

**MTFP Delivery &  
Prevention-First Transformation Strategy**  
Case for Change & Outline Plans

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## **BACKGROUND**

Plymouth is defined by its rich maritime heritage, vibrant culture, and remarkable natural beauty. With a lens on inequality, Plymouth can be described as a “tale of two cities” divided by challenges associated with the least-deprived communities in the East and the most-deprived in the West of the city. Plymouth has built strong foundation to support and shape the lives of our residents – to help them live longer, happier, healthier and more independent lives.

Plymouth is the home to over 260,000 residents, a city shaped by its past and present, strengthened by its communities, and energised by ambition and potential to thrive. Together, we face a shared reality, economic challenges, social inequalities, and the escalating effects of climate change are testing us like never before. Yet, it is through these challenges that our greatest opportunities emerge.

To continue meeting our residents’ needs, we must recognise that ongoing budget challenge through Directorate or Departmental savings alone is no longer sustainable. A more cross-cutting and transformative approach to demand management and cost avoidance is needed, and which must be aligned with the direction being set by Central Government as part of our Local Government Reform agenda.

Despite fourteen years of austerity, Plymouth has delivered on a number of community-based programmes, projects and initiatives to support residents to thrive. This approach on focusing on what is strong within communities rather than what’s wrong with them is key to driving forward a preventative approach – preventing crisis rather than trying to manage it. Prevention offers a better way forward, enabling us to manage demand, improve outcomes, and create a stronger, more resilient Plymouth.

### **The cost of inaction and the power of prevention**

Failure to be prevention focussed continues to drive demand for services and widen inequalities in our communities. Intervening early has the potential to have a profound effect on the life outcomes of our residents. Families in crisis often require costly emergency interventions, from temporary housing to hospital care. These interventions address immediate needs but do little to resolve underlying issues, leaving families trapped in cycles of dependence and vulnerability. While the financial cost of this reactive model is unsustainable, the human costs are even greater. Lives are disrupted, opportunities are lost, and inequalities deepen. Inaction is not an option.

To address the complex challenges facing Plymouth, our response emphasises a systemic shift from reactive measures to proactive and preventative approaches. Our **Prevention-First Strategy**, the final version which we will publish in 2025, integrates early intervention, data-driven decision-making, and collaborative solutions to ensure we tackle root causes and deliver sustainable, equitable outcomes for all residents.

At its heart, this is about building on the great work already done. This means continuing to work with our residents and partners differently, drawing on and building the support that exists in the community, as well as further joining up partnerships on the frontline: giving them all a common mission to help people stay afloat and then thrive.

The Prevention-First Strategy is central to this. By focusing on early identification and intervention, leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data insights, and building resilience through existing and new community partnerships, we will shift how services are designed and delivered. This is not about pulling departments or partners together under one roof; it is about creating an improved operating model and place centered system that:

- Uses data and insight to understand our residents and their communities better to help shape the prevention focus.
- Adapt the help and support they may need, putting the resident at the centre of co-production.
- Always seeks to find solutions that exist in the community and within our city partners – building a platform that enables this network of resources to grow and be sustained.
- Provides integrated universal public sector support where this is helpful or directs people to more targeted specialist support as required.
- Integrates pathways into specialist early help for children or life course services.
- Inspires confidence and trust from our residents through being clear about what our services can do and accepting when we get things wrong.

- Manages our resources effectively by keeping residents and staff safe, targeting our work on the things that residents really need and driving toward carbon neutrality.

To tackle the challenges ahead, Plymouth City Council will build on past successes and also integrate innovative approaches that align with our long-term vision. Our focus is to create a sustainable, resilient council structure capable of delivering meaningful outcomes to all residents. This commitment is underpinned by our Prevention-First Strategy, which forms the centre of our transformation journey. A prevention-first approach is no longer just an aspiration - it is an imperative. By tackling challenges at their root, Plymouth can create a city where every resident has the opportunity to thrive while managing service demand.

### **Prevention explained**

**Prevention is the strategic approach of addressing challenges before they escalate into crisis** - it's about being trauma-informed, strength based, and asset focussed, to change the focus from what's wrong to what's strong. It moves beyond reactive service delivery to tackle the root causes of problems, aiming to build resilience in individuals and families, and reduce long-term dependency on high-cost reactive interventions. Prevention is about doing the right thing at the right time. By identifying and addressing challenges early, we can:

- Support families before they face eviction.
- Help individuals into meaningful employment before they fall into long-term unemployment.
- Promote health and well-being before illness takes hold.
- Manage demand and save money on reactive interventions or expensive long-term dependency on our services.

### **Types of prevention**

To fully understand prevention, it is important to recognise its three distinct categories, each playing a vital role in supporting individuals, families, and communities:

#### **1. Primary prevention (Early Help and Support)**

**Primary Prevention** focuses on reducing the likelihood of problems arising in the first place by addressing underlying causes and promoting well-being across the population. This universal approach ensures a healthier, more resilient community by embedding preventative measures into everyday life. Examples include:

- Promoting healthy lifestyle choices through public health campaigns.
- Encouraging educational attainment to improve future employment opportunities.
- Building strong community networks that foster social inclusion.
- Retrofitting homes for energy efficiency to reduce fuel poverty and improve health outcomes.

We are referring to Primary Prevention as “**Early Help and Support**” due to the Pastoral Role the council and our city partners take when undertaking primary prevention.

#### **2. Secondary Prevention (Early Intervention)**

**Secondary Prevention** targets those at risk of developing issues, identifying vulnerabilities early and intervening to prevent escalation. It involves a proactive approach to mitigate risks before they become crises. Examples include:

- Identifying individuals and families experiencing or at risk of poverty, eviction or in households experiencing issues/abuse that can lead to longer term poorer outcomes including ill health and homelessness.
- Delivering early intervention programmes for children and adults with complex or multiple needs including Autism, Aspergers or learning difficulties to avoid educational or social exclusion.
- Providing tailored mental health services to individuals showing early signs of distress.
- Promoting independence at the earliest opportunity and putting a strong emphasis on reablement/recovery that delays, reduces or avoids the need for formal support.
- Addressing anti-social behaviour through targeted youth engagement initiatives.

We are referring to Secondary Prevention as “**Early Intervention**” due to the Custodian Role the council and our city partners take when undertaking secondary prevention.

### 3. Tertiary Prevention (Recovery)

**Tertiary Prevention** supports individuals and families who are already experiencing challenges, aiming to reduce the severity and long-term impact of these issues. This approach focuses on recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration into the community. Examples include:

- Offering comprehensive care and housing solutions for those experiencing chronic homelessness.
- Supporting people recovering from substance misuse to rebuild their lives.
- Providing specialised education plans for children excluded from mainstream schools.
- Offering vocational training and support for long-term unemployed individuals to re-enter the workforce.

We are referring to Tertiary Prevention as “**Recovery**” due to the Resilience Building Role the council and our city partners take when undertaking tertiary prevention.

### Our Prevention-First Strategy

The Prevention-First Strategy is central to our transformation efforts. By focusing on early identification and intervention, leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data insights, and building resilience through community partnerships, we will fundamentally shift how services are designed and delivered. This strategy is rooted in the principles of inclusivity, equity, and long-term sustainability, addressing both immediate needs and systemic inequalities.

The Council's Prevention-First Strategy integrates primary (early Help and support), secondary (early intervention), and tertiary prevention (recovery) into a cohesive framework, ensuring that:

- Root causes understood and tackled early, reducing future demand for crisis services.
- Resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact.
- Vulnerable individuals and families are supported at the right time with the right interventions.

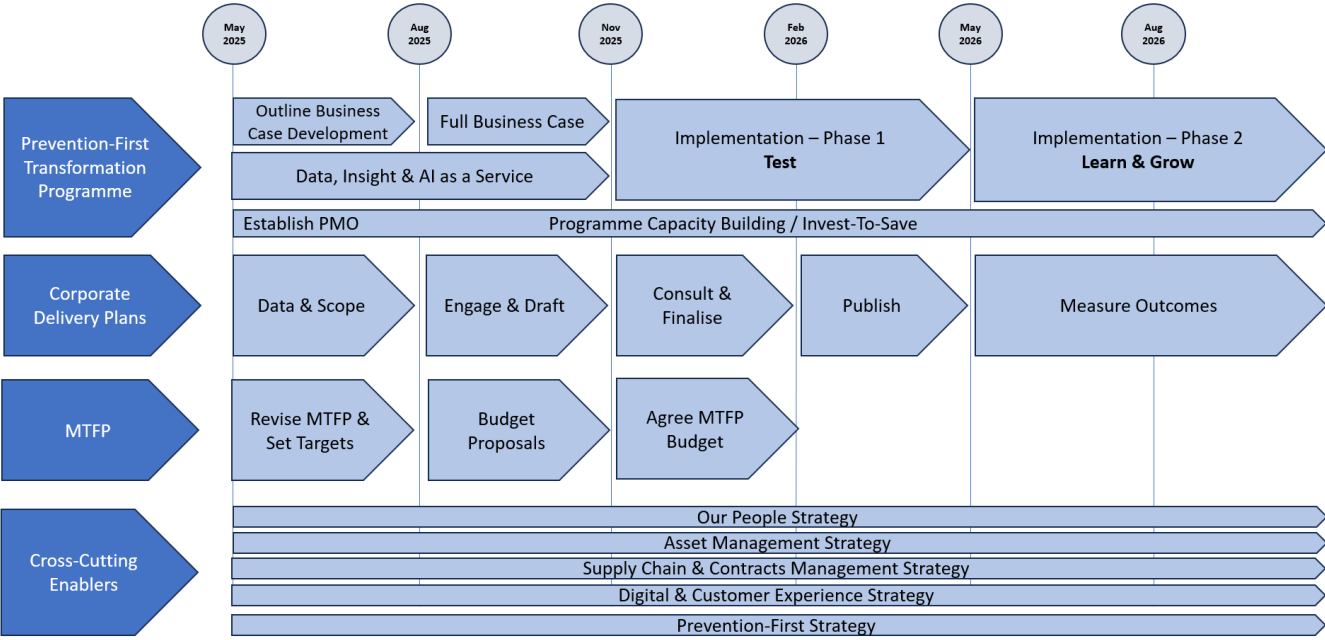
This approach underpins much of what we are already doing in Plymouth. Our Thrive Plymouth initiative, which tackles the wider determinants of health, and our Wellbeing and Family Hubs, which integrate services into communities, are already making an impact. For example, the Plymouth Alliance for Complex Lives has demonstrated the transformative power of collaboration. By bringing together services to support those facing substance misuse, homelessness, and mental health challenges, the Alliance has improved outcomes while reducing strain on crisis services.

These efforts represent the foundation of a prevention-first model that we are ready to scope and scale - and do so within a formal system of programme management while remaining agile in our delivery approach building on the Cabinet Office's **Test, Learn, and Grow** Programme Methodology.

## OUR PREVENTION-FIRST TRANSFORMATION AGENDA

### City Help & Support Transformation Programme

To fully realise our prevention-first vision, Plymouth City Council is launching a comprehensive transformation programme: **City Help & Support** and which will also have all existing, relevant council transformation projects subsumed under one single programme and governance. Where existing projects do not align with the objectives of City Help & Support, they will be stopped so that valuable resources can be re-directed to provide for additional capacity. This initiative represents a fundamental shift in how we deliver services, moving from fragmented, reactive responses, to a streamlined, proactive, and integrated (cross-cutting) model. By focusing on **fixing the basics, building strong foundations, and scaling innovative solutions**, we aim to meet the needs of all residents, especially the most vulnerable, while improving outcomes and achieving financial sustainability.



**Phase I (Test): Foundations (Months 0-12)**

The first phase of the programme is focused on establishing a strong foundation for change. During this period, we will lay the groundwork for a prevention-first approach by addressing structural inefficiencies, investing in key infrastructure, and testing innovative solutions. At this stage we will be assessing where we have gaps and issues in the required capabilities and build the transformation plans to address these. This will include costings and timelines for recruitment and mobilisation.

- **Establishing Governance:**  
A dedicated Prevention-First Board will oversee the programme, ensuring accountability and driving progress. This board will include representatives from key council departments, external partners, and community leaders to provide diverse perspectives and expertise.
- **Developing Predictive Analytics Tools:**  
Initial investments in data integration will enable the development of predictive analytics tools. These tools will allow us to identify emerging trends, allocate resources more effectively, and intervene early to prevent crises.
- **Engaging Communities:**  
Community workshops and forums will be held to co-design services with residents, ensuring that solutions are tailored to local needs and fostering trust in the Council’s commitment to change.
- **Expand Integrated Community Based Hub Model:**  
Based on the successes of our range of hub-based models, further hubs will be launched in targeted communities, focusing on families with young children and individuals with long-term health conditions. These hubs will provide a single access point for a variety of our services, such as benefits and employment advice, and mental health resources, reducing the complexity of navigating council systems.
- **A Focus on Core Service Delivery:**  
For the public, staff and elected members, none of this will ring true unless we also continue to improve core services. There is the prospect of a virtuous circle whereby the opportunities for us to grow and reform and work differently provide the financial breathing space to consolidate, improve and invest in the frontline – and in turn, getting the basics right helps to build trust and win consent for wider changes in the City. We will scope this work around the drafting of a Customer Experience & Digital Strategy and the application of that strategy as pilots in some of our services first.

**Phase 2 (Learn): Scaling Up (Months 12-24)**

Building on the success of the tests, the second phase will focus on scaling up solutions to other communities in Plymouth. During this phase, we will expand the scope of our interventions and strengthen existing partnerships and workings to deliver a truly integrated system.

In scope for this phase will be amongst other things: housing options; homelessness; libraries and all other hubs; debt and money advice; job readiness, skills and adult learning; employment support; drug and alcohol services; the youth service; domestic abuse; parts of the adults front door and our efforts in support of digital inclusion – together with a platform and capacity for working with, supporting and helping to build community and voluntary sector networks of support.

- **Rollout of Community Based Hubs:**

Integrated community-based hubs will be expanded, ensuring that every resident has access to coordinated support closer to home. These hubs will serve as the cornerstone of our prevention-first model, providing tailored services and building community resilience.

- **AI-Driven Decision-Making:**

Advanced AI tools will be deployed to enhance decision-making processes. These tools will help identify households at risk, predict service demands, and provide actionable insights for resource allocation.

- **Further Formalising Partnerships:**

Building on our good working relationships with the NHS, voluntary organisations, and private sector partners will be further enhanced and formalised to ensure a fully integrated and collaborative approach to service delivery. By pooling resources and expertise, we will create a seamless support network for residents.

- **Expanding Workforce Capacity:**

Additional training programmes will be rolled out to equip staff with the skills needed to deliver person-centred, prevention-focused services. Cross-departmental projects will foster collaboration and innovation.

- **Delivering the Change:**

Reaping the benefits of these opportunities will require certain parts of the organisation to change, over the coming years. This will mean ensuring that the Council's core corporate services are able to support change and deliver improvement and do so in a way that is both assured and consistent. If we say we are going to make a change, we need to know that we can deliver.

- **Winning Consent and working in Partnerships:**

An integral part of City Help & Support will be working with other services and partners – looking into teams inside the Council but always seeking to pro-actively work with other agencies as an equal participant.

This will encompass statutory partners like health services, as well as local community organisations who will provide an essential route into local communities. It is imperative that City Help & Support builds excellent, practical, sustained working relationships with other organisations.

This means winning consent and taking people with us - both inside the organisation and out. Inside, delivering change in a fair and constructive way – with the support of our trade union colleagues. This will be about focusing our culture change and organisational development teams on supporting the specific changes the organisation needs to deliver in the coming years. Outside the organisation it will be about continuing building a culture of participation and public engagement ensuring our localism agenda is mainstreamed, led and delivered. All this relies on partnerships: national, regional, local and hyper local. Partnerships and partnership activity will require proper resourcing and will need to be considered as part of our devolution and public sector reform agenda.

- **Scaling Customer and Digital Experience:**

We will learn from the pilots of testing our Customer Experience & Digital Strategy and expand the application of proven improvements from the testing of our Customer Experience & Digital Strategy in phase I.

**Phase 3 (Grow): Embedding Change (Months 24-36)**

The final phase of the programme will focus on embedding the prevention-first approach into the Council's culture, policies, and operations. By institutionalising these changes, we will ensure their long-term sustainability and impact.

- **Feedback Loops and Continuous Improvement:**

Data feedback loops will be established to monitor the effectiveness of interventions, identify gaps, and refine strategies. Regular reviews will ensure that services evolve to meet changing needs.

- **Embedding Prevention Principles in Policy:**

Prevention principles will be integrated into every aspect of council decision-making, from budgeting to urban planning. This will ensure that resources are directed toward long-term outcomes rather than short-term fixes.

- **Showcasing Success:**

Publicly sharing success stories and outcomes will demonstrate the value of the transformation programme, building confidence among residents and stakeholders.

- **Sustainability and Legacy:**

The programme will align with Plymouth's broader sustainability goals, such as reducing the carbon footprint of council operations and supporting the city's net-zero ambitions.

- **Lived Experiences and Centring inequalities:**

Underpinning all this needs to be a fresh approach to inequalities. This will require an understanding in both a quantitative and qualitative way the nature and prevalence of structural inequalities in our city – the barriers that prevent people moving forward in their lives and then ensuring that we have policies, strategies and actions to tackle them over the short, medium and long term. We will require comprehensive data and to hear people's lived experience, finding consistent ways of taking decisive action to tackle the inequalities that exist.

- **Building a Stronger Plymouth:**

The City Help & Support programme is more than a transformation plan, it is a blueprint for a fairer, more resilient Plymouth. By fixing the basics, leveraging data and technology, and fostering collaboration, we will create a council that is proactive, effective, and aligned with the needs of its residents. This ambitious programme represents a commitment to not only meeting today's challenges but also laying the foundation for a brighter future for generations to come.

**Addressing our biggest demand led pressures****Transforming Children's Home Provision**

Plymouth City Council is committed to transforming children's social care to ensure that every child in our care has a safe, stable, and supportive home that meets their needs. Our Family Homes for Plymouth Children Programme is a fundamental part of our transformation, designed to improve placement sufficiency, enhance care quality, and keep more children in family settings close to home.

The demand for children's social care has risen sharply due to an increase in childhood neglect, trauma, and disrupted attachments. Many children entering care have experienced significant adversity, including unmet emotional, behavioural, and learning needs, which makes placement stability and therapeutic support critical to their well-being.

Currently, Plymouth City Council is too reliant on independent providers for fostering and residential care, which has led to rising costs, a shortage of suitable placements, and challenges in keeping children close to their families and communities. Our programme is focused on shifting the balance, ensuring that children receive care that aligns with their needs, care plans, and best interests.



The **Family Homes for Plymouth Children Programme** is designed to:

- Reduce the number of children entering care by strengthening early intervention and family support.
- Ensure children in care can stay close to their family, friends, and communities wherever possible.
- Expand the availability of local foster carers and family-based placements, reducing reliance on costly residential care.
- Improve placement stability and outcomes, ensuring children thrive in their placements.
- Enhance Plymouth City Council's role as a direct provider of high-quality care, ensuring better oversight, quality control, and financial sustainability.

### **Understanding the Challenge: Placement Sufficiency and Rising Demand**

The growing demand for children's social care services is being driven by a range of systemic factors, including:

- Increasing childhood trauma and unmet needs – Many children entering care have experienced significant neglect, disrupted attachments, or developmental challenges. These children often have additional learning, emotional, and behavioural needs that require specialist, trauma-informed support.
- A shortage of local foster carers – Despite efforts to grow our in-house fostering service, the availability of local placements has not kept pace with demand. This has resulted in greater reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and out-of-area residential placements, which are not always in the best interests of the child.
- An over-reliance on residential care – A lack of family-based placements has led to an increase in the number of children placed in residential children's homes, some of whom could and should be in foster care.
- Unregulated placements and emergency accommodation – The lack of suitable placements has, in a small number of cases, resulted in children being placed in unregulated settings, which do not provide the stability, support, or oversight required.
- Cost and financial pressures – The high cost of externally provided placements, particularly in the independent residential sector, is creating a significant financial strain on the Council while not always delivering the best outcomes for children.

These challenges require a radical shift in how we support children at risk of entering care, as well as how we commission and provide placements for those who need them.

### **Our Approach: A Holistic Model for Family-Based Care**

Our Family Homes for Plymouth Children Programme is built on a whole-system approach to improving practice, placement sufficiency, and outcomes for children in care.

This programme is aligned with our Prevention-First transformation agenda, recognising that the best outcomes for children are achieved by keeping them in stable, family-based settings whenever possible. It is underpinned by three core principles:

#### **1. Keeping More Children at Home Through Early Intervention:**

- Strengthening early intervention services to ensure that families receive the right support at the right time, preventing the need for children to enter care wherever possible.
- Expanding the use of family-led decision-making models, such as Family Group Conferences, to identify safe and sustainable family-based solutions before a child enters the care system.
- Enhancing support for kinship carers and Special Guardianship Order (SGO) placements, enabling more children to remain within their extended family networks.

#### **2. Expanding Local Placement Sufficiency:**

- Growing the in-house fostering service, Foster for Plymouth, by recruiting, training, and supporting more local foster carers, particularly those who can care for children with complex needs.
- Strengthening local independent fostering and residential care capacity, ensuring providers align with our Sufficiency Strategy to increase the supply of high-quality, value-for-money placements.

- Ensuring placement decisions are data-driven, with a strengthened brokerage function to match children with the right placement from the outset, reducing placement breakdowns.

### **3. Reducing the Use of Residential Care Through a ‘Step-Down’ Approach:**

- Using an evidence-based model to step children down from residential care into foster care, providing structured transition support to ensure stability.
- Identifying children who are ready to leave residential care and supporting them to move into family settings in a planned, managed, and well-supported way.
- Ensuring that children in residential care only remain there when it is the best option for their needs, not due to a lack of fostering options.

## **Key Elements of the Family Homes for Plymouth Children Programme**

### **1. Increasing Local Foster Carer Recruitment:**

- Targeted recruitment campaigns to attract new foster carers, including those able to care for children with complex needs.
- Enhanced support and training for foster carers, enabling them to care for children with higher support needs, reducing the reliance on residential care.

### **2. Expanding the Council’s Role in Directly Providing Residential Care:**

- Plymouth City Council is exploring becoming a direct provider of residential care, reducing reliance on the independent sector.
- Developing a new model of residential care, with small, local homes that provide short-term therapeutic care before children transition into foster care.

### **3. Strengthening Support for Kinship and SGO Carers:**

- Providing financial and practical support to enable more children to remain within their extended family networks rather than entering care.

### **4. Improving Placement Commissioning and Value for Money:**

- Developing a more robust commissioning strategy that ensures all placements deliver high-quality, cost-effective care.
- Ensuring better cost-sharing with health partners for children with complex needs, maximising contributions from partner agencies.

## **A Transformational Shift for Plymouth’s Children**

The Family Homes for Plymouth Children Programme represents a transformational shift in how we support children and young people in care. By focusing on early intervention, local placement growth, and improved residential care provision, we will create a system that keeps children closer to home, provides stability, and delivers better outcomes. This programme is not just about fixing today’s challenges, it is about building a sustainable, prevention-first model that ensures Plymouth’s children receive the care and support they need to thrive, now and in the future.

## **Transforming Adult Social Care Provision**

Adult Social Care is under increasing pressure due to rising demand, increasing complexity of needs, workforce shortages, and higher costs of care provision. These pressures, if left unaddressed, will create an unsustainable financial burden while limiting our ability to provide high-quality, person-centred support for the people of Plymouth.

A Prevention-First approach is essential to ensuring that individuals receive the right support at the right time, reducing dependency on long-term, high-cost care interventions and enabling more people to live independently for longer. This approach prioritises early intervention, maximising resources, and making the best use of available funding, ensuring that Adult Social Care remains financially sustainable while improving outcomes for residents.

Each year, Adult Social Care services will undertake a detailed analysis of national benchmarking data, local trends, and financial performance to identify specific areas for targeted intervention. These interventions will focus on removing avoidable costs, maximising income, and delivering more effective, person-centred services that promote independence and well-being.

### **Understanding the Pressures on Adult Social Care**

Several interrelated factors are driving the rising demand and cost pressures within Adult Social Care:

- Increased complexity of need – The number of individuals requiring specialist and high-intensity support is increasing, particularly among older people, those with multiple long-term conditions, and individuals with disabilities.
- An ageing population – Plymouth's growing population of over-65s is placing greater pressure on health and social care services, with more people needing long-term support, reablement, and end-of-life care.
- Rising care costs – Inflationary pressures, workforce shortages, and increased demand for services have led to higher costs for commissioned care and in-house provision.
- Workforce challenges – A shortage of trained care staff and difficulties in recruitment and retention are affecting service delivery, particularly in domiciliary care and specialist support roles.
- Increasing numbers of unpaid carers – Families and informal carers play a crucial role in supporting individuals, but many are struggling with financial pressures, a lack of support, and the emotional toll of caring responsibilities.

Given these pressures, Adult Social Care must evolve to ensure long-term sustainability. Our approach will focus on prevention, independence, and financial resilience, ensuring that services are both high-quality and cost-effective.

### **Key Strategies for Addressing Adult Social Care Challenges**

To mitigate the growing pressures on Adult Social Care, Plymouth City Council is committed to a comprehensive programme of reform. This will include targeted initiatives to improve service efficiency, reduce avoidable costs, and ensure that funding is accessed and used effectively. These initiatives will focus on the following areas:

**1. Maximising Access to Grants and External Funding** - To support innovation, enhance service provision, and drive efficiencies, we will:

- Actively seek out and apply for national and regional grants that fund initiatives to transform Adult Social Care, including prevention and early intervention projects.
- Expand partnerships with NHS England, Integrated Care Systems (ICS), and third-sector organisations to unlock joint funding opportunities.
- Use external funding to pilot new care models, particularly those that focus on community-led support, assistive technology, and digital innovation to reduce reliance on traditional care models.

**2. Strengthening Financial Sustainability Through Effective Income Management** - To ensure financial sustainability, we will:

- Improve financial assessments to ensure that all eligible individuals contribute appropriately to the cost of their care.
- Increase income collection and debt recovery to ensure that everybody pays their fair share of towards the cost of their care.
- Enhance efficiency in assessing eligibility for Continuing Healthcare (CHC) funding, ensuring that individuals who qualify receive NHS-funded care and support rather than relying solely on council resources.
- Strengthen financial management processes to ensure Adult Social Care funding is used efficiently and aligned with wider transformation objectives.
- Routinely review support requirements to ensure funding is aligned to the current needs of our residents.

**3. Promoting Independence and Reducing Long-Term Dependency** - To reduce reliance on formal care services, we will:

- Strengthen our approach to reablement and rehabilitation, ensuring that individuals who leave hospital or require short-term support receive the right interventions to help them regain independence quickly.
- Ensure all care and support plans prioritise self-sufficiency, equipping individuals with the tools, information, and support networks to maintain their well-being without unnecessary long-term interventions.
- Expand the use of assistive technology and digital care solutions, such as remote monitoring, smart home adaptations, and telecare services, to enable individuals to remain independent at home for longer.
- Develop stronger community-based support networks, including voluntary and peer-led services that help people manage health and care needs in a less intensive, more cost-effective way.

**4. Supporting Carers and Strengthening Community-Based Care** - Recognising the critical role that unpaid carers play in supporting individuals with care needs, we plan to:

- Expand support for carers, ensuring they have access to respite care, financial assistance, and practical advice to maintain their well-being.
- Develop a Carers' Strategy that aligns with our Prevention-First approach, ensuring that carers receive the support they need before they reach crisis point.
- Ensure all care assessments consider the needs of family and informal carers, preventing carer burnout and unnecessary reliance on formal services.

### **Enablers of Change: Future-Proofing Adult Social Care**

To deliver these ambitious reforms and ensure Adult Social Care remains financially and operationally sustainable, Plymouth City Council will implement several key enablers:

#### **1. Data-Driven Decision Making**

- Expanding the use of predictive analytics to identify at-risk individuals and intervene earlier with targeted support.
- Enhancing data integration across health and social care systems, enabling better service coordination and resource allocation.

#### **2. Strengthening Partnership Working**

- Deepening our collaboration with the NHS, voluntary sector, and local communities to build joined-up support networks that reduce reliance on council services.
- Embedding Integrated Care System (ICS) approaches to drive more seamless service delivery and funding alignment.

#### **3. Investing in Workforce Development**

- Expanding training programmes to equip social care staff with advanced skills in strengths-based practice, digital care solutions, and early intervention techniques.
- Strengthening recruitment and retention initiatives to ensure a sustainable care workforce.

#### **4. Embedding Technology and Innovation**

- Accelerating the use of AI and automation in case management, assessments, and service coordination to improve efficiency and free up staff capacity.
- Scaling up assistive technology solutions to help individuals live independently for longer.

### **A Sustainable Future for Adult Social Care**

Adult Social Care in Plymouth is undergoing a fundamental transformation, shifting towards a Prevention-First model that prioritises independence, financial sustainability, and high-quality care. By focusing on early intervention, financial resilience, and smarter service delivery, we can ensure that every resident receives the

right support at the right time, reducing long-term care needs and improving quality of life. This ambitious programme will not only protect Plymouth's most vulnerable residents but also create a stronger, more sustainable Adult Social Care system that is fit for the future.

### **Transforming Homelessness Provision**

Homelessness is one of the most pressing social challenges facing Plymouth. Like many other parts of the country, Plymouth has seen a significant increase in homelessness in recent years, leading to an increasing demand for housing services, temporary accommodation, and emergency placements in expensive nightly paid options such as bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) and holiday lets.

The current model is financially unsustainable and fails to provide long-term, stable solutions for those experiencing homelessness. To break the cycle of homelessness, reduce dependency on high-cost emergency accommodation, and provide better outcomes for individuals and families, Plymouth City Council is committed to a Prevention-First approach that focuses on early intervention, the expansion of high-quality temporary accommodation, and long-term housing solutions.

This comprehensive strategy will enable the Council to reduce financial pressures, ensure better support for those at risk of homelessness, and deliver a sustainable and effective homelessness prevention model for the city.

### **Understanding the Pressures on Homelessness Provision**

Several interrelated factors have driven the rise in homelessness and demand for temporary accommodation in Plymouth:

- The Cost-of-Living Crisis – Rising energy prices, inflation, and increasing living costs have made it harder for individuals and families to sustain tenancies, leading to an increase in evictions and housing instability.
- A Lack of Affordable Housing – There is a significant shortage of affordable housing across all tenures, meaning that people facing homelessness have fewer options to secure permanent accommodation.
- Pressure on Health and Wellbeing Services – Oversubscribed mental health, addiction, and social care services limit the ability to intervene early, leading to more people falling into homelessness as their underlying needs go unmet.
- Increased Reliance on Expensive Temporary Accommodation – With limited affordable housing, the Council has had to place a growing number of people into costly nightly paid accommodation, including B&Bs and holiday lets, adding financial strain on the system.

Without significant intervention, these pressures will continue to increase costs, worsen outcomes for those experiencing homelessness, and limit the Council's ability to provide sustainable housing solutions.

### **Key Strategies for Tackling Homelessness**

Plymouth City Council is committed to reducing homelessness through proactive and preventative interventions. The key elements of our strategy include:

**I. Strengthening Early Intervention and Prevention** - To prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless in the first place, we will:

- Expand early engagement efforts to identify those at risk of homelessness before they reach crisis point.
- Strengthen tenancy sustainment support, working with landlords and tenants to prevent evictions through mediation, financial assistance, and tailored advice.
- Enhance access to welfare and benefits advice to ensure that households receive all available support to maintain their housing.
- Work closely with health and wellbeing services to ensure that those with complex needs (e.g., mental health challenges, substance misuse issues) receive early, targeted support to prevent homelessness.
- Increase partnerships with voluntary and community organisations to provide wraparound support for individuals at risk, including access to financial advice, employment support, and crisis intervention services.

**2. Expanding High-Quality Temporary Accommodation** - Reducing the reliance on costly and unsuitable emergency accommodation is a key priority. To achieve this, we will:

- Invest in the development and acquisition of more good-quality temporary accommodation to provide a stable environment for individuals and families while they transition to permanent housing.
- Work with partners to access funding programmes such as the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) to support the creation of dedicated, purpose-built temporary housing units.
- Introduce new supported housing schemes for those with higher support needs, ensuring that people receive the right level of assistance while transitioning to independent living.
- Develop more move-on accommodation that enables individuals to progress from temporary housing to permanent tenancies, reducing reliance on high-cost emergency placements.
- Increase capacity by delivering 80 additional units of temporary accommodation in FY2025/26 and a further 30 units in FY2026/27, providing much-needed additional housing stock for those in need.

**3. Reducing Financial Pressures Through Smarter Use of Resources** - To create a financially sustainable model of homelessness support, we will:

- Reduce reliance on expensive nightly paid placements such as B&Bs and holiday lets by scaling up investment in council-owned or partnership-led temporary accommodation.
- Optimise placement pathways, ensuring that homeless individuals are placed in the most cost-effective and appropriate accommodation for their needs, reducing unnecessary costs.
- Maximise external funding streams by working with government programmes and charitable partners to secure funding for innovative housing solutions.
- Implement a data-led approach to track patterns of homelessness and target resources more effectively to prevent crisis situations before they escalate.

**Enablers of Change: Creating a Sustainable Future for Homelessness Prevention** - To successfully transform Plymouth's approach to homelessness, we will implement several key enablers that will drive lasting change:

#### **1. A Data-Driven Approach to Homelessness Prevention**

- Enhancing predictive analytics capabilities to identify trends in homelessness and enable earlier, targeted interventions.
- Integrating data across housing, health, and social care services to improve collaboration and coordination of support.
- Using real-time data to measure the impact of prevention initiatives and adjust policies accordingly.

#### **2. Strengthening Collaboration and Partnerships**

- Expanding partnerships with housing associations, private landlords, and developers to increase the supply of affordable and supported housing.
- Working closely with health, mental health, and addiction services to create a joined-up support system that prevents individuals from becoming homeless due to unmet care needs.
- Developing a multi-agency homelessness prevention taskforce to ensure strategic alignment and effective resource allocation across sectors.

#### **3. Scaling Up Supported Housing and Alternative Accommodation Models**

- Exploring new models of housing provision, including modular homes, shared housing initiatives, and community-led housing solutions to provide more sustainable options for individuals leaving temporary accommodation.
- Expanding Housing First models, which provide long-term, stable housing solutions for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.

#### **4. Investing in Workforce Development and Service Transformation**

- Strengthening the Council's homelessness prevention workforce, ensuring that frontline staff have the skills and resources to deliver a prevention-first approach.
- Investing in customer-focused digital solutions to improve access to housing support services, making it easier for individuals at risk to seek assistance.

### **A Sustainable Future for Homelessness Prevention**

Homelessness is not an inevitable outcome, it is a challenge that can be tackled through early intervention, sustainable housing solutions, and targeted support. Plymouth City Council's Prevention-First approach will transform homelessness services, reduce reliance on expensive emergency accommodation, and create a system that prioritises long-term housing stability over crisis-driven interventions.

By investing in prevention, affordable housing expansion, and smarter use of resources, we will build a fairer, more resilient Plymouth where homelessness is prevented wherever possible, and those who do experience homelessness receive the support they need to rebuild their lives.

## **CROSS-CUTTING ENABLERS OF CHANGE**

The Council's transformation is underpinned by initiatives that enhance our capacity and capabilities.

### **Our People Strategy & Plan**

Plymouth City Council has a 4-year People Strategy, which we are reviewing and replacing in 2025. This will establish how we meet our current and future workforce challenges, and position Plymouth City Council as a good employer in the area and an organisation that people aspire to join and develop their careers.

Our current strategy describes our ambitions to be a welcoming employer, to aspire to be the best, to attract and keep the right people, and to be well led. We have made significant progress with this strategy, including recent developments in management & leadership development, apprenticeships & early careers, recruitment, and engagement with and support for staff.

The review of the people strategy will see conversations with staff at all levels of the organisation, using an appreciative enquiry approach, with the new strategy to be launched in 2025. This will connect the development of the current and future workforce to the priorities as set out in this paper and the Plymouth and Corporate Plan, including Prevention, Data Insight, Customer Experience & Digital.

Plymouth City Council has a skilled and dedicated workforce, and we know we need to do what we can to provide an attractive and stimulating working environment, so that we both retain and develop key skills and bring in new staff as part of strategic workforce planning. We will achieve this through open and constructive conversations with staff, to ensure that we are an organisation we all want to be a part of and that delivers for the city of Plymouth.

**HR Operations** – understanding the As-Is and To-Be structure, and the implications and associated processes.

City Help & Support is clearly not a tweak of existing services. It requires organisational change, with some new and citizen structures, job descriptions, grades, management approaches & workforce planning.

As with most cross-cutting transformation programmes, managing the logistics to ensure a fair and consistent approach for everyone will be paramount. This will require a concerted and sustained effort to re-shape some of our services to ensure that proposals are consistent with changes elsewhere in the Council and are always compliant with legislation and corporate values.

Our People Strategy must include sufficient HR business support to help deal with the logistics of affected staff, either as external interims or, preferably, internal secondments.

**Culture & Skills** – creating an inclusive approach to change that delivers an empowered, engaged, informed operations workforce and building in the core skills and ongoing learning and development needed for a vibrant, confident operations workforce.

People make things work. Processes can be clear, frameworks explicit, agreements watertight, but without the clear understanding and commitment of staff at all levels, services underperform or fail.

City Help & Support is all about people. At its heart, City Help & Support is about relationships, whether that's a simple smile and hello in a library or about sitting alongside a family in great need and in desperate straits. Connections, conversations and empathy will be the building blocks of City Help & Support - and these cannot be delivered without staff who:

- Understand the underlying principles of what is being sought.
- Understand the legislative requirements that govern what can be done.
- Understand the opportunities to flex and change within agreed parameters.
- Can sit alongside people and understand not just what is in front of them, but what any underlying issues maybe.
- Work as a supportive team, helping colleagues learn from practice and experience.
- Feel supported and cared for by their managers.
- Treat all colleagues with respect, irrespective of their professional or service backgrounds.
- Feel able to contribute openly to the development of the service.
- Have the right tools, training and skills to do their jobs effectively.
- Gain satisfaction from working as part of our transformation journey.
- Understand that the central role of the job is to help and support people – and people matter.

Securing this way of working cannot be enforced. It needs to be built and lived, over time – evolved with the active engagement of the individuals who will make up this new way of working. It also needs to be nurtured – this is not a sheep dip training programme that, once completed, need never be done again. So, part of the essential requirements of the Prevention-First agenda is to build in the self-sustaining infrastructure and toolkits to enable the programme to keep changing, evolving, long after the programme has finished.

This strand of work is, in many ways the most essential of all. Without success here all the other efforts made will be diminished – our focus on workforce development and the way we shape the culture of our council community therefore requires investment and time.

### **Customer Experience and Digital Strategy & Plan**

Historically the Council has developed Customer Services and Customer Access Strategies - these focus on the way in which customers can access Council services. Moving forward we will develop a Customer Experience & Digital Strategy setting out how we will aim to meet customer needs covering all aspects of the service experience from access through to confirmation of fulfilment and measuring satisfaction. **Customers are not a service, but it is the job of all of us to serve our customers.** To deliver on this strategy, we will require cross organisational ownership of the experience, spanning departments and systems.

We are also committed to using innovative new technologies such as AI to automate and digitise service delivery to improve our efficiency. Whilst we will continue to apply a digital-first design principle we will also remain committed to providing alternative access for customers to talk to people either over the phone or face to face, for those who are digitally excluded. We will also continue our support for those who are digitally excluded to help them build the skills/confidence and have access to digital services.

The places and spaces City Help & Support use will be hugely important to helping people accessing services feel welcome, safe and valued. Some of these spaces will be recognisable Council services – libraries and Family Hubs for example. Others will be in partner organisations – whether statutory, voluntary or local community organisations. It's important, also, to be able to work from non-traditional spaces – the kinds of places people gravitate to if they need a moment to talk – coffee shops, a local park or a playground.

To enable this approach to work, staff will need the following core components:



- **Technology to enable mobile working** – Covid 19 has shown clearly that office-based working isn't essential.
- **Access to shared data** – to enable real time conversations about real life issues in a holistic way, with access to data available on a need to know, appropriately shared basis.
- **A link between operational delivery and service planning and development** – so that real life working for staff informs thinking about future service innovation.

Plymouth currently has a myriad of databases, systems and access agreements. Streamlining these will be a key enabler of the new service, linked closely to other workstreams like The Way we Work.

### **Asset Management Strategy & Plan**

City Help & Support will combine face to face services for delivering partnership working in places that communities feel comfortable using and which are accessible and positively encourage engagement.

The Council's Asset Management Strategy will be refreshed in 2025/26, as we continue to rationalise our estate. To date, we have disposed of 197 assets, generating £25.4 million. Recent examples include vacating Midland House (saving £150,000 annually) and transferring Windsor House to the PRF, reducing costs by £600,000 annually by finding an anchor tenant.

We will continue to focus on reducing accommodation needs, modernising assets, and creating shared spaces. Flexible work, public access, and reduced accommodation costs are essential drivers, aligning with our carbon neutrality goals.

Creating spaces and using places where people feel welcome and secure will be a vital part of the face to face offer for City Help & Support. Understanding how City Help & Support forms part of the work on, for example, the effective use and expansion of community-based hubs will be a key aspect of the programme.

Plymouth City Council's Asset Management Strategy (2025) will be a fundamental enabler of our Prevention-First transformation programme, ensuring that the Council's physical assets, its buildings, land, and infrastructure, are aligned with the needs of our communities. As part of our wider transformation agenda, this strategy will be directly informed by our commitment to proactive, community-based service delivery, financial sustainability, and operational efficiency.

By taking a strategic and data-driven approach, we will maximise the value of our assets to drive better service outcomes, create stronger, more resilient communities, and ensure financial sustainability through smarter asset utilisation.

The Asset Management Strategy (2025) will be structured around two key areas:

1. **Re-purposing assets to support a prevention-first approach** – ensuring that critical community-based assets are repurposed to deliver services closer to those who need them most.
2. **Rationalising surplus assets** – identifying assets that are no longer required for service delivery or income generation, disposing of them efficiently, and reinvesting capital receipts into our transformation programme or reserves.

### **Re-Purposing Assets to Support a Prevention-First Approach**

A core objective of our Prevention-First transformation programme is to deliver services closer to communities, ensuring that residents receive early intervention and support before crises escalate. Our asset base is a vital tool in achieving this vision.

Key Principles for Asset Re-Purposing:

- **Bringing services closer to those in need** – ensuring that our properties in high-need areas become multi-disciplinary hubs that support prevention, early intervention, and community resilience.
- **Maximising the value of existing assets** – avoiding unnecessary new acquisitions by re-purposing assets to serve new functions, particularly for health, social care, and community outreach services.
- **Embedding flexibility and adaptability** – ensuring that our assets are designed for multi-purpose use, allowing for co-location of services, integration with partners, and community-led solutions.

- **Aligning with our digital strategy** – complementing physical assets with digital service access to create a hybrid, flexible service model that meets the needs of modern users.

The re-purposing of assets will help manage demand on Council services by:

- **Reducing pressure on crisis-response services** by shifting resources into early intervention and prevention.
- **Increasing service accessibility** in deprived areas, improving health and well-being outcomes, and reducing long-term dependency on statutory support.
- **Generating operational efficiencies** by enabling co-location and shared service delivery, reducing overhead costs and duplication.
- **Creating stronger community resilience**, encouraging residents to engage in self-help and peer-led support networks.

### **Rationalising Surplus Assets: Disposals & Reinvestment**

While some of our assets will be re-purposed to support service transformation, others will no longer be required for operational use or income generation. A key component of the Asset Management Strategy (2025) will be the rationalisation of surplus assets, ensuring that underutilised or non-strategic properties are efficiently disposed of to generate capital receipts.

A comprehensive asset review will be conducted to assess which properties are:

- **No longer required for service delivery.**
- **Not generating sustainable income.**
- **Inefficient to maintain or operate.**
- **Better suited for disposal to generate capital receipts.**

Where appropriate, the Council will explore alternative uses before disposal, such as:

- **Transferring assets to community groups or social enterprises** to ensure local benefit.
- **Exploring private sector partnerships** to maximise regeneration opportunities.
- **Repurposing assets for economic development** before considering disposal.

### **Expected Financial Benefits of Asset Disposals**

By rationalising the Council's property portfolio, we will:

- **Reduce the cost burden of maintaining unnecessary assets** (e.g., repairs, utilities, business rates).
- **Unlock capital receipts that can be reinvested into Council priorities**, including:
- **Fund our Prevention-First transformation programme.**
- **Support Investment in frontline services.**
- **Enhance digital and physical infrastructure.**
- **Strengthen financial resilience by replenishing reserves.**
- **Enable potential regeneration and increase the housing stock in the city.**

A phased disposal programme will be implemented between 2025 and 2027, ensuring that non-essential assets are gradually exited while maximising financial returns.

### **Supply Chain and Contracts Management Strategy & Plan**

We will embed category management for driving efficiencies and savings in procurement. By grouping similar goods, services, and works into distinct categories, we will be able to gain deeper insights into our spending patterns, supplier base, and market conditions. This approach will allow us to consolidate purchasing, standardise specifications, and negotiate more competitive contracts with suppliers. Importantly, category management also promotes collaboration across departments, ensuring that procurement decisions align with the Council's broader strategic priorities.

To support this shift, we are exploring an upgrade to our procurement systems, including the integration of advanced contract management functionality. This will streamline processes, improve transparency, and enhance oversight of supplier performance. The module will enable us to monitor contract milestones, track compliance,

and assess value delivery, ensuring that suppliers meet their obligations and that the Council secures the best possible outcomes from our contracts.

This work is also required for meeting the Council's compliance with the new **UK Government Procurement Reform and Act**.

### **Data, Insight & AI as a Service**

To support our transformation programme, we will establish Data, Insight, and AI as a Service, a dedicated function designed to harness the power of data and emerging technologies to drive innovation and support our Prevention-First agenda. This service will play a pivotal role in designing and implementing the Council's data, AI strategy and plans, laying the foundation for a smarter, more responsive organisation that can anticipate and address the needs of our residents effectively.

At its core, this service will focus on developing data, insight, and AI capabilities to enable evidence-based decision-making across all council operations. By integrating disparate data sources and leveraging predictive analytics, the team will identify trends, risks, and opportunities at an early stage, allowing for timely interventions and the effective allocation of resources. These capabilities will underpin our Prevention-First agenda by ensuring we can act proactively to prevent crises before they arise, delivering better outcomes for residents while reducing long-term costs.

To ensure that the use of data and AI aligns with ethical principles and best practices, the service will design the Council's AI ethics standards and governance frameworks. These will include robust policies to ensure transparency, accountability, and fairness in how data and AI are applied. Governance arrangements will provide oversight of data usage, safeguarding privacy and security while promoting public trust in the Council's digital transformation efforts. By taking a people-centric approach to AI, the service will ensure that the technology is used responsibly to support rather than replace human decision-making.

The implementation of modern data platforms will be another cornerstone of the programme. These platforms will provide the Council with the tools needed to store, manage, and analyse data efficiently and securely. With cutting-edge capabilities such as real-time data processing, machine learning, and advanced visualisation, these platforms will empower teams to deliver actionable insights that drive service improvements and operational efficiencies.

The establishment of Data, Insight, and AI as a Service will transform the Council's ability to deliver value to residents. Key benefits include:

- **Proactive Problem Solving:** Predictive analytics will help us identify and address issues early, from preventing homelessness to targeting public health interventions, reducing demand on reactive services.
- **Enhanced Efficiency:** By streamlining data processes and integrating systems, we will save time and resources while simplifying and improving service delivery.
- **Informed Decision-Making:** Data-driven insights will guide policy decisions, budget allocations, and strategic planning, ensuring resources are directed where they are most needed.
- **Ethical AI Deployment:** With clear AI ethics standards and governance, we will use AI responsibly, ensuring fairness, accountability, and alignment with public expectations.
- **Improved Transparency:** Centralising data management and developing governance arrangements will promote trust and confidence in how we use data to serve our communities.

This service will be instrumental in embedding a culture of data-driven decision-making within Plymouth City Council, supporting not only our Prevention-First agenda but also broader goals of financial sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation. It will ensure that we are well-equipped to meet the challenges of today while preparing for the opportunities of tomorrow.

### **Data & Insight in the Context of Prevention-First**

An essential element of both the eventual service and its creation is the effective discovery, use, interpretation and application of data and insight. City Help & Support needs this core data and insight to give us real understanding how best we can help people to help themselves. We have seen how powerful this approach can be based on the success of the work of the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) project that has identified and targeted support for households in Plymouth struggling with the rise in cost of living.

Some of this will be easier than other parts. For example, understanding how best to delight people when selecting books online through the library service should be straightforward. Understanding how to best help people who are in absolute crisis to not just deal with the crisis for them but help them be part of the solution will require a much more profound understanding of what is happening in all aspects of their lives - and how can we work with them to change things? And then use that insight to understand and pre-empt the same scenarios happening again to them and to others. If everybody has access to data, it empowers people to come up with better ways of doing things. Data that show trends can offer inspiration for new products and processes.

As well as the data research, user experience needs to be factored into our thinking, so data and real life 'join up'. People in need have complex lives and complex challenges. People sometimes know what is the 'right' thing to do in a rational way. But crisis often propels people to make decisions that feel better or easier or more publicly acceptable, entrenching the issues. We need to accept that in such situations, rationality gives way to emotion – fear, anxiety, shame, anger, withdrawal. These responses are not bad – they are human. Using appreciative enquiry techniques we need to understand what this means for the design of the service.

Marrying hard edged data analytics and experiential feedback will be a core driver for understanding how best to configure City Help & Support.

### **Finance (Financial Management, Efficiencies & Commercialisation)**

Finance is a critical enabler of our transformation programme, ensuring that all strategic ambitions are grounded in robust financial planning, discipline, and assurance. As we shift to a Prevention-First operating model, finance plays a central role in aligning our resources with the outcomes we seek to achieve, both in the short and long term, while ensuring we maintain a sustainable financial position for the Council.

At the core of this work is the development of our Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This plan is both informed by, and informs, our transformation strategy. It ensures that the financial implications of service reform, demand reduction, and investment decisions are built into our forward planning. By modelling various scenarios and assumptions, the MTFP enables us to respond flexibly to change while maintaining a balanced outlook and continuing to deliver statutory services.

Finance will continue to lead on corporate financial management, driving rigour in budget setting, monitoring, forecasting, and risk management. Every Directorate remains accountable for maximising value across all revenue budgets, not just within demand-led services. Through stronger financial challenge, comparative benchmarking, and a focus on cost-effectiveness, we will identify efficiencies and manage spend without compromising outcomes.

In parallel, we will undertake the required work of whole-service reviews to identify opportunities to deliver better outcomes at lower cost. This includes assessing our current service footprint, delivery models, and commissioning approaches. We will seek to modernise and consolidate where appropriate, align services to areas of greatest need, and discontinue those no longer viable or fit for purpose. These reviews will form a key part of the broader approach to closing the financial gap, alongside the Council's transformation and demand management work.

Finance will also continue to drive commercialisation and income generation opportunities. This includes a systematic review of fees and charges, best value reviews of our traded services, maximising rental and asset income, and pursuing external funding where aligned with our priorities. Where opportunities exist to deliver value through social enterprise or municipal trading models, these will be explored in collaboration with service leads and governance partners.

To ensure transparency and discipline in tracking progress, finance will work closely with the Corporate Programme Management Office (CPMO). The CPMO will lead on programme-level benefits tracking, while finance will validate all financial baselines, monitor realisation of savings, and ensure corrective actions are taken where variances occur. This partnership ensures that every investment made through the transformation programme is matched by measurable returns, whether in cost reduction, income, or improved outcomes.

Importantly, Finance also acts as the gateway for all funding decisions that support the transformation programme. It will lead and chair the Invest-to-Save Group, a formal mechanism through which all investment proposals will

be considered. This group will assess the financial robustness and return on investment of each business case, ensuring they are aligned to our strategy and deliver the intended impact. Business cases will be expected to demonstrate a clear problem statement, options appraisal, measurable benefits, payback assumptions, and ongoing tracking mechanisms before funding is approved.

In summary, Finance is at the heart of enabling and assuring the success of our Prevention-First transformation. It provides the governance, challenge, and leadership required to ensure that ambition is matched with prudence and that transformation is delivered in a way that is both bold and financially sustainable.

### **Growth and Municipal Income**

The Growth Directorate continues its work under an ambitious Capital Programme and through the Property Regeneration Fund, which is vital in attracting businesses, and building homes within the City. Both these aspects of their work have an important and direct impact on the Council's finances.

- Business Rates is a significant funding stream which depends on increasing the number and size of businesses in the City.
- Council Tax is the largest element within the Council's core financial resources. Growth to the Council Tax base is only possible through increasing the number of households within the City.

The growth programme constitutes business as usual and will continue to form a central plank of the way the Council addresses its financial challenges and supports this transformation programme.

### **Closing the gap through Financial Management & Service Reductions**

As well as the Transformation Programme, savings will continue to be needed through ongoing financial management and challenge. Medium-term financial planning and annual budget cycles include a requirement for Directorates to drive efficiencies in all revenue budgets, not just those involved in demand-led services with associated prevention and cost avoidance savings. This work will not be governed through Transformation, it will continue as part of business as usual alongside the proposed Transformation Programme, to close any budget gaps that persist outside of the work set out in this report.

However, while transformation and financial management will play a critical role in closing the budget gap, they may not be sufficient to fully address the Council's long-term financial pressures. As a result, additional service reductions may be required where efficiencies and prevention-driven savings cannot bridge the shortfall. Where this is the case, the Council will need to undertake a rigorous prioritisation exercise to determine which services can be scaled back, restructured, or ceased altogether, ensuring that resources are focused on core statutory functions and areas of greatest need. This process will be data-driven, risk-based, and undertaken in consultation with residents and stakeholders to mitigate the impact on communities wherever possible.

The Council will seek to redesign services in a way that minimises disruption, maximises efficiency, and explores alternative delivery models, including community partnerships, shared services, and digital transformation. Where service reductions are necessary, they will be planned and implemented strategically, ensuring that the Council continues to deliver high-priority services while maintaining financial sustainability for the future.

## **SCOPE & GOVERNANCE**

The level of governance required for cross cutting change activities should be proportionate to the scope, scale and impact of the programme or project – it also should not conflict with any existing and statutory governance arrangements. Adopting a methodology to identify the level of required governance will enable the Council to maintain a strong focus on the delivery of outcomes whilst ensuring programmes and projects are adequately controlled. A methodology is provided below and should be seen as a broad guideline to facilitate the decision making process.

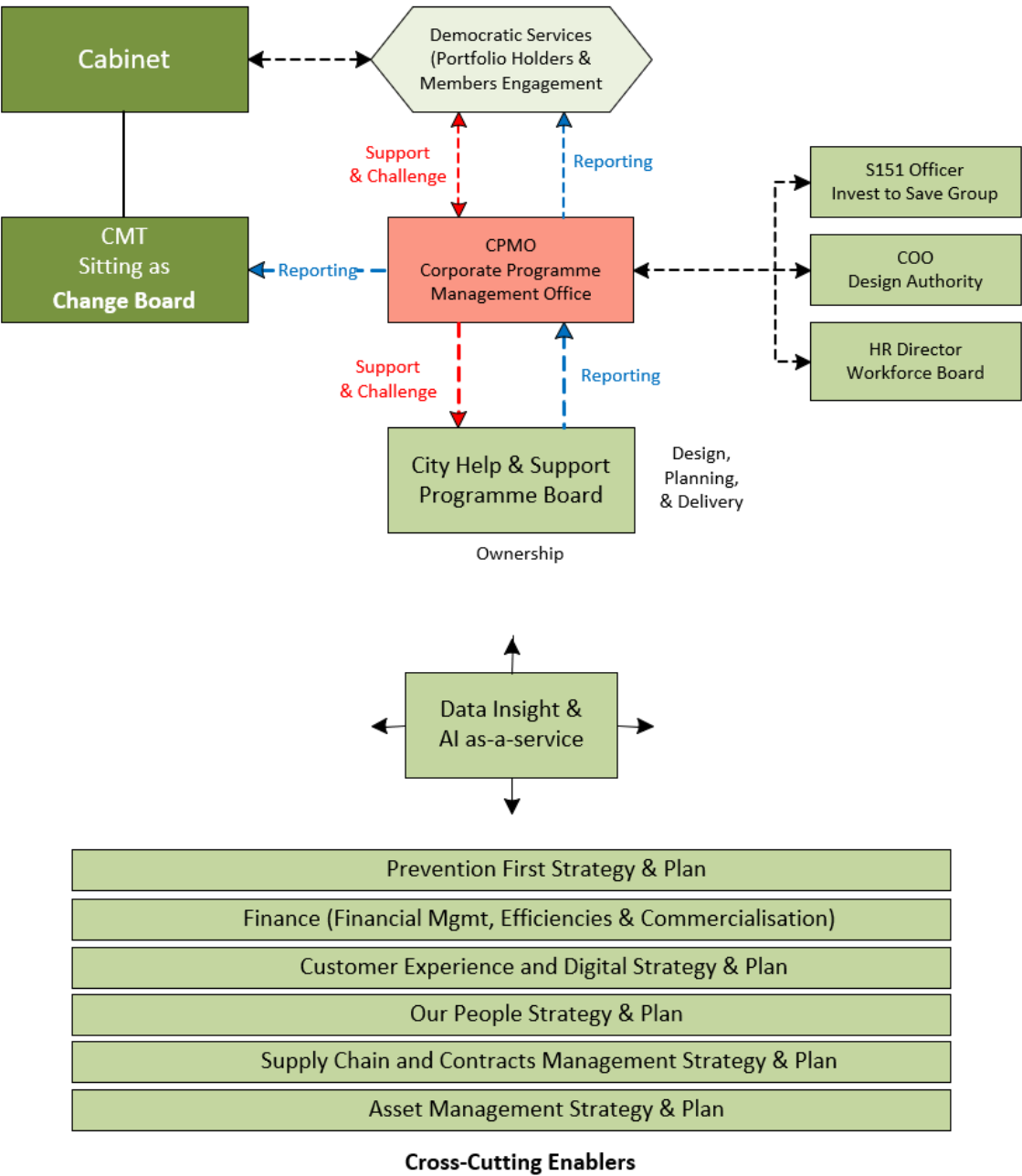
	Quick Cash	Continuous Improvement	Transformation Change		
	1. Quick Wins Short-term, cashable savings initiatives	2. Bronze Continuous improvement initiatives	3. Silver High impact and savings projects	4. Gold Cross-cutting, high impact and savings	5. Platinum Small number of politically sensitive projects
<b>Decision Making</b>	Departmental Boards	Departmental Boards	Prevention-First Portfolio Board	Prevention-First Portfolio Board	Prevention-First Portfolio Board
<b>Savings &gt; £0.5m</b>	X	X	P	✓	P
<b>Financial Risk</b>	X	X	P	✓	P
<b>Cross-Cutting</b>	X	P	✓	✓	P
<b>Reputational</b>	X	P	P	✓	✓
<b>Radical/ Innovation</b>	X	X	✓	✓	P

P = Possibly    X = No    ✓ = Yes

Programmes and projects that are identified as requiring corporate oversight will report through the Transformation PMO to the Prevention-First Portfolio Board (as per the process below). Smaller projects that do not need corporate oversight will report to their relevant Departmental Boards.

The above table suggests where and how Transformation is likely to be required to play a role. There will be other situations in addition to those included in the table that could also require Transformation support, for example in cases where departmental changes aligned to prevention require capability that doesn't exist within the department. Requests for this type of specific Transformation support would be considered and impacted by the PMO and decisions made by the chair of the Prevention First Board.

It is important to recognise that the scope and scale of transformation cannot be delivered by simply doing more for the same, but requires additional capacity and capabilities to our existing resource pool. None of this will happen without recognising the imperative relationships between investments (in specialist skills and capacity), the improvements that will follow from these investments, and the savings and improvements these will realise.



**BENEFITS**

Effective demand management lies at the heart of our Prevention-First Strategy. Shifting from reactive crisis responses to proactive early interventions, can improve outcomes for residents and create a financially sustainable framework for delivering vital services. This approach ensures that resources are focused where they are needed most, reducing inefficiencies and preventing avoidable costs.

**City Help & Support Savings**

Savings will be achieved through a combination of innovation, collaboration, and targeted investment in prevention-first practices. Key initiatives include:

- **Predictive Analytics and Data Integration:**

By harnessing the power of data, we can predict and prevent demand for costly interventions. Advanced analytics will enable us to identify households and individuals at risk of homelessness, health crises, or unemployment, allowing for tailored support before issues escalate.

- **Integrated Community Based Hubs:**

We will establish a number of digital and physical hubs where residents can access a wide range of services in one place. These hubs will streamline service delivery, reduce duplication, and provide consistent, joined-up support for families and individuals.

- **Community Engagement and Enablement:**

Continue to build on the successes of our local partnerships with local organisations and community groups, to enable residents to take an active role in shaping their futures. Preventative measures, such as financial literacy programmes and employment support, will build resilience and reduce long-term dependency on council services.

- **Workforce Development and Innovation:**

Upskilling our own workforce is essential to delivering prevention-first services. Staff will be trained to adopt holistic, person-centred approaches, supported by innovative tools such as AI-driven insights and predictive modelling.

### **The Broader Impact of Prevention**

While financial savings are a vital measure of success, the true value of our Prevention Strategy lies in its transformative impact on our residents' lives. By addressing the root causes of demand, we will:

- Reduce inequalities across Plymouth, ensuring all communities have the opportunity to thrive.
- Enhance quality of life for residents by providing timely and effective support.
- Strengthen the resilience of families and individuals, breaking cycles of dependency and crisis.

Our approach represents a cultural shift for Plymouth City Council, one that prioritises long-term sustainability over short-term fixes. By embedding prevention into everything we do, we can create a city that is resilient, equitable, and prepared to meet the challenges of the future. The true legacy of this work will be a stronger, more connected Plymouth.

### **Addressing our biggest demand led pressures**

#### **Children's Services**

Through the **Family Homes for Plymouth Children Programme**, we aim to achieve the following **key outcomes**:

- Fewer children entering care, as a result of better early intervention and family support.
- A significant reduction in the number of children placed in residential care, with more children placed in family-based settings.
- More local placements, reducing the number of out-of-area placements.
- Better placement stability, ensuring children remain in long-term, high-quality placements that meet their needs.
- Improved educational, social, and emotional outcomes for children in care.
- Cost savings through a reduction in reliance on independent placements, reinvesting resources into prevention and early intervention.

#### **Adults Social Care**

Through **Transforming Adult Social Care**, Plymouth City Council aims to achieve the following outcomes:



- Greater financial sustainability – Reducing avoidable costs, maximising income, and ensuring that funding is targeted at the most effective interventions.
- Increased independence – Supporting more individuals to live safely at home without unnecessary reliance on formal care services.
- Better health and well-being – Improving overall outcomes by providing early intervention and reducing crisis-driven care.
- Stronger support for carers – Ensuring that informal carers are well-supported, preventing burnout and enabling them to continue their role.
- A more resilient Adult Social Care system – Future-proofing services by embedding digital innovation, data-led decision-making, and community-based solutions.

## Homelessness

Through **Homelessness Provision**, Plymouth City Council aims to achieve the following key outcomes:

- A significant reduction in homelessness cases through earlier interventions and stronger prevention initiatives.
- A 50% reduction in the use of high-cost nightly paid emergency accommodation by expanding good-quality, Council-led temporary accommodation.
- An increase in housing stability and tenancy sustainment, reducing repeat homelessness and improving long-term outcomes.
- Stronger, more effective collaboration between services, ensuring that those at risk of homelessness receive the right support at the right time.
- A more financially sustainable model, enabling the Council to reinvest savings into further prevention and early intervention measures.

## INVESTMENTS AND FUNDING

At this stage of the programme it is not yet possible to provide investment estimates for the work required to deliver on the agenda described. This report is not asking for approval for funding this work, instead cases requiring investment will be put forward for decision over time as they are required by the programme. There are 2 important approaches that will be used to manage the Council's financial exposure associated with this work:

- Commit to work in stages
- Test, learn and grow

Committing to work in stages requires breaking change effort down so that plans are advanced as far as they are based on what is known. This brings greater predictability to change and allows for the process to respond more readily to changes. The alternative approach of seeking approval for a full plan and costed business case is proven to only really work for relatively short term and simple changes. More complex and longer-term programmes have to react to changes which would then require reworking the plan and business case and seeking new approvals each time this happens.

The approach to change of “test, learn and grow” is being promoted by the Cabinet Office and the LGA as the right way to structure investments into innovation and change. The approach seeks to closely align the level of investment required to the risk and benefits. The idea is to break problems down and start working at small scale to understand the challenge fully and then experiment with solutions using technology bought on a “pay as you go” basis. Where these pilots prove to be successful, they can then be scaled up and applied more widely, where the results are not what was expected from the pilot the learning is captured and used as a basis for new approaches. Low-cost pilots that don't deliver what was expected must be anticipated as a part of a process of innovation. The key to “test, learn and grow” is to limit investment and rapidly capture learning that provides for new perspectives on how to solve the problem.

The combination of these two approaches to change will allow us to respond to changes whilst also directing investments towards areas where we have confidence in them delivering a return and ceasing investment in areas that don't create benefits.

The funding assumption for the programme is that the work will be capitalised, this includes the resources required to design and build new capabilities. Initial investment cases will be funded from existing capital receipts, the Council currently has earmarked capital receipts to cover the initiation of this work and the continuation of existing transformation work in Children's Services which will be aligned into this work through the course of FY 25/26. As the programme moves forward the release of assets is anticipated to generate further receipts that should allow for continuity of funding. Work on our asset management strategy and the consolidation of services in community-based hubs is part of the programme, in this way the programme will be incentivised to achieve a self-funded position.

### Looking forward

The change described in this report represents the next phase of modernisation for the Council. The breadth of impact and requirements for change will require the contribution of staff across the Council and partners to deliver. Focusing the collective efforts of the Council on this change is required to a) ensure public services are targeted towards the greatest need and to b) manage levels of demand for services that have become unaffordable. This approach to common problems faced by UK local authorities is being promoted by MHCLG and the LGA. This means that we can and will continue to draw on experience and learning from other organisations who are ahead in their adoption of this approach.

As an organisation we have a proud history of standing up in the face of a challenge – recently challenges such as the Covid pandemic and the Keyham bomb disposal united the Council and residents. The next phase of modernisation will require efforts on a similar scale over an extended period of time. This is why it will require commitment, bold leadership and innovation to achieve, it will also require that the journey is energising and fun with those involved taking pride and being recognised for what they achieve. Building on all our relevant experience the current work of the programme is about setting the right foundations to ensure this change can be delivered successfully.