People's Budget

# Early Engagement Autumn 2026 for 2027-2028



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# Introduction: updating the People's Budget for 2027-2028

Between 15 September to 11 October 2026 we invited members of the public to consider how they would set Newcastle City Council's budget for the coming year using our online People's Budget simulator, which can be viewed online at: **www.letstalkbudget.org.uk**. We made several changes to it for 2026, which are described here, followed by a summary of who took part, and what they told us.

## Updating the budget simulator for 2026

In 2025, we ran the People's Budget campaign separate to statutory consultation for the first time, following feedback that running it alongside the statutory budget consultation period was confusing to residents. Feedback from the Finance and Budget Monitoring and Corporate Scrutiny Committees on this change was positive, but both groups said that they would like to have the results earlier to help inform decision-making around spending priorities, and that they would like to see us revise the wording of the 'consequences' of spending changes that the simulator presents.

Therefore, in 2026, we revised the People's Budget so that instead of asking people to "make savings", we asked about how they would allocate resources across our service areas and provided information about how different levels of spending would result in no services, a basic service, the current level of service, or an enhanced level of service. It is also possible to increase Council Tax and the Adult Social Care Precept to increase income, but not beyond the level that would trigger a referendum, and we removed the 'give up' option.

This approach reflects both feedback received on the 'consequences of cuts' messages that were a feature of previous budget simulators, and the focus on what is positive about Newcastle and what we can do together that was emphasised in the Newcastle's Big Conversation engagement exercise that ran earlier in 2026, we asked people who live, work in and visit Newcastle what they value about the city, what they would change and what they want for its future. More details on this are online here: Newcastle's Big Conversation.

Local authority budgets are complex and so the People's Budget simulator is not an exhaustive list of council spending. With that in mind, the primary focus of the campaign was, as in previous years, to educate individuals and communities around local government finances to raise awareness of the challenges of balancing our budget. Our communications on social media and in discussions in person reflected this. We are aware that some residents have expressed a preference for more detailed information when taking part in Budget-related consultation and engagement, and we will look at more ways this might be provided in future.

We would like to thank everyone who took part in this engagement exercise for taking the time to give us their views.

## How many people took part?

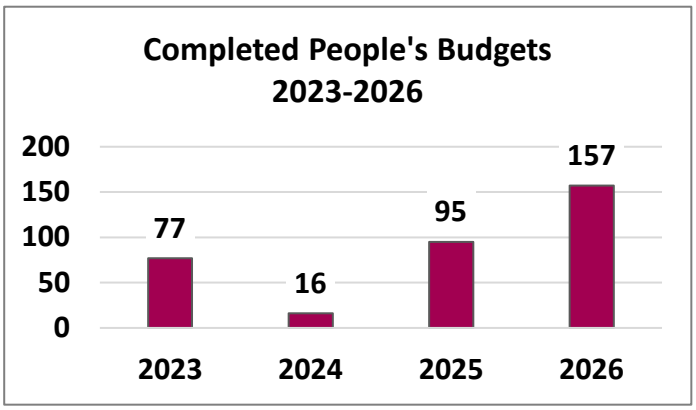
In 2026, we engaged people in three main ways: through the online simulator, in focus groups and discussions, and through social media.

| Channel | Responses |
|---|---|
| People's Budget Online Simulator | 157 |
| Focus Groups and Discussions | 38 |
| Focus Group 1 – Newcastle Youth Councillors aged 13-18 | 6 |
| Focus Group 2 – Newcastle Elders Council members aged over 65 | 3 |
| Focus Group 3 – Social housing tenants | 6 |
| Focus Group 4 – Student sabbatical officers | 6 |
| Focus Group 5 – People using ACANE services for African refugees and asylum seekers | 6 |
| Focus Group 6 – Newcastle Advisory Group – people with learning disabilities and support staff | 11 |
| Social Media – Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube | 784 |

We estimate that the **number of responses we received was 979**. Note that this is an estimate of the number of responses, not the number of individuals who took part, due to the nature of how the engagement with three main routes people could take part: the online budget simulator, focus groups, and social media.

Focus groups consist of focussed discussions in which people were asked to take part in the People's Budget. We aimed to invite a wide variety of different groups and communities in Newcastle to take part in hour-long detailed discussions to explore their views on spending priorities and what matters to them, facilitated by staff from the Explain Market Research agency.

Please note that we cannot provide a definitive number of people who took part, because those who took part in the focus groups were invited to complete the People's Budget online during the groups, and their responses are, therefore, included in the total number of people who completed the online simulator.
It is also possible that some people who completed an online People's Budget also commented on social media. As we do not have any way of knowing who did this and how many people did it, we can calculate the total number of responses, but not the total number of individuals. We had a bigger response to the online budget simulator than in previous years, as shown in the chart.




In the following analysis, we have used Microsoft CoPilot to assist with the first phase of analysis, with all such analysis checked by the researcher by having read the primary data, checking the preliminary analysis for accuracy against the data, and summarising the findings.

## A new approach to communications

As previously reported to Corporate Scrutiny Committee, a key element of the People's Budget campaign is to improve understanding of the financial challenges facing the Council and provide greater context for the difficult choices involved in setting a balanced budget.

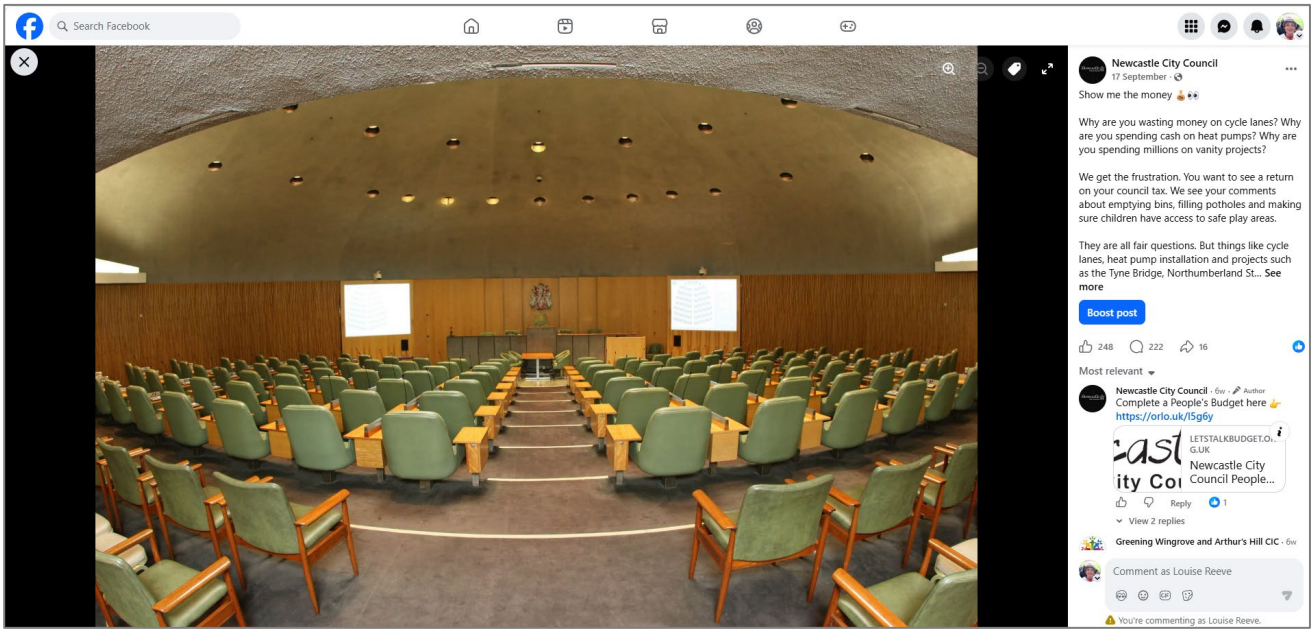
Previous engagement has demonstrated the importance of explaining the constraints within which the Council operates. Without clear information about how Council funding works, including restrictions on how particular funding can be used, there is a risk that residents may feel their views have not been heard or understood. The communications approach has therefore combined opportunities for residents to have their say with accessible information designed to explain the Council's financial position and address common misconceptions. Across the People's Budget 2025 and the subsequent statutory budget consultation, the Council engaged with more than half a million people.

Building on this approach, communications supporting the latest People's Budget included general social media content promoting the budget tool, alongside videos featuring Cabinet members, focus group participants and residents from across the city. The Council also sought to respond to questions and correct inaccurate information through social media engagement.

The campaign included themed content explaining:

- the significant proportion of the Council's available budget committed to Adult Social Care and Prevention;
- the impact of inflation, utility costs and wider increases in the cost of delivering services;
- the distinction between grant funding for specific purposes and the Council's core budget, including why funding allocated for one purpose cannot necessarily be redirected to another;
- how Council Tax income is allocated; and
- the reasons for Council Tax increases in the context of financial pressures and residents' concerns about the cost and availability of services.

The level of engagement indicates that this approach was effective in reaching residents and generating discussion. Across the campaign, social media content reached **371,279 people and generated 784 comments**. The example below illustrates how the campaign sought to explain the rationale and financial context behind Council spending decisions.




## Summary: What the People's Budget tells us

Across both the online Budget Simulator and in focus groups, responses to the People's Budget showed support for protecting services that meet people's essential needs, alongside investment that can improve residents' lives and local neighbourhoods over the longer term. Participants emphasised the importance of services such as **children and young people, education & early years, adult social care, clean & safe neighbourhoods, and community facilities**. They often expressed the view that prevention is very important, arguing that investment at an earlier stage can reduce more serious problems and higher costs in the future.

People also recognised that the Council faces difficult financial choices. Participants in several focus groups found it easier to identify services where they wanted additional investment rather than services where they were comfortable reducing expenditure. Concerns about affordability, particularly Council Tax, were also evident. At the same time, a recurring message was that residents wanted Council spending to demonstrate **value for money**, with greater efficiency, scrutiny and evidence that spending produces tangible benefits. Whilst they did not reference the importance of communications, we might also note that this shows the necessity of ongoing engagement to demonstrate what is happening and making sure that the impacts of Council spending are visible.

### Following on from Newcastle's Big Conversation

These findings are consistent with the priorities expressed in Newcastle's Big Conversation, when the quality of life in Newcastle's local neighbourhoods was mentioned by many participants. Three of the five main findings are especially relevant here:

1. **Cleaner, safer & better-maintained streets and public spaces** are a priority. This was the clearest area where people wanted to see improvement.

2. **Council services matter**. Services that support health, wellbeing and safety were particularly important, alongside services that keep neighbourhoods clean, safe and well maintained.
3. People want to play a part in improving their communities, but they also expect the council to lead. **People want to see what happens as a result of their feedback** and to be kept informed about progress.

The People's Budget findings have a slightly higher emphasis on services that meet people's needs such as adult social care, children and young people's services, and early years & education, which most likely reflects the different focus of both engagement exercises, with the budget simulator asking people to reflect in detail on the Council's service areas rather than the broader focus of the Big Conversation.

## Priorities from the online People's Budget

Overall, the 157 responses to the People's Budget showed relatively small changes to the largest areas of expenditure, particularly adult & children's social care, refuse & waste services, and early years & education. There was something of a focus on services for children and young people, with the aggregated budget keeping children's social care approximately at its existing level and made a relatively small reduction to adult social care, while increasing funding for early years & education. The largest percentage reduction was to enabling and business functions.

Participants increased spending in several areas which affect the wider environment and quality of life, including **refuse and waste, neighbourhood maintenance, highways, culture, leisure & libraries, planning & development, economic development, and enforcement & regulation**. The largest percentage increase was for enforcement and regulation (although we should note that this is a relatively small budget), while there was also a noticeable preference for greater spending on neighbourhood maintenance. The aggregate budget included the maximum Council Tax and Adult Social Care Precept increase permitted without a referendum, at 2.9%.

The most frequently mentioned spending priority in comments received was **children & learning**, followed by **culture, leisure & green spaces** and **care & safeguarding**. Clean and well-maintained places, infrastructure and accessibility, jobs and regeneration were also important. Participants frequently considered efficiency, value for money, evidence and personal experience when making choices. In the separate 'bright ideas' responses, prevention and service redesign and organisational efficiency and scrutiny were the two most frequently identified themes.

## Common priorities across the different forms of engagement

There was clear overlap between priorities emerging from the online exercise and those discussed in greater depth in the focus groups. Prioritising **investing in children and young people** was particularly consistent. Online respondents prioritised early years, education and opportunities for young people; Youth Councillors stressed education and opportunities over

the longer term; student representatives prioritised children, families and early years; and ACANE service users emphasised youth services, apprenticeships, training and routes into employment. The Elders Council also supported children, family and early-years services, showing that this was not only a priority among younger participants.

**Care and support for people with greater needs** was another common theme. Adult social care remained one of the most protected areas within the online budget, while care and safeguarding featured prominently in explanatory comments. Adult social care was the clearest priority among the Elders Council and council housing tenants, and was also an important priority for Youth Councillors, student representatives and ACANE service users. There was particular emphasis in the focus groups on prevention, helping people to remain independent and recognising the wider impact that a lack of support can have on families and carers.

A third area of agreement concerned **neighbourhoods and visible local services**. Online participants increased average spending on waste services, highways, neighbourhood maintenance and enforcement. Housing tenants placed particular emphasis on clean neighbourhoods, roads and pavements, effective enforcement and community safety. Youth Councillors connected clean, safe places and leisure opportunities with wellbeing and antisocial behaviour, while the Elders Council also highlighted roads, waste collection, cleanliness and fly-tipping. Similar priorities appeared on social media through comments about street cleaning, reliable refuse collection, community safety, roads and community facilities.

## Value for money, efficiency and accountability

A further consistent theme was that residents did not simply advocate for additional spending. Many also questioned **how effectively existing resources were being used**.

Twenty-five online participants referred to finding efficiencies, including reducing bureaucracy and overheads, and reviewing contractor and procurement costs.

Organisational efficiency and scrutiny was also one of the two leading themes among online participants' suggestions for saving money or generating income. This aligns with our Change and Innovation programme, which includes proposals to review spending on third-party contracts and designing better systems and processes to improve how residents interact with the Council, including the use of AI. The findings reinforce the importance of not only delivering these improvements, but also demonstrating clearly how they improve value for money, service delivery and residents' everyday experience of the Council.

Efficiency and value for money were particularly prominent themes in social media responses. Comments included concerns about management and wider workforce costs, waste, procurement and contracts, alongside calls for greater scrutiny and clearer evidence of outcomes. There was a corresponding emphasis on prioritising resources towards frontline, public-facing services. Housing tenants similarly highlighted visible service delivery, value for money and evidence that expenditure was translating into tangible improvements for residents.

Taken together, these findings suggest that participants' views about **what should be funded were closely connected to how confidently they felt public money was being managed and translated into effective services**.

## Information, transparency and trust

Several strands of the engagement also highlighted a desire for **clearer information about council finances**. The Elders Council felt it was difficult to make informed choices without more detailed and accessible information, while student representatives wanted greater information about existing expenditure, service performance and the practical consequences of changing budgets. Housing tenants raised questions about trust, accountability and whether consultation would lead to action. On social media, detailed and accessible budget information was one of the most frequently identified themes, alongside calls for scrutiny and measurable outcomes.

This is important when interpreting the results. People's difficulty in identifying reductions did not necessarily mean they rejected the need to balance the budget. Focus group discussions showed that participants recognised the trade-offs involved but often felt they did not have sufficient information to judge the consequences of reducing particular services. We will take this on board when running future engagement exercises.

## Priorities of individual focus groups

**Youth Councillors took a broad view** rather than concentrating only on services for their own age group. They prioritised children and education, adult social care and mental health, culture and leisure, safe and clean neighbourhoods and economic opportunities. Long-term benefits, vulnerability, prevention and quality of life influenced their choices, although affordability made participants cautious about increasing Council Tax.

**Elders Council members placed adult social care at the centre of their priorities**, including preventative support, independent living, unpaid carers and support for people with learning disabilities. They also prioritised children and families, culture and leisure, parks and libraries, and neighbourhood services. Their discussion had a strong intergenerational focus, with participants considering the needs of younger people and families as well as older residents.

**Council housing tenants emphasised services where residents could see a tangible difference**. Adult social care was their clearest stated priority, alongside community safety and enforcement, education and employment opportunities, waste and recycling, and roads and neighbourhood maintenance. They also wanted resources directed towards visible frontline services and placed considerable importance on value for money, accountability and trust.

**Student sabbatical officers prioritised children, families, early years and education**, alongside adult social care. They regarded services as interconnected and saw investment in younger people as potentially preventing greater social and financial costs later. They found it particularly difficult to identify areas for reductions without more information about current performance and the consequences of spending changes.

**ACANE service users placed particular importance on employment, training, apprenticeships and local business development**, alongside children and young people's

services, adult social care and community support. Their priorities were strongly influenced by prevention and inequalities between neighbourhoods. They favoured targeting resources according to need and barriers to accessing services, including bringing opportunities closer to lower-income communities. Digital inclusion and support for community organisations were also priorities.

**Newcastle Advisory Group wanted to protect the services that keep people supported, included and able to live well, while looking for fairer and less harmful ways of managing limited resources.** Participants recognised the council's financial constraints, but their priorities were shaped primarily by need, prevention, lived experience, affordability and fairness, rather than by a simple desire to reduce expenditure.

## Overall conclusion

Taken together, the findings point to a broadly consistent set of principles. Participants wanted the Council to **protect essential care and support, invest in children and prevention, maintain clean and safe neighbourhoods, and support opportunities that improve people's longer-term prospects**. **At the same time, they expected the Council to demonstrate efficiency, value for money and accountability**.

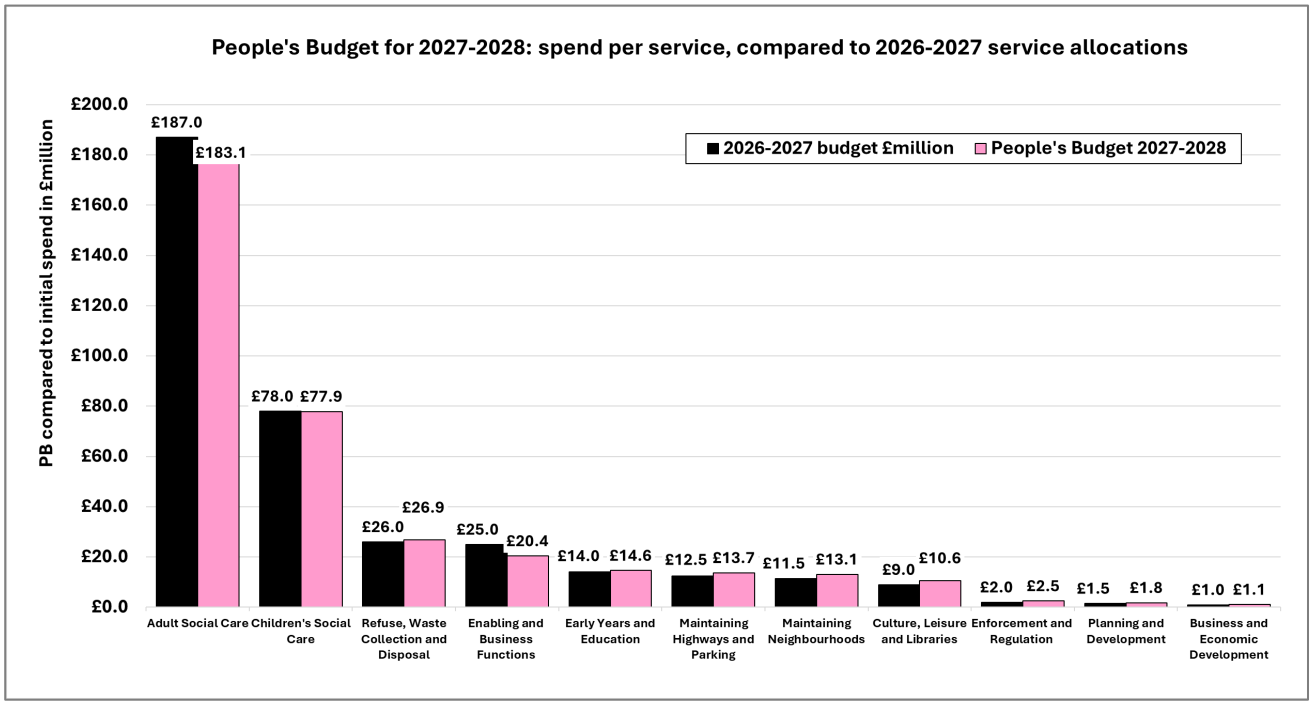
While social media responses were more likely to focus on management and staffing costs, transport and scrutiny, the underlying emphasis on efficiency, visible service delivery and value for money was consistent with feedback from the online exercise and focus groups.

The engagement therefore suggests that residents' priorities cannot be understood simply as preferences for one service over another. Across the different methods, participants frequently considered **who benefits, the level of need, whether investment prevents future problems, whether services produce visible results, and whether spending is fair and effective**. These considerations provide important context for interpreting the allocations made through the online budget simulator and the choices residents would like the Council to make when setting its budget.

# 1. The People's Budget: findings from the Online Simulator

## What people wanted to spend on service areas in 2027-2028

The chart below shows the initial spend on each service area as of 2026-2027, compared to the proposed spending amounts which people have selected in the People's Budget for 2027-2028:




(Please note that the Public Health and Capital Spending budgets do not appear in the charts and tables in this report, because they cannot be changed.)

We can see that in the **People's Budget 2027-2028**:

- **Spending increased** on refuse, waste collection & disposal; early years & education; culture, leisure & libraries; maintaining highways; maintaining neighbourhoods; planning & development; business & economic development, and enforcement & regulation.
- **Spending stayed** the same on children's social care.
- **Spending decreased** on adult social care, and enabling & business functions.

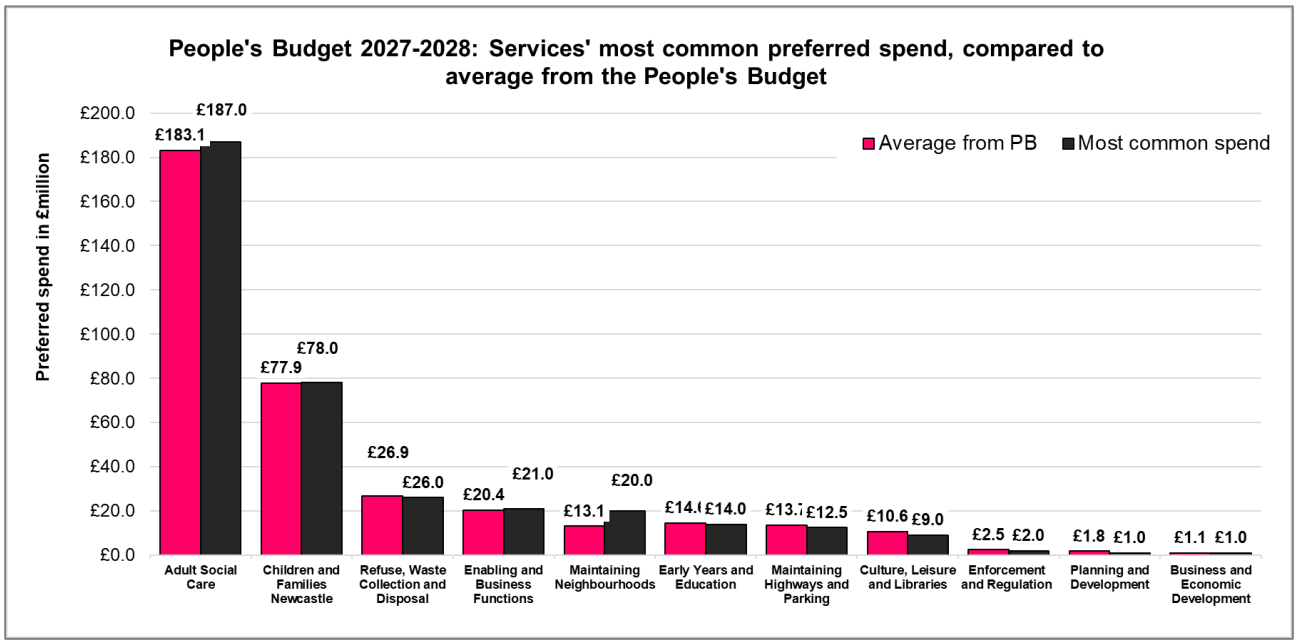
In nearly all cases, these were not very large changes, and we should also bear in mind that Adult Social Care is the single biggest area of spend. Thus, cutting spending on it is one way to balance the budget whilst preserving some level of service.

## Council Tax and Income Generation

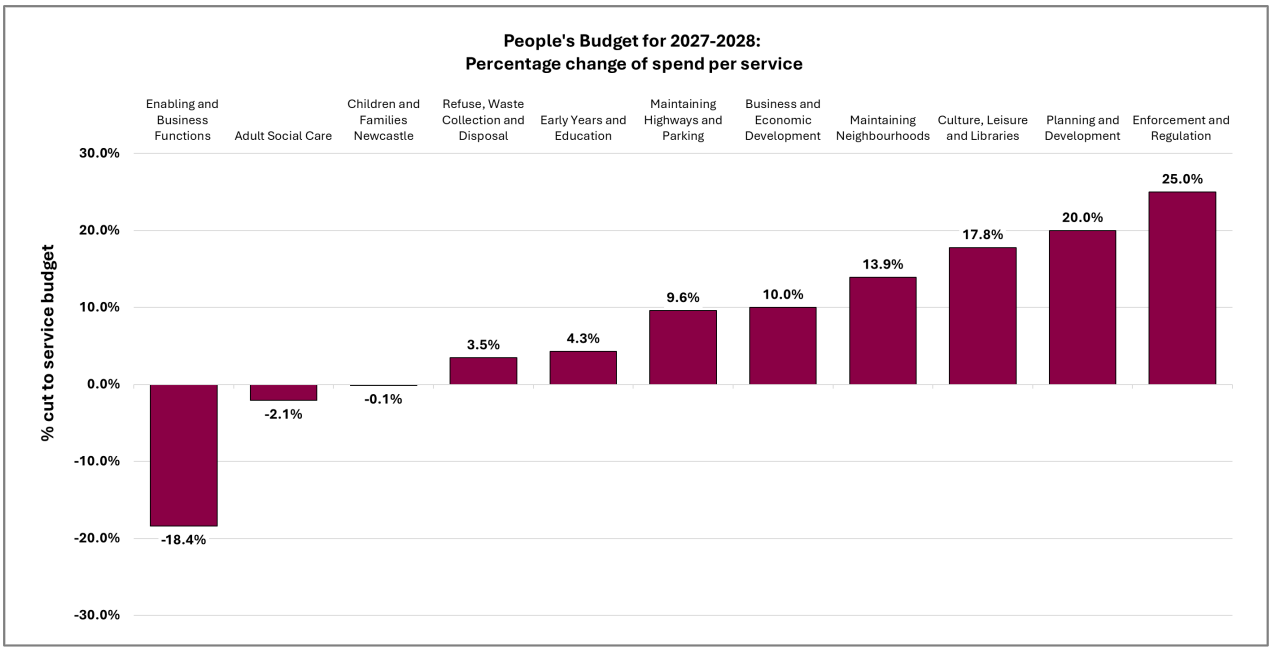
The People's Budget for 2027-2028 had a **Council Tax and Adult Social Care Precept** increase of 2.9%, generating £5million. This is the maximum allowed without triggering a referendum and is consistent with decisions made in previous years. In this year we did not ask about people's views on other ways to generate income, such as fees, charges and other income (from services such as registrars, school meals and more).

## How did people approach setting the budget?

The People's Budget online simulator is set up to produce a single 'People's Budget' by averaging all the online budgets submitted. It is interesting to compare this with the most common amounts that were submitted. For example, as shown in the chart below, the **average** preferred spend for maintaining neighbourhoods was £13.1M – higher than the actual spend in 2026-2027 of £11.5M – but when we look at the amount preferred by the **largest number of respondents**, this is £20.0M, which is even higher.

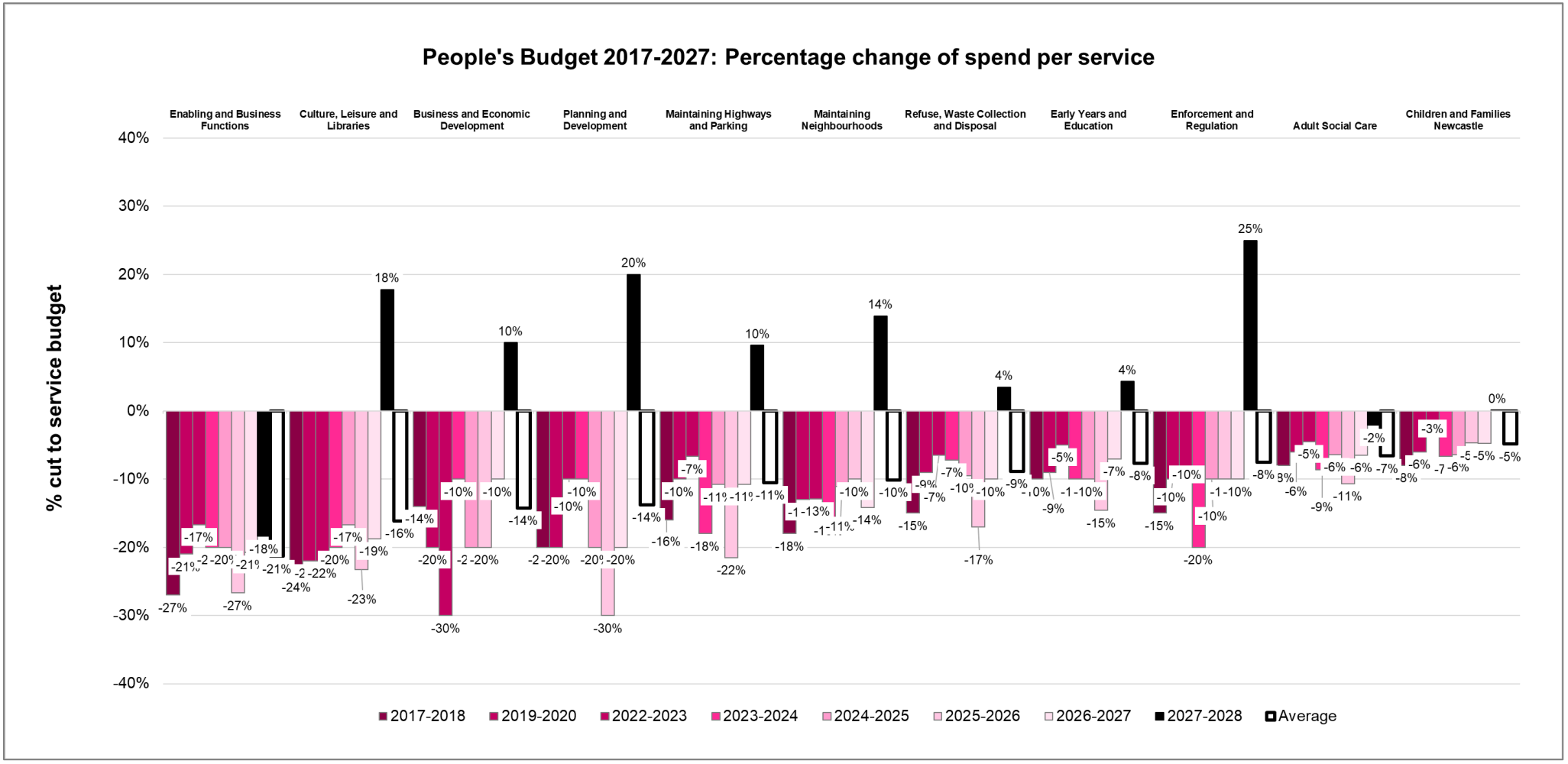



Another way to look at this is to consider the amounts per service in the People's Budget 2027-2028 as a percentage of the actual spend on services in 2026-2027. As shown in the chart below, the biggest percentage increase in spending (25.0%) was on Enforcement & Regulation – from £2.0M to £2.5M, and the biggest percentage decrease was in Enabling & Business Functions – from 25.0M to £20.4M.



In 2027-2028, people preferred to make smaller changes to children's and adult's social care, refuse & waste collection services, and early years & education, which is consistent with all previous years. Beyond this, it is harder to compare the People's Budget in 2027-2028 with those in previous years, because we redesigned it to focus on 'allocating spending' rather than 'making cuts', and also removed the options to increase income through increasing charges, and to 'give up'.

As shown in the chart on the next page, the new focus on allocating funding appears to have resulted in people being more willing to increase spending on some service areas, including culture, leisure & libraries; maintaining highways; maintaining neighbourhoods; planning & development; business & economic development, and enforcement & regulation.


People's Budget 2017-2027: Percentage change of spend per service
% cut to service budget
Enabling and Business Functions
Culture, Leisure and Libraries
Business and Economic Development
Planning and Development
Maintaining Highways and Parking
Maintaining Neighbourhoods
Refuse, Waste Collection and Disposal
Early Years and Education
Enforcement and Regulation
Adult Social Care
Children and Families Newcastle
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
-10%
-20%
-30%
-40%
2017-2018
2019-2020
2022-2023
2023-2024
2024-2025
2025-2026
2026-2027
2027-2028
Average

## What people told us about the reasons for their choices

97 participants commented on why they had made these choices. We can split the themes in their comments into two groups; the **factors that informed** their spending priorities, and the **priorities themselves**.

Looking at the 'top three' themes in people's comments:

1. the **most common** theme in people's comments about the factors that inform what they prioritise was to describe their **general approach** to taking part, saying what mattered most to them as an individual (31 people). The next **two most common** themes were:
2. to **look for efficiencies**, which has been a common theme in previous years (25 people), and
3. participants also commented on how their choices were informed by **evidence** they were aware of and their own **experiences** (20 people).

Again, thinking about what people have said in previous years, the next most common topic was to say why they had prioritised spending on adult social care (16 people) – 'review spending on adult social care' has frequently been a theme in earlier years' People's Budgets.

### Factors informing spending priorities

| Main theme and subthemes | Number of mentions | Anonymised examples of what participants said |
|---|---|---|
| **General comments on rationale**<br>• General thoughts on how people approached taking part | 31 | 'I considered how much to allocate on the basis of what I think more could be spent on.' |
| **Looking for efficiencies**<br>• Improve efficiency and value for money<br>• Reduce bureaucracy and overheads<br>• Reduce spending on contractors and procurement costs<br>• Use new technology and innovate | 25 | 'Enabling & Business Functions is where I would look first for savings, maybe 5-10%, via shared services or Digitisation rather than frontline cuts.' |
| **Evidence and experience**<br>• Personal or local experience shapes priorities<br>• Statutory and core duties should come first<br>• Visible service impact matters | 20 | 'Social care services are statutory, demand-driven, and where 70%+ of most council budgets go for a reason.' |

| Main theme and subthemes | Number of mentions | Anonymised examples of what participants said |
|---|---|---|
| **Care-related priorities**<br>• Looking at how cuts in one area of public spending affect other areas | 16 | 'Cutting here just shifts cost onto the NHS and creates crisis-driven spending later, which is more expensive.'<br>'Any reduction in spending on care costs will have a severe impact on care standards for disabled people.'<br>'Cuts over the last ten years have reduced services to a bare minimum.' |
| **Reach and fairness**<br>• Benefitting the greatest number of people<br>• Protect people with greatest needs<br>• Target misuse of spending and assess need | 16 | 'This is because more people will benefit from this.'<br>'Vulnerable adults will become more vulnerable and open to abuse, leading to bigger spending on safeguarding.' |
| **Budget simulator shows constraints**<br>• Budget choices are constrained<br>• Exercise seen as unrealistic or misleading | 11 | 'This is all contrived, really.'<br>'This is the constraint the tool is trying to teach: there's very little discretionary money once you protect these two services [adult social care, and children and families services].' |
| **Long-term impact of spending**<br>• Invest early to prevent later costs | 11 | 'By driving revenue-generating areas, the long-term growth opportunities for the council and local areas will improve income and allow additional investment.'<br>'Focus on younger people and children – they are the future and need a good start in life.' |
| **Income and prevention**<br>• Generate income and recover costs<br>• Increase enforcement and fines | 10 | 'Business development will help increase income for the council.'<br>'The council needs to look at more innovative ways to generate income and take on fewer uneconomic adventures such as the Crowne Plaza Hotel.' |

| Main theme and subthemes | Number of mentions | Anonymised examples of what participants said |
|---|---|---|
| **Council Tax and affordability**<br>• People should accept a higher level of council tax to protect services<br>• Oppose any council tax increase | 8 | 'Families can no longer be expected to endure endless increases in Council Tax; [the cost of living is] out of control.'<br>"I am willing to pay more council tax to improve the local area." |

## Spending priorities

Looking at the 'top three' themes in people's comments about their spending priorities:

1. the **most common** theme was a focus on **supporting learning and providing services for children and young people** (15 people said this), with people mentioning the importance of these services in tackling inequality in the long-term. The next most common themes were:
2. the need to **invest in culture, leisure and green spaces** (14 people), and
3. **care & safeguarding services for adults and children** (14 people).

It is noticeable that services for children and young people were often mentioned in comments alongside other services that people wanted to spend money on, along with the need to grow the local economy and improve local neighbourhoods and roads.

| Main theme and subthemes | Number of mentions | Anonymised examples of what participants said |
|---|---|---|
| **Children and learning**<br>• Invest in early years and education<br>• Provide youth activities and safe places | 15 | "I increased funding for because education & early years support can improve opportunities for young people and help reduce inequality." |
| **Culture, leisure and green space**<br>• Invest in parks and green spaces<br>• Protect libraries, culture and leisure | 14 | "I chose to increase funding because libraries, parks, leisure facilities and cultural activities are important for communities and give young people safe and positive places to spend their time." |
| **Care and safeguarding**<br>• Protect children and family support<br>• Protect or increase adult social care | 14 | "Adult Social Care and Children & Families I'd fund at, or slightly above, current levels." |

| Main theme and subthemes | Number of mentions | Anonymised examples of what participants said |
|---|---|---|
| **Clean and well-maintained places**<br>• Improve street cleaning and neighbourhood maintenance; Improve waste and bin collections<br>• Tackle fly-tipping and antisocial behaviour | 12 | "Bins need to be emptied weekly to help fly tipping and support the environment." |
| **Infrastructure and accessibility**<br>• Repair roads, paths and lighting | 9 | "I'd protect maintaining highways and neighbourhoods, as potholes and street cleanliness are consistently the top resident complaint in every UK council satisfaction survey." |
| **Economy, jobs and regeneration**<br>• Invest in jobs, business and economic development<br>• Support regeneration and long-term growth | 7 | "I'd increase the service level of business & economic development services to attract revenue-generating business to the local area to improve job availability and variety." |
| **Safety and environment**<br>• Improve safety and policing<br>• Support environmental sustainability | 6 | "Less road investment will mean more incentive to switch to greener modes of transport." |
| **Maintain current provision**<br>• Protect current service levels | 4 | "Reduction in highest spending areas slightly, to maintain service levels but free up funding for other key areas." |
| **Planning, housing and development**<br>• Improve planning and building regulation<br>• Prioritise housing | 3 | "Cut the red tape on planning applications, improve turnaround time and promote growth in the construction industry enabling more housing, business expansions and extensions to be approved." |

## ‘Bright ideas’ suggested by People’s Budget participants

A number of those who took part gave us their bright ideas for saving money and generating income. The most common themes in these comments were:

1. **The importance of prevention and redesigning services to ensure this** – seventeen people mentioned this, and
2. **Organisational efficiency and scrutiny of spending** – seventeen people mentioned this.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1.** | 17 | ‘Focusing on local services, children, education and families should be the top priorities.’ |
| **2. Organisational efficiency and scrutiny** | 17 | ‘Drive down waste in all services by simplifying systems. Innovation is not always better, especially in digital and tech development- it can and does lead to the further disenfranchisement of many [people].’ |
| **3. Economic growth and employment** | | ‘Driving business growth by attracting new employers to the area  promote investment from outside-of-Newcastle businesses, creating new jobs and industries and improving the council’s bottom line through additional council tax revenue.’ |
| **4. Assets and commercial income** | 12 | ‘Focus on the departments that do currently generate income and work out ways to increase this income.’ |
| **5.** | | |
| **6.** | | |
| **7.** | | |
| **8.** | | |
| **9.** | | |

## 2. Feedback from Focus Groups – Summary

We wanted to hear from different groups of people across Newcastle and contacted community and voluntary groups to ask if they would be able to take part in focus groups. These are organised discussions lasting for about an hour, with between six to eight people taking part, facilitated by a researcher from the Explain Market Research agency who led the discussion by, firstly, introducing the People's Budget Online simulator and inviting participants to complete it.

Secondly, after participants had had chance to do this (about fifteen minutes), the facilitator invited them to discuss the ideas and challenges raised by the simulator using a set of questions prepared in advance to guide the discussion. The focus groups were recorded, with consent obtained from the participants, and the market research agency supplied us with transcripts of the focus groups for analysis. We have **38 participants**.

| Theme | Number of people taking part |
|---|---|
| 1. Youth Councillors | Six Youth Councillors, aged between 13-18. |
| 2. Elders Council | Three members of the Elders' Council, aged over 65. |
| 3. Council Housing Tenants | Six council housing tenants. |
| 4. Student Sabbatical Officers | Six student sabbatical officers from both Northumbria and Newcastle Universities: five present in person, one online. |
| 5. ACANE service users | Six users of ACANE's service; ACANE supports African asylum seekers and refugees in Newcastle. |
| 6. Newcastle Advisory Group | Eleven people; five people with learning disabilities, three support workers, and three members of staff from Skills for people. |

We have analysed the transcripts of their discussions using Microsoft CoPilot to assist. The method followed is to read the whole transcript to gain a sense of the data, then to read and identify quotes, categorising them as meaningful units. These are then condensed into shorter sentences, assigned a code, and subthemes are developed, with the research objective being to identify what the participants' priorities for council spending are, and the factors informing these priorities.

CoPilot has been used to do initial analysis, with the research having read through all transcripts, then reviewing the identified themes and 'meaningful units' – the views expressed by the participants in the transcripts – to confirm that the understanding of the themes is correct.

## What the focus groups told us

Here is a summary of all the groups' main concerns and priorities.

| Theme | Quick Take-Away |
|---|---|
| 1. Youth Councillors | **Investing in people and place while recognising financial limits**: There was a tension running through the discussion, because participants wanted investment that they believed would improve people's lives now and create longer-term benefits for Newcastle, particularly through children and education, social care and mental health, safe and clean communities, leisure and economic opportunities. At the same time, they recognised that the available budget was limited and were conscious that raising more money through council tax could put further pressure on households. |
| 2. Elders Council | **A need for more detailed information, and a concern for intergenerational fairness and needs-based allocation**: Participants' priorities were informed by a **collective and intergenerational understanding of need** rather than by age alone. They considered impacts on younger adults, children, carers, families and the wider community, not only older adults. However, they felt that it was very difficult to make firm decisions about where to allocate resources without more **detailed information** in an accessible format. They also wanted to see spending choices informed by meaningful public deliberation. |
| 3. Council Housing Tenants | **Spend where residents can see it making a difference**: Probably the most significant finding from this group is that those who took part did not view it only as an exercise in ranking service areas, but a chance to express their views that value for money, visibility, effectiveness and trust are the criteria through which tenants decide whether spending is worthwhile. It was noticeable that **those taking part repeatedly assessed spending through whether it had a tangible effect on people's lives and neighbourhoods**. Services associated with care, safety, education, cleanliness and the physical environment attracted support because participants could connect them to visible needs. |
| 4. Student Sabbatical Officers | **Participants understood council spending as a set of interconnected social choices in which almost every reduction has consequences for somebody.** The students taking part **prioritised investment in people**, particularly children, families, early years and adult social care, because they viewed these services as both meeting people's immediate needs and contributing to longer-term social outcomes, such as health and employment. They acknowledge that their priorities were shaped by their lived experience, age and life stage, academic and professional knowledge, perceptions of service |

| Theme | Quick Take-Away |
|---|---|
| | performance and a strong awareness that council services are interconnected.<br><br>They found it substantially **easier to identify services deserving further investment than services from which funding could be withdrawn**; like the Elders' Council focus group, their ability to make those trade-offs was further constrained by a what they saw as a lack of information linking current expenditure to actual service performance, and the practical consequences of increases or cuts. |
| **5. ACANE service users** | **Council spending should create opportunities, protect people who need support, and put resources where residents can realistically access them.**<br><br>One way to describe what people using ACANE's services wanted to see would be an "**investment-and-prevention model**" of council spending. They repeatedly prioritised spending on services that they believed would expand people's ability to participate economically and socially, such as employment, training, apprenticeships, viable local businesses, youth services, social support and accessible community provision. They justified spending on these areas not only for the immediate benefits but because they believed it could reduce poverty, anti-social behaviour, crime and future demand for other services.<br><br>At the same time, their priorities were strongly shaped by their view that **opportunities are not distributed evenly across Newcastle**, saying arguing that lower-income communities such as Byker needed opportunities located within or close to them. Their views on what is fairness in spending is not so much "equal expenditure across Newcastle," but closer to "targeting resources according to barriers to accessing services and need." |
| **6. Newcastle Advisory Group** | **Protect the services that keep people supported, included and able to live well, while looking for fairer and less harmful ways of managing limited resources.**<br><br>As in other groups, there was tension running throughout the discussion: participants recognised the council's financial constraints, but their priorities were shaped primarily by need, prevention, lived experience, affordability and fairness, rather than by a simple desire to reduce expenditure. |

## 1. Youth Councillors

We held a focus group with six Youth Councillors, aged between 13-18, on Wednesday 17th September, facilitated by Explain Market Research. The Consultation Lead Officer, Louise Reeve, attended to help introduce the budget simulator, and a member of staff from the Voice and Influence team was also present to support the meeting. The young people present spent fifteen minutes completing their own People's Budgets online, then about 45 minutes discussing their thoughts on the issues raised, with the facilitator recording the session.

A noticeable trend in the discussion was that the Youth Councillors taking part did not only prioritise spending on services that directly affect or are used by children and young people. **Their choices reflected a wider view of Newcastle**. and included children and education, adult social care and mental health, culture and leisure, safe and clean neighbourhoods, and economic development.

The factors that informed their spending priorities were:

- **Long-term impact**; investing in services for children, education and future generations, to improve people's opportunities throughout their lives.
- **Levels of need and vulnerability**, including SEND (Special Education Needs and Disabilities) services, and protecting people who need social care or mental health support.
- **Personal priorities and experience**, including issues participants had already identified through their Youth Council involvement.
- **Visible situations in communities** that need improving, with Benwell given as an example when discussing waste and neighbourhood services.
- **Improving quality of life and the need for preventative services**, especially what young people saw as links between cleanliness, safety and leisure opportunities in local areas, and improvements in both residents' mental health and levels of anti-social behaviour.
- **Promoting economic opportunities**, including employment opportunities and support for independent businesses.
- **Affordability and cost of living**, which made them cautious about increasing Council Tax.
- **The necessity of trade-offs**, with participants recognising that protecting or improving one service could mean reducing another.

Their comments included:

> 'Kids that get that education could end up becoming the people who make the world better.'
>
> 'If I wanted to fund something, I knew I had to cut something…having to balance that was not so good.'
>
> 'If we have a clean, safe city it makes everybody feel better.'

## 2. The Elders Council

We held a focus group with three members of the Elders Council, aged over 65, on Monday 28th September, facilitated by Explain Market Research. Those present spent fifteen minutes completing their own People's Budgets online, then about 45 minutes discussing their thoughts on the issues raised, with the facilitator recording the session.

Participants approached the exercise cautiously and with a strong commitment to protecting public services. Their **highest priority was providing good adult social care,** in particular:

- preventative support, for example ensuring people are aware of what support they are entitled to at an early stage to help them remain active and living in their own homes
- help for unpaid carers
- support for people with learning disabilities
- support that enables independence
- services that reduce pressure on wider families
- sustainable home-care provision.

Other **strong priorities** included:

- **Children, families and early years services**, because earlier intervention may reduce later harm and expenditure.
- **Culture, leisure, libraries, parks and community facilities**, because these support wellbeing, social participation, prevention and quality of life.
- **Neighbourhood and infrastructure services**, including roads, waste collection, street cleanliness and the prevention of fly-tipping.
- **Effective enabling services**, where administration, legal services, technology and other less visible functions demonstrably support frontline delivery.

The **factors** informing these priorities were:

1. **Perceived level of need**, including an ageing population and increasing or more visible support needs among younger adults.
2. **Impact on families**, especially unpaid carers and multigenerational households.
3. **Prevention**, based on the belief that early support avoids more serious and expensive problems.
4. **Quality of life**, not simply survival or minimum statutory provision.
5. **Previous service reductions**, creating a belief that many services are already "cut to the bone."
6. **Interdependence between services**, such as links between parks, libraries, public health and social care.
7. **Concern about false economies**, where cuts or charges create costs elsewhere.
8. **Fairness and collective responsibility**, including consideration of services participants may not personally use.
9. **Personal and professional experience**, including knowledge of health, care, voluntary organisations and neighbourhood issues.
10. **Ability to understand the budget**, including the clarity, consistency and accessibility of the information supplied.

11. **Trust in the process**, which they felt was weakened by what seemed to be sometimes inconsistent figures and unclear terminology.
12. **Accessibility and digital inclusion**, particularly the availability of paper information and alternatives to completing the exercise on a small screen.
13. **Evidence of effectiveness**, including whether expenditure generates income, prevents demand or produces wider social value.

Participants generally found it **difficult to reduce spending** because they viewed most council services as necessary, interconnected and already under pressure. They were particularly concerned about cuts producing wider or delayed costs for individuals, families, communities and other public services.

A central finding is that **participants' priorities cannot be separated from their experience of the consultation exercise**. They repeatedly said that they felt that they lacked enough reliable, consistent and accessible information to make informed choices. Consequently, several participants increased priority services while maintaining other services at their current level, producing an unbalanced budget. However, the inability to balance the budget was not simply a technical difficulty, but reflected the participants' view that the available resources were insufficient to meet legitimate public needs.

Comments included:

> 'The lack of adult social care [services] is actually having quite a big impact on family life… it's not just about older people.'
>
> 'If you've got a child or a grandchild who's got particular needs and you're not getting the help, the impact on the wider family is very significant.'
>
> 'Why can't parks and open spaces be part of [the] public health [budget]?'

## 3. Feedback from Council Housing tenants

We held a focus group with six council housing tenants from across Newcastle, also on Monday 28th September, facilitated by Explain Market Research. As is standard for the focus groups, those present spent about fifteen minutes completing their own People's Budgets online, then about 45 minutes discussing their thoughts on the issues raised, with the facilitator recording the session.

The most noticeable aspect of this discussion is that participants did not only prioritise services according to how important they believed the service was in principle, but their **spending priorities were strongly shaped by their everyday experience of whether services were visible, accessible, effective and represented value for money**.

**Four overarching themes** emerged:

1. **Protect essential services** that support people and prevent harm
2. Invest in safe, clean and functioning **neighbourhoods**
3. Redirect resources from administration towards **visible frontline delivery**
4. Spending decisions depend on trust, accountability and **evidence of impact**

Within these, adult social care was the clearest explicitly stated priority, alongside education, enforcement and community safety, waste and recycling, neighbourhood services and maintaining roads and pavements. Analysis identifies six main spending priorities:

1. **Adult social care and support for older people**: The clearest explicitly expressed priority, associated with protecting older and potentially vulnerable residents.
2. **Community safety and effective enforcement**: Including visible wardens/staff, tackling anti-social behaviour and effective responses when residents report problems.
3. **Education, skills and routes into employment**: Seen both as intrinsically important and as a longer-term means of strengthening individuals and communities.
4. **Clean neighbourhoods, waste and recycling**: Participants expected reliable basic environmental services and equitable access to facilities such as recycling.
5. **Roads, pavements and neighbourhood maintenance**: Poor physical condition contributed strongly to perceptions that current expenditure was not delivering adequate value.
6. **Visible frontline provision**: Across different services, participants favoured resources reaching provision that could be experienced directly rather than less visible administrative functions.

### What factors inform those priorities?

People's spending preferences were informed by:

- their personal and observed **experience** of services
- the perceived **vulnerability** or needs of residents who depend upon them
- **visibility** of delivery, especially seeing staff and improvements locally
- **affordability**, particularly in relation to council tax, and perceived value for money
- **trust** in how public money is allocated and transparency and accountability
- whether residents believe reporting or consultation produces **action**, and
- a preference for **preventative investment**, visible when discussing education, employment, social care and safer neighbourhoods.

Comments included:

'I genuinely feel that in this country we seem to be in a place where we are slowly and constantly ignoring the elderly population.'

'But do they really listen to us? We can do all of this, and it's just like yes, but look, they're still going to do what they want anyway.'

'I mean, we're collapsing the council for all the services that the council provides and then asking subcontractors to do it for more money than if the council were actually doing it.'

## 4. Feedback from student sabbatical officers

We held a focus group with six student sabbatical officers from Northumbria and Newcastle Universities, on Thursday 1st October, facilitated by Explain Market Research. Those present spent fifteen minutes completing their own People's Budgets online, then about 45 minutes discussing their thoughts on the issues raised, with the facilitator recording the session.

The strongest overall finding is that **participants did not see spending priorities as independent services competing for money**. They repeatedly described council services as interconnected and found it difficult to reduce spending because reductions in one area could produce consequences elsewhere. Within that contents, children and families, early years and education, and adult social care emerged as particularly strong priorities for spending. Investment in children and younger people was often framed as preventative and future-focused, while adult social care was viewed as an existing and continuing pressure that could not simply be reduced.

A **second major finding is that the factors shaping priorities were almost as prominent as the priorities themselves**. Participants explicitly recognised that their decisions were affected by:

- personal and family circumstances
- age and stage of life
- educational and professional backgrounds
- previous work experience
- direct experience of local services
- what they encountered in their neighbourhoods and through the media
- perceptions of unmet need
- concern about the future of Newcastle
- knowledge, or lack of knowledge, about current spending and service performance
- willingness to make trade-offs or pay more tax.

Comments included:

> 'I don't think you can fully grasp what the consequences of cutting down things or increasing things [are] just from a few bullet points.'
>
> 'I've tried to put more money into [services for] children, families, early years and education... if you're investing in young people, then when they grow up, you don't have to spend as much in those other areas.'

## 5. Feedback from ACANE Service users

We held a focus group with three members of the Elders Council, aged over 65, on Monday 28th September, facilitated by Explain Market Research. Those present spent fifteen minutes completing their own People's Budgets online, then about 45 minutes discussing their thoughts on the issues raised, with the facilitator recording the session.

A strong pattern runs through the discussion: participants did not generally see spending areas as isolated services. They repeatedly described employment, economic opportunity, youth provision, education, social care and community support as interconnected, with investment in early intervention services potentially reducing the need for spending on problems such as anti-social behaviour later.

The **strongest priorities** for council spending emerging from this group 's discussion were:

1. **Employment** and routes into work, particularly in lower-income communities.
2. Economic and local **business development** to create jobs and strengthen the local economy.
3. **Children and young people's services**, particularly youth services, apprenticeships, vocational training and work experience.
4. **Adult social care** and support for people with greater needs.
5. Investment targeted at **disadvantaged neighbourhoods**, with opportunities physically accessible within those communities.
6. **Community organisations**, particularly those supporting minority communities.
7. Practical measures to address **digital exclusion**, including access to technology as well as skills.
8. Maintaining necessary **infrastructure**, but potentially at a basic level where participants considered other social priorities more pressing.

The **five factors** that informed these priorities were:

1. **Prevention**. Participants repeatedly preferred investment that they believed could prevent problems rather than pay for their consequences.
2. **Economic opportunity**. Jobs and businesses were understood as producing wider benefits through higher household incomes, reduced disadvantage and additional tax revenue.
3. **Inequality**. Perceptions of unequal opportunities between lower- and higher-income
4. **Affordability**. Participants' opposition to council tax increases reflected concern about asking households already experiencing financial pressure to pay more.
5. **Lived experience**. Participants frequently justified priorities through direct experiences involving their families and communities.

Comments included:

'We have three generations of unemployment here in Byker… Why spend a lot of money to [tackle] antisocial behaviour where you can stop it by [tackling] its cause, unemployment?'

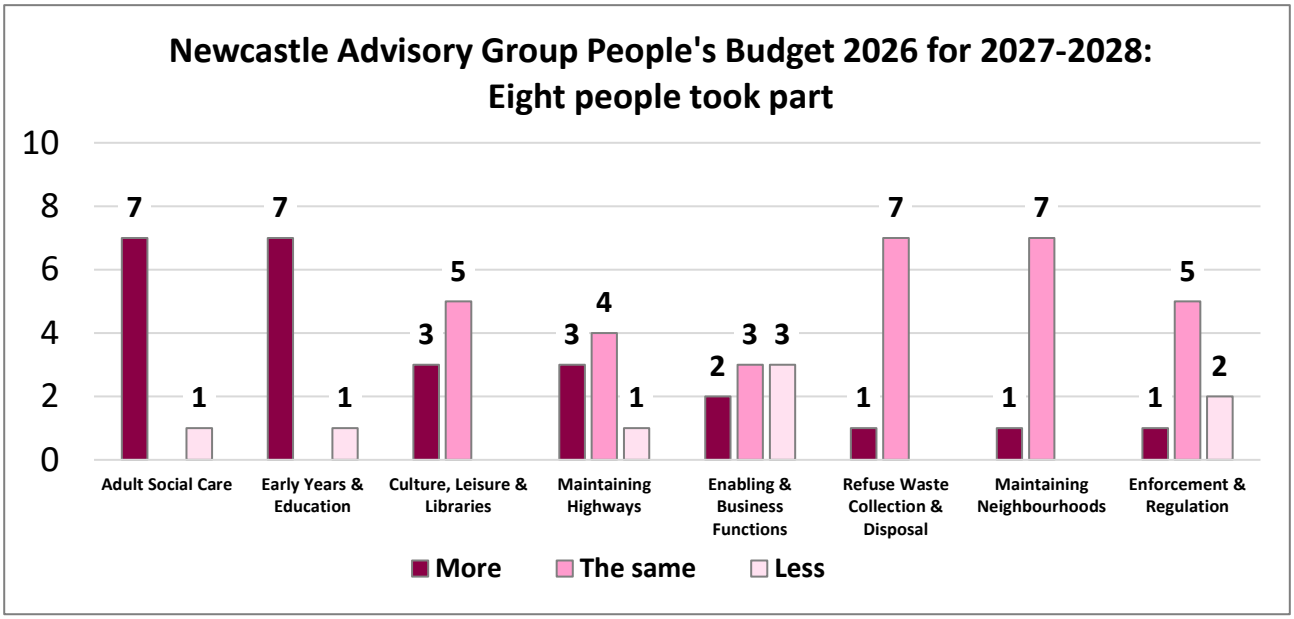
'I wanted to put more budget into early years [services]… but then I realised I didn't have enough money for [both early years and culture & libraries.'

## 6. Feedback from Newcastle Advisory Group

The Newcastle Advisory Group is a group of adults with **learning disabilities**, convened by Skills for People, who provide advice from the perspective from people with learning disabilities on public service and proposals, among other topics. On 14 October, we held a focus group with them with 11 people present; six people with learning disabilities, two support workers and three members of staff.

All were given the option to **complete a People's Budget using an 'easy read' version of the Budget Simulator**. This was not a 'full' Easy Read version of the simulator as it did not use images, but the language used and choices offered were simplified. We based this on feedback from the group on what would make it more accessible for them, received at an earlier meeting in September. Instead of a slider which people could set to different spending amounts, we gave people the options of spending more, the same, or less on each service area compared to the spending in the 2026-2027 financial year.

The different options mean that we cannot add in these responses to the 'main' People's Budget, as they cannot be combined. Instead, **the 'Newcastle Advisory Group People's Budget' is summarised in this chart**, which shows that most people wanted to spend more on social care year, and early years & education, the same on refuse, waste & disposal, maintaining neighbourhoods, and less on enabling & business functions, and enforcement & regulation.




Taken as a whole, the discussion suggests that **participants' approach to the council budget was primarily protective rather than reduction-focused**.

The clearest concern was **protecting services that directly affect people's wellbeing and independence, particularly adult social care**. Children & families and education were also framed as important people-facing services. Participants' reasoning frequently went beyond maintaining the immediate service: appropriate support was seen as potentially preventative, reducing the chance that people's needs would worsen.

Participants also valued the **everyday collective infrastructure of the city**. Roads, refuse collection, clean neighbourhoods, parks, libraries and museums mattered because they are

encountered in ordinary life. The condition or accessibility of those services directly affected judgements about spending.

A further underlying consideration was **financial pressure on residents**. Free cultural and leisure facilities were valued partly because they enable people and families to participate without spending money. Participants were therefore conscious both of pressures on the council budget and pressures on household budgets.

This **made the trade-off exercise difficult**. Participants understood that spending could not simply increase everywhere, but there was considerable reluctance to reduce services considered useful or already stretched. Where savings were contemplated, participants tended to consider services that appeared less immediately connected with people's everyday needs, or whether functions could be delivered differently.

Finally, there was **some willingness to consider raising additional revenue**, including a small increase in council tax, if this allowed valued services to be maintained. However, participants' comments indicate that the perceived fairness of who contributes matters.

Comments included:

‘A small increase in Council Tax means more money to spend on everyone, and everyone contributes. This seems fair and a minimal increase.’

‘It would be helpful if the council didn't keep advertising on social media about what percentage of budgets are spent on adult social care, it just breeds resentment!’

# 3. Feedback from social media

We posted about the People's Budget on Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and LinkedIn (we did not post on X, formerly Twitter), with the majority of comments being received on Facebook, and comments on these posts have been collated for analysis. As anyone posting in response to a social media post did not have the full information in front of them, as they would if participating in the People's Budget simulator either online or in person, we have analysed these comments separately.

Given the large volume of comments received, it has not been possible to identify how many individuals commented; we do know that many commented more than once. Analysis showed that we received around 700 comments across all channels which contained feedback on the budget proposals, but we should note that many comments were requests for information, off-topic debates (for example, on services managed by central government, not Newcastle City Council staff).

The most common themes in social media comments were:

1. **Value for money**: Invest more in public facing services and reduce workforce costs – **11** mentions
2. **Transport choices**: Public transport, buses and active travel – **10** mentions
3. **Transparency & accountability**: Detailed, clear & accessible budget information – **9** mentions

As shown below, social media feedback contained a wide range of views mentioned by Where people expressed opinions that were factually untrue, we commented to present the facts in response. The table below provides a more detailed analysis of what those commenting on prioritised.

| Theme and details | No. of mentions | Illustrative quotations |
|---|---|---|
| **Value for money:** Senior pay, management and workforce costs | 11 | 'If the council used new procurement methods to source services, supplies, stopped using contractors and employed their own staff a lot of money would be saved.' |
| **Transport choices:** Public transport, buses and active travel | 10 | 'Why are we losing our buses to hooligans? ' |
| **Transparency and accountability:** Detailed, clear and accessible budget information | 9 | 'Without additional contextual information, it's impossible to make decisions just on budget headings alone.' |
| **Fair taxation:** Reduce, freeze or reform council tax and charges | 8 | 'The core problem with the council tax system is the total absence of consumer choice.' |

| Theme and details | No. of mentions | Illustrative quotations |
|---|---|---|
| **Road layout and congestion:** Reduce congestion and review traffic schemes | 8 | 'Get rid of the cycle and bus lanes and give the roads back to the motorists.' |
| **Value for money:** Efficiency, productivity and reduce waste | 8 | 'Why couldn't the council review the remuneration of senior management while protecting the pay of lower-paid staff?' |
| **Transparency and accountability:** Scrutiny, audit and measurable outcomes | 6 | 'I wouldn't necessarily object to investing in our roads, but I would want much stronger monitoring of cost, timescales and outcomes.' |
| **Economic and asset management:** Council assets, regeneration and commercial decisions | 6 | |
| **Clean, safe neighbourhoods:** Street cleaning, litter and waste enforcement | 5 | 'Clean the main streets in the city centre.' |
| **Community facilities:** Libraries, parks, arts and community spaces | 5 | 'More children's play areas all around the city, the ones that we have are overcrowded.' |
| **Community safety:** Policing, anti-social behaviour and enforcement | 5 | 'Fine landlords who flout HMO laws.' |
| **Funding system:** Ring-fenced grants and funding choices | 5 | |
| **Reliable waste services:** Bins and refuse collection | 5 | 'Put the bins back to weekly.' |
| **Value for money:** Procurement, contracts and in-house delivery | 5 | 'Can we audit how much we are paying the contractors for road works?' |

| Theme and details | No. of mentions | Illustrative quotations |
|---|---|---|
| **Housing:**<br>More and better council or affordable housing | 4 | ‘Build more three- and four- bed council houses.’ |
| **Trust and influence**:<br>Doubts about whether consultation will influence decisions | 4 | ‘This is a rather confrontational post.’ |
| **Education and skills:**<br>Schools, courses and employment support | 3 | ‘I did that training for years and seriously, most of us were just bored.’ |
| **Funding system:**<br>Fairness of who pays and who benefits | 3 | ‘People are sick of paying more for less.’ |
| **Road maintenance and highways:**<br>Repair roads and potholes | 3 | ‘Fix the roads.’ |
| **SEND and disability support:**<br>SEND and disability services | 3 | ‘What about kids with special needs who we hear cannot get the support they need due to lack of money?’ |
| **Children and young people:**<br>Youth services and early intervention | 1 | ‘Good news for young people!’ |

# 4. Who took part

We know the following facts about people who took part in the People's Budget:

- Of the 128 people who answered the question about their **sex**, **52% were male**, 38% were female, 4% replied 'other', and 5% said they preferred not to give any information about this.
- 129 people answered the question about their **age**. 7% were aged under 18, 8% were aged 18-24, **44% were aged 25-44**, 29% were aged 45-64, and 12% were aged 65 and over.

# 5. How we invited people to take part

Feedback from previous years' budget consultations from community groups has indicated that many people prefer to have a conversation about budget proposals in person where possible. We therefore developed a paper version of the People's Budget simulator, including handouts containing the information and paper questions, and made it available on request and in focus groups for those who needed it. We also produced a paper-based simplified version of the budget simulator which was not a full 'Easy Read' version (using Easy Read images) but used simplified language to make it easier for people with learning disabilities to use, following feedback from the Newcastle Advisory Group of adults with learning disabilities, hosted by Skills for People.

We visited two Newcastle Neighbourhoods events to publicise the budget simulator, also a focus group at Disability North on the Adult Social Care and Prevention Plan, to make them aware of the opportunity to take part. We also promoted the People's Budget via a press release and news item on our website.

## Direct invitations to take part

Registered members of Let's talk Newcastle Online who had asked to receive notifications of our engagement work were sent email invitations to take part. We also produced a list of stakeholder organisations who were emailed an invitation to take part using the Council's Consultation and Engagement Stakeholder Database. This is a list of community organisations and groups who have previously expressed an interest in engaging with us, and who represent communities of interest – for example, Connected Voice, Disability North and West End Women and Girls. We also contacted organisations and individuals who took part in Newcastle's Big Conversation earlier in the year and asked us to inform them about future consultation and engagement work.

Using our staff Corporate Communications bulletin, we asked staff to invite residents, community groups and service users they work with to take part in the People's Budget. Connected Voice (our local Council for Voluntary Service) put information about this in their regular bulletin to their members. Several organisations who were not able to host a focus group with us agreed to email their members to ask them to take part, which included the Angelou Centre, HAREF, the Health Champions network, the LGBT Roundtable, the Revival network, the Schools Bulletin, and the Women and Girls network.

A table summarising our social media engagement, including reach, is shown on the next page.

## Social media

We promoted the People's Budget online through regular posts on our social media channels, including Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn and Instagram. Note that 'reach' figures for the same post on Facebook and Instagram are combined as a single figure, listed next to the post title on Facebook.

| Title | Date | Channel | Comments | Reach |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. How would YOU spend £400 million? | 11/09/2026 | Facebook | 35 | 7,295 |
| 2. How would YOU spend £400 million? | 11/09/2026 | LinkedIn | 35 | 1,975 |
| 3. Show me the money 💰👀 | 17/09/2026 | Facebook | 222 | 72,224 |
| 4. Show me the money 💰👀 | 17/09/2026 | LinkedIn | 8 | 10,966 |
| 5. What would YOU do with Newcastle's budget? | 18/09/2026 | Facebook | 32 | 63,017 |
| 6. What would YOU do with Newcastle's budget? | 18/09/2026 | LinkedIn | 0 | 4,335 |
| 7. How would you spend Newcastle's £400 million council budget? 💰 | 21/09/2026 | Facebook | 39 | 26,697 |
| 8. How would you spend Newcastle's £400 million council budget? 💰 | 21/09/2026 | LinkedIn | 0 | 1,974 |
| 9. The cost of caring ❤️ | 22/09/2026 | Facebook | 31 | 27,987 |
| 10. The cost of caring 💙 | 22/09/2026 | LinkedIn | 0 | 1,280 |
| 11. Where does our council tax go? 💰😳 | 24/09/2026 | Facebook | 111 | 35,643 |
| 12. Where does our council tax go? 💰😳 | 24/09/2026 | LinkedIn | 0 | 2,935 |
| 13. "Paying more for less" | 30/09/2026 | Facebook | 182 | 20,835 |
| 14. Quickfire 1 | 08/10/2026 | Facebook | 36 | 33,097 |
| 15. Quickfire 1 | 08/10/2026 | YouTube | 0 | 1,000 |
| 16. Quickfire 1 | 08/10/2026 | TikTok | 0 | 951 |
| 17. Quickfire 1 | 08/10/2026 | Instagram | 0 | 0 |
| 18. Quickfire 1 | 08/10/2026 | LinkedIn | 3 | 6,606 |
| 19. Quickfire 2 | 09/10/2026 | Facebook | 36 | 8,328 |
| 20. Quickfire 2 | 09/10/2026 | YouTube | 0 | 43 |
| 21. Quickfire 2 | 09/10/2026 | TikTok | 0 | 3,518 |
| 22. Quickfire 2 | 09/10/2026 | Instagram | 0 | 0 |
| 23. Quickfire 2 | 09/10/2026 | LinkedIn | 3 | 6,509 |
| 24. Quickfire 3 | 11/10/2026 | Facebook | 10 | 30,529 |
| 25. Quickfire 3 | 11/10/2026 | YouTube | 1 | 78 |
| 26. Quickfire 3 | 11/10/2026 | TikTok | 0 | 921 |
| 27. Quickfire 3 | 11/10/2026 | Instagram | 0 | 0 |
| 28. Quickfire 3 | 11/10/2026 | LinkedIn | 0 | 2,536 |
| - | | **Totals** | **784** | **371,279** |

# People's Budget

**Balancing the city's budget.**

