

Cumbria

Area Assessment

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oneplace

for an independent overview
of local public services

Contents

Cumbria at a glance

How is Cumbria doing?

About Cumbria

How well do priorities for Cumbria express community needs and aspirations?

Priorities for Cumbria

- Safe, strong and inclusive communities
- Health and well being throughout life
- A sustainable and prosperous economy
- Effective connections between people and places
- World class environmental quality

Cumbria at a glance

This independent assessment by six inspectorates sets out how well local public services are tackling the major issues in Cumbria. It says how well they are delivering better results for local people and how likely these are to improve in future. If, and only if, our assessment shows that the following special circumstances are met in relation to a major issue, we use flags to highlight our judgements. We use a green flag to highlight where others can learn from outstanding achievements or improvements or an innovation that has very promising prospects of success. We use a red flag to highlight where we have significant concerns about results and future prospects that are not being tackled adequately. This means that local partners need to do something more or different to improve these prospects.

 Green flag: Tackling Worklessness in Barrow in Furness

Red flags – significant concerns, action

No red flags have been identified for Cumbria

The local area

Cumbria is a county in the north west of England. It is the second largest local authority in England but has a population of less than 500,000. Just over half of its people live in rural communities. The county covers the districts of Allerdale, Barrow-in-Furness, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland. It includes the Lake District National Park and parts of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The largest population centres are Carlisle and Barrow-in-Furness, where 35 per cent of Cumbria's population live.

This assessment is about local public services and how they are working together to tackle the major issues facing the people of Cumbria. It looks at the last year and the work of partners to address local priorities. However, it is important to recognise the severity of the flooding that affected Cumbria in late November 2009. This was an unprecedented event not only in terms of the level of flooding but also the damage to homes, businesses, communications and infrastructure.

Nothing in this assessment should detract from the response of partners in Cumbria to the floods. Lessons from previous emergencies have been learnt. It is clear that all organisations in Cumbria, from the County and District Councils, the emergency services, NHS Cumbria and private and voluntary groups, have contributed to a well coordinated and effective emergency

response to the floods.

The next section tells you how Cumbria's public services are doing in each of their local priority areas.

How is Cumbria doing?

Safe, strong and inclusive communities

Cumbria is an area with low levels of crime. Actual levels of total crime, serious acquisitive crime, vehicle crime, robberies and domestic burglaries are all low. Levels of drug offences and violent crime have fallen and are comparable to other similar places.

Overall crime in 2008/09 fell by just over 12 per cent compared with the national average of five per cent - this was the second best performance in the country. Anti-social behaviour also fell. Re-offending by adults and young people is under control and there are promising signs that re-offending rates will drop further. Prospects for even lower crime levels are good.

There are clear arrangements for the emergency services, councils, the NHS, and other organisations to deal with emergencies. This work is coordinated through the Cumbria Resilience Forum and Business Continuity Group. Lessons have been learnt from previous experience, for example the flooding in Carlisle in 2005. Partners have strengthened their ability to deal with emergencies and support those affected.

The revised arrangements and commitment of all organisations in Cumbria have contributed to a well coordinated and effective emergency response to the floods that hit the county in late November 2009.

Health and well being throughout life

Cumbria's population suffers from some major health problems. Areas like Barrow-in-Furness and Carlisle are amongst the most unhealthy in England. Public services including the Primary Care Trust, County Council and district councils know what the problems are, and have plans in place to tackle them.

Cumbria as a whole is reducing early deaths from cancer and cardiovascular diseases and reduction targets for 2010 should be met. There is also progress on supporting people to live longer in both Barrow and Carlisle. More needs to be done to continue to improve people's health. Smoking remains a big killer and progress on helping people stop has not been good enough. More work is also needed to reduce teenage pregnancies.

Children and young people's health is generally in line with the rest of England and children placed in care benefit from a stable environment. However, obesity levels have increased at year six and access to child and adolescent mental health services needs to improve.

Older people in Cumbria receive good support to live independently.

Assessments are completed and support for those in need put in place quickly. Enhanced home care support has reduced admissions to hospital and residential care.

A sustainable and prosperous economy

Cumbria is surviving the recession better than many areas. The prospects for improvements in the economy are enhanced by some ambitious regeneration plans and an effective approach to tackling worklessness.

Good partnership working between public bodies has reduced the number of long term unemployed and incapacity benefit claimants in Barrow-in-Furness. However, more new jobs are still needed, particularly for young people and particularly in Barrow, where a high proportion of unemployed people are under the age of 24.

Private and public sector partners have a joint vision to transform the local economy through the Energy Coast Master Plan. This is an ambitious, nationally significant plan to develop a range of sustainable energy sources. The plans now need to identify priorities and deliver some tangible outcomes for local people.

Most schools in Cumbria are giving children a good education. School results have improved significantly. However, barely half of all secondary schools are rated 'good' or better - too many are only 'satisfactory'. Pupils in Cumbria with special educational needs and children who are looked after do as well as elsewhere. However, some children from minority groups do not perform as well.

A key factor holding back these otherwise good prospects is the general shortage of decent, affordable homes. There is also a need to improve skill levels, particularly in the deprived areas of West Cumbria and Barrow.

Effective connections between people and places

Many people in Cumbria find it difficult to access job opportunities and services compared with people in other areas. This is mainly due to the large, sparsely populated nature of the county.

Road improvements have created some safer and quicker traffic flows and the Carlisle Northern Relief Road will improve this further. The 'Rural Wheels' initiative, a service that provides subsidised taxis in rural areas to enable access to shops, health services and the public transport network, is helping to address this.

Overall, access to individual services in Cumbria is reasonable given the challenge of its geography. However, considerable damage to infrastructure, particularly bridges, was caused by the floods in November 2009. A review is now underway to determine the overall level of damage across the county.

To further improve access to services local public bodies know they will need to work together make best use of their budgets, co-ordinate plans and review and set clear priorities.

World class environmental quality

Cumbria is generally well kept, with clean streets, minimal amounts of graffiti, high levels of recycling and a reliable waste collection service. Two mechanical and biological waste treatment plants are planned to further reduce landfill in time to achieve government targets for 2020. This will enhance the natural environment and support tourism, which is so important to the County.

Carbon dioxide emission levels across the County are high and reducing them presents a big challenge. Partners have come together to encourage the whole county and its people to reduce their environmental impact. There are ambitious plans to both produce a range of sustainable energy - including wind, biomass, solar, wave and landfill gas - and reduce carbon emission levels.

Successful implementation will require much more emphasis than is currently given in Cumbria to using, for example, the planning system to require minimum or zero CO₂ emissions in new developments. The prospects for this to happen are dependent on all partners pulling together to agree priority actions and for appropriate investment in new technologies to be made.

About Cumbria

A recent survey shows that in Cumbria 85 per cent of people are satisfied with their immediate local area as a place to live. This is broadly the same as the average for similar areas and higher than the national average of 81 per cent.

Cumbria is a county in the north west of England. It covers an area of 2600 square miles, approximately four times the size of Greater London, with around 80 miles of coastline from the Solway Firth to Morecombe Bay. It is the second largest local authority in England by area after North Yorkshire. Cumbria has a population of nearly 500,000 and is classified as 'predominantly rural' - 51 per cent of the population live in rural communities compared with 19 per cent across England. The county covers the districts of Allerdale, Barrow-in-Furness, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland. It includes the Lake District National Park and parts of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The largest population centres are Carlisle (103,500) and Barrow-in-Furness (72,000) which together account for 35 per cent of the county's population. Kendal, Whitehaven and Workington are the other main population centres and between them account for a further 15 per cent.

Cumbria is a county of contrasts. It combines the spectacular and internationally recognised landscape of the Lake District, the geography of which dominates the centre of the county, with rural market towns, sparsely populated rural areas and pockets of industrial decline. Cumbria's geography and low population densities have implications for access to public services.

The overall population of Cumbria is set to rise by 13 per cent by 2031. This growth contains significant variations between districts and age groups. The proportion of people over 60 is forecast to grow, with growth in the proportion of older people over 85 being particularly noticeable. A significantly smaller proportion of Cumbria's population is made up of people from ethnic minorities compared with the average for England.

Cumbria is ranked 81st out of 149 single tier authorities in England in terms of average social deprivation, where '1' is the most deprived. Barrow is the most deprived area in Cumbria, ranked 29th out of 354 local authority areas, while Eden and South Lakeland are amongst the least deprived. Deprivation is largely concentrated in urban areas. Some parts of Barrow, Carlisle, Workington and Whitehaven are amongst the most deprived areas in England.

Between 1995 and 2005 the Cumbrian economy grew at a slower rate than other parts of the country, and the west of the county grew more slowly than the east. However, in recent years economic growth has been more similar to other parts of the country. The county is surviving the current recession better than many areas. Overall unemployment has increased at a slower rate in Cumbria over the last year than it has across the country.

The big challenges facing Cumbria are being addressed by the Cumbria Strategic Partnership. The partnership involves the main public bodies in the county including Cumbria County Council, the district councils, the primary care trust, the police, voluntary organisations, parish councils, community representatives and local employers working together to improve the quality of life for people.

How well do priorities for Cumbria express community needs and aspirations?

The Cumbria Strategic Partnership has developed a plan - the Cumbria Community Strategy 2008-2028 - which identifies the key challenges in improving the quality of life for people in Cumbria. The Plan sets out a vision under five themes covering community safety and cohesion, health and well-being, the economy and skills, access and communications, and the environment. The Partnership understands that county-wide averages mask differences between groups and areas, and is committed to removing inequalities. The Strategy is less clear about how these issues will be addressed, who is responsible for what, and where the money will come from. The Partnership knows it must develop clearer plans and set targets.

Public services are good at communicating with local communities - listening to their needs and giving them the information they need. For example, residents' views led to extra bus services being introduced around Barrow and better traffic management when the Barrow Waterfront project was built. Targeted local research and the Place Survey have given local services a clearer picture of inequalities. However, the way in which the police involve people in identifying local priorities needs to improve and become more consistent across the county.

Local services understand more about hate crime. They research well the needs of migrant workers and are working together to improve relationships with gypsy, Roma and traveller communities. A programme of focus group meetings with specific minority groups - such as those with a disability, lone parents and migrant workers has led to a better understanding of their views.

Cumbrian residents generally like where they live and have a strong sense of belonging to their immediate neighbourhood, according to results from the 2009 Place Survey. Older people in Cumbria are satisfied with both their homes and neighbourhood and feel they get the help they need to continue to live at home as long as they want to. Overall, more people in Cumbria feel that they can influence decisions in their local area than in other areas. However, this varies considerably across the county. Partners know they must do more to engage people and communities so that everyone has the opportunity to play a role in local decision-making.

Safe, strong and inclusive communities

Cumbria is an area with low levels of crime compared with similar places and nationally. Actual levels of total crime, serious acquisitive crime and vehicle crime are all very low in Cumbria compared to similar areas. Robberies are very low and although domestic burglaries have risen recently they are still low compared with similar places. Levels of drug offences and violent crime have fallen and are comparable to other similar places. There are good prospects for even lower crime levels.

Overall crime reduced from just over 35,000 incidents in 2007/08 to just over 30,000 incidents in 2008/09. Crime and anti-social behaviour levels have recently been falling at a faster rate than the national average. Overall crime in 2008/09 fell by just over 12 per cent compared with the national average of 5 per cent - this was the second best performance in the country. Overall anti-social behaviour fell by just over 10 per cent, again much better than the national average of 4 per cent.

There are clear arrangements for the emergency services, councils, the NHS, and other organisations to deal with emergencies. This work is coordinated through the Cumbria Resilience Forum and Business Continuity Group. Lessons have been learnt from previous experience, for example the flooding in Carlisle in 2005. Partners have strengthened their ability to deal with emergencies and support those affected. The revised arrangements and commitment of all organisations in Cumbria have contributed to a well coordinated and effective emergency response to the floods that hit the county in late November 2009. During 2010 we will be working with partners in Cumbria to understand the full impact of the floods and whether any further lessons may be learned.

The upward trend in reports of domestic violence is a positive development and reflects the public's confidence in reporting such incidents. The number of successful convictions for domestic violence is also on the increase, which should increase confidence further. However, there is an above average rate of repeat incidents compared with other places and the Cumbrian partners are not on track to meet the reductions they seek. This needs to improve.

The Cumbria Road Safety Partnership has helped to successfully reduce the number of annual fatalities on the county's roads from 55 in 2000 to 29 in 2008 and the number of serious injuries down from 493 to 276. The partnership is also having success with reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured involving young drivers. The partnership, which includes the police and the fire service, uses a combination of education, training, publicity and enforcement to bring this about. Cumbria's roads are now significantly safer than similar areas. Fewer people are being killed or injured in fire incidents. The Fire Service and partners are working to make people's homes safer, with almost 18,000 home safety checks in 2008/09 - a large increase on the 11,000 in the previous year.

The police and other partners in Cumbria are on track to achieve overall 2009/10 targets for reductions in serious violent and acquisitive crime. They are also likely to meet most other targets. New tactics are having an impact. For example, selected road closure, alcohol prohibition areas and use of dispersal powers have reduced violent crime associated with the night time economy in Botchergate, Carlisle. When asked, people said they now believe the area is safer and more enjoyable.

The police identify local priorities in a variety of ways, including street meetings, consultation with key community members and community meetings. However, the way in which priorities are decided is inconsistent across the county. Community meetings are not always well advertised or well attended. A recent inspection by HMIC on the 'Policing Pledge', found that Cumbria Constabulary does not meet an acceptable level and needs to do more.

Re-offending rates by young people in Cumbria are slightly worse than similar areas. The Council and Probation Service generally work well to keep re-offending by adults and young people under control. There are promising signs that re-offending rates will drop further.

People in Cumbria have a strong sense of belonging to their immediate neighbourhood. At the same time, they believe people from different backgrounds get along well together - more than in other parts of the country. With the exception of people's views on their own health, recent Place Survey results showed that residents in Cumbria generally regard the quality of life in their local area to be good or very good compared to other places.

Health and well being throughout life

Cumbria suffers from some major health inequalities, with areas like Barrow-in-Furness and Carlisle amongst the most unhealthy in England. Public services including the Primary Care Trust, the County Council and district councils know what the problems are, and have plans in place to tackle them. However, more needs to be done to continue to improve people's health.

People in Cumbria live an average 78.4 years, which is almost identical to the national average for England. However, within the county there are major differences in life expectancy. The Director of Public Health for Cumbria states people in Greystoke, near Penrith, live an average of 20 years longer than

those in Moss Bay, Workington. In some areas of the county there are also significant differences in life expectancy between men and women. For the period 2005-2007 the life expectancy for men in Barrow was 76 years compared to 79.4 years in South Lakeland. For women in Copeland it was 80.7 years compared to 83.1 in South Lakeland.

Barrow-in-Furness and Carlisle are among the places in England with the worst health and the greatest health inequalities. They are classified by the Department of Health as 'spearhead' areas - the 20 per cent worst areas in England for three or more of these following factors: male life expectancy at birth; female life expectancy at birth; cancer mortality rate in people under 75; cardiovascular disease mortality rate in people under 75; and, the index of multiple deprivation 2004 (local authority summary) average score, which shows differences in health across the country. As health for people is so poor in these areas additional funding has been made available to improve it.

The health needs of the different communities within the County are known. The Trust, the County Council and district councils have set up the Cumbria Intelligence Observatory which provides comprehensive statistical and geographic data on health needs. The specific health needs of gypsies and travellers in the county have been assessed, leading to development of new services. The Trust has made clear the health priorities it will tackle and these include tackling cancer, circulatory diseases and health inequalities.

Progress is being made in tackling the county's biggest killers - cancer and circulatory disease. Cumbria as a whole is reducing early deaths from these conditions. The targets to reduce deaths from cancer and circulatory disease by 20 per cent by 2010 should be met. There is also progress on supporting people to live longer in both Barrow and Carlisle with the targets likely to be met for men in both areas and for women in Carlisle but not Barrow.

However, smoking remains a big killer and progress on helping people stop has not been good enough in recent years. Plans and investment are in place to tackle these health problems. There needs to be further progress in reducing the number of people who smoke.

Older people in Cumbria receive good support to live independently. Assessments are completed and support for those in need put in place more quickly than the national average. Additional extra care housing schemes are on the way; better advocacy support is giving older people more of a say; and health services and the voluntary sector are planning to deliver services in partnership. The option of personal budgets - also known as self-directed support - is being promoted to those receiving care and take-up is growing. These developments are all helping older people live independently. Safeguarding of adults in Cumbria is improving.

The Cumbria Sector Skills Alliance, a partnership of social care employers in the private, voluntary and statutory sector has worked to promote, encourage and support people to work in social care. The Alliance received a national award from Skills for Care, demonstrating they are working well together to develop the county's social care workforce.

The County Council and the Trust are helping people in Cumbria to receive social care and nursing care support from a single trained person rather than from separate people. This offers a better service to the person requiring care

and a more effective form of service delivery. It helps to prevent avoidable admissions to hospital or residential care, facilitate early discharge from hospital and provide care at home for people who wish to remain at home.

Children and young people's health is generally in line with the rest of England. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well in most parts of the county, for example through school lunches and by encouraging young people to participate in sport and physical recreation - and more do so than the national average.

Schemes to reduce obesity have had an effect for children in the reception year at primary school, but obesity levels have increased at year six. Partners recognise that access to child and adolescent mental health services is not as good as in other parts of the country and needs to improve.

The safety of children and young people in Cumbria is good, with schools making a particularly strong contribution. The number of referrals to children's social care progressing to initial assessment and completed within the appropriate time scales is good in comparison with similar areas and the national average. Children placed in care by social services benefit from a stable environment and the safeguarding performance is similar to elsewhere. The number of children admitted to hospital is in line with the rest of the country and this remains a target for reduction.

More work is needed to reduce teenage pregnancies. Overall rates of teenage conceptions have reduced slightly in recent years and are similar to the national average. But in a small number of localities the teenage conception rate is still too high.

Partners and health services providers in Cumbria are aware of the issues and have plans in place to address them. We will look carefully in 2010 at whether the plans of health service providers and partners are delivering the required health improvements and quality of services in Cumbria.

A sustainable and prosperous economy



Green flag: Tackling Worklessness in Barrow in Furness

Local partners have succeeded in cutting the number of people in Barrow-in-Furness who spend a long time out of work.

Until recently, the long term unemployment rate had been falling in Cumbria, but not so well in Barrow. In July 2007, nearly 13 per cent of the unemployed population in Barrow had been out of work for over 12 months. By July 2009, this had reduced to 7.5 per cent - lower than that for Cumbria as a whole and well below the national average of 9.1 per cent.

The proportion of people claiming incapacity benefits in Barrow fell from 12.4 per cent in August 2007 to 11.6 per cent in February 2009 (370 fewer people). This is still high compared to the national rate of seven per cent, but the fall in Barrow of 0.8 per cent compares to a fall of just 0.1 per cent for the country

as a whole. The actions taken in Barrow are having a bigger impact than elsewhere.

Barrow has suffered high levels of deprivation through the loss of jobs in the ship building industry over recent decades. It is therefore very encouraging that good partnership working between public bodies is showing signs of successfully diversifying the economy and raising the expectations of local people to build a more sustainable future.

Local services including Job Centre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, Cumbria Colleges, the Primary Care Trust, Barrow Borough Council, Furness Enterprises and Cumbria County Council make better use of their resources by planning and working together. They have a deep understanding of worklessness issues in Barrow and make good use of national studies and independent research to help them do what works best locally. The partners have successfully attracted national funding, including the Working Neighbourhoods Fund, to help them do this. They seek to act quickly to get individuals back in work, should they become unemployed.

Their successful approach has three main strands to it. The infrastructure of the area has been improved - better roads, new business parks and environmental improvements. Secondly, they have helped create new jobs by giving incentives to businesses to locate in Barrow, encouraging entrepreneurship amongst local people and providing grants to help businesses grow. Thirdly, the partners provide personalised help to local people to help them get a job. This includes local people who are claiming incapacity benefit as well as those classified as unemployed. Good use is made of the four "Work Shops" that are based in local communities in Barrow. The help provided seeks to match people to specific jobs - improving skills, giving them confidence, and addressing whatever barrier may be preventing each individual from taking up work.

A sustainable and prosperous economy

Cumbria is surviving the recession better than many areas. The prospects for improvements in the economy are enhanced by some ambitious regeneration plans, an effective approach to tackling worklessness and better school results. A key factor holding back these otherwise good prospects is the general shortage of decent, affordable homes.

Overall unemployment has gone up at a slower rate in Cumbria over the last year than the national rate. Good partnership working between public bodies has reduced the number of long term unemployed and incapacity benefit claimants, particularly in Barrow-in-Furness which has suffered high levels of deprivation through loss of jobs in the ship building industry. Barrow is now showing signs of successfully diversifying its economy. However, more new jobs are still needed, particularly for young people and particularly in Barrow, where a high proportion of unemployed people are under the age of 24. The various services that are successfully reducing worklessness in Barrow are seeking to review and learn from their work.

Between 1995 and 2005 the Cumbrian economy grew more slowly than other parts of the country, and the west of the county grew more slowly than the east. However, in recent years, growth has been more similar to other parts

of the UK.

Private and public sector partners have a joint vision to transform the economy through the Energy Coast Master Plan. This is an ambitious, nationally significant plan to develop a range of sustainable energy sources in Cumbria, including new nuclear power stations - and also to regenerate the western part of Cumbria. The area is now positioning itself as a leader in the maritime, engineering, and nuclear industries. It also plans to boost employment by attracting greater numbers of visitors to the Lake District National Park, benefiting the east of the county and making even better use of this natural asset.

The regeneration of the Port of Workington is evidence of the Plan taking shape. Recent public investment in the port is now paying off - local businesses involved in forestry and packaging are now using the port to import goods. Specific investments in the port were key to E.ON Energy Limited setting up a new operation and maintenance base in the harbour for their off shore wind farm development. Another example is the new ENERGUS Campus just outside Workington. This houses the National Skills Academy for Nuclear and a Learning Gateway for the University of Cumbria. The Academy will support the nuclear sector to develop a skilled workforce and meet the future demands of the industry.

The Master Plan now requires prioritisation to focus on some key projects and deliver more tangible outcomes for local people. Continued engagement with the community will also be crucial to ensure they help shape the plans and become the strongest advocates for the transformation required.

Cumbria's workforce is generally better qualified than average. A higher number of young people are in education, employment or training than the national average. However, variable skill levels - for example, lower levels in more deprived areas of West Cumbria and Barrow - will be a barrier to further diversifying the economy.

Most schools in Cumbria are giving children a good education and school results have improved significantly. Although children at Early Years Foundation Stage do not achieve as well as other areas, the gap is narrowing. By Key Stage 2 all children do as well as their peers in similar authorities and nationally. The number of students gaining five or more GCSE A* - C including English and Maths has risen significantly and is in line with the national average. However, only 51 per cent of secondary schools (19 out of 37) are rated 'good' or better and too many are only 'satisfactory'. The Council and its partners recognise that further improvements are needed at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

Pupils in Cumbria with special educational needs do as well as elsewhere, but some children from minority groups do not perform as well as in similar areas. Children who are looked after are well supported and they do well at school. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities also do well.

After leaving school, young people in Cumbria tend to be more successful in moving on to employment, further education or training, and gaining qualifications, than those in other places. The average level of qualifications at age 19 is good and in line with similar places. Local services provide excellent support to help young people in care find accommodation and employment

when they leave school. However, there are wider inequalities in achievement at Level 3 ('A' level or equivalent) than similar areas and nationally and fewer young people from low income backgrounds progress to higher education.

There is a general shortage of decent, affordable homes in Cumbria. There is a high demand, from people on low incomes and with different housing and support needs, particularly in the National Park and adjacent rural areas. This is despite the requirement that all new developments with more than ten properties in Eden and more than six in South Lakeland must include 50 per cent affordable housing.

Local housing strategies generally reflect community needs and wishes. The provision of affordable housing is a priority for all councils in Cumbria. Housing sector partners in Cumbria plan to carry out new surveys of existing housing and of people's housing needs in 2011 to give a complete picture across the whole county.

Investment will improve poor quality social housing in parts of Allerdale, Copeland and Barrow. However, the condition of private sector housing in some areas is still poor, with homes often difficult to heat, leading to fuel poverty in low income households.

District councils have developed a county wide approach to tackling homelessness and improving housing services. They are also having some success in refurbishing empty homes and bringing them back into use. However, most districts are some way off meeting the government target to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation and the situation is getting worse in Barrow and Allerdale.

In 2010 we will want to see how partners in Cumbria are starting to better meet the housing needs of residents in terms of affordability, how the condition of private sector housing is improving and how the use of temporary accommodation is being reduced.

Local public services in Cumbria cost around £1.9 billion a year to run. Public sector organisations in Cumbria are generally doing a good job but need to be more efficient and effective in spending this budget.

The cost of providing services per person is generally high compared to other similar areas - including other large rural areas. The partners in Cumbria have an advantage over some other areas in that they have already got a good picture of where all the public money goes. However, they need an overall plan to jointly influence how this money is spent, improve services and reduce costs.

Councils have saved money in some ways, including joining together to buy goods and services. The County Council has made significant savings through its private sector partnerships. In recent years, the Councils have met their efficiency targets, but in the last year this only amounted to saving around £10m. With public services budgets predicted to be substantially reduced, a wholly different and much more radical approach is going to be needed to achieve major efficiencies in how public services are run in Cumbria in the future.

We will be looking carefully at whether an overall plan to jointly improve services and reduce costs is taking shape in 2010.

Effective connections between people and places

Many people in Cumbria find it difficult to access job opportunities and services compared with people in other areas. This is mainly due to the large, sparsely populated nature of the county and the mountains and lakes that create natural barriers to communication. In many cases it is too costly to provide the same infrastructure and transport facilities that more urban communities enjoy. People who are less physically mobile, poor or live in the most remote communities suffer most. Partners in Cumbria are fully aware of these challenges. They have set out a vision to improve sustainable transport connections, provide community and public transport which is responsive to demand and make public services more accessible.

Principal trunk roads such as the A66 from Penrith to Workington and the A590 from the M6 to Barrow in Furness have been improved to create safer and quicker traffic flows. Roads are not generally congested in the county, which means businesses can predict journey times. Rail services serving Carlisle and Kendal are benefiting from a faster, more reliable service to other parts of the country. The port of Workington has been redeveloped - increasing usage and allowing a rail interchange so imports can be transported from the port by rail not road. Further planned investment includes the Carlisle Northern Relief Road, to ease traffic flow in Carlisle and help connect the economy of West Cumbria with the national motorway network.

A comprehensive commercial bus service to serve the needs of the rural population is not viable throughout Cumbria. A public subsidy keeps some rural bus services running. The success of the 'Rural Wheels' service means that 99 per cent of residents can now access a town by public transport within 30 minutes, up from 86 per cent in 2006/07. Rural Wheels is a network of taxis and minibuses that provides public transport in remote areas of the County that the commercial bus companies cannot provide. The service particularly benefits older people and people with disabilities - helping them to continue living independently in their own home. Four out of ten users are over 80 years of age. Passenger numbers have grown from 3,200 in 2004/05 to more than 12,000 in 2008/09. Users are generally very satisfied with the service, particularly with its door to door nature.

Specific projects have helped to reduce peak time traffic congestion in the county and reduce CO2 emissions. These include an increase in the number of children walking to school from 39 per cent to 54 per cent. There are also plans to reduce the carbon and landscape impact of visitors in the National Park. This will include improving the cycle route between Bowness and Ambleside and establishing a waterbus as an alternative form of transport.

Allerdale and Eden Councils are the only Councils with top rated web sites. It is important in a large rural area with some isolated communities that best use is made of council websites so people can access information and services and

reduce their need to travel.

The County Council and district councils are introducing 28 'Local Links' centres across the county - to serve towns and rural areas and give people better 'across the counter access' to local services. The sites reflect existing road networks and people's existing travel patterns. Eight Local Links centres have been introduced so far, with good feedback from residents. A further 20 are planned to cover the whole county in the next two years.

Overall, access to individual services in Cumbria is reasonable given the challenge presented by its largely rural and spread out communities. However, considerable damage to infrastructure was caused by the extraordinary floods in late November 2009. Six bridges were washed away including Workington's Northside bridge. Cumbria County Council closed 14 road bridges including the Calva bridge, the last direct road link between north and south Workington, and two pedestrian ones. A review is now underway to determine the overall level of damage across the county.

To further improve access to services local public bodies know they will need to work together to make best use of their budgets, co-ordinate plans and set clear priorities.

World class environmental quality

Cumbria is generally well kept, with clean streets, minimal amounts of graffiti, high levels of recycling and a reliable waste collection service. There are plans to further reduce waste going to landfill and the prospects for this to happen are good.

The various public, private sector and community partners have even greater ambitions for a much more sustainable environment with very low levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and local production of their energy needs. Currently CO₂ emission levels across the County are high and reducing them presents a big challenge. The prospects for this to happen are dependent on all partners pulling together, for priority actions to be agreed and for appropriate investment in new technologies to be made.

Much of Cumbria is a beautiful place, where residents, visitors and businesses all benefit from local access to the mountain fells, the lakes and rural villages associated with the Lake District National Park. There are also miles of rugged coastline. The villages, market towns, city of Carlisle and more industrial towns of Barrow and Workington are all generally well kept, with low levels of litter and graffiti. This enhances the natural environment and supports tourism, which is so important to the County.

Local authorities in Cumbria are successfully helping residents to reduce the amount of waste produced. Recycling levels are high at around 44 per cent and the amount of waste sent to landfill has reduced to 61 per cent; meeting the target for March 2009. The Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership has introduced a range of reuse, recycle and reduce initiatives, pooling financial and staff resources going into the community to encourage people to be more environmentally aware. Two mechanical and biological waste treatment plants are planned to further reduce landfill in time to achieve government

targets for 2020.

The latest available data shows that CO2 emission levels for Cumbria are high compared with other places - both in terms of the total amounts, per household and per person. The emission levels per person are falling which is positive but, so far, this cannot be attributed to any specific action of local public services.

A good Climate Change Action Plan has been developed and is supported by many partners in Cumbria. Successful implementation will require much more emphasis than is currently given in Cumbria to using the planning system to require minimum or zero CO2 emissions in new developments. There are particular commitments to reduce CO2 emissions from Local Authority operations but detailed plans about how this will be achieved are still in development. Success will also be dependent on partners agreeing on where they intend to focus their efforts.

Partners want Cumbria to be a major producer of renewable energy types including wind, biomass, solar, wave and landfill gas and to produce 98 per cent of the area's own energy needs by 2020. This is a major long-term project and much work is still needed.

Partners work together to encourage sustainable lifestyles and communities through initiatives like the County Council's strategy of using its buying power to source food that is locally grown, reared or manufactured. This has saved £3.5m and 150,000 food miles. However, it is not clear whether all partners' initiatives are working. For example, some 13,000 workplace travel plans are in place, a number of schools have become eco-schools and some have encouraged more students to cycle to school but the extent of CO2 emissions reducing as a result is not yet clear.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

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