

What you pay
How to pay
How you can pay less
Where your money goes


Sunderland
City Council

Council Tax

2007 – 2008



Inside front from
Hemisphere

Foreword

Your Council Tax bill

Council Tax is one of the ways the City Council raises money to pay for local services such as care services for the elderly and children, libraries, refuse collection and the police and fire services.

When you pay your Council Tax you expect value for money – and quality, efficient community services when and where you need them. Sunderland City Council is committed to delivering continual improvement and best value for money for its residents with excellent services that make a positive difference to the quality of life for everyone in the City.

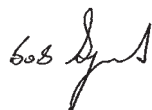
As the City Council's customers you – our residents – are our priority. Your needs are at the forefront of everything we do.

We have... Council officers... year.


Foreword to follow

While the emphasis is upon efficiency, there will be no cuts in services or the quality of those services. We are building upon a strong foundation, having earned the top rating - four stars – this year in the national performance assessment for councils and been placed in the top 25% of the 150 top-performing councils nationally. There is more information about the budget and the City Council's performance in this booklet and on the Council's website, www.sunderland.gov.uk

With all partners across the City, we have committed to a vision for the future for Sunderland that puts the wellbeing of our citizens at the heart of everything we do. We are building a City that will be known as a place where all residents can enjoy a balanced and healthy quality of life in a wonderful location by the sea. City agencies have committed to sustaining its special environment, finding smart solutions to job creation and innovation, delivering high quality public services and delivering positive and renewed benefits for its current and future citizens.



Cllr Robert Symonds
Leader of the Council



Ged Fitzgerald
Chief Executive

How you can pay less

There are four ways of reducing the amount of Council Tax you pay:

- Exemptions
- Discounts
- Reductions for disabled people
- Council Tax Benefit

Exemptions

Some properties are exempt from Council Tax. These include those occupied solely by full-time students, people under 18 years of age or people who are severely mentally impaired.

An annexe or self-contained part of a property, which is empty or occupied by an elderly or disabled relative, may also be exempt.

Exemptions also apply to other vacant properties, each with their own criteria and time limits. If you believe your vacant property may be exempt, please call 0191 520 5501.

Exemptions do not automatically appear on your bill – you have to claim them. If you have received a bill but think that your home is exempt, please call 0191 520 5501.

Discounts

A full Council Tax bill assumes there are two or more adults – people aged 18 or over – living in a property as their main home.

If there is only one adult, you are entitled to a 25% reduction.

If the property is empty or is no-one's main home, you are eligible for a 50% reduction.

Generally, if there are two or more adults living in your household, no discounts will apply, however certain people will be disregarded for Council Tax purposes. These include full-time students, student nurses, carers, people who have a severe mental impairment, apprentices and youth training trainees.

If you think that you are entitled to a discount, please call 0191 520 5501.

Reductions for disabled people

You may get a reduction in your Council Tax if you, or someone who lives with you, is disabled and you have special facilities in your home to meet the needs of the disabled person.

The reduction that can be given is the equivalent of your banding being reduced to the next lowest band e.g. if you are in band D it would be reduced to band C. If your home is in band A (the lowest band), the reduction will be equivalent to 1/9th of a band D charge.

Council Tax Benefit

Council Tax Benefit aims to help Council Tax payers on a low income by reducing their bill.

Many people are entitled to Council Tax Benefit – even if they are home-owners and have savings. People who have a low income or are getting Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance or any other state benefit may also be eligible. For expert advice, leaflets and confidential help with claims, please call the Council Tax Benefit freephone on 0800 633 5853.

Changes to your circumstances

You must tell the Council immediately if there are any changes to your circumstances that will affect your Council Tax Benefit.

If there are any changes to your circumstances that will affect your Council Tax including moving house or you are no longer entitled to discounts, you have 21 days to inform the Council Tax Team. Failure to do so may lead to a penalty.

What happens if you don't pay

The Council must receive payments by the due date shown on your bill. If you are having difficulty paying, the City Council urges you to get in touch as it may be possible to agree a different payment method.

If you miss a payment, the Council will take action to recover the money.

Making an appeal

If you think your home should be in a different valuation band than the one you have been placed in, please write to the Valuation Office at:

Eagle Star House, Regent Centre, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne. NE3 3TW

The Valuation Office, not the Council, decides which valuation band your home is placed in.

If you are unhappy with any other decision the City Council makes about your Council Tax, you may appeal by writing to:

City Treasurer, PO Box 115, Civic Centre, Sunderland. SR5 9BJ

Making an appeal does not mean you can stop paying Council Tax. If your appeal is successful, you will be entitled to a refund of any overpaid Council Tax.

What you pay

Normally the person living in the property will be responsible for paying if it is their main home and they are over 18 years of age.

The amount of Council Tax you pay depends on the value of your home. More valuable properties pay more Council Tax.

Each home is placed in a valuation band based on what your home was valued at in 1991.

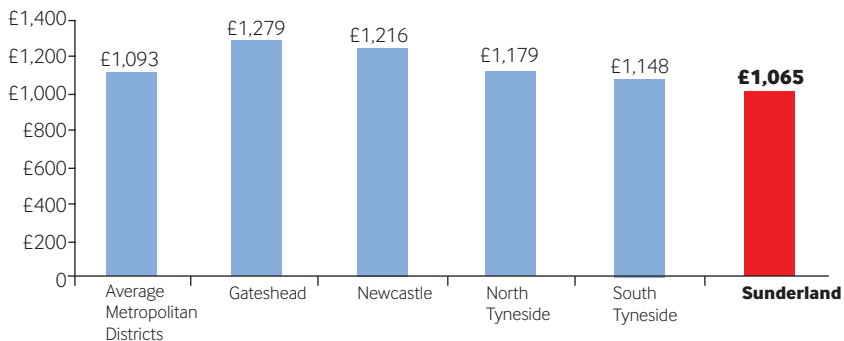
The table below sets out the Council Tax levels for 2007/2008 for Sunderland for each valuation band. Your Council Tax bill states the band that applies to your dwelling.

Valuation Band	City Council Tax level	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority Tax level	Northumbria Police Tax level	Total Council Tax level
	£ P	£ P	£ P	£ P
A	734.65	46.62	49.75	831.02
B	857.09	54.39	58.04	969.52
C	979.53	62.16	66.33	1,108.02
D	1,101.97	69.93	74.62	1,246.52
E	1,346.85	85.47	91.20	1,523.52
F	1,591.73	101.01	107.78	1,800.52
G	1,836.62	116.55	124.37	2,077.54
H	2,203.94	139.86	149.24	2,493.04

How does Sunderland's Council Tax compare with others?

In recent years, Sunderland has had the lowest Council Tax in the Tyne and Wear area and second lowest in the North East region on a consistent basis for several years. This compares favourably with the average for Metropolitan districts. This reflects the prudent approach that the Council has taken.

Band D Council Tax levels for 2006 – 2007



The indications are that for 2007–2008 our Council Tax will again be the lowest in Tyne and Wear.

How to pay

It's now even easier to pay your Council Tax, with a number of easy pay options.

Direct Debit

Thousands of people pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit because this easy option saves time and money – and spreads the cost across the year. You don't have to travel and queue to make payments or worry about cheques being lost in the post.

And with Direct Debit, you can choose to pay when it suits you, either monthly, weekly or four weekly.

If you choose to pay monthly, you can pay when it suits you on one of five dates in the month. If you choose to pay weekly, you can pay on any day between Monday and Friday – it's up to you. If you get paid every four weeks, you can pay on any Monday within your four-week payment cycle.

If you want to pay by Direct Debit please call 0191 520 5501 and have your bank account number and sort code available.

Telephone

You can pay by credit or debit card over the phone, Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.30pm by calling 0191 520 5501.

Please have your card number and its expiry date available. You will also need to know your Council Tax account number.

Internet

You can now pay your Council Tax over the internet via Alliance and Leicester 'paybill' service at www.sunderland.gov.uk/counciltax/girobank.asp

In person

You can make a payment by cash, cheque, by credit or debit card or in person at any of the following offices.

- Sunderland Customer Service Centre, Civic Centre, Sunderland
- Sunderland Customer Service Centre, Grangetown

You can also make a payment at Sunderland Housing Group Offices located within Customer Service Centres and other Sunderland Housing Group Offices across the City.

For opening times and locations of offices, please call 0191 520 5501.

By post

You can send payment by cheque or postal order to:

City Treasurer, PO Box 115, Civic Centre, Sunderland, SR5 9BJ

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to 'Sunderland City Council'. Your name, address and Council Tax account number should be written clearly on the back of the cheque.

How are the Council's finances managed?

The Council has a range of indicators which it has used to assess how well it is doing in managing its resources and successfully providing value for money (VFM):

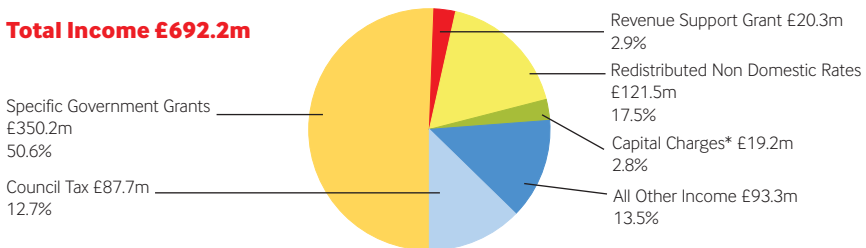
- As part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) the Council has received the highest rating possible five years in a row. In 2006/2007 the Council was judged to be four-star overall, and is one of only 15 metropolitan and unitary authorities to achieve this top rating.
- Following an independent assessment by the District Auditor, the Council was awarded 3 stars for its use of resources and providing value for money, the highest rating in Tyne and Wear.
- The District Auditor reports annually on the financial health of the Council. The latest report confirmed it maintains robust financial management arrangements.

Where does the Council get its funding from?

The Council provides a wide range of services including schools, caring for the elderly, collecting rubbish and providing leisure facilities. The cost of running and maintaining the day-to-day services provided by the Council is called Revenue Expenditure.

The Council Tax you pay forms only part of the funding to pay for these services. The chart below shows over half of the money comes from the Government and the remainder from Council Tax and income received from users of our services.

Total Income **£692.2m**



* Capital charges amounting to £19.2m are included in gross expenditure and income in accordance with the Best Value Accounting Code of Practice. This is a notional charge that has no impact on the level of Council Tax.

Funding from the Government

Central Government funding has a major bearing on the revenue budget which the Council sets each year. Central Government provides support in the form of Revenue Support Grant and Sunderland's share of Business Rates collected and pooled nationally, and redistributed.

For 2007/2008 Central Government support to Sunderland in the form of Revenue Support Grant and Business Rates will increase by 2.7% on a like for like basis. The Council's total budget requirement provides for increased spending of 3.2% in order to avoid the need to cut back on services and enable improvement in specific areas. The Council has drawn on some of its available balances both to address spending pressures and in order to limit the increase in Council Tax.

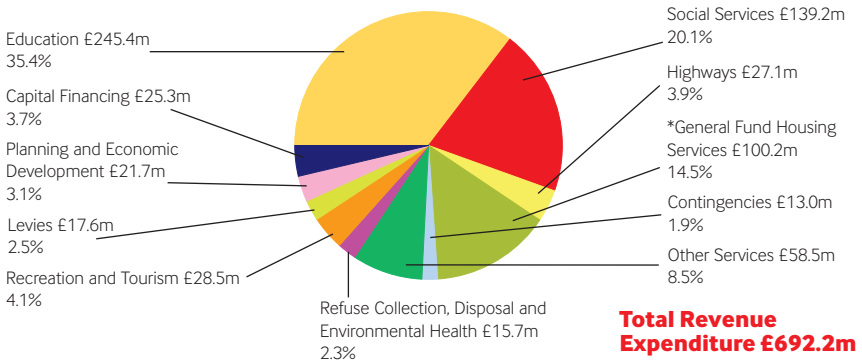
How residents help set the budget

Through the citizen's panel - Community Spirit - the Council asked for local residents' views on a range of budget issues.

Their opinions and feedback were taken into account when setting the budget, with additional resources being allocated to address a range of identified spending pressures.

What will be spent on Council services in 2007/2008?

The chart below shows what the Council plans to spend on its services in 2007/2008.



* This excludes Council Housing Costs as this service has transferred to Sunderland Housing Group and mainly consists of Housing Benefit payments.

What have been the major issues in setting the 2007-2008 budget?

The aim in setting the Council revenue budget for 2007/2008 was to address various cost commitments through identification of efficiencies which minimised the effect on front line services, and to try to enable improvement in specific high priority areas through the provision of some limited additional resources. The budget for next year has been prepared taking account of the following areas:

- Inflation - including the effect of pay awards, rises in specific contract prices, and significant increases in fuel and utility costs;
- Pensions - as a result of an actuarial valuation of the pension fund which recognised the poor investment returns being experienced in the public, but also the private sector, a stepped increase in pension contributions is necessary;
- In order to enable spending pressures to be addressed and allow for some additional investment in high priority services whilst limiting the impact on Council Tax, additional efficiency savings totalling £4.260m have been identified within the Council.

Additional revenue funding 2007/2008

Additional revenue funding has been allocated to address some of the Council's spending pressures following the consultation with stakeholders. Details are set out as follows under the priorities of the Sunderland Strategy 2004-2007:

Creating a prosperous City

- Text to follow
-

Extending cultural opportunities

-

Improving the quality, choice and range of housing

-
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Reducing crime and the fear of crime

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Raising standards and increasing participation in learning

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Developing an attractive and accessible city

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-
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Creating inclusive communities

-
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General

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Capital investments 2007/2008

In addition to spending on running your services, the Council is planning to invest a further Exxx million on capital projects. This will be funded from borrowing, Government grants, capital receipts and the use of Council reserves. The major projects include:

Creating a prosperous City

- Text to follow
-

Extending cultural opportunities

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Improving the quality, choice and range of housing

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Improving health and social care

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Raising standards and increasing participation in learning

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Developing an attractive and accessible City

-

Creating inclusive communities

-

The cost of services

In addition to services provided by the Council, other bodies including the Northumbria Police Authority and the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority also provide services which the Council must take into account. The table below gives a summary of the net cost of all these services for 2007-2008 and how the Council Tax at Band D is built up.

Last Year 2006 - 2007 £m	Summary net cost of services	This Year 2007 - 2008 £m	Band D Council Tax £ p
84.955	City Council (including Levies)	87.740	1,101.97
5.449	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority	5.568	69.93
5.727	Northumbria Police Authority	5.941	74.62
96.131		99.249	1,246.52

Sunderland City Council budget information

Last Year 2006-2007				This Year 2007-2008		
Gross Expenditure £m	Gross Income £m	Net Expenditure £m		Gross Expenditure £m	Gross Income £m	Net Expenditure £m
244.9	204.0	40.9	Education	245.4	217.8	27.6
135.2	51.7	83.5	Social Services	139.2	54.4	84.8
30.4	10.7	20.3	Highways	27.1	9.4	17.7
23.6	13.7	9.9	Planning and Economic Development	21.7	14.0	7.7
28.5	2.8	25.7	Recreation and Tourism	28.5	3.1	25.4
3.2	0.6	2.6	Environmental Health	3.3	0.7	2.6
11.5	1.0	10.5	Refuse Collection and Disposal	12.4	1.1	11.3
99.4	94.0	5.4	Housing (Non Council Housing Costs)	100.2	96.6	3.6
60.7	36.5	24.2	Other Services	58.5	40.7	17.8
24.6	0.0	24.6	Capital Financing Costs	25.3	0.0	25.3
662.0	414.4	247.6		661.6	437.8	223.8
12.8	-	12.8	Contingencies - General	13.0	-	13.0
-	1.9	(1.9)	Interest on Balances	-	2.8	(2.8)
-	7.2	(7.2)	Transfer to/(from) Reserves	-	2.9	(2.9)
-	43.9	(43.9)	Capital Charges	-	19.2	(19.2)
674.8	467.4	207.4	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	674.6	462.7	211.9
			Levies			
		17.0	Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority			17.5
		0.1	Environment Agency - Flood Defence			0.1
		224.5	TOTAL BUDGET REQUIREMENT			229.5
		22.5	Less Revenue Support Grant			20.3
		116.6	Redistributed Non Domestic Rates			121.0
		0.4	Collection Fund Surplus			0.5
		85.0	NET BUDGET REQUIREMENT			87.7

Total number of employees

Explanatory Notes

The Net Budget Requirement is £87.7m with planned gross expenditure at £674.6m (£692.2m including Levies) and gross income of £462.7m. The net increase in the total budget requirement is £5.0m, details of which is shown in the table opposite.

Borrowing liabilities outstanding at 31st March 2006 were £175.4 million (of which £18.5 million is on behalf of other public bodies such as the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority).

	£m
Inflation and increased costs	
Increase in Levies	
Change in Service Levels	
Increase in Other Income	
Increase in Specific Government Grants	
New Government Grant to fund schools	
Change in use of Reserves	
Efficiency savings	
Change in use of Balances	
	5.0

Cost per head of population

The table below shows the total cost to each person in Sunderland of services provided by the Council and Precepting Authorities after taking account of the income received from Revenue Support Grant and Business Rates.

	Total Budget Requirement £	Revenue Support Grant £	Business Rates £	Collection Fund Surplus £	Net Budget Requirement £
City Council					
Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority					
Northumbria Police Authority					
Total					

Precepts and levies

The following summaries provide information on the budgets for the Northumbria Police Authority, the Environment Agency, the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority, the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority, which all affect your Council Tax bill.

Northumbria Police Authority	Last Year 2006 - 2007			Last Year 2007 - 2008		
	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m
Police General	296.8	40.8	256.0			
Contingencies			4.5			
Total Budget Requirement			260.5			
Less:						
Police Grant			105.7			
Use of Balances			0.0			
Total Net Police Expenditure			154.8			
Less Revenue Support Grant			20.1			
Business Rates			104.0			
Collection Fund Surplus			0.2			
Net Budget Requirement			30.5			

Explanatory Note		£m
Change in Total Budget Requirement between years is attributable to:		
Inflation and other changes		
Variation in quantity / quality of service		
Change in other income		

Environment Agency	Last Year 2006 - 2007			This Year 2007 - 2008		
	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m
Flood Defence	12.6	11.3	1.3			
Transfer to / (from) Reserves			(0.1)			
Levy			1.2			

Explanatory Note		£m
Change in Levy (Total Budget Requirement) between years is attributable to:		
Inflation		
Decrease in Government Funding		
Funding of Capital Expenditure		
Use of Reserves		

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority	Last Year 2006 - 2007			This Year 2007 - 2008		
	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m
Fire Service	56.4	2.0	54.4	61.5	5.7	55.8
Emergency Planning	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.0
	56.9	2.5	54.4	62.0	6.2	55.8
Contingencies			1.1			1.0
Use of Balances			(0.6)			(0.3)
Total Budget Requirement			54.9			56.5
Less Revenue Support Grant			5.3			4.9
Business Rates			27.6			29.0
Collection Fund Surplus			0.3			0.2
Net Budget Requirement			21.7			22.4

Explanatory Note

Change in Total Budget Requirement between years is attributable to:	£m
Inflation and other changes	
Change in Pension Regulations	
Savings	
	1.6

Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority	Last Year 2006 - 2007			This Year 2007 - 2008		
	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m
Tyne Tunnels	9.6	12.3	(2.7)	8.2	13.6	(5.4)
PTA	4.1	0.0	4.1	4.3	0.0	4.3
Grant to Nexus	88.2	0.0	88.2	95.8	0.0	95.8
	101.9	12.3	89.6	108.3	13.6	94.7
Transfer to Reserves			2.1			2.6
Total Budget Requirement			91.7			97.2
Less Rail Grants and Miscellaneous Grants			26.6			29.8
PTA Levy			65.1			67.4

Explanatory Note

Change in Total Budget Requirement between years is attributable to:	£m
Reductions	(2.8)
Inflation and other cost pressures	2.0
Increase in income	(1.3)
Increase in Grant to Nexus	7.6
	5.5

Sunderland ... working together for a better future

The Council and agencies and organisations across the City, are working together as the Sunderland Partnership to position Sunderland as the most liveable city in the UK. The remainder of this booklet details some of the most important activities that the Council and its partners will undertake over the coming year to help Sunderland achieve this.

Creating a prosperous city

The Council is committed to improving economic participation in the city, supporting individuals to fulfil their potential, encouraging business growth and raising the profile of Sunderland as a key business location.

This year the Council will:

- Continue to work on the £100 million business park at Rainton Bridge, which will include Northern Rock's new campus style development, bringing more than 4,000 high quality jobs to the City.
- Secure nearly £2 million and manage over £12 million of UK and European funds for City Council projects and £15m of partnership funds.
- Secure £3 million of external funding to assist 1,000 residents from deprived areas to access employment and around 170 young people to complete training.
- Develop a programme to build on our Friendship Agreement with Washington D.C that will reap the economic, educational and cultural benefits of our special relationship.

Raising standards and improving access and participation in learning

The Council is working closely with schools to continually raise the achievement of all children in the City. The Council is also committed to providing opportunities for young people and adults to continue to develop their skills and experiences, raising aspirations across all age groups in the City.

This year the Council will:

- Open Oxclose School as part of the Building Schools for the Future Programme and work towards bringing three new academies to the City.
- Address all areas of under-performance in secondary schools to raise attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 (age 14 and GCSE) particularly by boys and vulnerable children.
- Ensure an increase in the number of 14-19 year olds from a wide range of backgrounds participating in vocational learning as a pathway to employment.
- Open shared adult learning facility at the customer service centre in Ryhope to increase adult learning in the City.

Improving the quality, choice and range of housing

The Council provides a co-ordinating role on all housing matters in the City. The Council's primary aim is to improve the quality, standards and choice of housing, to support the housing needs of all residents and to provide safe, attractive and sustainable surroundings.

This year the Council will:

- Implement the Easington Lane Development Framework to provide a range of high quality and affordable housing in the Coalfield area.
- Continue to prevent homelessness via mediation, education and further preventative action in order to increase the number of households prevented from being homeless from around 185 to 270.
- Work with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to ensure that all rented social housing complies with the Decent Homes Standard by 2010, building on the 97% of social housing that already complies.
- Expand the City's extra care housing facilities to include 4 new extra care schemes delivered by 2010, supporting individuals to retain independence whilst having specialist support available.

Improving health and social care

The Council, working closely with other partners in the City particularly the Teaching Primary Care Trust, is committed to tackling the main causes of ill health in the City and improving quality and access to health services.

This year the Council will:

- Increase choice and control by empowering more older people to identify and purchase their own care arrangements through the use of the direct payments scheme.
- Provide rehabilitation and re-enablement opportunities to increase by 10% the number of people aged 18-64 who are helped to live at home.
- In addition to the 12 Children's Centres already opened across the City open an additional 5 centres to deliver integrated services by April 2008.
- Increase the uptake of healthier school meals by developing a school meals strategy that underpins all Government recommendations in the provision of healthier school meals.
- Increase accessibility to sexual health and relationship education programmes and contraceptive services for young people to reduce the Sunderland under 18 conception rate by 55%.
- Work with health agencies to help people give up smoking and working towards becoming a smoke free city.

Reducing crime and disorder and the fear of crime

The Council, working in partnership with the Police and others, is committed to creating a city which is, and is seen to be, safer by reducing crime, fear of crime, anti-social behaviour and the misuse of drugs, through work on prevention; early intervention; enforcement and support and rehabilitation. Significant progress has been made in this area with the overall crime rate falling below the national average. Sunderland is also the safest big city in the North.

This year the Council will:

- Continue to work in partnership to reduce recorded crime by ensuring a 20% reduction for 2007/08 when compared to 2003/04.
- Increase the percentage of residents who said they felt very or fairly safe in Sunderland from 69% in 2005/06 to 74% in 2007/08.
- Reduce anti-social behaviour by working in partnership to deliver the Respect Action Plan.
- Reduce the number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System, by targeting those at risk of offending.
- Improve access to treatment to increase the number of problem drug users in treatment by 100% between 1998 and 2008 and improve the effectiveness of the treatment that is available.

Extending cultural opportunities

The Council's plans to extend cultural opportunities across the city are focused on establishing a sense of place, with facilities and events that make an impact locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, stimulating creativity within the City and providing opportunities for all residents to get involved and be active.

This year the Council will:

- Open the Sunderland Aquatic Centre, a regional centre of sporting excellence including the region's only 50-metre pool together with a state of the art Wellness Centre, as part of a £19.8 million regeneration programme building upon the success of Stadium Park.
- promote the joint nomination of St. Peter's Church and St. Paul's, Jarrow as a potential World Heritage Site.
- Increase usage of the City's Wellness Centres by people over 16 building on 154,000 visits achieved during 2005/06.
- Support the development of the Sunnyside area of the City Centre into a key cultural location by bringing vacant buildings back into use, acquiring and developing key sites, and creating new jobs and housing.
- Raise the profile and enhance the image of the City by developing and promoting more festivals and events that celebrate the distinctiveness of Sunderland.
- Invest £1m in play provision in the City by 2010 via the development of 6 new priority play projects with input from young people.

Developing an Attractive and Accessible City

The Council and its partners aim to create an attractive, accessible and sustainable city by developing a safe and effective transport system, by constantly protecting and improving the City's built and natural environment and by sustaining its special quality.

This year the Council will:

- Achieve a measurable reduction in energy consumption and carbon emission through delivering the Sunderland Climate Change Strategy and the 5-year Carbon Management Strategy.
- Improve household recycling and composting through widening the range of products that can be recycled and ensuring that the maximum number of households possible can participate in recycling. In order to exceed the government target of 20% of household waste recycled by 2007/08.
- Work with employers in the City to reduce car usage and encourage use of public transport, cycling and walking.
- Reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on the City's roads by 40% and children under 16 by 50% by 2010 by targeting road safety programmes at areas and those groups who have high levels of traffic accidents.
- Introduce integrated neighbourhood refuse collection, street cleaning and grounds maintenance services in Sunderland to ensure residents receive better value for money.

Creating Inclusive Communities

Sunderland is becoming an increasingly diverse city and one of the City's key challenges is to support our communities to live together and learn from each other, and to ensure that everyone is able to take advantage of the positive opportunities in the City.

This year the Council will:

- Complete Customer Service Network centres at Doxford Park, Ryhope, Washington and Southwick to deliver community based facilities providing excellent services to customers.
- Implement the ARCH (Agencies Against Racist Crime and Harassment) city-wide racist incident reporting system leading to better intelligence, improved support for victims and action against perpetrators.
- Encourage a greater number of residents to engage in voluntary activity each week through enhanced communication about volunteering.
- Develop the Community Cohesion Strategy and implement the resulting Action Plan.

Inside back page from Hemisphere




Sunderland Customer Service Centres

Sunderland residents now have a wider choice of how and where they can access the services they need.

Sunderland Customer Service Centres provide convenient locations where residents can access City Council and other services under the same roof. New centres are planned around the City to make it easier to get the help you need.

Now open for Sunderland City Council services

***Civic Centre** Burdon Rd

***Grangetown** Ryhope Rd

plus Sunderland Housing Group rent payment and Police advice surgeries

Hetton Centre Welfare Rd

plus Sunderland Housing Group, Youth and Community Health Services, Electronic Village Hall, Library and Cafe

Mobile Customer Service Centre operating in **Washington, Houghton** and **Hetton**

plus IT Training and internet access

Houghton

Shiney Row

Sandhill View

***Bunny Hill, Sunderland North**

Highfield (part of the Extended School)

Other centres under development include Ryhope, Southwick, Washington and Doxford Park

At the services centres, you will find fully-trained Sunderland City Council staff to help you.

- Find advice and information on services
- Complete and submit applications for benefits, services and approvals
- Request and order Council services
- Make payments for Council Tax and other services (those marked with a *)
- Contact the Sunderland City Council Customer Contact Centre by phone
- Access services through free internet self-service points
- Find out about job opportunities

In some centres you can also access other public services such as those provided by the Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust, Sunderland Housing Group and Surestart.

Access to Services is also available through the Council's Contact Centre.

For more information on Sunderland City Council Services, telephone the Customer Contact Centre on 0191 520 5555. Minicom: 0191 525 0075.

Part of the People First Programme

If you would like a copy of this booklet in an alternative language, large text, braille or audio format, please telephone (0191) 520 5555.

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