

CANDIDATE BRIEFING PACK

Chief Executive

Prepared for Luton Borough Council

May 2025



Penna

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Welcome Letter

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Executive at Luton Council.

This is an incredibly exciting and pivotal time for our town. We are proud of the bold progress we've made on our shared vision for **Luton 2040** – a town built on fairness, sustainability, and opportunity, where no one has to live in poverty.

In the past year alone, we've helped **lift over 5,000 people out of destitution** – a powerful reflection of our unwavering commitment to tackling inequality and improving life chances. Our efforts are being recognised nationally. According to the Centre for Cities, **Luton was ranked number one in the UK for job growth between 2010 and 2022**, a clear signal of our dynamic and resilient local economy.

We're also proud of the recognition we've received from the **Local Government Association**. Their Corporate Peer Challenge described our Luton 2040 vision as "trailblazing," and following their return visit, they praised the '**remarkable progress**' we've made in delivering on that ambition.

Luton 2040 is an ambitious and inclusive long-term plan, shaped with cross-party support and through meaningful collaboration with residents, businesses, and partners. At its core is a drive to create a child friendly, healthier, greener, and more inclusive town – ensuring economic prosperity is shared by all.

A key pillar of our economic growth is **London Luton Airport** – one of the UK's busiest and most important airports. It plays a central role in driving jobs, regeneration, and investment in our town. We're thrilled that the government has now formally **approved the expansion of London Luton Airport**, unlocking significant new opportunities for sustainable growth, employment, and infrastructure investment. We remain committed to ensuring this expansion is delivered responsibly, in line with our climate ambitions and in close partnership with our communities.

At the same time, we are progressing a series of major regeneration and infrastructure projects – from new housing and skills development to transport and town centre renewal – that will transform Luton for the long term.

This is a unique opportunity for a forward-thinking, inclusive, and values-driven leader to help us take Luton to the next stage. As Chief Executive, you will play a vital role in building strong partnerships, delivering meaningful change, and keeping our residents at the heart of all we do.

If you share our ambition and want to lead a place with momentum, vision, and heart, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Warm regards,

Councillor Hazel Simmons
Leader of Luton Borough Council



Advertisement

Luton Council - Chief Executive

Salary: £195,067 - £212,679 + Car benefit £5,618

Lead a bold and ambitious future for Luton

Luton is a town with ambition, super-diversity, and a strong sense of community. Our vision for Luton 2040 is working – but there's more to do to help us create a fair, sustainable and thriving town where no one has to live in poverty. We are looking for an exceptional leader to continue to drive our vision and bring about real change that improves the lives of our residents, supports businesses, strengthens our communities and build on the fantastic results we have already achieved.

As Chief Executive, you will be at the forefront of one of the UK's most dynamic and fast-evolving towns. You will lead a council committed to innovation, transformation, and inclusive growth, working in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver ambitious projects, including:

- London Luton Airport – maximising economic growth while delivering sustainability
- Town centre regeneration – creating a modern, vibrant, and prosperous hub
- Investment in skills, jobs and housing – ensuring opportunities for all

What We're Looking For

We need a visionary, strategic, and people-centred leader who can inspire and drive change. You should bring:

- A proven track record of leadership in a complex, high-profile organisation
- A passion for public service and making a tangible difference to communities
- The ability to build strong partnerships across public, private, and voluntary sectors
- A strong commitment to equality, inclusion and sustainability
- The confidence and resilience to lead Luton through both challenges and opportunities

This is an opportunity to shape the future of a town with limitless potential. If you are ready to take on this challenge and make a lasting impact, we would love to hear from you.

Please contact our retained consultants at Penna for further information as detailed below:

Julie Towers – 07764 791736 or email Julie.towers@penna.com

Amin Aziz – 07709 514141 or email Amin.aziz@penna.com

Ali Tasker – 07514 728114 or email ali.tasker@penna.com

Closing date: Midnight, Sunday 1st of June 2025

Technical Interviews: Friday 13th and Friday 27th of June 2025

Final Interviews: Thursday 10th and Friday 11th of July 2025

JOB DESCRIPTION



TITLE: Chief Executive

POST NO: 50308100AN

DEPARTMENT: Chief Executive's

RESPONSIBLE TO: The Leader of the Council

GRADE: Chief Executive terms and conditions

MISSION: Enabling Luton to be proud, vibrant, ambitious and innovative

PURPOSE OF POST:

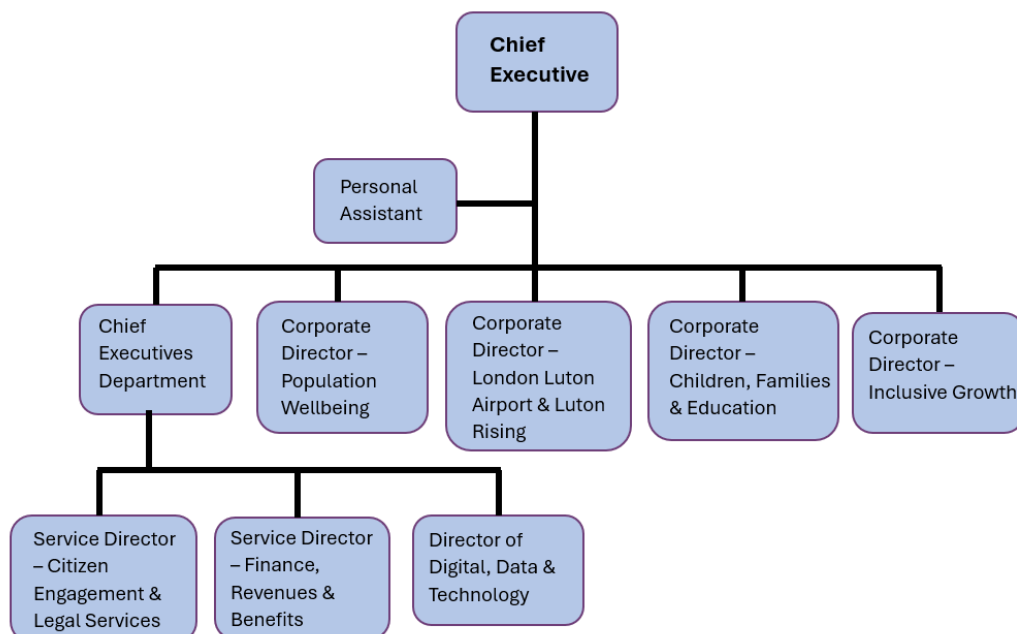
The Chief Executive is the principal adviser to the elected members and the head of paid service. The post-holder will undertake the role of Shareholders Representative for London Luton Airport Limited and all other Luton Group Companies with specific responsibility for ensuring appropriate oversight of company's affairs.

The Chief Executive is additionally the Council's Returning Officer. The responsibility for this role is one of a personal nature distinct from the duties as an employee of the Council.

To lead, motivate and inspire the organisation to deliver continuous improvement, focusing on improving the quality of services and customer services through new innovative ways of working, empowering individuals and teams, and managing performance.

This role sets the strategic direction of Luton Council, integrating the internal resources and utilising and optimising external partner relationships. The role will be accountable for the delivery of the Luton 2040 vision to eradicate poverty which will have a significant impact on the lives of people living in, visiting and working in Luton. The Chief Executive will act as an advocate for the Council and the Town at Local, Regional and National level.

ORGANISATION CHART:



Luton's Mission & Values



Our values are a key driver of everything we do.

Collaborative - we work as one team, producing great results for Luton.

Ambitious - we're determined to improve lives every day.

Respectful - we are open, honest and embrace difference.

Empowering - we trust our own decisions and those of others.

Supportive - we help each other to reach our full potential.

The Chief Executive will have responsibility for ensuring that the organisation lives and breathes these values.

Our Vision - Luton 2040

The Luton 2040 vision is for Luton to be a healthy, fair, and sustainable town where everyone can thrive, and no one has to live in poverty. The vision is underpinned by five key priorities: for Luton to be a Healthy, Child Friendly, Net Zero Town, built on fairness and social justice, with a strong and Inclusive Economy.

PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

Strategic Leadership and Management

1. Provide clear leadership and direction on the development and implementation of the Council's vision and spearhead service improvements, strategies, policy and practice that deliver key priorities in line with this vision. Play a lead role in ensuring the delivery of Luton's 2040 Vision.
2. Enable and ensure the effective corporate management of the Council to achieve the Council's aims and objectives through active leadership of the senior management team and the development and implementation of corporate projects and initiatives.
3. Work co-operatively with and provide timely and appropriate professional advice and support to, all elected representatives of all political groups, ensuring that they are well informed, able to discharge their duties and secure successful outcomes in pursuit of the Council's aims and objectives.
4. Lead on ensuring the formulation and implementation of policy, plans, strategies and effective management systems that deliver annual efficiency targets in line with governmental requirements.
5. Work across the Public, Voluntary, Community and Private Sectors in Luton to ensure strategic alignment with Luton's 2040 Vision.
6. Support the Mayor and members in providing the Civic Leadership for the Town

Service Delivery and Performance

7. Lead on ensuring that the Council's services are; driven by quality, judged by their results and determined by the needs of the communities and people of Luton multi-functional and collaborative – that services work co-operatively across all of the Council's departments in order to meet customers' needs, deliver the Council's corporate strategies and achieve the Council's overall aims and objectives subject to

effective long-term service planning with a co-ordinated business and service planning approach and service plans that link targets to service objectives and focus action plans on meeting targets.

8. Ensure that effective corporate performance and management arrangements are in place and kept under review to achieve the Council's overall aims and objectives, and provide an effective challenge to departmental service review programmes.
9. With the senior management team;
 - ensure that systems are in place to manage, develop, monitor, evaluate and review performance at all levels to deliver performance to agreed targets, service standards and budgets
 - strive to improve the Council's overall performance and achieve excellence in relation to the external assessment regimes
 - promote the use of performance information to manage and improve performance throughout the Council.
10. Manage and appraise directly reporting people through the setting and monitoring of performance targets and standards, to ensure they effectively achieve corporate plans, encouraging personal development and providing support and advice.

Resource Management

11. Develop, foster and promote an organisational capability for the Council to; continually deliver better services whilst adjusting to changing demands continually deliver efficiency and service improvements through the successful implementation of the transformation agenda.
12. Have an overview of the transformation programme promoting the most efficient and productive approach to be deployed by all levels of management and professionals to deliver efficiency in all aspects of organisational development and service provision.
13. Direct the senior management team to ensure that the Council's resources, eg, long and medium-term financial, service plans and corporate mechanisms are developed, deployed, monitored and controlled efficiently to achieve the Council's service objectives and outcomes. This will include the appointment, motivation, development and performance of quality staff.
14. Manage the Chief Executive's department, ensuring effective communication and delivery of key milestones in the departmental service plans.

Culture

15. Promote and deliver an organisational culture in conjunction with the Council "Future Ready Plan": that is positive, incorporates a 'one council approach', forward looking, results oriented, and customer focused that is supportive, fair and open, encouraging and enabling all parts of the workforce to meet required performance standards that sustains high standards of probity, integrity and public confidence that has positive commitment from staff and members to political accountability and continued improvement within the Council that is in keeping with the corporate values of the Council.
16. Promote a sense of purpose and ownership of the Council's corporate plans throughout the organisation, and empower all managers and other employees to develop the confidence and commitment to ensure the successful achievement of objectives and outcomes.

17. Promote efficiency, excellence and equality of opportunity in the delivery of services and employment practices. Ensure that the Council's strategic direction and leadership fully embraces equality dimensions, issues and aspirations, is responsive to the need for change and committed to Luton's diverse communities.

Communications & Partnerships

18. Develop, maintain and promote effective communications and establish effective working relationships with the Council's elected members, the public, private sector and governmental organisations.
19. Develop key working partnerships with other community organisations and public authorities that ensure the Council's interests are well informed, widely understood and furthered as appropriate. Ensure that these working mechanisms deliver improved and responsive services, optimising scarce resources, that reflect the needs of people in Luton and enhance the Council's community leadership role and deliver Luton 2040.
20. Represent the Council at national and regional levels, with government bodies, local authorities, agencies, the local community, the business community, academic institutions and any other appropriate organisations/bodies. Utilise these strategic networks to raise Luton's profile, promote the authority as a progressive Council and to inform strategic direction.

Luton Group.

21. Represent the Council's share-holding interest in LLAL and other Luton Group Companies as the Council's nominee. Exercising the voting rights of the Council as a Member of the company in accordance with the instructions of the Council, or, where no specific instructions have been given, on the basis of her/his understanding of the Council's wishes and interests in relation to the matter before the Meeting.
22. Ensure that the Luton Shareholder Group provides appropriate oversight of the activities of Luton Group companies.
23. Support the Lead Officers for the Group Companies, ensuring specific responsibility for the overall conduct of the company's affairs and ensuring effective liaison with the shareholder. Representing the company at meetings with senior representatives of the shareholders of the airport operating company and other partners.

Dimensions.

Employees: The total number of Luton Council employees is approximately 2,700.

Financial: Gross expenditure of all Council departments . -£572m gross expenditure-
Net Budget for Chief Executive's Department. -£17.2m

CONTEXT:

Luton Council is a unitary authority with a population of 231,000. Luton shares many similar characteristics to a London Borough. The population is super diverse with more than 140 languages and dialects spoken in the town. The borough is densely populated, and has large pockets of deprivation, with some areas that are the most deprived in the country. Luton has high population turnover which has implications on the provision of services.

The Council works in challenging circumstances. There are significant requirements in terms of local needs, with demand-led budgets causing particular concerns.

There is a clear expectation that the post holder will, through personal example, demonstrate commitment to, value and celebrate the diversity of Luton's communities, ensuring equality of access and treatment in employment and service delivery within the Directorate, and promote effective communication, within the Directorate, across the Council and externally.

Person Specification

This acts as selection criteria and gives an outline of the types of person and the characteristics required to do the job.

Essential (E) :- without which candidate would be rejected

Desirable (D):- useful for choosing between two good candidates.

Please make sure, when completing your application form, you give <u>clear examples</u> of how you meet the <u>essential and desirable</u> criteria.				
Attributes	Essential	How Measured	Desirable	How Measured
Experience	Substantial senior and/or executive management experience in a large multi-functional organisation, including strategic management of large budgets and resources, driving, managing and implementing organisational change.	1,2	Experience of working within a Local Government setting at Leadership level	
	Substantial experience in dealing with strategic policy and planning in a large organisation, formulating and successfully implementing corporate objectives, policies and strategies and operating in empathy and compliance with the legislation impacting upon local authorities.	1,2		
	Substantial experience of effective partnership working with strategic partners e.g. local strategic partnerships.	1,2		
	Substantial experience in commercialisation, including the ability to develop and implement commercial strategies that generate revenue, optimise financial sustainability, and drive efficiencies within a large organisation.	1,2		
Skills/ Abilities	Able to communicate effectively at a strategic level within a politically sensitive environment - demonstrating complex influencing, negotiating, diplomacy and advocacy skills. This will include consulting widely at all levels and building effective and productive partnerships internally and externally.	1,2,3, 5		
	Able to demonstrate inspirational leadership and motivational skills that empower people to challenge, develop and deliver improved and responsive services that reflect and meet corporate, service and individual objectives.	1,2		
	Able to undertake the strategic management of large resources within an organisation to deliver services within objectives and timescales.	1,2		
	Able to give articulate, comprehensible and			

Please make sure, when completing your application form, you give <u>clear examples</u> of how you meet the <u>essential and desirable criteria</u> .				
Attributes	Essential	How Measured	Desirable	How Measured
	<p>persuasive presentations that demonstrate a full grasp of political and strategic contexts. Presentations will effectively engage with a wide variety of audiences, including the media, and may be on controversial and/or complex matters.</p> <p>Able to write and present comprehensive and insightful reports on complex issues.</p> <p>Able to provide sound professional advice and guidance at senior management / director/elected member level.</p> <p>Able to organise and undertake a highly diverse and pressured workload, managing constant and often conflicting work demands and still meet competing deadlines and targets.</p>	<p>1,2,5</p> <p>1,2</p> <p>1,2</p> <p>1,2</p>		
Equality Issues	In-depth knowledge and understanding of equality issues and legislation and, in particular, how they impact on work with communities - able to integrate equality policies into strategic plans, service delivery and employment practices.	1,2		
Specialist Knowledge	<p>Substantial knowledge of, and empathy with, the legislation impacting upon local government, social inclusion, commercialisation and Business Transformation agendas.</p> <p>Substantial knowledge of national transformation and modernisation agendas and other legislation and Government guidance that currently impacts on local authorities.</p>	<p>1,2,5</p> <p>1,2,5</p>		
Education and Training	Evidence of development of high-level strategic management skills e.g. through training, qualification and/or experience.	1,2,4	Relevant professional/ management qualification(s).	1,2,4
Other Requirements	Able to attend meetings and events outside office hours in order to fulfil the demands of the job.	1,2		

(1 = Application Form 2 = Interview 3 = Test 4 = Proof of Qualification 5 = Practical Exercise)

We will consider any reasonable adjustments under the terms of the Equality Act (2010), to enable an applicant with a disability (as defined under the Act) to meet the requirements of the post.

The Job-holder will ensure that Luton Council's policies are reflected in all aspects of his/her work, in particular those relating to;

(i) Equal Opportunities

(ii) Health and Safety

(iii) Data Protection Act (2018) and General Data Protection Regulation (2018)

This post is deemed to be a politically restricted sensitive post. For further information please see the Council's statement on politically restricted posts.

How to Apply

This guidance contains important information to help with your application:

- Please apply by submitting a CV and Covering Letter (no more than four sides of A4 in length per document aligned to the person specification). Please also include your contact details.
- Please ensure your full employment history is outlined in your CV; and that where there are essential criteria, competencies and/or qualifications you make clear how you meet these. We may wish to verify this information during the recruitment process.
- Please provide the details of two referees. Note that we will only approach referees for candidates proceeding to final selection and only with your permission. Please clearly indicate whether we can approach each referee before the selection date.
- Please share with us in your supporting statement, the values and behaviours that you bring to your leadership, and how you will transfer your skills and experience into this role.
- Please complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form when you upload your details.
- Please return your application by the closing date – no applications will be accepted once the long listing process has begun.
- Following long listing, you will be contacted directly by a Penna consultant to update you on the status of your application.
- At any point throughout the process our retained consultants at Penna will be happy to help you with information, insight and guidance about the process and our clients.

The following timetable sets out the key dates in the recruitment process:

Date	Activity
Closing Date	Midnight, Sunday 1 st of June 2025
Longlist Meeting (candidates not required to attend)	Thursday 12 th of June 2025
Preliminary Interviews	Friday 13 th of June and Friday 27 th of June 2025
Shortlist Meeting (candidates not required to attend)	Monday 30 th of June 2025
Assessment Centre and Final Interviews	Thursday 10 th and Friday 11 th of July 2025

To apply for this role, please click the link below:

[Chief Executive](#)

Please contact our retained consultants at Penna for further information as detailed below:

Julie Towers – 07764 791736 or email: julie.towers@penna.com

Amin Aziz – 07709 514141 or email: amin.aziz@penna.com

Ali Tasker – 07514 728114 or email: ali.tasker@penna.com

**LUTON
2040**



CHANGE TODAY

2025 Progress Report

Luton2040.co.uk



Welcome



LUTON
2040

In 2024, for the second consecutive May weekend, Luton became the centre of the world. Following 2023's Wembley heroics, this year, the eyes of the UK focused on Stockwood Park as Coldplay rounded off a 'Big' weekend that will live long in the memory. We even got our own song...

"I was born in love with Luton, and I'm always gonna be..." Chris Martin, Coldplay, May 2024

While loving Luton means celebrating our successes, it also means being honest about our struggles, as well as plotting our journey towards a fairer town. As we publish this year's progress report, we share the roadmap for our journey to 2040, and how we're going to measure and track our progress towards our wildly ambitious goal. For the first time, this report allows us to vividly paint the picture of our vision for Luton in 2040 – the shape of poverty, our economy, our health, our children, our net zero ambitions and our strong, fair community.

The eradication of poverty in the town remains our core mission – almost 10% of households in Luton live in destitution- the most extreme level of poverty where households are severely financially stretched and struggling to afford housing and other basic necessities, this is as heartbreaking as it is unacceptable. Loving Luton means being honest about the shape of poverty, while being resolute in our ambition to create a town free of it. This vision is more ambitious than any other in the country, and we know that for some, this feels unrealistic. These targets allow

us to talk with clarity about what this will look like – no one in our town in destitution, and ensuring that for those that slip into poverty, our community-centred approach to creating a safety net provides timely routes out of it.

And yes, loving Luton means being honest that for many, 2024 will be remembered as a heartbreaking one, with the news of Vauxhall's exit from the town after 120 years of manufacturing. We know the devastating impact this will have, not only on those employed there, but by those part of our town-wide supply chain. It would be foolish to pretend that this is anything other than a horrible blow for our entire town, and our proud industrial heritage.

But we know this isn't all of Luton's story. We know that our vision is having an impact - the numbers of people living in destitution in our town has dropped from 12.1% to 9.9% of households in Luton, a positive change for almost 5,000 of our residents.

Our recent job and business creation has been exceptional – the number 1 place in the country for job growth between 2010 and 2022 and last year we were the number 2 place in the country for business creation. Thousands of new jobs are being created through schemes coming forward.



We have seen consistent rises in the average wages across Luton. We have exciting developments in our town centre to look forward to. Our 'Better off calculator' has generated £500,000 more income for our residents. The numbers of young people in Luton not in education, employment or training, or permanently excluded, are both lower than the national average, and education outcomes for those from disadvantaged backgrounds are better in Luton than both national averages and statistical neighbours. Our journey to net zero is ahead of the country as a whole and litter reported in the Keep Britain Tidy survey has halved since 2021. And on top of all these things, we know it is our biggest strength that drives us forward - our community. The commitment to Luton and resilience of our diverse population enables us to repeatedly punch above our weight and confound expectations, delivering the town-wide results for our residents in this report, despite the second largest gap between our need, and the funding we receive, in the country.

And of course, although we ended 2024 with bad news, we start 2025 awaiting a decision from government on the approval of London Luton Airport's bid for expansion which would bring 11,000 new jobs, £1.5bn additional economic activity and £13m a year investment into our community each year.

There's another line in Chris Martin's song that has stuck with us this year:

"It matters not at Kenilworth, that sometimes we taste defeat, it only makes the next time, that we win taste much more sweet"

Our journey to 2040 was never going to be a smooth one, and it's those tough times that make the victories we can celebrate in this year's report all the sweeter.



Progress towards Luton 2040

5000 fewer people living in destitution since 2023



End Child Poverty reported a **5.5% reduction** in town's child poverty figure in 2023



Luton has the **highest net new job creation** in British cities and large towns 2010-2022, even ahead of London



Hosted BBC's biggest ever One Big Weekend – including Coldplay's very own song dedicated to Luton



Planning permission secured for several development sites, including The Stage and Luton Town's new stadium at Power Court, bringing in further investment and hundreds of jobs



90% of our schools are good or outstanding



Anti-social behaviour has halved since 2016



Luton has the **fourth highest business start-up rate** in the country



Progress towards Luton 2040

A reduction in the number of people sleeping rough as well as an improvement in proportion of affordable homes approved through planning permissions in 2023/24



Luton has the **eighth lowest emissions** per capita in the country



Luton Airport continues to invest in Luton - at **55p invested into Luton per passenger**, more than 20 times more than any other UK airport



Launch of Luton Arts Alliance, bringing £1 million into Luton's creative sector, enabling the delivery of creative work that will improve the economic and social development of our town



Work has begun to **restore Wardown Park Lake**



Funding secured for trailblazing '**Stable Homes built on Love**' **pathfinder programme** in children's services



Launch of Luton Family Hub Network with 2 Family Hubs and over 20 outreach sites and partners connected



6 Green Flags awarded across our parks recognising the high quality of these spaces



Drop in the number of people smoking from 21% to 14.7%



This is Luton



LUTON
2040

Welcome to Luton – globally connected, in the heart of the Golden Triangle of London, Oxford and Cambridge and within easy reach of many major cities across the UK, Europe and beyond. There's good reason for Luton to be confident. Luton is expecting to see the fastest growth of any economic centre in the UK after London.

Our entrepreneurial, can-do spirit is in the fabric of the town: if you can dream it, you must do it.

A super diverse town with a vibrant mix of culture, skills and languages



The third youngest population in the country with 22 per cent of residents below the age of 15



A cohesive town where people get on well with their neighbours



An excellent strategic location, situated between London, Oxford and Cambridge



Outstanding connectivity by road, rail and air- less than 30 minutes from London by rail, close to the M1 and 10 miles from the M25



A strong local economy, with 'the highest net new job creation in British cities and large towns 2010-2022



A town of 231,000 people, the sixth fastest population growth over the last 20 years



A town experiencing **strong wage growth**



Civic agreement between University of Bedfordshire and Luton Council - the first of its kind



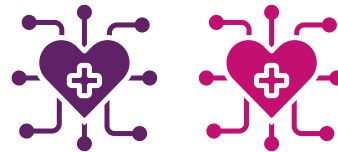
Home to the fifth largest airport in the UK - supporting 27,000 jobs, and adding around £1.1 billion to the regional economy



A growing arts, culture and heritage offer with events that celebrate our diverse range of cultures and support greater wellbeing



Effective and efficient health partnerships locally and regionally, led by the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care System



Home to Luton and Dunstable University Hospital – providing good and outstanding core services to around 400,000 people in the region



90% of schools in Luton rated as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted



A dedicated voluntary and community sector that delivers a wide range of crucial services



Outstanding access to greenspace – including six green flag parks and close proximity to the Chilterns



Home to **Luton Town Football Club**



A strong higher and further education offer through the University of Bedfordshire, Barnfield College and Luton Sixth Form College



Luton 2040 Vision

What do we want to see? Our collective town-wide vision for Luton in 2040 is a bold and ambitious one - a healthy, fair, and sustainable town where everyone can thrive, and no one has to live in poverty. This vision was developed with leaders, organisations, residents and partners across Luton, based on their aspirations for the future of the town and the 231,000 people who live here.

The vision is built around five priorities, each of which contributes to achieving our overall vision for the town:

Supporting a strong and empowered community, built on **fairness**, local pride and a powerful voice for all our residents.



Building an inclusive **economy** that delivers investment to support the growth of businesses, jobs and incomes.



Improving population wellbeing and tackling **health** inequalities to enable everyone to have a good quality of life and reach their full potential.



Becoming a **child friendly** town, where our children grow up happy, healthy and secure, with a voice that matters and the opportunities they need to thrive.



Tackling the climate emergency and becoming a **net zero** town with sustainable growth and a healthier environment.



We know that poverty and inequality cuts across outcomes for our residents in education, health and employment, which is why creating a town free of poverty is at the heart of our vision. We also know that poverty is a complex problem with no simple solution. So while tackling poverty is at the heart of our ambition for Luton, we know that getting there will involve creating a town built on fairness. Our vision also highlights the importance of inclusive economic growth, environmental sustainability, becoming a child friendly town, and improving wellbeing.

Since launching this vision in 2020, we have worked together to deliver a strong post-Covid-19 recovery in terms of wellbeing and our economy, and begun to transform the town with a series of major projects and initiatives. Other achievements include a town-wide programme of events celebrating the diversity of Luton's culture, one of which was the town's first Pride festival, and Luton Town Football Club's remarkable rise to the Premier League in 2023.



Outcomes and measures: our journey to 2040



Included in this report is our **Road Map to Luton 2040**, an overview that plots our journey from 2024 to 2040.

The Road Map is based on a set of 40 outcomes that outline the impact our collective work will make. For each outcome, we have identified a single measure that will take a temperature check on whether we are achieving this.

These measures will not give the full picture of the progress we are making, but will give an indication of what is heading in the right direction and what is not. We have identified a set of targets and milestones for each of the

measures, mapping our journey from 2024 to 2040 and articulating how Luton will be different in 15 years. Six headline outcomes act as a summary of the change we want to see.



Outcomes and measures: our journey to 2040



Outcomes and measures: our journey to 2040



Luton in 2040

The 2040 Road Map tracks our journey, outlining milestones on the way that help keep us on track, enabling us to track progress and priorities in the shorter and longer term.

Our 2027 milestones, included in this report, set out what will be different about Luton in two years time if we deliver on our 2040 commitments. This includes more children starting school with the skills they need, the number of Lutonians in employment increasing by 0.6%, completion of the Stage development, a new cultural centre in the heart of Luton, and an improvement in circumstances for at least one of our most deprived communities. These milestones will help us to prioritise our efforts in the shorter term, ensuring we target our resources where we can make the biggest difference. A full list of targets and milestones can be found at the back of this report.

To get us there, our partnership groups have each taken responsibility for the oversight of one or more of these outcomes and are in the process of identifying the delivery plans that will make the improvements we want to achieve. These groups are: Luton's Fairness Taskforce, the Community Safety Partnership, Climate Action Group, Inclusive Economy Board, Children's Trust Board, Education and Learning Reset Partnership, Child Friendly Town group, Health Equity Town Partnership, Place Board, Population Wellbeing Delivery Group and our Health and Wellbeing Board.

These groups are held together by the Luton 2040 Partnership, a new group established to provide system-wide leadership across our five priorities and take ownership for our headline measure – the number of people living in poverty in the town. This group is made up of 24 key organisations and community leaders who have a strong influence across Luton and a collective mission to use that influence to end poverty.



By 2040 Luton will be a place where:

No one lives in destitution. Children are healthy; we have lower than average child obesity levels, and more children than average start school with the expected levels of development. The number of children entering care every year reduces because families are well supported to look after their children and no child is excluded from school.

Average wages in Luton are in line with national average, employment rates rise and productivity within Luton makes us one of the fastest growing economies in the country. We regularly celebrate our culture and heritage and have new buildings and facilities that improve the perception of the town, draw people to our town centre and spend money locally. Overall townwide emissions are at Net Zero, along with those of our airport, and bus journeys increase by 5 million a year.

We have a healthy life expectancy in line with national average, smoking rates reduce significantly, and more people eat five a day. We are less anxious than the national average and when we need support, we can quickly get medical appointments or care. We have a decent place to live and 5000 private rented homes are quality controlled through a licensing scheme.

People feel part of their communities and feel safe. We are proud of our town, co-exist peacefully and are included, able to get the jobs and opportunities we want whatever our background.



Delivering 2040: Our Focus Areas



Our 2040 vision is massive, perhaps the most ambitious vision of its kind in the country. And we know that achieving this will take the collective efforts of everyone within the town.

To focus our efforts we have taken a focused approach, creating six focus areas every few years, ensuring residents, businesses, community groups and public sector organisations have tangible ways to make this vision a reality.

This will not only galvanise our collective efforts, but demonstrate change today on our journey to 2040.

Better off Luton

Better Off Luton's central mission is to ensure everyone in Luton gets the help they need to maximise their income. Through two primary workstreams, Better Off Luton will drive local action to:

- reclaim unclaimed benefits
- build financial literacy in the community.

This approach leverages Luton's community networks and local resources to develop financial literacy, reduce stigma around debt, and establish a reliable social safety net.

Keeping the Luton Pound in Luton

One of the most impactful things we can do for the Luton economy is committing to spend locally whenever we can – keeping the Luton pound in Luton. The impact of both our residents and businesses spending locally, whether that's directly in our shops and restaurants or our businesses through the supply chain, has the potential to be transformational in terms of supporting our economy.

Green Corridors

This focus area aims to rewild corridors stretching 86km along the River Lea and main transport routes through Luton, by planting trees, bushes, native flowers and long grass. With plans already underway and existing support by the National Lottery Heritage Fund as a strong foundation, the initiative will begin in key areas, offering residents access to tranquil spaces that promote mental and physical well-being and improving natural biodiversity. Community engagement is key to the mission's success, as local involvement will ensure the upkeep and longevity of these spaces, creating a sense of pride and collective responsibility.

Smoking cessation

It is estimated that 14.7% of adults in Luton currently smoke which is significantly higher than the national average of 11.6% in England. Smoking rates in Luton contribute significantly to preventable illnesses, affecting overall population wellbeing and placing a strain on healthcare services. About half of all life-long smokers will die prematurely, losing on average about 10 years of life.

By reducing smoking, Luton can promote better health outcomes, lower healthcare costs, and increase life expectancy – which is already lower in Luton compared to its surrounding areas. With cigarettes costing almost £16 a packet, this will also increase households disposable income.



The most generous town in the country

Luton's biggest strength is our community - the commitment to Luton and resilience of our diverse, global-majority population makes Luton what it is, enabling us to repeatedly confound expectations and punch above our weight in a variety of ways. A report from JustGiving in 2023 reported that Luton was the third-most generous area in the UK.

This focus area, to make Luton the most generous town in the UK builds upon our strength and demonstrate the amazing selfless streak that makes our town unique. We know that generosity goes beyond money, and into time and volunteering. This focus area values each aspect of that, and encourages everyone in Luton to play their part in our journey to 2040, by giving what they can.

Trusted adults

2024's Growing up in Luton survey reported that 10% of year 10 students feel they have 'no trusted adults' to turn to. This trusted adult can be found in various settings, from home, schools and community groups, to extended family or places of worship and is independently chosen by the young person to trust. We can all work together to ensure these settings are safe environments that can provide young people with the key connections they need to navigate life, improving outcomes for our most vulnerable young people.

Over coming months, including at the 2025 2040 Conference we will be further unpacking these focus areas, signposting clear ways for everyone in Luton to get involved.



Our number 1 priority - poverty



Our vision, for a town free of poverty, both shows Luton's ambitious nature, as well as the ongoing challenges faced by our town and community.

To put it bluntly, Luton has been ravaged by 14 years of austerity, chronic underfunding, Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis. Work to develop our approach to reducing poverty in Luton has identified seven main drivers of this in our town. These are: low paid irregular work; lack of affordable housing; disability and ill health; lack of central government funding; problematic debt; population growth; and inadequate social security and families with high numbers of dependencies. It's not that the challenges facing the town are unique to Luton, it's that Luton faces the sharp end of these national and global challenges.

Since launching the vision, child poverty figures in Luton have dropped from 45 per cent in 2019 to 39 per cent in 2024. Unsurprisingly the impact of COVID-19 saw a town-wide rise in destitution, peaking at 12.1% in 2023, but this figure has dropped down to pre-2022 levels over the last year, down to below 10%, showing the work and impact our system is having, making a hugely positive change for almost 5,000 residents.

Despite this, Luton's bespoke Minimum Income Standard estimates that 9.9% of households in Luton, 22,000 residents, are living in destitution, with another 11.2% of households, 25,000 residents, struggling to afford basic needs. Per the Joseph Rowntree strategy on eradication of poverty, our 2040 target is that no one lives in destitution or lives in poverty for longer than 2 years.

This target, along with a headline outcome and measure for each of the five 2040 priority areas are our six key temperature checks on our journey to 2040.

Numbers of households in each band, April 2024

Financial Quality of Life Bands	Band	April 2024 estimate	Definition
High Standard of Living	A	39,489 Luton households - 50.0% - fall into Bands A & B	Households that can afford all necessities - and many luxuries - and are very comfortable financially
Good Standard of Living	B	These are all above the Minimum Income Standard and FQOL line - therefore with a good or high standard of living	Households that can afford basic needs, personal services and paid social and cultural activities, being able to participate fully socially and culturally
Financial Quality of Life Line (FQOL)			
Decent Standard of Living	C	39,457 Luton households below FQOL threshold (including those in basic needs and destitution) 50.0% below FQOL (MIS) 22,784 Luton households - 28.9% - in Band C	Households that can afford basic needs, but may need to juggle finances to afford insurances, personal services like hairdressing or paid social and cultural activities such as day trips and holidays
Basic Needs (Material Deprivation) Line			
Basic Needs (Material Deprivation)	D	16,673 Luton households below Basic Needs threshold (including those in destitution) 21.1% below Basic Needs	Households that may struggle to pay some basic needs (rent, food, clothing, gas, electric, water, internet and transport costs) and require greater financial support. Much juggling of finances required.
Destitution Line			
Destitution	E	8,859 Luton households - 11.2% - in Band D 7,814 Luton households below Destitution threshold 9.9% in Destitution	Households that are severely financially stretched and struggle to afford their housing costs, heat their home or buy essentials. Their outgoings significantly outweigh their low incomes, and debt may be a major worry. Many things are unaffordable and there may be a reliance on charities eg. food banks. Physical and mental health may suffer as a consequence.

Outcome	Measure	Latest result	2027 Milestone	2040 target	Trend
No Luton resident lives in poverty	% of households in destitution	9.9%	7.7%	0%	Improving
Working people earn enough to afford a decent standard of living	Average weekly wages in Luton	£618 in Luton £682 nationally	£723.09	National average	Improving
Average healthy life expectancy	Healthy life expectancy - the average number of years a person can expect to live in good health	Males 59.2 Females 60	Males 60.8 Females 60.9	Males 63.1 Females 63.9	Improving
Carbon emissions decrease	Overall townwide emissions	2.6 tCO ₂ e per capita	2.2 2CO ₂ e per capita	0	Improving
No child lives in poverty	Children in deepest poverty	23.4%	19.5%	0%	No major change
Luton is more equitable	Number of 10% most deprived LSOAs within Indices of Multiple Deprivation	4	3	0	No major change

Partner contributions

At **Luton Foodbank**, we are wholly committed to supporting families and individuals facing food poverty.

As eradicating poverty is at the heart of the 2040 Vision, the work we do to ensure this is integral, with our main message being “No one goes hungry in our town.” Our overarching aim is to eradicate food poverty in Luton, and to support people so that they can take steps to overcome the problems that brought them to us. This year, we had a number of successes, from the ‘Let’s Eat Together’ Ramadan campaign which saw a number of communal meals take place, as well as launching the Luton Foodbank Young Ambassador programme for a second year.



Founded in Luton, **NOAH** is a charity that helps vulnerable people experiencing extreme poverty, homelessness and other disadvantages to make lasting, positive changes in their lives. This ensures that people facing destitution are able to access mental and physical support, addiction services, food and clothing, as well as other essentials. We also promote fairness and community cohesion and work to amplify the voices of those who are socially excluded when it comes to decision making. Last year, we helped 67 rough sleepers find emergency winter shelter. This year, we continued our impactful work assisting the vulnerable by providing food, clothing, and access to essential services. After having received funding to expand our outreach programme, such as the ‘No Second Night Out’ initiative, we are able to expand our mission to help marginalised individuals.



Inclusive economy



Our vision for Luton in 2040 will ensure working people in Luton earn enough to afford a decent standing of living by bringing wages and employment rates in line with national averages.

Our thriving town centre will meet the needs of our residents, while other areas of the town will be served by new housing and leisure developments across Luton. Our anchor institutions local spend will help our growing, productive economy, and our thriving local arts and culture scene will reflect our beautiful, diverse communities.

Since launching our vision, we have seen success in job growth and wage rise in the town, while town-wide productivity continues to rise. With investment in large-scale developments, and a new community-focused arts and culture project launching, there is much to be celebrated here. Alongside this we wait in anticipation as the government make their decision on the development of our airport – creating up to 11,000 more local jobs if approved.

creation in British cities and large towns from 2010 to 2022, even ahead of London, and the second highest business start-up rate in the country.

will focus on developing a productive, inclusive and resilient economy, of which the airport expansion would be a key contributor.

Areas needing more work



- Our town centre continues to fall short of our resident's expectations with fewer than half rating the retail and leisure offer as 'good' or 'very good'. Despite this, our latest data sees an improvement in satisfaction with the town centre, and with projects such as The Stage and the new football stadium at Power Court underway, these exciting new developments were the biggest reason our residents felt positive about the future of Luton.
- The planned closure of the town's Vauxhall plant is a huge economic and social blow to Luton. Work is being done to try and change that outcome, and best protect those impacted. Our new Economic Strategy

Progress



- Over the past five years, despite COVID-19, average wages within the town have risen by more than 10%, while the town's productivity has risen by 8% over the same period.
- Alongside this, the most recent Centre for Cities report showed that Luton had the highest net new job



Outcome	Measure	Latest result	2027 Milestone	2040 target	Trend
Working people earn enough to afford a decent standard of living	Average weekly wages in Luton	£618 in Luton £682 nationally	£723.09	National average	Improving
Luton has a retail, leisure and shopping offer that meets the needs of residents	Satisfaction with shops, pubs, restaurants, leisure activities	44%	46% satisfied	60.5%	Improving
Working age people have a job	Unemployment rate	7.6%	7.0%	Equal to or better than National average in 2040 - 4.3% currently	Getting worse
The town centre meets the needs of residents and attracts visitors	Town centre footfall	Awaiting new dataset	Awaiting new dataset	Not yet (new dataset on way)	N/A
Luton has developments that improve the town	Townwide developments	N/A	Completion of stage and first phase of Luton Town FC.	Completion of planned developments below*	N/A
Luton has high level of productivity	Gross Value Added GVA per individual	6600 million	6774 million	7814 million	Improving
The Luton pound stays in Luton	% of influenceable spend from anchor institutions	39.4%	45%	Luton Council target 60%. Anchor targets being formed	Improving
Luton's diverse culture and heritage is celebrated	Participation in arts, culture and heritage	31.6%	32%	50% reporting at least 3 types of arts and culture involvement in last 12 months	No major change

*Development of 449 homes; Completion of The Stage; Development of New Luton Town Football Club Ground at Power Court; Open Lea Phase 2; Town Centre Public Realm Improvements including Bartlett Square; Development of 2 SEND schools; New Playground at Wigmore Valley Park; New football training facility; New cricket training facility; ABC cinema regeneration scheme; Central Library Regeneration Scheme; station accessibility developments; Terminal 2 developments; Dualling of Vauxhall Way; Park and ride scheme at Butterfield; New bus shelters with real time announcement installed; More red routes; More Cycle paths.

Partner contributions

Citizens Advice Luton is committed to building an inclusive economy within the town. Through providing advice, support and training, we address the needs of our growing economy by providing comprehensive training and support to volunteers to ensure they gain the experience they need to apply to local jobs, and advocating for more financial support for those on low incomes. This year, we have continued our significant role in supporting the local community by addressing issues such as debt, welfare benefits, housing, employment and immigration. Over the year, we have assisted nearly 12,000 people with over 72,000 issues, and we are confident these numbers will continue to rise.

**citizens
advice** Luton

London Luton Airport plays a pivotal role in fostering an inclusive economy through employment, education, and skills development initiatives. A Real Living Wage employer since 2022, the airport supports flexible working and promotes opportunities for young people in the region.



In 2024, its community skills, education, and outreach programmes reached 500 students, providing tailored support to develop essential skills, access valuable opportunities, and provide meaningful career insights.

Employment around the airport has grown significantly, with a 9% increase between 2022 and 2023, reaching a record 12,100 jobs—84% of which are full-time. Additionally, 53% of the airport's supply chain spending, amounting to £70 million, was with businesses within a 25-mile radius. The largest share, £44.7 million, supported 125 businesses in Luton and Bedfordshire.

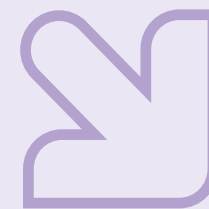
In partnership with the council and Bedfordshire Police, **Luton**



BID supports and enhances the promotion, growth and investment of businesses in Luton Town Centre. We offer organisation and strategic support for our town centre masterplan, which includes further development of the high street and other town centre districts, representing local businesses to organisations like the police and local government, promoting increased footfall and spend for our businesses, and ensuring the cleanliness and safety of Luton town. This year, Luton BID has organised and supported several initiatives aimed at increasing footfall and enhancing the vibrancy of Luton town centre. Notably, these included themed markets, seasonal events, and promotional activities such as mystery shopper programmes and Christmas festivities. Recently, 88% of businesses voted Yes for the renewal of Luton BID, which commenced in January 2025 for a further five years.



Population wellbeing



The health and wellbeing of our population is central to Luton 2040. The result of this, and our key measure in this area, will be a rise in our town's average healthy life expectancy.

To help us on this journey our residents will be living healthier lifestyles, with healthier diets and significantly fewer people smoking. Those who need it will get the help they need more quickly, while others will get timely medical appointments. We know that secure, good quality housing affects so many health outcomes and so ensuring we have the right houses for our growing population is a key difference maker in this area.

We knew that when we started our journey to 2040, that our key population wellbeing indicators and health outcomes wouldn't change overnight, but our system-focused approach, the formation of our Health Equity Town work, and launch of Family Hubs are all creating solid foundations for further progress in this area.

Progress

- The continued work to increase incomes in Luton through our bespoke Better Off Calculator is a huge success, securing £500,000 in unclaimed benefits for our residents. This has led to the formation of the financial resilience partnership group that will include community partners in the delivery of this across Luton, as well as wider financial resilience awareness, as part of our Better Off Luton mission.



- Luton has seen a 7% drop in smoking figures, from 21% to 14%, and there are 300 fewer households in temporary accommodation than in 2019, though the rising cost in providing temporary accommodation means demand pressure remains high.

Areas needing more work

- Housing in Luton remains an issue. Despite lower house prices than surrounding areas, the affordability of homes and rents in the town is a significant problem. Our housing solutions service sees an average of 450 households every month seeking advice and support, a number that has doubled over the last 18 months.
- The Adult Social Care budget in Luton has experienced a significant financial shift with an increase in demand for services. This has meant



only just over half of all initial assessments are completed within 28 days of referral.



Outcome	Measure	Latest result	2027 Milestone	2040 target	Trend
Average healthy life expectancy	Healthy life expectancy - the average number of years a person can expect to live in good health	Males – 59.2 Females - 60	Males – 60.8 Females 60.9	Males – 63.1 Females - 63.9	Improving
Residents have enough food to eat	Percentage of adults eating '5-a-day'	25%	27%	31% or equal to/better than national average	Getting worse
Residents have a stable home to live in	Households in temporary accommodation	13.9 per 1000 households	11 per 1000 households	4.5 per 1000 HH	No major change
Residents live in a decent home that isn't overcrowded	Number of landlords signed up to the mandatory licencing scheme and selective and additional licencing scheme	N/A – process getting underway	Selective licencing agreed in 2 wards	100% mandatory licencing plus 5000 selective licencing	N/A
Residents are resilient	Percentage of adults that have a high level of anxiety (Measure to be added for young people)	Luton – 19.9% National – 23.3%	3.7% lower than national average	5% lower than national average	No major change
Residents can access medical appointments when they need them	Percent who feel that the amount of time they waited for their GP appointment was 'about right'	55.4%	57%	66%	N/A
Those who need care are supported to live independently or provided with a care placement	Initial care assessments within 28 days of referral	51.5%	54%	90%	Getting worse
Residents are able to live a healthy lifestyle	Smoking prevalence	14.7%	14.0%	7.5%	Improving
Residents are able to manage their money	Income generated by benefit calculator (wider system measure being formed)	500,000 in last year	£3,000,000 generated per annum	£6,000,000 new generated per annum	Improving

Partner contributions

At **Active Luton**, we are committed to improving the health and wellbeing, education, skills and life chances of our community. We promote and deliver services that support increased physical activity, improved mental wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. We do this through our work in the sports facilities, libraries, community settings, our award-winning Total Wellbeing programmes, our training provision plus our work in schools. We continue to work closely with our partners, maximising collaborative working and funding opportunities all with the ultimate aim of improving population wellbeing.



East London Foundation Trust is dedicated to delivering towards our population wellbeing priority and aims to achieve this by ensuring children and young people have a voice in shaping their services, contributing to the creation of healthy and sustainable places, and supporting the community to develop skills and achieve a healthy standard of living. One way in which we excel in this is through co-production, delivering services that improve physical and mental wellbeing in partnership with the community and service users that we serve. We have made several service adjustments this year in Luton based on feedback from residents and young people. Key changes include: a new People Participation Lead for Luton's adult mental health services has been appointed to engage service users more effectively in shaping mental health care, focusing on empowering residents to identify and advocate for improvements. We have also proposed a comprehensive redesign of inpatient facilities to better meet the needs of the community, as well as making sure efforts are underway to integrate primary care with other mental health services, ensuring a cohesive approach.



Healthwatch Luton is committed to improving the wellbeing of Luton's population and delivering a service that supports health and wellbeing, and community safety; such as through our communications and support on community events and programmes. We seek to increase social connectedness and community such by our presence at Futures House Marsh Farm. Healthwatch Luton support the work of Luton's Fairness Taskforce, demonstrating a commitment to tackle health inequalities. Another main priority of ours is developing employee assistance programmes to support with debt, housing and financial issues, all of which are vital to ensuring population wellbeing. This year, 275 people reached out to us to share their experiences of health and social care services, helping to raise awareness of these issues, and 122 people came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost-of-living crisis.



Child friendly Luton



A child friendly Luton goes beyond measures and outcomes focused on our young people.

Luton in 2040 will have tackled the deepest child poverty in the town, and kept up our below-average numbers of young people not in employment or training, ensuring opportunities for all. Our numbers of children in care will drop from 420 to 250, with our new 'stable homes built on love' strategy enabling more children to stay living with their families.

But further beyond this, being child friendly means that children and young people are prioritised across all of our 2040 outcomes – ensuring they feel safe, proud of our town and elevating their voices, making them heard and listened to, shaping the future of Luton.

Our journey towards 2040 places children right at the centre of this work, and we can see areas where we are already getting this right. The drop in our NEET and permanent exclusion figures shows a town-wide commitment to inclusion. While fewer of them now live in poverty than in 2019, the number living in deepest poverty remains heartbreakingly high. Which all suggests that our system is serving those on the margins of poverty, but still has work to do to reach those most in need.

Progress

- The percentage of 16 to 17 year olds not in education, employment or training has not only dropped from 4.7% in 2019 to 3.7% but remains well below the national average of 4.9%.
- Similarly, permanent exclusions in the town sit at just 0.06%, less than half of the .13% it stood at in 2019, and also below the national average.
- Across our system young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (receiving free school meals) perform better in Luton than both national averages and our statistical neighbours. In 2022 and 2023, we performed 8.5% better in Key Stage 2 and 5% better in Key Stage 4 than national averages, and 5% (Key Stage 2) and 2.4% better than our statistical neighbours.



Areas needing more work

- While work on child poverty has seen an estimated 2,500 children and young people lifted out of poverty since 2019, those in the deepest poverty remains at over 20%, significantly more than the national average.
- There has been a rise in obesity among year 6 children since 2019, and this puts the town significantly above the national average.



Outcome	Measure	Latest result	2027 Milestone	2040 target	Trend
No child lives in poverty	Children in deepest poverty	23.4%	19.5%	0%	No major change
All children and young people up to the age of 25 are in education, employment or training	NEET % 16-17 age inc not knowns	3.7%	2.3%	1.7%	Improving
Children have an excellent education	GCSE results (average attainment 8 score)	45% - 6th out of 11 statistical neighbours	4th out of 11 statistical neighbours	Luton is in the top 25% for attainment 8 compared to towns like us - in top 3 out of 11.	Improving
Children are included at school	Percentage of permanent exclusions	0.06%	0.04%	0%	Improving
Early years children develop inline with expected standards	Percentage of children who achieve the Good Level of Development at the end of the reception year	61%	62%	75%	N/A
More children are safely cared for by their families	Number of children in care	420	380	250	No major change
Children are healthy	Obesity levels at year 6	42.5%	41.8%	36.6%	No major change



Partner contributions

At **Mary Seacole Housing**, we are dedicated to creating a child-friendly town by empowering young people and amplifying their voices. In 2024, we delivered several initiatives for example "Our Youth Voices" Podcast, which now features over 15 episodes, provides a platform for young people to share their opinions, and challenge inequalities that effect them. We also focus on raising aspirations through volunteering and job readiness programs, supporting transitions into work and increasing opportunities through SEND internships and work experience programmes via the Seacole Academy. Alongside these efforts, we continue to provide safe, stable accommodation for individuals experiencing homelessness. By combining advocacy, skill-building, and support, we strive to build resilience, foster community engagement, and make a lasting impact on the lives of vulnerable individuals and young people alike.



offers available. This year at Chiltern Trust, we have once again showcased our commitment to excellence and high achievement for all learners across our fifteen schools. our schools celebrated significant achievements, with

strong GCSE outcomes placing five of our Luton schools among the highest performing in the region. This was complemented by the continual improvement of KS2 results and fantastic A-Level results.



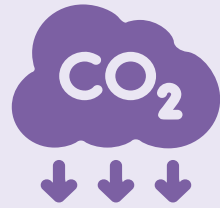
Barnfield College delivers targeted education and training in priority skills; equipping people for the modern, sustainable economy and driving growth across our town. We seek to remove barriers to education to ensure lifelong learning is accessible to all in Luton.



Chiltern Learning Trust is committed to improving the life chances of the Luton community, by improving standards of education across our primary and secondary schools and supporting the development and wellbeing of our teachers. We support student with their post-16 choices by providing a class-leading careers service to help signpost the best



Net zero



Luton's journey towards net zero in 2040 will do exactly what it says on the tin – ensuring the town's carbon emissions are cut to residual levels.

Facilitating this journey will be an accessible public transport offer which serves the needs of our town and the greenest airport in the country. A 'greener' Luton will also be a town where biodiversity flourishes, with green spaces and tidy streets for us all to enjoy.

With town-wide commitments on this journey, the greenest airport in the UK, further investment in public transport infrastructure on the horizon, our system is geared towards a net-zero town. We have seen significant drops in our carbon emissions and a rise in air quality – Luton's net zero journey is a good news story.

Progress

- Townwide carbon emissions remain significantly lower than both national and regional averages, with an average drop of 3% year since 2005.
- While there is still progress needed in the cleanliness of the town, litter reported in the Keep Britain tidy survey has halved since 2021.



- Bus journeys within the town have recovered to above pre-Covid levels, with regular annual growth over recent years.

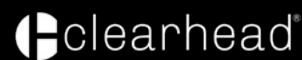


Outcome	Measure	Latest result	2027 Milestone	2040 target	Trend
Carbon emissions decrease	Overall townwide emissions	2.6 tCO ₂ e per capita	2.2 tCO ₂ e per capita	0	Improving
Air quality is within healthy range	AHAH Air quality domain	0.69%	0.60	0.35	Improving
Luton has an accessible public transport infrastructure that meets the needs of the whole of the town	Bus passenger Journeys	13,600,000 journeys per year	14,200,000 journeys per year	18,000,000 journeys per year	Improving
The greenest airport in the UK	Airport sustainability and job creation	TBC	TBC	TBC	N/A
Parks and green spaces improve biodiversity and meet the needs of residents and visitors	% sites in positive conservation management (needs targeting and benchmarking)	67%	71%	83%	Improving
A clean and tidy town	Keep Britain Tidy survey: Litter, Detritus, Graffiti and Fly Posting	Litter - 10.67% Detritus - 32.18% Graffiti - 0.50% Fly posting - 0.67%	Litter - 9% Detritus - 26.2% Graffiti - maintain score Fly posting - maintain score	Litter - 7.1% Detritus - 8.35% Graffiti - maintain score Fly posting - maintain score	Improving



Partner contributions

Clearhead Media is focused on reducing our carbon emissions to become a net-zero organisation by 2040, reducing waste and recycling more through our organisation and our supply chain. We have worked hard this year to incorporate sustainable practices into our operations.



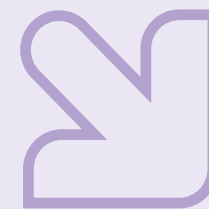
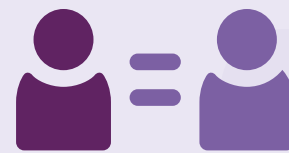
The University of Bedfordshire was delighted to achieve first place in the People & Planet University Green League 2024/25. This ranking involves nearly all universities and coming first nationally highlights our ongoing commitment to sustainability, energy efficiency, social justice, and equity and reflects the collective efforts of the entire University community. The University is driven to providing high quality education and fostering innovation. We are deeply committed to sustainability and working with partners to achieve the goal of a Net Zero town. This year, we also introduced our newest venture alongside Luton Borough Council aimed at supporting local businesses in their journey to achieving net-zero - the Sustainability and Net Zero Business Support Programme has already received £25,000 from the UK Government through UKSPF.



Luton Irish Forum is committed to providing social, welfare, cultural, skills and volunteering opportunities for all, primarily focusing on disadvantaged and under-represented groups. Specifically on net zero, following recent work in this area, we aim to further improve the efficiency of buildings and equipment, reducing energy consumption, as well as supporting the development of skills to assist with the delivery of Net Zero plans.



Strong, fair community



Creating a fair, safe, compassionate Luton is at the core of 2040.

Luton's biggest strength is our community - the commitment to Luton and resilience of our diverse population makes Luton what it is, enabling us to repeatedly confound expectations in a variety of ways. This priority will build on this strength, but going further to ensure the safety of our residents, ensuring all are respected and included by focusing on representation in senior positions across the town.

Central to this is ensuring a good quality of life for all Luton residents. Currently four areas of the town are in the top 10% most deprived in the country. By 2040, we aim for this to be zero.

The work of Luton's Fairness Taskforce continues to drive forward our system's work in this area, putting processes in place for our resident's voice to be heard and shape collective responses to the issues facing our communities. The strength of our community continues to boost our collective resilience, and helps everyone in Luton find a place in their neighbourhoods.

Progress

- The diversity and community of our town remains a strength. 70% of our town feel part of their community, and four-fifths agree that Luton is a town where people from different backgrounds get on well together.



- Strong local communities are also celebrated within the town: 78% agree that their neighbourhood is a good place to live, while 81% agree that people in their areas help their neighbours.

Areas needing more work...

- Despite a small rise from 27% to 33% this year in those rating safety in the town as 'good' or 'very good', this still remains below our target and is named as one of the key reasons residents feel negative about the town. This must be a huge priority going forward, requiring the efforts of our entire system.



Outcome	Measure	Latest result	2027 Milestone	2040 target	Trend
Luton is more equitable	Number of 10% most deprived LSOAs within Indices of Multiple Deprivation	4	3	0	No major change
Everyone feels safe in Luton	Perception survey question - safety in Luton rated as 'good' or 'very good' (with additional info from SHEU survey)	33%	40%	80%	No major change
The police provide support when needed	Police satisfaction survey	TBC	TBC	To follow	N/A
People feel part of their communities	Question in the perception survey – do people feel part of their communities	70%	70%	80%	N/A
Residents and children are listened to and influence town decisions	% of residents who feel they have the opportunity to influence decisions (and data from SHEU survey)	41%	40%	50%	Improving
Residents are proud of the town	Satisfaction with Luton as a place to live (resident and SHEU survey)	53%	62%	80% or 4% points above Nat Average	Getting worse
Residents and workers are respected and included	Make up of senior staff across anchors as reflective of the Luton population	22%	30%	Target currently in place LBC only - reflect diversity of working population (currently 54%) (Excludes Eastern Europeans from BME group)	Improving
Residents from different backgrounds co-exist peacefully and joyfully	% of residents who agree with 'Luton is a town where people from different backgrounds get on well together'	77%	80%	90%	No major change
Everyone has opportunities to make a positive difference to others and the world	Residents involved in any voluntary activities in the past 12 months, 2023	21%	29%	35% or at least 1% above Nat Average	No major change

Partner contributions

Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation

are passionate about improving the lives of people in Bedfordshire and Luton. We invest in supporting local charities to ensure their sustainability and build deeper relationships with grassroot groups in our area. We seek to promote fairness, community cohesion, and local pride and focus our programmes on addressing issues of poverty and the wider determinates of health. Through our work we aim to always listen, learn, adapt and change and to offer greater support for groups who have been marginalised or experience inequity. Working over the last 12 months with 16 donors across 20 funds, we awarded £4.3 million in 266 grants, which benefitted around 211,300 individuals. In 2024 we have already seen our request for grant funding support double and our partnerships with donors and funds increase to address this.



At **The Culture Trust**, we are committed towards connecting the community through meaningful culture and creativity. We want to improve life in Luton by presenting inspiring and diverse live arts, and by doing so, boosting civic pride and helping the town's diversity to flourish. We widen access to culture through free-to-enter museums and heritage sites, ensuring that every person, no matter their socio-economic background, has an equal opportunity to enjoy the heritage and arts culture of Luton. In 2024, we continued to play a pivotal role in celebrating the town's diverse culture through a range of engaging programmes, performances and community events. These included the Luton Mela which celebrates South Asian culture, a series of events to celebrate Black History Month including art exhibitions, live performances, talks and community workshops, as well as a number of other events including highlighting the diversity of the LGBTQ+ community, a global food festival, and multicultural arts and exhibitions.



Appendix 1 - 2040 Measures



Outcome	Single measure	Baseline 2019	Latest Result	Latest Result Year	National average where possible	2040 Target	2027 Milestone	2031 milestone	2035 milestone
No Luton resident lives in poverty	% of households in destitution	7.3%	9.9%	2023	Not available	0%	7.7%	5.1%	2.6%
Working people earn enough to afford a decent standard of living	Average weekly wages in Luton	£560.50	£618.10	2023	£681.7	National average - £1157.69	£723.09	£845.91	£989.60
Luton has a retail, leisure and shopping offer that meets the needs of residents	Perception survey question. Thinking about Luton as a town, how would you rate the following aspects: shops, pubs, restaurants, leisure activities	47%	44%	2024	Not available	60.5	46	50	55
Working age people have a job if they want one	Unemployment rate (claimant count)	3.2%	7.6%	8/1/2024	4.3%	Equal to or better than National average in 2040 - 4.3% currently	7.0%	6.0%	5.0%
The town centre meets the needs of residents and attracts visitors	Town centre footfall	Data not comparable	623,390 ave monthly	2023	Not available	Awaiting new dataset			
High level of productivity	Gross Value Added (0000s) GVA per individual	£6.1b £27,496	£6.6b £29,293	2022	£33,227	7814	6774	7094	7414
Luton has developments that improve the town	Success towards big developments					Development of 449 homes Completion of The Stage Development of New Luton Town Football Club Ground at Power Court. Open Lea Phase 2 Town Centre Public Realm Improvements including Bartlett Square, Development of 2 SEND schools. New Playground at Wigmore Valley Park New football training facility New cricket training facility ABC cinema regeneration scheme Central Library Regeneration Scheme station accessibility developments Terminal 2 developments			
The Luton pound stays in Luton	% of influenceable local spend from anchor institutions % of Influenceable Council Spend Through Procurement with Local Suppliers		39.40%	23-24	NA	60%	45%	50%	55%
Luton's diverse culture and heritage is celebrated	Participation in Arts, Culture and Heritage. Number of people reporting at least 3 types of arts and culture involvement in last 12 months	No comparable data	31.6%	2023	Not available	50%	32%	38%	44%

Outcome	Single measure	Baseline 2019	Latest Result	Latest Result Year	National average where possible	2040 Target	2027 Milestone	2031 milestone	2035 milestone
Average healthy life expectancy	Healthy life expectancy - average number of years a person can expect to live in good health	2017-19 males - 57.4 females - 60.2	2018-20 males - 59.2 females - 60.0	2018-20	males - 63.1 females - 63.9	males - 63 females - 63.7	Males - 60.8 Females - 60.9	Males - 60.7 Females - 61.6	Males - 61.5 Females - 62.2
Residents have enough food to eat	Percentage of adults meeting the '5-a-day' fruit and vegetable consumption recommendations	Can't compare to old method.	25%	22/23	31%	31% or equal to/better than national average	27%	28%	30%
Residents have a stable home to live in	Number of households (per 1000) in temporary accommodation	17.4	13.9	23/24	3.7	350 or 4.5 per 1000 HH	11 per 1000 HH	9 per 1000 HH	7 per 1000 HH
Residents live in a decent home that isn't overcrowded	Number of landlords signed up to the mandatory licencing scheme and selective and additional licencing scheme					100% mandatory licencing.	Selective licencing agreed in two wards	5000 selective and additional licenses.	TBC
Residents are resilient	Percentage of adults that have a high level of anxiety	16.60%	19.9%	22/23	23.3%	5% gap between Luton and national average	3.7% gap	4.1% gap	4.5% gap
Residents can access medical appointments when they need them	Percent who feel their that the amount of time they waited for their GP appointment was 'about right'	Not available (new question in GPPS 2024)	55.4%	2024	65.9%	66.0%	57.0%	60.0%	63.0%
Residents who need care are supported to live independently or provided with a care placement	Initial assessments within 28 days of referral	63.5	51.5	Sep-24	Not available	90%	54	67	78
Residents are able to live a healthy lifestyle	Smoking prevalence				12.7%	7.5%	14.0%	12.0%	10.0%
Residents are able to manage their money	Income generated by benefit calculator (wider system measure being formed)	n/A	£2,500,000	2023		£6,000,000	£3,000,000	£4,000,000	£5,000,000
No child lives in poverty	Children in deepest poverty	24.3%	23.4%	2023	16%	0%	19.5%	13.5%	6.5%
All children and young people up to the age of 25 are in education, employment or training	NEET % 16-17 age inc not knowns	4.7%	3.7%	2023	4.9%	1.7%	2.3%	2.1%	1.9%
Children have an excellent education	GCSE results (average attainment 8 score)	43.5	45% - 6th out of 11 statistical neighbours	2023	44.7	Luton is in the top 25% for attainment 8 compared to towns like us - top 3 out of 11 statistical neighbours	Top 6 among statistical neighbours	Top 5 among statistical neighbours	Top 4 among statistical neighbours
Children are included at school	Proportion of permanent exclusions	0.13%	0.06%	2023	0.11%	0%			
Early years children develop inline with expected standards	The percentage of children who achieve the Good Level of Development at the end of the reception year	Data not comparable	61%	22/23	67%	75%	0.04%	0.02%	0.01%
More children being safely cared for by their families	Number of children in care	406	420	2023	426	250	380	340	300
Children are healthy	Obesity levels at year 6	39.6%	42.5%	2023	36.6%	Current national average -36.6%	41.8%	40.2%	38.6%
Carbon emissions decrease	Overall townwide emissions Per Capita Emissions (tCO2e)	667.3 (kt CO2e) 3.0	595.5 (kt CO2e) 2.6	2022	4.5	0	2.2	1.4	0.6
Air quality is within healthy range	AHAH Air quality domain	Not available	0.69	2024	0.26	0.35	0.60	0.50	0.40
Luton has an accessible public transport infrastructure that meets the needs of the whole of the town	Annual bus passenger journeys Passenger Journeys Per Head of Population (BUS01f)	12,200,000 journeys	13,600,000 journeys	2024	N/A	18,000,000 journeys per year	14,200,000	15,000,000	16,750,000
The greenest airport in the UK	Airport sustainability and job creation	TBC	TBC			Net zero	TBC	TBC	TBC
Parks and green spaces improve biodiversity and meet the needs of residents and visitors	% sites in positive conservation management	58%	67% (16/24)	2023	43%	83%	71%	75%	79%
A clean and tidy town	Keep Britain Tidy survey (NI 195 style KPI) Litter, Detritus, Graffiti and Fly Posting	2021 21.4% 45% 1.7% 0	10.67% 32.18% 0.50% 0.67%	2023	Greater London 2023 7.10% 8.35% 7.03% 2.87%	7.1% or better than Greater London average 8.35% or better than Greater London average Keep score / better than Greater London average Keep score / better than Greater London average	9% 26.2% maintain score maintain score	8% 20.3% maintain score maintain score	7.5% 14.3% maintain score maintain score

Outcome	Single measure	Baseline 2019	Latest Result	Latest Result Year	National average where possible	2040 Target	2027 Milestone	2031 milestone	2035 milestone
Luton is more equitable	Number of top 10% most deprived areas within the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (LSOA's)	4	4	2019	Not applicable	0	3	2	1
Everyone feels safe in Luton	Perception survey question - safety in Luton rated as 'good' or 'very good' (measure around young people to be added in)	29%	33%	2024	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'Overall, I feel safe in the area where I live'? Strongly Agree = 28% Somewhat Agree = 50%	80% say somewhat agree	40.0%	52.0%	65.0%
The police provide support when needed	Police Satisfaction survey	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC			
People feel part of their communities	Question in the perception survey - People feel part of their communities	New measure	70%	2024	63% 21/22 national community life survey (feel very strongly or fairly strongly belong to their immediate neighbourhood)	80%	70%	74%	77%
Residents and children are listened to and influence town decisions	% of residents who feel they have the opportunity to influence decisions affecting neighbourhood. Measure to be added around young people.	46%	41%	2024	27%	50% of adults and 50% of young people	40.0%	43.0%	46.0%
Residents are proud of the town	Satisfaction with Luton as a place to live	66%	53%	2024	76%	80% or 4% points above national average	62.0%	68.0%	74.0%
Residents and workers are respected and included	Make up of senior staff across anchors as reflective of the Luton population. Currently data is Luton Council only.	18% (2021)	22%	2023	N/A	Organising reflect diversity of working population (currently 54%) (Excludes Eastern Europeans from BME group)	24% below	16% below	8% below
Residents from different backgrounds co-exist peacefully and joyfully	% of residents who answer yes to Luton is a town where people from different backgrounds get on well together.	86%	77%	2024	84%	90%	80%	83%	86%
Everyone has opportunities to make a positive difference to others and the world	Residents involved in any voluntary activities in the past 12 months, 2023	20%	21%	2024	34%	Atleast 1% above national average	15% below national average	10% below national average	5% below national average

**LUTON
2040**



**Thank you
for reading**



Luton2040.co.uk

LUTON
2040

Moving from vision to reality

Corporate Peer Challenge

Luton Council Position Statement



luton.gov.uk

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Luton Council's work in the town and relationships with partners are anchored in our vision for Luton in 2040: a place where everyone can thrive and no one has to live in poverty. Our 2040 priorities, which feed into this vision, ensure clarity of purpose towards inclusive economic growth, a town with positive health outcomes for all, a child-friendly Luton, our ongoing journey towards Net Zero and building a strong and empowered community.

This vision for a town free of poverty, both shows Luton's ambitious nature, as well as the ongoing challenges faced by both the council, and our community. Luton has been ravaged by 14 years of austerity, chronic underfunding from central government, Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis. It's not that the challenges facing the town are unique to Luton, it's that Luton faces the sharp end of these national and global challenges.

Yet in the midst of this, Luton is punching above its weight and delivering impressive outcomes for our residents.

OUR STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

Our community; Vision and leadership; Systems leaderships; London Luton Airport; Innovation and dedication; A community-led approach.

Luton's biggest strength is our community - the commitment to Luton and resilience of our diverse, global-majority population makes Luton what it is, enabling us to repeatedly confound expectations in a variety of ways. It is this community, combined with strong political leadership, with town-wide buy in to Luton 2040, and the huge economic asset of London Luton Airport which allows us to tackle the challenges facing our town.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE

The challenges faced by Luton can all be viewed through the lens of poverty. Some of these challenges are drivers of poverty, others the result of poverty. Despite child poverty figures dropping from 45 per cent in 2019 to 39 per cent in 2022 the number of people living in destitution in our town is on the rise, with an estimated 7020 people who are unable to afford their housing costs, heat their home or buy essentials.

Drivers of poverty in Luton: Housing; Low paid irregular work; Population growth; Disability and ill health; Inadequate social security and families with high numbers of children; Problematic debt; Lack of central government funding.

Impact of Poverty in Luton: Health inequalities; Problematic debt; Homelessness; Demand pressures; Quality of life.

With such a high number of our population living in destitution, and demand pressures in a variety of areas, the town's resources focus on our most vulnerable, meaning projects and work that would benefit the more 'socially progressed' areas of Luton are not always able to be prioritised - everyone in Luton, whether directly, or indirectly, is impacted by inequitable financial distribution across the UK.



AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Within Luton's evolving system, we know there are areas that need further work and development.

We have identified that we need to: further develop our approach to working together with residents; continue to develop partnerships: become more data led: be less self-effacing, shout louder and have bigger regional and national voice; and develop a better working relationship with our new auditor. We know that our resources and systems don't always match our ambition and improvements are required within our council enabling services.

WELCOME

We welcome peers to Luton as we seek to best use our assets to tackle the challenges that face us, and make steps to develop, enabling us to reach our 2040 vision.



LUTON
2040

LUTON'S POSITION



WELCOME TO LUTON

Luton Council's work in the town and relationships with partners are anchored in our vision for Luton in 2040: a place where everyone can thrive and no one has to live in poverty. Our 2040 priorities, which feed into this vision, ensure clarity of purpose towards inclusive economic growth, a town with positive health outcomes for all, a child-friendly Luton, our ongoing journey towards Net Zero and building a strong and empowered community.

This vision, for a town free of poverty, both shows Luton's ambitious nature, as well as the ongoing challenges faced by the council, and our community. To put it bluntly, Luton has been ravaged by 14 years of austerity, chronic underfunding from central government, Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis. This followed the catastrophic impact of the closure of the Vauxhall Car factory in 2002. It's not that the challenges facing the town are unique to Luton, it's that Luton faces the sharp end of these national and global challenges.

Yet in the midst of this, with the second biggest funding gap between resident need and central government funding in the country, Luton is punching above its weight and delivering impressive outcomes for our residents.



THIS IS LUTON

Population

225,300

total
population



55% of the
population
are from
ethnic minority
communities



150
languages
and dialects
spoken



Younger
than average
population



52 people
per hectare
(greater than
some London
boroughs)



Life expectancy:

78.1 for males
(national average 79.6)



82.4 for females
(national average 83.3)



Economy and employment

£33,920

average salary
for Luton jobs



8.5%

unemployment
rate
(4.8% nationally)



£29,258

average annual
full time salary for
Luton residents
(UK average
£31,285)



11,000

direct jobs at
London Luton
Airport with more
through supply
chains



Education

31%

of working age residents hold a degree or equivalent (40% nationally)



1 in 10

working age adults have no formal qualifications



95.4%

of young people are in education, employment or training (93.9% nationally)



6%

attainment gap between Luton pupils and the rest of England at key stage 2



87.5%

of children attend Ofsted rated 'good' or 'outstanding' primary schools



67%

of 16 to 64 year olds are educated to level 2 or above (78% nationally)



Housing

Occupancy:

60.2%

owned



15.8%

social rented



22.6%

private rented



£263,970

average house price (10% increase in the last year)



£1,050

average rent for a 3 bed house in Luton (£800 nationally)



14.6 people

assessed as homeless per thousand of population (6.3% nationally)



A super diverse town with a vibrant mix of culture, skills and languages



The third youngest population in the country with 22 per cent of residents below the age of 15



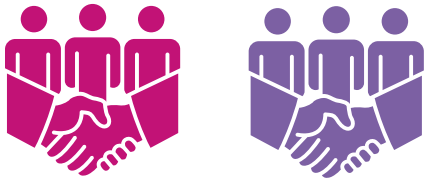
An excellent strategic location, situated between London, Oxford and Cambridge



Outstanding connectivity by road, rail and air- less than 30 minutes from London by rail, close to the M1 and 10 miles from the M25



A cohesive town where people get on well with their neighbours



A town of 225,000 people, with a continuously increasing population



A strong local economy, with productivity above the national average prior to the pandemic



Civic agreement between University of Bedfordshire and Luton Council



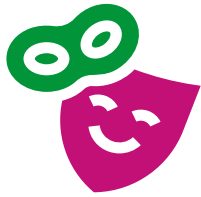
A town experiencing **strong wage growth**



Home to the fifth largest airport in the UK- supporting 27,000 jobs, and adding around £1.1 billion to the regional economy



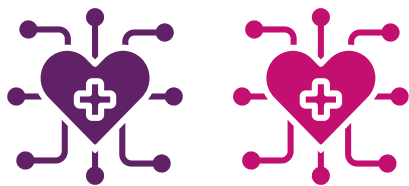
A growing arts, culture and heritage offer with events that celebrate our diverse range of cultures and support greater wellbeing



A dedicated voluntary and community sector that delivers a wide range of crucial services



Effective and efficient health partnerships locally and regionally, led by the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care System



Outstanding access to greenspace – including six green flag parks and close proximity to the Chilterns



Home to Luton and Dunstable University Hospital – providing good and outstanding core services to around 400,000 people in the region



Home to **Premier league Luton Town Football Club**



90% of schools in Luton rated as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted



A strong higher and further education offer through the University of Bedfordshire, Barnfield College and Luton Sixth Form College



WHO IS WHO

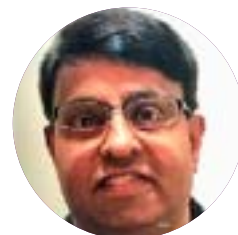
Hazel Simmons, Executive Leader

Cllr Hazel Simmons is Leader of Luton Council. Her portfolio as Leader includes Counter Extremism, Prevent and Equalities, and she leads on Luton's 2040 vision to have no-one in Luton living in Poverty by 2040. She has been a councillor in Lewsey Ward since 1991 and Leader since 2007.



Javed Hussain, Deputy Executive Leader

Cllr Javed Hussain is the Deputy Leader of Luton Council. His portfolio oversees sustainable development and highways within the town. He has been a councillor in Luton since 2019 and Deputy Leader since 2023.



Robin Porter, Chief Executive

Robin Porter took over as the Chief Executive for Luton Council in May 2019. Prior to this, he was Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director for Customer and Commercial Services at Luton Council, as well as the Lead Officer at London Luton Airport Ltd (LLAL). Before joining Luton Council in 2007 Robin worked as a senior manager in the private sector.

Robin is responsible for the circa 730 services the council delivers to Luton's 225,000 residents, and leading the 2,700 delivering those services.



Mark Fowler, Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director Population Wellbeing

Mark has worked in local government since 1991, operating at director level and above for the last 10 years. Prior to his move to Luton Council in February 2022 he was Corporate Director of Community Solutions at Barking and Dagenham Council where he supported communities, families and individuals to become more independent. As the Corporate Director for Population Wellbeing in Luton, Mark oversees services including Housing, Adult Social Care, Transformation, HR, Customer Services, Public Health, and Business Intelligence which are key to the Luton 2040 vision for the town to be healthy, fair and sustainable, where everyone can thrive and no-one has to live in poverty.



Dheeraj Chibber, Corporate Director, Children, Families and Education

Dheeraj was appointed Corporate Director for Children, Families and Education in May 2023, overseeing Children's Social Care, Quality and Improvement, and Education services. Prior to this, Dheeraj was assistant director for children's social care in London Borough of Merton, which achieved outstanding status in an Ofsted ILACS inspection.



Gerard McCleave, Corporate Director, Inclusive Economy

Gerard is our Corporate Director for Inclusive Economy having joined Luton Council in July 2023. Gerard is responsible for our place shaping services: inclusive growth; sustainable development; property and infrastructure; and neighbourhood services.



Nick Platts, Corporate Director and Managing Director, Luton Rising

Nick was appointed Managing Director of Luton Rising, the Luton Council company that owns London Luton Airport and associated assets, in July 2023. Prior to this, Nick had most recently lived and worked in Saudi Arabia for three years, initially as Director of Cargo at Riyadh Airport, and then leading development of the country's first special logistics zone. Prior to this Nick worked at Heathrow Airport.

Nick is responsible for Luton Rising's wide-ranging development and positive social impact programmes, including sustainability, Luton DART, and leading the application for long-term growth at the company's largest asset, London Luton Airport.



OUR STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

Our community, heritage and culture

Luton's biggest strength is our community - the commitment to Luton and resilience of our diverse, global-majority population makes Luton what it is, enabling us to repeatedly confound expectations in a variety of ways. The generosity and support of our community during Covid-19 has birthed ongoing initiatives such as our Food First programme, providing coordination and support to the hundreds of projects that help the most vulnerable of Luton's residents - its website has over 25,000 unique users of the site. As such it was no surprise when JustGiving named Luton the third most generous area in the UK. Faith plays a big part in the life of our community, with 82 per cent of Lutonian's reporting as having a religion in the 2021 census, compared with 63 per cent nationally. Our industrial and global heritage binds our community together and fuels our rich culture of festivals, celebrations and events. Our hat factories, The River Lea, museum collections and our public art are just some of the assets that remind us of this strong heritage and fuel our ambitions for the future.

Vision and leadership

Luton has courageous, strong political leadership and alignment of vision between members and officers. Luton's 2040 vision has cross-party buy-in, allowing all resources and planning to be aligned towards it. This headline vision drives our agenda, and work is ongoing to ensure that everyone in the council's workforce, and more of our wider town partners, understand their unique and important contribution towards Luton 2040.

Systems leaderships

Our shared agenda is held across the town's system, with strong buy-in from anchor institutions such as London Luton Airport, University of Bedfordshire, Luton and Dunstable Hospital and Luton Town FC, as well as nearly 30 other system partners who have taken a 2040 pledge.

This systems-leadership approach is paired with strong, intentional relationships with these key anchor institutions, including the unique civic agreement between Luton Council and the University of Bedfordshire.

London Luton Airport

Luton Council's ownership of the biggest regional economic asset, London Luton Airport, is our key economic driver, enabling us to support our most vulnerable residents despite inadequate financial support from central government. In 2019, the airport supported over 28,400 jobs, generating £1.8 billion in GDP across the UK. Luton Rising, our Airport company, will contribute £28m to fund frontline Council services this year alongside £8.7m that goes directly into the Voluntary and Community Sector. Luton Rising recently submitted their Development Consent Order application to seek approval to grow the Airport from 19m to 32m passengers a year, which if successful will create 11,000 additional jobs, £1.5bn additional economic activity and a further £13m a year invested directly into our voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations.



Innovation and dedication

In the face of regular challenges, our ability to adapt and innovate with projects such as Foxhall Homes and Connect2Luton, and ongoing entrepreneurial work through Luton Rising, allows Luton Council to have a continually balanced budget.

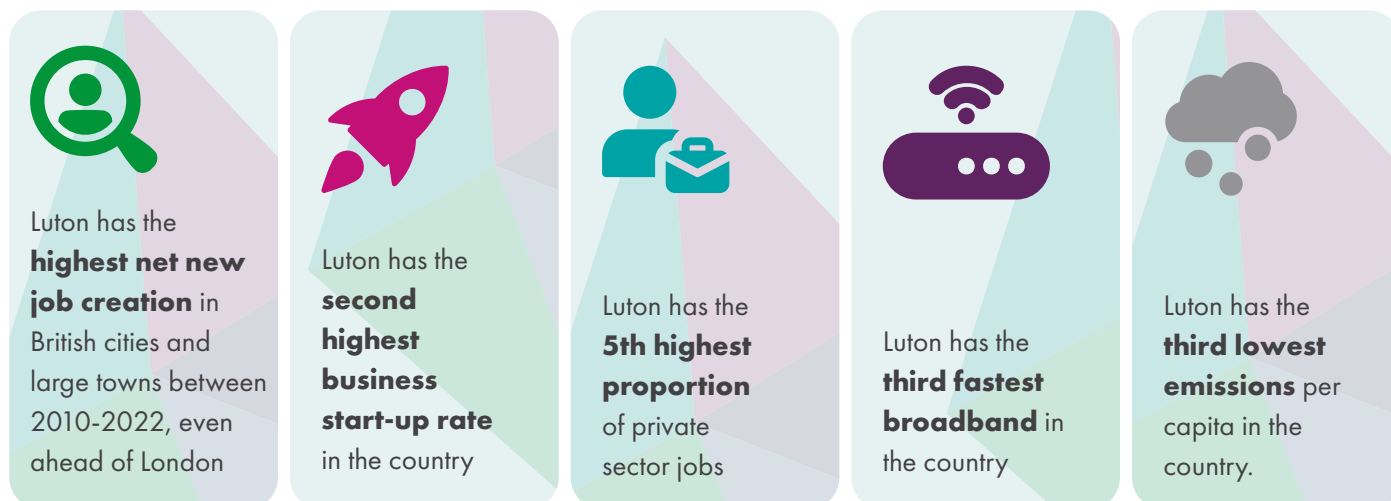
The pride, passion and dedication of Luton Council's workforce enables us to go above and beyond in support of our most vulnerable residents, with projects such as Luton Supporting You. Similarly, we're proud that our diverse workforce is increasingly reflective of our wider Luton community.

A grassroots approach

We have a compassionate and committed voluntary and community sector that supports some of Luton's most vulnerable and is a significant driving force for change within the town. Funding from Luton Rising into the VCFSE is unlike anything else in the country, with 53p per passenger being invested into the town 26 times more than any other UK airport, allowing our voluntary and community sector to thrive despite the uncertain wider context for charitable funding.

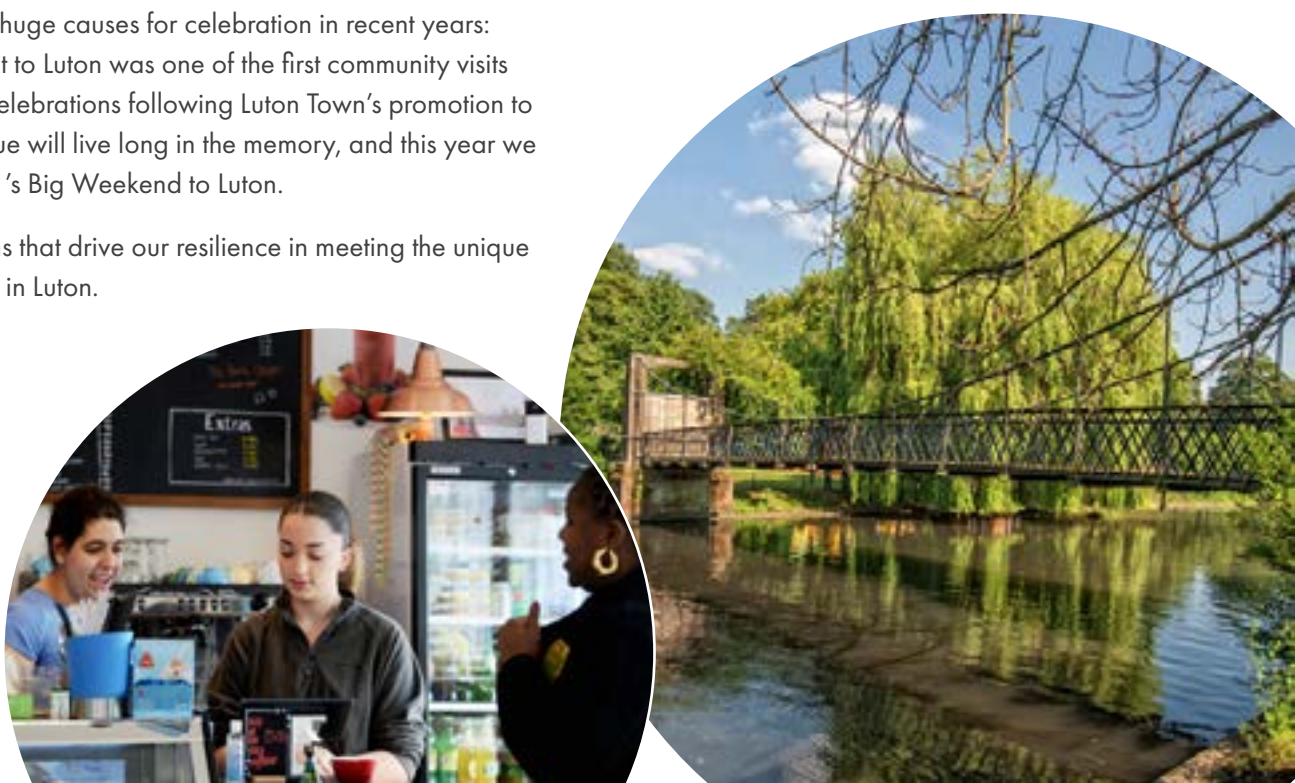
A town on the up

Continued economic growth within Luton has been highlighted by the recent Centre for Cities report which showed:



There have been huge causes for celebration in recent years: King Charles' visit to Luton was one of the first community visits of his reign, the celebrations following Luton Town's promotion to the Premier League will live long in the memory, and this year we welcome Radio 1's Big Weekend to Luton.

It is these strengths that drive our resilience in meeting the unique challenges faced in Luton.



OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE

The challenges faced by Luton can all be viewed through the lens of poverty. Some of these challenges are drivers of poverty, others the result of poverty.

Despite child poverty figures dropping from 45 per cent in 2019 to 39 per cent in 2022 the number of people living in destitution in our town rose, with an estimated 7,020 households who are unable to afford their housing costs, heat their home or buy essentials. Our minimum income standard work (below), is based on a similar model from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and allows us to track the financial quality of life of people living across Luton.



Analysis of research from Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and tools that we use to monitor change such as our joint strategic needs indicators and our social progress index, have shown us that the main drivers of poverty in Luton are:

Lack of affordable housing

Low paid irregular work

Population growth

Disability and ill health

Inadequate social security and families with high numbers of dependencies

Problematic debt

Lack of central government funding

DRIVERS OF POVERTY

Lack of affordable housing

Although Luton has tended to have lower house prices than surrounding areas, the affordability of homes and rents in the town is a significant problem. The town has a large private rented sector (29 per cent) which is both a route into settled accommodation but also a driver of homelessness due to tenancies ending. The Local Housing Allowance falls far short of actual rents in the town. However, Luton is an attractive location for other boroughs in more expensive areas to relocate people in housing need. Additionally the direct actions of the Home Office who at one point in 2023 had placed over a quarter of the East of England's Asylum seekers in Luton, have hugely exacerbated the housing issues. This has made it harder for Luton Council to secure affordable temporary accommodation, or move on accommodation with private landlords locally.

The poor quality of the private rented sector was recognised by the Institute of Health Equity as a driver of poor health outcomes. Attempts to introduce Additional and Selective Licensing have been hampered by legal challenges but are anticipated to roll out in May 2024.

Low paid work

Over 20 per cent of jobs in Luton generate income below the Living Wage and there is a high prevalence of insecure work and underemployment. The 2024 Centre for Cities Report showed that Luton has the third highest unemployment benefit claimant rate in the country.

Population growth

Since the Census of 2021, there are indications of significant increases to the population. These include approximately 10,000 additional GP registrations in the year to Sept 2023. Much of this growth is a result of global migration, with an increase in National Insurance number applications to 11,912 issued to foreign nationals in Luton in 2023, compared to an average of only 5,670 per year since 2011.

The asylum and refugee landscape across the UK is both complex and challenging, but this is felt particularly keenly in Luton, with a collective recognition of various pressures, impacts and risks for system partners, local people and the asylum seekers themselves.

When considered against the regional and national picture, Luton has a disproportionate volume of refugee asylum seekers based within the town housing 6.5 per cent of the total refugee asylum seeker population of the East of England compared with 3.4 per cent of the overall population, a proportion that is twice that of Bedford and Central Beds. Further to this, when considering Supported Asylum (i.e. removing Afghan and Ukraine schemes) and the accommodation categories with considerably greater impact and risk (i.e. Initial Accommodation, Dispersal Accommodation, Contingency Accommodation), Luton now hosts nearly one sixth of the total East of England asylum population (15.36 per cent). The support available to fund services for this population growth has not been provided.

Disability and ill health

Health outcomes for Luton residents are worse than in the wider population, with life expectancy and healthy life expectancy lower than the national average. On top of this, the percentage of Luton residents listed as disabled under the Equalities Act whose day-to-day activities are 'limited a lot' is above the national average. Similarly, the percentage of our wider population in the 2021 census who said they were in 'very bad', 'bad', or 'fair' health were all above the national average.

Inadequate social security and families with high numbers of dependencies

A freedom of information request revealed that the two-child limit on universal credit impacts more than 6,000 children in 1,700 families in Luton. The cap, which prevents parents from claiming child tax credit or universal credit for any third or subsequent child born after April 2017, makes families £3,235 a year worse off for each additional child above the limit.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation data shows that the social security system is failing to prevent destitution with the most common source of income for all destitute households being social security benefits (72 per cent). The basic rate of social security is now so low it fails to clear the extremely low-income cash threshold set for destitution.

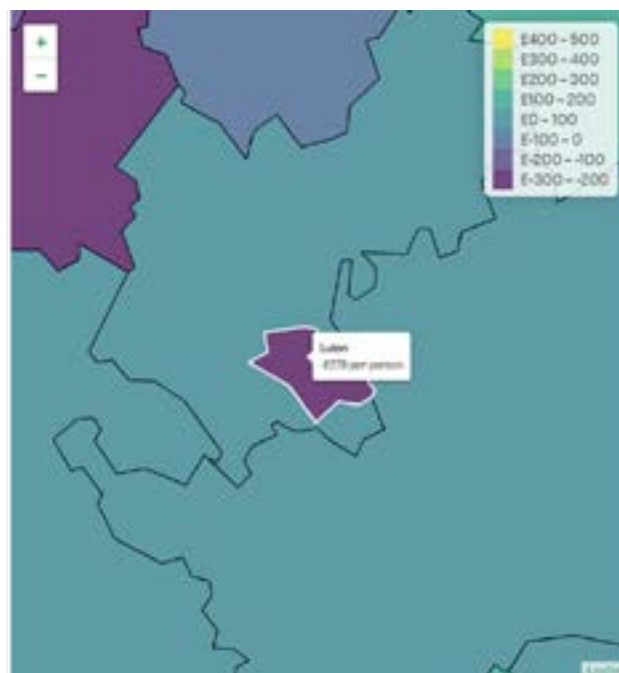
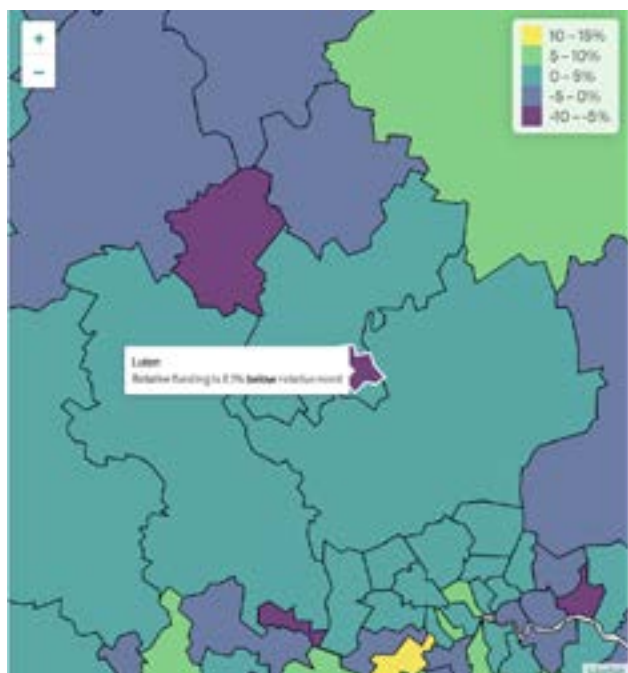
Alongside this we know that people in Luton are not always claiming all the benefits they are entitled to because of lack of understanding or access. Recent work by our Customer Services team highlighting low awareness of pension credit, supported 201 pensioners to claim Pension Credits, increasing their annual income by an average of £9,943 per year a total of £566,753 and when including additional benefits a total of £4.5 million over the life of the project.

Problematic debt

In recent years there have been significant rises in the proportion of adults in Luton holding a high-cost loan (increase of 29 per cent) and relying heavily on credit (increase of 36 per cent). For the town, good credit is becoming less available, as Luton has dropped from the 75th worst local authority for total credit score in 2019 to the 37th worst in 2023, with a drop in credit availability ranking from 137th worst to 84th worse over the same timeframe.

Lack of central government funding

Figures from the Institute for Fiscal studies show that Luton has the second lowest public spending figure on NHS, local government, schools, police and public health compared to the relative need within the town in England, with £278 per person below the perceived need being spent in the town.





THE IMPACT OF POVERTY

Health inequalities

The ONS Health Index places Luton in the bottom 20 per cent of local authorities for health in England.

Life expectancy in Luton is lower than the England average. In the years 2017–19, before the COVID-19 pandemic, life expectancy at birth was more than one year less than the England average for men, and about eight months less for women. Over the last two decades life expectancy in Luton has lagged behind the average for England.

In the period 2018–2020, healthy life expectancy at birth in Luton was 59.2 years for men and 60 years for women. These are just a little lower than the England averages but much lower than places in the UK with the highest healthy life expectancy - such as Rutland with 75 years of healthy life expectancy for men and the Orkney Islands with 77 years of healthy life expectancy for women.

Problematic debt

The prevalence of poverty in the town, combined with the lack of available credit, results in large subprime credit usage within Luton. It is estimated that more than 3,700 people in Luton are in debt to loan sharks. A recent report estimates £20 million has been borrowed from subprime lending sources in Luton each year – paying back an eye-watering £13 million in interest alone - affecting over 12,000 people in the town.

Homelessness

Luton has considerable pressures in terms of homelessness prevalence and temporary accommodation use. In 2022, Shelter research placed Luton at the top of the UK list on prevalence of homelessness, with one in 66 people in the town considered homeless. Our housing solutions service sees an average of 450 households every month seeking advice and support, a number that has doubled over the last 18 months. Numbers of households in temporary accommodation fell in the first part of 2023 but have risen recently. The costs of temporary accommodation creates one of the biggest risks to the overall council budget with a projected overspend of £3.5 million for 2023/24.

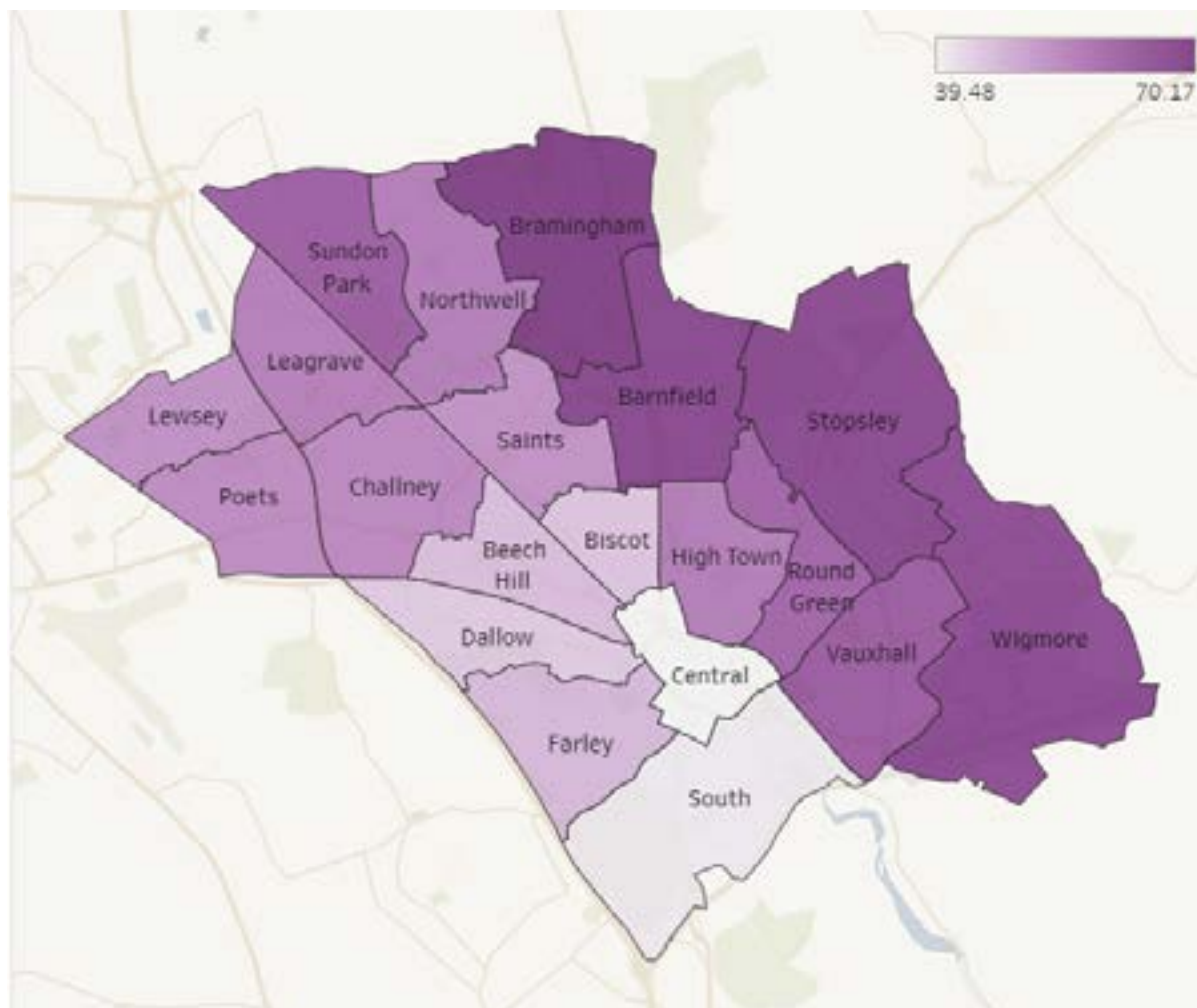
Demand pressures

Demand pressures on local services, often driven by population increase and deprivation are both a symptom and driver of poverty in the town.

Demand pressures are high in many areas, but we have seen the most significant increase in demand in Adult Social Care, with an anticipated overspend of £1.4-1.8m for 2023/24. Similarly, for Children Families and Education, rising referral numbers due to population growth, high levels of poverty and a chaotic children's care market are resulting in children's placement being overspent by £2.6m. Alongside this we have a year on year increase in the number of children with an Education, Health and Care Plan which, increased the need for the council to provide transport to school by over 142 per cent.

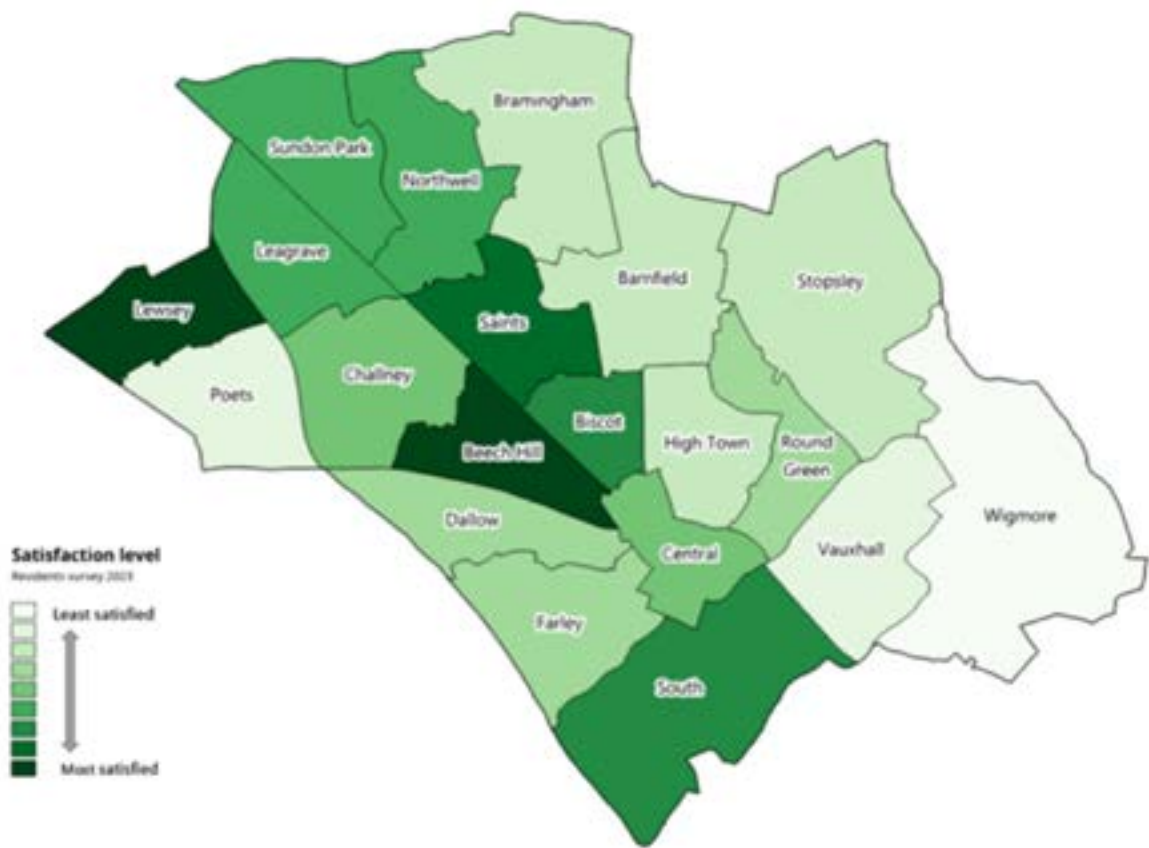
Quality of life

The impact of poverty in Luton is all encompassing; Luton's Social Progress Index seeks to measure quality of life outside of economic factors, focusing on basic human needs, foundations of wellbeing and opportunity within the town. The map below shows disparity of quality in life across Luton, with darker shades showing the more socially progressed wards



While opportunity, aspiration and educational attainment are often limited in deprived areas, we also know that poverty in Luton impacts our entire town.

The map below shows resident satisfaction across Luton. When compared with the SPI map, we note that it is the least 'socially progressed' areas of the town that have higher levels of satisfaction. With such a high number of our population living in destitution, and demand pressures in a variety of areas, the town's resources focus on our most vulnerable, meaning projects and work that would benefit the more 'socially progressed' areas of Luton are not always able to be prioritised - everyone in Luton, whether directly, or indirectly, is impacted by inequitable financial distribution across the UK.



OUR RESPONSE: LUTON 2040

Luton 2040 is our response to the challenge of poverty in our town. Together, as key system leaders and anchor institutions, we have developed this vision with residents and partners across Luton, based on their aspirations for the future of the town and the 225,300 people that live here.

We know that poverty and inequality cuts across outcomes for our residents in education, health and employment and community safety which is why creating a town free of poverty is at the heart of our vision. We also know that poverty is a complex problem with no one simple solution. So while at the heart of tackling poverty is our ambition for Luton to be a town built on fairness, a place that gives equitable opportunities to all, our vision is built around five priorities, each of which contributes to achieving our overall goal:



Supporting a strong and empowered community





Building an inclusive economy





Improving population wellbeing and tackling health inequalities





Becoming a child friendly town





Tackling the climate emergency and becoming a net zero town







AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Within Luton's evolving system, we know there are areas that need further work and development.

Our resources and systems don't always match our ambition

Luton 2040 is our key vision, an ambitious agenda with the alleviation of poverty at its heart. This would be a wildly ambitious goal for anywhere in the country, but in a town facing the scale of challenges that Luton does and chronic underfunding from central government, the gap between ambition and resources is clear. The development of 2040 itself needs further resourcing as we grow a system to understand, evaluate and clearly mark our journey towards 2040. To reach where we want to be in 2040 will require making the absolute most of what we have, constantly innovating to generate more from less, and town-wide buy-in.

We need to continue to evolve and strengthen the 2040 governance

Luton 2040 is an ambition held by our whole system. In order to mature in this work together we need to develop a set of shared KPI's, increase the number of organisations who have committed to the vision through taking a Luton 2040 Pledge and make our system wide governance structure more effective. Crucially this includes diversifying who is supporting 2040, particularly by increasing private sector buy-in. We want to grow the collective ownership of our vision, so that it is being driven across the town, even when we are not in the room.

We need to further develop our approach to working together with residents

The Wigan Deal is a great example of how a system's culture can transform the relationship between local government and residents. The strong partnership-focused culture we have across system leaders in Luton now needs to translate more fully to our work with residents. We need a unique approach for our unique community, one that will best place 2040 at the heart of what we do and create meaningful town-wide partnerships. There are already some areas of good practice, including the Fairness Taskforce and Black Lives Matter, but principles from this work need to now permeate through all that we do.

We need to continue to develop partnerships

Partnerships are at the core of our Luton 2040 work and a real strength for our town. We're proud of the partnerships within Luton and the shared commitment to the wellbeing of the town, but their remains unlocked potential that will enable us to go to the next level if we are to get where we want to go. We need partnerships that move beyond shared vision, into shared work and resources, partnerships both within Luton Council and beyond that break us out of silo working, into relationships leading to mutual flourishing and tangible outcomes. The appetite for this work is there, but we know these things don't just happen – they need care and attention.

We need to become more data-led

Our use of data in decision-making is currently limited. Tools launched over recent years such as the Minimum Income Standard and Social Progress Index have allowed us greater insight into the shape of poverty in Luton, and specific population data has allowed customer services to support residents in applying for a fuller range of benefits, but this work must continue to evolve and allow our solutions to these complex problems to be better data-led.

We need to be less self-effacing; shout louder; and have bigger Regional and National voice

With the challenges in Luton, we are often backwards in coming forwards, slow to let people know about the amazing strengths within Luton in the face of adversity. Our innovative streak, resilience and ability to buck trends and punch above our weight are often drowned out by talk of the things going wrong, meaning our narrative is not always as positive as it should be. In facing the sharp end of many global challenges, we have something to say on the regional and national stage, but in order to do this, and access to funding streams that could come our way through this, we need to build stronger and more intentional relationships with central government and the civil service.

Our enabling services need further development

Due to austerity and a lack of resources, some of our backhouse functions have had limited investment making them, at times, slow and complicated. This means that it is hard for us to be responsive, including swift and clear communications with front line staff, paying local contractors in good time and changing the shape of our teams quickly in order to respond to need.

We need to develop a better working relationship with our new auditor

Despite our best efforts, the relationship with our current Auditor is not as positive as we would like. We have made a positive start to the relationship with the new Auditor (from 23/24 onwards) and this needs to further strengthen to ensure that we get a set of Accounts that are Audited and a Value for Money statement that is under taken.

CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

This position paper seeks to expand on the strengths and assets of our town and the challenges facing both Luton council, and our system-wide approach to Luton 2040, through the lens of the five high-level themes adopted for all LGA Corporate Peer Challenges:

1.

Local priorities and outcomes:

Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities and achieving improved outcomes for all its communities?

2.

Organisational and place leadership:

Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?

3.

Governance and culture:

Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of respect, challenge and scrutiny?

4.

Financial planning and management:

Does the council have a clear understanding of its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a clear plan to address its financial challenges?

5.

Capacity for improvement:

Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

As a local council, and a town-wide system, we have a strong clarity of vision and direction. We're delighted to host such a strong, varied and experienced peer team to Luton as you join us in reviewing our approach as we seek to ensure our resources and efforts are well-aligned towards 2040.

Welcome to Luton.



PREVIOUS LGA REVIEW

The feedback from Luton's previous LGA included the below as areas which would take our work 'to the next level':

The impact of IT on customers and the council

The very strong message from staff and elected members is that the situation with IT has seen performance stabilise but it has not driven the level of change or improvement that other Councils have seen in the last few years, despite the investment that Luton Council has made. It is seen to represent one of the council's most significant risks and opportunities.

Please see page 85 for an update on Luton Council's insourcing project in relation to IT.

Corporate enablers

Notable progress was being made in the areas of HR and organisational development, Business Intelligence and Communications. The way in which Finance Business Partners supported and advised the Directorates and services to which they are affiliated is seen to model the 'gold standard' for the provision of support within the council from the corporate centre.

Transformation support and programme management were seen as essential for the council's ambitions to be delivered successfully HR and Organisational Development.

Please see page 83 for an update on Luton Council's ongoing transformation programme.

Checks and balances

Luton's level of ambition made it "no ordinary council" and necessitated an equivalent scale of checks and balances in order to ensure those ambitions were fulfilled.

The rigour, expert input and challenge being provided in relation to the £225m investment being made in the DART represented an example of good practice, but the feedback stressed the importance of carefully managed risk going forward.

Please see page 68 for an update on Luton Council's strategic risk management.

Luton as 'positive disrupters'

The feedback highlighted the changing power dynamic between Luton Council and the wider system, pointing out that to reach its full potential the council needed the support of a range of partners, and would benefit from a comprehensive long-term strategy and approach, encompassing all key partners.

Luton's 2040 vision is our key response to this feedback, not only as a town-wide strategy, but as a partnership-focused approach to our life-changing transformation programme and service delivery. As this document shows, this sits at the heart of Luton Council.

ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE PREVIOUS LGA REVIEW

 <p>Delivered our Covid-19 recovery plans for the economy and population wellbeing</p>	 <p>Launched our new Town Centre Masterplan</p>	 <p>Launched a new Employment and Skills Strategy</p>	 <p>Kickstart employment scheme delivered to support young people into work</p>	 <p>Delivering our continuous improvement journey for children's services</p>
 <p>Launch of a new Heritage Strategy – Curating Luton</p>	 <p>The opening of a new pocket park and opening up of the River Lea in the town centre</p>	 <p>Launch of Luton Rising – a new brand for our airport focussed on sustainable growth that supports our community and our planet</p>	 <p>Completion of Barnfield College's £25 million redevelopment</p>	 <p>Premium Progression Partnership scheme launched by University of Bedfordshire</p>
 <p>Delivery of Luton's first heritage month – with a full programme of events</p>	 <p>Refresh of our Arts and Culture Strategy – Harnessing Momentum</p>	 <p>The Culture Trust, Luton opened Hat Works in the Hat District</p>	 <p>Schools kept open throughout the pandemic and education catchup to support pupils</p>	 <p>Successful Creative Leaders Programme piloted</p>
 <p>Delivery of 600 new homes by developers, with a further 1,500 due to be completed by March 2023</p>	 <p>Opening of the new Windmill Hill SEND school</p>	 <p>Established Thriving Communities social prescribing programme</p>	 <p>Creation of our Integrated Family Partnership service</p>	
 <p>Six Luton Parks retained Green Flag status</p>	 <p>Luton's Fairness Taskforce launched</p>	 <p>Access for All upgrades delivered at Luton Airport Parkway Station</p>	 <p>Operation Foresight increasing policing and enforcement to improve town centre safety in 2021 and 2022</p>	



University of
Bedfordshire
launches its Civic
Agreement with
Luton Council



Completion of
Putteridge High
School's new
£23 million
building



Launch of new
Adult Social Care
Strategy and
Luton's first social
work academy



Lewsey Pool and
sports facilities
refurbished and
reopened



Edge of Care
service launched



Procurement of
Barnardo's to
deliver new
Junior
Safeguarding
Board



Established
Equality, Diversity
and Inclusion
Board



73% of residents said they were
satisfied with Luton as a place to live
in 2022 – the highest level
ever recorded



Resettlement
programmes for
refugees from
Afghanistan
and Ukraine



Over 375,000
vaccines delivered
to residents



£56.6 million in
business grants
delivered to local
businesses and
39,500 jobs
supported through
furlough



Planning approved
for Power Court,
a new stadium for
Luton Town FC



Good Business
Charter officially
launched



More than 280
people successfully
helped out
of temporary
accommodation



Obtained £19.1
million of Bus
Back Better
funding to deliver
our Bus Service
Improvement Plan



ABCD community
clean ups
organised as part
of #KeepLutonTidy
campaign



Mary
Seacole Housing
Association and
Bedfordshire and
Luton Community
Foundation launch
Will Power project



More than £119
million in grant
funding secured by
543 organisations in
Luton since 2020



Launch of BLMK
Integrated Care
System and
University
of Bedfordshire's
research hub



£20 million secured
from the Levelling
Up Fund for town
centre regeneration



New Town
Centre
Strategic Board
established



Luton officially becomes a Marmot
Town, following release of report
by Institute for Health Equity on
Reducing Health Inequalities in Luton



London Luton
Airport back to 80%
of pre-pandemic
passenger numbers
by summer 2022



Luton school pupils
achieve better Key
Stage 2 results
than the national
average in 2022



No school
exclusions among
looked after
children cohort for
another year



Secured £7.7 million
Salix grant to
decarbonise public
sector buildings