



# STATE OF THE BOROUGH 2025

Prepared by

**EAMONN O'BRIEN**

Prepared for

**ANNUAL COUNCIL**

**MAY  
2025**

**Bury**  
Council

# PREFACE: THE COUNCIL PERSPECTIVE

Over the past decade and a half, councils have seen funding per person drop sharply, with the most deprived councils seeing funding fall by 35%, councils across the UK have been forced to make some £24.5 billion worth of cuts since 2010/2011, and are yet still facing funding shortfalls.

With grant funding from central government slashed, rising need across services, and increases in the prices of goods, almost all councils have had to increase council tax to fill the financial gap. Here in Bury we've experienced a 29% cut in real terms to core spending power since 2010, and where councils like Camden have £1,333 to spend on every resident, Bury has just £792. Over the next 3 years we are looking at a funding gap of nearly £30m. We simply cannot go on like this.

For 2025/26 we set a budget of £238 million, responding to rising demand across social care and children's services, which together make up over 60% of our total spend. We've closed a structural deficit of £14m by making £17m in savings and drawing on £5m of our reserves. However pressures remain, and we have a projected gap of £11.57m for 2027/2028.

This challenge is not insurmountable, we have a plan, and with a new government in place since our last State of the Borough we are reiterating our Let's Fix it Together campaign, where over 1500 residents joined us in calling on the government to implement it's review of council funding, guarantee us a multi-year funding plan, and to bring Bury into line with the national average, securing us an extra £14m a year to spend on vital services and ensuring we can continue our valuable work across our borough.

Councils are vital to the fabric of our nation, and crucial to the lives of so many, whilst we work hard to deliver for the borough, we need government's help to undo the years of austerity and give power back to local communities to rebuild the services they rely on.

## 16.4%

Cut to real  
spending power  
compared to  
2010/2011

LGA Spending Review  
Submission 2025

## £54B

UK Council  
Funding shortfall  
to 2030

CCN Budget and Spending  
Review Submission 2025

## 33%

Of councils at risk  
of bankruptcy  
when higher  
needs override  
ends in 2026

National Audit Office Local  
Government Financial Sustainability  
Report

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# FOREWORD FROM THE LEADER



## **Cllr Eamonn O'Brien** **Leader of Bury Council**

A lot has happened over the past 12 months in Bury, the UK and around the world. There is a lot that will be on our minds and much that will impact our lives in different ways. As ever, within all of this will be opportunities to make the most of and challenges to overcome. In response to this, we must remain focused on our priorities to improve children's lives, tackle inequalities and deliver inclusive and sustainable growth. Through these priorities we can contribute towards getting our local services on a financially sustainable footing and deliver on our vision to grow the borough and reduce deprivation at the same time.

Doing this will not be easy. We have had 14 years of significant cuts to the Council and wider public services, the economy has stagnated, wages flatlined and poverty increase. With a new Government, we hope to see this change and we will continue to put our residents first by maintaining our campaign for fairer funding. To truly have a borough where everyone can share in success, we need more funding and a greater focus on prevention and early intervention.

With more devolution on the table, we also need to keep playing our part in Greater Manchester. Whether it is fixing the NHS, integrating public transport or giving everyone the skills they need, devolution is a huge part of the solution, and we must remain at the forefront of this agenda.

**Despite the challenges, both historic and present, let us also be confident and optimistic about our borough's future. Let's Do It!**

## **20,000**

New jobs expected to be created through the Northern Gateway Project

## **£100 million**

In regeneration projects on track for delivery

## **100%**

Of local childcare providers judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding'

# CABINET MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC GROWTH



**Cllr.**  
**Eamonn O'Brien**  
Portfolio Holder

Over the past 12 months we have seen enormous progress made on the delivery of our ambitious £250 million regeneration plans across the whole of our borough.

The new Flexi-Hall and Outdoor Market improvements in Bury are well underway, phase one of the Prestwich Regeneration plan has started on-site, and Radcliffe is seeing the numerous aspects of the strategic regeneration framework start to take shape. For Whitefield and Ramsbottom we have used the past year to develop and update specific Town Plans for each and crucially, started to work up a funding strategy to get the money in place to deliver them as soon as we can.

With our brownfield-first approach to new housing, we are now on track to significantly increase our housing supply and start to meet the growing demand for a whole range of housing options, including affordable housing. Getting Bury building again is a top priority because it's how we create opportunities for a better life and deliver on our vision to make sure everyone can share in success.

We must also have the right infrastructure in place to support this growth and with our Transport Strategy in place, draft Local Plan out for consultation and strategic planning policies agreed we are giving our borough the clarity it needs to truly deliver inclusive and sustainable growth.



## Radcliffe Regeneration

The Radcliffe Hub and Market Chambers project is now under construction following extensive design, planning and consultation. This £48m transformational scheme—jointly funded by the Government's Levelling Up Fund, Sport England and Bury Council—is due for completion in Summer 2026.

The new Hub will feature a modern swimming and leisure facility, improved public realm, a new library, space for community activities, and an innovative 'Clip & Climb' centre for adventurous residents. The Market Chambers will see the full refurbishment of a historic building, creating space for retail, leisure and community use, while also enhancing the popular Radcliffe Market.

The project is already delivering social value for local residents, including the creation of a skills centre to support access to employment and training.

Radcliffe's regeneration is guided by the Strategic Regeneration Framework adopted in 2021—the most comprehensive plan of its kind in the borough.

This scheme underpins wider activity including new homes at School Street, Green Street and East Lancs Papermill, a modern high school, pocket park, enterprise centre, and improved infrastructure.

**24**

Young people trained through the Vinci Community Skills Centre

**£10k**

Raised for Prostate Cancer UK by Vinci Teams

**12**

Community Engagement activities undertaken

# CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT CARE, HEALTH & WELLBEING



**Cllr.**  
**Tamoor Tariq**  
Portfolio Holder

This year, I'm proud of the leadership we've shown in turning Adult Social Care around. The LGA peer review — which I requested — described our model as one of the best examples of Health and Care integration nationally. That's down to clear political leadership and strong partnership working. We've cut assessment delays, improved hospital discharges, strengthened quality assurance, and our care homes now rank in the top 10 in England.

On public health, we've focused on practical action: boosting MMR vaccine uptake after an outbreak, tackling screening inequalities, and supporting people at risk of heart disease through GP practices. This is how we reduce health inequalities — aligned with our ambition to become a Marmot Town.

Looking ahead, I'm focused on preparing for CQC and other inspections, linking adult social care into the wider Bury system, and scaling up public service reform so no community in Bury feels left behind.

## Adult Care

In 2024/25, the Adult Social Care Department focused on six key priorities, aligned with our LET'S strategy:

- Transforming Learning Disability Services
- Delivering Excellent Social Work
- Providing Superb Intermediate Care
- Making Safeguarding Everyone's Business
- Ensuring a Local and Enterprising Care Market
- Connecting Unpaid Carers to Quality Support

We've seen strong progress. Our learning disability progression model is fully embedded in social work teams and will extend to commissioned services. Social work vacancies are at a record low, with just 4 posts unfilled.

Intermediate care supported 85% of people to improve and reduce their needs. Our Rapid Response Service is the busiest in Greater Manchester, and the virtual ward now supports 70 people at home each day.

New discharge processes with the Northern Care Alliance won an HSJ award. Care home quality ranks in the top 10 nationally, and provider staff vacancies have dropped by 5%.

A Q4 LGA peer review praised our integration and the dedication of our staff.

## Public Health

We have made significant progress in a number of areas. This includes seeing a reduction in overweight and obesity levels in reception age children and a stabilising of levels in year 6. We now have lower levels of overweight and obesity in reception and year 6 when compared to both national and regional levels. This is largely down to the focused work we have done with schools and early years settings to support physical activity and promote healthy eating.

We have made significant progress in reducing smoking prevalence and are now down to 10.5% lower than the national level and the lowest rates ever recorded. Achieved through targeted work through live well service. They have done a range of activities including outreach in a range of large employers in Bury along with the setup and implementation of the 'swop to stop' campaign.

# CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



**Cllr.**  
**Lucy Smith**  
Portfolio Holder

We have continued our improvement across our services this year with a more stable workforce in children's to improve quality practice and a revised local offer for SEND children and young people.

The rolling out of our First 1001 days of life programme is making sure families are supported at the earliest opportunity and giving our kids the best start in life.

This year we have continued a real focus on our corporate parenting duties- with champions on every committee and every elected member pledging to do more. Our new care leavers housing has receiving national recognition and we launched our new hub The Next Chapter.

Our support for employment has increased through the Council award winning apprenticeships and increased business engagement. I am proud we are leading the way with our membership of the Care Leaving covenant.

As we continue to drive through our corporate priority of Improving Children's Lives we will look for a whole Team Bury approach to make a difference, ensuring no child is left behind.

## Children's Services

In 2024/25, Children's Services focused hard on improving local services for children with special educational needs and their families, with the plan for improvement being agreed with central government in June 2024 and positive progress on delivery being noted in the DfE's stocktake in December.

Through the year, we have continued to improve our care and support for vulnerable children and families, implementing the nationally recognised Family Safeguarding model of social work practice, enabling families to be supported by multi-disciplinary teams focused on the whole family's needs.

Important achievements during the year include the launch of enhanced support for foster carers looking after children in care through two Mockingbird constellations (a collaborative group, with an experienced lead carer, providing support and guidance).

The stability of homes for children in care is a key strength:

- Three quarters of children in long term care have lived in the same home for the past 2 years; and
- 95% of children cared for by family and friends foster carers (kinship care) have been in their current home for at least 2 years.

More widely, we have continued to build back early intervention and support services for families, using our Family Hub and Children's Centres as bases to support children and families, with Midwives and other agencies providing drop-ins and clinics. Our Family Help offer to families has been transformed, providing parenting programmes to support local families and linking with local schools.

We will seek to develop our neighbourhood-based services further in the coming year.

Finally, we have made our support for care experienced older young people more accessible, with a Hub base in the centre of Bury enabling young people to get support as and when they need it. This is one strand of an overhaul of our support, with changes in their priority for local housing and dedicated homes for care experienced young people in new housing developments due to be completed in the next 5 years.

## 95%

Of children cared for by friends and family have been in their home for over 2 years

## 75%

Of children in long term care have lived in the same home for the past 2 years.

# CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND OPERATIONS



**Cllr.**  
**Alan Quinn**  
Portfolio Holder

It's been a good year, and I'm very proud of the progress that has been made across my portfolio

I'm very proud of the new 3G pitch that was recently opened at the Redbank in Radcliffe. It has been used by over 70 teams, and more than 700 people. The £1.8m grant given from the Football Foundation to construct the pitch was the largest ever given in England.

I'm delighted with the strides made by the Labour Government, reintroducing Beavers into the wild, boosting biodiversity in our waterways.

Back in Bury I'm proud to say that all new buildings will have Swift nesting bricks, ensuring a home for the endangered birds.

## Climate Change and Operations

It has been a positive year in the portfolio and we have seen excellent forward movement across our areas.

Over the past year we have resurfaced and repaired 35km of our roadways, repairing a massive 16,000 potholes across the borough across the past year.

We continue to focus on our core services and our bin collection averages at 97% one of the highest across all the Greater Manchester councils.

On transport, we're introducing more cycle and pedestrian friendly roads in the borough with more cyclops junctions and pedestrian crossings to keep our children safe. A new Interchange is on the way and all Metrolink stations on the Bury line will be upgraded with Heaton Park as a priority

However, climate change continues to affect us here in Bury, major weather events cause floods, bring down trees, impact our roads and disrupt our travel. There will be more rainfall, temperatures will increase. We need to be aware and prepare the best we can.

To combat this, we will continue to plant more trees with our friends from City of Trees, we will increase biodiversity net gain at our 6 receptor sites, and soon all new buildings in Bury will have Swift nesting bricks. Our regeneration plans will see more Sustainable Drainage, more nature friendly buildings with carbon reduction a main priority.

**16,000**

Potholes filled across the borough in 2024/25

**13**

Green flag awarded parks invested in

**2**

New 3G pitches delivered in Radcliffe and Ramsbottom

# CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND HR



**Cllr.**  
**Tahir Rafiq**  
Portfolio Holder

This year, I'm most proud of the huge strides we've made in staff engagement, employee reviews, and recognition for inclusive recruitment.

We've delivered award-winning workforce development and apprenticeship programmes, with Bury Council shortlisted for several Workforce Change Awards and the GM Health & Care Awards for Inclusive Recruitment.

We've implemented strategies to support local employment and improve workforce diversity, while also steering the organisation through complex restructures. A key milestone was our successful delivery of the Real Living Wage to all directly employed staff and those working for commissioned providers — fulfilling our 2021 pledge.

A standout moment was our staff awards ceremony, recognising the dedication and excellence of our people.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to keep improving the working environment, strengthen communication, and continue working in partnership with our Trade Unions.

## Corporate Affairs

In 2024/25, the HR & OD service delivered wide-ranging improvements, supporting transformation across the organisation. Over 1,700 contractual amendments were processed, alongside 689 new starters and 597 leavers. Workforce stability improved, with turnover and absence rates both below the national local government average, and employee review completion was the highest in Greater Manchester.

Mandatory training completion now averages 80%, and over 350 managers completed the award-nominated Management Development Programme. Our apprenticeship strategy achieved 83 starts — our highest yet — and we made nationally recognised progress in supporting care-experienced young people.

We've also updated numerous corporate policies, strengthened health and safety practices, and seen improved staff attendance.

HR also supported the transfer of 1,044 staff through TUPE, aligned with major changes in housing and schools. £290K was saved from workforce costs, and over £500K through organisational design.

A new intranet, risk assessment portal, and incident reporting system are live, while 100% compliance was achieved on key safety checks. Over 1,600 staff participated in the LET'S Challenge, driving values-led culture change.

**83**

Apprentices in training - our highest ever as a council

**350**

Managers completed our award winning development Programme

**£500,000**

Saved through organisational changes

# CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND INCLUSION



## **Cllr. Sandra Walmsley**

### **Portfolio Holder**

The Communities and Inclusion team has worked hard this year to deliver the updated Community Safety Plan (CSP). In partnership with GMP and other organisations, we've focused on key priorities: protecting children, preventing serious violence, tackling domestic abuse, and supporting cohesive communities.

In September, Council agreed a motion to strengthen community safety, cohesion and resilience—reinforcing our CSP work and aligning with our Armed Forces Covenant commitments to support veterans.

We've implemented our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, reaffirming our commitment to inclusive practice across the borough. Our Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy is also now in place, informed by the voices of those with lived experience, to ensure safe spaces for survivors.

The completion of our new Social Value Strategy will help the Council maximise the benefits of its contracts and partnerships for local people, places and businesses.

Finally, our revised agreement with Bury's voluntary, community and faith sector infrastructure organisation will further strengthen the sector and improve outcomes for residents.

## **Communities and Inclusion**

Over the past year, Bury has continued to be one of the safest boroughs in Greater Manchester, thanks to a refreshed Community Safety Strategy shaped by extensive community engagement. This sets out a partnership-led approach to building strong, resilient communities where everyone can thrive, safe from harm.

Action has included expanding CCTV coverage, joint patrols and training through Safer Streets funding, and targeted interventions like Operation VARDAR to tackle antisocial behaviour in Whitefield. We've also supported communities in responding to cohesion challenges—facilitating community roundtables and improving access to protective security for places of worship.

Bury's diversity remains one of its greatest strengths. Over the past year, we've celebrated this through events like Bury Pride, Bury Mela and Holocaust Memorial Day, as well as marking national days of significance for key communities. We've also deepened ties with Ukraine through work on town twinning and launched the Bury Women & Girls Commission, building on our International Women's Day activity.

Support for the Armed Forces community has continued through the Bury Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group—improving access to education, health and housing support, while strengthening remembrance activity through civic commemorations of D-Day 80 and VE Day.

We've invested in the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector with a recurring £100k Bury Fund, support for 68 groups via the LET's Value Volunteering fund, and a renewed agreement with the Bury VCFA to strengthen infrastructure support.

Finally, in response to cost of living pressures, we hosted a borough-wide summit, targeted Household Support Funding, expanded Citizen Advice capacity and launched neighbourhood pension credit sessions—forming part of our long-term approach through the Neighbourhub initiative to build financial resilience.

# 68

Local groups supported through the LET's Value Volunteering Fund

# £100k

Invested yearly into the Bury Fund to support local communities

# BURY

Recognised as one of the safest boroughs in Greater Manchester

# CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION



**Cllr.**  
**Sean Thorpe**  
Portfolio Holder

Over the past year, I'm most proud of delivering a legal budget that not only made real progress in reducing our deficit but also laid the foundation for greater financial stability. This achievement reflects the strength of our financial management team and the benefit of a more favourable funding settlement from the new Labour government.

In my role leading Transformation, the focus has been on improving how we work to better serve residents, ensuring resources are deployed effectively, and making a measurable impact. By tackling complexity and clarifying our priorities, we've built a strong platform for lasting change.

A standout moment has been seeing the momentum build on our major regeneration projects in Radcliffe, Prestwich, and Bury Market. These developments are critical to our ambition for inclusive economic growth and offer real hope in challenging national conditions.

Looking ahead, I'm focused on continuing our financial reform—especially through the new Financial Management System and a council-wide effort to harmonise budgeting. These improvements may be behind the scenes, but they're vital to delivering better outcomes for our residents and ensuring value for every pound we spend.

## Finance overview

The 2024/25 budget was set with a £15m funding gap supported by reserves, with the forecast future years funding gap then increasing to over £30m by 2026/27.

Detailed service budget review and challenge activity resulted in £17.251m of savings proposals being identified and agreed for delivery over the lifetime of the medium term financial strategy and alongside a more favourable funding settlement than anticipated this resulted in the 2025/26 budget being set with a much reduced requirement from reserves of £5.858m compared to the £25.7m originally forecast.

The agreed savings include £1.7m to be delivered recurrently by 2027/28 through the finance transformation programme linked to the upgrade of the Unit 4 finance system and the implementation of the new finance and procurement operating models.

Whilst a forecast funding gap of £11.5m remains by 2027/28, this represents a much improved position from that previously reported and a detailed 2026/27 budget timetable has been agreed setting out the approach, workstreams and timelines supporting production of proposals to address the remaining structural funding gap.

This will build on the agreed strategy and involve a zero based budget review of all council services and identification of proposals that will enable a balanced budget to be set without recourse to reserves over the current medium term financial strategy.

**£17M**

Saved through detailed budget review and challenge activity

**£11.5M**

Gap in funding, significantly down on the first estimated £30m

**New**

Zero Based budgeting system and finance management system being deployed

# CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE, ECONOMY & SKILLS



**Cllr.**  
**Charlotte Morris**

## Portfolio Holder

Over the past year, I'm incredibly proud of the real impact we've made through our culture fund and grant schemes—supporting creatives and bringing arts, music and community activity right into the heart of our neighbourhoods. From the Radcliffe music festival to new cultural spaces, we've backed culture as a driver of pride and belonging in our towns.

We've also launched ambitious new Economic Development and Skills Strategies—because everyone deserves access to opportunity. Our focus on fair work and good business is already paying off, with new jobs, better training pathways, and stronger local economies.

One key achievement that often goes under the radar is our work with GMP on licensing enforcement. Through Operation Avro, we've cracked down on illicit activity, making our streets safer and protecting legitimate businesses.

A standout highlight has been breaking ground on the Bury Market Flexi Hall. Bury Market means so much to so many—and despite the challenges since the closure of the indoor market, it continues to thrive. Our support for traders and the exciting new Flexi Hall are symbols of resilience and regeneration.

And for the year ahead? More of the same—delivering pride, prosperity and opportunity for every part of our borough

## Culture

Launched the Bury Cultural Strategy, securing budgets and funding to support the Arts and culture in the borough along with vital capital works funding Bury Art Museum and Ramsbottom Library. Successful delivery of Culture Events programme funded by UKSPF and securing further funding has been secured for 2025, and we are engaging with emerging creative industries to develop this sector

## Economy

Economic Strategy Delivery Plan completed its first 12 months delivery as work progresses across the 3 pillars of People, Place, Economy and Growth. UKSPF funding was delivered and reported as spent with most outcomes and outputs achieved. Local Growth and Place Flexible Grant was awarded which will assist in the delivery of our Town Centres Regeneration, Cultural offer support and boost our communications across the portfolio with a dedicated post.

## Skills

Bury Councils All-Age Work and Skills Strategy launched to articulate our work and skills ambitions for Bury's residents. It outlines our commitment to embed an integrated work and skills system that supports greater innovation and productivity in our economy. WorkWell Service was launched in Bury, designed to help local residents who struggle to stay in work due to health-related challenges. The Bury Regen Expo - A Networking event showcasing the regeneration activity that is transforming our townships and sharing future aspirations such as the Atom Valley Mayoral Development Zone.

**644**

Volunteer opportunities supported through UKSPF funding

**£500k**

UKSPF funding allocated to deliver Bury's Culture Strategy

**£447k**

Secured in Arts Council Funding for Bury

# CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING SERVICES



## **Cllr. Clare Cummins** Portfolio Holder

In our second year since bringing housing management services back in-house in 2024, I am proud of the progress we have made in delivering better outcomes for tenants. Having direct control has strengthened accountability, improved service standards, and deepened our relationship with residents.

We've built a stronger, more responsive housing service following the successful transition from the ALMO, kept services running smoothly while placing greater emphasis on tenant voice and neighbourhood support and aligned with the principles of Bury's Let's Do It strategy.

A standout moment this year was the success of our community days across Bury, where residents, councillors, and officers came together to tackle local priorities, celebrate achievements, and shape future plans.

I look forward to delivering more affordable, energy-efficient homes, embedding service improvements, and continuing to put communities at the heart of everything we do as part of our commitment to Let's Do It.

## **Housing Transformation**

This has been housing services first full year back in the council and a lot has been achieved to improve services for Council tenants in Bury.

We have significantly improved our property compliance ensuring we are compliant with the 'big six' compliance areas of gas, electrical safety, asbestos, legionella, fire safety and lift safety. This ensure that our tenants are living in safe homes.

We have also completed stock condition surveys for 87% of our properties allowing us to understand the condition of homes and develop an improvement program to ensure our homes are well maintained. This includes continuing to deliver our successful energy projects to prove the energy efficiency of homes. Works including extraction degraded cavity wall insulation and refill more thermally efficient wall insulation, loft insulation top up to 400mm, new double glazing and thermally efficient composite doors, ventilation upgrade and solar PV.

We carried out a successful mock inspection to identify any areas of weakness, putting in place an action plan to improve. We have established a Housing Advisory Board to ensure that tenants are involved in decision making and are able to influence our services and we have introduced our estate action days to increase visibility of the team on our housing estates.

Our Homeless and Housing Advice services continues to deliver high quality services despite the high demand facing the service. GMCA carried out a review of our homelessness services and found a highly resilient and motivated team despite overwhelming demand and significant resource constraints. They found that the right functions, ambitions, values and cultures were in place and the service was able to meet the challenges it faced.

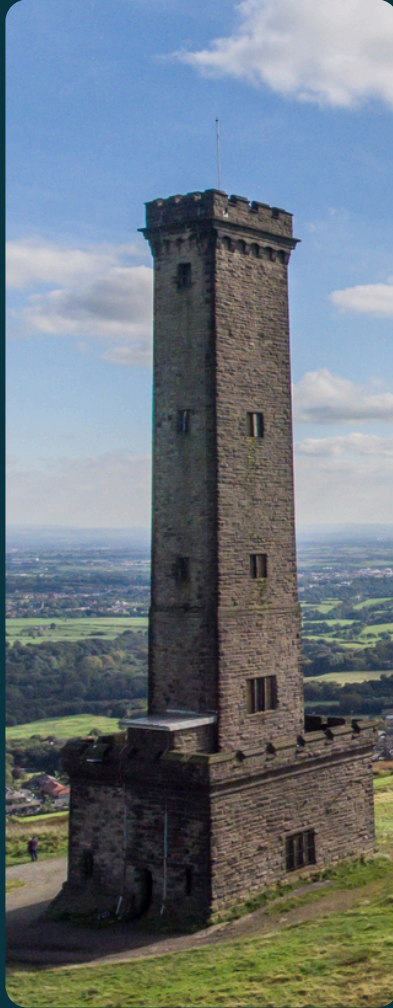
## **87%**

Properties reviewed  
as part of an  
improvement  
programme

## **Homeless Services**

Recognised by GMCA as  
being highly resilient and  
motivated

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