

Budget Consultation 2024/25



...let us know what
you think...



Budget Consultation

2024/25

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Alternative formats: If you require any of the consultation material in an alternative format or language, please contact communications@peterborough.gov.uk

Foreword from the Leader of the Council

Peterborough is a city I care passionately about – it's the place I have called home for most of my life and raised my family.

So, I was humbled and honoured to be voted in as Leader of the Council at the Full Council meeting on 1 November.

With a new administration, I want to bring fresh challenge and perspective to the running of the council and work closely with officers to achieve the aims set out in our Corporate Strategy, thereby improving life in Peterborough for all and building a solid foundation for the city's future success.

Our relationship with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority is vitally important for Peterborough as it provides both expertise and funding to help deliver many of our priorities. I have already spent considerable time with Mayor Dr Nik Johnson and his team, and together we are establishing a new, more positive and more productive relationship. More detail about our relationship with the combined authority, and why it matters so much, is described later in this document.

In the past year we've continued to face unprecedented financial pressures. As a result, the budget challenge that we need to meet in 2024/25 has increased and now stands at £6.2m.

Challenges brought about by the pandemic, rising energy, fuel and food prices, and inflationary increases are making it difficult for the council to balance its budget, just as it is making it difficult for individuals and households to balance theirs.

Demand for our services has continued to rise and we've seen particular spikes in the need for temporary accommodation and in the number and complexity of cases open to Children's and Adult Services.

Peterborough is not alone in these challenges. Many other councils are experiencing similar pressures, with some issuing warnings that they will have to pause all but essential spending.

In Peterborough the situation is very different – we will meet the challenge and will continue to invest in the services that you need to create a better city for all those who live, work and spend time here. However, in doing so there will be some difficult decisions that we need to make along the way.

To help us to understand which services you value the most, we once again asked you to complete our Budget Simulator Challenge. Thank you to everyone who took part and shared their opinions. Feedback is included on page 12 of this document and you will see it referenced throughout.

Longer term, I want to work with officers to find a solution to the situation that we find ourselves in year after year, which is needing to cut spending to be able to balance our budget. We will achieve this by transforming our services, making sure those services we provide meet demand with the budget we have available. The council is making strides forward in this area and my cabinet colleagues and I will be focusing our efforts on this too.

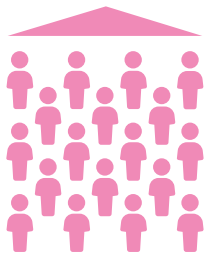
So please, take the time to tell us what you think. Your feedback will help inform the decisions we make when councillors set the budget on 21 February 2024. Your responses are highly valued, and I'd like to sincerely thank you for playing your part.

Councillor Mohammed Farooq
Leader of Peterborough City Council

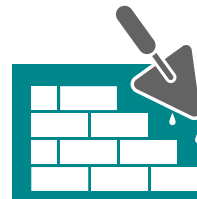


Peterborough's facts and figures

Provisions have been made for a further
19,440 new homes BY 2036



We're growing, we have a population of over 215,000
That's an increase of over
30,000 people
in the past 10 years



765 homes
have been built in the
past 12 months

The local economy
GREW BY 29%
between 2015 and 2021



In 2023
there were
OVER 9,600
BUSINESSES
IN PETERBOROUGH



Over the past
10 years, there
has been a

26%

increase in children under 15 years



PETERBOROUGH
IS AMONG ONE OF
THE TOP 15 CITIES
for the highest number
of business start-ups



Peterborough is home to
215,700 residents

The largest proportion of homes fall
into Bands A and B category (%).



The past financial year
has seen a **14% increase**
in the number of
people of working age

supported by the council with
long-term care and support needs



As a unitary authority, we have
nearly 1,900 statutory duties
and **over 130 service areas**
spread across the council



We are **one of the**
top 10 cities for
the number of new
business start-ups



Peterborough has a diverse and
robust economy and **is one of the**
fastest growing cities in the UK

More content



Our priorities

In October 2022, city council members signed off a new Corporate Strategy.

Sustainable Future City Council sets out how we will deliver long-term improvements and meet the changing needs of residents in the next three years. It is also the council's response to the geo-political, macro and socio-economic challenges being faced in the UK and locally in Peterborough.

Our City Priorities sets out the proposed direction of travel for the council so that we can deliver our long-term vision for the region and our four priority outcomes. It is a positive vision for the city and one which will capitalise on the huge opportunities the city presents to us.

- **The Economy and Growth** - maximising economic growth and prosperity for Peterborough as a city of opportunity in an inclusive and environmentally sustainable way, together with our partners and communities.
- **Our Places and Communities** - creating healthy and safe environments where people want to live, work, visit and play, enabled by effective community engagement and strong partnerships.
- **Prevention, Independence and Resilience** - help and support our residents early on in their lives and prevent them from slipping into crisis.
- **Supported by a Sustainable Future City Council** - adjust how we work, serve and enable, informed by strong data and insight capability and led by a culture of strong leadership.



Through delivering these priorities, our aim is to improve life in Peterborough and build a solid foundation for the city's future success.

The starting point is the challenge of finding significant savings over the coming years and to achieve financial sustainability – then, we can invest in our city's future.

We will do this by delivering a new type of council, which will enable us to manage demand, help and support people before they reach crisis point, while finding new ways to tackle inequality in our communities by maximising inclusive, sustainable economic growth that benefits everyone.

When setting our budget, we will do so with our priorities in mind.

Our achievements

In the past year we have worked hard to deliver services for everyone in Peterborough against a very challenging backdrop.



Take a look at what we did...



Services for you

We collected **7.1m wheelie bins** and recycled or composted **around 41 per cent of the city's waste** – or 18,000 tonnes.



We supported **52 people a month with short-term reablement** to recover from a hospital stay or illness.



We supported over **16,000 vulnerable residents** who are struggling due to the cost-of-living crisis, via support schemes such as our Household Support Fund and network of hubs.



Going green

We planted **4,460 trees** across Peterborough.



Supporting the next generation

We supported 63 primary schools, 15 secondary schools, eight special schools and three further education colleges to **provide education for 41,546 children and young people.**



Prioritising health and wellbeing

We provided **supermarket vouchers** for children who receive free school meals.



We handled **1,115 nuisance complaints** about noise, odour and light.



We funded **approximately 10,000 visits** to children and families by health visitors.



Roads and transport

We repaired **2,877 potholes**, cleansed **15,190 gullies** and carried out **highways works on 1,366 different roads**, footpaths and cyclepaths.



We maintained **24,099 streetlights**, **366** like bridges, traffic signs and signals, bollards and drainage gullies.



Backing business

We handled **766 cases to improve food safety** and food standards in the city.



We also

✓ Handed out **£6m in retail, hospitality and leisure relief** so far this year to support businesses

✓ More than **9,300 households** have benefited from **additional support** with their council tax bills in 2023/24

✓ **532 households** received a **£400 Energy Bill Support Scheme payment** and a further 350 received a **£200 Alternative Fuel Payment**

Financial position

When the council set its budget in February 2023, gaps of £0.5m in 2024/25 and £1.1m in 2025/26 were predicted.

The size of these budget gaps has gradually increased throughout the year because of a number of challenges which are largely outside of our control. It is a similar story for councils nationally.

One of the biggest pressures is the demand for services in Adult Social Care and Child Protection and Family Support Services which remains very high.

In Children's Social Care, we are spending in the region of an additional £4m on care for young people with very complex needs. The number of children under a child protection plan has increased from around 101 in November last year to around 242 in November 2023. The number of children in care is also rising, from 380 in January to 414 as of September 2023.

In Adult Social Care, there has been a 59 per cent increase in accommodated care (residential and nursing care homes) and a 46 per cent increase in community care (such as home care or day care) since 2020.

The number of individuals and families requiring support with housing, particularly temporary accommodation, has also remained very high.

Added to this, we continue to face high rates of inflation, which means the cost of delivering services remains high. Like many households and businesses, the council faces increased energy costs and rising costs of pay for our own staff and those who deliver services on our behalf such as care workers.

At the same time, the funding we receive from Government and from council tax has not kept pace with the increasing demand for the services we provide.

As a result, councils nationally are facing increasing pressure on their budgets and a growing number have resorted to issuing section 114 notices, which limit spend on all but essential services. Others are predicting budget gaps running into tens of millions.

That's not the case in Peterborough thanks to the hard work of officers and members over the past two years. However, huge challenges remain and we must once again make savings to deliver a balanced budget in 2024/25. We must also continue our focus on the transformation of services to achieve financial sustainability in the long-term.



The challenge from 2024/25

The increase in our forecasted budget gap has not taken us by surprise, and we always knew our financial position could become more challenging. We have been planning for it and developing strategies as early as possible to meet the very steep challenge.



We also know that the way to achieve financial sustainability – being able to provide the services our residents need with the budget we have available – is by changing the way we provide services.

We have set up workshops to look at the key pressures which are challenging our budget the most and our transformation plans focus on these areas. Our Independent Improvement Panel has highlighted the importance of our transformation work in its latest report, citing it as a critical next step on our improvement journey.

Portfolio boards have been established, linked to the four areas of our Corporate Strategy, and they are leading on the transformation of services. This works includes the separation of services which have previously been jointly run with Cambridgeshire County Council where it is right to do so, for example our fostering service.

We are also looking at where we can better manage demand, in housing and Children’s Services in particular. We are also reviewing all the council’s land and buildings and selling those which are no longer needed. These efforts should help to reduce the pressure in future years.

In the past year we have continued to work closely with councillors as part of our cross-party Financial Sustainability Working Group, to develop budget saving ideas and explore ways to support the council to achieve financial sustainability.

Since December 2021, we have also been working with our Independent Improvement and Panel, who are experts in specific fields of local government to challenge, scrutinise and advise on our budget proposals to ensure they are robust and provide best value.

Our Chief Executive and his senior leadership team have been working closely with our cabinet and all members to identify ways that we can make savings and transform service delivery. This includes:

- Continuing to look for ways to reduce spend and get a better deal from those organisations we rely on to provide services, including our supply chain.
- Continuing to transform the way we deliver services, doing things differently in a way that improves outcomes and doing more for less or have somebody else doing it cheaper. We are bringing back in-house service delivery where it is in the best interests of the council to do so.

- By reducing our capital programme and selling our surplus land and buildings we have reduced our cost of borrowing.
- Stopping 'non vital' services or charging more - as part of this we must consider our statutory obligations to those who need our help and support the most.
- Reviewing the council's use of agency and interim staff and progressing to permanent recruitment where necessary more quickly.

As this document outlines, we have made significant progress with plans in place to almost meet our budget gap, which will allow us to offset inflationary pressures, manage demand, continue to grow and develop the city and support those residents who need our help the most.

That said, the financial climate nationally is so unstable that we must continue our focus and indeed some of the plans we are outlining here may change in the coming weeks and months, prior to us setting the budget in February.

Our budget principles:

Last year we developed a set of budget principles which underpin the council's approach to budget decisions and seek to limit the impact of budget cuts on the city's most vulnerable residents. We still believe these budget principles are relevant and vital, to ensure a financially sustainable future for the council and our residents. Our principles:

- **We'll continue our approach to strong financial management by managing budgets carefully,** with control on expenditure ensuring the best possible services and value for money for the taxpayer.
- **We'll be responsible and ambitious and strive to become a financially sustainable council** by developing a robust three-year Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- **We'll endeavour to improve the council's financial health and resilience** by maintaining the appropriate levels of reserves and reducing our borrowing where appropriate.



To achieve this we will:

- ✓ Increase council tax in line with the maximum referendum limit to ensure the council is best placed to continue providing the same range and quality of services.
- ✓ Continue to find alternative ways of providing services more efficiently and effectively by working jointly with partner organisations such as the health sector, the voluntary sector, local businesses, and other local authorities.
- ✓ Take every opportunity to maximise technology, digitalisation and transform working practises to make the council more efficient.
- ✓ Seek to generate additional income by reviewing our sales, fees, and charges, including those for discretionary services.
- ✓ Where possible, protect services that support the city's most vulnerable, including adults and children's social care services. However, some of our current services may stop; many will have to be delivered differently or reduced.
- ✓ Treat our staff with respect. A reduced budget will likely mean the size and composition of our workforce will change. We'll do all we can to retain staff through redeployment and retraining, to minimise compulsory redundancies.
- ✓ Seek to maximise income opportunities from commercial services and investments.
- ✓ Maintain a tight grip on our capital expenditure, by maximising grant income and prioritising schemes in line with our capital strategy principles- this will contribute towards reducing the council's total borrowing.
- ✓ Maximise the use and return on our assets (land and buildings). Where assets are no longer generating a return, or are surplus to requirements, we will dispose of these ensuring best value is achieved.
- ✓ Scrutinise all requests for investment to ensure we maximise the return (financial benefits) and protect our reserves balance.
- ✓ Conduct an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for our budget proposals.
- ✓ Develop a process which ensures that as part of the council's overarching budget setting process, wherever possible, spending and investment plans are focussed on enabling the council to better achieve its corporate objective of achieving net zero carbon by 2030. We will also undertake Carbon Impact Assessments (CIA) for all major budget proposals.
- ✓ Conduct consultations on the tough choices we must make and be transparent with any stakeholder groups, groups of service users or staff who may be affected by any cut, reduction, or significant change in service provision, and explore with them other ways to provide the service.



Underpinning all of the above we will be **open and honest** about our financial position with our residents, businesses, and service users.

Setting Council Tax

The Government has traditionally set a maximum limit for council tax increases that can be introduced without holding a referendum. Last year this limit was 4.99 per cent, which can be broken down into a 2.99 per cent for general council tax and 2 per cent for the Adult Social Care Precept.

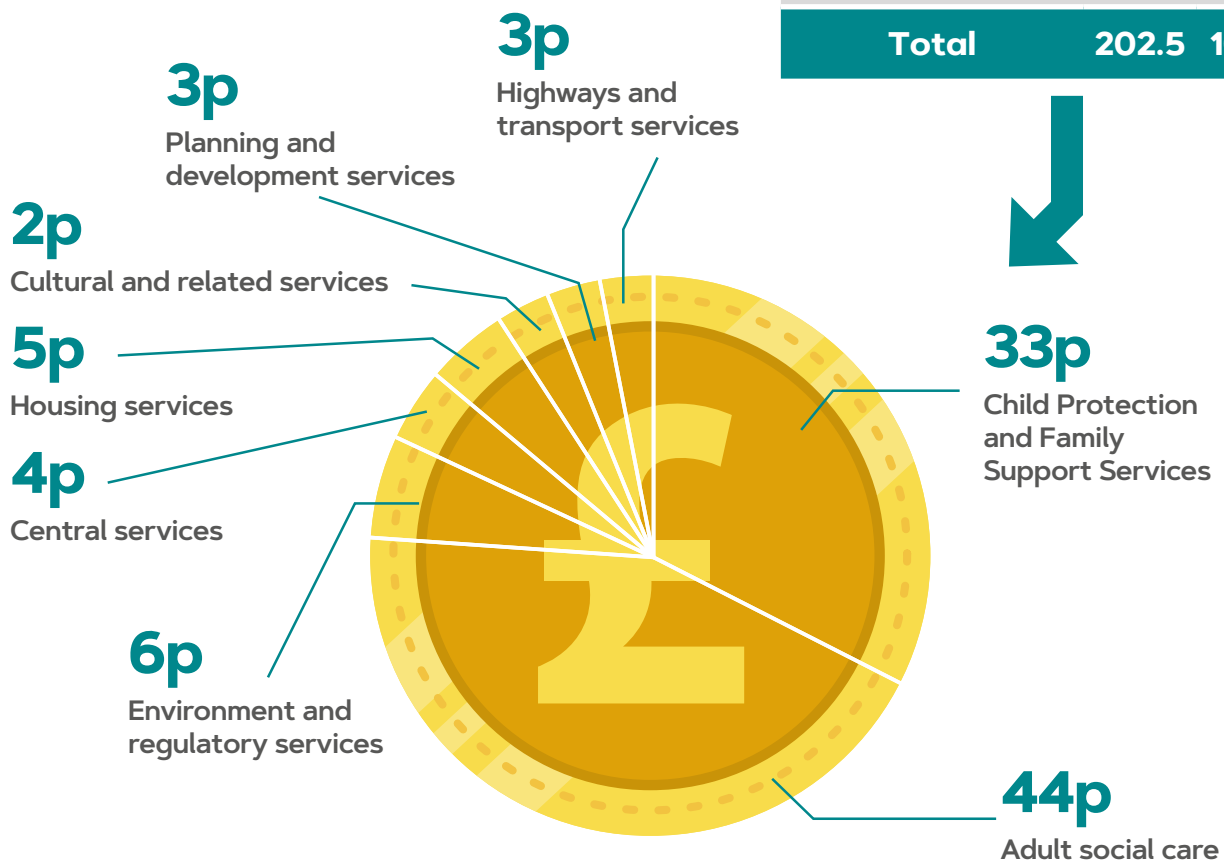
The Government issued a Local Government Policy Statement last December, which sets out policy for both 2023/24 and 2024/25. This outlined that councils would be able to increase council tax up to 2.99 per cent, in addition to a 2 per cent Adult Social Care precept, without holding a referendum. This would mean a maximum increase of 4.99 per cent.

In line with our Budget Principles, we have agreed to increase council tax in line with the maximum referendum limit to ensure the council is best placed to continue providing the same range and quality of services.

An increase of 4.99 per cent would add £79.36 per year (or £1.52 per week) to the city council element of the bill for a typical band D property and take the total city council element of council tax to £1,666.28 (or £32.04 per week).

Such an increase would raise £4.9m per year towards the council's rising costs.

2023/24		
	£m	%
Council Tax	95.4	47%
Business Rates	69.9	35%
Revenue Support Grant	12.1	6%
Other Grants	25.1	12%
Total	202.5	100%



This diagram shows how every pound of our funding is spent, with council tax being our biggest source of funding.

Budget simulator feedback

On 19 September, we launched a budget simulator to give residents the opportunity to learn more about the breadth of services we provide and to have a say on where they think we should be focusing our spending and making savings.

The simulator closed on Tuesday 31 October and in total 342 people completed it. That's an 83 per cent increase on the 187 people who completed the simulator last year.

The results show that on average people wanted to broadly protect, with reductions of 2.1 per cent or less, the following service areas:



On average, there were large reductions proposed, of 7.5 per cent or more, for:




Community activities and growing the city do not appear to be as important to the people that completed the survey. Similarly, customer services and back-office functions are not as important, perhaps as these are not things the residents experience or see the value of in the services they receive as they are not visible.

Interestingly, people wanted to, on average, increase spend on Public Health but that may have been skewed as there was not an option to reduce it as this funding is ringfenced by Government and cannot be spent on anything else.

On average people wanted to increase council tax by 2.42 per cent. This was on top of the 4.99 per cent increase that was approved by members at the Full Council meeting in March 2023 and would require a referendum with the public to implement.



 We have used the responses to the simulator in developing this document

Place Services

Our role is to create a place where everyone has opportunities to learn, work, relax, and thrive, whilst living in warm, safe and affordable housing in communities which are connected, resilient, and sustainable.

Housing and Communities

Delivering services that help make communities safer and stronger is something which we know matters to people and has a direct impact on the quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors to Peterborough.

We know that many people are finding it hard to make ends meet, and we know there are groups of people who need our support more than ever. For example, people who are at risk of becoming homeless, and those who are victims of domestic abuse or other crimes. We are so grateful to our many voluntary, community and faith sector partners, without whom the level of practical help and support we'd be able to offer our residents would be far less significant.

This year, our pilot project to bring together key public and advice services into a single location has delivered some encouraging results, including increasing household income for those who accessed its services by an average of £1,000 per household. We plan to continue with this approach to make it easier for people who need help to get to it quickly and easily by expanding the pilot into other areas of Peterborough.

Requests for help from people in housing crisis are continuing to rise. Last year we predicted a 25 per cent increase in the number of people coming to us at risk of becoming homeless, and this has indeed been the case this year. However, we have worked hard to find ways to prevent homelessness and reduce the need for people to sleep rough on our streets, and, despite demand for help increasing, we are making good progress.

In the coming year we will further increase our efforts to work with residents who are in housing difficulty at the earliest possible opportunity, to prevent them becoming homeless in the first place. Where this is not possible and there are no other options, we will continue to provide accommodation for those who are homeless.

We will need to reduce the funding we provide to some of our partner organisations who provide housing related support to people in temporary accommodation or who are unable to secure a tenancy of their own. There are many different ways to make sure everyone gets the support they need, and we will work with other council services, such as Adult and Children's Services, as well as our voluntary sector partners, to make sure that support is provided.

In the coming year we will continue to focus our efforts on the city centre, making sure it is a place which is vibrant and where people feel and are safe. We will increase our workforce in the city centre to make sure that the issues that matter to people, such as anti-social behaviour, street drinking, littering, and graffiti are tackled.

We will also increase the number of stalls in the new city market and deliver a programme of pop-up markets and other events on Cathedral Square and elsewhere in the city centre. We will need to increase some of our parking charges although we will make sure they remain competitive and affordable.

Our leisure, libraries and heritage services – such as the Museum and Flag Fen – will continue to be delivered by Peterborough Ltd, a council wholly-owned company. We need to reduce the costs associated with delivering some of these services and will work with our operator to increase the commercial success of our leisure services to make sure they do not require any council funding. We will also work with our partners to review our libraries and heritage services to make sure they are impactful and cost-effective. This might include, for example, placing more public services in our library buildings.

Our regulatory services – trading standards, licensing, and environmental health – ensure the safety of our residents and provide advice and support to businesses. We will make small changes to the ways in which these services operate to make savings as well as generate more income. We also deliver services to a neighbouring council for which they pay a contract fee. That fee hasn't been reviewed for some time and no longer represents best value for the council. We will therefore negotiate to increase the fee to cover the full cost of providing those services.

Growth and Regeneration

Our growth and regeneration teams are responsible for growing our city in ways that create opportunities for everyone – existing as well as new residents – to thrive and prosper.

In 2023, the council invested £1m in creating a growth and regeneration Service, and already we are bringing forward development plans for a number of sites across our city that have been left behind, including the former TK Maxx building on Bridge Street, the Wellington Street and Dickens Street car parks, and the area known as Middleholme adjacent to the river close to the city centre.

The council also benefits from working closely alongside the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, and together we have already brought the new ARU Peterborough University to the city with its third building on campus due to open for students next September. We're also working together to bring forward plans for the next phase of growth for the university so we can make Peterborough a place of choice for students in the UK.

We are progressing at pace with the transformation of our Station Quarter, having secured £48m of Government funding via the combined authority, and we are working hard to bring forward plans to regenerate the North Westgate area.

We have already transformed our planning service, and, because of increased growth and a national increase in the fees that councils will need to charge developers, we predict an increase in fee income which will be used to make sure the pace of our growth and regeneration activity can continue. We will also transform our building control service so it becomes the service of choice for developers. This will generate more fee income which can be used to support the increased demand we will face.

We will be making more effort to attract new employers into Peterborough, including those who can offer better paid and permanent employment opportunities. To help those employers see that Peterborough is a good place to invest, we will be refocusing our adult skills service, delivered by City College Peterborough and mainly funded via the combined authority, so that it helps people with few or no formal qualifications or work experience to gain employment. We will do this alongside our partners at Peterborough College and ARU Peterborough.

We will continue to develop our new Local Plan, which will set out our strategy and policies to deliver growth, alongside our new Housing Strategy. The Housing Strategy will set out our plans to increase housing in the city to help address the homelessness challenges we face as well as establish new communities and higher value homes for those that want them.



Infrastructure and Climate

Providing the right infrastructure is crucial as the city grows, including a good network of roads, footways, and cycleways. We have benefited significantly already from funding made available to us by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority - for example, the new Nene footbridge which will link into the proposed extension of the Green Wheel along Thorpe Wood, improvements to junction 15 of Nene Parkway, and junction 3 of Fletton Parkway.

As the city continues to grow and evolve, we anticipate an even stronger relationship with the combined authority, particularly in relation to helping shape our public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure. We already have a shared commitment to bid for government funding for a flyover at the Wittering junction of the A1 to improve safety, as well as funding towards relocating the bus depot from its current site in Millfield to a fit for purpose site capable of enabling a fully electrified bus fleet.

We maintain and develop the highway network which includes over 930km of roads, 24,000 streetlights, 366 structures (like bridges) as well as footways, cycle paths, traffic signs and signals, bollards, and drainage gullies. This includes carrying out emergency work to repair potholes, broken paving, streetlights, and cleaning gullies to keep roads draining well. Over the winter months, we grit main routes to ensure people can get around safely.



We promote cycling and walking and deal with issues such as speeding and parking problems where needed.

Our highways services are provided by Milestone, and we will continue to make sure that contract, as well as our Highways and Transport service overall, delivers value for money for our residents.

We recycle 44 per cent or 32,800 tonnes of the total waste collected through the kerbside collections and Household Recycling Centre. We maintain and clean over 1,685km of highway, pathways, cycleways, and pedestrianised areas and respond to around 12,000 reports of flytipping and collect in excess of 300 tonnes of litter each year from street bins.

The costs to treat the waste that is collected have increased, largely because of inflation, and so we will need to spend more money to make sure those services can continue. This includes the costs to treat recycled materials, general waste, food waste, and the costs to deliver our Household Recycling Centre. We will continue to drive up our recycling rates, which is good for our climate but also economically good for the council as treating recycled waste is far cheaper than treating general waste. We will also review our membership of a countywide waste partnership, exploring opportunities to reshape our involvement to ensure any involvement we have drives real value for Peterborough.

The council has also committed to become a net zero authority by 2030. Reducing our carbon emissions will bring a number of vital benefits, including reducing our costs. We are also committed to supporting the city to become net zero, which will help to reduce fuel poverty, improve physical and mental health, improve air quality, stimulate our economy, and provide jobs to the local area. This is a vision shared by our colleagues in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, and together we will deliver a number of practical projects that help achieve the net zero aspirations we are jointly committed to.

As a result of the uncertainty in the financial markets globally and the changing climate which is leading to more unusual weather patterns, for example extreme heat in the summer and a higher prevalence of torrential downpours, the council needs to be prepared to support its residents and to plan for emergency situations. We will continue to focus on emergency planning to ensure we are as prepared as possible for those situations which are outside of our control.

People's services

Adult Services

We aim to help and support our residents early on in their lives and prevent them from slipping into crisis by ensuring they receive the right level of support at the right time, in the right place and from the right person.

The aim is to keep people as independent and healthy as possible and prevent or delay the need for long-term care and support, which is both better for the individual and less expensive than the alternative. This is delivered through a range of different services:

- **Early intervention and prevention** – supporting people early with targeted information and advice and low-level and community support. For example, targeted short-term reablement support at home, or equipment that can help people manage at home.
- **Long-term care and support which is personalised and keeps people connected to their communities.** For example, regular care coming into the home or residential/nursing care placements.
- **Adults at risk are safeguarded from harm in ways that meet their desired outcomes.** This year we have responded to an average of 241 safeguarding concerns each month.
- **Supporting people with care and support when they come out of hospital.** This includes designing, delivering and commissioning localised, person-centred, and sustainable care services to meet their needs. This year, we are supporting an average of 251 discharges from hospital each month.

Across the country, councils are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of their adult population and Peterborough is no different. The level of demand, the complexity of the care which is required, and the rising cost of care have set the bar even higher.

Demand for Adult Social Care services has been increasing for a number of years and is showing no sign of slowing down. More and more people are living longer and will require care and support. This year, we have received an average of 3,514 contacts per month to our adult early help team, a 3 per cent increase on last year.

There has also been a 59 per cent increase in accommodated care, such as residential care or nursing care homes, and a 46 per cent increase in community care since 2020.

In addition, the care that people require is becoming more complex. This may be an impact of the Covid-19 pandemic where people delayed asking for help and support to meet their needs.

The adult social care sector is also impacted by the ongoing high rates of inflation and coupled with the increase in the National Living Wage, now at £11.46, the cost of meeting people's needs is rising. It is not just our own costs that are increasing, but those of our providers too who are also impacted by inflation and the National Living Wage increase.

Our focus in the coming year is to look for further opportunities to deliver more prevention and intervention through the following areas:

- **Developing a clear digital strategy and implementation plan,** focusing on areas such as

automation of back-office functions such as invoicing and more modernised self-service. For example, by improving the information we offer online so people can assess themselves what they are entitled to. We will also continue to improve the use of technology enabled care (TEC) to support people with their care and support needs. This could be things such as lifeline alarms, medication reminders and fall sensors. By increasing the use and range of TEC, we can increase people's confidence to live independently and delay the need for more costly long-term provision of care.

- **Working with health colleagues** to develop integrated neighbourhoods that will enable prevention work to be targeted to the needs of the neighbourhood, recognising that one size does not fit all. Data and insight will be better used to understand the needs of a neighbourhood so that services can then be commissioned based on local need.
- **Reablement** - this delivers short term, goal-oriented support for up to six weeks to help people regain their independence when they have been in hospital. We will recruit more frontline workers which will enable us to expand the service to support more people in their own homes, preventing the need for long-term care which is more costly.

We also plan to develop a shared lives scheme to support adults with learning disabilities, mental health problems or other needs which make it harder for them to live on their own. The scheme matches someone who needs care with an approved carer. The carer shares their family and community life and gives care and support to the person with care needs. Shared lives schemes are available across the country and are an alternative to traditional kinds of care, such as care homes.

We will also be looking at how we can provide daycare services within the community rather than in traditional day service settings.

- Within the next 12 months, we are anticipating an inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Therefore, we will be focusing on how we can improve the services that we offer and better support our providers to ensure a stable care market, as a result.

Children's Services

We have a legal duty (statutory responsibility) to support vulnerable children and their families across Peterborough. Our key aim is to protect children and to support families, helping them to meet their development goals.

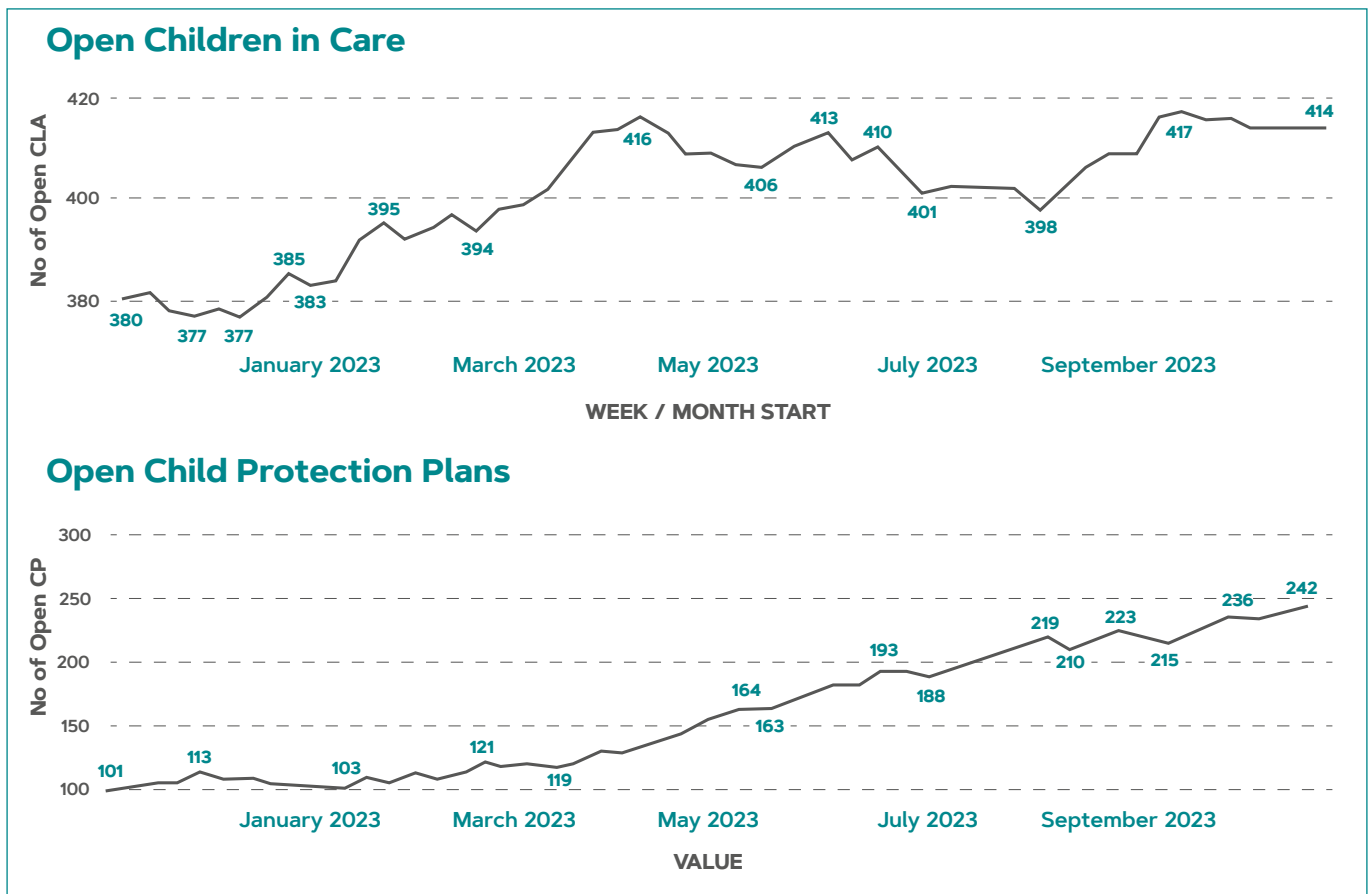
We will be investing even more money into Children's Services in 2024/25 to be able to meet those duties and improve the services that we offer children and families.

In our Budget Simulator Challenge this year, you told us that, on average, you prioritised this area above others to balance the budget next year.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis on vulnerable children and families means the landscape in which we operate has changed significantly.

Demand for our services has risen sharply and the complexity of the care required for some children and young people has increased. This is a trend being seen by many other local authorities and we expect it to continue.

In the past 12 months, the number of children who are subject to a child protection plan has increased – these are children that need protection, help and support from the council. At the same time, the number of children in our care has increased. This is placing a significant financial pressure on the council's budget.



The council takes its responsibilities for child protection very seriously and it's only right and proper that we invest in this area.

In the current financial year, the council has put additional investment into Children's Services and this is planned to continue in 2024/25.

This additional funding will be used to meet the aims of the council's action plan to improve the services offered to children and families following Ofsted's focused visit in March 2023. During the visit Ofsted assessed the quality of the council's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and found areas for improvement. This is a multi-agency service managed by the council, police and NHS and is the first point of contact when there are concerns about a child.

Following the Ofsted visit, an Improvement Notice was issued by the Department for Education and the council was required to establish an Independent Children's Improvement Board, which has now been set up. The board is overseeing and driving improvements to services provided to children by the council and its partners and is being led by an ex-Director of Children's Services and expert in leading Children's Services improvements.

In the coming financial year, we will continue to separate those services which we have previously run jointly with Cambridgeshire County Council, where it is in our best interests to do so. Peterborough now has its own newly appointed dedicated Executive Director of Children's Services and the majority of our staff are now focused on providing services for Peterborough children and families.

Plans are progressing to separate the fostering service and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Significant investment is needed in the MASH to build a team that can manage demand and ensure children are protected.

We recognise the responsibility we have to children in care and we want them to live in homes with loving families who can meet their needs. For some children this will be with a foster carer. That is why we are investing heavily in our fostering service, to find safe and loving homes for children who can no longer live

with their birth families. We will continue to look to increase the numbers of council fostering placements, enabling us to reduce the numbers of children placed in more expensive agency placements. We recognise the need to review the offer we can make to encourage people to become foster carers.

The recruitment and retention of staff in Children's Services remains challenging, as it does for many councils. There is a national shortage of social workers. This means the council is using more agency staff than it would ideally like to, which is more costly.

To address this, there are plans to develop a social work academy to support the recruitment and retention of social workers. The academy would provide wrap-around support for newly qualified social workers, giving them real life experience and the chance to learn from their peers, whilst keeping caseloads manageable. Once established this should reduce the council's need for agency social workers.

We will continue to benefit from the significant Central Government grants being offered to promote the development of Family Hubs over the next financial year. Family Hubs are part of a national programme to ensure babies, children and families have the support they need, when they need it. This funding is being used to invest heavily in early help services to support families to get the right help in the right place at the right time.

We remain committed to offering care leavers the best start to their adult life. We want to work with housing providers in the city to strengthen the accommodation offer made to care leavers. We will also continue to focus our efforts with partners on making sure the health needs of these young people are met and that they get the support they need to secure education, employment and training opportunities.

Education

We have a legal duty (statutory responsibility) to provide education for every young person in Peterborough in schools, colleges and further education. Our key aim is to support them to achieve expected national standards.

Those people who took part in our Budget Simulator told us they prioritised this area above others, on average.

There are currently 63 primary schools within the authority area, along with 15 secondary, eight special schools and three further education colleges. There were a total of 41,546 pupils in education locally at the end of the 2022/23 academic year. This is almost one fifth of the population of Peterborough.

Our education service has faced some unprecedented challenges in recent times, most notably working to support early years settings, schools and colleges following the Covid-19 pandemic, which stretched resources to the very maximum.

A key challenge remains, which is providing enough places for every pupil living here as Peterborough's population continues to grow rapidly and significant numbers of families with school age children move into Peterborough.

In the academic year 2022-2023, our School Admissions Team processed a total of 5,901 applications for school places – that's 2,100 more applications than the previous academic year.

A high number of children and families moved into Peterborough over the school summer holidays this year which is continuing to place pressure on our schools. Additional spaces are needed now and demand for places is likely to continue to grow in the future.

This rising school population is also creating an increased demand for school transport which places an additional financial pressure on the local authority. In certain circumstances, free home-to-school transport is provided for some children who can't attend their nearest school and the school they attend is above a certain distance or is unsafe to walk from their home.

We also provide transport for eligible children with an education, health and care plan, and some children with free school meals or with parents/carers on benefits and on some religious/faith grounds. Peterborough currently provides school transport for around 2,400 children, of which 870 are children with special educational needs.

We have expanded the school transport team and continue to review contracts to ensure they are providing the best service and value for money. However, we are spending more than we budgeted for due to the statutory requirements to provide transport for some children to get to school.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) numbers are expected to increase over the next five years, as they are in many parts of the country. We are developing three new hubs in the city to meet the needs of children with Autism and Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) needs. We will be visiting those schools that have shown interest in becoming a hub. A number of capital projects (new buildings) are also in the pipeline that will, in the long-term, increase capacity in the city for children with SEND needs.

Despite these challenges, we are seeing some encouraging progress in our schools and significant rises in several league tables. In the national 'progress 8' table which measures how far young people progress in their education across secondary education for eight subjects, the improvement by 0.24 is a substantial rise. It is also the first time Peterborough has had a positive progress 8 outcome. Out of the 151 local authorities, this places Peterborough as 38th nationally, up from 107 previously.

There are similar successes in our primary schools. The progress pupils make in their learning between the ages of 7 and 11 years has improved significantly. Consequently this year Peterborough has moved up the league tables by 16 places in reading, 11 places in writing and 27 places in mathematics.

We have built strong relationships with all our early years settings, schools and colleges, proactively setting up head teacher groups to ensure regular dialogue and effective problem solving.

There has been a fall in the number of annual births, which has led to a lower demand for early years and younger primary school places. In the spring budget, the Government announced an expansion of the childcare offer, offering funded childcare places for children from nine months old, for working parents, with a phased introduction over the next two years, which will increase the demand for childcare places.

We have invested in the Statutory Assessment Team (SAMS) and Educational Psychology Team (EPS) to ensure capacity to respond to significant increases in demand and fulfill the council's statutory duties for SEND children to assess their needs and where appropriate coordinate plans to meet those needs.

Public Health

We have a duty to improve and protect the health of everyone who lives in Peterborough. More broadly this is about living for longer in good health, reducing inequalities in health and making sure that children have good outcomes that lead to a long and healthy life.

We buy in services from other organisations that support healthier lifestyles, identify issues early and prevent problems escalating which includes:

- **School nurses and health visitors (Healthy Child Programme)** – last year, we funded approximately 10,000 visits to children and families by health visitors. This program enables all families with a new baby to get support to improve health and wellbeing and identify any issues early.
- **There were nearly 5,000 contacts with young people through Chathealth** (a confidential text messaging service for children and young people aged 11-19) and approximately 4,000 calls and 3,500 texts to our Healthy Child Programme (0-19) duty desk in 2022/23.

- **Help to stop smoking** – 1,203 people set quit dates and we helped 433 people quit smoking last year .
- **Improving sexual and reproductive health through information and support** in 2022/23, people in Peterborough attended 15,195 sexual health clinic appointments and 4,000 adults and young people accessed regular outreach sessions.
- **Reducing drug and alcohol misuse** – 1,638 adults and 124 young people aged 12-18 used these services during 2022/23.
- **NHS health checks** – 4,053 NHS health checks were delivered by our providers in 22/23. These checks are for people aged between 40 and 74 to assess an individual’s general health including their weight, blood pressure and cholesterol. The NHS health check is designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes or dementia.
- **Weight management** – 417 people lost 5 per cent or more of their weight through a Tier 2 adult weight management course last year - considerably higher than the national average.

Investing in public health services not only provides health benefits to those who engage with us, but reduces pressure on other public services and saves money in the long term.

Public Health funding is a key challenge with Peterborough residents receiving less per head in the public health (PH) grant than they should based on need. The total PH grant for Peterborough is currently £11.9m or £55.22 per head , compared to £73.12 per head for other similar sized local authorities.

Many of our residents – across all ages, but particularly in deprived areas – benefit from these public health services. Our population increase means demand is likely to grow further in the future. For instance, there has been a 24 per cent increase in children under 15 over the past 10 years, many with a high level of need, for example, 38.5 per cent of our Year 6 children are overweight or obese and a quarter of our children live in relative poverty.

To address these issues, the Health and Wellbeing Integrated Care Strategy has highlighted three main goals by 2030

- ✓ Increase the number of years people spend in good health
- ✓ Reduce inequalities in preventable deaths before the age of 75
- ✓ Achieve better outcomes for our children

How do we do this?

- ✓ By making sure our children are ready to start school and are prepared for their lives after they finish education
- ✓ By creating an environment to give people the opportunity to be as healthy as can be
- ✓ By reducing poverty through better employment, skills and housing
- ✓ Promoting early intervention and prevention around mental health and wellbeing.

We will work with partners and those who need our services to look at ways we can best meet their needs.

Corporate Services

There are a number of essential professional support services the council needs to keep it operating effectively. They provide vital support to services across the council to allow them to function.

In the council's Budget Simulator exercise, those who responded opted for a higher reduction in budget for Corporate Services compared to some of the other service areas listed. This may be because those who took part did not fully understand how vital services such as finance and HR are to the smooth running of most front-line services, such as care for the elderly and vulnerable and the maintenance of roads. However, it should be noted that significant savings have been identified within Corporate Services, relating to Property Services, IT, Finance and the cost of debt management.

The areas which make up Corporate Services are:

Finance - ensures there is an effective system of financial control to manage budgets and monitor spending and is responsible for ensuring the council prepares statutory accounts - something it is legally required to do. It also prepares the Medium-Term Financial Strategy which sets out how the council plans to spend its money to deliver council priorities.

Legal - provides legal advice to the council's departments and to councillors and represents the council in court. It also takes legal action on behalf of the authority, such as trading standards and fly-tipping prosecutions.

HR and development - supports with changes in staffing, the effective recruitment and development of our people and managing their performance, as well as ensuring our policies and processes are compliant with employment legislation, easy to understand and supportive.

Communications - provides information for the public about council services, public information and campaigns. It also engages with staff and external stakeholders. The team manages the council's website and social media channels and liaises with the media on council issues and initiatives.

Commercial property and asset management - responsible for managing the day-to-day activities across the council's estate and manages all landlord and tenant activities. It supports the council in bringing forward large regeneration, development and construction projects and looks after our properties making sure they are compliant, in good condition and fit for purpose.

Commercial and procurement - responsible for all the council's procurement activities (buying in goods and services) and provides strategic guidance and oversight on key commercial contracts. It leads the annual procurement plan which aims to make sure the goods and services we procure are fit for purpose and at the best possible price.

Health and safety - ensures the council maintains up-to-date policies and procedures, provides training, audits service delivery and manages incidents.

IT and digital - the enabler for all services within the council, supporting them in achieving their own aims and requirements while prioritising the customer journey. Everything our staff do requires access to IT in a secure and compliant manner.

Constitutional and democratic services - supports around 80 public meetings each year and the

organisation of civic events, such as Remembrance events, and flag raising ceremonies. Electoral Services is responsible for running local elections which includes managing and publishing an up-to-date and accurate register of voters so everybody entitled to vote can do so.

In recent months, we have redesigned our finance and communication teams to ensure they are able to meet the demands of the council and can support it to deliver the priorities of the Corporate Strategy.

The HR and Legal teams are currently under consideration for the same reasons. We are investing in our HR service. Reviews and benchmarking of this service revealed that we are currently under-resourced and there is a need for extra resource. The Health and Safety Service has also recently been subject to a review and we are in the process of recruiting a new Head of Health and Safety.

We are developing a new Asset Management Plan which sets out how we will invest in assets which support our Corporate Plan and dispose of those that don't, thereby reducing our capital programme and borrowing costs. A review of the council's buildings and assets is underway as a result, and this is expected to generate a saving in the region of £146,000 in 2024/25.

As part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy work we have identified a number of areas which will place financial pressure on the council over the next three years. These include:

- **Staff pay award** – this is yet unknown, but it is likely unions will negotiate a pay settlement in 2024/25. We are factoring in a £1.2m pressure.
- **Capital financing** – the debt we need to refinance will cost us more because of higher interest rates. This is generating a £1m pressure. However, we also generate higher rates of return on our temporary investment balances, which partly off-sets the pressure.
- **Significant increases in energy costs**
– this is predicted to generate a pressure of £3m in 2024/25. To offset this pressure, we are looking at options for energy efficiency, energy generation and grants that may be available.

Peterborough is not alone in each of these areas. Every other council nationally is experiencing similar challenges and budget pressures.

In addition, we continue to negotiate with Serco on the services it provides on behalf of the council and the future arrangements for this contract.



Our Consultation

We want to hear the opinions of residents, partner organisations, businesses, and other interested parties as part of the budget setting process.

You can give your opinions by completing an online survey on the city council website www.peterborough.gov.uk/budget

Paper copies can be requested by emailing communications@peterborough.gov.uk.

The consultation will launch on Monday 4 December 2023 and close at midnight on 7 January 2024.

Our Joint Scrutiny Committee will consider the council’s budget and your feedback on 22 January 2024. It will be considered by the Cabinet on 12 February 2024.

Please do not include any information in your answers that will identify you or people you know.

Questions

1 The council is meeting its budget challenge in a variety of different ways as outlined below.

Place in order of priority (1-6) the measures outlined below (1 being the most important and 6 being the least important).

Generating additional income

Introducing and increasing fees and charges for some services

Increasing council tax

Using reserves

Reducing services

Changing services

2 The council is maximising its use of technology and digitalisation and transforming working practises to make the council more efficient.

To what extent do you agree with this approach?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Slightly Disagree

Strongly Disagree

3 To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should protect services that support the city’s most vulnerable, including adults and children’s social care services and education.

Even if this means some other services will have to be delivered differently or reduced?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Slightly Disagree

Strongly Disagree

4 To what extent do you agree or disagree with our approach to increase council tax in line with the maximum referendum limit (4.99 per cent) to ensure the council is best placed to continue providing the same range and quality of services?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Slightly Disagree

Strongly Disagree

5


The council works hard to recruit foster carers but with the number of children needing placements being greater than our number of carers, we have to use private fostering agencies, placing children away from the local area.

What could the council do to make fostering a more attractive offer for residents?

6

Do you have any other comments to make about the council’s spending, service delivery or this budget consultation?

About you

 We are asking the following questions so we can check the response to our survey is representative of Peterborough. The information won't be used to identify you in any way. We don't ask for any information that will enable us to identify you.

You can find out more about how we use personal data here
www.peterborough.gov.uk/council/council-data/corporate-privacy-notice

So that we can check this survey is representative of Peterborough overall, please complete the following questions. Please note that all questions are optional – you do not have to respond.

Are you?

<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer another term
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Please indicate your age range:

<input type="checkbox"/> Under 18	<input type="checkbox"/> 18-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 25-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 35-44
<input type="checkbox"/> 45-54	<input type="checkbox"/> 55-59	<input type="checkbox"/> 60-64	<input type="checkbox"/> 65-69
<input type="checkbox"/> 70-79	<input type="checkbox"/> 80 or over	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	

Which of the following best describes you?

<input type="checkbox"/> Employed full time	<input type="checkbox"/> Employed part time	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed actively seeking work
<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed not actively seeking work	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time student over 18	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time student under 18	<input type="checkbox"/> Stay at home parent
<input type="checkbox"/> Retired	<input type="checkbox"/> Carer	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to work	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say

Do you work in the Peterborough City Council area?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
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Can you give us your home postcode?

We would like this to know that you live in Peterborough or visit the city.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
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What is your ethnic group?

<input type="checkbox"/>	White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish British Gypsy or Irish Traveller Any other white background
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed / multiple ethnic groups White and Black Caribbean White and Black African White and Asian Any other mixed / multiple ethnic background
<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian / Asian British Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi Chinese Any other Asian background
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black/ African / Caribbean / Black British African Caribbean Any other Black / African/ Caribbean background
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other ethnic group / Any other ethnic group

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
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Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey

