

Carmarthenshire County Council

Corporate Strategy

2015 – 2020



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Foreword

Leader

They say that strategy is the art of planning and marshalling resources for their most efficient and effective use. This document has these goals in mind as it outlines our major priorities for the next five years. Carmarthenshire County Council continually strives to do things better and we always aim to raise standards.

The corporate strategy has been prepared against a back drop of continuing and unprecedented financial cuts. It's so important, therefore, that we make better use of resources as we attempt to build a better Council, as we aspire to improve Carmarthenshire.

I am confident that our priorities reflect the needs of our communities. There is clear evidence that a majority of Carmarthenshire's residents are satisfied with the services that we provide. But this document hopefully makes it clear that we are not prepared to rest on our laurels and, as the new Leader of the council, I shall be looking for continuous improvement over the next five years. The ambitions set out in this document will certainly be challenging, but I have no doubt in my mind that they are achievable. I truly believe that Carmarthenshire County Council is an excellent local authority with a dedicated and professional workforce and, although I am new to the position of Leader of the Council, I recognise and respect the achievements of the council over recent years.

But now is a time to move forward and I have great confidence that, armed with this new five year corporate strategy, Carmarthenshire County Council can go from strength to strength.



Cllr Emlyn Dole

Chief Executive

Welcome to Carmarthenshire County Council's Corporate Strategy 2015 – 2020. The Council is responsible for providing an extremely diverse range of services, employing over 9,000 members of staff with an annual turnover of over £500 million, and therefore a clear understanding of priorities is essential.

We have been ambitious in determining our priorities, ensuring we focus on those priorities that will make a difference to people's lives. There is no doubt we are facing some tough challenges ahead against a backdrop of financial austerity, but we are committed to demonstrating that we make best use of our resources.

We will ensure that the Authority is working as efficiently as possible in order to protect and maintain front line services where possible. This efficiency programme will be driven forward by all staff working for the Authority and we always welcome your views on how we can deliver more effective services.

The Corporate Strategy will be reviewed annually and we will report our progress in delivering these priorities to the public in our Annual Report.



Mark James



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Carmarthenshire in Context

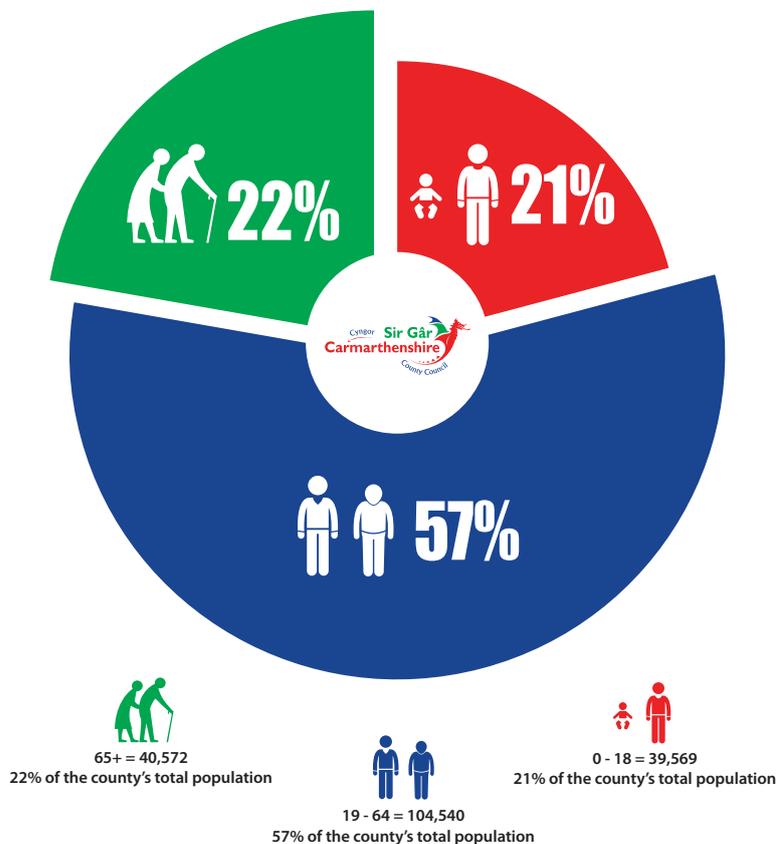
Carmarthenshire is the third largest county in Wales covering some 2,365 square kilometres. Carmarthenshire is a county of contrasts. The agricultural economy and landscape of rural Carmarthenshire is side by side with the urban and industrial south-eastern area. Within the county, the former coal, steel and other heavy industries have left their mark on the environment. The county is now developing into a modern economy that includes light engineering, new technological and service industries with other business enterprises.

Carmarthenshire has a rich natural and cultural environment. It includes sites designated at an international level to protect important biodiversity features, as well as striking landscapes and distinctive historic towns and villages.

The Welsh language in Carmarthenshire plays a key role in our every day lives with 43.9% of the population over the age of 3 being Welsh speakers and 58.1% of the population having one or more skill in Welsh.

Number of Carmarthenshire residents **184,681** population

Total population 2013 mid - year estimate

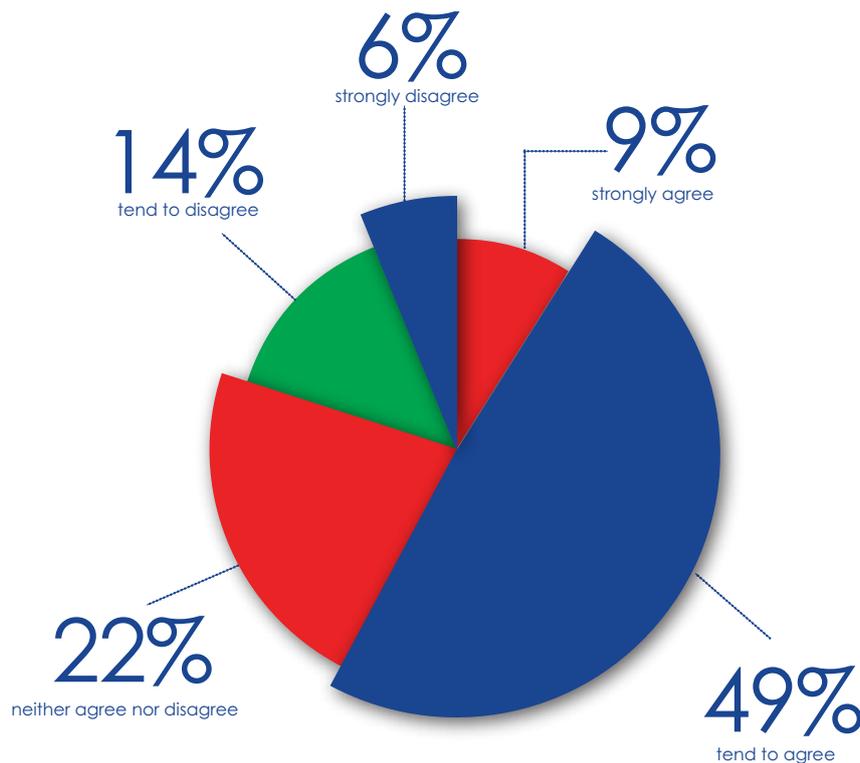


Service priorities for Carmarthenshire residents

Based on responses to the September 2014 Citizens' Panel and 50+ Network survey Carmarthenshire residents noted their top ten Council service priorities as follows:

1. Refuse collection
2. Services and facilities for ill and disabled people
3. Services and facilities for older people
4. Road maintenance
5. Bus services
6. Primary and secondary education
7. Pavement maintenance
8. Public conveniences
9. Recycling facilities
10. Environmental health and trading standards.

The National Survey for Wales (conducted by Welsh Government) asked a sample of Carmarthenshire residents 'To what extent do you agree or disagree that your Council provide high quality services'. The Carmarthenshire results for 2014-15 were as follows:



Source: National Survey for Wales 2014-15, Welsh Government

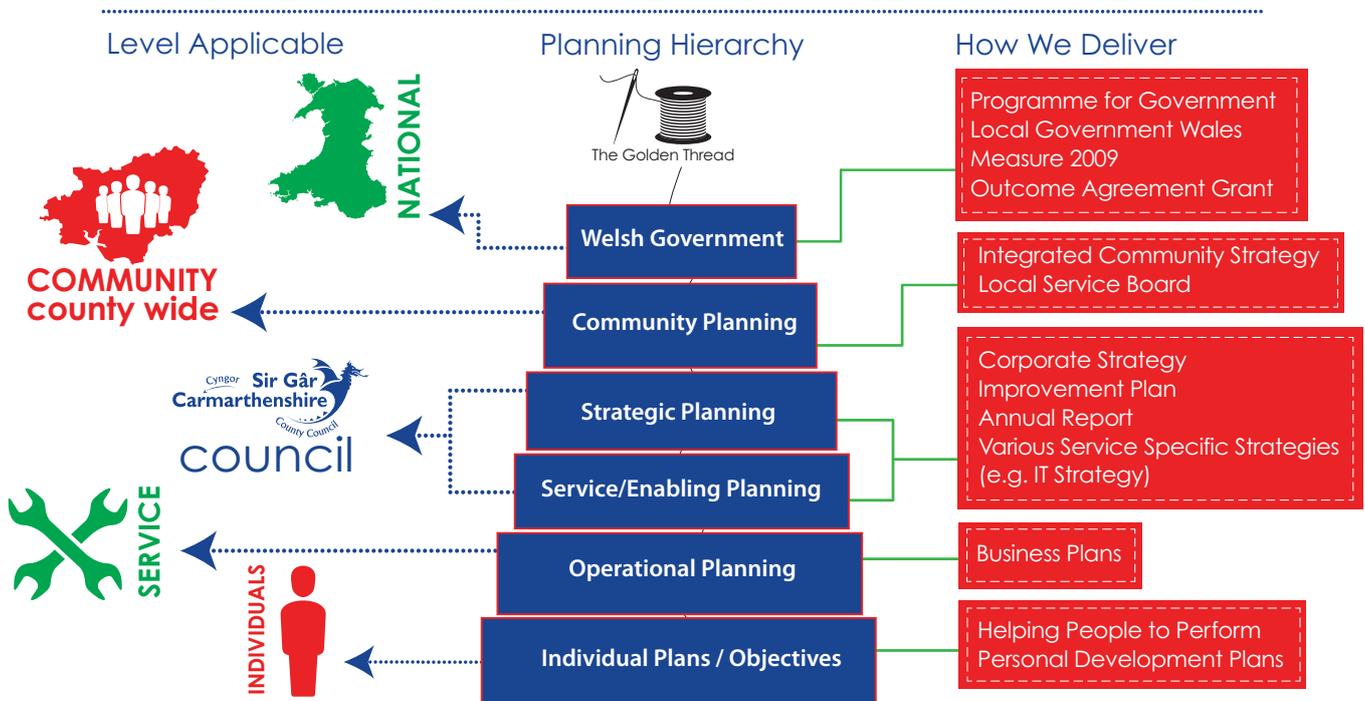
58% of Carmarthenshire respondents 'agreed' that the Council provided high quality services, with **20%** disagreeing. Carmarthenshire's 'agreed' percentage is five percentage points above the Wales average.

What is a Corporate Strategy?

The Corporate Strategy sets out the Council’s strategic priorities and aspirations and outlines what we plan to do to achieve our vision for Carmarthenshire. As a result, this Strategy will not refer to everything the Council does only what we believe should be our focus for the next five years in addition to our usual service provision. Further information about the Council’s work and development is reported through our Annual Report and Improvement Plan (ARIP) which is supported by the annual divisional business plans prepared by all Council services.

These strategic priorities and aspirations are aligned to the multi-agency county-wide outcomes identified through our Integrated Community Strategy (ICS) for Carmarthenshire 2011-16 all of which focus on improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of the people of Carmarthenshire. The ICS has been developed by Carmarthenshire Local Service Board and sets out the vision and outcomes for the people of Carmarthenshire to be delivered by key organisations in the public and voluntary sectors. No one organisation alone can achieve these outcomes and it is recognised that each partner has a role to play in achieving these outcomes through collaboration. This Corporate Strategy (along with the ARIP) confirms the Council’s contribution towards achieving the ICS outcomes.

How plans are made - The planning cascade - “The Wedding Cake & Golden Thread”



Our vision for Carmarthenshire

Our vision is for a Carmarthenshire that enables people to live healthy and fulfilled lives by working together to build strong, bilingual and sustainable communities

(Integrated Community Strategy for Carmarthenshire 2011-16)

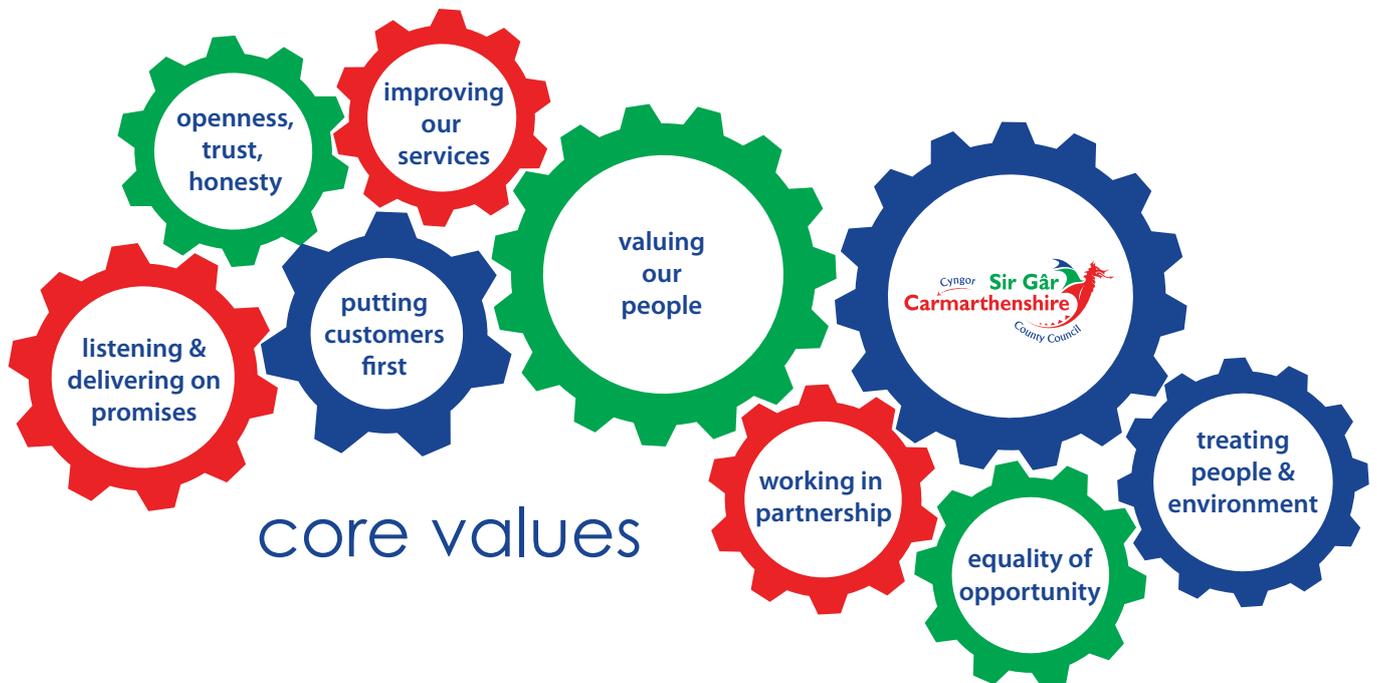
Overarching themes and core values of the Council

The Council is committed to ensuring that the economic, social and environmental well-being of the county is at the heart of all that it does whilst also ensuring that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

In order to do so the Council takes account of the following overarching themes in everything that it does:

- i. Its role as a provider of services
- ii. Its role in supporting communities
- iii. Its role as an employer
- iv. Its role in protecting and enhancing the Welsh language
- v. Its role in ensuring equal opportunities for all its residents
- vi. Its role in tackling poverty within the county.

In addition, the Council works to a set of core values as the basis of all that it does.



Challenges facing the Council

As the Council plans for the future we must take account of a number of challenges that we face. Most of these challenges are driven by factors outside of the Council's control but they are factors that we have to consider as we develop and, in some instances, change the way that we work and do things.

- i. Increasing demand and complexity for services
- ii. Increasing expectations of provision at the same time as managing decreasing budget
- iii. Challenging economic climate local economy
- iv. Increasing need to strengthen the digital infrastructure and support digital inclusion for individual residents as well as public, private and third sector organisations looking to develop economic prosperity and agile working
- v. Changing demographic profile of the county and in particular its ageing population
- vi. Increasing risks to ensure children and young people are protected from harm
- vii. Adapting to environmental change
- viii. Increasing deprivation and poverty with growing inequities between communities
- ix. Reforming Local Government
- x. Increasing legislation and regulation from Welsh Government
- xi. Managing the workforce risks associated with the pace of change required by the organisation.

The Council's priorities going forward

In addition to providing the Council's core services, in order to ensure continuous improvement and the best possible outcomes for the people of Carmarthenshire the following areas have been identified as key priorities for the Council between 2015-2020.

Making Better Use of Resources

The Council is facing a period of significant and continued budget cuts and it is more important than ever to ensure that we are making the best use of resources. We will ensure that the organisation is working as efficiently as possible in order to protect and maintain front line services where possible. However, it may not be possible for us to continue doing some of the things we have done in the past and we will work with our communities and stakeholders to find new ways of addressing need where appropriate.

We will focus on:

- Managing and making best use of the Council's property and assets with a focus on rationalising office accommodation and sharing with other partners as well as facilitating community ownership of assets for community benefit
- Providing services as efficiently as possible, ensuring value for money and supporting staff in order to reduce sickness absence rates
- Investigating and developing new ways of working and providing services
- Working in collaboration with other organisations to identify areas for shared services and economies of scale to reduce running costs
- Reviewing management and 'back office' costs in order where possible to safeguard 'front line' services.

Expected Outcomes:

- Improved public satisfaction levels with the services provided by the Council
- Reduction in organisational 'running costs'
- Increased online activity to address public queries and transactions

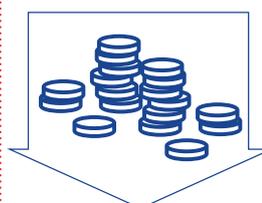
How the Council was funded 2014/15



£203,000,000
Welsh Government Grant
to support local authority services



£102 million
Specific Grants
19%



13%
£72million
Council Tax



£58million
Business Rates
received from
central government

11%

Building a Better Council



The Council has always worked towards building a better Carmarthenshire and has a proven track record of delivery. However, the way that public services are provided is changing and as a Council we need to respond and adapt to these changes in order to ensure we can support the needs of our residents in the future.

We will focus on:

- a. Promoting local democracy and transparency by further developing approaches to engaging and communicating with our residents and stakeholders including the increased use of digital technologies
- b. Ensuring the Council's governance arrangements and constitution are fit for purpose for future requirements in line with the findings and recommendations of the 2014 WLGA 'Peer Review'
- c. Managing and supporting our workforce to provide better outcomes for our residents through appropriate recruitment, retention and development of our staff.
- d. Developing an integrated workforce plan that supports the Council's strategic objectives.
- e. Increasing collaboration with our partners and communities in order support the delivery of services
- f. Responding to the need to reform local government and ensuring Carmarthenshire is well positioned in any future arrangements.
- g. Strengthening the position of the Welsh language in Carmarthenshire by implementing the recommendations of the 'Welsh Language in Carmarthenshire' report (March 2014)

Expected Outcomes:

- Increasing public communication, consultation and engagement
- Improved staff satisfaction levels
- Reduced staff sickness absence levels

People in Carmarthenshire are healthier

Our way of life is changing. People are living longer with a higher quality of life but our care needs are becoming more complex. The challenge now facing us is to prevent ill-health in the first place.

We will focus on:

- a. Ensuring further integration of community focused Council support services with health services
- b. Enhancing the range of community options to support older people to remain independent in their later years
- c. Supporting disadvantaged children and families to build their resilience with early intervention through targeted intervention programmes such as Flying Start, Families First and Communities First and embedding this practice within our core services
- d. Increasing the availability of rented and affordable homes to support the needs of local people by building new homes, bringing empty homes back into use and ensuring an allocation of affordable homes on new developments
- e. Mitigating the local impacts of welfare reform by supporting effected residents through the changes
- f. Supporting residents suffering from fuel poverty and introducing renewable energy technology to our tenants homes in order to save them money on energy costs
- g. Getting more Carmarthenshire people more (physically and creatively) active, more often in order to improve the health and well-being of our residents.



Expected Outcomes:

- Reduction in referrals to adult and children's social services
- Increased availability of rented and affordable homes
- Increased use of leisure facilities

People in Carmarthenshire fulfil their learning potential

We all want our children and young people to have the best possible start in life by supporting them to gain the skills and knowledge they need to lead happy, healthy, fulfilling lives. We want to improve outcomes for all ages through lifelong learning.

We will focus on:

- a. Ensuring continuous improvement in education outcomes for all children and young people across all learning phases
- b. Successfully introducing and translating the new national curriculum and qualifications into an inspiring and engaging local curriculum
- c. Developing a self-improving school system across the County making every school a good and improving school
- d. Continuing to improve school attendance.
- e. Ensuring a range of youth support services to foster the engagement of young people in education, work and community life
- f. Continuing to improve the condition, suitability and resource efficiency of our schools network through the Modernising Education Plan by investing a further £170m in the improvement of school premises through the 21st Century School Programme
- g. Further developing the 'Un Sir Gâr - Yr Hwb' service approach by simplifying access to learning and employment support services for young people and working age people.
- h. Further developing Welsh medium and bilingual education provision within the County in accordance with the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.



Expected Outcomes:

- Improved educational attainment
- Improved school attendance rates
- Reduced number of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training
- Improved condition of schools

People who live, work and visit Carmarthenshire are safe and feel safer

Carmarthenshire remains one of the safest areas in the UK. However, we must not become complacent and we need to continue to work together with partners to address problems identified by local communities.

We will focus on:

- a. Protecting and safeguarding children and adults from harm
- b. Supporting children, young people and families at times when they are facing challenging circumstances and enabling them to build their resilience to cope in the future
- c. Being good corporate parents to children and young people who come into the care of the Authority
- d. Reducing speeding and road traffic accidents
- e. Reducing anti-social behaviour by working in partnership with other agencies and communities to tackle local problems
- f. Reducing drug and alcohol misuse within the county



Expected Outcomes:

- Appropriate support provided to children, young people and families as required
- Reduction in road casualties
- Reduction in total recorded crime
- Reduction in anti-social behaviour

Carmarthenshire's communities and environment are sustainable

Carmarthenshire is known for its diverse communities and wonderful natural environment and we want to ensure that we develop sustainably so that everyone in the county is able to enjoy a better quality of life now and for generations to come.

We will focus on:

- a. Enhancing and utilising our rich natural environment whilst at the same time adapting to future needs as a result of climate change
- b. Supporting resilience with our rural and urban communities
- c. Taking further steps to reduce waste and increasing recycling working towards achieving the national target of 70% recycling by 2024/25 (from 59% in Carmarthenshire in 2014)
- d. Improving digital inclusion within the county but ensuring access to IT equipment, developing digital literacy and supporting connectivity for our communities

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased rates of recycling
- Improved digital access
- Improved transport links
- Increased use of renewable energy



Carmarthenshire has a stronger and more prosperous economy

Providing secure well paid jobs and training opportunities for local people is central to everything we are seeking to achieve. In the past, too many young people have been forced to leave Carmarthenshire to get jobs. Working across all sectors – public, voluntary and private – we want to increase prosperity for everyone in the county.

We will focus on:

- a. Creating jobs and growth throughout the County
- b. Developing training and learning opportunities for local people
- c. Improving the highway infrastructure and communication network to support further economic development and connectivity
- d. Ensuring long-term economic and social benefits for Carmarthenshire through the Swansea Bay City Region and future European and external funding avenues

supported the creation of

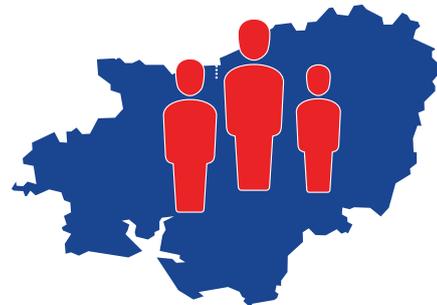
352

jobs in the county 2014/15

safeguarded

210

jobs in the county 2014/15



Expected Outcomes:

- Increased employment
- Reduction in working age population in receipt of out of work benefits
- Increased economic activity and productivity