

Durham County Council

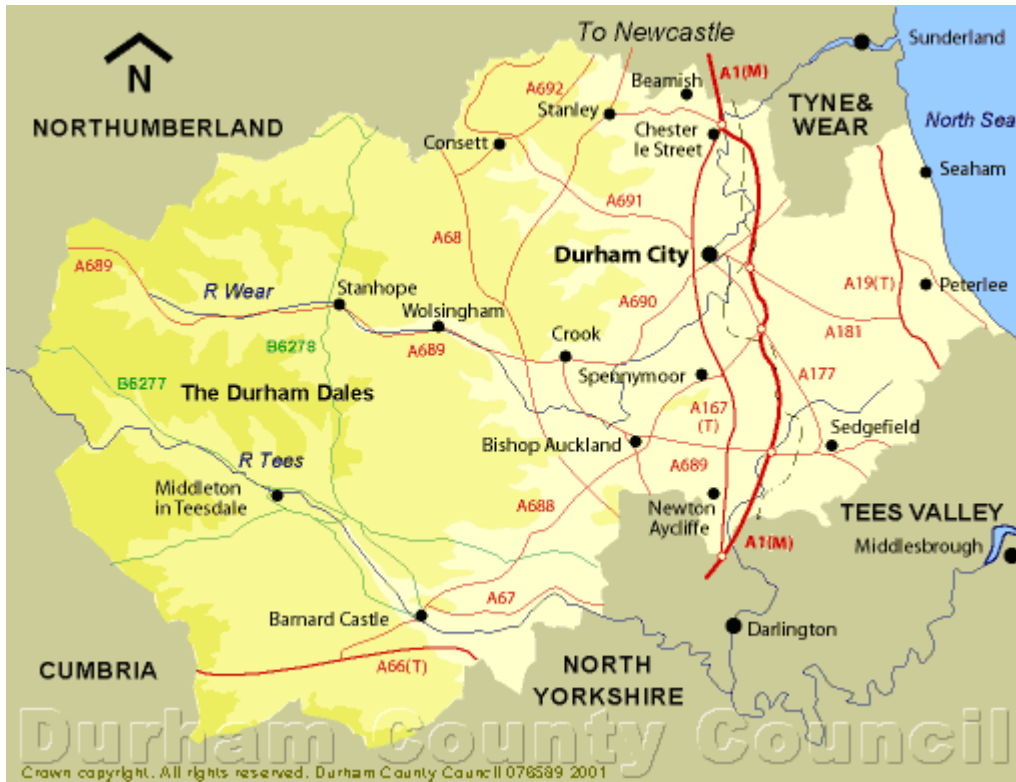
CPA Corporate Assessment

Self – Assessment September 2007

Making a difference where you live



Durham County Council
Comprehensive Performance Assessment
Self-Assessment



Signed on behalf of Durham County Council by:

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Leader of the Council

Mark Lloyd
Chief Executive

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SECTION 1: CONTEXT AND SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the context within which the County Council operates, both locally and regionally, has continued to change with many opportunities to work differently and to focus on better outcomes for local people. The Council continues to make a positive contribution and is currently assessed as a 'four star' council which is 'improving well'. The recently published Local Government White Paper, with its focus on community empowerment, local leadership and local government as a convener of public services, will undoubtedly present further opportunities and challenges for the Council and its partners. The Council responded to the Government's invitation to submit proposals for unitary local government in two tier areas and on 25 July the Government announced its decision to create a single unitary council in County Durham. The creation of the new council will be a major undertaking and work is already underway to put in place the necessary structures and programme management arrangements for the new council to be up and running from April 2009.

COUNTY DURHAM

The Place

County Durham extends from the North Sea heritage coast in the east to the high moors of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the west. It is a large geographic area covering 223,000 hectares (862 square miles) and is bordered by the major conurbations of Tyne and Wear to the north and Tees Valley to the south. Most of the County is rural in nature, with settlement patterns centred on 12 major towns and over 300 other small towns and villages, many of them former colliery villages. The City of Durham is the County's most significant centre, with a population of 37,000, and its Cathedral and Castle are recognised as one of the Country's few World Heritage Sites. Recent research has shown that 79% of residents live in one of the 12 major towns.

The main transport routes and economic arteries through County Durham are the major north/south routes - the A1M, A19 and A68 and the East Coast mainline railway. The important east/west links include the A66 and the A689 to Cumbria, the A688 to Barnard Castle and the A690 to Sunderland. Durham is served by two regional airports - Newcastle and Durham-Tees Valley.

The People

The County has a population of just under 500,000 and there are 207,000 households. The population has been declining over the past 30 years (by around 5% over that period) but latest sub-national population projections forecast that the population will remain relatively stable over the next twenty years. However, the county's age profile, like most areas, is set to change dramatically. By 2010 a sharp fall in the number of young people is predicted along with a significant rise in older age groups. There is a projected 84% increase in the number of people aged over 85 years by 2021 and many will require social care support.

The economic history of the County, its agricultural heritage and the development of coal mining in particular, have shaped and defined the cultural tradition of the County and its many communities. The County's people have a strong sense of identity with the County and with their town/village, and there is a distinctive local culture and sense of community, particularly in the smaller settlements. Due to the settlement patterns in the County there are many communities that experience problems of remoteness and this highlights the importance of effective communication and transportation systems.

According to the 2001 census black and minority ethnic people represent around 1% of the population with the three largest groups being Irish, Indian and Chinese. This percentage has increased over recent years, particularly taking account of migrant workers from Eastern European countries, such as Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. Currently the total is estimated to be around 2% of the population. There is also a significant population of Gypsies and Travellers who are settled or migrant and, as with some of the newer migrant workers, mapping accurate numbers is an important task for many organisations in the County.

Many parts of the County have significant levels of deprivation. Around one third of the population live in areas which are judged amongst the 30% most deprived nationally. The high levels of deprivation are mainly concentrated in East Durham, North West Durham and around the Bishop Auckland/Crook & Willington area (see map attached).

The people of County Durham experience some of the worst health of any area in England and life expectancy for men and women is below the national average. Life expectancy for women is 79.4 and for men 75.6 years, compared with 81.1 and 76.9 for England as a whole. Approximately 31% of all adults smoke, compared with around 26% nationally, levels of obesity are high (32% of adults) and there is a high teenage pregnancy rate (48.9 per 1000 of 15-17 year olds). There are relatively large numbers of people with a disability or long-term limiting illness reflected in high numbers of disability living allowance, incapacity benefit and carers' payments. The Council will also need to address the demand arising from an estimated increase in the number of school leavers with learning disabilities who will require services and greater numbers of ageing learning disabled people.

Educational attainment at all key stages has been improving well in recent years. The number of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*- C has been improving at a much faster rate than nationally and has increased from 41% in 2002 to 56.6% in summer 2006. Results for 2007 show a further significant increase to reach 60%. The proportion of young people aged 16-18 not in employment, education or training (NEET) is relatively high at 12.%, although it has reduced from 13% at March 2006. In the County there are high levels of employees with basic skill needs.

Despite a recent increase in recorded crime County Durham remains one of the safest places to live in the country. However, evidence from survey work and community consultation consistently records concern about crime and, more particularly, about anti-social behaviour. Reducing such concerns and promoting public reassurance is a key issue for all of the County's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs).

The Economy

The county's traditional economy in mining and manufacturing has changed significantly over the last 40 years. The County still has a number of high performing manufacturing companies and it benefits from having world class University of Durham, which has a strong research base, and is amongst the best in the Country. Recent growth in leisure and tourism has increased the importance of this sector, particularly in rural areas. Beamish Museum is one of the most visited paid attractions in the north east, while Durham, with the Cathedral and castle attracts visitors all year round. In rural Wear Valley the proposed development of the Eastgate site into an eco-friendly community, powered by harnessing renewable energy, has a powerful tourism element.

The North East Technology Park (Netpark) in Sedgefield is a powerful brand for County Durham, representing and driving forward the knowledge economy and higher value added activities in County Durham at a national and international level. Plans are underway to introduce a Virtual Netpark, the world's first virtual (online) science park.

The economic challenges facing the County include:

- Low levels of Gross Value Added (GVA) per head – the 2004 GVA per head was only 61% of the national average.
- Weak economic structure with an over-reliance on the manufacturing sector.
- Low business densities - businesses per head in County Durham are 62% of national average.
- Low rates of economic activity – the economic activity rate of 75.4% is lower than the regional average and nearly 3 percentage points less than the national figures for 2006. At May 2006 there were some 36,100 Incapacity Benefit Claimants in County Durham (11.73% of the Working Population).
- Low skills levels - in County Durham 60.7% of the working age population is qualified to NVQ level 2 or higher compared to 62.7% nationally. The gap widens at NVQ 4 with 20.5% qualified to NVQ4 or higher compared to 26.5% nationally.

The Environment

The completion of 40 years of land reclamation has rid the county of the derelict scars of its industrial past. In total, around 22 square kilometres have been reclaimed and this is the biggest programme of its kind ever mounted by a local authority. The 'greening' of the County, the designation of the heritage coast and the investment in tree planting and developing countryside parks, footpaths and cycle routes, have transformed its attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit.

The fabric of some of the County's towns and villages has been declining and further investment is needed in order to enhance the built environment and create more attractive conditions. Two major investment programmes are being implemented to breathe new life into the County's towns and villages and an urban and rural renaissance programme covering approximately 50 smaller towns, villages and neighbourhoods is also underway.

The easy availability of landfill sites has led to an over-reliance on the use of those sites for waste disposal but, more recently, joint working in partnership with district councils for more sustainable waste management is now improving levels of waste recycling. There is also a growing awareness and concern about global climate issues and the need to protect the environment for future generations, including the impact of climate change and the need to reduce energy use and promote the use of energy from renewable sources.

The housing market in County Durham is changing rapidly. Whilst there are still pockets of obsolete, pre-1919 terraced houses, new housing led regeneration schemes are attracting people into the County. Interest from house builders is high and there is strong demand for good quality homes in all sectors. Tenure patterns in the County have changed markedly over recent decades. The latest Census figures show that the County possesses 207,436 households of which 66.9% live in owner occupied dwellings and only 25.4% now live in social housing. Whilst home ownership is growing, County Durham has a higher than national average percentage of homes to rent. The home ownership sector has relatively high numbers of old terraced properties. House prices have increased significantly across all sectors at a higher rate than nationally in the past 2 years.

Local government context

In the current two tier local government structure in County Durham there are eight principal authorities.

Authority	Population	Revenue expenditure (£000)
Chester-le-street District Council	53,200	10,263
Derwentside District Council	86,300	18,505
Durham City Council	92,200	13,182
Easington District Council	93,300	23,115
Sedgefield Borough Council	87,800	22,916
Teesdale District Council	24,900	4,920
Wear Valley District Council	62,100	13,460
Durham County Council	499,800	632,286

In addition, in a third tier of local government, there are 129 town and parish councils and parish meetings in the County, with two new councils in the process of being developed. Over 93% of the County is parished with over 77% of the population served by town and parish councils.

The current strategic partnership framework in the County comprises a County Durham Strategic Partnership (CDSP) and seven district level Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). There are also four key countywide partnerships that reflect the four broad themes in the Strategic Vision for County Durham of:

- Building a strong economy – County Durham Economic Development Partnership
- Developing Lifelong Learning – County Durham Strategic Partnership for Education and Lifelong Learning (under review)
- Promoting Strong, Healthy, Safe Communities – Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities Partnership
- Looking After the Environment – County Durham Environment Partnership

Linked to the district LSPs there are currently five crime and disorder reduction partnerships (three district based and two based on a combination of districts). In addition there is a County Durham E-Government Partnership (CDeGP), which has representation from all eight local authorities and is leading on a joint Access to Services Strategy.

Regional context

In the regional context the Council has continued its active engagement with the development of business cases for the Tyne & Wear and Tees Valley City Regions. There are significant opportunities for some parts of County Durham to be part of the strategic development agenda for the city regions but there are concerns about the implications for the rural areas in County Durham. The Council and partners have also been engaged in debate over the proposals in the Regional Spatial Strategy to ensure that County Durham is not disadvantaged and that the County's strategic ambitions can be achieved.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Elected members

The County Council has 63 elected members.

- | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----------------|---|
| • Labour | 53 | • Independent | 3 |
| • Liberal Democrat | 5 | • Conservative | 2 |

The County Council has around 18500 employees, including teachers, which is approximately 15,000 FTE. The gender profile of the workforce is 76% female and 24% male. Around 47% of the top 5% of employees are women.

In 2007/08 the Council plans to spend £842.897 million on services (gross expenditure). The net budget requirement is £293.133 million. The capital budget for 2007/8 is £84.8m and a further £116.9m is planned over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan. Although levels of spending are relatively high compared to other county councils, this is a result of targeted investment to improve services and to meet demand placed on services by demographic changes and by higher levels of deprivation than other county councils. When compared to geographic neighbours, which have deprivation levels and socio-economic characteristics that are closer to County Durham than many other county councils, expenditure per head in all areas falls below the median level.

The County Council has agreed a 2.9% increase in its share of council tax bills for 2007/08, which is the lowest council tax increase for a decade.

SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES IN COUNTY DURHAM

Through its own research and analysis, and through partnership working, the County Council is well placed to understand the challenges facing the County in terms of improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of the County. The County Durham Local Area Agreement provides a more detailed assessment of the local context. The main challenges are:

- **Demographic change** – providing services for older people and helping to keep them in their homes and be part of the local community;
- **Community Development** – improving community engagement and the capacity of individuals and community groups to fully participate in decisions that affect their lives;
- **Crime and Fear of Crime** – responding to public concerns about anti-social behaviour;
- **Educational attainment and adult basic skills** – improving the levels of attainment in schools, particularly secondary schools, and adult skills for the modern labour market;
- **Economic vulnerability and lack of employment** – addressing the need to diversify and strengthen the economy and the fact that too many people are without jobs;
- **Environment** – ensuring waste is managed sustainably and the need for environmental improvements in towns and villages and increasing awareness of sustainability issues;
- **Public health and adult care** – meeting the needs of increasing numbers of people with learning disabilities and helping to tackle high levels of ill health, teenage pregnancy and obesity;
- **Inequalities** – supporting vulnerable adults and children and addressing the impact of inequality and social exclusion, including transportation and access to services and opportunities.

As part of its successful submission for unitary local government, the County Council outlined the proposed approach to programme management and provided outline plans for implementation. The delivery of these plans and the establishment of a new unitary authority by April 2009 will present a significant challenge for the county and district councils, and at the same time will offer many opportunities for improving services for local people. The work will impact on our future ambitions in the County, our approach to prioritisation and performance management and will require a positive and innovative approach to change to ensure our capacity to improve is sustained.

SECTION 2: CORPORATE ASSESSMENT

AMBITION

A Shared Vision

Durham County Council is committed to working with a range of partners to deliver better outcomes for the people of County Durham. The County Durham Strategic Partnership (CDSP) was established as part of a jointly agreed strategic

partnership framework to set the long term plan for the County. In 2003 the CDSP agreed a long term Shared Vision "The goal is to create 'Dynamic Durham' by 2023 - a County with a strong economy, with a commitment to lifelong learning, with strong, healthy and safe communities and with an enhanced environment"

The Vision identifies twelve key challenges covering:

- Tourism
- Knowledge Economy and NetPark
- Shopping, Culture and Leisure
- World class schools
- Skills and Young People
- Community Hubs and Learning
- Healthy Communities
- Empowered Communities
- Housing and Neighbourhoods
- Safe Communities
- Integrated Transport
- Environmental Enhancement

The Vision was developed following wide ranging consultation with local communities and partners to ensure that it concentrates on the things that matter. Initial tasks and lead responsibilities for the Vision challenges have been agreed with partners and progressed through existing partnership arrangements.

Local Area Agreement

The Vision has set long term aspirations for the County and this has been reinforced by the development of the County Durham Local Area Agreement. The LAA has built on the significant achievements already made through partnership working and ensured a shared understanding of local priorities over a shorter timeframe. The LAA has four overarching objectives:

- Narrowing the deprivation gap
- Improving access to services
- Supporting sustainable service improvements
- Improving public satisfaction with their local area and increasing the number of people who feel able to influence public services.

The partnership approach to developing the LAA has helped understanding of local needs. The stretch targets in the LAA are challenging and address priorities that need the support from a range of partners. At the first six month review the LAA was given an amber rating for overall progress and green for direction of travel.

The County Council is the accountable body for the LAA and has supported an open and inclusive approach to the development of the LAA with a broad range of partners. A multi-agency project team has led the work. As part of the joint working on the Local Area Agreement it was agreed that there should be a fundamental review of the County Durham Strategic Partnership within the context of the wider strategic partnership framework. An independent interim chair was appointed by the CDSP to lead the review and there is now agreement to the way forward with a County Durham Partnership Interim Board. This approach and the agreed work streams take account of the Local Government White Paper proposals for LAAs and LSPs. The Vision is also undergoing a review to make sure that as the sustainable community strategy it reflects any changes in local priorities and is linked to the ongoing review and refresh of the LAA during 2007/08. A position statement on progress to date has been prepared as part of this process.

The Council's ambitions

The Council's overall mission is "to make County Durham the best place in which to live, work and bring up a family". Understanding the needs of the County and its residents is fundamental to strategic planning and underpins the Council's decisions. The Council's mission, corporate aims, values, and improvement priorities are set out in the current Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan relates to other key strategies that have been developed in consultation with partners and stakeholders and is underpinned by Service Business Plans for 2007/08. The Council's ambitions are reflected in a number of important strategies that will have a positive impact on local communities and will lead to better outcomes for local people. These include:

- **Children and Young Peoples Plan** - Ambitions within Children and Young People's Services are high and considerable work has been carried out with partners to analyse need, set clear priorities and agree the first Children and Young People's Plan (2006 – 2009). The Plan demonstrates a partnership approach to achieving the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes and has now been reviewed and updated.
- **Services for Older People** - The Council is continuing with its strategy for investment in modern (preventative) services for older people following recent consultation on the future of the Council's remaining residential care homes. The Council is also developing an overarching strategy for the provision of services for older people. The 'Living Well In Later Life' strategy will take account of recent major consultation events with older people and partners.

- **Building Schools for the Future (BSF)** - In June 2007 DfES agreed the Council's Outline Business Case for BSF in East Durham. This gives approval to go ahead with the first phase of a £400million investment in the renewal and refurbishment of all secondary schools in the County over the next 10 – 15 years.
- **Local Transport Plan 2** – This five year plan for 2006-2011 is set within the regional and national context and will help to realise the transport challenge in the Strategic Vision. The Council has been designated as one of 17 Centres of Excellence whose track record in delivering local transport has led to it being chosen to serve as a model for other highway authorities to follow.
- **Access to Services** – The two key elements of the Council's strategy are the implementation of a contact centre which will deal with a wide range of requests for service at the first point of contact, whether telephone, e-mail or text, and the establishment of a countywide network of access points.
- **Urban and Rural Renaissance programme** – In partnership with 40 stakeholder organisations, including all of the district councils, Groundwork trust, ONE NorthEast, community and voluntary sector and private companies, the County Council has made a commitment to improving the vitality of many of the smaller towns and villages in the County through a programme of improvement works.
- **Economic Strategy** - Through the County Durham Economic Development Partnership the current strategy is at the end of a complete re-write. The emerging strategy proposes that new directions and approaches are required to make the kind of acceleration in the County's economy that is required to reduce the gap between productivity in the County and the rest of the UK. Formal consultation on the new Strategy will start shortly.

Consultation and community engagement

Consultation and community engagement have been a key focus for the authority over a number of years. A Community Support Team was established in October 2000 to support and promote the Council's approach to community engagement. The team also work closely with local County Council members in support of their Community Leadership role. The Council continues to encourage community capacity building and has signed service level agreements with all six Councils for Voluntary Service across the county. The County Durham Compact provides the framework for meaningful partnership and engagement with the voluntary and community sector.

The Council's Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy aims to embed good practice across all services and is supported by a toolkit and training programme. The strategy built on significant work with communities of interest, using focus groups for specific interests, for example faith groups, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups and black and minority ethnic communities. Individuals have been invited to join a Community Engagement Advisory Group to feedback on good practice in reaching particular groups. The Council has received national interest in the inclusive approach that has been taken in building relationships with the Travelling Community in the County.

Community engagement and community development training has been provided to over 500 officers and elected Members, and many Members have received an abridged version of the training during Members induction sessions. Training sessions have also been attended by representatives of external partner agencies such as district councils, community and voluntary sector members, community groups and the Police.

The Council uses a range of consultation routes including the Citizen's Panel, surveys, focus groups for staff and website feedback. In addition Services also conduct specific consultation exercises with user groups to seek feedback or help develop service delivery. Examples of recent consultations include:

- Children and Young Peoples' Plan (CYPP) – for work on the CYPP the Council's 'Investing in Children' initiative was commissioned to undertake research into the views of children and young people, with particular efforts to consult with harder to reach groups. Wider consultation was also carried out through local children's planning groups to ensure a broad range of participation.
- Strategy for Older people – a second annual consultation event was held in September 2006 to consult with a range of partner organisations and older people on the development of the Council's strategy for older people.
- Building Schools for the Future – a number of consultation events were held in 2005 to consult on the transformational vision for secondary education which is the fundamental basis for the whole BSF programme.
- Local Area Agreement – for the development of the initial LAA and the first annual refresh, two major stakeholder events were held in September 2005 and January 2007 respectively.
- 'Have Your Say' budget consultation – for the current budget cycle there was wide ranging consultation on the Council's budget proposals, the outcome of which was taken into account before finalising the budget.
- Day centre provision for people with Learning Disabilities – in response to the 'Valuing People' agenda a consultation exercise was conducted to find out the aspirations of Durham citizens with a learning disability.

Equality and diversity is key to delivering the Council's mission and is reflected in the corporate values. The Council's approach has encompassed the 'six strands' of equality and diversity through policies, plans and impact assessment

processes. The Council's impact assessment process has incorporated gender, disability and race as standard from 2004.

The Council is committed to mainstreaming equality and diversity throughout the authority in terms of service delivery, employment opportunities, policy-making, partnerships and community leadership. There has been significant progress in recent years using the Equality Standard for Local Government as the improvement framework against which to measure performance. Having identified equalities and diversity as a high priority for improvement, the Council has made a considerable investment in training and awareness-raising. The Council is one of a small number of councils that have achieved Level 3 of the Equalities Standard, confirmed through external validation.

It is important that the Council provides information both internally and externally about its priorities, plans and achievements. The Council's revised Communications Strategy (May 2006) sets out an agenda for improvement in communication practice, both internal and external, over the next three to four years. The strategy complements other strategies the Council is developing and implementing in relation to community engagement, access to services and equalities & diversity. The Council has also given its support to involvement in the Local Government Association Reputation campaign, which is designed to improve the reputation and standing of local authorities with a focus on five key areas of activity – effective media management; provision of an A-Z guide to Council services; publication of a regular council newspaper; effective branding and good internal communications.

An early action for the communications strategy was the review of the Council's newspaper 'Countywide'. The review involved extensive consultation, including focus groups with Members, the Community Engagement Advisory Group, staff and residents and readers' surveys. The completely revitalised 'Countywide' went into circulation in May 2006 and is more cost effective and will incorporate more user orientated content. The August edition of the Newspaper included an A-Z of Council Services. In November 2006 'Countywide' was given an Award of Excellence at the Northern Communicators in Business Awards. The council's website was re-launched in September 2006 and a new staff magazine was launched in February 2007. A 'Just Call' promotional campaign was launched in April 2007 and will run until September.

Delivering through partnerships

The Council strongly endorses the importance of partnership working, which is particularly relevant in two tier areas. The Council has a long-standing involvement in partnership working, both in terms of establishing and leading partnerships, and in taking an active and positive role on partnerships led by others. Members and officers of the Council have continued to take a leading role in key countywide partnerships and within the seven LSPs in the County. The development of the Strategic Vision for County Durham, community strategies by each of the LSPs, and the LAA has required closer working between the County Council and district councils, particularly in relation to consultation with local communities.

There are many examples of partnership initiatives that are tackling priority needs and these include:

- work in partnership with the PCT to promote healthy lifestyles, particularly the role of schools in encouraging sport and exercise and healthy eating. There has been a successful multi-agency approach to reducing teenage pregnancies.
- taking a leading role on a number of fronts in economic development work, for example with Durham City Council, One NorthEast, Durham Cathedral and University of Durham in the preparation of a Durham City Vision and Masterplan. This has involved a major consultation exercise with the local residents.
- establishing a Local Partnership Accord with Jobcentre Plus to raise the chances of people who have been unemployed for long periods to gain employment.
- considerable joint working with district councils, and with all of the LSPs, in the preparation of plans to implement town and village centre improvements as part of the Urban and Rural Renaissance Initiative, which is being led by the County Council. The shaping and delivery of these plans also involved close working with a number of Town and Parish Councils.
- joint working with Easington District Council and all 19 town and parish councils in the district to agree a local charter which aims to improve co-operation between the different tiers of local government. This is a model to be rolled out across the County.

The partnership context within the County is undergoing considerable change, including:

- The establishment of a Children's Trust for County Durham from April 2007, bringing together a range of partners who are working to improve the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes for children, young people and their families, following an extended period of joint work and consultation. The Local Safeguarding of Children Board is in place.

- The County Durham Economic Partnership has been reviewed, new structures are in place and an independent chair has been appointed.
- With support from the County Durham Economic Partnership a new County Durham Area Tourism Partnership has been established and has developed an Area Tourism Management Plan.
- A review of the strategic partnership framework in the County is underway, aligned to the LAA governance arrangements. This presents opportunities to rationalise partnership working and will be the vehicle for reviewing the Strategic Vision for the County and reviewing the LAA to meet new requirements from April 2008.
- Changes in the structures of other public sector partners have also heralded the start of new working arrangements with the County Council. This has included the reconfiguration of Primary Care Trusts with a single PCT for County Durham from October 2006, the new neighbourhood policing model for the police and a new regional structure for the Learning and Skills Council.

In order to maintain an overview of partnership working the Council has established a Partnership Performance Management Framework, which has provided guidance and a toolkit for use by all services for the assessment of all key partnerships, incorporating a risk assessment. The key strategic partnerships have been identified, a database has been established with details of our key partnerships and reporting arrangements to service management teams on delivery of actions to address significant risks have been developed.

PRIORITISATION

The Council carries out an annual review of improvement priorities as part of the overall strategic planning and performance management framework, linked to the development of the medium term financial strategy and the annual budget process.

A detailed review of improvement priorities was initiated in August 2006. The review focused on improved outcomes for people living in, working in and/or visiting County Durham and identified the main areas of service delivery for improvement. It took account of:

- consultation conducted through a survey of the Citizens' Panel and feedback from readers of Countywide, the Council's newspaper
- the outcome of external assessment and inspections
- views of elected Members
- national shared priorities
- current performance
- baseline information that showed the position in County Durham relative to national floor targets in key areas such as health, worklessness, educational attainment and crime.

The review was conducted alongside the joint discussions with partners to agree priorities and outcomes for inclusion in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) for County Durham. The final outcome of the review was reported in March 2006 and resulted in the addition of 'improving health' and 'promoting economic wellbeing' as priority areas for 2006/07.

Improvement priorities were reviewed again in 2006 as part of the annual budget cycle and Cabinet agreed a revised Statement of Medium Term Improvement Priorities in January 2007. For each of the improvement priority areas shown below there are specific outcomes and targets for achievement over the next three years.

- **Protecting and supporting vulnerable children**
- **Improving educational attainment/achievement**
- **Protecting and supporting vulnerable adults**
- **Improving health**
- **Promoting economic well-being**
- **Quality of the environment**

A new format of Corporate Plan was published in April 2007, which focuses on actions to deliver the agreed outcomes and targets. This is underpinned by Business Plans for all of the Council's services, which follow a standard format and concentrate on actions to deliver corporate and service related priority outcomes. Within services more detailed Team Plans and work programmes are prepared, and all services follow a corporate approach to carrying out individual appraisals, which relate to service and team plans.

There is a clear link between the allocation of resources and the Council's priorities for improvement. The annual review of priorities identifies areas for additional investment to inform the annual budget process and medium term financial plan. The areas for additional investment in service improvement in 2007/08 are:

- Vulnerable children and young people

- People with learning disabilities
- Older people (to retain their independence)
- Transport infrastructure and reducing the rate of decline of public transport
- Building schools for the future

Over the last four years the Council's 'Embracing Change' programme has represented the main corporate management priorities. It was introduced in 2003 to drive forward improvements after self review and the 2002 CPA corporate assessment. Over two phases there has been both an internal and external focus for the change programme. In the first phase the programme had a wide scope but priority areas were leadership, performance management, community engagement, customer services, equalities and diversity and the people strategy. The focus of the second phase of 'Embracing Change' in 2005/06 and 2006/07 was Community, Localism and Access. The core activities were access to services, community engagement and partnerships, delivered alongside the requirements of the e-Government agenda.

In a renewed approach to change management there will be continuing emphasis on the importance of changing behaviours and embedding good management practice across the Council. Following an IDeA Peer Review, which highlighted areas of good practice as well as providing insight into areas for improvement, six broad priority themes for corporate management have been identified:

- Ambition, leadership and partnership working
- Community and customer focus
- Decision making, delegation and support for Members
- Value for money
- Embedding values and behaviours
- Organisational development.

CAPACITY

Political leadership

Political leadership is provided through a Cabinet and Leader model, which was implemented in May 2002. The Cabinet comprises the Leader, Deputy Leader and eight Cabinet portfolio holders from the majority party. The Cabinet portfolios were revised in May 2007 and cover Resources; Children and Young Peoples Services; Adult and Community Services; Transport, Sustainability and Tourism; Business, Planning and Waste Management; Corporate Services, Libraries and Culture; Social Inclusion, Sports and Leisure; and Climate Change and Service Direct. Open Cabinet meetings are held monthly.

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has five sub-committees that mirror the Council's corporate aims and which allow all non-executive Members to have a role in both policy development and scrutiny. In addition there is a joint Health Scrutiny Committee. The Council also has a Standards Committee with an Independent Chair and five Regulatory Committees covering Human Resources; Planning; Highways; Licensing, Registration and General Purposes; and Appeals and Complaints.

A new Member Code of Conduct was introduced by the Government in May this year and next year sees the beginning of a locally based regime for Members. Accordingly, the Council has adopted a new code of conduct and training sessions on the new code were provided to Members in July. The Council is working with the Audit Commission to carry out an ethical governance audit, which will be used to help the Council to establish its compliance with the relevant conduct legislation, its awareness and understanding of ethical issues and possible identification of future training needs.

There are six Member Area Panels that are co-terminous with the district and Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) boundaries, where Members are able to identify and discuss local community issues. A Member's initiative fund was established in 2001 allocating each Member £2000 annually to spend within their local community. In addition Members each have an allocation of £6,000 for local environmental improvements.

There is a clear understanding of the distinction between the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny functions. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees draw up an annual work programme based on service and member consultation and drawing on the links with the corporate priorities and other key drivers. This approach ensures that a small number of in-depth reviews in priority areas are carried out. The reviews encourage increased engagement with local communities and aim to maximise the benefits in terms of service improvement and delivery of efficient and effective services. Scrutiny also plays a key role in ensuring that the Council is achieving value for money. It does this through the scrutiny reviews, budget scrutiny (annual and ongoing) and performance monitoring on a quarterly basis. The Council's website provides detailed information on the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function, including Overview and Scrutiny annual reports.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been subject to independent review and has had recognition for good practice. The Northumbria University evaluation of Overview and Scrutiny in 2005: stated "It is evident that Overview and Scrutiny has progressed significantly in the past twelve months and continues to work well and bring added value to Durham County Council. This view is supported across the Council amongst Executive and non-Executive Members, Co-opted Members and Departmental Officers".

Support for members is provided through:

- Members' induction programme
- Members' development programme, with all members now having personal development plans
- Members' seminars for key topics
- Cabinet Briefing sessions every two weeks and one to one briefings for Cabinet portfolio holders
- Support officer for Cabinet members
- Members' Resource Centre

After assessment in January 2007 the Council has been awarded the Chartered for Member Development by North East Regional Employers Organisation/IDeA. The Council demonstrated its overall commitment to Member development and gave evidence to show a strategic approach, having Member development plans in place, ensuring learning and development is effective in building capacity and promoting work life balance and citizenship. The Members' training programme has included joint training on ethical standards with the police and fire authorities.

Managerial leadership

Leadership for officers comes from the Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team. In the last two years there has been substantial change in the senior management structures. Following his appointment in 2005 the new Chief Executive introduced a re-shaping of the Council's front-line services in 2006 to create three groupings:

- **Adult & Community Services** – providing a focus on well-being and social care for adults; culture and leisure services through libraries and museums; and community support.
- **Children & Young People's Services** – providing education, student support and education in the community for children and young people; health and social care, support for families, fostering, adoption and child protection.
- **Environment** – looking after countryside, towns and villages, roads, cycle ways and footpaths; planning control and development; promoting and developing use of public transport; treating and disposing of municipal waste.

Three new Corporate Directors from outside the Council joined in 2006 to provide strong leadership for these new services. New organisational arrangements in Adult & Community Services and Children & Young Peoples Services are being finalised following appointments to new Heads of Service posts.

The remaining structure has also been reviewed resulting in a smaller, more focused **Chief Executives Office** which provides corporate policy and strategy, communications and public relations, and human resources management. The Chief Executives Office will also include the programme management of the implementation arrangements for the new unitary council. Economic development and regeneration have moved to Environment and BSF is now with Children and Young People's Service. Other services are as follows:

- **Corporate Services** – providing legal, and procurement services; managing council property and assets; building and design; registration services and democratic support.
- **County Treasurer** – managing financial resources, audit and risk IT and access to services.
- **Service Direct** - providing maintenance and construction for highways and bridges, street lighting, grounds and building maintenance; catering and cleaning; vehicle management.

The Council is actively engaged in shaping the future of Local Government nationally, through our leading councillors' membership of numerous committees at the Local Government Association and County Councils Network, and our Chief Executive's membership of the CLG Sounding Board and the Building Schools for the Future Chief Executives' Forum. The Council also plays strongly into the North East region's partnership arrangements and is an active contributor to a number of 'best practice' related projects such as the Improvement Partnership, North East Connects and the North East Centre of Excellence. Our elected members articulate County Durham's interests through their membership of the North East Assembly and the Association of North East Councils.

Workforce development

The Council has a People Strategy and workforce development plan through which there is a commitment to the main workforce issues identified in the national Pay and Workforce Strategy which are:

- Creating better leaders
- Creating a better workforce

- Creating better organisation
- Recruiting and retaining the best employees
- Using pay and reward to encourage performance

The People Strategy sets out the over-arching approach to people management issues covering development; involvement ; respect; performance; and wellbeing The corporate Workforce Development Plan sets out progress to date and the future challenges to having the right people, with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours deployed appropriately throughout the services. This takes account of approaches adopted in services, including a survey across all services to identify recruitment and retention issues and skill shortages. The Council is currently progressing job evaluation/equal pay review.

The 'Embracing Change' programme reinforced priority areas of work that improved capacity, encompassing leadership, performance management, equalities and diversity and people strategy. In the renewed approach to change management there will be continuing emphasis on the importance of changing behaviours and embedding good management practice across the Council. This is being supported by a number of communications mechanisms with employees including:

- Corporate newsletters;
- Directorate communications plans;
- Chief Executive's blog and Question Mark;
- Intranet communications, including questions for Corporate Directors;
- Head of Service briefings;
- Staff roadshows by the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors
- Chief Executive's breakfast sessions.

In 2007 the Council's corporate accreditation for Investors in People was retained following a partial review. This is helping to support a consistent approach to people management across the Council. A new Corporate Appraisal Scheme has been adopted for all Council employees (except teachers) and as this is rolled out employees will have personal development plans. This is supported by a comprehensive corporate training programme.

New arrangements have been introduced for corporate induction training, which is delivered every month for staff who are new to the Council. The training is supported by members of the Corporate Management Team and has received very positive feedback. The Council's 'Leadership Programme' is an integral part of the Council's strategy for developing effective corporate leadership. In excess of 200 managers have participated in the five month programme of learning covering communication, capacity building, vision and direction, empowerment and performance management. The programme has five intakes per year and builds upon 360 degree review of the manager's displayed leadership behaviours and the resulting development plan allows for relevant areas of support to be agreed.

A third staff survey was carried out in March/April 2006 as a follow-up to a previous survey in 2004. The survey showed that 90% of respondents were clear about their roles and responsibilities. The results have been reported to CMT, service management teams and Members and an overall action plan is being implemented to address the issues raised.

The Council has introduced and continues to develop a range of flexible working and family friendly policies for employees, and with advances in ICT is developing options so that more staff can take advantage of flexible, remote and mobile working facilities. Our recent corporate IIP review stated that "in many areas exceptional evidence of development outcomes have been identified that have impacted positively on performance improvement ie service delivery"

Making best use of resources

The Council has established an Efficiency and Improvement Steering Group (EISG) to manage corporate efficiency initiatives and issues. Originally established to manage the action plan from a Best Value Review of Business Support Services, the group has started to take on a wider remit with fuller ownership of the Council's efficiency agenda, including the monitoring and reporting of gains. The EISG has a portfolio of efficiency projects under its management, these are constantly reviewed and new areas added to as they are identified from within the business. An example is a review of the Council's postal services, from which the Council now has a contract with UK Mail to replace the current arrangements with Royal Mail for the outgoing post from County Hall. The change will result in significant cost savings to the Council.

The Council continues to implement its procurement strategy and the procurement targets that have been agreed. Work is underway with the North East Centre of Excellence and 4P's to review and revise the strategy and to develop a

Procurement Code of Practice. Every opportunity is taken to develop joint procurement initiatives with others, and examples include:

- work with Sunderland Council on the procurement of Agency staff which should deliver savings of £350,000 per annum.
- a contract for Supporting People (AYPC) for Community Alarms and Housing Related Services, which will generate savings of £316,000 per annum, an accumulate saving of £1.1m over the length of the contract
- joint procurement with Northumberland CC to procure a licensing agreement with ORACLE for its e-business suite of back office software. This agreement has saved the Council £1m in purchase, licence and support costs over three years and implementation is expected to save around £900,000 annually on back-office costs

The use of ICT is important to the modernisation and transformation of council services and to the achievement of corporate ambitions to be more customer focused. The implementation of the ORACLE ERP solution, in collaboration with Northumberland County Council, and a new HR/payroll system, will improve back office processes. Both have supporting business cases and are being managed under a robust governance framework with dedicated project managers and resources. Also Procurement Cards are now in operation in Emergency Repairs and Civil Engineering Sections at Service Direct. A total of 75 cards are currently being used with spend of £800,000 and transactions numbering 10,000. Extension of the use of Procurement Cards for all transactions under £100 is planned when the new ORACLE e-business suite is implemented.

The Council is undertaking a number of major projects at present and risk assessments have been carried out for significant new projects, including Building Schools for the Future, the Waste Management contract, the new payroll system and the Local Area Agreement. In addition Gateway reviews have been carried out by 4Ps on two of these projects – BSF and Waste Management. A new Integrated Transport Unit has been implemented in 2007 to realise gains through integrated planning, combined procurement and reduced duplication.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Corporate Plan is the Council's key strategic document and sets the framework for corporate performance management. The Statement of Medium Term Improvement Priorities establishes the outcomes that the Council will focus on, and this includes some of the stretch targets from the County Durham LAA.

Progress against the improvement priorities is measured as part of a Corporate Balanced Scorecard which focuses on a small number of key performance indicators across four domains:

- Delivery of high quality services;
- Capacity to improve;
- Community engagement; and
- Use of resources

Performance targets for the scorecard and other key indicators are included in the Corporate Plan and are cascaded down into service operational plans. Service plans contain more detailed performance measures and targets. An Annual Performance Review report was presented to County Council in June 2007

Quarterly performance reports are co-ordinated centrally and presented to Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committees. In 2006/07 a new integrated format for the reports was introduced to bring together quarterly financial and performance monitoring information and relevant supporting documents for consideration and action by CMT and Members. The format of the reports has been revised for 2007/08. At CMT quarterly reports are now considered at a meeting dedicated to performance management issues, which also receives quarterly updates on risk management and equalities and diversity. Service management teams have also adopted more structured approaches to performance management. Services operate performance management and continuous improvement strategies which enable locality scrutiny and analysis of performance "hot spots".

This focused approach has resulted in year on year improvement in terms of front line services as evidenced by individual service judgements from external inspections agencies. The best example of this has been the sustained focus on educational attainment at Key Stage 4 which has been closely tracked and has been supported by the allocation of additional resources. This has seen a significant rise in the number of young people gaining 5 GCSEs at A*-C, which has been much better than the national rate of improvement and in March 2007 the Council achieved Beacon Status for School Improvement.

The corporate performance management system is Performance Plus and data is entered directly into the system by the services and used in corporate reports. As accountable body for the LAA the Council acts as the co-ordination point for all relevant performance data, using Performance Plus, and council services have had an active role in the review and refresh process for the LAA.

The Council has recently joined a county council benchmarking club. In addition services also have separate benchmarking arrangements, such as a regional performance group relating to social care services, and national benchmarking arrangements for economic development through the Chief Economic Development Officers Society (CEDOS). Customer views are also incorporated into service performance management, for example in Environment Services in relation to the LTP and highways maintenance work.

Financial management

The Council's budget process, with the preparation of the Medium Term Financial Plan and the annual Revenue Budget, provides the framework for assessment of costs and financial decisions. This involves proposals for savings and identification of pressures for growth in line with corporate priorities for additional investment. Services provide short and long term costs to support their proposals, together with implications of savings proposals and a business case for growth proposals. The budget process includes consideration of savings in relation to efficiency targets and the Council's own procurement targets.

The Council's strategic and financial planning cycle allows for an annual review of priorities and, together with regular consideration of performance management information, this helps to ensure that allocated budgets are delivering value for money in terms of improved performance and outcomes for local people. Value for money is a strong theme underpinning all of our decision-making and our overall strategic approach to Value for Money is set out in the 'VFM : Taking Stock' document.

The annual budget process ensures that the budgets are scrutinised in a number of different ways and forums including:

- CMT identifying budget pressures and preparing the budget;
- Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Committees receiving budget reports on a quarterly basis and involvement in the budget process;
- External consultation to seek views of the public and others on budget proposals; and
- Cabinet and Council considering and approving the whole budget

Annual base budget reviews are conducted, using baseline information linking budgetary and service information, together with benchmarking and unit cost information. All budget reports are taken through the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and one of the tasks of these committees is to:

- probe base budgets;
- consider the reasonableness of pressures put forward;
- explore whether all possible funding strategies, other than relying on the council tax, have been investigated;
- test the validity of service developments put forward; and
- put forward realistic options

This year the budget process began earlier to allow for better consultation with members, stakeholders and local people on our budget proposals. A consultation document, 'Have Your Say' was made widely available and feedback from the consultation was used to inform the budget decisions.

In line with the requirements of the Gershon review, the Council's processes for delivering efficiency gains have been refined. This involved the collection of intelligence on efficiency gains and their reporting through CMT and the Cabinet. The Annual Efficiency Statement (AES) – Forward Look was submitted in April 2007 and the Backward Look in July 2007. The Government target to make efficiency gains of 2.5% in each of 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 equates to £21.54m (based on 2004/05 out-turn figures). Having achieved gains of £12.0m at the end of the first year, and a further £7.1m in 2006/07, the Council is on target to exceed its target of £21.54m by March 2008.

Proposed capital investments are all considered against the Council's corporate prioritisation scoring system which assesses the relative merits in relation to the Council's corporate aims and investment priorities and the need to address issues of risk or opportunity management

In the most recent CPA Use of Resources assessment the Council scored 3 out of 4 overall and this included improved scores for Value for Money and Internal Control. More work is being done to improve the integrated reporting of performance and financial information to ensure that value for money considerations are well embedded across the Council.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

The Council has been judged as improving well in the CPA Direction of Travel assessment. This reflects the fact that there has been good progress in all of the Council's priority areas for improvement. The Council's Annual Performance Review 2006/07 sets out these improvements.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND TRANSPORT

All four of the county-wide themed partnerships that support the County Durham Strategic Partnership contribute to the sustainable development of communities in the County. The Strategic Vision incorporates cross cutting principles of sustainability and social inclusion and has enabled a more co-ordinated and holistic approach to social and economic regeneration and the concept of liveability.

Promoting and supporting a sustainable economy

The County Durham Economic Partnership (CDEP) was established in 1994 with the overall aim of "securing the economic well-being of the County" as detailed in the County Durham Economic Strategy. The CDEP Secretariat is currently provided by Durham County Council with funding support from One NorthEast in the form of management and administration funds as part of the delegated funding to CDEP. The Council therefore plays an active role in assisting the CDEP to:

- Lead and co-ordinate the delivery of the County Durham Vision challenges
- Support the development and implementation of the County Durham Economic Strategy and its Action Plan
- Lead the development and delivery of the Economic Development and Enterprise Block within the County Durham Local Area Agreement
- Advise/ Implement/ Deliver the Regional Economic Strategy and be an advocate of the strategy
- Provide a leadership role within the Sub Region in terms of economic development and regeneration

In carrying out these strategic objectives, the CDEP has delivered significant improvements which have impacted on the Economy of the County:

- **Town Centres Baseline Study** - The County Council commissioned Experian on behalf of the County Durham Economic Partnership to carry out a baseline study of the County's major centres. The original study took place in 2004, and has been followed by an update in 2006. It provides an evidence base for the vitality of our town centres, looking at economic issues such as rental levels and types of facilities, but also community safety and transport. This piece of work has been followed up by an investigation into the correlation between housing supply and the economic vitality of our major centres.
- **Major Centres Programme** - The Economic Partnership has committed significant resource to its town centre programme, and recognises the impact town centres have on the County's economy. The programme includes investment in hard transport infrastructure, such as Stanley Bus Station. Work to develop the **Barnard Castle Vision** masterplan is underway to ensure the sustainable growth of this major rural centre. This work will attract £1.4 million of leverage from the private sector, 110 businesses will be created and 160 businesses will be supported. In addition 200 learning opportunities will roll out from the training projects aimed at improving the prosperity, age profile and vitality of the town centre.
- The **Durham City Vision** is about the sustainable development of Durham City, improving the retail offer and economic output, but also ensuring it is a great place to live and visit. Recent investment in transport solutions for Durham City, such as the Park and Ride development and town centre congestion charging, will complement this.
- **Settlement Renewal Initiative** and its successor Community Economic Development Initiative supports community based projects that address the economic and social challenges faced by small deprived settlements. Transport and access to essential services, employment and training have been the predominant focus of the support.
- **Stanhope Retail Distinctiveness** - this project seeks to improve the economic vitality of the town's retail offer. It complements and supports previous and on going investment that has occurred in the development of Weardale Railway and the Eastgate Renewable Energy Village. These projects will support the rural community in the Durham Dales, providing services, housing, energy, transport and employment.
- **Eastgate Renewable Energy Village - subject to planning permission** this project will ultimately lead to the creation of a mixed use sustainable development providing housing, workspace and employment, powered completely by renewable energy. It is anticipated that £2.5 million of private sector leverage will be attracted by 2011 and that 350 new jobs will be created in the first 10 years of the project.
- **West Durham Rural Pathfinder** brings together economic, social and environmental threads of regeneration to ensure that each of these aspects is considered in development. The Pathfinder's Case Studies reflect the diversity

of issues that are being investigated to support sustainable development: Young People and Rural Transport, South West Durham Heritage Corridor, Broadband and Social Enterprise.

- Working in close partnership with Derwentside District Council, the County Council developed **DurhamNet**; a high capacity broadband network across County Durham, to overcome market failure linked to technological disadvantage. DurhamNet is designed to provide capacity for the current and future needs of the County's business community. This recognises the policy drive towards knowledge economy and e-commerce, but is also based on an appreciation of the benefits broadband can bring to existing businesses.
- The council played a key role in the successful County Durham **Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI)** bid, which aims to make self-employment and enterprise accessible to all. A number of the underlying local causes of deprivation faced by the communities of the four districts will be tackled by; creating and safeguarding employment, reducing worklessness, reducing poverty and raising aspirations of young people in respect to work and learning.
- The **County Durham Area Tourism Partnership**, to which Durham County Council contributes financially, and supports through its role as CDEP Secretariat, is tasked with preparing an Area Tourism Management Plan (ATMaP). The current interim ATMaP recognises transport and the environment as important considerations in the development of our tourism economy.
- The County Durham Economic Partnership's **Lifelong Learning Project** is part of the Economic Inclusion strand of the Single Programme Investment Plan. This project places Life Long Learning Coordinators in each district (with the exception of Derwentside). Their aim is to reintroduce people who have various employability issues into mainstream learning with a view to moving them back towards employment. This project has delivered over 2500 learning outcomes since the project began in 2004.

Making a Difference – Knowledge Economy and Netpark

One of the challenges in the County Vision is "to secure the creation of Netpark as the hub of Countywide provision for knowledge industries and higher value manufacturing accessed by a high capacity broadband telecommunications network". Netpark is a prestige science park helping to realise the economic potential of Durham University's research status and it is linked into emerging City Regions Plans in the North East. The first Netpark incubator was officially opened in January 2006 with tenants having access to all the latest communications and computer technology, and second phase of development in underway. ONE NorthEast has approved a £10m project for Netpark that will put the region and County Durham at the forefront of revolutionary plastic electronics technology with the creation of the Plastic Electronics Technology Centre (PETeC). The new phase of development at Netpark will result in the following outcomes by 2011; 736 jobs safeguarded; 64 businesses safeguarded; 450 firms given business support; over £200 million private sector levered funding; and over 9.21 hectares of brown field land brought back into use.

Delivering a quality environment and promoting sustainable lifestyles

The County Council has had a Local Agenda/Action 21 Partnership in place for over twelve years, which has a Europe wide reputation for its work. The Council has taken a proactive approach in dealing with Biodiversity issues and has gained national recognition whilst doing so. The Council has also worked closely with the North East Assembly on a Regional pilot to develop a toolkit for local communities to be more sustainable - through biodiversity, transport, food and health.

The Council's medium term improvement priorities now reflect a commitment to reducing its impact on climate change and encouraging others to follow suit. A Carbon Management Action Plan for the County Council is currently under development to reduce the Council's carbon emissions. A Climate Change Action Plan for County Durham has been developed in partnership with all the district councils in the County and the Energy Savings Trust NE Advice Centre. The Council was the first to introduce a wind turbine connected to the national grid at one of its primary schools.

The completion of 40 years of land reclamation and Durham County Council's work to rid the county of the derelict scars of its industrial past, was marked in 2004 by the production of a unique 40-page record of its efforts to achieve 'The Greening of County Durham'. The first phase of the restoration of the Georgian gardens at Hardwick, a Grade II* landscape, is due for completion at the end of 2007. The Heritage Lottery Fund have provided the majority of the funding for this £7.5m project.

The Council has made a commitment to improving the vitality of many of the County's smaller towns and villages through the Urban and Rural Renaissance (URR) Programme. A list of priority settlements, based on a study of need that looked at social, environmental and economic factors, was agreed with the seven Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). The Council has committed £5 million to the 5-year programme with match funding from other partner organisations adding another £10 million. Efforts have concentrated on physical improvements to the centre of settlements i.e. streets, footpaths, green areas and buildings. At the same time traffic and pedestrian safety and public transport facilities are

also considered. For small neighbourhood improvement schemes each Member Area Panel is asked to select 2 schemes for inclusion in the programme each year. £1 million in total from the County Council's £5 million Urban and Rural Renaissance Fund has been allocated for these schemes.

The URR programme has gained national recognition. It has won a Gold National Award in the partnership category of the annual Green Apple Awards which recognise best practice in environmental issues. It was also one of four projects shortlisted for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM's) Sustainable Communities Award. The ODPM stated that "this is an imaginative example of what can be done to develop sustainable communities in a highly fragmented mix of urban and rural settlements". The Council has also been awarded one of Britain's first 'Green Heroes' shields, a new annual award presented exclusively to Councils and companies that have not only won a Green Apple Award for environmental best practice, but have also demonstrated their commitment by helping others to follow their environmental lead.

Managing waste and resources sustainably has been a corporate improvement priority since 2003. The Council has driven substantial increases in the amount of waste recycled and composted. From a very low base of 5% in 2000/01 almost 30% of waste is now recycled/composted (2006/07 figures), exceeding Government Performance Standards to date. However to make any real inroads into reducing the performance gap between ourselves and similar authorities further work is needed, particularly to meet future LATS targets and performance standards.

Making a Difference – Aerobic Digesters

The Council has procured treatment at the aerobic digestion plant at Thornley and this has made a major contribution to the increase in the amount of waste recycled. A second aerobic digester tower at Thornley was completed and operational in January 2005. The construction of a third tower at the Thornley Aerobic Digester is now complete and a planning application for a six tower plant at Tursdale has been approved. The aerobics digester and the use of the output material are helping to produce less carbon, ensuring that the waste disposal agenda also addresses climate change in the future.

Examples of good practice include:

- Waste SMART Campaign which ran between September 2004 and March 2006 is highlighted by Recycle Now as a success story on their website;
- Recycling Rewards for Schools campaign highlighted by DEFRA as part of the Evaluation of the Household Waste Incentives Pilot Scheme;
- Viacom 'Best Campaign' title 2006 for waste recycling campaign on back of buses
- Introduction in November 2005 of a permit scheme to divert Traders using the 15 Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC's) illegally. The scheme has proven to be very successful helping to divert approximately 50kg per head from the total of household waste collected from 575kg in 2004/05 to approx 520kg in 2006/07.
- The fly-tipping investigations officer (partnership post) has been cited by DEFRA as an example of best practice in its consultation document on incentives for recycling by householders.

The Municipal Waste Management Strategy produced by the County Durham Municipal Waste Partnership (County and all 7 districts) provides the way forward on the treatment and disposal of municipal waste in the County. The process for letting the contract for treatment and disposal of waste has now commenced.

Transport

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) was prepared for of the County in partnership with local organisations including District Councils. The Department for Transport believed the Council's performance over the LTP1 period demonstrated: "a good standard of overall delivery and a positive impact on local transport provision with some strong delivery in places. Areas of strength included maintenance, road safety, bridge assessment and bridge strengthening" and; "the Park and Ride had exceeded all expectations". In relation to LTP2 they said: "This is clearly a good plan with some areas of excellence. The plan is clearly well set in the context of local, national and regional strategies and consultation and involvement is also particularly strong with innovative methods used to engage the whole range of stakeholders".

The Council achieved the 'Most Innovative Local Authority Award' for 2006/07 (Highways Magazine Excellence Awards – the road industry's premier awards event). A wide range of innovative measures have recently been introduced to deal with traffic management and provide sustainable transport solutions across the County. These include the region's first purpose built Park and Ride, an internationally recognised city centre road charging scheme, and a controlled parking scheme. Progress with School Travel Plans, accident reduction programmes and bus priority measures were highlighted by the award judges, together with the development of public transport interchanges. At the same event the council was recognised for outstanding work around accident prevention and reduction with the Passive Safety Initiative Award –

focuses on improving road safety by preventing or reducing the severity of accidents, including the use of more 'crash friendly' structures that collapse in a controlled manner on impact.

Other initiatives which contribute to accident reduction:

- Driver Improvement Scheme – provides training for drivers as an alternative to prosecution and also provides one to one training for inexperienced and vulnerable drivers
- Child Pedestrian training – the model successfully developed in Easington district will be rolled out across the County from September 2007
- Safe Driving with Age Scheme – for elderly drivers who may be referred by GPs where there is some doubt about patients' safety whilst driving.

The Council was awarded Transport Innovation Funding from the Department for Transport – one of only seven successful bids nationally in the first tranche of pump priming funding. This substantial funding will help expand the knowledge of transport issues within the framework of the Durham City Vision. The funding will also help to test the practicality and popularity of extending congestion charging in Durham city centre, as well as the potential for infrastructure improvements.

Making a difference – Park and Ride

The Council opened three Park and Ride sites in December 2005 (Sniperley, Howlands Farm, and Belmont). All three sites are achieving better than expected passenger results with a year on year increase in passenger trips per month showing an average increase of 33%. All passenger facilities have been designed to a high standard offering easy access with buses modified with low floor use for wheelchair ramps and specially designed easy use wheelchair spaces.

The Council purchased Durham Bus Station in 2005 and refurbished it to provide improved accessibility and facilities for passengers. The acquisition has allowed Arriva to invest over £3m on new low floor vehicles for the Durham fleet. A public user survey conducted before and after the opening proved that the public feel much safer and have easier access.

Planning and housing strategy

At a regional level the County Council, as strategic planning authority, was invited to represent County Durham at the Examination in Public of the Draft NE Regional Spatial Strategy which took place over 5 weeks in March/April 2006. Unlike the other sub-regions, the County Council chose to prepare statements and provide representatives at the Examination in partnership with the 7 district planning authorities, under the banner of the County Durham Authorities, to present a united case for County Durham. Joint working has continued with the district planning officers, the County Durham Association of Local Authorities and the County Durham Economic Partnership, to prepare a strong evidence base and to lobby regional stakeholders before responding to the Secretary of State's consultation on proposed changes to the RSS in August 2007. The County Durham Authorities' jointly argued case for increased new housing provision and the re-instatement of several key sites has been supported by the North East Assembly and other key stakeholders.

The joint County/District Officers' Development Plans Monitoring Group, chaired by the County Council, is another example of partnership working to progress preparation of Local Development Frameworks, sustainability appraisals and maintain county-wide monitoring systems on housing, employment land and retail development to meet RSS and LDF evidence base requirements. It is a useful forum for sharing ideas and best practice, as well as for jointly commissioning specialist work, which individual planning authorities would find too costly to undertake alone. A major new area of jointly funded work is the County Durham Strategic housing market Assessment required by the government to assess need and demand to underpin planning for housing policies at regional and local level.

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES

The county-wide Strong, Healthy, Safe Partnership takes an overview of the many themes of partnership working that contribute towards safer and stronger communities. The County Council fulfils its statutory responsibility under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (the Act) to work with partners to reduce crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour, behaviour adversely affecting the environment and substance misuse primarily through membership on the seven Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and more recently on the Safer Stronger Communities (SSC) sub group of the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Reducing and preventing fear of crime

Community engagement is essential to achieve sustainable reductions in crime and disorder. As such the County Council is a key partner in the development of Neighbourhood Policing within the County which is now to form part of a

broader neighbourhood improvement approach. The council has worked with partners to obtain additional funding for consultation exercises for crime and disorder reduction for the County, for example obtaining funding for the Community Safety (Fear of Crime) Survey and audience response system. The Council co-ordinated funding from all CDRPs in the County to develop a registered traders scheme to tackle bogus officials and rogue traders.

The Council's Community Safety team provides expert advice and knowledge to partners in relation to community safety issues. Recently, an Officer from DCC Community Safety was seconded to Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Service to evaluate their community services, deliver a new and challenging strategy and make proposals for delivery of community safety services for the next three years.

Section 17 of the Act places specific duties on the County Council to consider crime and disorder implications within its decision making procedures. Implementation of section 17 responsibilities has been done through the development of the Section 17 policy and strategic framework. Crime and disorder implications are considered in all corporate and operational plans and policy decisions. A training programme for staff and elected members for section 17 has been developed and implemented. Staff handbooks in relation to section 17 responsibilities have been piloted and an evaluation is to be undertaken prior to rolling the handbooks out throughout the authority.

Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour

The Durham County Council Community Safety Strategy details how services contribute to the prevention and reduction of crime and disorder. This includes:

- Site assessments undertaken by Service Direct
- Site assessments by Community Safety Team on behalf of services
- Secured by design principles adopted in all planning designs
- Community Safety questions adopted in regeneration's project plans and reviews
- Estates policy re: cutting hedges
- DCC actively support True Vision
- Work with Age Concern

The Council has been instrumental in the development of a coordinated countywide approach to ASB. An ASB Coordinator, employed through the County Council until 2005, developed a countywide ASB Policy which has been agreed by all partners and highlights the need for a holistic approach to ASB reduction to including prevention, enforcement and support. A policy and procedure for publicity of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), protocols for Dispersal Orders and Premises Closure, developed by the Council, have been adopted across County Durham.

The Council is a member of local ASB Panels and Problem Solving Groups which consider ASB hotspots and individual perpetrators. The Council has undertaken research in relation to victims and witnesses of ASB as well as in relation to breaches of ASBOs and reports have been presented to CDRPs for implementation. The Council is also leading the development of a single system for recording incidents of ASB (including environmental ASB) for County, District and Borough Councils. The Customer Relations Management (CRM) system is in the process of being implemented across the County. In the interim period the County Council has developed a tracking system for any crime and disorder issues reported to community safety staff within the County Council.

In December 2006 the Council agreed a policy framework within which applications for Alleygate schemes can be determined. The policy relates to the application of Gating Orders for alleyways which facilitate persistent crime and anti social behaviour problems, where other interventions are not appropriate or cost-effective. As the Highways Authority, a cross-service team from Community Safety, Highways, Rights of Way and Legal Services consider applications within the policy.

Reducing the Impact of Drug and Alcohol Misuse

The County Council plays a considerable role in relation to the reduction of drug and alcohol misuse. The Corporate Director of Adult & Community Services chairs the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) strategic board. The Council has contributed to the pooled budget for drug and alcohol treatment not only for adults but also for children and young people. Other Council services are represented on the sub-groups of the DAAT as well as the Board.

The County Council is integral to the district based Community Drugs Teams (CDTs) across the County. Social workers form part of district based CDTs of nurses and social workers. In addition, Adult & Community Services within DCC provide specialist teams for adults with problematic substance use. The CDTs work in partnership with organisations commissioned by to provide treatment, structured counselling, outreach work and day services. Social workers provide Comprehensive Assessments of Need for drug or alcohol clients with complex needs and commission home care, day

care or residential services to meet the identified needs as appropriate out of a small external care commissioning budget. Social workers can also co-work with other specialisms (Mental Health, Learning Disabilities, Older People and Children's services). At December 2007 the number of users receiving treatment was 1, 320.

The Council has been involved, in partnership with the DAAT, in the development of the XS service (substance misuse treatment service for young people) and is a key partner in the hidden harm multi-agency network. At December 2007 there were 142 young people in the XS service. Drug and Alcohol education is of primary importance in the prevention of drug and alcohol misuse. A comprehensive education package has been developed, teachers receive drug and alcohol training and each school in the County has a drugs policy. Peer-led education programmes are also in place. Through a time limited task and finish Substance and Alcohol Misuse (DSAM) Group a DCC Drug and Alcohol Policy has been developed and the Council is committed to training all staff in Drug awareness. The Council also contributed to the completion of the drugs audit and development of strategies. Targets are in line with the National Drug Strategy.

DCC Trading Standards have enforcement powers in relation, particularly, to alcohol. Trading Standards engage in intelligence-led investigations and test-purchase exercises on a regular basis, enforcement measures are pursued when necessary. Since April 2006 Trading Standards have completed 113 test purchases, of which 15% were illegal sales. From April 2006 to March 2007 there were 17 prosecutions submitted for consideration.

Reducing Accidents

In order to deliver a coherent strategy across all aspects of road safety, a Casualty Reduction Partnership has been established within the Durham Constabulary area. The partnership includes Police, Darlington Borough Council, Durham County Council, Highways Agency and the Fire and Rescue Service. Analysis of accident data allows the design and implementation of remedial schemes at sites with an identified history of recorded personal injury accidents. This work will help the Council achieve its year 2010 casualty reduction targets.

Road Safety training is provided via National Driver Improvement Scheme, School Crossing Patrol Staff, Pedestrian Training, Cycle Training and In-Car Safety Training for Children. The practical elements of road safety training also develop awareness of the health benefits of cycling and walking. As an example of impact, Pedestrian Training in Easington District has seen a reduction of 57% in child casualties over the last four year. This scheme will be rolled out across other districts from September 2007.

Safer Driving with Age (SAGE) offers older driver low cost driving assessments to ensure they are still physically and mentally capable of driving safely. Whatever outcome of the assessment all drivers are advised on the benefits of leaving the car at home and using alternative methods of transport, including walking.

School Travel Planning (joint ventures between the school, pupils, parents, local community and DCC) enable more children to walk, cycle or take public transport to school.

Stronger communities

In addition to the commitment the Council has made to community development through its corporate community development policy and strategy and the community engagement and consultation strategy, the Council also supports communities through a range of community initiatives, events and activities. Creative opportunities which enable people to take part in a wide range of activities also contribute to the economy of the County by making use of local talent for events and activities and by promoting the work of local artists. The County Durham Cultural Partnership received financial support from the County Durham Economic Development partnership to commission a countywide events strategy and during 2005/06 events attracted an attendance of 197,000. Events range from the mobile libraries delivering arts programmes to small rural communities to larger events such as Durham Lifest, Stanley Blues Festival and the Miners Gala.

The Council currently funds a number of voluntary and community organisations and a review is underway to improve the corporate and strategic approach to engaging and supporting the voluntary and community sector in line with the principles set out in the County Durham Compact. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is also carrying out a review to help to grow and build capacity in communities and provide a strategic steer towards a sustainable future for the community buildings owned by the Council.

Emergency Planning

Durham County Council is committed to working effectively with a diverse range of organisations involving all Category 1, Category 2, Voluntary Agencies and other cooperating bodies in the planning and preparation of emergency and business continuity plans and procedures and ensures that there is effective engagement with regional emergency

planning groups and the Regional Resilience Forum. The County Durham and Darlington Civil Contingencies Unit works for the Council to ensure that it is fully engaged in all areas of the Local Resilience Forum's work and that the Council has coordinated response plans in place to effectively deal with local emergency situations. Key response staff within the Council, participate in on-call rotas and have names and personal contact details held centrally within the Civil Contingencies Unit in order to provide 24 hour response to emergency situations.

A recent example where the emergency planning arrangements came into play, and worked well, was a major gas leak in Wear Valley, which forced people from their homes at Middlestone Moor and resulted in gas supplies being cut to 11,000 people. It was several days before supplies were fully restored. Officers from across the Council's services provided reception centre services for those people displaced and arranged transport. As well as the need for the evacuation of homes near the gas leak, the Council's Adult and Community Services ensured that vulnerable people were not at risk overnight through the loss of gas-fuelled heating and/or cooking.

The Council has in place a large range of generic and specific emergency and business continuity plans to respond in a coordinated way to various hazards and emergency situations that may arise. All of these plans have effective monitoring, amendment and document control procedures. Plans are supported by both internal and external multi-agency training and exercising programmes on a local and regional level in which Council staff participate

The Council is further committed to identifying internal organisational risks as identified within the work of the Corporate Risk Management Team and the Council's Risk Management Strategy. The Council is also committed to reduce the potential impact of a major service interruption demonstrated within the Business Continuity Plans and an effective framework for Business Continuity Management activities. The Council additionally provides generic Business Continuity advice and assistance to local businesses and voluntary organisations, hence further increasing local resilience and response capabilities.

HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

Durham County Council recognises it has a significant contribution to make to the improvements that are required in the health of the local population, particularly because of our role in many of the issues and services relevant to some of the key underlying determinants of health status, such as educational attainment, the environment, the economy and lifestyle choices.

Community leadership for health improvement is a cross cutting issue for the Council delivered through high level partnership working to address the social, economic and environmental factors which impact on the health of communities. These partnerships include

- County Durham Strategic Partnership and County Durham Local Area Agreement Interim Board
- County Durham Strong Healthy and Safe Communities Partnership incorporating the health inequalities design group
- County Durham Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership incorporating the Every Child Matters agenda, and the Tackling Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board
- County Durham Environment Partnership addressing environmental impacts on community health
- Integrated Regeneration in County Durham addressing broader deprivation including chronic ill health issues
- Durham Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership Board.

The Healthy Communities and Older People block of the Local Area Agreement, developed under the leadership of the County Council, has a strong emphasis on health improvement but all the LAA themes encompass the health improvement and health inequalities agenda, through action to address the underlying determinants: for example reducing the numbers of local people in receipt of incapacity benefit through tackling workless-ness.

Following the merger of the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in the County into a single body, work is beginning to bring together a number of PCT strategies into a single approach county-wide. The creation of the single PCT, co-terminous with the County Council, has enabled the Council and the PCT to have a Joint Director of Public Health. The co-terminosity now provides a stronger platform for effective partnership working to improve services for vulnerable people and, critically, to improve the health of local communities and reduce inequalities. The PCT's key development plan, its Local Delivery Plan setting out its investment programme, has been discussed at length with the Council, and we have been successful in ensuring that there is a greater emphasis than in the past on health improvement.

The Council has recognised the need to bring together more effectively the huge range of activity that supports health improvement and action on health inequalities, and is currently producing its own health strategy, which will demonstrate

the Council's Contribution to the key health issues for the County as set out in the Annual Report of the PCT Directors of Public health. These include:

Smoking: Smoking is the biggest single contributor to the shorter life expectancy experienced locally. A joint action plan on tobacco control has been developed, under a tobacco control alliance chaired by the County Council. This includes Trading Standards' enforcement of tobacco sales regulations, preparation for the national legislation on smoke-free workplaces (for example the development of a revised smoking policy for the Council itself), and active work to promote the smoke-free agenda with schools, youth services and more broadly. Smoking is a key indicator in the LAA.

Obesity: Levels of obesity in the County are amongst the worst in England. The Children & Young People's plan has highlighted the importance of tackling childhood obesity and increasing opportunities for physical activity. The Council is working to achieve high coverage of the Healthy Schools Award (see below), and implementing initiatives to tackle obesity, such as the school food policy and the Trading Standards Café Life information produced to give guidance to schools on healthy and safe food. Sure Start and Early years work to improve the health of children from disadvantaged communities. The promotion of walking and cycling is a key element of the sustainable transport objective, both because of its direct health benefits (and because of the reduction in emissions if people switch from using cars for short journeys). The Walking and Cycling action plan aims to further develop the cycle network, for example through the development of disused railway lines, improve safety and promote cycling as a viable alternative to car usage. We have developed specialised activity programmes for adults with a learning disability, and have a significant programme of action to develop the role of libraries in providing health promotion information. The Council has also developed a successful workplace health programme for its own staff, and in December 2006 was awarded the Bronze Health At Work Award by the PCT.

Teenage Conceptions: The County Council chairs the local Teenage Pregnancy Partnership (TTP) Board, which has reduced the conception rate by over 10% since 1998, and between 2004 and 2006 we improved our performance rating on this area from "red/red" to "amber/green". The work of the Partnership is concerned with both preventing conceptions and improving outcomes for teenage parents and their children. We have been successful in ensuring a strong approach to delivery of personal social and health education in schools and in the development of the skills of staff – such as youth workers – to support the TTP strategy. We have good support services for pregnant schoolgirls, as well as providing targeted support to high risk groups, such as Looked After Children, and geographical hotspots. Supported accommodation for teenage parents is commissioned through our Supporting People programme. However, we need to ensure greater consistency across the county, whilst prioritising more strongly the hotspot areas and high risk groups. In recognition of the need for continued focus on this area, the Council will be strengthening its role through the transfer of the post of the co-ordinator of the strategy from the PCT to the Council's Children and Young People's commissioning team.

Making a difference – Healthy School Awards

It is important to change young people's knowledge and behaviour in respect of their health, and a key element of the Council's approach to this is to increase the number of children and young people participating in physical activity and to raise still further the number of schools that have achieved healthy schools status. As at April 2006, 77% of primary schools in the County had achieved the old healthy schools standards, and the intention is that by 2009, 95% of primary schools will have achieved this – this is a LAA stretch target. A delivery plan is in place, including for example providing funding to allow schools to back-fill staff who can then be released to go on specific training.

More broadly, the Council considers the implications for health as part of its ordinary decision-making process: for example, the Local Transport Plan (LTP2), prior to its publication, was subject to a health impact assessment the results of which were taken into account in the final Plan.

With regard to transport, the County Council chairs the County Durham and Darlington Transport for Health Partnership: In recognising the need to draw together transport and health the LTP2 has planned budget provision over the whole of the plan to contribute to the provision of joint schemes with the health sector that will contribute to residents' accessibility to health services. This issue had been one of the main problems brought up by the public in the LTP2 consultation exercise carried out prior to the Plan coming into effect in April 2006. Works completed in 2006/07 involved accessibility audits being carried out at University Hospital Durham, Bishop Auckland and Chester-le-Street hospitals. Targets for transport accessibility for GPs and Outpatients are contained within the Local Area Agreement.

The Council has a very active Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee which deals not only with consultations from local NHS organisations on service changes, but also addresses health improvement topics – its first piece of work was concerned

with the different approaches across the County of Exercise on Prescription schemes and more recently it published an investigation into heart disease and stroke in the County, as well as a report on the health of children under 5, which has prompted the development of a breast-feeding policy for the County. Its current work includes an investigation into drug and alcohol misuse by young people in the County.

Later this year, the Council will begin a leadership for health development programme with IDEa, which is intended to increase Councillors' (particularly the non-executive members) understanding of health improvement and support them in developing their role in improving the health of people in the county. The programme will be delivered in partnership with the PCT.

The Council has also been selected as an "early adopter" site for the new arrangements for the involvement of users and carers in health and social care services – the Local Involvement Network (LINK), and is working with the Commission For Patient and Public Involvement In Health, the PCT and local voluntary sector organisations to develop the new model.

There is a wide range of other projects and initiatives in place that support the health improvement agenda, including the Looked after Children project (see below), and the role of the welfare rights team in tackling poverty by raising the income of disadvantaged families. The forthcoming strategy aims to capture and strengthen the various initiatives, as well as identifying areas for further work

Making a difference – Looked After Children project

Three looked after children (LAC) nurses from County Durham PCT (partly funded by the Council) work as a single service across the county, though each primarily covers a different part of the area. Over the past 3 years the LAC nurses have developed and significantly improved the Health Assessment process. The LAC nurses undertake the initial health assessment for all older young people coming into the looked after system, and co-ordinate and often deliver the holistic annual health assessment for all looked after children and young people. Through these efforts Durham's performance on the percentage of looked after children who have had a health assessment and dental check within the past 12 months has risen from 76% in 2003/4 to **80.5%** in 2005/6. Performance is currently running at **86.9%**.

OLDER PEOPLE

The partnership framework around older people's issues is currently in a transitory position due to a changing context at both local and national levels. The multi-agency Older People's Modernisation Group has provided strategic direction and a partners' forum around older people's services since November 2003, beneath the overall strategic framework of the County Durham Strategic Partnership and its themed Strong Healthy Safe Communities Partnership. A range of other action-focussed groups (such as the Durham Housing and Neighbourhoods Group and Community Equipment Board) have also had a bearing on older people's wellbeing during this period.

The re-organisation of County Durham's Primary Care Trusts (from five to one), the Local Government White Paper's blueprint for a statutory Health and Well-Being Partnership, the emergence of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and the local review of the County Durham Strategic Partnership all provide an opportunity for re-shaping and streamlining partnership arrangements around older people's issues. The Council is demonstrating clear leadership in this debate, with initial discussions with partners developing a model based on a partnership board for older people's issues with commissioning and delivery responsibilities operating within the LAA framework. It is anticipated that this partnership board would sit beneath an umbrella framework of a revitalised County Durham Strategic Partnership and a new statutory Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

A 'Living Well in Later Life' draft strategy for older people's services is currently with partners for approval, before proceeding through the Council's decision making processes later in 2007. The strategy brings coherence and leadership to a key area of the Council's corporate priorities, and has at its core our belief in working with and listening to the views of older people in the County. The strategy is also built around a range of national guidance, legislation and service development documents, and the Council's leadership in developing this strategy reflects our broader role in encouraging and supporting partners' activity and 'place-shaping'.

The strategy adopts the Government's 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say' outcomes as a framework around which to structure the views of older people, medium and short-term priority areas for action and relevant performance targets and indicators. The 7 outcomes are:-

- improved health
- improved quality of life

- making a positive contribution
- increased choice and control
- freedom from discrimination and harassment
- economic well-being
- maintaining personal dignity and respect

The strategy's accompanying action plan provides a mechanism for monitoring effective delivery, with inbuilt accountability between partners, and between public sector organisations and older people in the County.

Local Area Agreement (LAA) - In line with the national and local strategic priorities for older people and for vulnerable adults, the Healthy Communities and Older People block of the County Durham LAA focuses on prevention, promoting healthy ageing and developing a joined-up approach between partners. The LAA provides the short-term action plan and performance framework for outcomes within the 'Living Well in Later Life' draft strategy in some priority areas.

Through the LAA process partners identified the following issues as being of particular importance to County Durham:

- Increased demand for services for older people as a result of demographic shift;
- Increased provision of and participation in social activities and leisure opportunities.
- Increased community involvement through employment or volunteering.
- Improved economic wellbeing through access to employment opportunities and benefits.
- Greater independence, choice and control through direct payments, home improvements and housing support.
- Reduced excess winter mortality of older people through immunisations, benefit takeup and affordable warmth schemes.

The range of outcomes and indicators listed in the LAA represent the three year action plan for tackling these headline issues. Of specific importance to the independence and well-being of older people are two of the three 'stretch targets' for which the County Council is the lead partner:

- Ensuring that the large proportion of vulnerable adults relying on informal support from family, friends receive the support and benefits that they need – 'Percentage of older people within County Durham in receipt of Council Tax Benefit'
- Supporting the direction of the 'Our Health Our Care Our Say' and the National Supporting People Strategy away from institutional forms of care towards home-based services and prevention, independence and choice – 'Number of adults and older people receiving direct payments per 100,000 of the 18+ population'

Consistent and Meaningful Engagement - The first annual Conference for older people in County Durham took place in 2005. It focused upon highlighting and discussing issues of importance to local people, and the key priorities for those attending the conference were:-

- information, where to find it and improve co-ordination
- well-being e.g. being active, physically and mentally, and community engagement
- housing and support services e.g. clean, safe and comfortable homes, low level preventative services such as handyvan and community alarms
- economic well-being e.g. benefits and financial advice
- being safe e.g. crime prevention, bogus callers, fire safety
- transport and travel e.g. accessibility, cost of travel, rural issues
- support for the vulnerable e.g. GP and hospital services, home care and residential care
- carers issues e.g. support and breaks services

These priorities were included in a draft strategy and outcomes framework which was the subject of the second annual Countywide conference in September 2006. Consultation around these issues, and further refinement in light of national guidance, resulted in the 'Living Well in Later Life' draft strategy. Partners have a shared aspiration to repeat this older people's conference on an annual basis to continually refine priority areas and demonstrate improvements for older people in the County.

A practical example of this commitment to engagement is the Service Level Agreement between the Council and Age Concern, which was recently redrafted to focus upon outcomes and extending involvement to hard to reach groups. Furthermore, the Council has undertaken social inclusion workshops within local communities with the purpose of engaging users/carers and other stakeholders in shaping a commissioning strategy, which promotes principles of social inclusion.

County Durham is one of nine Early Adopter areas in the country testing approaches to Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) which will replace Patients' Forums and provide new structures to empower and support community engagement in health and social care. The Council is leading this process and has developed a Project Group with key partners. An initial stakeholder event was held on 2nd March, 2007.

Conscious of the future challenges posed by changing demographics in the County, the Council's Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee conducted a review of 'Opportunity Age' in 2006, and the resultant action plan from this review is a powerful tool for bringing clarity and focus to the new Adult and Community Service's priorities for 2007/08, and provides a benchmark against which the Council's responsibilities in the 'Living Well in Later Life' draft strategy can be tested and monitored.

The challenges facing the Council in response to demographic trends and balancing increasing demand for services against limited resources, requires the Council to review its strategic approach to the commissioning of services for older people. Building upon the success of Stage 1 of Modernising Services for Older People, which established Extra Care provision in the County, the Council embarked upon an intensive consultation exercise in relation to the future of "in-house" residential provision. Responding to public opinion, Cabinet agreed to explore further a wide range of options geared towards a sustainable strategy for residential care provision, maximising the totality of sustainable resources.

Provision for vulnerable adults remains one of the Councils' corporate priorities, and the Council can be proud of its achievements in delivering services for older people in the County. The Council retained its Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) Adult Social Services judgement of 2 stars, serving most people well with promising capacity for improvement in December 2006. The Commission complemented the Council's performance for older people around:

- integrated health, housing and care teams;
- increase in the number of extra care tenancies;
- self assessment pilots which are increasing efficiency and effectiveness of assessments;
- effective advocacy arrangements for older people's voices to be heard;
- the fact that fewer people were placed outside the county boundary for residential care than comparator councils.

The Council has also received national recognition for its innovation and commitment to older people's services:

- Community Care provider services retained all 3 Charter Mark's in their services in 2006;
- Integrated Learning Disability provider services have enjoyed continued success maintaining 2 Charter Marks and work is in hand with regard to the retention of the standard for all three service areas in 2007;
- MJ Awards 2005 – Finalist in the Public/Private Partnership of the Year;
- Health and Social Care Awards July 2005 - Northern Region winner in the Technology Category;
- Health and Social Care Awards December 2005 – Finalist in the Technology Category;
- Local Government Chronicle Award March 2006 – Finalist in the E-government category.

Integrated Services – a key strategic aim for the Council has been to integrate front line services with partner agencies. Three Intermediate Care Teams have been established in Easington, Durham/Chester le Street and Derwentside, each with a jointly appointed manager, whilst in Sedgefield five Integrated Community Teams have been established and four Integrated Team Managers have been appointed in the Dales. The Council, with partners, has committed to reviewing models of integration to ensure consistency across the County and drive up performance levels using best practice from models applied so far. The Council is working in partnership with the NHS and community and voluntary sector to promote well-being through, for example, the Service Level Agreement with Age Concern which addresses standard 8 of the Older People's National Service Framework – "the promotion of health and active life in older age".

Making a difference - Intermediate Care Easington

Intermediate Care Easington (ICE) is a multi- agency partnership initiative bringing together services that aim to: prevent unplanned admission to hospital, promote faster recovery from illness, maximize independence and skills, avoid inappropriate admission to long term care and facilitate hospital discharge. The team, comprising social work, therapy, nursing, residential, home care and support and administration staff, all co-located at Grampian House in Peterlee, provides a range of interlinked functions (Crisis Response, Supported Hospital Discharge, Mobile Rehabilitation, 24/7 rehabilitation in a residential and nursing setting) to adults of 18 years and over, utilizing joint decision making and single assessment processes.

The Council has demonstrated strategic leadership in facilitating the creation of a new Durham Housing & Neighbourhoods Partnership Board to act as the strategic body within County Durham for the consideration of housing

and related policies. This group will bring some coherence to the policy framework in housing, and ensure that housing policies blend better with other plans and strategies for County Durham and the North East region. As such, the Council will play a key role in working with partners to ensure that housing solutions address social care needs.

Safeguarding Adults – In response to the launch of a new set of national standards for adult protection work by the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS), Durham County Council Adult and Community Service commissioned a new inter-agency protocol in February 2006. As part of this work, the Inter-Agency Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedural Guidance has been developed which commits each of its partner organisations to a zero-tolerance of abuse. The aims of the new joint policy and procedural guidance are:

- to raise public and staff awareness;
- to ensure that partner agencies have preventative measures in place to lessen the likelihood of abuse occurring;
- to ensure that there is a consistent, supportive response from partner agencies county-wide whenever abuse is suspected or reported;
- to ensure that quality assurance measures and outcome information are used to improve safeguarding practices; and
- to ensure that monitoring data is used to inform strategic planning and development of appropriate new initiatives and services.

A number of the ADSS's standards are currently being met, with particular progress being made around standards 1, 5, 6 and 11 which provide a benchmark for joined up working, workforce development, public information and access. The Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board assessed progress against the ADSS framework at a workshop in September 2006, and has focused on implementing strategic improvements as we move into 2007.

The Council's performance in commissioning high quality services for vulnerable people is strong. Notable achievements include: -

- The launch of the Inter-Agency Learning Disabilities Workforce Plan 2006/8 to ensure that all staff working with people with learning disabilities are effectively trained and that a unified approach is adopted between agencies focussed upon new ways of working and skills development;
- The continuation of the Improvement programme for Learning Disability Day Services with investment in the Pontop Centre;
- The use of direct payment continues to increase;
- The use of direct payment continues to increase within Learning Disability Services;
- Service user and carer involvement has been strengthened by the launch of the Learning Disability Service User Parliament and the actioning of the carers' elections linked to the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board;
- Increased support in terms of numbers of bed days purchased for older people with mental health needs, in line with increased demand and demographics;
- Achievement of planned reduction in admissions to residential/nursing care;
- Enhanced access to services for vulnerable adults through the development and implementation of a Telecare Strategy across agencies within County Durham;
- Value Improvement Project finished with Communities and Local Government funding and the new community alarms and warden services due to start from 1 April 2007;
- Improving performance for client groups for the number of people helped to live at home;
- The development of Commissioning Strategies for various client groups, participation in an outcomes focussed Commissioning pilot and the appointment of a new Head of Service for Commissioning;
- Improvement in reducing waiting times for assessment;
- More people receiving a review of their care service each year;
- High levels of compliance with regulatory minimum standards for care services.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

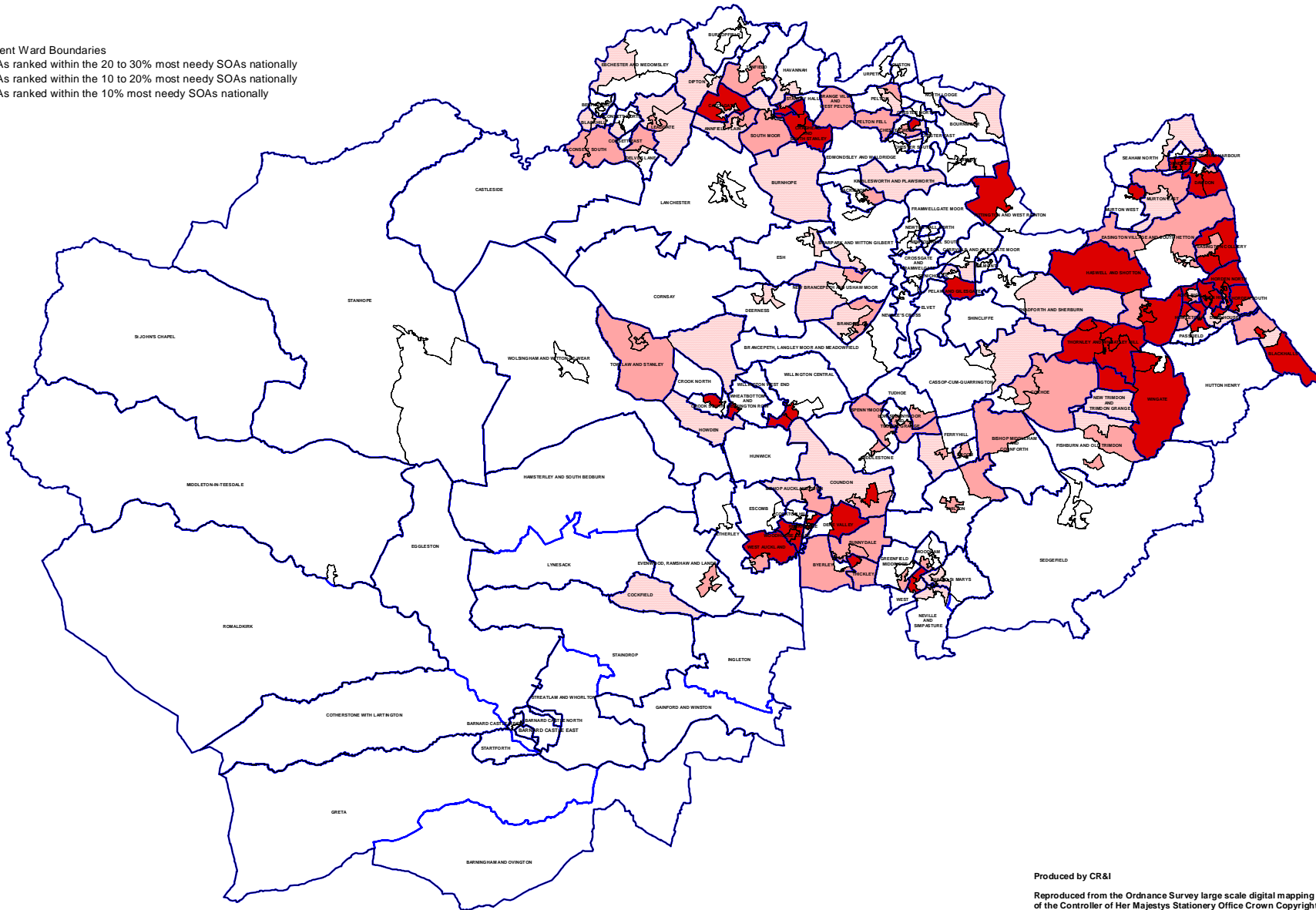
Detailed information on services for children and young people was set out in the self-assessment as part of the evidence for the Joint Area Review.

SELF SCORING

Theme	Score
Ambition	4
Prioritisation	4
Capacity	3
Performance Management	3
Achievement	3/4

MAP A : The Index of Deprivation 2004 : Distribution of SOA Scores in County Durham

- Current Ward Boundaries
- SOAs ranked within the 20 to 30% most needy SOAs nationally
- SOAs ranked within the 10 to 20% most needy SOAs nationally
- SOAs ranked within the 10% most needy SOAs nationally



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