



**BIG  
ISSUES  
BRIEFING**  
2024

## Purpose

The Corporate Strategy is the Council's key strategic document setting out our vision and priorities, and as such it is important to undertake an annual review to plan for the following 12 months. This further informs the allocation of resources through the budget setting process, Medium Term Financial Strategy, and capital programme. The Corporate Strategy was last refreshed in October 2023 and reflected the impact of the cost of living crisis on the lives of residents and the wider operating context of the Council. The strategy for the 2025/26 financial year will be approved by full Council in November 2024.

It is anticipated that the overall vision and priorities of the Council will continue as these reflect longer-term commitments. However, the new government may implement new national policies and so areas of emphasis may change. This document aims to provide a starting point and focus for discussions as part of reviewing the Corporate Strategy and budget development process.

## Key Issues

### Major schemes and investments

In 2023, the Council has secured £20 million from the Government's Levelling Up Fund for town centre improvements. Regeneration works include the creation of a Civic square for community use and events and enhancements to the public realm, connecting key areas to encourage active travel, reduce car journeys, and minimize noise and pollution in the town centre.

Since April 2023, we have made enhancements to 12 different parks and open spaces across the borough. Highlights of investment works undertaken include improvements to the changing facilities at King George V Playing Pitches, an indoor and outdoor archery facility at Wigan Lane Sports Hub and improvement work to the play areas at Astley Park and West Way. These initiatives reflect the Council's commitment to creating vibrant, accessible spaces for the community to enjoy.

The historic Astley Hall Located in the stunning Astley Park, celebrates its 100 years since opening to the public as a museum. To celebrate this milestone the Council launched the 100 years of Astley memories initiative, inviting members of the public to share their stories and experiences of the hall and in turn become a part of the hall's history. Astley Hall remains one of our premier visitor destinations and an invaluable asset to Chorley. Looking ahead it will be vital to make the most of local assets through strategic marketing, promotion and ensuring the events programme is aligned with key plans and strategies.

### Housing

Housing was again identified as a key corporate priority last year. Projects within the current Corporate Strategy include:

- Deliver affordable and energy efficient housing.
- Strive for good quality housing for all.
- Work with partners supporting new ways to prevent homelessness.
- Support our most vulnerable residents.

The Tatton Gardens project completed in 2023 and was shortlisted for three awards at the North West Regional Construction Awards. The state-of-the-art facility provides specialist housing and care facilities to individuals aged 55 and over and has transformed the local area. The scheme received at Sub-regional Project of the Year Award, demonstrating the dedication of all involved in creating the fantastic facility.

## **Community engagement**

The Council continues to work with communities to build resilience through engagement activities such as holiday clubs and digital support. Strengthening community resilience is central to our approach, as it can improve the health, wellbeing, and outcomes of our residents, as well as reducing demand on public services in the long term. The Council endeavours to implement plans that are co-produced with the community, community groups, and partners to target areas where support is needed the most. The Communities Team review plans on an annual basis and the key actions that have been identified for 2024/2025 in addition to the Corporate Strategy projects are:

- Implementing and embedding the review of the Communities service.
- Deliver community based, year-3 UKSPF projects.
- Secure sustainable funding for grant-supported services.
- Improve the infrastructure support for voluntary, community and faith sector.

## **Performance and Transformation**

Performance has remained strong with all corporate projects now underway and largely on track to deliver as expected. Shared Services continue to provide greater capacity, expertise, and skills as well as achieving savings for the Council. Local councils are evolving to be “fit for the future” in the face of the myriad of challenges they are facing. These include managing budgets to support rising costs and demands, maximising the use of evolving digital and technological developments, supporting community wellbeing, issues arising from the aftermath of the pandemic and ensuring sustainability.

Chorley Council is no exception, and although we have been fortunate in being able to achieve balanced budgets to date, transformation and change is required to ensure the Council is fit for the future and able to serve residents in the most efficient and effective ways. The Fit for the Future programme aims to streamline initiatives to save money, develop more commercial approaches, generate income and to transform to ensure that the councils are modern and sustainable.

## **Public service reform and partnership working**

The Chorley and South Ribble Partnership has continued to collaborate with partners to ensure that we provide more co-ordinated service to meet the need of our residents. We have launched a new data sharing platform that brings together data from an array of partners ranging from education, social housing, health and policing. The platform brings together local data sources to provide overarching, place-based insights to help us make more informed decisions. This aligns with our broader commitment to enhancing service delivery and fostering collaborative solutions for our residents. Going forwards, the platform will provide a distinct benefit by bringing all place-based data together into a single repository for the first time, providing access to a more comprehensive and localised view than is available with any individual source of data. New integrated neighbourhood teams in the health sector continue to highlight better ways of delivering services to better meet needs. As a Council we will learn from this and implement improvements to our services.

## Looking ahead

The future of local government funding remains uncertain, and it is essential that the Council has a robust plan to ensure sustainable services in future. It is important to leverage recent investment in key assets to add value to the community and local economy. Many of the current corporate initiatives and projects provide support for residents in response to the cost of living crisis and these will continue into future years. These initiatives include interventions for food and fuel poverty, debt, housing, and a community-based health and wellbeing programme. Targeted communications will be fundamental to ensure that benefits are highlighted to residents, raising the profile of the Council, and increasing overall satisfaction.

## Policy Context

The following details the changes and shifts in national policy which may affect the council's direction and delivery over the next 12 months:

### Changes in Government

The recent general election has seen a new Government formed whose new national policies will undoubtedly impact regional policy making.

The new Government's 5 main missions are:

- Kickstart economic growth to secure the highest sustained growth in the G7 by:
  - Delivering economic stability with tough spending rules
  - Creating a new partnership with business to boost growth everywhere
  - Establish a National Wealth Fund to invest in jobs
  - Initiate planning reform to build 1.5 million new homes
  - Devolution of power across England
  - Formulate a New Deal for Working People
- Make Britain a clean energy superpower to cut bills, create jobs and deliver security with cheaper, zero-carbon electricity by 2030, accelerating to net zero by:
  - Setting up Great British Energy to cut bills for good
  - Having energy independence
  - Creating 650,000 new high-quality jobs
  - Creating warmer homes to slash fuel poverty
  - Forcing water companies to clean up rivers
- Halving serious violent crime and raising confidence in the police and criminal justice system to its highest levels by:
  - Cracking down on antisocial behaviour with more neighbourhood police
  - Implementing tough new penalties for offenders
  - Getting knives off the streets
  - Establishing a specialist rape unit in every police force
  - Creating a new network of Young Futures hubs
- Breaking down barriers to opportunity by reforming childcare and education systems, to make sure there is no class ceiling on the ambitions of young people in Britain.

- Build an NHS fit for the future that is there when people need it; with fewer lives lost to the biggest killers; in a fairer Britain, where everyone lives well for longer.

## Central government finances

The 2024 Spring Budget was presented to Parliament on 6 March 2024 by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Key policy changes from the spring statement include:

- National Insurance, a payroll tax, cut by 2p in the pound for employees and the self-employed.
- The salary thresholds at which people start paying income tax and national insurance remain frozen - meaning people will pay more tax as their incomes rise.
- Full child benefits are to be paid to households where the highest-earning parent earns up to £60,000 - the current limit is £50,000.
- Partial child benefit to be paid where the highest earner earns up to £80,000.
- Longer repayment period for people on benefits taking out emergency budgeting loans from the government.
- Government fund for people struggling with cost of living pressures to continue for another six months.
- Freeze on alcohol duty, due to end in August 2024, to continue until February 2025.
- New tax on vaping products from October 2026, linked to the levels of nicotine.
- Tobacco duty to go up £2.00 per 100 cigarettes at same time, to ensure vaping remains cheaper.
- Fuel duty frozen again, with the 5p cut in fuel duty on petrol and diesel, due to end later this month, kept for another year.
- A further £120m for a government fund that invests in green energy projects.
- Higher rate of tax paid on profits from selling property cut from 28% to 24%.
- Threshold at which small businesses must register to pay VAT raised from £85,000 to £90,000 from April.

The local government 2024/25 financial settlement was agreed in February 2024 and once again only covered a one-year settlement. The 2023/24 settlement had already confirmed that Chorley will continue to benefit from additional business rates income of approximately £1.2m per annum from the Lancashire Business Rate Pool. To address any possible increases to budget shortfalls, reviews of the Council's financial position will continue to take place throughout the year.

There are additional costs that impact on the Council's budget because of the Local Government 2023/24 pay offer. A pay award was agreed in November 2023 of £1,925 per full-time equivalent, for which no additional funding provided. The increase presents a recurring cost pressure for 2024/25 and beyond, with the Local Government 2024 pay negotiations still ongoing.

## Economy

The local economy is still being impacted by the increased cost of living. The UK inflation rate has fallen from 10.1% in Jan 2023 to 2% in May 2023. The continued rise in the cost of food, wholesale gas and oil prices, and increased supply chain costs will have an impact on residents, local businesses, and Council operations. Government support has been available in the form of grants such as the Household Support Fund, Council tax rebates, and energy bill support scheme, alongside additional support provided by the Council.

To combat high inflation, the Bank of England has increased the interest rate multiple times to 5.25% as at July 2024. This will impact residents, businesses, and Council financial planning. Further discussions will include how we can best support our local economy and the communities and businesses which are most in need of additional support.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), which is aligned to the Government's Levelling Up agenda, will offer support programmes under the priorities of:

- Communities and place
- Local businesses
- People and skills.

Chorley has been allocated £4,212,901 over a three-year period up to 2024/25. The fund is a replacement for previous European funding and while it is significantly less than the previous allocations, it is directly within the Council's control rather than regional partners. There is no confirmation of funding beyond 24/25.

## **Community wellbeing**

The Covid 19 pandemic continues to have an impact on resident's health and wellbeing across the borough, albeit this has reduced in comparison to previous years. The pandemic created a significant backlog of patients waiting for treatments, as non-urgent health care was limited throughout the pandemic. This backlog continues to be an issue and the NHS are currently facing significant staffing problems including industrial action. This is against the backdrop of existing widening gaps in inequality and it is expected that there will be increasing demand for health care in the following years.

At Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, the average waiting time for first outpatient appointments for general surgery is 29 weeks. Whilst the average waiting time for treatment at this trust for this general surgery is 24 weeks. Other areas to consider include A&E waiting times, timely test results, face to face GP appointments, and cancer treatments.

Population mental health has declined with issues such as increased anxiety, stress, and loneliness due to isolation. The economic impact of increases to the cost of living and rises in inflation will continue to impact on mental health, particularly for those in vulnerable groups.

There is ongoing industrial action within the health sector, with junior doctors and nurses undertaking strike action throughout 2023 and 2024. It is uncertain if this is likely to continue into 2025 and what impact this may have on waiting times for non-emergency procedures for residents. Consideration will have to be made for how we can adapt our current provision to ensure that the community support that we provide reflects these ongoing challenges.

## **Hybrid and flexible working**

The Council recognises the advantages of flexible and hybrid working to attract and retain employees. Staff have the technology and equipment to enable working flexibly across multiple sites. As part of our Fit for the Future programme, we will be looking at how we can make the best use of our office assets. This approach ensures we provide a high quality, modern, fit for purpose workplace for all staff that enables mobility, flexibility, productivity, and collaboration across the Council whilst supporting our positive organisational culture.

## **Levelling up and devolution**

The Levelling Up White Paper set out the previous government's approach to rebalancing opportunities across the UK through the redistribution of government powers and funding. The White Paper included details on the approach to devolution, guidance on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and underpinning policy, monitoring and metrics.

The Levelling Up approach is based around 12 'missions' to be achieved by 2030. These missions are based on four areas around boosting productivity and living standards by the private sector; improving public services; restoring community and local belonging; and empowering local leaders.

The Lancashire 2050 framework set out the challenges and opportunities facing the county in eight key areas – including the economy, housing and transport. There continue to be tensions in working across local government in Lancashire, and the Council will need to ensure that it is well-positioned to secure opportunities for the borough and minimise any risks, particularly through devolution discussions.

## Devolution

At a Lancashire level, there has been progress on a Greater Lancashire Deal. The guidance is explicit on the need for a directly elected mayor to secure the highest level of powers, which has not been universally supported for Lancashire. The devolution structure does indicate that Chorley can still secure benefits in relation to key functions such as economic development and climate change.

The new county deals are a chance for upper-tier councils to ask government to transfer the changing planning powers up from the district level towards this new, strategic geography of their own creation to help reduce the pressure that planning and housing puts on each individual council. However, the potential impact of the county deal would be to exclude districts in the decision-making bodies with potential for some powers to be taken from districts and placed with the county authority.

## Jobs and skills

The White Paper set out a series of policy aims to empower and regenerate the 'left behind' areas of the UK including the introduction of Education Investment Areas, the UK National Academy, new Institutes of Technology, and the Unit for Future Skills, among other provisions including increase in the National Living Wage. The paper stresses the links between people's health, education, skills, and employment prospects and focuses on policies that can ensure that everyone, wherever they live, has the opportunity to live fulfilling, healthy and productive lives.

The previous Government encouraged the integration of LEPs and their business boards into Mayoral Combined Authorities, Combined Authorities and County Deals, where these exist. Where a devolution deal does not yet exist, it is expected that LEPs will continue to play their role in supporting local businesses and the local economy.

## **Environmental policy**

In November 2020, the Government set out a ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution, considering the approach to supporting green jobs, and accelerating the path to net zero emissions target. The plan focused on areas such as green power, transport, buildings, protecting our natural environment, and green finance and innovation.

In addition to the ten-point plan, the government published its Net Zero Strategy setting out how the UK will transition to a net zero economy by 2050. The main policy areas of the plan included:

- Working with the grain of consumer choice: no one will be required to rip out their existing boiler, for example.
- Ensuring the biggest polluters pay the most for the transition: through fair carbon pricing.
- Ensuring that the most vulnerable are protected through government support: including energy bill discounts and efficiency upgrades.
- Working with business to continue developing deep cost reductions in low carbon tech: through support for the latest state of the art kit to bring down costs for consumers and deliver benefits for businesses.

This Council has its own ambitions to reach net zero by 2030 and we will have to continue to work with local partners and central government to consider any future policy frameworks and funding opportunities, alongside the role of local government in delivering new green infrastructure and supporting green jobs.

### **Homelessness**

Under the Homelessness Reduction Act, the Council has a statutory duty to support those who present as homeless. There are additional challenges that impact on homeless prevention and the number in temporary accommodation, these are mostly market factors that are out of the Council's control:

- It is expected that the cost of living crisis, evictions, and an increase in number of duties to refer presentations from statutory bodies such as hospital, probation, police, and prison services will likely increase the number of people presenting as homelessness
- Since 2023, Progress Housing committed to not evicting people in arrears which reduces the flow of any property becoming available. They will continue to do this as part of their tenant centred approach.

Any potential new measures could impact on our Housing Team and how we approach homelessness within our communities.

### **Boundary Commission**

Following the 2023 Boundary Review it will be important that we continue to communicate the boundaries of our borough, ensuring that our communities and partners have a clear understanding of our local areas and place.



# Chorley Borough Council

## 1. Demographics

Over the past decade, Chorley has seen the second largest population increase in the North West. The population size has increased by 9.9% from around 107,200 in 2011 to 117,800 in 2021. This is higher than the overall increase for England (6.6%) and the North West (5.2%). In 2021, Chorley ranked 201st for total population out of 309 local authority areas in England, moving up 14 places in a decade. It is estimated that between 2014 and 2043 the population of Chorley will increase by 17.8%, the highest predicted growth rate by some way in Lancashire.

In 2021, Chorley was the 15th least densely populated of the North West 39 local authority areas. The number of households is projected to increase by a substantial 24.4% between 2018 and 2043, this is the second largest growth rate in Lancashire and exceeds the predicted percentage growth in households in England of 16.2%.

In terms of working age population, those aged 15 to 64 years in Chorley account for 62.6% of the population, which is a 1% increase from the 61.6% recorded in 2020 and is higher than Lancashire (60.7%) in 2020. In 2021, there was an increase of 34.7% in people aged 65 years and over, and an increase of 10.2% in children aged under 15 years.

## 2. Health and Wellbeing

Since the last index in 2015, all other areas of Lancashire have seen an increase in deprivation except Chorley and West Lancashire which have become relatively less deprived. The change in percentage is an increase of 3.5% from 2015 to 2019. Chorley has a decile rating of 7 which is higher than the previous figure of 6 in 2004/2007/2015. The Chorley Ward (E01024968) is ranked in Lancashire 12 area's 5 least deprived wards.

The number of Chorley Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in the bottom 20% of most deprived areas in England is eight however Chorley has 0 in the bottom 1% and 5% and only three within the bottom 10%. However, Chorley does have 20 LSOAs in the top 20% of least deprived areas as well as seven in the top 10% and three in the top 5%.

The most recent information regarding the health of South Ribble population can be found in the district health profile (produced by Public Health England). Some of the key statistics include:

- Life expectancy in the borough is lower than the national average, with life expectancy in Chorley for men at 78.5 and women 81.9 compared to 78.9 for men and 82.8 for woman in England. Life expectancy in Chorley is also higher than the regional average which is 77.3 for men and 81.3 for women.
- The proportion of those killed and seriously injured on the roads (2016 -18) was 49.5 people per 100,000 and was higher than the North West (38.4) and England (42.6) average.
- The percentage of physically active adults has increased to 71.3% in 2022/23 from 70.5% in 2021/22. This is higher than the 2022/23 regional (65.7%) and national (67.1%) average. This change was not reflected in the overweight prevalence in adults which has increased from 61.5% in 2021/22 to 65.4% in 2022/23. This figure is lower than the regional average (66.5%) and national average (64%).
- The proportion of children who are classified as obese in Year 6 has increased consistently year upon year, from 19.5% in 2018/19, to 20.2% in 2019/20 before decreasing slightly to 19.8% in 2021/22. However this figure has now risen significantly again to 22.6% in 2022/23. This is still lower than the regional (23.8%) and national (22.7%) averages.

- The rate of hospital admissions for intentional Self-Harm decreased from 176 per 100,000 in 2019/20 to 123 in 2020/21. This figure has now decreased again from 147.4 per 100,000 in 2021/22, to 114.5 per 100,000 in 2022/23. This figure remains a lot lower than the average for the North West (139.3) and England (126.3). For those admitted to hospital as a result of violent crime, the rate has increased slightly from 28.7 per 100,000 in 2019/20 to 31.2 in 2020/21. This has decreased by 1% in 2022/23 to 30.2 which is lower than both the regional (46.8) and national (34.3) averages.
- For those under 18 admitted to hospital over alcohol related conditions, the rate per 100,000 has decreased from 41.3 in 2020/21, to 35 in 2022/23 this remains above the North West average of 31.2 and national average of 26.
- The average Attainment 8 score for Chorley in 2022/23 is 48.1 this is lower than 2021/22 which was 50.6. This is higher than the regional average of 44.5 and the England average of 46.2 in 2022/23.
- According to the 2024 Residents' Survey, 75% of residents surveyed expressed satisfaction with parks and green open spaces in the local area, this is a decrease of 7% from the 2021 survey.

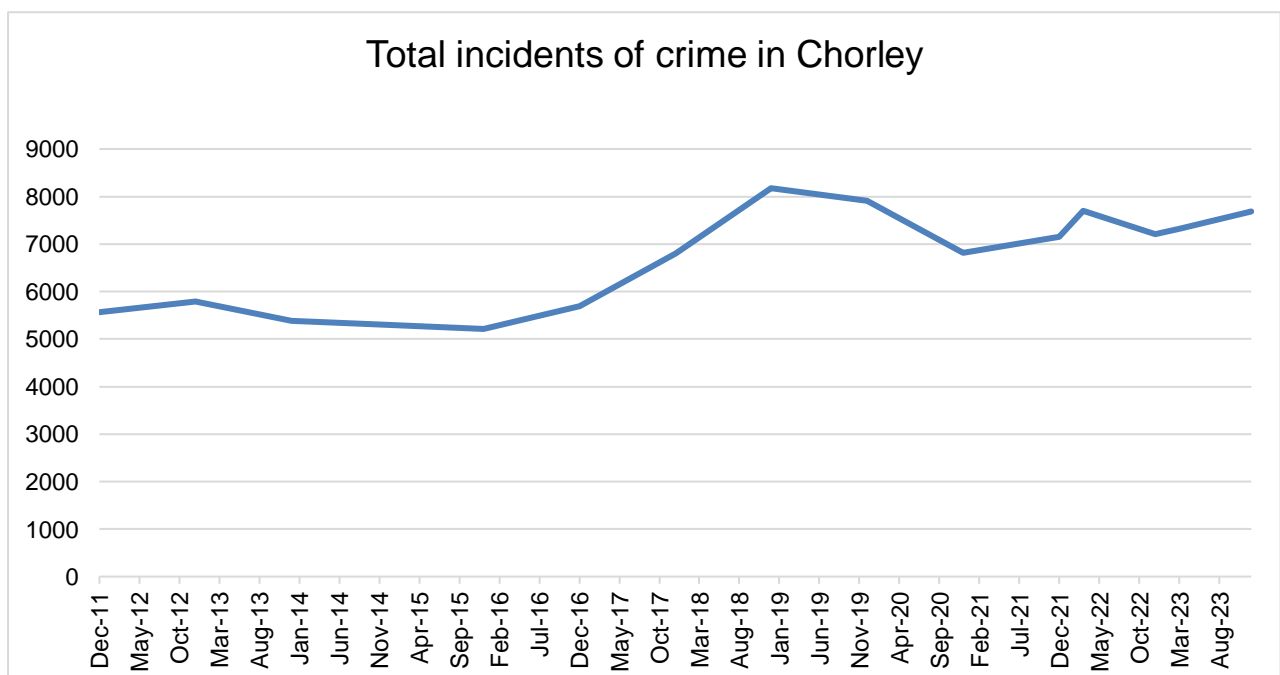
### 3. Crime and Safety

Overall recorded crime in Chorley has decreased slightly over the past year. The total number of crime incidents in the year ending in 2022 was 7,690. This has dropped to 7,387 in the year ending December 2023. This represents a decrease of just under 4% from the previous year. In 2023, the three most common offences were:

1. Violence against the person (3,325)
2. Theft offences (1,969)
3. Violence without injury (1,254)

According to the 2023/24 Residents' Survey, 89% of residents surveyed said that they feel 'safe' when outside their local area during the day and 60% said they feel 'safe' at night.

The table below shows the total incident of crime over an eleven-year period (excluding fraud):



## 4. Employment and Economy

### Jobs, employment, and the economy

Chorley is part of Central Lancashire which operates as a relatively well-connected internal labour market with strong commuter flows between Preston, South Ribble and Chorley. Chorley also stands out as a supplier of labour to the Manchester city region, especially Bolton and Wigan. Employment figures (NOMIS) for 2023 show:

- There has been a decrease in the proportion of the population who are economically active, which stands at 69.4% in 2023 compared to 73.3% in 2022. This number remains significantly lower than both the North West (76.7%) and national (78.8%) average.
- The level of unemployment has decreased, with 3.1% of the economically active population not in employment compared to 3.2% in 2022. This is also better than the North West (3.8%) and equal to the national (3.7%) figures.

**Table 1: Employment (January 2023 – December 2023, NOMIS)**

	<b>Chorley (number)</b>	<b>Chorley (%)</b>	<b>North West (%)</b>	<b>Great Britain (%)</b>
Economically active (all)	52,700	<b>69.4%</b>	76.7%	78.8%
Economically active (males)	25,000	<b>63.0%</b>	80.6%	82.7%
Economically active (females)	27,700	<b>75.7%</b>	73.0%	74.9%

**Table 2: Economic Inactivity (January 2023 – December 2023, NOMIS)**

	<b>Chorley (number)</b>	<b>Chorley (%)</b>	<b>North West (%)</b>	<b>Great Britain (%)</b>
Total	21,500	<b>30.6%</b>	23.3%	21.2%

- By the end of March 2024, 3.6% of 16- to 17-year-olds were not in employment, education, or training. This has increased from the 2.5% recorded in March 2023.
- In May 2024, 2.6% of the working age population were claiming Universal Credit, of which 58.2% were male and 41.8% were female. This is lower than the 4.4% recorded in the North West and 3.9% nationally in the same period. However, this is higher than the 2.5% in May 2023 and the same as 2.6% recorded in May 2022.
- In 2023, there were 4,535 active enterprises in Chorley which is an increase compared to 4,725 in 2022. The biggest proportion of businesses in Chorley were micro enterprises of 0 to 9 employees, accounting for 88.9% of the total. It is slightly higher

than the 88.3% recorded for the North West and slightly lower than the Great Britain figure of 89.1%.

- The largest occupation type in the borough is in professional occupations. This accounted for 27.4% of employees in 2023, which represents a decrease from the 29.8% in 2022. It is however higher than the 26.3% North West average. The second most common occupation type is associate professional, accounting for 18.5% of employees.
- The average weekly earnings by place of residence in 2022 was £649.80 this has seen an increase to £668.5 in 2023. It is also higher than the North West average £649, but lower than the national average of £682.60.

**Source:**

NOMIS (2021). 'Labour Market Profile: Chorley', *NOMIS*. Available at [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk/Labour%20Market%20Profile%20-%20Nomis%20-%20Official%20Census%20and%20Labour%20Market%20Statistics)

Public Health England (2021). 'Local Authority Health Profiles', *PHE*. Available at <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/1/qid/1938132701/pat/6/ati/301/are/E07000118/iid/90366/age/1/sex/1/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yr/3/cid/4/tbm/1>

[Recorded crime data by Community Safety Partnership area - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/Recorded-crime-data-by-Community-Safety-Partnership-area)

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/lancashire-insight/area-profiles/local-authority-profiles/chorley-district/>

[How the population changed where you live, Census 2021 - ONS](https://ons.gov.uk/how-the-population-changed-where-you-live-census-2021)

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uk/nhs-england-best-worst-trust-near-me-postcode-waiting-times/>