

IMPROVING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Our aim is to develop a more enterprising, vibrant and diverse local economy that strengthens local businesses and enterprises and will attract investment, share prosperity and create better employment opportunities for local people.

Context

The Council, working closely with its partners through the Darlington Partnership, has a very clear and ambitious strategy for strengthening and growing the local economy. The focus of this strategy is the Darlington Gateway Development Framework, developed as a cornerstone of the Tees Valley Vision sub-regional growth strategy. The core of Gateway is the preparation of a series of key sites within the borough that have the most potential to secure inward investment and economic growth in the future. In preparing and marketing these sites, the aim is to achieve a step change in the diversity and quality of the local economy. Gateway is well established as a strategy, and the focus in 2004/05 was on making it happen. At the start of the year, activity on the ground was only evident at one site, Morton Palms Business Park. By the end of the year, infrastructure works at Faverdale East Business Park are well advanced; the Argos development at Faverdale has been brought from initial enquiry to virtual completion, with a major archaeological excavation along the way; similarly Central Park on Haughton Road has progressed from concept to construction of the new Darlington College; and the first phase of Morton Palms, providing 6,600 metres² of prestige office accommodation, has been completed. It has been a year of translating ambition into achievement.

It has also been a year of challenges that have had to be carefully managed to keep Gateway on course. The loss of the developer for the Commercial Street shopping development, difficulties in securing the funding for the Pedestrian Heart and the discovery of regionally important Romano-British archaeology on the Argos site, could all have derailed key Gateway projects. The Council successfully managed all of these issues by being responsive, flexible and entrepreneurial in its approach. Argos was particularly complimentary about the quality, speed and effectiveness of our services.

As well as building prosperity, a key focus for Darlington Partnership and the Council is on ensuring that everyone in Darlington can share in that prosperity. The Economic Regeneration Strategy 2004-09, published in 2004, sets the direction for tackling economic deprivation and inequalities by supporting people into employment and supporting new and existing businesses. Programmes like Skills for Success, Central into Work and financial support to businesses have continued to create jobs and opportunity in 2004/05. Unemployment has fallen further during the year to 3%.

The town centre is a vital component of our regeneration strategy, and big strides have been taken to bring the Commercial Street shopping development and the Pedestrian Heart to fruition. These projects are focused on ensuring that Darlington continues to prosper as an attractive and competitive sub-regional shopping centre.

Building the Borough's attractiveness and promoting its heritage is also important in attracting visitors. Research during the year showed that tourism spending is now worth around £72 million to the local economy, and tourism is one of the largest local industries. 182,000 people used the Information Darlington tourist information service during the year.

High Level Summary of Performance

| Corporate Objective | Priority | PIs | Progress against targets |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Shaping a better Darlington | Strengthen the local economy Secure the development that Darlington needs Tackle unemployment and low wages | DE11a De11b | λ σ |
| Providing Excellent Services | Promote the Borough's heritage to residents and visitors Attract resources and make the best use of assets Manage key relationships nationally, regionally and sub-regionally | BV170b BV170c DE4 DE13 | σ H H λ |
| Putting the Customer first | Be positive, problem solving, innovative and entrepreneurial Lobby Darlington's case for new schemes (e.g. Northern Way) | DE14 | λ |
| Ensuring access for all | Reduce relative deprivation | DE15 | σ |
| Overall Progress against aim | | | λ |

More detail on outcomes secured and other achievements

| Priority | Outcome/achievement |
|--|---|
| <p>Strengthen the local economy</p> <p>Secure the development that Darlington needs</p> <p>Tackle unemployment and low wages</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong progress in implementing Darlington Gateway, with key developments either on site or progressed to the building stage. • Major expansion proposals for Durham Tees Valley Airport developed to planning application stage. • New developer (Discovery Properties) selected for Commercial Street shopping development following withdrawal of St Martins Properties from all projects outside London. • Funding secured for town centre Pedestrian Heart, design and consultation completed and work started on the ground. • Central Park master plan published, design for new Darlington College prepared and work started on site. • 6,600m² of prestige office accommodation completed at Morton Palms Business Park; planning permission granted for phase 2. • Faverdale East Business Park infrastructure works implemented with £2.2 million of ERDF and Single Programme funding. • Funding secured to extend Skills for Success project for a further 2 years. • Council grants to small and medium sized businesses have helped to create 260 jobs. • Argos development at Faverdale will create 700 new jobs. • £1Million BAT legacy provided first round of funding allocations to job creation and training programmes; second round of projects drawn up. |
| <p>Promote the Borough's heritage to residents and visitors</p> <p>Attract resources and make the best use of assets</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 182,000 people used Information Darlington visitor information service in 2004/05; tourism is now one of Darlington's largest industries and tourism spend is around £72 million per annum. • 'BLAZE', a highly praised opera production drew large audiences to the museum in July 2004. • The museum has been re-accredited as a VAQAS (Visitor Attraction Quality Accreditation Scheme). • The 3 year Northgate Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme, providing grants to improve buildings in Northgate, ended in March 2005; further funding has been secured from English Heritage for a 2 year follow-up conservation programme. • Funding has been secured for a 3 year programme of grant aid to owners of buildings around the Pedestrian Heart. • A development plan for Darlington Railway Museum has been agreed with partners and a full Heritage Lottery Bid to fund the plan has been submitted. |

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| <p>Manage key relationships nationally, regionally and sub-regionally</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The West Park area has been identified as a potential location for a regional 'gateway' visitor attraction in an initial approach to the Council by One North East. • Tees Valley Regeneration has been allocated Single Programme funding for Central Park of approximately £9 million over 3 years. • Lottery awards to Darlington projects were worth £2.23 million in 2004/05, the highest of any of the Tees Valley Boroughs, and a total of £5.575 million has been won since 2002/03. • A legacy of £1 million was negotiated with British and American Tobacco and is being used to support business development/ training/job creation programmes. • £6 million of Government Single Programme funding has been secured for Darlington over the three years starting in 2004/05, including £3.25 million for the Pedestrian Heart, and £2 million was spent on economic regeneration projects in 2004/05. • The Central Park development, led by Tees Valley Regeneration, will attract up to £100 million investment against £15 million public sector investment. • The Council has succeeded in getting the Gateway strategy enshrined in the Regional Spatial Strategy. |
| <p>Be positive, problem solving, innovative and entrepreneurial</p> <p>Lobby Darlington's case for new schemes (e.g. Northern Way)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging difficulties in progressing two key Gateway schemes – Commercial Street and the Pedestrian Heart – were successfully managed by being creative, flexible and entrepreneurial. • The Argos development, bringing 700 jobs, was attracted to Darlington and a very quick development timetable achieved despite significant challenges. • The 'Northern Way' growth strategy, published last summer, identifies the Tees Valley as a city region location for growth; the City Region Development Plan, about to be published, will incorporate the Gateway concept and major Gateway sites. • A Darlington Development Showcase was staged in London in February 2005, profiling Darlington to a national audience – the marketing showcases are an important aspect of Gateway • The Estates Gazette featured Darlington Gateway as a significant growth strategy in its recent profile of the region. |
| <p>Reduce relative deprivation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented first year of a two year programme to support unemployed people in four target wards into employment. • Unemployment reduced to 3% in March 2005 from 3.2% in March 2004 and 5.3% in March 2001. • Deprivation in Firthmoor has reduced to a greater extent than the general reduction across Darlington following completion of the Firthmoor regeneration programme. |

External Recognition

The North East Chamber of Commerce presented the Council with the regional Best for Business Award in June 2004, as the most business-friendly council in the region.

A successful showcase of Darlington's development potential as the gateway to the North East was staged in London. At the event, private sector companies that have already invested in Darlington, including Argos, Marchday plc, City and Northern and Peel Airports praised the Council's 'can do' approach and recommended Darlington to the audience because the Council is serious and proactive about attracting investment into the borough.

Comments received after the London Showcase included:

"...it is very encouraging to see the Council's vision and enthusiasm. We work with a number of local authorities and would recommend that more follow your example."

"Very well organized...the presentation was both informative and entertaining."

The Council's website was identified as one of four in the region that are 'Best for Business' by the North East Chamber of Commerce

Areas for Improvement

The priorities and actions for 2005/06 are largely focused on rolling forward work from 2004/05 and continuing progress and achievement within the Gateway Development Framework and Economic Regeneration Strategy. The key priorities are the continuing delivery of major development projects; the implementation of the Economic Regeneration Strategy, Darlington Marketing Strategy and the Town Centre Business Plan.

Some areas of performance have dipped below target in 2004/05, and the main focus of improvement is on addressing these, notably in relation to museum visits, the cost-effectiveness of our financial support to businesses to create jobs, and measures related to narrowing the employment/deprivation gap between the most prosperous and most deprived areas of the borough. We need to ensure that our targets for supporting people into paid employment in the most deprived wards are achieved. However, we also need to develop a more comprehensive and balanced set of performance indicators to properly represent and measure our achievements in strengthening the local economy.

Other areas of focus for the coming year include the continuing development of our project management methodology and practice, to ensure that projects deliver the desired outcomes; engagement and partnership with local companies to promote Darlington and seize opportunities for growth; participating in the review of the Tees Valley Partnership and the Joint Strategy Unit to ensure Darlington is fully represented in the outcome; and investigating the feasibility of using the new economic development powers available to councils to achieve enhanced outcomes for Darlington.

Progress against planned actions

| What we planned to do in 2004/05 | Did we deliver? |
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| Progress major development and investment projects and ensure implementation of the Darlington Gateway Development Framework | Yes – significant progress in planning and/or implementation for all the key Gateway sites. |
| Publish new Economic Regeneration Strategy | Yes – new strategy published in May 2004. |
| Engage with major companies and improve joint working with regional and sub regional partners | Yes – effective engagement with regional and sub-regional agencies to progress Gateway and secure funding; and with companies and developers to bring about investment in the local economy. |
| Implement the Local Public Service Agreement target for increasing employment opportunities in target wards | Yes – the Council is working with Jobcentre Plus to deliver ‘Central into Working’ supporting people into paid work/training in 4 target wards. |
| Influence regional and sub-regional strategies | Yes – Gateway has been progressed within the Tees Valley Vision and has been enshrined in both the Regional Spatial Strategy and ‘Northern Way’ growth strategy. |
| Market Darlington as a location for business and tourism | Yes – Darlington Development Showcase staged, following on from events in Darlington, Newcastle and Leeds. Darlington Quality of Life tourism/inward investment promotional CD ROM commissioned. |
| Develop the town centre to maintain Darlington’s attractiveness as a market town: - Pedestrian Heart - Commercial Street Shopping Centre | Yes - £3.25 million of funding for the Pedestrian Heart was secured within our Single Programme allocation against fierce competition from other projects; the design of the scheme and consultation was completed and the first phase of works to enable re-routing of buses is being carried out. A new developer for Commercial Street was selected following the withdrawal of original developer St Martins Properties from all projects outside London – the Council was successful in using its land ownership within the scheme to promote the development, manage the outcome of the sale of St Martins ownership and secure an excellent outcome for Darlington. |

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| <p>Support businesses in Darlington</p> | <p>Yes – the Council has continued to provide financial support and advice to businesses to promote creation of new jobs and business growth. In 2004/05 48 businesses received support and this helped to create 260 new jobs. The Skills for Success programme is also available to provide support to businesses to develop their workforces.</p> |
| <p>Continue to access external funding and develop the External Funding Team and processes</p> | <p>Yes – the External Funding Team has continued to develop and embed its role across the Council and partner agencies, co-ordinating lottery and European funding bids, and leading in negotiating Single Programme funding for Darlington. £6 million of Single Programme money has been allocated to Darlington for the three years starting in 2004/05, and lottery bids totalling £5.575 million, co-ordinated by the team, have been successful.</p> |

The Argos Development

Argos chose Darlington for the location of its new direct delivery depot, serving northern England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The 65,000m² building is now nearing completion at Faverdale. Opening in July 2005, the whole project will have been completed in only 18 months, due in no small part to what Argos has acknowledged as the Council's 'Can Do' approach.

The site at Faverdale had already been identified through Gateway for major inward investment and had outline planning permission. The Council was able to respond seriously and rapidly to an anonymous national enquiry put out to local authorities in January 2004. The previous preparatory work put Darlington in a strong position even before the identity of the developer was known. Site availability and the Council's fast, committed response were key factors in winning the project for Darlington against strong competition. The first meeting with Argos was in March 2004, and detailed planning permission was granted in July. Work started on site in September.

A routine archaeological survey found evidence of Romano-British remains on the site. The Council organised a full excavation whilst working with Argos to manage the impact on its development timetable. The remains were fully explored and documented, but were not found to be worthy of preservation *in situ*. The 'Can Do' approach ensured that the archaeology was properly surveyed and documented whilst ensuring that the development went ahead.

Graph showing trend data

Unemployment Rate

[Page 45 of 2004 BVPP, plus March 2005 unemployment rate – 3%]

Graph showing trend data

Average Earnings

[ASHE data on JSU website]

Council Plans for Improvement 2005/2006

| Community Strategy theme: Improving the local economy | | |
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| Corporate Objectives | Priority | PIs |
| Shaping a better Darlington | <p>Strengthen the local economy</p> <p>Secure the development that Darlington needs</p> <p>Tackle unemployment and low wages</p> | <p>Jobs created through Council-funded assistance to companies (DE11a)</p> <p>Percentage of residents who think the Council is successful in improving the local economy (DE14)</p> <p>Gap in percentage points between unemployment rates for Darlington and for Great Britain (DE65)</p> |
| Providing excellent services | <p>Promote the Borough's heritage to residents and visitors</p> <p>Attract resources and make the best use of assets</p> <p>Manage key relationships nationally, regionally and sub-regionally</p> | <p>Number of visits/usages of museums per 1000 population (BV170a)</p> <p>Number of children visiting museums in organized school groups (BV170c)</p> <p>Number of people using Information Darlington tourist information service (DE4)</p> <p>Number of jobs created through Council funded assistance to businesses (DE11a)</p> <p>Darlington's share of external funding awarded to Tees Valley boroughs (DE13)</p> |
| Putting the customer first | <p>Be positive, problem solving, innovative and entrepreneurial</p> <p>Engage with companies and other partners in the local economy and lobby Darlington's case for investment and new schemes</p> | <p>Percentage of residents who think the Council is successful in improving the local economy (DE14)</p> |

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| Ensuring access for all | Reduce relative deprivation | Average unemployment rate of five wards with highest rates compared to average for five wards with lowest rates – gap between highest and lowest (DE15) Number of jobless supported into a job in target wards (DE53a) Number of jobless from priority groups supported into sustained employment (DE53b) |
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| Key Actions | | | |
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| Action | Portfolio Holder/ Lead Officer | Date for Completion | Measure of Success |
| Progress major development and investment projects and ensure implementation of Darlington Gateway development Framework | Cllr Lyonette Richard Alty | Ongoing in line with project plans | DE13 DE14 DE65 |
| Influence regional and sub-regional strategies, partnerships and funding streams | Cllr Lyonette Richard Alty | Ongoing | DE11a DE13 |
| Develop the town centre to maintain Darlington's attractiveness as a market town <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Pedestrian Heart • Complete planning procedures for Commercial Street • Support completion of Crown Street development • Bring East Street car park top deck back into use | Cllr Lyonette Richard Alty Steve Petch Stuart Muckle Keith Atkinson | Ongoing to March 2008 2005/06 Dec 2005 (Car park) During 2005 subject to legal procedures | DE13 DE14 |
| Implement Town Centre Business Plan | Cllr Lyonette Gwenda Lyn Jones/ Louise Toms | Ongoing to March 2007 | DE13 DE14 |
| Implement Economic Regeneration Strategy | Cllr Lyonette Richard Horniman | Ongoing to March 2009 | DE11a DE13 DE14 DE15 |
| Implement 'Marketing Darlington' Strategy to promote Darlington as a location for business and tourism | Cllr Lyonette Caroline Taukulis Claire Boston Smithson | Ongoing | DE04 DE11a |
| Engage with major companies and implement the Investor Development Programme | Cllr Lyonette Gwenda Lyn Jones/ Caroline Taukulis | Ongoing | DE11a |
| Implement the Local Public Service Agreement target for supporting people into work in target wards | Cllr Lyonette Suzanne Clark | March 2006 | DE53 |
| Continue to secure external funding and develop the External Funding Team and processes | Cllr Lyonette Richard Horniman | Ongoing | DE13 |
| Continue to develop project management process and practice to ensure delivery of strategic outcomes from project implementation | Cllr Lyonette Steve Petch/ Rebecca Clarkson | Ongoing | DE14 |

PROMOTING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Our aim is to reduce social inequalities, renew disadvantaged neighbourhoods, protect the vulnerable and ensure equality of access for all members of the community to services and opportunities.

Context

The Council is clearer than many by what it means by social inclusion: the processes and actions required to improve the life chances of those who are suffering, or at risk of suffering, disadvantage and discrimination.

The publication of "All Together Now: A Social Inclusion Strategy for Darlington" has raised the profile of social inclusion issues in Darlington. The Council formally supports the strategy. Darlington Partnership is responsible for delivery.

Although only formally ratified in March, more than a fifth of the strategy's three year action plan has been completed. Progress has been made in areas as diverse as:

- the completion of detailed neighbourhood appraisals in Darlington's eleven most deprived wards and the development of local action plans.
- bids submitted for the development of an information project for older people in Darlington.
- commissioning the Information for All video, which gives detailed information on how to access public services in Darlington. It is aimed at all the Social Inclusion Strategy's target groups.

In addition, Darlington's Community Partnerships attracted 130 new volunteers. In total, these Partnerships were awarded £325,414 to be spent by March 31st 2005. This funding partly included £100,000 from the Big Lottery Fair Share Trust programme. That these funds will be invested in the right priorities is supported by the results of a recent survey. 89% of the 47 community partnership volunteers questioned agreed, or strongly agreed, that Community Partnerships address local issues.

Following the Housing Stock Options Appraisal, there was overwhelming support from Council tenants for the Council to retain ownership and management of the Council Housing Stock. Tenants also helped the Council to set out its priorities for housing investment in the future.

£1.3 million of DEFRA funding was invested in improvements to the Honeypot Lane Caravan Site to provide kitchen and toilet facilities for permanent residents and a transit site for travellers. Improvements included the new Sure Start building, which will be used to deliver health and social services alongside services for the under 5s and their families.

Eleven new schools achieved the Inclusive Schools award. The award has been developed in Darlington to measure inclusivity across a range of school activities. Social inclusion has also been embedded into the cluster model for extended schools as one of three key themes. All schools in Darlington now have access to a counselling service.

With the adoption of complementary strategies for neighbourhood renewal, drug and alcohol harm reduction and crime and disorder reduction, the following year will see an even stronger approach to the tackling of the social problems associated with crime and disadvantage. This approach will be reinforced by the Council's commitment to providing core funding for both its community legal services liaison officer and its team of community development workers.

High Level Summary of Performance

| Corporate Objective | Priority | PIs | Progress against targets |
|------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|
| Shaping a better Darlington | Drive forward the equalities agenda Increase voter turnout | BV2 CR5 | λ H |
| Providing Excellent Services | Reduce number of 'children looked after' | BV49 BV163 SS20 SS12 | λ σ λ H |
| Putting the Customer first | Engage residents including those who may be 'hard to reach' in the provision and delivery of services Develop Community Legal Services to empower residents to seek good quality, timely advice Develop more socially inclusive service provision | BV75a CS31 CS61 | λ H σ |
| Ensuring access for all | Strengthen partnership working with the voluntary and community sector to further empower residents in service delivery and regeneration initiatives Work with our partners and community to promote inclusive communities through the effective administration of community capacity building initiatives | CS29 CS40 CS42 CS44 CS51 CS52 | λ H λ σ H σ |
| Overall Progress against aim | | | H |

Eid Celebrations

Northgate ward has the highest population of Black and Minority Ethnic people in Darlington. In order to bring the different cultures of the ward together, the Northgate Partnership worked closely with a representative from the local Asian Community to organise an event to celebrate the Muslim religious festival of Eid at Darlington's Dolphin Centre. More than 150 people turned out for a fun evening, which gave people the opportunity to sample food and enjoy music from another culture.

Joining Forces

Representatives from Red Hall and Firthmoor Community Partnerships (two of the priority wards in Darlington) joined forces to campaign for two new bus routes servicing both estates. The Council successfully obtained over £1m from the Urban Bus Challenge initiative. All routes have been planned at the request of residents living on the two estates. The services link into Eastbourne Sports Complex offering residents direct travel to a variety of leisure activities, including the PCT cardiac rehabilitation course which is held at the centre.

Welfare Rights Service

Darlington's Community Legal Service Partnership has successfully developed a Business Plan for establishing a Welfare Rights Service for the town. The Council, in partnership with Age Concern, has approved match funding for the service. The unit will be operational by July 2005. It will offer free specialist advice on a range of entitlements including, Pension Credits, Child Tax Credits, Working Tax Credits, Disability Living Allowance, and Income Support. The unit will assist people with their claims, give advice on the wide range of benefits that are available and arrange representation for appeals and tribunals.

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| | Cabinet adopted the business case for welfare rights provision. The service will be fully operational by July 2005. |
| <p>Strengthen partnership working with the voluntary and community sector to further empower residents in service delivery and regeneration initiatives</p> <p>Work with our partners and community to promote inclusive communities through the effective administration of community capacity building initiatives</p> | <p>The Local Compact with the voluntary and community sector was successfully launched. A major review of voluntary and community sector funding has been completed, with a move towards the granting of three year strategic funding packages to cover core costs.</p> <p>Council and the LSP adopted Darlington's first Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. Local action plans in Darlington's priority wards have been developed with individual Community Partnerships.</p> <p>All eleven Community Partnerships have now been established in Darlington's priority wards, in compliance with the target set by One North East. The target to attract £193,164 external funding has been exceeded by £132,250. In total, £325,414 was raised.</p> <p>A number of learning opportunities have been delivered. Whilst performance was slightly under target in this area, residents involved in Skills for Community Groups organised by the Council and delivered by Darlington College were awarded the Newsquest North East Communicate Award for Community Learning, with the Chairman of Bank Top Community Partnership receiving Community Learner of the Year.</p> <p>Neighbourhood management arrangements at Firthmoor have been reviewed and a community development model has been established.</p> |

External Recognition

The Council's recent corporate assessment, published by the Audit Commission, noted:

“The social inclusion agenda has been pursued through good improvements to social care and benefits services and following extensive consultation is now embodied in a clear social inclusion strategy.”

Findings from Community Partnership evaluation showed that 89% of respondents involved in the Community Partnerships felt that they were involved in addressing their local issues. 91% of respondents are clear about how they can contribute to the work of the Partnerships so they are aware of how they are impacting on their community. 85% of respondents agreed that the work of the Partnerships is improving their local neighbourhood.

The Council has achieved best quartile performance (in comparison to all other local authorities in England) for tenant satisfaction with opportunities for participation in management and decision-making. A recent survey shows that 67% of our tenants are satisfied or very satisfied with the opportunities that exist for participation in management and decision-making. This shows an improvement of 16% over the last 3 years.

As part of the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment, service blocks are also assessed. Housing scored 3 out of 4 and Housing Benefits scored 4 out of 4.

Darlington was one of the first authorities in the North East to achieve “Fit for Purpose” for both our Housing Strategy and Housing Business Plan.

Areas for Improvement

The Council is aware that it needs to follow the adoption of its Neighbourhood Renewal, Social Inclusion, Crime and Disorder Reduction and Drug and Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategies with more action on the ground. This will be reinforced as the activities of the eleven community partnerships become embedded in the Council's work.

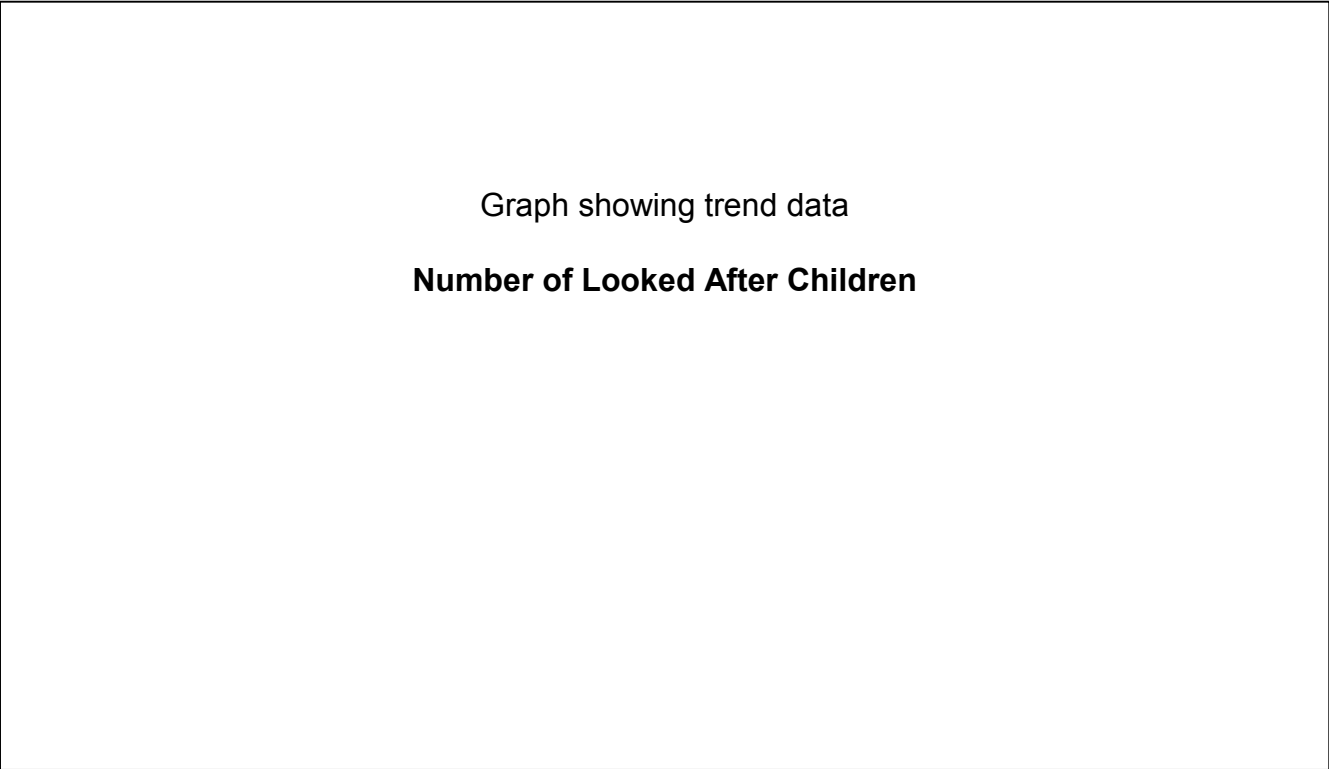
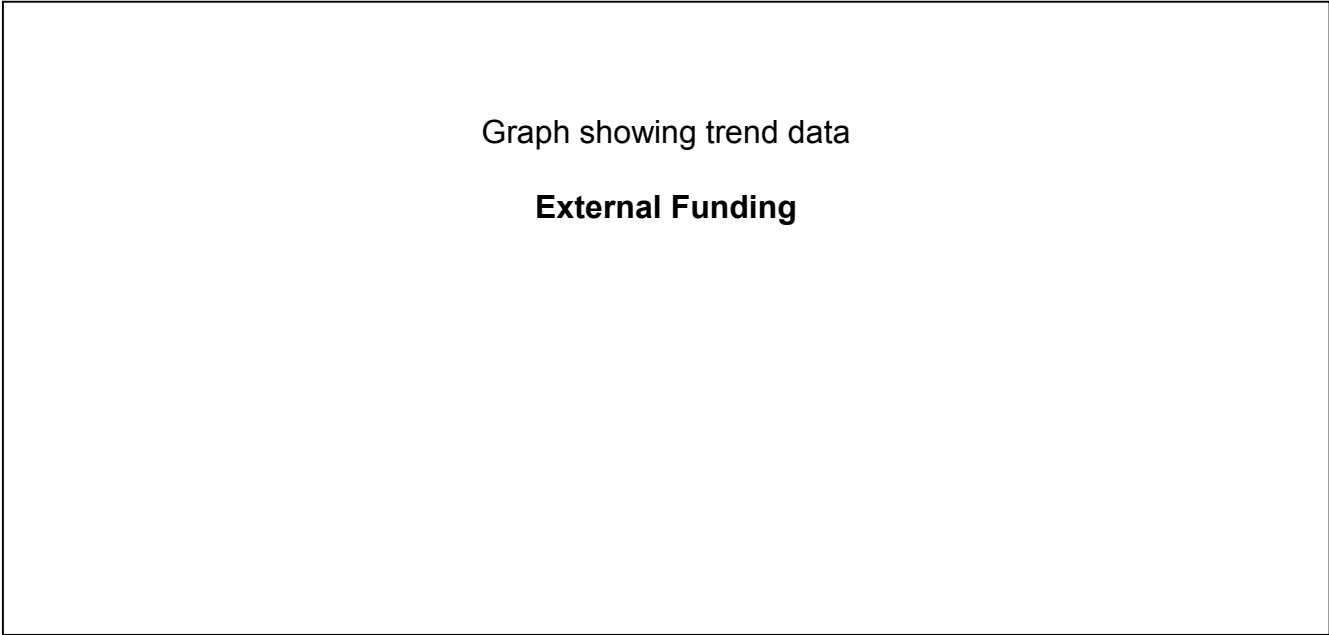
The development of the annual Community Strategy Action Plan containing detailed plans for health improvement in Darlington will provide the Council with more structured opportunities for partnership working in this area, especially with Darlington Primary Care Trust.

The Council will continue to promote the benefits of the Supporting People programme and commission new services to meet gaps in service provision. We will continue to improve conditions in the private rented sector and deliver the ‘Darlington Standard’ for council housing and services which was set by Council tenants, following an option appraisal process. We will continue to drive forward improvements in assessing Housing Benefits and dealing with fraud. We will continue to develop the capacity of communities in Darlington's eleven priority wards, providing support to local communities to tackle local issues that are important to them. The establishment of the new Welfare Rights Service will enable us to be more proactive in ensuring that increased welfare benefit take-up among specifically targeted client groups is undertaken.

Progress against planned actions

| What we planned to do in 2004/05 | Did we deliver? |
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| Reduce the number of Children Looked After | Yes - Against a national trend of an increasing number of Children Looked After, the number in Darlington reduced from 145 to 138. |
| Deliver a Social Inclusion Strategy | Yes - "All Together Now: A Social Inclusion Strategy for Darlington" was ratified by Council and adopted by Darlington Partnership in early 2005. A fifth of the action plan has already been delivered. |
| Work towards attainment of Level 3 of the Equality Standard | Yes - Twenty equalities impact assessments were carried out in major service areas. On schedule, the Social Inclusion Implementation Group has begun work on the Council's second corporate equalities review and plan. |
| Develop three Estate Based Compacts | Ongoing - Estate Based Compacts were developed by residents on three local Council estates. However, due to new Government guidance published in March 2005, the compacts were not printed and are to be reviewed in light of the new guidance. The target for tenant satisfaction with opportunities for participation in management and decision-making was exceeded. |
| Increase the number of 'Quality Marked' organisations | Yes - The numbers of advice providers obtaining Community Legal Service quality marked accreditation has increased. The target of four agencies was exceeded when five obtained accreditation. |
| Implement Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy Action Plan | Yes - The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy Action Plan has been adopted and is being implemented. |
| Draw up business plan for establishment of welfare benefit advice service including sources of funding | Yes - The business plan and funding for the establishment of the welfare rights service has been agreed by Cabinet and the service will be operational July 2005. |
| Deliver 2004/05 Darlington Communities Capacity Building Project | Yes - Eleven Community Partnerships have been established in Darlington's priority areas. In addition, the council has agreed to mainstream funding for the Community Development Workers. |

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| <p>Reduce fraud and error by meeting the BVPI security targets, and implement the Benefit Take-Up Strategy</p> | <p>No – Some targets have been achieved for SAFE (Security Against Fraud and Error) reward targets Verification Framework visiting targets and fraud sanctions and prosecutions target. We have failed to meet our local target concerning the number of claimants visited. This was partly due to new fraud targets being introduced as there was a lack of benchmarking information to establish a realistic target. However, networking suggests that our performance will be in the best quartile of all local authorities in England.</p> <p>Yes - The Benefit Take-Up Strategy has been extremely successful and a recent benefit campaign has resulted in 500 new applications for benefit being received. The target of £50,000 was exceeded when £51,022 was claimed in additional benefits.</p> |
| <p>Promote Direct Payments</p> | <p>Yes - The number of disabled children benefiting from direct payments rose to 15. A total of 79 people in Darlington now receive direct payments.</p> |
| <p>Deliver the Tenants' Communication Strategy and the Tenants' Empowerment Strategy</p> | <p>Yes - As part of Housing's option appraisal process, the Tenants' Community and Empowerment strategies have been delivered. The option appraisal has been signed off by GONE.</p> <p>Tenant satisfaction with opportunities for participation in the decision making process has moved from being bottom quartile at 51% to best quartile performance (for all local authorities in England) at 67%.</p> |



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| | <p>Improve performance in the administration of Housing Benefit and comply with performance standards in relation to HB/CTB</p> | <p>Fraud investigations: number of claimants visited (BV76a) Fraud investigations (BV76b) Fraud investigators (BV76c) Number of fraud prosecutions (BV76d)</p> <p>Percentage of data-matches resolved within 2 months (CS146)</p> <p>Average time processing new claims (BV78a)</p> <p>Average time registering change in circumstances (BV78b)</p> <p>Claims calculated correctly (BV79a)</p> <p>Overpayments recovered (BV79bi)</p> <p>Overpayment recovered as % of HB overpayment debt (BV79bii)</p> <p>Overpayment written off as % of HB overpayment debt (BV79biii)</p> <p>Cost of HB claim (CS020)</p> <p>Percentage of new claims processed within 14days of receipt of all necessary information (CS119 & PSA)</p> <p>Percentage of rent allowance claims where the payment is made on time or within 7 days of decision (CS123)</p> <p>Percentage of new claims outstanding over 50 days (CS145)</p> |
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|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| | | <p>Percentage of applications for reconsideration/revision notified within 4 weeks (CS147)</p> <p>Percentage of appeals submitted to the Appeals Service in 4 weeks (CS148)</p> <p>Percentage of appeals submitted to the Appeals service in 3 months (CS149)</p> <p>Satisfaction overall service (BV80g)</p> |
| <p>Putting the customer first</p> | <p>New Children’s Services Department to benefit children and their families in Darlington by providing better and integrated services. The focus will be on improving a number of things for children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educational attainment • physical and emotional well-being • safety from abuse and neglect • involvement in shaping their own lives. | <p>Pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C GCSEs or equivalent (BV 38)</p> <p>Half days missed due to all absence ion secondary schools (BV45)</p> <p>Half days missed due to all absence in primary schools (BV46)</p> <p>Stability of placements of looked after children (BV49)</p> <p>Educational qualifications of looked after children (BV50)</p> <p>Long term stability of children looked after (CF/D35)</p> <p>Re-registrations on the child protection register (CF/A3)</p> <p>Children looked after in foster placements or placed for adoption (CF/B7)</p> <p>Health of children looked after (CF/C19)</p> <p>Participation of looked after children in reviews (CF/C63)</p> |

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| | <p>Increase Tenant Involvement in the Management and Delivery of Housing Services</p> <p>Improve the life chances of those experiencing or at risk of experiencing discrimination and disadvantage</p> | <p>BV75 – Satisfaction of tenants in the decision making process.</p> <p>Detailed PIs reported in community strategy action plan</p> |
| Ensuring access for all | <p>Reverse the spiral of decline in Darlington's priority wards by building the capacity of communities</p> <p>Develop Services for Older People</p> <p>Complete corporate programme of equalities impact assessments</p> | <p>Develop Local Action Plans (CS42a)</p> <p>Number of new individuals involved in Community Partnerships (CS30)</p> <p>External funding in priority wards (CS40)</p> <p>Percentage of people clear about the aims of Community Partnerships (CS162a)</p> <p>Percentage of people who agree that Community Partnerships address local issues (CS162b)</p> <p>Percentage of people who feel they can influence Community Partnership decisions (CS162c)</p> <p>Percentage of occasions that a response and first action was instigated to an emergency call from Warden Link service within 3 minutes (CS001)</p> <p>Percentage of occasions that a mobile warden responds to cases within 20 minutes (CS014)</p> <p>Internal Refurbishment of Sheltered Housing (CS048)</p> <p>The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government (BV2a)</p> |

| Key Actions | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Action | Portfolio Holder/ Lead Officer | Date for Completion | Measure of Success |
| Review Private Sector Renewal Strategy | Cllr Dixon Pauline Mitchell | December 2005 | BV64, CS118a, CS118b |
| Implement Business Plan (Target non decent homes within work programme) | Cllr Dixon Pauline Mitchell | March 2006 | BV63, BV74, BV184a, BV184b |
| Establish Welfare Rights Advice Service and increase benefit take up | Cllr Harker Sharon Brown | July 2005 | BV55b |
| Increase the number of Quality Mark providers and spend on CLS | Cllr Harker Sharon Brown | March 2006 | BV22a BV22b BV22c CS61 |
| Develop and implement Partnering arrangements that are Egan compliant and market test all repair contracts | Cllr Dixon Pauline Mitchell | March 2006 | BV211a CS021 CS151 |
| Implement PSA target to improve HB/CTB performance in key BVPIs and reduce fraud and error by meeting security targets | Cllr Dixon Anthony Sandys | March 2006 | BV 76a,b,c,d BV78a,b BV79b CS 020, CS119, CS123, CS 145, CS146, CS147 |
| Review Tenant Participation Structures and Tenant Compacts and develop a Tenant Empowerment Strategy | Cllr Dixon Sharon Brown | March 2006 | BV75 |
| Implement the first year of Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and Develop the Community Partnership Network | Cllr Harker Sharon Brown | March 2006 | CS30,CS40, CS42a, CS 162a,b,c |
| Refurbish 10 Sheltered/Good Neighbour Communal Facilities and review use of Assistive Technology | Cllr Dixon Jill Walton | March 2006 | CS001 CS014 CS048 |
| Implement year one of "All Together Now: A Social Inclusion Strategy for Darlington" | Cllr Williams David Plews | March 2006 | Community Strategy action plan indicators |

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------|---|
| Provide second transit site at Honeypot Lane Caravan Site | Cllr Harker Barry Pearson | March 2006 | Helps delivery of Social Inclusion Strategy |
| Attain level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government | Cllr Williams David Plews | October 2006 | BV2a and b |
| Explore options to improve the physical provision of Education Other than at School services | Cllr McEwan Margaret Asquith | March 2006 | Options analysis completed |
| Promote Direct Payments | Cllr McEwan Margret Asquith | March 2006 | BV201 |
| Reduce the number of Looked After Children | Cllr McEwan Margaret Asquith | March 2006 | SS20, SS12, BV49, BV163 |
| Ensure a seamless transition to new Children's Services department | Cllr McEwan Margaret Asquith | March 2006 | Basket of Children's Services PIs |
| Formalise links between PCT management team and CMT to link and mainstream health and inclusion agendas | Cllr Williams Lorraine O'Donnell | March 2006 | Improving Health and Social Inclusion PIs in Community Strategy |

RAISING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Our aim is to ensure the highest quality opportunities exist in education, learning and training, improving school performance and raising aspirations and standards of achievement for all age groups.

Context

Such is the Council's priority on raising educational attainment that the mixed performance in 2004/05 is a cause for concern and the subject of enhanced focus within the new Children's Services department. Children's Services was formally in place from 1 April 2005. The detailed description below of performance over the previous year forms the basis for identifying improvements to be made in setting and hitting targets, achieving consistency of improvement across the board and improving our comparative performance and value added ratings. In other words the focus will be on achieving the highest standards of performance through consistent and sustainable improvement.

At Key Stage 1 performance dipped slightly so that the Council was just below national averages having been above them for a number of years. Key Stage 2 performance at Level 4 and above saw a dramatic improvement after having plateaued in previous years, with particular gains in English. Although the DfES target was not met, our general rate of improvement was such that it received particular recognition from the Minister for School Standards. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in the Key Stage 2 tests increased in English, Mathematics and Science. Darlington is now above national, statistical neighbours and regional performance in all subjects at Level 5.

In the secondary sector there was also a mixed picture. The gains of previous years at Key Stage 3 were consolidated and at level 6 improved upon, although there was a dip in Science and ICT Assessments both of which now fall within 3rd quartile performance. GCSE performance after seven years of better than average increases fell to 48.7% achieving 5 or more A* - Cs leaving the Authority almost 5 percentage points adrift of the national average and placing performance within 3rd quartile performance. Overall figures also mask some stark variances in performance. For example at Key Stage 4 performance ranged between a high of 79.3% and a low of 33.7% and with the exception of one all secondary schools failed to achieve their GCSE performance targets. 2004 also witnessed a worrying trend in the number of pupils not achieving any passes from 4.1% in 2001, 4.5% in 2003 to 4.9% in 2004. The challenge to the Council and schools is to prevent these dips in performance from escalating into a continued downward spiral. On a positive note Carmel RC Technology College celebrated its best ever year for performance at 'A' level.

Good progress has been made on major capital schemes for schools in the borough. The new Education Village is being constructed and due to open in November 2005. The new Alderman Leach Primary School is now open and construction work is ongoing at Skerne Park and Middleton St. George Primary Schools. A £3.5 million replacement for Cockerton CE Voluntary Controlled School is currently at project development stage. Although

disappointing that the Authority was not included within an early round of the Building Schools for the Future programme, the Council remains determined to continue investment in the secondary sector and will submit a £15 million targeted capital bid for the refurbishment of Hummersknott School and Language College during May 2005.

The Council's amalgamation programme continued, with Whinfield Infant and Junior Schools amalgamating at the beginning of September 2004 after a decision by the School Organisation Committee. There were no objections with respect to the amalgamation of Harrowgate Hill Infant and Junior Schools and that will formally take place on 1st September

2005 when the school moves to its new buildings. Eastbourne Nursery and Heathfield Nursery schools closed and were re-opened as integrated Foundation Stage Units within Dodmire Infants and Heathfield Primary Schools respectively. The recommendations made by the LifeLong Scrutiny Committee following a major review of primary education have been responded to and proposals to close Rise Carr Primary and Albert Hill Nursery Schools have been agreed by the School Organisation Committee. The Nursery school will be integrated with Gurney Pease Primary School to form a Foundation Stage Unit.

Eastbourne Comprehensive School was successfully removed from Special Measures in November 2004 although with any such school improvement requires close monitoring and support. Following OFSTED inspections Bishopton/Redmarshall Church of England School was categorised as having Serious Weaknesses, whilst Branksome Comprehensive was categorised for Special Measures. At an HMI monitoring visit conducted in March 2005 the causes for Serious Concern at Bishopton/Redmarshall were judged to have been removed. Both schools will however continue to receive intensive support from the Local Authority.

Two significant developments, planned during the last academic year, were inaugurated on 1st September 2004. The Council, with Hummersknott School and Language College as the lead school, supported the creation of a Training School based on all secondary schools in the Borough. This will enable up to 25 teachers to train in our secondary schools and hopefully remain in Darlington to teach. Alongside the successful School Centred Initial Teacher Training operating in a large number of our primary schools, we are well placed to train and then recruit our own teachers across all sectors.

High Level Summary of Performance

| Corporate Objective | Priority | PIs | Progress against targets |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Shaping a better Darlington | Lead, challenge and secure support for schools in raising achievement | BV38 BV39 BV40 BV41 BV48 BV50 BV181 BV194 | σ λ σ λ λ H σ σ |
| Providing Excellent Services | Secure comprehensive and high quality early years services, facilities and education Improve services aimed at including young people as active and engaged citizens | BV192 ED11 ED12 ED13 ED15 | H λ λ σ λ |
| Putting the Customer first | Maximize efficiency and effectiveness within available resources through the provision of high quality responsive and customer focused services | BV118 ED15 ED21 ED22 ED26 ED35 ED51 ED56 ED58 ED65 ED61 ED62 | λ λ H σ H H λ λ λ λ H H λ |
| Ensuring access for all | Promote educational and social inclusion Promote and develop learning and basic skills in the community Pilot Children's Trust Every Child Matters | BV43 BV44 BV45 BV46 BV118 BV159 ED1 ED2 ED5 ED11 ED13 ED21 ED25 | σ σ σ σ λ λ λ H λ H λ |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--|------|-------------------------|
| | | ED26 | σ H H H |
| Overall Progress against aim | | | λ |

Excellent Key Stage 2 Results

Extract from letter of congratulations to Director of Education from David Milliband when Minister of State for School Standards (August 2004)

'It gives me great pleasure to write and say that schools in your authority have achieved excellent Key Stage 2 results this year.

The results for both English and Maths combined mean that the cumulative results achieved by children in your authority are amongst the most improved this year. I would like to pass on my congratulations to pupils and teachers, and to colleagues at LEA level, for that achievement.'

Education Village

The country's first ever Education Village is set to be completed in Darlington in October 2005. The £34 million project will bring together, on one site, pupils from Springfield Primary School, Haughton Community School and Beaumont Hill Technology College. From November around 1,400 pupils, aged three to sixteen, will be able to take advantage of a range of state-of-the-art facilities all under one roof.

The groundbreaking scheme is being built on the site of Haughton Comprehensive School in Rockwell Avenue. As well as modern classrooms, all with computers and interactive white boards, the education village will have an Internet café and a range of top class sporting, drama and music facilities. These include a 25metre swimming pool and hydrotherapy pool, a village green for performances and events, outdoor classrooms, eight outdoor sports pitches, an artificial cricket square and multi-use games area, a performance hall with separate dance and drama studios and music therapy rooms.

The site is being constructed by the Kajima Corporation under a Private Finance Initiative. The company will run some services such as cleaning and maintenance but overall control will remain with Darlington Council.

More detail on outcomes secured and other achievements

| Priority | Outcome/achievement |
|--|--|
| <p>Lead, challenge and secure support for schools in raising achievement</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance at Key Stage 2 improved significantly in 2004. The improvement in English was well above the national rate of improvement and in Maths it was above the rate of national rate of improvement. • The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level (Level 5) in the Key Stage 2 tests increased in English, Mathematics and Science. Darlington is now above national, statistical neighbours and regional performance in all subjects at Level 5. • Performance at Key Stage 3 improved significantly in 2003. This momentum has continued in 2004, with continued improvement in English and Mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level (Level 6) increased for the second year in succession. • The first Collaborative Restart programme in the Country initiated between Eastbourne and Hurworth Comprehensive Schools has delivered results with Eastbourne School being removed from Special Measures in November 2004. However, despite impressive gains in public examinations the school remains fragile and in need of continuing intensive support. • The Council has worked closely with a combination of secondary schools, colleges, Connexions, the Learning & Skills Council and work based training providers to establish the Darlington 14 -19 Trust which is charged with taking forward proposals for this phase of education. Good progress has been made with Young Apprenticeships and common timetabling. |
| <p>Secure comprehensive and high quality early years services, facilities and education</p> <p>Improve services aimed at including young people as active and engaged citizens</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation Stage Profile national assessment was implemented. Darlington practitioners have worked collaboratively to develop the Darlington Foundation Stage Profile, which is used on children from entry to Foundation Stage at age 3. The Darlington profile has been held up as excellent practice by the DfEs as a tool for identifying early intervention. • The Early Years, Childcare and Sure Start Service opened the Darlington Children's Information Service in April 2004 to provide a childcare matching service for the residents of Darlington |

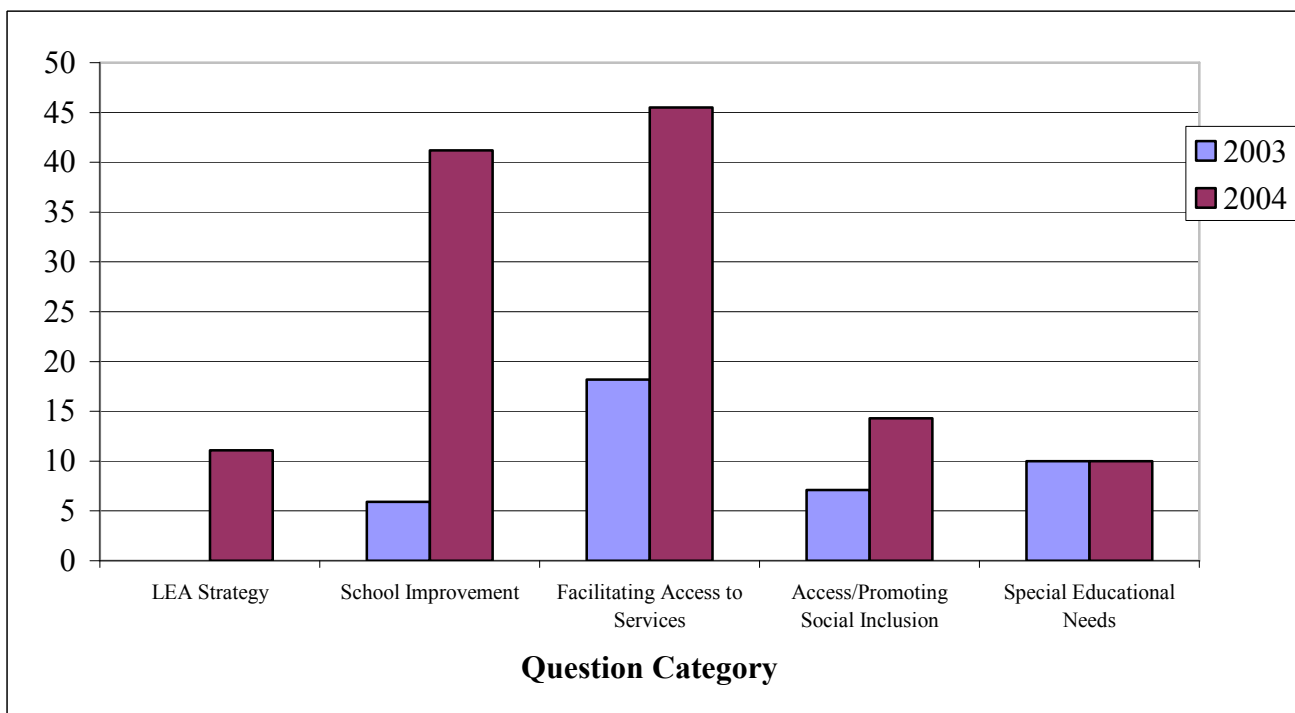
| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Maximise efficiency and effectiveness within available resources through the provision of high quality responsive and customer focused services</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of successful school admission appeals has continued to reduce due to close working arrangements developed between the Admission Team and Headteachers specifically looking at the contents of appeal statements. The Admission Team also successfully implemented the co-ordinated admission scheme for primary admissions for entry into for 2006. • Through the provision of careful and supportive financial guidance and advice no schools produced a budget deficit during 2004/05. This compares to six schools in deficit during the previous financial year. • Improvements to the long-term absence insurance scheme for schools resulted in a significant rebate for those schools that opted to buy in, as well as a reduced level of administration and speedier payments. • Despite the difficulties and pressures created through the introduction by the DfES of a new centralised process for Student Support applications the Council was able to maintain its record of processing all accurately completed applications within DfES timescales. |
| <p>Promote educational and social inclusion</p> <p>Promote and develop learning and basic skills in the community</p> <p>Pilot Children’s Trust</p> <p>Every Child Matters</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The former Education and Social Services Departments developed a joint strategy for looked after children. • An Attendance Strategy was adopted that has resulted in increased publicity, community awareness raising events, truancy sweeps and proposals for the issue of penalty notices and the introduction of a borough-wide school pass system. Attendance rates are now improving. • As part of the Adult Learning Inspection, Family Learning was awarded the first Grade 1 in the country for its outstanding delivery of learning for adults and children. The service also attracted an additional 200 learners during the year, appointed 34 new tutors and delivered courses from an additional 3 venues. |

External Recognition

The Audit Commission School Survey 2004 tracked considerable improvement in the overall perception of schools of the Local Authority between 2003 and 2004. In particular nearly 66% of questions now fall into the best 2 quartiles compared to only 21% the previous year and in terms of LEA Strategy no questions now fall within the worst quartile of national performance. Four areas of questioning are now ranked within the top ten of national performance:

- a. The quality of financial information, including comparative data.
- b. The quality of financial support and advice.
- c. The quality of programming and management of building projects.
- d. The effectiveness of educational psychology support.

The graph below illustrates the improvement of questions falling within best quartile performance between 2003 and 2004.



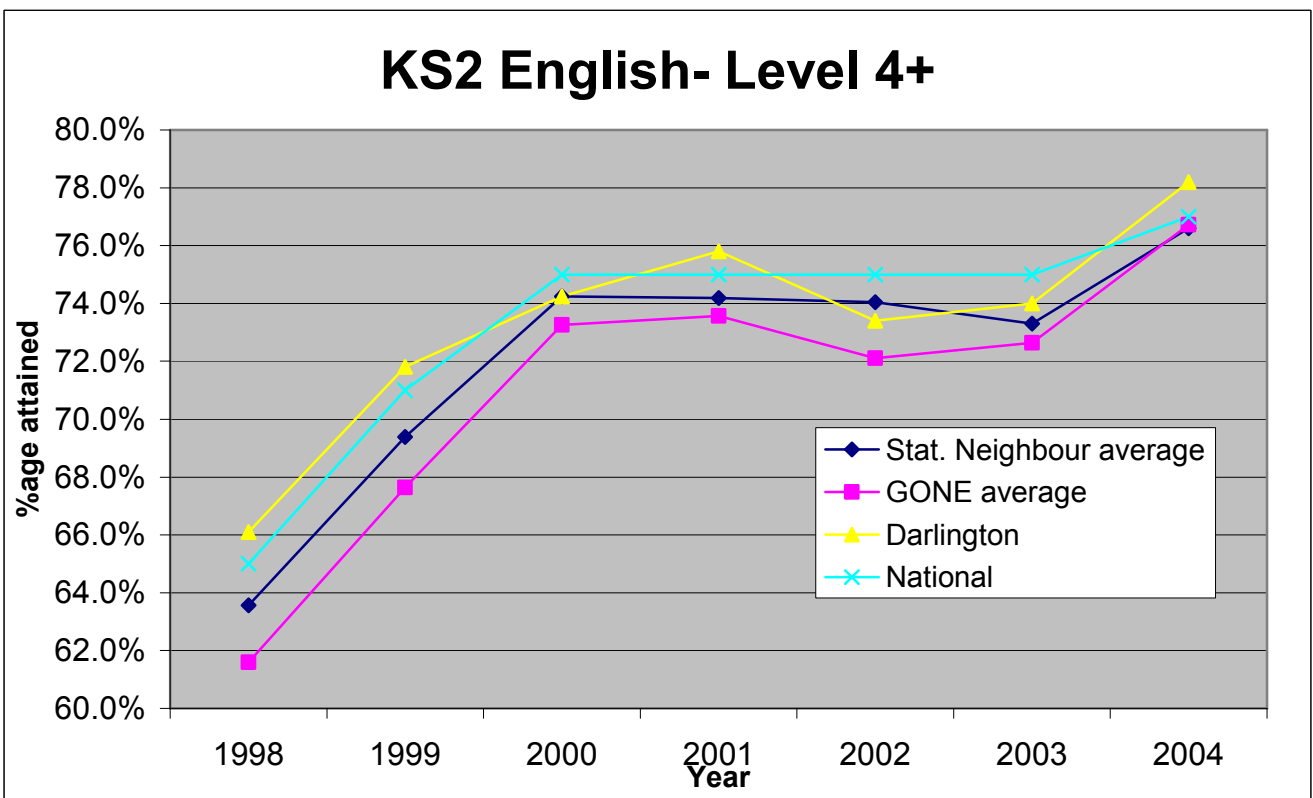
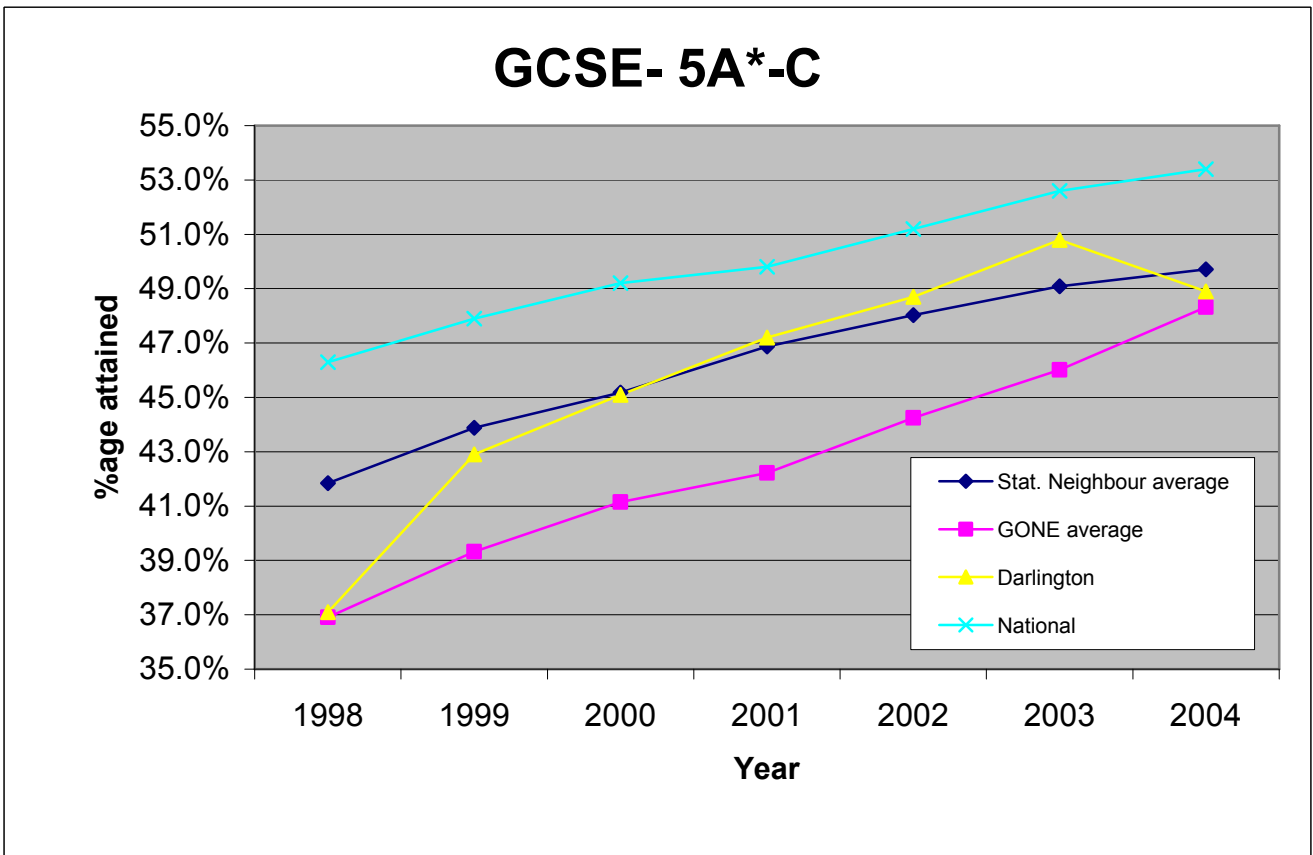
Areas for Improvement

The focus for the year will remain on raising standards of achievement at all key stages and reducing differential performance between schools. Support to schools causing concern and in particular those under Measures or recently out of Measures will feature strongly. The greater targeting of support to meet the needs of vulnerable children including SEN, CLA, EAL, BME and Travellers will be a major theme in the move toward integrated services for Children and Young People. The emphasis on improving rates of school attendance will remain and be strengthened further to ensure that children receive the best possible life chances through receipt of their education. Greater emphasis will be placed on meeting the needs of those children who risk exclusion from the mainstream education system including 'hard to place' pupils.

Progress against planned actions

| What we planned to do in 2004/05 | Did we deliver? |
|--|--|
| Develop and commence implementation of 14-19 Strategy | Yes - Strategy agreed and launched in October 2004. |
| Develop Strategy for Extended Schools | Yes – Extended School pilot between Hummersknott and Skerne Park schools has been extended to all schools working within clusters. |
| Open Darlington Education Village | Yes – The construction phase remains on programme with the school due to open in November 2005. |
| Implement Strategy to develop and review SEN provision | Text to Insert |
| Improve GCSE attainment at 5 or more grades A*- C through implementation of LPSA Action Plan | No – Performance fell from 50.8% in 2003 to 48.8% in 2004. |
| Improve school attendance rates through implementation of LPSA Action Plan | No – Secondary total absence rate remained static at 9.2%. Primary total absence rate reduced from 6.4% in 2003/04 to 6.1% in 2004/05. LPSA targets were not met. |
| Enhance support for Gifted and Talented Children | Yes – School Improvement Officer identified as lead officer for Gifted & Talented. EiC identifies Gifted & Talented strand within the Excellence in Cities action plan. National Association for Able Children in Education Challenge Award (Gifted & Talented self-evaluation framework) identified as vehicle to support Gifted & Talented children was launched with schools in 18 November 2004 Two summer schools for Gifted & Talented children were hosted at Haughton and Hummersknott Schools and attended by 80 pupils in total. |
| Develop a joint Education/ Social Services Strategy to ensure that Looked After Children receive maximum educational opportunity | Yes – Joint strategy adopted and key actions being implemented. |
| Improve service delivery to support behaviour support in schools | Yes - Team expanded from 0.3 teachers plus 2 Teaching Assistants to 1 team leader plus 2 Coaches, 2 Teaching Assistants and 2 peer mentors. All primary schools offered 6,12 or 15 days support. All Secondary Schools being offered the equivalent of 9 days support from EOTAS Team. |

| | |
|--|--|
| Remove Eastbourne Comprehensive School from Special Measures | Yes – School removed from Special Measure in November 2004. |
| Subject to confirmation of inclusion in an early wave develop detailed strategy for a full Building Schools for the Future programme | N/A – Darlington was not included within an early round. |



Council Plans for Improvement 2005/2006

| Community Strategy theme: Raising educational achievement | | |
|--|--|---|
| Corporate Objectives | Priority | PIs |
| Shaping a better Darlington | Lead, challenge and secure support for schools in raising the achievement of children and young people helping them to become active and fully engaged citizens. | % achieving 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-C (BV38) % achieving 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-G (BV39) % achieving Level 4 or above at KS2 English test (BV40) % achieving Level 4 or above at KS2 Maths test (BV41) % achieving Level 5 or above in KS3 English (BV181a) % achieving Level 5 or above in KS3 Maths (BV181b) % achieving Level 5 or above in KS3 Science (BV181c) % achieving Level 5 or above in KS3 ICT test (BV181d) % achieving Level 5 or above at KS2 English test (BV194a) % achieving Level 5 or above at KS2 Maths test (BV194b) % achieving Level 2B or above at KS1 Reading/ Writing/Maths/Science (ED118a/b/c/d) % BME achieving 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-C (ED110) % BME achieving 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-G (ED111) % BME achieving Level 4 or above at KS2 Maths test (ED112) % BME achieving Level 4 or above at KS2 English test (ED113) % BME achieving Level 5 or above in KS3 English (ED114a) % BME achieving Level 5 or above in KS3 Maths (ED114b) |

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| | | <p>% BME achieving Level 5 or above in KS3 Science (ED114c)</p> <p>% leaving care with 1 or more GCSE grade A*-G (BV50)</p> <p>% schools rating the quality of strategic planning for school improvement as satisfactory or better (ED035)</p> |
| Providing excellent services | Secure comprehensive and high quality early years services, facilities and education. | <p>% of 3 year olds with access to good quality, free, early years education (ED015)</p> <p>Quality of early years & childcare leadership (BV222a)</p> <p>Quality of early years & childcare leadership – Postgraduate input (BV222b)</p> <p>% early years settings judged by OFSTED as satisfactory or better (ED012)</p> |
| Putting the customer first | Maximise efficiency and effectiveness within all available resources through the provision of high quality responsive and customer focused services. | <p>% schools satisfied with financial support & advice (ED056)</p> <p>% schools satisfied with support to develop governing body (ED059)</p> <p>% schools satisfied with the co-ordination of admissions process (ED061)</p> <p>% schools satisfied with home to school transport (ED063)</p> |
| Ensuring access for all | Promote educational and social inclusion. | <p>% SEN statements issued within 18 weeks (BV43 a & b)</p> <p>% half days missed in secondary schools due to total absence (BV45)</p> <p>% half days missed in primary schools due to total absence (BV46)</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | <p>Promote and develop learning and basic skills in the community.</p> | <p>% permanently excluded offered 21 hours alternative tuition (BV159) % schools satisfied capacity to support SEN (ED021) Number of children with additional needs accessing mainstream provision or links (ED11) % schools satisfied with support for ethnic minority pupils, refugees & travellers (ED025) % schools satisfied with how the LA promotes access to education and social inclusion (ED026) Wheelchair access to schools (ED5) % schools satisfied with educational psychology (ED022) % adult learners gaining accreditation (ED049) % of Learners judging their learning as satisfactory or better (ED116) Aggregate library opening hours (ED072) % static libraries providing access to information resources on internet (ED073)</p> |
| <p>Enhancing our capacity to improve'</p> | <p>Maximise efficiency and effectiveness within all available resources through the provision of high quality responsive and customer focused services.</p> | <p>% schools satisfied with support to make them effective purchasers of traded services (ED055) % of schools satisfied with support to develop the effectiveness of governing bodies (ED058) % schools satisfied with support for the professional development of school workforce (ED103)</p> |

| Key Actions | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Action | Portfolio Holder/ Lead Officer | Date for Completion | Measure of Success |
| Develop and implement strategy for raising education attainment through Children's Services | Cllr McEwan John Thorley | July 2005 | BV38, BV39 |
| Continue to support the 14-19 Trust including broadening the KS 4 curriculum and extending opportunities for vocational training | Cllr McEwan John Thorley | September 2005 | ED104 |
| Expand extended school activity to all schools/clusters through the production of cluster plans | Cllr McEwan Julian Kenshole | July 2005 | ED109 |
| Continue to implement workforce reform including the development of pay and grading model for all support staff | Cllr McEwan Julia Sowerby | July 2005 | ED103 |
| Improve processes for the safeguarding of children including agreeing a protocol for the admission arrangements of 'hard to reach pupils' | Cllr McEwan Gill Walker | September 2005 | ED106 |
| Review CLA Strategy | Cllr McEwan Gill Walker | July 2005 | BV50 |
| Implement the National PE and School Sport Strategy | Cllr McEwan David Walker | April 2005 | |
| Implement recommendations emanating from the independent consultants review of SEN | Cllr McEwan Cate Crallan | September 2005 | ED021 |
| Improve standards at Key Stage 1, particularly in writing | Cllr McEwan David Walker | On-going | ED118 a,b,c,d |
| Improve standards at Key Stage 2 | Cllr McEwan David Walker | On-going | BV40,BV41 BV 194a&b |
| Improve standards at Key Stage 3 | Cllr McEwan David Walker | On-going | BV181a,b,c,d |
| Improve standards at Key Stage 4 | Cllr McEwan David Walker | On-going | BV38 BV39 |

| | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Continue implementation of LPSA action plan and Attendance Strategy including the extension of the EMS attendance module to schools | Cllr McEwan Gill Walker | September 2005 | BV45 BV46 |
| Continue to enhance support for able, gifted and talented pupils including offering summer schools | Cllr McEwan John Thorley | July/August 2005 | ED102 |
| Improve the coordination of training and professional development opportunities for schools and the department | Cllr McEwan David Walker | May 2005 | ED103 |
| Review Access Strategy and School Access Plans | Cllr McEwan Cate Crallan | March 2006 | ED026 |
| Improve EOTAS provision increase hours and rates of reintegration including the completion of a needs analysis | Cllr McEwan Gill Walker | July 2005 | BV159 |

STIMULATING LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Our aim is to stimulate participation in cultural pursuits, promoting creativity and extending opportunities for people to experience high quality recreational and leisure activities.

Context

A considerable amount of headway has been made in the delivery of the Local Cultural Strategy 'Moving Up' and significant developments have taken place including securing funding for the refurbishment of existing facilities. The recruitment of the Visual Arts Officer by the Leisure and Arts Division provides more consistent advice to raise confidence in how cultural schemes can shape developments. Public art requirements have been built into the planning briefs and planning requirements for several major developments such as Commercial Street, Haughton Road and West Park.

Creative Markets have been established within the town e.g. the French Market, Farmers Market, Winter Wonderland and Christingle Markets. These markets enable opportunities where traditional skills and products can be showcased. In addition the Council through its medium term financial plan has allocated £50,000 for improvements to the covered market.

Building works at the former Borough Road Music School have been completed and the Forum Music Centre has now been officially launched. The facility provides a new home for live music in Darlington and is an important new cultural facility for the town and the surrounding area.

Following a corporate review of the council's services, the Youth Service was transferred from the Education Department to Community Services Leisure and Arts Division on 1 June 2004. Following the publication of the government's Transforming Youth Work Agenda, the transfer was seen as a key means of providing additional capacity to support the work with young people. Effectively, this gives greater access to facilities for the arts, drama, music and sport and consolidates existing partnership working with outside agencies to potentially increase the reach to young people. It is envisaged that this will improve opportunities for young people to be involved more effectively in the decisions and planning processes that develop young people's programmes. Additionally, by expanding the existing links for the Youth Service, this move will provide further opportunities for the delivery of quality youth work. A key task following a recent inspection by OFSTED is to make improvements to the Youth Service in line with the inspection recommendations and ensure that sufficient resources are available and are effectively deployed to secure sustainable improvements to the service. Key to this will be to establish the level of resources that are required to improve the overall quality of youth practice and curriculum activity, giving young people the opportunity to be involved more effectively in the overall development, management and evaluation of the service. A priority for action is to develop a Borough wide Strategy for Young People.

High Level Summary of Performance

| Corporate Objective | Priority | PIs | Progress against targets |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Shaping a better Darlington | To drive the operation and development of Leisure and Arts to enhance the local environment and maximise commercial opportunity whilst promoting inclusion | CS18a CS18b CS18c | σ σ σ |
| Providing Excellent Services | Provide Best Value services throughout leisure and arts and proactively work towards recognised quality standards | CS63 | σ |
| Putting the Customer first | Offer a safe and welcoming visitor experience for all | BV118 BV119 CS18 CS26 | λ σ σ λ |
| Ensuring access for all | Develop IT systems to enable effective marketing of leisure and arts and promote greater access Work in partnership with public, private and voluntary sector to develop a rich and diverse leisure and arts opportunities | BV119 CS17a CS17b CS17c CS17d CS17e CS25 CS32a CS32b CS32c CS62 CS69 | σ σ λ H λ H λ σ σ σ σ σ λ |
| Overall Progress against aim | | | σ |

Increasing Physical Activity

Big Lottery funding of £1.075m has been secured for the delivery of PE and Sport Programmes. The funding will provide brand new sports facilities on nine school sites and improved sports facilities at High Force Residential Centre. The grant is designed to increase and enhance participation in physical activity in schools within and beyond the curriculum. A Zone Action bid has also been successful, leveraging in £184,470 to deliver physical activity in some of Darlington's priority wards over 3 years. The Zone Action bid was developed with 3 Community Partnerships operating in the priority wards.

New North Lodge Play Area Opens

North Lodge Park underwent a £270,000 refurbishment using a Transforming Your Space Grant through the Lottery and has been the result of a partnership between Darlington Council, The Friends of the Park, the Children's Fund and Sure Start. The refurbishment includes the installation of CCTV, improved footpaths, lighting and landscaping works plus the installation of new play equipment that is designed to be more accessible to a wider section of the community. New fencing and coloured safety surfacing adds to the security and overall design of the area.

Sports Centre Revamp

Darlington M.P. Alan Milburn performed the official reopening of the newly refurbished Eastbourne Sports Complex, which has undergone a £70,000 makeover transforming it into a state of the art facility, which has cutting edge Techogym cardiovascular and fixed resistance machinery. Over the last five years Eastbourne Sports Complex has played host to 700,000 visitors. The emphasis is very much on healthy lifestyles to help fight heart disease, cancer and obesity. The facilities have been invaluable in putting heart patients on the road to recovery and are used by Darlington Primary Care trust and the Darlington Coronary Support Group for cardiac rehabilitation.

In addition to the Sports Centre revamp a new pavilion at Eastbourne sports was completed. The new £80,000 building has a range of modern facilities including a function room that can accommodate up to fifty people. The new pavilion provides a safe and attractive environment where bowlers can enjoy their sport and it provides an ideal venue for community groups.

More detail on outcomes secured and other achievements

| Priority | Outcome/achievement |
|---|---|
| <p>To drive the operation and development of leisure and arts to enhance the local environment and maximise commercial opportunity whilst promoting inclusion</p> | <p>The consultants appointed to design the Town Centre Pedestrian Heart works are making good progress and the concept design for the Pedestrian Heart Scheme including a revised traffic management system has been completed</p> <p>The cultural dimension is increasingly becoming mainstreamed within the Council. The Visual Arts Officer now has input into new planning developments to raise the profile of how art and other cultural schemes can be involved in new developments. For instance, an artistic dimension has been included in engineering projects such as the design for the new footbridge over the A66 and as part of the Gateway Development framework to upgrade railway bridges at Bank Top. An artist has been commissioned in the development of the Pedestrian Heart Scheme taking forward the next stage of design for the water feature, chronological lighting and 'life pulse' ideas.</p> <p>In terms of enhancing urban and rural landscapes in ways that preserve Darlington's biodiversity and sustainability, 6 new nature reserves have been declared and 38 hectares of tree planting completed, including 100 native black poplar trees. Additional land has been purchased at Skerningham Manor for a primary gateway site.</p> |
| <p>Provide Best Value services throughout leisure and arts and proactively work towards recognised quality standards</p> | <p>A Marketing Officer funded by ACE has been appointed to take forward the marketing of cultural events across the Tees Valley and a national PR agency has been contracted to raise the profile of events and festivals.</p> <p>Leisure and Arts were awarded Charter Mark for service provision</p> <p>The first ever formal Community Access Agreement has been signed, prioritising women's team participation and inclusion. This agreement has been mentioned as an example of good practice by Sport England.</p> <p>Specialist Sports College bid for Longfield was successful. Funding obtained from Libraries and the Community Learning Service has supported the building of a dance studio at the school.</p> |

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| <p>Offer a safe and welcoming visitor experience for all</p> | <p>Eastbourne Sports Complex has been refurbished and now offers state of the art equipment</p> <p>Satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities - whilst not meeting the 72% satisfaction target set (performance being 65%) it is expected that performance will remain in the best quartile.</p> <p>Whilst the target of 35% for satisfaction for children's play facilities was not met (performance achieved being 32%), over the last 3 years satisfaction in the area has steadily improved.</p> <p>Whilst the targets for Festival and Arts were not achieved, through partnership working with other Tees Valley authorities a full time Marketing Officer has been appointed and a national PR agency has been contracted to raise the profile of events and festivals. Through the new mechanism all opportunities for Culture 10 projects will be maximised. 'Rhythm n Brews' festival has been accepted on to the Culture 10 programme for 2005.</p> <p>In improving satisfaction for community sports and arts it is hoped that the implementation of the Zone Action bid and working closely with Community Partnerships will make a difference.</p> |
| <p>Develop IT systems to enable effective marketing of leisure and arts and promote greater access Work in partnership with public, private and voluntary sector to develop a rich and diverse leisure and arts opportunities</p> | <p>The e-library opened in Crown Street Library and the Library is now badged as 'family friendly' and is improving its services to families.</p> <p>The Council website has been revamped and includes information on all the council's cultural facilities. The target to increase the number of hits on the leisure and arts website has been exceeded.</p> <p>Targets to increase participation at the following have been exceeded: Stressholme driving range, adults and juniors participating in swimming, and attendance at Theatre and Arts venues. Attendance at Eastbourne sports complex was not achieved and has been suffering due to outdated equipment. The centre was closed for 2 weeks for refurbishment and all signs are that this will improve attendances.</p> <p>Big Lottery funding of £1.075m has been secured for the delivery of PE and Sport Programmes. The funding will provide brand new sports facilities on nine</p> |

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| | <p>school sites and improved sports facilities at High Force Residential Centre. The grant is designed to increase and enhance participation in physical activity in schools within and beyond the curriculum. A Zone Action bid has also been successful leveraging in £184,470 to deliver physical activity in some of Darlington's priority wards over 3 years. The Zone Action bid was developed with 3 Community Partnerships operating in the priority wards that this initiative will be delivered within.</p> <p>A Better Play application has been successful which has enabled the appointment of an Inclusion Co-ordinator to enhance confidence amongst families with adults and children who have disabilities in accessing inclusive family based cultural opportunities.</p> <p>A Learning in Leisure project has been developed jointly funded by the Learning and Skills Council and European Funding. The scheme has focused on giving unemployed young people and parents returning to work the skills to work in the leisure industry.</p> <p>Ten Community Access Agreements have been successfully entered into with schools and the PSA target for increasing sport and physical activity beyond the curriculum is being taken forward.</p> <p>Performance against partnership funding was slightly short of the target.</p> |
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External Recognition

The Leisure and Arts service was awarded Charter Mark for excellence in public service in 2004. Awarded by the Government the Charter Mark recognises commitment to continuous improvement. It also measures performance in key service areas such as consulting users, setting standards and using resources effectively.

The Leisure and Arts Service took over and successfully managed Durham's Gala Theatre for 2004/05. Under the Darlington Arts Team the Gala established an agreed realistic subsidy for the theatre from the City Council, and achieved external funding from the Arts Council and Northern Film and Media. Through professional management of the budgets the theatre ended for the first time in its history with a surplus, which was invested into the programme. In January 2005 the Durham City's risk register was re assessed and the Gala Theatre was no longer assessed as a risk and the management of the theatre was handed back to Durham City Council.

Areas for Improvement

To further stimulate leisure activities there are a number of challenges for the year ahead. In particular working with our partners we aim to contribute to the town's drive to reduce obesity, smoking and alcohol abuse. A priority is to deliver against our PSA target with regards increasing sport and physical action and recreational opportunities for young and older people. We also will be working closely with local communities in Darlington's Priority wards to improve access to Leisure and Arts activities.

Disappointingly we did not achieve our local target for customer satisfaction for sports and leisure facilities. However whilst the local target was not achieved it is predicated that performance attained will still place us within best quartile performance. However will the aim of increasing customer satisfaction and participation we have an ambitious programme to refurbish our existing facilities in particular the Arts Centre and Dolphin Centre. We will also continue to work within the region to promote and develop the cultural opportunities for the town.

A key priority is also to improve performance in the Youth Service following the OFSTED inspection. To achieve this we will implement the improvement action plan for the Youth Service and develop a Borough Wide Youth Strategy.

Progress against planned actions

| What we planned to do in 2004/05 | Did we deliver? |
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| <p>Re-align resources to meet service plan priorities to increase residents satisfaction</p> | <p>Yes – Civic Theatre has achieved DDA compatibility with a new audio box to allow audio description, upgraded the infra-red audio loop, and fitted automatic sliding doors at the entrance to the theatre and a lift from the auditorium to the stage for use by audience and artists. The Civic Theatre’s audio loop was then reused at the arts centre improving the facilities for the hard of hearing in the Arts Centre Theatre.</p> <p>Yes – the Civic Theatre programme was extended achieving a shorter break period over the summer.</p> <p>Yes- In terms of human resource we recognised the importance of delivering on the sport and physical activity agenda by extending the Sports Development team. This increased the capacity to support and deliver outreach activities and sport/physical activity within the community.</p> <p>Yes- Reviewed the leisure operational structure and implemented a more progressive system that meets the frontline demands of customers.</p> |
| <p>Implement the marketing strategy for leisure and arts facilities</p> | <p>Yes - There is a coordinated marketing strategy in place, as well as a new coordinated marketing department. The ‘Moving Up’ Logo is the recognised brand for the Cultural Strategy. The Local Authority website has been revamped and includes information on all the council’s cultural facilities.</p> |
| <p>Appoint 2 PE coaches to undertake PE and physical activity sessions beyond the school curriculum to deliver PSA target</p> | <p>No - Appointment is scheduled for July of this year to enable work to commence when schools return in September. Recruitment will take the form of a number of part time coaches rather than two full time as indicated to ensure that we are working with as many school children as possible.</p> |
| <p>Develop quality and range of products offered to schools and review pricing policy behind facilities management package</p> | <p>Yes - Leisure and Arts managers have worked with Education managers to develop an education model for the use of creativity within the curriculum to raise whole school standards.</p> |

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| | <p>Also funding has been secured for the development of an extended school at Hummersknott and Skerne Park. The newly appointed Extended School Co-ordinator is currently working to embed Leisure and Arts into the work of the extended schools.</p> <p>Yes - The pricing policy behind facilities management has been reviewed and the outcome of this is to apply the standard percentage increases to each service level agreement cost. This is to ensure retention of existing SLAs and encourage other schools to sign up to this service.</p> |
| Extend partnership working with education partners | <p>Yes - The Education and Outreach Officer provides the role of Creative Partnerships mentor for Darlington. Through the Council, Tees Valley Arts (the regional arts education agency) is supported. Leisure and arts and education officers are working closely together to promote the effectiveness of cultural education. Funding has also been secured for the development of an extended school at Hummersknott and Skerne Park. The newly appointed Extended School Co-ordinator is currently working to embed leisure and arts into the work of the extended schools.</p> |
| Develop Neighbourhood Leisure And Arts Plans linked to Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy | <p>No - Each of the Community Partnerships have developed local action plans which include developments with respect to Leisure and Arts. These action plans will form the basis of specific Leisure and Arts Plans for priority wards.</p> |
| Seek additional investment for Arts Centre improvement | <p>Yes - Applications for funding have been submitted and confirmed as follows: Arts Council £300,000, Northern Rock Foundation £250,000, CDENT £50,000. In addition the council has committed £110,000 to be used as match funding for the refurbishment of the centre. The refurbishment work includes: refurbishment to external approaches, front of house bars and catering, improvements to backstage facilities in the theatre, creation of a studio theatre providing better facilities for our Excellence in Young People theatre status.</p> |
| Complete proposals for Dolphin Centre refurbishment and achieve funding business plan | <p>Yes - A feasibility and business plan for the refurbishment of the Dolphin Centre has now been completed. The refurbishment scheme estimated to be £3.4 million has been developed on a Business Case spend to save using prudential borrowing. The proposed designs take into consideration customer feedback concerning improvements to the centre and maximise commercial opportunities.</p> |

Graph showing trend data
Satisfaction with sports and arts facilities

Graph showing trend data
Visits to/usage of museums

Council Plans for Improvement 2005/2006

| Community Strategy theme: Stimulating leisure activities | | |
|---|---|---|
| Corporate Objectives | Priority | PIs |
| Shaping a better Darlington | <p>Enhance leisure and arts contribution on the quality of design to urban regeneration, rural development and Darlington's built environment</p> <p>Extend leisure and art provision to unrepresented groups and promote community development and capacity building</p> | <p>Percentage of residents satisfied with festivals and events (CS18b)</p> <p>Increase in partnership funding (CS25)</p> <p>Increase in sponsorship funding (CS77)</p> <p>Increased participation at theatre and arts outreach (CS17e)</p> <p>Percentage of residents satisfied with community sports and arts (CS18c)</p> <p>Number of personal and social development hours offered to young people 13 – 19 age (CS103)</p> <p>Implement zone action bid and increase participation by 5% in 3 priority wards (CS154)</p> |
| Providing excellent services | Undertake effective marketing and strengthen information systems for leisure & arts to promote greater usage & provide better access to services electronically | <p>Increase in participation – Eastbourne: Adults (CS17ai)</p> <p>Increase in Participation – Eastbourne: Children (CS17a ii)</p> <p>Increase in participation at Stressholme Golf Club (CS17bi)</p> <p>Increase participation at Stressholme Driving Range (CS17bii)</p> <p>Increase participation in swimming: Adults (CS17i)</p> <p>Increase participation in swimming: Children (CS17cii)</p> <p>Increase in participation at Theatre and Arts venues (CS17d)</p> <p>Increase in participation at Theatre and Arts outreach (CS17e)</p> <p>Increase hits on arts and leisure website (CS78)</p> |

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| <p>Putting the customer first</p> | <p>Seek investment in existing and new cultural facilities and events</p> | <p>Percentage of residents satisfied with the Council's leisure and arts venues (CS18a) Satisfaction with Arts Centre (CS141/BV119d) Satisfaction with Dolphin Centre (CS142) Satisfaction with Civic Theatre (CS 143)</p> |
| <p>Ensuring access for all</p> | <p>Increase Sport, Physical Activity and Recreational Opportunities for Young People</p> <p>Pursue the personal and social development of young people promoting social inclusion and assisting people at risk</p> <p>Provide opportunities for older people to engage in leisure</p> | <p>Number of pupils participating in sport aged 4-11 beyond the curriculum for at least 45 minutes in a typical week (CS32)</p> <p>Percentage of young people aged 13-19 gaining a recorded outcome compared to the % of young people in the local authority area (BV 221a) Percentage of young people aged 13-19 gaining an accredited outcome compared to the % of young people in the local authority area (BV221b) Number of personal and social development hours offered to young people 13 – 19 age (CS103) Organise 2 large scale borough wide event for young people (CS152) Organise 5 young people events in 5 zones (CS153)</p> <p>Number of new GEM classes (CS49b)</p> |

| Key Actions | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Action | Portfolio Holder/ Lead Officer | Date for Completion | Measure of Success |
| Achieve adoption of Public Art Policy by DBC & consequently develop Public Art Strategy And develop an outdoor Event Strategy | Cllr Vasey Lindsay Tuck | July 2005 | CS18b |
| Develop neighbourhood leisure & arts plans to provide more diverse provision (better communities) | Cllr Vasey Lindsay Tuck & Mike Crawshaw | March 2006 | CS17e, CS18c CS103, |
| Implement the Zone Active bid to increase levels of physical activity in 3 priority wards | Cllr Vasey Emma Coleby | Ongoing over 3 years | CS154 |
| Develop IT systems to increase the scope of information collected for users, establishing the extent to which the service meets needs to inform future service delivery and marketing activities | Cllr Vasey Caroline Bell | March 2006 | CS17ai&aii CS17bi&bii CS17ci&cii CS17d CS17e CS78 |
| Take forward the refurbishment of the Arts Centre and Dolphin Centre | Cllr Vasey Steve Thompson | March 2006 | CS18a, CS141 CS142 CS143 |
| Implement PSA target to increase the number of school children taking part in sport and physical activity for at least 45 minutes beyond the school day and deliver the NOF initiative in 9 schools | Cllr Vasey Steve Thompson | June 2006 | CS32 |
| Work with our partners to tackle obesity smoking cessation and alcohol abuse | Cllr Vasey Steve Thompson | March 2006 | Contributing to Community Strategy targets |
| Implement OFSTED Action Plan for the Youth Service | Cllr McEwan Steve Thompson | March 2006 | Bv221a, BV221b, CS103, CS152, CS153 |
| Develop a Youth Service Strategy | Cllr McEwan Steve Thompson | March 2006 | BV221a, BV221b |
| Expand GEM into community And Implement the action plan for GP referral scheme. Key partners Choosing Health Services on prescription | Cllr Vasey Jill Walton & Emma Coleby | March 2006 | CS49b |

PROMOTING COMMUNITY SAFETY

Our aim is to reduce crime and disorder and enhance feelings of safety amongst local people.

Context

Creating safe, clean and vibrant communities is a key priority for the Council and its partners. In December 2004 the Community Safety Partnership published its third Crime, Disorder and Substance Misuse audit. The findings of the audit confirmed that people in Darlington remain relatively concerned about becoming a victim of crime despite significant reductions being achieved in some types of offences.

The audit established a number of key priorities for the Council and its partners; house burglary, vehicle crime, violent crime, domestic violence, theft, drugs and alcohol, anti-social behaviour and criminal damage and to deal effectively with those individuals who persistently commit in crime within the Borough. The Community Safety Partnership's three year Crime, Disorder and Substance Misuse Strategy sets out clear targets and action plans have been developed to address the priorities identified through the audit process.

During 2004/05 the Council and its partners made significant improvements in reducing crime within the Borough. Total crime reduced from 11,098 crimes in 2003/04 to 9,868 crimes in 2004/05, a reduction of 11.1%, with major reductions in house burglary and vehicle crime. Despite this, the public's fear of becoming a victim of house burglary and vehicle crime remains relatively high. Following significant reductions in the fear of crime during 2003/04 there was a slight rise in the fear of crime during 2004/05.

It is well evidenced, both at national and local level that there are clear correlations between crime and the misuse of alcohol. In the fight against tackling alcohol fuelled crime and disorder, the Licensing Act 2003 introduced a range of new provisions to prevent nuisance, promote public safety and reduce crime and disorder. One of the most fundamental changes saw the responsibility for Licensing transferred from the Magistrates Court to the Council. During 2004 the Council developed a robust Licensing policy which contributes to and supports Darlington's Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy which was developed by the Local Strategic Partnerships Sub Group for reducing alcohol related harm in Darlington. The new Alcohol Strategy for Darlington aims to reduce the impact of alcohol on all aspects of life in the town by providing strategic direction to local services.

The Council recognises that more work needs to be done to address anti-social behaviour. We are currently working with key partners to develop a strategic approach to addressing problems that occur across Darlington, including implementing the provisions within the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. At a local level the Council's Uniformed Wardens Service continue to work in partnership with the Police and the StreetSafe Unit to address issues of anti-social behaviour and promote public safety.

High Level Summary of Performance

| Corporate Objective | Priority | PIs | Progress against targets |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Shaping a better Darlington | Provide reassurance to the community regarding crime and anti-social behaviour, and to reduce the fear of crime, whilst providing opportunities and support which enable residents to develop an active role in tackling issues which affect their quality of life | BV45 BV46 SS9 SS10 | σ σ λ λ |
| Providing Excellent Services | Reduce house burglary and the number of repeat victims of house burglary, whilst reducing the community's fear of becoming a victim of this crime Reduce violence related crimes Encourage the reporting of incidents and take effective action against offenders and provide support to victims Raise awareness of the factors that contribute to vehicle crime and to reduce all vehicle related crime including theft of motor vehicles and theft from motor vehicles | BV126a BV127 BV128a | H H σ |
| Putting the Customer first | Address the problems associated with anti-social behaviour, to minimise its impact on individuals, neighbourhoods and communities, to achieve sustainable reductions in all forms of anti-social behaviour | BV45 BV46 SS9 SS10 | σ σ λ λ |
| Ensuring access for all | Provide support for victims of domestic violence and develop programmes to address offender behaviour, whilst continuing to raise the profile that domestic violence is a crime and will not be tolerated | BV176 | λ |
| Overall Progress against aim | | | λ |

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

Tackling anti-social behaviour continued to be a key priority for the Council and its partners during 2004/05. Building upon work that had already been undertaken including the development of the Uniformed Warden Service and Early Intervention Team the Council appointed the Borough's first Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Coordinator with financial support from Government Office North East. The Coordinator will be developing the Councils and Community Safety Partnership's strategic approach to tackling anti-social behaviour through effective enforcement, early intervention, prevention and education.

Youth Offending Service

During 2004 the Youth Offending Service continued to improve its performance throughout the year. The introduction of the Governments Prolific and Other Priority Offender Strategy provided a key challenge for the service and the wider Community Safety Partnership, building upon the good work already carried out by the service the mechanism are in place to address those young people who potentially cause the most harm, these mechanisms include, early intervention and prevention, catch and convicting persistent offenders and resettling those young people who have been through the criminal justice system back into society to lead productive lives.

More detail on outcomes secured and other achievements

| Priority | Outcome/achievement |
|--|---|
| <p>Provide reassurance to the community regarding crime and anti-social behaviour, and to reduce the fear of crime, whilst providing opportunities and support which enable residents to develop an active role in tackling issues which affect their quality of life.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Councils Uniformed Warden Service continued to provide a high visibility presence across the Borough, providing reassurance and a point of contact for the community. • Durham Constabulary launched the <i>StreetSafe</i> initiative with a team of police officers and a uniformed warden working together and with the community to tackle anti-social behaviour and violence in the night-time economy. • Residents have been actively involved in tackling local issues through the established Resident Associations and the 11 Community Partnerships. |
| <p>Reduce house burglary and the number of repeat victims of house burglary, whilst reducing the community's fear of becoming a victim of this crime.</p> <p>Reduce violence related crimes Encourage the reporting of incidents and take effective action against offenders and provide support to victims.</p> <p>Raise awareness of the factors that contribute to vehicle crime and to reduce all vehicle related crime including theft of motor vehicles and theft from motor vehicles.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House burglary reduced from 606 burglaries in 2003/04 to 463 in 2004/05 a 23.4% reduction. The number of repeat victims fell from 17 in 2003/04 to 9 in 2004/04 a 47.1% reduction. • A Burglary Support Officer has been appointed to support victims of House burglary. • <i>Smartwater</i> introduced as a crime reduction initiative. • Offences of Violence Against the Person reduced from 1164 offences in 2003/04 to 1129 offences in 2004/05 a 3% reduction. • Reported domestic violence incidents reduced from 1724 in 2003/04 to 1705 in 2004/05 a reduction of 1.1%. • Theft of motor vehicles offences reduced from 598 in 2003/04 to 423 in 2004/05 a 29.3% reduction. Theft from a motor vehicle reduced from 1637 offences in 2003/04 to 955 offences in 2004/05 a 41.6% reduction. • A number of media campaigns to raise awareness of factors contributing towards becoming a victim of vehicle crime were carried out. • Operation Hawkeye, which specifically targets unattended vehicles that have items left on display, continued to raise awareness. |

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| <p>Address the problems associated with anti-social behaviour, to minimise its impact on individuals, neighbourhoods and communities, to achieve sustainable reductions in all forms of anti-social behaviour.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multi-agency sub group was established and an action plan implemented to improve the councils and other agencies response to anti-social behaviour. • The Council's Uniformed Warden Service continued to provide a high visibility presence across the Borough, providing reassurance and a point of contact for the community. • Durham Constabulary launched the <i>StreetSafe</i> initiative with a team of police officers and a uniformed warden working together and with the community to tackle anti-social behaviour and violence in the night-time economy. • The Borough's first Community Safety & Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator was appointed. • A series on multi-agency tasking and Coordinating Groups were established to address issues concerning young people, adults and locality based anti-social behaviour problems. |
| <p>Provide support for victims of domestic violence and develop programmes to address offender behaviour, whilst continuing to raise the profile that domestic violence is a crime and will not be tolerated.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Violence Forum was restructured and a new constitution adopted to facilitate the delivery of support services. • A Domestic Violence Advice Circle was developed. • A Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme has been implemented with over 10 men being accepted on the programme. |

Youth Offending and Early Intervention

Engaging and supporting young people and parents is a key role of Darlington Youth Offending Service and Early Intervention Team. Since April 2003 the Early Intervention Team has supported and worked with over 1056 young people. They have also worked with almost 300 parents on a one to one basis. Almost 90% of young people supported by the Early Intervention Team have not entered or re-entered the criminal justice system. A StreetSafe Unit has been established comprising police and Uniformed Wardens to address incidents of anti-social behaviour and violence in the night-time economy.

External Recognition

Crime, Disorder and Substance Misuse Audit & Strategy 2005 – 2008

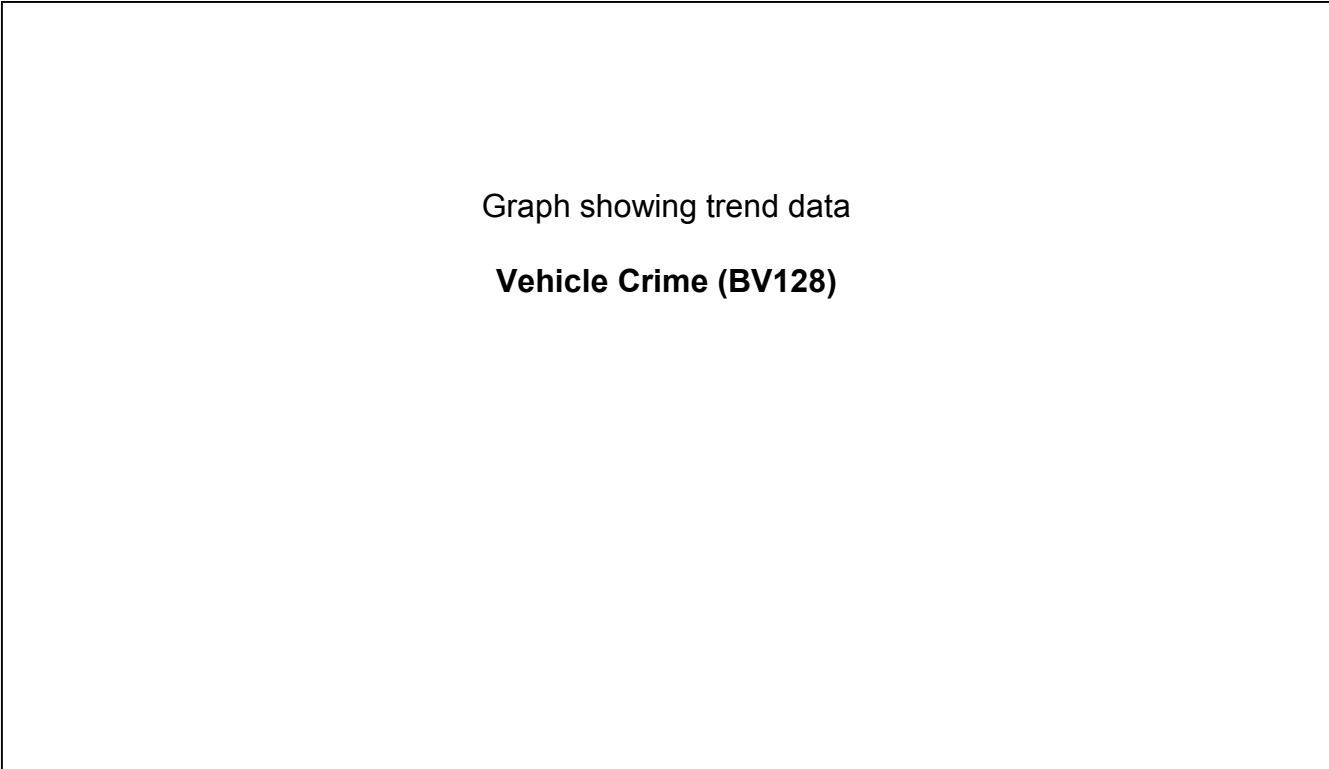
In December 2004 the Council and its Community Safety partners completed the Borough's third audit of crime, disorder and substance misuse. The audit involved extensive consultation with partners and a Borough wide residents survey, the findings of which have been used to develop the Community Safety Partnerships first fully integrated Crime, Disorder and Substance Misuse Reduction Strategy. The Strategy sets out detailed and challenging targets and outcomes that the Council and its partners aim to achieve. The Strategy has been approved by Government Office North East who have recognised it as an example of good practice.

Areas for Improvement

During 2004/05 there were significant reductions in crime including house burglary and vehicle crime, however it is recognised that more work needs to be done to address anti-social behaviour. During 2005/06 the Boroughs first Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy will be developed. The Strategy will take account of some of the good work that has already been carried out across the Borough, including the development of the StreetSafe Unit, Uniformed Warden Service and Early Intervention team, but more importantly it will clearly identify how we intend to address anti-social behaviour and involve and support the community in tackling some of the key issues that impact upon the everyday lives of the people of Darlington.

Progress against planned actions

| What we planned to do in 2004/05 | Did we deliver? |
|---|---|
| Develop Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy | No – Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator appointed in December 2004 to develop and implement strategy. |
| Apply for accreditation of Wardens Service | Yes – 5 Uniformed Wardens accredited with further accreditations to follow. |
| Develop diversionary and preventative services | Yes – Funding secured to support the Early Intervention Team. |
| Develop crime, disorder and substance misuse audit | Yes – Audit completed in December 2004. The audit has informed the production of Darlington’s Crime, Disorder and Substance Misuse Reduction Strategy 2005-2008. |
| Implement vehicle crime target for PSA | Yes – The baseline for this target is 2002/03 when there were 1764 offences. The target is 1233 offences in 2005/06, however as there were 1378 offences in 2004/05 it is unlikely that this target will be met. |
| Monitor Section 17 compliance | Yes – Section 17 implications considered in all Council reports. |
| Implement relevant sections of the Licensing Act 2003 | Yes – The Council took over the licensing functions of the Magistrates from January 2005; a licensing service has been successfully established to handle licensing of premises and individuals for sale of alcohol and entertainments, as well as taxi licensing. |



Council Plans for Improvement 2005/2006

| Community Strategy theme: Promoting community safety | | |
|---|--|---|
| Corporate Objectives | Priority | PIs |
| Shaping a better Darlington | To reduce the impact on local communities of anti-social behaviour and disorder | Incidents of youths causing annoyance and anti-social behaviour (CD10) Incidents of anti-social behaviour (CS4a) Incidents of youths causing annoyance (CS4b) Percentage of people feeling safe (QoL15a/b) |
| | To reduce crime in line with the governments Public Service Agreements | Criminal damage per 1,000 population (CS4c & CD1d) Total recorded crime per 1,000 population (CD1 & CS2a) |
| | To reduce the impact of alcohol related crime and disorder on local communities in line with the national Alcohol Harm Minimisation Strategy | Currently being developed by DAAT (DE55a/b) |
| | To reduce drug related crime in line with the National Drugs Strategy targets | Increase numbers into treatment (CD14) Percentage of people discharged from treatment being retained for 12 weeks or more (CD14a) Reduce drug and alcohol misuse (IH4) |
| | To reduce the impact of prolific and Other priority Offenders on the community | Total recorded crime per 1000 population (CD1 & CS2a) [new programme targets/performance framework currently being developed] |
| | To deal effectively with domestic abuse | Percentage of repeat victims of domestic violence (CD12) Total number of domestic violence incidents reported to the police (CS2e) Action Against domestic violence (BV225/CD13) |

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Providing excellent services | <p>To raise awareness of the factors that contribute towards vehicle crime and to reduce vehicle related crime</p> <p>To reduce house burglary</p> <p>To reduce theft of pedal cycles and theft from the person</p> <p>To raise awareness of the factors which contribute towards violent crime and reduce the level of violent crime.</p> <p>To increase the numbers of drug users into treatment and to increase the proportion of people discharged from treatment being retained for 12 weeks or weeks</p> | <p>Vehicle crimes per 1,000 population (BV128/CD6/QoL16c/CS2d)</p> <p>Domestic Burglaries per 1000 households (BV126/CD2/QoL16a/CS2b)</p> <p>Theft (CD8/CD9)</p> <p>Violent Crime (BV127a/CD4/CD5/CS2c)</p> <p>Drugs (CD14/IH4)</p> |
| Putting the customer first | To reduce the impact on local communities of anti-social behaviour and disorder | <p>Incidents of youths causing annoyance and anti-social behaviour (CD10)</p> <p>Incidents of anti-social behaviour (CS4a)</p> <p>Incidents of youths causing annoyance (CS4b)</p> <p>Percentage of people feeling safe (QoL15a/b)</p> |
| Ensuring access for all | <p>To provide, continuously improve and develop services for victims of domestic abuse and their families and deliver programs to address offender behaviour</p> <p>Pursue the personal and social development of young people promoting social inclusion and assisting people at risk</p> | <p>Domestic Violence CD12/CD13/CS2e/BV225/BV176</p> <p>Percentage of young people aged 13-19 gaining a recorded outcome compared to the % of young people in the local authority area (BV 221a)</p> <p>Percentage of young people aged 13-19 gaining an accredited outcome compared to the % of young people in the local authority area (BV221b)</p> <p>No of personal and social development hours offered to yp 13 – 19 age (CS103)</p> <p>Organise 2 large scale borough wide events for young people (CS 152)</p> <p>Organise 5 young people events in 5 zones (CS153)</p> |

| Key Actions | | | |
|---|--|----------------------------|---|
| Action | Portfolio Holder/ Lead Officer | Date for Completion | Measure of Success |
| Develop Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy | Cllr Dixon Rob Jones | Nov 2005 | CD10/CS4a/CS4b/ QoL15a/15b |
| Develop Anti-Social Behaviour Order Protocol. | Cllr Dixon Rob Jones | March 2006 | CD10/CS4a/CS4b/ QoL15a/15b |
| Develop Anti-Social Behaviour Communication & Publicity Protocol. | Cllr Dixon Rob Jones | March 2006 | CD10/CS4a/CS4b/ QoL15a/15b |
| Implement Action Plans - Crime, Disorder and Substance Misuse Reduction Strategy. | Cllr Dixon Rob Jones | April 2005 | CD1/CS2a CD10/CS4a/CS4b/ QoL15a/15b |
| Review delivery of frontline services that impact upon Community Safety as part of the Street Scene initiative. | Cllr Harker Cllr Dixon Ian Thompson Rob Jones | Dec 2005 | CD1/CS2a CD10/CS4a/CS4b/ QoL15a/15b |
| Implement appropriate provisions within the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 | Cllr Harker Keith Atkinson Ian Thompson | March 2006 | CD1/CS2a CD10/CS4a/CS4b/ QoL15a/15b |
| Implement Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy | Cllr Dixon Beverley Oliver | March 2006 | PIs being developed |
| Consolidate the new Licensing Service and ensure that it contributes to maintaining a safe and vibrant night time economy | Cllr Harker Keith Atkinson | 2005/06 Ongoing | DE55a/b |
| Implement OFSTED Action Plan for the Youth Service | Cllr McEwan Steve Thompson | March 2006 | BV221a, BV221b, CS103,CS152, CS153 |

IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Our aim is to improve the health, well-being and social care of local people, reduce inequalities and help people at all stages in their life to enjoy the best possible health.

Context

Significant progress has been made during 2004/05 with overall improvement in key performance indicators recognised by the award of a two star rating for Social Services, which was a key contributing factor in the Council achieving an 'excellent' CPA rating. It is expected that this improvement will continue through 2005/06 and is a key driver to improving the health and well-being of people in Darlington.

A skill mix review of staff within Adult Services was undertaken to ensure appropriate resources and skills within each area. This has led to improved access to services and quality of response provided to service users. As part of the development of the Learning Disability Commissioning Strategy a review of day services was undertaken in line with the Government's agenda for Modernising Learning Disability Services. The Action Plan resulting from the inspection of services for people with a physical and/or sensory impairment has been fully implemented.

New Child Protection procedures have been launched and the Safeguarding Children Board established which will further improve and enhance the protection of vulnerable children and young people in our community.

The major issues that need to be addressed to continue improvement are: -

- To work in partnership with other agencies to further develop the range of services for older people which will help them to live in their own homes and improve their experiences;
- To reduce the length of time it takes to assess a person's needs and provide the support they require;
- To ensure people receiving care get a plan saying what care is to be provided and that this is reviewed at least annually.

The Council is progressing well with the embedding of the Children's Services Department as required by the Children Act 2004. In parallel to this the Council is currently considering its response to the Green Paper "Independence, Well-being & Choice" to ensure adult social care in Darlington continues to meet the needs of the local community.

High Level Summary of Performance

| Corporate Objective | Priority | PIs | Progress against targets |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Shaping a better Darlington | Support service users to live independently Protect and maintain a healthy, fair, safe and sustainable environment through regulation, monitoring, enforcement, education and promotion of good practice Protect all vulnerable children and adults from abuse Regenerate deprived areas to create sustainable communities by working in partnership with key stakeholders including private and registered social landlords Ensure that all council properties meet the Government's decent home standard Housing stock options | BV53 BV54 BV62 BV63 BV64 BV162 BV184a BV184b SS6 SS12 CR6 | λ H H λ H λ H H H H λ |
| Providing Excellent Services | Plan, commission, purchase and monitor an adequate supply of appropriate cost effective and safe health and social care provision Work with the NHS, users, carers and other agencies to avoid unnecessary hospital admission, avoid unnecessary delays in hospital and inappropriate placement on leaving hospital Improve education levels of Children Looked After Provide the public protection service required to meet statutory duties and targets, local needs and council priorities Ensure that continuous assessment of the fitness and condition of housing stock maintains and improves overall standards | BV50 BV52 BV53 BV54 BV74 BV166a BV166b SS13 | H λ λ H λ λ λ λ σ |
| Putting the Customer first | Ensure that service users are enabled to make choices, to include access to direct payments, which improve quality of life, and to assist informal carers to continue with support/care independently for as long as they and the service user wish Ensure that effective mechanisms for dealing with comments and complaints are in place Empower the local community to identify their needs and are able to affect service planning and delivery | BV75 DE8 SS17 SS19 | λ λ σ λ |
| Ensuring access for all | Ensure Service Users and carers can gain easy access to assessment and appropriate continuing support services Improve life chances, employment prospects and protect vulnerable service users from potential abuse | BV58 SS18 | λ λ |

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| Overall Progress against aim | λ |
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Social Services' Star Performers

Social Services department is one of only 27 nationally to receive an improved rating from the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in 2004.

The Commission gave Darlington a two star rating in a performance system, which ranks all social services from three stars for top performers to zero stars for the worst performers. The commission also rated Darlington's prospects for improving children's and adult services as 'promising'.

The rating, announced by the CSCI, the independent inspectorate for all social care services in England, confirms improvement measures put in place by Darlington social services have been effective. In children's services there has been improved educational attainment for looked after children, improved access to health care and improvements have been made to the child protection system. The Council's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service is now Beacon Status accredited which is the highest government accolade for a council service. Improvements in adult services include eliminating the delays for people awaiting discharge from hospital, or awaiting occupational therapy and better support for older people to help them live independently, at home.

Margaret Asquith, Director of Social Services, said: " It's a tremendous result and all credit must go to all of the teams throughout the department who have worked so hard to achieve this."

No waiting for occupational therapy assessments

Identified as a key performance target, the occupational therapy team have focused on the waiting list for assessment during 2004/05. They have successfully reduced the waiting list to zero by September 2004 and have maintained this for the remainder of the year.

"In eliminating the waiting list, we have made a significant improvement in the lives of those people who were previously awaiting assessment" says Acting Service Manager Jackie Haskey.

"We are delighted to be able to provide prompt support to enable people to live independently in Darlington."

More detail on outcomes secured and other achievements

| Priority | Outcome/achievement |
|---|--|
| <p>Support service users to live independently</p> <p>Protect and maintain a healthy, fair, safe and sustainable environment through regulation, monitoring, enforcement, education and promotion of good practice</p> <p>Protect all vulnerable children and adults from abuse</p> <p>Regenerate deprived areas to create sustainable communities by working in partnership with key stakeholders including private and registered social landlords</p> <p>Ensure that all council properties meet the Government's decent home standard Housing stock options</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant progress to reaching the LPSA target required by 2006. • Performance on BV166a&b increased by 10% to 90% (best quartile) • 100% of reviews of children on Child Protection Register carried out (best quartile). • Adult Protection Co-ordinator appointed and procedures developed & rolled out with ongoing training programme of awareness raising for identifying abuse. • Exceeded first year PSA funding targets to improve performance on empty and unfit homes in the private sector and on course to exceed the 3-year target by 31st March 2006. • The Standard Assessment Procedure rating for council properties has continued to improve and the target has been met. • Darlington's targets have been met with regards to meeting the Government's Decent Home Standard (outturn should be in best quartile performance) |
| <p>Plan, commission, purchase and monitor an adequate supply of appropriate cost effective and safe health and social care provision</p> <p>Work with the NHS, users, carers and other agencies to avoid unnecessary hospital admission, avoid unnecessary delays in hospital and inappropriate placement on leaving hospital</p> <p>Improve education levels of Children Looked After</p> <p>Provide the public protection service required to meet statutory duties and targets, local needs and council priorities</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit and skill-mix review completed and implemented. • Increased choice in services. • Domiciliary Care services for those with specialist needs have been commissioned. • Improved performance on suite of PIs resulting in 2 star rating. • Increased capacity in residential care market and the development of quality assurance measure to ensure the highest standards for service users. • 15 Intermediate Care beds commissioned resulting in a significant reduction in hospital discharge delays. • Opening of Extracare services at Oban Court and Mayflower Court. |

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| <p>Ensure that continuous assessment of the fitness and condition of housing stock maintains and improves overall standards</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting List for Occupational Therapy assessment eradicated from 30 September 2004 and maintained. • Improved educational performance, looked after children sitting GCSE exams increased from 71% to 85.7%. • Developed a Business Plan, which ensures all homes are brought up to the Decent Homes standards by March 2006. • Tenant satisfaction with the overall service provided by the landlord, continued to increase and satisfaction stands at 84%. |
| <p>Ensure that service users are enabled to make choices, to include access to direct payments, which improve quality of life, and to assist informal carers to continue with support/care independently for as long as they and the service user wish</p> <p>Ensure that effective mechanisms for dealing with comments and complaints are in place</p> <p>Empower the local community to identify their needs and are able to affect service planning and delivery</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 children in receipt of Direct Payments. • Adult Direct Payments increased from 65 to 90, which is a best quartile performance. • Voucher Scheme in place with marketing strategy developed for carers services. • Reduction in number of Social Services complaints by 42% from 120 to 69. • Increased involvement of local community and service users in planning and delivery of services. Now 395 older people involved in Growing Older Living in Darlington (GOLD); Mental Health service in Darlington are being monitored by service users through MOST (Monitoring of Services Team) which will result in contributing to the development and planning of mental health services; a new mental health carers' support worker post is being established; Investing in Children and Children's Fund have engaged children and young people to discuss issues affecting them such as rural transport, activities, minority ethnic groups, domestic violence. • Through the Housing Options appraisal process a large number of Council tenants, were able to significantly influence the outcome of the future management and ownership of their homes; prioritising home improvements and service improvements. • Tenant satisfaction for opportunities for being involved in the decision making process for housing has increased from 51% to 67%. This performance is now in top quartile of local authorities in England. |

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| <p>Ensure Service Users and carers can gain easy access to assessment and appropriate continuing support services</p> <p>Improve life chances, employment prospects and protect vulnerable service users from potential abuse</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Information for All” DVD/video a comprehensive signposting guide in several languages including BSL completed in partnership with local agencies. • Reconfiguration of adult services to improve accessibility of social services in particular the creation of an Access & Contact team. • Engagement of Minority Ethnic Groups in development of services and consultation to ensure involvement of hard to reach communities. • Adult Protection Co-ordinator appointed and procedures developed & rolled out with ongoing training programme of awareness raising for identifying abuse within the community. • Increase in engagement of care leavers in Employment, Training and Education from 35.8% to 62.5%. • Development of ‘Advance Employment’ services with robust recruitment and selection together with stringent vetting to protect vulnerable service users. |
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External Recognition

PSI Inspection – February 2004

“Services to disabled people and those with sensory impairment were moving positively in the right direction.....Partnership working was well developed, both with other agencies and with service users, who were influencing strategic plans and developments.”

Corporate Performance Assessment 2005 – *Excellent rating*

“In social services there has been a sustained effort to improve performance, with a focus on the action plan from the Children’s Services inspection in 2004, and more recently efforts to improve performance on key indicators for adult services such as delayed discharges, and the waiting list for occupational therapists. This has now resulted in the award of two stars from the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)”

Areas for Improvement

In line with the annual performance letter the Council will show that its permanence policy ensures that there is a minimum of delay in the process experienced by those children who are placed for adoption; will continue to improve the long term stability of foster placements for those children who have been looked after continuously for four years and improve the proportion of initial assessments undertaken within seven working days of referral.

In relation to adults and older people's services the Council and its partners will develop a range of new services to increase the number who are helped to live at home, and improve their life experiences; maintain the zero waiting times for occupational therapy assessment; reduce the length of time taken to start and complete assessments of older people, as set out in the Government's target. There will be further improvement in the percentage of people who receive a statement of their needs and how they will be met.

In Children's services the Council will monitor the effectiveness of the Permanence Policy and ensure compliance. Ensure the implementation of the Action Plan relating to the discharge/variance of care orders. Continuing the work of the Adoption Monitoring Panel and the review of the Foster Care payments scheme.

For adults and older people the council will ensure that a greater proportion of adult service users are supported to live safely and independently within their own home. Service users are enabled to make choices, to include access to direct payments, which improve quality of life, and to assist informal carers to continue with support/care independently for as long as they and the service user wish. Effective mechanisms for communicating with residents are in place especially when dealing with comments and complaints.

The Council will ensure strategies are in place which commission, purchase and monitor an adequate supply of appropriate, cost effective and safe health and social care provision; working with a range of partners where possible. Identify individuals with needs who are eligible for public support, to assess those needs accurately and consistently and to review packages of care to ensure that they are appropriate, cost efficient and effective. Improve life chances, employment prospects and protect vulnerable service users from potential abuse; ensuring effective safe guarding systems are in place for contracting, monitoring and reviewing of all services.

Ensure that appropriate workforce development processes for staff recruitment and retention are in place.

Progress against planned actions

| What we planned to do in 2004/05 | Did we deliver? |
|--|--|
| Achieve a two star award in Social Services star rating | Yes - Continued improvement across Social Services recognised by 2 star rating. |
| Implement the older persons and intermediate care PSA targets | Yes – on target to achieve by deadline. |
| Stabilise the domiciliary care market | Yes – quality standards introduced and greater choice offered to service users. |
| Improve occupational therapy service outcomes | Yes – zero waiting lists for occupational therapy from September 2004 and maintained. |
| Improve the involvement of and the support to carers | Yes – Through the continued improvement in identifying & supporting carers. Increased training for staff in the assessment and support of carers. |
| Reduce spend on external placements | Yes – Unit cost of services for looked after children reduced from £460 in 2003/04 to £439 in 2004/05. |
| Improve permanence planning | Yes – number of children with 3 or more placements reduced from 14.5 to 9.4% (best quartile) Number of adoptions maintained at 3% with further 10 children placed for adoption at 31st March 2005. |
| Ensure that a joined-up approach is taken to supporting older persons/ adults living independently in the community | Yes - Improved performance in BV54, BV53, Extracare and BV56. |
| Ensure that targets are met in response to items of equipment being delivered within seven days | Yes - Target met and exceeded. |
| Improve standards in the private sector through the delivery of the PSA target in relation to unfit homes and in doing so provide energy efficiency improvements | Yes - Exceeded first year PSA funding targets to improve performance on empty and unfit homes in the private sector and on course to exceed the 3-year target by 31st March 2006. |
| Implement delivery plan of housing stock option appraisal for the purpose of meeting the decent homes standard | Yes - The delivery plan for housing stock option appraisal has been successfully completed and signed off by the GO-NE. Through the Housing Options appraisal process a large number of Council tenants, were able to significantly influence the outcome of the future management and ownership of their homes; prioritising home improvements and service improvements. |

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| <p>Promote warden link service in council and private sector</p> | <p>Yes - The Council's warden service has been improved to 261 good neighbour properties with enhanced security for tenants by the installation of mains smoke detectors linked into the warden call system. A programme is in place to install in all of these sites by 2010.</p> <p>A programme to upgrade all council sheltered housing schemes with telecare technology has commenced, with 173 properties now able to operate smart technology to provide additional support with the remaining schemes to be upgraded by 2009.</p> <p>The Lifeline Service is supporting more people than ever. During 2004 –2005 160 Lifelines were fitted for new clients. Lifeline gives older and disabled residents the freedom and choice to live independently with the reassurance that help is on hand 24 hours a day, 7 days per week.</p> |
| <p>Develop extra care scheme and undertake internal refurbishment in sheltered housing schemes</p> | <p>Dalkeith House, a council sheltered scheme upgraded in 2004 to extra care facilities includes 39 flats, communal lounge, hair and beauty salon, laundry, lunchtime catering facility and assisted bathroom for the residents use and the wider older community.</p> <p>Oban Court, a council sheltered scheme was upgraded to extra care. Phase 1, 12 flats and communal areas completed December 2004. Communal Areas include lounge with coffee bar, kitchen, hairdressing salon, and health & beauty room. Phase 2 to be completed May 2005 when lunchtime meal provision will commence.</p> <p>A successful bid for capital funding has been achieved to remodel Rosemary Court (a sheltered scheme) and negotiations are underway with our partners Hanover Housing to develop the scheme into an extra care facility for older people including 14 new units for older people with mental health problems;</p> <p>A programme to upgrade the communal facilities of council sheltered schemes was implemented. In 2004 Havelock Street and</p> |

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| | <p>Pilmoor Green benefited by a total redesign and refit of the communal kitchens and installation of accessible toilets, Tennyson Garden a redesigned and fitted kitchen. Dinsdale Court an enlarged and redesigned kitchen through lounge, accessible toilets, laundry and creation of a warden's office and assisted bathing area.</p> <p>A programme has commenced to create or upgrade the communal bathing facilities at the council's sheltered schemes to provide accessible and comfortable bathing facilities and reduce the need to adapt individual properties.</p> |
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Graph showing trend data
People helped to live at home

Graph showing trend data
Education of Looked After Children (PAF A2)

Council Plans for Improvement 2005/2006

| Community Strategy theme: Improving health and well-being | | |
|--|---|--|
| Corporate Objectives | Priority | PIs |
| Shaping a better Darlington | <p>Ensure that a greater proportion of adult service users are supported to live safely and independently within their homes</p> <p>Ensure strategies are in place which commission, purchase and monitor an adequate supply of appropriate cost effective and safe health and social care provision; working with a range of partners where possible</p> <p>Improve life chances, employment prospects and protect vulnerable service users from potential abuse; ensuring effective safe guarding systems are in place for contracting, monitoring and reviewing of all services</p> <p>Ensure that appropriate workforce development processes resulting in effective staff recruitment and recruitment outcomes</p> | <p>Admissions to residential care over 65 (C26)</p> <p>Older people helped to live at home (BV54/C32)</p> <p>Adults with physical disability helped to live at home (C29)</p> <p>Direct Payments (BV201/C51)</p> <p>Percentage of items of equipment delivered in 7 days (BV56/D54)</p> <p>Older people with mental health problems helped to live at home (SS6/C31)</p> <p>Acceptable waiting times for packages of care (BV196/D56)</p> <p>Clients receiving a review (SS18/D40)</p> <p>Admissions to residential care over 65 (C26)</p> <p>Intensive home care (BV53/C28)</p> <p>Older people helped to live at home (BV54/C32)</p> <p>Adults with physical disability helped to live at home (C29)</p> <p>Percentage of items of equipment delivered in 7 days (BV56/D54)</p> <p>100% of PDRs completed (CR4a)</p> |

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| | <p>Improve standards within the private sector</p> | <p>Number of private sector dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished during the year as a direct result of action by the local authority (BV64) Increase number of Heat Efficient Homes (CS45) No of private sector dwellings made fit (CS118a)</p> |
| <p>Providing excellent services</p> | <p>Identify individuals with needs who are eligible for public support, to assess those needs accurately and consistently and to review packages of care to ensure that they are appropriate, cost efficient and effective</p> <p>Develop floating support services and accommodation services for people with drug and alcohol misuse problems</p> | <p>Clients receiving a review (D40)</p> <p>Percentage of people receiving a statement of needs and how they will be met (D39)</p> <p>Percentage of items of equipment delivered in 7 days (BV56/D54)</p> <p>Direct Payments (BV201/C51)</p> <p>Acceptable waiting times for packages of care (BV196/D43)</p> <p>Promote race equality (BV2b)</p> <p>Provide floating support to people with drug and alcohol problems (CS127)</p> |
| <p>Putting the customer first</p> | <p>Ensure that service users are enabled to make choices, to include access to direct payments, which improve quality of life, and to assist informal carers to continue with support/care independently for as long as they and the service user wish</p> | <p>Direct Payments (BV201/C51)</p> <p>Services for carers (D62)</p> |

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| | Ensure that effective mechanisms for dealing with comments and complaints are in place | Complaints (SS19) |
| Ensuring access for all | Develop services for older people | Internal refurbishment of Sheltered Housing Schemes (CS 48) Uptake of the lifeline service (CS50) |

| Key Actions | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Action | Portfolio Holder/ Lead Officer | Date for Completion | Measure of Success |
| Increase number of heat efficient homes | Cllr Dixon Pauline Mitchell | March 2006 | BV64, CS45, CS118a |
| Work with our partners to tackle obesity, smoking cessation and alcohol abuse | Cllr Vasey Steve Thompson | March 2006 | Community Strategy targets |
| Expand GEM into the community and implement the action plan for GP referral scheme. Key partners choosing Health Services on prescription | Cllr Vasey Jill Walton & Emma Coleby | March 2006 | CS49b |
| Refurbish 10 Sheltered/Good Neighbour Communal Facilities | Cllr Dixon Jill Walton | March 2006 | CS48 |
| Develop Lifeline Service | Cllr Dixon Jill Walton | March 2006 | CS50 |
| Develop floating support for people with drug or alcohol problems | Cllr Dixon Anthony Sandys & Commissioning DAAT Manager | October 2005 | CS127 |
| Develop a range of new services to increase the number who are helped to live at home | Cllr Thistlethwaite Daljit Lally | March 2006 | C26, C28, C32, C29, BV54, BV201 BV56, BV53, C31/ SS6 |
| Maintain zero waiting times for occupational therapy assessment | Cllr Thistlethwaite Daljit Lally | March 2006 | D56, D40 |
| Identify individuals with needs who are eligible for public support, to assess those needs accurately and consistently and to review packages of care to ensure that they are appropriate, cost efficient and effective | Cllr Thistlethwaite Daljit Lally | March 2006 | D43, D40, D39, D38, D42, C51 BV196, BV2b |
| Improve permanence planning and the stability of Looked after children's placements | Cllr McEwan Alison Walton | March 2006 | D35 |
| Reduce spend on external placements | Cllr McEwan Alison Walton | March 2006 | B8 |

ENHANCING THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Our aim is to create a more attractive environment that is safe, clean and tidy as well as a more healthy and diverse natural environment.

Context

The quality of Darlington's environment is a key factor in promoting the borough and attracting inward investment through the Darlington Gateway strategy. The challenge is to manage change so as to safeguard and further improve the borough's attractiveness whilst accommodating the development that Darlington needs to ensure social and economic sustainability in the future.

We also need to ensure that a quality environment is available to all our residents, and is not just a characteristic of the town centre and the more historic or prosperous areas. Environmental quality is an issue of social inclusion and is part of our strategy to improve the most deprived parts of the borough. The Council recognises that what matters most to people is 'liveability', achieved through effective maintenance and management to achieve clean, well-maintained streets and tackle anti-social behaviour.

We are looking to build on the progress we have made with our award-winning litter initiative and innovative warden service, by getting the various street-based services more 'joined-up', and engaging more effectively with residents to identify and tackle their priorities. The street cleaning service is moving to neighbourhood-based teams with a 'caretaker' ethos, and we will be expanding this approach across other street services.

This 'liveability' focus on maintenance is complemented by the work of the planning service, which works to secure the best possible design in new development. The management of our own projects, like Pedestrian Heart, uses designers of national reputation to add to the quality that already exists, and we continue to secure funding to help property owners restore buildings in key locations.

In terms of environmental sustainability, we have been successful in limiting the expansion of built-up areas by securing the reuse of previously developed land instead of green fields for new development. The recycling and composting of household waste instead of landfill also contributes to sustainability, and our performance in this respect is continuing to improve.

We have a responsibility for looking after the natural as well as the built environment. A total of seven Local Nature Reserves have now been declared in the borough, and two large areas of community woodland have been created. We are taking opportunities to introduce management of biodiversity rather than amenity grassland into more areas of open space where this is appropriate.

High Level Summary of Performance

| Corporate Objective | Priority | PIs | Progress against targets |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Shaping a better Darlington | Clean, safe streets, parks and open spaces An environment that is healthy and sustainable Increase recycling/ composting and minimise landfill | BV82a BV82b BV82d BV84 BV106 BV199 DE6 | λ λ λ λ λ H H λ |
| Providing Excellent Services | Provide positive problem-solving services to meet statutory duties, local needs and council priorities Maintain an improved planning service Ensure an efficient waste management collection service | BV86 BV87 BV109a BV109b BV109c CS12 CS23 DE10 | H λ σ σ λ H H H |
| Putting the Customer first | Operate services in an open accountable and responsive manner Achieve high customer/ user satisfaction levels | BV89 BV90a BV90b BV90c BV111 BV119 CS26 CS27 DE16 | λ λ σ λ λ σ λ λ λ |
| Ensuring access for all | An environment that is accessible for all | BV156 BV165 | σ λ |
| Overall Progress against aim | | | H |

South Park revamp continues

Work on the restoration of South Park is well underway. The £3.9 million projects has already seen fencing and gates restored or renewed and the lake drained and dredged. The bandstand has been removed for refurbishment and work has started on the terracotta fountain. The new children's play area has been completed and an education area is being created to provide a community study centre.

Litter Initiative goes from Strength to Strength

The Council's award winning litter initiative, featured on the BBC's 'Real Story' series, was progressed during 2004/05 from a high profile campaign to an integral part of the mainstream street cleansing service. A pilot scheme to reorganise street cleaning on a neighbourhood basis, focused on a caretaker ethos rather than a service specification, was successful, and is to be rolled out across the borough in 2005/06. The comprehensive 'Street Scene' review of street services will link cleaning with street maintenance and warden services to provide a co-ordinated focus on localised environmental issues, better engagement with residents, and a visible, responsive Council presence on the streets. There was further improvement last year in satisfaction with street cleanliness and the Council will strive for further improvements in the coming year.

West Park – Partnership in Action

This time last year, West Park was an ambitious and imaginative concept. Whilst things were starting to take shape on the ground, the project was more promise than action at that stage. A year on, and the concept, underpinned by an innovative partnership between the Council and the developer, is becoming reality. A whole new neighbourhood is appearing in place of the Darchem works and tip, changing the landscape with a hilltop park, crowned by the sculptures of the 'Trinity Stones'. Eventually West Park will be a sustainable community of 600 dwellings, with its own shops, community and medical facilities. In the past year the new hospital has opened, providing a state-of-the art mental health facility for South Durham, and Alderman Leach School transferred to its new home at the beginning of 2005. Around 70 of the dwellings are already completed, with house type designs unique to West Park, and bus services and transport infrastructure have been provided. The Arts Strategy 'Caring Sharing Daring, uses sculpture and words to bring a unity to West Park and tie it into Darlington's heritage.

More detail on outcomes secured and other achievements

| Priority | Outcome/achievement |
|---|---|
| <p>Clean, safe streets, parks and open spaces</p> <p>An environment that is healthy and sustainable</p> <p>Increase recycling/ composting and minimise landfill</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented PSA target (BV199) - the target for cleanliness of land and highways was achieved. • Funding of Pedestrian Heart secured and planning completed – scheme is now being implemented and will result in a safer and more attractive town centre environment. • Additional £250,000 revenue invested in footway improvements and £2.5 million prudential borrowing secured for 3 year programme to start in 2005/06 to address low satisfaction ratings on road and footway condition. • An average of only 0.81% of streetlights not working helped to make the environment safer. • The condition of all categories of road, measured using national, independent surveys, was further improved; and all categories are now amongst the best in the country. • Development of West Park as a sustainable community progressed during the year – major new park largely completed, new hospital and school opened, housing under construction on two sites, bus service operational and comprehensive foot and cycle path network installed; the arts strategy has been implemented across all components. • Four new statutory Local Nature Reserves declared at Maidendale, Geneva Wood, Brankin Moor and Rockwell, bringing total number of LNRs in town to six, and seven in borough. • The target for locating new housing development on previously developed land rather than green fields was easily achieved, with 84% of all new dwellings completed during the year built on ‘re-used’ land. • Northgate Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme completed in March 2005; funding secured for a further 2 year building renovation grant scheme for Northgate. • Grant scheme introduced for enhancement of buildings around the Pedestrian Heart. • Over 18% of household waste was recycled or composted, achieving our target and breaking through a |

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| | <p>key government performance threshold.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of waste collected was kept well within target at 523.4kg per head of population. • Of the 51,400 tonnes of household waste generated, just under 82% was sent to landfill, the lowest percentage to date; the Council will be seeking to continue to reduce landfill as it prepares for the new waste disposal contract to be let for 2009 onwards. • £750,000 was secured from DEFRA to enable the Civic Amenity Site to be extended and upgraded, with enhanced provision for recycling and composting. • The highly regarded kerbside recycling scheme, established in 2003/04, was consolidated and a recycling boost programme was carried out to achieve increased usage. |
| <p>Provide positive problem-solving services to meet statutory duties, local needs and council priorities</p> <p>Maintain an improved planning service</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The responsive and proactive planning service has supported progress of Darlington Gateway, with planning permissions achieved for the Argos development, the new Darlington College and the Pedestrian Heart. • The Argos development was progressed very quickly from initial enquiry to construction, despite requiring a major archaeological excavation of the site – what Argos called the Council's 'Can Do' approach. • At the same time as achieving quality outcomes for major schemes, the service surpassed its target of determining 80% of domestic/householder planning applications within 8 weeks. • However, the speed of processing of major/commercial applications fell below target and is the focus for improvement in 2005/06. • The quality of service was underlined by a high score (83%) against the government's Quality of Service checklist. • There was significant progress, reflected in the checklist score, in enabling electronic delivery of the planning service. • Only 17% of appeals against refusals of planning permission were upheld, underlining the consistent quality of decision making. • Preparation of the new Local Development Framework was progressed in accordance with the project timetable |

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| <p>Ensure an efficient waste management collection service</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government awarded Planning Delivery Grant of £143,000 for 2005/06 on the strength of the Council's performance in 2004/05, and this will be increased in recognition of progress with the preparation of the Local Development Framework; however PDG award is less than last year and the focus on improving application determination rates in 2005/06 will help to increase PDG for 2006/07. • The urban design and conservation aspects of the planning service were reinforced with new appointments of staff to fulfil the roles of Design Champion and Historic Environment Champion. • The cost of waste disposal, at £32.52 per tonne, was well below the average of £39.18 for all English authorities. • The number of missed household waste collections per 100,000 collections was only 18.33 compared to a target of 30. • The target for removing incidents of fly tipping within 1 day was achieved. |
| <p>Operate services in an open accountable and responsive manner</p> <p>Achieve high customer/ user satisfaction levels</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy of strong enforcement against littering was continued and extended with a campaign against smoking-related litter. • Satisfaction with street cleanliness rose from 57.9% of survey respondents stating they were satisfied in 2003/04, to 61% in 2004/05; however the target of 71% was not achieved. • Satisfaction with waste management improved from 78.5% in 2003/04 to 84% in 2004/05, although this fell short of the very ambitious target that we set for the year • An ambitious target was also set for increasing satisfaction with children's play areas. This wasn't achieved, but satisfaction did improve 6 to 32%. • The first phase of a £60k programme of refurbishment of play areas was carried out, to address low satisfaction, with new facilities at Alderman Crooks and North Lodge Parks. • Road and pavement maintenance is also an area of low satisfaction; despite the continued improvement in the measured condition of roads and pavements, satisfaction fell during 2004/05 – this will be addressed in the coming year. • Satisfaction with the planning service remains high at 87%. |

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| <p>An environment that is accessible for all</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of the year 75% of all Council buildings open to the public have been improved and are classed as suitable for and accessible to disabled people; this does not achieve the target we set for the year of 85% of buildings, but it is in the top 25% of all English authorities. • Significant progress has been made in adapting roads to enable disabled people to have increased mobility; 97% of signaled pedestrian crossings now have tactile and/or audible aids for disabled people. • The first year of the five year 'Town on the Move' project has been implemented; the project focuses on opening up travel choice, so that people without access to a car are less disadvantaged, and tackling congestion. • New foot and cycle paths have been provided at Cockerton, West Park, Cemetery Lane and Hurworth/Neasham to enhance accessibility for all. |
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Areas for Improvement

The key areas of improvement for the coming year revolve around improving the linkage and co-ordination of all the Council's on-street services; improving public satisfaction with particular aspects of the local environment; and addressing workload issues to match the quality and effectiveness of the planning service with faster determination rates for major applications.

Two former Best Value Reviews, Street Safety and the unfinished Street Environment, have been brought together into a single 'Street Scene' exercise to be conducted during 2005/06. The aim is to drive improvement on the localised street issues that most concern residents – litter, routine maintenance, anti-social behaviour – and increase efficiency by bringing cleansing, highway and warden services together around a shared neighbourhood 'caretaker' role. An action plan is already in place for reorganising street cleaning into neighbourhoods, and we need to adapt and develop this approach to link other services into it.

Low satisfaction ratings on some aspects of the local environment, particularly road and pavement maintenance and children's play facilities, are at odds with measured performance. We need to focus on residents' concerns and get better at engaging and communicating with residents about what needs to be done and the progress we're making. This needs to be progressed as part of the larger Street Scene project.

The performance of key services will be monitored and improved. Performance on speed of determination of major planning applications (BV109a and BV109b) has been held back by significant workload increases over the last two years. Additional staffing and workload management arrangements have been put in place, and we will be looking to achieve improvement in 2005/06. We will also be seeking to sustain the ongoing increases in recycling and composting of waste.

Progress against planned actions

| What we planned to do in 2004/05 | Did we deliver? |
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| Develop an improvement plan for street services from the ongoing Street Environment BVR and review of Warden Service | No – Composite review of street environment and street safety progressed during year but deferred into broad Street Scene review of all street-based services in 2005/06 |
| Improve the standards of street cleanliness within target areas - LPSA Target | Yes - Standard of street cleansing throughout the Borough improved with overall customer satisfaction rising to 57.9% and an improvement to 19% for BV199 from the previous year of 28%. |
| Introduce zonal cleansing and implement Street Litter Initiative programme | <p>Yes - A pilot zonal cleansing approach was launched on Bank Top, Eastbourne, Lascelles, Lingfield and Middleton St George. The aim of a zonal system is to introduce more flexibility into the way in which the streets and open spaces of the Town are managed and cleaned.</p> <p>The scheme brings together a team who have responsibility for keeping streets and parks clear, tidy and litter free. The team has responsibility for emptying litterbins and cleaning up graffiti and fly tipping.</p> <p>The pilot approach to zonal cleansing has worked extremely well. Prior to commencing, litter classification of Grade C (which is unacceptable standard), the latest full inspection, classification is now Grade B (which is an acceptable standard).</p> <p>The Street Litter Initiative campaign is ongoing. In addition a Dog fouling campaign was launched alerting the public that failure to clear up dog fouling may result in a fixed penalty of £50. The Smokers Code was also launched to encourage smokers to dispose of smoke litter in the bins provided. To assist in these campaigns the council has installed extra cigarette and litter bins throughout the town and has held special litter awareness days.</p> |
| Develop street initiatives to improve satisfaction with streets and street issues | <p>Yes - Community Partnerships in Darlington's Priority wards and schools in Darlington have been involved in litter picking initiatives. These initiatives were part of the ongoing anti-litter campaign.</p> <p>Additional £250,000 revenue put into pavement improvements in 2004/05 – used to address immediate pavement trip and flooding problems, and to set up an intensive 3 year programme of</p> |

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| | pavement improvement starting in 2005/06 using £2.5 million of prudential borrowing secured in 2004/05. |
| Implement parks and Open Spaces Strategy Action Plan and phase 2 of South Park restoration | <p>Yes- The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy will be superseded by a new Open Space Strategy following Best Practice Guidance and Planning Policy Guidance. The existing action plan within the existing draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy continued to be delivered with a number of improvements achieved.</p> <p>Phase 2 of South Park is well underway, the lake has been drained and restoration work has started to the historical structures of the park, which includes the bandstand and fountains.</p> <p>The new play area opened at Easter and has proved to be extremely popular to residents and visitors to the area.</p> |
| Increase satisfaction with outdoor play facilities | <p>Yes- Satisfaction with outdoor play facilities has increased slightly. Improvements to outdoor play facilities have been undertaken. The refurbishment of North Lodge play was completed using funds from a Transforming Your Space Grant. The new play area includes a range of new play equipment that is designed to be more accessible to a wider section of the community. In addition the first phase of a £60,000 council project to refurbish five children's play areas was completed.</p> |
| Improve refuse collection, participation in kerbside recycling and minimise liability for landfill tax | <p>Yes – Recycling promotion staged during year. Participation in recycling and composting combined has exceeded targets and is contributing towards limiting liability for Landfill Tax. Funding has been secured to enable the Civic Amenity Site to be expanded and improved, with the specific purpose of increasing recycling/ composting at the site.</p> |
| Implement the Waste Strategy and work towards development/ letting of new waste disposal contract | <p>Yes – The current waste service, incorporating the kerbside recycling service and working towards improvement of the CAS, accords with the Waste Strategy. Work is ongoing on identifying and appraising options for a new waste disposal contract to be let for implementation from 2009 when the current contract expires.</p> |
| Progress the preparation of the new Local Development Framework | <p>Yes – Extensive consultation carried out and 'Statement of Community Involvement' published. Local Development Scheme, setting out timetable for preparing the LDF, agreed with Government office and progress during the year has been in accordance with the scheme.</p> |

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| Maintain the performance of the Planning Service in terms of the timeliness and quality of decisions | Partial – Performance improved and target achieved for speed of determination of domestic/ householder applications, but remained below target for major and commercial applications. The low percentage of appeals upheld against refusal of planning permission indicates that the service is producing quality decisions, whilst high customer satisfaction ratings, acknowledgement from business applicants and a score of 83% against the Quality of Service Checklist indicate a high quality of service provided to customers. |
| Carry out environmental improvements to Parkgate and Northgate railway bridges | No – Funding earmarked for these schemes was diverted to the Pedestrian Heart, in order to ensure that funding pressures on the much higher priority town centre scheme could be overcome and sufficient finance could be secured to enable it to proceed. Also the Central Park scheme may require access works to the Parkgate retaining walls, and any improvements to the bridge would now be premature until the details of any access arrangements for the southern end of Central Park emerge in the future. All the bridges have been equipped with anti-bird netting to combat hygiene and environmental problems for pedestrians under the bridges. |
| Implement the Northgate Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme | Yes – The 3 year run of the scheme ended in March 2005, with a number of properties having benefited from improvement grants. A further 2 year Conservation Programme has been established with funding from English Heritage |
| Respond to community requests for improved street lighting | Yes – A number of requests have resulted in stronger or additional lighting units being installed. In addition, the white light replacement programme has continued, improving the quality of lighting whilst reducing energy use and light pollution. The target for minimizing the number of lights not working was achieved. |
| Encourage development on previously developed land | Yes – 84% of new dwellings completed during 2004/05 were built on previously developed land, against a target of 60%. |
| Apply for Northumbria in Bloom | Yes - The Authority was runner-up for 2004/2005 for Northumbria In Bloom. An application has been placed for 2005/2006. |

Graph showing trend data

Percentage of household waste recycled and composted
based on graph in 2004/05 BVPP, updated with 2004/05 performance,
and add graph line to show composting in 2003/04 and 2004/05

Graph showing trend data

Either – **Percentage of new homes built on previously developed land BV106** –
shows a good, consistent picture OR
Planning applications – total number determined year on year to show increase
in workload

Council Plans for Improvement 2005/2006

| Community Strategy theme: Enhancing the local environment | | |
|--|--|--|
| Corporate Objectives | Priority | PIs |
| Shaping a better Darlington | Streets and open spaces that are clean, throughout the borough | <p>Percentage of people satisfied with cleanliness standards (BV89/ CS135 - PSA)</p> <p>Cleanliness of land and highways (BV199a - PSA)</p> <p>The proportion of relevant land and highways expressed as a percentage from which unacceptable levels of graffiti is visible (BV199b)</p> <p>The proportion of relevant land and highways expressed as a percentage from which unacceptable levels of fly posting are visible (BV199c)</p> <p>The year on year reduction in total number of incidents and increase in total number of enforcement actions taken to deal with fly tipping (BV199d)</p> |
| | Streets that are safe by being well maintained and well lit | <p>Percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours of legal entitlement to remove (BV218b)</p> <p>Condition of unclassified roads (BV224b)</p> |
| | A healthy and sustainable environment | <p>Rectification of street lighting faults – non DNO (BV215a)</p> <p>Percentage of streetlights not working as planned (DE06)</p> |
| | Increased recycling and composting and reduced landfill | <p>Percentage of new homes built on previously developed land (BV106)</p> |
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|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| | | <p>Identifying contaminated land – number of sites of potential concern (BV216a)</p> <p>Percentage of household waste recycled – (BV82ai)</p> <p>Percentage of household waste composted – (BV82bi)</p> <p>Percentage of household waste landfilled (BV82di)</p> <p>Household waste collected in kgs per head (BV84)</p> |
| <p>Providing excellent services</p> | <p>Positive, problem solving services pursuing local needs and Council priorities whilst meeting statutory duties</p> <p>Undertake a review of all aspects of the Building Service</p> | <p>Percentage of major/minor/other applications determined in 13/8/8 weeks (BV109a/b/c)</p> <p>Percentage of Building Control applications checked and response given within 21 days/35days (DE10a&b)</p> <p>Percentage of planning appeals allowed against the authority's decision to refuse (BV204)</p> <p>Quality of planning services checklist (BV205)</p> <p>Satisfaction of Children's Play area (CS26)</p> <p>The proportion of planned repairs and maintenance expenditure on HRA dwellings compared to responsive maintenance expenditure on HRA dwellings (BV211a)</p> <p>Average weekly repair cost (CS021)</p> |

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|----------------------------|--|--|
| | An efficient and effective waste management collection service | <p>Percentage of repair appointments kept (CS151)</p> <p>Cost of waste collection/disposal (BV86/87)</p> <p>Missed household collections (CS12)</p> <p>Percentage of households resident in the borough served by a kerbside collection of recyclables (BV91a)</p> |
| Putting the customer first | Operate services in an open, accountable and responsive manner, and seek to achieve high levels of customer satisfaction | <p>Percentage of people satisfied with cleanliness standards (BV89/CS135-PSA)</p> <p>Satisfaction with the upkeep of the town centre (CS27)</p> <p>Satisfaction with waste collection (BV90a/ CS137)</p> <p>Satisfaction with Refuse Collection (BV90b/ CS138)</p> <p>Satisfaction with waste collection/ recycling facilities/Civic Amenity Site BV90a/b/c (CS137/CS138)</p> <p>Satisfaction with planning service (BV111)</p> <p>Satisfaction with children's play areas (CS26)</p> <p>Satisfaction with road/pavement maintenance (DE16a/b)</p> |
| Ensuring access for all | An environment that is accessible for all | <p>Percentage of Council buildings open to the public that are suitable for and accessible to disabled people (BV156)</p> <p>Percentage of pedestrian crossings with facilities for disabled people (BV165)</p> |

| Key Actions | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Action | Portfolio Holder/ Lead Officer | Date for Completion | Measure of Success |
| Integrate service delivery around street cleansing, refuse and grounds maintenance | Cllr S Harker Ian Thompson | March 2006 | BV89/CS135 (PSA) BV199a (PSA) BV199b/c/d |
| Conclude 'Street Scene' review; link integrated street cleansing/refuse/grounds maintenance service with highway maintenance and warden services to co-ordinate all street services with a focus on residents' 'liveability' issues | Cllr Harker/ Cllr Wallis Ian Thompson/ Keith Atkinson | January 2006 | BV199 a/b/c/d BV89 DE16a/b |
| Rationalise and improve the quality of play areas | Cllr S Harker Ian Thompson | September 2005 | CS25 |
| Implement the waste strategy to minimise Landfill Tax liability and cost of Biodegradable Waste Permits, and progress preparations for new Waste Disposal Contract | Cllr Harker Bill Westland/ Ian Thompson | Ongoing/ July 2008 for letting new contract | BV82di BV84a/b BV86, BV87 |
| Improve Kerbside Recycling performance | Cllr Harker Bill Westland | 2005/06 | BV82ai/ii |
| Implement Litter Initiative Action Plan 2005/06 | Cllr Harker Shane Shrimpton/ Barry Pearson | 2005/06 | BV89, BV199 a/b/c/d |
| Implement arrangements and targets for dealing with abandoned cars | Cllr Harker Barry Pearson | 2005/06 | BV218a/b |
| Implement new requirements to identify and monitor contaminated land | Cllr Harker Wendy Lilico | 2005/06 | BV216a/b |
| Progress preparation of Local Development Framework in accordance with Local development Scheme | Cllr Lyonette Steve Petch | Submit LDF to SoS Aug 2006 | BV200a/b/c |
| Maintain the quality of the planning service and its outcomes, and improve the speed of determination of major/commercial applications | Cllr Lyonette Steve Petch | 2005/06 | BV109a/b/c BV111 BV204 BV205 |
| Progress the implementation of the Pedestrian Heart | Cllr Lyonette Richard Alty | 2007 | CS27 |
| Implement the grant schemes to support improvements to buildings bordering the Pedestrian Heart, and in Northgate | Cllr Lyonette Steve Petch | 2008(PH) 2007(NG) | CS27 |
| Carry out consultation and develop/implement programme to address pavement maintenance issues and increase public satisfaction | Cllr Wallis John Ray | 2008 | BV187 DE16b |

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Our aim is produce a safe and effective transport system that balances the needs of all users.

Context

Transport policy and investment has a key role to play in working towards the aims and priorities of the Community Strategy for Darlington. It is central to achieving a balance of social, economic and environmental sustainability. Our transport strategy is being built around the concept of accessibility, focused on enabling everyone to access jobs, shopping, health and other facilities. This requires a comprehensive approach to transport provision that allows choice for individuals, so that lack of accessibility and transport deprivation is minimised.

This context is especially significant in Darlington. Despite increasing prosperity in recent years, Darlington still has relatively low car ownership and high (although falling) bus patronage. Car ownership and use is still an aspiration for many, and this is a cultural challenge to promoting increased bus use and other sustainable travel choices in order to tackle congestion.

Our strategy recognises that a balanced package of transport measures is required to meet Darlington's requirements.

- Investment in road infrastructure remains a priority where it is needed to support the Darlington Gateway Strategy, prepare sites for inward investment and facilitate the road transport that is essential to a thriving economy.
- Making sure that the borough's facilities are accessible to everyone, including children, older people and people with impaired mobility, and that people are not disadvantaged by not having access to a car.
- Maintaining and adapting the transport infrastructure is also a high priority, to make sure it is safe, can accommodate the traffic that needs to use it, and that it doesn't detract from the quality of the environment and people's perceptions of, and satisfaction with, their neighbourhood.

This balanced strategy is being built into the second Local Transport Plan, currently being prepared for submission to Government, and covering the period 2006-2012.

The Darlington 'Town on the Move' national demonstration project puts us in a strong position to implement our strategy by funding a five year research and implementation programme aimed at tackling congestion, opening up transport options and marketing sustainable travel choices to local households.

High Level Summary of Performance

| Corporate Objective | Priority | PIs | Progress against targets |
|------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Shaping a better Darlington | Provide convenient transport choices for all Town centre pedestrianisation | BV102 DE20 DE21 DE22 | σ λ H H |
| Providing Excellent Services | Improve the condition of the highway network Implement Darlington Gateway | BV96 BV97a BV97b BV99i BV99ii BV99iii BV100a BV187 | H λ λ H H H λ H |
| Putting the Customer first | Provide positive problem solving services to customers Improve customer focus of highway services Improve public satisfaction with road and pavement maintenance | BV103 BV104 DE5 DE6 DE7 DE16a DE16b | σ H λ λ H λ λ |
| Ensuring access for all | Make appropriate provision for disabled people in highway projects | BV165 | λ |
| Overall Progress against aim | | | H |

The Pedestrian Heart

The Pedestrian Heart will provide a high quality public realm in the centre of Darlington in place of the relatively poor environment for pedestrians that exists at present. The project will help to maintain the town centre as an attractive and competitive sub-regional shopping centre. The town centre is a key driver of the local economy and a vital component of the Gateway strategy to attract new investment and jobs to Darlington.

Pedestrian Heart addresses the conflicts between pedestrians and buses and other vehicles, and the relatively degraded and cluttered environment that results. The project will reorganise bus circulation and reduce pedestrian/vehicle conflict. Pedestrian accessibility in the shopping core will be enhanced. Local Transport Plan funding is being used to carry out preparatory works, including the construction of bus lanes and junction improvements along the inner ring road. These measures are preparing the way for the major phases of Pedestrian Heart, the re-landscaping of the shopping core to create coherent public spaces and improved access for all, including disabled people.

The Council works closely with Darlington Association on Disability to improve accessibility for disabled people around Darlington and within public buildings. Local Transport Plan funding has been used to develop 'Wheelygood', an interactive map on the association's website showing wheelchair routes, dropped kerbs, accessible parking and accessible shops throughout the town centre.

School Travel Planning

The way children travel to school has a big impact on them and the wider community. Traffic congestion around the school gates is a serious problem for neighbouring residents and general traffic circulation. Driving children to school also increases danger for other children. Children also miss out on the physical activity involved in walking or cycling, which has educational as well as health benefits, and on the social contact with other kids.

The Council is addressing this issue as part of its wider Town on the Move programme by working with schools to develop travel plans. Plans can include school-based initiatives such as walking trains and pedestrian or cycle training, and they also link into wider initiatives such as the national 'Walk to School' and 'Bike to School' weeks. Their purpose is to promote travel choices for children and to train children to take up those choices safely.

The Council's School Travel Plans Officer works with the schools and the Road Safety team. 11 schools now have completed travel plans. 3 local schools are participating in the 'Bike It' project run by Sustrans (only 40 schools are involved nationally!), and over 1000 trips to school were made by bike during Bike to School week. Heathfield School had the second highest participation rate of any school nationally, and has maintained high levels of cycling – 30 children regularly cycle to school and 20 are awaiting permits to do so.

More detail on outcomes secured and other achievements

| Priority | Outcome/achievement |
|---|--|
| <p>Provide convenient transport choices for all</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey work in late 2004 has provided a database of travel patterns and habits in Darlington as a basis for individualised travel planning within the ‘Town on the Move’ programme. • Local Travel Summit and National Conference staged in Darlington in March 2005 shared survey results and identified significant potential for enhancing travel choice and reducing congestion. • School travel planning has made significant progress, opening up choice to children about how they travel to school – 11 schools now have completed plans. • ‘Wheelygood’ interactive map developed jointly with Darlington Association on Disability; on the association’s website, the map shows wheelchair accessible routes, accessible parking and shops throughout the town centre. • A new developer-funded bus service linking West Park to the town centre, and new foot and cycle path provision at West Park, Cockerton, Hummersknott and Hurworth/ Neasham, enhanced transport choice. • Sky Express bus service started, linking the Railway Station, town centre and Durham Tees Valley Airport; service is funded by Peel Airports Ltd, and has been made possible by LTP investment in an interchange facility at the station. |
| <p>Town centre pedestrianisation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council succeeded in convincing Government Office of the economic benefits of the Pedestrian Heart, against other schemes with more obvious benefits, and securing the funding for the project to go ahead. • From funding approval earlier in the year, Pedestrian Heart has rapidly progressed to implementation, with extensive consultation and planning procedures along the way. • Preparatory works to enable the re-routing of buses and the removal of pedestrian/vehicle conflict in the shopping core are now in progress. • The town’s first bus priority measures, together with junction improvements, are being installed on the inner ring road to prepare the way for Pedestrian Heart. |

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| <p>Improve the condition of the highway network</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £3.1 million secured through the Local Transport Planning process for investment in transport schemes in 2005/06, including £1.2 million for road maintenance. • £400,000 of the £1 million secured through the Local Public Service Agreement to enhance road maintenance was invested in 2004/05; the remaining £600,000 will be used in 2005/06. • Road condition on all classes of road is now best quartile – only 1.59% of the principal road network has ‘negative residual life’, requiring intervention to prolong its life. • The Council is one of the top authorities in the development and use of the United Kingdom Pavement Management System (UKPMS) to analyse road condition data and determine the most cost effective priorities for improvement of the highway network. • An additional £250,000 of revenue has been invested in footway improvements, dealing with the most significant trip and flooding problems. • The additional spending on footways was an interim measure, with prudential borrowing of £2.5 million approved during the year to develop an ambitious footway renewal and improvement programme starting in 2005/06. |
| <p>Implement Darlington Gateway</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design and preparatory procedures for the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor were completed, leaving the way clear to lobby for regional funding for the scheme in 2005/06. • The Council participated in the Tees Valley Gateway Study, which reported in early 2005, with proposals to improve access to the Tees Valley and reduce congestion on the A66(T), including upgrading of the A66 Darlington bypass. • Transport inputs have helped to keep key Darlington Gateway developments on course, including roads and drainage infrastructure for Faverdale East Business Park, the access and traffic aspects of the Argos development and Central Park/Darlington College relocation, and the progress on the Pedestrian Heart. |
| <p>Provide positive problem solving services to customers Improve customer focus of highway services</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport inputs were part of the proactive and creative responses to issues arising around the Commercial Street, Pedestrian Heart and Argos schemes, that overcame the difficulties and kept the schemes on course. |

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| <p>Improve public satisfaction with road and pavement maintenance</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 99% of incidents of dangerous damage to roads and footways were remedied within 24 hours. • Consultation procedures relating to highway schemes have been improved and further improvements are planned for 2005/06. • Public transport information has been improved, with new timetable boards at all key bus stops. • Extensive public consultation was carried out, in two stages, into proposals for the Pedestrian Heart. • Whilst road and footway condition has improved significantly with substantial and ongoing investment, public satisfaction has not improved – this will be further addressed in the Street Scene service review to be carried out in 2005/06. |
| <p>Make appropriate provision for disabled people in highway projects</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme of bus stop improvements carried out to provide raised kerbs to aid use of low floor buses. • Wheelygood project provides information on wheelchair access around Darlington town centre (see above). • Pedestrian Heart will radically improve accessibility for disabled people in the shopping core. • All signal controlled pedestrian crossings except one (North Road/Whessoe Road junction) have facilities to enable disabled people to use them; the exception is awaiting decisions on the improvement of the junction before investment in disabled facilities. |

External Recognition

Darlington's progress on sustainable travel developments was recognised by the Department for Transport's decision to stage the first National 'Town on the Move' Conference in the town in March 2005; representatives of the other winning authorities, Peterborough and Swindon, together with the other 51 Councils that bid for 'Town on the Move', came to Darlington to hear about and learn from our experience.

The Audit Commission's inspection of the Council's Transport Service in July 2004 judged the service to be 'Fair' with 'Excellent Prospects for Improvement'. The inspection report (November 2004) comments include:

"...There is a strong focus on improving transport...underpinned by additional resources"

"...The service can demonstrate a record of improvement in key priority areas..."

"Service planning...and performance management are now strong"

Areas for Improvement

Recent external assessments, in the shape of the Audit Commission's report on the inspection of transport services carried out in July 2004 and the Government Office assessment and feedback on our 2004 Local Transport Plan Annual Progress Report, provide a clear context for our improvement planning.

We need to continue to improve on the delivery of the required outcomes from transport projects. We have made progress in developing our project management methodology to ensure that outcomes, targets and milestones are clearly defined and that projects are managed to deliver those requirements. Programme control systems have been introduced, together with policy briefs specifying outcomes, and responsibilities have been rationalised within the Transport Team to give clarity to programme management. Further development is now needed to routinely deliver measured outcomes.

Our focus on tackling congestion and promoting 'smart travel choices' – the use of sustainable transport modes where they provide a viable option – is being pursued through the five year 'Town on the Move' programme. Whilst Town on the Move is in its infancy, we recognise that bus patronage in particular is continuing to decline, and that the promotion of walking, cycling and bus as viable travel options alongside the car will be very challenging. We need to continue what we've started with rigorous follow-up on travel planning with individuals, households, schools and employers.

Following the introduction of on street parking charges during 2004/05, and with the temporary loss of town centre car parks to development, parking enforcement needs to be strengthened to ensure that available parking spaces are used efficiently. We will be working with the Police to progress parking decriminalisation, so that we can move to a single enforcement regime for on and off street parking.

The Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor is a key road investment scheme in support of local economic regeneration, but one that, at the present time, is seen as a low priority for regional funding. The Council is fully committed to the scheme and has invested in land acquisition, statutory procedures, design and other preparatory works. We need to make a case for the scheme regionally to secure the necessary funding, and are actively working towards this end.

We need to give further attention to increasing public satisfaction, particularly with road and pavement condition.

The term contract for highway maintenance is due for renewal in 2005/06, and we need to take the opportunity to review the way in which the service is procured and the options available for improving outcomes and securing efficiency gains.

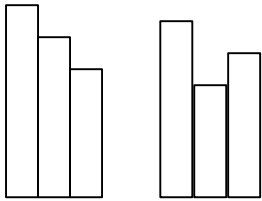
Progress against planned actions

| What we planned to do in 2004/05 | Did we deliver? |
|--|--|
| Develop and implement 'On the Move' showcase Transport Town programme for reducing congestion and improving sustainable travel | Yes – good progress made in developing the project; team appointed, major travel habits survey carried out by international consultant and results shared at highly successful local travel summit and DfT sponsored national conference in Darlington in March 2005. |
| Implement programmes to improve road and pavement condition, achieve Local Public Service Agreement road condition targets and to increase public satisfaction | Partial – use of Symology system to focus investment where it can be most effective has achieved best quartile road condition indicators for all classes of road, as measured by CVI surveys. Current condition indicators show that LPSA targets have already been achieved, even though there is a year to run on the LPSA. However, public satisfaction has not been increased, despite these improvements. |
| Introduce charging for on-street parking in the town centre and take over parking enforcement powers from the Police | Partial – on street charging was introduced in October 2004, but taking over enforcement requires further work with the Police and is now scheduled to be achieved by March 2007. |
| Implement programme of transport works in accordance with the Local Transport Plan and commence preparation of new plan | Yes – a programme of strategic and local transport works has been implemented and preparation of LTP2 is on course for submission of the initial plan in July 2005 and the full plan in July 2006 at the end of the period covered by the existing plan. |
| Implement arrangements to meet the requirements of the Traffic Management Bill | Yes – a Traffic Manager has been appointed and the necessary systems and procedures have been established. |
| Improve the regulation and management of streetworks within the framework of the Roads and Streetworks Act | Yes – the regular liaison meetings with utilities have been increased in frequency, and an additional Highways Inspector has been appointed to implement the powers and duties imposed by the act. Utilities are co-operating in seeking to co-ordinate and minimise the impact of street works and our arrangements are regarded as working as well as any in the region, although there is plenty of scope for further improvement. |
| Improve traffic flows and access for buses on main routes into Darlington | Partial – there has been some improvement on flows as a result of Corridor of Certainty works on North Road, but bus priority |

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| | measures have not yet been implemented – bus lanes are being introduced as part of the Pedestrian Heart works, and some bus priority measures on main radial routes will be implemented in the coming year. |
| Implement speed management strategy | Yes – the number of speed visors and sites has been doubled, as these are proving effective in reducing speed at key locations. Numerous traffic calming speeds have been implemented, and national speed campaigns have been supported. Road accident casualties are continuing to be reduced. |
| Develop the Eastern Transport Corridor new road, from the A66 to Haughton Road | No – the Council has carried out all preparatory work but so far the scheme has not been prioritised for funding at the regional level. Work is ongoing to make a successful funding case for the scheme within the region. |
| Deliver pedestrian training for 6/7 year olds and the cycle training programme | Yes – successful training programmes have been delivered, and programmes are expanding to support the School Travel Planning process, which has been pursued successfully during the year following the appointment of a School Travel Plans Officer within the ‘Town on the Move’ team. Child road accident casualties have been halved since the late 1990s and the Council continues to provide a comprehensive School Crossing Patrol Service. |

Graph showing trend data

Condition of Roads – update graph from last BVPP, but show all three classes of road (**BV96, 97a, 97b**) in a three column format, as our focus is increasingly on minor and neighbourhood roads rather than primaries – all three classes tell a good story, but we also need a note explaining what the graph shows – percentage of the network with negative residual life and requiring work to prolong its life



Graph showing trend data

Total road safety casualties killed and seriously injured

Council Plans for Improvement 2005/2006

| Community Strategy theme: Developing an effective transport system | | |
|---|---|---|
| Corporate Objectives | Priority | PIs |
| Shaping a better Darlington | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convenient transport choices for all • Ease of movement and accessibility • A high quality pedestrian town centre environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local bus journeys (BV102) • Road traffic approaching town centre (DE20) • Walkers and cyclists crossing inner ring road (DE21/DE22) • Traffic flows on key corridors (DE60) • Grade achieved for Local Transport Plan APR (DE50) • Accessibility to health facilities (DE58) • Percentage of rural households within 13 minutes walk of an hourly or better bus service – (DE59) |
| Providing excellent services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well maintained roads • Improved footways • Effective input to Darlington Gateway and other key strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condition of principal/other classified roads (BV223/ BV224a) [TRACS & CVI] • Condition of unclassified roads (BV224b) [CVI] • Condition of category 1, 1a, 2 footways (BV187a) • Accident casualties killed& seriously injured; and with slight injuries (BV99i/iii) • Children killed and seriously injured (BV99ii) |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rectification of street lighting faults – non DNO (BV215a) • Percentage of streetlights not working as planned (DE6) • Number of days of road closures or temporary traffic controls on traffic sensitive roads due to Council road works (BV100a) • Number of car parks achieving 'Secured Car Park' status (DE7) |
| Putting the customer first | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive problem-solving services to customers • Improved customer focus of highway services • Improved public satisfaction with road and pavement maintenance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidents of dangerous damage to roads and pavements remedied within 24 hours (DE5) • Satisfaction with public transport information (BV103) • Satisfaction with local bus services (BV104) • Percentage of population satisfied with roads and pavement maintenance (DE16a/b) |
| Ensuring access for all | An accessible transport network for all | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of pedestrian crossings with facilities for disabled people (BV165) |

| Key Actions | | | |
|--|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Action | Portfolio Holder/ Lead Officer | Date for Completion | Measure of Success |
| Complete preparation and submission of second Local Transport Plan; implement LTP projects and programmes. | Cllr Wallis Simon Houldsworth | July 2005/ Ongoing | DE50 DE58 DE59 |
| Continue to develop and implement 'Town on the Move' programme for tackling congestion and opening-up travel choices to all. | Cllr Wallis Owen Wilson | Ongoing to 2009/10 | BV102 DE20 DE21 DE22 |
| Roll-out project management and supporting arrangements to improve delivery of outcomes from transport projects. | Cllr Wallis Richard Alty | 2005/06 | DE50 |
| Consolidate improvements in road condition and deliver the LPSA road condition targets. | Cllr Wallis John Ray | March 2006 | BV223 BV224a/b |
| Carry out consultation and develop a three year programme to achieve real improvements in footway condition across the borough. | Cllr Wallis John Ray | October 2005 March 2008 | BV187a |
| Participate in the 'Street Scene' review and implement service changes and improvements in accordance with its findings. | Cllr Wallis John Ray/Peter Roberts | January 2006 | DE16a/b |
| Linked to the above three actions, carry out a programme of engagement and marketing to increase public satisfaction with road and pavement maintenance. | Cllr Wallis John Ray/Peter Roberts | October 2005 | DE16a/b |
| Continue to seek to have the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor included in the regional funding programme for major road schemes. | Cllr Wallis Richard Alty | 2005/06 | BV223 DE20 BV99 |
| Progress parking decriminalisation and the take over of enforcement powers from the Police. | Cllr Wallis Simon Houldsworth | March 2007 | n/a |
| Contribute to the development and implementation of major Gateway regeneration projects, including completion of the preparatory works for Pedestrian Heart. | Cllr Wallis/ Cllr Lyonette Richard Alty | Ongoing | BV223 BV224a DE21 DE22 |
| Consolidate and implement the arrangements established under the Traffic Management Act and the Roads and Streetworks Act. | Cllr Wallis John Ray/Alan Ward | 2005/06 | DE60 BV100 DE16a/b |

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|--|--|------------|-------------------------|
| Implement Highway Asset Management and develop Highway Maintenance Plan. | Cllr Wallis John Ray/Brian Summers | March 2006 | BV223 BV224a/b |
| Review procurement of highway maintenance works to improve outcomes and secure efficiencies. | Cllr Wallis John Buxton | 2005/06 | DE5 BV100 DE16a/b |
| Continue to deliver road safety training to schools in support of schools travel planning. | Cllr Wallis Norma Sheppard | Ongoing | BV99 |

ENHANCING OUR CAPACITY TO IMPROVE

Our aim is to produce high quality, value for money services for Darlington's communities, its stakeholders and visitors to the Borough.

Context

It was reported in last year's Corporate Plan/Best Value Performance Plan that the council was assessed as 'Good' by the Audit Commission as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process, with inspectors indicating that the direction of travel was good and that services were improving. After a weeklong Corporate Assessment inspection in October 2004, and with Darlington's Social Services reclassified from a one-star to a two-star service, the council has now been reassessed as 'Excellent'. The Audit Commission stated that we had improved across all areas of the Corporate Assessment improving from 3 to 4. Particular strengths highlighted included our strong performance management and service planning arrangements, whilst in addition it was stated that the council was improving its approach to procurement and equality. As part of the CPA process, the council's 'Use of Resources' was reassessed and once again received the highest score available. Use of Resources includes elements such as Financial Management, Internal Control, Corporate Governance and Risk Management.

The authority strives to continuously improve and has set itself challenging targets to improve cost-effectiveness throughout the council as part of the 'Gershon' agenda. It has also set out on a programme and project management initiative to ensure that we continue to provide the best possible services to local people. Our mission is to become a 'Leading Edge' authority and we continue to aim to provide and improve customer-orientated services for all.

Whilst the authority is justly proud of its achievements to date, we recognize there is more to be done and are constantly striving to improve satisfaction, enhance performance and provide value for money in all services that we provide. We are reviewing our approach to providing support services by examining with external consultants a possible collaborative partnership with Stockton Borough Council. In addition, other support services are being radically reviewed as part of our ongoing commitment to provide excellent services and to put our customers at the heart of everything that we do.

High Level Summary of Performance

| Corporate Objective | Priority | PIs | Progress against targets |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Shaping a better Darlington | Develop, implement and communicate vision and strategy Be a good local employer | BV1 BV12 CR4 CR7 | λ λ H λ |
| Providing Excellent Services | Best practice in corporate financial management Review MTFP Collection of local taxation in the top quartile External recognition | BV9 BV10 | λ λ |
| Putting the Customer first | Implement Access to services BV Action Plan Effective consultation | BV4 | σ |
| Ensuring access for all | Promote equality and diversity Buildings complying with DDA Act 1995 | BV2 BV11a BV16a BV17a BV156 | λ H λ λ σ |
| Enhancing our capacity to improve | Monitor LPSA progress Improvement on PIs Deliver procurement cost efficiency savings Maximise efficiency and effectiveness within all available resources through the provisions of high quality responsive and customer focused services | BV33 BV34a BV34b BV193 CR8 CR10 CR11 CR32 ED55 | N/A H λ λ H H N/A H σ |
| Overall Progress against aim | | | λ |

More detail on outcomes secured and other achievements

| Priority | Outcome/achievement |
|---|---|
| <p>Develop, implement and communicate vision and strategy</p> <p>Be a good local employer</p> | <p>The Council remains on target to deliver its role in the Community Strategy (BV1).</p> <p>Add quotes form Corporate Assessment re Community Strategy and strength of Council as community leader.</p> <p>73.6% of the Council's employees believe Darlington is a good organization to work for [annual employee survey] (CR7).</p> <p>Sickness absence has improved by 11.26% in 2004/05 (BV12).</p> <p>95.75% of Personal Development Reviews were conducted (CR4).</p> |
| <p>Best practice in corporate financial management</p> <p>Review MTFP</p> <p>Collection of local taxation in the top quartile</p> <p>External recognition</p> | <p>The council's Use of Resources were assessed as 4/4 as part of the CPA reassessment. In addition, the council's Finance Team was a 'highly commended' runner up in the Local Government Chronicle's (LGC) National Awards for 2004/05.</p> <p>Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements are to be reviewed in line with the council's overall approach to value for money.</p> <p>Collection of Council Tax fell last year, primarily due to a high turnover of staff. Whilst performance did not reach best quartile for 2004/05, performance to date for 2005/06 has improved. (BV9/10).</p> <p>Darlington reclassified as an 'Excellent' authority.</p> <p>Social Services 2 * service (Children's services serving 'most' people well, with promising prospects. Strong direction of travel for Adult Services).</p> <p>Corporate Assessment scored by Audit Commission as 4 out of 4.</p> |

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| | <p>Promising prospects for improvement or better for two-thirds of external service inspections.</p> <p>The council's new recycling initiative voted to be in the top ten nationally by Friends of the Earth.</p> <p>The West Park Development won the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors' Regional Renaissance Gold Award.</p> |
| <p>Implement Access to services BV Action Plan</p> <p>Effective consultation</p> | <p>Access to council services is to be significantly enhanced when the £0.9m customer contact centre opens in Autumn of 2005. New software and telephony arrangements will be key to providing an improved customer experience.</p> <p>The Council's website has been accredited with the RNIB's 'See it Right' accessible website standard.</p> <p>Annual Community Survey indicated: 84% satisfied with household waste collection (BV90a). 68% satisfied with waste recycling (local facilities) (BV90b). 75% satisfied with waste disposal (local tips) (BV90c). 67% satisfied with Libraries (BV119b). 75% satisfied with parks and open spaces (BV119e).</p> |
| <p>Promote equality and diversity</p> <p>Buildings complying with DDA Act 1995</p> | <p>The council achieved its target of attaining Level 2 of the Local Government Equality Standard and remains on target to attain Level 3 by October 2005. Performance is top quartile for the employment of women (BV11a).</p> <p>The Council has improved performance across all indicators measuring the employment of people from minority ethnic communities and people with a disability (BV16a/17a).</p> <p>The Council remains on target to make all council buildings accessible in accordance with DDA 1995 (BV156).</p> |

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|---|---|
| <p>Monitor LPSA progress</p> <p>Improvement on PIs</p> <p>Deliver procurement cost efficiency savings</p> <p>Maximise efficiency and effectiveness within all available resources through the provisions of high quality responsive and customer focused services</p> | <p>The council is on target to achieve at least 70% of the available reward grant for the Public Service Agreement, resulting in higher performing services. The cost effectiveness target is currently performing 19% above the baseline year of 2002/03.</p> <p>Non-financial PIs improved by 9.9%</p> <p>Savings in excess of £180,000 have been achieved following the appointment of new providers for Advertising and Mobile Phones and a re-negotiated energy contract.</p> <p>The council has submitted its Annual Efficiency Statement forward look for 2005/06 and has identified £1.7 million efficiency savings for the year.</p> <p>The reduction from 11.19 days sickness across the Council to 9.93 days in 2004/5 has realised a significant efficiency saving.</p> <p>There are now no primary or secondary schools with 25% or more places unfilled.</p> <p>63.2% of primary and 50% of secondary schools are satisfied with LEA support to make schools effective purchasers of traded services ED55a/b.</p> |
|---|---|

Progress against planned actions

| What we planned to do in 2004/05 | Did we deliver? |
|--|--|
| Monitoring LPSA outcomes | Yes – Remain on target to deliver a 70% of the total £2.3 million reward grant Yes - Cost effectiveness improves by 19% since the 2002/3 base year |
| Continued improvement in procurement practices | Yes – Procurement Strategy implemented and savings in excess of £180,000 delivered |
| Implement new performance management software (<i>PerformancePlus</i>) | Yes – P+ rolled out across the Council and underpins the Performance Management Framework |
| Maintain good inspection performance | Yes – two thirds of external service inspections result in at least ‘promising prospects’. |
| Implement Access to Services Improvement Action Plan | Yes – Customer/Contact Centre to be launched the Autumn of 2005 |
| Continue to develop <i>Striving for Excellence</i> in accordance with CPA Improvement Plan | Yes – Overall goals met. Evolving now into next phase to be phrased ‘Leading Edge’. |
| Deliver a sustainable Financial Plan given the potential ‘capping’ criteria for 2005/06 | Yes – Sustainable Financial Plan delivered and the Council was not the subject of a ‘capping order’. MTFP to be reviewed in line with value for money initiatives |
| Apply for national awards | Yes – the council continues to embrace external awards, applying for LGC awards, Beacon Status, etc. |
| Continue to mainstream Best Value as a means to improve service delivery | Yes – Best Value remains at the core of the Council’s approach to improving service delivery, with the methodology changing to better reflect value for money |
| Continue to develop the authority’s approach to social inclusion to further improve the Equality Standard rating | Yes – The Council has adopted its first Social Inclusion Strategy and remains on target to achieve Level 3 of the Local Government Equality Standard rating by October 2005 |
| Conclude job evaluation and introduce equal pay across the Council | No – Implementation likely to be concluded by the end of July 2005 |
| Implement the Best Value Review of Support Services | Yes – This review is underway with key workstreams including a corporate review of Administration |

Graph showing trend data
Sickness Absence

Graph showing trend data
Proportion of top earners who are women

Council Plans for Improvement 2005/2006

| Community Strategy theme: All themes | | |
|---|---|--|
| Corporate Objectives | Priority | PIs |
| Shaping a better Darlington | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop, implement and communicate vision and strategy - Be a good local employer | Community Strategy (BV1) Single Status and Equal Pay PDRs completed (CR4) Sickness absence (BV12) |
| Providing excellent services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement CPA 2005 workstream - Best practice in corporate financial management - Collection of local taxes in the top quartile - External recognition | Timely Cabinet reports on revenue and capital spend Council Tax and NNDR collection (BV9/10) Use of Resources Auditor Scored Judgements External Audit Opinions |
| Putting the customer first | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch Call Centre and Customer Services Centre - Effective Consultation | 90% of telephone calls answered in 10 seconds Customer Satisfaction Satisfaction with Complaints (BV4) Community Survey Outcomes |
| Ensuring access for all | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Achieve Level 3 of the Local Government Equality Standard - Promote equality and diversity - Buildings complying with DDA Act 1995 | Equality Standard (BV2) Women in top 5% earners (BV11a) Disabled employees (BV16a) Ethnic Minority employees (BV17a) Accessible council buildings (BV156) |
| Enhancing Our Capacity to Improve | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliver the Gershon Agenda - Maximize efficiency and effectiveness within all available resources through the provision of high quality responsive and customer focused services - Improvement in PIs | Sickness absence (BV12) Cost effectiveness (CR10) Gershon efficiency Savings > 2.5% (CR32) PSA Performance Grant (CR11) Improvement in non-financial BVPIs (CR8) |

| Key Actions | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|--|
| Action | Portfolio Holder/ Lead Officer | Date for Completion | Measure of Success |
| Continued improvement in procurement practices | Cllr Bristow Susan White | March 2006 | % Gershon savings |
| Maintain good inspection performance | Cllr Williams Lorraine O'Donnell | Annual Assessment | CPA direction of travel statement/CPA service block scores/Inspection judgements |
| Launch Call Centre and Customer Services Centre | Cllr Bristow Ken Walker | Autumn 2005 | Customer Satisfaction |
| Review and revise Organisational Development Strategy | Cllr Williams Ada Burns | Autumn 2005 | CR7/CR8 |
| Conclude the Equal Pay and Single Status negotiations implement an 'equal pay model' | Cllr Bristow Lesley Blundell | July 2005 | Agreement and introduction of new pay structure |
| Conclude the Best Value Review of Support Services | Cllr Bristow Paul Wildsmith | Autumn 2005 | Inspection Judgements/Gershon savings/Improved support |
| Continue to develop the council's approach to social inclusion and improve the council's Equality Standard rating | Cllr Bristow David Plews | September 2005 | BV2 |
| Deliver a sustainable Medium Term Financial Plan | Cllr Bristow Paul Wildsmith | Annual Assessment | Use of Resources/Value for Money CPA Rating |
| Deliver Gershon efficiency Savings and illustrate that the Council provides the Darlington Community with value for money | Cllr Bristow Lorraine O'Donnell | Annual Assessment | Annual Efficiency Statement; Key projects to contain Gershon outcomes |
| Apply for National Awards | Cllr Williams Ada Burns | Annual Assessment | Number and quality of awards obtained |
| Continue to maintain Best Value as a means to improve service delivery | Cllr Williams Andrew Robinson | Annual Assessment | Audit and Inspection Judgements |
| Maintain high quality performance management | Cllr Williams David Goodchild | Annual Assessment | Improvement in non-financial PIs (CR8) |