

CORPORATE PLAN / STRATEGIC CHANGE PROGRAMME 2023-2024

Half year progress April 2023 to September 2023

Well-being Objective 2

All communities are thriving and sustainable

Objective
People live healthy, long and good lives in thriving and sustainable communities where people get along together and support one another

2027 Outcome	Key Priorities for 2023/2024	Progress Comment	RAG Status
1. Enhanced support is given to those who are at risk or living in poverty.	a. Make sure those who need help and support with the cost of living know what support is available and how to access it and identify gaps in help and support and how those gaps could be addressed.	<p>Communications has remained a key element in the response to the Cost of Living crisis during the first six months of 2023-2024. NPT stakeholder e-bulletin issued in September 2023, highlighted new information about the support available from local and national organisations to help people who are struggling with the cost of living – e.g., The Digital Poverty Alliance scheme, NPT’s Christmas Jobs Fair, and the UK Government’s new website of energy saving advice: https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/energy-saving-advice/</p> <p>NPT Council’s social media has been utilised to promote schemes such as the School Uniform Grant, Free School Meals, Food and Fun, as well as free activities for children and families during the summer holidays (July-August 2023).</p> <p>Recent social media activity in September has included promotion of the Port Talbot Opportunity Hub, NPT Employability recruitment events, the ‘Gathering Place’s’ community-driven initiative, as well as signposting to help and support available with the cost of living this winter https://beta.npt.gov.uk/housing-and-benefits/help-with-the-cost-of-living/</p> <p>In September, Warm Wales moved into ‘phase 2’ of their operation. They are taking an outreach approach in order to reach those members of the community not previously engaged with, taking a particular focus on those who don’t have access to the internet. Activities include attending community events and venues (such as Warm Hubs), as well as building networks to support with cross-referrals.</p> <p><u>Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT)</u> – The Corporate Policy Support Officer (Tackling Poverty) took up their role in July-23; they have undertaken training, conducted research and attended webinars between August-September 2023.</p> <p>Initial areas of focus have been identified (gaps in help to address) – i.e., Pension Credit, Healthy Start Vouchers – and once the DPIA (Data Protection Impact Assessment) is signed off, the officer will initiate the first targeted intervention campaign for winter 2023-24.</p> <p>During the warmer spring/summer months, NPT’s ‘Help with the Cost of Living’ webpage continued to receive views. Between 1st April and 30th September 2023, there were 8,451 views of the landing page.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top 3 most viewed pages from the landing page were Household Bills (2,423), Emergency Support (1,325), and Claiming Benefits (1,132) – between 18th May and 30th September 2023. <p>Welsh Government have confirmed that we will be receiving the Food Hardship Relief Scheme again also known as the Food Poverty Grant. It is estimated that the grant will be received in readiness for Quarter 3.</p>	

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	<p>b. Revisit the work undertaken with the support of the Bevan Foundation, reset the strategic objectives and actions to address the root cause of poverty.</p>	<p>In July 2023, the Corporate Policy Officer (Tackling Poverty) took up their post; they will be supporting the Cost of Living and Poverty Prevention Partnership in revisiting the work begun prior to the pandemic with The Bevan Foundation in order to develop a poverty plan.</p> <p>The officer re-established contact with The Bevan Foundation (Aug-23) who have provided suggested reading material to support the officer in understanding the picture of poverty in the current climate, as well as the report produced by The Bevan Foundation about poverty in Neath Port Talbot (as a response to the symposium in 2019).</p> <p>Following completion of an agreed Action Plan for winter 23/24 (an output of the autumn poverty workshop – October 2023), and the identification of medium to long-term actions, the Corporate Policy Officer (Tackling Poverty) will explore options for The Bevan Foundation to support the work of the Cost of Living and Poverty Prevention Partnership in identifying objectives and setting relevant actions to tackle poverty in Neath Port Talbot.</p> <p>While there is no impact to measure at the six-month mark, the relationship with The Bevan Foundation has been re-established and this will be taken forward in the next 3-6 months. The aim is to see how The Bevan Foundation can help NPT Council to tackle poverty.</p>	
	<p>c. Work with partners to help people experiencing hardship to improve their circumstances.</p>	<p>In Qtr. 1 the Cost of Living and Poverty Prevention Partnership’s Steering Group reviewed the output of the Spring Workshop (March 2023), which identified 6 focus areas impacting citizens and communities in NPT as a result of the cost-of-living crisis: Energy, Food, Debt, Housing, Mental Health, and Basic Skills.</p> <p>The feedback was incorporated into the finalised Cost of Living Report (May/July-23), which was sent as an appendix to the Neath Port Talbot PSB’s (Public Service Board) letter to Welsh Government (July 2023) expressing concern at the level of hardship being experienced by the citizens of NPT as a result of the Cost of Living crisis.</p> <p><u>Hardship Relief Scheme</u> – This has continued to be delivered by Warm Wales throughout the first six months of the financial year (Apr-Sep 2023), with interventions including Argos vouchers, white goods, energy company payments, water payments, and home maintenance.</p> <p><u>Third Sector Discretionary Cost of Living Crisis Grant Scheme</u> – In Sep 2023, NPT Council partnered with Neath Port Talbot CVS to launch a one-off grant scheme aimed at supporting third sector organisations that have experienced increased demand for their services due to the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>Members of the Partnership’s wider Reference Group were asked to align themselves to one (or more) of the 6 focus areas – 19 responses were received.</p> <p>Hardship Relief Scheme – Warm Wales delivered 1,013 interventions between Apr-Sep 2023.</p> <p>Third Sector Discretionary Cost of Living Crisis Grant Scheme – applications close on 18th Oct 2023.</p>	
	<p>d. Identify how the council can bring its services closer to where people live, helping to sustain key local facilities that act as community hubs.</p>	<p>Work has been undertaken to scope out opportunities to utilise two council properties for community activities. Engagement with local communities in the Afan Cluster and with specialist groups has been completed and opportunities for enhancing existing community hubs are now being scoped.</p> <p>Community members feel listened to and have offered opportunities to improve their local community.</p>	
<p>2. Worked with communities to develop a clear and detailed</p>	<p>a. Further develop our work at neighbourhood level, mapping local assets (what’s strong about each</p>	<p>Mapping of community local assets has been completed in partnership with CVS (Council for Voluntary Service) and is available for staff to access this information via Geo Discover.</p>	

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<p>understanding of what is strong about each community and what communities want to achieve for the future. People are involved in decisions that affect them; more people are involved in community life.</p>	<p>community) and mapping community vulnerabilities.</p>		
	<p>b. Coordination of funding opportunities for communities based on place-based model/needs.</p>	<p>SPF (Shared Prosperity Fund) has given the Local Authority an opportunity to support communities via the Sustainable Communities Growth Fund. £1 million to support the poverty and equality themes.</p> <p>The fund has been open for the past 2 months and applications are being developed by applicants currently. The panel is in place and will meet on a monthly basis. A number of different organisations have enquired including business and the third sector.</p> <p>The council's Third Sector Grants supported 43 third sector organisations for 2023-2024, with a total grant of £722,310 being paid out across the year. The council's application window for the grant opened between August 7th and October 13th inviting applications for 1 year funding for 2024-2025.</p>	
	<p>c. Increase the number of people helped to connect with local information care and support networks by working the community and other partners to identify opportunities.</p>	<p>Strengthening of the Prevention and Early Intervention model within Adult Services continues to progress. A review of the community connecting team has commenced with a view to reshaping the offer of support to be able to meet community/service need.</p> <p>Development of "Our NPT" digital platform continues to be co-developed with a number of community groups. The platform will provide easy access to local information, learning and community groups.</p> <p>Community Groups are being supported to consider digitisation of their group activities where possible. 5 groups have already been supported.</p> <p>Housebound residents will be able to access community activities reducing isolation and loneliness.</p>	
	<p>d. Create a network of neighbourhood forums to increase opportunities for local people to participate in decisions that affect them and provide greater support for the work of local councillors in their ward.</p>	<p>In partnership with Neath CVS (Council for Voluntary Service) 3 Neighbourhood forum sessions have been delivered across the Borough. Facilitated by CVS, the sessions provided an opportunity for community members to come together and talk about the issues/opportunities within their area. Approximately 30 people attended each event and feedback was very positive.</p> <p>The Aging Well officer has worked with and supported several older person's groups (55+) to talk about what is strong about their communities. Emerging key themes from the engagement work include Transport, access to information and access to timely primary health services.</p>	
	<p>e. Continue to promote and develop our 'NPTBuyLocal' initiative, encouraging local people to support their local business.</p>	<p>The NPTBuyLocal website is still accessible.</p>	
	<p>f. Begin to take the actions that will implement our commitment to the place making charter.</p>	<p>The Council continues to work with Consultants 'the Urbanists' to produce Place Plans for our three main town centres, but also several secondary towns such as Ystalyfera and Briton Ferry. In addition, Place Plans will also be produced for several tertiary settlements such as Taibach, Cwmafan and Gwaun Cae Gurwen. These Place Plans will provide a pipeline of Regeneration projects that will be able to take advantage of future funding streams. We also continue to consult with the Design Commission for Wales as part of this process</p>	

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3. Improved the range and quality of informal and formal support for elderly and vulnerable residents, including unpaid carers.	a. Bring forward proposals for the further development of adult and children social care services.	A review of unpaid carers is underway with a view to strengthening an earlier offer of support and identification with a view to avoiding crisis along with transitional support throughout the caring journey.	
4. Worked with the community to prevent problems from happening or getting worse.	a. Continue to work through our community safety partnership to address the problems posed by alcohol, illegal drugs, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour.	<p>The Community Safety Partnership Board has met during Q1 and Q2. The Board continues to be coordinated by the Principal Officer of Community Safety, co-chaired by the Strategic Manager for Partnerships and Community Cohesion, NPTCBC and Superintendent for CSP (Community Safety Partnership), South Wales Police.</p> <p>During December 2022, a development day was held to realign our priorities for the next 3 years. The priority areas are as follows;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence 2. Anti-Social Behaviour 3. Substance Use 4. Serious Violence 5. Acquisitive Crime – including Crime Prevention and Community Engagement 6. Community Cohesion <p>At each meeting the board receive updates on each priority area – in the form of a highlight report and a verbal update. These updates are accompanied by performance reports from South Wales Police and updates from the other responsible authorities; Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Swansea Bay University Health Board and the Probation Service. Information discussed at the meetings is shared with the West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board, and the Public Service Board to ensure clear communication lines, shared information and support to remove any barriers.</p> <p>The 6 priority areas have formed the basis for a new draft Community Safety Strategy which will go out to public consultation in the new year. The Board will continue to monitor emerging trends, patterns, and performance data. This information will be used to steer campaigns, community engagements, new projects and initiatives that the Community Safety Team will deliver on, in partnership with other responsible authorities and local partner agencies.</p>	
	b. Hold engagement events to promote community safety and crime prevention related campaigns/initiatives.	<p>The Community Safety Team commenced a trial of a new approach to community engagements; delivering bespoke crime prevention events in different areas of the borough, adjusting the partners who attend to meet the needs of the local communities, taking into account local intelligence and anecdotal information.</p> <p>Areas visited during Q1;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'A Safer Dulais Valley' • 'A Safer Cadoxton' • 'A Safer Glynneath' <p>Also during Q1, Crucial Crew took place; Community Safety's flagship event, which has been running for 27 years. Each year, at least 1500 Year 6 pupils attend the event, and visit a series of 10 minute safety workshops.</p> <p>The aim of Crucial Crew is to make sure young people stay safe over their summer holidays and during their transition from primary to secondary school.</p>	

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		<p>Workshops include Fire Safety, Water Safety, Healthy Relationships, Road Safety, Railway Safety and many more.</p> <p>This year, we were also supported by Ysgol Cwm Brombils Year 10 drama students, who provided a 10 minute peer education production to every school, which was incredibly emotive and thought provoking.</p> <p>Various Paws on Patrol events were also held during Q1, to promote the scheme which encourages dog walkers to be our eyes and ears in the community, reporting in the issues they may see.</p> <p>In addition the above, our social media presences remains strong, with good reach and levels of engagement.</p> <p>Bespoke Community Safety Events continued with;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'A Safer Sandfields' • 'A Safer Ystalyfera' <p>The team also attended the Emergency Services family fun day at Victoria Gardens and issued crime prevention advice to over 400 people.</p> <p>Other events attended included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPT Family Play Day • Taibach Party in The Park • Paws on Patrol with Dogs Trust at Gnoll Park and Bryn Park • Fairyland Family Fun Day • Skewen Family Fun Day <p>The team has engaged with over 4000 residents at in person events. This engagement ensures residents are better able to protect themselves from crime, but they also know what to report and how to report, should they find themselves victim of a community safety related issue such as; domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour, hate crime, burglary, theft etc.</p>	
<p>5. Supported the development of more community groups with an increase in the number of volunteers.</p>	<p>a. Provide seed funding for community and voluntary initiatives that strengthen early intervention and prevention support at the neighbourhood level.</p>	<p>Loneliness and Social Isolation strategy and implementation plan is being developed with the community and is due to be finalised by January 2024. Over 15+ groups have been involved in the development of the implementation plan.</p> <p>Funding to support initiatives is available to support implementation and will be facilitated by NPT CVS in the new year. The money will be available to community and grass roots groups and organisations.</p>	
	<p>b. Work alongside the Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service to encourage and further develop community and voluntary groups across the county borough.</p>	<p>Partnership working with CVS continues to be strengthened with regular engagement in particular looking at Neighbourhood Forums, Social Prescribing and Volunteering.</p>	
	<p>c. Finalise the Council's Volunteering Policy to encourage and support council staff to volunteer.</p>	<p>Meetings have taken place corporately to scope out the different volunteering offers across the Council with a view to collating the different policies and procedures and drafting a clear volunteering policy.</p>	
<p>6. Developed our valleys, villages and towns.</p>	<p>a. Clean up, Green up initiative to be continued and extend work to improve</p>	<p>A £4.25m capital additional works programme was allocated to various different green up and clean up initiatives in 2022. During the first quarter of 2023/24, the delivery of a number of those initiatives has progressed including the renovation of play grounds such as Talbot Memorial Park and the adventure Playground at the Gnoll Estate Country Park</p>	

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	the cleanliness, environment and safety of towns, villages and valleys.	and delivery of new vehicles such as a new pot-hole pro machine, new road sweepers and street vacuums. Procurement exercises are also ongoing for certain initiatives, such as regenerating the playground at Aberavon seafront and arboriculture and bus shelter improvement works throughout the borough. The clean-up and green up initiative has already made a significant impact throughout our communities and more will be realised as the programme is being delivered.	
	b. Strengthen our neighbourhood management services.	The 12 additional neighbourhood services operational staff members have been focusing on cleaning up our communities through delivering services such as weed ripping, weed spraying, overgrowth cut back, pathway edging, preparation work for organised events and generally reacting to works demands from the community and members. This has resulted in some excellent feedback being received from members of the public, along with elected member for which the team now have more capacity to enable them to fulfil their roles as community champions.	
	c. Ensure effective engagement and communication of what is being delivered in valleys, villages and towns.	<p>CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT:</p> <p><u>Let's Keep talking:</u></p> <p>The 'Let's Keep Talking' campaign ran from 29.6.23 to 8.10.23. Responses from this phase will be used to inform the draft budget and draft corporate plan for 2024 and beyond. Engagement activities were designed to ensure they were accessible to people across the county borough and included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an online questionnaire • printed questionnaires in 40 public buildings across the county borough (21 of these in valleys communities) • Tai Tarian also distributed printed copies of the questionnaires and information to their Haven Housing for over 55s. There are 15 Haven schemes in Neath Port Talbot, 9 of which are in valleys communities • Attendance at 18 meetings and community events by Cabinet Members, The Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Services with officer support (6 of these took place in valleys communities although we were unable to identify any events in the Amman Valley to attend during the campaign) • A series of online focus groups to help us gain a better understanding of the issues in our valleys communities <p><u>NPT Citizens' Panel:</u></p> <p>In August, officers met with Opinion Research Services (ORS) to discuss a relaunch and recruitment drive for the Citizens' Panel, to start in October during Local Democracy Week. Responses will be analysed and targeted recruitment will take place in the new year to ensure the panel is as representative of the adult population of Neath Port Talbot as possible (this will include geographic location).</p> <p>The NPT Community of Practice on Involvement and Engagement (NPT CoP):</p> <p>The NPT CoP was established in 2019 and membership has grown to 60+ council officers and representatives from partner organisations who regularly engage with specific stakeholder groups as part of their work. Members of the CoP, such as the Local Area Coordinators, Youth Services etc. support the council to reach stakeholders in specific communities, such as the valleys. The NPT CoP continued to meet on a six-weekly basis from April to September and have been instrumental in supporting the council's consultation and engagement activity amongst their stakeholder groups.</p> <p>Communication activity:</p>	

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		18 Vlogs with Leader, Deputy Leader or Cabinet Members 88 Press releases posted on NPT website newsroom and issued to media Social media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook – 789 posts • Twitter – 1202 posts • Instagram – 83 posts • LinkedIn – 65 posts 	
	d. Agree how place plans can be evolved to shape activity into the future years, ensuring such plans bring physical regeneration within the wider council offer and carefully targeting Shared Prosperity Funding and other funding sources.	The council is working with consultants ‘The Urbanists’ to deliver Place Plans for our three main commercial town centres of Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe, and also what are considered to be our secondary towns and tertiary settlements e.g. Briton Ferry, Ystalyfera, Taibach, Cwmavon and Gwaun Cae Gurwen. These Place Plans will identify opportunities for improving the physical environment and street-scenes of these centres and settlements via a pipeline of regeneration projects. These will include improvements to commercial premises, the conversion of disused commercial space into residential accommodation, as well as new public realm projects and green infrastructure. The delivery of these programmes will be supported by the Welsh Government’s Transforming Towns’ Place making grants, as well as the UK Governments Shared Prosperity Fund. Consultation on these Place Plans will commence late 2023/early 2024. Following this process, the Place Plans will form the frame for a wider NPT Regeneration Strategy, which will then dovetail with the council’s Economic Recovery Plan.	
	e. Refresh the Compact with the voluntary sector and the Charter with Town and Community Councils.	Discussion scheduled at Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum – 13 th November 2023 to set out timeline and approach to refresh the Compact with the voluntary sector. Discussions scheduled at Town/Community Councils Liaison Forum – 4 th December again to set out timeline and approach.	
	f. Create place plans for the 3 towns and 2 district centres and reset town centre stakeholder collaboration arrangements to ensure effective engagement by the council.	As above	
	g. Agree how town centre aspirations can be developed and fed into longer term plans and funding opportunities.	As above	
	h. Improved the quality of the public realm.	As above	
7. Council staff will understand the principles of community development and have the skills and confidence to put those principles into practice.	a. Develop a training programme for staff with regards to community development principles. Ensuring staff feel supported and confident in their delivery.	An eLearning video and training programme has been development to provide staff with an introduction to Neath Port Talbot including its heritage, history and culture. Once launched in early December this module will be available to staff as part of their induction.	

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<p>8. Worked with developers to increase the supply of quality, affordable and low carbon housing; helped residents to reduce the carbon emissions of their homes.</p>	<p>a. Working closely with Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) to increase the number of interim and move on accommodation units.</p>	<p>Leased units from Registered Social Landlords has increased by 26 units in the first 2 quarters. This now takes the total of leased units to 68.</p> <p>The increase number of units means there are less families placed in hotels for any period of time. Some families are initially placed in a hotel but will be moved to a self-contained unit in a much shorter time frame due to the increase</p>	
	<p>b. Implement the Rapid Housing Plan.</p>	<p>The Rapid Rehousing Coordinator has been in post since May. This is to implement a 5 year plan so the tasks highlighted in the plan will be worked on in a prioritised way over the next 5 years.</p> <p>Discussions have already started with Registered Social Landlords in terms of how current working practices will need to change in offer for the Rapid Rehousing Plan to be successful. Several papers on the proposals have either been to Cabinet/SMT (Strategic Management Team) etc., or will be over the coming months so all proposed changes are highlighted</p>	
	<p>c. Bring forward proposals to strengthen our housing strategy function and increase the number of units of housing. Prioritise those in temporary accommodation in need of affordable housing and housing for those with care and support needs.</p>	<p>The service has submitted a business case that relates to necessary changes that mean the service can, moving forward, operate in a way that is fit for purpose taking into account the significant changes in demand and the housing crisis that is currently affecting the service that can be provided. Part of this business case includes developing a new strategic team to take forward the work plan within the new housing and homelessness strategy</p> <p>The business case is yet to have final sign off but the intention (subject to sign off) is to create the new team for the new financial year so further progress can be reported at the appropriate time</p>	
<p>9. Improved digital connectivity across Neath Port Talbot.</p>	<p>d. Continue to provide support to those that are unable to access the internet.</p>	<p>We have secured funding (SPF) to employ 3 Digital Inclusion Officers to work under the Digital Inclusion Ambassador. This has enabled the Digital Inclusion Ambassador to engage with the communities, to market the service and increase the number of sessions the service provides. Support given in these sessions include downloading and saving documents from and email, to assisting with applying for a bus pass online. Assisting participants to take their first steps online using the library computer and using google maps.</p> <p>During Adult Learners' week the team promoted the service. Recruiting new participants to join the groups by putting on demos and giving out learning packs across the public libraries.</p> <p>Engaging with 60 different participants with ongoing or one off support with digital inclusion across public libraries and community centres, Supporting with digital inclusion, digital skills, and accessing digital services/devices.</p>	

Performance Measures 2023-2024		Baseline April 2022	Actual 2022-2023	Accumulative Total to date April – September 2023	Outlook for 2023 - 2024 (increase, decrease or maintain)
1.	Number of active volunteers (Safe & Well).	12	11	23	Increase
2.	Number of volunteer hours (Safe & Well).	New performance measure	Not previously collected	682.5	n/a – New Measure
3.	Number of social and micro enterprises supported.	New performance measure	N/A	481	n/a – New Measure
4.	Number of community owned or managed community assets.	New performance measure	108 of NPT Council buildings or assets leased to voluntary sector groups and 17 to Town and Community Councils	109 of NPT Council buildings or assets leased to voluntary sector groups and 18 to Town and Community Councils	n/a – New Measure
5.	% increase in mental well-being in adults.	New performance measure	National Survey for Wales - Mental wellbeing score 48 (15 of 22 Welsh local authorities in 2022/23 had a score of 48 or 49)	Annual Data	n/a – New Measure
6.	Number of people supported into employment with a long-term health condition/disability	New performance measure	New performance measure	42	n/a – New Measure
7.	Number of self-reported well-being following a period of intervention via Prevention and Early Intervention provision (Local Area Coordination, Community Independence Service or Community Connecting Team).	New performance measure	Not previously collected	Unable to report currently as in initial phase of piloting wellbeing measure tool	n/a – New Measure
8.	% of people satisfied with the local area as a place to live.	66%	Not measured by National Survey for Wales	Annual Data	Increase
9.	% of high risk victims who engage with the Independent Domestic Violence Service (IDVA).	67%	68%	69%	Increase
10.	Number of people subject to the Anti-Social Behaviour Warning process.	6	6	7	Decrease
11.	Number/% of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless.	60.67%	53.7%	57.9%	Maintain
12.	Increase in people engaged with digital technology via digital inclusion initiatives to aid their independence.	New performance measure	New performance measure	385	n/a – New Measure
13.	% households with access to the internet.	98%	98%	98.7%	Increase