



CABINET

TUESDAY, 24 JUNE 2025

10.00 AM COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, LEWES

MEMBERSHIP - Councillors Keith Glazier (Chair), Nick Bennett (Vice Chair), Bob Bowdler, Penny di Cara, Claire Dowling, Carl Maynard and Bob Standley

A G E N D A

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2025 (*Pages 3 - 6*)
2. Apologies for absence
3. Disclosures of interests
Disclosures by all members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the member regards the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
4. Urgent items
Notification of items which the Chair considers to be urgent and proposes to take at the appropriate part of the agenda. Any members who wish to raise urgent items are asked, wherever possible, to notify the Chair before the start of the meeting. In so doing, they must state the special circumstances which they consider justify the matter being considered urgent.
5. Council Monitoring Report - end of year 2024/25 (*Pages 7 - 102*)
Report by the Chief Executive
6. Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) - State of the County (*Pages 103 - 272*)
Report by the Chief Executive
7. Any other items considered urgent by the Chair
8. To agree which items are to be reported to the County Council

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16 June 2025

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NOTE: *As part of the County Council's drive to increase accessibility to its public meetings, this meeting will be broadcast live on its website and the record archived. The live broadcast is accessible at: <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/your-council/videos-of-council-meetings/webcasts>*

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 22 April 2025.

PRESENT Councillors Nick Bennett (Vice Chair), Bob Bowdler, Penny di Cara, Claire Dowling, Carl Maynard and Bob Standley.

Members spoke on the items indicated:

Councillor Adeniji	– item 6 (minute 85)
Councillor Beaver	– item 6 (minute 85)
Councillor Daniel	– items 5 and 6 (minutes 84 and 85)
Councillor Denis	– items 5 and 6 (minutes 84 and 85)
Councillor Claire Dowling	– item 6 (minute 85)
Councillor Field	– item 5 (minute 84)
Councillor Hilton	– item 6 (minute 85)
Councillor Lambert	– item 6 (minute 85)
Councillor MacCleary	– item 6 (minute 85)
Councillor Maples	– items 5 and 6 (minutes 84 and 85)
Councillor Redstone	– item 5 (minute 84)
Councillor Robinson	– item 6 (minute 85)
Councillor Stephen Shing	– item 6 (minute 85)
Councillor Shuttleworth	– item 6 (minute 85)
Councillor Standley	– item 6 (minute 85)
Councillor Taylor	– item 6 (minute 85)
Councillor Tutt	– items 5 and 6 (minutes 84 and 85)
Councillor Webb	– item 6 (minute 85)
Councillor Wright	– item 6 (minute 85)

80. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 MARCH 2025

80.1 The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 20 March 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

81. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

81.1 Apologies for absence were received for Councillor Glazier.

82. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

82.1 Councillor Redstone declared a personal interest in item 5, as Vice-Chair of the Genesis Federation (Beckley and Peasmarsh primary schools), and SEN link governor. He did not consider this to be prejudicial.

82.2 Councillor Tutt declared a personal interest in item 5, as Trustee of Southfields Trust. He did not consider this to be prejudicial.

82.3 Councillor Robinson declared a personal interest in item 6, as a regular bus user. She did not consider this to be prejudicial.

83. REPORTS

83.1 Copies of the reports referred to below are included in the minute book.

84. AREA SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES (SEND) INSPECTION OF EAST SUSSEX LOCAL AREA PARTNERSHIP

84.1 The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Children's Services.

84.2 It was RESOLVED to:

- 1) welcome the findings of the Area Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Inspection of East Sussex Local Area Partnership which was published on 4 February 2025;
- 2) note that the East Sussex SEND Strategy 2022-25 will be updated to include actions in response to the recommendations made in the inspection report;
- 3) note the challenges within the current SEND system and our key lobbying points for future policy development in this area; and
- 4) note that the existing SEND strategy 2022-25 will be extended by one year and that work on the new strategy will begin in 2026.

Reasons

84.3 East Sussex has maintained a focus on the key priority outcome of keeping vulnerable people safe. The report notes that there are areas for improvement which the Council will continue to focus on but also recognises recent improvements and the renewed focus on SEND across the local partnership. The Council work with partners, children and young people and parents and carers to address the recommendations and deliver more consistent experiences and outcomes for the children and young people.

84.4 The strengths outlined in the report show that East Sussex is in a good position to support the implementation of future Department for Education reforms. The Council will continue to work within the Change Programme over the next two terms to advocate for the required changes that are believed are necessary to create a more equitable and sustainable SEND system in the future

85. EXCEAT BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

85.1 The Cabinet considered a report by the Director for Communities, Transport and Environment.

85.2 It was RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the estimated costs and options for replacing Exceat Bridge;
- (2) agree to continue with the proposals for an offline two-lane replacement bridge ('Option A');
- (3) agree to re-direct £11.128m grant funding from the Newhaven and Peacehaven bus priority schemes set out in the Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to the Exceat Bridge Replacement Project;

(4) approve the amendments to the 2025/26 BSIP funding allocation, reflecting the reallocation of £4m of funding to the Newhaven bus priority scheme; and

(5) delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to take all actions necessary to achieve the completion of the offline two-lane replacement bridge ('Option A'), including but not limited to awarding any required construction contracts for the Bridge.

Reasons

85.3 The Council's preference has always been to complete the original proposal for an offline two-lane replacement bridge (Option A). However, this is only viable if additional external funding is identified. The diversion of BSIP funding from the Peacehaven and Newhaven bus priority schemes provides an opportunity to continue with Option A, subject to confirmation of the Orders by the Secretary of State and / or successful negotiations with the landowners.

85.4 Delegation of authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to take all actions necessary to achieve the completion of the 'option A' two-lane replacement bridge, including but not limited to awarding any required construction contracts for the Bridge will ensure the effective delivery of the project.

86. INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY AND PLAN 2025/26

86.1 The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Operating Officer.

86.2 It was RESOLVED to agree the Council's Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Audit Plan 2025/26.

Reason

86.3 The Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan 2025/26 sets out how the Council will meet its statutory requirements for internal audit.

87. ESCC EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2024/25

87.1 The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Finance Officer.

87.2 It was RESOLVED to approve the External Audit Plan for 2024/25.

Reason

87.3 The External Audit Plan provides an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of the Council's 2024/25 accounts and identifies any significant risks.

88. TO AGREE WHICH ITEMS ARE TO BE REPORTED TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL

88.1 It was agreed that item 5 should be reported to the County Council.

[Note: The item being reported to the County Council refers to minute number 84]

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Title: Council Monitoring Report – end of year 2024/25
Report to: Cabinet
Date: 24 June 2025
Report by: Chief Executive
Purpose: To report Council monitoring for the full year 2024/25

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is recommended to note the latest monitoring position for the Council

1. Introduction

1.1 This report sets out the Council's position and year-end projections for the Council Plan targets, Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, and Savings Plan, together with Risks at the end of March 2025.

1.2 Broad progress against the Council's four strategic priority outcomes is summarised in paragraph 4 and an overview of finance and performance data is provided in the Corporate Summary at Appendix 1. Strategic risks are reported at Appendix 8.

2. Overview of Council Plan 2024/25 outturns and strategic risks

2.1 We set challenging targets each year that reflect our aim to deliver the best services we can for our local residents and businesses with the limited resources we have available. The ongoing difficult financial position for the Council has meant that services have been working to deliver the priorities within the Council Plan alongside making savings. While our services have had a number of successes over the past year despite this, there are also areas that have experienced challenges. The Departmental Appendices (3-7) provide details of both our achievements and how we are working to improve, where we can, where targets have not been met.

2.2 The overall position at the end of quarter 4 was 43 (72%) of the 60 Council Plan targets had been achieved and 11 (18%) were not achieved. 6 (10%) are carried over for reporting in quarter 1 2025/26. These are measures where the corresponding activity has been completed, but the year-end outturn data is not yet available to report against the target. It should be noted that the percentage of targets met represents an improvement on the year-end position reported in quarter 4 of 2023/24.

2.3 Of the 60 targets, the outturns for 14 (23%) are not comparable with the outturns from 2023/24. Of the remaining 46 measures which can be compared, 14 (23%) improved or were at the maximum (i.e., the most that can be achieved); 4 (7%) remained the same; 22 (37%) had a lower outturn; and 6 (10%) are carried over for reporting in quarter 1 2025/26. Although 22 measures are showing a lower outturn compared with 2023/24, 11 of these met their target for 2024/25. This reflects the difficult decisions we had to make to adjust some targets for 2024/25 based on the resources we had available for this year. This should also be viewed in the context of the results of the inspections and audits that the Council has been subject to, which demonstrate that while we may not always be able to stretch our resources to meet the high ambitions we have for our services, we continue to deliver safe, effective and efficient services.

2.4 The Strategic Risk Register, Appendix 8, was reviewed and updated to reflect the Council's risk profile. Risk 23 (Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution) is new and introduced this quarter. Risk 4 (Health) has an updated risk definition, risk control and risk score. Risk 22 (Oracle) has an updated risk definition and risk control. Risk 1 (Roads), Risk 6 (Local Economic Growth), Risk 9 (Workforce), Risk 15 (Climate), Risk 20 (Placements for children and young people) and Risk 21 (Care Act) have updated risk controls.

3 Budget Outturn

3.1 The detailed revenue outturns for each department are set out in the relevant appendices which show an aggregate total overspend of £21.9m (£24.8m forecast at quarter 3). The main headlines are:

- Children's Services has an overspend of £13.6m (£15.4m forecast at quarter 3); the main areas of overspend being Early Help and Social Care and Home to School Transport. The Early Help and Social Care overspend of £12.4m (£13.1m forecast at quarter 3) is due in the main to staffing costs within Localities, pressures around agency placements and Children's Homes within Looked After Children, although there was a reduction in net costs at Lansdowne Secure Unit due to increased income from recharging other local authorities for placements.

Home to School Transport has an overspend of £3.8m (£4.2m forecast at quarter 3) due to growth in numbers of pupils and unit costs for transport that have far outstripped what was estimated during the budget setting process. The final overspend has improved since quarter 3 due to legal advice confirming the possibility of charging personal transport budgets for children with Education and Health Care Plans to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant; this meant that £0.6m of transport expenditure could be recharged.

Not included in the figures reported above is the position of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which, in accordance with the Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2020, is required by local authorities to be carried forward on their balance sheets. As of 31st March 2025, the Council has a cumulative DSG surplus of £2.8m, which is very unusual as most local authorities have significant DSG deficits. However, this will not continue as a forecast cumulative deficit is expected by the end of 2025/26. The statutory override is due to expire in March 2026, which means that any deficit will then be offset against useable council reserves.

- The overspend for Adult Social Care is £10.0m (£9.9m forecast at quarter 3) which largely relates to the Independent Sector, where the overspend is £12.4m. This is due to a combination of factors, primarily being increasing complexity of need and pressures arising from demand and demographic growth returning to pre-pandemic levels. There is an underspend in Directly Provided Services of £2.4m due to staffing vacancies which reflects the impact of savings consultations and underlying difficulties in recruitment.
- There is an underspend of £0.4m (£0.4m forecast overspend at quarter 3) for Business Services. This is due to new grant income, higher than budgeted income for services and reduced costs including staff vacancies, offset by increased accommodation and reactive maintenance costs.
- Communities, Economy and Transport is showing an underspend of £1.3m (£0.9m forecast at quarter 3). This is due to higher than budgeted recycling income and lower Private Finance Initiative contract prices, staff vacancies and slippage on completing Road Safety schemes; offset by an overspend in Highways where the cost of electricity for streetlighting and depots is much higher than budgeted and there was an increase in the number of winter service jobs.

3.2 Within Centrally Held Budgets (CHB), including Treasury Management (TM), and corporate funding there is an underspend of £14.3m (£13.0m forecast at quarter 3), which includes the general contingency:

- There is a £2.6m underspend on TM (£1.6m forecast at quarter 3); a reduced in-year capital borrowing requirement alongside an ongoing strategy to delay borrowing in a falling interest rate environment has meant that the Council has delayed new external borrowing; and returns on investments in year were greater than anticipated as the Base Rate did not fall as fast as originally anticipated. It should be noted that there has been a fall in cash investment balances; the level of balances has fallen by 43% in one year to £115.3m at the end of 2024/25.

- Within CHB the underspend is now £8.4m; an increase of £1.3m from the forecast at quarter 3 due to the movement in TM and a decrease in the estimated debt impairment for the year. The underspend is mainly due to the TM variance, the General Contingency of £5.3m, and the decision not to transfer a planned £1.3m contribution to the Capital Programme.
- Corporate Funding budgets have underspent by £5.8m (£5.9m forecast at quarter 3). This is mainly due to the allocation of the Social Care Services Grants totalling £5.4m in February 2024, after the 2024/25 budget was set (as approved by Cabinet on 25 June 2024), plus a net additional £0.4m received for business rates 2023/24 pooling and reliefs.

3.3 The net impact of the above is an unplanned draw from the financial management reserve of £7.6m in 2024/25 (a fall from the £11.8m projected at quarter 3). This is in addition to the planned £14.3m draw to present a balanced position in setting the 2024/25 budget. The Council's projected level of strategic reserves was last assessed to be £4.5m as of March 2029; any reduction in unallocated reserves reduces the flexibility available in dealing with the challenge of addressing next year's projected deficit and setting a balanced budget, without having to seek further savings. In this context, to address the projected in-year overspend and reduce the required draw from reserves, the Council took a number of actions to reduce spending in 2024/25, including:

- Additional controls on spending, including the requirement for purchase orders above £1,000 to be supported by a business case and approved by a reviewing board.
- An updated recruitment protocol, including Corporate Management Team approval of non-core role recruitment.
- Reviewing proposed savings for 2025/26 to identify whether actions can be brought forward into 2024/25.
- Asking departments to identify any further actions to reduce in-year spend across all budgets.

3.4 The Capital Programme Outturn net expenditure for the year is £87.0m against a budget of £106.6m. In previous reporting, a slippage risk factor of £20.0m had been applied to the capital programme to reflect likely slippage based on a risk assessment of historic levels of actual expenditure and slippage at a project/programme level. The risk factor was held at a corporate level to enable services / project managers to manage project budgets at a local level, whilst ensuring greater robustness to the overall planning and monitoring process. The net forecast expenditure at quarter 3 after applying this risk factor was £84.6m, so there was a relatively small movement of a £2.4m increase in the final outturn from the quarter 3 forecast.

- The programme outturn slippage is £19.421m against a quarter 3 forecast of £13.7m across several projects, relating to various project specific factors. The largest areas of slippage included: Integrated Transport A22 Corridor (£1.112m); Other Integrated Transport Schemes (£1.033m) Exceat Bridge Replacement (£2.553m); Eastbourne Town Centre Phase 2b (£1.952m); Youth Investment Fund (£1.745m); Schools Capital Building Improvements (£1.033m); IT & Digital Strategy (£2.191m) and IT & Digital Strategy Oracle (£2.622m).
- The programme outturn shows a small spend-in-advance of £0.333m, against a previously forecast £0.4m, mainly relating to: Learning Disability Supported Living (£0.123m) and Broadband additional vouchers (£0.107m).

4 Progress against Council Priorities

Driving sustainable economic growth

4.1 The Council has spent £382m with 815 local suppliers over the past 12 months. This equates to 60% of our total procurement spend, meeting the target of 60%. £1.8m in Social Value was secured through our Property Frameworks from contracts with a combined value of £11.5m which equates to 16% of the contract value. In total, all applicable contracts in 2024/25 secured 19% of Social Value commitments against a target of 10%. Social Value secured through these contracts included apprenticeship and job opportunities for local people, work experience and career

awareness programmes offered to local schools and colleges, and supporting environmental programmes with local groups, schools and colleges (Appendix 4).

4.2 In 2024/25 the percentage of Principal roads requiring maintenance was 5%, against a target of 7%. The percentage of Non-Principal roads requiring maintenance was 6% against a target of 8%. The percentage of Unclassified roads requiring maintenance was 31%, against a target of 25%. A lower figure indicates better road condition. These figures are only available at one point each year, with the results published in quarter 4. They are based on specialist laser surveys undertaken in summer 2024 for Principal and Non-Principal roads, and manual surveys for Unclassified roads which were undertaken in early 2025. The outturns refer to the percentage of road length across the entire county that should be considered for maintenance. The surveys measure road condition in 10m sections. All roads are likely to have a mixture of green, amber and red road condition sections. The road condition outturns reported here are the percentage of 10m sections that should be considered for maintenance, which are classed as red. So, for example, a proportion of 5% indicates that 5% of all 10m sections surveyed of that road type should be considered for maintenance (Appendix 6).

4.3 Work on our highways continued in 2024/25 using the extra funding approved by the Council in recognition of the deterioration of the network following last winter's prolonged, wet and cold weather. We completed 510 patches across 381 sites throughout the year. We replaced, repaired or cleaned 350 road signs and refreshed 683 road markings. We also completed 565 minor road drainage schemes, and 75 larger schemes. 117 road improvement schemes were completed in 2024/25 and over 23,000 potholes were repaired (Appendix 6).

4.4 During 2024/25 over 1,500 students have had the opportunity to go on an Open Doors workplace visit, and over 50 employers have committed to offer the visits. An iCan careers event in March 2025 was attended by more than 400 young people from 34 schools. They had the opportunity to explore career pathways, engage in 6 interactive workshops on employability skills, and connect with representatives from 32 different organisations. The Council continued to help adults improve their numeracy skills through 14 Multiply interventions in 2024/25. 1,300 people were supported as part of the interventions (Appendix 6).

4.5 The Council has delivered business support programmes that helped to create 60 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs in 2024/25, against a target of 45 FTE jobs. 29.5 FTE jobs were created through the first round of the Newhaven Business Grants Programme, 18.5 FTE jobs through the first round of the Rural Business Grants Programme, and 12 FTE jobs through the delivery of specialist business support through the 'Big Ambitions' programme (Appendix 6).

4.6 Final data for the average Attainment 8 score for pupils at state-funded schools was released in quarter 4. Both the average score for all pupils and the average score for disadvantaged pupils were below the targets set for this year (43.1 against a target of 44.0 and 30.1 against a target of 30.5 respectively). The performance of four academies in the Bexhill and Hastings area, where average attainment is lower, impacts significantly on the overall outturn for East Sussex. The young people attending those schools account for approximately one fifth of all secondary pupils in year 11. The average Attainment 8 score of Looked After Children was also below target at 14.7 (target was 19.0) (Appendix 5).

4.7 The percentage of eligible disadvantaged children aged 2 years old who took up a funded place in the spring 2025 funding period was 73%. While this is lower than the national average of 74.8% (the target for this measure), it should be noted that performance appears to have been affected by changes in how the data is reported by the Department for Education (DfE). Some eligible disadvantaged children are now able to access a funded place through the working families funding streams implemented in April 2024, which is reducing the cohort counted through this measure (Appendix 5).

4.8 The 2024/25 percentage of young people who were Not in Education, Employment or Training at academic age 16 was 4.2% against a target of less than or equal to 5%. This is also an improvement on the 2023/24 figure of 4.4%. For academic age 17 the total was 5.7%, against a

target of less than or equal to 7%. The 2023/24 figure was 6%. The commissioned advice and support that our Youth Employability Service provides has had a positive impact in supporting young people to access education, employment, and training. We continue to work with the DfE and local colleges to expand the courses available at Level 2 and below. Level 2 courses are generally equivalent to GCSEs and can serve as a pathway to Level 3 courses, apprenticeships, or employment (Appendix 5).

Keeping vulnerable people safe

4.9 The rate of children with a child protection plan was 59.8 per 10,000 children aged 0-17 at year-end, below the target of 64.4. This represents an 11% decrease from the outturn for 2023/24 and reflects the continuing positive impact of the support provided by the Connected Families Intervention Practitioners. The rate of Looked After Children reduced slightly in quarter 4 to 67.3 per 10,000 just above the target of 66.6 (Appendix 5).

4.10 We have met all of the targets linked to waiting times in Adult Social Care included within the Council Plan. This is due to improvements in how cases are triaged and how waiting lists are managed (Appendix 3).

4.11 Trading Standards made 290 active interventions in 2024/25 to protect vulnerable people, exceeding the annual target of 200. 360 businesses received training or advice from Trading Standards in 2024/25, against a target of 350. Trading Standards also seized a significant amount of illegal tobacco and vape products in 2024/25, with tobacco and cigarettes with a genuine retail value of nearly £450,000 and illegal vapes with a genuine retail value of £60,000 seized (Appendix 6).

4.12 A new contract to provide safe accommodation (Refuge) in East Sussex will begin in quarter 1 2025/26. The new provider, Interventions Alliance, will take over the 37 existing units of safe accommodation and provide an additional 18 units within the first 3 months of the contract. The new contract is due to last for 3 years. 6 projects awarded via the Domestic Abuse Small Grants Fund started to deliver services in January 2025. These projects consist of: support for victims / survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds, older people, those in temporary accommodation, and adults with multiple compound needs, as well as child to parent abuse initiatives and whole family approaches (Appendix 3).

Helping people help themselves

4.13 Satisfaction with the 0-19 Early Help Service remained high in 2024/25, with 91% of respondents to our feedback survey agreeing that things had changed for the better as a result of the targeted support they received, above the target of 80% (Appendix 5).

4.14 321 carers were supported through short-term crisis intervention in 2024/25, against a target of 390. Together with the provider and NHS Sussex, we have reviewed the service. The contract has been respecified, and the target has been reduced to 300. This reflects the increased needs of carers and the offer of up to 6, rather than the previous 4, visits (Appendix 3).

4.15 The multi-agency Financial Inclusion programme in East Sussex brings together statutory, voluntary and other partners to improve residents' financial wellbeing and resilience. The programme delivered a range of benefits during 2024/25. These benefits included distribution of the Household Support Fund, which made 170,000 awards totalling £7m to support households struggling with the cost of bills and essentials. Benefits maximisation campaigns were carried out, which contributed to increases in resident income through benefits of over £1m per year. The 'Additional Measures' grants programme provided additional funding to the money advice sector during the year, reaching over 3000 clients and delivering £2.7m of increased income and debt reduction (Appendix 3).

4.16 In collaboration with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise partners, a new Social Enterprise Development Programme began on 1 April 2025 to provide information, advice and support to residents and assist the Council in meeting its duties under Sections 2 and 4 of the

Care Act 2014 including the requirement to prevent, reduce or delay the need for care and support (Appendix 3).

4.17 In February 2025, East Sussex Public Health held our first multi-agency workshop about prevention of gambling-related harm, and there was unanimous support to work together on the development of an action plan. In addition, funding has been secured from the South-East School of Public Health to enable delivery of Wider Workforce Gambling Harms Prevention Training to staff working in organisations across East Sussex (Appendix 3).

Making best use of resources now and for the future

4.18 Throughout 2024/25 corporate lobbying work focussed on using our partnerships and networks at the local, regional and national level to influence policy development in a range of areas, with a focus on the reforms needed in response to growing demand and financial challenges. Significant lobbying in 2024/25, has emphasised the acute need for sustainable resources to meet increasing demand and local government funding reform to ensure the unique needs of the population of East Sussex are recognised and can continue to be met now and in the future. In quarter 4, this included the Council responding to consultations on local authority funding reform and the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, which highlighted that allocations of the new Recovery Grant did not account for population need in East Sussex. The Leader and Chief Executive have continued to actively raise issues and priorities for the county with our local MPs during 2024/25, including, in quarter 4, through specific updates on our Council Plan and budget for 2025/26. This included the Leader meeting, along with group leaders, with a number of East Sussex MPs in quarter 4 to brief them on proposals included in the budget for 2025/26 and ask for their continued support in lobbying Government (Appendix 7).

4.19 We completed 3 energy efficiency schemes in quarter 4, including 2 window replacement projects and one heat decarbonisation scheme. In total, during 2024/25, 20 schemes have been delivered against a target of 23. This reflects cuts to both the Salix Recycling Fund and the ring-fenced Council budget for directly funded carbon saving projects. Energy consumption and carbon emissions are reported a quarter in arrears, so quarter 3 data is the most up to date information. Carbon emissions for quarter 3 were 2% lower than quarter 3 2023/24. If consumption during quarter 4 is similar to previous years, then the reduction compared to the baseline year 2019/20 would be 36%, against a target of 50% (Appendix 4).

4.20 The Council has continued to work both across the organisation and with partners across a range of environment and climate change areas in 2024/25. This included providing environmental advice to client local planning authorities on nearly 2,000 planning applications. We delivered the 40% of the actions in the East Sussex Climate Emergency Road Map 2022 – 2025 which were assigned to the Council. The remaining 60% of actions are assigned to other partners in the Road Map. We have also continued to develop the local nature recovery strategy, which is currently planned to be published by early 2026 (Appendix 6).

4.21 The Council continued with a project to replace the SAP system used for our procurement, finance and Human Resources processes in 2024/25, as this will not be supported from 2027. The Council made good progress on implementing the Oracle Fusion system to replace it. Most of the modules from Phase 1, and all of Phase 2 (which cover most of the procurement and finance processes) are now live. Phase 3, the final phase of the implementation, will begin to be delivered during 2025/26 (Appendix 4).

4.22 The 2024/25 sickness absence figure (excluding schools) is 9.21 days lost per FTE employee, against a target of 9.10. This is an increase of 0.9% on the 2023/24 figure. The predominant reason for the increase in absence rates is a rise in the number of flu related absences and musculoskeletal related absences (Appendix 4).

4.23 The Council continues to ensure its office hubs are used efficiently and during 2024/25 the space used for staff at County Hall was rationalised and reduced. In quarter 4, the Council vacated both South and East blocks, which involved over 163 teams moving to remaining blocks (Central, North, and West). The vacant blocks are being advertised for office use, marketing commenced in

March 2025. The total work on office rationalisation across the corporate estate, including at Eastbourne and Hastings, has provided significant benefits to the Council including £1.050m of financial benefit, reductions in resource required to support ongoing facilities management and maintenance, and reductions in carbon emissions (Appendix 4).

4.24 In December 2024 the Government published its English Devolution White Paper outlining plans to devolve greater powers to newly established Strategic Authorities, alongside a programme for Local Government Reorganisation. The Government invited expressions of interests from upper-tier and neighbouring unitary authorities in joining the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) which would see progress happen at an accelerated pace. In January 2025, following a discussion at Full Council, Cabinet approved a response to Government's invitation which confirmed a commitment to work with partners in West Sussex County Council, and Brighton & Hove City Council to develop a proposal for a Mayoral County Combined Authority (MCCA). Confirmation was received in February that Sussex was one of six successful areas accepted on to the DPP and expected to undergo reorganisation and devolution at an accelerated speed. In March, following debates at Full Council, Cabinet agreed a response to Government consultation on the establishment of an MCCA in Sussex and agreed an interim proposal for unitary local government in East Sussex developed jointly with district and borough council partners (Appendix 7).

Becky Shaw, Chief Executive

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How to read this report

This report integrates monitoring for finance, performance and risk. Contents are as follows:

- Cover report (includes how to read this report)
- Appendix 1 Corporate Summary
- Appendix 2 Treasury Management Prudential Indicators
- Appendix 3 Adult Social Care and Health – (ASCH)
- Appendix 4 Business Services (Department) – (BSD)
- Appendix 5 Children’s Services (Department) – (CSD)
- Appendix 6 Communities, Economy and Transport – (CET)
- Appendix 7 Governance Services – (GS)
- Appendix 8 Strategic Risk Register

Cover report, Appendix 1 and Appendix 2

The cover report, Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 provide a concise corporate summary of progress against all our Council Plan Targets (full year outturns at quarter 4), Revenue Budget, Savings Targets, Capital Programme and Treasury Management Prudential Indicators.

The cover report highlights a selection of key topics from the departmental appendices, for the four Council priorities:

- driving sustainable economic growth;
- keeping vulnerable people safe;
- helping people help themselves; and
- making best use of resources now and for the future.

More information on each of these topics is provided in the relevant departmental appendix referenced in brackets, e.g. (Appendix 3). More detailed performance and finance data is also available in the departmental appendices.

Departmental Appendices 3-7

The departmental appendices provide a single commentary covering issues and progress against key topics for the department (including all those mentioned in the cover report). This is followed by data tables showing progress against Council Plan Targets, Savings Targets, Revenue Budget, and Capital Programme for the department.

For each topic, the commentary references supporting data in the tables at the end of the appendix, e.g. **(ref i)**. The tables include this reference in the ‘note ref’ column on the right hand side. Where the commentary refers to the Revenue Budget or Capital Programme, it may refer to all or part of the amount that is referenced in the table, or it may refer to several amounts added together. Performance exceptions follow these rules:

Quarter 1	All targets not expected to be achieved at year end i.e. not RAG rated Green, and any proposed amendments or deletions. Changes to targets early in Q1 should be made under delegated authority for the Council Plan refresh in June.
Quarter 2	Targets that have changed RAG rating since Q1 including changes to Green (except where target was amended at Q1), plus proposed amendments or deletions.
Quarter 3	Targets that have changed RAG rating since Q2 including changes to Green (except where target was amended at Q2), plus proposed amendments or deletions.
Quarter 4	Targets that have changed RAG rating since Q3 to Red or Green (except where target was amended at Q3). Outturns that are not available are reported as Carry Overs. All target outturns for the full year are reported in the year end summary at Appendix 1.

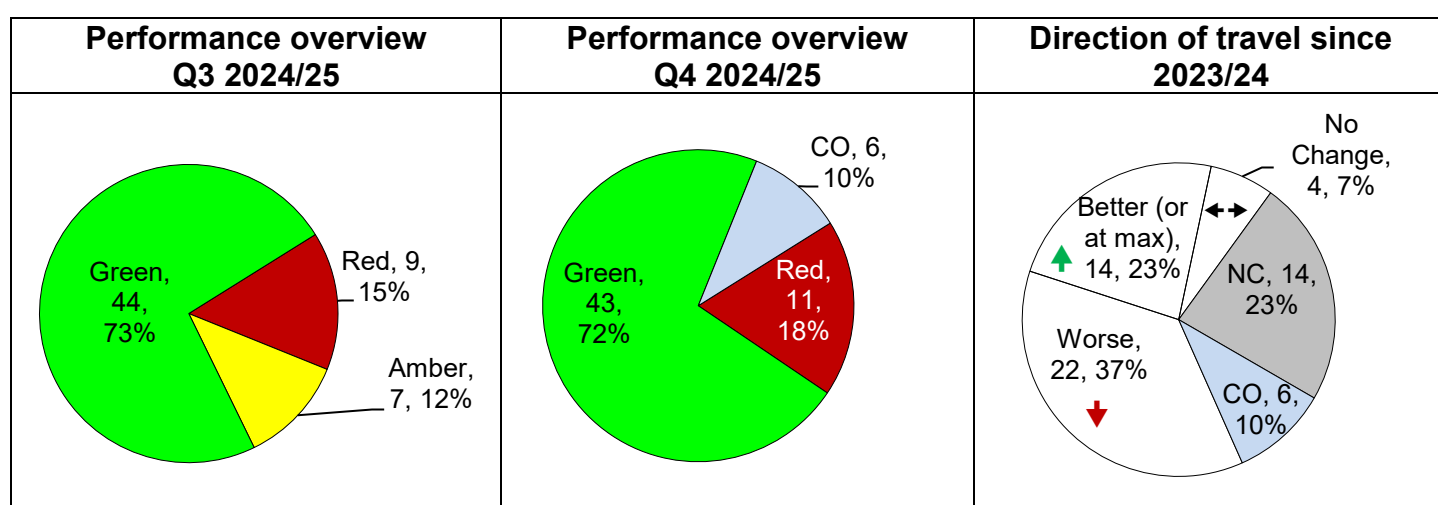
Strategic Risk Register Appendix 8

Appendix 8 contains commentary explaining mitigating actions for all Strategic Risks.

Council Monitoring Corporate Summary – end of year 2024/25

Council Plan performance targets

Priority	Total	Red	Green	Carry Over
Driving sustainable economic growth	25	5	20	0
Keeping vulnerable people safe	16	2	12	2
Helping people help themselves	12	2	7	3
Making best use of resources now and for the future	7	2	4	1
Total	60	11	43	6



Direction of Travel key:

No Change: ↔, Not Comparable: **NC**, Carry Over: **CO**, Worse: ▼, Improved (or at maximum): ▲

Council Plan year end 2024/25 outturn summary all measures

60 Council Plan target outturns for the full year are reported below. Targets achieved are highlighted in green; targets not achieved are highlighted in red; and carry overs (CO) for reporting at Q1 2025/26 are highlighted in blue.

Detailed information for new exceptions at Q4 is contained in the departmental appendices and these exceptions are highlighted **in bold in the table below**. Details of previous exceptions can be found in the referenced appendices for Q1-Q3 monitoring.

Where available, performance improvement relative to 2023/24 is given under Direction of Travel. Measures marked NC (not comparable) do not have 2024/25 outturns, which are comparable with 2023/24 outturns.

Driving sustainable economic growth – outturn summary

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Outturn 2024/25	Direction of Travel
BS	The percentage of Council procurement spend with local suppliers	64%	60%	60%	↓
BS	Economic, social and environmental value committed through contracts, as a percentage of our spend with suppliers	31%	≥10.0%	19%	↓
BS	The Council's Apprenticeship Levy strategy supports the Council's workforce development and training plans	252 staff within the Council and schools currently undertaking an apprenticeship 117 staff enrolled on a new apprenticeship in 2023/24 Apprenticeships range from entry level to master's degree Over £275,000 annual levy spend passed onto small and medium employers throughout the county in 2023/24	Where appropriate Standards exist, to ensure apprenticeship training is available and taken up (subject to the needs of the business), which addresses skills shortages in the Council	In 2024/25 147 new and existing staff enrol onto apprenticeships. This is a 21% increase on the new starts for 23/24.	↑
CET	Create a pan-Sussex visitor economy group to re-start the leisure, hospitality, culture, retail and tourism economy and enhance existing marketing vehicles	Completion of shared Sussex Story and assets delayed until 2024/25 Shared Sussex Meetings, Inceptive, Conferences and Events (MICE) initiatives developed	Establish a Sussex Local Visitor Economy Partnership and agree a Strategic Plan	Recruitment of formal Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) board in progress. Strategy for Growth circulated. Additional area of work to support LVEP has included the Sussex Visitor Stories Phase 2	↑
CET	Create a prioritised list of cultural projects ready for and seeking funding over the value of £100k	Pipeline list published and maintained on ESCC website of cultural projects ready for and seeking funding over	Advise four project sponsors	Four project sponsors advised	↑

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Outturn 2024/25	Direction of Travel
		the value of £100k			
CET	Deliver a range of Family Learning programmes across East Sussex to provide high quality learning opportunities for parents/carers and their children to develop English, maths and language skills and to support a culture of learning in the family (subject to external funding)	2,051 enrolments	1,300 enrolments across Family Learning programmes	1,347 enrolments	NC
CET	Deliver East Sussex Skills priorities for 2021-2026	a) Adult Learning Network established b) 6 interventions delivered that meet the Skills East Sussex priorities c) 17 embedded numeracy interventions delivered	a) Deliver six interventions that meet the Skills East Sussex priorities b) Deliver six embedded numeracy interventions	a) Delivered seven interventions that meet the Skills East Sussex priorities b) Delivered fourteen embedded numeracy interventions	NC
CET	Deliver new economic strategy	Draft economic strategy developed	Economic Strategy endorsed and adopted by key stakeholders including Team East Sussex	The Economic Growth Strategy ("East Sussex Prosperity") was endorsed by Team East Sussex and Cabinet	NC
CET	East Sussex Careers Hub	Schools supported to achieve an average of 5.7 benchmarks 234 Industry Champions in place	East Sussex Careers Hub to support schools to achieve an average of 5 national benchmarks. 210 Industry Champions support schools and colleges in the county	Schools supported to achieve an average of 5.8 benchmarks 211 Industry Champions are in place and supporting schools/colleges	↔
CET	In partnership with funding organisations provide online learning (including skills for life and ICT courses) in libraries (subject to contract)	88 achievements	75 achievements	99 achievements	↑
CET	Job creation from East Sussex Programmes	No jobs created from East Sussex Invest Fund remains	45 jobs created	60 full time equivalent jobs created	↑

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Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Outturn 2024/25	Direction of Travel
		closed to new applications			
CET	Percentage of Principal roads requiring maintenance	4%	7%	5%	↓
CET	Percentage of Non-Principal roads requiring maintenance	5%	8%	6%	↓
CET	Percentage of Unclassified roads requiring maintenance	17%	25%	31%	↓
CET	The number of businesses receiving advice and support through training and bespoke advice provided by Trading Standards	653	350	360	NC
CS	Average Attainment 8 score for Looked After Children (LAC)	Academic Year 2022/23 ESCC: 18.9	Ac Year 2023/24 19	Ac Year 2023/24 ESCC: 14.7	↓
CS	Average Attainment 8 score for state funded schools	Academic Year 2022/23 ESCC: 43.6	Ac Year 2023/24 44.0	Academic Year 2023/24 ESCC: 43.1	↓
CS	The average Attainment 8 score for disadvantaged pupils	Academic Year 2022/23 ESCC: 30.3	Ac Year 2023/24 30.5	Academic Year 2023/24 ESCC: 30.1	↓
CS	The percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving at least the expected standard in each of reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2	Academic Year 2022/23 ESCC: 39.2%	Ac Year 2023/24 40.1%	Academic Year 2023/24 ESCC: 40.8%	↑
CS	The percentage of eligible 2 year olds who take up a place with an eligible early years provider	ESCC: 84% (1,045 / 1,241) National Average: 73.9%	Equal to or above the national average	ESCC: 73.5% (808 / 1,100) National Average: 74.8%	↓
CS	The percentage of LAC participating in education, training, or employment at academic age 16 (Year 12)	84% (75 / 89)	80%	85.3%	↑
CS	The percentage of LAC participating in education, training, or employment at academic age 17 (Year 13)	73% (77 / 105)	70%	78%	↑
CS	The percentage of pupils achieving a “good level of development” at the Early Years Foundation Stage	ESCC: 69.9% National Average: 67.2%	Ac Year 2023/24 Equal to or above the national average	ESCC: 69.0% National Average: 67.7%	↓
CS	The percentage of young people who are in Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at academic age 16, including unknowns	4.4%	Equal to or below 5%	4.2%	↑
CS	The percentage of young people who are in Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at academic age 17, including unknowns	6%	Equal to or below 7%	5.7%	↑

Keeping vulnerable people safe – outturn summary

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Outturn 2024/25	Direction of Travel
ASC	Health and Social Care Connect – % of contacts that are appropriate and effective (i.e. lead to the provision of necessary additional services)	99.2%	95%	99.2%	↔
ASC	Median time from proposed start date to actual start date for carer reviews	New measure 2024/25	≤6 days	-1 day	NC
ASC	Median time from proposed start date to actual start for adult reviews	New measure 2024/25	≤6 days	6 days	NC
ASC	Median waiting time for Adult Care Act assessments	New measure 2024/25	≤21 days	18 days	NC
ASC	Median waiting time for Carers' Care Act assessments	New measure 2024/25	≤7 days	1 day	NC
ASC	Number of people with a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) episode awaiting allocation of a Best Interest Assessor	New measure 2024/25	<650	429	NC
ASC	Percentage of potential safeguarding concerns initially reviewed within 3 days	New measure 2024/25	>99%	99.5%	NC
ASC	Number of drug and alcohol related deaths in the county	77	72	103	↓
ASC	Percentage of Health and Social Care Connect referrals triaged and progressed to required services within 24 hour	95.7%	95%	95%	↓
ASC	The % of people affected by domestic violence and abuse who have improved safety/support measures in place upon leaving the service	96.1%	90%	CO	CO
ASC	When they leave the service the % of those affected by rape, sexual violence and abuse who have improved coping strategies	90.2%	88%	CO	CO
CET	The number of active interventions for vulnerable people who have been the target of rogue trading or financial abuse	2,669 positive interventions	200	290	NC
CS	Rate (of 0-17 population) of assessments started by children's social care services (per 10,000 children)	399 (4,249)	≤558	413	↓
CS	Rate (of 0-17 population) of referrals to children's social care services (per 10,000 children)	413 (4,400)	≤556	401	↑
CS	Rate of children with a Child Protection Plan (per 10,000 children)	64.6 (688 children)	64.4 (661 children)	59.8 (614 children)	↑
CS	Rate of Looked After Children (per 10,000 children)	61.5 (655 children)	61.8 (635 children)	67.3 (691 children)	↓

Helping people help themselves – outturn summary

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Outturn 2024/25	Direction of Travel
ASC	GP practices in East Sussex deliver a targeted NHS Health Check service	9% of the eligible population in the 20% most deprived areas (IMD1) received a health check	Increase coverage of IMD1 NHS Health Checks by 9% (i.e., uptake by total eligible population)	CO	CO
ASC	National outcome measure: Achieve independence for older people through rehabilitation / intermediate care	92.5%	>90%	CO	CO
ASC	National outcome measure: Proportion of working age adults and older people receiving direct payments	28.1%	>25.2%	26.7%	↓
ASC	Number of carers supported through short-term crisis intervention	333	390	321	↓
ASC	Number of people receiving support through housing related floating support	8,178	7,282	5,330	↓
ASC	Percentage of respondents who strongly agree or agree that the professionals who are involved in organising and providing their care communicate well with each other and share information to make sure their support is the best it can be (Listening To You)	61.6%	>56%	60%	↓
ASC	Successful smoking quits through the OneYou East Sussex service	New measure 2024/25	7% of local smoking population to set a quit date, with 50% achieving four-week quit	CO	CO
ASC	The proportion of people who received short-term services during the year, where no further request was made for ongoing support	95.9%	>90.5%	93.3%	↓
CET	Road Safety: Deliver targeted cycle training activities to vulnerable road users	551 Bikeability Courses delivered to 4,428 individuals 343 Wheels for All sessions delivered to 3,862 individuals	Deliver Bikeability Training to 4,000 individuals and 100 Wheels for All sessions	476 Bikeability Courses delivered to 4,085 individuals 474 Wheels for All sessions delivered to 5,823 individuals	↑
CET	Road Safety: Implement infrastructure schemes on identified high risk sites/routes to improve road safety	24 Safety Schemes implemented	Implement 24 safety schemes	24 Safety Schemes implemented	↔
CS	Proportion of all new EHC Plans issued within 20 weeks	(a) 76.3% (521 / 683)	(a) 65% (b) 70%	(a) 68.5% (370 / 540)	↓

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Outturn 2024/25	Direction of Travel
	(a) Including Exception Cases (b) Excluding Exception Cases	(b) 76.5% (521 / 681)		(b) 71.3% (368 / 516)	
CS	The proportion of respondents to the feedback surveys who agree that things have changed for the better as a result of getting targeted support from the 0 – 19 Early Help Service	Adult - 86% (82 / 95) Young Person 91% (29 / 32) Average - 87%	80%	91%	↑

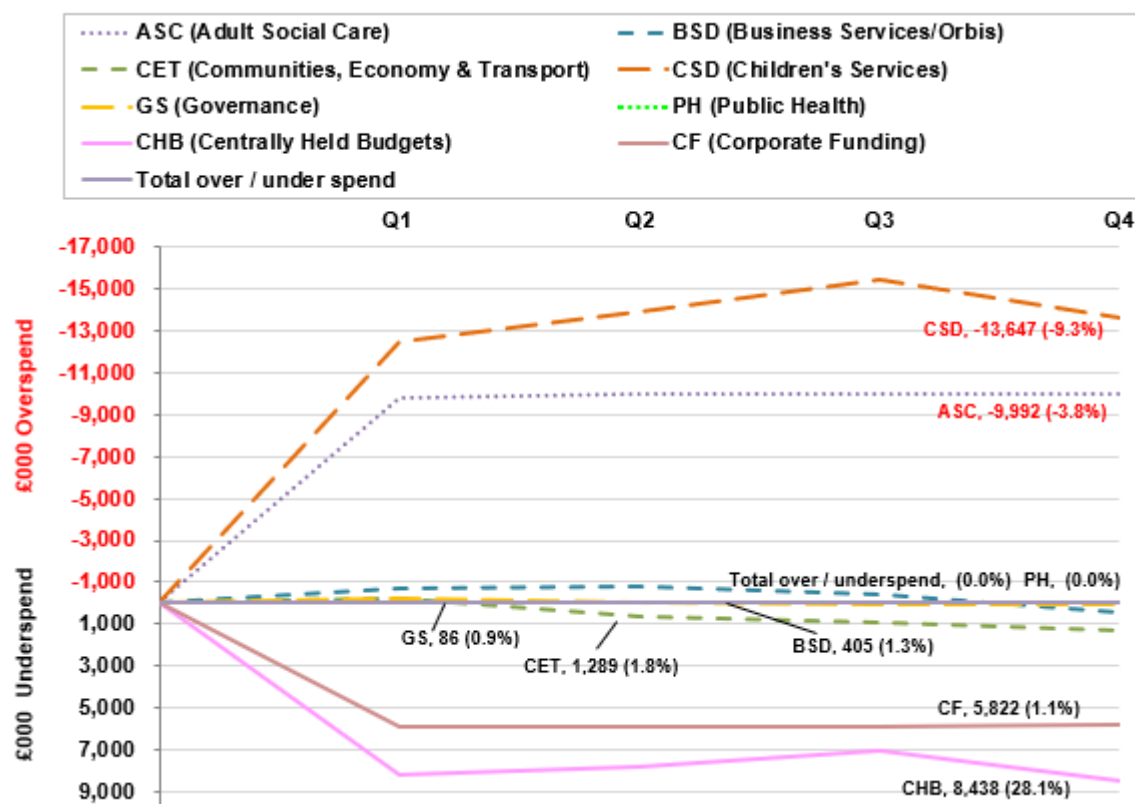
Making best use of resources now and for the future – outturn summary

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Outturn 2024/25	Direction of Travel
BSD	Deliver the Property Asset Investment Strategy	4 Outline Business cases brought forward against priority projects	6 business cases completed	12 business cases completed	↑
BSD	Number of working days lost per FTE (Full Time Equivalent) employee due to sickness absence in non-school services	9.13	9.10	9.21	↓
BSD	Progress on implementation of Carbon reduction schemes	25 energy saving schemes implemented	23 energy saving schemes implemented	20 energy saving schemes implemented	↓
BSD	Reduce the amount of CO2 arising from County Council operations	36% reduction on baseline year (2019/20) emissions	50% reduction on baseline year (2019/20) emissions	CO	CO
BSD	Review use of corporate buildings	Office strategy revised and footprint reduced in Eastbourne and Hastings. Paper on options for County Hall produced. Plans for 2024/25 developed, including consideration of options for County Hall, finalisation of Eastbourne office moves, and further work to reduce the Hastings office footprint	Implement reduction of office footprint identified in 2023/24	Action was taken to rationalise space occupied by staff. In Q4, all County Hall staff moved into Centre, West and North Blocks, involving over 160 teams. South and East Blocks are now vacant and being marketed for non-Council office use following the office moves.	NC
BSD	Achievement of key milestones for the Workplace Adjustments Review	Key milestones from the Workplace	Implementation and monitoring of	Workplace adjustments activity	NC

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Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Outturn 2024/25	Direction of Travel
		Adjustments Review achieved	new Workplace Adjustments activity	implemented and monitored	
GS	Delivery of Corporate Equality Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan actions planned for the year	Key actions delivered from action plan	Deliver the key actions within the action plan	Key actions delivered from action plan	↔

Revenue budget outturn (net £000)



Revenue budget summary (£000) 2024/25

Services:

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2024/25 Gross	2024/25 Income	2024/25 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net
Adult Social Care	403,329	(141,857)	261,472	442,565	(171,101)	271,464	(39,236)	29,244	(9,992)
Public Health	39,143	(39,143)	-	38,393	(38,393)	-	750	(750)	-
Business Services / Orbis	60,504	(29,751)	30,753	66,497	(36,149)	30,348	(5,993)	6,398	405
Children's Services	458,407	(311,422)	146,985	496,186	(335,554)	160,632	(37,779)	24,132	(13,647)
Communities, Economy & Transport	164,680	(91,807)	72,873	164,775	(93,191)	71,584	(95)	1,384	1,289
Governance Services	9,847	(609)	9,238	9,775	(623)	9,152	72	14	86
Total Services	1,135,910	(614,589)	521,321	1,218,191	(675,011)	543,180	(82,281)	60,422	(21,859)

Centrally Held Budgets (CHB):

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2024/25 Gross	2024/25 Income	2024/25 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net
Treasury Management	19,980	(8,900)	11,080	19,043	(10,562)	8,481	937	1,662	2,599
Capital Programme	2,972	-	2,972	1,941	(269)	1,672	1,031	269	1,300
Unfunded Pensions	4,702	-	4,702	4,763	-	4,763	(61)	-	(61)
General Contingency	5,270	-	5,270	-	-	-	5,270	-	5,270
Provision for Budgetary Risks	6,217	-	6,217	6,217	-	6,217	-	-	-
Apprenticeship Levy	772	-	772	858	-	858	(86)	-	(86)
Levies, Grants & Other	1,382	(2,377)	(995)	1,117	(2,278)	(1,161)	265	(99)	166
Debt Impairment	-	-	-	750	-	750	(750)	-	(750)
Total Centrally Held Budgets	41,295	(11,277)	30,018	34,689	(13,109)	21,580	6,606	1,832	8,438

Corporate Funding:

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2024/25 Gross	2024/25 Income	2024/25 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net
Business Rates	-	(101,362)	(101,362)	-	(101,751)	(101,751)	-	389	389
Revenue Support Grant	-	(4,346)	(4,346)	-	(4,346)	(4,346)	-	-	-
Service Grant	-	(478)	(478)	-	(524)	(524)	-	46	46
Council Tax	-	(373,550)	(373,550)	-	(373,550)	(373,550)	-	-	-
Social Care Grant	-	(56,705)	(56,705)	-	(62,092)	(62,092)	-	5,387	5,387
New Homes Bonus	-	(554)	(554)	-	(554)	(554)	-	-	-
Total Corporate Funding	0	(536,995)	(536,995)	0	(542,817)	(542,817)	0	5,822	5,822

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2024/25 Gross	2024/25 Income	2024/25 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net
TOTAL	1,177,205	(1,162,861)	14,344	1,252,880	(1,230,937)	21,943	(75,675)	68,076	(7,599)
One-off Use of Financial Management Reserve 2024/25	-	(14,344)	(14,344)	-	(14,344)	(14,344)	-	-	-
Use of FM Reserve to cover overspend	-	-	-	-	(7,599)	(7,599)	-	7,599	7,599
FINAL TOTAL	1,177,205	(1,177,205)	0	1,252,880	(1,252,880)	0	(75,675)	75,675	0

Revenue Savings Summary 2024/25 (£'000)

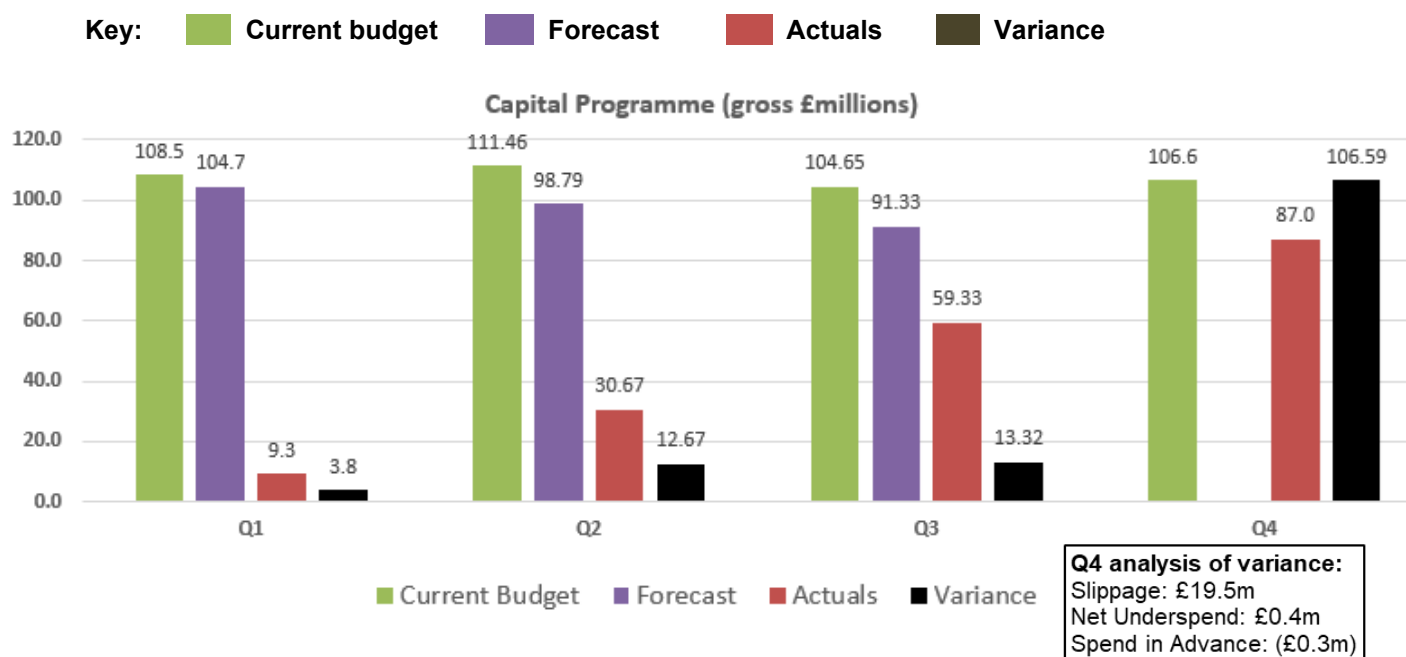
Service description	Original Target for 2024/25	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved
ASC	-	-	-	-	-
BSD/Orbis	693	1,003	1,003	-	-
CS	-	-	-	-	-
CET	-	805	60	745	-
GS	-	-	-	-	-
Total Savings	693	1,808	1,063	745	-
ASC			-	-	-
BSD / Orbis			-	-	-
CS			-	-	-
CET			-	-	-
GS			-	-	-
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0
Total Savings & Permanent Changes	693	1,808	1,063	745	-

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total
ASC	-	-	-
BSD / Orbis	-	-	-
CS	-	-	-
CET	-	745	745
GS	-	-	-
Total	0	745	745

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Capital Programme (gross £ millions) – approved projects**Capital Programme Summary 2024/25 (£'000)**

	Budget 2024/25	Actual 2024/25	Variation (Over) / under 2024/25 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance
Adult Social Care	3,092	3,162	(70)	53	-	(123)
Business Services	39,059	29,116	9,943	562	9,398	(17)
Children's Services	2,599	2,572	27	(117)	144	-
Communities, Economy & Transport	61,838	52,186	9,652	(34)	9,879	(193)
Gross Expenditure (Planned Programme)	106,588	87,036	19,552	464	19,421	(333)
<i>Corporate Slippage Risk Factor</i>	<i>(20,068)</i>	-	-	-	-	-
Net Expenditure	86,520	87,036	(516)	464	19,421	(333)
Developer Contributions	4,621	3,155	1,466	-	-	-
Other Specific Funding	30,444	21,764	8,680	-	-	-
Capital Receipts	4,802	4,802	0	-	-	-
Formula Grants	25,772	23,802	1,970	-	-	-
Reserves and Revenue Set Aside	14,681	9,234	5,447	-	-	-
Borrowing	6,200	24,279	(18,079)	-	-	-
Total Funding	86,520	87,036	(516)	-	-	-

Treasury Management

The Treasury Management Strategy (TMS), which provides the framework for managing the Council's cash balances and borrowing requirement, continues to reflect a policy of ensuring minimum risk, whilst aiming to deliver secure realistic investment income on the Council's cash balances. Cash investment balances as at 31 March 2025 have fallen by 43% in one year, from £202.5m at Q4 2023/24 to £115.3m at Q4 2024/25.

The average level of Council funds available for investment purposes during Q4 was £142.4m. The total amount received in short term interest for Q4 was £1.742m at an average rate of 4.96%, compared to £2.290m at an average rate of 5.10% for Q3 2024/25. The average investment return for the year was 5.26% from the 5.11% assumed at budget setting based on the forecasts from our external treasury management advisors.

The Bank of England Base Rate was cut by 0.25% on the 6 February, the rate at 31 March was 4.50%. The prospect for interest rates is for further reductions into 2025/26 to a 3.75% level by 31 March 2026. Where possible a number of fixed term deposits with local authorities were placed for periods up to 1 year in Q4, this will help secure investment returns into 2025/26.

The investment strategy approach in previous quarters to 'ladder' deposits has created a steady maturity profile, this will ensure the Council's cashflow and liquidity requirements are covered for 2025/26.

Cashflow is monitored on a rolling 18 month forecast and no short-term borrowing was required in Q4. The majority of the Council's external debt, totalling £211.6m at Q4, is held as long-term loans. No long-term borrowing was undertaken in Q4, and no further cost-effective opportunities have arisen during Q4 to restructure the existing Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) or wider debt portfolio. Options to restructure debt will be explored as and when appropriate.

The Treasury Management budget underspent by £2.6m. This is based on the position outlined above with regard to balances held and investment returns. A reduced in-year capital borrowing requirement alongside an ongoing strategy to delay borrowing in a falling interest rate environment has meant that the council has delayed new external borrowing; and returns on investments in year were greater than anticipated as the Base Rate did not fall as fast as originally anticipated.

The performance of the Council's treasury management activity, against benchmarks and the key indicators set in the Treasury Management Strategy, as approved by Full Council on 6 February 2024, are set out at Appendix 2.

Reserves and Balances 2024/25 (£000)

Reserve / Balance	Balance at 1 Apr 2024	Forecast net use at Q3	Outturn net use at Q4	Movement	Balance at 31 Mar 2025
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Statutorily ringfenced or held on behalf of others:

Balances held by schools	18,258	-	(2,215)	(2,215)	16,043
Public Health	6,294	(3,607)	(2,296)	1,311	3,998
Other	6,752	(1,635)	(1,261)	374	5,491
Subtotal	31,304	(5,242)	(5,772)	(530)	25,532

Service Reserves:

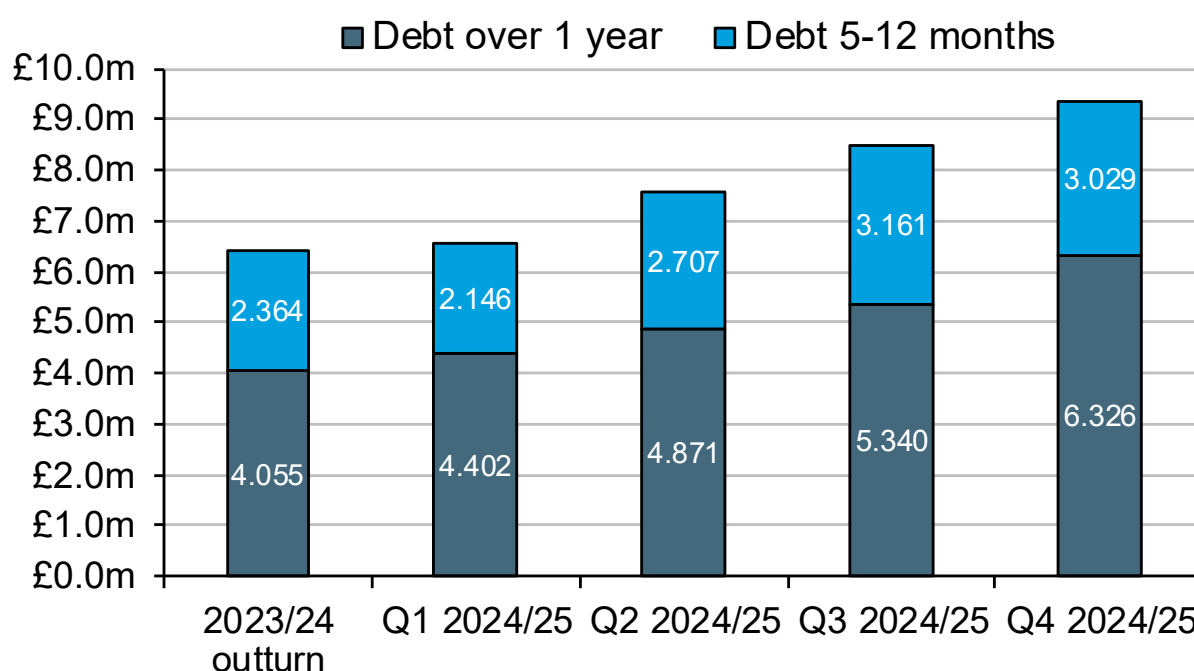
Corporate Waste	19,486	(141)	358	499	19,844
Capital Programme	9,851	(391)	(791)	(400)	9,060
Insurance	7,358	-	320	320	7,678
Adult Social Care	3,034	(2,445)	(3,034)	(589)	-
Subtotal	39,729	(2,977)	(3,147)	(170)	36,582

Strategic Reserves:

Priority / Transformation	7,314	(4,313)	(2,127)	2,187	5,187
Financial Management	35,806	(29,360)	(24,490)	4,869	11,316
Subtotal	43,120	(33,673)	(26,617)	7,056	16,503
Total Reserves	114,153	(41,892)	(35,535)	6,357	78,618
General Fund	10,000	-	-	-	10,000
Total Reserves and Balances	124,153	(41,892)	(35,535)	6,357	88,618

Changes to Fees & Charges

The Escape Cafe at County Hall provides catering facilities for Council employees and external colleagues. At 2025/26 RPPR a 4% increase on prices was approved; during Q4 approval has been given to increase prices by a further 10%. With the possibility of new tenants occupying space in County Hall, this could also generate additional income to the Council.

Outstanding debt analysis (£ millions)

The value of aged debt over 5 months as a proportion of debt raised has increased from 3.93% in 2023/24 to 5.00% in 2024/25.

The majority £8.936m (95.52%) of all debt over 5 months old relates to Adult Social Care (ASC), which has increased by £2.952m compared with the 2023/24 outturn position of £5.984m.

The debt over 5 months related to income due to other departments has decreased by £0.016m to £0.419m, compared with the 2023/24 outturn position of £0.435m.

ASC debt represents most of the Council's debt collection activity and recovery can take a long time due to the circumstances of the debtors. For example, an ASC client may lack capacity to make decisions for themselves and an appointee, deputy or power of attorney therefore needs to be established, or the debt forms part of the administration of an estate.

Recovery of debt continues to be a high priority. As part of ongoing improvement work a Debt Recovery Project was initiated to review and improve the ASC debt recovery model. Work to explore the end-to-end ASC debt recovery processes began and several priority action areas were identified and taken forward. In recognition of the complexity of ASC debt recovery a fuller strategic review is required to identify and take forward any further opportunities for improvement, which is being progressed into the new financial year.

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Treasury Management Prudential Indicators – end of year 2024/25

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy published the revised Treasury and Prudential codes in 2021, which now requires quarterly reporting of performance against forward looking prudential indicators. The performance of the Council's treasury management activity, against benchmarks and the key indicators in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, as approved by Full Council at its meeting of 7 February 2024, are set out below.

Investments

Cash investment balances as at 31 March 2025 have fallen by 43% in one year, from £202.5m at Q4 2023/24 to £115.3m at Q4 2024/25, due to a combination of reducing reserve levels and a strategy to meet the capital borrowing requirement from internal balances to delay external borrowing. The average investment return over Q4 was 4.96%, performing above the benchmark rate by 41 basis points (or 0.41 percentage points). Performance has improved as a result of Money Market Fund yields holding value for a extended period following a Base Rate reduction and undertaking a number of short-term investments in the Local Authority market which achieved above benchmark rates due to general lack of liquidity and increased demand in the sector.

Quarter	Average Investment Balance £m	Average Investment return	Average Benchmark Rate*	Difference
Q1	217.354	5.48%	5.19%	0.29%
Q2	204.434	5.36%	5.03%	0.33%
Q3	178.026	5.10%	4.80%	0.30%
Q4	142.417	4.96%	4.55%	0.41%

**the Benchmark rate used is the Standard Overnight Index Average (SONIA); a rate administered by the Bank of England based on actual transactions of overnight borrowing by financial institutions.*

During Q4 we have monitored the security of the Council's investment, to assess the risk of those investments losing their value. These risks were assessed using the financial standing of the groups invested in, the length of each investment, and the historic default rates. Our investment strategy sets an allowable risk level of 0.050% (i.e. that there is a 99.95% probability that the Council will get its investments back). The actual indicator ranged between 0.007% and 0.008%, reflecting the high proportion of investments held in highly secure and/or very liquid investments.

Investment Risk benchmark	0.050%
Maximum investment risk experienced Q4	0.008%

Borrowing

The table below shows the Council's total external borrowing and average rate as at 31 March 2025:

	Balance as at 31 March 2025 £m	Average Rate
PWLB	205.142	4.45%
Market Loans	6.450	4.25%
Total borrowing	211.592	4.44%

The table below shows the outturn position of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) compared to the forecast position within the 2024/25 strategy approved in February 2024. The closing CFR showed an under-borrowed position of £76.274m, compared to the original estimate of £75.000m under-borrowed. The Strategy throughout the year forecast that the level of reserves and balances in the medium term allowed for internal borrowing of up to £75.000m, and therefore no new external borrowing was expected to be required during the 2024/25 financial

year to support the capital programme. This supports the strategic decision to delay borrowing in the current economic environment where interest rates are expected to fall in the short to medium term.

Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) (Underlying Borrowing Need)	Original Estimate 2024/25 £m	Outturn Position 2024/25 £m
Opening CFR	280.571	271.303
Borrowing Need	32.143	24.279
Minimum Revenue Provision	(7.406)	(7.743)
Closing CFR	304.684	287.839
External Borrowing as at 31 March 2025	229.684	211.592
Under Borrowing Position	75.000	76.247

The table below shows that the Council is operating within the Operational Boundary and Authorised Borrowing Limits set within the Treasury Management strategy and has sufficient headroom to cover the borrowing need arising from the year's capital programme.

Borrowing Limits	Operational Boundary £m	Authorised Borrowing Limit £m
Limit set for 2024/25	393.000	413.000
Less: PFI & Leases	58.000	58.000
Limit for Underlying Borrowing	335.000	355.000
External Borrowing at 31 March 2025	211.592	211.592
Headroom*	123.408	143.408

**Authorised Borrowing headroom cannot be less than zero*

The maturity profile of the Authority's borrowing is within the limits set within the strategy.

Maturity Structure of borrowing	Lower Limit set	Upper Limit set	Actual as at 31 March 2025
Under 12 Months	0%	25%	2%
12 months to 2 years	0%	40%	3%
2 years to 5 years	0%	60%	7%
5 years to 10 years	0%	70%	22%
Over 10 years	0%	90%	66%

Adult Social Care and Health – end of year 2024/25

Summary of progress on Council Priorities, issues arising, and achievements

Adult Social Care (ASC)

Demand for care and support services

In accordance with the Care Act 2014, Adult Social Care (ASC) commission and provide a range of services to support adults and older people across East Sussex. There is an increasing complexity of need among people accessing support, and demand for services is exceeding pre-pandemic levels and is continuing to increase. As an example, when comparing the period April 2024 to March 2025 to the period April 2023 to March 2024:

- There has been a 7.2% increase in overall activity (in relation to Appearance of Need Tools (ANTs), assessments, other statutory work, reviews and safeguarding)
- There has been a 3.0% increase in assessments completed, this includes Adult Core assessments, carer's assessments, Occupational Therapy assessments and Sensory assessments.
- There has been a 9.8% increase in reviews completed.
- There has been a 16.7% increase in other statutory work completed. This increase has mainly been seen in Mental Capacity Assessments and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) applications.

A good level of performance continues to be maintained against most measures, with East Sussex performing well (either in the upper or upper middle quartile) in 17 (77%) of the 22 national Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) outcome measures for 2023-2024. Additionally, improvements have been seen in the majority of measures taken from the Adult Social Care Survey for 2024/25 (as described in a later section).

However, additional pressures facing the service are having a significant impact on the financial position. Details of the work being undertaken to address these can be found in the Revenue Budget Summary section below.

Health and Social Care integration.

In keeping with proposals agreed by the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) 3 out of the 7 planned informal board development sessions have now taken place. These focused on the long-term health outlook for our population, improving healthy life expectancy, and the building blocks of health. Sessions aim to increase the shared understanding about the needs and priorities of the population and generate ideas and innovation to inform and shape the next refresh of our rolling five-year HWB Strategy.

The sessions have also explored what makes good system leadership and working, and the HWB's role in modelling a strategic stewardship approach for East Sussex as one of three places within our Sussex Integrated Care System. Overall, the sessions have been highly valued by members and outcomes are reported to the formal HWB meetings held in public with links to current Shared Delivery Plan and other plans.

The groundwork has continued to be put in place for 5 Integrated Community Teams (ICTs). This builds on the initial informal development sessions, small-scale tests of change and five partnership events for 262 staff and volunteers from across health and care services held in November. These events allowed staff to learn about the services and support available for the people they work with ahead of winter 2024/25.

During Q4 the leadership of each ICT has started to move onto a formal footing through the setting up of 5 ICT 'management and planning groups' (MPGs) with local leads from across general practice, community pharmacy, social care, public health, housing, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE), mental health and community services. The groups will oversee and

nurture the development of their local ICT in line with local needs and strategic priorities, such as those set out in Improving Lives Together, Health and Wellbeing Board strategies, the Shared Delivery Plan and other plans.

A key first action for each MPG will be to develop a high-level joint action plan for the ICT by September 2025, including actions that support a consistent model for multi-disciplinary team-working in neighbourhoods for people with more complex health and care needs across the county.

The shared Integrated Care System (ICS) objective of improving hospital discharge has remained an area of significant challenge for the system in 2024/25. In Sussex there are increasing numbers of people presenting in acute hospitals whose discharges are being delayed due to having complex onward care needs. This is particularly challenging in East Sussex where there are proportionately high numbers of people aged over 85, often with multiple long-term conditions alongside other complexities due to ageing and frailty. It is acknowledged that all but the most simple discharges back to a person's own home require multi-disciplinary and multi-agency assessments and processes, with the solutions requiring all partners to work together.

In light of this NHS Sussex and the Council agreed to jointly invest an additional £1m in an additional 42 beds to enable people to be discharged from acute hospital into other bed-based care for further recovery and assessment over winter, alongside other actions designed to help people stay active whilst in hospital and minimise deterioration in health and wellbeing. These included running hubs to better coordinate the transfer of care; and needs-based demand and capacity modelling to help to get the right type of support in place to respond to people's needs appropriately after being in hospital. Funding allocations have now been agreed for Q1 2025/26 to help maintain the right levels of bedded care capacity for the population. Health and care needs and improvement actions will remain a strong focus for this area in 2025/26.

Reviews and Assessments

The Council has met all of its targets for both carer's and adult's reviews and assessments in 2024/25. We have continued to increase the number of carer's and adult's reviews and Care Act assessments completed year-on-year to help meet increasing demand and prioritise reviews according to people's needs. We have also taken steps to improve people's experiences of waiting, including a new letter template for adults and carers waiting for a Care Act assessment, which includes an estimated waiting time and more detail on where people can find information and advice whilst waiting.

Adult Social Care Survey

Preliminary results from the Adult Social Care Survey for 2024/25 has shown increases in the majority of national performance measures taken from the survey when compared to 2023/24. These results are predicted to place us as performing comparatively well nationally (based on 2023/24 thresholds):

- 81.3% of respondents stated that they as much control as they would like, or adequate control over their daily life. This has increased from 80.6% and is predicted to retain performance in the upper quartile.
- 49.4% of respondents stated that they had as much social contact as they would like. This has increased from 48.3% and is predicted to improve performance to the upper quartile from the upper middle quartile.
- 72.4% were extremely or very satisfied with the care and support they receive. This has increased from 66.8% and is predicted to improve performance to the upper quartile from the upper middle quartile.

- 70.5% of respondents stated that they found it very or fairly easy to find information and advice about services. This has increased from 68.8% and is predicted to retain performance in the upper middle quartile.
- 71.7% of respondents stated that they felt as safe as they want. This has increased from 70.8% and is predicted to improve performance to the upper middle quartile from the lower middle quartile.
- The Social care-related quality of life score (a composite score taken from 8 questions within the survey relating to quality of life) was 19.4 This has reduced slightly from 19.6 but is predicted to retain performance in the upper quartile.

Third Sector support

During Q4 the contracts for the new Community and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Development Programme were awarded, and meetings held with the providers to discuss mobilisation ready to begin delivery on 1 April 2025.

During Q4 a campaign to promote volunteering and the Tribe Project ran on social media and in the Council's external e-bulletins and partners' newsletters. The campaign generated a good level of interest in Tribe, with over 2,000 sessions logged by readers looking at the volunteering opportunities available across the county.

Number of carers supported through short-term crisis intervention.

The number of carers supported through short-term crisis intervention in Q4 was 83. The 2024/25 outturn was 321, against a target of 390. Together with the provider and NHS Sussex, we have reviewed the service. The contract has been respecified and the target has been reduced to 300 per annum. This reflects the increased needs of carers and the offer of up to 6 rather than the previous 4 visits.

Number of people receiving support through housing related floating support.

The number of people receiving support through housing related floating support in Q4 was 1,001. The 2024/25 outturn was 5,330, against a target of 7,282. This is due to the provider implementing a pause on recruitment from May 2024 due to uncertainty over levels of future funding from the Council and staff leaving following the Cabinet meeting in February 2025. The service is now operating at under 70% of frontline staffing capacity.

Migrant Support

One of the largest cohorts to arrive in East Sussex are Ukrainian people and there is continued support for Ukrainian families towards independence and wellbeing as East Sussex residents. This means ensuring all Ukrainians can access support with welfare and wellbeing, English language, employment, education and routes into independent accommodation. A commitment to welcome and support Ukrainians continues with the introduction of the new Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) visa scheme, which enables Ukrainians to apply for an additional 18 months stay in the UK.

As of 31 March 2025, a total of 1,990 guests had arrived in East Sussex under the Homes for Ukraine scheme since the start of the war, sponsored and hosted by 886 sponsors. A significant number (848) have successfully moved from hosted accommodation into independent private sector accommodation.

Cross-county partnership work will continue in order to support migrants and communities towards independence, wellbeing and integration. East Sussex has welcomed arrivals from many countries as refugees as well as through dedicated resettlement and visa schemes.

Cost of Living

The high cost of living in East Sussex has an impact on the financial wellbeing of our residents, which can have a negative effect on their overall health and wellbeing. The Financial Inclusion

programme aims to improve residents' financial wellbeing, which supports better general health and wellbeing and reduces pressure on local services. The multi-agency Financial Inclusion programme in East Sussex brings together statutory, voluntary and other partners across the County to improve financial wellbeing and resilience of our residents. The programme works alongside existing service delivery to deliver additional benefits, including:

- campaigns to residents to promote and encourage people to maximise income through benefits have reached tens of thousands of residents and have contributed to increases in resident income through benefits of over £1m per year (significantly more in terms of lifetime income). Recent campaigns, designed with District and Borough Councils and other partners, include Healthy Start, Free School Meals, Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance and Council Tax Reduction.
- administering and distributing the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Household Support Fund Household Support Fund, which in 2024-25 made 170,000 awards to residents in East Sussex, totalling £7m, in the form of vouchers, cash, food or support to households struggling with the cost of food, energy and water bills.
- the 'Additional Measures' grants programme has provided additional funding to the money advice sector from 2021 to 2025 and reached over 3000 clients in 2024/25, with a total benefit (of increased income and debt reduction) of £2.7m in that year.
- information for residents about how to improve their financial circumstances has been regularly updated, including our Cost of Living webpages, plus a range of other accessible resources such as postcards, leaflets and videos, to reach as many people as possible.
- partnering with the Money and Pension Service (MaPS) to deliver the East Sussex Money Guiders training programme. This has been taken up by 169 staff from statutory and VCSE sector so far, increasing staff knowledge across the system to confidently give non-regulated financial information, guidance and signposting to residents.

Sustainable Care Market

In 2024/25, comprehensive provider engagement and support has continued in order to shape and support a sustainable market in the adult social care sector. The Market Support Team conducted over 400 visits and virtual support calls, maintaining a robust understanding of the provider market and effectively managing risks. A new support offer for personal assistants (PAs) and micro-providers was developed, this included updated webpages, a guide to being a PA, and free training opportunities. Additionally, in-person care provider events were held in Autumn 2024 plus an ASC provider forum in March 2025 to facilitate information sharing and feedback from providers. The Market Position Statement was published and promoted to support providers to develop and sustain their business in response to the changing social care market.

Strategic Carers Plan

The East Sussex Commitment to Carers was signed off by Adult Social Care and Health and Children Services Department Departmental Management Teams and launched as part of Carers Rights Day on 21 November 2024, as was the overarching Carers Partnership Plan - www.eastsussex.gov.uk/social-care/policies/east-sussex-carers-partnership-plan

The production of a multi-agency action plan is now underway (which will cover a 5 year period to December 2029) to deliver against the 8 Key Themes identified:

- Early Identification, Recognition and Intervention
- Access to Respite, Breaks and Carer Support
- Health and Wellbeing
- Financial Support
- Peer Support
- Employment, Education and Training

- Technology, Digitisation and Streamlined Data
- Partnership Working

Safer Communities

Preventing Violent Extremism - During Q4 the Safer East Sussex Team (SEST) developed a multi-agency Communication and Engagement Strategy, refreshed the Council Prevent Duty training plan for Council staff and commissioned services in preparation for the annual Home Office assurance check.

During 2024/25 the SEST delivered 73 Community Safety Prevent awareness and training sessions and undertook engagement at 34 community events with a focus on awareness of Prevent for special educational needs providers, and on supporting community cohesion following the Southport attacks.

Serious Violence - During Q4 the SEST refreshed the East Sussex Serious Violence and Exploitation Needs Assessment and convened a multi-agency workshop to refresh the Partnership Serious Violence and Exploitation Strategy and action plan identifying seven areas of risk to focus on in 2025.

Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse

The 6 projects awarded via the Domestic Abuse Small Grants Fund started to deliver services in January 2025. These projects consist of: support for victims / survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds, older people, those in temporary accommodation, and adults with multiple compound needs (MCN), as well as child to parent abuse initiatives and whole family approaches.

The contract with the current provider of safe accommodation (Refuge) in East Sussex is ending on 31 May 2025. A new contract has been awarded to Interventions Alliance to take over 37 existing units of safe accommodation and provide an additional 18 units within the first 3 months of the contract.

Interventions Alliance are also mobilising a new MCN Safe Accommodation and Community Support Service. The contract is for 3 years to 31 March 2028.

The Safer Communities Partnership Board (SCPB) and East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership Delegated Safeguarding Partners signed off 'Family D', on 4 February 2025. 'Family D' is a multi-agency action plan was developed and submitted to the Home Office and National Panel and learning will be disseminated locally in Q1 2025/26.

The first White Ribbon Working Group was held in March 2025. A White Ribbon Champion and Ambassador resource page will be launched on the Safe in East Sussex website. This will include signposting to support for victims of harassment, abuse, or violence, as well as resources to support Champions and Ambassadors in their role. These resources will include a YouTube video on how men can call out misogynistic behaviour, and an allyship learning resource, created by White Ribbon UK, which provides examples of what men can do to foster positive culture change (e.g. reflecting on attitudes and behaviours and calling out misogyny if it is witnessed).

The MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) is a twice-weekly meeting at which local services work together to support people affected by domestic abuse who are at substantial risk of harm. The purpose of MARAC is to share information to identify the risks and potential actions that could reduce the risks.

The MARAC Triage Pilot continues to reduce the number of cases discussed at MARAC by one third and has been extended to March 2026; however, the volume of MARAC referrals increased a further 5% in Jan-Dec 2024 compared to the same period the previous year and continues to increase.

Drug and alcohol treatment/recovery

103 individuals died of a drug or alcohol related death in East Sussex in 2023. This is the most recent data available due to the time taken to release Coroner's inquests. This is a 34% increase from 2022, compared to a 9% increase for England. However, it should be noted that deaths of those in treatment (when considered as a proportion of all those in treatment) are lower than the same period last year. For those at risk of a drug or alcohol related death, being in treatment is a protective factor.

These figures are produced by the ONS and OHID Fingertips, and as such reflect all drug and alcohol related deaths.

At the end of Q3 (reported a quarter in arrears), there were 1,067 individuals in treatment for opiate use. Of those in treatment for opiate use, 61.4% in East Sussex are showing substantial treatment progress.

The Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Improvement Grant (DATRIG) has been confirmed for 2025/26. This means East Sussex will benefit from an additional £3 million for the treatment and recovery system this year. The funding will be used to continue many of the interventions previously funded through the three additional grant streams received for the past three years. It will also allow the continuation of Recovery Services for another year.

Public Health

Gambling

Gambling and its associated wide-ranging impacts is a growing area of concern in Public Health. The gambling industry's revenue in Great Britain for the year up to March 2023 was £15.1 billion, more than the gaming and music industry combined. Unfortunately, the 5% of people classified as experiencing harm or risk of harm from Gambling represent almost 60% of industry profits. In February 2025, East Sussex Public Health held their first multi-agency workshop about prevention of gambling-related harm, and there was unanimous support to work together on the development of an action plan. In addition, funding has been secured from the South-East School of Public Health to enable delivery of Wider Workforce Gambling Harms Prevention Training to staff working in organisations across East Sussex.

Housing retrofit programme and Warm Homes Local Grant

As a building block of health, people's homes and their energy efficiency impact their health and wellbeing. The Public Health team is supporting the creation of a strategic housing retrofit plan, building on work to future-proof homes, reduce people's energy bills, and improve indoor air quality and ambient comfort. Two well attended multi-agency workshops were held to start to develop a collaborative plan, with working groups established on identified priorities (including readiness for external funding opportunities). In March 2025 an East Sussex consortium expression of interest, led by Lewes District Council and submitted to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, received an allocation of £3.9m. The scheme will enable home upgrades for around 300 low-income households from 2025-28.

Substance Misuse Commissioning Team

During Q4 we consulted with service users as part of the development of the service specification for the new drug and alcohol treatment contract due to commence in April 2026.

Employability brokers

Public Health have co-developed a programme of homelessness prevention activities with local District and Borough housing authorities, complementing work already underway in each area. The programme is delivered on a county-wide basis and aims to work with people at risk of homelessness at an earlier stage, providing housing advice, wellbeing support and links to training and employment. The Employability Brokers work with people directly to find and sustain work,

including accessing support through the Employment Support Training Advice and Resources (ESTAR) project.

Q4 has seen four employment outcomes: 2 new jobs, 1 in work training/progression and 1 negotiation of fixed working hours to improve household income. The team has also recorded 12 housing outcomes: 6 homelessness preventions, 4 moves to private accommodation and 2 moves to social housing.

Revenue Budget Summary

ASC and Safer Communities

The net ASC and Safer Communities budget of £261.472m for 2024/25 includes a 7% inflationary uplift of £18.607m to support the care market across the Independent Sector. This uplift is in addition to £3.917m to fund growth and demographic pressures, with the costs of the increases being partially funded by £7.060m raised through the 2% ASC Care Precept.

The net ASC outturn for 2024/25 is £271.464m, which is an overspend of £9.992m. The net outturn has decreased from £272.376m at Q3, largely due to a drawdown of grant funding to apply to the Supported Living capital programme. The overspend has increased by £0.052m from £9.940m reported at Q3. The overspend largely relates to the Independent Sector, where the overspend is £12.386m, an increase of £0.669m from Q3. The overspend is due to an underlying pressure that arose in 2023/24 when there was a return to a pre-pandemic level of demand for ASC support as well as increasing complexity of need. The overspend in 2023/24 was largely offset by reserves, hence the increase in the ASC overspend of £1.984m in 2023/24 to £9.992m in 2024/25.

There is an underspend in Directly Provided Services of £2.394m due to staffing vacancies which reflects the impact of savings consultations and underlying difficulties with recruitment. This is an increase in the underspend of £0.617m since Q3.

Public Health

The Public Health (PH) budget of £39.143m comprises of the PH grant allocation of £30.853m and additional income and grants of £3.744m. On top of this are planned draws from reserves of £1.596m for reserve projects, £2.420m released funding and £0.530m to support in year PH spending.

The 2024/25 outturn for PH expenditure is £38.393m. This is less than planned by £0.750m due to savings across reserve projects of £0.715m and £0.035m reduced spend on general expenditure to release further funding in future years.

General PH Reserves of £5.101m at the start of 2024/25 have reduced by £2.930m to £2.171m as of 31 March 2025. The Health Visiting reserve of £1.193m has increased by £0.634m to £1.827m as of 31 March 2025.

COVID-19 related funding streams

ASC has incurred the final expenditure of £0.413m relating to schemes initiated during the national COVID-19 response in 2024/25. In November 2024 the Council submitted a Statement of Assurance to the government that all £16.026m of COMF grants received were fully spent in line with the grant determinations.

Grant	Funding brought forward £'000	Planned Usage £'000	Balance Remaining £'000
Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF)	413	413	-
Total	413	413	0

Homes for Ukraine

ASC continues to lead on the programme of services to support Ukrainian guests to settle in East Sussex. Expenditure outturn in 2024/25 is £3,535m against funding of £8.303m, with the remaining budget allocated for the subsequent years of support required under statutory guidance. In addition, ASC has passed £1.437m to districts and boroughs to fund payments to hosts, in line with guidance.

HFU Grant Funding	Funding b/fwd £'000	Expected Funding £'000	Total Funding £'000	Planned Usage £'000	Funding c/fwd £'000
Tariff Funding	7,210	1,093	8,303	3,535	4,768
Thank you Payments	-	1,437	1,437	1,437	-
Total	7,210	2,530	9,740	4,972	4,768

Capital Programme Summary

The ASC Capital programme budget for 2024/25 is £3.092m and the outturn is £3.162m.

The £0.070m variance comprises spend in advance of £0.123m on the Supported Living Projects offset by an underspend of £0.053m on House Adaptations, due to lack of demand.

Construction work on Phase 2 of the Supported Living Projects is ahead of schedule at both The Meads and Jasmine Lodge by at least two weeks, despite work commencing during winter. This has caused spend to be incurred earlier than forecast and is the main reason that forecast slippage of £0.663m at Q3 has turned into a £0.123m spend in advance at Q4. The building works are expected to be complete by September 2025 and costs are forecast to be within budget.

Performance exceptions (see How to read this report for definition)**Priority – Keeping vulnerable people safe**

Performance measure	Outturn 23/24	Target 24/25	RAG Q1 24/25	RAG Q2 24/25	RAG Q3 24/25	RAG Q4 24/25	2024/25 outturn	Note ref
The % of people affected by domestic violence and abuse who have improved safety/support measures in place upon leaving the service (CP)	96%	90%	G	G	G	CO	Reported a quarter in arrears –Q3 94%	
When they leave the service the % of those affected by rape, sexual violence and abuse who have improved coping strategies (CP)	90%	88%	G	G	A	CO	Reported a quarter in arrears –Q3 87.2%	

Priority – Helping people help themselves

Performance measure	Outturn 23/24	Target 24/25	RAG Q1 24/25	RAG Q2 24/25	RAG Q3 24/25	RAG Q4 24/25	Q4 24/25 outturn	Note ref
GP practices in East Sussex deliver a targeted NHS Health Check service (CP)	9% of the eligible population in the 20% most deprived areas (IMD1) received a health check	Increase coverage of IMD1 NHS Health Checks by 9% (i.e., uptake by total eligible population)	G	A	R	CO	Reported a quarter in arrears. Q3 6%	
National outcome measure: Achieve independence for older people through rehabilitation / intermediate care (CP)	92.5%	>90%	G	G	G	CO	Reported a quarter in arrears –Q3 92.4%	
Successful smoking quits through the OneYou East Sussex service (CP)	New measure for 24/25	7% of local smoking population to set a quit date, with 50% achieving four-week quit	G	G	R	CO	Reported a quarter in arrears –Q3 3% of local population set a quit date, 54% achieved four-week quit	

Savings exceptions 2024/25 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2024/25	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved	Note ref
	-	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Savings	0	0	0	0	0	
			-	-	-	
			-	-	-	
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0	
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	0	0	0	0	0	

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total	Note Ref
	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	
Total	0	0	0	

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Revenue Budget 2024/25 (£'000)**Adult Social Care – Independent Sector:**

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2024/25 Gross	2024/25 Income	2024/25 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note ref
Physical, Sensory and Memory and Cognition Support	162,512	(89,262)	73,250	193,171	(106,369)	86,802	(30,659)	17,107	(13,552)	
Learning Disability Support	93,926	(6,130)	87,796	97,367	(9,644)	87,723	(3,441)	3,514	73	
Mental Health Support	40,401	(17,402)	22,999	40,234	(18,328)	21,906	167	926	1,093	
Subtotal	296,839	(112,794)	184,045	330,772	(134,341)	196,431	(33,933)	21,547	(12,386)	

Adult Social Care – Adult Operations

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2024/25 Gross	2024/25 Income	2024/25 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note Ref
Assessment and Care Management	34,416	(2,747)	31,669	37,716	(4,056)	33,660	(3,300)	1,309	(1,991)	
Directly Provided Services - Older People	17,944	(5,811)	12,133	16,570	(6,119)	10,451	1,374	308	1,682	
Directly Provided Services - Learning Disability	9,674	(605)	9,069	8,453	(691)	7,762	1,221	86	1,307	
Subtotal	62,034	(9,163)	52,871	62,739	(10,866)	51,873	(705)	1,703	998	

Adult Social Care- Strategy, Commissioning and Supply Management

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2024/25 Gross	2024/25 Income	2024/25 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note Ref
Commissioners, Commissioned Services and Supply Management	10,618	(4,329)	6,289	10,002	(4,561)	5,441	616	232	848	
Supporting People	6,221	(387)	5,834	6,473	(987)	5,486	(252)	600	348	
Equipment and Assistive Technology	8,504	(4,385)	4,119	9,228	(4,735)	4,493	(724)	350	(374)	
Carers	2,435	(1,736)	699	2,385	(1,691)	694	50	(45)	5	
Subtotal	27,778	(10,837)	16,941	28,088	(11,974)	16,114	(310)	1,137	827	

Adult Social Care- Planning, Performance and Engagement and Other:

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2024/25 Gross	2024/25 Income	2024/25 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note Ref
Planning, Performance and Engagement	7,894	(1,013)	6,881	11,327	(5,266)	6,061	(3,433)	4,253	820	
Service Strategy	6,637	(7,140)	(503)	6,731	(6,854)	(123)	(94)	(286)	(380)	
Safer Communities	2,147	(910)	1,237	2,908	(1,800)	1,108	(761)	890	129	
Subtotal	16,678	(9,063)	7,615	20,966	(13,920)	7,046	(4,288)	4,857	569	

APPENDIX 3

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2024/25 Gross	2024/25 Income	2024/25 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note Ref
Total Adult Social Care	403,329	(141,857)	261,472	442,565	(171,101)	271,464	(39,236)	29,244	(9,992)	

Public Health – Core Services:

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2024/25 Gross	2024/25 Income	2024/25 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note Ref
Mental Health & Best Start	3,562	-	3,562	3,756	-	3,756	(194)	-	(194)	
Health Visiting (Reserve funded)	8,406	-	8,406	7,772	-	7,772	634	-	634	
Risky Behaviours and Threats to Health	14,354	-	14,354	14,186	-	14,186	168	-	168	
Health Systems	3,637	-	3,637	3,593	-	3,593	44	-	44	
Communities	1,054	-	1,054	938	-	938	116	-	116	
Central Support	3,869	-	3,869	4,047	-	4,047	(178)	-	(178)	
Recovery & Renewal	245	-	245	166	-	166	79	-	79	
Funding/Savings to be released	2,420	-	2,420	2,420	-	2,420	-	-	-	
Public Health Grant income	-	(30,853)	(30,853)	-	(30,853)	(30,853)	-	-	-	
Other Grants and Income	-	(3,744)	(3,744)	-	(4,610)	(4,610)	-	866	866	
Draw from General Reserves	-	(2,950)	(2,950)	-	(2,049)	(2,049)	-	(901)	(901)	
Deposit to Health Visiting Reserve	-	-	-	634	-	634	(634)	-	(634)	
Project Board Reserve	1,596	(1,596)	-	881	(881)	-	715	(715)	-	
Total Public Health	39,143	(39,143)	0	38,393	(38,393)	0	750	(750)	0	

Capital programme 2024/25 (£'000)

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget 2024/25	Actual 2024/25	Variation (Over) / under 2024/25 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
Supported Living Projects	6,421	6,421	3,042	3,165	(123)	-	-	(123)	
Greenacres	2,598	2,598	-	-	-	-	-	-	
House Adaptations for People with Disabilities	2,769	2,716	50	(3)	53	53	-	-	
Total ASC Gross	11,788	11,735	3,092	3,162	(70)	53	0	(123)	

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Business Services – end of year 2024/25

Summary of progress on Council Priorities, issues arising, and achievements

Key cross cutting programmes

Carbon

In line with our current Climate Emergency Action Plan 2023-2025, progress continued in Q4 on the delivery of energy efficiency projects across the estate. A total of 3 projects were completed in Q4:

- 2 window replacement projects: Bexhill Library and Grovelands Primary School
- 1 Heat Decarbonisation Project: Peasmarsh Primary School

The Council Plan target for 2024/25 was to complete 23 energy efficiency projects and the outturn was 20. This reflects cuts to both the Salix Recycling Fund and the ring-fenced Council budget for directly funded carbon saving projects. However, there were business as usual projects which help make up some of the shortfall in project numbers, albeit with relatively lower carbon savings than targeted low carbon projects. Work to increase training continued, with 2 energy efficiency workshops taking place in Q4, bringing the total delegates trained during 2024/25 to 105, exceeding the target of 40. Ongoing work continued to support the 10 sites in the pilot Site Heating Control Interventions Initiative, with annual savings of £6,300 being achieved from no- or low-cost measures.

Energy consumption and carbon emissions are reported a quarter in arrears, so Q3 data is the most up to date information (**ref i**). Our carbon emissions for Q3 2024/25 were 2% lower than Q3 2023/24, despite the weather being slightly colder. The weather in Q4 will have significantly influenced the total annual consumption but if consumption was similar to Q4 last year, then the projected emissions reduction for 2024/25 would be 1.3% year on year compared to a 13% target. The reduction compared to the baseline year 2019/20 would be 36%, against a target of 50%. Actual outturn consumption and emissions data will be available in Q1/Q2 2025/26. The UK grid carbon emissions factor (which is the figure used to convert electricity consumption from the national grid into equivalent carbon emissions) has remained static since 2023/24, so the Q3 fall in emissions is due to a reduction in the amount of electricity and gas consumed by the Council.

The Council's annual spend on electricity has significantly reduced since 2019/20. The spend figures below have been estimated using the consumption figures from 2019/20 and 2023/24, price-corrected against the average unit rates from 2023/24. The spend figures are based on consumption only (i.e. not including standing charges or any other non-commodity costs).

Year	Spend
2019/20	£7,148,566
2023/24	£5,422,112

These spend figures demonstrate that the introduction of renewable energy creation (e.g. solar PV), a reduction in buildings owned and occupied, energy efficiency measures and initiatives, resulted in an estimated financial reduction of £1,726,454 (24% reduction) when comparing 2023/24 to 2019/20.

Oracle Implementation

Implementation of the Oracle Fusion system continued throughout Q4 with most modules of Phase 1 (Enterprise Performance Management) and all of Phase 2 (Finance with dependent HR processes, Procurement and Helpdesk modules) now live. The Recruitment module is also live and use by hiring managers will follow training in Q1 2025/26. Phase 3 (Payroll and all remaining HR processes) will be delivered during 2025 and 2026.

The programme is now in a 3 month 'hypercare' period of enhanced support from the programme team and partners. The system is proving stable and the majority of queries to the helpdesk are

about system access due to inherent complications with roles and permissions. This is typical in system implementations and improvements have been identified and are being implemented.

Human Resources and Organisational Development (HROD)

During 2024/25 a new People Strategy was developed for 2024-2027. The strategy helps support our managers and staff to respond to the changing and challenging operating environment in which the Council exists. It supports the delivery of the Council's priorities and provides the direction and purpose for our people related activities. Stakeholder engagement confirmed the four themes from the previous strategy remain appropriate. These are: Leadership and Management; Performance, Development and Reward; Employee Engagement and Inclusion; and Employee Health and Wellbeing. Using the evidence gained from our engagement, the strategy includes specific activities and deliverables within each of the four themes. In conjunction with the People Strategy a 'Leadership Management Capability Framework' has been developed which sets out the management and leadership standards expected in support of the Council's priority outcomes and operating principles. Work is continuing with departments to embed this.

In common with many employers, we are experiencing recruitment and retention challenges in some occupational areas as a result of current labour market conditions and cost of living pressures. As part of HROD's work to respond to these pressures a number of actions have been implemented, including:

- Development of a new employer brand – We Choose East Sussex – and updated recruitment materials to identify the Council as an employer of choice. Throughout 2025/26 we will build on our successful recruitment campaign to understand more about what attracts people to join the Council and encourages them to stay.
- Implementation of a number of targeted recruitment and retention strategies such as a new 'refer a friend' scheme an updated relocation policy, employee loans policy, salary sacrifice schemes and financial wellbeing resources. Market supplements are paid for some of our roles, for example social workers in Children's Services.
- Continuation of hybrid working arrangements to broaden our recruitment pool and to respond to new expectations in the workforce on flexible working post-COVID-19. We are also developing digital approaches.
- Use of apprenticeships, traineeships and intern arrangements as a way of bringing new talent into the Council. This will be further developed as the arrangements for the new Growth and Skills Levy become clear.
- Attendance at events, such as careers fairs and shows, to maximise our presence with job seekers, as well as linking in with organisations that support people back into employment to extend our reach into sections of the labour market that are underrepresented or face significant barriers to employment.
- Guidance on making reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates has now been published and promoted to recruiting managers. The Council's suite of recruitment policies is also currently being reviewed to embed inclusive practice.
- Guidance on the use of volunteers, as a route into the workplace, is in development with the intention being for such opportunities to support people who are out of work to come back into the workplace through gaining confidence and experience of work.
- Guidance on the completion of exit interviews has also been published and a workforce planning toolkit launched in Q4 to support operational managers with forecasting and planning for future workforce capacity.

Attendance Management and Wellbeing

The 2024/25 year-end sickness absence figure for the whole authority (excluding schools) is 9.21 days lost per FTE, an increase of 0.9% since last year. The target of 9.10 days/FTE has therefore been missed.

Key drivers of this increase include:

- Flu-related absence, up by 1,025 days on 2023/24.
- Musculoskeletal (MSK)-related absence, up by 1,037 days on 2023/24 - primarily within Adult Social Care.

Mental health remains the leading cause of absence, though the total number of days lost rose only marginally (+14 days). Notably, stress-related absence fell by 1,306 days, linked to proactive early contact with managers by the Attendance Management team since January 2023. This has helped reduce the average duration of stress-related absences from 24 to 17 days.

Actions underway:

- HR are reviewing short-term flu-related absence data and offering targeted coaching and training for managers as appropriate.
- Building on the success of the stress intervention, a pilot for early intervention for MSK-related absence in ASCH has now commenced, with contact being made with the manager in the first week of absence.
- The dedicated MSK project with Brighton University has completed its Phase 1 evidence gathering with recommendations, implementation will follow in September 2025.

Ongoing health and well-being initiatives include:

- Targeted health workshops addressing key absence reasons.
- Evaluation of well-being support via the "Most Significant Change" method, including feedback from the Time to Talk about Mental Health campaign.
- Expansion of our Mental Health First Aiders network.
- Regular menopause cafés to support staff wellbeing.

This multi-pronged strategy aims to ensure support and interventions are evidence-based, targeted, and responsive to staff needs.

Procurement

Procurement, contract and supplier management activities

The Council has spent £382m with local suppliers over the past 12 months. This equates to 60% of our total procurement spend, against a target of 60%. 815 local suppliers were used. The Procurement team continues to promote contract opportunities to local suppliers, as well as building local supply chain opportunities into tenders where possible.

Social Value

A number of contracts that commenced in 2024/25 secured significant social value commitment, including:

- Building & Washroom Cleaning Services for the Council's corporate and schools estate: The successful supplier committed to a Social Value offer of £1.76m over the initial 3 year contract term (14% of contract spend). Social Value benefits include apprenticeship and job opportunities for local people, including those in priority groups such as long term unemployed and young people not in employment, education or training (NEET); work experience and career awareness programmes offered to local schools and colleges; and initiatives to reduce operational carbon emissions.
- The Joff & Heathfield Youth Centres construction works: The successful supplier committed to a Social Value offer of £4.27m across the 2 contracts (69% of combined contract spend). Social

Value benefits include spend with local supply chains; apprenticeships; professional development opportunities for local people; job opportunities and employability support for local people in priority groups, including long term unemployed; and supporting environmental programmes with local groups, schools and colleges.

- Hollington Youth Hub Works Contractor: The successful supplier committed to a Social Value offer of £700k (30% of contract spend). Social Value benefits include spend with local supply chains; the creation of local jobs; work experience and career awareness programmes offered to local schools and colleges; local volunteering time for staff and initiatives to reduce operational carbon emissions.

The Social Value secured through our Property Frameworks used for the Planned Maintenance Programme in 2024/25 has been reported in Q4. Contracts with a combined value of £11.5m were awarded and secured £1.8m in Social Value, which equates to 16%. The Social Value consists of a number of different measures, including targeted spend with local sub-contracted suppliers and contractors, which is an important contributor to economic growth, and various employment and skills initiatives.

In Q4, a total of 11 contracts commenced, of which 8 were out of scope of the Social Value Measurement Charter, which quantifies the economic, social and environmental benefits of the procurement, as they accessed an existing pre-approved list of suppliers (Frameworks) with predefined contractual terms. The in-scope contracts for Q4 had a total contract value of £14.6m and secured £2.5m in Social Value commitment, which equates to an outturn of 17% against a target of 10%.

These figures bring the final outturn figure for the year to 19% against a target of 10%.

Procurement policy

The Procurement Act 2023 came into force during Q4 and the Policy Team led on ensuring this significant legislative change was embedded into the Council's Procurement and Supply Chain operations. This has included finalising the Procurement & Contract Standing Orders which were recently approved and included officer obligations with respect to Modern Slavery, Environmental Sustainability and Social Value. Internal governance changes have taken place and are being communicated to officers across all departments.

Further work on developing the Council's Social Value Model (SVM) has been undertaken following the previous update to Place Scrutiny Committee in September. This has included the creation of a Needs and Strategies tool which helps buyers to identify and target social value outcomes more closely aligned with existing Council priorities.

Highlights of the Policy Team's work over 2024/25 include:

- Successfully preparing the Council for the implementation of the Procurement Act and National Procurement Policy Statement.
- Drafting and embedding the Council's Supplier Code of Conduct in our procurements and contracts, which is a key practical lever of Council policies.
- Increasing the number of suppliers reporting carbon emissions and reduction plans to more than 50% of overall spend and a reduction of overall Scope 3 supplier emissions of more than 30% for 2023/24 (the latest annual data available) compared to the baseline year of 2022/23.
- Successfully implementing a trial of the SVM in Adult Social Care and Health procurements and reporting positive feedback from voluntary and charity sector organisations and commissioners on this qualitative approach to social value. This will lead to a wider development and roll-out of the SVM in due course.

Work is continuing to engage the care sector in East Sussex to deliver Modern Slavery training which has previously been rolled out successfully in Surrey and Brighton.

Contract and Commercial Advisory (CCA)

Much of the CCA's focus in Q4 was on ensuring the Council is compliant with the Contract Management obligations as prescribed in the Procurement Act 2023. As well as launching a new suite of guidance material and training, proactive engagements with the early affected projects are now underway. For 2025/26, the team's focus will remain on the regulations as we approach key new stages in the Procurement Act that will require careful consideration and action. This includes the publication of Contract Details Notices, which for some projects (£5m+) will require the publication of the contract Key Performance Indicators and a redacted copy of the contract itself. On top of this, the team will focus on Contract Assurance activities to begin providing the authority with the assurance that contracts are performing as required and that contract managers are appropriately trained, in line with the National Procurement Policy Statement.

Internal Audit

Through the delivery of sufficient audit coverage in Q4, the Chief Internal Auditor continues to be able to provide assurance over the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and internal control for the Council.

Internal Audit have continued to focus on delivery of the Annual Internal Audit Plan and were able to complete 95% of the plan to draft report stage by the end of Q4, against an annual target of 90%.

All high priority actions agreed with management as part of individual audit reviews are subject to action tracking, whereby we seek written confirmation from services that these have been implemented. As at the end of Q4, 14/15 (93.3%) of the agreed high-risk actions due to be implemented on a 12-month rolling basis have been actioned by management. The one outstanding action, relating to the need to introduce a declaration to the staff loan application process that requires staff to confirm that they have considered the affordability of the loan, has not yet been implemented. A revised implementation date has therefore been agreed.

Property

Following approval by the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change (LMRCC) in Q4 the Council acquired Eastbourne Borough Council's share of Pacific House, Eastbourne, and with Eastbourne Borough Council commenced marketing of the commercial development site, known as Site 6, adjacent to Pacific House. In March 2025, the LMRCC approved the grant of a lease of Sidley Depot to Rother District Council for their waste services, and approved the disposal of land linked to the development of the North Street Quarter in Lewes which enables the regeneration of a strategic brownfield site.

The Council continues to ensure its office hubs are used efficiently and during 2024/25 the space used for staff based at County Hall was rationalised and reduced. In Q4, the Council vacated both South and East blocks, which involved over 163 teams moving to remaining blocks (Central, North, and West). The vacant blocks are being advertised for office use, with marketing commencing in March 2025. The total work on office rationalisation across the corporate estate, including at Eastbourne and Hastings, has provided significant benefits to the Council including £1.050m of financial benefit, reductions in resource required to support ongoing facilities management and maintenance, and reductions in carbon emissions.

Two youth centre projects, funded by external capital funding from central government (Youth Investment Fund) are nearing completion. Works to the main structures of The Joff, Peacehaven, and Heathfield youth hubs were completed in Q4 and final fitout will take place in Q1 2025/26. In addition, planning permission was granted in Q4 for Hollington Youth Hub, which was funded by central government as part of Hastings Level Up Funding. Two Supported Living Adult Social Care capital projects were completed and became operational with clients moving in.

IT & Digital

Microsoft Copilot M365 discovery work was a focus for Q4. 33 pilots identified by a cross-Council working group are now underway to investigate how AI can be used safely and responsibly to enhance productivity and enable efficiencies. Webinars, workshops and 'prompt-a-thons' have been taking place throughout Q4 to support pilot participants in their contextual application of the technology. Usage is being monitored to enable evaluation of the relative benefits and these results will inform any business case that would be fed into the RPPR process.

Work to replace the Council's office and contact centre telephony platforms continued through Q4 and the Council's contact centres migrated onto the new platform during April. Remaining users of office telephones will move over to Microsoft Teams Telephony in Q1 2025/26. The proposed changes will modernise a key aspect of the Council's digital infrastructure – moving from desk-based landline phones to a digital service which is aligned to hybrid working. Mobile phone and other IT equipment use continued to be targeted as part of cost saving measures, supported by a communication campaign asking for unused smartphones and kit to be returned to IT & Digital. Work continues on the eligibility criteria for a corporate smartphone, with the aim being to reduce the number of smartphones used and in turn lower costs.

The Windows 11 device refresh project continued during Q4. With the end of support for Windows 10 approaching in October 2025, the project has passed its midpoint milestone, with over 3,000 devices now refreshed and staff experiencing the benefits of a faster device and upgraded operating system. Devices will now be refreshed every 5 years to extend the value of the assets. The scale at which this is done (across 3 councils through the Orbis Partnership) has many benefits and, in this case, a saving of 18% per device has been achieved through this joint procurement.

IT & Digital resources continued to support moves in conjunction with the office rationalisation work ongoing throughout Q4.

The migration of services to the new South East Grid (SEG) network on behalf of the Link Consortium is now complete. Hosted by the Council, the network allows the Council and other public sector organisations in the South East to access higher speed digital infrastructure connections and contributes to the provision of ultra-fast data network connectivity throughout East Sussex.

Our Strategic Digital Framework sets out how we will use technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our business processes. During 2024/25 we:

- reviewed our IT systems and upgraded these where possible to take advantage of advances in technology. However, there is a significant cost involved in replacing older systems, requiring cost/benefit judgements on a case-by-case basis.
- took part in benchmarking exercises to understand how well we are performing.
- adopted a data management framework to set best practice guidelines around data standards, data principles and data policy.
- maintained a set of clear and robust information governance processes to make sure data is kept safe and is shared and used appropriately.

Revenue Budget Summary

The 2024/25 Business Services net revenue budget is £30.753m. There were £1.003m planned savings in BSD for 2024/25 including £0.310m of unachieved savings brought forward from 2023/24 (**ref ii**). The impact of any unachieved savings is included within the current outturn forecast which is a £0.405m underspend (**ref viii**). In Business Administration and Finance – there was an underspend of £0.389m (**ref iii**) as the result of new grant income, higher than budgeted income for services and a reduction in expenditure. IT&D has an underspend of £0.145m (**ref iv**) because of reduced costs including staff vacancies and a £60k contract expense expected in 2024/25 that has slipped to 2025/26. In Procurement the balance of the unrealised £0.100m income target (**ref v**), will be offset from part of the underspend arising from a forecast reduction in

the required contribution to Orbis of £0.307m (**ref vii**). In Property there is a net overspend of £0.333m (**ref vi**) which is a reduction of over £0.300m since Q3. The main factors include; £0.240m overspend relating to St Mark's House as the Eastbourne estate had been planned to reduce in 2023/24, however the Council remained in the premises until October 2024; at Q3 there was a net £0.205m overspend on Reactive Maintenance due to Health & Safety Executive requests and essential equipment that had to be replaced. However, in Q4 spend was comparatively lower which has helped to improve the overall position. Overspends that Property were unable to mitigate during Q4 include a £0.140m net overspend on the PFI and Joint Use budgets. Finally, there have been areas of underspending; Surplus Properties had additional income of £0.129m due to the Mckinley Way Easement. Facilities Management had a favourable movement of £0.090m where a milder winter reduced gritting and utilities costs. £0.152m reduction in consultants being engaged, and some additional income relating to backdated lease renewals. £0.052m underspend on Cleaning and Waste Budgets. £0.072m underspend on the Property Staffing budget from vacancies that were kept on hold for the remainder of the financial year.

Capital Programme Summary

The 2024/25 capital budget is £39.059m. At Q4 there is a net £9.943m underspend (**ref xviii**) comprising the following variances: SALIX Contract - £0.256m underspend (**ref ix**) Salix Recycling ended in March 2025. Youth Investment Fund - £1.745m slippage (**ref x**) due to design changes and subsequent planning approvals needed to bring the project back within budget. Hollington Youth Centre - £0.327m slippage (**ref xi**) a main contractor has now been appointed, and the works were started but the majority has slipped into 2025/26. Special Educational Needs - Grove Park £0.232m slippage (**ref xii**) due to issues with site conditions and badger setts, works are now slipped into the next financial year. Core Programme - Schools Basic Need £0.368m underspend (**ref xiii**) £0.146m of the EY Childcare Wraparound grant will slip into 2025/26 and there is an underspend due to no further mobile classrooms being required after Q3. Core Programme - Capital Building Improvements Corporate - £0.875m net slippage (**ref xiv**) relates to slippage for St Marks dilapidations. Core Programme - Capital Building Improvements Schools - £1.033m slippage (**ref xv**) supply chain delays, lack of contractor capacity and adverse weather affected several projects, pushing them into 2025/26. Core Programme - IT & Digital Strategy Implementation - slippage of £2.191m (**ref xvi**) which relates to a change in approach to the Nutanix refresh (previously reported) and reprofiled spend on the device refresh project. Core Programme – Oracle – £2.622m slippage (**ref xvii**) as programme work continues into 2025/26 a portion of the expenditure will now be incurred in 2025/26.

Performance exceptions (Q4: RAG change since Q3)

Priority – Making best use of resources now and for the future

Performance measure	Outturn 23/24	Target 24/25	RAG Q1 24/25	RAG Q2 24/25	RAG Q3 24/25	RAG Q4 24/25	2024/25 outturn	Note ref
Reduce the amount of CO2 arising from County Council operations	36% reduction on baseline year (2019/20) emissions	50% reduction on baseline year (2019/20) emissions (emissions not to exceed 6,211 tonnes CO2e)	R	R	R	CO	Emissions are reported a quarter in arrears Q3: projected reduction by year end: 36% reduction on baseline year	i

Savings exceptions 2024/25 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2024/25	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved	Note ref
Planned savings – BSD Property	593	803	803	-	-	
Planned savings – BSD IT&D	100	100	100	-	-	
Planned savings – Orbis Procurement		100	100	-	-	
Total Savings	693	1,003	1,003	-	-	ii
			-	-	-	
			-	-	-	
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0	
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	693	1,003	1,003	-	0	

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total	Note Ref
Property	-	-	-	
Procurement	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	
Total	-	-	-	

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Revenue Budget 2024/25 (£'000)

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2024/25 Gross	2024/25 Income	2024/25 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note ref
Finance and Bus Admin	13,156	(6,517)	6,639	13,979	(7,729)	6,250	(823)	1,212	389	iii
HR & OD	3,407	(1,107)	2,300	3,597	(1,286)	2,311	(190)	179	(11)	
IT & Digital	13,212	(4,132)	9,080	15,083	(6,148)	8,935	(1,871)	2,016	145	iv
Procurement	62	(100)	(38)	70	(16)	54	(8)	(84)	(92)	v
Property	26,882	(17,895)	8,987	30,290	(20,970)	9,320	(3,408)	3,075	(333)	vi
Contribution to Orbis	3,785	-	3,785	3,478	-	3,478	307	-	307	vii
TOTAL BSD	60,504	(29,751)	30,753	66,497	(36,149)	30,348	(5,993)	6,398	405	viii

Capital programme 2024/25 (£'000)

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget 2024/25	Actual 2024/25	Variation (Over) / under 2024/25 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
SALIX Contract	350	350	350	94	256	256	-	-	ix
Lansdowne Unit (CSD)	39	39	39	1	38	38	-	-	
Youth Investment Fund	7,003	7,003	7,203	5,458	1,745	-	1,745	-	x
Hollington Youth Centre	-	-	663	336	327	-	327	-	xi
Hastings & Rother Skills LUP	-	-	1,000	907	93	-	93	-	
Hastings and Rother LUP Minibus	70	70	70	-	70	-	70	-	
Sidley Family Hub	90	90	90	90	-	-	-	-	
Sorrell Drive Refurbishment	165	165	165	165	-	-	-	-	
Special Educational Needs	2,510	2,510	560	522	38	46	9	(17)	
Special Educational Needs - Grove Park	17,120	17,120	1,300	1,068	232	-	232	-	xii
Special Provision in Secondary School (Priory and Robertsbridge)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Disabled Children's Homes	189	189	24	10	14	-	14	-	
14 Westfield Lane	17	17	17	-	17	-	17	-	
Core Programme - Schools Basic Need	61,874	61,874	600	232	368	222	146	-	xiii
Core Programme - Capital Building Improvements Corporate	45,482	45,482	4,401	3,526	875	-	875	-	xiv
Pacific House	713	713	713	713	-	-	-	-	
Core Programme - Capital Building Improvements Schools	40,401	40,401	5,097	4,064	1,033	-	1,033	-	xv
Core Programme - IT & Digital Strategy Implementation	71,234	71,234	7,399	5,208	2,191	-	2,191	-	xvi
Core Programme - IT & Digital Strategy Implementation Oracle	26,513	26,513	9,344	6,722	2,622	-	2,622	-	xvii
IT & Digital - Utilising Automation	24	24	24	-	24	-	24	-	
Total BSD Gross	273,794	273,794	39,059	29,116	9,943	562	9,398	(17)	xviii

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Children's Services – end of year 2024/25

Summary of progress on Council Priorities, issues arising, and achievements

Early Help and Social Care

Family and Youth Hubs

Our Family and Youth Hubs are now well established as delivery points for a range of Early Help services. This includes:

- **Health visiting** - April 2024 to Mar 2025
 - New Birth Visits - 98.23% completed of the 4,170 that were due a visit.
 - 6–8-week Visits - 96.74% completed of the 4,204 that were due a visit.
 - 1-year Visits - 95.11% completed of the 4,516 that were due a visit.
 - 2½ Year Visits - 92.33% completed of the 4,708 that were due a visit. More parents choose to decline this visit due to children attending nursery or parents working.
- **Infant feeding**
 - In Q4, 1338 calls were made to 950 Parents were called to offer feeding advice/support at 10 days after birth.
 - 757 calls were successful, and 192 parents were referred to feeding support and/or were referred to midwifery.
 - Our breast-feeding rates for Q4 were 59.2% above the national average of 53% (at Q3, latest data available) so we are confident that this intervention (which began with a pilot in Q2 2023/24) is making a difference.
- **Language and communication support**
 - Of 673 children identified as not achieving the expected milestones in language skills in Q4 2023/24, 96.39% either showed an improvement in language skills or were referred for specialist therapy by Q4 2024/25.
- **Family keywork**
 - During Q4, Early Help keyworkers delivered intensive support to 1023 families (2,142 children).
 - 188 Early Help keywork plans ended in Q4, 155 with the outcomes achieved. Only 16% stepped up to social care.
 - During Q4, 92.5% agreed that things have changed for the better as a result of getting targeted support from the 0-19 Early Help Service.
- **Parenting support**

We have had a focus on perinatal mental health support and improving the parent infant relationship.

- In 2024/25, 401 sessions of perinatal counselling were held, with 91% parents showing an improvement in their mental health
 - 100% of those completing a Time for Me (post-natal support group for mild-moderate anxiety) intervention showed a positive outcome in Q4.
 - 100% parents reported a better awareness of their response to their infant after engagement with BrightPip (parent infant psychotherapy).
- **Youth Hubs**
- Funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) via the Youth Investment Fund has allowed us to upgrade two outdated Youth Hubs in 2024/25. Both Hubs are set to reopen their doors this summer once work is fully completed.
- Heathfield Youth Hub is nearing completion. It is a new purpose built rural Youth Hub offering young people from Heathfield and the surrounding area access to a range of positive activities and youth support services.

- The JOFF Youth Hub in Peacehaven is undergoing a significant refurbishment and extension doubling the existing footprint. The newly improved Youth Hub will provide a much-needed broad range of positive activities and youth support services for young people from the Havens.

Capital funding was secured through the government's Levelling Up programme for a major refurbishment of Hollington Youth Hub in Hastings. This includes extending its facilities to meet the demands of local children and young people. The Hub closed at Easter 2025 – and is due to reopen in March 2026.

Young people have been involved at all stages of these three developments. They have identified the types of activities and support they would like to see delivered from the new buildings, and played a role in helping design the interiors of the buildings.

Homes

At Q4, our 4 open Children's Residential Homes are all judged Good and are operating at full capacity. We have reduced staff vacancies and enhanced management oversight. This has resulted in reduced levels of agency use in the homes.

Lansdowne Secure Children's Home has received a second Good judgement since reopening and has evidenced financial sustainability (with a £0.605m underspend in 2024/25). As part of our year 2 plan, we are working towards submitting a Variation of Approval to Ofsted. This will allow us to increase capacity to 10-12 children (we are currently registered for 7).

Our two further residential homes for children with disabilities have experienced significant challenges over 2024/25. They are currently rated as Requires Improvement. We have a robust action plan in place and recent visits from Ofsted have confirmed the positive trajectory of both homes. Recruitment across residential services remains a national challenge. We are working with the Department for Education (DfE) National Support programme and the South East Regional Care Cooperative to actively address this need.

Transformation

We have set up a governance structure for the transformation programme established in response to the government's Families First Partnership programme and the children's social care reforms included in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. The Transformation Board is chaired by the Director of Children's Services. We have established multi-agency workstreams which meet monthly and report to the Board. The workstreams are beginning work on:

- Earlier intervention – supporting partners to hold more lower level risk with support from Team Around the Family Co-ordinators and a professional help line. Work is underway to launch in September 2025.
- Family Help – the integration of early help keywork and social work teams in line with the DfE Families First Partnership guidance. A pilot is planned for late 2025/early 2026 with full implementation of the new model planned for autumn 2026.
- Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams – these will support child protection statutory duties. They will include social work, education, police and health. We plan to pilot our approach in East Sussex in autumn 2026 and launch as set out in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill in 2027.
- Family Network and Kinship care – consolidating the family group conference offer and developing plans to upskill the workforce and partners to facilitate family network meetings. These will support families to support children in their family network.

Child in Need (CIN) cases and Child Protection Plans (CPP)

The Council's Family and Youth Support Teams (FYSTs) continue to focus on addressing specific parental risk factors around mental health, substance issue and domestic abuse. These factors underpin a significant number of CPP cases. The FYSTs continue to work towards these cases stepping down to a CIN status. In addition, they retain a focus on safely closing as many CIN

cases as possible and improving knowledge and awareness of Early Help services to ensure families are supported as part of the step down from statutory social care services.

- The number of CIN (not including Children's Disability Service (CDS) CIN) reduced slightly from 955 at end of Q3 to 953 at the end of Q4. This is a 10% reduction on the Q4 2023/24 figure of 1,060. CDS CIN numbers reduced slightly over the course of 2024/25 from 151 to 137 (9% decrease). This has been achieved in CDS despite the continued change in the work process where children's cases are now not transferred to Adult Social Care until they reach their eighteenth birthday (cases previously transferred at age 16).
- Over the course of 2024/25 there were four months when the number of CIN plans (non-CDS cases) increased from the total the previous month and on 8 other cases the numbers reduced. This reflects the inter-relationship between CIN numbers and CPP numbers as well as the impact on how many children are brought into FYST via the Duty and Assessment Team (DAT) Family Assessment work each month. This is also dependent on other variables such as CIN closure numbers and new numbers of children being transferred from the DAT. CIN closures continue to be a priority for all FYST's and a target remains for the 150 CIN closures to take place each month across the 10 FYST's.
- We reduced the overall number of children countywide subject to CIN plans from 315 at the end of March 2024 to 256 at the end of March 2025. A specific target during 2024/25 was to reduce the proportion of open CIN cases open for 9 months or more from 29% at the end of March 2024 to 15% at the end of March 2025. Despite reducing this figure to 21% by the end of October 2024 this has subsequently increased to 27% by the end of March 2025. This remains a particular issue in East FYST teams where 35% of our CIN children have been open for 9 months or more, compared with only 21% in the West FYST teams. This may reflect greater levels of deprivation across the East of the county. We remain committed to reducing this to 15% across the county in 2025/26.
- In Q4, the re-referral rate increased slightly, from 16% to 17%. Whilst this is still relatively low this will be carefully monitored to identify and address any emerging themes. In four of the last five months the re-referral rate has exceeded the existing target, and this may reflect the greater numbers of CIN cases being closed each month.
- At the end of Q4, there were 614 children (59.8 per 10,000) subject to a CPP. This is a 5% reduction from the 645 recorded at Q3 and an 11% reduction from the 691 recorded at Q4 2023/24. This means we have met our target of below 661 children (63.4 per 10,000). Connected Families Intervention Practitioners (CFIP) support continues to be instrumental in reducing demand at these highest levels of concern.
- At the end of Q4 we had 73 children subject to a CPP for 18 months or more. This is an 8% reduction from Q3 (80 children) but the proportion of children in this category remains over the 10% target at 12%. This remains a priority area for development for 2025/26.

Connected Families Intervention Practitioners (CFIP)

CFIP, introduced in January 2024, deliver intervention for parents experiencing difficulties. They tackle the main causes of family breakdown, delivering rapid and proactive support and evidence based interventions. The teams include practitioners who specialise in working with the adults in the family on the key areas of domestic abuse, mental health and substance misuse. In 2024/25 the service worked with 539 families with children on CPP or CIN plans.

- CFIPs work with families has been instrumental in enabling and sustaining change and reducing risks.
- 77% of the families achieved the aim of the intervention through completing assessments, programmes, bespoke support, and accessing tailored advice and guidance. 17% disengaged and did not complete the intervention. The needs of only 6% of families escalated during/post CFIP interventions.

Improvements in Public Law Outline (PLO) timeliness

As part of Children's Services post inspection improvement plan the revision and expansion of the PLO Tracker and reporting measures has allowed the service to more comprehensively track all of our cases, understand their outcomes and timeliness and the rationale for any delay. This has helped to drive the improvements we have seen during 2024/25 alongside the practice changes we have introduced. The average length of PLO at end of Q4, was 16.9 weeks (compared to 24 weeks at Q1). 10% of cases were over 26 weeks (compared to 20% at the time of Ofsted inspection). Through effective use of the PLO period during 2024/25 39% of children were successfully diverted from care proceedings and enabled to continue to live within their families.

Family Group Conferences (FGCs) and Kinship care

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill recommends making FGCs a statutory requirement prior to care proceedings, embedding them as a mandatory first step in decision-making when children are at risk of entering care. This approach reflects a broader national shift towards family-led solutions and kinship-based care. The Council's FGC service has been operational for over 20 years and is accredited by the Family Rights Group. The service is nationally recognised for its quality and impact. It has a specialist team delivering trauma-informed and restorative interventions. As part of Children's Services transformation programme planning is underway to deliver earlier support to families using this approach. In 2024/25, 92% of families were referred to the FGC service prior to the first Meeting Before Proceedings meeting.

In December 2023, the DfE published Championing Kinship Care, the first national kinship care strategy, setting out clear guidance for local authorities. East Sussex is among 11 local authorities working in partnership with Foundations to implement the Kinship Care Practice Guide. The Guide promotes evidence-based support for kinship carers. East Sussex was invited to present on its work in a national feedback panel, reflecting external recognition of the Council's strategic leadership in this area.

- In Q4 9.5% of Looked After Children were placed with kinship carers
- We are currently providing financial support to 484 children subject to Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs).

Enhanced in-house foster care offer

To improve placement sufficiency, enable more children to have access to our high-quality foster carers and achieve value for money we have focused on enhancing our in house foster carer offer. As a result of our improved recruitment campaign in 2024/25 we have recruited 30 new households, which equates to 47 places. During the same period, 13 households retired from being foster carers (22 places). Our net gain for 2024/25 is 17 households which equates to 25 places.

Rate of Looked After Children (LAC) (per 10,000 children)

At the end of Q4 there were 691 LAC (67.3 per 10,000) a small decrease from 698 at the end of Q3. This is above the target of 61.8 (635 children).

During Q4, 39 children were admitted into local authority care via our DAT and FYST teams (Locality Children's Social Care). One child was admitted via the Child Exploitation Team (part of Youth Justice Service). 9 of those children had ceased to be LAC by the end Q4. This compares with 53 who became looked after under the same pathway in Q3. 49% of these children became looked after via a Section 20 Children Act 1989 arrangement, with 33% entering care through care proceedings (Section 38 Children Act 1989 Interim Care orders) and 18% initially via Police Protection. All LAC admissions continue to be authorised at Assistant Director level.

A summary of those entering care is provided below:

- 15% were provided with LAC status following or alongside a Meeting Before Action (MBA) process. This process is used when we believe that the risks to a child are so great that it might be necessary to ask the court to decide where the child will live and who they should live with

through a court order. These children were placed with either their wider family or foster care. All children subject to this legal status are reviewed each month with a RAG rating provided based on the likelihood of them returning to parental care or to that of a wider family member.

- 18% entered care via an unplanned crisis led pathway, via Police Protection (Section 46 Children Act 1989). 5 of those 7 children had returned home by the end of Q4.
- 3% re-entered local authority care via an adoption disruption.
- 5% entered local authority care as a result of a special guardianship order disruption.
- 13% entered local authority care due to being considered beyond parental control. 3% of these children had also experienced an adoption disruption. These children are predominately adolescents with a complexity of needs including emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns, neurodiversity, special educational needs, and behaviours that challenge. An additional factor is the challenge around identifying appropriate education provision to meet these children's needs. Placement and support costs for these children are often the most significant.
- 8% entered local authority care via the Southwark Judgement Homeless pathway which requires the local authority to support homeless 16–17-year-olds in need of accommodation and support.
- 5 of the 13 children who became LAC via an Interim Care order (Section 38 Children Act 1989) did so following completion of an MBA process.
- 4 of the children became subject to an Interim Care order via private law proceedings where the primary issue of concern was parental alienation. All 4 of these interim care orders had been discharged by the end of Q4.
- There has been a continued reduction in the number of families subject to MBA during 2024/25 compared to our last inspecting local authority children's services (ILAC) Inspection in December 2023. At the time of that ILAC inspection there were 47 families subject to the MBA process. At the end of Q4 there were 30 families subject to the same process with 84% within the statutory timescale of 16 weeks. This demonstrates the continued improved oversight, timeliness and rigour of response to children within pre-proceedings. Parental mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse continue to be the predominant concerns with regards to children who were made subject to an Interim Care order (Section 38 Children Act 1989) in Q4 alongside 3 children who had been suspected of suffering non accidental physical injury. The investment in CFIP (who specialise in interventions in these 3 areas) continues to be critical in achieving positive change and enabling more children to live safely within their families.

38% of the 39 children admitted into care in Q4 were placed in foster care and 20.5% were placed with kinship carers. 10% required a Residential Children's Home provision. 18% were Placed with Parents (this is a high figure this quarter but includes 4 children being made subject to an interim care order (ICO) through private law proceedings). 8% of the children required post 16 supported accommodation and 5% were placed in an assessment foster care placement with their mother (now ended during Q4).

In addition, 12 separated migrant children arrived and came into our care in Q4. All these children are looked after under Section 20 of the Children's Act. The majority have been placed into post-16 supported accommodation, with two placed with foster carers.

HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) inspection of Youth Justice Service delivered in East Sussex

HMIP undertook an inspection of our youth justice services in the week commencing 10 June 2024 and published the inspection report on 17 September 2024. With an overall rating of Good, the report recognises the commitment and motivation of the partnership and youth justice service and the work they do to support children, young people and their parents and carers. 9 of the 13 areas inspected are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. We are delivering our action plan to address the areas for improvement.

Education

Recruitment of childminders

In March 2025, we launched our '[Do something big](#)' campaign to recruit more childminders in East Sussex. The campaign is part of our work on the sufficiency of Early Years places, and preparation for the expansion of Early Years places.

The government currently funds 15 hours per week childcare for children aged nine months and above. In September 2025 this will increase to 30 hours. We expect demand for childminders to rise, especially for wraparound care for primary school children. The Council is offering a £600 grant to encourage childminders to deliver care before and after school. This is being used to help attract new people to the sector.

Improving attendance across East Sussex

In January 2025, 140 school leaders attended the 'The Power of Connection: Responding Together for Success' event. Attendees included headteachers, principals, and attendance leads. The purpose of the event was to collaborate on improving attendance across our schools and settings.

One of our Young Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Ambassadors opened the event. They highlighted the importance of breaking down barriers faced by young people around attendance. Attendees also celebrated and shared best practice from local primary and secondary schools. This included:

- strategies to improve attendance and a sense of belonging
- the impact of current work with young people and families across East Sussex in breaking down barriers around attendance

Attendance remains a key priority for Children's Services. We are committed to fostering continued cooperation with school leaders and multi-agency partners to ensure our collective efforts on attendance are effective and have impact.

Although challenges remain, we are beginning to see some positive developments which, if they continue, will be reflected in the attendance data for the 2024/25 academic year, which will be reported in 2025/26. This includes the persistent absence rates for all pupils, including those with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and receiving Special Educational Needs (SEN) support, which is currently lower than at the same time last year.

East Sussex Area SEND Inspection and SEND Improvement Plan

We continue to work with our partners across the East Sussex SEND community to deliver the East Sussex SEND Strategy 2022/25. In November 2024 we had our Area SEND Inspection of the East Sussex Local Partnership. Ofsted published their report in February 2025. The local area received the middle outcome: *The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)*. The local area partnership will work together to make the improvements. The Partnership has updated the East Sussex SEND Strategy with the Inspection Implementation Plan. We have also agreed to extend our current SEND Strategy 2022/25 until September 2026. The SEND Strategy Governance Board will oversee the implementation of this plan.

It is important to note that this round of Local Area SEND inspections comes at a time of significant challenge for local authorities, the vast majority of whom are struggling to implement the full breadth of the 2014 reforms due to increasing demand and insufficient resources. Key challenges include:

- There have been significant increases in the number of requests for EHCP assessments (1,164 requests in 2024/25, compared to 553 in 2020/21) and in EHCPs that are issued (540 new plans issued in 2024/25, compared to 318 in 2020/21).

- The tribunal system does not have to take account of the resource implications for local authorities which can compound issues due to expectations of the families of children with SEND.
- The funding of SEND does not take into account levels of demand and relies on an out-dated formula. This means that there is significant disparity across the country in terms of how different local authorities are funded.

Improving Alternative Provision in East Sussex

In 2024/25, we reviewed our Alternative Provision (AP) offer. The offer supports pupils unable to access mainstream education due to exclusion, illness, or other challenges. We have established an Alternative Provision Subgroup, consisting of relevant partners, including school leaders. The subgroup reports to the Joint Board and SEND Strategy Governance Board. Key responsibilities of the group include:

- ongoing review of the AP offer
- overseeing the planned transfer of our Pupil Referral Unit provision to a new academy trust by September 2025.

Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) project

Throughout 2024/25 the Council has been taking part in the national PINS project. This was a joint NHS and DfE programme that aimed to support the education and health needs of neurodiverse children in mainstream primary schools. The project was designed to be time limited and ended in March 2025. It focused on a partnership approach, and we worked closely with the East Sussex Parent Carer Forum. From September 2024 to March 2025, 16 East Sussex schools took part. Both national and local evaluations, including testimonials and case studies, are underway to better understand the impact of the project. Positive feedback locally from parents, young people, and school throughout the delivery phase helped to shape the project in East Sussex.

We will continue working closely with the participating schools to assess how the learning from the project is being embedded and to help determine future support needs.

The percentage of eligible 2-year-olds who take up a place with an eligible early years provider

The percentage of eligible disadvantaged children aged 2 years old (**ref i**) who took up a funded place in the spring 2025 funding period was 73.5% (808 out of a DfE list of 1,100 families who could potentially be eligible). This is below the national average of 74.8%.

This is a reduction from 80% at Q3. However, this reduction is due to differences in how children are being reported. Some of the children who are eligible to access a funded place as a disadvantaged 2-year-old are also eligible to take up a funded place under the working families funding streams implemented from April 2024. This is reflected in the lower number of children being identified as a disadvantaged 2-year-old.

The difference in how future reporting of the percentage of children eligible for both funding streams was not flagged in Q3 as the external IT provider and the DfE were expected to provide a work around for local authorities. We expect to be able to identify the number of disadvantaged 2-year-olds who are also eligible for the working families funding stream, approximately 18% of total cohort, for Q1 2025/26.

Average attainment 8 score

- The average attainment 8 score for state funded pupils (**ref ii**) for academic year 2023/24 is 43.1 (revised results published by the DfE on 27 Feb 2025). This is below the national figure of 46.1 and below our target was 44.
- The average attainment 8 score for disadvantaged pupils (**ref iv**) for academic year 2023/24 is 30.1 (revised results published by the DfE on 27 Feb 2025). This is below the national figure of 34.7 and below our target of 30.5.

- Final, validated data for LAC attainment 8 score academic year 2023/24 (**ref iii**) is expected to be published in June 2025. The provisional outturn is 14.7 which is below the target of 19.0.

Further improvement in attainment is needed in Hastings and Bexhill. The performance of four academies in the area impacts significantly on the overall outturn for East Sussex. The young people attending those schools account for approximately one fifth of all secondary pupils in year 11. Actions we are taking to improve secondary school attainment for academic year 2024/25 include:

- Targeting school improvement resources through the Secondary Board. This includes using our external adviser programme to deliver bespoke support as needed.
- Focusing on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. We are embedding a programme of 'Study Visits' to provide Continuing Professional Development for Headteachers and Senior Leaders.
- Attendance is a critical factor when considering attainment and progress outcomes for all key stages and pupil groups. We continue to support all secondary schools to implement 'Working together to improve school attendance' which became statutory in August 2024.
- For LAC, we continue to offer tutoring in English and Maths to all our cohort but with a focus on year 10 and 11 students. Personal Education plans cover the importance of revision and young people and carers are given revision advice. We are dedicated in our support for our Year 11 students, providing intensive assistance to remove obstacles that could impact their exam success. Many of our Year 11 cohort have experienced challenging circumstances which will impact on their performance.

The percentage of young people who are in Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at academic age 16 (year 12) and academic age 17 (year 13) including unknowns

- The percentage of young people who are NEET at academic age 16 (**ref v**) for 2024/25 is 4.2% against a target of less than or equal to 5%. This is within target and an improvement on last year's annual figure of 4.4%.
- The percentage of young people who are NEET at academic age 17 (**ref vi**) for 2024/25 is 5.7% against a target of less than or equal to 7%. This is within target and an improvement on last year's annual figure of 6%.

The commissioned advice and support that our Youth Employability Service (YES) provides has had a positive impact in supporting young people to access education, employment, and training. We continue to work with the DfE and local colleges to expand the courses available at Level 2 and below. Level 2 courses are generally equivalent to GCSEs and can serve as a pathway to Level 3 courses, apprenticeships, or employment.

The proportion of academic age 16-17 years whose Education, Employment and Training (EET) situation is not known is 0.9%. This is less than the national figure of 2.2%.

Communications Planning and Performance

Climate Change Event for Education Settings

In March 2025, we held our East Sussex Climate Change online event for Education Settings. The event was attended by participants from 40 education settings across East Sussex. It provided a platform for them to showcase their ongoing initiatives related to climate change. The event included an update on the DfE's Sustainability Strategy and the East Sussex Climate Change Charter. One of the highlights of the event was an inspiring talk by Fergus Garrett, Head Gardener at Great Dixter. He spoke about the potential of gardening in schools to enhance biodiversity. Attendees had the opportunity to engage in a lively question and answer session with our expert panel. The event highlighted the dedication and creativity of our education settings in addressing climate change.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme

The HAF programme continued in 2024/25. We worked with around 86 providers who offered over 38,600 sessions over the course of the year. Feedback showed that many parents felt HAF had benefitted their child's wellbeing and confidence and, in turn, had had a positive impact on the mental health of some parents and families.

Partnership working

We have worked with NHS and other partners to:

- develop information, advice and guidance for CYP mental health and emotional wellbeing
- update the council wide Equality Strategy to include support to schools
- establish the Care Experience Partnership Group
- re-sign the Armed Forces Covenant

Revenue Budget Summary

The department has a total net budget of £146.985m in 2024/25, and the Q4 outturn was £160.632m. This is a year-end overspend of £13.647m (**ref xi**).

The main area of overspend is within Early Help and Social Care, but due to additional investment in the LAC budget this year, the Council did not overspend to the same extent as 2023/24.

The second largest service pressure Children's Services have is within Home to School Transport.

Not included in the figures reported above is the position of the Dedicated Schools Grant, which, in accordance with the Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2020, is required by local authorities to be carried forward on their balance sheets. As of 31st March 2025, the East Sussex has a cumulative Dedicated Schools Grant surplus of £2.837m, which is very unusual, as most local authorities have significant DSG deficits. However, this will not continue as a forecast cumulative deficit is expected by the end of 2025/26. The statutory override is due to expire in March 2026, which means that any deficit will then be offset against useable council reserves.

Central Resources underspend of £1.440m (ref vii)

Central Resources has a budget of £1.063m and outturn overspend of £0.377m. The position worsened by £0.035m in Q4 due to small movements in staffing and legal costs.

Early Help and Social Care overspend of £12.392m (ref viii)

Early Help and Social Care has a budget of £109.145m and outturn expenditure of £121.537m. The position improved by £0.721m in Q4.

The position for Separated Children (formerly called Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) worsened by £0.058m, taking it to a £0.494m overspend. Since Q3, the Home Office grant return for April-September 2024 has been completed and returned, so the income is now more definite. However, the income for October-March had to be estimated and accrued, as the Home Office don't confirm funding until the next financial year.

The Looked After Children (LAC) service had a £9.087m overspend. This improved by £0.330m in Q4:

- There was an increased overspend of £2.324m within LAC agency placements (i.e. not in-house):
 - £0.113m increase relates to placement moves for 11 children. 6 stepdown moves resulted in lower cost placements, whereas 5 children moved from in-house provision to agency provision.
 - £0.536m increase relates to 9 new agency placements. Part of this cost relates to a block bed contract recently negotiated with the YMCA.
 - £1.575m increase related to additional support for 22 children who exhibited high risk behaviours or increased complexity of needs. Any short-term additional support is robustly

reviewed each month and stepped down as soon as possible. This figure includes a recharge from Lansdowne Secure Unit for East Sussex children.

- £0.502m increase was due to 6 extended placements, in 1 secure unit and 5 residential children's homes.
- £0.100m decrease came from additional income from Education for 5 children with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities who are in residential care.
- £0.348m decrease was due to 12 placements ending sooner than expected. Children either stepped down to in-house provision or were placed for adoption. This is a key focus for the service, maximising use of in-house resources when it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- £0.047m increase was because of other small adjustments.
- A growth and churn calculation in LAC numbers had been added to the forecast. As we're now at year-end, this has been removed, which reduced the LAC figure by £0.704m.
- Additional income from Education, the Integrated Care Board, Virtual School, recovery of overpayments, and the Supported Accommodation reform grant, led to a reduction in spend of £0.395m in Q4.
- The Lansdowne Secure Unit ended the year with a £0.605m underspend, which was an improvement of £1.031m between Q3 and Q4. The Q4 movement was mainly due to recharging the LAC agency budget for additional agency staff who had been recruited to care for an East Sussex child in the unit. The unit received £5.125m income in the year for children placed there. £1.747m of this came from other Local Authorities and £3.38m came from the East Sussex LAC budget. In this way, the true cost of the children placed there was properly reflected, so as to demonstrate that Lansdowne could operate as a business unit.
- There were other small mitigations which decreased spend by £0.524m in Q4 amongst Careleavers and Throughcare, Fostering Services and Adoption Services.

The Localities service had an overspend of £2.760m. This improved by £0.333m in Q4:

- Salary costs have decreased by £0.229m. Ongoing work is taking place within Localities to reduce the staffing structure down to the budget available. There is £2.929m set aside as growth for Localities staffing in the Medium Term Financial Plan from 2026/27, as agreed in 2023/24 budget-setting.
- Non-staffing changes resulted in a £0.104m decrease in spend in Q4:
 - A significant contributor to the overspend in year was the statutory, non-avoidable, duties the authority has relating to intentionally homeless families. The financial position worsened by £0.167m in Q4. £0.145m of this is due to non-recoupment of rent costs from universal credit clients.
 - The family support teams saw increased pressures of £0.122m in relation to accommodation, school transport, and taxi costs.
 - Placements for children with SEND decreased by £0.309m. There were some recoupments where children have moved to another local authority and some forecast placements for long and short term care didn't materialise.
 - Other smaller movements in Parent and Baby placements, S17 ISEND Children, Special Guardianship Orders, Legal, and other totalled a £0.085m decrease in Q4.

Specialist Services ended the year with a £0.592m overspend, which was an increase of £0.300m in Q4. Recharges for staff costs from Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust were £0.322m higher than projected, but this was partially mitigated elsewhere within the service.

The Early Help 0-19 service delivered an additional underspend of £0.250m in Q4, taking it to a £0.485m total underspend. The service continued with its recruitment freeze of Level 2 Keyworkers and maximised its use of grant income.

There were other small favourable movements totalling £0.166m within the Youth Justice, Connected Families, Early Help Other, Management, and Social Work & Education services.

Education underspend of £0.734m (ref ix)

Education has a budget of £129.700m and outturn expenditure of £128.966m.

There was a £0.733m improvement in Q4. £0.496m of this was within Standards and Learning Effectiveness and £0.111m was within Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

There was a year-end underspend of £0.753m within Standards and Learning Effectiveness. £0.284m of this was an underspend on HUGG vouchers funded by the Household Support Fund. This freed up the fund to support Education service costs. There was also a reduction in the planned use of consultants within the Primary and Secondary school board budgets of £0.146m, as well as other smaller decreases totalling £0.066m.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities finished the year with a £0.020m overspend. In Q4, there was additional funding received from the "SENDAP Change Programme" for work carried out by the Alternative Provision team.

Communication, Planning and Performance (including Home to School Transport) overspend of £3.429m (ref x)

Communication, Planning and Performance has a budget of £28.283m and outturn expenditure of £31.712m. The position improved by £0.479m in Q4.

Home to School Transport ended the year with an overspend of £3.849m, which was an improvement of £0.312m in Q4.

Since Q3, legal advice was sought, which confirmed the possibility of charging personal transport budgets for children with Education and Health Care Plans to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. This mean that £0.571m of transport expenditure could be recharged.

At year-end there was £0.705m spend relating to providing transport for children from other local authorities during academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25. Due to clashing legislation issued by central Government, there is no consistent approach taken by local authorities on this matter. £0.297m of this outstanding debt has been rolled forward into financial year 2025/26, based on a calculation of debt owed by authorities who have indicated they may pay.

There were various small movements totalling a £0.167m improvement in Q4 for: Outdoor Education, Music, Planning & Performance Improvement, Safeguarding, Supported Families, Equalities & Participation, and Organisational Development.

Capital Programme Summary (ref xiv)

Children's Services had a capital budget in 2024/25 of £2.599m and outturn expenditure of £2.572m. This is an underspend of £0.027m.

There was £0.117m overspend within the Housing Adaptations for Disabled Children's Carers' Homes project (**ref xii**). A backlog of adaptations had been agreed, with a number of these being delivered in 2024/25 resulting in the overspend, however some of these will slip into 2025/26.

£0.144m budget was unspent and slipped into 2025/26 for the Essential System Development Projects (**ref xiii**). There has been a delay in part of the system purchase due to a change in ownership of the system.

Performance exceptions**Priority – Driving sustainable economic growth**

Performance measure	Outturn 23/24	Target 24/25	RAG Q1 24/25	RAG Q2 24/25	RAG Q3 24/25	RAG Q4 24/25	Q4 24/25 outturn	Note ref
The percentage of eligible 2 year olds who take up a place with an eligible early years provider	ESCC: 84% Nat Avg: 73.9%	Equal to or above the national average	G	A	G	R	ESCC: 73.5% Nat Av: 74.8%	i
Average Attainment 8 score for state funded schools	Ac year 2022/23 ESCC: 43.6 Nat Av: 46.4	Ac year 2023/24 44.0	G	A	A	R	Ac Year 2023/24 ESCC: 43.1 Nat Av: 46.1	ii
Attainment 8 score Looked After Children (LAC)	Ac year 2022/23 ESCC 18.9 Nat Av 19.4	19	G	G	A	R	14.7 (provisional)	iii
The average Attainment 8 score for disadvantaged pupils	Ac Year 2022/23 ESCC: 30.3 Nat Av: 35.1	30.5	G	G	A	R	Ac Year 2023/24 ESCC: 30.1 Nat Av: 34.7	iv
The percentage of young people who are in Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at academic age 16, including unknowns	4.4%	Equal to or below 5%	G	G	A	G	4.2%	v
The percentage of young people who are in Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at academic age 17, including unknowns	6%	Equal to or below 7%	G	G	A	G	5.7%	vi

Savings exceptions 2024/25 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2024/25	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved	Note ref
	-	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Savings	0	0	0	0	0	
			-	-	-	
			-	-	-	
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0	
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	0	0	0	0	0	

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total	Note Ref
	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	
Total	0	0	0	

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Revenue Budget 2024/25 (£'000)

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2024/25 Gross	2024/25 Income	2024/25 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note ref
Central Resources	2,978	(1,915)	1,063	3,240	(3,617)	(377)	(262)	1,702	1,440	vii
Early Help and Social Care	129,297	(20,151)	109,146	151,128	(29,590)	121,538	(21,831)	9,439	(12,392)	viii
Education	138,655	(8,955)	129,700	147,774	(18,808)	128,966	(9,119)	9,853	734	ix
Communication, Planning and Performance	32,583	(4,300)	28,283	39,150	(7,438)	31,712	(6,567)	3,138	(3,429)	x
Schools	154,894	(154,894)	-	154,894	(154,894)	-	-	-	-	
DSG Non Schools	-	(121,207)	(121,207)	-	(121,207)	(121,207)	-	-	-	
Total CSD	458,407	(311,422)	146,985	496,186	(335,554)	160,632	(37,779)	24,132	(13,647)	xi

Capital programme 2024/25 (£'000)

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget 2024/25	Actual 2024/25	Variation (Over) / under 2024/25 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
Housing Adaptations for Disabled Children's Carers' Homes	1,168	1,285	50	167	(117)	(117)	-	-	xii
Schools Delegated Capital	32,269	32,269	1,943	1,943	-	-	-	-	
Conquest Centre redevelopment	341	341	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Youth Investment Fund	193	193	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Children's Services Essential System Developments	606	606	606	462	144	-	144	-	xiii
Total CSD	34,577	34,694	2,599	2,572	27	(117)	144	0	xiv

Communities, Economy & Transport – end of year 2024/25

Summary of progress on Council Priorities, issues arising, and achievements

Economy and environment

Employability and Skills

The Council aims to support young people in the county by giving them the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their careers. This support is provided through a range of initiatives. 211 Industry Champions were supporting schools and colleges at the end of Q4, including during the National Apprenticeship week in February 2025 and National Careers Week in March 2025. Young people were also supported through work experience placements, sessions to help them develop their networking and interview skills, and Open Doors workplace visits. During 2024/25, over 1,500 students have had the opportunity to go on an Open Doors workplace visit, and over 50 employers have committed to offer visits. An iCan careers event in March 2025 was attended by more than 400 young people from 34 schools. They had the opportunity to explore career pathways, engage in 6 interactive workshops on employability skills, and connect with representatives from 32 different organisations (employers, training providers and support organisations) offering guidance on employment, training, and further education.

Building on the success of the previous Effective Transitions 'Steps to Success' pilot in East Sussex, which ran between 2021 – 2023, the Council was selected to take part in Phase 2 from 2024 – 2026. Phase 2 started in September 2024 with 315 Year 10 students who are on Free School Meals and are either persistently absent from school or have Special Education Needs or Disabilities. The project will help to determine what interventions are effective in helping vulnerable young people to successfully transition into post-16 environments.

The Council continued to help adults improve their numeracy skills through 14 Multiply interventions in 2024/25. 1,300 people were supported as part of the interventions, which included the East Sussex College Group delivering maths interventions for the hospitality sector and a maths through payslips short course.

Apprenticeships

In 2024/25, 147 new and existing staff enrolled onto apprenticeships. This is a 21% increase on the number of new starters for 2023/24. A large proportion of these have come from Children's Services, where all new staff working within a residential or community-based setting now undertake an apprenticeship to meet the mandatory training requirements of the role. By transferring staff onto apprenticeships, rather than paying for external training, Children's Services saved £39,150 in training costs in 2024/25. In addition, this has also meant a significant uptake in spend from the Council's levy.

The Government announced plans in September 2024 to transform the apprenticeship levy into the 'Growth and Skills' Levy. We are still awaiting the detail of the changes which are now expected to be included in the autumn statement. The delay in this information being published means that the new, shorter 'foundation' apprenticeships, targeted at young people working within positions of need, such as care, are also delayed. However, one change that has been implemented is the removal of the requirement for apprentices who do not have a GCSE in Maths and/or English to undertake functional skills training. This requirement has always been a significant barrier to a more expansive uptake of apprenticeships, and we are anticipating a wider range of candidates wishing to undertake an apprenticeship as a result.

Cultural investment and recovery

Recruitment of the formal Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) board began in Q4. The LVEP Strategy for Growth was circulated in Q4, to support recruitment to the board.

With support from the Council and other partners, Towner Eastbourne hosted the Turner Prize in 2023/24. An economic impact report has found that the Turner Prize exhibition, the prize giving ceremony, and the accompanying Eastbourne Alive programme produced £16.1m of benefits to the East Sussex economy. 130,000 people visited the exhibition, and the estimated value of the media coverage was £14.3m.

Broadband

The Broadband Project has formally closed. We continue to engage with Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) on its Project Gigabit programme and Cityfibre, who have been appointed as the BDUK's supplier for East and West Sussex and Brighton & Hove. We are currently in discussion with Cityfibre to explore the possibilities of pushing their rollout even further since there is no detail of how BDUK plans to cover the very hardest to reach properties in the county. There is still no update on the possible reopening of the Gigabit Voucher scheme run by BDUK although some areas of the country now have a revised scheme, mainly in urban areas.

Job creation

21 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs were created by Economic Development managed programmes in Q4, meaning the total for 2024/25 is 60 (FTE) against a target of 45 (FTE) **(ref i)**. 29.5 (FTE) jobs were created through the first round of the Newhaven Business Grants Programme, 18.5 (FTE) through the first round of the Rural Business Grants Programme, and 12 (FTE) through the delivery of specialist business support through the 'Big Ambitions' programme.

Environment and climate change

We continue to work both across the organisation and with partners across a range of environment and climate change areas. This included:

- Deciding, after an assessment of the potential for a solar farm at the closed landfill site at Pebsham, that the preferred approach is to seek to lease the site to a third party commercial solar farm developer when the site reverts to the Council in 2028. This is subject to completing further assessments of viability, which will also require an external grant to be secured.
- Beginning to test the climate change adaptation toolkit, which is designed to assist services to integrate adaptation into their services.
- Starting discussions with GB Energy about options for securing third party funding for rooftop solar panels on grant-maintained schools.
- Providing environmental advice to client local planning authorities on nearly 2,000 planning applications during 2024/25.
- Working with all Sussex local authorities to prepare for the fourth round of Sussex Solar Together in summer 2025.
- The Council helped to deliver the 40% of the actions set out in the East Sussex Climate Emergency Road Map 2022 – 2025 which were assigned to the Council. The remaining 60% of actions are assigned to other partners in the Road Map.
- Delivering the Cold Alert service to over 3,000 residents.
- The Council continued to host the [Sussex Nature Partnership](#) and the [Sussex Air quality partnership](#).
- We have continued to develop the local nature recovery strategy, which is currently planned to be published by early 2026.

Planning

100% of County Matter applications were determined within the statutory determination period during 2024/25, against a target of 70%. 100% of County Council development applications were determined within 8 weeks or within an agreed extension of time during 2024/25, against a target of 70%.

Highways, transport and waste

Highways improvements and road condition

The road condition outturns (where a lower figure indicates better road condition), were published in Q4. These figures are only available at one point each year and are based on specialist laser surveys undertaken in summer 2024 for Principal and Non-Principal roads, and manual surveys for Unclassified roads in 2025. The outturns refer to the percentage of road length across the entire county, and all roads are likely to have a mixture of green, amber and red road condition sections. The surveys measure road condition in 10m sections. The road condition outturns reported here are the percentage of 10m sections that should be considered for maintenance. So, for example, a proportion of 5% indicates that 5% of all 10m sections surveyed of that road type should be considered for maintenance. The percentage of Principal roads requiring maintenance was 5%, against a target of 7%. The percentage of Non-Principal roads requiring maintenance was 6% against a target of 8%. The percentage of Unclassified roads requiring maintenance was 31%, against a target of 25%, so the target has been missed (ref ii). The intense strain on resources means that we are not able to invest in road maintenance to the level we would want to and have been forced to scale back our plans to match the grant funding we receive.

We repaired 8,009 potholes in Q4, with 6,734 of these being carriageway potholes; the remainder were primarily footway potholes. Amongst the carriageway potholes, 90.8% of these were completed within the required timescales. Overall, during 2024/25 over 23,000 potholes have been repaired, with almost 19,000 of these being carriageway potholes. We completed 29 road improvement schemes in Q4 to improve the condition of the roads. Overall, 117 road improvement schemes have been completed in 2024/25.

We replaced, repaired or cleaned 92 road signs in Q4. The patching and drainage projects were completed at the end of Q3. During 2024/25 we completed 510 patches across 381 sites. We replaced, repaired or cleaned 350 road signs and refreshed 683 road markings. We also completed 565 minor road drainage schemes, and 75 larger schemes.

Road safety

5 road safety infrastructure schemes were implemented in Q4. During 2024/25 a total of 24 schemes have been implemented, meeting the target for the year of 24. The Council runs courses aimed at giving children and adults the skills they need for riding their bikes on the road. We delivered 76 Bikeability courses to 691 individuals in Q4. During 2024/25, 476 courses were delivered to 4,085 individuals, meeting the target for the year. 50 'Wheels for All' sessions were delivered to 607 attendees in Q4. During 2024/25 474 sessions were delivered to 5,823 attendees, meeting the target for the year.

Transport and parking

East Sussex was assigned an additional £9.9m by the Government for 2025/26, as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). Options for this extra funding were considered at a Lead Member meeting in Q4. On 22 April 2025, Cabinet agreed to allocate some of this money to the Exceat Bridge project, to enable the preferred option of a 2-lane, offline replacement bridge to continue.

£18.5m of capital funds were allocated to bus priority measures in East Sussex as part of the Government's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). 5 bus priority schemes across Eastbourne, Newhaven and Peacehaven were identified, and a public consultation on all schemes took place in summer 2023. 3 of the 5 schemes are progressing through the design stages with construction to follow from Q3 2025/26. In Q4, a Project Adjustment Request was approved by the Department for Transport to transfer funds from 2 of the bus priority measures to the Exceat bridge project. Approval to reallocate these funds to the Exceat bridge replacement project was given by Cabinet in Q1 2025/26. The Council has agreed to allocate the 2025/26 BSIP capital funding to the Newhaven (The Drove and Denton Roundabout) bus priority scheme. We aim to deliver the Telscombe Cliffs to Peacehaven bus priority scheme at the earliest opportunity if future BSIP funding is available.

Following approval by the Department for Transport, and the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles, the Council has received the full allocation of £4.441m from the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund, which will help to support the delivery of on street electric vehicle charge points in the county. The tender for the contract to install the charge points is due to be published in Q1 2025/26.

The Lead Member reviewed and approved proposed increases to parking charges in Rother in Q4, after having considered the feedback and recommendations to a consultation on the proposed changes.

Local Transport Plan

The new Local Transport Plan was approved by the Cabinet and County Council in Q2. Following this, work has continued to agree the future governance and monitoring arrangements for the plan and undertake a carbon assessment. Alongside the Local Transport Plan, the Rail Strategy has been refreshed, and a new Freight Strategy has been developed. However, due to the need to engage in further consultation on the Rail Strategy and Freight Strategy, including a public consultation, these strategies were not adopted by the end of 2024/25. Adoption is expected to take place in 2025/26.

Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling project

Following a review of the Eastbourne and South Walking & Cycling Package, a revised package of schemes was approved by the Lead Member in September 2024. These comprise the Eastbourne cycle parking phase 2 – which was completed in March 2025 – as well as the Horsey Cycle Route Phase 1b (between Ringwood Road and Ashford Road) and Eastbourne rail station to seafront cycle routes. Both the cycle routes are currently at the design phase with construction scheduled for 2025/26.

Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access package

The package of improvements to Eastbourne town centre is progressing on schedule. Final preparation work for Phase 2a, which will see changes to Langney Road, Bolton Road and the pedestrianisation of Terminus Road between Bankers Corner and M&S/Millets is ongoing. Our Highways contractor, Balfour Beatty Living Places has begun the tender process for construction, and this is scheduled to commence in summer 2025. Despite some delays in the planning process, the construction of Phase 2b (Victoria Place) has begun, with the drainage works package complete and the main works commencing. This project is on track to be fully completed by December 2025.

Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package

The pedestrian crossing improvements in Albert Road Hastings were substantially complete by the end of 2024/25, with final footway works and road safety audit to be completed in Q1 2025/26. Detailed designs have been finalised for the Station Approach junction improvements in Hastings and construction is expected to take place in Q3 2025/26. The design also

progressed for the Bexhill Cycle Route, with land ownership discussions ongoing. Traffic regulations orders were advertised in early 2025; and the design is being reviewed to take the objections received into consideration.

Waste

The Q3 outturn (reported a quarter in arrears) for the amount of waste re-used, recycled or composted or used beneficially was 55%. There was a small increase in total waste in Q3, combined with a decrease in the recycle, reuse, beneficial use and composting tonnage.

A public consultation on the proposal to introduce a booking system for the Household Waste Recycling Sites closed on 22 December 2024. A booking system has the potential to provide financial savings to the Council by stopping trade waste illegally entering the sites. Around half of local authorities already have booking systems in place, including several neighbouring authorities, and they have reported they are working well. The Lead Member agreed to the implementation of the booking system in Q4, and this is expected to be in place by autumn 2025.

Rights of Way (RoW) and Countryside Sites

We completed 96% of high priority maintenance work on schedule in Q4, the total for 2024/25 was 91% against a target of 80%. A new section of the '[King Charles III England Coast Path](#)' opened on the 6 December 2024. This new stretch of National Trail creates a continuous 28-mile (45km) walking route between Eastbourne Pier and Rye Harbour. It also forms part of the roughly 350-mile 'South East England Coast Path' National Trail, running from the London Borough of Bexley to Shoreham-by-Sea.

Communities

Trading Standards

Trading Standards made 44 active interventions in Q4, to protect vulnerable people. During 2024/25 we made 290 interventions, meeting the target of 200. 98 interventions were with new victims identified through support sessions. These victims were offered advice and support. 192 interventions were with people who contacted the service to ask for assistance after falling victim to financial fraud or rogue trading. 57 businesses received training or advice from Trading Standards in Q4. During 2024/25 360 businesses received training or advice, against a target of 350.

This year has seen a number of significant seizures of illegal tobacco and vape products. During 2024/25 Trading Standards seized illegal cigarettes with a total retail value, if genuine, of £418,506, and illegal hand rolling tobacco with a retail value of £28,451. Illegal vapes with a retail value of £60,000 were seized over the course of the year.

Libraries

826,973 visitors came into our libraries in 2024/25, an increase from 759,005 in 2023/24. In 2024/25 44,314 participants attended library events, this compared to 34,210 in 2023/24 and 25,802 in 2022/23. 150 new volunteers have been recruited to support our volunteer offers including home library service, IT For You, Rhymetimes and conversation groups. In addition, refurbishment of Seaford and Bexhill libraries were completed in 2024/25 which have ensured our libraries are maintained in a safe and appropriate condition from which to support delivery of our Libraries Strategy.

6,602 children took part in the Summer Reading Challenge in summer 2024, exceeding the target of 5,200. 3,880 children completed the challenge, and they were provided with certificates to celebrate their success.

350 people enrolled on Family Learning Programmes at East Sussex libraries in Q4. During 2024/25, 1,347 people enrolled on programmes, against a target of 1,300. 30 people passed online learning courses in libraries in Q4, including in IT, English and Maths. During 2024/25, 99 people passed online learning courses, against a target of 75, achieving qualifications to help towards finding work, gaining a new role, or entering into further education to improve their careers.

Revenue Budget Summary

The CET revenue budget is £72.873m and has underspent by £1.289m. There were underspends across the department following the in-year introduction of vacancy and other spending controls and these account for £319k of the underspend. The largest underspend is in Waste in Transport and Operational Services where higher than budgeted recycling income and lower Private Finance Initiative contract prices due to lower inflation, was partly offset by reduced electricity income (**ref vi**). The underspend in Communities was mostly due to staff vacancies, training, and slippage on completing Road Safety schemes (**ref v**). In Customer, Libraries and Registration there has been a large increase in marriage income and income from the registration academy (**ref iv**). The Economy underspend was mostly due to the receipt of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government grant for Local Enterprise Partnership transition work and slippage in pipeline projects that were not able to be completed (**ref viii**). The largest overspend was in Highways where the cost of electricity for streetlighting and depots was much higher than budgeted and there was an increase in the number of winter service jobs (**ref vii**). The planned Parking saving was not achieved this year due to lower levels of income than was forecast and delays in removing parking machines and therefore the need to continue to pay the costs (**ref iii**).

Capital Programme Summary

The CET capital programme has a gross budget of £52.186m and there was slippage of £9.879, spend in advance of £193k, and overspend of £34k. The largest slippage was on the Exceat Bridge scheme where works are on hold while detailed design and alternative options are costed (**ref xiv**). The Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package Phase 2b was delayed due to the need to readvertise a traffic regulation order (**ref xi**). Phase 2a of that package will go to planning in June, with existing objections carried forward from a previous traffic order (**ref x**). The public consultation on the A22 Corridor scheme has resulted in changes to the design, commencement, and procurement timeline (**ref xiii**). There were delays across the Bridge Strengthening scheme as designs are being reworked to achieve better value for money (**ref xv**). The Queensway Gateway Road has been delayed following a scheme redesign and underground utility issues that are awaiting approvals from the relevant statutory bodies (**ref ix**). There are a number of projects in the Other Integrated Transport scheme that slipped mainly due to planning and design issues (**ref xii**). There are additional schemes with smaller variations to their budgets.

Performance exceptions (Q4 – RAG status changed to Red, Green, and Carry Overs)**Priority – Driving sustainable economic growth**

Performance measure	Outturn 23/24	Target 24/25	RAG Q1 24/25	RAG Q2 24/25	RAG Q3 24/25	RAG Q4 24/25	2024/25 outturn	Note ref
Job creation from East Sussex Programmes	27 jobs created	45 jobs created	G	G	A	G	60 FTE jobs created	i
Percentage of Unclassified roads requiring maintenance	17%	25%	G	G	G	R	31%	ii

Savings exceptions 2024/25 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2024/25	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved	Note ref
Parking	-	745	-	745		iii
Environmental Services	-	60	60	-		
Total Savings	0	805	60	745		
			-	-	-	
			-	-	-	
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0	
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	0	0	0	0	0	

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total	Note Ref
	-	745	745	
	-			
Total	0	745	745	

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Revenue Budget 2024/25 (£'000)

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2024/25 Gross	2024/25 Income	2024/25 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note ref
Management and Support	5,620	(4,081)	1,539	1,664	(225)	1,439	3,956	(3,856)	100	
Customer and Library Services	9,842	(4,059)	5,783	9,874	(4,514)	5,360	(32)	455	423	iv
Communities	3,457	(926)	2,531	3,055	(1,086)	1,969	402	160	562	v
Transport & Operational Services	114,237	(71,272)	42,965	117,761	(75,840)	41,921	(3,524)	4,568	1,044	vi
Highways	21,607	(4,941)	16,666	22,679	(4,750)	17,929	(1,072)	(191)	(1,263)	vii
Economy	4,008	(1,886)	2,122	4,108	(2,332)	1,776	(100)	446	346	viii
Planning and Environment	5,909	(4,642)	1,267	5,634	(4,444)	1,190	275	(198)	77	
Total CET	164,680	(91,807)	72,873	164,775	(93,191)	71,584	(95)	1,384	1,289	

Capital programme 2024/25 (£'000)

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget 2024/25	Actual 2024/25	Variation (Over) / under 2024/25 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
The Keep	1,096	1,096	130	-	130	-	130	-	
Gypsy and Traveller Site Refurbishment	700	700	70	3	67	-	67	-	
Peacehaven Library	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Libraries	5,139	5,139	725	727	(2)	-	-	(2)	
Broadband	33,800	33,800	65	172	(107)	-	-	(107)	
Bexhill and Hastings Link Road	126,247	128,347	-	34	(34)	(34)	-	-	
BHLR Complementary Measures	1,800	1,800	141	9	132	-	132	-	
Economic Intervention Fund	8,884	8,884	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Economic Intervention Fund - Loans	3,000	3,000	-	20	(20)	-	-	(20)	
Stalled Sites Fund	916	916	-	-	-	-	-	-	
EDS Upgrading Empty Commercial Properties	500	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Community Focused Road Safety Interventions	750	750	129	125	4	-	4	-	
Safer Roads Fund A2100	840	840	30	11	19	-	19	-	
Climate Emergency Works	8,859	8,859	2,220	2,036	184	-	184	-	
Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme	4,891	4,891	1,212	1,119	93	-	93	-	
Flood Management SuDS	600	600	398	398	-	-	-	-	
SALIX Decarbonisation - Ninfield School	145	161	-	-	-	-	-	-	
SALIX Decarbonisation	369	369	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Newhaven Port Access Road	23,271	23,271	135	107	28	-	28	-	
Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	4,541	4,541	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Real Time Passenger Information	3,181	3,181	250	264	(14)	-	-	(14)	
Bus Service Improvement Plan	18,500	18,500	1,418	1,308	110	-	110	-	
BSIP Passenger Transport	3,815	3,815	1,251	1,068	183	-	183	-	
Replacement Lewes Road Bus Station	100	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	
PAX Software System	37	37	5	-	5	-	5	-	

APPENDIX 6

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget 2024/25	Actual 2024/25	Variation (Over) / under 2024/25 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
Queensway Gateway Road	3,313	3,313	3,358	2,888	470	-	470	-	ix
Hastings and Bexhill Movement & Access Package	9,583	9,583	1,053	709	344	-	344	-	
Eastbourne/South Wealden Walking & Cycling Package	6,936	6,936	170	83	87	-	87	-	
Hailsham/Polegate/ Eastbourne Movement & Access Corridor	2,251	2,251	134	64	70	-	70	-	
Eastbourne Town Centre Movement & Access Package 2A	6,936	6,936	821	374	447	-	447	-	x
Eastbourne Town Centre Movement & Access Package 2B	5,454	5,454	2,696	744	1,952	-	1,952	-	xi
Other Integrated Transport Schemes	66,646	66,646	3,412	2,379	1,033	-	1,033	-	xii
A22 Corridor Package	3,393	3,393	2,143	1,031	1,112	-	1,112	-	xiii
A22 North of Hailsham	118	118	118	66	52	-	52	-	
Community Match Fund	780	780	123	48	75	-	75	-	
Emergency Active Travel - Tranche 2	438	438	130	35	95	-	95	-	
Area-wide traffic management scheme – Schools Streets	200	200	6	6	-	-	-	-	
ATF Eastbourne Liveable Town Centre	274	274	316	274	42	-	42	-	
Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections	9,689	9,689	400	384	16	-	16	-	
Exceat Bridge	10,591	10,591	2,980	427	2,553	-	2,553	-	xiv
Queensway Depot Development	1,956	1,956	3	2	1	-	1	-	
Urban Tree Challenge	262	262	22	11	11	-	11	-	
Core Programme – Highways Structural Maintenance	499,175	499,175	28,517	28,537	(20)	-	-	(20)	
Visibly Better Roads	5,800	5,800	250	256	(6)	-	-	(6)	
Core Programme - Bridge Assessment Strengthening	38,785	38,785	3,073	2,509	564	-	564	-	xv
Core Programme - Street Lighting - Life Expired Equipment	39,248	39,248	3,346	3,369	(23)	-	-	(23)	
Core Programme - Street Lighting - SALIX scheme	2,961	2,961	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Core Programme - Rights of Way Surface Repairs and Bridge Replacement	10,417	10,417	588	589	(1)	-	-	(1)	
Total CET Gross (Planned Programme)	977,187	979,303	61,838	52,186	9,652	(34)	9,879	(193)	

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Governance Services – end of year 2024/25

Summary of progress on Council Priorities, issues arising, and achievements

Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)

Planning for 2025/26 and beyond culminated with the agreement of the budget and the Council Plan by the County Council in February 2025. The plan and budget were informed by engagement events with strategic partners, young people, business and culture representatives and Trade Unions as well as input from scrutiny committees. The Council Plan and Portfolio Plans 2025/26, which set out our priority and delivery outcomes for the coming year and our plans for delivering them, have been published online.

The plans and the budget reflect the immediate financial position facing the Council, with the authority facing very tough choices in order to continue making the necessary investments to sustain essential services in light of growing demand and complexity of need. The agreed budget is reliant on the delivery of substantial further savings, on top of the £140m identified since 2010, all of which represent hard choices which will impact on local people, our staff and partners.

However, the savings identified do not fully bridge the funding gap, and a draw from service specific reserves of £11.4m was required to present a balanced budget for 2025/26. The size of the gap in the medium term far outstrips our remaining reserves. It is essential that planned national reforms to local government funding accurately recognise the real need for services in East Sussex, and the true cost of delivering them, if we are to find a sustainable way forward beyond the coming year.

Our integrated planning process, RPPR, has allowed us to continue to focus and protect our spending where it will deliver our priority objectives most effectively. Through the process we have ensured that we have the demographic trends and performance information to monitor progress through the year, as well as the evidence we need to support proactive lobbying at a local, regional and national level. We began the planning process for 2026/27 in Q4 in preparation for State of the County and are continuing to review our processes to ensure that we are maximising the value for money that we deliver.

In December 2024 the Government published its English Devolution White Paper outlining plans to devolve greater powers to newly established Strategic Authorities, alongside a programme for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The Government invited expressions of interests from upper-tier and neighbouring unitary authorities in joining the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) which would see progress happen at an accelerated pace. In January 2025, following a discussion at Full Council, Cabinet approved a response to Government's invitation which confirmed a commitment to work with partners in West Sussex County Council, and Brighton & Hove City Council to develop a proposal for a Mayoral County Combined Authority (MCCA). Confirmation was received in February that Sussex was one of six successful areas accepted on to the DPP and expected to undergo reorganisation and devolution at an accelerated speed. In March, following debates at Full Council, Cabinet agreed a response to Government consultation on the establishment of an MCCA in Sussex and agreed an interim proposal for unitary local government in East Sussex developed jointly with district and borough council partners.

Corporate Lobbying

Throughout 2024/25 corporate lobbying work focussed on using our partnerships and networks at the local, regional and national level to influence policy development in a range of areas, with a focus on the reforms needed in response to growing demand and financial challenges. Significant lobbying in 2024/25 has emphasised the acute need for sustainable resources to meet increasing demand and local government funding reform to ensure the unique needs of the population of East Sussex are recognised and can continue to be met now and in the future. In Q4, this included the Council responding to consultations on local authority funding reform and the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, which highlighted that allocations of the new Recovery Grant did not account for population need in East Sussex.

The Leader and Chief Executive have continued to actively raise issues and priorities for the county with our local MPs during 2024/25, including, in Q4, through specific updates on our Council Plan and budget for 2025/26. This included the Leader meeting, along with group leaders, with a number of East Sussex MPs in Q4 to brief them on proposals included in the budget for 2025/26 and ask for their continued support in lobbying Government. Chief Officers also continue to influence service specific national policy developments through national professional associations and networks.

Supporting democracy

During 2024/25 we supported 160 meetings (46 in Q4) including: 6 County Council meetings (3 in Q4); 11 Cabinet meetings (5 in Q4); 46 Lead Member meetings (13 in Q4); 51 Scrutiny Committees and Review Boards (11 in Q4); and 46 other committees and panels (14 in Q4). We also despatched agendas for a further 21 meetings (5 in Q4). We supported 6 Whole Council Forums (3 in Q4). The webcasts of Council meetings were viewed 12,914 times (7,028 times in Q4). The most viewed meetings were the Full Council meeting in February 2025, which was watched 1,203 times and the Cabinet meeting in February 2025, which was watched 1,045 times, either by live view or as a recording.

The Member Training and Development Programme delivered a wide range of training and briefing sessions to Members throughout 2024/25, with a total of 18 sessions being delivered. Courses included sessions on Economic Development, Cost of Living and Financial Inclusion, Climate Change, Migration Schemes and the Council's Property Assets. To help ensure courses continue to meet the needs of Members, a survey of training needs was undertaken in Q1. Feedback from that survey was used to inform the development of the training offer for Members for the year.

To help make participation as easy as possible, most training sessions will continue to be delivered remotely with resources, such as slides from training sessions, being saved to the Councillors' area of the intranet for future reference. The Member Reference Group met on three occasions in 2024/25 and discussed a range of issues including the content of the Member training and development programme, proposed arrangements relating to the induction process for returning and newly elected Members following council elections, and developments relating to information technology that might be of interest/assistance to Members.

The Council's scrutiny committees have continued to use a variety of approaches to ensure timely scrutiny input on a range of issues throughout the year, including completing two scrutiny reviews which were reported to the County Council in Q4. During Q4, scrutiny comments were reported to Cabinet and Council as part of budget and Council Plan setting for 2025/26, following the Place and People Scrutiny RPPR Boards held in December which are the culmination of scrutiny's input throughout the annual RPPR cycle. In addition, People Scrutiny Committee held a Pre-decision Board to consider Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) savings proposals prior to decisions by Cabinet in February.

Three call-ins were considered by People and Place Scrutiny Committees in Q4, two relating to decisions on ASCH savings and one relating to a decision on introducing a booking system for Household Waste Recycling Sites. During the year scrutiny committees have undertaken work to influence key service developments including the updated Local Transport Plan, preventative approaches in Children's Services and the Care Quality Commission assessment of Adult Social Care. During Q4, this work included an initial meeting of the Place Scrutiny Asset Management Strategy Working Group and a meeting of the People Scrutiny School Attendance Reference Group.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has continued to scrutinise the commissioning and delivery of local health services; in Q4 this included considering reports on access to NHS dentistry services, the ophthalmology transformation programme at East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, and improvements at South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust. The

Committee also agreed the report of its review of audiology services in East Sussex and made recommendations to the local NHS for consideration.

The Health and Wellbeing Board met in Q4 and considered the Draft East Sussex Housing Partnership Strategy, a report on the Wellbeing Approach to Prevention in Adult Social Care and an update on the East Sussex Health and Social Care Shared Delivery Plan (SDP) Integration Programme. During 2024/25, the Board also considered annual reports from the Director of Public Health, Healthwatch, Sussex learning from lives and deaths report, the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Board and well as regular updates on the SDP. The Board has also held informal 'deep dive' strategy sessions ahead of each formal Board meeting to inform the future Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the outcomes of which are reported as part of SDP update reports.

The East Sussex School Appeal Service received 54 in-year appeals from families during Q4, with a total of 68 appeals being heard in Q4 (as 14 appeals submitted in Q3 were also heard during the period). This resulted in 10 virtual appeal hearing sessions taking place. Of the 68 appeals, 13 were successful, 18 were dismissed by an Independent Appeal Panel and a further 22 were either withdrawn by the families or were not needed because a place became available at their preferred school before the hearing. The remaining 15 are set to be heard in Q1 2025/26. A total of 291 appeals have been received for the September 2025 secondary school intake. Of this, 240 will be heard in Q1 2025/26, the remaining 51 do not need to be heard as they have now been either withdrawn by the families or are not needed as place has now become available at their preferred school.

Across the whole of 2024/25, a total of 665 school admission appeals were received. Of this total, 217 were not heard due to either the appeal not needing to be heard as a result of a place becoming available at the preferred school or the appeals being withdrawn by the families. A total of 50 Independent Appeal Panels were convened across the year to hear the remaining 448 appeals. A total of 4 school exclusion review hearings were also conducted.

Following earlier development work and testing, enhancements to the in-house secure online digital appeal management system also went live during Q4. These enhancements have made the system more useable for both parents and the service, have improved General Data Protection Regulation compliance and improved use of the system when remote working.

Legal Services

During Q4, Legal Services assisted Trading Standards to obtain a successful conviction against a fraudulent trader for counterfeit goods offences, resulting in a fine of £200, a victim surcharge of £80 and an order to pay prosecution costs of £200.

The Service provided advice in relation to 2 judicial review applications issued against the Council in 2024/25, compared to 2 in 2023/24. The first application issued in 2024/25 related to a failure by the Council to issue an Education, Health and Care Plan, which had been amended by the First Tier Tribunal (FTT). The Council had not issued the Plan because it had submitted an appeal to the FTT regarding two parts of the Plan. Following grant of permission to judicially review, the FTT resolved the appeal and the Council issued a plan to include the disputed parts. The Council paid the Claimant's costs of £15,000 and the claim was settled by way of a consent order on 31 January 2025. The second application disputed the Council's assessment of an asylum seeker as an adult and not a child and has been transferred to be dealt with by the Immigration Tribunal, so is no longer a judicial review claim.

During 2024/25 the Service advised in relation to 241 Court of Protection cases and 89 matters involving safeguarding vulnerable adults (compared to 268 and 84 in 2023/24). The Service also advised in relation to 206 Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards applications in the Court of Protection (compared to 232 in 2023/24).

The Service continues to work closely with Children's Services, providing advice and representation, including in pre-proceedings and court applications for care proceedings. Our

priority is to keep children within their family when it is safe to do so, and for public law applications to be a necessary and proportionate response to achieve the best outcome for the child. The Service continues to work with Children's Services on pre-proceedings engagement with families being undertaken with increased focus and in shorter timescales, with the aim of decreasing the number of care proceedings issued, completing all necessary assessments prior to issue of care proceedings and reducing the length of time children are subject to care proceedings. This has resulted in less pre-proceedings and care proceedings being open to the Service at any one time. At the end of 2024/25, there were 36 families open in pre-proceedings compared to 52 at the end of 2023/24. In 2024/25, the Service applied for care proceedings in respect of 71 families, compared to 72 in 2023/24. At the end of Q4, there were a total of 49 ongoing care proceedings compared to 59 proceedings at the end of Q4 2023/24. In 2024/25, we concluded 81 sets of care proceedings which is the same as in 2023/24. Of the concluded proceedings, 37% of children were placed in the care of family under special guardianship or child arrangements orders, 39% were made subject to care orders and 24% were subject to orders giving permission to place for adoption. Concluded proceedings in East Sussex in 2024/25 took an average 43 weeks per child, this is 5 weeks less than in 2023/24 and in keeping with national averages.

During 2024/25, the Service completed agreements to secure financial contributions to the Council of over £2m, together with the delivery of additions and improvements to the highway network across the county. The Service also advised on 203 new property matters compared to 187 in 2023/24. During 2024/25, the Service advised on 225 new contract and procurement matters compared to 241 in 2023/24. In addition, the Service has completed two academy conversions.

During Q4, the Service assisted Income Recovery in securing the recovery and repayment of debts totalling £19,765, compared to £74,671 in Q4 2023/24. The Service secured recovery and repayment of debts totalling £140,575 in 2024/25 compared to £216,907 in 2023/24.

Coroner Services

The Council provides staff and accommodation to the East Sussex Coroner in undertaking the judicial role of investigating violent, un-natural or sudden deaths of unknown cause and deaths in custody. Accommodation includes the provision of mortuary, pathology, histology, toxicology and body removal services, as well as court and office accommodation and relevant hardware, software and information technology support. As an independent judicial officer holding office under the Crown, the Coroner operates entirely independently to the Council in making decisions about post mortems and inquests.

During Q4 2024/25, 396 deaths were reported to the Coroner compared with 585 in Q4 2023/24. Of those deaths 217 (55%) went on to have a post mortem compared to 269 (46%) in Q4 2023/24. 64 Inquests were opened during Q4 2024/25 compared to 86 during Q4 2023/24.

During Q4 2024/25, 67 inquests were closed compared to 65 in 2023/24. There were 253 open inquests at the end of Q4, compared to 297 at end of Q4 2023/24. 50 Inquests are over 12 months old compared to 63 at the end of Q4 2023/24.

In total during 2024/25, 1,832 deaths were reported to the Coroner compared to 2,201 in 2023/24. 52% (959) of deaths reported to the Coroner required a post mortem compared to 46% (1,009) in 2023/24. In 2024/25, 334 Inquests were opened (compared to 339 in 2023/24) and 339 Inquests were concluded in 2024/25 (compared to 265 in 2023/24). The introduction of the Medical Examiner (ME) system in September 2024 has seen a decrease in the number of referrals to the Coroner. Deaths that do not fall under the Notification of Death Regulations are now reportable to MEs. In most cases, deaths can now be certified without referral to the Coroner to allow the death to be registered. MEs alert the Coroner where certain deaths may require further investigation which previously would have been registered as natural, and this has led to a higher percentage of post mortems in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24.

Since 1 April 2025, the East Sussex Coroner's Office has moved to Westfield House, County Hall, Lewes from the Innovation Centre in Hastings. In addition, courtrooms previously based at Muriel Matters House, Hastings and Eastbourne Town Hall have also moved to Westfield House, bringing the service together and helping to make savings through the more efficient use of space. The change will also improve and streamline the service, with access to courtrooms five days a week reducing the waiting time for inquests to be heard. The change will provide a single point of contact for the public and will improve the quality of service to bereaved families and friends.

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)

There were no active RIPA Authorisations during Q4. On 31 March 2025, the Lead Member approved the Policy for the year ahead with only minor amendments to the existing Policy.

Local Government Ombudsman complaints

The Ombudsman issued 28 decisions in Q4. 17 of these cases related to Adult Social Care (ASC), 9 related to Children's Services (CS) and 2 to Corporate Services (CORP). 19 cases were closed before a full investigation for a variety of reasons. This included insufficient evidence of fault, complaints being out of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, because the complaint had not been through our internal complaint process or because the Ombudsman had sufficient information to uphold the complaint.

Of the 9 cases that were fully investigated 7 related to ASC and 2 related to CS, of which, 4 were closed with the complaint partly or fully upheld as follows:

ASC – The client's husband was dissatisfied with the financial remedy of £300 offered by the Council, in acknowledgement of his complaint about the care provided to his wife. The Ombudsman found that the Council had acknowledged its failure to properly deal with the complaint before it was escalated to them. It had apologised and offered a satisfactory remedy. The Ombudsman found no outstanding injustice that required their intervention.

ASC – The client complained that the Council did not provide her with the care and support to meet her needs, which she said impacted her wellbeing. The Ombudsman found the Council at fault for a delay in completing and issuing the client's reviewed care and support plan, which caused the client limited injustice. The Ombudsman also found fault with the Council's handling of the complaints. The Council has agreed to apologise and make a payment of £100 to the client in acknowledgement of its unsatisfactory complaint handling.

CS – The client's mother complained that the Council failed to provide suitable alternative education for her daughter, since it was agreed that she was unable to attend her allocated school. As a result, her daughter missed out on appropriate education and her mental health deteriorated. Furthermore, the client's mother had to give up work to look after her daughter which caused avoidable financial hardship and distress. The Ombudsman found fault because the Council did not review its original alternative education decision in the light of new evidence available. The Council has agreed to review its decision.

CS – The client's father complained that the Council failed to act in his child's best interests when choosing a suitable secondary school, arranging alternative education, and arranging school transport. The Ombudsman found no fault in the Council's decision-making on these issues and did not investigate the Council's earlier decision to name a mainstream school in the client's Education Health and Care Plan, as this came with appeal rights. The Ombudsman did find the Council at fault for refusing to reimburse fees the client's father paid to an independent school to secure his child's place. The Council has now agreed to reimburse the fees.

Web activity

There were 6.6m unique page views of the Council website in 2024/25. During Q4, there were 1.9 million unique page views. The satisfaction of residents using the East Sussex highways website has improved, with the number of website visitors saying their experience of the site was satisfactory, good or excellent increasing from 12% in May 2023 to 45% in February 2025. This

follows research, testing and development of the site to remove obstacles for users and make it easier to report highways issues, track progress and find information.

Media and information work

In Q4, the press office dealt with 179 media enquiries and issued 24 press releases which generated 112 stories. Coverage in Q4 was dominated by devolution and budgets, but other press releases achieving good coverage include the introduction of smokefree spaces on beaches in Bexhill beach and Camber Sands, the library amnesty which saw the return of a book missing for more than 27 years, and discussions around future plans for Exceat Bridge.

In 2024/25 the press office dealt with 510 media enquiries and issued 107 press releases generating 344 stories, 37 of which were from TV and radio. Press releases achieving the most coverage included the additional investment in road patching, budget press releases issued July, September, October, November and February, devolution and local government reorganisation and a review of speed limits.

Effective publicity and campaigns

Requests for our on-demand bus service (Flexibus) have risen from 4,232 in March 2024 to 6,523 in March 2025, an increase of 54%. Passenger requests have risen sharply during periods of marketing activity, which have included social media advertising, radio advertising, leafletting, and public display boards.

Local advertising campaigns to recruit staff for supported living homes for people with learning disabilities drew high numbers of applicants. The campaigns, which began in Q4, on Facebook and Nextdoor targeted people in a 5–10-mile radius of the homes in Crowborough and Battle, and saw 102 applications in the first two weeks of the campaign.

South East 7 (SE7)

Throughout 2024/25, the SE7 partnership continued to provide a valuable forum for sharing intelligence on the rapidly evolving national policy context following the General Election, as well as developing joint lobbying messages in response. The SE7 partnership has also helped provide understanding on how neighbouring councils are responding to shared challenges. This year they have particularly focused on demand and cost pressures in Adult Social Care and Children's Services, including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Home to School Transport; devolution and local government reorganisation; and the asylum system.

SE7 Leaders and Chief Executives met jointly in Q4 to discuss latest issues and priorities for all councils, including plans for devolution and local government reorganisation, issues emerging from budget setting for 2025/26, and significant national reforms in children's services. SE7 Leaders also met in March and discussed developments on these issues as well as shared lobbying priorities, including funding reform, SEND, and utilities company street works. Chief Executives continue to meet regularly to discuss the latest policy developments.

Revenue Budget Summary

The Governance Service's net budget is £9.847m and at the end of the financial year there is an underspend of £86k. The underspend in Corporate Governance is mainly due to staff vacancies and the early implementation of savings targets for the forthcoming year. The overspend in Corporate Support is mostly due to the additional cost of locums to cover maternity leave and other vacancies in the Legal Services team.

Performance exceptions (See How to read this report for definition)

Performance measure	Outturn 23/24	Target 24/25	RAG Q1 24/25	RAG Q2 24/25	RAG Q3 24/25	RAG Q4 24/25	Q4 24/25 outturn	Note ref
None								

Savings exceptions 2024/25 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2024/25	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved	Note ref
There are no savings for 2024/25	-	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Savings	0	0	0	0	0	
			-	-	-	
			-	-	-	
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0	
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	0	0	0	0	0	

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total	Note Ref
	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	
Total	0	0	0	

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Revenue Budget 2024/25 (£'000)

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2023/24 Gross	2023/24 Income	2023/24 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note ref
Corporate Governance	5,844	(196)	5,648	5,583	(173)	5,410	261	(23)	238	
Corporate Support	4,003	(413)	3,590	4,192	(450)	3,742	(189)	37	(152)	
Total Governance	9,847	(609)	9,238	9,775	(623)	9,152	72	14	86	

Capital programme 2024/25 (£'000)

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget 2024/25	Actual 2024/25	Variation (Over) / under 2024/25 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
No current programme for Governance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total GS Gross (Planned Programme)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

Strategic Risk Register – Q4 2024/25

Ref	Strategic Risks	Risk Control / Response and Post Mitigation RAG score	RAG
5	RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE & RESOURCE There is ongoing uncertainty in relation to future funding levels, the longer-term local government funding regime and the impact of national reforms, particularly across Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care. The impact of a period of high inflation/cost of living are leading to higher demand for Council services and have increased the direct cost of providing services. Together these create a risk of insufficient resources being available to sustain service delivery at the agreed Core Offer level to meet the changing needs of the local community. Our revenue budget for 2024/25 includes a draw from the Financial Management Reserve to provide a balanced budget. In year pressures in 2024/25 are likely to require an additional draw on reserves. Our proposed budget for 2025/26 includes additional savings and further use of our limited reserves. We are reliant on the multi-year settlement in 2026/27, fair funding review and business rates review delivering sufficient funding to meet the needs of our residents. Additionally, there are risks and uncertainties regarding the capital programme over the current Medium Term Financial Plan period and beyond, which could impact on the ability to deliver the Council's priorities and set a balanced budget. Funding uncertainty (including capital grants, receipts and developer contributions), inflation, supply chain issues and high interest rates could all constrain our ability to implement our Capital	We employ a robust Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process for business planning, which ensures a strategic corporate response to resource reductions, demographic change, and regional and national economic challenges; and directs resources to priority areas. We take a commissioning approach to evaluating need and we consider all methods of service delivery. We work with partner organisations to deliver services and manage demand, making best use of our collective resources. We take a 'One Council' approach to delivering our priorities and set out our targets and objectives in the Council Plan. We monitor our progress and report it quarterly. The Council reviews and updates its 20-year Capital Strategy annually as part of the RPPR process, which sets the framework in which the capital programme is planned and allows the Council to prioritise investment to support its objectives. The development and delivery of the capital programme is overseen by a Capital Strategic Asset Board (CSAB), which is a cross departmental group, who also hear from Departmental Capital Board/Sub Boards who oversee priority areas. Our plans take account of known risks and pressures, including social, economic, policy and demographic changes and financial risks. However, we continue to operate in changing and uncertain contexts. Current and forecast economic conditions continue to shape a very challenging financial outlook both for the Council itself and many of the county's residents and businesses. Alongside this we continue to face ongoing challenges as a result of the persistent legacy of Covid, the increased cost of living and other national and international factors. We will continue to use the latest information available on these challenges to inform our business planning. We will also continually review our performance targets, priorities, service offers and financial plans, and will update these as required. As part of this we will continue to take action wherever we can to mitigate financial and service delivery pressures – making best use of new technology, investing in our workforce, seeking efficiencies, and checking that our services are effective and provide value for money. We lobby, individually and in conjunction with our networks and partners, for a sustainable funding regime for local government in general and for children's social care and adult social care specifically, to meet the needs of the residents of East Sussex. If the funding reforms do not lead to an increase in funding for our services, we will need to consider further options, including seeking Exceptional Financial Support.	Red

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	Strategy and increase the pressure on the revenue budget via increased borrowing costs.		
12	CYBER ATTACK The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has highlighted the enduring and significant threat to UK infrastructure. From ransomware attacks to AI-enabled intrusion, malicious actors are looking to maximise their disruptive and destructive efforts in an increasingly connected world. Cyber attacks are growing more frequent, sophisticated, and damaging when they succeed. Amid a rise of state aligned groups, an increase in aggressive cyber activity and ongoing geopolitical challenges, there is an accelerated need to keep pace with the dynamic threat landscape. Furthermore, while AI presents huge opportunities, it is also transforming the threat landscape. Cyber criminals are adapting their business models to embrace this rapidly developing technology - using AI to increase the volume and impact of cyber attacks against citizens and organisations. Meanwhile the proliferation of advanced cyber intrusion tools is lowering the barrier for entry to criminals and states alike.	Most attacks leverage software flaws, gaps in boundary defences or social engineering-based insertion methods (such as legitimate looking emails which trigger viral payloads). These are becoming harder to identify and filter. IT&D use modern security tools to assure our security posture: Monitoring network activity and identifying security threats; Keeping software up to date with regular patching regimes; Continually monitoring evolving threats and re-evaluating the ability of our toolset to provide adequate defence against them; Ongoing communication with the security industry to find the most suitable tools and systems to secure our infrastructure. IT&D continues to invest in new tools, which use pre-emptive technology to identify threats and patterns of abnormal behaviour. Services hosted in ISO 27001 accredited Orbis Data Centres. As well as mitigations against attack, the following measures are currently in place to minimise the impact should there be a successful attack: • Behavioural analysis systems defend against hostile activity • Resilient systems enhanced with immutable backups enable quick recovery • Robust protocols for response escalation and communication	Red

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22	DELIVERY OF ORACLE IMPLEMENTATION There is a risk that the implementation of Oracle may not achieve the outcomes planned which results in: •higher delivery costs •longer timescales •a reduced quality of back office services from a substandard technical implementation •risk of not meeting statutory or contractual requirements such as payments of Pay as You Earn (PAYE) / National Insurance (NI), pensions, suppliers and employees •an inadequate control environment •lack of user buy-in and adoption due to a lack of organisational readiness impacting on core business processes •additional pressure on business as usual capacity from high resource demands during delivery •risk to employee wellbeing from high workloads and delivery timescale Failure to implement would result in the use of an unsupported and unlicensed system (or subject to ransom charges on some level of support) as the SAP system passes its expiry date and would miss out on efficiencies that can be gained through the new system.	Mitigations are in response to the four main elements of programme delivery: 1. Effective governance and internal controls The Oracle Programme Board, Sponsors, Workstream Boards and the Audit Committee Sub Group meet regularly and CMT receive regular reports. Internal audit continues to undertake reviews across the programme. 2. Technical delivery A phased 'Adopt not Adapt' approach is being taken as the most cost-effective and straightforward route to implementation. The Oracle solution, both functional and data, is tested to a pre-defined and approved set of quality standards. The solution is not released for organisational use unless it meets these standards and is approved by the Oracle Board and CMT. 3. Organisational readiness To go-live successfully, it is necessary for the organisation to adopt the new system with the 'adopt not adapt' approach being the most cost-effective. There is therefore a substantial communication, engagement, change and training workstream in place to support the organisation to understand and adopt the necessary changes in working practices in areas such as hiring processes, budget processes, raising purchase orders or in using self-service for expenses, payslips, timesheet and absence. 4. Support model To ensure confidence in the system and ongoing effective use post go-live it is essential to have a support model in place to respond to inevitable issues and queries, and for users to understand what the user experience will be in advance of that. To increase resilience and the ability to flex depending on the level of support required, a blend of internal and external resource is being used. A variety of other support tools are also in place such as a Helpdesk, Oracle Guided Learning, floor walkers, bitesize briefings, and Advocates. For Phase 2 of the implementation (covering Finance, Procurement and Recruitment) all of the above elements were successfully delivered and rated green. This Phase therefore went live on 17 April 2025. Inevitable post go-live issues are being effectively dealt with. Work continues on Phase 3 (payroll, and employee and manager self-service) and an earliest realistically achievable go-live date for this phase is currently being considered. To deliver the implementation, it is necessary to ensure that sufficient programme resource is in place, and this is therefore kept under constant review. In addition, a positive ongoing working relationship with our implementation partner, Infosys, needs to be in place. The project lead	Red

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		therefore has regular conversations with Infosys senior staff and escalates issues where necessary. It is also necessary for the organisation to prioritise programme activity at key points in time and this is also therefore kept under constant review.	
15	CLIMATE Failure to limit global warming to below 1.5°C above pre-industrialisation levels, which requires global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) to be reduced by about 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching 'net zero' by 2050 at the latest. The predicted impacts of climate change in East Sussex include more frequent and intense flooding, drought, and episodes of extreme heat, as well as impacts from the effects of climate change overseas, such as on food supply. This will lead to an increase in heat-related deaths, particularly amongst the elderly, damage to essential infrastructure, increased cost of food, disruption to supply chains and service provision, and greater coastal erosion.	Climate change mitigation: the science-based target is to reduce scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 50% every 5 years (equating to 13% per year). The focus is on buildings, as they made up 79% of carbon emissions in 2020/21. Internal oversight of progress is by the corporate Climate Emergency Board. Climate change adaptation: we work with partners on some aspects of adaptation, such as flood risk management and health impacts. A) Mitigation: 1) Carbon Reduction Target: the target is a 13% carbon reduction in 2024/25 compared with 2023/24, which would achieve a cumulative reduction of 50% against the baseline year of 2019-20. Carbon data for Qs 1-3 show a 2% reduction compared with Qs 1-3 in 2023/24. If energy usage is similar in Q4 this year to Q4 last year then the annual carbon reduction in 2024/25 will be 1%, against the target of 13%. This will deliver a cumulative reduction of 36% against the baseline, against the 50% target. 2) Carbon Reduction Schemes: the target for 2024/25 is for the delivery of a further 23 capital schemes. A total of 20 schemes were delivered to date (5 solar PV, 4 LED lighting, 7 heat decarbonisation, 1 Building Closure, 3 Insulation schemes). This reflects cuts to both the Salix Recycling Fund and CET CC budget for directly funded carbon saving projects B) Adaptation: 1) Corporate Adaptation Plan: During Q1 a climate change vulnerability and risk assessment report was completed and published. In Q2 council plans and strategies were reviewed to identify where adaptation may need to be embedded, and progress was reported to Place Scrutiny Committee. In Q3 work began on developing adaptation tools and guidance for Council services. These tools and guidance will be completed in Q4 and begin to be applied in 2025/26. Ultimately there is not sufficient funding available for the Council to be able to keep pace with the science-based target to halve emissions every five years. Although grant funding will be sought to mitigate against this, it is unlikely to be sufficient. The council will continue to work on what it can to reduce emissions with the funding it has available including working with its supply chain on Scope 3 emissions.	Red

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20	PLACEMENTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR CARE Inability to secure sufficient high quality placements for children in our care, suitable accommodation for care experienced young people and respite provision, leading to significant financial pressure and poorer outcomes for children/young people. The risk of the failure of one or more key providers in the independent sector is an increasing concern, set against necessary regulatory tightening of profit which might further impact the market.	Effective demand management, robust management of front door Delivery of early help services, implementation of Family Hub programme throughout 2023-24, and Level 2 Family Keyworkers Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Edge of Care 'Connected Families', The Family Hubs programme has been implemented across E.Sussex delivering early intervention and support within communities, Connected Families (Connected Coaches and Intensive Practitioners), Foundations, SWIFT are delivering intensive evidence based interventions alongside Social Workers to maximise the opportunity for children to be cared for within their own family. There has been a 14% reduction in the number of children subject to child protection plans since February 2024, this is as a direct result of the launch of the Connected Families Intensive Practitioners (CFIP service). Further delivery of kinship/Special Guardianship Order placements. Capital bid for Sorrel Drive. In 2023/24 Children's Services worked with IMPOWER to enhance our approach to using data to shape placement sufficiency. We have developed trajectory planning, implemented the 'Valuing Care' approach to ensure children receiving the right care for their needs and value for money achieved, and improved support for in house foster carers, including an investment in allowances. An analysis of the children becoming Looked After during Q1 2024-2025, indicates that a high proportion (81%) are entering into foster care or kinship care provision rather than residential care. Fostering Recruitment & Retention Strategy completed. East Sussex County Council is part of the South East Sector Led Improvement Programme, Regional Fostering Strategy and piloting Mockingbird hub. Uplift to fostering allowance (for in house carers, Special Guardianship Orders, Kinship carers) approved by the Chief Management Team to help secure sufficient supply of in house foster carers as an alternative to more expensive care packages. The valuing care tools have been embedded into the business as usual with a strong focus on reunification. In Q4 A strategic group was set up to drive forward the valuing care agenda which will report into the Transformation Board chaired by the Director of Children's Services. Fostering allowance uplift has been made part of the recruitment drive. Both elements are attempting to mitigate the increased costs due to the lack of placements for Looked After Children. Q1 has seen a significant rise in foster carer applications in this period. The new Duty and Commissioning team have added capacity to the service and we are already seeing impact with placements and prices. Q2 has continued the trajectory above with tighter discussions and process, however the market continues to present a challenge.	Red

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19	SCHOOLS AND INCLUSION, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (ISEND) For Children with Special Educational Needs. Inability to secure statutory provision due to lack of availability of specialist placement within the county and increasing demand for placements in this sector. This would put the Council at risk of judicial review and/or negative Local Government Ombudsman judgements for failing to meet our duties within the Children and Families Act 2014, with associated financial penalties and reputational damage.	Effective use of forecasting data to pre-empt issues. Work with statutory partners to develop contingency plans. Work with the market to increase provision where needed. Expanding internal interim offer for children.	Red
1	ROADS Extreme weather events over recent years, including the last winter, have caused significant damage to many of the county's roads, adding to the backlog of maintenance in the County Council's Asset Plan: and increasing the risk to the Council's ability to stem the rate of deterioration and maintain road condition.	The changing climate is now influencing the rate of road deterioration, with more extreme events such as warmer wetter winters; and drier summers punctuated by unseasonal heavy downpours (drying and shrinking the substructure of roads). Additional funding over the last few years has helped maintain road condition, however, the latest condition and funding modelling showed the potential for deterioration over the next 10 years. Works from additional investment made in 2023 on patching, footway, signing and lining have provided greater network reliance. However, deterioration in road surfaces in 2025 has continued. Recognising this, Cabinet have approved a further £1m in July 2024 for a programme of targeted patching works to address the worst areas of road damage. Mitigations include encouraging road users to report potholes so we can intervene as soon as possible in accordance with our policies; closely managing the operational performance of the highway contractor; and lobbying Government for additional investment as, without it, it will be increasingly difficult to manage the risks of further decline. In conjunction with this, new technologies and materials are being trialled to introduce improvements to practices and ensure works are as efficient as possible. This includes introducing a new Asset Management system with enhanced capabilities for data management and funding modelling, and introducing smart street lighting systems that allow greater control over levels of lighting, reducing energy consumption.	Red

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4	HEALTH Failure to secure maximum value from partnership working with the National Health Service (NHS). If not achieved, there will be impact on social care, public health and health outcomes and increased social care operational and cost pressures, as well as shared Integrated Care System objectives for jointly managing patient flow through our System. An increase in activity and complexity in the presentation of patients through our acute hospital sites, has resulted in an increase in the NCTR (No Criteria to Reside) numbers and presents a system risk in respect of adequate patient flow. Integrated Care Board (ICB) operating costs and programme funding will need to reduce by 50% by Q3 2025/26 as per a national mandate. For NHS Sussex this means a reduction of 53% which presents a risk to the way ESCC works with the NHS to jointly commission services locally and get the best value out of the collective resources available for our population, and could have implications for the Sussex Integrated Care System (ICS) which would impact on alignment with the Sussex Combined Mayoral Authority Devolution plans.	East Sussex was allocated £5,088m, as part of the national Government Discharge Fund Grant for 2024/25, to support local authorities to build additional adult social care and community-based reablement capacity to reduce hospital discharge delays by delivering sustainable improvements to services for individuals - focussed on improving discharge to home, alongside increased therapy and assessment provision and associated plans to reduce the use of bedded discharge pathways. Collaborative work continues with ICB and NHS colleagues on our Hospital Discharge Transformation work and how as a system we can support and expedite discharges from both local and out of county hospitals, to address the increase in the number of patients who no longer meet the Criteria to Reside (NCTR) in an acute hospital bed. National data provided by NHSE places East Sussex the third highest in the country in regard to high numbers of NCTRs compared to local population. In light of this, two Hospital Social Work Teams currently support discharge either through established routes via SPOT purchase or Discharge To Assess beds in the community. Additional support has been provided over Winter via £1million additional joint ESCC and ICB investment. This was utilised through a temporary increase of D2RA ('discharge to recover and assess') and spot-purchased beds in the community to the end of March 25. An additional scheme to expedite discharges of self-funding patients from acute sites was commissioned with Xyla. This supports 15 placements a month and oversight of this is through place-based Operational Executive (OPEX). System funding allocations have been agreed for Q1 2025/26 for Hospital Discharge Schemes, the use of which is being monitored at Place. Building on our ICT development work in 2024/25, we have now established the shadow leadership infrastructure for our 5 Integrated Community Teams (ICTs) in East Sussex across primary, community and social care, linking with mental health, VCSE and housing. This will enable the development of joint local action plans based on population needs and challenges and aligned to the strategic objectives of our health and care system, building on relevant tests of change and other pilot activity to support integrated care through closer working at the neighbourhood level. Over time this is expected to reduce the need for urgent and unplanned attendance and admission to hospital, through moving to a model of better coordinated and proactive multi-disciplinary care for people with complex health and care needs, for example due to multiple long term conditions and frailty. In March 2025 it was nationally mandated that Integrated Care Board (ICB) operating and programme funding costs will need to reduce by 50% by Q3 2025/26, with running costs of £18.76 per head of weighted population set as a national target for ICBs, excluding certain services. This target means each ICB, or the regions they are a part of, must reduce their overall spend per head of weighted population to this level. For NHS Sussex this equates to a reduction of 53%, and comes on top of already having recently restructured significantly to deliver a 30% running costs reduction in 24/25. This presents a risk to the way ESCC works with the NHS to jointly commission services locally and get the best value out of the collective resources available for our population. This could also have implications for the Sussex Integrated Care System (ICS) more broadly, for example if the ICS footprint changes to a larger scale to accommodate the reduction, which would	Red

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		impact on alignment with the Sussex Combined Mayoral Authority Devolution plans. A national ICB model blueprint has recently been produced which describes the future strategic role of ICBs, and signals potential transfers of current Continuing Healthcare, SEND and safeguarding functions, all of which would need primary legislation to enact (and would therefore be post cost reductions). More detail is expected. Feedback about the lack of engagement with Local Government (LG) as a key partner, and the importance of coterminous footprints with the NHS for a future Sussex CMA and Devolution has been given to the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution, and via the LGA. Locally all three Local Authority partner members on the Sussex ICB are in collective agreement about the need for a continuing Sussex ICB footprint and this is being fed into the local planning discussions both formally and informally. The ICB's decision will be made public in June 25.	
23	LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION AND DEVOLUTION Both the proposed creation of a new Mayoral County Combined Authority for Sussex and the proposed transition from a two tier local authority arrangement to a unitary government model for East Sussex will have a significant effect on our workforce. These are likely to lead to additional workloads for staff over the next few years. The timescales for implementation are challenging and will place considerable additional pressures on teams. This could have result in resources being diverted from the ongoing delivery of services and a consequential deterioration in service delivery.	Through our RPPR process we will continue to review the resources required to support Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation and will lobby Government for additional funding to help support the significant additional workload this will place on the Council. We will also continue our work on supporting staff through change and will ensure all staff are aware of the full range of support available to them. Additional mitigations will be implemented as the potential impact on both the Council and our local area becomes clearer.	Amber
9	WORKFORCE An inability to attract and retain the high calibre staff needed could lead to a reduction in the expertise and capacity required to deliver statutory services to our residents, including to prevent harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults at the required level and standards, impacting on the achievement of the Council's strategic objectives.	A number of strategies responding to the current significant recruitment and retention challenges have been put in place. Highlights include: - On-going attendance at events such as careers fairs to maximise our presence with job seekers. - Continued use of apprenticeships, traineeships, intern arrangements and more flexible work arrangements etc as a way of bringing in new talent to the Council. - Continued delivery of our two leadership development programmes to support our talent management strategies: the 'Ladder to Leadership' programme and 'Head of Service Masterclasses'. - Provision of 1-1 advice and guidance sessions to prospective candidates who require support around making an application, undertaking interviews etc - Engagement with employees at ESCC, who are under 25, to get feedback on what attracted them to the Council as an employer; and to begin establishing a forum for young people in the new year to highlight any issues, and to attract candidates from a younger demographic to the Council.	Amber

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		Additional work undertaken in Q4 includes: - continued delivery of inclusive recruitment training to managers - guidance on making reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates has now been published and promoted to recruiting managers - the Council's suite of recruitment policies is currently being reviewed to embed inclusive practice - guidance on the use of volunteers as a route into the workplace is currently being developed. The intention is for such opportunities to support people who are out of work to come back into the workplace through gaining confidence and experience of work - the 'study smarter' (recruitment platform) monthly views increased from 2,534 in January 24 to 6,251 in December 24 - the Council's Apprenticeship team has been invited by the DWP to be part of a mentorship programme for jobseekers aged 18-24, which aims to work in tandem with the Government 'Youth Job Guarantee'	
18	DATA BREACH A breach of security/confidentiality leading to destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal data. This includes breaches that are the result of both accidental and deliberate causes. A personal data breach is a security incident that has affected the confidentiality, integrity or availability of personal data regardless of whether information has been accessed, altered or disclosed via electronic or manual means. Risks to individuals, reputational damage, fines from the Information Commissioner's Officer (ICO), compensation claims	Policy and guidance procedures in place to support practice. Data Protection Officer (DPO), Caldicott Guardians and Information Governance Officers monitor breach reporting and put in place mechanisms to minimise recurrence. Staff training to develop awareness. E-learning and policy delivery mechanism expanded to enhance skills and increase awareness of responsibilities under General Data Protection Regulation legislation. Technical security measures operated by Information Technology and Digital (IT&D), including access control and segregation of duties.	Amber

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6	LOCAL ECONOMIC GROWTH The transfer of South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) responsibilities and functions to East Sussex County Council (ESCC) does not successfully integrate the development of economic strategic planning, business support, and management of capital funded programmes, into Council operations as required by Government policy. Possible consequences if the transfer is not managed successfully include: •Management, monitoring, and evaluation of the current capital programmes do not meet Government requirements, leading to potential clawback of £m funds; or an inability for ESCC to demonstrate it can manage funds successfully, affecting future allocations of growth funds. •Third parties with existing contracts may raise concerns if new / variation funding agreements are not put in place early from April 2024. •Loss of an effective 'business voice' through the current local economic growth board (Team East Sussex) and its various subgroups. •An inability to produce an agreed local economic strategy, which sets the ambitions, objectives, and key outcomes for East Sussex.	East Sussex County Council, working with partners, has successfully secured significant amounts of local growth funding totalling £127m since 2012 via the South East and Coast 2 Capital Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), to deliver a wide range of infrastructure projects in East Sussex. In August 2023, Government formally announced that direct funding for LEPs will be removed from April 2024. Upper tier local authorities (UTLA's) will then be required to take on the current non-statutory LEP powers, responsibilities, and functions. These include strategy development, business support and oversight/management of capital programmes. We submitted our proposal to Government in November 2023 to become an UTLA as per the guidance issued. East Sussex has now been confirmed by Government as a 'functional economic area' to take on LEP responsibilities. A recent Government consultation was run in Feb 2025 as Government were minded 'to withdraw' financial support to authorities carrying out the transferred LEP functions. Government has since confirmed in March 2025 that it will remove the funding but expects the authorities to continue to perform the above stated functions. The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and East Sussex County Council have produced integration plans to mitigate the transfer risks on current and future capital programmes; and the financial, legal, and reputational risks. SELEP and our own Corporate Management Team endorsed the integration plans in quarter 3 2023/24, and the plans were taken to Lead Member in January 2024 and approved by Cabinet in March 2024. Further Government guidance and a Local Economic Development Fund - Assurance Framework were finally issued in October 2024 setting out the transition arrangement requirements. Essex County Council (ECC) as the Accountable body for SELEP, have issued on 30 August 2024 a Transition Agreement between all six of the upper tier local authorities (incl. ESCC) to hand over local accountable body responsibilities for the legacy capital programmes to UTLA's. A response has been provided by ESCC and whilst there have been delays from Essex CC in finalising the agreement it is now expected to be signed in early Q1 2025. In the absence of this agreement, East Sussex has established clear governance, reporting and transparency arrangements to address the Government's responsibilities since April 2024 in overseeing the management of current LEP funded programmes/projects. Looking ahead, the lack of large-scale funding programmes to support economic growth across the county presents a significant risk to achieving growth ambitions. Recent funds have been awarded directly to local Borough and District authorities (e.g., UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Levelling Up Funds and Plan for Neighbourhoods) or funding has come from time-limited specific sources. We now have a new growth strategy – East Sussex Prosperity - and will be developing in the accompanying investment plan in 2025 with strategic partners to articulate our investment propositions and asks to Government and also respond to the Governments emerging Industrial Strategy and Sector Plans.	Amber

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		The Council is already in a good position to mitigate the risks on business support and ensuring business has a voice. We directly run the Business East Sussex Growth Hub services and Government have confirmed funding 2025/26 and we await to receive the grant terms and conditions for signing in Qtr 1. We will also ensure the business voice continues to be heard through Team East Sussex, our local strategic advisory economic growth board for the county, which continues to meet on a quarterly basis.	
21	Care Act reviews and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding (DoLS) assessments Demand exceeding capacity for annual Care Act reviews and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding (DoLS) assessments	- These are known issues for virtually all local authorities with social care responsibilities as this activity falls within our duties under the Care Act 2014 and Mental Capacity Act 2005. - We have measures for Care Act reviews and DoLS assessments included in the Council Plan for scrutiny from Members and the public. As of Q4 2024/25, we are meeting our target for adult Care Act reviews (outturn is 6 days against a target of 6 days) and carer Care Act reviews (outturn is -1 day against a target of 6 days, meaning reviews started on average 1 day before their proposed start date). We are also meeting our target for the number of people with a DoLS episode awaiting allocation of a Best Interest Assessor (429 people against a target of 650). - We use regular benchmarking. For example, we have the 3rd lowest number of reviews overdue by more than 12 months out of 18 local authorities in the South East (comparing March 2025 data to August 2023 South East data, which is the latest available). Mitigations and actions: - We are continuing to increase the number of reviews completed year-on-year to help meet increasing demand, and to prioritise reviews according to people's needs. The number of adult Care Act reviews completed increased by 10% in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24, and the number of carer reviews increased by almost 9%. - A project to reduce Care Act waiting times began in April 2024. Since then, the median wait time for adult and carer reviews (combined) has reduced from 7 days to 3 days. As of March 2025, there were no carer reviews overdue by more than 12 months. - We have oversight of performance at all levels of the Council to ensure visibility, accountability and grip. Weekly and monthly reporting is sent to Operational Managers at all levels, and then scrutinised by the Waiting Times Steering Group and the Improvement and Assurance Board on a regular basis. - Since October, we have piloted the delegation portal with our strategic partner Care for the Carers, making it easier and quicker for them to process carer reviews. - Young carers reviews are undertaken by Imago Community, ensuring a timely assessment and review for this cohort.	Amber

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Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	24 June 2025
By:	Chief Executive
Title of report:	Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) – State of the County
Purpose of report:	To update Members on the issues which need to be taken into account in the priority and budget setting process for 2026/27 and beyond

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) note the evidence base on demographics (Appendix 1) and the national and local policy outlook (Appendix 2);**
 - 2) review the priority outcomes and delivery outcomes (Appendix 3) and agree these as the basis of the Council's business and financial planning;**
 - 3) agree officers update the Medium Term Financial Plan as the basis for financial planning when more information is available, as set out in paragraph 5;**
 - 4) agree officers identify areas of search for further savings as set out in paragraph 5;**
 - 5) agree officers update the Capital Strategy and programme (Appendix 4) as set out in paragraph 6; and**
 - 6) receive reports on more detailed plans for 2026/27 and beyond in the autumn when there is more information about future resources.**
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1. Background

1.1 The State of the County report is a key annual milestone in the County Council's Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process, our integrated business and financial planning cycle. The report provides an overview of the current operating context for the Council to begin the process of more detailed planning for 2026/27 and beyond. Alongside the 2024/25 year end monitoring report earlier on this Cabinet agenda, it reflects on our achievements over the last year and the challenges we expect in the year ahead arising from both local and national factors. This analysis helps us start to refine our plans and to guide our business planning and budget setting processes.

1.2 The County Council continues to play a vital role in the quality of life for people across East Sussex. The essential services we provide and commission, and the work we do in partnership with public, voluntary and business sector partners, contribute significantly to improving health and wellbeing, independence, prosperity, connectivity and community across the county. The reach of our services is significant. In the past year our Adult Social Care services have supported over 30,000 people, our Children's Services have been in contact with over 48,000 children and young people, we maintained over 2,000 miles of road, including repairing over 23,000 potholes in our roads and pavements, issued over two million items through our libraries and dealt with a quarter of a million tonnes of waste. The Council employs 9,912 people (approximately half of these in schools) and spends £382m (60%) with local suppliers, a significant influence in the county's economy.

1.3 We have a strong track record of focusing, within the Council and with our partners, on making best possible use of the collective resources available for the benefit of local

people. Over the past year we have been able to invest in extra support for families facing challenges to help them stay together wherever possible, further develop the integration of community health and social care services, and work with partners to publish the Economic Prosperity Strategy for the county and to create new jobs through business support programmes, all of which benefit our residents and communities.

1.4 These valued partnerships and services provide a firm foundation as we approach a period of both sustained challenge for the Council and the most significant change to local government in a generation. The potential devolution of powers from national Government to Sussex and election of a new Mayor in 2026, alongside the proposed reorganisation of local council structures from 2028, would represent reform on a scale not seen since East Sussex County Council (ESCC) came into being. The change on the horizon is considerable and will be a key factor in our planning for the future, but there remain a number of uncertainties, and the future landscape is not yet clearly in our sights. Whilst we anticipate new opportunities in the medium term to progress further transformation and integration of local public services, in the short term it is vital to maintain our focus on the immediate and growing pressures on ESCC services and resources. The financial challenge facing the County Council in the next two years is, once again, unprecedented in its scale as costs have continued to build beyond the resources available to respond. Securing the ability to maintain our statutory duties and continuing to meet the needs of East Sussex residents, particularly the most vulnerable, remain our most pressing priorities.

1.5 As well as significant achievements, the past year has seen the Council forced to take difficult decisions which impact on individuals, communities and partners in order to meet our legal duty to set a balanced budget. Pressures on services have continued to grow as the needs in our communities increase and become more complex, costs have escalated due to national factors beyond our control, and the funding we receive from Government and can generate locally has not kept pace. We expect these pressures to be ongoing in the coming months and years and have a significant impact on planning for the future. The evidence base set out in this report shows how changing demography, needs and national reforms will continue drive future demand for services and support. The gap between the funding we have and the cost of providing statutory services has now grown unsustainably and we have been realistic and honest about the substantial challenges this creates. As always, we will be transparent about the choices we face, including what this may mean for services and the people they support, and we will continue to approach our planning with a sharp focus on what the Council wants to achieve for East Sussex with the limited resources we have.

1.6 This will involve progressing the savings described within the budget set by Council in February which we know are all difficult choices which will have further impacts on our residents, staff and partners. It will mean continuing our focus on approaches which help people stay independent, or avoid the need for more intensive statutory support from ESCC services, wherever we can. We know that the best investment is in the upstream, preventative services which improve outcomes and ultimately make better use of resources and we will continue to make and evidence this argument. However, we do not have sufficient funding to scale up or even maintain these services to the level we would want, or to invest as we would like in the infrastructure and economy of East Sussex for the future. We will also maintain our tight controls on day to day spending and costs. But it is clear that these actions will not be enough to bridge the gap and we will need to consider the further steps needed as we work towards a balanced budget for the coming year.

1.7 This State of the County report contains the usual elements: the demographic evidence base; the national and local policy outlook; and updates on the Medium Term Financial Plan and capital programme. It provides our latest understanding of how we will

need to continue to respond to the wide range of policy, demographic and financial drivers which influence the outlook for the Council in the short and longer term.

1.8 We begin our planning for 2026/27 and beyond from the most challenging financial position the Council has ever faced, but also with significant uncertainty about future funding. Government is planning fundamental reforms to the way local government funding is allocated to individual councils, and the recent Spending Review set out a national funding pot for councils which will not grow at the same level as need. Whilst we welcome the national commitments to reducing the number of ringfenced grants and to multi-year funding settlements which will help us plan most effectively, the combination of constrained and redistributed funding increases the likelihood that the Council will not receive the resources required to bridge the financial gap and fund the essential investments we need to make in order to sustain statutory services. The temporary solution of relying on reserves to balance the books, as we have in the past two years, is no longer viable now that these reserves are depleted and the deficits from previous years have accumulated. If the promised multi-year settlement does not provide the funding we need, other avenues will need to be sought. It was agreed earlier in June to commission analysis to inform our options, including the potential to seek Exceptional Financial Support from Government.

1.9 Together with the high level of financial uncertainty, we continue to see locally the ongoing impact of the Covid pandemic and increased cost of living translate into growing need for the statutory, demand-led services for vulnerable children and adults which account for around three quarters of our budget. This, combined with ongoing escalation in costs right across the Council, including in other major statutory services such as highways and transport, have significantly increased the expenditure required to maintain core services. This picture reflects national trends following Covid and cost of living shocks to the economy and society, but has been pronounced here in East Sussex due to demographic make-up and needs of our population, the nature of the local economy and the steps we have already had to take over many years to respond within reduced resources.

1.10 East Sussex is ahead of the national ageing population trend, with over a quarter (26.5%) of the county's population aged 65 or over, compared to 18.7% in England and 19.8% regionally. There are pockets of significant deprivation which also impact on demand, with 78,000 of our residents living in areas amongst the top 20% most deprived nationally. The county differs substantially from the wider south east in this respect. East Sussex offers an exceptional natural environment in which to live and work but this also places limitations on the development and infrastructure which support economic growth, prosperity and the related generation of business rates to help fund services. Earnings are below both the national and regional average and the percentage of people who are unemployed is higher in East Sussex than the south east.

1.11 These national and local factors are also impacting on the Council's key partners, particularly in local government, health and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sectors. For district and borough councils the impact of increased homelessness and the spiralling costs of temporary accommodation has a major impact on resources, and national reforms to planning, housing and waste are significant. For the local NHS, demographic changes and increased complexity of need, coupled with the Covid legacy and major national reforms, impact demand and resources, with implications for working with Adult Social Care and Children's Services. For VCSE partners increased vulnerability in our communities and stretched public services mean more local people seeking support, alongside increased funding challenges as a result of higher costs. In this context, working together to target resources and sustain support as effectively as possible is more important than ever.

1.12 Taking every step we can locally to manage demand and reduce costs continues to be an ongoing discipline. However, the scope for more efficiency gains is now very limited and national support is vital. This report sets out our approach to proactive lobbying and communications to ensure that the Government is aware of the needs of our county, the urgent requirement for sustainable funding that appropriately reflects local need, and the case for fundamental national reform in key areas to enable more flexible and targeted use of the resources we have.

1.13 It continues to be critical that we focus ESCC resources, in partnership with others, in the most effective way to support our priorities and the provision of statutory services. The Council spends over £1.1bn gross each year (in the region of £580m net) on services for the county's residents and businesses. We continue to use our robust RPPR process to ensure our financial and other resources are aligned to delivery of our priority outcomes and that we are informed by a clear understanding of our effectiveness. This report describes the range of action we are already taking and outlines further steps we will need to take to bridge the financial gap if additional national support is not forthcoming.

2. Current Position

2.1 A range of national factors have continued to impact on the county over the past year, leading to ongoing pressures on households. The heightened cost of living has persisted, with a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable, the complexity of need amongst vulnerable children, families and adults has continued to grow, and population changes have also led to increased need. These pressures have manifested locally in ongoing growth in demand for County Council services, reinforcing the importance of the role the Council plays for the residents, communities and businesses of East Sussex. Our assessments of the impact of the national and local operating context on future levels of service demand continue to be refined and the latest modelling will be built into our planning.

2.2 As we develop our medium and longer term plans we will also need to factor in the broader context in which we will be working. As it approaches the end of its first year in office, the Government is pursuing a wide range of fundamental reforms to key services with more anticipated in the coming months. Many of these reforms have major impacts for our services, requiring a significant policy and operational response at a time of limited resources and uncertainty about the funding available to support change and transition. The national and local context includes:

- The developing national and international economic outlook, including considerable economic uncertainty. Inflation has fallen from previous heights but has recently increased and remains above target, impacts from the increased cost of living persist, economic growth remains limited and public finances continue to be strained. The ongoing pressures on households are likely to continue to influence demand for our services and the costs of providing services will also continue to increase.
- Considerable uncertainty over the future of local government funding. The long-planned funding review, covering the formula on which funding allocations to individual local authorities are based, is underway and will inform a multi-year financial settlement from 2026/27. With the review's outcomes and any transitional arrangements unclear, and indications of a shift of funding towards concentrated areas of deprivation in urban centres, there are considerable risks for East Sussex. In addition, national service reforms in Children's Services and a lack of clarity on funding arrangements for Adult Social Care (see below) carry considerable financial risks for local authorities.
- Structural change in local government initiated by the English Devolution White Paper. Locally, this will see the potential creation of a Mayoral Combined County

Authority (MCCA) for Sussex and a single tier of local government in East Sussex, with associated opportunities and risks for the Council and the county, as well as the potential for wider public service reform.

- Potential further changes to arrangements for driving economic growth locally as some functions currently undertaken by upper tier authorities could transition to a Sussex MCCA, along with additional powers devolved from Government. Harnessing the benefits of additional investment and opportunities for the county through these developments, Levelling Up Partnerships and the Plan for Neighbourhoods will be vital.
- Major national reforms in children's social care and education requiring a significant local response from the Council and partners, alongside ongoing work to respond to increasing complexity of need and challenges in securing suitable care placements. Significant reforms to the special educational needs and disabilities system are also anticipated in the coming months.
- Uncertainty in relation to plans to reform the Adult Social Care system, particularly future funding arrangements which remain unclear. Significant national reforms in the NHS are also impacting local health partners and have implications for how we work together. We are also continuing to respond to a range of significant local pressures in health and social care and taking forward a range of work to manage demand and improve outcomes.
- Significant national policy developments related to planning, infrastructure and transport, including the reintroduction of strategic spatial planning, potential changes to transport planning under proposed devolution arrangements and significant reforms to public transport. We are also taking forward our agreed Local Transport Plan and its supporting plans, the next stages of our Bus Service Improvement Plan, and a number of local infrastructure projects.
- Delivering new duties arising from the Environment Act, including in relation to biodiversity, nature recovery, waste and recycling. We will also look for opportunities to draw investment into East Sussex through Government plans in areas such as clean energy, and to define the current and future role for local authorities in Sussex in addressing climate change, to work most effectively alongside new national and local structures that are emerging.
- Ongoing challenges in the labour market, including the impact of workforce shortages and recruitment and retention challenges, ongoing pay negotiations and the need for our workforce to adapt to service reforms. We will also need to consider the impact of significant national employment reforms. Alongside this, the need to take advantage of new opportunities from rapidly developing advances in technology and artificial intelligence which may support capacity and efficiency.
- The ongoing need to respond to a complex picture of migration in light of global conflicts, increased numbers of people seeking asylum, including unaccompanied children, and developments in national policy on immigration.
- Renewing work with our voluntary, community and social enterprise Sector (VCSE) partners to maximise capacity to build community health, wellbeing and resilience as part of our ongoing activity to help people help themselves.

- The ongoing importance of all our partnerships in harnessing the collective resources and assets available within the county for the benefit of our communities, particularly in the context of financial pressures.

2.3 The local and national policy outlook at Appendix 2 sets out the latest position on these and other current issues, and plans will continue to develop over the summer and autumn as more information emerges. As always, Members will continue to be updated on policy developments throughout the RPPR cycle.

2.4 To address the unsustainable financial position we have taken every possible step including instituting strict spending and recruitment controls, reprioritising spend, reducing our office estate and maximising income. We have reviewed and reduced our capital programme to minimise the need for borrowing, which means we are not able to invest to the level we would want in other important areas, such as the roads which support the county's economy and communities and our response to the climate emergency. Without the capacity in the budget to support borrowing to invest for the future, we have been forced to scale back our plans in these and other areas to match only the grant funding we receive. We have reviewed the value for money our services provide, ensuring they perform well against our nearest comparator authorities and that we adopt good practice elsewhere where we can. External assessment has confirmed that the Council continues to provide good value for money, is efficient and well-run. We are introducing and testing further digital and artificial intelligence approaches and systems which benefit both service delivery and capacity.

2.5 Where it is feasible within available resources we have pursued preventative or upstream approaches which improve outcomes and manage demand, supporting people and communities to be independent wherever possible. This includes a transformation programme in Children's Services focused on securing the right placements for children and delivering national reforms to social care support for families, and the further integration of community health and care services and development of a prevention strategy in Adult Social Care and Health. The delivery of additional patching, drainage and lining works through Cabinet's previous additional investment in highways maintenance has supported the future resilience of the roads which the local economy and our communities depend on. However, there is a lack of funding for the scale of investment required in preventative work across a range of areas which would reduce the need for more intensive support in the future. As resources for this work have become increasingly constrained over time, services have become necessarily focused on responding to the most critical needs, creating a negative cycle of growing demand and increased costs.

2.6 We have taken the additional and significant steps of bringing forward further difficult service reductions and drawing on service reserves to balance the budget. However, despite all the action we have taken, fundamentally there remains a large gap between the income we currently expect to receive in the coming years and the costs of providing services. Without further Government support, changes to the statutory requirements local authorities are expected to fulfil, or more funding for the county as a result of reform of local government finances we will not have the funding we need for the future. Further detail on the financial outlook and proposed next steps is provided at paragraph 5.

2.7 In all our activities, and in planning for the future, the County Council will continue to work to our guiding principles that:

- We are effective stewards of public money and deliver good value for money through strong integrated business planning;
- Our activities are transparent and we can be held to account;
- We operate as One Council and focus on agreed priority outcomes;

- We prioritise the investment available for front line service delivery and maximise the resources available, including work to secure sustainable national funding and partnerships with other organisations;
- We carry out all we do professionally and competently;
- We remain ambitious and realistic about what can be achieved with the resources available; and
- We strive to be a good employer and partner.

3. Demographic, Economic and Demand Changes

3.1 Appendix 1 sets out the key factors affecting the county in relation to demography, deprivation, health, housing, the environment and economy, and the impact these are having on demand for our services. This contains more detail on the issues outlined in paragraph 2. Appendix 1 highlights some of the longer-term challenges we face related to the nature of our population and our geography alongside emerging issues. While some factors impact on residents across the county, such as the ongoing challenges around cost of living, each local area is different and some are impacted more by particular issues. In addition, some of our communities are impacted by multiple systemic issues that require additional support to address. This has been recognised by the awarding of Levelling Up funding to these areas, and more recently being identified as eligible places for Plan for Neighbourhoods funding.

3.2 The main factors highlighted by the report are:

- **Older People** – the latest population projections show that the number of over 65s in the county will continue to grow at a much faster rate than our working age population; we are expecting an increase of 9.5% in the 65-84 age group and an increase of 18.3% in the over 85 age group in the next four years. Proportionately we have high numbers of over 65s and over 85s which has an impact on the demand for services and the Council's finances. Rother has the joint highest percentage of the population aged 85 years and over in the country.
- **Children and Young People** – there are still higher levels of demand for children's social care and more complex cases than seen pre-pandemic which together have resulted in a higher number of child protection cases. The number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continues to increase year on year, which is leading to an increased demand for home to school transport provision.
- **Economy** – economic productivity within the county remains lower than the national average. Average wages for those employed within the county also remain lower than the national average. The unemployment rates in Hastings and Eastbourne are higher than the national average.

4. Council Priority Outcomes

4.1 The Council's business and financial planning is underpinned by our four priority outcomes, which provide a clear focus for decisions about spending and savings and direct activity across the Council.

4.2 The current four priority outcomes are:

- Driving sustainable economic growth;
- Keeping vulnerable people safe;
- Helping people help themselves; and
- Making best use of resources now and for the future.

The priority outcome that the Council makes the “best use of resources now and for the future” is a test that is applied to all activities to ensure sustainability of our resources, both in terms of money and environmental assets. It ensures that the future impact of the choices we make about using resources is actively considered across all that we do, as well as the here and now.

4.3 The priority outcomes, and their subsidiary delivery outcomes, are reviewed annually to ensure they continue to reflect the current context. Updates have been made in recent years to ensure the priorities we are working to deliver, and the way we measure the performance of our activities and services, reflect the current operating context. Following these recent updates, it is considered that the current priority and delivery outcomes, as set out at Appendix 3, remain appropriate and Cabinet is recommended to agree these as the basis for future business and financial planning.

5. Medium Term Financial Plan

5.1 When the 2025/26 balanced budget was approved by Full Council on 11 February 2025, the deficit on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2027/28 was £56.2m. Updating the MTFP for normal factors (such as the latest inflation rates and an additional year), the position is an increased deficit by 2028/29 of £70.8m.

5.2 On 11 June the Chancellor published the Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) – the first spending review of the current Parliament. The CSR announced a 2.6% real terms increase in local government core spending power, although this largely comes from increased Council Tax, which will retain the 3% core referendum principle and 2% for the Adult Social Care precept. The CSR did not publish any information on likely allocations, which will be subject to the outcome of the Government’s funding reform consultation. The Government’s intention to use funding reform to target funding based on deprivation creates risks that redistribution will impact negatively on the Council’s future financial position.

5.3 The MTFP as set out below assumes continuation of current funding. However, the detail within the Comprehensive Spending Review, funding reform consultation and business rates reset, together with a multi-year settlement are all likely to impact on the future deficit. The Council will be required to set a further two balanced budgets in 2026/27 and 2027/28, prior to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in 2028/29.

Medium Term Financial Plan	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29* £m
Annual Budget Deficit / (Surplus)	25.089	18.084	16.175
Carry Forward of 2025/26 Deficit	11.449	-	-
Annual Budget Deficit / (Surplus) after Carry Forward	36.538	18.084	16.175
Total Budget Deficit / (Surplus)	36.538	54.622	70.797

*Notional due to LGR

5.4 The Council has recognised ongoing service pressures in Adult Social Care and Children’s Services and invested £51.1m in 2024/25 with a further £54.9m in 2025/26 required when the budgets were set. Whilst the 2025/26 Local Government Financial Settlement saw an increase in grant funding to the Council including a £8.9m increase in the Social Care Grant and a £1.5m allocation of Children’s Social Care Prevention Grant, there was the loss of £0.5m Services Grant, plus the Council did not receive an allocation from the new £600m Recovery Grant, where allocations were specifically targeted to meet need and deprivation, particularly in non-shire authorities. Overall, the additional funding was not at a

level sufficient to fund the investment, and the Council still required a significant draw on reserves of £11.4m in 2025/26.

5.5 The use of reserves to mitigate budget deficits is not sustainable as they can only be used once. The current level of reserves is set out in the table below. Total strategic reserves are projected to be £4.5m by 2029, which excludes any additional draws required to balance budgets in 2025/26 or beyond. This compares with a cumulative deficit of £70.8m by 2028/29:

Reserves Balances	1 Apr 2025 £m	Estimated 1 Apr 2026 £m	Estimated 1 Apr 2029 £m
Earmarked Reserves:			
Held on behalf of others or statutorily ringfenced	25.5	22.5	21.4
Named Service Reserves			
Waste Reserve	19.8	14.7	7.4
Capital Programme Reserve	9.1	5.2	0.0
Insurance Reserve	7.7	5.7	5.5
Local Government Reorganisation Reserve	0.0	4.2	0.0
Subtotal named service reserves	36.6	29.8	12.9
Strategic Reserves			
Priority Outcomes and Transformation	5.2	4.6	2.0
Financial Management	11.3	4.6	2.5
Subtotal strategic reserves	16.5	9.1	4.5
Total Earmarked Reserves	78.6	61.5	38.8
General Fund Balance	10.0	10.0	10.0
TOTAL RESERVES	88.6	71.5	48.8

5.6 Planning scenarios will be considered which may impact the overall deficit, as set out in the table below.

	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29* £m	Total £m
Revised deficit	36.538	18.084	16.175	70.797
Scenarios currently being considered				
Continuation of Council Tax flexibility: <i>Add a further 3.00% to our current 1.99% assumption to get to 4.99% (2.99% plus 2.00% ASC Precept) for 2026/27</i>	(11.894)	(0.420)	(0.433)	(12.747)
Deficit/(surplus) after scenarios	24.644	17.664	15.742	58.050

*Notional due to LGR

5.7 The CSR confirmed that the Council Tax referendum limit would continue to be 5% (a 2% Adult Social Care precept and 3% for other services). If the Council raised Council Tax by 4.99% there would remain a cumulative deficit of £58.1m by 2028/29. With regard to possible funding scenarios, the Government has been clear that deprivation will play a much

bigger part in determining the allocation of funding. There is concern that the measures used to define 'need and deprivation' will favour urban councils, while shire councils such as ESCC will lose out. This could be particularly challenging for East Sussex, which has higher levels of deprivation and need than neighbouring authorities.

5.8 Given the forecast level of strategic reserves is £4.5m by March 2029, which excludes any draws necessary to mitigate future deficits, and that all other avenues have been explored, the Council will have to consider balancing the 2026/27 budget from the following options:

- Further savings and service reductions, which could have a significant impact on local residents given the savings that have already been delivered.
- Use of remaining reserves, which would leave the Council unable to manage emergent financial pressures.
- Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) to fund the deficit - EFS is not 'free' money to the Council as it would involve either borrowing and/or increasing Council Tax above the referendum limit. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) look to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to provide assurance for any EFS requests. CIPFA has been commissioned to undertake the required financial assurance review in anticipation of having to approach MHCLG for EFS.

5.9 None of the above options are desirable but the Council will have no option but to undertake some combination of the above if it is to maintain financial sustainability and protect services to the residents of East Sussex, as we move towards the reorganisation of local government.

Savings

5.10 The 2025/26 balanced budget and MTFP agreed by Council in February already includes planned savings of £16.2m. Following on from over £140m in savings delivered since 2010, these savings are very challenging to deliver and will have significant impacts on our residents, staff and partners. They also mean that it has not been possible to sustain all services at Core Offer levels - the basic but decent level of services residents should expect. However, in light of the serious financial position the Council faces, and the very limited options remaining, it is recommended that officers explore areas of search for further savings and service reductions across all departments to reduce the financial gap.

5.11 Given the need for any savings to take effect as early as possible to impact on the 2026/27 financial position, areas of search will be brought forward for Member consideration at the earliest opportunity.

6. Capital Programme

6.1 The approved programme has now been updated to reflect the 2024/25 outturn and other approved variations, revising the gross programme to £724.1m to 2033/34. The details are set out in Appendix 4, together with the revised programme.

6.2 The 10 year capital programme to 2034/35 and 20 year Capital Strategy 2025/26 to 2045/46 will be updated as part of the RPPR process over the autumn to add an additional year and ensure continued links into, and support of, the Council's other strategies.

7. Lobbying and Communications

7.1 This report sets out the range of significant demand, policy and financial issues which must be addressed in our planning for the future. The outlook is highly challenging - we face a significant financial gap and very limited and undesirable options open to the Council in

responding to this. There is also continued uncertainty in relation to national reforms in major service areas, ongoing growth in need and a lack of clarity on future funding arrangements. At the same time, similar pressures are affecting many of our key partners, affecting the work we do together to improve outcomes for local people, and we are working with local government partners to plan and deliver major structural change.

7.2 These are substantial risks and planning in this context is very complex. It is clear however, that without further Government support, the financial outlook will require difficult decisions in the short term and that these will not be the decisions we would choose to make to address growing demands or to support transition to future organisations.

7.3 Through our lobbying, we will make clear to the Government the requirement for sustainable funding for local government as a whole, additional support to deliver national reforms and that the specific local needs of East Sussex must be appropriately reflected in new funding arrangements. We will highlight that opportunities for efficiencies and service transformation arising from structural change can only be fully harnessed if underpinned by the robust and sustainable services that East Sussex residents, businesses and communities need. This includes opportunities to continue positive preventative work that could most effectively manage future demand for services.

7.4 We will continue to work with local, regional and national partners to make this case through all available avenues and seek the support of East Sussex MPs in highlighting the needs of our county and the key role the Council has to play in improving the quality of life for local people.

8. Next Steps

8.1 Work will continue over the summer to refine our understanding of the medium term impacts on our services of national reforms, changing demand for services and the financial resources that will be available to us in the coming years. We will also develop proposals for closing the financial gap.

8.2 We will report back to Members in the autumn with an updated assessment of our service demand, funding expectations and proposed actions to inform more detailed business and budget planning for 2026/27 and beyond. We will use our RPPR process to plan for the future as best we can in the context of the considerable uncertainty we face.

8.3 Members will continue to be consulted on plans as they are developed through Cabinet, County Council, Scrutiny Committees, Whole Council Forums and specific engagement sessions throughout the 2025/26 Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources process.

BECKY SHAW
Chief Executive



State of the County 2025

Focus on East Sussex

Version number 1

Publication date August 2025

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Summary

Population - East Sussex has an older age profile than nationally, with a significantly higher proportion of the population aged 65+ than both England and the South East. Rother has the joint highest proportion of people aged 85 and over in the country.

Children and young people - More children achieve a good level of development at the Early Years Foundation Stage than nationally. However, the levels of attainment at Key Stage 2, and at Key Stage 4 (Progress 8 and Attainment 8) are lower than nationally. We continue to see higher levels of demand for children's social care and more complex cases which together have resulted in a higher number of child protection plans. The number of Looked After Children has increased, and we have continued to see significant increased demand for support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including for Home to School Transport.

Health and wellbeing - East Sussex has a consistently higher life expectancy for both men and women than the national average. There is a lower percentage of people who are overweight or obese in East Sussex compared to nationally, but smoking levels are higher in some parts of the county.

Adults - the number of people receiving long term support increased in 2024/25, with the majority aged 65 or over. Projections indicate that the number of people with dementia, and those with multiple long-term conditions will continue to increase in the coming years. A higher percentage of the population were providing unpaid care in 2021 in East Sussex than nationally.

Housing - house prices in East Sussex remain higher than the national average. The ratio of median house prices to median earnings is also higher than the ratio in England, and the same as the South East. Rented housing makes up a significant proportion of the housing sector in East Sussex, and there were significant rises in the cost of private rented housing between 2019 and 2025.

Deprivation - as a county, East Sussex is ranked 93 out of 151 Upper Tier Local

Authorities on the Index of Multiple Deprivation rank. This is a similar level of deprivation as Lincolnshire, Somerset and Kent. However, deprivation varies across the county, with Baird Ward in Hastings in the most deprived 1% of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in the country, while an LSOA in Uckfield is in the least deprived 3%. The Government has identified 4 out of 5 local authorities in East Sussex as having specific locations with priority need for 'levelling up' funding. This funding will be used in projects that address economic recovery and growth, improved transport connectivity, and need for regeneration.

Environment - emissions of carbon dioxide have continued to fall in East Sussex over recent years. However, further reductions will be needed.

Economy - employment rates rose in 2024. The challenges that existed pre-pandemic relating to productivity and average wages for those employed within the county remain. Although the unemployment rate in the county is now below the national average, it remains higher than the regional rate. Youth unemployment remains higher than the overall rate.

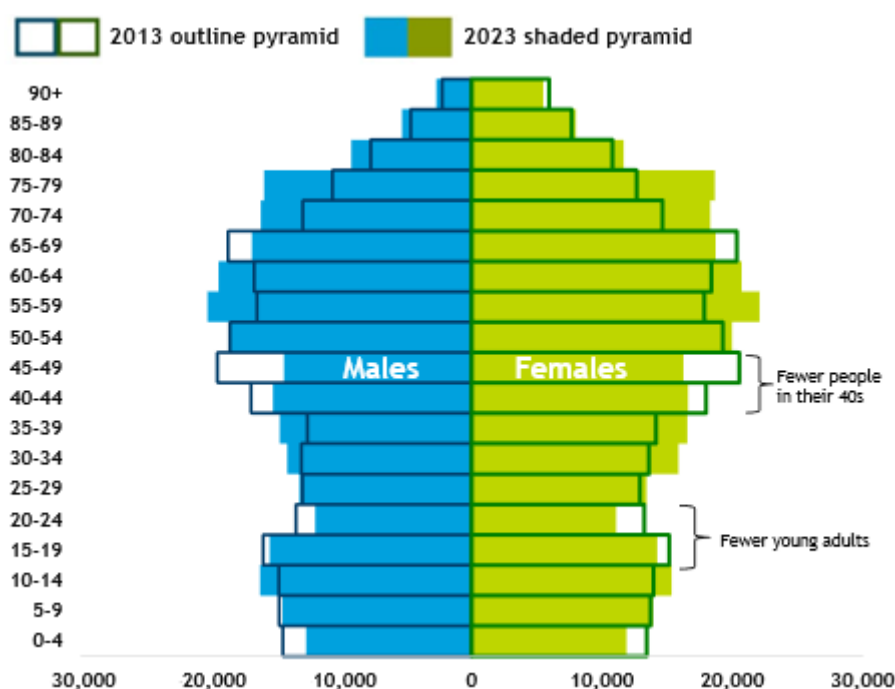
Civil Society - there are a diverse range of Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations in East Sussex, working at every level, neighbourhood, town/parish, and district/borough. There are over 3,000 not-for-profit groups and organisations providing activities and support to residents and communities that bring about positive change and improve people's lives.

Community safety - neighbourhood crime rates in East Sussex are lower than the national average in all categories. Between 2023 and 2024 there was a decrease in neighbourhood crime in East Sussex. There was an increase in serious violent crime in the county between 2023 and 2024, though the rate of serious violent crime remains low in East Sussex.

Population

Age and sex

The ONS mid-year estimates 2023 estimated the population of East Sussex to be 555,500. Compared to England and the South East, East Sussex has a much older age profile, with Rother having the joint highest rate of people over the age of 85 in the country at 4.9%, the same rate as North Norfolk and New Forest. 26.5% of the East Sussex population is comprised of people aged 65 or over, compared to 19.8% for the South East and 18.7% for England. 3.9% of people in East Sussex were aged 85+ in 2022, higher than nationally, 2.5%, and the South East, 2.8%.



Source: ONS mid-year estimates 2023

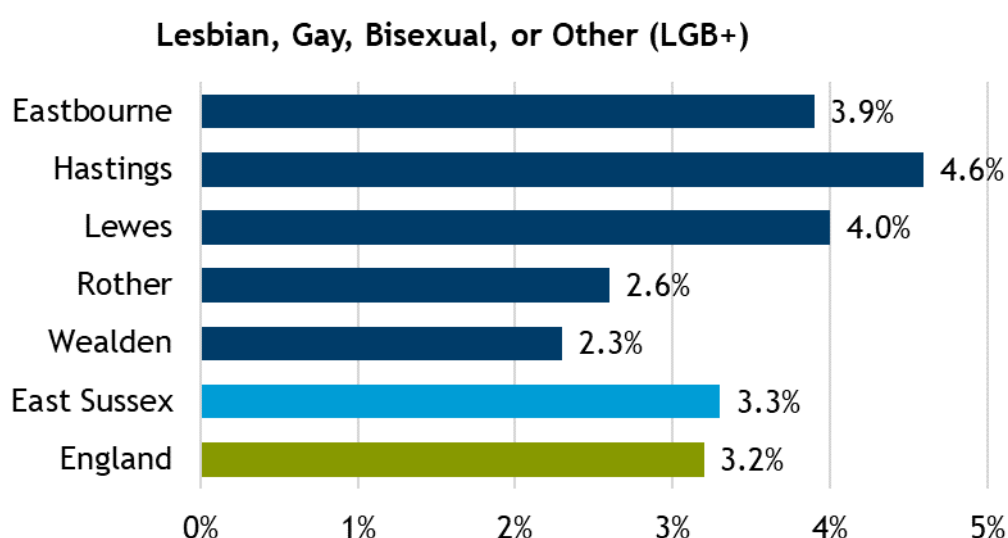
Young people, those aged 0-17, made up 18.7% of the population of East Sussex in 2023. This is lower than in England, 20.8%, and the South East, 21.0%. Working age people, those aged 18-64, made up 54.9% of the population in East Sussex in 2022. This is lower than England, 60.5%, and the South East, 59.3%.

This means that for every 10 working age people there are 4.6 older people in East Sussex, this ratio rises to 6.1 in Rother. The national average is 3.0.

52% of the county's population was estimated to be female and 48% male, similar to the national split. For those aged 65 and above, it was estimated that 55% of the population was female and 45% male.

Sexual Orientation

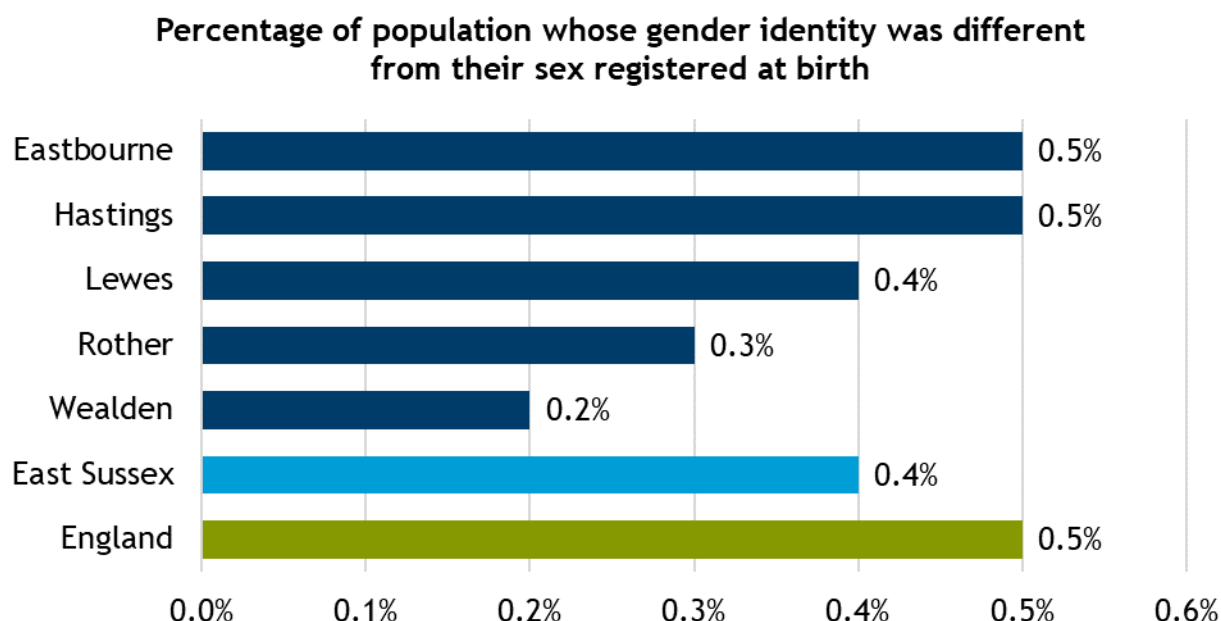
The 2021 Census indicates that 3.3% of the East Sussex population identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Other (LGB+). This is similar to the national average of 3.2%. Hastings had the highest percentage of people identifying as LGB+ at 4.6%.



Note: A significant percentage of people across the county provided no response, therefore the percentage of people identifying as LBG+ could be either higher or lower than estimated. Source: Census 2021

Gender identity

Gender identity was included in the national census questions for the first time in 2021. A significant percentage of people did not respond to this question, but this is still the best data we have on this topic. 0.4% of the East Sussex population recorded that their gender identity is different to their sex registered at birth. This equates to 1,640 people.

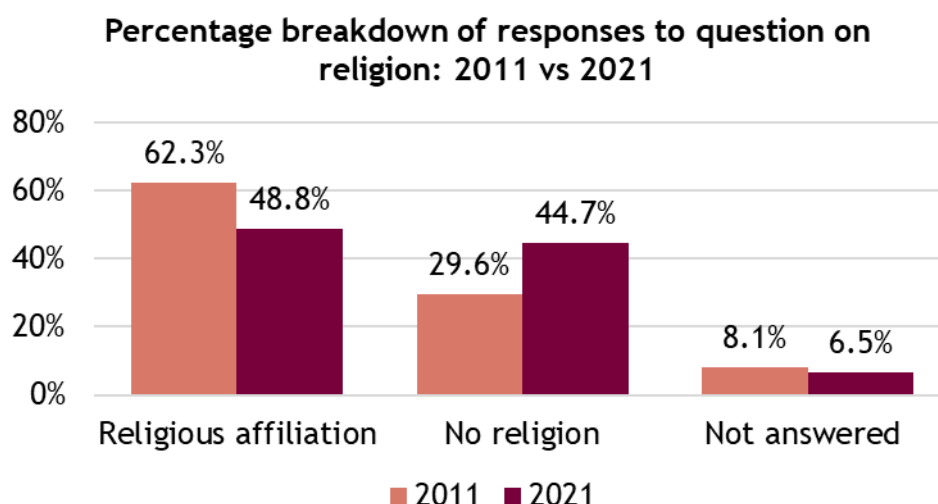


Note: A significant percentage of people across the county provided no response, therefore the percentage of people with a different gender identity to their sex registered at birth could be either higher or lower than shown. Source: Census 2021

Religion

For the 2021 Census, 45.9% of the population in East Sussex stated their religion was Christian, 1.1% stated their religion was Islam, 0.5% as Buddhism and 0.3% as Hindu. 44.7% of the population selected 'no religion' as their response.

The percentage of people who indicated an affiliation to a religion fell between 2011 and 2021, while the number of people who gave 'no religion' as their response grew.



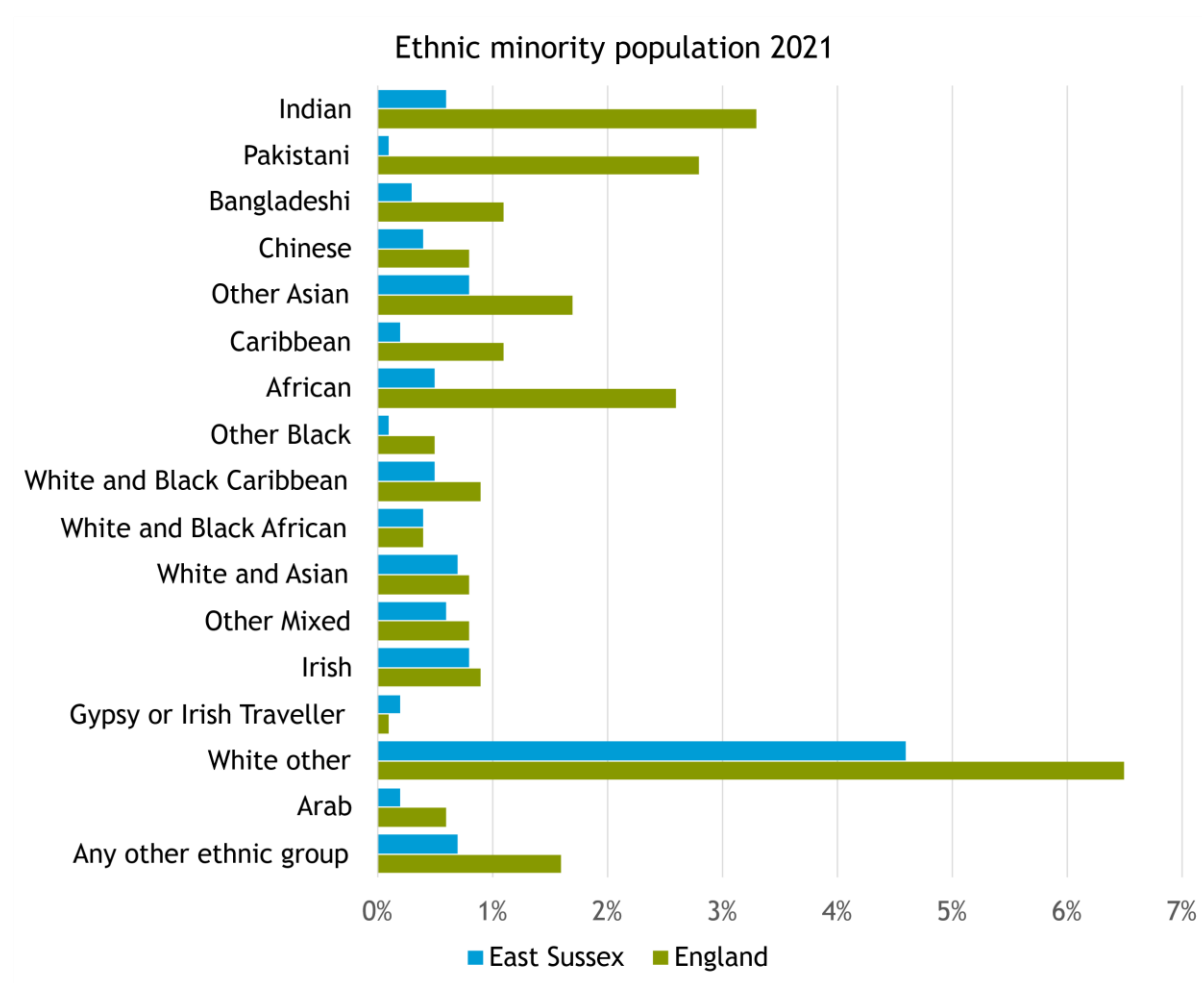
Source: Census 2021

Marital status

Data from the 2021 Census shows that 31.9% of respondents from East Sussex were single and 46.8% of respondents were married or in a civil partnership. 2.3% of respondents were separated from their partners and 11.2% were divorced or had a civil partnership which was dissolved. The remaining 7.7% of respondents were widowed.

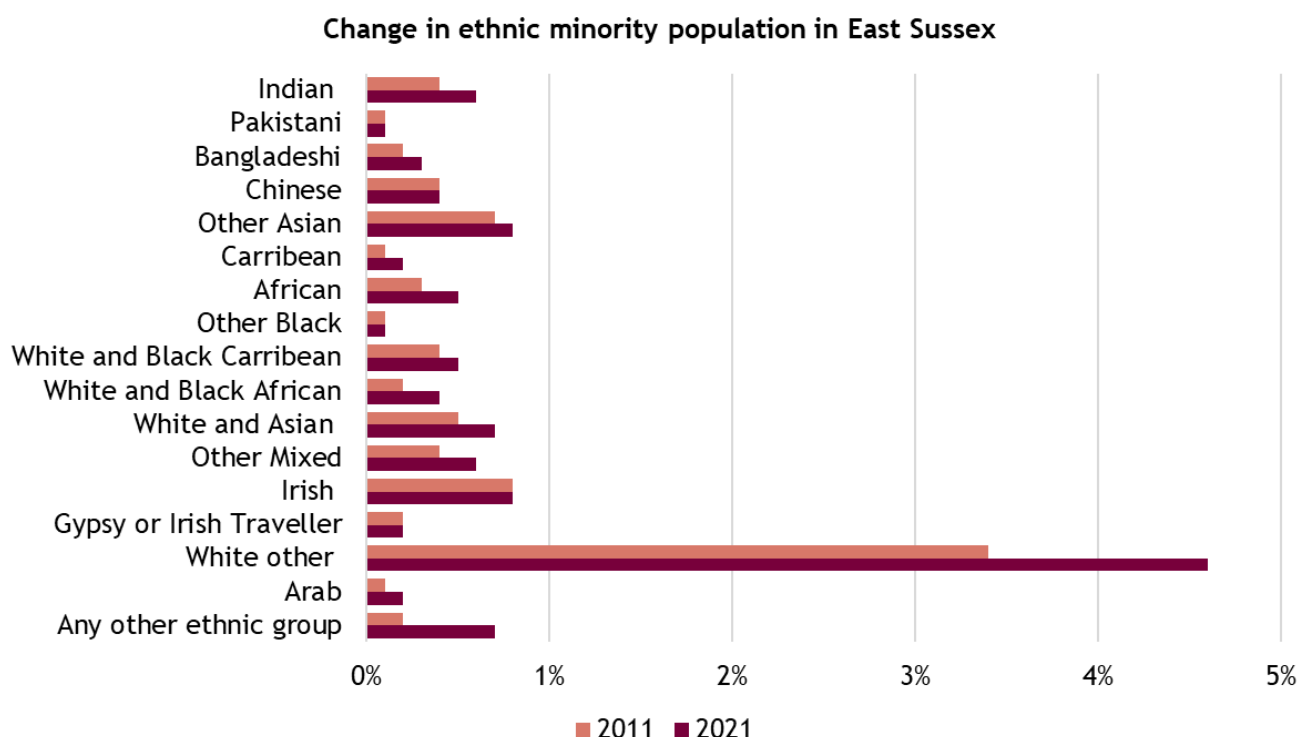
Ethnicity

The latest ethnicity data for the county is from the 2021 Census. 88.3% of the county's population identified as White: British and Northern Irish, compared to the regional average of 78.8% and the national average of 73.5%. A higher percentage of the population in East Sussex identified as Gypsy or Irish Traveller than the national average (0.2% compared to 0.1%).



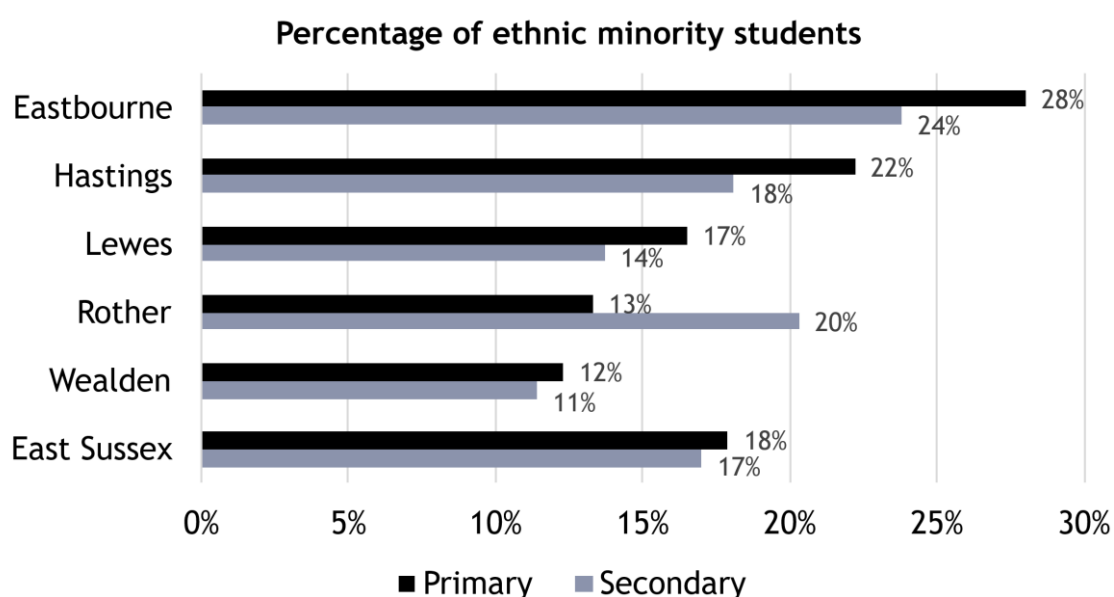
Source: Census 2021

Overall, the percentage of the population in East Sussex in each ethnic minority group has either stayed the same or increased between 2011 and 2021.



Source: Census 2021

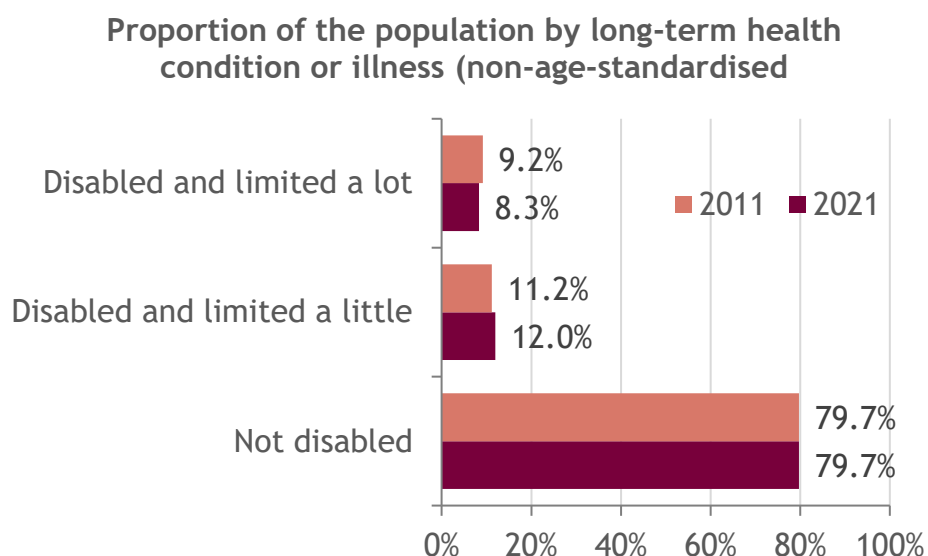
A higher percentage of pupils (17%) are from ethnic minority backgrounds, compared to the adult population. Overall, Eastbourne has the highest percentage of students from ethnic minority backgrounds for both primary (28%) and secondary (24%) schools.



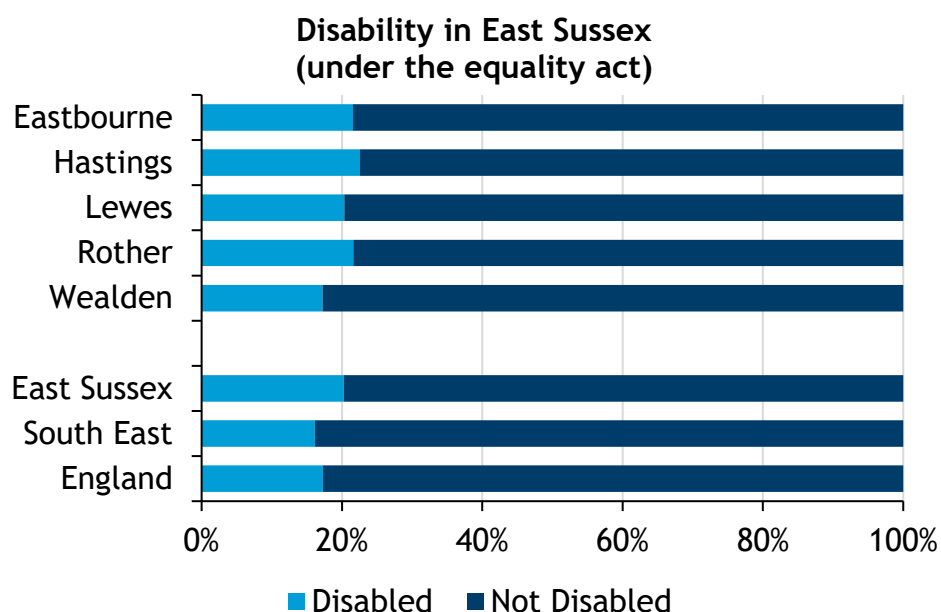
Source: ESCC Schools Census January 2025

Disability

In the 2021 Census, the proportion of the East Sussex population that identified themselves as disabled was 20.3% (110,550). This is exactly the same as the proportion that identified as disabled in the 2011 Census (20.3%, 107,150).

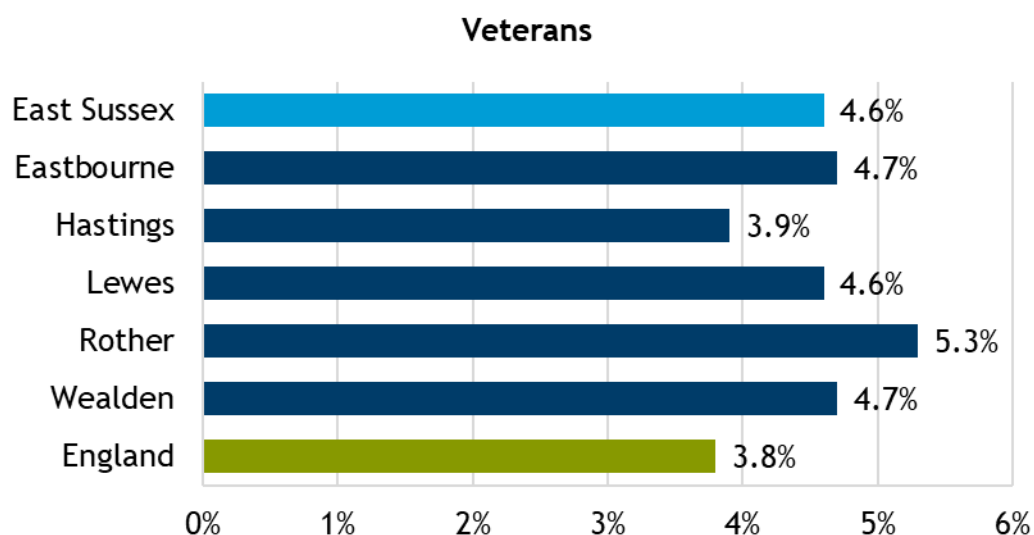


The percentage of people identifying themselves as disabled varied slightly across the district and boroughs, but rates across the county were higher than the South East average.



Veterans

2021 Census data shows that 4.6% of the population in East Sussex were Veterans, compared to the national average of 3.8%. This equates to 21,200 Veterans living in East Sussex.



Pregnancy and maternity

The ONS births data provides an indication of the number of women in East Sussex who may be pregnant or on maternity.

Protected characteristic: Pregnancy and maternity	East Sussex	Eastbourne	Hastings	Lewes	Rother	Wealden
Live births - 2023	4,321	779	838	765	622	1,317
Births per 1,000 females aged 15 to 44 - 2023	49.2	43.2	51.3	49.7	47.6	52.9

Source: ONS

Population change

The latest ONS population estimates suggest that the East Sussex population increased by 0.8% between 2022 and 2023, while in England and the South East the increase was 1.0%. Over this period the population grew fastest in Eastbourne, up 1.4%, and grew slowest in Hastings, up 0.2%. Wealden has seen the fastest population growth over the past 10 years, with an increase of 8.4%, while Hastings has seen a slight decline of -0.2% since 2013.

Based on the information currently available we estimate that around 560,000 people live in the county in 2025. We expect that to increase to around 577,700 people in 2029, an increase of 3.2%.

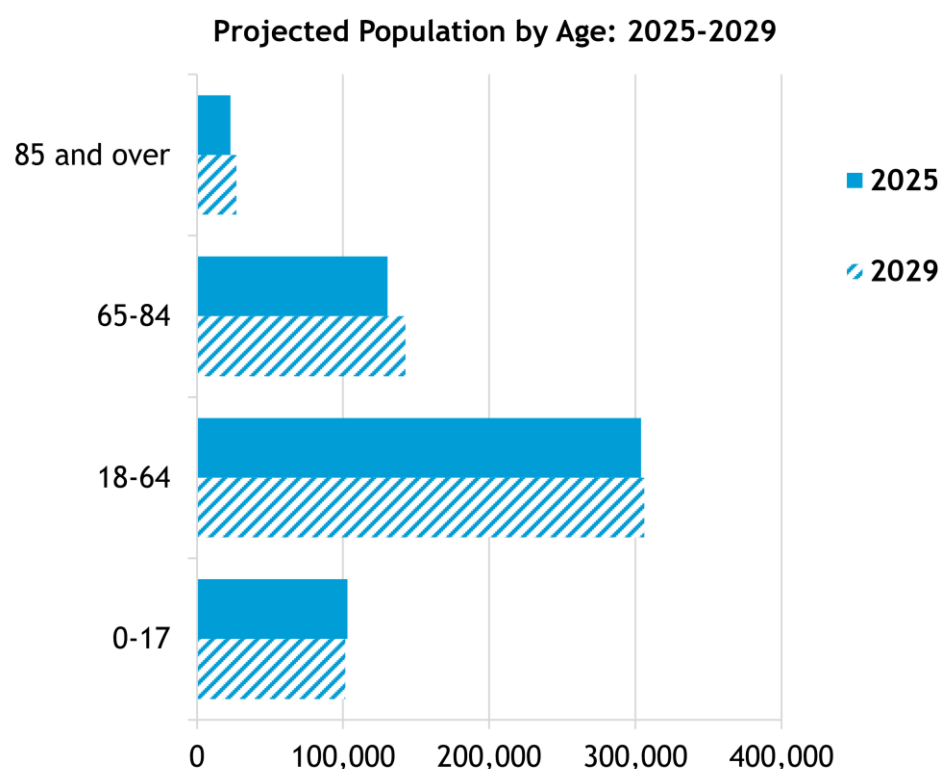
We expect the increase in population to be driven by people moving into the county from elsewhere in the UK. Many of the people who choose to come to East Sussex are older adults, and, together with the aging of the baby boomer generations, this means that the over 65 age group is growing much faster than younger age groups. In 2029 we expect that just over half of our population will be aged 18-64 (53%), with nearly 30% aged 65 and over.

Between 2025 and 2029 we are expecting that there will be around 17,300 births in the county and around 26,400 deaths. This reflects the fact that we have a larger population of older adults in East Sussex. Over the same period, we are expecting around 140,800 people to move into the county, offset by around 114,000 people moving out of the county.

Overall, these changes mean that compared to 2025, we estimate that by 2029 there will be:

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- A decline of 1.4% (1,440 people) in the number of children and young people
- An increase of 0.8% (2,570 people) in the working age population
- 9.5% more people aged 65-84 (12,350 people)
- 18.3% more people aged 85+ (4,200 people)



Note: These dwelling-led population projections (sometimes known as policy-based projections) are constrained to reflect the number of additional dwellings being planned for future years by local authorities in East Sussex. They are also based on the latest 2023 data on population estimates and migration released by ONS in June 2024. This year's projections also use fertility rates which more closely reflect those used by the ONS in their latest national, 2022-based, trend-based population projections.

Projected Population in 2029

Age Range	East Sussex	England
0-17	17.6%	19.1%
18-64	53.0%	60.9%
65-84	24.7%	17.2%
85+	4.7%	2.8%

Population Change: 2025-2029

Age Range	2025	2029	Actual change
0-17	103,000	101,570	-1,430
18-64	303,700	306,270	2,570
65-84	130,420	142,760	12,340
85+	22,880	27,080	4,200
All people	560,000	577,680	17,680

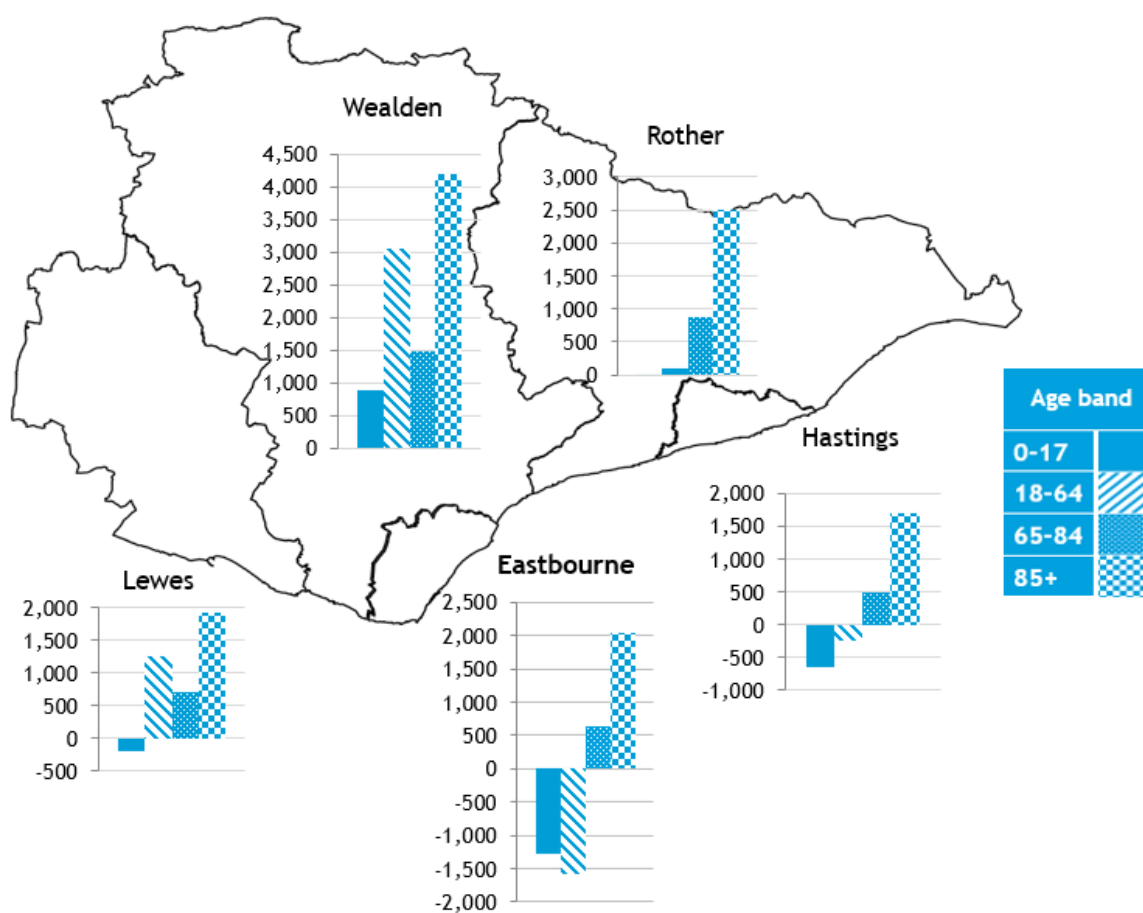
Source: ESCC data: ESCC 2023-based population projections (dwelling-led), March 2025. National Data: ONS 2022-based trend-based projections, published February 2025. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 and therefore may not sum.

District population change

We expect that how our population changes will be different in different parts of the county. By 2029 our projections suggest:

- An increase of 23% (1,500) more people aged 85+ in Wealden; the smallest percentage increase in this age group will be in Eastbourne, 15% (600)
- 11% (4,200) more people aged 65-84 in Wealden, and 10% (1,700) more people in Hastings. Lewes will see the smallest rise of 8% (1,900)
- Wealden is projected to see a rise in the working age population (18-64) of 3% (3,000), and Lewes 2% (1,300)
- Eastbourne is projected to see a fall in the working age population over this period, with numbers declining by 3% (1,600 fewer people)

District population change 2025 - 2029



Source: ESCC data, ESCC 2023-based population projections (dwelling led), March 2025.

Children and young people

Early Years

East Sussex received 1,100 applications for a funded place for eligible 2-year-olds in the spring 2025 funding period. Of these, 297 children were not eligible to receive funding. 73.5% (808) of those who applied have accessed a place with an early years provider, compared to the England average of 74.8% (Source: ESCC Children's Services).

Attainment

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

At early years, children in East Sussex achieve above the national averages for Good Level of Development which is the expected standard for: communication and language; physical development; personal, social and emotional development; literacy and mathematics. 69.0% of pupils achieved a good level of development in East Sussex in 2023/24, compared to 67.7% nationally.

In 2023 the percentage point gap between children eligible for free school meals achieving a good level of development and their peers was -23.2, which is above the England average gap for this cohort of -20.5.

Key Stage 2 Attainment

The percentage of pupils working at the expected standard in reading, writing and maths combined at Key Stage 2 is 58%, which is below the England average of 61%.

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils working at the expected standard in reading, writing and maths combined at Key Stage 2 is 41%, which is below the England average of 46%.

Key Stage 4: Attainment 8

Attainment 8 is the students' average achievement across eight subjects: English, mathematics, three English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects (from sciences,

computer science, geography, history and languages), and three further subjects, from the range of EBacc subjects, or any other GCSE or approved, high-value arts, academic, or vocational qualifications. All pupils in East Sussex, including disadvantaged pupils, achieved 43.1, lower than the England average of 46.1. Disadvantaged pupils achieved 30.1, lower than the England average of 34.7.

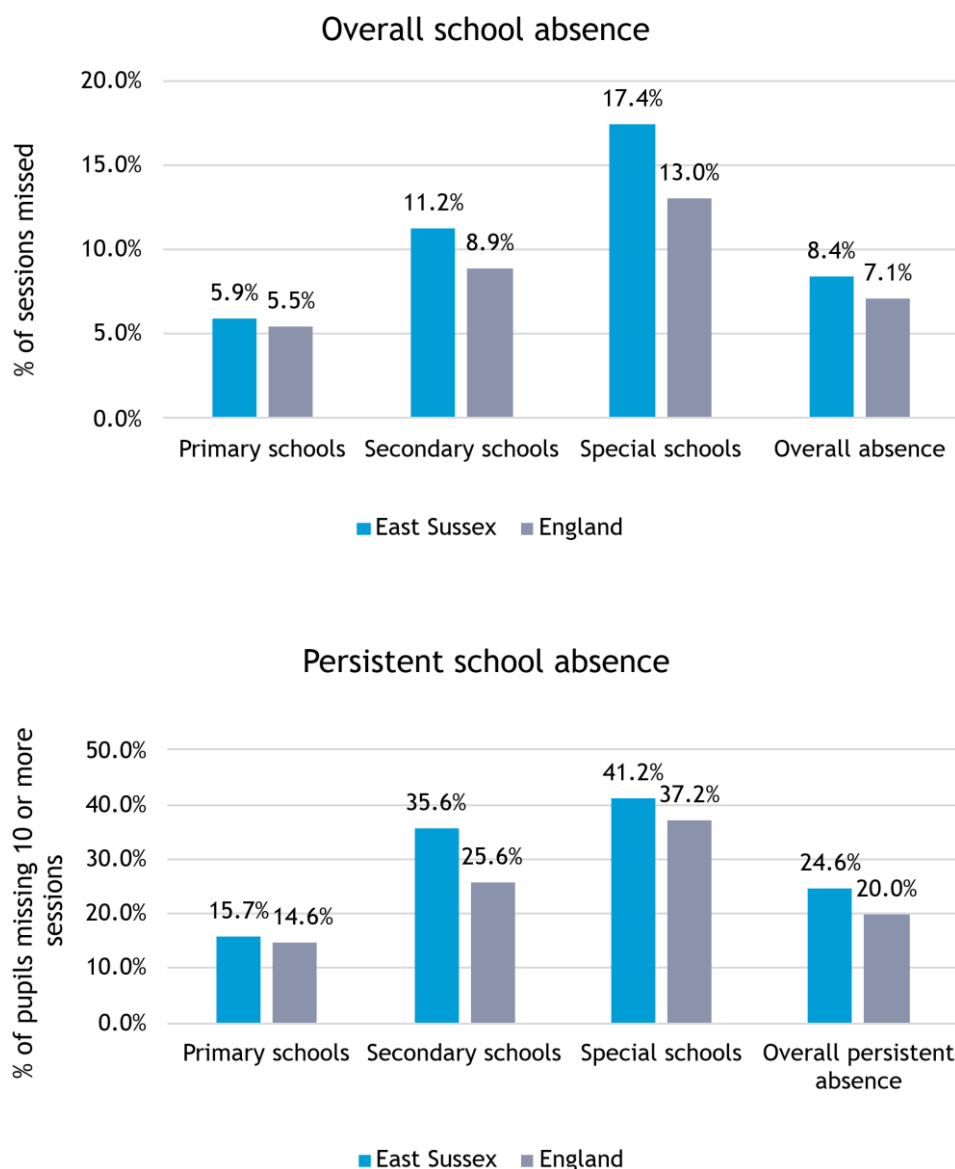
Key Stage 4: Progress 8

Progress 8 is a measure of students' progress across the Attainment 8 subjects from the end of primary school (Key Stage 2) to the end of secondary school (Key Stage 4). Scores for East Sussex are -0.18 which is below the England average of -0.03.

Attendance

The pandemic had a significant adverse impact on school attendance, both nationally and locally. The percentage of children persistently absent from school, defined as missing 10% or more of sessions, is 24.6%, above the England average of 20%. The overall percentage of sessions missed out of all available sessions due to pupil absence is 8.4% in East Sussex, compared to the England average of 7.1%. In August 2024 the Government published attendance statutory guidance to clarify responsibilities for local authorities, schools, parents and carers. This outlines the expectation that all councils should strengthen their oversight of attendance through regular individual dialogue with all schools, and provide whole family early help support, free of any charge, to schools and all families of children whose attendance is less than 50%.

Absence for academic year 2023-2024:



Source: Department for Education

East Sussex has high levels of suspension and exclusion, and these are rising further, in line with national trends. School leaders are experiencing increased levels and complexity of need in their school populations and the demand for support services remains high.

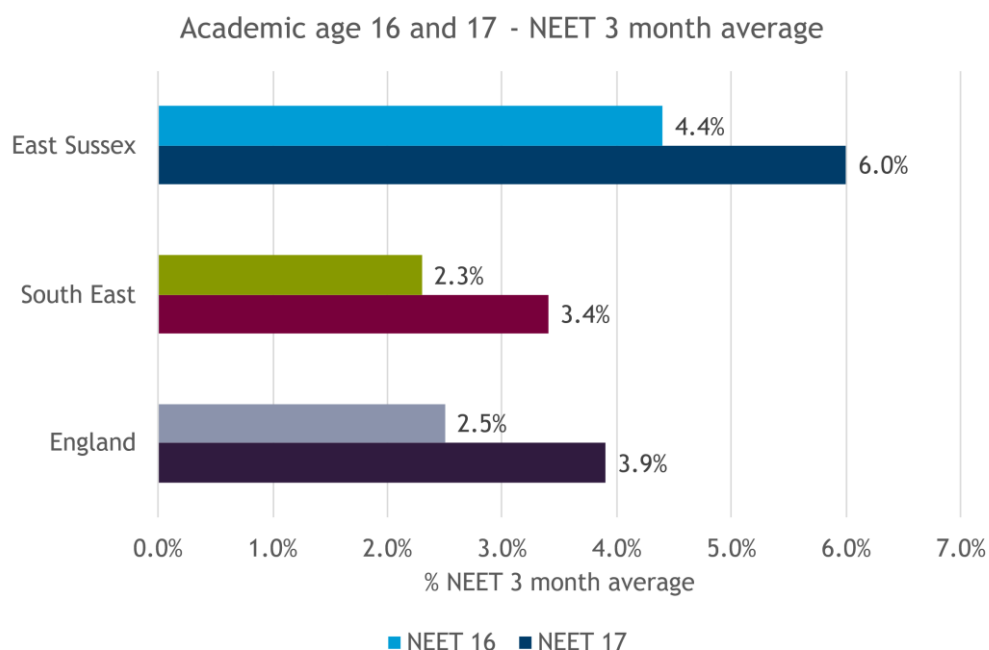
Academic Year 2023-24	
The percentage of exclusions in primary schools per school population in that year:	
(i) Fixed term	2.90%
(ii) Permanent	0.10%
The percentage of exclusions in secondary schools per school population in that year:	
(i) Fixed term	37.01%
(ii) Permanent	0.33%

Young people in education, employment and training

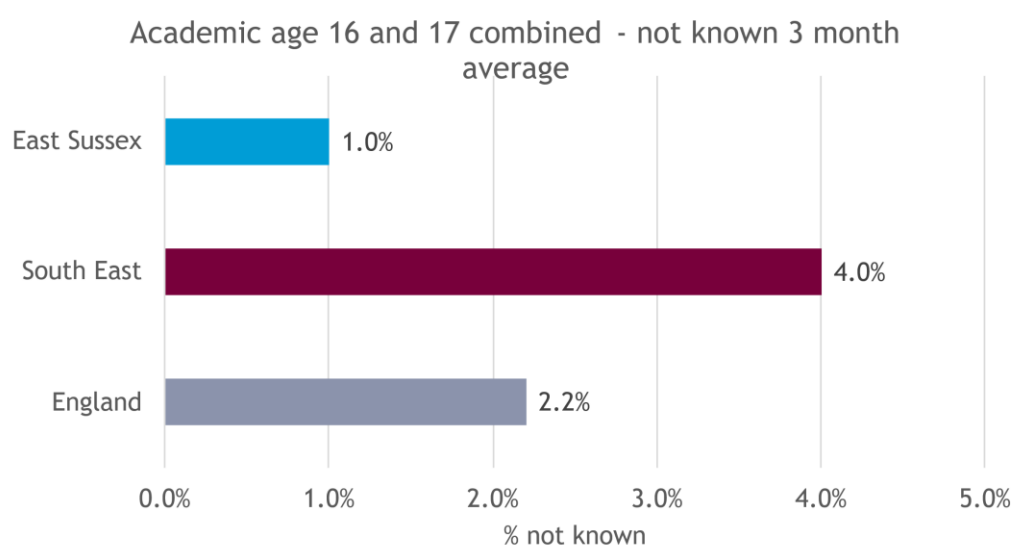
At the end of 2023/24 95.6% of 16 years old and 94% of 17 year olds were participating in some form of education, training or employment - this includes those in employment without Department for Education regulated training, or part-time/temporary employment. Local Authority comparisons data indicate East Sussex is slightly above the South East and national averages. There are ongoing concerns about the impact for young people of the national Traineeship programme which ceased in summer 2023, as well as European Social Fund not in education, training or employment (NEET) provision.

While the figures for the percentages of young people aged 16 and 17 who are known to be NEET are higher than the regional and national averages these need to be considered alongside the figures for young people whose activities were not known. We have a smaller percentage of young people whose activities were not known and it is likely that a significant proportion of the people across the South East and nationally whose activities were not known were actually NEET.

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Source: ESCC Children's Services



Source: ESCC Children's Services

School places

The overall population of under 18s is expected to decline slightly over the period 2025 to 2028, and while growth is expected in the number of young people aged 16-17, numbers of children aged 0-3, 4-10 and 11-15 are expected to decrease,

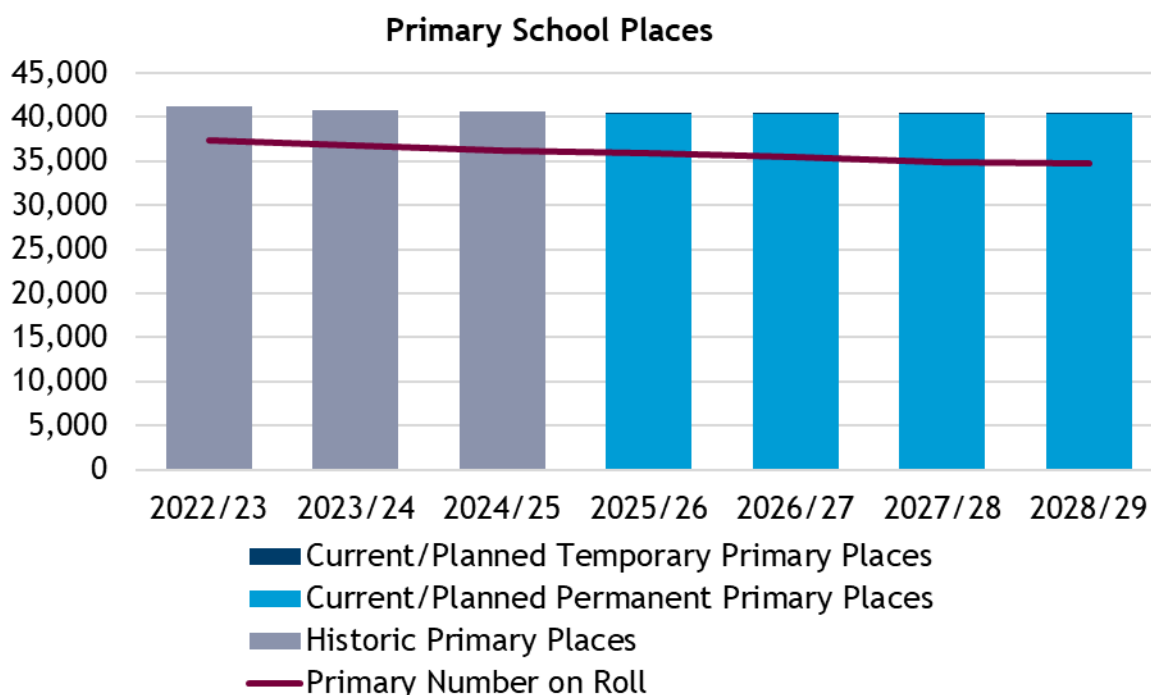
with the largest fall among the 4-10 age group.

Age/year	2025	2028	% change 2025-2028	2029	2033	% change 2029-2033
0-3	18,920	18,860	-0.3%	18,750	18,360	-2.1%
4-10	39,380	38,520	-2.2%	38,370	37,660	-1.8%
11-15	31,670	31,240	-1.4%	31,100	30,230	-2.8%
16-17	13,040	13,430	3.0%	13,350	12,990	-2.7%

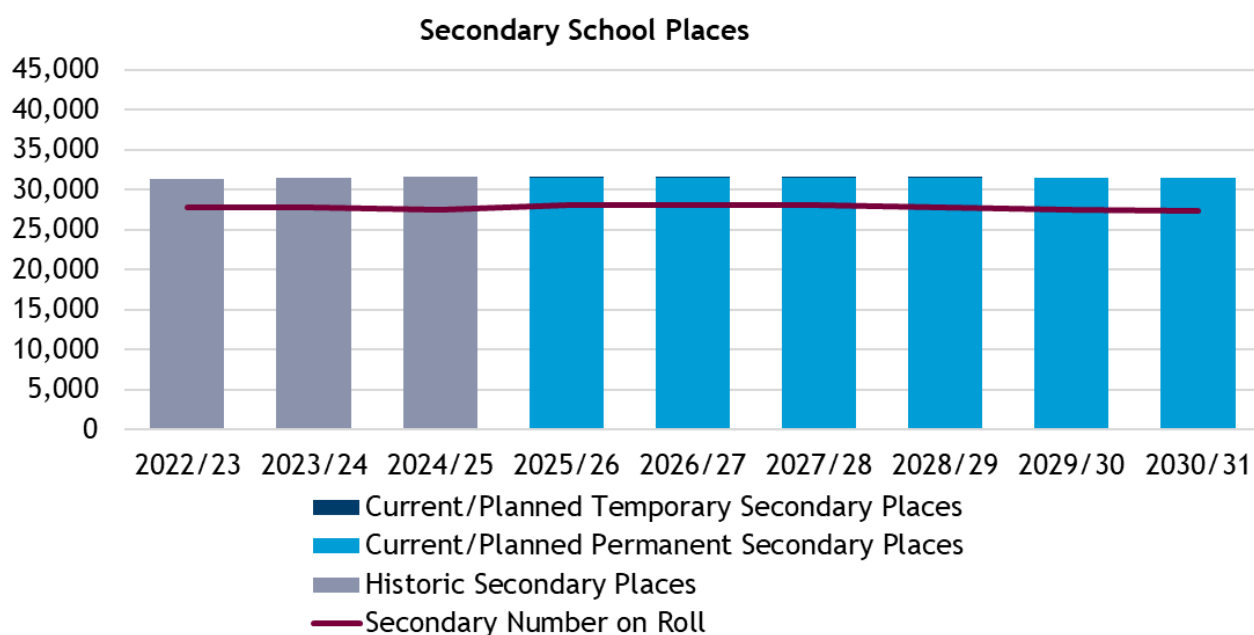
Source: ESCC data, ESCC 2023-based population projections (dwelling led) March 2025, numbers rounded to 10. Note: Care should be taken when using the projected population figures above.

The total numbers of pupils in primary schools peaked in 2018/19 and are now in decline. As a result, some of the temporary additional capacity in schools that was created to accommodate the peak is being removed. This, together with the closures of Holy Cross CE Primary School on 31 December 2023 and St Pancras Catholic Primary School on 31 August 2024, led to a net reduction in capacity of 405 places between the start of the 2023/24 academic year and the start of the 2024/25 academic year.

Secondary pupil numbers had been rising but are expected to have peaked around 2024/25. 105 additional permanent places and 30 additional temporary places will have been added between 2023/24 and 2025/26 to meet forecast demand in local areas.



Source: ESCC Pupil Forecasts and Pupil Model



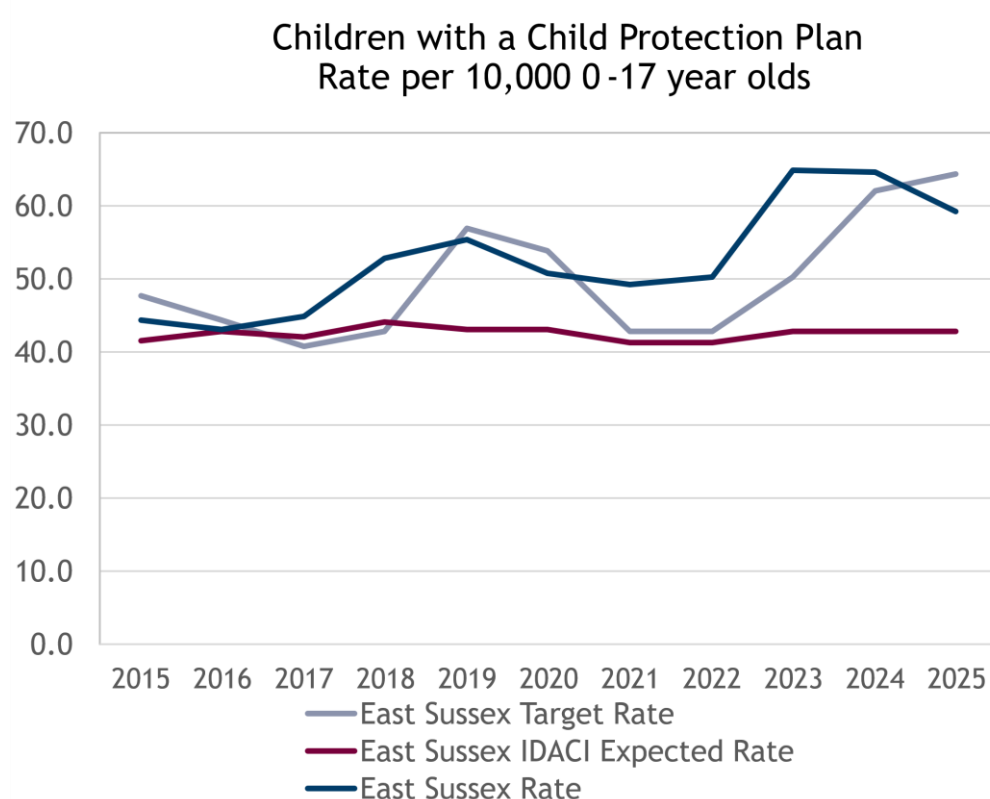
Source: ESCC Pupil Forecasts and Pupil Model

Child Protection (CP) Plans

At the end of March 2025, the number of CP plans was 614, a rate of 59.3 per 10,000 children aged 0-17. This is significantly above the expected rate

benchmarked for child deprivation using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). However, the rate was lower than that recorded for the last two years.

We continue to see significantly higher levels of demand and complexity due to the effects of the pandemic, the impact of cost-of-living pressures and an increase in child and adult mental health concerns. We have a continued emphasis on enabling children to live safely at home where possible, resulting in relatively lower rates of looked after children.

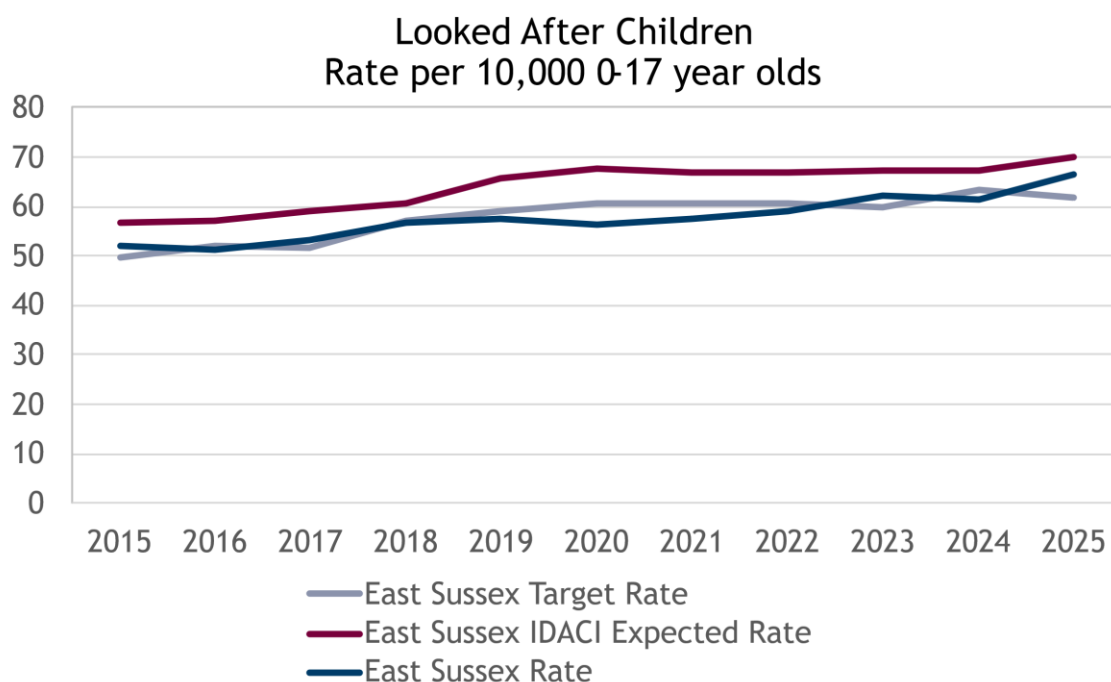


Source: ESCC Children's Services

Looked After Children

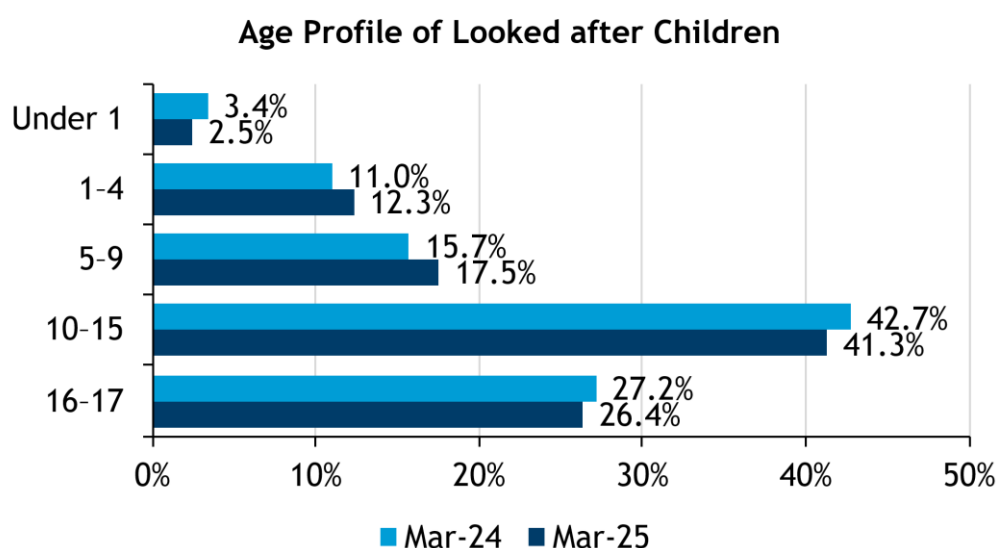
At the end of March 2025, there were 690 Looked After Children, a rate of 66.6 per 10,000 children. Of the 690 children, 70 are Separated Children. There was a 5% increase in the number of Looked After Children (not including Separated Children) compared to the previous year. The rate of Looked After Children is below the expected rate benchmarked for child deprivation using the Income Deprivation

Affecting Children Index (IDACI).



Source: ESCC Children's Services

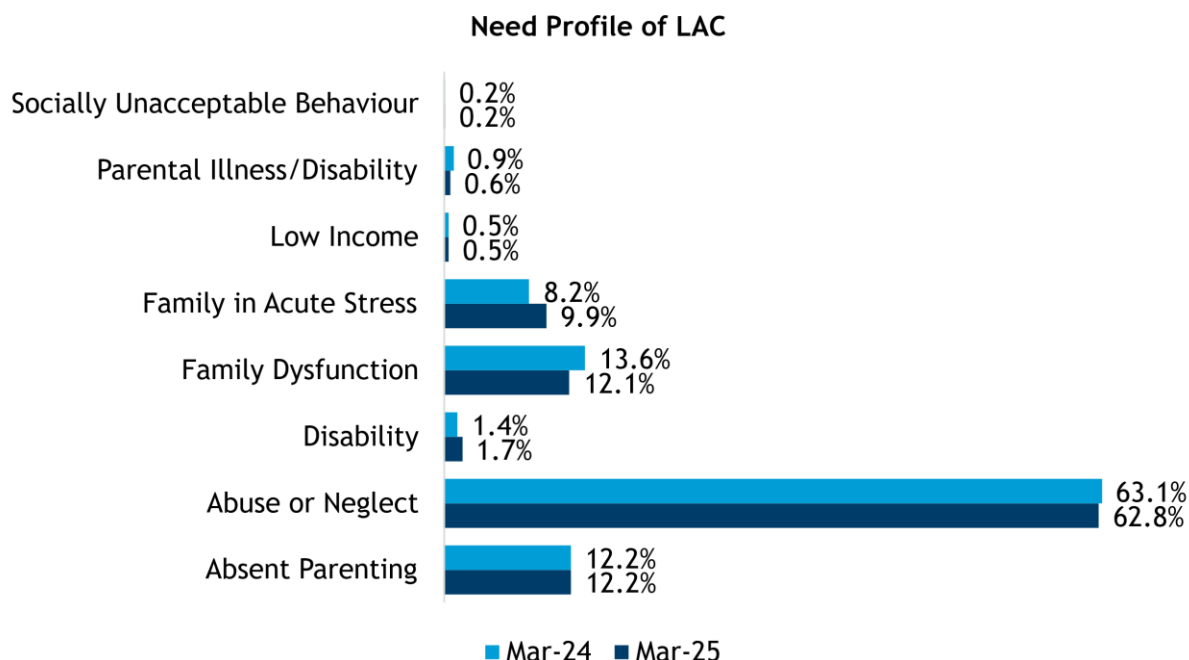
The age profile of Looked after Children was similar between March 2024 and March 2025, with the majority of children aged over 10.



Source: ESCC Children's Services

The 4 categories of need, Families in Acute Stress, Family Dysfunction, Abuse and

Neglect and Absent Parenting accounted for 97% of Looked after Children in March 2025. The number of children in the remaining groups is very low in comparison, which is a similar picture to last year.



Source: ESCC Children's Services

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

In line with the national picture, East Sussex continues to see significant increases in demands for statutory assessments and specialist provision for children and young people with SEND.

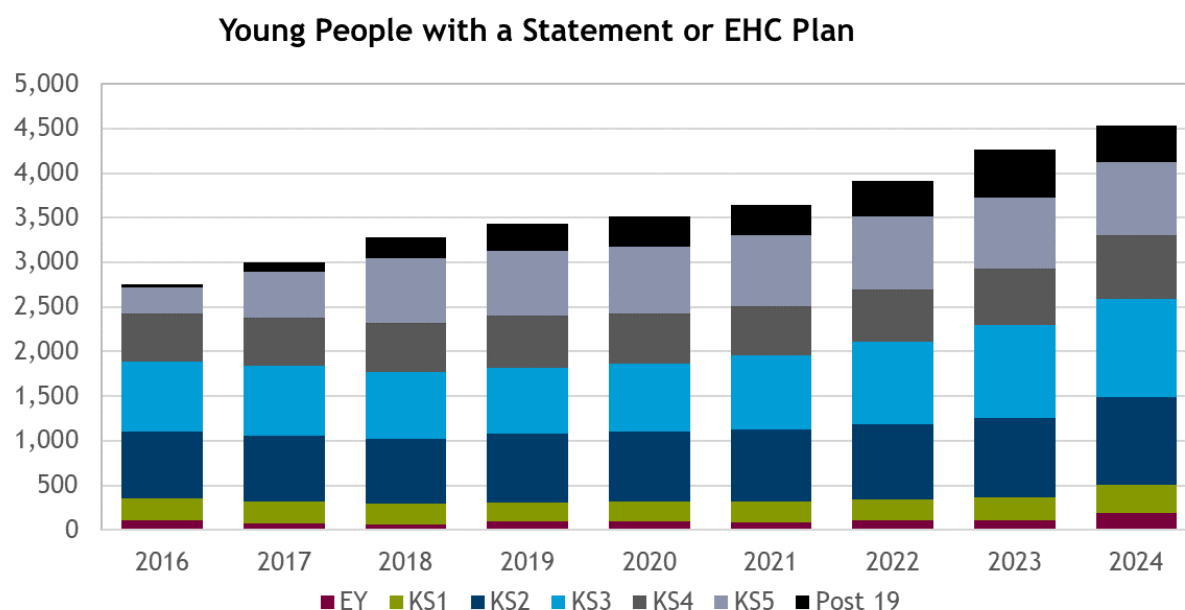
41.6% of all children and young people aged 0-25 with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in East Sussex are placed in special schools which is over nine percentage points higher than the England average. 59.7% of all new EHCPs were placed in mainstream schools, compared to 70.9% nationally. Council funded high-cost placements at Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools have increased significantly since 2015 and account for 9.7% of all EHCPs - greater than the England average of 6.3%.

EHCPs of SEND maintained by the Council increased by 87% from 2015 (2,645) to

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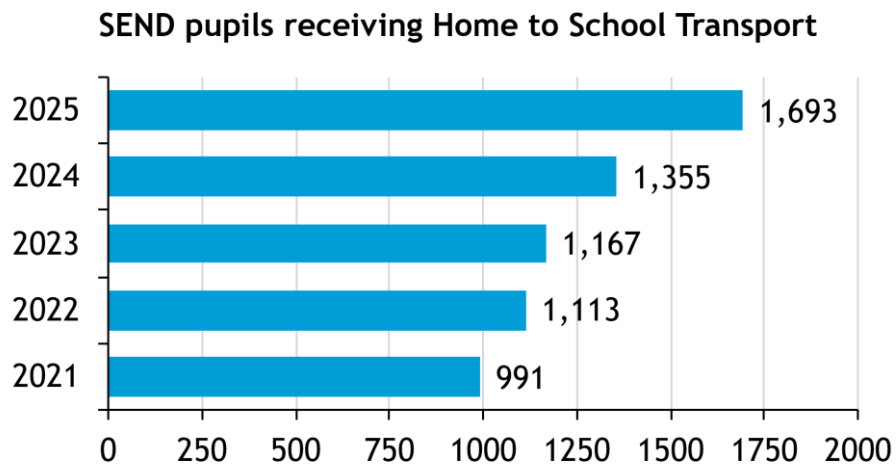
2025 (4,940). Most of the increase since 2015 has been in the Key Stage 5 and Post 19 groups; this is predominantly due to young people retaining EHCPs Post-16.

The number of pupils with an EHCP is currently forecast to rise in East Sussex by 22.7% over the next three years, having increased by 32.2% in the last three years.



Source: ESCC Children's Services

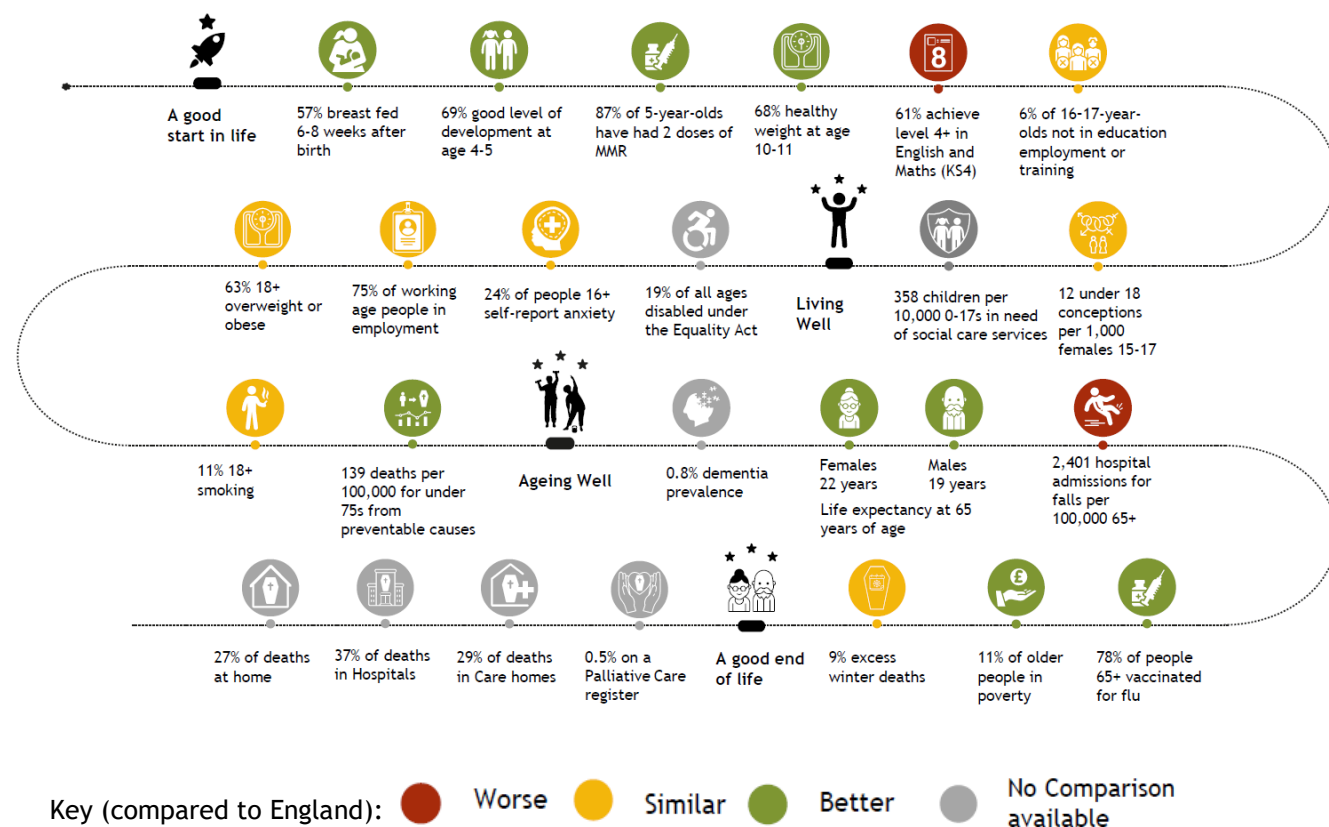
There have been increases in the number of pupils receiving Home to School Transport since 2021. These increases have been particularly acute with regards to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) due to a 71% increase in the number of children requiring transport. There have also been significant increases in the cost of providing transport due to inflationary pressures on fuel and staff. The increased number of SEND pupils receiving Home to School Transport and the inflationary pressures has led to a 106% increase in costs of transporting SEND children since 2021.



Source: ESCC Children's Services

Health and wellbeing

Life course summary

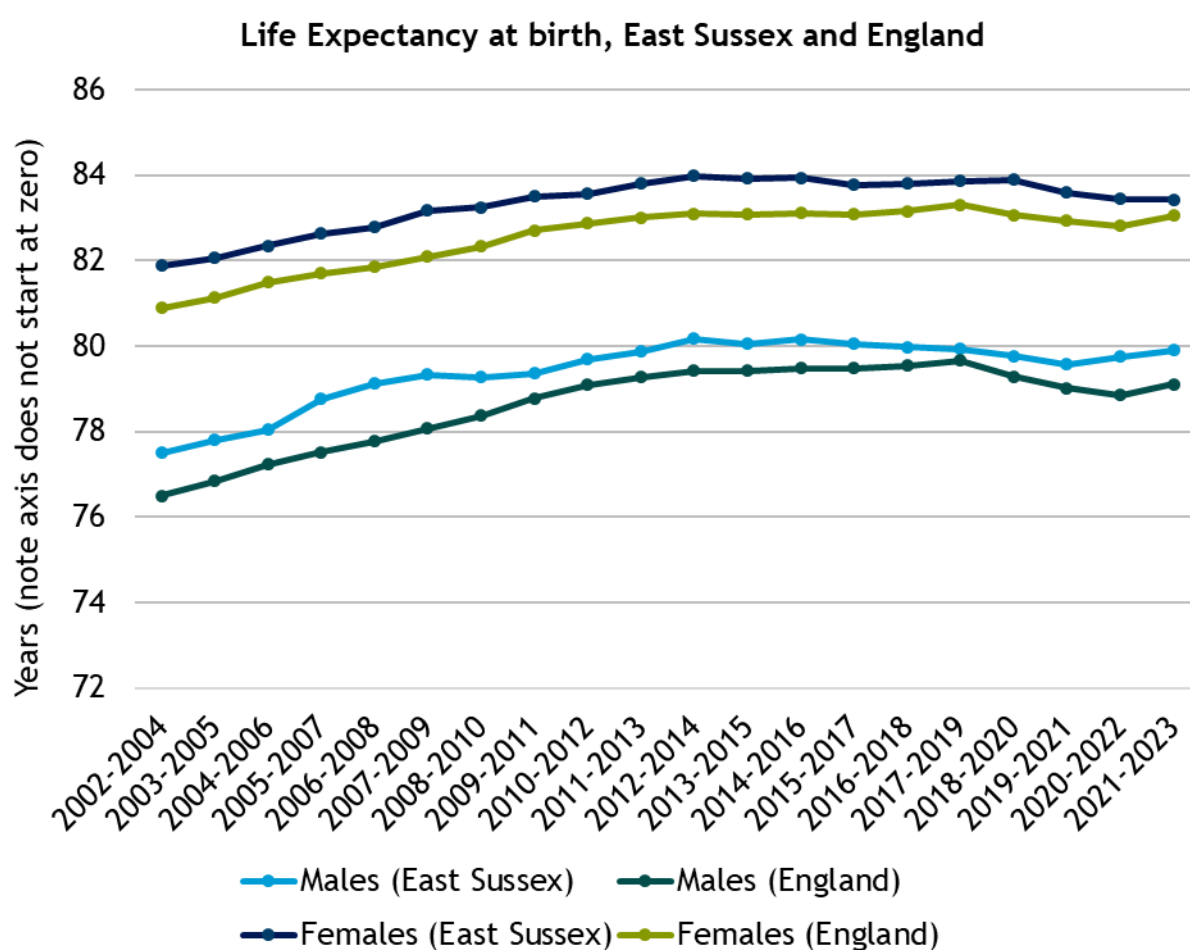


Source: ESCC Adult Social Care and Health department

This chart shows a timeline for the population of East Sussex, from having a good start in life, through living well and ageing well, to a good end of life. This is called a life course approach. It shows the protective factors and risk factors that can influence a person's physical and mental health and well-being throughout their life. There are many indicators that can be measured, but this chart selects a few key ones to paint a picture of the East Sussex population. Each indicator is compared to England where possible. For most indicators in East Sussex the results are similar to or better than England overall. There are two indicators where the County is significantly worse, which are educational achievement in English and Maths at GCSE, and admissions to hospital for falls amongst older people.

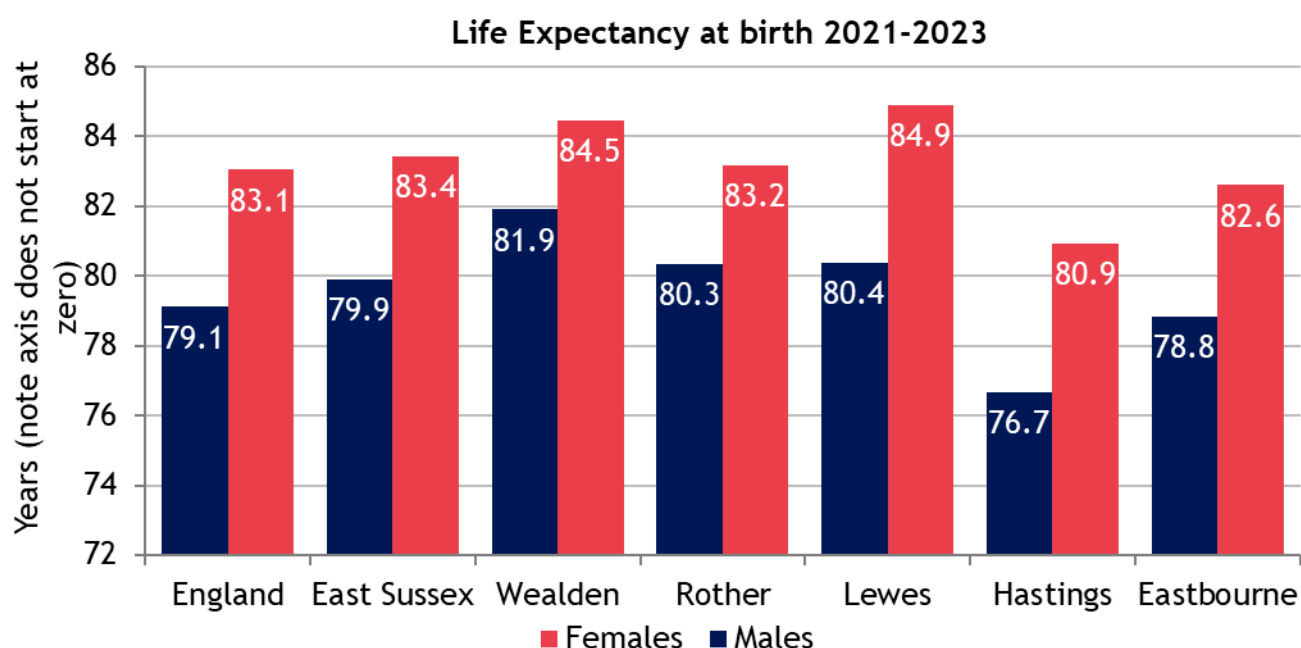
Life expectancy at birth

Life expectancy at birth is an estimate of the average number of years that a person born can expect to live. East Sussex has consistently had a higher life expectancy for both men and women than the national average. Life expectancy has generally increased gradually since the early 2000s, however this increase has plateaued, or begun to reduce, in recent years.



Source: ONS

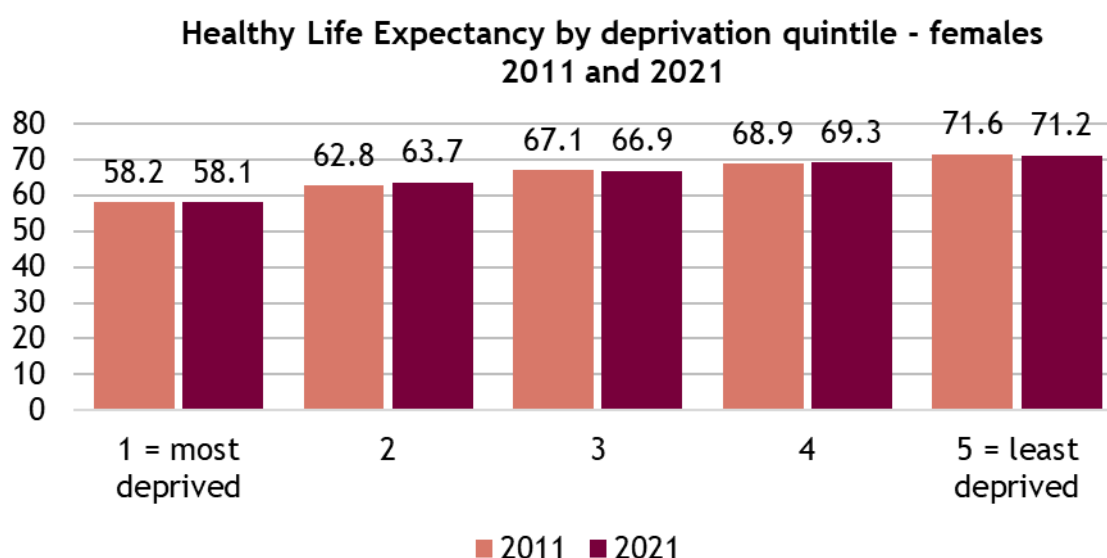
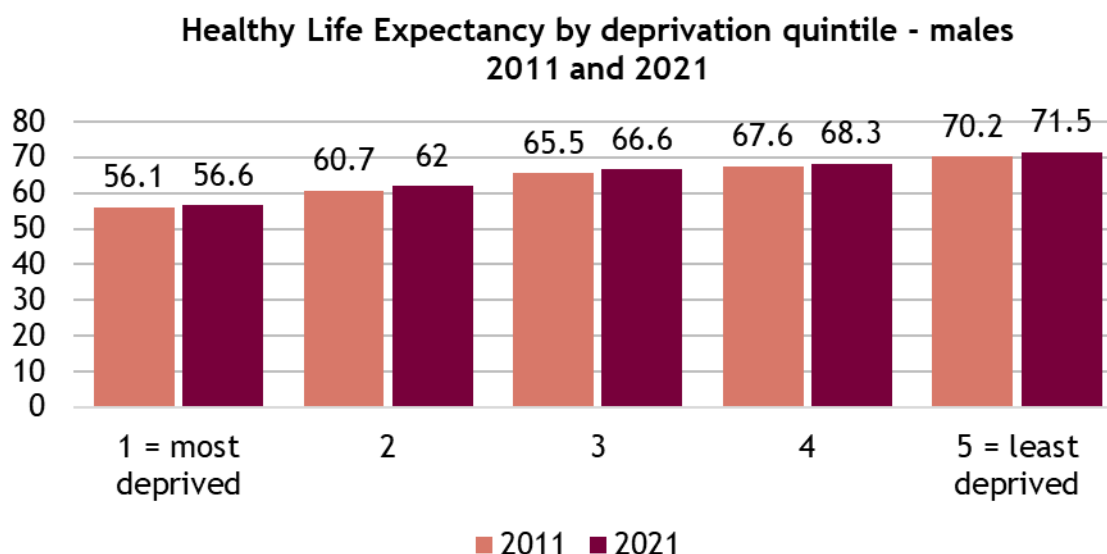
Wealden has the highest levels of life expectancy at birth for men in the county, the highest levels for women are in Lewes. The lowest levels are in Hastings. Countywide life expectancy levels are slightly higher at birth for both men and women than nationally.



Source: ONS

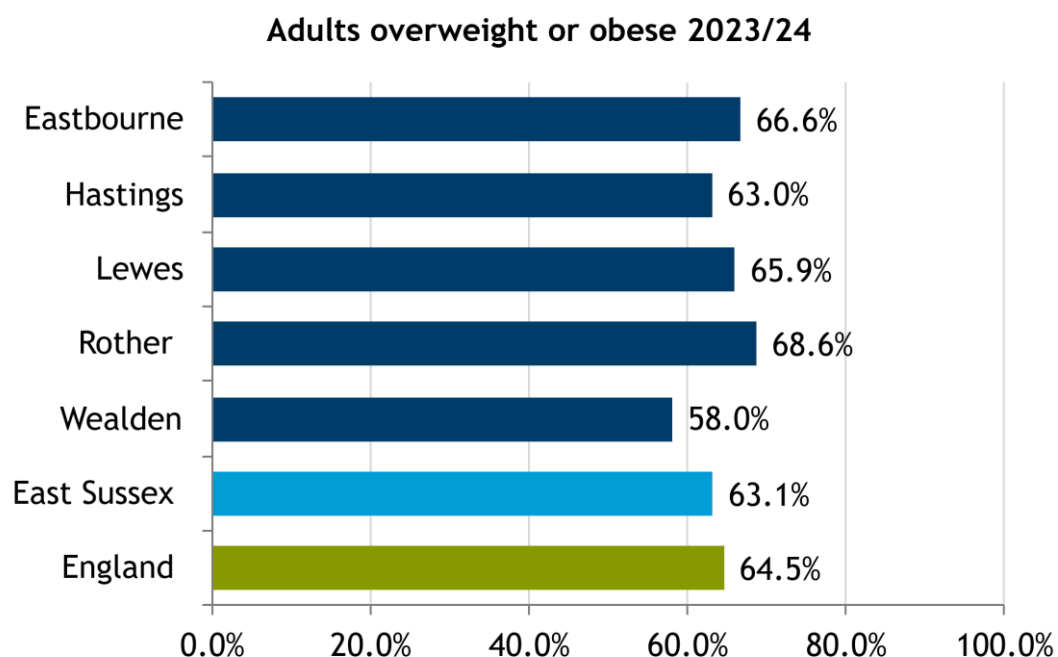
On average, people living in the most deprived communities in England have over 18 years less of their lives in good general health than those living in the least deprived areas. In East Sussex, this gap is 14.9 years for males between the most and least deprived quintiles, and 13.4 years for females.

Healthy life expectancy in East Sussex increased from 2011 to 2021 in males across all deprivation quintiles. For females, healthy life expectancy in 3 out of 5 quintiles (including the most and least deprived areas) slightly decreased in 2021. Also, for the first time, in 2021 healthy life expectancy for those in the least deprived areas was higher in males than females.



Excess Weight

Overall, the percentage of adults in East Sussex who were overweight or obese in 2023/24 was lower than the national average, however the picture varied across the county.

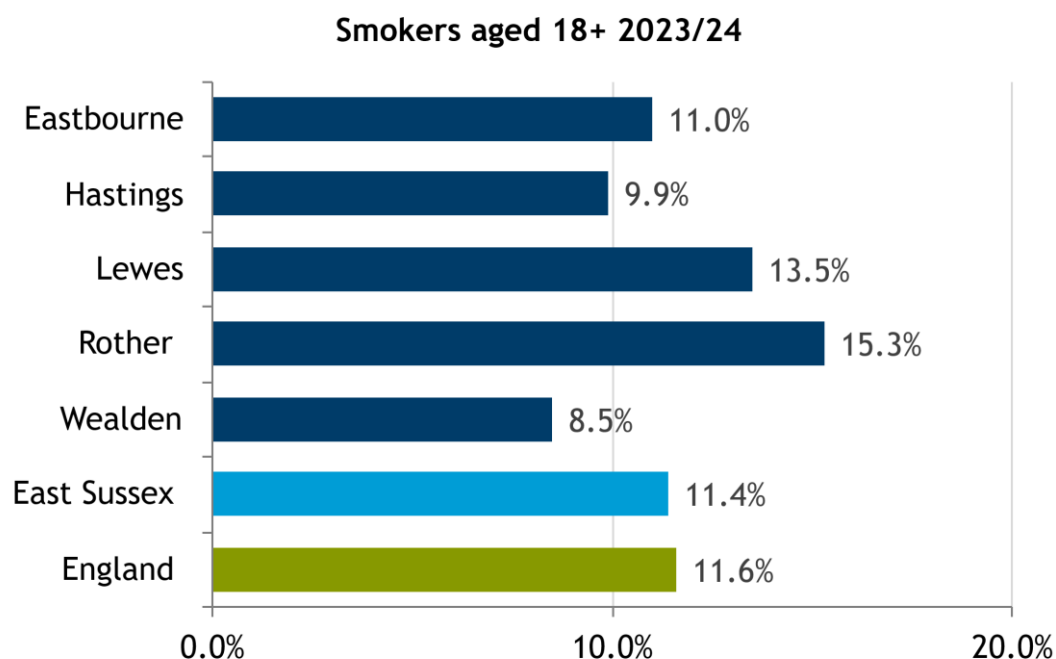


Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework

Rother had the highest percentage of adults overweight or obese in East Sussex in 2023/24, at 68.6%. The lowest percentage in the county was for Wealden, 58.0%.

Prevalence of Smokers

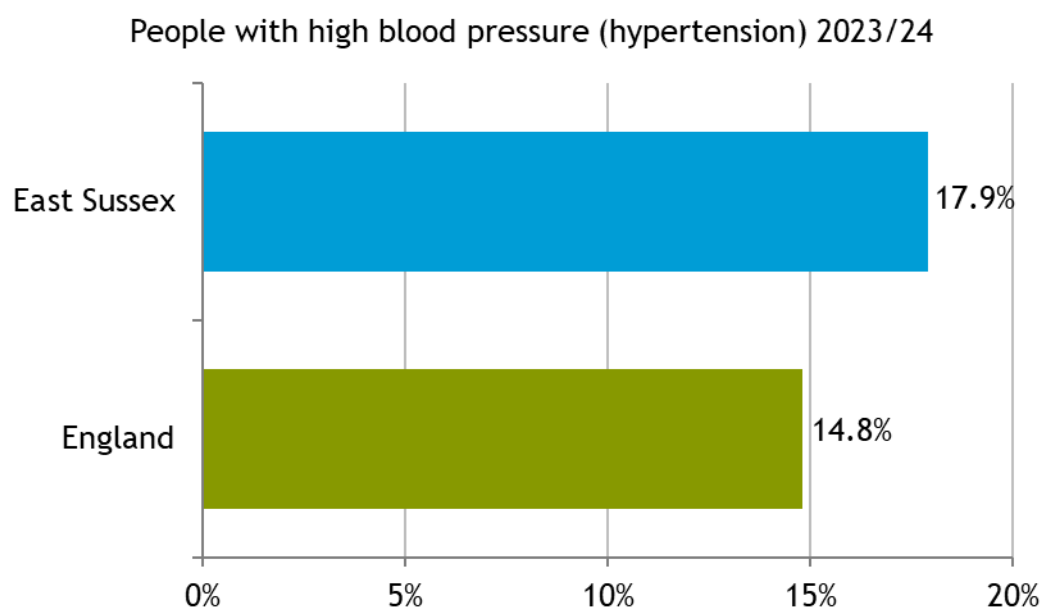
Rother has the highest prevalence of smoking in East Sussex in 2023/24 at 15.3%. Wealden had the lowest prevalence at 8.5%.



Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework

Prevalence of Hypertension

East Sussex has a higher prevalence of diagnosed high blood pressure (17.9%) compared to the national average for England (14.8%).



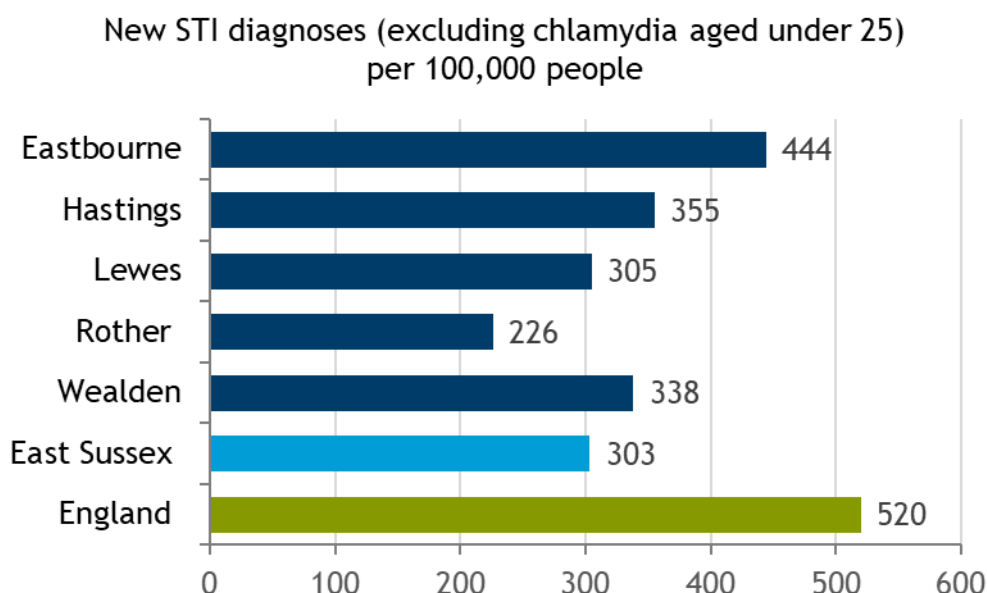
Public Health Outcomes Framework

Physical Activity

Over 69% of people in East Sussex did 150 or more minutes of physical activity per week in 2023/24. Nearly 21% did less than 30 minutes per week with the remaining 10% falling in between these categories (source: Public Health Outcomes Framework).

Sexual Health

East Sussex has fewer new Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) diagnoses per 100,000 population compared to England. Within the county rates are lower than for England in all areas.



Note: This data does not include diagnoses of Chlamydia and only represents people aged 25 or younger. Source: UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)

Mental health

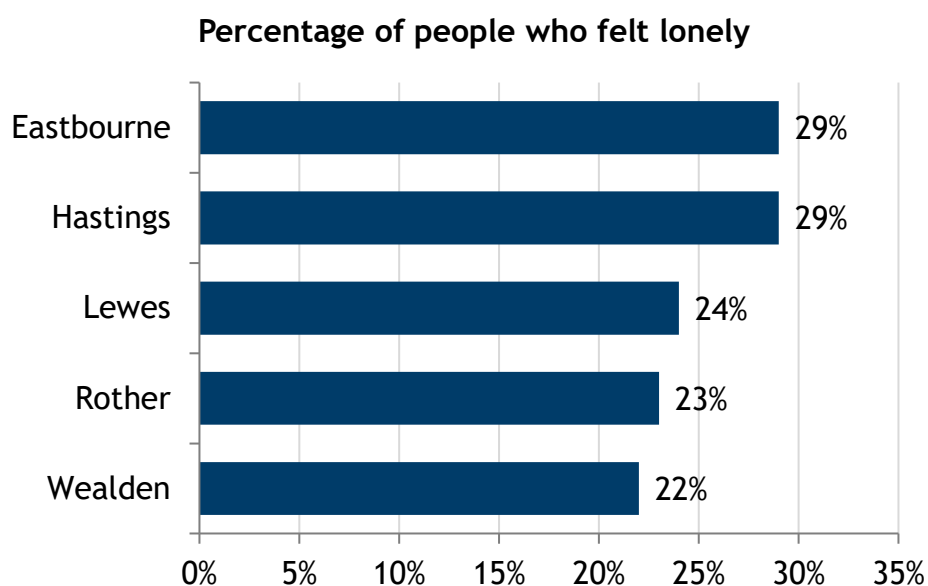
It is estimated that 1 in 6 people will have a mental health condition at any one time. Latest survey figures show a higher percentage of adults in East Sussex reported high anxiety and low satisfaction with life compared to the national average.

Indicator (persons aged 16+ years) 2022/23	East Sussex	England
Self reported low satisfaction with life	7.5%	5.6%
Self reported low worthwhile score	3.5%	4.4%
Self reported low happiness score	13.0%	8.9%
Self-reported high anxiety score	24.1%	23.3%

Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework

Loneliness

For East Sussex, 25% respondents reported feeling lonely often (5%) or some of the time (20%), with feelings of loneliness not changing markedly from the 2015 (24%) and 2017 (25%) East Sussex Community Surveys.



Note: Percentages are derived by combining the number of people who answered as feeling lonely often and some of the time. Source: East Sussex Community Survey 2019

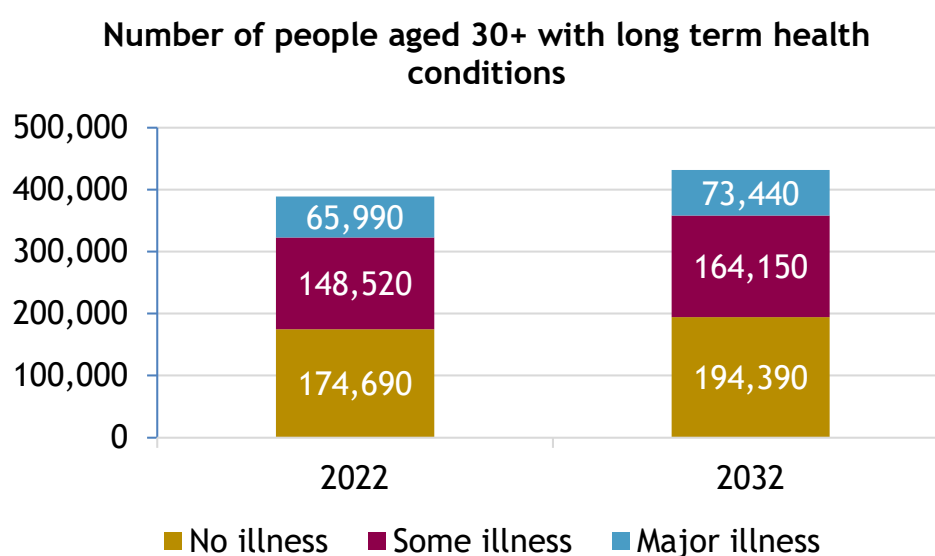
Data from the 2019 survey shows that feelings of loneliness are more prevalent among groups who are more likely to spend more time at home (e.g. due to mobility issues) workless residents (56% vs. 20% of those in work); those in poor health (55% vs. 18% of those in good health); those with a disability (44% vs. 19% of those without a disability).

those without); single person households (38%) and single parents (47% vs. 25% overall). Other groups who are more likely to feel lonely include: social tenants (46%) and private renters (39% vs. 20% of owner occupiers); People with no qualifications (34% vs. 25% overall) and women (26% vs. 24% of men). At district and borough level, those in Hastings and Eastbourne are more likely than average to feel lonely often or some of the time (both 29% vs. 25% overall). The population in these areas are more likely to be comprised of the groups listed above. Those living in Rother and Wealden are more likely to say they hardly ever/never feel this way (77% and 78% respectively).

Multiple long term health conditions

The number of people with multiple long-term conditions (multi-morbidity) in the East Sussex population is expected to increase in line with the growth in the general population over the next ten years. Multi-morbidity is the presence of 2 or more conditions, and therefore greatly increases the complexity (and overall costs) of managing care for people, families and services.

For the purposes of looking at health problems at a population level these can be classified using the Cambridge Multimorbidity Score into three groups: people with no illness, some illness and major illness.



Source: Ref Watt T, Raymond A, Rachet-Jacquet L, Head A, Kypridemos C, Kelly E,

Charlesworth A. Health in 2040: projected patterns of illness in England. The Health Foundation; 2023 (<https://doi.org/10.37829/HF-2023-RC03>). Population figures based on East Sussex population projections 2022 rounded to the nearest 10.

The Cambridge Multimorbidity Score (CMS) assigns a weight (score) to 20 conditions based on how the illness is likely to affect people's use of primary care and emergency health services and the likelihood of their death.

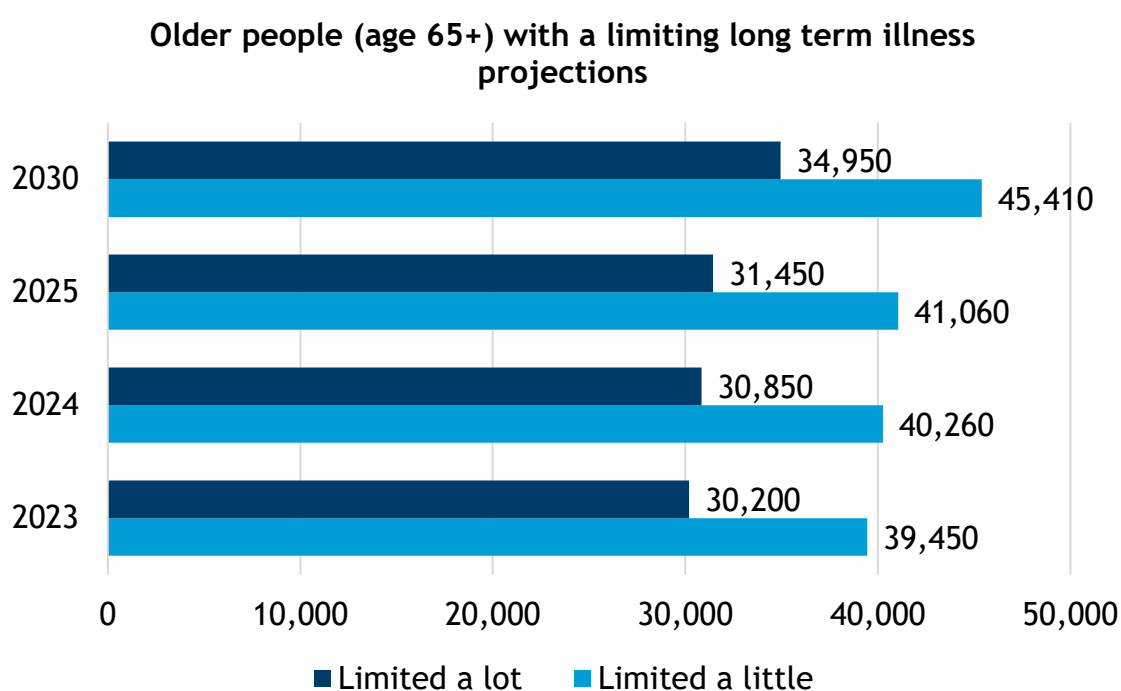
Adults

Long Term Illness

It is estimated that in 2023 there are 69,650 older people (age 65+) in East Sussex who are living with a long-term illness which limits their day-to-day activities.

39,450 of these people are 'limited a little' in their day-to-day activities, while the other 30,200 are 'limited a lot'.

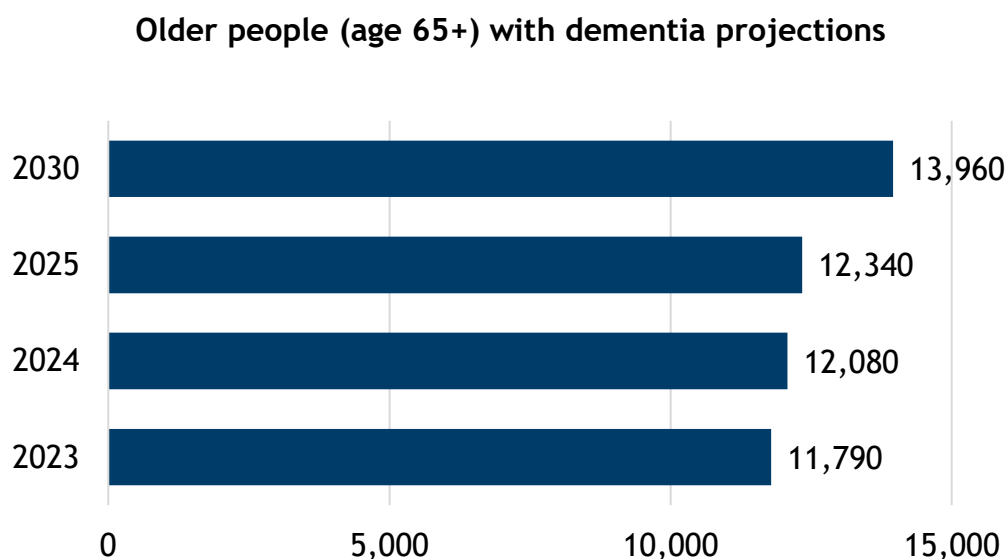
These figures are projected to rise to an estimated 80,360 older people living with a long-term illness which limits their day-to-day activities in 2030, an increase of 15.4% compared to 2023. 45,410 of these people are projected to be 'limited a little' (up 15.1% compared to 2023), and the other 34,950 are projected to be 'limited a lot' (up 15.8% compared to 2023).



Source: POPPI. Note: These figures are based on population projections produced before the latest population figures from the 2021 Census were available

Dementia Projections

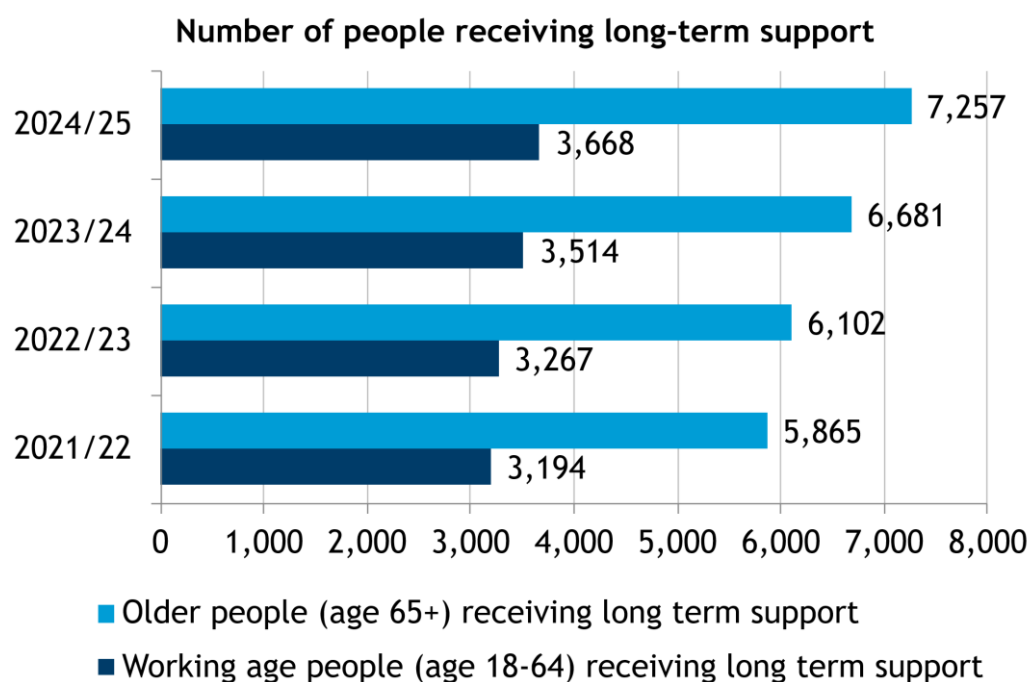
13,960 older people (age 65+) are projected to have dementia by 2030, an increase of 18.4% from 2023.



Source: POPPI. Note: These figures are based on population projections produced before the latest population figures from the 2021 Census were available.

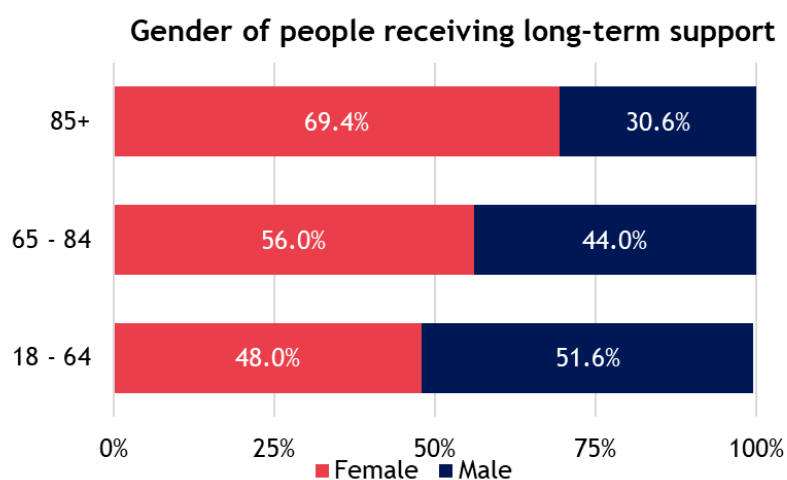
People receiving long term support

The total number of Adult Social Care clients receiving long term support increased by 7.2% in 2024/25 to 10,925, continuing the trend seen since the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of clients receiving long term support are older adults (those aged 65 and over).



Source: East Sussex SALT Return

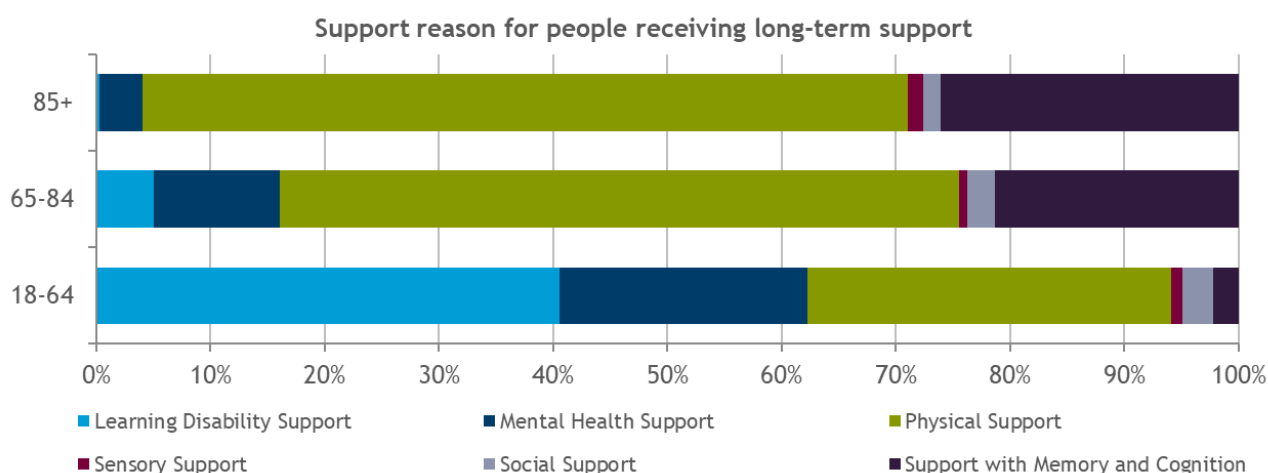
The percentage of women receiving long term support is higher than the number of men for older people, especially those above the age of 85. This reflects the fact that women on average have a longer life expectancy than men and make up a higher proportion of the population among older age groups. The percentage of men receiving long term support is slightly higher than women for the working age population.



Source: East Sussex SALT Returns

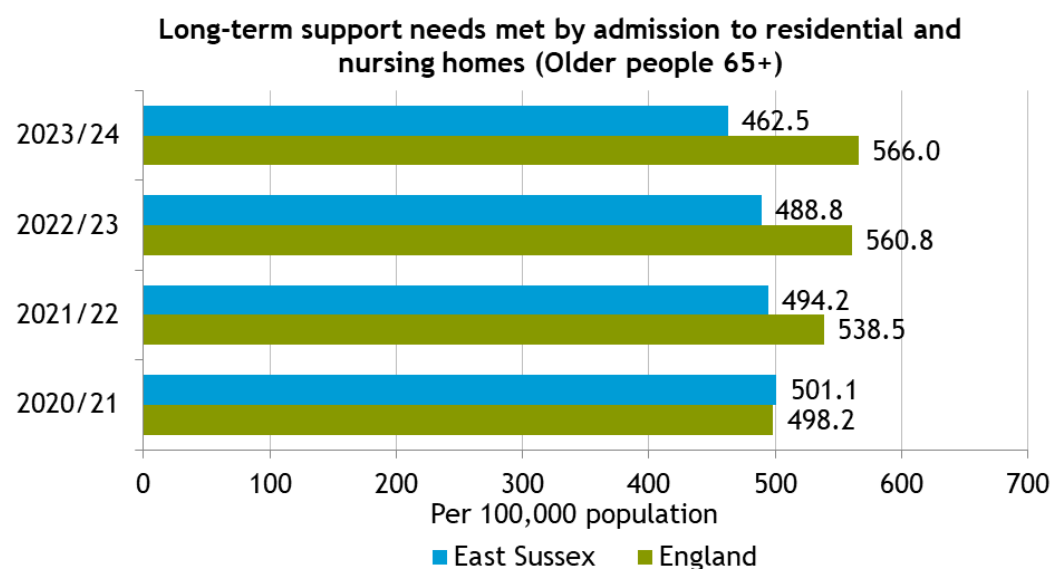
State of the County 2025: Focus on East Sussex

People receive long-term support for a variety of different needs. The percentage of people receiving long term support due to Learning Disability Support and Mental Health Support reduces as you move up the age ranges, whilst the percentage of people needing support for Physical Support, Sensory Support and Support with Memory and Cognition increases.



Source: East Sussex SALT Return

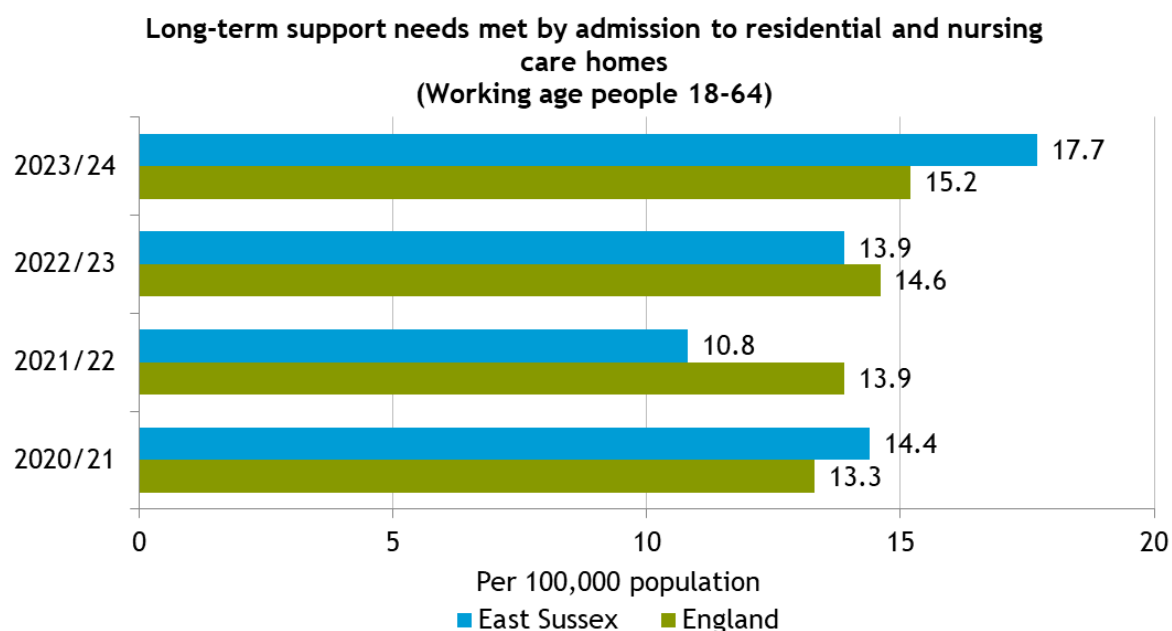
Permanent admissions of older people to residential and nursing homes (those aged 65 and over) per 10,000 population slightly decreased in East Sussex in 2023/24.



Source: NHS Digital Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework data ASCOF 2A2

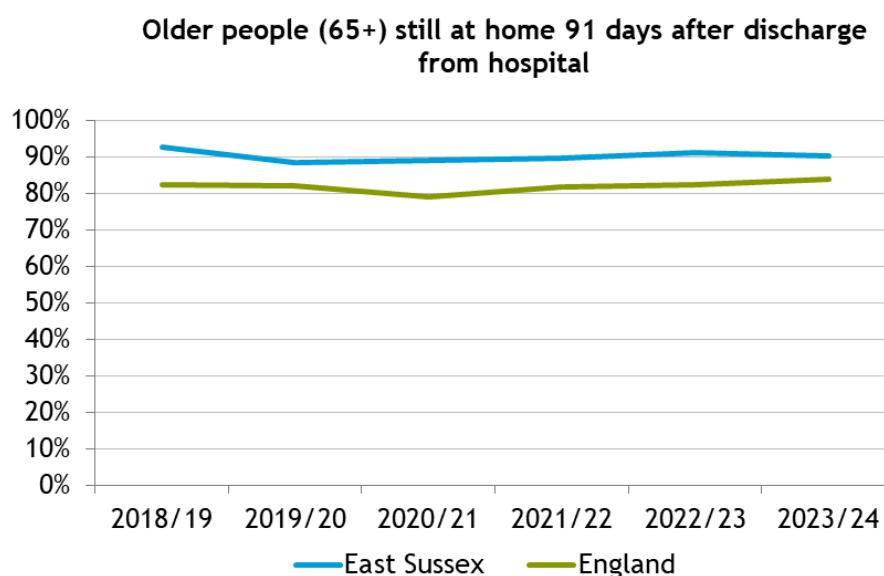
State of the County 2025: Focus on East Sussex

Permanent admissions of working age people (18-64) to long term residential care increased in East Sussex in 2023/24 and was above the national rate.



Source: NHS Digital Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework data ASCOF 2A1

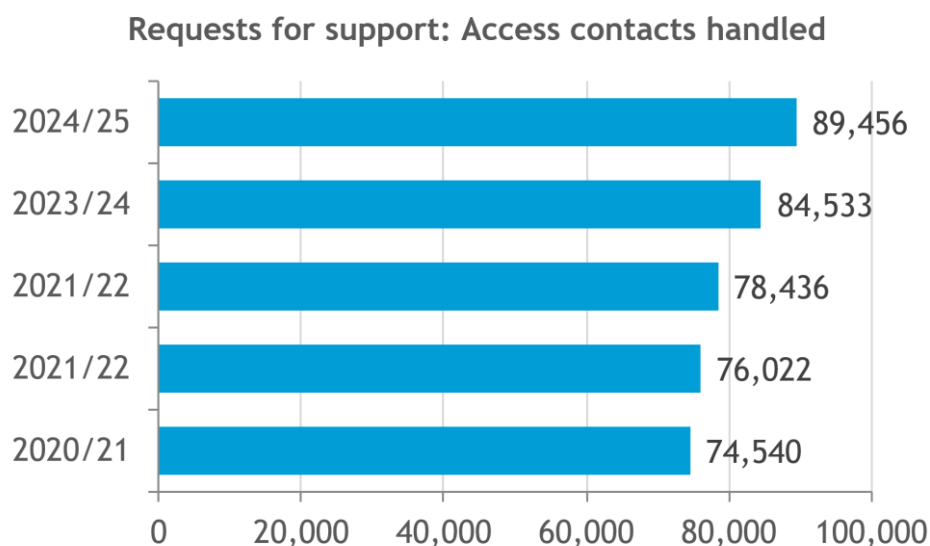
The proportion of older people (age 65+) still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services in 2023/24 was 90.4%, above the national figure of 83.8%.



Source: NHS Digital Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework ASCOF 2B1

Access contacts

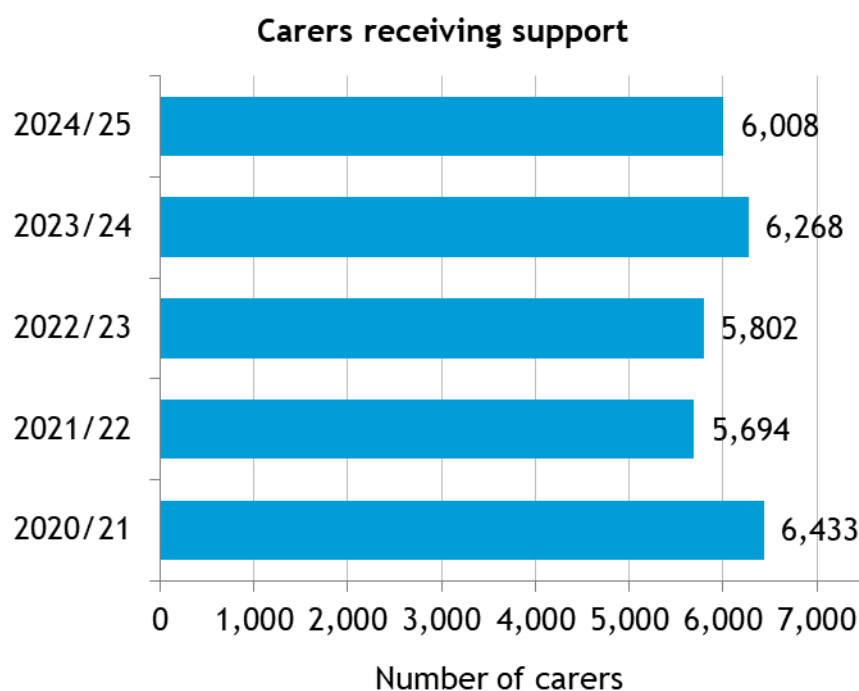
The Access team in Health and Social Care Connect (HSCC) handled 89,456 contacts in 2024/25, an increase of 4,923 (5.8%) compared to 2023/24.



Source: East Sussex Adult Social Care and Health department

Carers receiving support

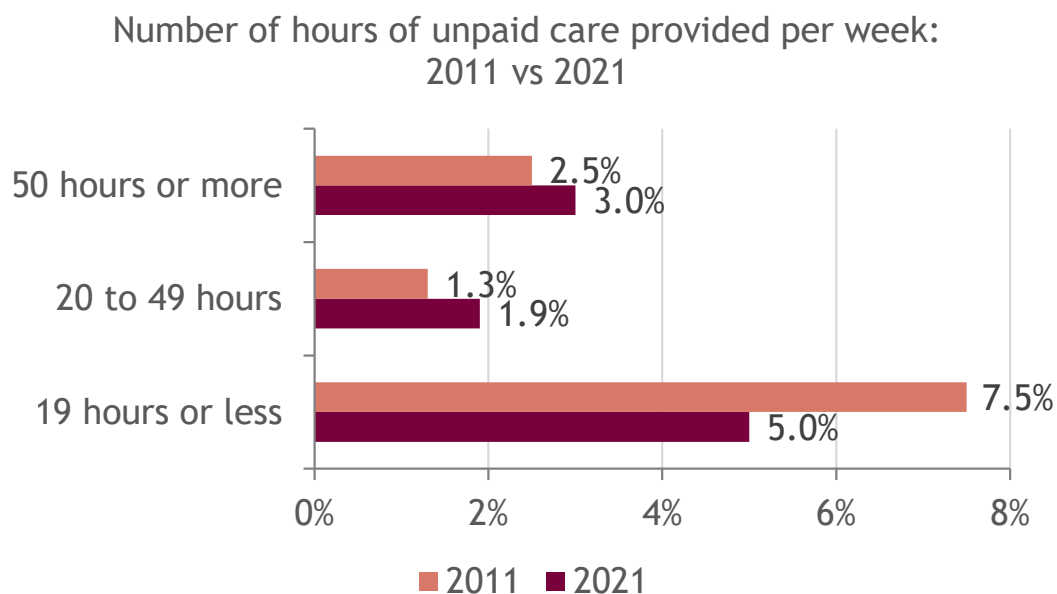
The total number of carers receiving support from Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) in East Sussex decreased slightly in 2024/25. There continues to be a significant number of carers being supported by Care for the Carers, a partner organisation who provide, support, guidance and information to carers in East Sussex.



Source: East Sussex SALT Return

Unpaid Carers

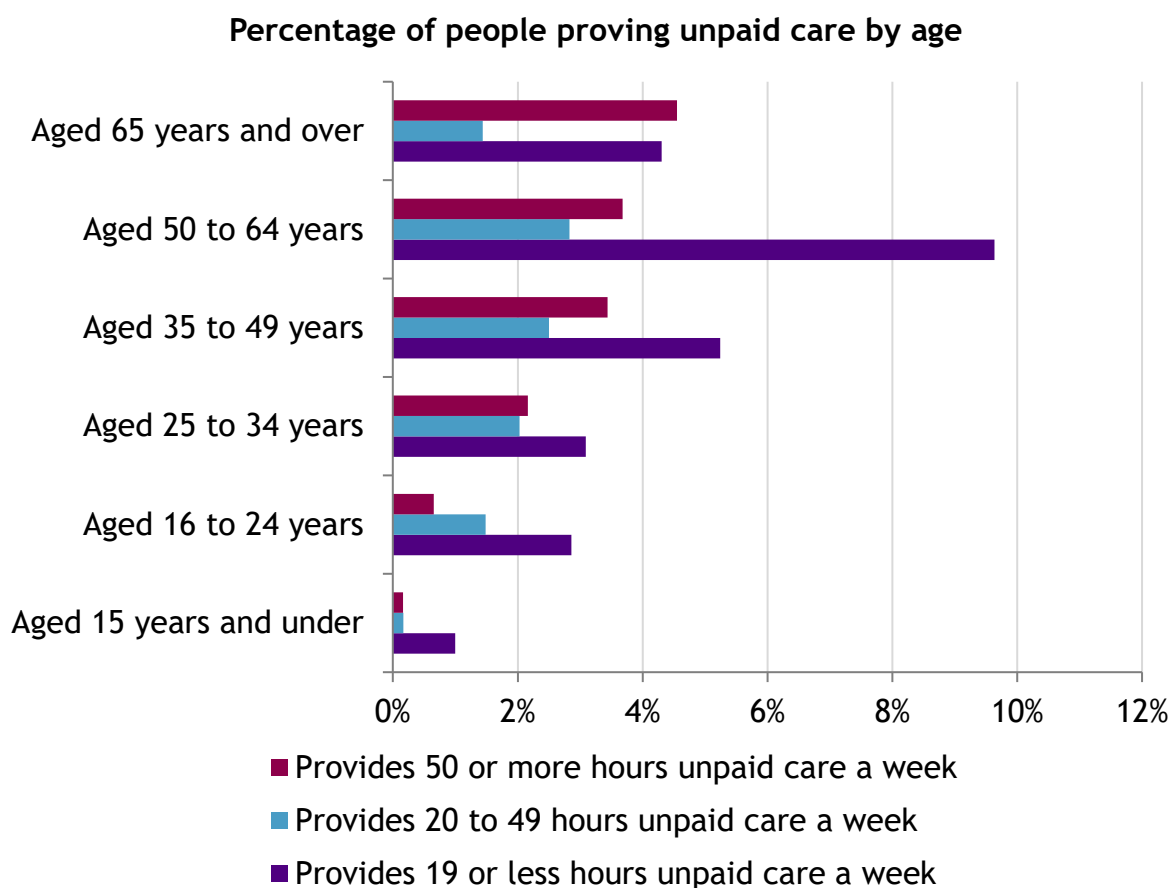
Data from the 2021 Census suggests that 9.9% of the population in East Sussex provides any form of unpaid care, compared to the national average of 8.8%. Compared to the 2011 Census however, the proportion of unpaid carers has decreased by 1.8 percentage points within East Sussex. Furthermore, the proportion of people providing 19 hours or less of unpaid care a week decreased from 7.5% in 2011 to 5.0% in 2021, those providing 20 to 49 hours of unpaid care increased from 1.3% to 1.9% and those providing 50 or more hours of unpaid care increased from 2.5% to 3.0%.



Note: Percentages are representative of the population aged 5 years or above.

Source: ONS

The percentage of people providing unpaid care varies by age. 16.1% of those aged 50 to 64 provided some unpaid care a week, with the majority providing 19 or less hours unpaid care a week. Although the percentage of those aged 65 and over providing unpaid care is lower, people in this age group were more likely to be providing 50 or more hours unpaid care a week.



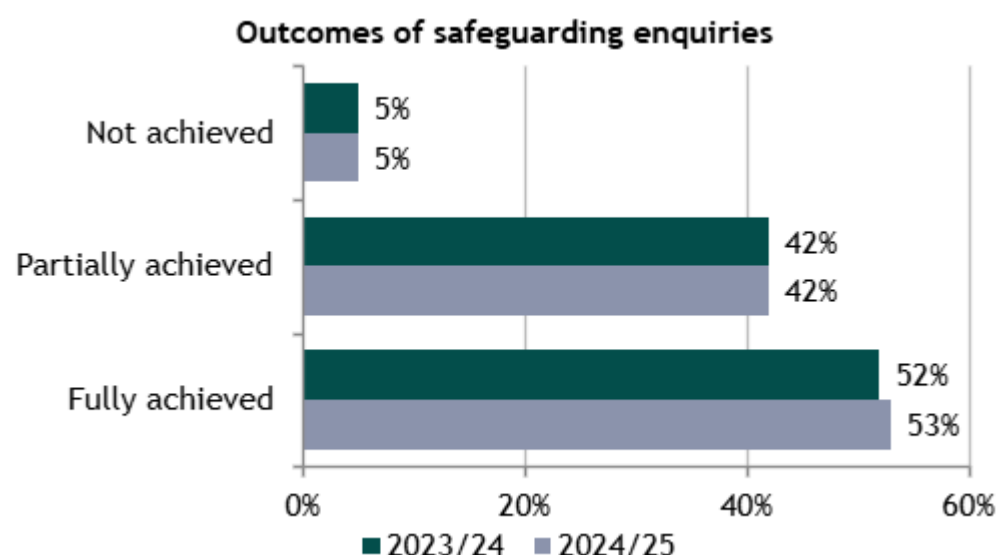
Note: Percentages are representative of the population aged 5 years or above.

Source: ONS

Adult safeguarding

We have made improvements to how we report on safeguarding concerns over the past year. These figures now include all contacts and referrals linked to safeguarding. 15,392 concerns were raised during 2024/25. Due to the changes in reporting these figures are not comparable to those reported for previous years.

As part of safeguarding enquiries desired outcomes for the adult concerned are identified. In 2024/25, performance remained steady, sustaining the improvements seen in the previous year.



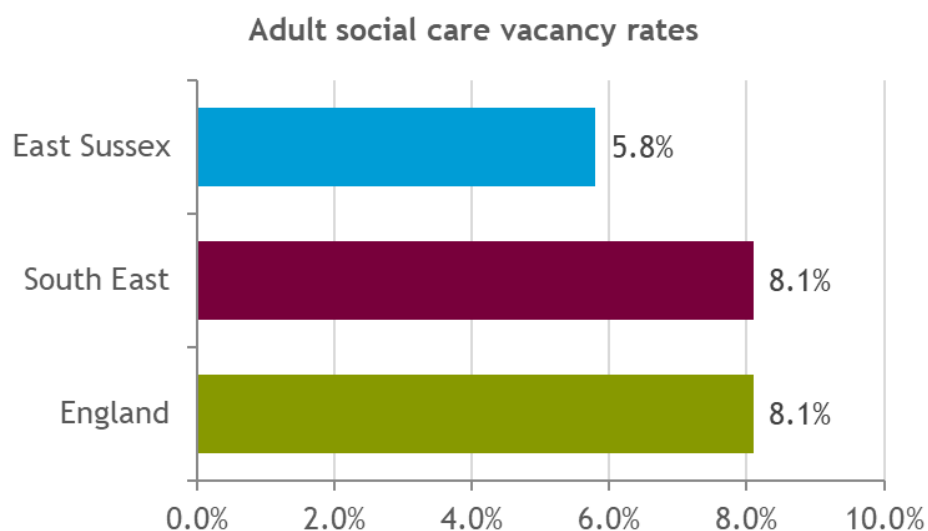
Source: East Sussex Adult Social Care and Health department. Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding issues

Adult social care workforce

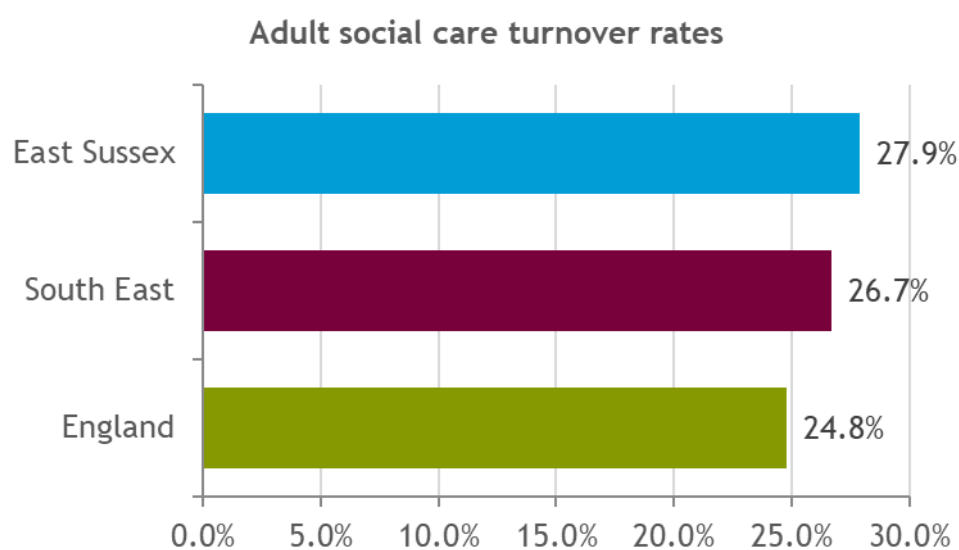
As the demand for support for adult social care increases it is important that we have a sufficient supply of highly skilled workers for the sector. The adult social care workforce includes all staff working in adult social care settings, in both the independent sector and for the Council. There were 20,500 posts filled in the adult social care workforce in East Sussex in 2023/24, with 1,100 posts vacant.

Projections show that to meet the anticipated demand for social care in 2040 the workforce would need to grow by 29%.

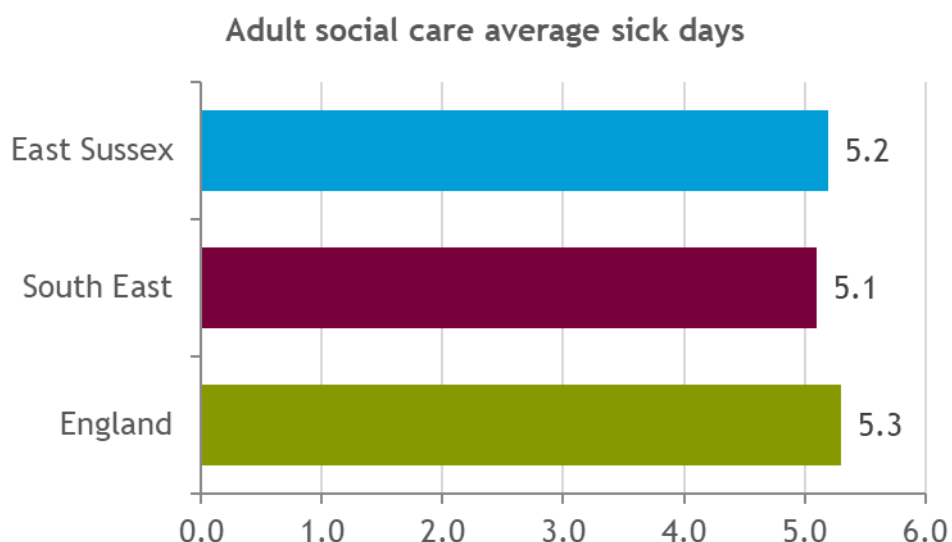
The vacancy rate in the adult social care workforce in East Sussex was lower than both the South East and England averages in 2023/24.



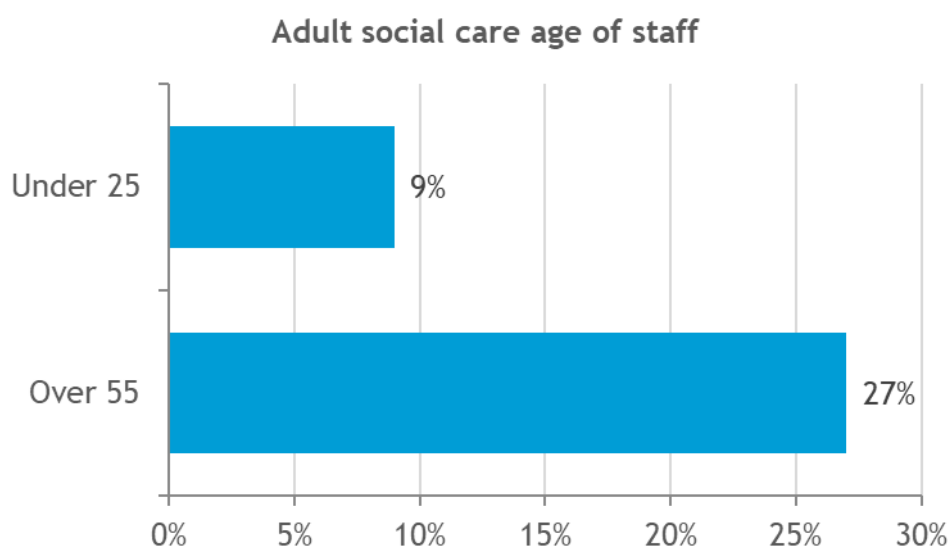
However, the rate of staff turnover was higher than the South East and England averages.



The average number of sick days taken by adult social care staff in East Sussex in 2023/24 was similar to the average across the South East and for England.



Only 9% of people working in the adult social care sector in East Sussex in 2023/24 were under 25, while 27% were over 55. It is expected that 4,700 workers in the sector will reach retirement age in the next 10 years.



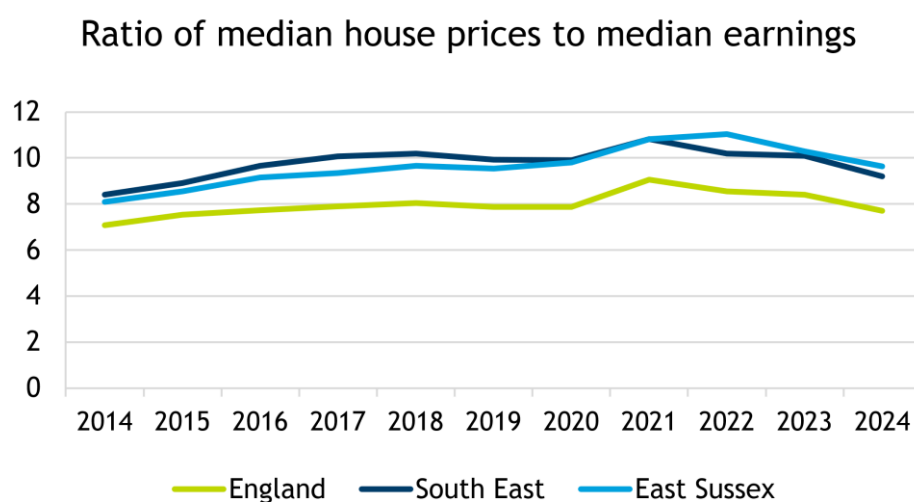
Housing

Housing affordability

East Sussex is an attractive area to live, however this means that house prices are higher than the national average. In 2024 in East Sussex the average (median) house price was £340,000, 9.6 times the average annual earnings of residents,

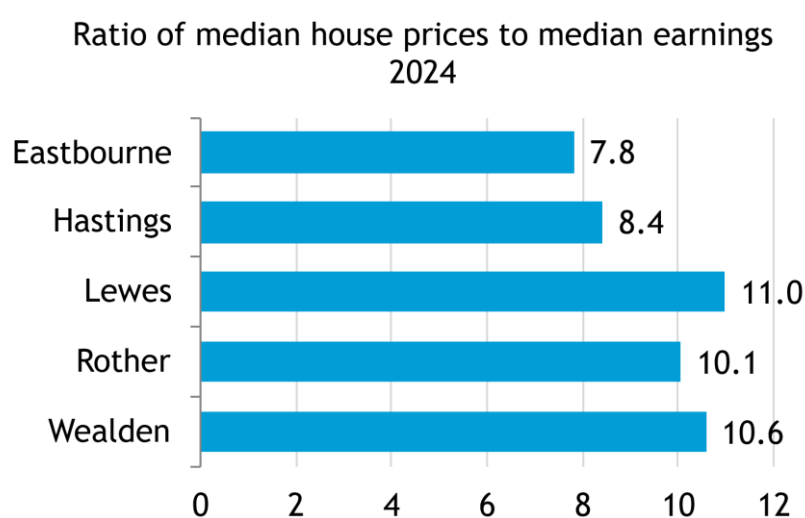
which were £35,300. In comparison the average house price in England was £290,000, 7.7 times average annual earnings, which were £37,600 in 2024.

The average ratio of median house prices to median earnings in East Sussex is higher than for England and is the same as the South East average.



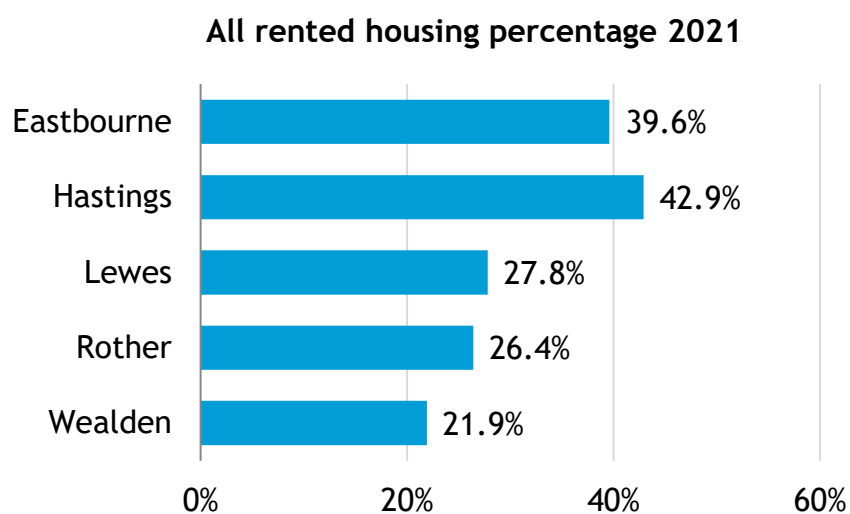
Source: ONS

The median average house prices were over 10 times the average annual earnings of residents in Lewes, Rother and Wealden.



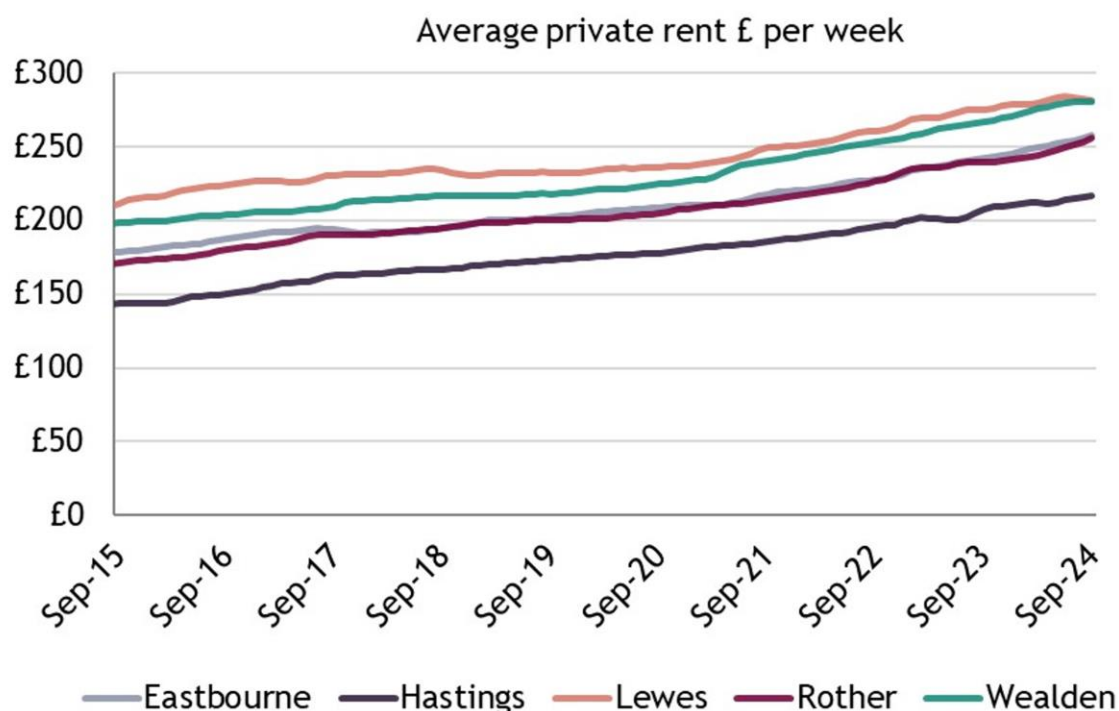
Source: ONS

Rented housing is a significant sector in East Sussex, making up 21.9% of housing in Wealden and 42.9% in Hastings.



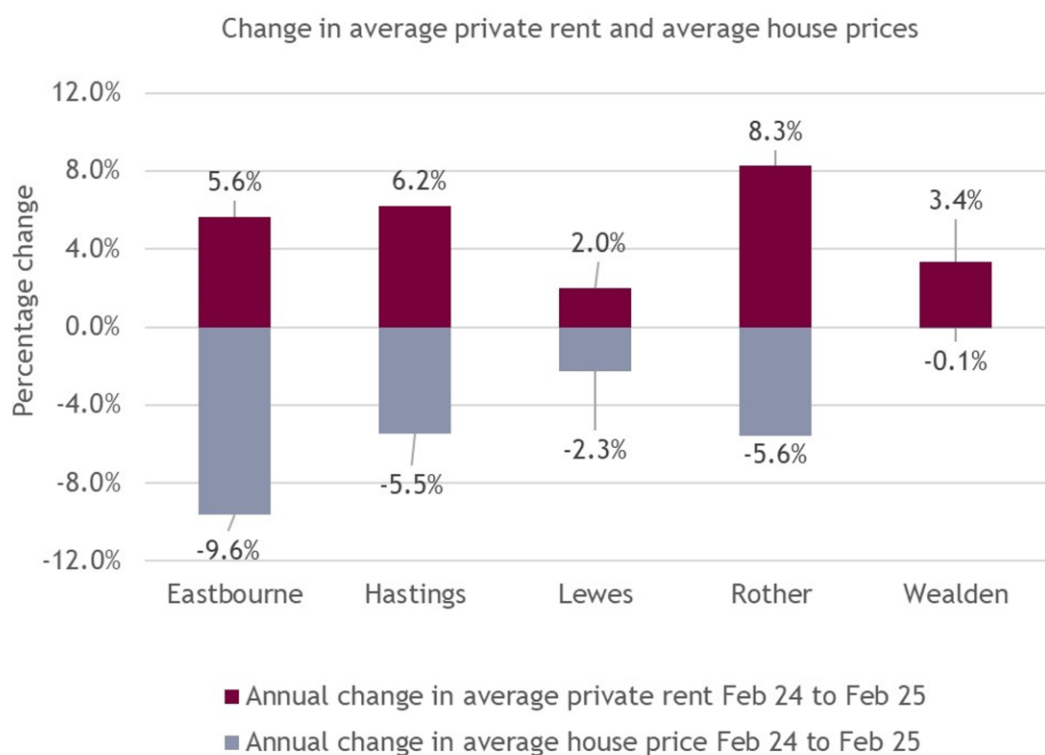
Source: Census 2021.

Rented housing is a significant sector in East Sussex, making up 21.9% of housing in Wealden and 42.9% in Hastings. The cost of private rented housing rose by up to 29% between 2019 and 2024. Average private rents ranged from £217 to £282 a week across districts.



Source: ONS/Valuation Office Agency

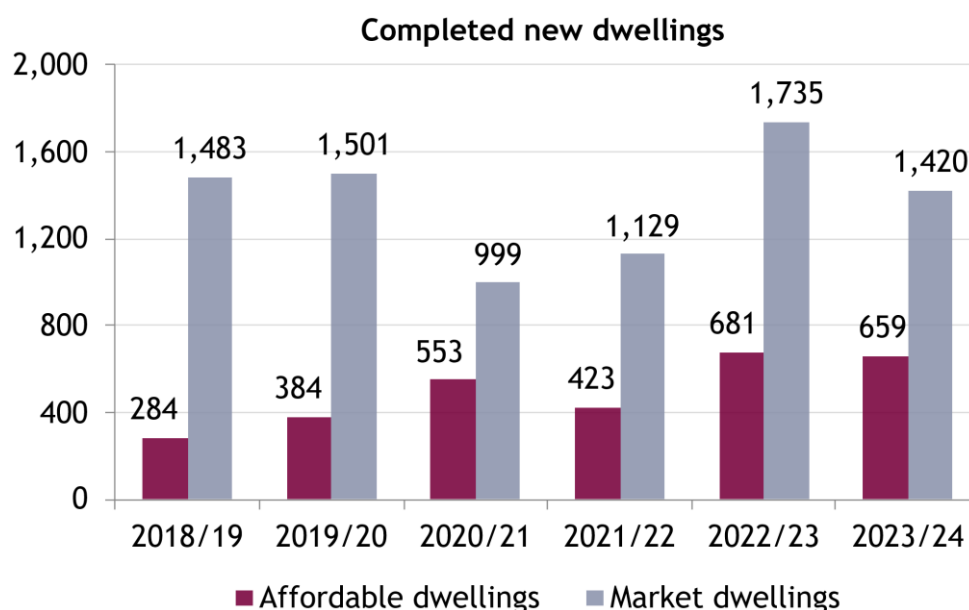
The cost of private rented housing in East Sussex continued to rise during 2024 to 2025, while the cost of house purchases across the county fell by up to 9.6%.



Source: Price index of Private Rents and UK House Prices from the ONS

Households and housing delivery

2,079 new dwellings were completed across the county in 2023/24. Of these, 659 (31.7%) were classed as affordable.



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Homelessness

There was an increase in the number of households in East Sussex in temporary accommodation in September 2024 compared to the previous year. The rate of households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households shows Hastings having the highest rate in East Sussex at 12.91. Hastings shares with Brighton & Hove City Council the fourth highest rate of local authorities outside London. The highest rate in the country outside of London was for Slough at 19.73.

District/Borough	Number of households in temporary accommodation (30 September 2024)
Eastbourne	313
Hastings	567
Lewes	75
Rother	182

District/Borough	Number of households in temporary accommodation (30 September 2024)
Wealden	72

Source: ONS

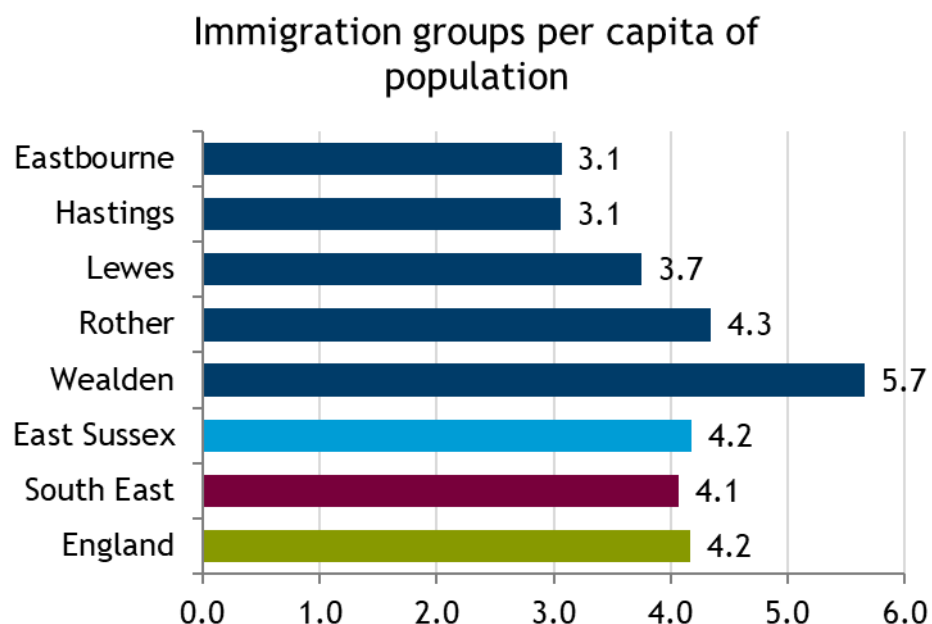
The Council's Children's Services Department have a duty to help children whose families face destitution. As some immigrant families with children have no recourse to public funds the Council provides assistance to prevent them from becoming homeless. The total number of people assisted with accommodation over the last four years has fluctuated, but the number of households has been very consistent.

Year	Number of adults	Number of children	Total households
2020/21	23	40	22
2021/22	31	53	22
2022/23	21	34	21
2023/24	30	51	23

Source: ESCC Children's Services department

Refugees and asylum seekers

The rate of immigrants who have arrived in East Sussex as refugees, asylum seekers or displaced persons of another type was comparable to the regional and national averages at the end of 2024. However, the rates differed across the county, with Wealden having a higher rate than both the regional and national average.



Source: ONS. Note: the groups above include those who have arrived as part of the Homes for Ukraine, Afghan Resettlement Programme and as part of Supported Asylum.

Individuals arriving through the Homes for Ukraine scheme accounted for 88% of arrivals in East Sussex. 7% came through the Afghan Resettlement Programme and 5% were those being supported by the Home Office following claims for asylum.

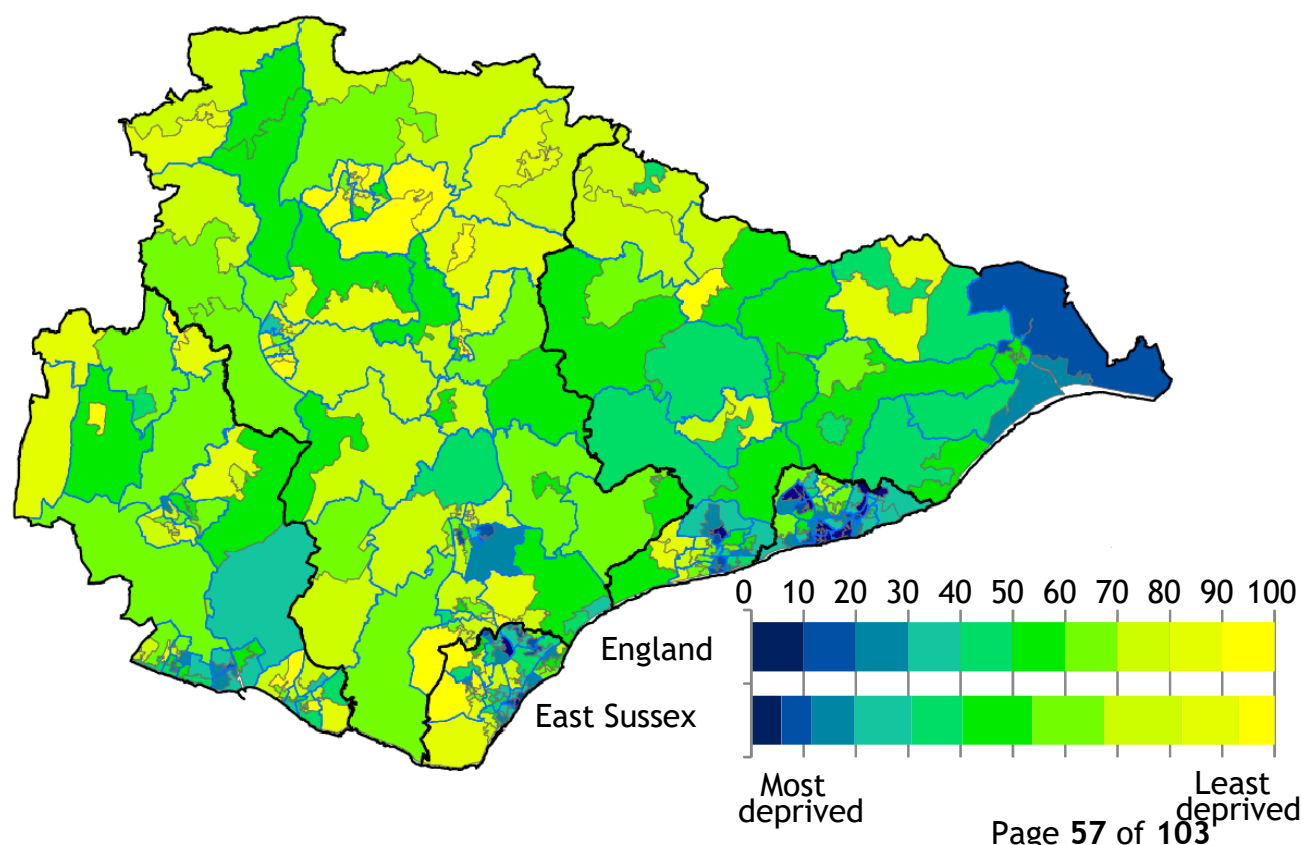
Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 measures relative deprivation for small areas in England. It takes into account a number of factors including health, access to services, environment, crime and housing, however income and employment have the greatest effect on the deprivation score given to an area.

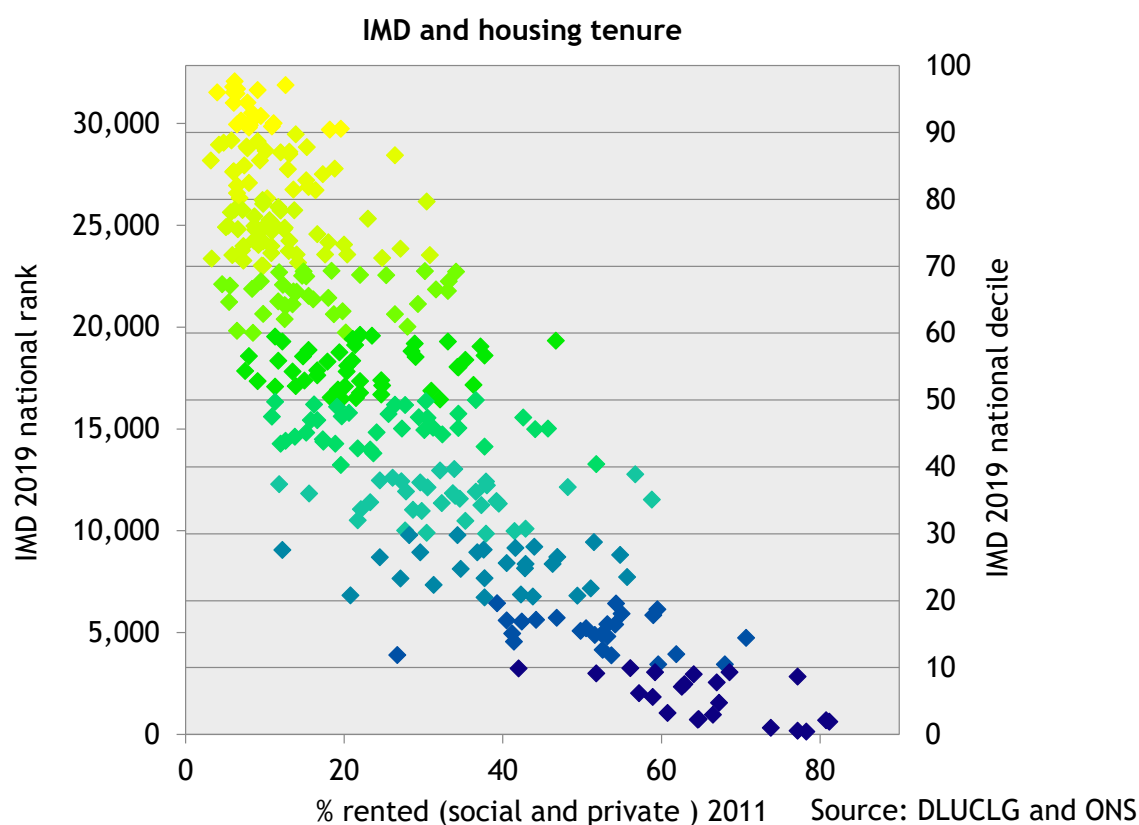
East Sussex has a significant variation across the county in levels of deprivation. Hastings is the 13 most deprived Lower Tier Local Authority (LTLA) out of 317 LTLAs in the country, with similar levels of deprivation as Newham, and Blackburn with Darwen. Wealden is the least deprived LTLA in East Sussex, with a rank of 254, which means it has similar levels of deprivation as Sevenoaks and Hambleton.

Overall, as a county East Sussex is ranked 93 out of 151 Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLA) on the IMD rank. This is a similar level of deprivation as Lincolnshire, Somerset and Kent. Blackpool is the most deprived UTLA, whilst Wokingham is the least deprived.

The map shows how deprived individual parts of the county are compared to the national average.



The IMD is calculated for small areas called LSOAs, as shown on the map, each of which have approximately 1,500 residents. In East Sussex there are 329 LSOAs, 22 are in the most deprived 10% nationally. 16 of these are in Hastings, four in Eastbourne, and two in Rother. 21 LSOAs are in the least deprived 10%, 13 are in Wealden, six in Lewes, and two in Eastbourne.



Areas of high deprivation correlate with some areas of predominately rented housing. This includes concentrations of social rented properties (up to 70%) and private rented properties (up to 68%), and both (up to 81%). Measures of deprivation include the indoor living environment, and in these areas, more properties (excluding social housing) may be in poor condition or without central heating, leading to higher heating costs and other negative outcomes.

People living in more deprived areas often face multiple challenges and therefore may be more likely to access Council and other public services. However, it is important to note that the IMD is based on averages across an area, so it is possible to have people with low levels of deprivation in an area classified as being more deprived and vice versa.

The relationship between multiple deprivation, low income and poor-quality housing means it can be hard to change relative deprivation for people living in an area of predominantly low-cost housing without addressing housing quality.

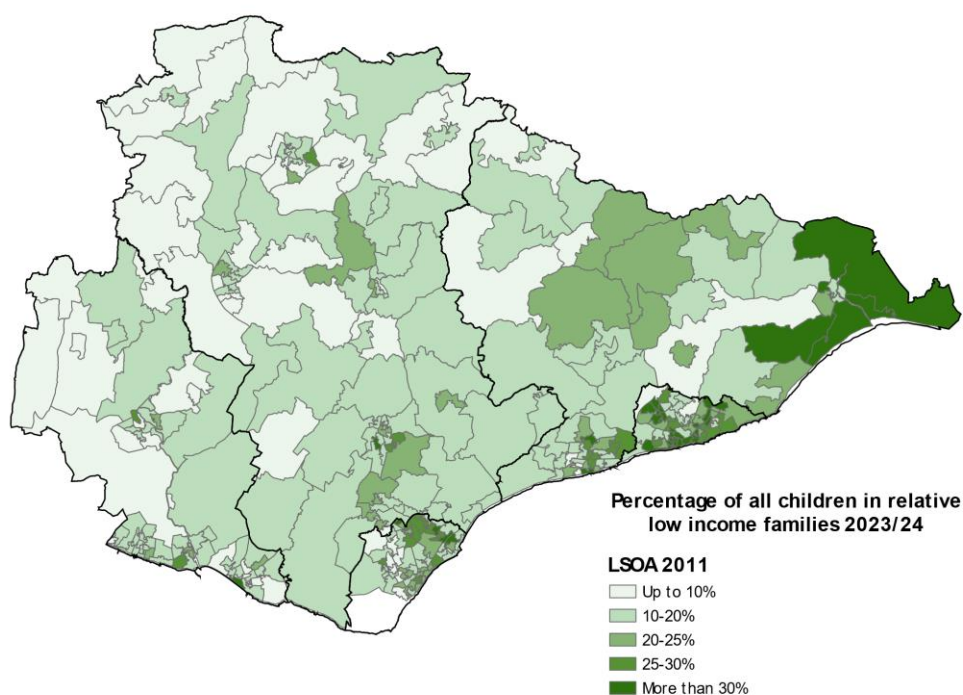
Lower Tier Local Authority	Rank of average rank out of 317 (1=most deprived)
Blackpool	1
Newham	12
Hastings	13
Blackburn with Darwen	14
Northampton	105
Eastbourne	106
Dover	107
Westminster	133
Rother	135
Crawley	136
Exeter	193
Lewes	194
Watford	195
Sevenoaks	253
Wealden	254
Hambleton	255
Hart	317

At the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) level the picture across the county is even more nuanced. The most deprived LSOA in the county, Hastings 005A within Baird Ward, is within the most deprived 1% of LSOAs in England. Whereas the least deprived LSOA, Wealden 012D in Uckfield, ranks amongst the least deprived 3%.

	Most deprived LSOA	Least deprived LSOA
England	1	32,844
Eastbourne	2,352	31,476
Hastings	147	23,407
Lewes	5,233	31,476
Rother	754	28,840
Wealden	4,812	32,075

Some of the data that the IMD is based on is now several years old. However, the latest child poverty data, relating to children living in families with relative low-income, shows a similar pattern in income deprivation across the county.

In 2023/24, there were 20,519 children in East Sussex living in families with relative low-income, which was 18.0% of all children and young people aged 0-19. This is a slightly lower rate than the national average of 21.9%, but in Hastings 27.3% of children and young people lived in relative low-income families. 72% of all children in relative low-income families in East Sussex were in families where at least one adult was in work. This compares to the national picture, where 69% of children in relative low-income families were in working families. Only 28% of East Sussex children in low-income families were in households where no-one worked.

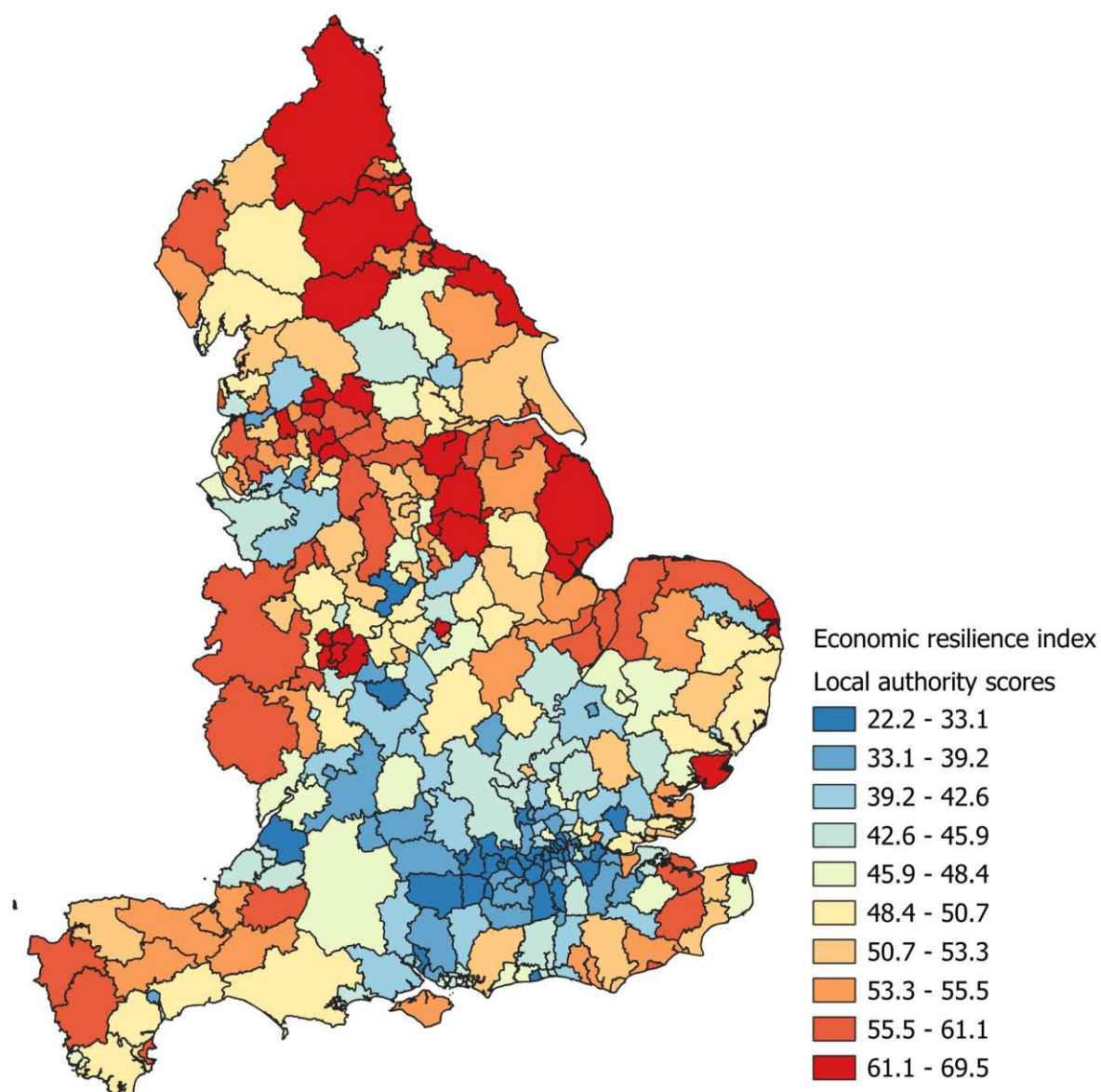


24.8% of East Sussex pupils were known to be eligible for Free School Meals in 2024. For England the figure was 24.6% (Source: Department for Education).

As the data on deprivation shows some parts of the coastal region of the county face greater challenges. The previous Government established the Levelling Up

Fund to address areas of high need. At the time 4 out of 5 local authorities in East Sussex were identified as having locations with priority need for 'levelling up' funding, to be used in projects that address economic recovery and growth, improved transport connectivity, and need for regeneration. Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, and Rother have all been identified as having specific locations with the greatest priority need for 'levelling up'.

The allocation of funding from one of the levelling up funding streams, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was informed by an economic resilience index. This looked at a range of factors including economic productivity, employment rates, wage levels and skills. The map shows that all of the district and borough areas in East Sussex scored above the national average, indicating higher levels of need for support. The map also shows most lower tier local authorities in the South East scored lower than the national average.



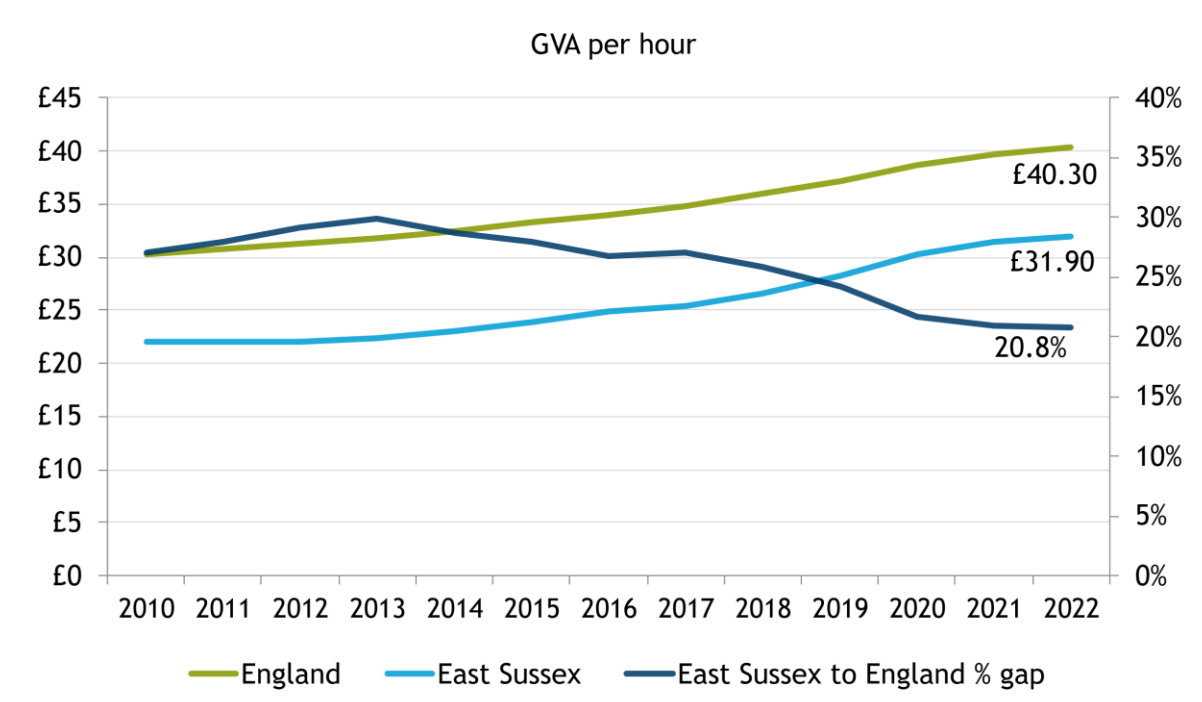
Source: data from DLUHC, Local authority boundary information from Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence v.3.0

Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2024. Note that Cornwall and the City of London were not included in the index.

Economy

GVA per hour

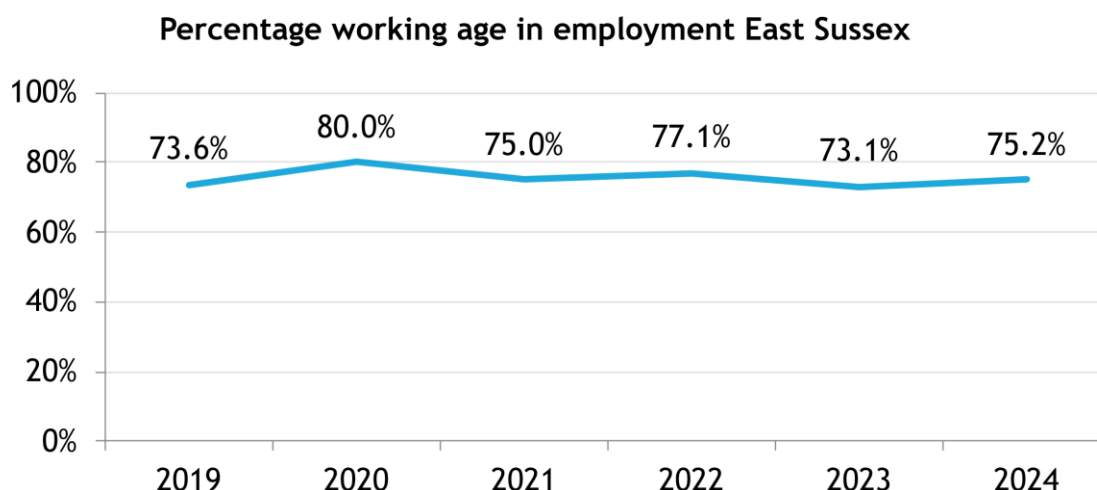
Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour is used to assess the productivity of an area. It measures the value of goods or services produced in an area per hour worked in that area. GVA per hour for East Sussex in 2022 was £31.90, 20.8% below the England level of £40.30.



Source: ONS

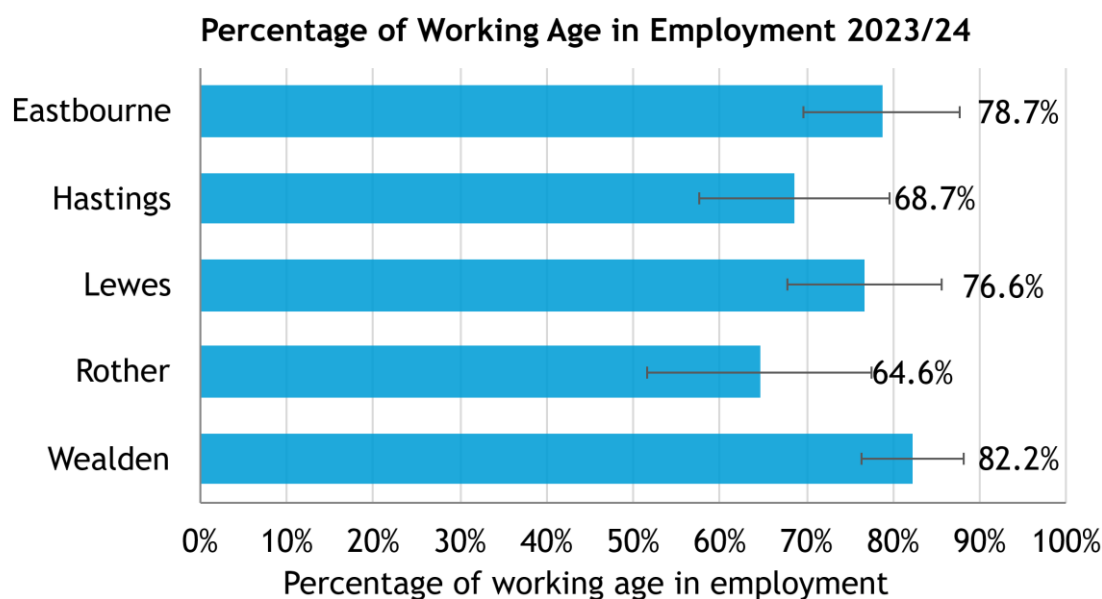
Employment

75.2% of the East Sussex working age population (age 16-64) were in employment between April 2023 - March 2024. This was lower than the national average of 75.7% and the average across the South East of 79.6%.



Sources: Annual Population Survey/Labour Force Survey, NOMIS/ONS

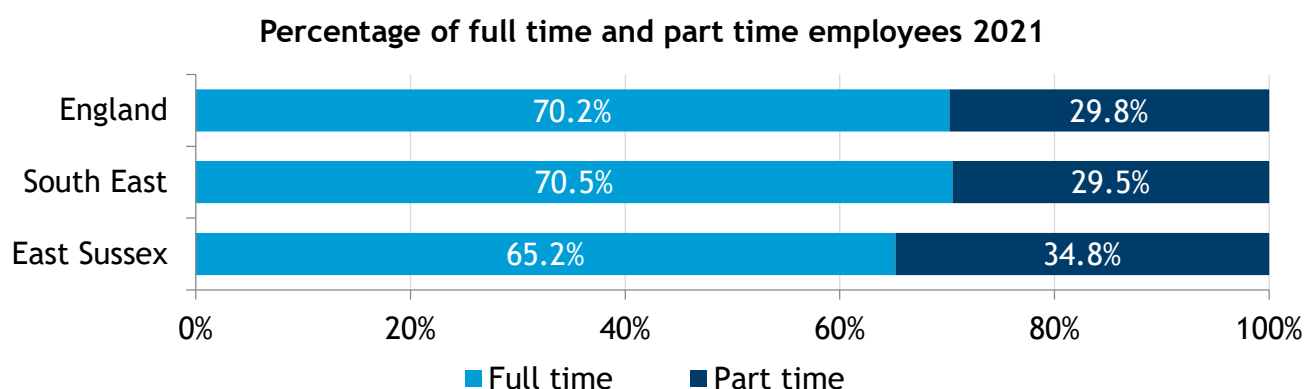
Wealden had an increase of 9 percentage points since 2023, giving it the highest rate of employment at 82.2%. Meanwhile, Rother had the lowest at 64.6%, showing a dip of over 15 percentage points compared to the previous year.



Sources: Annual National Survey/Labour Force Survey, NOMIS/ONS

Note: The Annual Population Survey (APS) can have very small sample sizes at district and borough levels which can result in the data changing significantly year on year and having very broad confidence intervals. The confidence intervals have been added to the chart above, the actual figure may fall anywhere between the lower and higher level.

A higher proportion of people work part time in East Sussex (34.8%) than in the South East (29.5%) or England (29.8%).

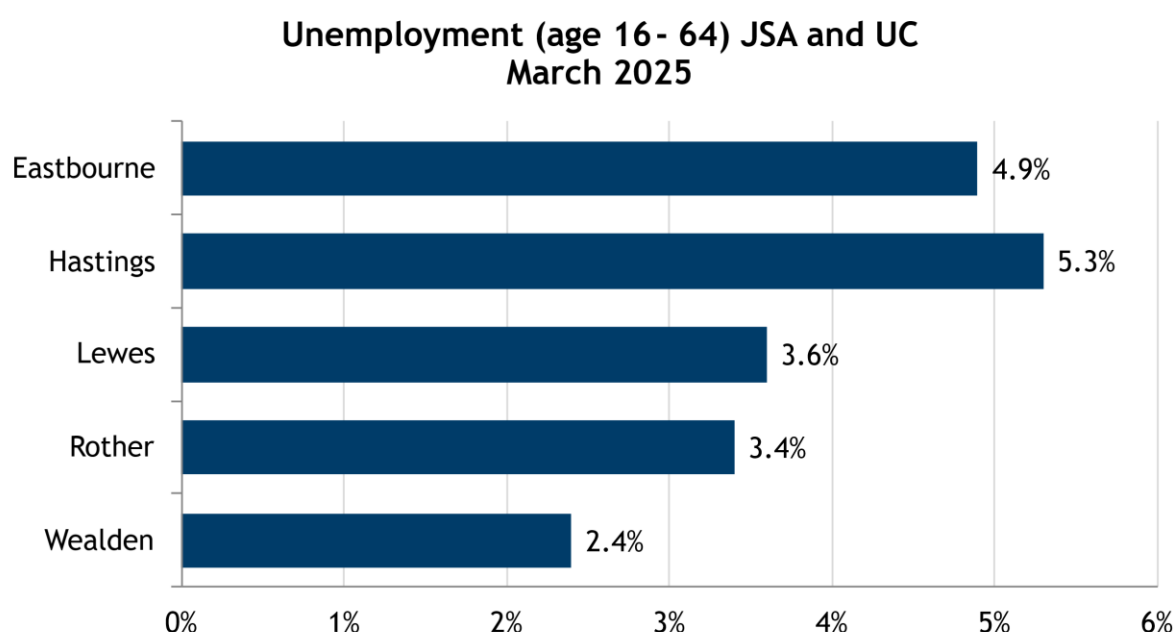


Sources: Census 2021

Unemployment

The unemployment rate includes people who are economically active and not in employment. People who are classified as economically inactive include those in full-time education, people who are looking after their family or home full-time, people who are unable to work for health reasons and those who have retired.

The unemployment rate for March 2025 was 3.8% for East Sussex, lower than the national average of 4.3%, but above the regional average of 3.3%. Hastings had the highest rate of the districts and boroughs at 5.3%.

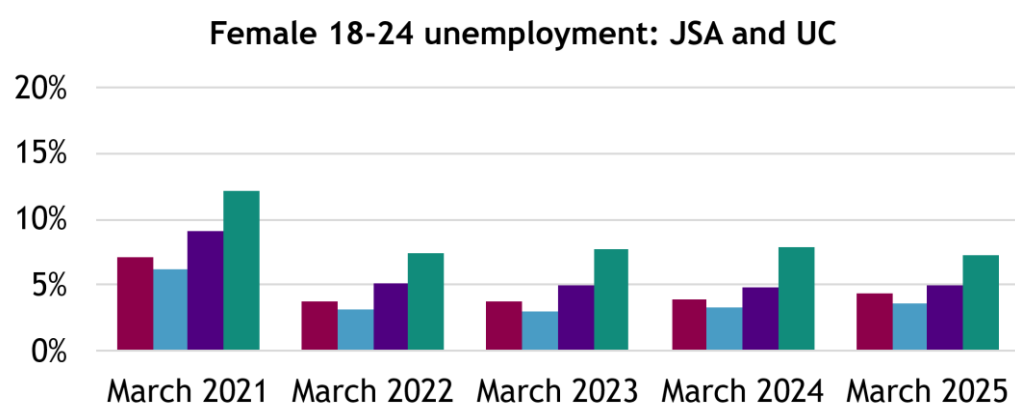


Source: Office for National Statistics/NOMIS - claimants of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) or Universal Credit (UC) who are searching for work age 16 - 64

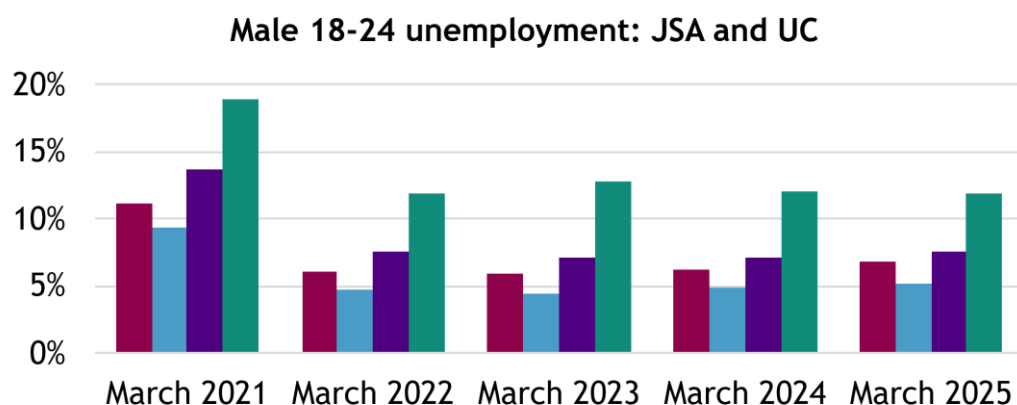
Youth unemployment (age 18-24) is normally higher than the overall rate and this trend is greater at time of economic stress. At March 2024 youth unemployment for East Sussex was 6.1%, whilst the England rate was 5.1%. Hastings had the highest district and borough rate at 10.1%. Rates in East Sussex increased for March 2025 at 6.4%, compared to an increase nationally to 5.7%. Youth unemployment in Hastings fell, but remained higher than the county average at 9.7%.



Within this female unemployment is usually lower than male unemployment. For example, in March 2025 female youth unemployment for Hastings was 7.3%, while the male rate was 11.9%.



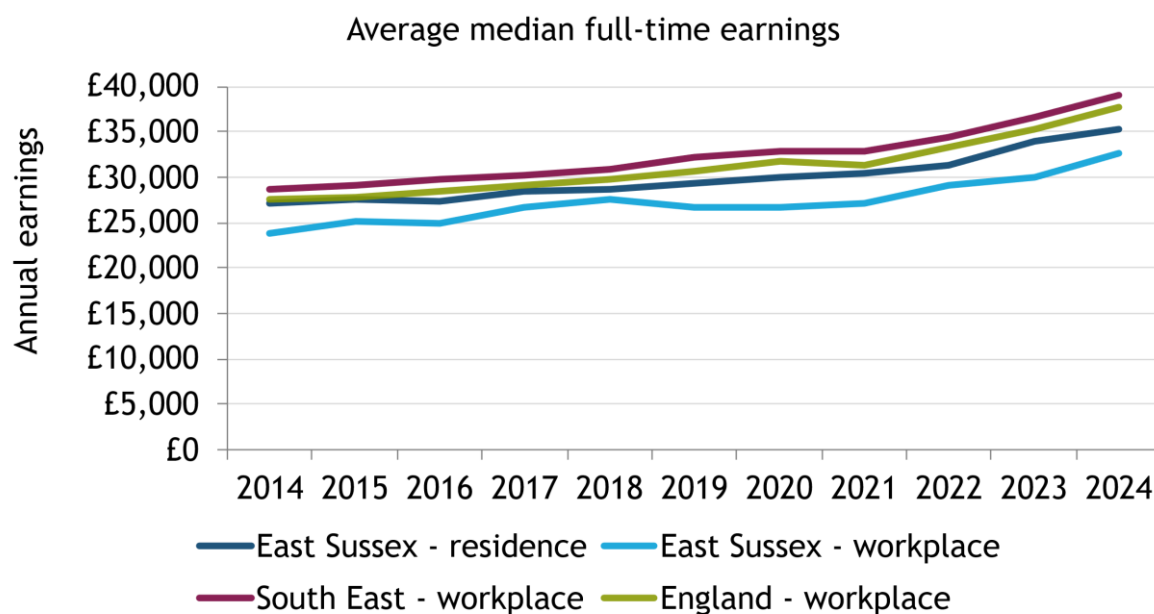
A higher proportion of males are categorised as economically active than females, which means that if the unemployment rate is the same for males and females there will be a higher number of males unemployed than females. 575 young people were unemployed in Hastings in March 2025, 205 were female and 370 were male.



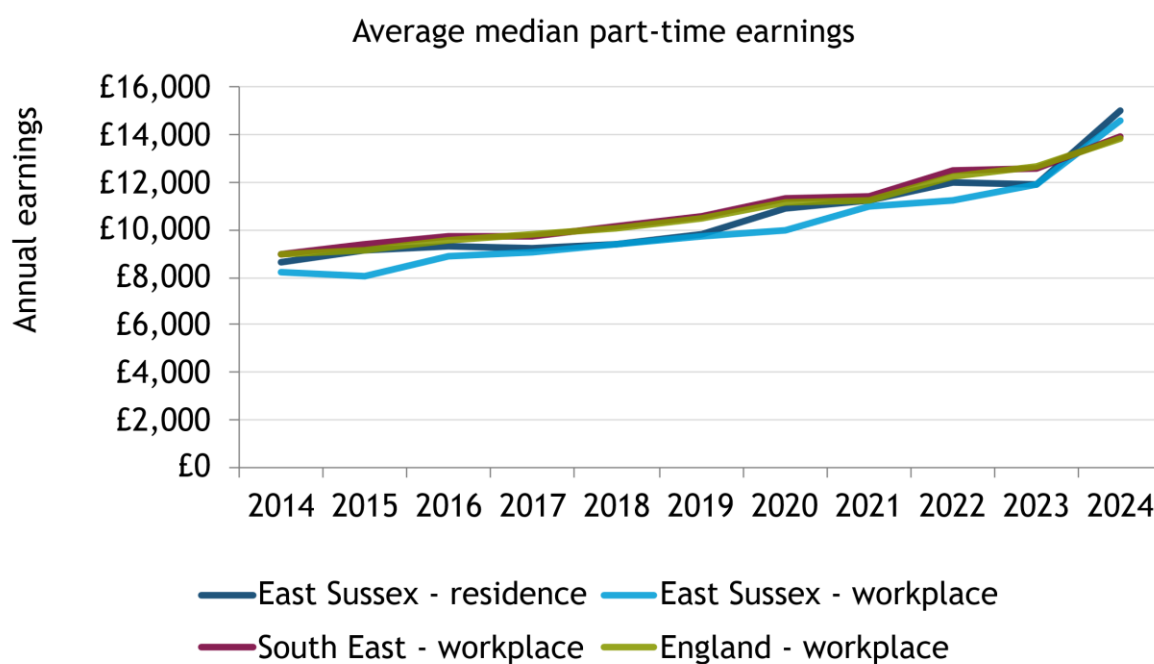
Source all: Office for National Statistics/NOMIS

Earnings

East Sussex residence based earnings increased for full-time employees in 2024, and are now close to the England average. East Sussex workplace based earnings for full-time employees increased but remained lower than the regional and national averages. Earnings for residence based part-time employees rose in 2024 and are now at a higher level than workplace based employees in the county, and above the average earnings for England and the South East. Residence based earnings are those of people living within East Sussex, some of whom have workplaces outside East Sussex; workplace earnings are those of people whose workplace is within East Sussex.



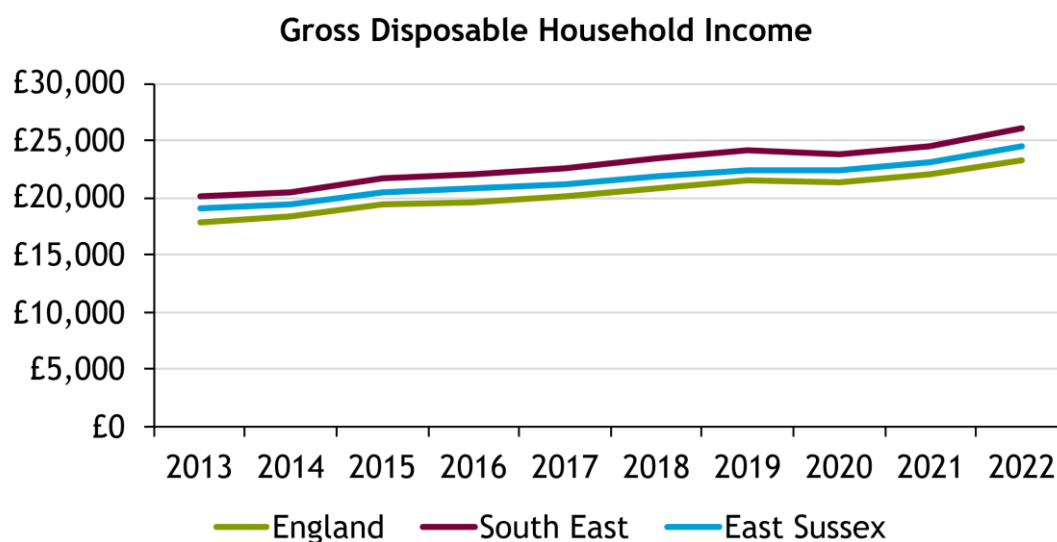
Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), Office for National Statistics



Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), Office for National Statistics.
 Note: The ASHE can have very broad confidence intervals, so changes in data year on year may not be reflective of a real change in earnings.

Gross Disposable Household Income

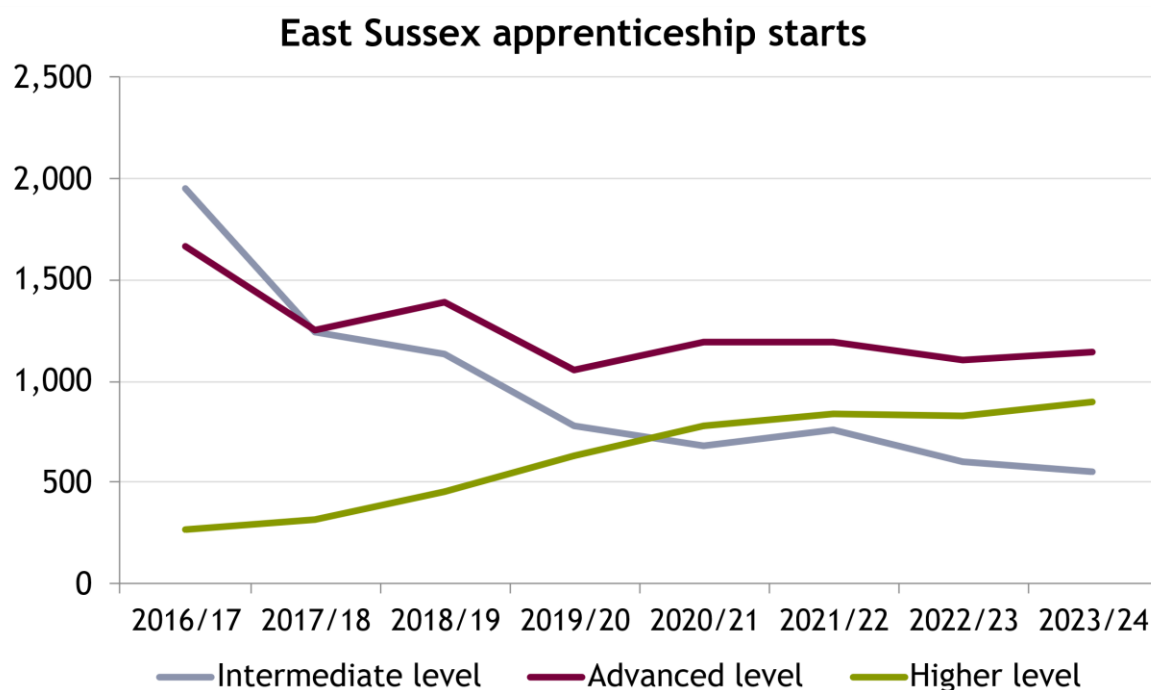
Gross disposable household income in 2022 was below the average in the South East, but above the England rate. There is a time lag with the release of this data so it is unclear how the inflationary rises over the last few years have affected current levels of gross disposal household income.



Source: ONS

Skills

There were 22,740 apprenticeship starts in East Sussex between 2017 and 2024. Apprenticeship starts in East Sussex in 2023/24 were up 2% on the previous year. Higher level apprenticeship starts in 2023/24 increased by 8% compared to the previous year.



Source: Department for Education further education data library, apprenticeships

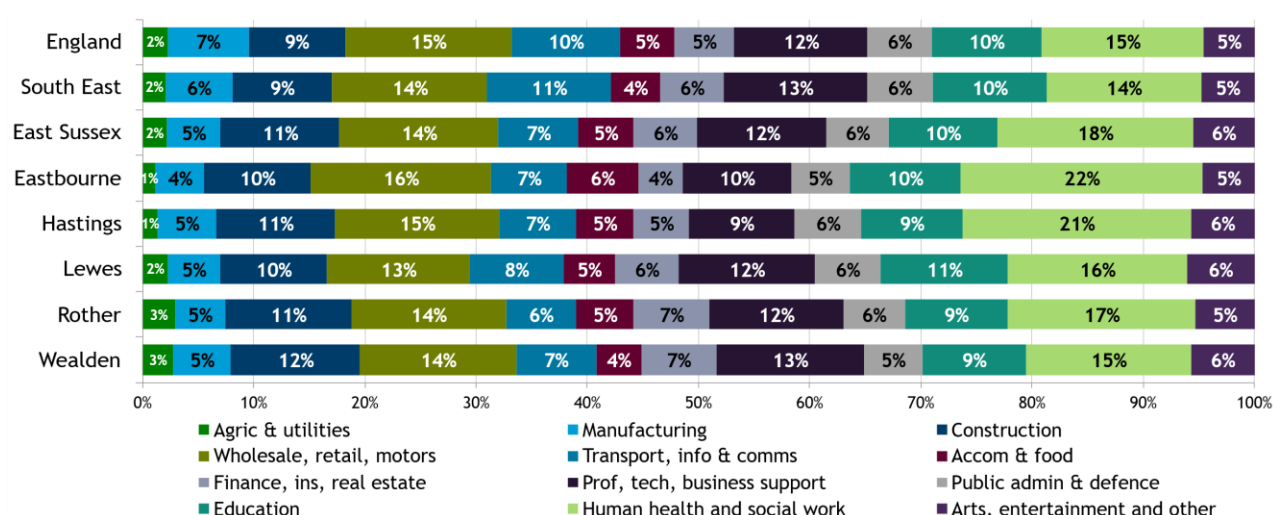
Qualification levels across the county are broadly in line with the regional and national averages. Both Lewes and Wealden have a significantly higher proportion of better qualified people compared to the rest of districts and boroughs in the county.

	Qualifications of working age population 2021 (16-64)					
	None	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4+	Other
Eastbourne	12.2%	11.6%	16.7%	20.6%	32.2%	6.7%
Hastings	14.1%	11.9%	17.4%	19.8%	30.6%	6.2%
Lewes	9.2%	10.7%	16.5%	20.4%	37.4%	5.7%
Rother	11.0%	11.7%	17.5%	21.1%	32.6%	6.1%
Wealden	8.1%	10.5%	17.9%	22.1%	35.3%	6.0%
East Sussex	10.6%	11.2%	17.2%	21.0%	33.8%	6.1%
SE region	10.0%	9.9%	15.3%	20.1%	38.8%	5.9%
England	12.4%	9.9%	14.8%	19.5%	37.1%	6.3%

Source: Census 2021

Employment by industry

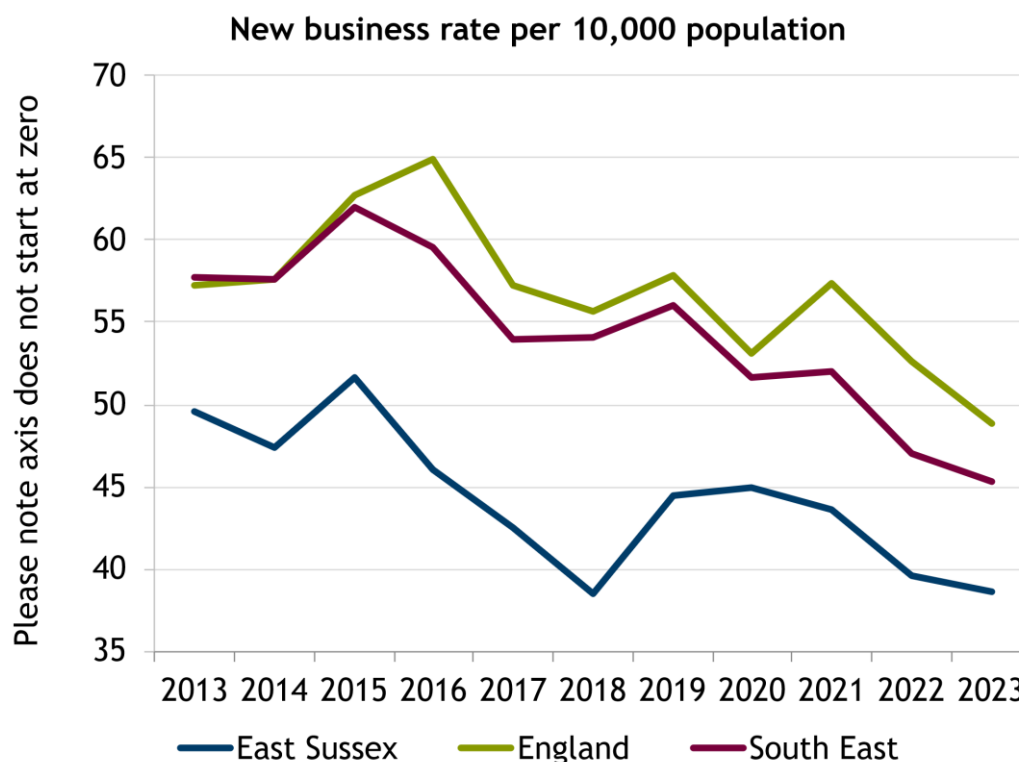
Across East Sussex as a whole the proportion of people employed in different industries is broadly similar to the national picture. We have a higher proportion of people employed in human health and social work and a lower proportion employed in professional, scientific and technical, and manufacturing than the national average. However, employment by industry varies significantly across the county, with the percentage of people working in human, health and social work highest in Eastbourne at 22%, and those working in professional, technical and business support lowest in Hastings at 9%.



Source: Census 2021

Businesses

The latest data we have for businesses is for 2023 when the economy was still affected by the impact of the pandemic and increases in the rate of inflation which will have affected both decisions to start new businesses and business survival rates. In 2023 in East Sussex there were 2,145 business starts and 2,095 business closures. The East Sussex new business registration rate per 10,000 people decreased between 2022 and 2023 to 38.6. The highest rate was in Wealden at 45.6, whilst the lowest was in Lewes at 33.1.



Source for all: ONS Business Demography

Broadband

Over 99% of East Sussex premises had access to superfast broadband in 2024 with 65.7% having access to Gigabit capable broadband, compared to 78.9% in the South East and 82.5% in England. 0.42% of properties have less than the Legal Universal Service Obligation (at least 10Mbps).

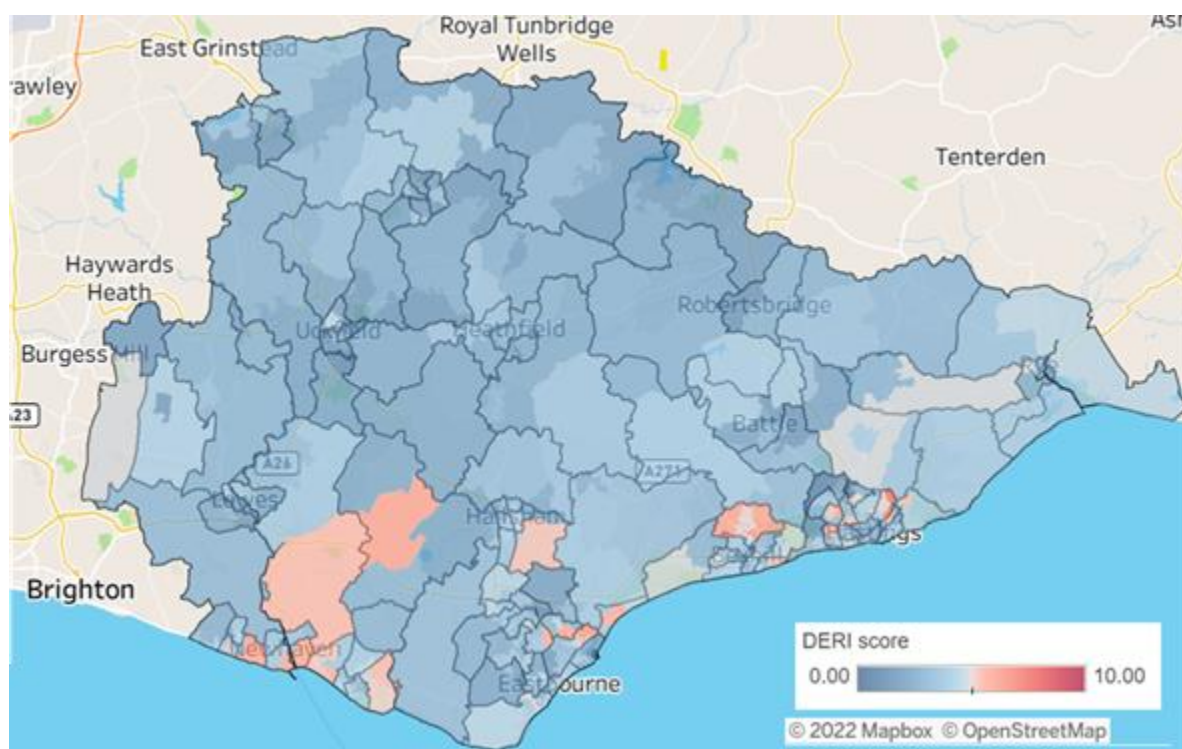
Digital Inclusion

As more businesses and services use digital channels to engage with residents those people who are digitally excluded are likely to face increasing challenges. Access to broadband is one part of being able to access digital services. People also need to have the necessary skills and confidence to use digital services, as well as being able to afford the devices and data connections needed for these.

A digital exclusion risk index has been developed by the Greater Manchester Office of Data Analytics that shows where people at higher risk of digital exclusion live.

This index is based on a range of data including data on population, relative

deprivation and broadband coverage. Areas where people have a higher risk of digital exclusion have a higher score, for East Sussex the areas with the highest risk of digital exclusion scores are in the south of the county. It should be noted that the index includes the proportion of population aged over 65 as one of the risk factors due to national research indicating lower digital skill levels in this age group. We have a large population of over 65s in East Sussex, many of whom will have strong digital skills.



Source: Digital Exclusion Risk Index (Greater Manchester Office of Data Analytics)

Highways, transport and infrastructure

Transport network

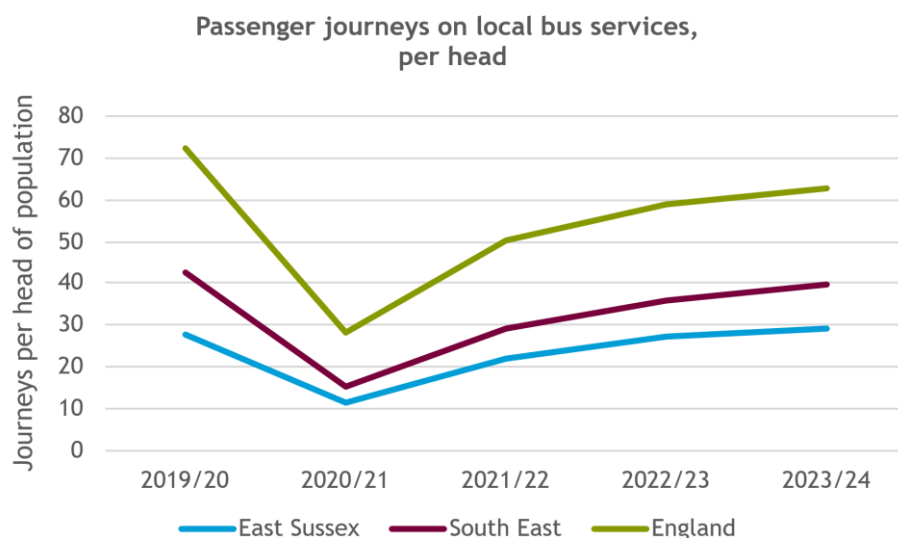
As a rural county transport connectivity is important to residents and businesses in East Sussex. The county has 38 national rail stations and 3,264 bus stops. There is an extensive Public Rights of Way network covering a combined distance of around 2,000 miles. There are also several National Cycle Network routes within the county.

State of the County 2025: Focus on East Sussex

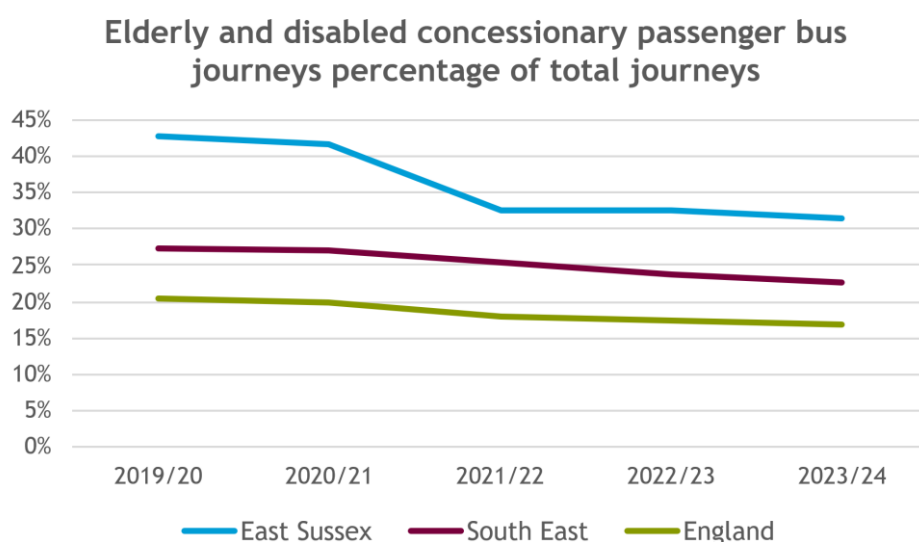
At the time of the 2021 Census 89% of households in Wealden had at least one car or van, compared to 71% of households in Hastings. Car ownership is affected by a number of factors including income, parking availability and the availability of public transport. The rail services in the county traverse the coast and link the eastern and western parts of the county to London as is shown in the map.



Bus passenger numbers have increased in East Sussex each year since Covid-19 restrictions, with passenger journeys almost reaching pre-pandemic levels by the end of March 2024. In 2023/24 there were 16.2 million bus passenger journeys in total, compared to 16.3 million in 2018/19. Bus passenger journeys per person in East Sussex have historically been lower than the average for the South East region or England. In 2023/24 there were 29.2 bus journeys per head of population, compared to 39.5 per head of population for the South East or 62.9 per head of population in England.



The percentage of bus journeys that were made using concessionary fares for elderly and disabled people in East Sussex in 2023/24 was 31.5%. This is significantly higher than the averages for both the South East (22.8%) and all England (16.8%). However, the percentage of journeys made by elderly or disabled people using concessionary fares has decreased each year since 2019/20 (42.8%) showing that more people are making journeys without a concessionary fare.



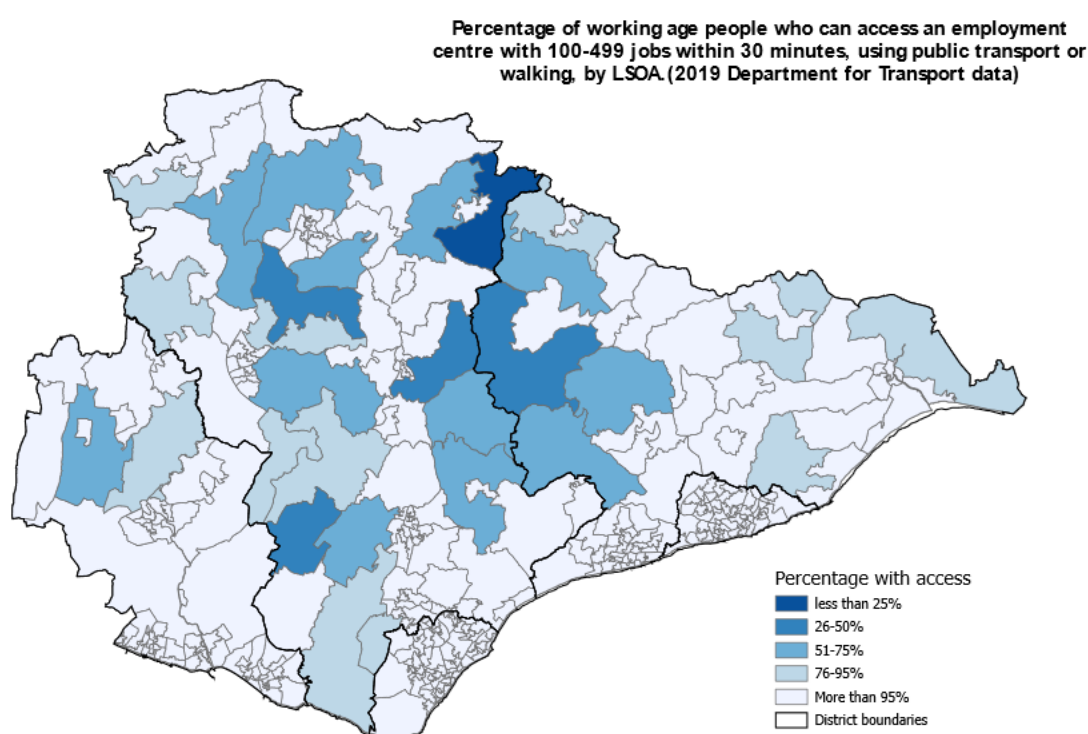
Recovery in bus passenger numbers has also been supported by a government programme of reduced fares since January 2023. Bus fares were capped at £2 for a single journey until December 2024, rising to £3 in January 2025. This aimed to reduce the cost of living particularly for low-income households, by reducing the

cost of travel, and to support recovery in bus use following the pandemic.

Infrastructure

The latest Department for Transport data from 2019 shows there was good access to services by car across the county. However, accessing services by public transport or walking can be more challenging in rural areas.

Access to employment centres (100-499 jobs) within 30 minutes by public transport/walking.



The county has 3,375km of carriageway and 2,481km of footways and cycleways. Traffic volumes in East Sussex are highest along its major roads, some of which are managed by East Sussex County Council (for example, A26 Lewes to Tunbridge Wells and A259 Peacehaven to Pevensey) and others by National Highways (namely the A21, A26 (Newhaven to Lewes), A27 and A259 Pevensey to the county boundary with Kent via Bexhill, Hastings, and Rye). The latest road condition survey indicated that 5% of the length of the principal road network ('A' roads) requires maintenance and 6% of the length of the non-principal road network ('B' and 'C' roads), based on the standards set out by the Department for Transport.

State of the County 2025: Focus on East Sussex

This table details the projects which will improve the infrastructure in East Sussex in the coming years.

Area	Project	Value
Countywide	Local Transport Improvements	£12.681m
Countywide	Developing EV infrastructure provision across the county	£4.4m
Countywide	Broadband - Superfast coverage (>30 Mbps) 99% Ultrafast coverage (>100Mbps) 68% Building Digital UK (BDUK) has awarded a contract for East & West Sussex, Brighton & Hove, to Cityfibre as part of their Project Gigabit programme.	£100m (please note this is for Sussex overall, not just East Sussex)
Countywide	East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan - Bus priority measures in Eastbourne and Newhaven	£5.9m
Countywide	A259 Major Road Network South Coast Corridor Package	£28m
Countywide	Exceat Bridge Levelling Up Fund Round 1	£19.1m
Countywide	Potential A27 offline solution	Not allocated at present
Countywide	A22 Major Road Network Junction Improvement Package	£46.5m
Countywide	Centres of Digital Excellence across Sussex	£2.3m
Countywide	Greener Sussex land management & Decarbonisation Academies	£7.2m
Countywide	College Condition Allocations	£3.4m
Bexhill	North Bexhill Access Road (Local Growth Fund)	£18.6m
Bexhill	Bexhill Enterprise Park North (Local Growth Fund)	£1.9m

State of the County 2025: Focus on East Sussex

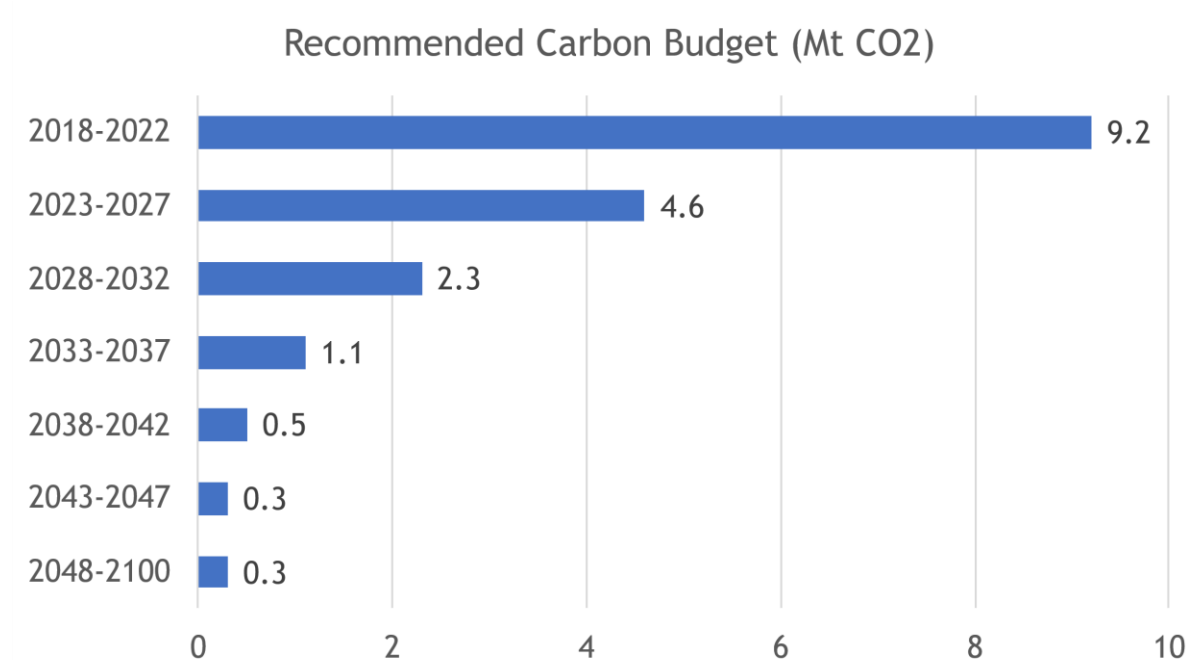
Area	Project	Value
Bexhill	Bexhill Enterprise Park Development	£46.0m
Bexhill	Plan for Neighbourhoods (over ten years)	£20m
Eastbourne	Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package (Terminus Road) (Local Growth Fund)	£11.3m
Eastbourne	Eastbourne and South Wealden walking and cycling package (Local Growth Fund)	£6.6m
Eastbourne	Hailsham, Polegate and Eastbourne Movement and Access Corridor (Local Growth Fund)	£2.1m
Eastbourne	Levelling Up Fund (including £4.7m 'Victoria Place' pedestrianisation project)	£19.9m
Eastbourne	Plan for Neighbourhoods (over ten years)	£20m
Hastings	Skills Capital Fund	£0.5m
Hastings	Bexhill and Hastings Movement and Access Package (Local Growth Fund)	£9.0m
Hastings	Potential HS1 rail extension (also to Bexhill and Eastbourne)	Not allocated at present
Hastings	Town Deal (includes the £10m Hastings Green Connections public realm project)	£24.3m
Hastings	Plan for Neighbourhoods (over ten years)	£20m
Hastings	Levelling Up Partnership (LUP) (including £2.5m for Queensway Gateway Road infrastructure)	£15m
Newhaven	Future High Streets	£5.0m
Newhaven	Town Deal	£19.3m
Newhaven	Levelling Up Fund	£12.7m
Rother	Skills Capital Fund	£0.5m
Rother	Levelling Up Fund	£19.2m
Rother	Levelling Up Partnership (LUP)	£17.5m
Rother	Rural Business Capital Fund (Local Growth Fund)	£1m
Uckfield	Bus station improvements	£0.7m
Wealden	Rural Business Capital Fund (Local Growth Fund)	£1.5m

Environment

The Cumulative CO_{2e} emissions budget

Emissions of the main greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide (CO₂), in East Sussex fell by 42% between 2005 and 2021, while the population grew by about 8%. This excludes emissions that occur outside the area due to demand for goods and services that are consumed in the county. This reduction is similar to the decrease seen nationally and driven by the same changes (e.g. the switch from coal to gas and renewables to generate electricity).

The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change has calculated the emissions reductions necessary for East Sussex (and other local authority areas) to make a fair contribution towards keeping the increase in global average temperature below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This requires cutting emissions from the county area by an average of about 13% per year, which roughly equates to halving total emissions every 5 years.

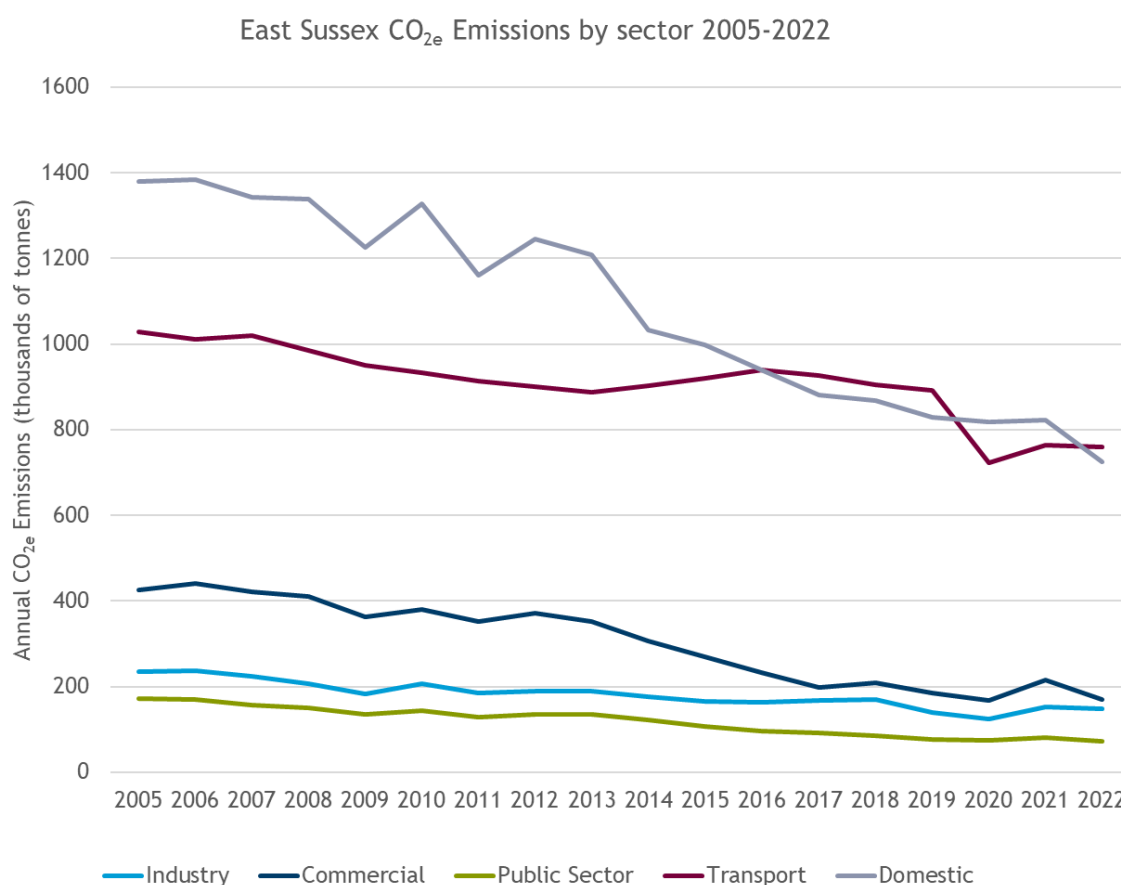


Source: Tyndall Centre for Climate Change, 2022.

State of the County 2025: Focus on East Sussex

Emissions from domestic properties and transport are the greatest contributors to overall emissions across the county. Domestic emissions fell by nearly 48% between 2005 and 2022. Transport emissions also fell, but at a slower pace. Emissions from all sectors, but especially transport, fell sharply in 2020 due to pandemic impacts, before rebounding in 2021.

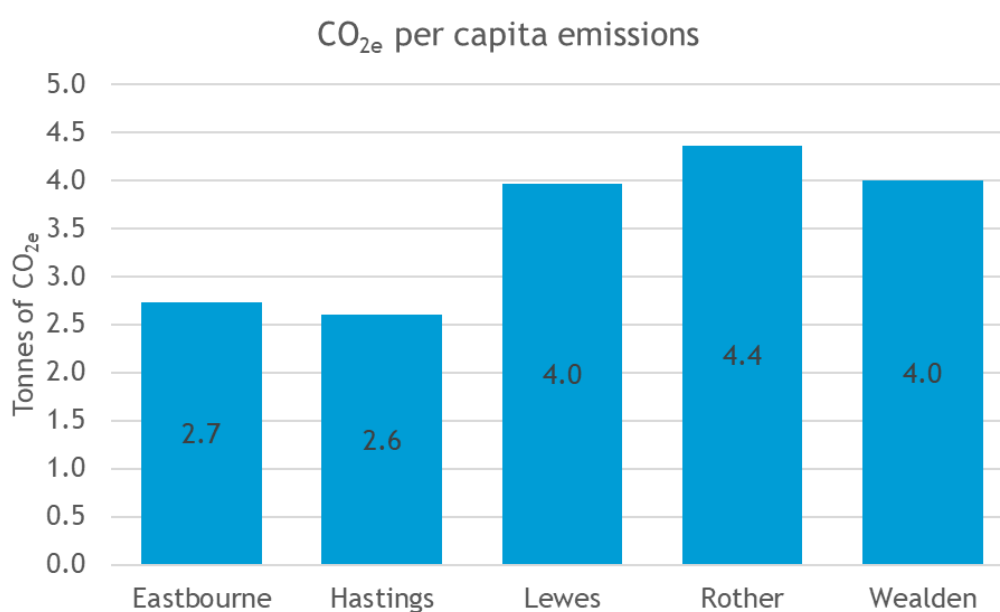
Land use (and land use changes) both absorb and emit carbon, however on an overall (net) basis carbon emissions from land use in East Sussex are negative. Carbon is absorbed by forests and grasslands, while carbon losses occur on existing cropland and when natural land (e.g. grassland) is converted to croplands or settlements. Lewes, Rother and Wealden all have significant (net) negative land use emissions, whilst land use emissions in the urban boroughs of Eastbourne and Hastings are negligible.



Source: DESNZ

Domestic emissions make up a larger share of emissions in the county's two urban

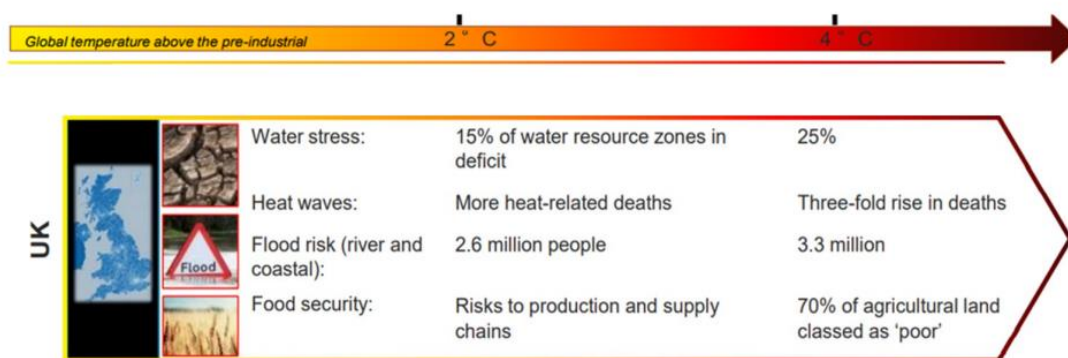
areas - Eastbourne and Hastings - than the three more rural areas, whilst transport emissions are lower. This is due to the smaller road networks in the urban areas, and smaller, higher density housing. Total per capita domestic emissions are higher in the rural areas, as houses tend to be larger, and many properties use higher carbon forms of heating such as oil.



Source: DESNZ

Climate adaptation

Even if global warming can be limited to 1.5°C, significant additional investment will be needed in measures to adapt to the effects of climate change that are already locked in due to past emissions of greenhouse gases.

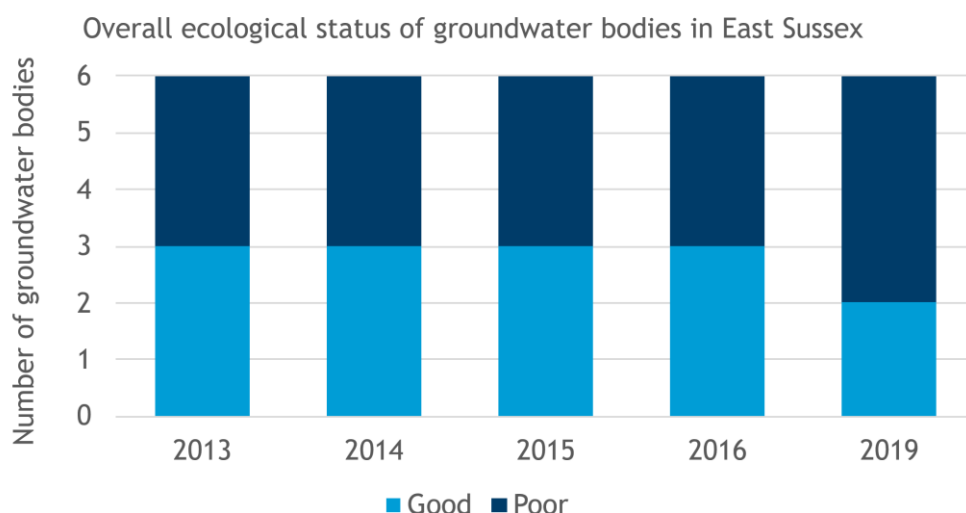


Source: Met Office

UK Met Office predictions of the effects of climate change in East Sussex include hotter and drier summers, milder and wetter winters, more droughts, more flooding, and more intense and frequent storms. This is predicted to lead to an increase in heat-related deaths, particularly amongst the elderly, damage to essential infrastructure, increased cost of food, disruption to supply chains and service provision, greater coastal erosion, and impact on coastal habitats.

Water quality

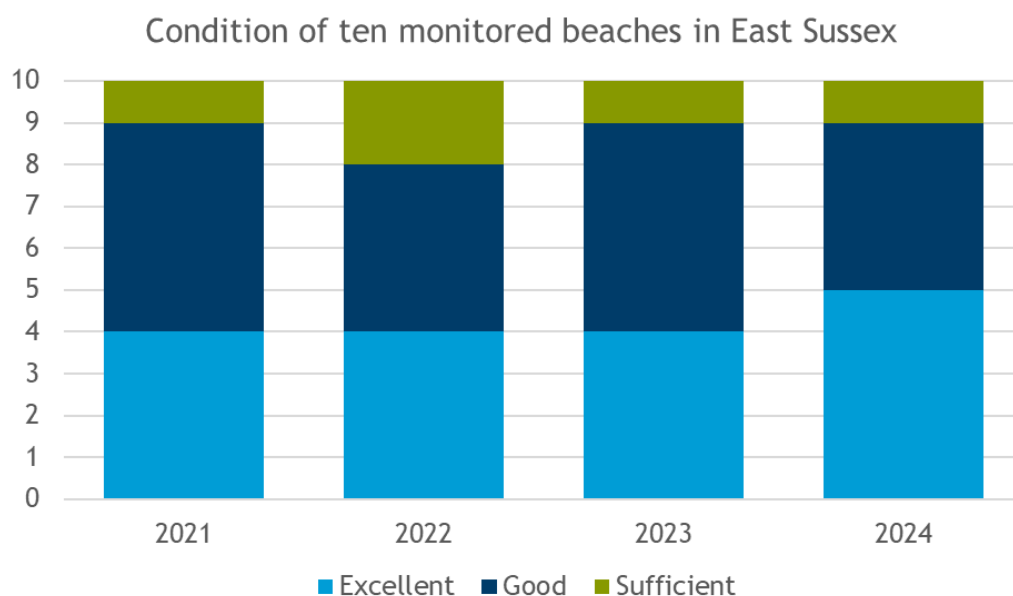
Water pollution is mostly caused by land management practices (e.g., agricultural run-off), wastewater treatment plants, and urban and highway run-off. The most recent data available for groundwater bodies is for 2019. The quality of water bodies in East Sussex has deteriorated slightly in recent years. The number of groundwater bodies in East Sussex rated as good reduced from three to two between 2016 and 2019. The quality of some ground waters, which provide about 70% of drinking water, have deteriorated due to rising nitrate levels, mostly due to historic farming practices.



Source: Environment Agency

The quality of bathing waters improved slightly in 2024 with 5 of the 10 monitored beaches being rated 'excellent' compared to 4 the year before. Although the

situation has improved it is still below that reported for 2017 when 6 beaches were ‘excellent’ and 4 were ‘good’.



Source: Environment Agency

Air quality

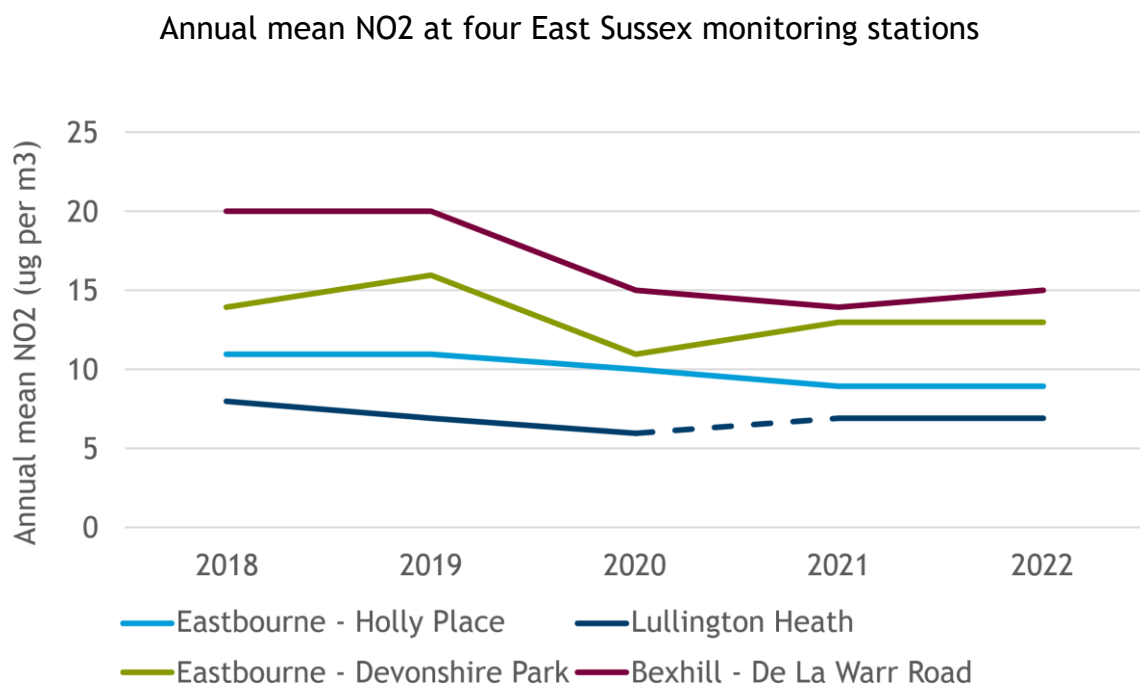
Air quality has improved considerably across most of the UK over the last 30 years. However, up to 36,000 deaths per year in the UK are still attributable to exposure to outdoor air pollution (Public Health England, 2017). This makes air pollution the top environmental risk to human health in the UK, and the fourth greatest threat to public health after cancer, heart disease and obesity. The concentration of pollutants in the air is determined by the emission of air pollutants and factors such as building layout and weather conditions.

In East Sussex, the 3 main pollutants of concern for health are nitrogen dioxide, particulates and ozone. These are monitored by a small number of automatic monitoring stations in the county and the data are published on the Sussex Air website. The latest available data are from 2022.

Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)

The main sources of NO₂ are road vehicles and domestic combustion. In 2022 the

levels of NO₂ monitored at all sites in East Sussex were compliant with the short and long term health-based national air quality strategy objectives. Annual mean NO₂ has trended downwards over the past 5 years, largely due to effective controls on newer road vehicles.



Note that no annual mean was available for Lullington Heath in 2021

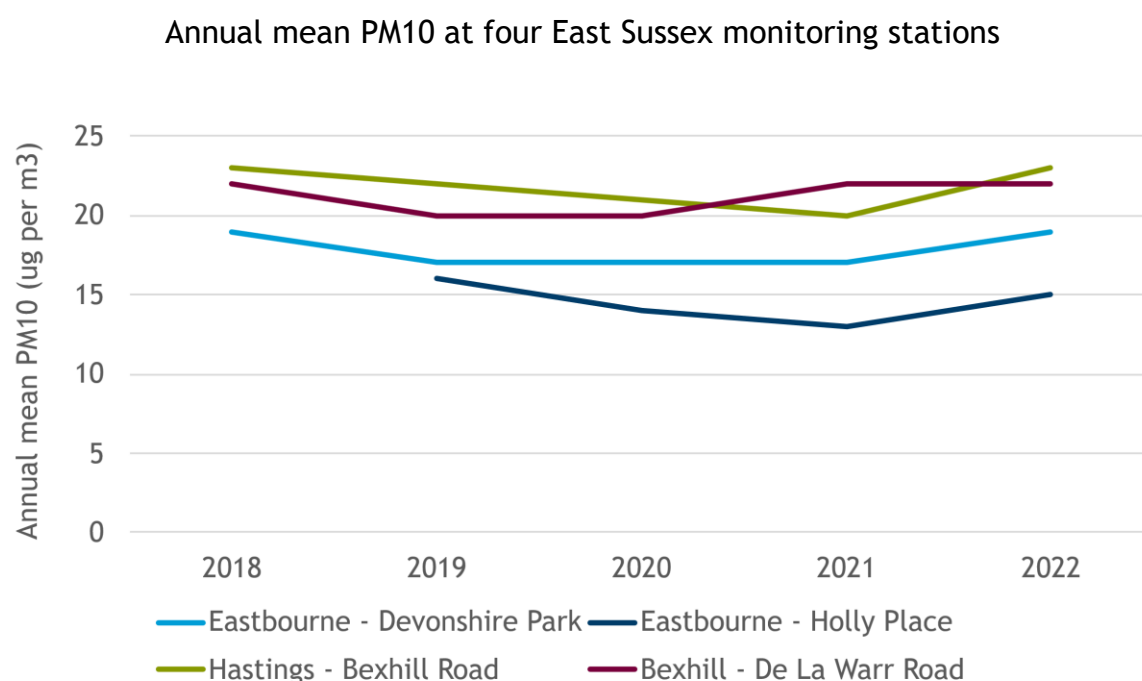
Particulate matter

Particulate matter is everything in the air that is not a gas and so consists of a wide range of chemical compounds and materials. The main sources of particulates are road vehicles and solid fuel combustion, notably wood.

Particulates are measured as either 'PM₁₀' or 'PM_{2.5}', which refers to the diameter of the particulates; the smaller they are the further they can penetrate into the lungs and, potentially, the blood stream. There are no safe levels of particulates.

Figure 6 shows that annual mean PM₁₀ fell at most sites between 2018 and 2021 but rose at 3 sites during 2022. Nevertheless, the levels monitored at all sites in 2022 complied with the health-based national air quality strategy objectives, whilst the

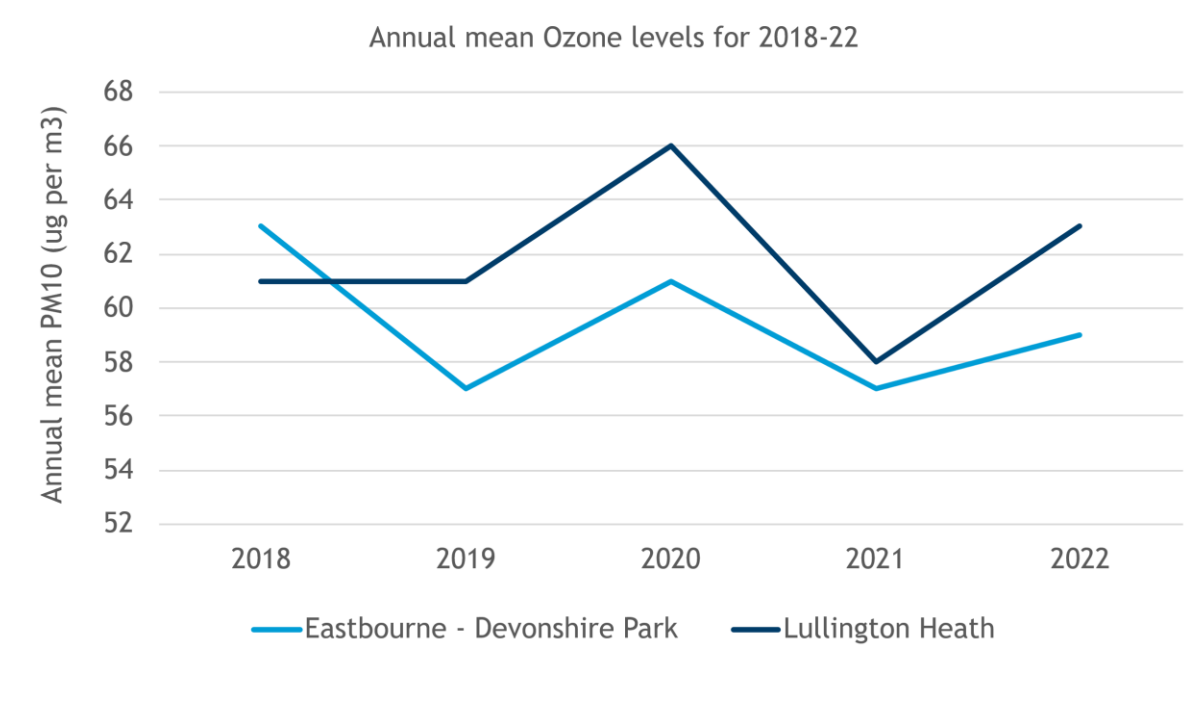
PM_{2.5} levels complied with the health-based interim standards required to be met by 2028, as set out in the Environment Act of 2021.



Ozone (O₃)

Ozone is a secondary pollutant, created when other pollutant gases react in sunlight. It is a long-lived pollutant and tends to affect urban background and rural locations, rather than roadside sites.

Annual mean concentrations of O₃ levels have shown no clear trend between 2018 and 2022, albeit with significant year-on-year variation, largely due to the impact of the weather on O₃ formation.



The government's Daily Air Quality Index divides air pollution levels into 'low', 'moderate', 'high' and 'very high', based on the potential impact on health. In 2022 there were no days when O₃ levels were measured as being either 'very high' or 'high', and one monitoring site measured 'moderate' levels on 7 days.

Environmental designations

East Sussex has a rich natural environment, with over two thirds of the county covered by one or more environmental designations. The table below shows how much of the county is covered by which type of designation.

Designated sites and reserves		Area (ha)
International	Ramsar	6,442
	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	7,193
	Special Protection Area (SPA)	5,546
National	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	87,980
	National Nature Reserve (NNR)	321
	National Park	24,365
	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	15,380
Local	Country Park	692
	Local Geological Site (LGS)	766
	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	1,435
	Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	9,382

Designated sites and reserves		Area (ha)
	Notable Road Verge	47
Reserve/ Property	Environmental Stewardship Agreement	20,121
	National Trust	1,841
	RSPB Reserve	284
	Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserve	1,118
	Woodland Trust	484

Source: Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre

Habitats

The key habitats in East Sussex are grassland, arable farmland and woodland.

Habitat	% of East Sussex
Water bodies	1.5%
Arable	22.7%
Grassland	40.0%
Heathland	0.9%
Intertidal	0.7%
Coastal	0.4%
Built up Areas and Gardens	9.1%
Woodland	19.9%
Other	4.8%

Ecology

Protected Areas

Over half of the county is designated for its landscape value, either as part of a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are 65 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), covering about 8% of the county, which recognises and protects their biological and or geological value. About half of these SSSIs are additionally designated as being internationally important for biodiversity, either as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the Habitats Directive, a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the Birds Directive, or a Ramsar site (an internally important wetland site).

There are 26 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), four National Nature Reserves (NNRs) - considered to be the “jewel in the crown” of SSSIs, and 285 Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs). About a third of the county supports priority habitats, which are identified as being of principal importance for conservation.

About three quarters of the SSSIs are in favourable or favourable recovering condition and the rest have either been partially destroyed or are in unfavourable condition. About half of the LWSs are currently known to be in positive conservation management.

Assets at Risk

The 2019 Sussex Nature Partnership Natural Capital Investment Strategy identifies some priority habitats as being at high risk, because they:

- a) Are not adequately protected under existing mechanisms.
- b) Are fragile or vulnerable and/or already highly fragmented.
- c) May be of particular significance in a Sussex context.
- d) Are irreplaceable or not easily recreated (either on-site or elsewhere) if destroyed.

The priority habitats most at risk in Sussex are:

- Lowland heath - particularly significant in East Sussex, notably at Ashdown Forest, due to small amounts present in the south of England, the fragmentation of the habitat type (especially outside Ashdown Forest) and it provides a range of benefits, notably clean water.
- Mudflats and saltmarsh - these habitats provide a range of benefits yet are under increasing pressure from climate change, development, and construction of hard sea defences. The national picture is one of medium risk, but the East Sussex context (with high levels of coastal squeeze) increases the risk to these habitats and the benefits they provide. There are small amounts at Newhaven Tide Mills, Cuckmere Estuary and Rye Harbour.
- Vegetated shingle - a globally restricted and internationally important habitat, for which East Sussex is a stronghold in the UK, mostly at Rye

Harbour.

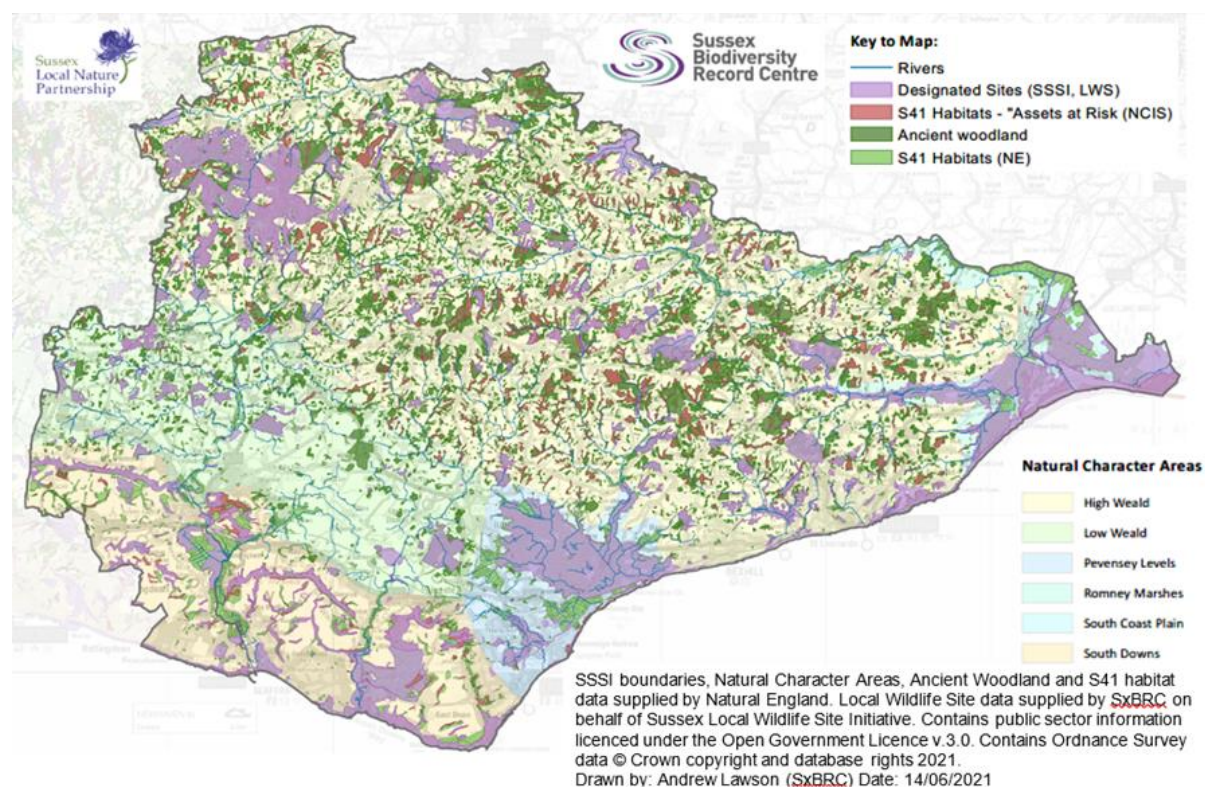
- Reedbed, fen and grazing marsh - small and highly fragmented areas remain in East Sussex, notably at Pevensey, yet they have the potential to provide a wide range of benefits, particularly flood risk mitigation in flood plains and provision of clean water.
- Floodplain woodlands - a fragmented habitat type which plays a very important role in floodplain function.
- Species rich grassland - highly fragmented and those areas outside formal designated areas have little/no protection from further loss. These areas are a priority for loss to development.

Marine Conservation Zones

There are 2 Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) off East Sussex, with two other offshore sites under consideration. Designated under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, MCZs protect areas that are important to conserve the diversity of national rare, threatened, and representative habitats and species. These are Beachy Head West, which stretches along the coastline from Brighton Marina to Beachy Head, with a gap at Newhaven, and Beachy Head East which contains two marine Sites of Nature Conservation Importance: the Royal Sovereign Shoals and the Horse of Willingdon Reef. This large inshore area runs to Hastings, out to just beyond 6 nautical miles from the coast at its furthest points.

Nature Recovery Network Mapping

The map below shows the fragmented state of the most important species rich habitats that are to be conserved under section 41 of the National Environment and Rural Communities Act.

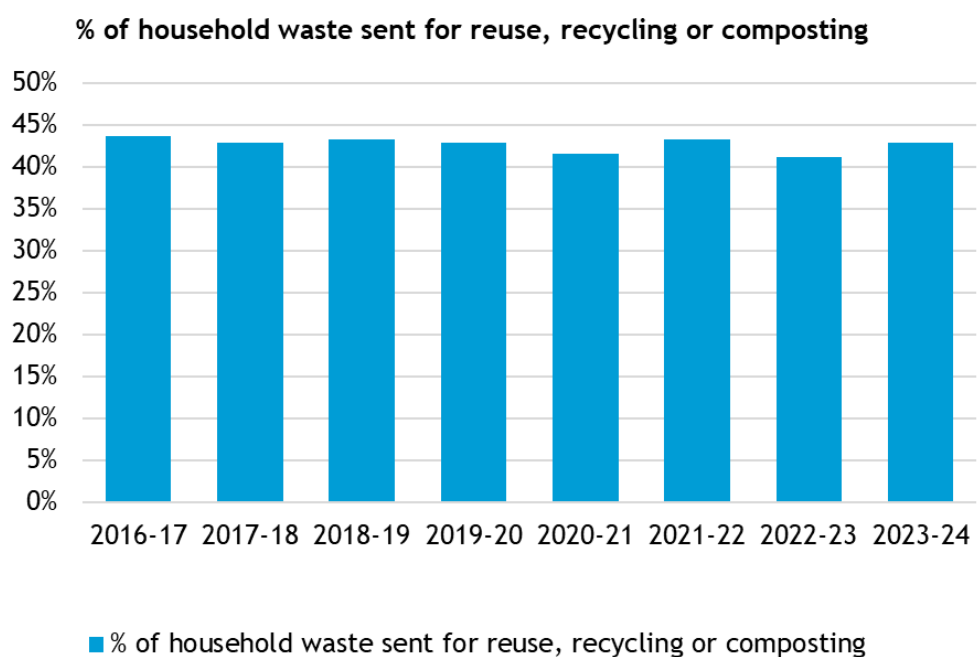
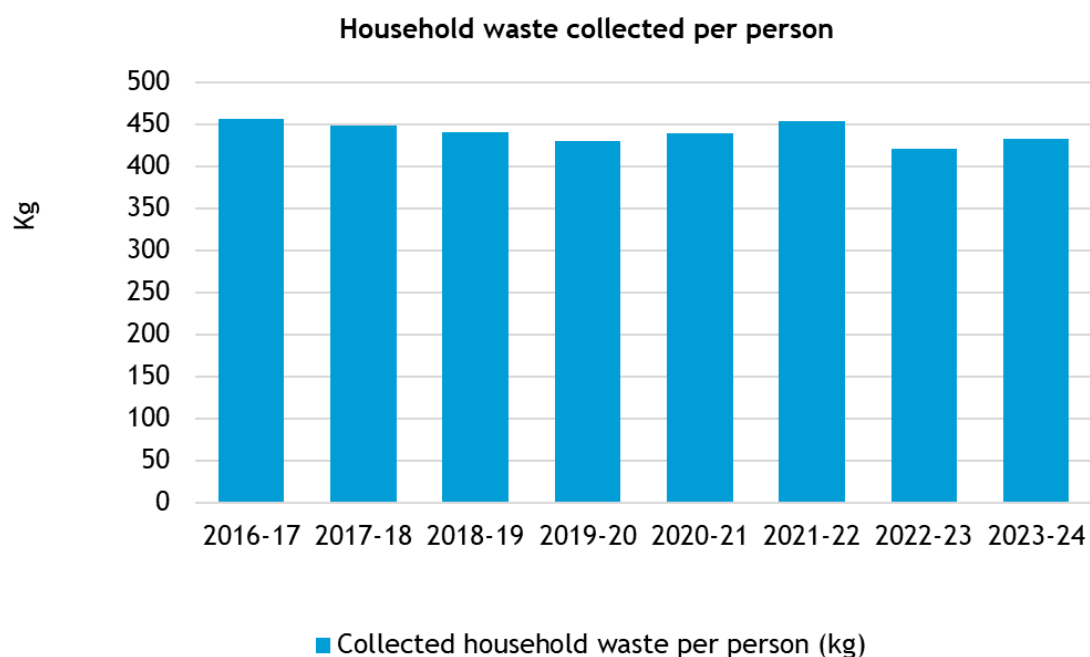


Local Nature Recovery Strategies

The Council has been appointed as the Responsible Authority to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove, under the Environment Act 2021. Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a mandatory new system of spatial strategies for nature. They are designed to work closely alongside other measures in the Act and will help support delivery of mandatory biodiversity net gain, provide a focus for a strengthened duty on all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity, and will underpin a national Nature Recovery Network.

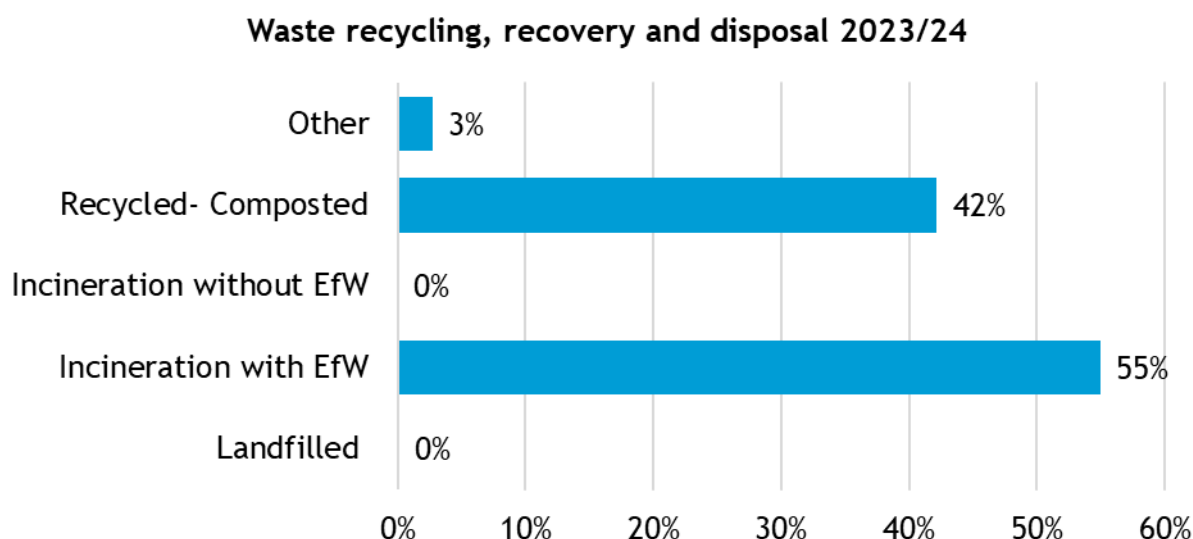
Waste

The volume of household waste collected rose slightly in 2023/24 compared to the previous year, 241,864 tonnes compared to 233,386 tonnes. This equates to 432.3kg of household waste per person living in the county.



Source: Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

In 2023/24 42% of our waste was reused, recycled or composted. 55% of our waste was sent for energy recovery (Energy from Waste, or EfW). Newhaven Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) supplies power for over 25,000 homes. East Sussex sent less than 1% of collected waste to landfill in 2022/23.



Source: Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Flooding

Flooding is a natural process that shapes our environment, but it can also pose a threat to the safety and wellbeing of communities. Flooding can be caused by major rivers, the sea, groundwater and surface water. Overall flood risk is highest to the south of the county and on river flood plains. The highest risk of surface water flooding is in Eastbourne and Hastings.

Settlement	Residential Properties at Risk
Eastbourne	Greater than 1,000
Seaford	500 to 1,000
Newhaven	50 to 150
Peacehaven	150 to 500
Lewes	50 to 150
Hailsham	150 to 500
Bexhill	500 to 1,000
Battle	50 to 150
Hastings	Greater than 1,000
Rye	Fewer than 50
Heathfield	50 to 150
Crowborough	50 to 150
Uckfield	Fewer than 50
Forest Row	Fewer that 50

Note: A comparison of residential properties at risk from a 1 in 30 year surface water flood event (3% chance in any given year) between 2016-2026 Assessments of

Local Flood Risk. Source: ESCC Flood Risk Strategy

Settlement	Non-Residential Properties at Risk
Eastbourne	Greater than 200
Seaford	25 to 50
Newhaven	Fewer than 25
Peacehaven	Fewer than 25
Lewes	Fewer than 25
Hailsham	25 to 50
Bexhill	25 to 50
Battle	Fewer than 25
Hastings	Greater than 200
Rye	Fewer than 25
Heathfield	Fewer than 25
Crowborough	Fewer than 25
Uckfield	Fewer than 25
Forest Row	Fewer than 25

Note: A comparison of non-residential properties at risk from a 1 in 30 year surface water flood event (3% chance in any given year) between 2016-2026 Assessments of Local Flood Risk. Source: ESCC Flood Risk Strategy.

Civil Society

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector and volunteering

We have a diverse range of VCSE organisations working at every level, neighbourhood, town/parish, and district/borough, there are over 3,000 not-for-profit groups and organisations providing activities and support to residents and communities that bring about positive change and improve people's lives.

Some of the organisations the Council funded or supported during 2024:



Source: East Sussex Adult Social Care and Health department

A quarter of the population volunteer at least once a month in East Sussex, giving their time to local causes, groups, and communities that aim to make communities a better place where helping people themselves is part of everyday life. The sense of community that volunteering brings enables people to feel connected and that they are making a positive difference.

Community Safety

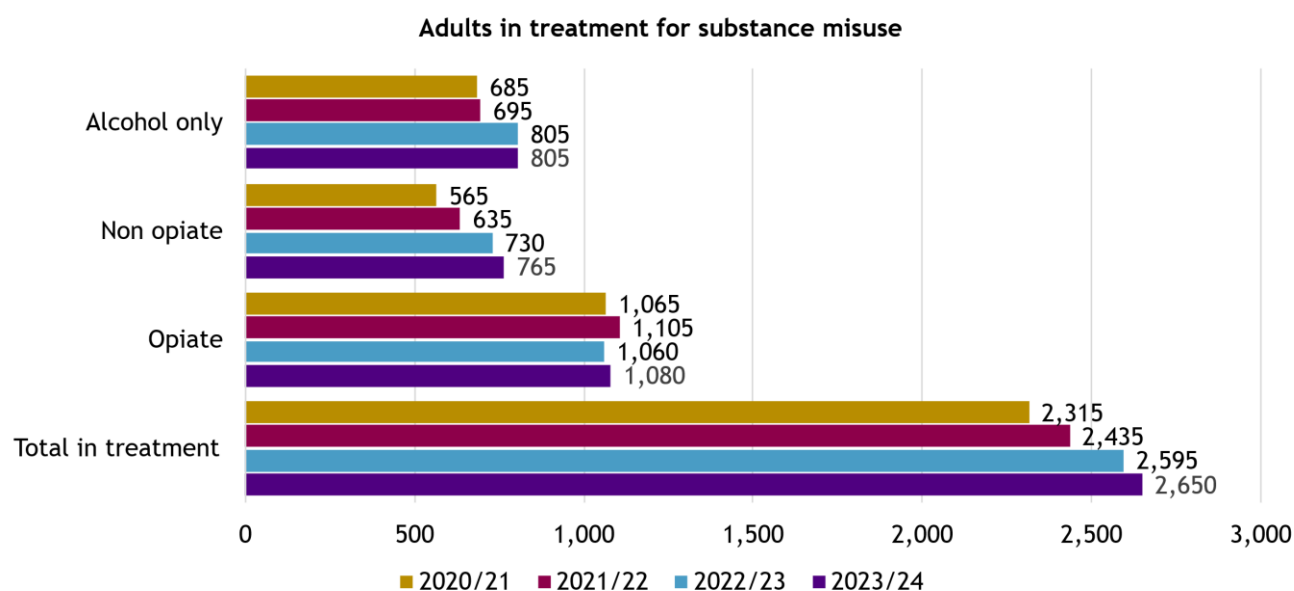
Drug and alcohol-related harm

In 2023/24 there were 2,650 adults in treatment in East Sussex for problematic drug and/or alcohol use, this is an increase of 2.12% (+55 adults) on the previous year compared to a 6.96% increase nationally.

There has been a significant increase since 2019/20 as a result of the additional investment from Government following the Dame Carol Black Review. In East Sussex there has been a 28% increase in adults in treatment from 2019/20 to

2023/24.

In East Sussex, the largest cohort were in treatment for opiate use (1,080, 40.75%). The number in treatment for non-opiates increased by 4.79% (+35); this was notably lower than both the national figures (19.69%) and the local increase the previous year (14.96%, +95). The number in treatment for alcohol has remained the same from 2022/23 to 2023/24, while the numbers for England increased by 9.18%. The number in treatment for opiate use in East Sussex increased by 1.89% (+20) following a decrease the previous year of 4.07% (-45), compared to England where the number in treatment decreased for the third consecutive year.



Source: National Drug Treatment Monitoring System

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive appropriate support.

Nationally, 19,125 potential victims of modern slavery were referred to the Home Office in 2024, representing a 13% increase compared to the preceding year (16,990).

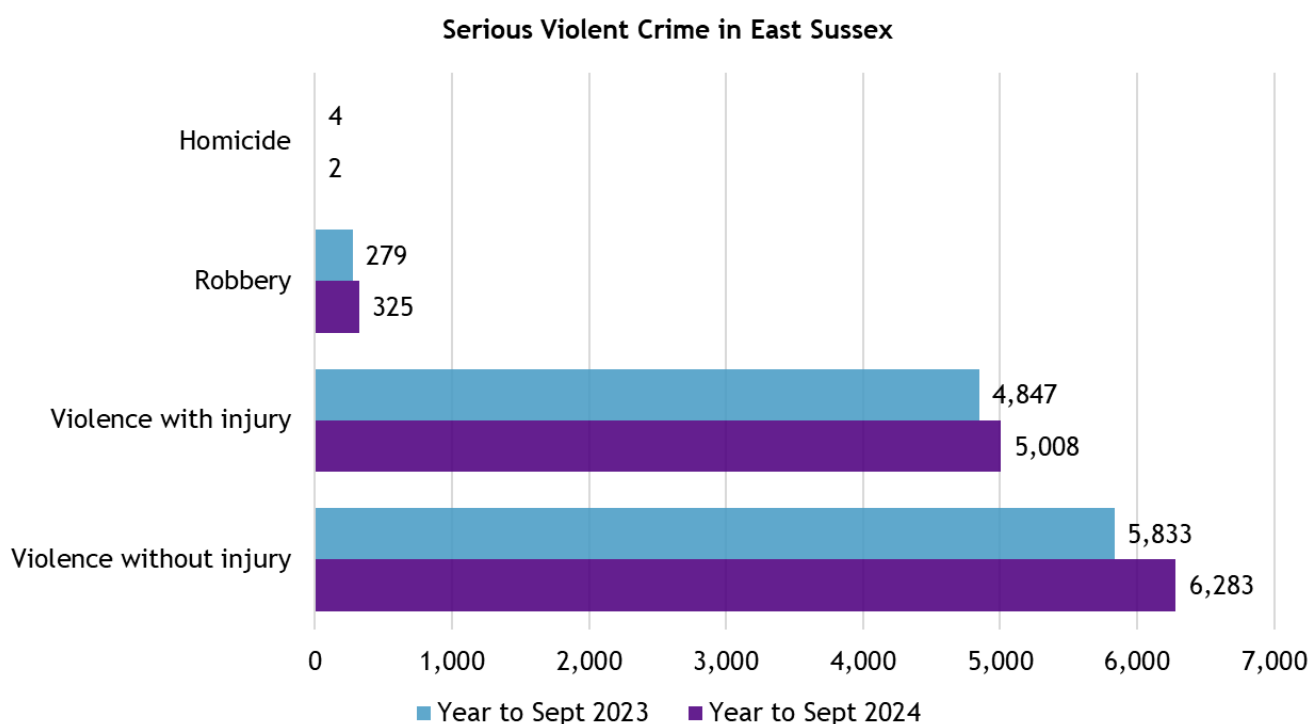
In East Sussex in 2024, 2 adults and 21 children who were potential victims of modern slavery and human trafficking were referred by the local authority through the NRM. This compares to 5 adults and 24 children in 2023.

Sussex Police made 86 NRM referrals during 2024, this compares to 98 for 2023. Please note this is for the whole of Sussex. (Source: National Referral Mechanism statistics).

Violent Crime

Violent crime is under increasing national scrutiny. Despite rates remaining low in East Sussex, the Council has an active focus on this through the Violence and Exploitation Reduction Partnership.

There was a slight increase in violent crime in East Sussex over the period October 2023 to September 2024, when compared with the period October 2022 to September 2023. There was a 16.5% (+46) increase in robbery crimes, a 7.7% (+450) increase in violence without injury crimes (mostly assault without injury), and a 3.3% (+161) increase in violence with injury crimes. However, there was a decrease in the number of homicides.



Source: Police recorded crime, Community Safety Partnership Open Data tables

Child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation

Between April 2024 and March 2025, 65 East Sussex children were experiencing either criminal or sexual exploitation or both. This is in line with the number of children experiencing exploitation in the same period the previous year.

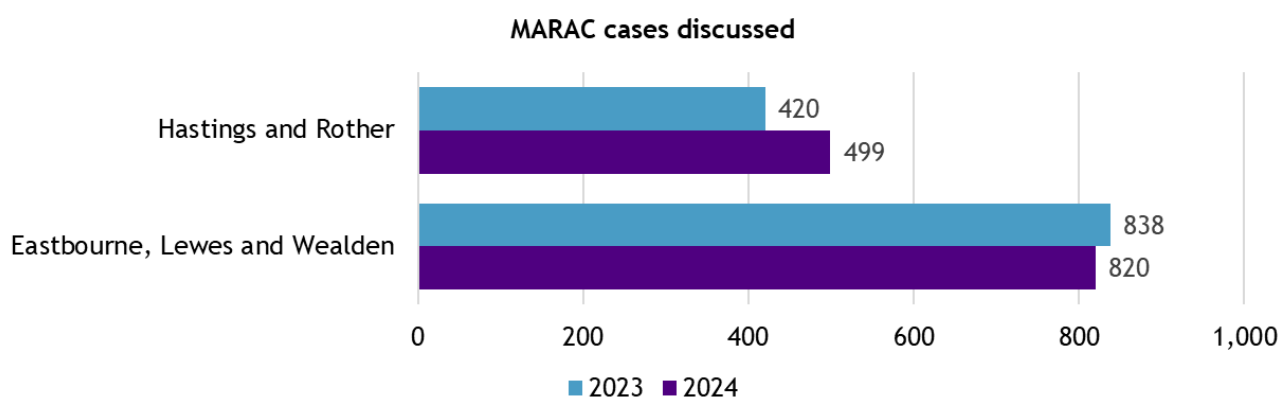
Two thirds of children experiencing exploitation were male and 82% were aged 14 or older. 43 children were removed from the Safeguarding Adolescents From Exploitation and Risk (SAFER) group during the year and the average time it took for a child to be removed from SAFER due to a lowering of their risk level was just under seven months.

Domestic violence and abuse

Multi-Agency Risk Conferences (MARACs) are meetings that discuss the highest risk domestic abuse cases. East Sussex has historically had a high number of referrals into MARAC and both county MARACs remain over the recommended number of 40 cases per 10,000 population.

During 2024 there was a 5% increase in the number of cases discussed at MARACs compared to the previous year.

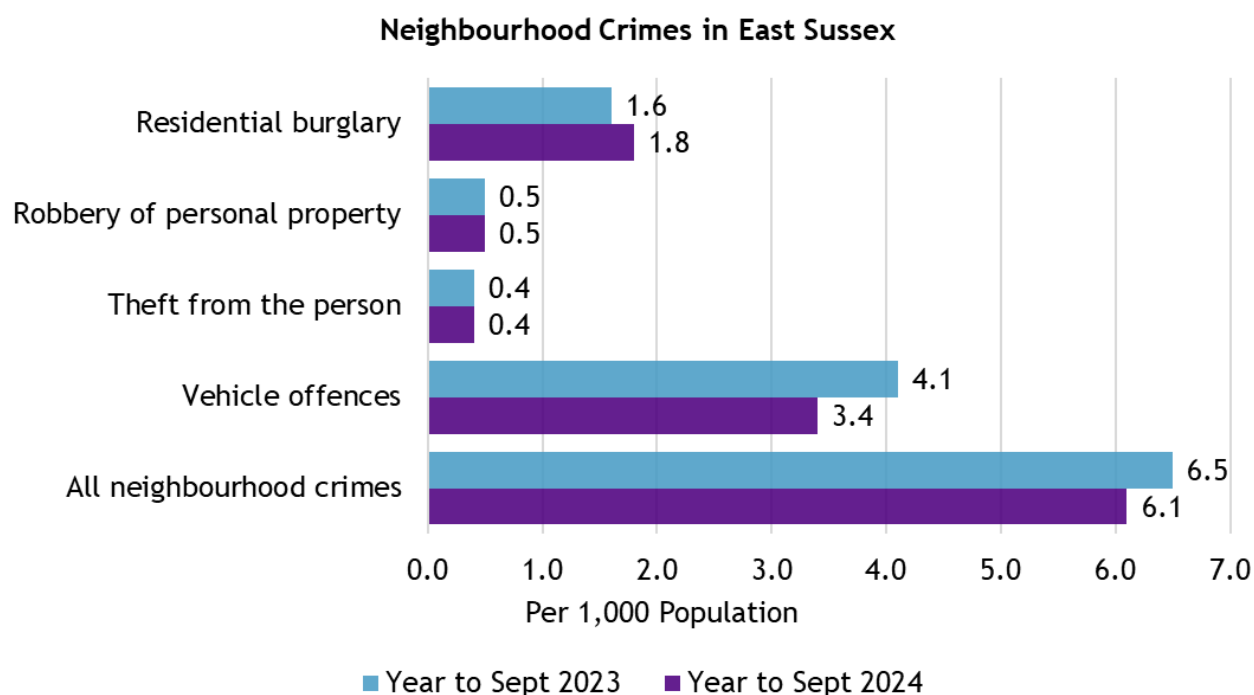
Although the Eastbourne, Lewes & Wealden MARAC saw a 2% decrease in the number of cases discussed from 2023 to 2024, Hastings & Rother saw a 19% increase.



Source: ESCC Adult Social Care and Health Department

Neighbourhood Crime

Neighbourhood crime rates in East Sussex are lower than the national average across all categories. Neighbourhood crime includes residential burglary, vehicle offences, theft from the person and robbery of personal property.



Source: ESCC Adult Social Care and Health Department

Road Safety

The rate of people being killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road traffic collisions in East Sussex has historically been higher than the average for England. For the three-year period 2017-2019 (the latest period not impacted by the national lockdowns) the average rate of people killed or seriously injured for East Sussex was 68.1 per 100,000 population compared to 43.2 in England. Note that standard road safety reporting is based on a three-year reporting period. 2017-2019 has been used as this is the last period not affected by COVID-19.

Although East Sussex has had higher rates of people killed or seriously injured than the national average and many other areas, direct comparisons between rates are uncertain due to both methods of data collection and recording across police forces, and the differences in road networks and infrastructure.

The number of people killed or seriously injured in East Sussex has fluctuated in recent years. Please note the 2020 and 2021 figures were affected by COVID-19 restrictions/lockdowns. The figures also include crashes on the Strategic Road Network which is managed by National Highways.

Number of people killed or seriously injured in East Sussex

Year	Seriously injured	Fatalities	Total
2024	383	21	404
2023	352	13	365
2022	378	20	398
2021	321	18	339
2020	279	17	296
2019	395	14	409
2018	334	21	355

Source: Sussex Safer Roads Partnership

Data

We use a wide range of data to help us understand the context for our plans and the impact we are having through our work and in partnership. A selection of this data is listed below. Years are financial (April-March) or academic (September-August) unless otherwise stated.

Key: CY - calendar year (January-December), NA - data not available.

Measure	2021/22 Outturn	2022/23 Outturn	2022/23 England
Percentage of working age residents (16-64 year olds) with a level 3 or higher qualification (HNC, HND, degree etc.) (CY)	N/A	33.8% (Census 2021)	37.1% (Census 2021)
Percentage of working age residents (16-64 year olds) with no qualifications or qualified only to NVQ1 (CY)	N/A	10.6% (Census 2021)	12.4% (Census 2021)
Annual gross full-time earnings, median average (residence based)	£31,259 (2022)	£34,028 (2023)	£35,100 (2023)
Percentage of working age population (16-64 year olds) in employment	77.1% (2022)	73.1% (2023)	75.7% (2023)
People claiming unemployment benefits (JSA and Universal Credit) percentage of population 16-64 year olds at March	3.6% (2023)	3.5% (2024)	3.9% (2024)
New business registration rate per 10,000 people over 16 (CY)	52.2 (2021)	47.5 (2022)	64.6 (2022)
New houses built, total completed / total affordable	1,129 /423	1,735 / 681	N/A
Average Attainment 8 score per pupil state funded secondary schools	46.5	43.6	46.4
Average Progress 8 score for state funded secondary schools	-0.11	-0.19	-0.03

Measure	2021/22 Outturn	2022/23 Outturn	2022/23 England
Percentage of pupils who achieved a 9-5 pass in English and maths GCSEs	46.3%	41.0%	45.3%
Average point score (APS) per entry for level A levels (age 16-18)	36.19	32.46	34.16
Attainment of A level students (age 16-18) average point score (APS) per entry, best 3	34.81	31.27	34.68
Attainment of A level students (age 16-18) % achieving grades AAB or better at A level, of which at least two are in facilitation subjects	12.3%	9.18%	15.8%
Rate per 10,000 (aged 0-17 population) of Looked After Children	61	62	71
Rate per 10,000 (aged 0-17 population) of children with a Child Protection Plan	50.1	64.8	43.2
Percentage of children who ceased to be looked after adopted during the year ending 31 March	8%	7%	9%
Proportion of people (65 and over) who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital	89.7%	91.2%	82.3%
Suicide rate per 100,000 of population, three-year average	12.1 (2019 - 2021)	11.6 (2020 - 2022)	10.3 (2020 - 2022)
Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in children aged 0-14 years, rate per 10,000 resident population	99.8 (2020/21)	107.6 (2021/22)	84.3 (2021/22)
Percentage of children aged 4-5 years with excess weight (overweight or obese) LA by postcode of child	19.8%	22.1%	21.3%
Percentage of children aged 10-11 years with excess weight (overweight or obese) LA by postcode of child	32.8%	32.6%	36.6%

Measure	2021/22 Outturn	2022/23 Outturn	2022/23 England
Percentage of adults (aged 18+) classified as overweight or obese	64.9%	62.7% (2021/22)	63.8% (2021/22)
Percentage of children aged 4-5 years who are underweight	0.7%	0.5%	1.2%
Percentage of children aged 10-11 years who are underweight	1.6%	1.3%	1.6%
Long-term support needs of younger adults (aged 18-64) met by admission to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000 population per year	10.8	13.9	14.6
Long-term support needs of older adults (aged 65 and over) met by admission to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000 population per year	494.2	488.2	560.8
Proportion of older people aged 65 and over who received reablement services following discharge from hospital	1.6%	1.4%	2.9%
The outcome of short-term services: sequel to service: proportion of people who received short-term services during the year, where no further request was made for ongoing support or support of a lower level	93.7%	94.7%	77.5%
Emergency hospital admissions due to falls in people aged 65 and over per 100,000	2,314 (2020/21)	2,523 (2021/22)	2,100 (2021/22)
Number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads (CY)	399 (CY 2022)	362 (CY 2023)	N/A

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National and Local Policy Outlook 2025

1. Introduction and contents

1.1. This appendix provides an overview of the key developments in the national and local context that will influence and inform our future service and financial planning through the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process for the 2026/27 financial year and beyond. It also provides an update on work to deliver the County Council's local priorities and summarises key strategic challenges for our services.

1.2. Recent developments in national policy and the Council's broader operating context have been the most significant in several years. There have been rapid policy shifts since the general election in 2024 which we continue to respond to, both in terms of immediate impacts and implications for future planning. The Government has brought forward far-reaching reforms to local government as a whole through the English Devolution White Paper as well as in major service areas experiencing significant pressures, such as children's social care. This context will continue to evolve as the Government's plans in other key areas, such as adult social care and special educational needs and disabilities, are clarified. While many of these developments are in welcome alignment with our own priorities, they present delivery challenges in the context of serious pressures on funding and capacity.

1.3. Significant work is taking place locally, as an organisation and with our partners, to respond to these developments, progress our local priorities, and prepare for future challenges. The Government's ambitions for local government reorganisation and devolution have significant potential to facilitate reform and integration of local public services and provide increased flexibility to respond to local priorities in the future. More immediately, major national reforms already impacting on our partners, particularly district and borough councils and the local NHS, will affect how we work together on key areas such as social care, planning and infrastructure, and waste. Detail on this work is set out below.

1.4. This appendix has been written to be easily navigable to specific sections for future reference (using the below contents list), as well as providing a comprehensive single overview of developments. It includes information on:

Section 2 – Overall Context (pages 3-6)

- National political context (pg 3)
- National economic outlook (pg 3)
- Local government finance outlook (pg 4)
- Devolution (pg 5)
- Local government reorganisation (pg 6)

Section 3 – Adult Social Care and Public Health (pages 6-18)

- National adult social care reform (pg 7)
- National NHS reform (pg 8)
- Mental Health Bill (pg 8)
- CQC assurance developments (pg 9)
- Local priorities and projects (pg 9)
- Adult social care workforce (pg 13)
- Carers Partnership Plan (pg 13)
- Adult social care market (pg 13)
- Financial Services (pg 14)

- Health and social care integration (pg 15)
- Health and Wellbeing Board (pg 16)
- Housing (pg 16)
- Public Health (pg 17)

Section 4 – Children’s Services (pages 18-20)

- Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill (pg 18)
- National reforms to children’s social care (pg 18)
- Local service pressures and developments (pg 19)
- Youth service developments (pg 20)

Section 5 – Education and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) (pages 20-24)

- National education reforms (pg 20)
- Small schools strategy (pg 21)
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms (pg 22)
- East Sussex Area SEND Inspection and SEND Strategy (pg 22)
- Educational attainment (pg 23)
- School attendance (pg 23)
- Home to School Transport (pg 24)

Section 6 – Communities (pages 24-30)

- Financial Inclusion and the Household Support Fund (pg 24)
- VCSE support, development and infrastructure (pg 25)
- Migration (pg 25)
- Community Safety (pg 27)
- Trading Standards – priorities and future focus (pg 28)
- Local resilience arrangements (pg 29)
- National planning reforms (pg 29)

Section 7 – Highways and Transport (pages 30-36)

- New Local Transport Plan 2024-2050 (pg 30)
- Integrated National Transport Strategy (pg 30)
- Rail reforms and services (pg 31)
- Highways maintenance (pg 31)
- Bus Services Bill (pg 32)
- Bus Service Improvement Plan (pg 32)
- Rail and Freight Strategies (pg 33)
- Active Travel developments (pg 33)
- E-vehicle charging (pg 33)
- Transport for the South East (TfSE) (pg 34)
- Road safety developments (pg 34)
- Exceat Bridge replacement (pg 35)
- National Highways Programmes (pg 35)

Section 8 – Economy (pages 36-39)

- Government plans for economic growth (pg 36)
- Local economic strategy (pg 36)
- Skills and employability (pg 37)
- Culture and tourism (pg 38)

Section 9 – Environment and Climate Change (pages 39-41)

- Climate change – national policy context (pg 39)
- Environment Act 2021 (pg 39)
- UK Emissions Trading Scheme (pg 40)

Section 10 – Supporting Services (pages 41-44)

- Oracle transition (pg 41)
- National workforce reforms (pg 41)
- Workforce challenges (pg 42)
- ESCC Property Asset Management (pg 43)
- Supporting productivity – data management and Artificial Intelligence (pg 43)
- Procurement Act 2023 (pg 44)

2. Overall Context

2.1. The following section provides an overview of the overall economic, fiscal and policy context the County Council is operating and planning within.

National political context

2.2. The Government's overarching priorities were set out in December 2024 in the Plan for Change, which detailed the milestones Government aims to achieve by the end of this Parliament to deliver on the five long-term missions outlined in its manifesto. The Plan for Change milestones are to: raise living standards in all parts of the UK through increased economic growth; build 1.5 million homes in England; end hospital backlogs; increase the number of police on the street; give children the best start in life, with 75% of 5 year olds ready to learn when they start school; and secure home-grown energy, with at least 95% clean power by 2030.

National economic outlook

2.3. The UK's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) performance stagnated in the second half of 2024. In its March 2025 economic forecast, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) halved its forecast for real GDP growth for 2025 from 2% to 1%. In May 2025 the International Monetary Fund slightly increased its 2025 UK GDP growth forecast from 1.1% to 1.2%, however this remained a downgrade from earlier forecasts and reflects ongoing global economic instability. Consumer Price Index inflation rose to 3.5% in the 12 months to April 2025, impacted by rises in utility bills. The OBR forecasts that monthly inflation will rise to a peak of 3.8% in July this year, but the rate is expected to fall to the Bank of England target of 2% from 2026 onwards. In response, the Bank of England has continued to cut interest rates, with a reduction to 4.25% in May 2025, and potential for further cuts to the base rate in coming months.

2.4. Over the last few years, a series of significant shocks has contributed to falls in labour market participation, weak productivity growth, and high consumer price inflation. Following historic falls in living standards linked to sharp increases in residents' cost of living, the OBR now expects real household disposable income to grow by an average of around 0.5% each year from 2025-26 to 2029-30.

2.5. Data on the East Sussex economy, cost of living, and labour market are set out in Appendix 1 – Focus on East Sussex. Output of the East Sussex economy remains below the national average; Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour in East Sussex (a measure of the goods or services produced in an area per hour worked in that area) was 20.8% below the England level in 2022, the latest available data (£31.90 per hour, against £40.30 per hour in England). The unemployment rate for March 2025 was 3.8% for East Sussex, lower than the

national average of 4.3%, but above the regional average of 3.3%. The youth unemployment rate (those 18-24 claiming unemployment related benefits) was 6.4%, higher than the England rate of 5.7%. Further information on the national labour market picture, and the recruitment and retention challenges this presents for ESCC, are set out at 10.8-10.13.

Local government finance outlook

2.6. The outlook for local government funding remains uncertain and very challenging. In light of ongoing pressures on the public finances and commitments to protect spending in areas such as the NHS and defence, the recent national Spending Review confirmed that funding for the sector as a whole will be constrained, with growth in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's funding for local government expected to average 1.1% annually over the period to 2028/29, below anticipated increases in demand and costs in key services, together with a continued reliance on Council Tax rises to increase councils' core spending power by an average 2.6% per year overall. Funding that ESCC will receive from central Government for 2026/27 onwards will be impacted by plans to reform funding allocation formulas, which are subject to consultation ahead of a multi-year financial settlement towards the end of the year. However, Government has indicated that the direction of travel will be towards increasing the focus on levels of deprivation within local authority areas. This was reflected in the distribution of the 2025/26 Recovery Grant, from which ESCC, along with most other shire counties, received no allocation. Individual grant streams may also be subject to review and potential consolidation within the settlement. This creates significant uncertainty about the level of funding the County Council will receive in the future. The Government is also pursuing reform of business rates. This is expected to entail more frequent revaluations and redistribution of income across authorities, creating additional risk to East Sussex.

2.7. Other key uncertainties include future levels of inflation and interest rates, Government-determined increases to the National Living Wage and the nationally negotiated local government pay award. These variables, though outside of ESCC's control, have a significant impact on the Council's costs and future financial position. Locally, key risks for the Council relate to ongoing growth in demand and complexity in children's and adults' social care and special educational needs and disability. The resulting increases in costs are also largely outside of local control, particularly given market conditions in these sectors and the impact of national policy on pay and taxation, including the unfunded increase in employers' National Insurance contributions. Coupled with increased costs across other services, and the uncertain impact of national reforms, we can expect to see sustained pressures on services and budgets which will impact our Medium Term Financial Plan and ability to meet needs.

2.8. The past two years have also seen the level of debt continue to rise, particularly for adult social care contributions, and it is expected that this trend will continue. We will continue our work on debt management and maximising income as part of our response to financial pressures. Ongoing impacts on the collection of business rates and Council Tax continue to be fully assessed, as do the impact of changes to district and borough Council Tax Reduction Schemes and the potential income from their introduction of Council Tax for second homes following the national change in policy which enabled this.

2.9. The financial impact of potential devolution and local government reorganisation (LGR) is yet to be quantified. The final year of the Medium Term Financial Plan will be impacted by LGR and, subject to Government decisions on the future unitary structure for East Sussex, work will be undertaken with district and borough councils to model the collective financial position as part of wider transition planning. In the short term, both devolution and LGR will entail additional costs to support transition, with the level of Government financial support still to be determined. Any potential financial benefits will be

seen in the longer term, resulting from service transformation and consolidation following the move to a new structure. These are expected to be limited given the scale of savings already made across councils and will not be a solution to the immediate funding gap ESCC faces. Unless sufficient funding is received to support our statutory service provision, the Council will need to explore all options to set a balanced budget for 2026/27, including further service reductions and the potential to seek Exceptional Financial Support from Government. Our options and approach will be informed by the financial assurance review we have commissioned from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

2.10. In relation to the capital programme, the level of investment in assets which support the objectives of the Council Plan must be considered in the context of its impact on the revenue budget and wider financial position. The challenging revenue budget position for 2025/26 therefore required a full review of the capital programme during 2024/25. The review reduced and re-profiled programmes and schemes over the 10 year programme to minimise borrowing costs within Treasury Management and the revenue budget. Further review will be required in light of the significant financial gap over the medium term.

2.11. Insufficient Government funding to address pressures and increased costs in social care, requiring councils to use reserves to mitigate pressures, means that we have allocated substantial reserves to balance the budget for both 2024/25 and 2025/26, which significantly impacts on the Council's ability to use reserves to manage future financial risk. While the Council's reserves have been applied within a robust reserve policy, work to set a balanced budget for 2026/27 will take place in the context of significantly depleted reserves and increased risk.

Devolution

2.12. The [English Devolution White Paper](#), published in December 2024, sets out the Government's plans to extend devolution to local government in England both geographically and in terms of the range of functions devolved to Strategic Authorities – the term used to describe combined authorities exercising devolved powers across multiple local authority areas. The updated framework within the White Paper details the powers available to local areas through devolution arrangements linked to different governance models, reserving the majority for areas taking up a mayoral model. The White Paper also highlights an ambition to align public service boundaries with Strategic Authorities, including across health, police, and fire services as well as councils, and for the Authorities to drive wider public service reform. Further detail is awaited in the English Devolution Bill due in the coming weeks which is expected to set out the new framework in legislation, enshrining the 'devolution by default' approach. The Bill is expected to progress through Parliament ahead of new Mayoral Strategic Authorities coming into being from spring 2026.

2.13. To maximise the potential of devolution for East Sussex and ensure the full benefit of Government support through this process, ESCC successfully applied to the Devolution Priority Programme, alongside West Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council, enabling devolution to be progressed on an accelerated timescale. Following a Government consultation on establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) as the Strategic Authority for Sussex, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is due to confirm later in summer 2025 whether it will proceed. Subject to Government approval, it is anticipated that legislation for the establishment of the MCCA will be laid out in the autumn and take effect in early 2026, ahead of a mayoral election in May 2026.

2.14. Should Government approval be received, the timescales for the establishment of the MCCA are ambitious. To take forward transitional governance arrangements consideration is being given to the establishment of a Devolution Joint Committee. The Joint Committee

would be for a limited period, until the establishment of the MCCA, and have oversight of the development of the combined authority and the successful devolution of functions to ensure that it is established in accordance with the Directions and relevant Statutory Orders issued by the Government.

2.15. Devolution in Sussex, and the establishment of a Sussex MCCA, would have significant implications for functions currently delivered by upper tier local authorities in the area, including ESCC. Areas such as strategic transport planning, economic growth and skills are expected to come under the remit of the new authority and be subject to extended powers devolved from Government. In addition, new MCCA roles in relation to spatial planning, housing and environment will require ESCC's engagement and form part of our wider operating context. Further detail on potential impacts in these areas, and how we are taking these into account in our planning, is set out in sections 7-9 below.

Local government reorganisation

2.16. To support the Government's devolution plans, the White Paper also outlined a programme of reorganisation for two tier areas and some existing smaller unitary authorities. The Government's aim is for the creation of new unitary councils that are of sufficient size to be able to withstand financial shocks, achieve efficiencies and improve capacity. These areas were invited in February 2025 to submit proposals for reorganisation, with criteria including that new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more as a guiding principle, and that existing district and borough areas should be considered as the building blocks for proposals. Alongside this, Government has set out that proposals should prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services; meet local needs and be informed by local people; support devolution arrangements; enable stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment.

2.17. Following the submission of the East Sussex interim plan in March 2025, jointly by ESCC and the five district and borough councils, a full proposal is being developed in partnership for agreement by all six councils ahead of the deadline of 26 September 2025. The proposal that is being developed is a single unitary council on the existing County Council boundary. The interim plan also outlined that the councils remained open to other options should the Government indicate flexibility in the current criteria, or if residents demonstrate a clear desire for us to consider an alternative configuration. The full proposal will be informed by the feedback received from Government on the interim plan and take account of feedback from resident and stakeholder engagement.

2.18. Following submission of a full proposal, Government will give consideration to all relevant proposals that have been made. It is then anticipated that the Government will launch a consultation on the preferred proposal with a view to making a decision in the first quarter of 2026 and subsequently preparing and laying the necessary legislation in the latter half of 2026 to enable a unitary shadow authority to be elected in May 2027. Once a final Government decision on the model for unitary local government in East Sussex is made, work to establish transitional arrangements and prepare services for structural change can begin.

3. Adult Social Care and Public Health

3.1. Since the 2024 general election, the Government has set out its intention to significantly reform the NHS and social care through the development of a 10 Year Health Plan and a National Care Service, both of which will impact on how adult social care is delivered locally. We will contribute to shaping these reforms as well as continuing to respond to national and local developments, set out in more detail in this section. These include working with health partners to progress local health and social care integration,

implementing a number of key local strategies and progressing initiatives to facilitate hospital discharge.

National adult social care reform

National Care Service and Independent Casey Commission

3.2. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has indicated three priorities for the development of the adult social care sector:

- a 'home first' approach that supports people to live independently for as long as possible;
- a relentless focus on ensuring high-quality care; and
- close involvement between people receiving care and their families and carers.

3.3. These priorities will influence the development of the Government's 10 Year Health Plan and will involve close partnership working between adult social care, the NHS, the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector and other partners.

3.4. The Government has also stated that adult social care reforms will run alongside the health plan and will include the development of a National Care Service (NCS) and Fair Pay Agreement (FPA) for staff working in social care. An NCS could lead to a radical shift in how residents' care is funded – we would need to see adequate funding for staffing to process applications. The FPA would need to be adequately funded centrally to ensure providers can maintain their staffing levels. If properly resourced, the FPA would likely positively impact recruitment and retention, improving our ability to commission and provide high quality services.

3.5. Baroness Louise Casey is chairing an independent commission into adult social care which will inform both medium and long term reforms to adult social care. Opposition political parties have been invited to take part with the aim of creating a cross-party consensus.

3.6. The commission will take place over two phases. The first phase will focus on identifying critical issues facing adult social care and is due to report in 2026 with recommendations for medium term reforms. These will aim to be tangible and pragmatic recommendations that can be implemented in a phased way and that make adult social care more productive, preventative and give people who draw on care, and their families and carers, more power in the system. The second phase will look at the model of care needed to address the ageing population; consider how services should be organised to deliver this model; and consider how best to create a fair and affordable adult social care system for all. This is due to report in 2028 with recommendations for long term reforms.

3.7. The commission is expected to provide the Council with opportunities to feed into the national conversation around adult social care reform with the aim that the outcomes of the commission will lead to positive changes nationally, which could in turn improve the long-term sustainability of the adult social care system and market in East Sussex. We will continue to advocate with our partners for reforms that will meet the needs of people who draw on care and support, and their carers, in East Sussex.

3.8. However, the timescale of the commission indicates that significant reforms, including funding reforms, are unlikely to take place before 2028. Due to the significant pressures facing adult social care, inaction in the short term poses risks to the continuation of some services and support to residents who need them most.

National NHS reform

NHS 10 Year Health Plan

3.9. Following Lord Ara Darzi's rapid independent review of the NHS in England in 2024, the Government intends to publish a new 10 Year Health Plan imminently, after undertaking a significant consultation with the public and staff working across health and care. Building on the previous NHS long term plan, it aims to create a modern health service to meet the changing needs of the population, address health disparities across the country and improve mental health. It is anticipated the health system reforms will be structured around three shifts:

- moving care from hospitals to communities;
- making better use of technology; and
- focusing on preventing sickness, not just treating it.

3.10. These shifts provide opportunities for adult social care reform and align with local priorities including prevention. It will be important that any national changes in models of care and support, or service delivery, are sufficiently funded and resourced locally.

Changes to NHS England and the role of Integrated Care Boards in England

3.11. NHS England (NHSE) is responsible for leading the NHS through a range of statutory functions and regulatory powers to oversee and support the delivery of effective and high-quality NHS care. It also supports the commissioning of healthcare services with local Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and acute, community, mental health and primary care providers delivering local services. It directly commissions some highly specialised services.

3.12. The Government intends to return NHSE, currently an executive non-departmental public body, to direct oversight within the DHSC. It is expected to significantly reduce in size through this transition. The Government intention is that this will improve efficiency by reducing bureaucracy and allowing healthcare professionals to focus more directly on patient care. This transition will require primary legislation and is expected to take place over a two year period.

3.13. Concurrently, ICBs in England are required to reduce their operating budgets by half by autumn 2025; this is in addition to a recent 30% reduction to running costs. NHS Trusts in England also have a requirement to reduce corporate services budgets back to pre-pandemic levels. As well as impacts on local NHS staff, these proposed changes are expected to have significant implications for the role the NHS Sussex ICB has within the Sussex Integrated Care System (ICS), and the way the Council works in partnership with the NHS to transform, commission and deliver health and care services.

Mental Health Bill

3.14. The [Mental Health Bill](#), if given royal assent, will impact how the Council delivers mental health support, particularly in relation to autistic people and people with a learning disability. The following changes in the Bill will apply to autistic people and people with a learning disability:

- they are no longer able to be detained (sometimes referred to as being 'sectioned') for treatment in a mental health hospital unless they also have a defined mental health condition;
- aftercare services currently required under section 117 of the Mental Health Act will therefore not be available in these cases;

- if they have been detained, care and treatment reviews will be required to ensure they are receiving the right support; and
- local authorities will be required to keep a Dynamic Support Register (DSR) of those people more likely to be detained ('sectioned') to try and prevent them being admitted to hospital.

3.15. DHSC has stated that the reforms for people with a learning disability and autistic people will commence once systems are able to demonstrate sufficient levels of community support as an alternative to hospital based care.

3.16. In response, the Council may need to conduct additional assessments for autistic people and people with a learning disability to ensure alternative provision is in place, such as for those detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 who are no longer eligible for aftercare. We will review policies and procedures to ensure people are not wrongfully detained under the Act. New DSR duties mean the Council, when exercising its market function, will need to ensure that necessary adult social care services are available for people with a learning disability and autistic people who are at risk of admission.

CQC assurance developments

3.17. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is assessing local authority adult social care departments on how they are discharging their duties under the Care Act 2014. Following a national review into the operational effectiveness of the CQC, it has been suggested local authority assessments will continue as planned, but the scoring evidence will be more transparent and there will be a strengthened focus on nationally agreed priorities.

3.18. Following ESCC's assessment, which concluded in February 2025, a report is expected imminently and a work programme and action plan reporting to the Council's Adult Social Care and Health Improvement and Assurance Board will be updated to reflect any newly identified priorities.

3.19. We await further detail on future CQC assessments but anticipate that the Council will continue to be subject to assurance by the CQC and that our planning at both a strategic and operational level will need to be informed by the outcomes of CQC findings.

Local priorities and projects

3.20. Our five agreed local priorities for adult social care are:

- Prevention
- Waiting times
- Safeguarding
- Quality
- Value for money

3.21. The priorities will help drive a range of work to deliver positive outcomes for residents and have been informed by our CQC assurance work, including our Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review of adult social care, and the financial context for the Council.

Social Care Future

3.22. Social Care Future (SCF) is a movement which aims to change the way people think about adult social care. The SCF community, which supports local authorities, is helping us to gain inspiration, support, ideas and methods to plan and act locally. The Council has adopted the SCF vision as a future where we want everyone in East Sussex to "live in the

place we call home, with the people and things we love, in communities where we look out for each other, doing the things that matter to us”.

3.23. We will continue to embed the following SCF themes into our work in 2025/26 and beyond, including through our work driven by the Council’s priorities for adult social care and our ‘What Matters to You’ and prevention strategies:

- Co-production: sharing power with people within our communities who draw on care and support.
- Person-centred practice: transforming how we do assessments and support planning ‘with’ and not ‘to’ the person.
- Prevention and early action: hearing what matters to people, working with carers, and understanding our local resources, such as faith groups, lunch clubs and transport options.

3.24. Learning from and collaborating with SCF will support the Council to take further opportunities to maximise people’s wellbeing, utilise resident insight and prevent the need for some forms of care and support.

‘What Matters to You’ Strategy

3.25. Based on the priorities of the Council’s adult social care strategy [‘What Matters to You’](#), a two year action plan was developed and is currently in its second year of delivery. Upcoming actions will focus on working with the independent and VCSE sectors, improving the information and advice available to residents throughout their care journey, and supporting people to stay at home and healthy for longer.

Prevention strategy

3.26. The Council has also produced a prevention strategy focusing on adult social care, having developed a strategic approach with the VCSE, residents, and provider stakeholders. The strategy seeks to maintain and maximise people’s wellbeing to prevent, reduce, and delay the need for care and support. This approach supports the Government’s aims to shift towards more preventative activity in health and social care.

3.27. Implementation of the strategy started in early 2025 and we are considering how we can integrate and strengthen preventative work in Adult Social Care and Health. Initial strategic priorities include focusing on physical wellbeing; community wellbeing; and the knowledge, skills, connections and other resources people have to maintain their wellbeing and independence. Work to increase preventative capability and wellbeing will seek to complement and add value to related work across the Council, for example, supporting and being influenced by transformation programmes within Children’s Services.

3.28. The ‘What Matters To You’ strategy and the prevention strategy are now aligned and an action plan developed to support both sets of strategic aims. This means that work in response to the priorities of our residents will also support the wider national shift to building preventative capacity alongside work that improves current care and support.

3.29. Delivery of these strategies over the next three years will consider how we take forward and assess existing work, population priorities, resources, and how the landscape of providing care and support and working preventatively will evolve through reforms to local government structures. Plans for local government reorganisation may change, for example, strategic interaction between housing and adult social care, and thus how the aims of the ‘What Matters to You’ are best achieved.

Waiting times programme

3.30. Waiting times are one of our five priorities for adult social care. The effective management of our waiting lists will help the Council to manage increasing demand for our services and target resources at those who need them the most over the coming years.

3.31. We continue to develop our relationships with organisations such as the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and programmes such as Partners in Care and Health to ensure we are up to date with national developments linked to waiting times and can respond to these locally. The Council supported the DHSC to develop the [‘Operating Model Toolkit for Local Authority Assessments’](#). We will use the toolkit to self-assess where we are as a local authority and use the outcomes to identify ways to streamline our adult social care assessments and reduce waiting times.

Safeguarding Adults Board and workstreams

3.32. The East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) is a multi-agency statutory partnership which provides leadership and strategic oversight of adult safeguarding work across East Sussex. Its strategic plan priorities for 2024-2027 are:

- Self-neglect - improve and develop multi-agency working and practice.
- Prevention and early intervention - ensure unpaid carers have an understanding and awareness of adult safeguarding and what support they, and the person they are caring, for can access.
- Safeguarding and homelessness - promote positive practice with professionals working at the interface of multiple exclusion homelessness and adult safeguarding.

3.33. We will continue to build on our safeguarding practice and outcomes through safeguarding workstreams, which will introduce better checks and reporting. This includes audits linked to self-neglect, improving decision-making, and the contact adults or their representatives receive from the Council as part of safeguarding enquiries. We will be working with the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector and carers to support their understanding of adult safeguarding. We will also be introducing new safeguarding reporting arrangements and oversight to enable us to continually monitor and improve our performance.

Safeguarding - Health and Social Care Connect pilot and review

3.34. In response to the LGA Peer Review feedback, the Council commissioned an independent review of our safeguarding triage function within Health and Social Care Connect (HSCC). We are running a pilot to increase management oversight of referrals linked to safeguarding, improve sign-off for referrals leading to safeguarding enquiries, and develop how we gather information and communicate with adults, their representatives, and to referrers as part of our ‘make safeguarding personal’ initiative. The learning from this pilot is being used to develop a new operating model for the management of safeguarding screening and triage to improve consistency of safeguarding decision making across Adult Social Care and Health, and to ensure timely review of referrals. We will introduce a standardised and streamlined way to manage, process and respond to safeguarding contacts across all operational teams.

3.35. The new operating model, safeguarding processes and governance arrangements will help the Council meet its statutory duties while making best use of the resources required to keep people safe.

Quality practice and assurance framework

3.36. The Quality Practice and Assurance Framework describes the elements of good practice and assurance and how these support the promotion of the Council's vision for ASCH. Using the framework, we will enable staff across Adult Social Care and Health to know and develop social work and care, best practice and provide opportunities to assure we are providing good quality responses to people who draw on support and make better use of Council and partner resources. This includes supporting staff to continually develop, make specific practice improvements in the quality of their assessment, care and support planning, and use data and insight to identify how to provide more personalised support.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

3.37. Our Adult Social Care and Health [equality, diversity, and inclusion \(EDI\) strategy](#) sets out ambitions to transform care and support services so that everyone feels they belong, have a voice and an equal opportunity to thrive. Following the strategy launch, we are working to improve outcomes for people from seldom heard communities, conducting a review of our approach to implementing actions from equality impact assessments as well as delivering a range of EDI learning opportunities for staff.

3.38. As part of the implementation of the recommendations from the [scrutiny review of equality and inclusion in adult social care](#), we are improving engagement with people from seldom heard groups and their representation on our engagement forums. Informed by the diverse range of people who live and work in East Sussex, this work will help us to identify and plan any improvements required to support people and services that Adult Social Care and Health delivers and commissions.

3.39. We will also enhance our approach to EDI through improving our use of data to identify areas of focus and to monitor impact and outcomes for local people.

All-Age Autism Action Plan

3.40. Following consultation with autistic people and wider stakeholders across the county, the East Sussex Autism Partnership Board has produced an [East Sussex All-Age Autism Action Plan](#). The plan, which will be implemented over the next three years, aims to improve the lives of autistic people, their families, carers, and wider support networks in our county. The priorities in the plan are:

- improving the health and wellbeing of autistic people;
- improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting positive transitions into adulthood; and
- supporting autistic people into employment and helping them sustain their employment.

3.41. The Council and partners will use the Action Plan to support autistic people to find support earlier and lead independent lives, preventing crisis and increased need for support in the future. This includes increasing autism awareness and improving education, employment, wellbeing and life opportunities. The plan has been produced in the context of funding challenges for the Council, the NHS Integrated Care Board, and other partners, and focuses on priorities considered achievable whilst delivering meaningful change for the East Sussex autistic community.

Adult social care workforce

3.42. The adult social care workforce is undergoing significant changes, and as with all local authorities, we need to make substantial savings and efficiencies. However, it is crucial that we maintain a trained and knowledgeable workforce with the right values and skills. This commitment is encapsulated nationally in the [Skills for Care strategy](#), and locally in our Workforce 2030 programme.

3.43. As the needs of our community continue to become more complex and more people require adult social care support, we will adopt new technologies and ways of working. Through demographic analysis, we will also consider what our workforce needs to look like in 2030 and beyond. This is significant to our planning and budgeting as our workforce is central to the Council and our providers' capability to meet the needs of people in East Sussex.

3.44. The national care workforce pathway will guide the Council's efforts to attract more people into the workforce, including a focus on young people and succession planning. Our training offer will reflect the need for a skilled workforce capable of meeting changing demands. Whilst we will prioritise our budget on mandatory and statutory training, we will also continue to support succession planning and career development initiatives. Additionally, we will continue to support the development of a skilled workforce by maximising the use of artificial intelligence and implementing our local Adult Social Care and Health workforce strategy.

Carers Partnership Plan

3.45. The Council and NHS Integrated Care Board, Care for the Carers, Amaze and Imago have signed a public 'Commitment to Carers' setting out priorities to meet the needs of carers in East Sussex.

3.46. As part of this commitment, a multi-agency [Carers' Partnership Plan](#) for East Sussex with eight key themes has been developed and will progress with partners and carers using a phased approach across five years.

3.47. Initial actions will consist of developing a multi-agency communications plan with partners to co-ordinate messaging during Carers Week and the Care for the Carers Annual Carers Voices Conference. This supports work linked to the Carers' Partnership Plan themes of 'caring about equality' and 'how health and social care can work better for carers'. It supports aspirations of the Council to reach out to more carers (including those who are seldom heard) and highlight the needs of carers to our partners. We will also develop peer support for carers.

Adult social care market

3.48. Financial pressures continue for the social care sector and recent increases to employer's National Insurance contributions and the National Minimum Wage will impact on adult social care providers' business sustainability. Many providers are small to medium sized local businesses and will have limited ability to absorb these cost increases. Significant workforce, recruitment and retention challenges remain, whilst upcoming changes to international recruitment visa requirements may further impact provider capacity.

3.49. In May 2025, as part of the [Restoring Control over the Immigration System White Paper](#), the Government announced the social care visa route will be ending. A transition period will be in place until 2028, allowing people already in the UK on this scheme to continue to extend their stay, change sponsors, and apply to settle, although this will be kept under review. Responses from the adult social care sector have highlighted concerns

regarding recruitment and retention of care workers following the announcement, as the sector relies on international recruitment to fill vacancies.

3.50. The Council will continue to engage providers on how these changes are affecting the market and offer a range of support to help mitigate the impact on service sustainability.

3.51. The East Sussex allocation of the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund for 2025/26 will be used to support ongoing sustainability of the adult social care market through our annual fee uplifts to providers, which DHSC has confirmed as one of the target areas for the fund. In a change for 2025, the Market Position Statement now forms part of the submission for the fund. Our [Market Position Statement](#) will be updated dynamically to set out market position changes and recommissioning opportunities for providers.

Provider payment policy: net to gross

3.52. We are piloting a change to how the Council pays residential and nursing home providers - from paying net to paying gross of the client contribution. Moving to gross would mean we pay the provider the full cost of the resident's care and collect any client contributions directly from the people drawing on care and support, or their representatives. The pilot evaluation will inform a recommendation in autumn 2025 on whether to pay all residential and nursing home providers in this way.

3.53. If the Council does go ahead, it will represent a change in policy and processes for provider payments and align our approach with most other local authorities (including neighbouring authorities). This would increase market sustainability and reduce the administrative burden on providers through changes such as transferring invoicing of adults from providers to the Council. The change would also support Adult Social Care and Health to secure residential and nursing home placements with providers who might previously have been deterred by our payment terms.

3.54. Transferring the collection of client contributions to the Council would however increase and expedite our exposure to some levels of financial risk. This would be mitigated through work to assess and improve our debt management processes (see below) and a research project to better understand how to support adults to pay for care and support on time.

Financial Services

3.55. A programme of change is currently underway within Adult Social Care and Health Financial Services which involves a strategic review of key documents and processes, such as the charging for care and support policy and disability related expenditure procedure. One option under review is the introduction of administrative fees for support set up by the Council on behalf of adults who have been financially assessed as able to fully fund their care. This work is subject to a public consultation taking place between May and July 2025. The work will support the Council to maximise efficiency within the service, respond to national changes in case law and explore opportunities to fulfil what we can legally charge for under the Care Act, whilst minimising levels of debt.

Debt management project

3.56. We will undertake a strategic review of debt recovery processes linked to how service users make payments, looking at both secured and unsecured debt, and explore opportunities to improve our recovery success. This is important given the context of financial pressures and the impact cost of living is having on residents and the Council, as

well as the potential change to care home provider payments from net to gross outlined above, which poses a risk of increased debt exposure for the Council.

Health and social care integration

Sussex integrated care strategy and shared delivery plan

3.57. The Council continues to play a lead role in the Sussex Integrated Care System (ICS). This includes having a seat on the NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB), co-leading the Sussex Health and Care Assembly, a formal joint committee set up with West Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council and NHS Sussex ICB, and hosting the Independent Chair. The Sussex Health and Care Partnership Executive oversees shared system challenges and risks, for example around hospital discharge.

3.58. Shared priorities are set out in the five-year Sussex integrated care strategy [Improving Lives Together](#) and the subsequent supporting Sussex shared delivery plan. Both are built on our understanding of population health needs in East Sussex, and the Health and Wellbeing Board strategy. An annual refresh of the shared delivery plan takes place to ensure it is updated and progress towards shared objectives can be built on.

Better Care Fund policy framework and plan

3.59. [The Better Care Fund \(BCF\) policy framework](#), in line with the Government's plans for health and care, sets out the Government's vision for funding, oversight and support arrangements for the Better Care Fund (BCF) for 2025 to 2026. It is focused on overarching objectives linked to the 10 Year Plan, including a focus on prevention, providing more care at home, and using technology to transform care. BCF plans now include use of additional national discharge funding, promoting a joint approach to care and support required for timely hospital discharges.

3.60. East Sussex BCF plans will continue to support these objectives through close alignment to the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board strategy, Healthy Lives, Healthy People. We will work closely with system partners, including on our shared focus on hospital discharge. Our BCF plans include significant consideration of how adequate community resources can support people after they return home and to remain independent within their communities. The recent Spending Review indicated that there will be an increase to the NHS' minimum contribution to adult social care via the Better Care Fund in future years and we await further details.

Hospital discharge initiatives

3.61. As part of our Integrated Care System (ICS) we will continue to work with NHS Sussex and provider trusts to improve performance and outcomes in hospital discharge. This includes developing a common NHS and social care discharge data set and a clear escalation framework for patients with complex needs waiting a long time in acute hospitals.

3.62. Successful improvements in hospital discharge initiatives can avoid prolonged stays in hospital for people awaiting assessment or commissioned services and make effective use of the resources available to the Council, NHS and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) partners.

Neighbourhood health

3.63. NHS England published [Neighbourhood health guidelines](#) to help NHS Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), local authorities and health and care providers progress plans for

neighbourhood health in 2025/26 with local partners. The guidelines include progress on the three shifts in advance of the publication of the 10 Year Health Plan and a framework for action that can be tailored to local needs, building on the local developments and integrated service provision already in place.

Integrated community teams

3.64. As a shared ambition in the Sussex integrated care strategy Improving Lives Together and the Shared Delivery Plan, integrated community teams (ICTs), which bring together a 'team of teams' focused on local communities in a fixed footprint, are a key development to deliver the Government's shifts for health and care and vision for neighbourhood health. The programme will be supported by data and insight to better coordinate delivery of an integrated offer of health, care and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. Over time, ICTs will help strengthen the way we deliver prevention as well as proactive, integrated care better suited to supporting independence and wellbeing.

3.65. In East Sussex there are five ICTs coterminous with local borough and district council footprints. Following our launch of [ICT Profiles](#), development sessions with partners and connections with the wider network of support in each ICT area will continue to co-design our model for multi-disciplinary teams to support people with complex needs. Leadership groups are now being formalised in each ICT footprint to develop their plans for implementation during 2025/26.

Health and Wellbeing Board

3.66. The East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board is undertaking a programme of informal development sessions on topics from our East Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), including looking at the long-term health outlook for our population, improving healthy life expectancy and wider determinants of health. This programme aims to support understanding of our population's needs and priorities and will link to Shared Delivery Plans and the next refresh of the [East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board strategy](#) Healthy Lives, Healthy People which is due in 2026/27.

3.67. These discussions are helping to strengthen relationships and mutual accountability for whole system collaboration on shared priorities, particularly the challenging financial context being experienced by our organisations. This is contributing to a shared vision for the Health and Wellbeing Board's unique stewardship role for the system and unlocking the added value of partners collaborating at 'Place'. In 2025/26 the Council and partners will further embed this way of working throughout our East Sussex Health and Care Partnership to support improved outcomes for our population.

Housing

Place based housing strategy

3.68. The East Sussex Housing Partnership continues its work to develop a place-based housing strategy which will provide a framework for cross sector working to reduce health inequalities linked to housing and make the best use of capacity and resources across the system. The partnership priorities are:

- homelessness prevention;
- housing, health and care integration;
- improving housing management and standards;
- increasing housing supply, climate change and retrofit; and

- the private rented sector.

3.69. The strategy includes work to tackle financial challenges such as the rising cost of temporary accommodation and the need to increase supply of affordable housing. It will guide preparations for upcoming legislative changes, including the Renters' Rights Bill, which will impact on households living in the private rented sector, and the Supported Housing Regulations which will apply to support accommodation and will require local housing authorities to work with Adult Social Care and Health and Children's Services to develop plans to address gaps in provision.

3.70. The partnership is seeking feedback to help refine the strategy before it is adopted in September 2025.

East Sussex Mental Health and Housing Strategy

3.71. Our Mental Health Commissioning team will lead on the delivery of the East Sussex Mental Health and Housing Strategy. This has four priority areas for development over 2025/26 - 2027/28:

- Improve integration between housing and mental health services;
- Review the effectiveness and impact of 'discharge to assess' and develop support models prepared for emerging funding in East Sussex;
- Improve supply and flexibility of the current support offer; and
- Improve the quality and inclusiveness of the current supported housing offer across the system.

3.72. The priorities in our plan aim to strengthen the availability, quality and effectiveness of accommodation and housing support in East Sussex. The plan will support the Council and partners to drive integration and collaboration to enable a recovery focused accommodation and housing provision, helping people to live their best life whilst reducing the likelihood of illness and crisis developing.

Housing retrofit programme and strategy

3.73. People's homes and their energy efficiency are one of the building blocks of health. Homes are also one of the largest sources of carbon emissions in the county, with climate change expected to exacerbate challenges with inefficient houses due to extreme heat, cold and weather events. The East Sussex Housing Partnership Board's housing retrofit programme aims to accelerate housing retrofit across the county. Time-limited Public Health funding is supporting the creation of a strategic plan in collaboration with partners, building on work to future-proof homes, reduce people's energy bills, and improve indoor air quality and ambient comfort. The programme aims to unblock local challenges and increase the county's capacity to achieve retrofit at scale, draw in more external funding, improve the supply of trained tradespeople and address poor consumer trust in the sector and misconceptions about retrofit.

Public Health

Tobacco and Vapes Bill

3.74. The [Tobacco and Vapes Bill](#) raises the age of sale for all tobacco products by one year every year from 2027 onwards. The Bill also introduces Government powers to halt the branding and marketing of vapes and other nicotine products, such as nicotine pouches, to

appeal to children and young people. The ban on smoking in public may be extended to some outdoor spaces along with the introduction of vape free areas.

3.75. The Council will respond by reaching key smoking populations with innovative support and smoking cessation interventions which are responsive to needs. This includes our Public Health team working with colleagues in Trading Standards to disrupt the supply of illegal tobacco and underage vape sales, as well as working with local businesses during the transition period in which disposable vapes are banned.

Gambling related harm and statutory levy

3.76. The gambling sector is seeing substantial growth. This is being fuelled by the rise in smartphone use, targeted advertising, and sophisticated technology. Gambling-related harm carries hidden economic costs in healthcare expenditure, welfare support, criminal justice and homelessness services. The Government has reviewed legislation set in 2005 and plans to introduce a new levy on all operators to be collected during 2025/26. Detailed plans are not yet available but the anticipated £100m to be raised will fund treatment, prevention and research.

3.77. Locally we are working with partners to raise awareness and assess the risk to residents of both land based and online gambling. We will learn from good practice in other authorities to develop a local action plan to address the availability, accessibility, advertising, awareness and environment of gambling products.

4. Children's Services

4.1. This section and section 5 below outline significant reforms in both children's social care and education, including those outlined in the [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#). They also outline local priority focus areas for Children's Services, including reshaping the delivery of early help and social care services in line with national policy and the ongoing response to demand pressures, work to improve educational outcomes and to develop support for special educational needs and disabilities, and on home to school transport.

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

4.2. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill was introduced to Parliament in December 2024 and is currently nearing its final stages in Parliament. Through 39 new policies, it sets out significant reforms for children's social care and education which aim to enhance child welfare and educational standards across England. ESCC Children's Services has been working towards these reforms for some time. This includes work to strengthen partnerships between councils, schools, health services, and other agencies; to drive a strong focus on prevention; and holistic family support. We believe that this approach will achieve better outcomes for children and families and deliver the most effective use of limited resources. However, the Bill is more prescriptive than expected, and the timeline for delivery is challenging. The following paragraphs detail reforms, and local responses, in social care. Education reforms are outlined in section 5.

National reforms to children's social care

4.3. The majority of the social care reforms set out in the Bill were foreshadowed in the policy paper [Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive](#), published in November 2024. This built on previous work including the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, published in 2022, which proposed a variety of reforms aimed at improving the care system for vulnerable children, and the subsequent strategy published by the previous Government in response to this review, *Stable Homes, Built on Love*, in 2023.

4.4. In March 2025, the Department for Education (DfE) launched the Families First Partnership Programme (FFPP), the Government's umbrella initiative for the major children's social care reforms. It aims to provide early support to families, helping them to overcome challenges before problems escalate. This includes, for Early Help and Social Care, changes to working more preventatively with children and families, setting up new Family Help services and Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams, and optimising use of family networks and kinship care.

4.5. In East Sussex, we are building upon existing strengths as we adapt services to meet the key priorities of this programme. These priorities are designed to achieve four main outcomes:

- Children and families stay together, reducing the need for children to enter the care system.
- Children and families are supported by an extended family network.
- Children and families are safe inside and outside the home – addressing risks in both domestic and community settings.
- Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes.

4.6. The Government's strategy will reshape the delivery of early help and social care services by integrating targeted early help with social work teams (Family Help teams) to drive improvements in outcomes and ensure that families receive the right help at the right time. The aim is to create a more responsive, seamless system for families and ensure efficiencies in the provision of services.

Local service pressures and developments

Transformation Programme

4.7. Locally we are working with our partners to take forward the national reforms and a Transformation Board, chaired by the Director of Children's Services, has been established to oversee the delivery of these key changes. This will support our vision of providing help when problems emerge, tilting the balance from statutory intervention to one of prevention and support, by:

- enhancing the prevention offer at a much earlier stage;
- planning for the integration of early help and social care teams into a Family Help service;
- creating a Multi-Agency Child Protection Team with police, health and education colleagues;
- strengthening our kinship offer, including strengthening family-led plans and family group conferencing and embedding the kinship national guidance and support;
- establishing clearer leadership and accountability for multi-agency safeguarding, including an enhanced role for education and wider corporate parenting responsibilities for health and police; and
- developing the workforce, improving data systems, and ensuring services are responsive to local needs through better multi-agency information sharing.

Care placements

4.8. A key pressure for Children's Services continues to be care placements for looked after children. Increased demand and complexity of needs, coupled with significant limitations on the availability of suitable placements and dysfunction in the care market, has led to a substantial increase in the cost of placements over the past two years. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill sets out measures to address these pressures,

including increased transparency, improvements to local authority commissioning, and boosting the supply of provision. The Bill also sets out Government's intention to address excessive profit making by including a backstop law to potentially cap the profit providers can make. However, this will only come into effect if the other measures introduced do not have an impact.

4.9. Our focus remains on taking forward programmes of work to address this, including:

- refreshing our sufficiency strategy to continue to broaden the range of high-quality placement options for our looked after children, particularly those with complex needs;
- playing a leading role in the South East Regional Care Cooperative to improve placement sufficiency across the whole region;
- working more closely with our neighbouring local authorities on foster carer recruitment through a hub model; and
- further developing an integrated commissioning approach to ensure the best use of our shared resources to support our looked after children.

4.10. These areas of work are included as part of the wider transformation programme in Children's Services and progress and impact is driven through the Transformation Board.

Service demand

4.11. Children's Services nationally and locally continue to see a sustained high level of demand and complexity in the needs of children and their families. We are seeing a lasting impact from Covid, particularly with regards to growing levels of mental health need (with increasing issues relating to neurodiversity), heightened inequalities, and cost of living challenges. There has been an increase in the number of families in temporary accommodation, increases in domestic abuse and substance misuse, rising school exclusions and behaviours that challenge, developmental delay in younger children, and an increase in overlapping complexities of need.

4.12. Over the past two years, ESCC has experienced a 17% increase in the number of social care assessments undertaken with children and families, and a 5% increase in the number of looked after children (not including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children). Positively there has been a 7% decrease in children subject to child protection planning over the same period. This demand is contributing to increased pressure on Children's Services and wider partners and we need to ensure we have sufficient capacity to meet our statutory duties. We are continuing to address these demands through our early help services and a range of preventative approaches and interventions.

Youth service developments

4.13. Funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) via the Youth Investment Fund allowed us to upgrade two outdated youth centres in 2024/25. Heathfield Youth Hub and the JOFF Youth Hub in Peacehaven are due to reopen in the summer of 2025. Capital funding has also been secured through the national Levelling Up programme for a major refurbishment and extension of facilities for the Hollington Youth Hub in Hastings. The Hub closed at Easter 2025 and will reopen in March 2026.

5. Education and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

National education reforms

5.1. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill contains significant reforms related to education which will impact locally on ESCC and schools. It aims to reshape key aspects of England's education system, provide clarity on key areas of work and strengthen the role of local authorities. The Bill also contains important provisions for children not in school, who are often amongst the most vulnerable.

5.2. The Bill also includes a commitment to a national rollout of free breakfast clubs in every primary school in England. The first phase began in April 2025. Schools in Hastings, Seaford and Eastbourne were among those chosen to pilot the new scheme, which is expected to be expanded in summer 2025.

Elective Home Education

5.3. The number of electively home educated children in East Sussex continues to rise, reflecting a national trend. In the 2023-2024 academic year, 2,636 children were home educated, a 25% increase from the previous year. The majority of these children are secondary aged. Urban areas and areas with economic disadvantage continue to have higher proportions of elective home education children.

5.4. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill will introduce mandatory registration for electively home educated families, replacing the current voluntary system. Local authorities will have clearer responsibilities for tracking and supporting home educated children. In preparation, we will:

- review our existing related infrastructure, policies, and procedures;
- ensure our case management systems track electively home educated registrations and assessments; and
- continue to build trust and transparency with the home education community and engage proactively with families.

Approach to academies

5.5. The Bill also contains key reforms related to academisation. Academies will lose some of their current flexibilities and be required to align more with local authority maintained schools. Academies will also be required to follow the national curriculum. The Bill will repeal the duty to issue academy orders for maintained schools that are judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted. This will allow the Secretary of State the flexibility to determine what the most appropriate action is to drive school improvement in each individual case. The presumption that any new school is an academy will also be removed.

5.6. The Bill also outlines new duties for local authorities and schools to cooperate on areas such as admissions and place planning and will give local authorities the ability to direct academies to admit a child. It focuses on the role of local authorities to ensure that children can attend their local schools and brings more alignment between academies and maintained schools. We will continue to work through our strong school partnerships to ensure that all schools are meeting the needs of their school communities.

Small schools strategy

5.7. Working with our school leaders and the Dioceses, we believe that the future of our schools is best safeguarded through groups of schools working together in partnership, within their locality. We will continue to encourage small schools to work together, developing a variety of strong partnership models which contribute to the broader school-led system across the county.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms

5.8. There have been a number of reviews of the SEND system in recent years, leading to the publication of a [Green Paper in March 2022](#). As a result, the SEND Change Programme was established to look at different areas that could be reformed to make improvements to the system. Along with the other Sussex local authorities and Portsmouth City Council, East Sussex has been part of the South East Change Programme.

5.9. The current Government has indicated that it views SEND reform as a priority. Since the autumn of 2024, there has been a shift in the work of the Change Programme with greater focus on improving inclusive practice in mainstream schools. This shift, along with proposed changes to the school inspection framework, will support improvements to inclusion, outcomes and financial viability across the SEND system. However, we are still awaiting a clear policy direction from the Department for Education (DfE) on the broader issues around SEND and how the system will be funded sustainably in the future. At the Spending Review in June 2025 it was confirmed that details of the Government's intended approach to SEND reform will be set out in a Schools White Paper in the autumn. Further details on supporting local authorities with the transition to a reformed system are also expected as part of the upcoming local government funding reform consultation.

East Sussex Area SEND Inspection and SEND Strategy

5.10. In November 2024, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) undertook an Area SEND (ASEND) inspection of the East Sussex Local Partnership (ESCC and NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board). The local area was given the middle outcome. The [ASEND inspection report](#) highlighted what the area partnership is doing well, including areas of good practice and examples of multi-agency working with professionals to provide holistic support for children and young people and their families.

5.11. The report also identified some areas for improvement, including:

- Improving the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) to better identify the provision that children and young people require to meet their needs. This should include:
 - improving joint working of practitioners, particularly health, to contribute to EHCPs; and
 - ensuring a more timely and precise annual review process.
- Taking further action to reduce overall waiting times in relation to neurodevelopmental pathways, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) interventions and the provision of wheelchairs and ensuring that support provided to families while waiting is well used and beneficial.
- Developing and embedding work with education settings on improving inclusion.
- Ensuring that there is sufficient and suitable alternative provision and post-16 options for children and young people with SEND.

5.12. As a partnership, we have published a new [ASEND Inspection Improvement Plan](#) to address these areas. This further builds on our work and aligns with the Ofsted and CQC requirements. We have also extended our [SEND strategy](#) for an additional year, to run until the end of the 2025-26 academic year, whilst the national direction of travel is clarified.

5.13. In line with the national picture, East Sussex continues to see significant increases in demand for statutory assessments and specialist provision for children and young people with SEND. Improving outcomes for children with SEND is a key priority for the Partnership and focused work is underway with schools and partners through our SEND Strategy. We

continue to monitor the impact of increased demand on SEN funding and sufficiency of provision.

Educational attainment

5.14. The Council has a statutory duty to promote high standards in education. This currently is discharged within the context of the removal of the DfE grant for school improvement and the expectation that schools themselves should lead improvement. In East Sussex, we deliver this duty through working collaboratively with all schools through our partnership structures and supporting a school led system of improvement.

5.15. Children and young people in East Sussex achieve above the national average for Early Years Good Level of Development, however, at other key stages results remain below the national average.

5.16. Despite results remaining below the national average, there have been improvements and encouraging performance by several schools/trusts. Partnerships with and across schools are a strong feature of education in the county.

5.17. Actions we will take to improve primary school attainment include reviewing and analysing data collaboratively with school leaders to help us identify joint priorities and plan accordingly, and targeting school improvement resources through the Primary Board, including using our alliance partner programme to deliver bespoke support as needed.

5.18. Actions we will take to improve secondary school attainment include targeting school improvement resources through the Secondary Board, including using our external adviser programme to deliver bespoke support as needed, focusing on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, and embedding a programme of 'Study Visits' for headteachers and senior leaders. Attendance is a critical factor when considering attainment and progress outcomes for all key stages and pupil groups. We continue to support all secondary schools to implement the statutory guidance on attendance (see section 5.22 below).

SEND attainment

5.19. Attainment for pupils with SEND is above the national average for Early Years Good Level of Development for children with SEN support but not for children with EHCPs. At Key Stage 2 performance is below the national average. At Key Stage 4 attainment for East Sussex pupils with SEN support is below the national average and for pupils with an EHCP it is slightly above the national average.

5.20. We will continue to take action to improve SEND attainment including continuing to develop capacity in early years providers, primary and secondary schools to support children with EHCPs effectively, and continuing to improve identification and planning for children, including better joining up working across teams. We will also continue to champion young people with SEND, ensuring that the outcomes and needs of young people with SEND are central to the plans of our school partnerships and our work with multi-academy trusts.

School attendance

5.21. The impact of the Covid pandemic continues to significantly impact school attendance locally and nationally. Whilst we have seen some marginal gains, East Sussex continues to have high levels of non-attendance, suspensions, and exclusions. School leaders are experiencing increased levels and complexity of need in their school populations and the demand for support services remains high.

5.22. In accordance with the national statutory guidance [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#), which clarifies roles for local authorities, schools, and families, we continue to strengthen oversight of attendance through regular individual dialogue with all schools and by providing early help and support to schools and all families of children whose attendance is less than 50%. We will continue to collaborate with schools to monitor attendance and identify pupils at risk from persistent absence.

Home to School Transport

5.23. Home to school transport (HTST) is under significant budgetary pressure, primarily due to increases in the number of children and young people eligible for HTST and increased costs associated with providing transport. The majority of spend for HTST relates to children with SEND and there has been an increase in the number of children with SEND with more complex needs. The number of pupils with an EHCP is currently forecast to rise in East Sussex by 22.7% over the next three years, having increased by 32.2% in the last three years.

5.24. In addition, some children are transported to schools some distance from their home; this can be due to local schools being unable to meet their needs or because of tribunal decisions. This results in children being transported further distances at greater cost.

5.25. Updated national guidance on home to school transport is expected and we will consider the implications when this is issued. Children's Services will work with Communities, Economy and Transport to maintain the delivery of the Council's statutory responsibilities and continue to look at ways we can reduce costs, including:

- Conversion of solo transport to shared routes.
- Route optimisation.
- Implementing a new strategy for an enhanced personal transport offer where this is cost effective.
- Promoting independent travel training.
- Increasing the number of pupils travelling on public transport to school.

6. Communities

6.1. The following section outlines the Council's ongoing partnerships and work with local communities and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to connect people and places, build and develop a thriving VCSE sector and meet community needs, including keeping communities safe.

Financial Inclusion and the Household Support Fund

6.2. The multi-agency Financial Inclusion Steering Group continues to oversee a programme of activities to improve financial wellbeing and help residents with the cost of living. Priorities include maximising resident income, building capacity in the system and improving the inclusivity of services.

6.3. To achieve this we continue to maintain the Council's [cost of living webpages](#), as a central information source for residents and partners, promote information through non-digital communications, and design and deliver targeted welfare benefits campaigns to enable residents to access support.

6.4. Our East Sussex Money Guiders training programme, delivered in partnership with the Money and Pensions Service, offers training and resources to workers across all sectors

to build capacity, ensure the correct information, guidance and advice is given, and enable residents to access the right services.

6.5. The Department for Work and Pensions has extended the Household Support Fund (HSF) for a further full year to March 2026. The fund supports households in the most need with essential costs including food, energy and water bills, and helps manage demand on services provided by the Council and other partners. HSF in East Sussex is delivered through a wide range of partners including Adult Social Care and Health, Children's Services, Warmer Homes, foodbanks and food partnerships, district and borough councils, and twenty VCSE partner organisations. At the recent Spending Review the Government set out its intentions to reform crisis support, including a multi-year settlement to transform the HSF into a new Crisis and Resilience Fund incorporating Discretionary Housing Payments. Further details are awaited and we will continue to administer these funds whilst they are made available by Government.

VCSE support, development and infrastructure

6.6. The Council has renewed our investment in the [VCSE Alliance](#) for a further three years from 2025. The Alliance brings together organisations to share insight on community needs and to enable the VCSE sector to increase its influence, voice and trust amongst partners.

6.7. A new three year programme funded by the Council has been developed to support VCSE capacity building, infrastructure support and asset based approaches to resident and community wellbeing. This programme will support the shift to more person and community centered approaches to improve health and wellbeing. This will include mobilising assets within communities, encouraging equity and social connection, and increasing people's control over their health and lives. VCSE partners in each of the five district and borough council areas will work together with residents, groups and organisations to support all communities to be connected and thrive.

6.8. In 2025, the Council is collaborating with the Alliance and Sussex Community Foundation to commission a new research project on the state of the VCSE sector. A refreshed understanding of the sector is essential to the Council and partners given the range of pressures and demands on the system in recent years, so that there is a contemporary assessment of the health and resilience of the VCSE sector to inform future planning and policy.

Migration

6.9. A new [Restoring Control Over the Immigration System White Paper](#) was published in May 2025 setting out reforms to legal migration.

6.10. The White Paper has five key principles:

- Reduce net migration;
- Link the immigration system to skills and training requirements in the UK, so that no industry is allowed to rely solely on immigration to fill its skills shortages;
- The system must be fair and effective;
- Rules must be respected and enforced; and
- The system must support integration and community cohesion.

6.11. Updated measures in the White Paper include increasing the threshold for skilled worker visas to reduce lower skilled migration; workforce strategies to increase training and participation rates in the UK; closing the social care visa route to overseas recruitment;

restricting dependants; increasing English language requirements; and increasing the length of time people need to be in the UK to achieve settled status.

6.12. The White Paper puts forward changes the Government intends to make, and we await further details and implementation timescales to help us to fully understand the impact. However, we anticipate that these measures could have a significant impact on the care workforce and we will work with our providers to understand this as proposed measures progress.

Humanitarian protection schemes

6.13. Separate from this White Paper, new measures specifically to respond to 'irregular migration', including small boat crossings, are included in the [Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill](#). This repeals some provisions within the previous Government's legislation. However, plans remain in place to deliver dispersal accommodation across the UK, with all areas expected to participate in accommodating people seeking asylum. The Home Office holds procurement plans and targets for dispersal accommodation for all areas, including the South East. Indications are that the current Government will seek to take a more 'place based approach' that considers asylum dispersal in the wider context of other types of asylum accommodation and refugee resettlement, and this may require greater engagement and accountability at a local level. At the recent Spending Review Government allocated additional funding to reduce the asylum backlog and committed to ending the use of hotel accommodation by the end of the parliament.

Homes for Ukraine and the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme

6.14. The Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) scheme opened for applications in February 2025 to allow Ukrainian nationals, or family members of Ukrainians living in the UK with existing permission on one of the Ukraine schemes, to live in the UK for a further 18 months. The Council continues to support Ukrainians in East Sussex through the Homes for Ukraine programme, which will support to people on UPE where this is needed and appropriate. The Homes for Ukraine scheme also remains open to new applications.

Afghan Resettlement Programme

6.15. The Government is consolidating resettlement schemes under a single Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP) to streamline support and funding. The revised programme will update arrangements for funding, transitional accommodation, and resettlement, and will require local authorities to put forward proposals for support. In East Sussex, the ARP is led by district and borough councils.

Safe and legal migration routes

6.16. A consultation on capping other safe and legal migration routes was halted due to the general election. Further updates on safe and legal routes and any associated caps will be determined following future consultation, in which the Council and partners will participate, once details of this become available.

Support for Separated Migrant Children

6.17. The Council remains committed to the [National Transfer Scheme](#) for Separated Migrant Children (previously known as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children). Children are well supported by a specialist team of practitioners who are experienced and skilled in understanding their needs, and the impact of their earlier life experiences. Whilst the National Transfer Scheme ensures funding for under 18s, there are significant budget

pressures associated with those who become care leavers who often, due to complexities relating to their immigration status, require support until they reach the age of 25.

6.18. Under a new Government policy, young people seeking asylum status are now processed more quickly and, as a result, can spend longer in appeal. Supporting a young person who is in appeal is not as well funded and could result in financial pressures for the Council. We are working through the implications of this change.

Community Safety

Preventing violent extremism

6.19. The terrorism threat to the UK remains 'substantial', meaning an attack is likely. To prevent future incidents, several national developments are taking place in 2025 including the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (or Martyn's Law); a rapid review into counter extremism policy; a national review of Police Led Partnerships; and a national evaluation of the Channel programme.

6.20. Locally, we expect to see an increase in the number and complexity of Channel cases (those relating to people susceptible to radicalisation). The counter extremism review will see the introduction of new powers to tackle the rapid increase in youth radicalisation and measures to strengthen the Prevent programme. The Safer East Sussex Team will continue to work with system partners, including Sussex Police, to respond to national updates and co-ordinate efforts to prevent violent extremism in East Sussex.

Serious violence and adult exploitation

6.21. The Government's Safer Streets mission to halve knife crime within a decade will influence how Violence Reduction Partnership funding is allocated and will introduce a new power to seize knives in public places, including schools. Youth Futures prevention partnerships and panels will be introduced to manage suspects in crimes, young people at risk of offending, and anti-social behaviour. The Serious Violence Duty national guidance (2025) has also been refreshed.

6.22. The remit of the East Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership will be expanded to include criminal and sexual exploitation of adults due to recent increases in serious violent crimes, and links between serious crime and exploitation. The Council's Children's Services panels (Immediate Justice, Turnaround and REBOOT) will influence how Violence Reduction Partnership funding will be allocated.

6.23. Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) are regular multi-agency meetings to discuss victims of domestic abuse who are at the highest risk of serious harm or death. In East Sussex, the number of cases discussed are 29% above recommended levels and that of the national average, with volumes reaching 35 – 40 cases a week. In order to address this, a pan-Sussex MARAC review will be led by Sussex Police, drawing on national best practice examples. East Sussex is leading the way with proposed changes to referral criteria and the introduction of a separate High Risk Domestic Abuse Panel. The proposal is for the majority of multi-agency liaison and action planning on high risk victims to take place online rather than at in person meetings which will be used only for cases that would most benefit from a multi-agency discussion.

Domestic and Sexual violence and abuse and violence against women and girls

6.24. We are working with partners to tackle domestic and sexual violence and abuse, and violence against women and girls through a locally produced action plan. The plan is

informed by the pan-Sussex needs assessment and strategy in fulfilment of Domestic Abuse Act 2021 duties, including those related to domestic abuse-related death reviews.

6.25. The Council's application to reinstate White Ribbon accreditation has been accepted and the action plan to February 2027 demonstrates a commitment to ending violence against women and girls. However, as we have not seen an increase in funding to match rising costs in delivery, it will be challenging for the Council to sustain its offer with current resources.

Substance misuse

6.26. In response to a relative funding reduction in 2025/26 of the Drug and Alcohol Treatment, Recovery and Improvement Grant (DATRIG), the Safer Communities Team is working with the commissioned treatment provider to ensure continuity of service provision.

6.27. The DATRIG is for one year, which means that the recommissioning of drug and alcohol treatment services can only be specified against the core budget available which has reduced due to the financial pressures on the Council. Services such as 'Carer Provision' and 'Outreach and Navigators' will have reduced capacity and direct funding will cease for a women-specific service, recovery activities, and some elements of the psychosocial interventions previously provided. However, some specific support services will be integrated into the commissioned treatment provider, such as prison in-reach services, and our specialist partners and providers, to minimise impact on the people accessing these services and the wider community.

6.28. The 'Harm to Hope' Board will oversee developments in recommissioning of substance misuse services in East Sussex and its strategic work will continue, focusing on improving joint working protocols, access to primary care, continuity of care in the justice system, services for underrepresented groups and respiratory and liver conditions.

Trading Standards – priorities and future focus

6.29. Legislation previously agreed, or currently progressing through Parliament, will result in several new powers available to Trading Standards to underpin and develop work to protect consumers and businesses in East Sussex and ensure fair trading in the county. The service will integrate the new legislative provisions outlined below into business as usual as they come into effect.

6.30. In April 2025, the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 came into force. The Act gives Trading Standards new powers to deal with issues such as drip pricing (where consumers are initially shown a low price for a product or service, but additional fees are added later in the buying process) and fake reviews, but also encourages more collaborative work with the Competitions and Markets Authority to deal with large scale consumer issues in partnership.

6.31. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill (see 3.74 above) will provide new powers to Trading Standards to issue fixed penalty notices for contraventions of the legislation when it comes into force. In addition, from 1 June 2025, Trading Standards powers to enforce regulations banning the sale of disposable vapes came into force.

6.32. The Product Safety and Metrology Bill is likely to receive royal assent in the coming year. The Bill aims to update product safety and metrology law since EU transition and adapt the legal framework to accommodate technological advancements like artificial intelligence (AI) while ensuring an equitable landscape, particularly regarding online marketplaces and product safety.

Local resilience arrangements

6.33. Martyn's Law, officially the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, has now received royal assent. The Act mandates that certain premises and public events in the UK take steps to enhance preparedness for and protection from terrorist attacks. It applies to publicly accessible locations and events, dividing them into two tiers based on capacity, each with specific requirements, with the goal to improve public safety by making premises and events better prepared to respond to attacks and reduce harm. The Government intends for there to be an implementation period of at least 24 months before the legislation is commenced, which will provide those responsible for premises and events to have sufficient time to understand the new obligations, and to plan and prepare accordingly. An assessment of the ESCC estate has concluded that all ESCC premises fall into the standard tier and therefore premises will be expected to have procedures in place for evacuation, invacuation, locking down the premises, and communicating with individuals on the premises. Government will release guidance on the implementation of this legislation in the coming months, which will be required to fully assess the impact of the Act.

6.34. One of the recommendations arising from the Covid-19 Inquiry was to hold regular UK-wide pandemic response exercises. The Government accepted this recommendation and work has commenced on preparation of a national pandemic preparedness exercise (exercise Pegasus), to be held in autumn 2025. The exercise is designed to test the nation's preparedness, capabilities, and response arrangements in the context of a novel infectious disease pandemic. The exercise will test the Council's response plans, ensuring ESCC is resilient in the event of another pandemic.

National planning reforms

6.35. In March 2025, the Government introduced the [Planning and Infrastructure Bill](#), which is expected to receive royal assent later this year. The overarching aim of the Bill is to reform the planning system to increase housing and infrastructure delivery, modernise planning authorities, and to speed up decision making and the Local Plan making process.

6.36. Aspects of the Bill are unlikely to have a substantial impact upon ESCC, in terms of our existing role as the County Planning Authority. Measures proposed include a national scheme of delegation (i.e. prescribing which planning applications need to be considered by a Planning Committee), mandatory training for Planning Committee members and specifying the composition of Planning Committees. Although close attention will need to be paid to these measures, they are unlikely to result in the need for substantial changes to be made in the way the County Planning Authority, including the Planning Committee, is run and managed.

6.37. Of greater significance to the County Council is the element of the Bill that sets out the return of statutory strategic planning, with the requirement for Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) to be prepared by Strategic Planning Authorities (SPA). An SDS will set out policies that broadly distribute development (i.e. how many houses will be built in particular areas), as well as the infrastructure to support that development. The geography of an SDS is expected to be consistent with combined authorities.

6.38. The Bill sets out that SPAs which will be required to produce a SDS include combined county authorities, and upper-tier county councils and unitary authorities which do not form part of a combined authority. As the Sussex Mayoral Combined County Authority is proposed to be in place by May 2026, it is expected that it will take responsibility for the production of the SDS, subject to Government approval. The Council will have a significant role in its production, contributing towards and influencing the evidence base to inform the

SDS, as well as its content. There will be clear resourcing and budgetary implications of this for ESCC, although further detail is required from Government to accurately assess these.

6.39. Other reforms in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill relating to the Nature Restoration Fund and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects will have implications for relevant development proposals that the Council is either promoting, determining the applications for, or acting as a consultee.

6.40. The Government has also recognised the important role played by statutory consultees in the planning system and is proposing a number of changes, reforms and reviews as to how they operate. This is an important matter to ESCC given that we perform a statutory consultee role as Highways Authority, Lead Local Flood Authority and County Planning Authority. The Government wants statutory consultees to make more timely responses on applications, for local planning authorities to limit the occasions when consultations take place and to introduce a new performance framework for consultees. The Government has recognised that statutory consultees need to be resourced adequately and on a sustainable basis and is expected to announce further details on this in the coming weeks. Until such details are forthcoming, along with further information on the already announced measures, the implications of these changes to ESCC cannot yet be fully established.

7. Highways and Transport

7.1. This section sets out a range of national and local developments impacting on transport planning and infrastructure in the county, encompassing highways maintenance, road safety, bus and rail reforms, the update to the Local Transport Plan and associated strategies, and planned improvements to local public transport.

New Local Transport Plan 2024-2050

7.2. The East Sussex [Local Transport Plan 4](#) (LTP4) sets out our strategy and policies for how we plan to invest in improving transport and maintaining the roads in the county to meet transport needs. Following extensive public and stakeholder consultation, the LTP4 and associated documents were adopted by the Council in October 2024. This included an Investment Plan of short, medium and long-term interventions and initiatives which support the delivery of the Plan's vision and objectives. Both LTP4 and its Investment Plan now provide the strategic platform to help prioritise and determine investment in transport infrastructure in the county in the short term. The main implications are in managing public and partner expectations on what can be delivered within the limited budgets available as opportunities to successfully secure external funding, usually via competitive bidding rounds, may impact on our ability to deliver on the strategy going forward.

7.3. LTP4 will also provide a strong evidence base for the proposed Mayoral County Combined Authority (MCCA) for Sussex, as the new Mayor would have powers to develop a joint transport plan for the MCCA geography.

Integrated National Transport Strategy

7.4. The Government is developing an Integrated National Transport Strategy which will set the high-level direction for how transport should be designed, built and operated in England over the next 10 years. It will set out a single national vision which intends to put people who use transport and their needs at its heart, and empower local leaders to deliver integrated transport solutions that meet the needs of their local communities.

7.5. Last year, the Government issued a 'call for ideas' consultation. In our response we advocated for a vision led, 'people and places' approach, which the Council applied in the development of LTP4. Our response also advocated that funding (both capital and revenue) should be available to reflect the multi-modal approach of transport over a longer time period. In addition, where infrastructure is linked to development and supporting growth, we suggested that an 'infrastructure first approach' is key, with the appropriate funding needing to be in place to enable delivery in advance or alongside development. It is expected the Integrated National Transport Strategy will be published later in 2025.

Rail reforms and services

7.6. One of the five strategic priorities for the Department for Transport (DfT) is improving performance on the railways and driving forward rail reform. The Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act 2024 received royal assent in November 2024, and means nearly all passenger rail services will be re-nationalised when existing contracts expire. Government will be bringing forward further legislation to establish Great British Railways (GBR), the organisation which will absorb Network Rail and the train operating companies. Government consulted on its proposals for GBR in its 'A railway fit for Britain's future' consultation undertaken in spring 2025.

7.7. Together these changes will have a significant impact on rail passengers and businesses in the county. It is important that we continue to be involved in future processes associated with the delivery of the Plan for Rail and engage with GBR to ensure these changes benefit our residents, those visiting East Sussex, and businesses operating in and out of the county.

7.8. Following the Kent and East Sussex Rail Connectivity Study, in May 2021 a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) which set out the strategic case for four options (two in East Sussex) to potentially improve rail connectivity to the Kent and East Sussex coast was submitted to Government. A formal response has yet to be received, however the scheme has been included in the Kent, Medway and East Sussex package of interventions in the Transport for the South East (TfSE) Strategic Investment Plan and the LTP4 Implementation Plan. In the meantime, KentSussex Connect, involving business and other interested parties, and the local authorities in East Sussex and Kent continue to work collaboratively to explore opportunities to lever in private sector finance or investment to fund the delivery of the rail schemes identified in the study.

Highways maintenance

7.9. In December 2024, Government announced £21m maintenance funding allocation for ESCC in 2025/26, which supports our planned capital programme. £5.5m of this funding is contingent on the Council demonstrating to Government that it is complying with certain criteria aimed at driving best practice and continual improvement in highways maintenance and publishing information on our website regarding asset plans, asset condition and spending.

7.10. Additionally, ESCC needs to provide more detailed information on how we are meeting best practice by 31 October 2025. This will include not only highway maintenance, but how we are managing our street works to minimise disruption (including the introduction of the lane rental scheme), what we are doing to understand any risks to the network arising from climate change, how we are decarbonising our operations and how we apply a risk-based whole life cycle asset management approach to all highways assets, including bridges, footways, cycleways, street lighting, drainage, and soft estate. The East Sussex Highways team is in a good position to provide the required data and documentation and

evidence our compliance with best practice, although this will take additional officer time and cost to commission some data we do not currently hold.

Bus Services Bill

7.11. The [Bus Services Bill](#) aims to make it easier, faster, and more flexible for local authorities across England to take greater control over their bus services through franchising, ultimately aiming to improve services for passengers. The Bill will empower all Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to franchise bus services without needing prior consent from the Secretary of State, and it will accelerate the process of doing so. At this stage we have indicated to the DfT that our current position on franchising is that we are open to exploring whether franchising could deliver benefits in East Sussex and opportunities for franchising in the future.

7.12. Other provisions include the direct awarding of initial contracts, allowing LTAs to directly award the first franchise contracts to incumbent operators for a maximum of five years, greater flexibility in service descriptions, streamlined data sharing and enhanced enforcement powers. The Bill will also grant the Secretary of State for Transport powers to issue guidance on making bus stops and stations more accessible and safer for people with disabilities, as well as to set an end date (no earlier than 1 January 2030) for the sale of new non-zero emission buses for local services outside of franchised areas.

Bus Service Improvement Plan

7.13. ESCC received £41.4m in BSIP funding (£22m capital and £19m revenue) in 2022. The majority of the capital funding (£20m) was allocated to deliver bus priority measures by the end of the financial year 2024/25, which was subsequently extended to 2025/26. £13m of the revenue funding was allocated to bus service improvements, including the Flexibus Digital Demand Responsive Transport services, and these improvements are funded to April 2026. £5m of the revenue funding was allocated to providing reduced fares in East Sussex and will do so until April 2026. Delivery of the East Sussex BSIP has played a key role in East Sussex's bus passenger numbers being one of the highest in England in 2023/24, compared to pre-Covid levels. We are sixth nationally and the top rural and shire authority.

7.14. Following public consultation in both 2023/24 and 2024/25 across bus priority proposals, schemes in Eastbourne and Newhaven are progressing with continued engagement with stakeholders which will support the final designs. The cost of delivering these schemes will come from external funding so will not impact on our budgets but there will be an ongoing maintenance cost to some of these schemes.

7.15. East Sussex County Council published the [East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan 2](#) (BSIP) in May 2025. The BSIP 2 outlines a range of deliverables aimed at enhancing bus services in East Sussex:

- Conventional Bus Services: Maintain the existing bus network where possible and the BSIP enhanced services that have been in place from July 2023.
- Rural Service Improvements: The continuation of the Flexibus service which provides rural residents with access to key services and to the wider public transport network.
- Traffic Light Priority: bus priority at 30 traffic signal-controlled junctions in areas including Eastbourne, Hastings, Peacehaven and Newhaven.
- Fares and Ticketing: including fare reductions for young people, a new multi-operator day ticket, and discounted single trip fares.
- Passenger Experience: Improvements to real-time information at bus stops, QR codes for accessing live information, interchange enhancements, and bus stop upgrades

across the county. Construction of key interchange facilities, with Uckfield completed in October 2024 and Hailsham expected in summer 2025.

- Fleet Improvements: Working with bus operators to increase the number of low and zero-emission buses in East Sussex.
- Ongoing Support: funding for BSIP delivery through the bus team, marketing and communications initiatives.
- Infrastructure Integration: Integrating bus improvements with wider transport infrastructure programs in the county.

7.16. The BSIP also sets out longer-term ambitions beyond 2026, focusing on further improvements to the bus network, bus priority measures, fares, passenger experience, and fleet.

Rail and Freight Strategies

7.17. Following the adoption of the East Sussex LTP4, the supporting Rail and Freight Strategies have been updated to reflect its vision led approach, revised objectives and policies. For the Rail Strategy, this has included assessing the opportunities in relation to Operations and Infrastructure, Planning, Policy and Data and Urban Delivery. For the Freight Strategy, this has included assessing the opportunities in relation to infrastructure, service enhancement, customer experience and connectivity to the station. Both strategies are currently subject to stakeholder and public consultation, before being presented to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment for approval and adoption.

Active Travel developments

7.18. Our [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#) (LCWIP), adopted in September 2020, sets out proposed local cycling and walking networks and measures for the key coastal towns and the market towns within the county. It provides a basis for seeking funding for active travel infrastructure projects and is being used to inform the review of borough and district councils' Local Plans. The LCWIP will be refreshed in 2025 as a supporting document to LTP4.

7.19. The Council's local authority self-assessed active travel grade was re-affirmed in September 2024 by Active Travel England (ATE) as Level 1, securing active travel funding to deliver the development of pipeline schemes for future capital funding bids in 2025. These pipeline schemes include school streets schemes and an area-based cycle scheme which have involved collaborative and co-design activities with communities and learning opportunities for both officers and Members regarding active travel. In addition, we have received consolidated revenue and capital funding for the development and delivery of active travel schemes during 2025/26.

7.20. The Council continues to aim towards achieving beyond the current ATE level 1 assessment so that we can unlock further external funding from ATE to support the delivery of the vision and objectives set out within our LTP4. However, without significant external funding for these programmes, we will not be able to deliver our ambitious plans for active travel infrastructure in the county.

E-vehicle charging

7.21. Transport is now the greatest contributor to carbon emissions in East Sussex. Supporting this area will be a major part of carbon reduction within the county, and the Council has made a commitment to develop a strategy to support the growing demand and needs of Electric Vehicles (EV) users within East Sussex. Reflecting the national strategy at

a local level, a draft EV Charging Strategy has been developed as a supporting document to our LTP4.

7.22. The ability to charge at or close to home is a major concern to many EV users. In November 2023, £4.441m was secured under tranche 1 of the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund. The funding will help the Council to scale up the delivery of local on street chargepoints, enabling more residents, especially those without off-street parking, to switch to EVs. The funding will also be used to provide chargepoints on the County Hall campus.

7.23. Separate grant funding has been made available to local residents with no off-street parking to introduce EV chargepoints on their properties. This has implications for the Council in relation to licencing the installation of cable gully channels in the footway in line with Government best practice guidance, as well as the liability and ongoing maintenance of these channels, alongside how this affects the commercial viability of potential on-street chargepoints delivered using the LEVI funding.

7.24. Procurement of a chargepoint operator will be undertaken during 2025 with an expectation that the initial roll out of on-street chargepoints will commence from autumn 2025 onwards. Following the initial investment and installation of chargepoints across the county the effectiveness of the take up by the public will determine the future implications of this work as there is the potential for a proportion of the income generated to be used to support Council services.

Transport for the South East (TfSE)

7.25. We have provided evidence for the refresh of TfSE's Transport Strategy and a response to its consultation on the draft strategy which will inform the final draft to be presented to the TfSE Board in summer 2025 before submission to Government in October. We will also work with TfSE to support their review and update of the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) first approved by TfSE's Board in November 2022. The SIP identifies key transport priorities across the region and has helped to access funding for eight key schemes last year.

7.26. Launched last summer, we have provided case study evidence to the TfSE Centre of Excellence which now has over 200 recognised users and has been recognised as an exemplar by the Department for Transport. This also means we can collaborate and learn with national organisations, universities, and professional institutions to share best practices and strengthen our capability.

Road safety developments

7.27. The statutory duty placed on us, and the expectation of our residents, in terms of road safety is significant. To manage this, we have a range of measures and programmes designed to fulfil the wide-ranging pressures we face, including an annual assessment of crashes occurring on our road network to inform prioritisation of road safety schemes. Nationally, the Government has confirmed the first Road Safety Strategy for over a decade is in development and expected to be published later in 2025.

7.28. A review of speed limits on all A and B-class roads across the county was recently undertaken which identified 13 roads where a lower speed limit would be more appropriate and three roads where measures to improve compliance with an existing speed limit would be beneficial. £500,000 has been allocated to take forward schemes at these sites, and consultations are underway for four of the lower speed limits, with a further two planned to commence during 2025/26. The measures to encourage compliance with existing speed

limits are due to be completed in summer 2025. The remaining speed limit changes will take place in 2026/27.

7.29. We are continuing to implement innovative behaviour change focused projects which aim to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured (KSI) on the county's road network. A new behaviour change trial, in partnership with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), launched in February 2024, is continuing into 2025/26. The trial targets young drivers and uses existing DVSA communication channels to engage with them in the six months after they pass their test. Communications are designed to address a range of behaviours which influence driving, reinforce the legitimacy of speed limits and the costs of driving unsafely. The trial is intended to reduce the overall rate of speeding offences, which evidence indicates is a suitable proxy for reducing the future risk of being involved in a KSI collision. The impact of the trial will be assessed during 2025.

Exceat Bridge replacement

7.30. Following the reallocation of some Bus Scheme Improvement Programme (BSIP) funding to the bridge replacement project, the preferred option of a two-lane, offline bridge is progressing. In view of the objections received by the Department for Transport against the Compulsory Purchase Orders necessary to secure the land needed for the new bridge, a Public Inquiry was held in May 2025 and we await the decision from the Secretary of State in the autumn. Construction of the new bridge is expected to commence in early 2026.

National Highways Programmes

Strategic Road Network (SRN) - A27/A21

7.31. The Government's second [Roads Investment Strategy](#) (RIS2), covering 2020-2025, identified further work would be undertaken to develop proposals for the A27 between Lewes and Polegate as a potential pipeline scheme for construction between 2025 and 2030. A study outlining potential options for the A27 was submitted by National Highways (NH) to DfT in January 2023 for consideration alongside the other RIS3 pipeline scheme studies.

7.32. The RIS3 was expected to be published by March 2025. However, Government announced in February 2025 that RIS3 will cover the five-year period from April 2026 to March 2031 with an interim settlement for NH being put in place covering 2025-26. It is expected that the draft strategy will be published in summer 2025 and the final strategy in place at the end of 2025.

7.33. NH's Strategic Road Network Initial Report and South Coast Central Initial Report, published in May 2023, indicated that the A27 Lewes to Polegate will slip to become a pipeline project in RIS4. Alongside our partners, it is important we continue to engage with NH and DfT to make the case for investment in a more comprehensive solution for the A27 between Lewes and Polegate, as well as improvements to the A21 at Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst, Flimwell and Hurst Green through future RISs. The schemes for the A27 and A21 corridors, included within the TfSE SIP and the LTP4 Implementation Plan, will improve the economic connectivity of the county.

Major Road Network (MRN)

7.34. The MRN sits between the Strategic Road Network and the local road network and includes the busiest and most economically important local authority A roads. In East Sussex there are a number of roads included as part of the MRN, including the A259 between Rottingdean and Pevensey Bay and A22 Eastbourne to Forest Row (including Golden Jubilee Way).

7.35. The Outline Business Case for the A22 Corridor Package, focused on the Hailsham, Polegate and Stone Cross section of the corridor, was approved in May 2024 with the full business case planned for submission to Government in March 2026. A decision is still pending from Government on the Strategic Outline Business Case submitted for the A259 South Coast Corridor Package. Further business cases are being developed should further rounds of MRN funding become available. The development and delivery of these packages of MRN funded schemes are required to meet infrastructure needs that will come forward through the Local Plan processes as well as support the objectives of our adopted LTP and its supporting documents, our Prosperity Strategy, alongside TfSE's Transport Strategy and Strategic Investment Plan and national policies.

8. Economy

8.1. The following sections outline recent developments in Government policy and investment programmes that will affect the support we provide, with partners, to drive sustainable local economic growth in future, including through the East Sussex Prosperity Strategy, skills and employability programmes.

Government plans for economic growth

8.2. The Government has indicated that delivering economic growth is its number one priority, with an aim for the UK to achieve the highest sustained growth in the G7. To support this, in November 2024 the Government published [Invest 2035: The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy Green Paper](#), a 10-year plan to provide certainty and stability to businesses to encourage investment in the high growth sectors. The growth sectors identified in the Green Paper were: advanced manufacturing; clean energy industries; creative industries; defence; digital and technologies; financial services; life sciences; and professional and business services. The Council responded to the consultation on the Green Paper, noting the importance of flexibility in the Industrial Strategy so it can align with local high growth sectors including health and social care, agri/viticulture and the visitor economy. The Government's final Industrial Strategy, to be published in June 2025, will set out how it plans to accelerate growth in the eight growth-driving sectors and strengthen economic resilience.

8.3. A second key pillar of the Government's growth plans is its ambition to build 1.5m new houses by the end of the parliament, including a new generation of new towns to be built across England. The Council will need to work to ensure that any new significant developments in East Sussex have the necessary infrastructure and services in place to support communities. The Government also intends to speed up the development of critical major infrastructure, and to this end has indicated that it is minded to approve the use of a second runway at Gatwick Airport, with a final decision expected later in 2025. A 10 year national Infrastructure Strategy is also expected imminently.

Local economic strategy

8.4. Under the Government's devolution plans, the proposed Sussex Mayoral Combined County Authority will have powers that cover economic development and regeneration, including a statutory duty to produce a Sussex-wide Local Growth Plan. Devolution and plans for local government reorganisation will create both opportunities and complexity for local economic development teams to respond to, alongside delivery of existing functions and schemes.

8.5. We will continue work to develop a strategic investment plan to support the delivery of the missions in the [East Sussex Prosperity Strategy 2024-2050](#), which we envisage will feed into any proposed Sussex-wide Growth Plan. The missions encompass Business,

People and Place with associated interventions aimed at increasing prosperity across the county. We will also continue to support Team East Sussex (TES) which is the county's business-led public/private advisory growth board and will also continue to support a range of sectoral special interest boards to further work on economic prosperity.

8.6. We are awaiting the publication of the Government's new Industrial Strategy and Small Business Strategy in 2025, alongside the launch of a new national Business Growth Service to work alongside the Growth Hub network to support business growth. The Economic Development Team continues to deliver the East Sussex Growth Hub, alongside a raft of business support programmes.

Levelling Up Partnerships

8.7. Rother and Hastings are Levelling Up Partnership areas, each receiving a funding package of £20m to invest in areas such as housing, health and wellbeing, skills, and economic development. As part of the programmes, ESCC has been awarded funds including to deliver: a Youth Hub in Hastings; a £1m skills fund; and monies to assist with the completion of the Queensway Gateway Road.

Plan for Neighbourhoods

8.8. Under the previous Government, Bexhill, Eastbourne and Hastings were identified as recipients of Long Term Plan for Towns investment of up to £20m endowment fund each over 10 years. The current Government has since agreed to 'retain and reform' the programme rebranding it as a 'Plan for Neighbourhoods'. Accompanying guidance has been designed to offer support and tools for Neighbourhood Boards and accountable bodies (the relevant district and borough councils) to deliver the plans. We will seek to maximise investments to support our priorities and those of our partners.

Skills and employability

Skills England

8.9. Skills England has been established as a new arms-length body to identify and address skills needs nationally. It will prioritise key growth-driving sectors to shape and direct technical education to respond to skills shortages and it is due to announce reforms to the Growth and Skills Levy, to replace the existing Apprenticeship Levy. Changes to the Levy include more flexible and shorter/accelerated provision, as well as the development of foundation apprenticeships aimed at supporting younger workers into the system.

8.10. It is expected that Skills England will work closely with Combined Authorities and upper-tier local authorities to create a unified and coherent skills landscape. This collaboration aims to ensure that the workforce is equipped with the necessary skills to drive economic growth and meet local and national priorities. The local response to any national policy and reforms will be considered and overseen by the Skills East Sussex (SES) Board.

Bootcamps

8.11. Skills Bootcamps will be rolled out in 2025/26 across East Sussex to upskill adults aged 19+ via intensive 16-week Level 2-5 provision with a wide variety of courses on offer to those who are unemployed and those who wish to upskill and progress in work. Training for up to 450 people in East Sussex will be available in areas such as construction, green skills, viticulture, early years learning and a range of digital skills. We will focus on maximising take up of courses in order to achieve the outcomes envisaged from the programme.

Connect to Work

8.12. The Department for Work and Pensions funded Connect to Work Programme is anticipated to start in 2025/26 as part of the Government's Get Britain Working plan (see paragraph 10.7 below). It will provide support to economically inactive people in East Sussex, supporting people from specific cohorts into work, including care leavers, homeless adults, people with disabilities or mental health needs, those at risk of unemployment, refugees, people aged over 50 and ex-offenders. The programme is planned to run for up to five years, supporting over 2,500 people into work. ESCC will oversee the programme implementation, working with local providers to ensure that there is good take-up of the offer in line with objectives, that a high quality of employment support is given to participants, and we will draw on our links with local employers to support access to jobs in the local economy for project participants.

Skills provision

8.13. The Council's Employability and Skills Team run several programmes, many of which are time bound and subject to funding. There will be a need to respond to substantial changes in national policy and funding reforms in relation to skills and employability in partnership with Council services and external partners. A number of projects will continue until or beyond March 2026, including the 'Steps to Success' Effective Transitions pilot for disadvantaged young people, the Moving on Up employability programme, Support in to Work for Ukrainians and refugee groups, and Homelessness Prevention Employment Service.

8.14. ESCC will continue to deliver the Transform service to support East Sussex small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with advice on apprenticeships and skills training and help them to access Government incentives and unspent Levy funds to pay for apprenticeship training. ESCC is able to allocate up to 50% of its unspent Apprenticeship Levy (up to £600,000) to local SMEs if not used by the Council for its internal apprenticeship training. The Skills England reforms to the Growth and Skills Levy to be announced in 2025/26 may impact the amount of Levy that Transform is able to transfer to SMEs going forward.

8.15. The Adult Skills Fund (ASF), which is a vehicle for supporting adults towards employment, has been reduced by 6% for 2025/26 and will decrease by a further 11% over the next two years. The ASF is a funding area that would be transferred to a Sussex Mayoral Combined County Authority, meaning in future there would be opportunity to determine the application of the funding to support local needs.

Culture and tourism

8.16. VisitEngland has rolled out Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) which segment England into strategic tourism areas, each with its own LVEP board. The East Sussex, Brighton and Hove and West Sussex LVEP was accredited in February 2024. An open recruitment has now secured a business led LVEP board for the region and a Visitor Economy Growth Plan has been endorsed, which sets out a strategy to grow the Sussex visitor economy from its current value of £5bn a year to £7.5bn a year. To support the delivery of this ambition ESCC and West Sussex County Council have launched Experience Sussex, a Destination Management Organisation which targets international and high spending markets whilst supporting visitor economy sector development.

8.17. Both the culture and tourism sectors are operating in an uncertain economic environment, creating challenges for businesses. Although overseas visits to the UK and visitor confidence have now returned to pre-Covid levels, the impact of inflation and cost

pressures on businesses and customers, and geopolitical instability continue to affect these businesses. Those parts of the cultural sector that rely on grant funding are reporting a significant decrease in funds available, resulting in fewer projects, shorter opening hours and less work for creative freelancers. The creative industries are identified in the Government's Industrial Strategy Green Paper as one of eight priority sectors. As a consequence South East Creatives, a business programme to support high growth potential creative businesses, has received a funding extension from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

9. Environment and Climate Change

9.1. The following paragraphs detail recent national commitments, strategies and legislation that impact the Council's work to deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation, protection and enhancement of the local natural environment and waste management. It is important to note that net zero is increasingly integrated into wider policy, for instance housing, transport and public procurement.

Climate change – national policy context

9.2. One of the Government's five missions is to 'make Britain a clean energy superpower through delivering clean power by 2030 and accelerating to net zero'. The [Great British Energy Act 2025](#) has established Great British Energy Ltd, which will be responsible for investing £8.3bn over the current Parliament in clean energy projects. This represents an opportunity to draw significant investment into East Sussex in support of delivering Council objectives set out in the Economic Prosperity Strategy, the Local Transport Plan 4 and other strategies.

9.3. The Energy Act 2023 established the National Energy System Operator (NESO), which is responsible for planning the transition to net zero in an integrated way across the electricity and gas networks. NESO has established regional teams to prepare Regional Energy Systems Plans during 2025, which will look to identify what investment in the energy system is required where and when. Local authorities are expected to play an important role in developing the plans, for instance in identifying where new housing and other development is required and when it is likely to come forward.

9.4. The proposed Sussex Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) would take on responsibility for some aspects of responding to climate change. This includes co-ordinating heat network zoning, energy infrastructure planning and work on green jobs and skills, as well as working strategically with Great British Energy. Most of these roles are not currently being carried out by any organisation in Sussex, so this provides a further opportunity to draw new investment into East Sussex. There is also the need to define what role the current and future local authorities in Sussex need to play in addressing climate change, to work most effectively alongside the new structures that are emerging, including GB Energy, NESO and the MCCA.

Environment Act 2021

9.5. The Environment Act 2021 placed a number of duties and responsibilities on ESCC with implications as outlined below.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

9.6. The Act placed a requirement on ESCC to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove. LNRSs are a means to identify and agree the local priorities and direct future action and funding needed to deliver bigger, better and more connected habitats, as well as wider environmental benefits such as

carbon storage and sequestration and flood management.

9.7. ESCC is continuing to work closely with West Sussex County Council (WSCC) to share expertise and resources and carry out joint engagement. Extensive stakeholder engagement has been undertaken, as well as regular updates with our Supporting Authorities (Local Planning Authorities and Natural England). We are currently planning to go out to public consultation in summer 2025, with publication of the final strategy likely to be in Quarter 4 of 2025/26.

9.8. Delivery of the LNRS, once published, remains unclear, with many actions falling to individuals and organisations other than the Council. However, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has indicated that it sees Responsible Authorities such as ESCC playing a role in delivery, for example providing local leadership and oversight, coordinating delivery and creating a project pipeline. Additional burdens funding for such a role is currently under consideration by Defra. In parallel, the English Devolution White Paper has indicated that, over time, Government envisages that Strategic Authorities, such as the proposed Sussex MCCA, will be appointed to be the LNRS Responsible Authority.

Biodiversity Net Gain

9.9. The Environment Act 2021 requires the majority of developments considered through the local planning system to deliver a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG). This system has now been mandatory for a year and the Government has provided local authorities with additional burden monies to support implementation. ESCC has provided training to relevant staff at district and borough councils on BNG requirements and is continuing to support them on assessing BNG, through our service level agreements.

9.10. To support the need to deliver BNG, habitat banks (areas of land where biodiversity enhancements are being implemented to generate biodiversity units which can be sold on to developers) are being developed, with at least two live and registered in East Sussex, and several more in development.

9.11. One of the main challenges with BNG is securing the means to meet the requirement to maintain, monitor and report on the ecological schemes that are being implemented for at least 30 years following development. This is usually done through planning conditions and/or Section 106 Agreements. ESCC is working to develop best practice, including learning from other authorities across the country, to help ensure that BNG is being delivered as promised.

Waste provisions

9.12. The Environment Act introduces several changes to how waste services operate. Extended producer responsibility for packaging (EPRP) began in 2024 and the Council will receive its first payment towards the management of this material in winter 2025. Weekly food waste collections and the inclusion of cartons in the recycling bin will begin in April 2026, with plastic film collected from April 2027. A deposit return scheme for plastic drinks bottles and metal beverage cans will be introduced in October 2027. These changes will impact the Council's waste contracts, will require changes to facilities and will alter the amount and composition of waste and recycling that we manage.

UK Emissions Trading Scheme

9.13. In summer 2024, the Government conducted a consultation on the expansion of the UK Emissions Trading Scheme to include energy from waste from 2028, the results of which are expected in summer 2025. Inclusion of Newhaven Energy Recovery Facility in the UK Emissions Trading Scheme would have significant financial and operational impacts. Should this go ahead, starting in January 2026, the plant will need to monitor, report, and verify its emissions. From January 2028, it will also be required to purchase carbon allowances. The Council has engaged technical support to investigate potential ways to decarbonise the facility and reduce the financial liability of joining the scheme.

10. Supporting Services

10.1. The below section provides updates on key local and national developments for ESCC's supporting services. This includes local priorities relating to the transition to Oracle, responding to workforce and pay challenges, asset management, supporting productivity and reforms to data & digital/AI and public procurement.

10.2. ESCC support services such as IT & Digital, Human Resources (HR), Property, Internal Audit, Finance and Procurement will be comprehensively and fundamentally affected by local government reorganisation. There will be further complexity related to the delivery of some support functions (IT & Digital, Procurement and Internal Audit) through a shared service model across ESCC, Brighton & Hove City Council and Surrey County Council, as part of the Orbis public sector partnership. The scope and scale of the change will be significant, alongside business as usual activity, and will include areas such as property assets and their use, team structures, IT systems and data infrastructure, cyber security, and existing contractual commitments across all authorities concerned.

Oracle transition

10.3. The Oracle implementation programme was established to replace the Council's core finance and human resources (HR) systems. The current system, SAP, will no longer be supported by the supplier beyond 2027, making the implementation of a replacement unavoidable in order to sustain critical business functions, such as running a payroll. Replacing a system originally implemented over 15 years ago provides opportunities to take advantage of new technology which is better able to support an agile and flexible workforce. In addition, a more modern system is more intuitive for users, has a single sign-on, and brings with it improvements to the Council's internal control environment.

10.4. Oracle Fusion was selected as the new software platform with Infosys as the implementation partner, and the system is being implemented in a three phased 'Adopt not Adapt' approach. The 'Adopt not Adapt' approach involves using as much off-the-shelf Oracle functionality as possible, meaning that some changes in organisational ways of working are instead required. These changes are therefore supported by considerable staff, and wider stakeholder, engagement and assistance.

10.5. Most modules of Phase 1 (Enterprise Performance Management) and all of Phase 2 (Finance with dependent HR processes, Procurement, Recruitment and Helpdesk modules) are now live. Phase 3 (Payroll and all remaining HR processes) will be delivered during 2025 and 2026.

National workforce reforms

10.6. The Government's Plan to [Make Work Pay](#) is a core part of its mission to grow the economy, raise living standards across the country and create opportunities. The Plan seeks to help more people to stay in work, improve job security and boost living standards, of which the [Employment Rights Bill](#) is a key element. Containing a number of reforms, once

implemented, the Bill will support family friendly rights by improving flexibility and security, prioritise fairness, equality and wellbeing of workers and strengthen individual and collective employment rights, placing new obligations on employers.

10.7. As a good employer, the Council already has in place an extensive suite of employment related policies and procedures which set out our approach to staffing matters. We have well established consultation and engagement arrangements with the recognised trade unions and these have served us well in handling a complex range of workforce issues in recent years. We will ensure we follow the progress of the Bill and other wider workforce related reforms, such as those coming out of the [Get Britain Working White Paper](#) and the Keep Britain Working Review, and will update our policies and procedures as necessary to ensure compliance.

Workforce challenges

Pay

10.8. The introduction of the National Living Wage (NLW) created pressures as a result of its close proximity to the bottom end of the local government pay scales. Given the national employers' principle that local government should not be a minimum wage employer, maintaining headroom between the lowest rate of pay and the NLW has been a key objective of the recent national pay awards. The current top-end forecast of the NLW will have a significant impact on the lower end of the local East Sussex Single Status pay scales, in particular the first two grades. These grades currently cover a range of posts, the majority of which are in schools.

10.9. To address the NLW pressures, recent national pay awards have removed pay points and front loaded the pay award to provide a higher increase at the bottom end of the pay structure. Whilst this has addressed the immediate NLW pressures, a continuation of this approach in future pay awards will likely result in the need for the local Single Status pay scales to be remodelled.

Recruitment and retention

10.10. The Council continues to face recruitment and retention challenges as a result of the current national labour market conditions and cost of living pressures. Locally, there are particular challenges in front line social care roles (qualified and unqualified) and some of our technical and professional roles such as legal services, IT/digital, property, and engineering. The position is exacerbated in our more rural locations with recruitment in these areas being especially difficult. There is evidence to show that this tight labour market is putting pressure on pay levels.

10.11. In order to respond to these pressures and attract staff to work for the Council, a number of initiatives have been put in place which position ESCC as an 'employer of choice'. These include building on our 'We Choose East Sussex' recruitment brand to create additional engaging and informative content on the jobs pages of our website, as well as attending local careers fairs to showcase the range of job opportunities at the Council. As well as seeking to attract experienced individuals, we are also utilising approaches such as apprenticeships (making use of the Apprenticeship Levy), traineeships and intern arrangements as a way of bringing new talent into the Council. We are developing a 'work experience' package, the intention being to provide opportunities to support individuals to become work ready as well as encouraging individuals to consider the Council as the place to start their career, supported by wider work to attract candidates from a younger demographic to the Council.

10.12. Retention of our workforce is also a key aim. We are committed to supporting our staff with continuous professional development and creating an environment where staff are encouraged to learn and grow. In line with this, the People Strategy, covering the three-year period 2024 to 2027, has been updated to reflect the areas of workforce challenge. We are reviewing our leadership development offer following the second cohort of our innovative 'Ladder to Leadership' programme to build on the programme's successes and ensure it remains relevant to the needs of the Council and our future workforce. We continue to develop our extensive wellbeing offer to support our staff to remain healthy and well, both in and out of work.

10.13. Subject to the detail to be announced by Government, we will look to utilise increased flexibility in the new 'Growth and Skills' Levy to pursue wider training options to directly address our workforce needs and skills gaps.

ESCC Property Asset Management

10.14. The [Strategic Asset Plan 2020-2025](#), which is being reviewed and updated this year, includes actions to support efficient use of the Council's property assets. There is an ongoing focus on ensuring our assets are optimally utilised to reduce the physical footprint, which reduces property running costs and carbon emissions from the whole estate.

10.15. Following the review of County Hall in 2024/25 and the rationalisation of the Council's use of the space, we are pursuing opportunities to secure external tenants alongside Council operational teams to further reduce our property running costs. There will be a further review of all operational assets aligned to service changes reflecting the financial and budget pressures the Council faces.

Asset disposals

10.16. The Council will continue its ambitious disposal of assets programme to secure capital receipts which support the capital programme. This is particularly important at a time of significant financial constraints. We are working with district and borough councils to ensure relevant groups are aware of the Assets of Community Value lists under the Localism Act 2011. This gives town and parish councils and defined community or voluntary groups a right to nominate buildings or land for listing by the local authority as Assets of Community Value, with the aim of preserving buildings or land that are of importance to their community's social well-being.

Supporting productivity – data management and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

10.17. The [Data \(Use & Access\) Bill](#), currently in its final stages in Parliament, proposes comprehensive regulations on the use and access of data within local government, aiming to enhance transparency and accountability in digital governance. The Bill mandates stricter guidelines for the implementation and usage of AI in local government operations, requiring AI systems to be thoroughly vetted for biases and ensuring they operate within ethical standards. Additionally, it promotes the adoption of AI to improve service delivery while safeguarding residents' privacy and data security.

10.18. One of the critical impacts of the Bill is on resident-facing systems, such as online portals and customer service platforms. The Bill advocates for these systems to be more responsive and accessible, providing residents with real-time updates and personalised services. We will monitor closely the progression of this Bill to legislation and adoption, and revisions to existing approaches relating to the testing and adoption of new technologies will be made as required.

10.19. The Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology has set out a vision and set of initiatives for AI within governmental operations which focus on improving efficiency and enhancing service delivery by automating routine tasks. This includes the deployment of AI-powered chatbots in customer service, predictive analytics for resource management, and machine learning algorithms to enhance decision-making processes. This drive from Government will complement the work underway within local government to explore how and where AI-powered systems can enhance the efficiency of resident-facing platforms, such as online portals and customer service interfaces as well as central functions. The Council is conducting trials with Microsoft Copilot to assess productivity gains, quality improvements, and to develop ethical and security guidelines.

Procurement Act 2023

10.20. The Procurement Act 2023 came into force in February 2025 and is the most significant change in public procurement legislation for 30 years. It has required a number of changes to our systems, process and procedures, as well as corporate governance arrangements, and engagement with service stakeholders on the impacts of this legislative change. The Council's Procurement and Contract Standing Orders have been rewritten to comply with national legislation and were approved by Full Council in March 2025. As well as procedural changes and new opportunities to procure differently, the Council has a number of new transparency and contract management obligations. All procurement staff have been trained to understand these, and support and information has been provided to officers more widely affected by the new regulations.

10.21. The Council must also have regard to a revised [National Procurement Policy Statement](#), which also came into effect in February 2025. It includes four priorities: social and economic benefit; supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs); sustainability and Net Zero; and procurement/commercial capability. Associated Procurement Policy Notices require social value in contracts to be obtained through the use of the Government's Social Value Model (though this is not binding on local authorities). We will keep the new regulations and changes made under review in the short term to ensure these are embedded effectively in Council operations.

Our priority and delivery outcomes

The Priority Outcomes

The Council has four overarching priority outcomes: driving sustainable economic growth; keeping vulnerable people safe; helping people help themselves; and making best use of resources now and for the future. Making best use of resources now and for the future is the gateway priority through which any activity and accompanying resources must pass. For each priority outcome there are specific delivery outcomes.

Driving sustainable economic growth - delivery outcomes

- East Sussex businesses are supported to succeed and grow sustainably
- The county is an attractive place to live, work and do business
- Individuals, communities and businesses thrive in East Sussex with the environmental, and social infrastructure to meet their needs
- The workforce has and maintains the skills needed for good quality employment to meet the needs of the current and future East Sussex economy
- The value of our role as both a significant employer and a buyer of local goods and services is maximised
- All children progress well from early years through school and into post-16 education, training and employment

Keeping vulnerable people safe - delivery outcomes

- All vulnerable people in East Sussex are known to relevant local agencies and support is delivered together to meet their needs
- People feel safe at home and well supported by their networks
- Children grow up supported by enduring, loving relationships
- People feel safe with support provided
- We work with the wider health and care system to support people to achieve the best outcomes possible

Helping people help themselves - delivery outcomes

- Commissioners and providers from all sectors put people first when providing services and information to help them meet their needs
- The most vulnerable get the support they need to maintain their independence and this is provided at or as close to home as possible
- Through working well with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, individuals, families and communities are supported to thrive
- We work to reduce health inequalities and maximise opportunities for our residents to live healthier lives

Making best use of resources now and for the future - delivery outcomes

- To help tackle Climate Change East Sussex County Council activities are carbon neutral as soon as possible and in any event by 2050
- We work as One Council
- We work in strong and sustained partnership with the public, voluntary community, social enterprise and private sectors to ensure that our collective resources and influence are used to deliver maximum benefits
- Ensuring we achieve value for money in the services we commission and provide

- Maximising the funding available through bidding for funding and lobbying for the best deal for East Sussex
- We are an employer of choice and support our staff to achieve and develop, ensuring we have the workforce we need to deliver services both now and in the future

Appendix 4 – State of the County 2025 Capital Programme Update

1 Background

1.1 Through the Reconciling Policy Performance and Resources (RPPR) process the Capital Strategy and programme are reviewed annually to ensure that they support the Council's responsibilities and departmental service strategies. To manage investment to a sustainable level, the Capital Strategy focuses on the delivery of targeted basic need for the council to continue to deliver services as efficiently as possible, rather than rationing through prioritisation. Basic need for the purpose of strategic capital planning is provided below: -

- Place: ensuring we can deliver services by planning for future need.
- Asset Condition: maintaining our assets to an agreed level.
- ICT Strategy: ensure that our ICT is fit for purpose for delivering modern council services in a digital era and protecting data.
- Climate Change: supporting the Council's aim of reaching carbon neutrality from our activities as soon as possible and in any event by 2050 in an appropriate and cost-efficient way and within the resources available.

1.2 At Full Council in February 2025 the target led basic need capital strategy of 20 years, supported by a 10-year planned capital programme was approved. The programme reflected the outcome of the capital programme review undertaken during 2024 that reduced planned borrowing costs by an estimated £3.9m over the medium term period (2025/26 to 2027/28).

1.3 The capital programme 2024/25 to 2023/24 reported as part of the Budget in February 2025 had a total programme expenditure of £713.9m and a borrowing requirement of £218.3m. Table 1 below provides details of the approved capital programme and funding.

Table 1 – Capital Programme (Budget 2024/25) (£m)	Previous Year 2023/24	MTFP Period			2027/28 to 2033/34	Total
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27		
Gross Expenditure	(104.651)	(130.758)	(54.046)	(44.527)	(379.936)	(713.918)
Specific Funding	(33.851)	(51.046)	(5.815)	(2.883)	(1.002)	(94.597)
Net Expenditure	(70.800)	(79.712)	(48.231)	(41.644)	(378.934)	(619.321)
Formula Grants	(25.772)	(29.530)	(29.330)	(30.919)	(208.370)	(323.921)
Capital Receipts	(4.802)	(3.950)	(2.248)	(2.198)	(4.424)	(17.622)
Reserves and Revenue Set Aside	(14.671)	(12.141)	(0.385)	(0.452)	(14.187)	(41.836)
Developer Contributions Target	-	-	-	-	(17.601)	(17.601)
<i>Slippage Risk Factor</i>	<i>(20.068)</i>	<i>(18.278)</i>	<i>(7.337)</i>	<i>(3.924)</i>	<i>(49.607)</i>	(0.000)
Programme Borrowing	(5.487)	(15.813)	(8.931)	(4.151)	(183.959)	(218.341)

1.4 The financial outlook for local authorities continues to become ever more challenging, with uncertain funding allocations, inflationary pressure on contracts and wages, increasing service demands and the impact of national reforms leaving much uncertainty about the Council's future financial position. Capital investment decisions have a direct impact on the council's revenue budget, particularly relating to borrowing costs, and are therefore to be considered in the context of their impact on the MTFP. The Council will therefore continue to consider changes to the Capital Programme outside normal Capital Strategy updates.

2 Capital Programme

2.1 Table 2 below summarises the gross movements since budget setting in February 2025, reflecting the 2024/25 outturn position, other updates made in accordance with approved governance and variation process, and proposed updates to be made in accordance with Capital Strategy principles. A detailed programme has been included at **Annex A**.

Table 2 - Capital Programme Gross Expenditure Updates	Ref:	Outturn 2024/25 £m	MTFP Period			2028/29 to 2034/35 £m	Total £m
			2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m		
Approved Capital Programme (Budget 2025)		104.651	130.758	54.046	44.527	379.936	713.918
Approved Variations	A	1.937	(0.734)	0.263	0.227	0.000	1.693
Capital Programme Slippage / Reprofiles	B	(19.088)	(30.347)	36.610	11.914	0.911	0.000
Capital Programme Over / Underspend		(0.464)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.464)
Other Programme Updates	C	0.000	3.304	0.623	0.623	4.361	8.911
Total Updates		(17.615)	(27.777)	37.496	12.764	5.272	10.140
Revised Capital Programme		87.036	102.981	91.542	57.291	385.208	724.058
Capital Slippage Risk Factor	D	0.000	(18.890)	0.000	0.000	18.890	0.000
Approved Capital Programme (after Capital Slippage Risk Factor)		87.036	84.091	91.542	57.291	404.098	724.058

A Approved Variations

There is a gross increase to the programme of £1.7m relating to several fully funded schemes that have a net nil impact on the capital programme. One of the schemes – the purchase of the Pacific House site was funded via internal borrowing as set out in table 3 below:

Table 3 – Approved Variations since State of the County 2025	Outturn 2024/25 £'m	MTFP Period			2028/29 to 2034/35 £m	Total £'000
		2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000		
Children's Essential System Developments net change (revenue set aside)	0.017	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.017
Youth Service Mobile Resource Bus (specific grant funding)	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.070
Sidley Family Hub Refurbishment (specific grant funding)	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.090
Youth Investment Fund (revenue set aside)	0.200	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.200
Sorrel Drive Refurbishment (50/50 revenue set aside & health funding)	0.165	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.165
Oracle Implementation - training to revenue (reserve funding)	(0.290)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.290)
Flood Management and SUDs in Schools (specific grant funding)	0.060	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.140
Pacific House purchase (internal borrowing)	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.002
Schools Basic Need (external contribution)	0.793	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.793
Special Educational Needs (school contribution)	0.035	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.035
Climate Emergency Works (external contribution)	0.083	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.083
Schools Delegated Capital (specific grant and schools contributions)	0.713	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.713
Capital Building Improvements Corporate (external contribution)	0.000	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.070
Urban Tree Challenge (specific grant)	0.000	(0.117)	(0.044)	(0.044)	0.000	(0.205)

Other Integrated Transport Schemes (Formula Grant)	0.000	(0.505)	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.505)
ATF Eastbourne Liveable Town Centre (Formula Grant)	0.000	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.075
Hailsham/Polegate/Eastbourne Movement & Access Corridor (Formula Grant)	0.000	0.240	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.240
A22 North of Hailsham (Formula Grant)	0.000	0.190	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.190
Other Integrated Transport Schemes (S106 & External Contribution)	0.000	(0.805)	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.805)
Hastings Bexhill Movement and Access Programme (S106 Contributions)	0.000	(0.372)	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.372)
Area-wide Traffic Management Scheme - Schools Streets (S106 Contributions)	0.000	0.010	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.010
Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections	0.000	0.000	0.307	0.000	0.000	0.307
Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections	0.000	0.400	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.400
Exceat Bridge Replacement	0.000	0.000	3.037	8.362	0.000	11.399
Bus Service Improvement Plan - Bus Prioritisation	0.000	0.000	(3.037)	(8.091)	0.000	(11.128)
Total Net Nil Approved Variations	1.937	(0.734)	0.263	0.227	0.000	1.693

C Other Programme Updates

Other updates made in accordance with Capital Strategy principles relate to:

- the DFE Grant for Schools, which has increased by £0.6m per annum above previous planning assumptions.
- the allocation of additional High Needs Capital Funding, which has been added to the programme in line with the Capital Strategy.

D 2024/25 Capital Programme Outturn

Total 2023/24 capital expenditure was £87.0m against an approved budget (after variations) of £106.5m, resulting in a variation to budget of £19.5m. This variation is made up of £19.1m net slippage, and a £0.4m net underspend against the planned programme. Net slippage has been re-profiled to future years. In addition, work has been undertaken to re-profile future expenditure to construct a programme that reflects a realistic projection of when work will take place at a project level.

E Capital Slippage Risk Factor

The Capital Programme continues to experience significant levels of budget slippage compared to original budgets, which can undermine the planning process, particularly in terms of treasury management modelling and the impact of borrowing on the revenue budget over the medium term. A corporate capital risk factor was introduced in 2024/25 to reflect likely slippage based on a risk assessment of historic levels of actual expenditure and slippage at a project/programme level. The original slippage risk factor applied to the 2024/25 budget was £19.1m. This compares with final slippage of £19.5m. A further risk factor of £18.9m has been applied for 2025/26, proportionate to the slippage reported in the 2024/25 outturn, to bring the total planned expenditure over the MTFP period to a figure which reflects the general risk to delivery of the programme.

3 Capital Programme Funding Update

3.1 Table 4 below shows the funding for the programme.

Table 4 – Capital Programme Funding Update	Ref:	Current Year 2024/25 £m	MTFP Period			2028/29 to 2034/35 £m	Total £m
			2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m		
Gross Expenditure		87.036	84.091	91.542	57.291	404.098	724.058
Specific Funding	E	(21.666)	(21.191)	(18.647)	(12.214)	(8.900)	(82.618)
Specific Developer Contributions	F	(3.279)	(1.771)	(2.305)	(1.674)	(2.402)	(11.431)
Net Expenditure		62.091	61.129	70.590	43.403	392.796	630.009
Formula Grants	G	(23.815)	(36.453)	(29.953)	(29.953)	(214.130)	(334.304)
Capital Receipts	H	(4.802)	(1.288)	(4.910)	(2.198)	(4.424)	(17.622)
Reserves and Revenue Set Aside		(7.155)	(4.568)	(1.843)	(0.723)	(11.532)	(25.821)
Capital Reserve		(2.005)	(4.624)	(0.535)	(0.682)	(7.957)	(15.803)
Developer Contribution Target		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(17.601)	(17.601)
Capital Programme Borrowing	I	24.314	14.196	33.349	9.847	137.152	218.858

3.2 Current Treasury Management modelling for the direct costs of borrowing estimates that for every £10m of additional borrowing, there would be an associated revenue cost of approximately £750,000 per year over the full life of the asset (based on a 30 year asset life), although the profile of costs will vary dependent on a number of variables such as timing, internal cash balances and interest rates. The capital programme review undertaken has significantly reduced the borrowing required to fund the future programme.

F Formula Grants Update

The capital programme is supported by £327.3m of non-specific formula grant, which represents 45% of the total gross programme funding. Formula grant assumptions reflect best estimates but noting that there continues to be risk in relation to these grants as values for future years are still yet to be announced. Formula Grant values have been updated to reflect both the notification of additional High Needs Provision capital grants in 2025/26 of £7.0m and the reduction of basic need funding to zero in 2026/27 and 2027/28.

G Capital Receipts Update

Review and refinement of Property Services schedule of capital receipts is undertaken on a regular basis with estimates based on Property Officers' professional judgement on a site-by-site basis. This is supported by the work undertaken recently and successfully getting several surplus properties to the point of sale. Capital receipts have been re-profiled based on recent sales. Further work will be undertaken during budget setting 2025/26 to reflect recent legislative changes to the use of capital receipts.

I Borrowing

The borrowing figure in 2024/25 reflects a level of internal borrowing required to fund capital expenditure incurred in 2024/25. No additional external borrowing was undertaken. The requirement for future external borrowing will depend on projected treasury balances, interest rates and future slippage.

4 Programme Update and Review / RPPR Next Steps

4.1 Work will now be progressed as part of the RPPR process to extend the programme by a further year to maintain a 10-year planning horizon and ensure continued links into, and support of, the Council's other strategies.

4.2 The Capital Strategy will also be reviewed to ensure it continues to drive investment ambition in line with the Council's priorities and to continue to include equality impact assessments (EQIAs) as part of the capital RPPR process, whilst also providing for appropriate capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management within the context of sustainable, long-term delivery of services.

5 Conclusion

5.1 This report provides an update on current approved capital programme as part of the annual RPPR cycle. Work will now be progressed as part of the RPPR process to extend the programme by a further year to maintain the 10-year planning horizon, link into and support the Council's other strategies, as well as a review of the programme to reduce the revenue impact of borrowing.

Annex A – Detailed Capital Programme

Detailed Capital Programme (Gross Expenditure) (£m)	Previous Year 2024/25	MTFP Period			2027/28 to 2033/34	Total
		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28		
Adult Social Care						
Older People's/LD Service Improvements (House Adaptations)	(0.003)	-	-	-	-	(0.003)
Learning Disability Supported Living Scheme	3.165	1.829	0.043	-	-	5.037
Greenacres	-	0.140	-	-	-	0.140
Adult Social Care Total	3.162	1.969	0.043	-	-	5.174
Business Services						
SALIX Contract	0.094	-	-	-	-	0.094
Lansdowne Secure Unit - Phase 2	0.001	-	-	-	-	0.001
Youth Investment Fund	5.458	1.745	-	-	-	7.203
Hollington Youth Centre	0.336	3.037	0.039	-	-	3.412
Hastings and Rother Skills Capital	0.907	0.093	-	-	-	1.000
Youth Service Mobile Resource Bus	-	0.070	-	-	-	0.070
Sidley Family Hub and Main Building Refurbishment	0.090	-	-	-	-	0.090
Sorrel Drive Refurbishment	0.165	-	-	-	-	0.165
Special Educational Needs	0.522	3.673	1.000	1.000	3.500	9.695
Special Educational Needs – Additional Places	1.068	3.350	11.272	1.430	-	17.120
Disability Children's Homes	0.010	0.014	-	-	-	0.024
Westfield Lane (delivered on behalf of CSD)	-	0.017	-	-	-	0.017
Core Programme - Schools Basic Need	0.232	0.546	0.512	0.460	60.149	61.899
Core Programme - Capital Building Improvements (Schools)	4.064	6.909	5.012	5.012	35.084	56.081
Core Programme - Capital Building Improvements (Corporate)	3.526	4.966	4.000	4.000	28.000	44.492
Pacific House Purchase	0.713	-	-	-	-	0.713
Core Programme - IT & Digital Strategy implementation	5.208	5.094	4.281	2.880	53.342	70.805
IT & Digital Strategy implementation - Oracle Implementation	6.722	8.800	2.622	-	-	18.144
IT & Digital Strategy implementation (utilising automation)	-	0.024	-	-	-	0.024
Business Services Total	29.116	38.338	28.738	14.782	180.075	291.049

House Adaptations for Disabled Children's Carers Homes	0.167	-	-	-	-	0.167
Schools Delegated Capital	1.943	1.150	1.150	1.150	-	5.393
Children's Services Essential System Developments	0.462	1.279	0.958	0.774	-	3.473
Children's Services Total	2.572	2.429	2.108	1.924	-	9.033
Broadband	0.172	0.338	0.500	0.500	0.500	2.010
Bexhill and Hastings Link Road	0.034	-	-	-	-	0.034
BHLR Complementary Measures	0.009	0.132	-	-	-	0.141
Economic Intervention Fund - Grants	-	-	-	-	-	-
Economic Intervention Fund - Loans	0.020	0.022	0.300	0.300	1.055	1.697
Growing Places Fund Loan Scheme	-	-	-	-	4.958	4.958
Stalled Sites	-	-	-	-	-	-
EDS Upgrading Empty Commercial Properties	-	-	-	-	-	-
Community Match Fund	0.048	0.397	-	-	-	0.445
Community Road Safety Interventions	0.125	0.422	-	-	-	0.547
Newhaven Port Access Road	0.107	0.028	-	-	-	0.135
Real Time Passenger Information	0.264	0.267	-	-	-	0.531
Passenger Services Software	-	0.005	-	-	-	0.005
Bus Service Improvement Plan - Bus Prioritisation	1.308	5.877	-	-	-	7.185
Bus Service Improvement Plan - Passenger Transport	1.068	0.183	-	-	-	1.251
Bus Service Improvement Plan 2025-26	-	4.555	-	-	-	4.555
Queensway Depot Development (Formerly Eastern)	0.002	0.001	-	-	-	0.003
Queensway Gateway Road	2.888	0.470	-	-	-	3.358
The Keep	-	0.212	0.085	0.152	0.628	1.077
Other Integrated Transport Schemes	2.379	4.063	4.818	3.523	20.587	35.370
Integrated Transport Schemes - A22 Corridor Package	1.031	1.112	-	-	-	2.143
A22 North of Hailsham	0.066	0.242	-	-	-	0.308
Exceat Bridge Replacement	0.427	2.587	5.323	9.282	-	17.619
Emergency Active Travel Fund - Tranche 2	0.035	0.403	-	-	-	0.438

Area-wide Traffic Management Scheme - Schools Streets	0.006	0.154	-	-	-	0.160
ATF Eastbourne Livable Town Centre	0.274	0.117	-	-	-	0.391
Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections	0.384	0.772	8.881	-	-	10.037
Core Programme - Libraries Basic Need	0.727	0.489	0.574	0.449	0.898	3.137
Core Programme - Highways Structural Maintenance	28.537	16.667	21.000	21.000	147.000	234.204
Safer Roads Fund	0.011	0.864	-	-	-	0.875
Core Programme - Bridge Assessment Strengthening	2.409	2.180	6.758	1.830	14.447	27.624
Bridge/Structures Assessment Strengthening - Essential Maintenance	0.100	1.300	1.000	-	-	2.400
Core Programme - Street Lighting and Traffic Signals - life expired equipment	3.369	2.596	4.974	1.041	8.790	20.770
Core Programme - Rights of Way Surface Repairs and Bridge Replacement Programme	0.589	0.642	0.662	0.702	5.780	8.375
Gypsy and Traveller Site Refurbishment	0.003	0.137	0.070	0.070	0.490	0.770
Visibly Better Roads	0.256	0.248	-	-	-	0.504
Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	-	0.500	2.320	1.721	-	4.541
Flood & Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme	1.119	0.840	0.683	-	-	2.642
Flood Management and SuDS in Schools	0.398	-	-	-	-	0.398
Urban Tree Challenge	0.011	0.015	0.015	0.015	-	0.056
Climate Emergency Works	2.036	0.242	-	-	-	2.278
Eastbourne Town Centre Phase 2a	0.374	2.290	1.161	-	-	3.825
Eastbourne Town Centre Phase 2b	0.744	4.328	-	-	-	5.072
Eastbourne/South Wealden Walking & Cycling Package	0.083	1.892	-	-	-	1.975
Hailsham/Polegate/Eastbourne Movement & Access Corridor	0.064	0.310	-	-	-	0.374
Hastings Bexhill Movement and Access Programme	0.709	2.346	1.529	-	-	4.584
Communities, Economy and Transport Total	52.186	60.245	60.653	40.585	205.133	418.802
Capital Programme Total	87.036	102.981	91.542	57.291	385.208	724.058