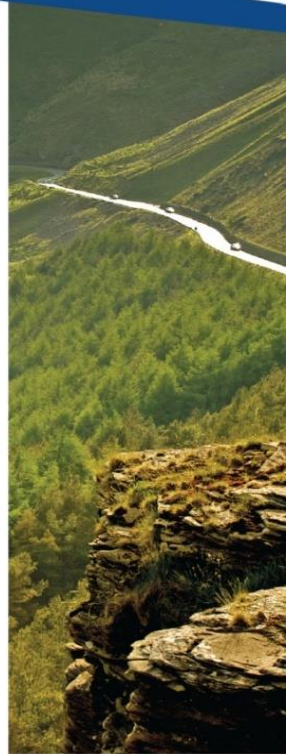


Annual Report 2014-15



Bridgend County Borough Council
Working together to improve lives

Foreword

This is our annual report for 2014-15. We hope you find it helpful.

Our Corporate Plan for 2013-17 sets out our vision, which can be summed up as working together to improve people's lives. It also explains what steps we intend to take in order to realise this vision. We review our plans and promises each year and we check our performance regularly. This annual report assesses what we did in 2014-15, in light of what we said we would do.

We use a range of measures to see how well we fulfilled our promises and commitments. We are delighted to report that in 2014-15 we were among the five local authorities in Wales that had improved the most, and among the nine that had performed the best. We were among the top three authorities for reducing delays in the transfer of care, the top four for reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill, the top five for supporting adults living in the community and the top six for attracting people to our sport and leisure centres.

We are particularly pleased about the improvements in education and children's social care. School attendance, in both primary and secondary schools, improved over the previous year, thanks to parents' support.

We completed 81 percent of our commitments for the year and missed out only marginally in a further 19 percent.

We put a great deal of effort into helping individuals, families and communities take greater responsibility for improving their own health and wellbeing. We are aware that other people and organisations besides the Council also influence the quality of local people's lives, so we worked with a range of partners to find new and different ways to meet local needs and provide services. You can find examples in this report.

We can be proud of what we achieved in 2014-15, for it shows that by working together we can help improve things despite diminishing resources and cuts in funding.

If you have any comments, please tell us at:

Corporate Improvement Team, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB.

Email: improvement@bridgend.gov.uk

Phone: (01656) 643224.

This report is available in another language or format on request.



Councillor Mel Nott
Leader of the Council



Darren Mepham
Chief Executive

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Section 1 - Introduction

In April 2013 we published our new Corporate Plan for 2013-17. The Plan sets out our Improvement Priorities, the outcomes we want to achieve by 2017 and how we will know we are succeeding. Each year we review the plan and our specific commitments for the current year.

Our six improvement priorities¹ are:



Our annual report gives an account of what we achieved collectively in 2014-15 against what we committed to do in that year, as set out in the Plan, focusing on outcomes. We use the following symbols to indicate the progress we made against both the success indicators and commitments:

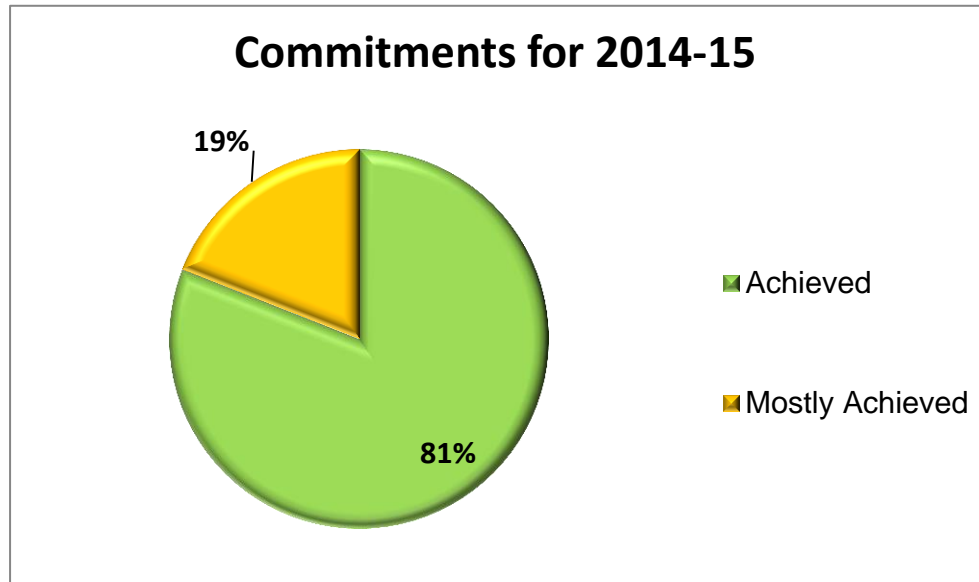
-  planned improvement or target achieved (G=Green)
-  planned improvement or target mostly achieved (A=Amber)
-  planned improvement or target mostly missed (R=Red)
-  no data available

¹ These six priorities are our improvement objectives under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Summary of Performance in 2014-15

Progress against Commitments

In our Corporate Plan, our commitments are the key pieces of work we plan to complete. In 2014-15, we made 58 commitments.

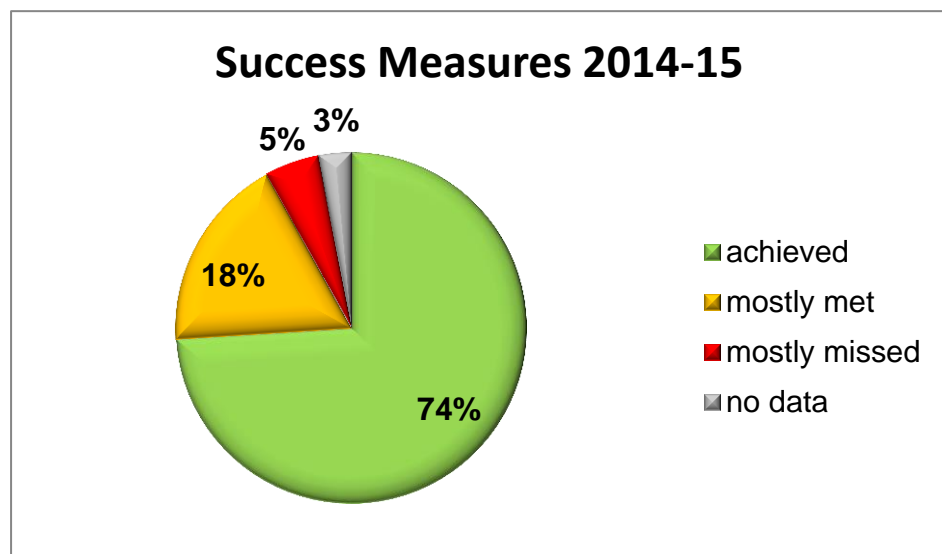


Of these commitments:

- 47 (81%) achieved the planned improvement;
- 11 (19%) mostly achieved the planned improvement;
- 0 (0%) mostly missed the planned improvement.

Improvement Priorities	Commitments			
	TOTAL	R	A	G
Priority One: Working together to develop the local economy	10	0	2	8
		0%	20%	80%
Priority Two: Raising Aspirations and driving up educational achievement	9	0	2	7
		0%	22%	78%
Priority Three: Working with children and families to tackle problems early	8	0	2	6
		0%	25%	75%
Priority Four: Working together to help vulnerable and older people to stay independent	11	0	3	8
		0%	27%	73%
Priority Five: Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles	8	0	1	7
		0%	13%	88%
Priority Six: Working together to make the best use of our resources	12	0	1	11
			8%	92%
Total number of Commitments against all Improvement Priorities	58	0	11	47
		0%	19%	81%

Progress against Success Indicators



We identified 69 indicators for 2014-15. Among the 69 indicators we defined 38 measures to evaluate if we are collectively succeeding in the year.

Of these 38 measures:

- 28 (74%) achieved or exceeded the target;
- 7 (18%) mostly met their target;
- 2 (5%) mostly missed the target; and
- 1 (3%) had no data available.

The table below shows performance of these success measures against each of our improvement priorities.

Improvement Priorities	Success Indicators				
	TOTAL	R	A	G	No Data
Priority One: Working together to develop the local economy	9	1	3	5	0
		11%	33%	56%	0%
Priority Two: Raising Aspirations and driving up educational achievement	8	1	1	6	0
		12.5%	12.5%	75%	0%
Priority Three: Working with children and families to tackle problems early	6	0	1	5	0
		0%	17%	83%	0%
Priority Four: Working together to help vulnerable and older people to stay independent	5	0	0	5	0
		0%	0%	100%	0%
Priority Five: Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles ²	5	0	2	2	1
		0%	40%	40%	20%
Priority Six: Working together to make the best use of our resources	5	0	0	5	0
		0%	0%	100%	0%
Total Success Indicators against all Improvement Priorities	38	2	7	28	1
		5%	18%	74%	3%

Detailed information and analysis for all 69 success indicators plus other statutory measures is published separately on the Council's website www.bridgend.gov.uk in the 'Council Performance and Priorities' section.

² No new data on healthy life expectancy since 2009

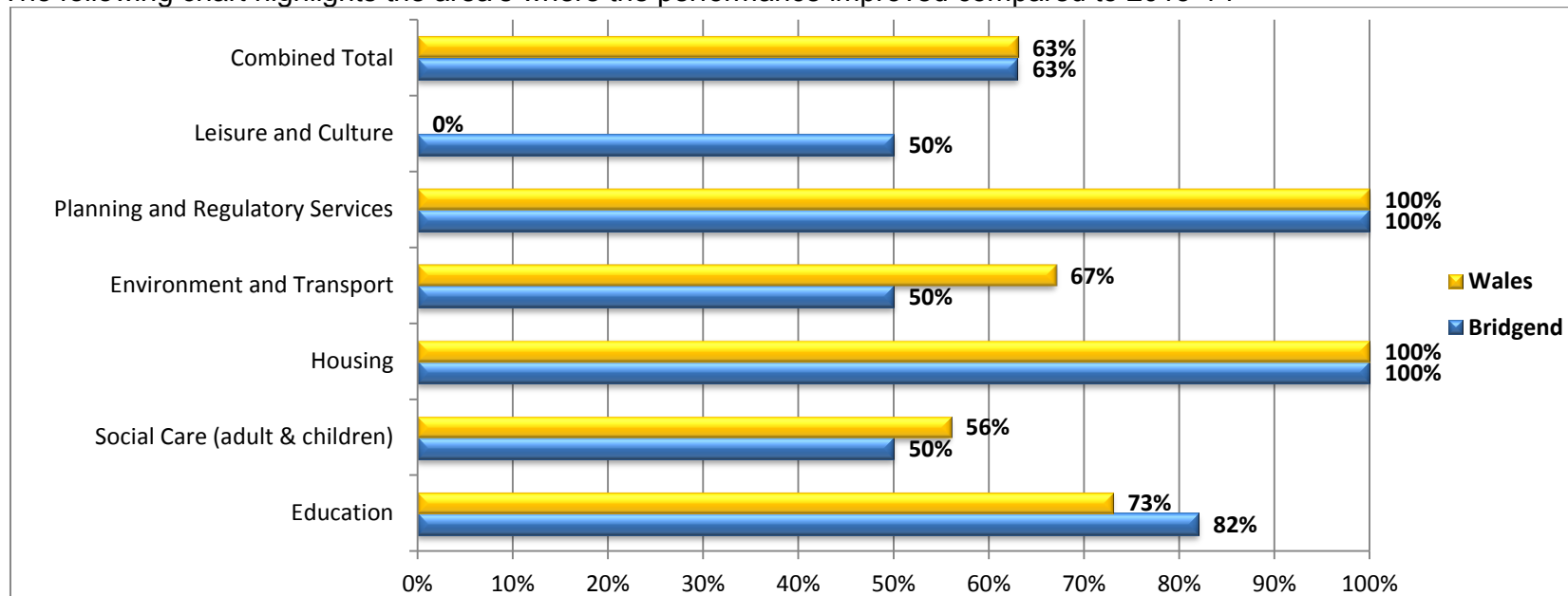
Performance against National Indicators in 2014-15

Each year, the Welsh Government and the Local Government Data Unit publish a range of national performance indicators which enables citizens to compare how their local authority performed compared against the other 21 Welsh local authorities across a range of key services. In all, forty-three (43) indicators were collected nationally. Of these, only 41 indicators could be compared with last year as one indicator was new for 2014-15. In Bridgend County Borough Council, one other indicator was not applicable and so our total number of comparable indicators is 40.

In 2014-15 Bridgend County Borough Council was the fifth most improved local authority in Wales. Bridgend County Borough Council equalled the Wales average by improving on 63% of the indicators (when measured against 41 indicators). However, the performance improvement for Bridgend County Borough Council increases to above the Wales average to 65% when compared against 40 indicators.

- 26 (63%) showed an improvement;
- 13 (32.5%) remained the same; and
- 1 (2.5%) showed a decline.

The following chart highlights the area's where the performance improved compared to 2013-14



When we look at where Bridgend County Borough Council is ranked in the delivery of a range of services, we are the 9th best local authority in Wales, with 31.7% of our national indicators in the top quarter (or quartile), while 19.5% ended in the bottom quarter. The following table shows our overall quartile position compared against all Welsh local authorities.

		Bridgend County Borough Council's Quartile Position				Total
		1st	2nd	3 rd	4 th	
Combined Total	Percentage	31.7%	22%	26.8%	19.5%	
	Value	13	9	11	8	41
Human Resources	Percentage	0%	0%	0%	100%	
	Value	0	0	0	1	1
Leisure and Culture	Percentage	50%	0%	50%	0%	
	Value	1	0	1	0	2
Planning and Regulatory	Percentage	0%	0%	50%	50%	
	Value	0	0	1	1	2
Environment and Transport	Percentage	33%	33%	17%	17%	
	Value	2	2	1	1	6
Housing	Percentage	50%	50%	0%	0%	
	Value	1	1	0	0	2
Social Care (Adult & Children)	Percentage	33%	28%	28%	11%	
	Value	6	5	5	2	18
Education	Percentage	30%	10%	30%	30%	
	Value	3	1	3	3	10

Detailed information about each of our indicators is included in the full list of indicators published separately on the Council's website www.bridgend.gov.uk in the Council priorities and performance section.

Section 2 – Progress in carrying out our Improvement Priorities

In this section, we assess our performance against the commitments we made under each of our improvement priorities for 2014-15.

Improvement Priority One: Working together to develop the local economy



What do we want for people in Bridgend County Borough by March 2017?

We want town centres, business premises and transport and communication networks that cater for the needs of residents, businesses and visitors, to ensure access to employment opportunities that are varied and secure in the long-term.

How did we do in 2014-15?







We made progress towards achieving this improvement priority. We said we would “continue to regenerate our town centres, actively look for new funding opportunities and encouraging new investments to help boost our local economy, provide extra employment opportunities and attract more visitors to the borough”.




Working together, we

- completed the programme of improvements in Bridgend town centre and commenced further regeneration in both Maesteg and Bridgend having secured significant funding from Welsh Government;
- redeveloped Porthcawl Marina, which is fully operational, though the principal regeneration scheme in Porthcawl remains delayed;
- worked with 9 employers, resulting in the creation of 52 new jobs through the Bridgend Employment and Skills Programme; and
- attracted almost 630,000 more visitors to the Borough than last year, generated over £7 million more revenue from tourists and held the Golf British Senior Open in the Borough hosted by Royal Porthcawl.

Progress against Success Indicators

We identified 9 indicators to measure success. Although most of these indicators are long term and require a joint effort to improve, we chose them nevertheless to give us an indication of the borough’s social and economic state that have direct impact on our citizens’ lives. Most of those indicators either met or narrowly missed their targets (see table below).

How did we say we would measure success?	How did we do?	Traffic Light
Employment and youth employment rates improve relative to the national average	The percentage of working age population in employment decreased from 72.1% in 2013-14 to 69.8% in 2014-15. The employment rate for young people fell from 49.5% to 46% at the end of March 2015.	
The number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance reduces	The number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance fell to 2.2% in March 2014 compared with 3.1% for the year before.	
Percentage of children living in households where nobody works falls	The latest data (2013) showed that the percentage of children in workless households increased from 17.5% in 2012 to 20% in 2013.	
Percentage of children living in low-income households reduces	The percentage of children in households with less than 60% average income increased from 21% in 2012 to 22.2% in 2014.	
Gross Value Added (GVA) per head rises	According to the latest published figures (December 2014), GVA rose from £15,334 in 2012 to £15,593 in 2013.	
Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) per head increases	According to the latest published figures (May 2015) GDHI rose from £14,513 in 2012 to £14,773 in 2013.	

Total revenue coming into the county borough from tourism grows	Tourist revenue increased from £289 million in 2013-14 to £306.6 million in 2014-15.	
Number of visitors to the borough increases	Overall the total number of visitors to the Borough increased from 8,700,216 in 2013-14 to 9,330,155 in 2014-15.	
Percentage of overall roads in a poor condition reduces	7.7% of A, B and C roads were in poor condition in 2014-15, compared to 6.9% in 2013-14 We remain in the top 9 local authorities.	

Progress against 2014-15 Commitments

Most of the commitments for this Improvement Priority were completed as set out below.

1.1 Complete the current programme of regeneration works in Bridgend town centre	
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We completed a £9 million programme of improvements in Bridgend town centre on time and within budget. Primarily funded from a European Grant and the Welsh Government, the programme included improvements at Nolton Street, Court Road, Derwen Road, Merthyr Mawr Road (North), Rhiw Hill and Elder Place. This included new road layouts, pedestrian safety measures, better accessibility and on street parking at Nolton Street to support short-stay trading.

1.2 Begin a new programme of works to develop retail, office and residential sites in Bridgend town centre subject to the success of our bid for funding to the Welsh Government	
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We began the £35 million regeneration scheme of Bridgend town centre with a £6 million grant from Welsh Government under their Vibrant and Viable Places (VVP) programme. The grant pulled in a further £29 million in investment, £21 million of which is private sector funding. The main project is a £10 million redevelopment of the Rhiw Car Park as a new multi storey and affordable housing development due to be completed in 2017. The wider programme aims to support town centre business and encourage more people to live in or near the town centre. The scheme includes building and converting upper storeys in properties to provide an extra 250 additional living accommodation units on the edge of the town centre. It is pleasing to note that the project management arrangements were independently audited and achieved the joint highest rating of any local authority under the Wales wide VVP programme.

1.3 Reappraise development options and continue to manage regeneration projects in Porthcawl	
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The original proposal for redeveloping the Porthcawl Waterfront included building a supermarket. As that didn't come to fruition, we continue to discuss with landowners and agents to identify other development options for the site. In spite of the need to reconsider this part of the redevelopment, we successfully progressed on a number of regeneration projects.

The Porthcawl Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) and sale of the Jennings building are 100% on target. The regeneration of the Harbour area includes the Jennings building, the Pilot's Lookout Tower and Customs House, all of which will be high quality conversions of the three listed buildings. The Jennings will create 3 commercial leisure units on the ground floor including a café and bistro restaurant with live/work units on the upper floors for creative industries. The Pilot's Lookout Tower will be returned to its original use and used by National Coast Watch, while the Custom House will be used as a commercial operation. The whole scheme will create an attraction on the waterfront with the Jennings providing an estimated 80 permanent jobs.

Porthcawl Marina was successfully completed. The Marina is at full capacity, with 65 permanent berths and 5 visitor berths. Currently there is a waiting list in place. We have also been working closely with a third sector organisation and Visit Wales to develop a proposal for a new maritime centre at Cosy Corner.

Proposals are currently being developed to support Porthcawl's aim to host the British Open. Porthcawl is only one of 3 locations in South East Wales being prioritised by Visit Wales.

The Council was successful in obtaining grant funding (£300,000) under the Big Lottery Coastal Communities Fund for a cycle and pedestrian route from Rest Bay to Trecco Bay, including a new bike hire scheme, with work due to commence during 2015.

1.4	Commence the development of the Ewenny Road site in Maesteg and develop proposals for future development in the Llynfi Valley	
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Due to unforeseen circumstances, we had to reappraise our plan to develop the Ewenny Road site during the year and refocused our efforts on the future development in the Llynfi Valley. The regeneration scheme for Ewenny Road site is still live (although it no longer forms part of the Welsh Government funding agreement). Our target for this year is to negotiate the sale of this land for redevelopment.

Thanks to a £2.5 million loan from Welsh Government, we were able to undertake site investigations and ground remediation at 3 sites in the Llynfi Valley. We aim ultimately to market and dispose of the sites for new housing development. The site investigations are on target for completion and the ground remediation work will potentially start by end of 2015/16.

1.5	Work with neighbouring local authorities to provide focused support for businesses to help them to invest and create jobs	
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More than 10 jobs were created locally last year through the South East Wales Community Economic Development (SEWCED) regional project which supports local social enterprises. Over the 3 year life of the project, some 25 organisations were supported creating more than 55 local jobs. We are continuing to work with the 10 Local Authorities that make up South East Wales Directors of Environment and Regeneration (SEWDER) to establish a national or regional project to commence in 2015-16. However, due to funding constraints future targets may be difficult to achieve.

1.6 Improve transport, pedestrian and cycle links between the bus and rail network and employment and education sites



We improved our pedestrian and cycle infrastructure through the 'Safe Routes in the Communities' Grant at Cynffig Comprehensive, Corneli Primary, Porthcawl Primary and Tremains Primary Schools. The work included upgrading or putting in new cycle routes totalling 2,167 metres as well as providing 165 cycle parking spaces across the four schools. However, due to the reduction of funding of £120,000 to support local bus services, there was a reduction or removal of some services across the Borough.

1.7 Complete the final year of the three-year highway improvement programme to improve the condition of our roads



Our three year highway improvement programme funded by a grant from Welsh Government was mostly completed. A small slippage of works was completed in the summer of 2015. This resulted in the overall condition of roads being better than expected, with an improvement in the condition of our (B) roads.

1.8 Engage with people and communities to understand their learning needs so that courses are developed that meet those needs and employment prospects improved



During 2013-14, we asked people to fill in a short questionnaire in a range of places to find out their learning needs. We used the findings to plan our curriculum for 2014-15. Along with our partners including Bridgend College, Workers' Educational Association and BAVO, we delivered 230 short and long courses to improve people's employment prospects.

We worked in partnership with the Communities First BESP project (Bridgend Employment and Skills Programme) which proved particularly successful. We worked with nine local employers to determine skills and knowledge required for jobs. Seven of these employers recruited 52 local people directly through the partnership, with one employer recruiting 25 people through the process.

1.9 Establish a county borough wide provision with partners that will help people to gain skills and training that leads to employment



With our support, the Bridgend Employer Liaison Partnership (BELP) operated over 40 workclubs throughout Bridgend County Borough in 2014-15 resulting in 130 people entering employment during that period.

1.10 Establish the Bridgend Tourism Partnership and work with partners to improve accommodation, attractions and events



The Destination Management and Coastal Partnerships met during the year to support the delivery of the Bridgend Tourism Strategy and to look at the planning, development and management of the Coastal Zone. Research was commissioned to support funding applications to help grow our tourism economy and create jobs.

Some 41 events were supported either through contact with the Events Safety Advisory Group for advice and assistance and/or access to funding from the Visitor Support Events Fund. The British Senior Open 2014 at Royal Porthcawl was particularly successful and generated £2.16 million for the local economy, with 389 million households around the world viewing the event. The media value of this was nearly £11.5 million.

What are our challenges for 2015-16 and how will we respond?

Financial cuts will continue to have an impact on the delivery of services. We will continue to attempt to mitigate this where possible in a variety of ways including implementing revised models of delivery and creating further efficiencies. Our key priorities for 2015-16 are as follows:

We will:

- develop bids and secure funding for the next phase of urban regeneration projects through the EU Convergence programme, up to 2020;
- continue to implement the first phase of a number of key land reclamation and development projects in Maesteg and the Llynfi Valley;
- continue implementation of a composite regeneration programme in Bridgend town centre;
- re-appraise development options for the delivery of regeneration in Porthcawl;
- commence implementation of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 working with rural communities and partners towards achieving self-sustaining rural communities, diversified rural enterprises and vibrant rural economies;
- provide focused support for businesses and support social enterprises to help them invest and create jobs;
- engage with people and communities to understand their learning needs so that adult community learning provision is commissioned to meet their needs and employment prospects are improved;
- continue improvements in transport, pedestrian and cycle links between the bus and rail network and employment and education sites to include schemes in Bridgend, Maesteg and Porthcawl; and
- identify and implement physical improvements to the public rights of way and cycle track network using Welsh Government RoWIP and other grant funding.

Improvement Priority Two: Working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement



What do we want for people in Bridgend County Borough by March 2017?

We want to ensure that by working in partnership with schools, colleges and local training providers, our children and young people achieve improvements to their educational results, gain qualifications and undertake training.

By 2017, we want every school to be improving at a much faster rate so that at least two thirds of young people achieve a minimum of five GCSEs Grade A*- C or equivalent, including English/Welsh and mathematics and the gap in literacy and numeracy between those who receive free school meals and those who do not is reduced.

How did we do in 2014-15?

We made good progress towards achieving this improvement priority.





We wanted to secure a big change in the rate of improvement so that, by September 2015, children are functionally literate and numerate at the end of their primary education and at least 60% of young people achieve the level of qualification expected of them at GCSE.

In 2014-15





- the percentage of pupils achieving the Core Subject Indicator at the end of their primary education increased from 82.6% in 2013-14 to 86.2% in 2014-15;
- 99.9% of pupils left compulsory education, training or work based learning with an approved external qualification; and
- 59.4% (provisional data) of our pupils achieved a minimum of five GCSEs Grade A*- C or equivalent, including English/Welsh and mathematics, which is above the Welsh average of 57.6% (provisional data³).

Progress against Success Indicators

We identified 8 indicators to measure success and the majority of these showed improvement as set out below.

How did we say we would measure success?	How did we do?	Traffic Light
Most of our children can read, write and count to a level of skill needed to get by in life, by the time they complete their primary education	The percentage of pupils assessed at the end of Key Stage 2 achieving the Core Subject Indicator, as determined by Teacher Assessment, increased from 86.20% in 2013-14 to 87.6% in 2014-15.	
Attainment levels for pupils in all areas across the county borough increase	Educational attainment for all pupils increased in 2014-15 at Key Stage 2 (primary school), Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 (GCSE).	
Our children achieve the level of qualification expected of them at GCSE	Provisional data shows that the percentage of pupils who achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE grade A*-C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics increased from 54.8.% in 2013-14 to 59.40% in 2014-15, achieving our education consortium target of 55% but narrowly missing our challenging target of 60%.	
Children who receive free school meals have as much success throughout their education as those	In most schools, the performance of children who receive free school meals was maintained or improved but as performance was not	

³ The final figures will not be available until December 2015

who do not receive free school meals(FSM)	consistent across all schools, the percentage difference in the achievement of the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE grade A*-C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics between children who receive free school meals and those that do not widened by 4.6% points in the 2013-14 academic year. Schools will continue to work with their challenge advisers to improve the performance of FSM pupils and this target area will remain a key focus for secondary schools.	
Children with additional learning needs receive the support they need	The gap in the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above in English/Welsh, maths and science at the end of Key Stage 2 between pupils that have special educational needs and those who do not reduced from 47.31% in 2013-14 to 40.15% in 2014-15.	
Our children who have left school either further their education, find employment or undertake some form of training	The percentage of Year 11 leavers from schools in the Authority identified as not being in education, employment or training in the Careers Wales Annual Destination Survey Statistics improved from 3.7% to 3.6%.	
When our children leave education or any form of training, they do so with an approved qualification that will help give them a good start in life	The percentage of all pupils that leave compulsory education, training or work based learning with an approved external qualification improved from 99.6% in 2013-14 to 99.9% in 2014-15.	
More children are members of our libraries	The percentage of children under 5 who are members of the library service increased from 27.81% in 2013-14 to 31.26% in 2014-15.	

Progress against 2014-15 Commitments

Most of the commitments for this Improvement Priority were completed as set out below.

2.1	Use data to ensure we better understand the performance of individuals and groups of learners and offer extra help at an earlier stage in their education	
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There are specialist teachers who collect pupil progress data for pupils with additional learning needs. We provided training in 2014-15 so that these teachers were better able to collect and analyse their data and identify when pupils are not making expected progress and what support they need. The progress made in using the data was recognised by the schools monitoring body, Estyn, as good practice. However, we need to modify our ICT systems in schools to improve this process further but we were held back by a lack of resources.

2.2	Support schools to meet pupils' additional learning needs and the needs of more-able pupils who need extra support to reach their full potential	A
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We set up a process for the Inclusion Service and schools to discuss pupils with additional learning needs and identify what support the school needs. For example, if there is a high incidence of dyslexia in a school then the locality Cognition & Learning teacher will look at what the school does to support this group of learners and provide training to improve the teachers' skills. For more able pupils we carried out exploratory work to better understand how we can support them.

2.3	Monitor and seek to improve the effectiveness of schools through the Central South Consortium	G
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The Central South Consortium comprises five local authorities (including Bridgend County Borough) and was set up to improve schools' effectiveness. This year, challenge advisors from the Consortium were put in place to work with all schools and provide additional support where necessary to improve pupils' educational attainment. The challenge advisors also provided statistics on performance and prepared annual performance reports for schools.

2.4	Reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)	G
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This year the percentage of Year 11 school leavers known not to be in education, employment or training reduced from 3.7% (67 young people) in 2013-14 to 3.6% (60 young people). We employed an Engagement and Progression Coordinator (EPC) and team of 6 dedicated full-time Lead Workers who provided targeted support to young people identified as potentially vulnerable to becoming NEET in all schools as well supporting pupils attending alternative educational provisions or who were Elected Home Educated.

2.5	Provide 14-19 year olds with the advice they need to ensure they engage in the right type of qualification for them	G
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Lead Workers in schools supported young people to access accredited courses (via Agored Cymru, the Duke of Edinburgh programme) and to build their confidence, and to develop their CV skills and Interview skills. We also restructured EOTAS (Educated Other Than At School) provision, including the Bridge Alternative provision for school age single mothers.

2.6	Develop and implement the school attendance strategy	G
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The Authority's Attendance Strategy came into effect on 1st January 2015. It supports schools in identifying children who are showing signs of poor attendance and helps them to tackle and overcome any problems or obstacles.

Following public consultation we set up a code of practice for Fixed Penalty Notices to be used when a pupil's attendance does not improve. During 2014-15 we saw a significant improvement in attendance in primary schools from 93.49% to 94.8% and secondary schools from 92.46% to 93.9%.

2.7 Provide community focused schools that support the needs of all learners and their local community

A

2014-15 saw the official openings of Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen, Pen-y-Fai School and the Garw Valley South scheme. Construction of the Emotional Behavioural and Social Difficulties (EBSD) Specialist Provision on the former Ogmere Comprehensive School Site and the new Coity primary school also started.

A feasibility study was completed to address growing pressure on the number of primary school places in the Valleys Gateway Area, including Tondy, Bryncethin and Brynmenyn primary schools. A consultation was prepared on the proposals to relocate Brynmenyn school and build a two form entry replacement school to the rear of Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen.

2.8 Develop opportunities for local participation in sports leadership and accredited learning programmes for young people

G

We trained 129 young leaders through leadership pathway, which was identified by Estyn as 'sector leading'. The scheme supported employability skills and accreditation. Ten of the 129 young leaders are Looked After Children. Ten former pupils of Heronsbridge School completed sports leadership training and will progress to entry level coaching awards to support the development of community based opportunities.

Eighty young people who received accredited training are now working locally. Two of Bridgend County Borough's young leaders were finalists for the Wales Sports Personality of the year awards.

Bridgend County Borough Council was recently awarded "International Partner of the Year" for its work with young people in the Create Development national awards.

2.9 Promote libraries and implement a series of programmes designed to get more children and young people to enjoy reading

G

More than 2,500 children participated in the Summer Reading Challenge. To promote the challenge, staff visited schools, issued press releases and put information on our website. Over 68% of the children completed the scheme which is an improvement on the previous year and attracted more families and young people to benefit from reading. "It's really helped my son to enjoy reading", said one mother whose child took part at Bridgend Library.

Overall, library membership in the under 5s rose from 27.81% in 2013-14 to 31.26% in 2014-15.

What are our challenges for 2015-16 and how will we respond?

We continue to face budget reductions, constraints and capacity issues in the face of increasing demands in some service areas.

We will:

- use data to ensure we better understand the performance of individuals and groups of learners and offer extra help at an earlier stage in their education;
- support schools to meet pupils' additional learning needs and the needs of more-able pupils who need extra support to reach their full potential;
- monitor and seek to improve the effectiveness of schools through the Central South Consortium;
- continue to implement the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework;
- support schools in the implementation and use of Fixed Penalty Notices for non-attendance in schools;
- implement the BCBC attendance strategy;
- provide 14-19 year olds with the advice they need to ensure they engage in the right type of qualification for them;
- provide schools that support the needs of all learners and their communities;
- promote libraries and implement a series of programmes designed to get more children and young people to enjoy reading;
- deliver the agreed actions under the School Modernisation Programme, including implementation of projects within the capital programme; and
- under the auspices of the Schools Task Group, work with schools to develop a sustainable strategy for the provision of education in Bridgend County Borough.

Improvement Priority Three: Working with children and families to tackle problems early



What do we want for people in Bridgend County Borough by March 2017?

We want to increase the effectiveness of early support and intervention to prevent issues from becoming complex and reduce the risk of children becoming looked after.

How did we do in 2014-15?

We made good progress with this priority.





We wanted to achieve more positive changes for more children and families.

We

- helped 223 children, young people and parents through our Families First programme achieve an improvement in their literacy and/or numeracy skills relative to their age;
- saw a reduction in the number of looked after children, children in need and children on the child protection register;
- supported 32 families with complex needs and prevented 52 children / young people from becoming Looked After Children.

Progress against Success Indicators

We identified 6 indicators to measure success and the majority of these met their target as set out below.

How did we say we would measure success?	How did we do?	Traffic Light
<p>Our early intervention measures lead to reduction in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number of children and young people being referred to Social Services; • the number of Looked After Children; • the number of children in need; • the number of children recorded on the Child Protection Register 	<p>The number of children referred to Social Services with concerns of neglect or abuse reduced to 401, compared to 448 in 2013-14.</p> <p>During 204/15 the number of Looked After Children reduced from 412 at 31st March 14 to 390 at 31st March 15, 22 fewer children.</p> <p>The number of children in need decreased to 884 as at 31 March 2015, compared to 967 for the previous year.</p> <p>There were 125 children on the Child Protection Register, down from 179.</p>	
The prospects for Looked After Children in the county borough improve, with fewer leaving school without a recognised qualification	All our Looked After Children left school with a recognised qualification in 2014-15 and we are ranked first in Wales for this indicator.	
The number of children adopted increases	This year 24 children were adopted compared to 25 last year but more than our target of 16 adoptions. We also increased the number of approved prospective adopters from 18 exceeding our target of 16.	
More young people leaving care are able to get the help and on-going support they need	We stayed in contact with 94.7% of young people who left care up from 82.6% in the year before.	

More families benefit from working with the Multi-Agency Community teams and receive support at an earlier stage	399 families were referred in for early support this year compared to 263 for 2013-14.	G
More families and young children access the Flying Start provision	1,428 children and their families accessed Flying Start provision in 2014-15 compared to 1,171 last year.	G

Progress against 2014-15 Commitments

Most of the commitments for this Improvement Priority were completed as set out below.

3.1 Improve the way we and other agencies help families to address the root causes of their problems	G
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We brought all family support services together into local 'hubs' and established an Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy that brings together all integrated early support for families. We reviewed our Joint Assessment Family Framework (JAFF) and Team Around the Family (TAF) processes to make more services available and easier to access. We provided 167 families with intensive family support, exceeding our target of 160 and all families reported that they were satisfied with the service they had received.

Our Edge of Care service supported 32 families with complex needs and prevented 52 children / young people from becoming Looked After Children.

We trained staff across agencies to work together to address families' needs at an early stage, making it easier for families to engage with the support on offer.

We also developed a new carer's assessment template and e-learning module for staff to improve their awareness and identification of young carers. There was, however, a poor take up by staff of the Carers Awareness e-Learning module. We will do more to promote it in 2015-16 and team managers will ensure that front line staff use the e learning module.

Despite this, all young carers known to us were assessed and provided with a service. We held a Young Carers Conference in October 2014 which resulted in the following actions:

- the provision of training to the county's schools;
- a process to identify and support Young Carers' Champions in schools;
- awareness-raising sessions for school health nurses; and
- the production of a range of materials, including posters, aimed at those who may be young carers and for distribution schools, GP surgeries, hospitals, libraries, etc.

3.2	Increase the number of family support workers and train them to help families make the decisions that are right for them	G
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There are now 19 trained family support workers in place, increased from 16.

3.3	Put systems in place that mean families need only tell their stories once using the Joint Assessment Families Framework	G
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We developed a single referral route for all support services and an improved Joint Assessment Families Framework process making it simpler to use. All teams have been trained in the developments including the assessment model.

3.4	Increase the number of staff in a named key worker role within the Multi-Agency Community teams	G
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There are now key workers in each hub and they have a single referral process to aid access to a range of services.

More work will be done in 2015-16 to enable partner agency staff to access BCBC systems to help share information across partner agencies.

3.5	Continue to develop partnership working arrangements with relevant partners	G
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We established hubs across the County Borough with a mix of safeguarding and early help staff located in each hub. This resulted in much closer working relationships with a greater range of partners.

3.6	Implement Looked After Children strategy and the regional adoption service	A
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We implemented a refreshed placements and permanency strategy during the year, aimed at safely reducing the number of Looked After Children. This strategy, along with the launch of our new prevention and early help strategy, steadily reduced the number of Looked After Children during the year. Of those children who became looked after, 96.9% of their first placements began with a care plan in place.

The regional adoption service became operational in January 2015 and adoption teams from Bridgend County Borough Council, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot local authorities are now based in offices in Neath Port Talbot Civic Centre. Proposals for replacing our Independent Fostering Agency placements with a new local Parent and Child Fostering Service were slightly delayed but are now moving ahead.

3.7 Implement a reconfigured 'Families First' programme

G

The Families First programme is aimed at families across the borough that need extra help and support to make a lasting improvement in their lives. Support services provided to families included work focused training, improved parenting skills and support to achieve better family health and wellbeing. We worked with partners to help 223 children, young people and parents achieve an improvement in their literacy and/or numeracy skills relative to their age. We successfully supported 258 young people and parents access employment, education or training as a result of the support received. We also supported 194 families in managing the effect of disability on the family, with 70 families pleasingly demonstrating improvements in confidence, nurturing and resilience.

3.8 Increase the number of children benefiting from Flying Start nursery provision by expanding the service into Lewistown, Blackmill and Sarn

A

Flying Start is a Welsh Government programme aimed at supporting families and children under four years old who live in some of the most deprived areas of Wales. In 2014-15 we introduced Flying Start nursery provision to the communities in Blackmill and Sarn and created 72 new childcare places although due to delays in Lewistown we missed our target of 92 new childcare places.

Overall the rate of attendance at all Flying Start nursery provision is 81% compared to our target of 76%.

What are our challenges for 2015-16 and how will we respond?

We must maintain the pace of transformation of services to ensure good outcomes for children, young people and their families in the light of current and future budget reductions.

We will:

- put systems in place to support our new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) arrangements;
- relaunch the Joint Assessment Family Framework to ensure that partnership arrangements are more effective;
- implement the Permanency and Placement Strategy and the Early Help Strategy to reduce the number of looked after children and to prevent children becoming looked after; and
- improve the way we work with other agencies to help identify more families that are in need of support and to address the root cause of their problems.

Improvement Priority Four: Working together to help vulnerable people to stay independent



What do we want for people in Bridgend County Borough by March 2017?

We want to enable vulnerable people to live independently.

How did we do in 2014-15?




We made good progress with this priority.



We wanted to ensure effective care and support was given to people when it is needed.

- Our Better@Home service provided 394 people with support at home as an alternative to staying in hospital while they awaited the start of their planned support.
- Through our Healthy Homes Assistance Grant that provides small scale essential works to prevent trips and falls we helped 450 older people maintain their independence and remain in their own homes.
- Our Assisted Recovery in the Community (ARC) service received 1,363 referrals to support people with mental health needs.

Progress against Success Indicators

We identified 5 indicators to measure success all of which showed improvement as set out below

How did we say we would measure success?	How did we do?	Traffic Light
The proportion of older people aged 65+ who live independently increases	<p>During the year, we supported more people to live independently than in the year before by increasing the number of people using telecare services and accessing community services, thus reducing the number of people needing to live in care homes.</p> <p>Our Telecare service responded to 1,009 callouts to people who had fallen, of which 720 avoided an ambulance call out. Our Telecare service consistently supported people to feel confident to remain independent at home, with 96% of people using the service reporting that it made it easier for them to stay in their own home.</p> <p>Working closely with partners, we also encouraged people to access advice and support directly from the third sector and within their own networks and communities. Our commissioned Care and Repair services helped 450 people in 2014-15 compared to 310 last year.</p>	
The numbers of inappropriate admissions to hospital and residential care are reduced	Our Community Resource team and services supported 960 people to stay at home and avoid being admitted to hospital and residential care.	
More carers say that they are supported and their needs are met	67% of carers surveyed said they felt that services for carers had improved. This was against a target of 35%.	

The number of people who have been discharged home with short-term packages of care increases	This is a new measure and we supported 705 people of whom 432 did not require an ongoing care service. More services are being developed with the carers centre to support successful discharge planning.	
The average number of days to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant reduces	We reduced the number of days to deliver a grant from 214.12 to 182.26. We are one of only nine councils in Wales to achieve an improvement in this indicator, improving our ranking from ninth to sixth across Wales.	

Progress against 2014-15 Commitments

Almost all of the commitments for this Improvement Priority were completed as set out below.

4.1	Continue to bring health and social care together in order to appropriately respond to older and disabled people and further develop preventative services within the community	
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Significant work took place across Western Bay to integrate Health and Social Care teams.

We reviewed Mental Health services with all stakeholders, including service users and carers. The number of people accessing primary mental health services increased from 1,931 to 2,123.

We developed a common service framework for the Community Support Team so that people with a learning disability who are known to adult social care, now receive joined up health and social care services.

We also introduced a new common assessment framework for Adult Social Care across the Western Bay area so that community health and social care services are better co-ordinated.

As part of the development of Prevention and Wellbeing services, we established a pilot for Local Community Co-ordination in the Llynfi Valley where Local Community Coordinators, based in communities, provided support and assistance to 34 vulnerable people by building links with local people, their families and their local community.

4.2	Work with partner organisations to remodel our homecare and residential services	
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We agreed a transformation plan and we are on target to complete the remodelling of homecare by December 2015. As part of this remodelling, we took on board new homecare providers and this helped to strengthen the local homecare market which has grown significantly over the last few years.

Our transformation plan includes the redevelopment of residential care in older people to an Extra Care service model. Extra Care housing provides quality, safe accommodation with flexible care and support services. We have not yet appointed a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) to build the Extra Care Housing schemes but we are continuing to hold discussions with RSLs who expressed an interest.

4.3 Review the commissioning arrangements with the third sector to ensure the right support and services are in place



We reviewed the 24 agencies that we commissioned from the third sector using a new toolkit. The review highlighted that there were opportunities to work more effectively with the third sector and this is being taken forward by the corporate Transformation Change Programme within the Council to develop stronger contracts with better performance measures.

As part of the work being done by the Prevention and Wellbeing Board, a communication plan was put in place which improved the provision of information available on the internet so that service users are clear about what support and services are available to them.

4.4 Create alternatives to hospital admission including respite, crisis provision and carer support



Throughout 2014-15 the Community Resource Team (CRT) continued to develop its services that offer alternatives to hospital admissions.

We made therapies available from the CRT in Accident & Emergency at the hospital that resulted in more people being able to return home without having to be admitted.

We are also working with the Bridgend Carers Centre to support successful discharge from hospital and avoid re-admission through support for carers by signposting them to other services and support available.

The CRT also enabled fast access to community clinics where people could get health and social care services to avert inappropriate admission to long term care services or avoid having to be seen at the hospital.

Our early response service assessed and supported 569 people in 2014-15 who, without our intervention, might have ended up in hospital. Ninety percent of users stated the service had improved their quality of life.

Our Better@Home service provided 394 people with support at home as an alternative to staying in hospital while they awaited the start of their planned support.

The Reablement unit at Bryn y Cae provides reablement services to people at risk of moving to long-term care. During 2014-15, 37 people successfully completed programmes and returned home with further support from the CRT services. We know that over 92% of people who used the facility at Bryn y Cae said they felt the service had improved their independence.

Overall, during 2014-15, the CRT received 1,872 referrals including:

- 630 interventions made by our BridgeStart enabling service;
- 411 interventions by other services including includes Bryn Y Cae Residential Reablement Unit;
- 569 Early Response Service interventions; and
- 394 Better at Home interventions.

Of the referrals above, 960 people were provided with an alternative to a hospital placement.

4.5 Ensure standards are in place and monitored to improve quality of care

G

We put standards and a framework in place to ensure that our citizens had consistent quality care and good experiences within a care home setting. This framework has helped care home providers to monitor and continually improve the quality of care they provide.

Residential and Nursing Contract Monitoring Officers spend time in homes talking to service users and their families to seek their views on how their life is within that environment, what outside community activities come into the home and what improvements could be made. In 2014-15, 74 users gave us their views. 100% of care homes in Bridgend County Borough were assessed in 2014-15.

Bridgend County Borough Council also led on the development of the regional quality framework across Western Bay.

4.6 Continue to develop new models of service and support for people during the day

G

We developed a prevention and well-being strategy to support people to have meaningful daytime activities. In particular, we worked with our colleagues in Learning Disability and Healthy Living to develop day opportunities in the community including community and leisure facilities as well as potential employment and volunteering opportunities. From information gathered in discussions with service users, we developed a range of activities including sessions in the hydrotherapy pool, support to join a fishing club and learning I.T. skills.

We developed a Dementia Strategy to improve support and services to individuals and families that included the development of a dementia friendly community and dementia training for care home providers.

In 2014-15, the Assisted Recovery in the Community (ARC) service supported a large number of people with mental health needs with day opportunities. There was an increase of 40.4% in referral rates from 971 in 2013-2014 to 1363 in 2014-15. This was due to GPs

referring patients directly to ARC rather than through a secondary health service. A customer service questionnaire highlighted that 88% of people who use the service would recommend it to others.

4.7 Develop an accommodation strategy with a range of supported accommodation options

G

The strategic direction for supported accommodation is set out in the Bridgend Strategy and Commissioning Plan for Learning Disability Services and the Western Bay Learning Disability Commissioning Plan. The Learning Disability Accommodation group, which includes representatives from Adult Social Care, the Communities Directorate and Health, developed a number of accommodation projects in partnership with Registered Social Landlords based on different models of support, including 24 hour supported living, and local support and advice provided through community hubs. So far, two community hubs have been set up and a third is being planned.

4.8 Increase accommodation options for households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness

A

The Kerrigan project provides temporary supported accommodation for single people who are homeless, vulnerable and have complex support needs. It aims to provide a homely, safe environment, where people are assisted to access services and achieve independent living. There was a small delay in delivering a new house for the scheme but when completed it will provide 7 temporary supported accommodation units that will move service users onto more settled accommodation within six months.

We have continued over the year to explore shared accommodation options with our housing associations but the lack of housing support available was identified as a barrier by our partners.

A new floating support scheme is being implemented which will assist people to maintain their tenancies i.e. managing their money, keeping healthy, and integrating into the community. A single access point for service users with support needs will be provided to help those who require supported housing, floating support services and move-on into independent accommodation. We now have 51 supported accommodation units, a rise from 44 in 2013-14.

The focus for 2015-16 will be to prevent and relieve homelessness in line with the greater responsibilities placed on the Council through the new Housing (Wales) Act 2014, which was implemented on 27th April 2015.

4.9 Review the Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy to ensure it is meeting needs and delivering value for money

A

We did not fully review the Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy as intended this year.

The take up of our Healthy Homes Assistance Grant was good. This grant provides small scale essential works to prevent trips and falls. 450 older people were able to maintain their independence and remain in their own homes with 98% being independent for longer than 6 months.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are awarded to homeowners for adaptations to their homes and are approved using the Council's in-house schedule of rates. We review rates for individual items of work continually to keep them in line with inflation. A review of the current schedule of rates was begun and will be published when the exercise has been completed.

It is worth noting that in 2014-15, Bridgend County Borough Council was one of only nine local authorities across Wales who reduced the time taken to deliver DFGs.

4.10 Develop an agreement with partners to address the needs of carers across the Western Bay region

G

Across the Western Bay region, a strategic partnership group began working to develop ways of supporting carers and had responsibility for spending the Carers Measure funds (approximately £52,920 in 2014-15). The funds were used to support a variety of local projects such as Welfare benefit surgeries, information leaflets, promotional DVDs and focused work in hospitals, schools and GP practices. We also held events such as specific training for parent carers e.g. on challenging behaviour and the Young Carers' Conference.

4.11 Continue to work with partners to mitigate the impacts of UK Government Welfare Reforms

G

The 'Get Bridgend On Line' project supported Job Seekers and others to improve their IT skills and get online. The project is a partnership between BCBC Libraries, Valleys to Coast, Wales Co-operative Centre and the voluntary sector. It provided support in libraries, community centres and other community venues across the county. During the life of the project, 1,353 Bridgend County Borough residents were supported to get on line, 20 volunteer digital champions were recruited and over 80 front line staff in partner organisations received digital inclusion training to help them provide support to their service users.

What are our challenges for 2015-16 and how will we respond?

The service is now focusing on the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act by April 2016 and must continue to build on the work done so far to meet this timetable. At the same time we must progress with the transformation agenda for social care if we are to address the risks associated with future budget cuts. We expect to continue to face increasing demand for services from demographic changes and dementia.

We will:

- produce and consult on the prevention and wellbeing strategy that includes the coordination of support, information and advice available in local communities;
- increase the range and accessibility of advice and information for carers;
- develop a regional quality framework to monitor and improve the quality of care;
- take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness in line with strengthened duties under the new Housing (Wales) Act 2014;

- help vulnerable people retain their dignity and stay as independent as possible in accommodation that best meets their needs;
- further develop crisis prevention, support and accommodation options for people with mental health needs that promotes independence and prevents hospital admission;
- continue the development of two new extracare schemes across the borough;
- continue the transformation of homecare services; and
- establish an integrated operational model for the Learning Disability Community Support Team.

Improvement Priority Five: Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles



What do we want for people in Bridgend County Borough by March 2017?

We want to see a healthier population.

How did we do in 2014-15?

We made progress towards achieving this improvement priority. We wanted to “make good progress in encouraging more people across the borough to live healthily” and to “see increased participation in physical activity across all population groups”.





Working together, we


- completed the redevelopment of the Bridgend Life Centre;
- exceeded the target of the number of Access to Leisure scheme memberships by 565 to 1962; and
- increased the retention rates for those completing a 16 week National Exercise Referral Food Wise Programme from 395 to 438 participants.

Progress against Success Indicators

We have chosen a combination of short-term and long-term indicators for this priority. For long-term indicators it usually takes years to see any effect.

We made progress in improving our short-term indicators, but less so in the long-term ones.

How did we say we would measure success?	How did we do?	Traffic Light
Percentage of the population who smoke reduces	The latest data (2014) showed a reduced rate of people who smoke, from 22% (in 2013) to 20%.	
Percentage of the population who are overweight or obese reduces	The latest data (2014) showed no change for the year, remaining at 58%.	
Percentage of adults who binge drink on at least one day per week reduces	The latest data (2014) showed that the number of people who binge drink on at least one day per week decreased from 30% (in 2013) to 27%.	
Percentage of adults achieving the recommended levels of physical activity increases	The latest data (2014) showed that the rate of people achieving the levels of physical activity recommended from 31% to 29%. The number of visits to local authority sport and leisure centres during the year per 1,000 population where the visitor participated in physical activity decreased marginally from 9,588 to 9,528. However, this does not include clubs who over the year migrated to using playing fields on school sites, or the development of all new weather playing areas to support clubs.	

Gap in Healthy Life Expectancy between the borough's most and least deprived communities narrows	In 2009 the gap for Male was 19.4 years and for Female 20.8 years. No new data after 2009 is available.	
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Progress against 2014-15 Commitments

Almost all of the commitments for this Improvement Priority were completed, as set out below.

5.1 Implement a series of early years programmes to encourage more physically active households	
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The Family Active Zone programme continued to promote active and healthy households with 27 partners receiving training and resources and 117 households accessing the programme at 8 locations throughout the borough.

5.2 Remove or reduce barriers to being physically active for underrepresented groups by delivering the sport and physical activity objectives of the Strategic Equalities Plan	
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Our Sport and Leisure service worked with Disability Sport Wales to develop community based opportunities for people with disabilities. There were 923 junior participants, 623 senior participants and 293 volunteers in the programme. BCBC also supported 12 community partners to achieve the 'Insport' inclusive activity accreditation and delivered 'Disability Inclusion Training' to 27 local providers. BCBC was the only local authority in Wales to be awarded 'Calls for Action' monies, from Sport Wales, via a one off investment fund, to engage better with disabled people and enhance local opportunities and citizen voice.

5.3 Develop an effective preventative support services which will enhance people's wellbeing and contribute to a healthier lifestyle.	
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We achieved 100% of high risk inspections, which included advice and guidance to food businesses across the borough as well where appropriate Health and Safety inspection and enforcement. Underage sales enforcement was completed as planned for the year. In addition to this, the number of broadly compliant (i.e. a Food Hygiene Rating of 3 or above) food businesses in the borough increased to just over 90% through inspection and advice to businesses. We launched the Healthy Options Award with HALO within Bridgend Life Centre, promoting healthier food choices on menus and supported the promotion of Food Safety week and Food Standards Agency campaigns.

5.4 Further develop targeted projects to encourage better health with a particular focus on the Llynfi Valley and a reduction of smoking.	
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We continued to work towards narrowing the twenty year gap in health life expectancy and addressing health and wellbeing inequalities in the Llynfi Valley. Initiatives included undertaking test purchases where evidence suggested the sale of age restricted

products to minors, resulting in either cautions or prosecutions where applicable. Bridgend County Borough Council also participated in a successful targeted campaign to raise awareness of the problems associated with counterfeit or smuggled tobacco.

5.5	Complete the re-development of Bridgend Recreation Centre and re-launch it as Bridgend Life Centre by July 2014	
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Bridgend Life Centre was officially opened on 18th July 2014. Since then 465,208 visits to the Centre have been recorded. Throughout Bridgend County Borough's leisure centres, attendances for a physical activity reached 1,338,439 during 2014-15.

5.6	Deliver the National Exercise Referral Food Wise Programme in partnership with HALO Leisure Ltd to help address obesity levels and encourage better weight management across the county borough	
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This pilot programme worked with partners and attracted people from across the County Borough including, for example, carers from Bridgend Carers centre and Communities First areas. In all, three courses ran and 438 people completed the 16 week National Exercise Referral programme against a target of 395.

5.7	Support the implementation of the Active Travel Bill by developing walking and cycling initiatives	
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We developed the Love 2 Walk Programme which included community walking groups. In all, 402 people regularly took part in our community walking programme against a target of 350. The community groups supported older people, people with learning disabilities and mental health conditions (delivering 8 navigational awards). The programme supported older people to become accredited walk leaders.

We also delivered adult cycling programmes in the Ogmores/Garw valleys and trained staff to support school cycling programmes such as 'Bike Bridgend'.

5.8	Protect and promote the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees	
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We set out to identify any issues relating to health and safety performance and safety culture within the Council. This involved presentations to managers and a survey on existing health and safety arrangements. This will now enable us to target resources at those areas where staff face the greatest risks. Initiatives during the year included reviewing safety of staff working near roads, lone worker training as well as providing access to a confidential service for staff who have a health condition or may be suffering from wellbeing issues such as stress and anxiety.

What are our challenges for 2015-16 and how will we respond?

We face ongoing challenges of budget cuts and increased demands for services. We will continue to meet these challenges through continuing working with new and existing partners, including working collaboratively where there are clear reasons for improving service provision and to create further efficiencies.

We will:

- ensure our schools meet the standards of the Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations 2013;
- continue to roll-out and implement cashless catering system across our schools;
- through the Family Active Zone initiative, promote nutrition, physical activity and family relationships for positive lifestyle change;
- promote the Healthy Options Scheme with businesses across the county borough to offer customers healthy options on a food business' menu;
- continue to work with partners towards joint inspections of premises selling age restricted products such as tobacco and alcohol which will help tackle nuisance behaviour related to alcohol consumption;
- develop and provide advice and education to businesses on matters such as the sale of age restricted products and food hygiene standards;
- implement the primary and secondary school national sport programme to increase physical activity levels;
- support partners in the LSB to further develop target projects to encourage better health with a focus on the Llynfi Valley;
- develop services and opportunities that encourage and promote life-long physical activity particularly amongst underrepresented groups, by working in partnership with HALO Leisure and a range of community partners;
- continue to deliver the National Exercise Referral Programme in partnership with HALO Leisure to help reduce obesity levels and encourage better weight management across the county borough;
- co-ordinate the Love to Walk programme to support community walking networks;
- develop active travel maps and support walking and cycling initiatives that will contribute to the implementation of the Active Travel (Wales) Act; and
- identify and promote new initiatives that support the health and wellbeing of employees.

Improvement Priority Six: Working together to make the best use of our resources



What do we want for people in Bridgend County Borough by March 2017?

We want people in the borough to be confident that the Council is fair, ambitious, customer-focused and efficient.

How did we do in 2014-15?






We made good progress towards achieving this improvement priority. We planned to make £11.274 million of savings in 2014-15 and to prepare for further savings in future years while driving improvements in priority areas.

Working together, we

- achieved the savings for the year;
- generated £8 million of capital receipts through our disposals programme;
- continued to improve the way we communicate with citizens;
- reduced CO₂ emissions; and
- improved the way we commissioned facilities and services, saving over £1.3 million through the Value Wales Collaborative Procurement Programme.

Progress against Success Indicators

We identified 5 success measures for Improvement Priority Six, all of which achieved their target as set out below.

How did we say we would measure success?	How did we do?	Traffic Light
Planned savings are achieved	We achieved the savings required.	
The use and value of our available office space is maximised	We rationalised our offices through reconfiguring our Civic Offices providing more useable office space for staff, enabling us to dispose of two council sites. We put in place new office arrangements and facilities at Civic Offices and Ravens Court, which enabled staff to work flexibly maximizing the space available.	
Our current spend on ICT systems is reduced	The savings for ICT systems were achieved.	
Our resource strategies clearly support the delivery of the corporate improvement priorities and the Medium Term Financial Strategy(MTFS)	We delivered the budget reductions required under the MTFS and corporate improvement priorities show progress (evidenced elsewhere).	
There is positive feedback from citizens regarding communication, engagement, access to services and value for money	Our latest Citizens Panel Survey found that 44% of citizens surveyed found the Council was good or very good at telling them about the services it provides and council related news, against a target set of	

	40% for 2014-15. In addition, there was an increase in the percentage of citizens who said that their individual access requirements are met when contacting the Council at 63% against a target set of 52% for 2014-15.	
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Progress against 2014-15 Commitments

Almost all of the commitments for this Improvement Priority were completed as set out below.

6.1	Continue to develop our Medium Term Financial Strategy aligning our resources to our improvement priorities	
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Our Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the four year period from 2014-15 to 2017-18 is developed in line with corporate improvement priorities and the Council's Corporate Plan. The MTFS identifies budget changes against improvement priorities over financial years and specific budget reductions against improvement priorities. The capital programme is also linked to each of our improvement priorities.

6.2	Deliver the savings proposals identified in the 2014-15 budget	
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Savings of £11.274 million were identified and £10.429 million achieved against these. We achieved additional savings to compensate for this shortfall by managing staff vacancies and a tighter control on general expenses.

6.3	Deliver the 'Making Best Use of Resources' projects in Bridgend Change Programme for the coming year	
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We introduced a new performance management system to measure our performance. The e-post mail room became operational and we introduced Electronic Data Record Management (EDRM) whereby all incoming and outgoing mail is digitised. This also included ongoing digitisation of our back office files which reduced storage requirements. Hybrid mail is now in place, reducing the amount of time, effort and money to mail out large volumes of letters or documents, by processing them electronically. We continued to rationalise our office accommodation. Civic Office accommodation was reconfigured and Sunnyside and Glanogwr Road offices were sold.

6.4	Continue to rationalise and improve council systems and processes	
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The new digital office became operational with all incoming and outgoing mail digitised. To date almost 13 million documents have been scanned and are held electronically on the EDRM system. This represents the first steps in moving the organisation to being digital by default.

6.5 Complete our procurement and commissioning review

A

We completed the corporate contracts register (a list of all the authority's contracts) which will enable us to better manage our existing contracts and adhere to re-commissioning timetables. Currently the project is being re-profiled and is subject to a structural review.

We saved a total of £1.367 million through the Value Wales Collaborative Procurement Programme.

6.6 Implement the Asset Management Plan (AMP) 2014-15 actions, including energy and carbon reduction measures

G

We are on target to deliver the Asset Management Plan 2021 with audit and condition surveys completed to enable us to make the right decisions to achieve efficiencies. The Carbon Reduction measures for 2013/14 (figures for 2014-15 not yet available) achieved 1,053 tonnes of carbon reduction savings, reducing our liability for buying allowances by £12,636 from the previous year.

6.7 Work towards a collaborative land agreement for Parc Afon Ewenni (Waterton)

G

As consensus was not reached with other land owners, we decided that we will market the site independently. Work is ongoing to relocate the Highways depot from Waterton. Agents have been appointed to market the site and technical reports commissioned to enable the sale.

6.8 Deliver the enhanced disposals programme

G

Our disposals programme works to reduce our surplus assets. Monies raised go towards the Council's capital programme including supporting the Council's match funding requirement for the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools programme. Since the enhanced programme began in April 2014 we generated £8 million of capital receipts including about £1 million from property auctions. The disposals ranged from small plots of land, vacant offices and caretaker's houses to large development sites.

6.9 Share best-practice and take action, where necessary, to reduce absence levels

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We have been working with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) on undertaking a 'compare and contrast' exercise on how sickness is managed in local authorities across Wales. We have developed policies and reviewed Managers' guidelines to reduce our sickness levels. Furthermore, an Absence Management toolkit is being developed and a new absence management training course developed and rolled out to those staff managing staff absence. However, despite these concerted efforts, sickness levels increased across the Council during 2014-15 from 9.80 days to 10.83 days. Going forward, we will also implement any recommendations from the WLGA sickness absence project.

A new counselling service was put in place offering a wide range of services and support to all staff on a 24/7 basis.

6.10 Develop a management competency framework and organisational development plan

G

New management competencies were developed to ensure that managers can perform effectively in their role. A Workforce Plan for 2015-18 was developed to help the Council plan for future changes, including: improving and expanding employee skills and performance; planning to reduce the workforce whilst recruiting and retaining employees in key areas; and focusing on employees' wellbeing.

6.11 Further develop mechanisms to enhance customer feedback

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For the first time, residents were able to sign up to the Citizens' Panel and receive a survey immediately whilst a consultation was open. This created the highest sign up rate recorded with an additional 35 new members. We saw a 10% rise in the number of responses as a result of consultations and Citizens' Panel having more online capabilities, such as altering the size of the screen, making it easier to use. We increased the number of opportunities for residents to respond to consultations such as making them available in paper format in our libraries and undertaking public engagement events for the budget consultation which received over 60 attendees overall.

6.12 Review the work with our partners, including the Local Service Board and the third sector

G

Four boards were set up in partnership with our LSB partners, which included representatives from Health, Police, Fire Services, Natural Resources Wales, Business sector and Further Education to look at effective ways of joint working for the benefit of the residents of Bridgend County Borough. One of the Boards developed a project aimed at understanding the reasons why residents in some areas feel more unsafe and disengaged from their communities and services than others and then to work with those communities and LSB partners to develop new ways of working to address this.

We reviewed our arrangements with the third sector, to ensure that the services they provided met our needs, achieved good outcomes, provided value and were efficient, against a background of reduced funding. We supported organisations such as BAVO, Shelter and Women's Aid in delivering a small number of vital services, which include supporting vulnerable children and young people and older people across the Borough. Our Independent Professional Advocacy service, targeted at young people engaged with Social Services, was remodelled during the year.

We worked with six other local authorities and the Health Board in providing assessment and specialist intervention for children and young people who are displaying sexually harmful behaviour. We will continue to support the third sector and try to limit the impact of further funding reductions by working more in partnership with the sector and building its capacity.

What are our challenges for 2015-16 and how will we respond?

Our main challenges include:

- managing declining resources against an expectation of increased demand;
- managing staff workload and retaining the required expertise;
- introducing new Welsh Language Standards across the authority; and
- the potential for disengagement and negativity from the public as service provision reduces.

We will:

- implement the planned savings identified in the 2015-16 budget;
- deliver the projects contained within the Bridgend Change Programme (BCP);
- improve efficiency by rationalising and maximising the use of ICT systems and software applications;
- develop proposals to provide citizens with more self- service options for accessing Council services;
- develop effective mechanisms to improve our understanding of citizens' views;
- explore new ways of engaging and consulting with children and young people to continue to hear their voice;
- implement the contract management and e-procurement strategy to improve efficiency;
- deliver the agreed actions of the Parc Afon Ewenni scheme;
- extend electronic learning opportunities for staff to develop the skills and flexibility of the Council's work force;
- further rationalise the Council's operational estate to reduce accommodation costs;
- pursue our asset disposal strategy with the aim of securing capital receipts of at least £6 million; and
- introduce a compliance tracking system to support more effective facilities management of our buildings.

Section 3 – Financial Performance

Our financial environment is becoming increasingly challenging. We need to make unprecedented savings in the future that can only be achieved by changing the way we work and changing the way services are delivered.

2014-15 Expenditure

Last year, the amount we spent on delivering services to our citizens and investing in our landscape and infrastructure totalled around £425 million. The total amount that we have available to spend is made up from three main sources listed below.

Revenue Expenditure

Our revenue expenditure represents day to day costs such as salaries, equipment, supplies and services. Our net revenue expenditure in 2014-15 after allowing for appropriation to earmarked reserve, additional income from council tax and an underspend on general contingencies (as reported in the 2014-15 Statement of Accounts) was **£255.08 million**, which resulted in an underspend of £55,000 which was transferred to the Council Fund. The table below shows the expenditure and proportion of spend per Improvement Priority in 2014-15:

Improvement Priority for 2014-15	Revised Budget 2014-15 (£'Million)	Actual Outturn 2014-15 (£'Million)	Actual Over/(Under) Spend 2014-15 (£'Million)
1.Working together to develop the local economy	9.4	9.1	0.2
2.Working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement	104.2	103.4	0.8
3.Working with children and families to tackle problems early	21.6	22.2	-0.6
4.Working together to help vulnerable people to stay independent	25.5	25.5	0.0
5.Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles	18.6	18.4	0.2
6.Working together to make the best use of our resources / Other Business as Usual and Not Linked to Improvement Priorities	75.8	76.4	-0.6
TOTAL	255.131	255.076	0.055

Capital Expenditure

This represents our spending on schools and infrastructure such as roads, bridges and buildings. These assets will benefit the community over long periods of time and the expenditure is largely financed by borrowing and capital grants.

Our capital expenditure in 2014-15 was **£28.23 million**, where the main projects carried out during the year included:

- £3,840,000 Community Care Information System (CCIS);

- £ 1,713,000 Disabled Facility grants & Private Sector Housing;
- £ 2,686,000 Coety / Parc Derwen primary school;
- £ 1,447,000 Energy Company Obligation (ECO) grant;
- £ 1,423,000 Coleg Cymunedol y Dderwen;
- £ 2,787,000 Carriageway Reconstruction & Street Lighting;
- £ 2,674,000 Additional Learning Needs (former Ogmores School site).

Grants

We also received specific government grants, in addition to the core Revenue Support Grant and Non-domestic Rate (NDR) allocations, totalling **£93.31 million** during 2014-15, which we are able to use in addition to our own Revenue and Capital expenditure. The main grants received during 2014-15 included:

- £6,536,000 Post-16 Grant;
- £6,152,000 Supporting People grant;
- £2,854,000 Sustainable Waste grant;
- £3,024,000 Flying Start grant;
- £1,839,000 Families First grant.

Budget Reductions

We made good progress in achieving budget reductions over the past three years, which resulted in a recurring annual saving of £19.78 million. However additional reductions of £11.225 million need to be achieved in 2015-16 and each year it gets more difficult to identify new proposals.

In 2014-15, we planned to make budget reductions of £11.274 million. Reductions of £10.701 million were fully achieved during the year, with the remaining £573,000 not achieved. This is after £272,000 of budget reduction proposals in respect of the MREC were rolled forward into 2015-16. Budget reduction proposals for 2014-15 that were not fully met relate to:

Proposal	2014-15
Re-provision and re-modelling of Shared Lives	105
Reduction in sickness absence (Wellbeing)	50
Residential Resettlement	192
Efficiencies in internal supported living service	75
Review Continuing Health Care eligible cases	51
Anaerobic Digestion Facility	100
	573

To compensate for this shortfall, additional savings were achieved through the use of the Council's staff vacancy management protocol and through a tighter control on general expenses.

Section 4 - Working in Partnership

We work in partnership with a range of public sector, private sector and third sector organisations on a local, regional and national basis to most effectively address some of the most challenging issues faced by our citizens. This approach enables us to provide improved services in a more cohesive and effective way, whilst ensuring that services provided use public money in the most efficient way possible. Some of our major collaborative activities from 2014-15 are shown below:

The **Western Bay Health and Social Care Collaboration Programme** was established in January 2012. Its primary aim is to work across boundaries to integrate health and social care to meet financial and demographic challenges.

During the year, a Partnership Forum was established, focusing on three transformational programmes. These are Community Services, Prevention and Wellbeing and Contracting and Procurement. A plan was put in place to ensure that the remaining priorities continue to progress. These include the Community Learning Disability Team model, the Mental Health Project and the Regional Adoption Service. The remaining Western Bay activity, regional Supporting People Committee, regional Area Planning Board for Substance Misuse, the regional Safeguarding Boards and the Integrated Family Support Services have separate governance arrangements but if there are specific issues there is still the ability to escalate to the Leadership Forum.

During the year our **Adoption Service** merged with Adoption Services in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot to form a new Western Bay Regional Adoption Service. The service is responsible for recruiting prospective adopters and finding families for children who need to be adopted. The aim is to better meet the needs of those children who need permanence through adoption by bringing together the best practice from each authority into a single more efficient and flexible service.

Our **Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS)** works in a very intensive way with families where there is parental substance misuse. The team, made up of social workers and nurses, works with the whole family and ensures that all involved agencies are included in the family plan. During 2014-15, there were 114 referrals across the region, with 31 in Bridgend County Borough.

Our **Youth Offending Services/Teams (YOS/Ts)** have a legal duty to co-operate in order to secure youth justice services appropriate to their area. The joint service across Bridgend County Borough Council, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea began in May 2014, following agreement with all three local authorities, with a view to sharing resources and expertise, achieving efficiencies and improving outcomes. First time entrants reduced by 36%, which compared favourably to the South Wales average of 19% and Wales average of 31%. In Bridgend County Borough Council, a 43% reduction was achieved which amounted to 21 young people entering the Youth Justice System. Other developments being shared include a “building” skills programme and Intervention Centre helping young people move away from offending and reach their potential as young adults.

Working with **Action on Hearing Loss** and the **British Deaf Association** to improve service delivery for deaf customers culminated in us attaining the BSL Charter in December 2014 and the Action on Hearing Loss Gold Award in May 2015.

The **Regulatory Services collaboration** between Bridgend County Borough Council, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan commenced on the 1st April 2015, and we now provide a new shared Public Protection service. The project will enable efficiency savings to be made while protecting services to the public.

We are providing **Work Placements, Traineeships and Apprenticeships** through joint working across service areas and in partnership with other organisations such as Job Centre Plus and local training providers. Since April 2014 the Council provided more than 120 work placements, which included apprentice placements in Building Maintenance for first year students, social care placements and placements for young job seekers. Arrangements are also in place to provide support to young people who are leaving care through an employment and training project. These initiatives will continue in 2015/16. In September 2014 the Council, in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, invited local residents to a jobs and information event. In its fourth year, visitors to the event discussed employment and volunteering opportunities with a host of local employers, offering a range of temporary and permanent jobs. Help and support was also on hand from agencies that can assist people find employment.

We secured £2.5 million in Welsh Government funding to purchase and refurbish **Celtic Court** to provide a modern, bespoke and fit for purpose healthcare provision, which is due to be completed in October 2015. The refurbishment was designed and undertaken by the Council on behalf of Welsh Centre for Action on Dependency and Addiction (WCADA) and Community Drug and Alcohol Team (CDAT).

The Council recently completed its community asset transfer of **Carnegie House** (former Bridgend library) to Bridgend Town Council so that they can relocate their offices and establish a new community arts hub within the town centre. Working in partnership the parties secured Town Heritage Initiative funding to undertake works to the exterior of this listed building. As well as providing a new base for the town council, Carnegie House is successfully hosting regular exhibitions and events.

The **Joint Vehicle Maintenance Facility and Fleet Management Service** is a partnership with South Wales Police which maintains both organisations' fleets. Work was progressed, and became operational as of March 2015.

We will continue to look for new opportunities to work in partnership where we can see that working with others will improve service quality or value for money. Over the next 4 years we will maintain our close working relationships with other organisations, including:

- Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Local Health Board;
- Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations;
- Bridgend Business Forum;
- Bridgend College;
- Bridgend Equality Forum;
- Bridgend schools;
- Bridgend Tourism Association;

- Bridgend Youth Council;
- City and County of Swansea Council;
- Community groups;
- Environment Agency Wales;
- HALO/GLL and commercial partners;
- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council;
- Other local authorities;
- Service user and carer representation groups;
- South Wales Fire & Rescue Service;
- South Wales Police;
- Town and Community Councils;
- Vale of Glamorgan Council;
- Valleys to Coast and other registered social landlords;
- Wales Probation Trust; and
- Welsh Government.

Section 5 – Our citizens' feedback

Citizen feedback is vital when planning how we will improve local services for local people. There are a range of options available for our citizens on the consultation page of our website www.bridgend.gov.uk to get in touch and to have their say on how well we provide services or how we should be carrying out our services both now and in the future. In 2013-14 we also developed an improved social media presence through Twitter to gain citizens' views.

Across all our services we are communicating with our citizens every day. In 2014-15 our Customer Service Centre dealt with:

- 15,445 written contacts, 99.98% of which were responded to within 5 days;
- 181,140 phone calls, 72% of which were answered in 30 seconds; and
- 23,806 visitors to the Customer Service Centre in the Civic Offices where 68% were seen within 10 minutes with the average wait time being 8.80 minutes.

These contacts related to all aspects of our services, including waste collection, planning, council tax, homelessness. Our Customer Service Centre was able to help resolve 95% of all the issues raised through telephone or visitor contacts on that first contact. Overall 76% of people surveyed said that they found the service to be good or very good (Citizens' Panel Autumn 2014).

We continued to provide a wide range of opportunities for service users to help us with feedback on our services, often through working with third sector partner organisations and other partners. In 2014-15 these opportunities included:

- Bridgend Equality Forum (BEF) aims to promote equality in Bridgend County Borough by assisting in the process of airing and resolving equality related issues and helping to build strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds. The forum met bi-monthly and shared information, discussed important council-based issues and offered opportunities for members to work together on projects and activities;
- direct contact with people living in residential or nursing care homes through regular monitoring visits;
- a Contact Centre survey sent out to anyone who received a service; and
- regular service users meetings as part of the Neath Port Talbot/Bridgend Community Group to discuss topical issues relating to the Supporting People Programme and consider emerging service needs related to supported accommodation.
- visits to private and 3rd Sector care and nursing home provision to monitor service quality. Engagement with residents and service users is an integral part of this; and
- elected members visiting our care establishments on a rota basis.

Each year we also hold specific public consultations to help us with planning services, setting priorities and making changes to the way we provide services. In 2014/15 these consultations included:

Budget Review 2015 – Over the next four years Bridgend County Borough Council is expecting to have to make £49 million worth of savings on its annual budget. We wanted to better understand our awareness of the financial situation, and to gather residents' views on how the council should prioritise its budget. The consultation held in the autumn of 2014 received 443 responses overall.

We put forward proposals for 'how we can bring money in'. These could potentially generate £218,000 of income for the council. The most popular were:

- 1) introduce a charge for pest control (58% of the votes);
- 2) introduce a parking charge for Blue Badge holders in our off-street car parks (58% of the votes); and
- 3) introduce a percentage charge for credit card payments made to the council (55% of the votes).

- The most popular 'money saving proposal', receiving over 64% of the votes was to set up a 'not for profit trust' to deliver library and cultural services. The proposal could offer estimated savings of £391,000. We worked on this proposal with partners and set up a new cultural Trust which will operate from October 2015. The Council will continue to play an active strategic and supportive role in the development of facilities and services of the new trust.
- Over one in three (36 per cent) believed that residents could help reduce demand on council services by taking more personal responsibility. This will be explored further in 2015-16 when we review the way we deliver our services.

School attendance fixed penalty notice code of conduct – A public survey inviting views on the proposed fixed penalty code of conduct was conducted between 24 June 2014 and 4 August 2014. The local authority code of conduct was introduced in September 2014 setting out the framework for the operation of fixed penalty notice schemes. This proposal will affect all mainstream pupils between the ages of 5 to 16. In total 345 responses were received.

- Over eight in ten (81 per cent) said they would not support a consistent approach in refusing term-time holidays.
- Almost all (95 per cent) of the respondents agreed there is a need to have exceptional circumstances for authorising absences.
- Seven in ten (70 per cent) agreed with the additional considerations that can be taken into account before issuing a penalty.
- Over three quarters (76 per cent) also disagreed with the circumstances for issuing a fixed penalty notice. In total 43 per cent disagreed with holiday fines and five per cent with fines for lateness.

Learner Travel Review – A public consultation on Bridgend County Borough Council's home to school transport policy was undertaken over a twelve week period from 29 September 2014 and 22 December 2014. The consultation received 725 responses from a combination of the consultation survey and seven community workshops held across the county borough. There were three proposals:

- Proposal one - To increase the distance required for free transport between a pupil's home and their school, to match the distance required by law (including Welsh and religious schools). 34 per cent stated that there would be little to no impact if proposal one were to be introduced.

- Proposal two - To charge the full cost of a school bus pass for pupils who do not receive free school transport. The majority of respondents (35 per cent) stated that charging the actual cost was too expensive.
- Proposal three - To stop providing free transport for learners aged 16 or over, who go to school or college. Exactly one in five (20 per cent) believe introducing proposal three would have a negative impact on the community in the future.

Starting in September 2016, proposal one and two will be progressed and the Learner Travel Policy will be amended to bring it in line with minimum statutory requirements.

This will mean that the qualifying distances for free transport to primary schools will change from 1.5 miles to two miles and from two miles to three miles for secondary schools. The new qualifying distances will include Welsh-medium and voluntary aided schools. The qualifying distance for post-16 students will change from two to three miles.

Pupils who currently receive free transport will continue to do so until they move to the next stage of their education or another non-catchment school, while a pupil starting at the same catchment school as an elder brother or sister will automatically receive the same entitlement as their sibling.

The cost of a daily return ticket for primary and secondary pupils and post-16 students who live outside the qualifying distances will increase by 48p from £1.42 to £1.90.

Public Toilet Review A public consultation reviewing Bridgend County Borough Council's public conveniences was undertaken on 12 January 2015. In total, 933 responses were gathered, with 96% of respondents stating that there should be disabled access at all public toilets in the County. Responses showed that those aged 55 and over are almost twice as likely to use the public toilet as 25 – 34 year olds. 87% of respondents supported the re-introduction of the comfort scheme which provided small grants to businesses to permit the use of their toilets by the general public.

Section 6 – What did our regulators say about us?

Each year, the Auditor General is required to prepare an Annual Improvement Report (AIR) which presents a picture of how well we are planning for improvement and delivering services. This report also includes a summary of the key findings from reports issued by regulators such as the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn).

In his annual report for 2014-15, issued in October 2015, the Auditor General said that the Council continued to make progress in delivering improvements in its priority areas and had recognised the need to support improvement of children's services. The Auditor General said that the Council's forward planning arrangements and track record suggest that " it is well placed to secure improvement in 2015-16"

In October 2012, Estyn (the education and training inspectorate for Wales) said that the authority needed monitoring to

- improve outcomes for learners, especially at key stages 2 and 3 by using individual pupil data to set more robust targets and by strengthening the rigour and consistency in the local authority's challenge to schools;
- improve attendance in primary and secondary schools by continuing to develop the joint work between education welfare and family engagement officers;
- strengthen self-evaluation in order to understand what is working well and what needs to improve in order to help learners achieve their goals;
- improve the quality of information provided to elected members so that they can challenge the performance of the authority's services and schools more robustly; and
- continue to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

In its follow up inspections in 2014-15 Estyn judged that the Council made significant progress and no further monitoring was required.

In October 2014 the CSSIW reported that the Council continued to work towards its change agenda and the development of new models of service delivery, in line with the expectations of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. The Council faces particular challenges in respect of improving children's services and is taking action to tackle this. The CSSIW 2015 evaluation report will report on progress in 2014-15 and will be published in October 2015. .

The Auditor General for Wales did not make any statutory recommendations but made a few proposals for improvement.

Copies of Auditor General's report and the Estyn and CSSIW reports are available on the Estyn website: <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/>, the CSSIW website: www.cssiw.org.uk and the Wales Audit Office's website: <http://www.wao.gov.uk>

Section 7 – Our Improvement Objectives for 2015-16

In 2015-16, we have retained the six improvement priorities identified in the Corporate Plan 2013-17. These are the things that citizens told us are most important:

- Working together to develop the local economy
- Working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement
- Working with children and families to tackle problems early
- Working together to help vulnerable people to stay independent
- Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles
- Working together to make the best use of our resources.

For full details on the actions we have in place to deliver each Improvement Priority, please visit the Corporate Improvement page on our website and view our Corporate Plan: <http://www1.bridgend.gov.uk/services/corporate-improvement.aspx>

The six Improvement Priorities are our contribution towards delivering the four outcomes from the Local Service Board's Single Partnership Plan 'Bridgend County Together' which are shown below:

- People in Bridgend are healthier
- People in Bridgend benefit from a stronger and more prosperous economy
- People in Bridgend are engaged and empowered to achieve their own potential
- Bridgend is a great place to live, work and visit.

A copy of 'Bridgend County Together' is available on the website: <http://www.bridgendlsb.org.uk/Bridgend-County-Together>.