



# Sunderland City Council Annual Report

January – December 2019



# A successful year for Sunderland



## Message from Graeme Miller, Leader of Sunderland Council

Welcome to our 2019 Annual Report. Sunderland has well and truly put itself on the map this year and in the 18 months since I became Leader. I'm immensely proud of my fellow councillors and officers, partners (both longstanding and new this past year) and our residents and communities for all that's been achieved and for the many developments and initiatives highlighted in this report.

Thanks to this hard work and dedication, 2019 has been nothing short of an outstanding year for the cultural and economic regeneration of the city. We have developed and approved the City Plan 2019-30, setting the blueprint for the next decade for us to work in partnership to build a connected, international city with opportunities for all. In order to realise the ambitions set out in the plan, as a council, we have begun to restructure our services and ways of working to ensure the needs and aspirations of residents and communities are at the absolute heart of everything we do.

Despite the financial challenges and prolonged period of austerity driven by central government, I am proud to say we have kept our budget balanced whilst continuing to drive our ambitions forward and provide vital services for our residents.

This report is just a snapshot of some of the things that have been done or are being planned in response to residents' suggestions, ideas and concerns.

I hope everyone will agree that Sunderland has got a lot to be proud of and I hope that we will be able to build on this year's successes in 2020 to improve outcomes for residents.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graeme Miller'. The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large loop at the end.





**Message from Patrick Melia,  
Chief Executive, Sunderland City Council**

The past year has been a great year for Sunderland and I thank all council staff for their hard work, innovation and contribution to all the council's achievements and developments – it is very much appreciated.

We will continue to transform the council and our ways of working in 2020 to ensure we're in the best shape possible to deliver the City Plan and excellent services for our residents.

We have seen major developers commit to investing in our city – in infrastructure and sites that will drive job creation and in the building of more new homes, including the council itself starting to build houses again. An increasing number of residents are getting involved in creating plans for their neighbourhoods which ensures we are responding to resident feedback and resourcing and improving what is important to people in their local area.

Council staff deliver over 700 services across Sunderland and this report highlights a variety of successes and achievements during 2019.

Going forward, continued growth, investment and delivering opportunities will depend on the council playing a strong leadership role to create the right conditions, ensuring Sunderland is at the forefront of new infrastructure development.

Being the first city in the UK to deploy 5G ready wi-fi at the end of 2019 sets the tone for more exciting developments in 2020 as we continue to work towards achieving great outcomes for the city and its residents.

Throughout this report there are many examples of how the council works co-operatively with residents and communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Melia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



# Our city, our neighbourhoods

The close working relationships the council has with the city's residents and locally-based organisations are underpinned by the council's co-operative values. We are keen to include genuine input from our communities and partners in the services we deliver and we want to continue to support services that are led by them, working with and on behalf of communities.

The council has well-established area arrangements that lead locality working across the city from Roker to Silksworth, Hetton and Washington. This year the council has delivered a range of community-based initiatives to help ensure that residents are proud of where they live, there is access to good housing, green spaces, opportunities to get involved in community life and support for vulnerable and isolated people.

It is vital that local people are able to have a strong voice and that all our communities share in the prosperity which we aim to create. Our new community engagement framework 'Let's Talk' sets out the dynamic ways in which the council engages with communities across Sunderland and acts as a practical resource for use across the council and by our partners. Through it we are clear in our aspirations to improve people's lives and the quality of public services. We are continuing to listen and involve community groups and residents in shaping the city. In 2020 we will be working with communities and partners to develop Neighbourhood Investment Plans for each of the five areas as well as the city centre.

Throughout this report there are many examples of how the council works co-operatively with residents and communities.





# DYNAMIC CITY



**More and better jobs** – Our focus remains on increasing well paid jobs in the city through promoting growth in target sectors including advanced manufacturing, the Port, digital and software sector, professional sector in the city centre (office jobs), alongside more creative and cultural businesses in relation to vibrancy.

- Sunderland is now home to over 90 global companies, employing 26,350 people (23% of all employees in the city). Companies that have invested in the city include USA firm Saggezza, Swedish owned Walker Filtration, Minth from China, as well as USA headquartered hearing aid battery manufacturer Rayovac
- The city has key international links with Washington DC in the USA, Harbin in China, Essen in Germany and St Nazaire in France
- Over the past 10 years the city has had a successful inward investment track record, with over 500 projects, creating £2.17 billion of investment and over 18,000 jobs
- The current proportion of working age residents in employment (employment rate) for Sunderland is 69.7%, up 3.6 percentage points on five years previously, compared with a 2.2% point rise across the North East
- The International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) is one of the most important development sites in the north of England and is key to creating more jobs and employment opportunities. It will build on Sunderland's reputation as a manufacturing centre, enhance its standing as an export champion and secure its position as a hub for new technologies, particularly in the low carbon and electric vehicle sectors. IAMP will support more than £400m private sector investment with over 7,000 new jobs. French car parts maker SNOP - which has over 40 manufacturing plants, has been the first business to open on IAMP, swiftly followed by Japanese car parts supplier Faltec
- Work has commenced at the sea front to bring the STACK to Sunderland - a brilliant shipping container concept bringing exciting new bars, eateries and retailers to Seaburn. There has also been planning consent for a 42 room hotel in Seaburn
- The re-development of the former Alex Smiles waste site has enabled Liebherr to expand its operation in the city.



**More and better housing** – Our focus under this City Plan commitment is to enable the delivery of more housing, including more large, family and high-status homes as well as more affordable housing. Alongside this, we are committed to ensuring that the housing we have is of quality by bringing empty homes back into use.

- Key housing sites across the city are now in development - Chapel Garth to Chester Gate to Hetton Downs and Seaburn, with a focus on creating a range of affordable homes and new road infrastructures
- There are currently 16 private housing companies or individuals developing 24 sites across the city
- Over 70% of housing completions were on previously developed land
- 106 new build affordable homes have been built in 2018-19
- Almost 32% of the homes built were four bedroom family homes
- The council has agreed to commence building new properties and renovating empty properties from the private rented sector to fill gaps in the housing market and tackle empty homes
- Work has started to bring empty properties back into use across the city, including a partnership with Gentoo and Thirteen Group to acquire empty properties to return to use as affordable family housing
- The council has acquired the Norfolk Hotel in Sunnyside to support city centre regeneration and reducing reliance on private homeless hostels
- The city has low rough sleeper numbers compared to regionally and nationally
- Rogue landlords have been tackled through legal action. The council has successfully prosecuted five landlords for various housing standards offences since 2017 with numerous cases pending
- Partnership working has targeted areas of Hendon and Southwick to secure improvements in housing standards and local environmental issues. Community and landlord involvement has also been improved.



**More local people with better qualifications and skills** – The City Plan sets out the challenge that the qualifications that residents have don't match the needs of industry in the city. The focus is on tackling the barriers for those least able to access employment and ensuring that more local people benefit from a stronger economy. We will also support and enable apprenticeship and work experience opportunities focused on skills and experience for the local economy.

- Overall, Sunderland schools at key stage one are performing either in line or above our national and statistical neighbours at 'expected' standard for reading (75% Sunderland/75% national), writing (72% Sunderland/69% national) and mathematics (77% Sunderland/76% national)
- The percentage of Key Stage 2 pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing (teacher assessment) and mathematics in 2019 was 66%, continuing to remain above the national figure by 1% and 1.1% above the average statistical neighbour performance

- At key stage four 58.4% of children achieved grades 9-4 in English and mathematics, showing improvement of 1.1% compared to 2018
- The city's unique Work Discovery Sunderland programme provides young people with insight into the job opportunities available in the city, with over 1,300 student opportunities in 2018-19
- 43.6% of care leavers aged 19-21 are in employment, education or training
- Ofsted rate the council's Adult Learning as good
- The last three Job Show North East events were held in Sunderland, with 74 employers/trainers and 2,327 job seekers attending.
- By the end of 2019 £1.17m of Community Led Local Development Funding was allocated to some 15 projects, attracting match funding of £1.158m. This is providing a mix of locally led projects focussing on improving employment prospects and skills development target areas which cover parts of the East, North, Washington and West of the city
- The third call for Community Led Local Development projects went live on 1 October 2019 and remains open until 31 March 2020. This is seeking projects to enhance employment and skills provision in the target area with a budget of £265k available to deliver to this priority.



**A stronger city centre with more business, housing and cultural opportunities –**

There is a need to attract new jobs to the city to increase the number of people employed there and for new homes to be built for city centre living. This in turn will encourage footfall into the retail centre and increase overall vibrancy.

- Riverside Sunderland was launched, an ambitious and exciting regeneration plan spanning both sides of the river. This was backed by the announcement of £120 million worth of investment by Legal and General in further high-quality offices on the former Vaux Brewery site
- The first building on Riverside Sunderland, The Beam was completed, with the arrival of its first occupants Penshaw View and Ocado Group (an organisation with a £1.6 billion turnover) creating hundreds of jobs
- Construction work has started on the new City Hall which the council will move into in 2021 along with partners including the Department for Work and Pensions and Gentoo
- The delivery of the Sunderland Historic High Streets Heritage Action Zone has commenced, with financial support from Historic England and the council totalling £1.3 million. The investment includes Mackies Corner and 170-175 High Street West in Sunnyside. There will be further investment in promotion and events
- Key buildings in the Minster Quarter area, including the Dun Cow and Peacock pubs are being restored. Financial support from the council, National Lottery Heritage Fund and third party contributions have totalled £880,000 so far. A further £674,000 has been invested in the restoration of Town Park and supporting activities and events. This investment to date forms part of an overall planned investment of £2.9 million through the Bishopwearmouth Townscape Heritage project.



**A lower carbon city with greater digital connectivity for all** – High speed and resilient digital connectivity will support both residents and businesses and will help to attract more and better jobs. There is also a focus on reducing overall carbon emissions, with transport known to be a significant factor in emission levels.

- Sunderland is the first city in the UK to deploy 5G-ready Wi-Fi in the city centre. Building on our reputation as a global, digital leader, this will boost our digital infrastructure further for the benefit of residents and businesses. 2020 will see the expansion of the network from current locations in and around the city centre, across the wider city
- As part of its 'Project Lightning', Virgin Media is expanding its ultrafast broadband network across the UK, bringing average top speeds of 516Mbps to residents and small businesses. This will help transform the quality of broadband in Houghton-le-Spring, including the surrounding areas of Shiney Row and Penshaw, where the average download speed is 40Mbps. Residents will benefit from 'fibre to the premises' technology which allows for smooth, reliable connectivity in the home
- Over 2,700 people are now digitally connected to 'Go Online' (#GoOnline), as part of the Sunderland Digital project. These people have been enabled to use computers and smart phones, helping them to save money on household bills
- The council has committed to the International Climate Emergency Declaration, seeking to reduce both the council and city's carbon emissions. Initial work within the council has included baselining the council's carbon emissions and developing a suite of project proposals. A shadow Carbon Board has been established to progress the partnership work
- Sunderland was named the best place in the UK to find electric vehicle charging stations in a UK-wide survey by green energy provider Tonik Energy. The UK's first electric vehicle fast charging station was opened in the city
- Nissan Sunderland played a part in producing the LEAF which has sold over 400,000 worldwide - saving over 38 million barrels of oil.







# HEALTHY CITY



**Access to the same opportunities and life chances** – We want all children to have the best start in life and equal life chances, from early years through to adulthood.

- Our early education offer has 80% take up of two-year-old places, compared to 68% nationally
- Sunderland is performing better than both the North East and England for completing new birth and 24-30 month health visits, supporting the best start in life (94% compared to the regional average of 90% in 2018-19)
- More families are getting help earlier, with over 840 open Early Help plans, involving over 2,000 children
- Together for Children’s Fostering and Adoption services are rated Good with Outstanding features by Ofsted and they continue to develop their therapeutic support
- 70% of the city’s Looked After children live in a foster family environment; 60% live with Together for Children approved foster carers, meaning fewer children are placed far from Sunderland
- A very low level of first-time entrants (first reprimand, warning or conviction) to the criminal justice system.
- There has been £3.7 million of improvements made to maintained schools, with a new school providing places for 90 autistic children scheduled to open in July 2021
- 63 schools have achieved a Gold or Silver in the Sunderland Anti-Bullying Charter Mark, with a further 34 schools working towards it
- All of our four children’s homes are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. Our short break services at Grace House are rated good by Ofsted
- The official opening of the Link School at Springwell Dene was celebrated, providing alternative learning provision in a nurturing and creative environment
- Washington Rainbow Family Centre was refurbished, providing an exciting place for children and families to enjoy activities together.



**More people living healthier longer lives** – We want to support and make it easier for individuals, families, communities and businesses to access and make healthier choices. We need to impact on levels of smoking, harmful alcohol consumption, obesity and inactivity.

- Healthy life expectancy at birth in Sunderland is increasing, but remains lower than the North East and England (58 years for males and 59 years for females)
- Over 500 group health promotion sessions have reached over 22,000 children and young people
- The city has over 300 community-based Health Champions, enabling passionate individuals to make a difference to health in their work, community and social networks
- There are approximately 400 Young Health Champions in secondary schools
- Young people aged 11 to 18 have been given improved mental health support, through access to online counsellors. Between April and December 2019, there have been over 1,300 users of the service and 94.6% of these would recommend the service to a friend
- Sunderland under 18 conception rates have reduced from the 6th highest in the country in 2015 at 34.6 per 1,000 population, to 24th highest in 2017 at 25.7 per 1,000 population
- 37 schools now take part in the daily mile, encouraging children to be active through 15 minutes of physical activity each day
- 28 schools have achieved the Sunderland Mental Health Charter Mark, successes were celebrated at the inaugural awards
- 113 emotional harm and resilience drop in sessions were made available, enabling 1,908 contacts with young people
- The Sunderland Smoke Free Partnership has been established, with the ambition to reduce smoking prevalence to 5% by 2025
- A new Specialist Stop Smoking Service has been established. Support will be targeted at groups with the greatest smoking prevalence, including those people in routine and manual professions and pregnant women
- Smoke free zones have been introduced in all parks across the city
- The Sunderland Alcohol Partnership has been established to tackle alcohol harms across the city
- Almost 100% of young people who access drug and alcohol treatment successfully complete it
- 107 businesses have signed up with the Workplace Health Alliance and 19 workplaces have achieved the regional Better Health at Work Award up to December 2019
- 100% of schools and civic buildings hold 4 or 5 stars in Food Standards Agency rating
- Air quality in the city is classified as 'good'; air quality objectives are being met across the city and we have seen a general decline in some of the pollutants measured

- Step-Up Sunderland, a new app to encourage people to be more active by walking in their day-to-day lives, was launched in 2019 with over 2,000 steppers involved by December 4



**People enjoying independent lives** – We are committed to ensuring that people in the city can enjoy independent lives.

- Most Sunderland residents (99.8%) over the age of 18 live independently, without social care services
- The proportion of adults with learning disabilities who live in their own home or with their family is 89.8%
- Nearly 3,500 residents are now attending regular events, activities and clubs in their neighbourhoods, which is improving their independence, minds and fitness levels
- Adult Social Care receive and manage around 18,000 new customer contacts each year
- Over 4,000 people receive adult social care support with 400 of these receiving support in response to a health need
- Sunderland Care and Support supports 6,000 vulnerable people each week and provides a wide range of services including intermediate care services, telecare, community equipment, day care, short breaks and support to enable people to live at home in the community
- We are a national exemplar for the use of assistive technology in people's homes
- The latest published annual adult Social Care User survey shows Sunderland ranked 4th out of all local authorities for self-reported quality of life measures
- Strong partnership working has been developed with health. Delayed transfers from hospital into the community are at half the nation's maximum target
- There has been an innovative approach to new technologies and ways of working to improve the outcomes for adults within the city. This has included working with partners to participate in new opportunities such as being a first local authority connector for the Health Information Exchange, meaning organisations share data. 205 households across the city are also trialling assisted technology in their homes
- 88% of our care homes are rated 'good' or 'outstanding'
- The Care Quality Commission's recent inspections of Sunderland Care and Support are all rated 'good'
- Prepaid cards were introduced to over 350 service users to enable social inclusion, independence and flexibility
- A falls strategy has been put into operation to help reduce the number of emergency hospital admissions due to falls for over 65 year olds.



**Cleaner and more attractive city and neighbourhoods** – We all want to live, study and work in a city that is clean and attractive where everyone takes responsibility and plays their part.

- 126,500 bins are emptied every week – that’s 7 million bins per year
- 91 specialist large goods vehicles support essential front-line services such as winter gritting, refuse collection and highways maintenance
- 30,000 tonnes of waste was recycled/composted. The current level of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting is 28.3%; we aim to improve this to 32% or better by April 2021
- Plans have been agreed to develop a new waste recycling site in Pallion, replacing Beach Street in the city centre. The new facility is due to open in 2021
- The city has five Green Flag status parks - Barnes, Hetton Lyons Country Park, Roker Park, Mowbray Park and Herrington Country Park
- Roker and Seaburn beaches have both have international Blue Flag status
- Washington Village was awarded gold in the Northumbria in Bloom awards and named Best Village in the Northumbria region for the first time
- Improvements commenced at Bishopwearmouth Park as part of five-year regeneration plan and improvement works at Doxford Park and Usworth Park
- An ongoing programme of deep cleaning in the city centre commenced in the spring and over 1,200 litter pick volunteers have been carrying out a series of campaigns around the city to make their neighbourhood cleaner. #cleangreencity
- 660 workshops have been delivered across our schools, with over 18,000 pupils, parents and teachers. Topics have included learning more about changing behaviour towards litter, recycling and putting the right items into the wheelie bins, not to mention how to take care of themselves and each other’s mental wellbeing
- An ongoing programme of deep cleaning in the city centre commenced in the spring; volunteers are also supported in undertaking community litter picks
- Landscape improvement works have been undertaken at key sites in the city. This includes key gateways into the city, on the A690 adjacent to Royal Courts and at Harbour View.



**A city with great transport and travel links** – Our focus is on supporting people to move around the city with ease through improved transport routes. This will enable access to key employment sites and encourage active travel within the city, maximising cycle and walkways.

- 764 miles of roads and 1,500 miles of paths are maintained
- 6.5 miles of coastline are maintained
- 48,000 street lights are maintained
- The Northern Spire bridge has 14,000 cars crossing daily. It has received a number of national awards and forms part of the Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor (phase 3) which will bring many benefits including improved journey times, improved public transport, cycle and pedestrian routes and reduced congestion. It will also facilitate regeneration and investment plans.



Active Sunderland  
**BIG**  
Events

Active Sunderland  
**BIG**  
Events



# VIBRANT CITY



**More creative and cultural businesses** – To create vibrancy within the city, one of the employment sectors we will focus on is the creative industries.

- In 2019 work has commenced on securing a number of sites in the city centre for cultural development opportunities and working to support partners in creating a greater cultural offer in the city. This has included:
- Purchase of Norfolk hotel in Sunnyside
- Purchase of Elephant Tearooms in the city centre
- Commencement of The Auditorium building work with a capacity of 800.



**More residents participating in their communities** – This commitment is about residents, including children and young people, being able to engage with and participate in their communities.

- 252 local voluntary and community organisations have been awarded local grants worth a total value of £245,647 and the five Area Committees have awarded over £1,805,669 to meet local priorities in neighbourhoods
- The five Area Committees in the city were keen to make sure children and young people had access to a range of indoor and outdoor activities, including trips to local places of interest such as the beach, parks, museums and residential throughout the school holidays over the next year. So much so, over £160,000 grant funding has been awarded to 36 community groups to deliver 688 sessions, with the aim of engaging with over 5,000 children. Each session will involve staff, supported by a team of 90 volunteers who will offer fun, education and be serving over 24,000 meals
- 23 Community Hubs have been refurbished, providing community services and activities in local communities
- Over 14,000 young people have been accessing a variety of youth provision, with nearly 450 acting as young volunteers pulling together funding bids, delivering projects and supporting other young people
- The Make Your Mark Ballot saw over 10,400 votes cast by young people across our areas, on topics ranging from health to the environment
- Sunderland’s annual Young Achievers awards celebrated the bravery, talent and positive contributions that children and young people have made to the lives of their families and communities

- The 'Let's Talk' Resident Engagement strategy was launched. City-wide events were identified, working alongside all partners including schools and the voluntary and community sector, to maximise the opportunities to engage with residents across the city. The outcome of engagement with over 155,000 residents is supporting development of the five Neighbourhood Investment Plans
- A new volunteering platform was launched. 77 volunteers have signed up so far and currently 48 volunteering opportunities are being advertised
- Crowdfund Sunderland, a digital platform supporting communities to crowdfund for projects which matter to their neighbourhood, has been launched. Fundraising for projects important to neighbourhoods is already underway
- The Local Plan, which sets out how Sunderland should develop in coming years, was considered by the Planning Inspectorate in the summer. The plan sets out how land should be developed or used, such as for businesses and new jobs, recreation and housing. This was one of the biggest consultation exercises undertaken by the council, with over 8,000 comments from over 2,000 individuals.



### **More people visiting Sunderland and more residents participating in cultural events and activities**

– This brings in a lot of economic benefits for Sunderland as people spend locally.

- Sunderland was one of only 12 places in the UK to host the "Leonardo Da Vinci - A Life in Drawing" Exhibition at the Museum and Winter Gardens
- The 31st Sunderland Airshow, the River Wear Festival and a whole range of events across city attracted huge crowds, providing fun and entertainment for people of all ages, and boosting the local economy
- Some of the world's biggest music acts returned to the Stadium of Light, with the Spice Girls playing a sell-out concert
- The city was a proud host of several World Transplant Games events and the annual, Sunderland 10k and half marathon races. 2019 saw the addition of a 5k race, broadening the offer to more participants
- Visitors to Sunderland have increased by 6% in 2019, building on a 4.7% increase in the previous year. Spend by visitors has also shown an increase of 6.5%
- The Tall Ships Races 2018 was voted Best Event Sunderland and Best Overall Event at the North East Culture Awards 2019
- Sunderland was awarded £14.2m to provide 3 new Football Hubs and construction started in January 2019. The Washington Hub opened in November 2019; within the first 6 weeks over 13,000 people had registered and on average 3,000 people were playing each weekend. The Downhill and Ford Hubs will open early 2020
- The average monthly attendance at leisure facilities was 174,260
- Over 313,700 library books were issued in 2018/19 and more than 49,000 books were issued to children
- 6,000 people attended heritage open days

- Two Sunderland attractions, Sunderland Winter Gardens and the National Glass Centre, are in the top 10 most visited free attractions in the North East, according to VisitEngland.



**More people feel safe in their neighbourhoods and homes** – This commitment relates to both people feeling safe from crime and to vulnerable adults who use our services feeling safe. We are committed to disrupting criminal and anti-social behaviour through intervention and enforcement.

- Overall, our residents feel safe in their local area, with the percentage consistently at 96% or above
- The proportion of people who use adult social care services who say that those services have made them feel safe and secure was 91.4%
- The council monitor over 1,100 CCTV cameras and work closely with the Police to support community safety
- The council provide a 24-7 emergency response service attending Road Traffic Accidents and incidents at schools and public buildings
- The council has used powers available to tackle disruptive behaviour affecting residents and businesses. In the city centre this has included 11 Community Protection Warning Notices, 11 Community Protection Notices, one Civil Injunction and one Encampment Notice. Overall, 26 Community Protection Warnings were issued for unreasonable behaviour having a detrimental effect on the locality
- The council have worked with partners to disrupt and tackle organised crime
- A seller of counterfeit goods was prosecuted, with more than 1,100 counterfeit items and 1,400 packs of fake cigarettes seized. The total value to the industry was £150,000 and the offender received suspended prison sentence
- The council have worked with Northumbria Police to establish a Hate Crime Champions training package, which has resulted in over 350 hate crime champions being trained across the city.



**More resilient people** – We will support families that require early help, where children are in need of protection or are looked after. We are committed to continuing to improve the delivery of our children's services, through Together for Children. We will seek to build resilient communities through mitigating the impact of welfare reform and hardship, where possible.

- The council worked with Sunderland Foodbank and a range of independent foodbanks to provide over 5,000kg of food across the city each month. There was an increase in residents supported by foodbanks in July and August due to school holiday pressures
- Work has commenced to identify opportunities across the city for improving prevention activity for those most impacted by hardship through homelessness
- 1,304 Crisis support awards were issued by the council for food and fuel. 399 Community Care awards were issued for furniture, beds and white goods
- Our local advice providers generated £877,490.05 for vulnerable people who sought help

- The council's specialist Welfare Rights team helped people with benefit awards/reinstatements across the year, generating £5 million in benefit awards/reinstatements and improving the circumstances of many individuals
- Our specialist Welfare Rights Team won 80% of the tribunals they provided representation at, which is above the national average of 70% and a much greater success rate than unrepresented cases
- 1,372 Discretionary Housing Payments were awarded. This included supporting 32 customers facing homelessness by providing rent in bonds/rent in advance
- Support has commenced with people impacted by fuel poverty. In addition, work has started to develop an affordable credit solution and tackle illegal money lenders in the city.

# Sunderland City Council – delivering excellence

We are working hard to improve the accessibility of our services and the customer experience. We maintained a balanced budget this year despite central government funding being reduced. We are committed to ensuring we have a productive healthy workforce and we continue to enable more agile and paperless working through the adoption of digital technologies and will continue to enable more digital interaction with our customers, making it easy for you to access the services you need when you need them.

- Nearly 1.4m customer transactions take place annually. Year on year there are increases in customers using self-serve options – last year over 42.7% of transactions were self-serve
- The Ministry of Defence has recognised Sunderland City Council's support for the Armed Forces with a Gold Award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. Sunderland annually hosts one of the largest Remembrance Sunday services in the country outside of London, and a number of commemorative events throughout the year
- The council has been awarded Controlling Migration Fund monies which will allow new work aimed at community integration to take place
- The council has a new Code of Practice on Drugs and Alcohol to protect employees from the dangers of drug and other substance misuse and to encourage those with alcohol and substance dependencies to seek help
- Developed Employee Protection Register to protect employees from any potential violence, aggression and abusive behaviour risks
- Sunderland City Council supported annual PRIDE celebrations and raised the profile through social media. There were over 15,000 Facebook views of the rainbow crossings being laid
- The council ranked 76 in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index Top 100
- The council is a Time to Change employer – supporting good mental health in the workplace. In 2019, this has included promoting the role of Mental Health First Aiders and rolling out mental health awareness training for managers
- £109m of council tax was collected, with over 70% of people paying by direct debit. On average, new Council Tax Support claims were processed within 28 days of the date they were made and within five days of the council receiving all the information needed to make a decision
- On average new housing benefit claims were processed within 22 days of the date they were made and within five days of receiving all the information needed to make a decision
- Through our progressive procurement practices, we secured significant social value including spending £155m with Sunderland suppliers (40%), £11.6m with local voluntary and community organisations and £190m with North East suppliers (66%). 95% of suppliers are satisfied or very satisfied with our approach
- The City Partnership arrangements have been reviewed to ensure the right structures are in place to deliver on the priorities within the City Plan.





