



Darlington Borough Council

Council Plan Performance Management Report

April to September 2021/22

This report outlines council performance up to the end of the second quarter of the 2021/22 financial year.

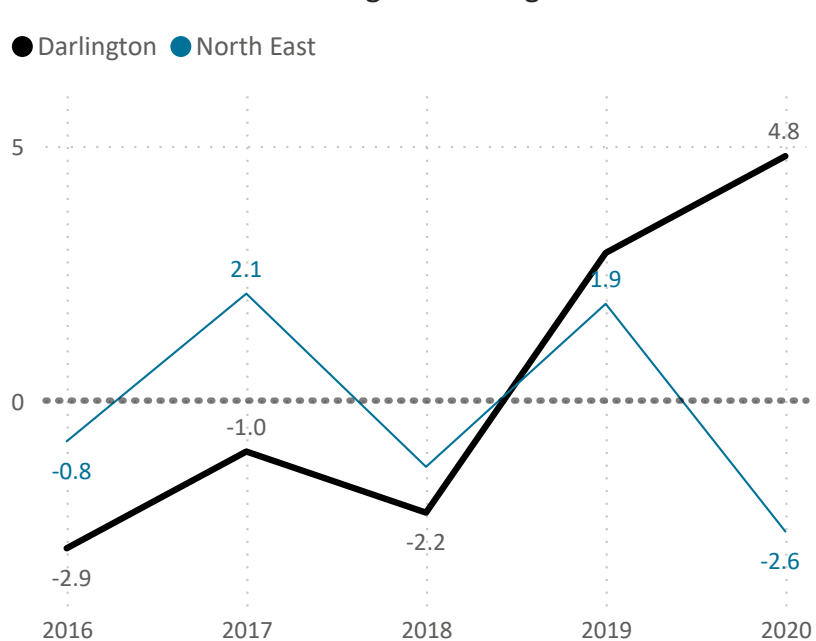
The performance report is structured around the Council Plan, with:

- A high-level update on progress towards the overarching corporate priorities outlined in the beginning of the Council Plan document to highlight areas of strategic significance:
 - Growing Darlington's Economy (pages 2-12)
 - Maximising the Potential of our Young People (pages 13-15)
 - Working with Communities to Maximise their Potential (pages 16-17)
 - Supporting the Most Vulnerable in the Borough (pages 18-21)
- Sections on each Cabinet portfolio area highlighting progress against key actions and relevant key performance indicators:
 - Adults (pages 22-23)
 - Children and Young People (pages 24-30)
 - Economy (pages 31-33)
 - Health and Housing (pages 34-39)
 - Local Services (pages 40-42)
 - Resources (pages 43-46)
 - Stronger Communities (pages 47-51)

1. GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

1.1 Delivering - More sustainable well-paid jobs

Jobs created within Borough of Darlington



This measure shows the difference in total employment (both Public and Private) compared to the same point 12 months previously, in order to show the number of jobs created in Darlington within the last year. As can be seen, the number of job opportunities increased again in 2020, in contrast to the regional and national picture where job opportunities fell during the first 9 months of the pandemic.

Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman

Number of people employed including self employed

Year	Darlington
2015	49,800
2016	48,600
2017	50,200
2018	49,400
2019	48,600
2020	48,400
2021	49,600

Employment growth continued in Darlington despite the Covid-19 pandemic, with an additional 1,200 employment opportunities recorded, including self-employment, in the local economy between July 2020 and June 2021 compared to the same period the year before.

Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman

Number of employees

Year	Darlington
2015	42,800
2016	42,600
2017	43,200
2018	44,500
2019	42,400
2020	43,300
2021	44,200

Employee growth also appears to have continued in Darlington despite the effects of the pandemic, with data showing 900 additional employees recorded in the local economy between July 2020 and June 2021 compared to the same period the year before.

Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman

1.1 Delivering - More sustainable well-paid jobs

Median weekly full-time residence based earnings

Year	Darlington	England	North East
2012	348	412	374
2013	382	421	382
2014	387	843	773
2015	402	429	395
2016	437	442	405
2017	416	454	416
2018	415	466	420
2019	440	483	438
2020	428	484	436
2021	487	509	463

Darlington resident median weekly incomes increased in 2021, following a fall in 2020, to £487 per week (equating to £25,324 per annum). This metric is based on sample data, and therefore should be treated with some caution as smaller areas such as Darlington tend to show relatively high volatility between years. Looking back since 2014, however, suggests that Darlington median weekly earnings for residents are, and continue to be, in line with regional trends.

Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman

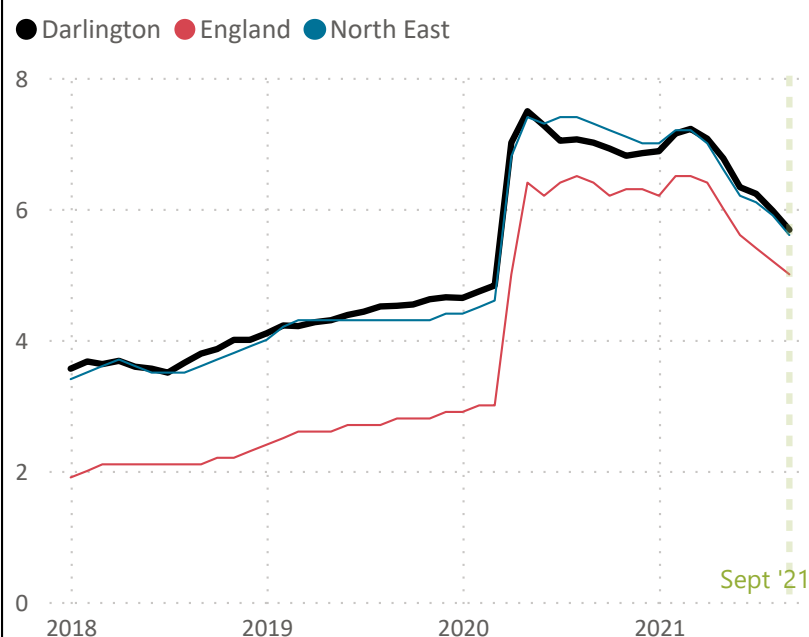
Median weekly full-time employee based earnings

Year	Darlington	England	North East
2012	366	412	372
2013	330	421	379
2014	422	422	390
2015	437	429	395
2016	435	442	403
2017	423	454	417
2018	433	466	418
2019	457	483	438
2020	435	485	436
2021	457	510	458

Darlington employee median weekly incomes increased in 2021, following a fall in 2020, to £457 per week (equating to £23,769 per annum). This metric is based on sample data, and therefore should be treated with some caution as smaller areas such as Darlington tend to show relatively high volatility between years. Looking back since 2014, however, suggests that whilst Darlington median weekly earnings for employees have increased slightly over this period, the rate of increase has been slower than elsewhere and so fallen from being in line with the national average, to being in line with neighbouring authority areas. New civil service roles are expected to help improve this trend.

Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman

Monthly unemployed claimant count (%)

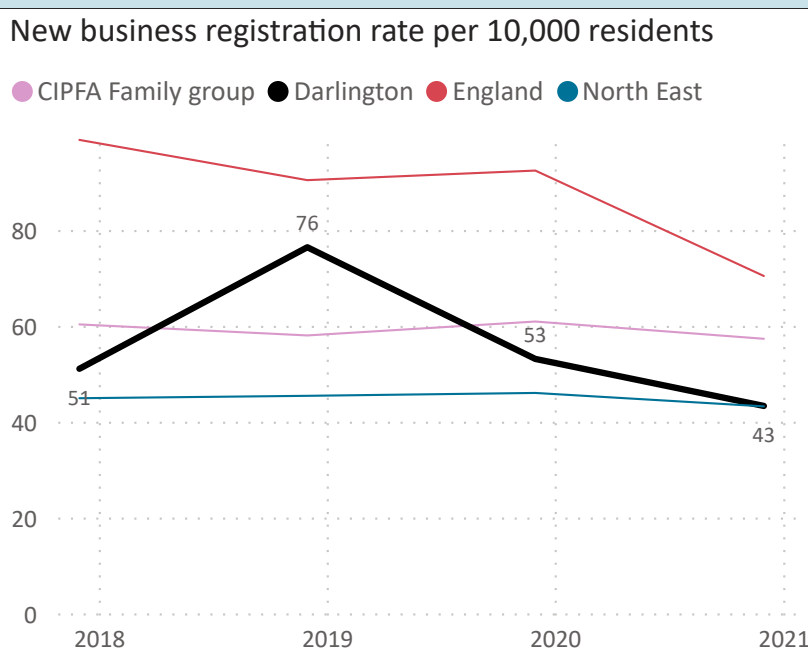


The number of Darlington residents claiming benefits for the reason of unemployment fell again in September, to 3,700 (5.7%), from 4,880 (7.5%) in May 2020 when the impacts of Covid-19 on worklessness reached its peak. Whilst Darlington remains above the national average for this measure, it is in line with neighbouring authorities in the North East and expected to continue falling as the economy recovers from the pandemic and growing vacancy numbers feed through into reduced unemployment.

Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman

1. GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

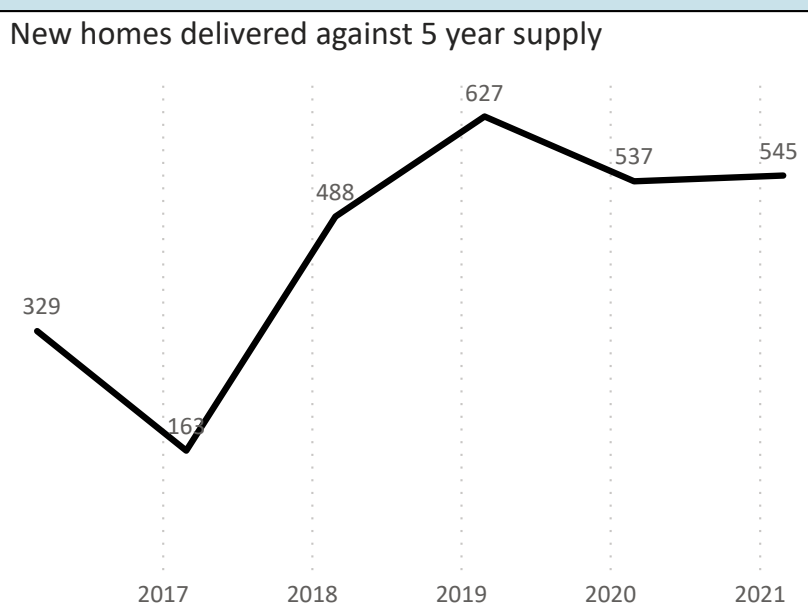
1.2 Delivering - More businesses



New business formation numbers have fallen in Darlington in both 2020 and 2021, due to the immediate impacts of Covid-19 pandemic and resulting limited opportunities for new enterprises. Despite this fall, however, the number of employment opportunities in the town, measured as absolute number of available jobs, has increased over the same period. Moreover, it is anticipated that as the local economy continues to recover from the pandemic and its aftermath the numbers of new businesses created in the borough will begin to recover, supported by recent positive developments including the arrival of hundreds of new civil service jobs in Darlington.

Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman

1.3 Delivering - More homes



Despite the pandemic the housing market remains buoyant in the borough and, based on the completions so far in the first half of the financial year, we would expect to once again exceed the annual requirement. The Local Plan will hopefully be adopted early in the new year which will result in applications currently in the system being given approval. The adoption of the Local Plan will result in further applications being submitted to ensure we have a pipeline of permissions to ensure delivery of our 5 year supply going forward.

Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman

1.4 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - Clean

Percentage of complaints about refuse on private land investigated and completed within 28 days (except where there is non-compliance with enforcement action taken)

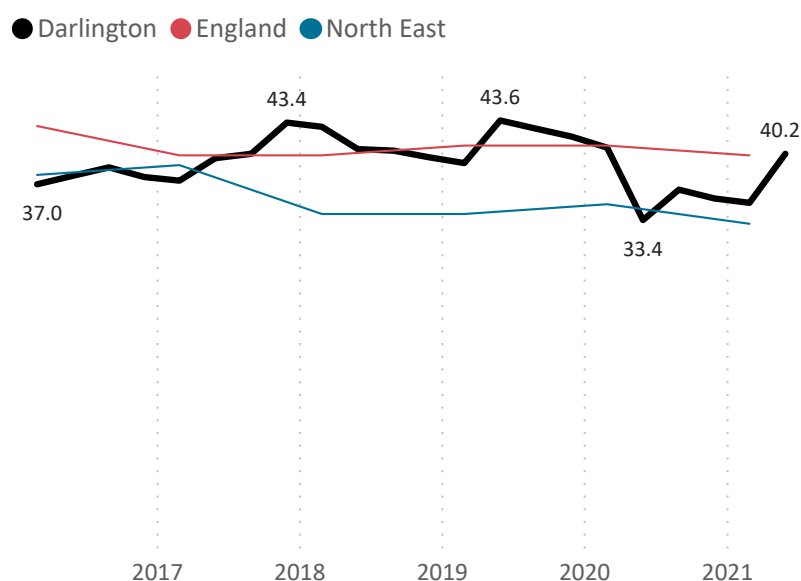
Year	Month	Darlington
2021	June	91.2%
	September	89.5%

Environmental Health investigate complaints of accumulations of refuse on private land and in financial year 2020/2021 received 306 service requests and 171 up to September this year. In the first instance for the majority of cases involving refuse accumulations in yards / gardens a Community Protection Warning is issued requiring disposal of the refuse in a proper manner and these have proved to be successful. For those case where the refuse has not been removed enforcement action is considered prioritising refuse which is causing a public health nuisance i.e. putrescible household refuse. The timescale within the target has been extended from 28 to 42 days to allow a longer period of time to be given to those responsible to dispose of the accumulation of refuse.

Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman

1.4 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - Clean

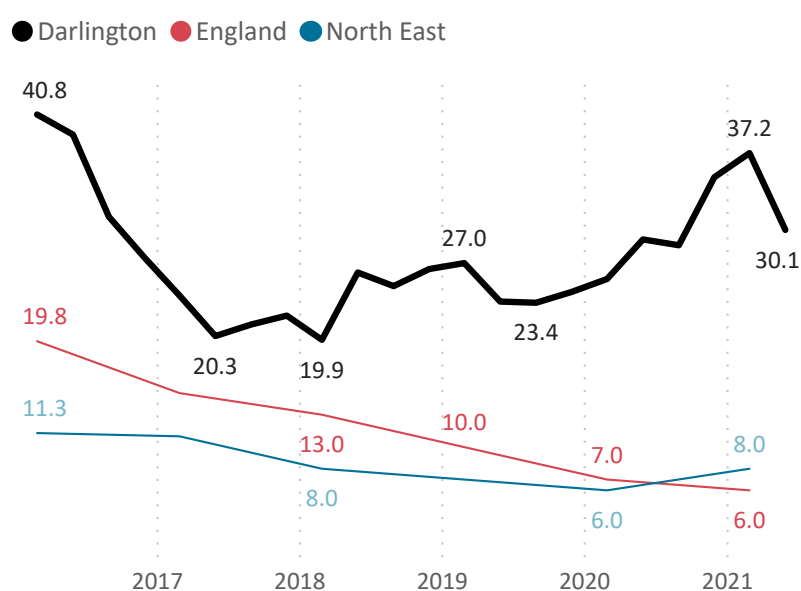
Percentage of household waste that is collected that is either reused, recycled or composted



Data for the proportion of local household waste reused, recycled or composted is only available for Quarter 1 of this year as the information is reported through a national system which has a three-month lag. The Quarter 1 data shows an increase, to 40.2%, for this measure, above the equivalent figure for the previous four quarters and above the most recent benchmarking data for England and the North East. Significant work continues to be undertaken by the Street Scene and Communications teams to increase recycling rates and reduce contamination by raising residents' awareness of what can be recycled through a variety of channels.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

Percentage of overall waste that is collected by the Council that is landfilled



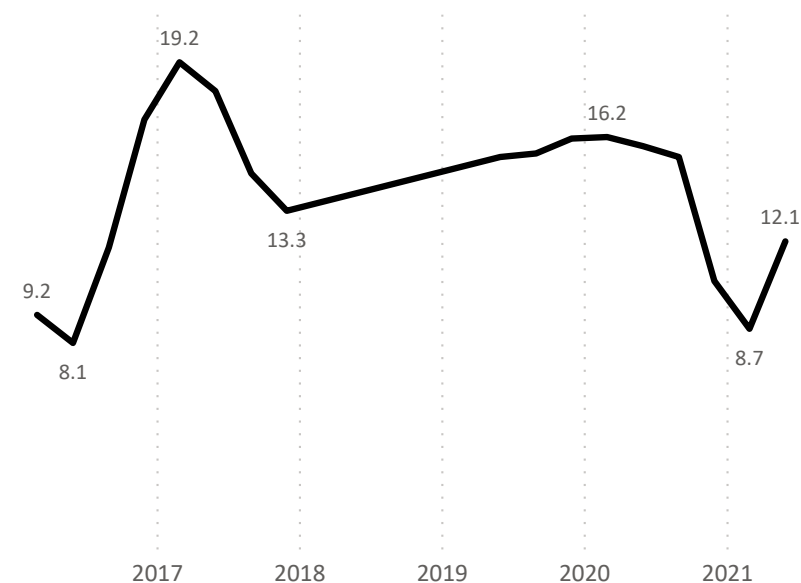
Landfill rates in Darlington have fallen significantly over the last fifteen years:

- The proportion of municipal waste sent to landfill since 2006/07 has reduced from more than 60% to 37%
- The proportion of household waste sent to landfill since 2006/07 has reduced from 80% to 38%

There are fluctuations over the years as there is a relationship with levels of recycling and waste sent to energy recovery. Darlington Borough Council performs worse than the rest of the North East as the majority of our neighbours send all residual waste to an energy recovery facility with limited waste going to landfill.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

Percentage of overall waste that is collected by the Council that is used for energy recovery



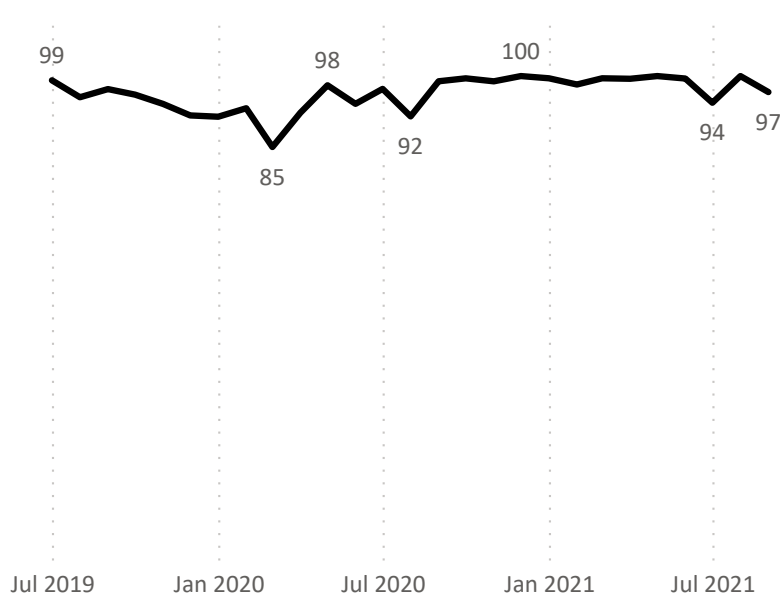
The proportion of household waste sent for energy recovery dropped from 16% in 2019/20 to 9% in 2020/21. The reason for this reduction was the emergence of Covid-19, which led to a collapse of the market waste was sent to for energy recovery. As the markets begin to stabilise again, a new Tees Valley provider has been found to deliver this service and so more waste is now being sent as a fuel source to energy plants. This metric is expected to continue improving as the industry recovers from the effects of the pandemic.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

1. GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

1.4 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - Clean

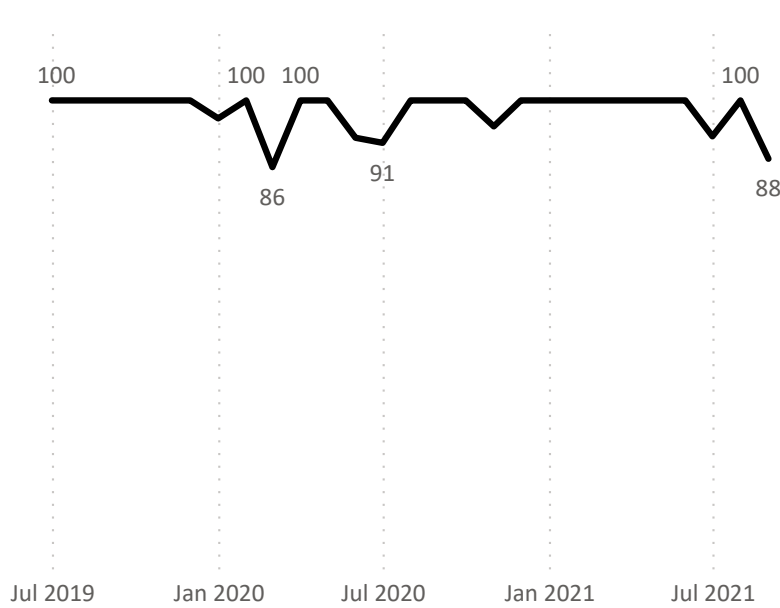
Percentage of small fly tips removed within target time (reported monthly)



Data for the first two quarters of 2021/22 shows that the Council's Street Scene team have continued to clear the vast majority of small fly tips within their target timescales, with monthly averages ranging between 94 and 100%.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

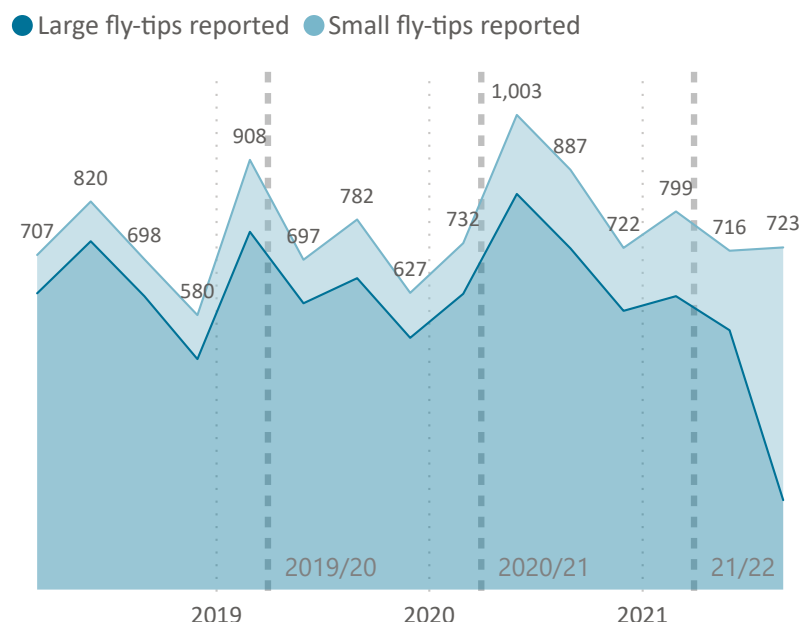
Percentage of large fly tips removed within target time (reported monthly)



The proportion of large fly tips removed in target time has fallen over the period, however this is due to a new process whereby large fly tips now initially go to the Council's Civic Enforcement team to investigate to see if there is any evidence to proceed to prosecution, rather than directly to the Street Scene team. Only once the initial investigation is carried out is Street Scene notified to collect the relevant fly tip, which has led to longer overall periods between notification and removal. As the target time was for Street Scene collection this measure will be reviewed to better reflect actual performance going forward.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

Total number of fly-tips reported in quarter

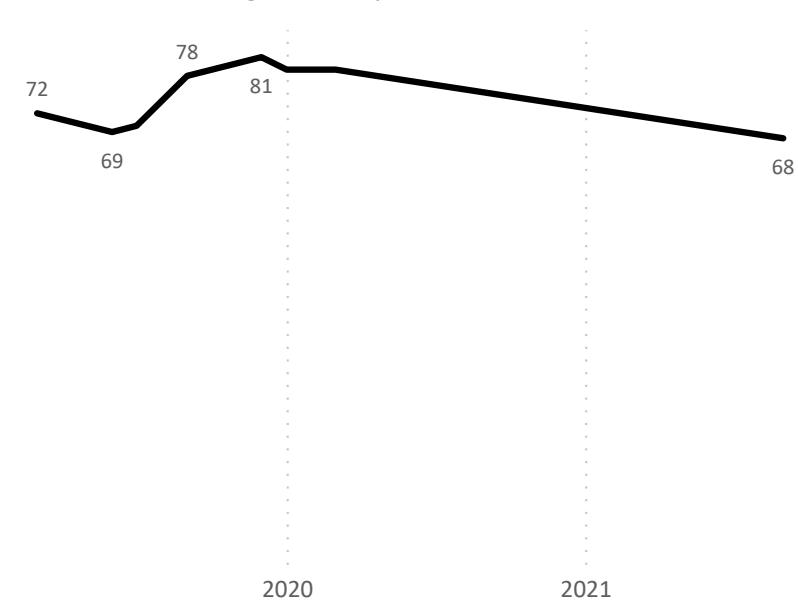


Following an increase due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of fly tips reported fell in the first two quarters of 2021/22, compared to both the previous two quarters and the same period in 2020/21.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

1.4 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - Clean

Land Audit Management System - Litter Score



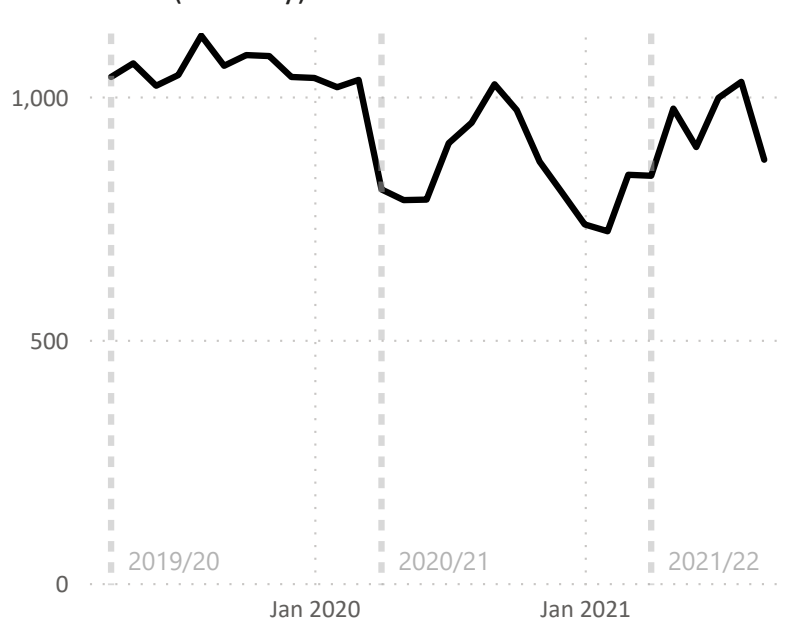
The scoring system used for monitoring litter as part of the Land Audit Management System (LAMS) is based on a grading structure; Grade A with no litter to Grade D which is heavily littered.

The majority of inspections carried out during the period were in the lightly littered grades and therefore passed the inspection. There will be a difference between periods as the inspections are carried out in different areas of town on a rolling basis with some areas having more challenging littering issues than others.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

1.5 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - Safe

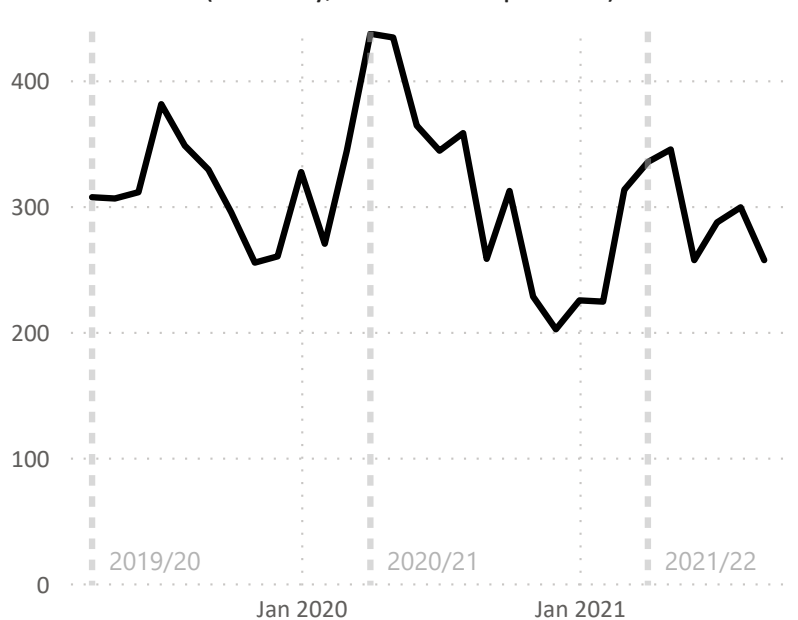
Total Crime (monthly)



Recorded crime for the first six months of 2021/22 increased 7% from the same period last year, however was still 11% lower than the same period pre-pandemic, in 2019/20. The types of reported crime showing increases are largely directly linked to the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, in areas such as violence against the person for example. The Council are working with Durham Constabulary and other partners to help address these issues and continue monitoring crime rates.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

ASB Incidents (monthly, excludes duplicates)



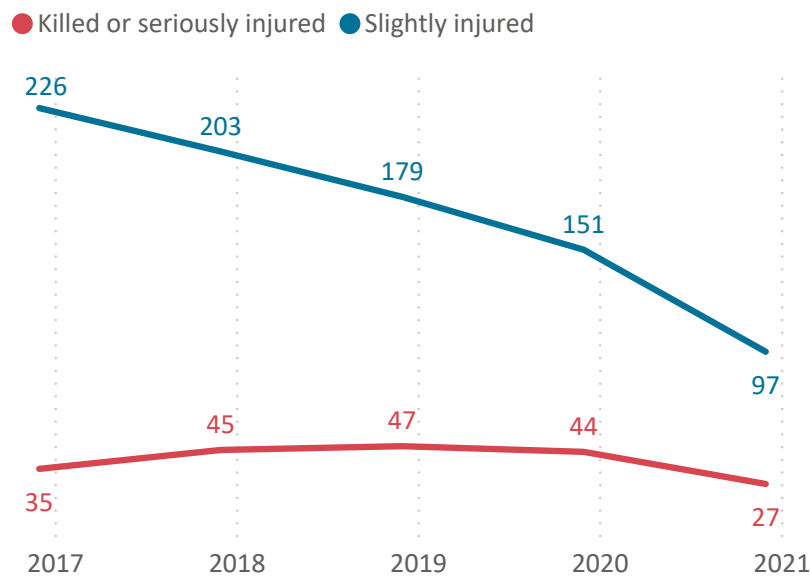
Whilst the rate of reported antisocial behaviour incidents across the borough continues to fall, the Council continues to be proactive in addressing issues. Over the past two quarters, for example, incidents of youths throwing missiles in areas to the east and north of Darlington have been a priority for the Community Safety team, with the Council's Civic Enforcement officers working closely with Durham Constabulary and other partners to identify individuals involved through a series of targeted operations. Several groups have subsequently already been identified and the Civic Enforcement team are in the process of interviewing parents and, where appropriate, referring individuals to the Youth Justice Service (YJS).

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

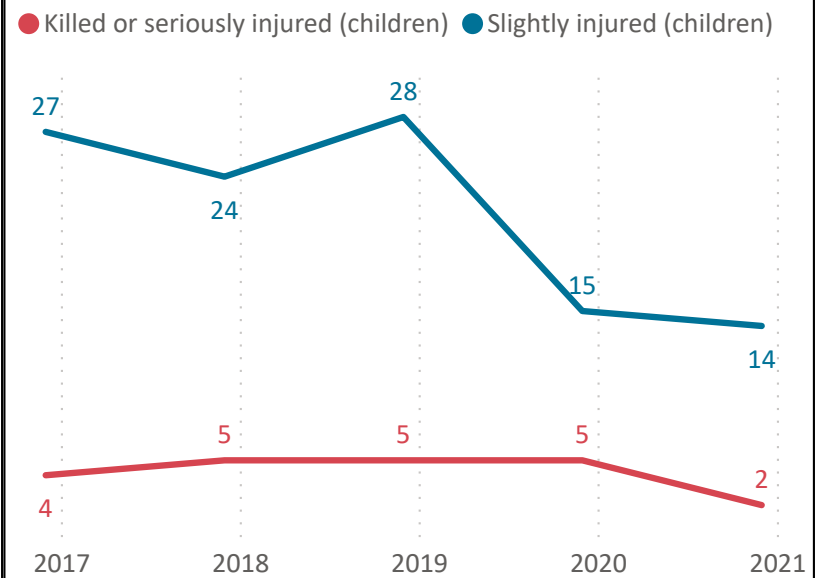
1. GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

1.5 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - Safe

Number of people killed or injured in road traffic accidents (annual)



Number of children killed or injured in road traffic accidents (annual)



Casualties are monitored annually and there has been significant progress in reducing the number of Slight casualties in Darlington over a sustained period.

Covid-19 has resulted in changing road traffic patterns with significantly less traffic recorded during lockdown periods. This will be a contributory factor in the significant reduction in people killed or seriously injured during the 2020/2021.

Whilst casualties are reducing, it is saddening that people are still injured on our roads. There have been no fatalities this year and number of people killed on our road since 2017 is 6. There have been no child fatalities since 2013.

Assistant Director Transport & Capital Projects - Ant Hewitt

1.6 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - Healthy

Male healthy life expectancy at birth

Year	Darlington	England	North East
2014	62.2	63.4	59.6
2015	61.8	63.4	59.6
2016	61.1	63.3	59.6
2017	60.7	63.4	59.5
2018	60.3	63.4	59.4
2019	58.1	63.4	59.4

There is a two-year lag on this metric, however latest data, for 2017-19, shows Darlington is statistically similar to the North East average, at 58.1 years, but lower than the national average and falling at a faster rate than elsewhere since 2015-17. This indicator is considered an important summary measure of mortality and morbidity, by showing the years a person can expect to live in good health, rather than with a disability or in poor health. The measure is calculated using contemporary mortality rates and the prevalence of self-reported good health in local areas.

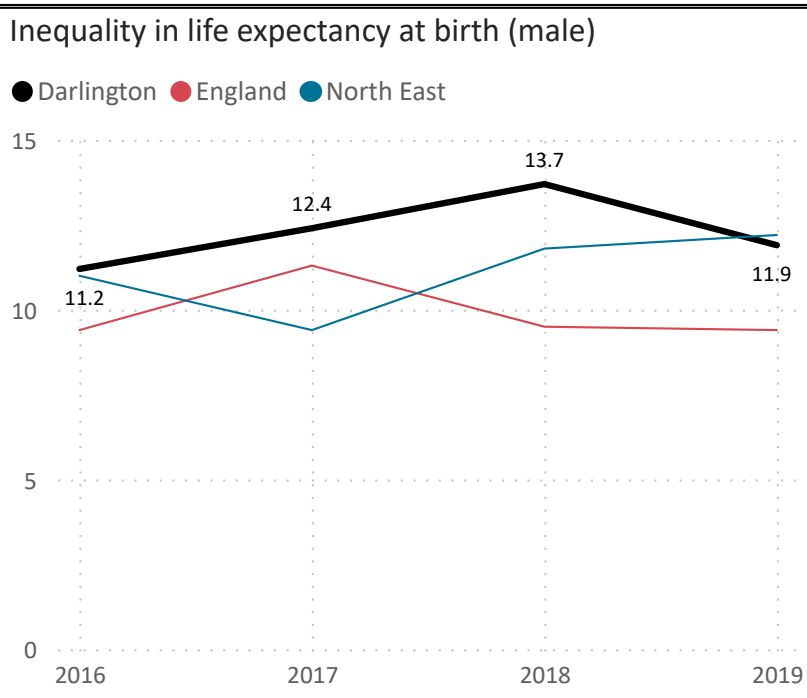
[Director Public Health - Penny Spring](#)

Female healthy life expectancy at birth

Year	Darlington	England	North East
2014	61.7	63.9	59.9
2015	61.4	64.1	60.1
2016	63.4	63.8	60.5
2017	64.3	63.8	60.4
2018	63.3	63.9	59.7
2019	62.2	63.5	59.0

There is a two-year lag on this metric, however latest data, for 2017-19, shows Darlington performs relatively well compared to the rest of the North East in terms of healthy life expectancy for females and is statistically similar to the England average, at 62.2 years, however this measure has been falling at a faster rate than elsewhere since 2015-17. This indicator is considered an important summary measure of mortality and morbidity, by showing the years a person can expect to live in good health, rather than with a disability or in poor health. The measure is calculated using contemporary mortality rates and the prevalence of self-reported good health in local areas.

[Director Public Health - Penny Spring](#)

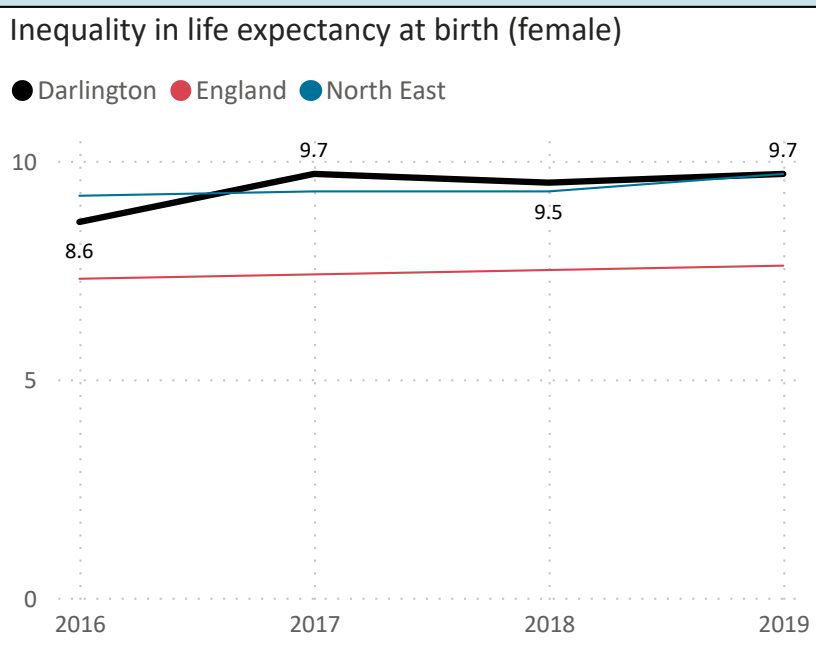


This indicator measures inequalities in life expectancy at birth within England as a whole, each English region, and each local authority. It takes account of health inequalities across the whole range of deprivation within each area and summarises this in a single number. This represents the range in years of life expectancy across the social gradient from most to least deprived, based on a statistical analysis of the relationship between life expectancy and deprivation. Inequality in life expectancy at birth for males in Darlington fell in 2019, from 13.7 to 11.9 years and is now slightly below the North East average of 12.2 years, although it remains above the national average.

[Director Public Health - Penny Spring](#)

1. GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

1.6 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - Healthy



This indicator measures inequalities in life expectancy at birth within England as a whole, each English region, and each local authority. It takes account of health inequalities across the whole range of deprivation within each area and summarises this in a single number. This represents the range in years of life expectancy across the social gradient from most to least deprived, based on a statistical analysis of the relationship between life expectancy and deprivation. Inequality in life expectancy at birth for females in Darlington increased very slightly in 2019, to 9.7 years, but remains in line with the North East average and above the national average.

Director Public Health - Penny Spring

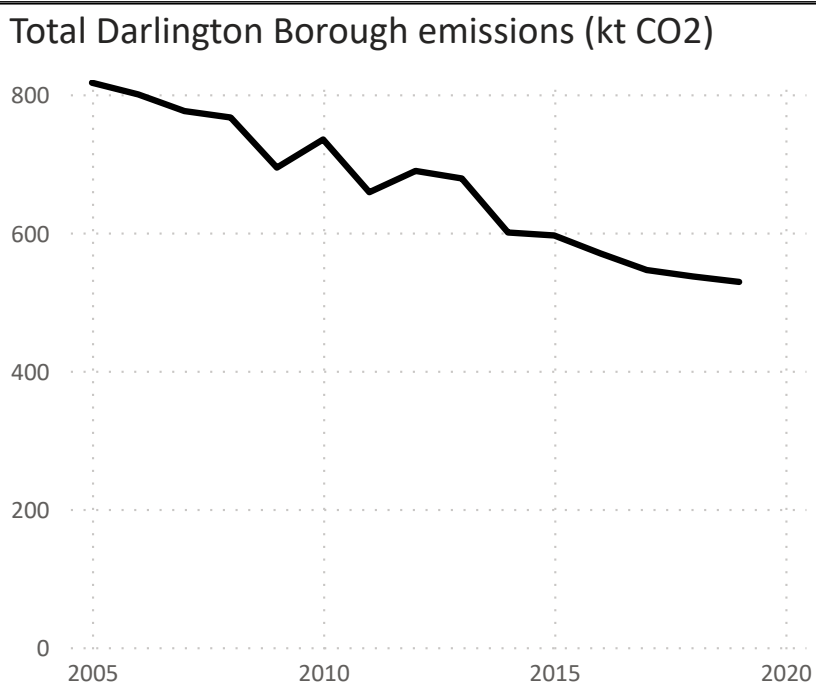
1.7 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - Sustainable

CO2 emissions per capita

Year	Darlington	England	North East
2014	5.7	6.1	9.0
2015	5.6	5.8	8.1
2016	5.4	5.4	6.0
2017	5.1	5.2	6.0
2018	5.0	5.1	5.8
2019	4.9	4.9	5.5

As shown by the data, Darlington's emissions remain well below the North East average. Officers will use the lessons learnt from putting our own house in order to persuade and encourage businesses in the area to take their own actions to further deliver improvements for this measure. The Council will also step up its engagement with residents and schools over the coming period to ensure we are all equipped to play our part in tackling climate change.

Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman



The Council's climate change action plan has now been published, with almost 200 actions outlined to ensure we meet our climate declaration. In addition, almost £2m of grant funding has been received for work on the corporate estate and energy efficiency measures for almost 900 properties across Darlington. A compulsory staff training module has also been rolled out, ensuring Council employees understand their role in combatting climate change. Finally, a revised tree and woodland strategy has been published, including a commitment to plant at least 20,000 trees over three years, almost 10,000 of which have already been planted or are planned.

Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman

1. GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

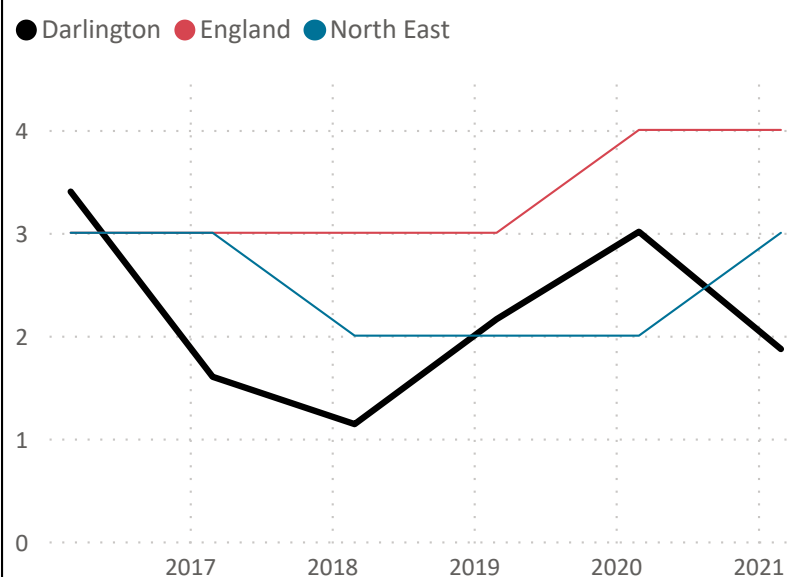
1.8 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - Well planned

The successful adoption of the Local Plan will ensure that a degree of confidence is given both to the Council and developers that commercial and residential growth will be permitted in a variety of sustainable and accessible locations, to meet both our ambitions and local needs. The development of new housing and new economic strategies will then further support and promote economic growth targets and priorities, as well as complement existing strategies including partnership plans at Tees Valley Combined Authority level, to ensure the Council continues to have a comprehensive, robust and deliverable action plan for continued economic growth.

Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman

1.9 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - On the move

Percentage of principal roads where maintenance should be considered (A class)



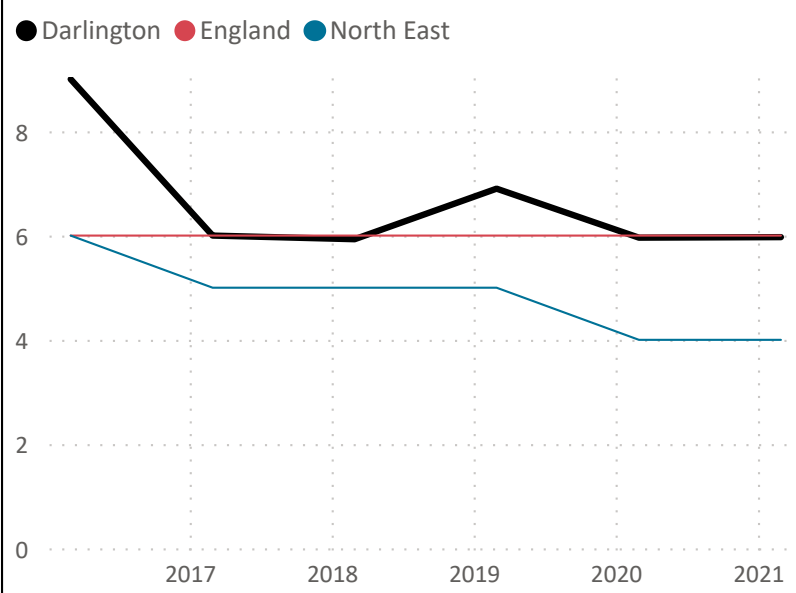
Due to Covid-19 restrictions on pedestrian social distancing, two of the 2020/21 programmed "A" road schemes had to be deferred, however the programme still delivered 1.16km of reconstructed and/or resurfaced A roads in Darlington, resulting in an improvement in the overall condition of the A road network.

The percentage of the A road network needing to be considered for maintenance fell to 1.9%, better than the national and North East average.

In Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 three A roads were completed; the A68 West Auckland Road, the A6072 Heighington Bypass and the A67 Merrybent.

Assistant Director Transport & Capital Projects - Ant Hewitt

Percentage of non-principal roads where maintenance should be considered (B and C class)



Due to Covid-19 restrictions on pedestrian social distancing, the investment planned on the B&C class road network planned in 2020/21 has had to be deferred until 2021/22.

The network condition remained at 6%, highlighting that there has been no deterioration in the condition of B and C class roads. Previous years investment has seen improvements to B and C Class roads and Darlington is now in line with the England average.

In Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 two resurfacing schemes on B and C class roads were completed; the C38 Middleton Road / Sadberge Road and the B6279 Tornado Way.

Assistant Director Transport & Capital Projects - Ant Hewitt

1.9 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - On the move

The Council continues to work in partnership with TVCA and the other Tees Valley local authorities to deliver the joint Strategic Transport Plan. This work is crucial in supporting the council plan's principal ambition of economic growth and work has continued on Darlington Station improvements, bus improvement corridors and the establishment of the Bus Partnership, development of Demand Responsive Transport, travel behaviour programmes, upgraded Urban Traffic Management and Control System, Wheels to Work, Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan investment and electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

[Assistant Director Transport & Capital Projects - Ant Hewitt](#)

2. MAXIMISE THE POTENTIAL OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE BY

2.1 Working with partners to maximise educational achievement

The Ofsted profile of local schools has improved significantly since 2020, reflecting the significant work continuing to be undertaken by local partners to support children and young people's attainment in Darlington. In January 2019 Darlington was highlighted in the Ofsted report "Flight or Fight" as one of 3 local authorities with the highest number of "stuck" schools in England that had received persistently poor inspection ratings and was locked in a cycle of low performance. At this point Darlington was also well below regional and national average on Ofsted performance for secondary schools. As of September 2021, however, the percentage of "Good" or "Outstanding" secondary schools in Darlington is now above regional average and the second highest in the Tees Valley. There has also been a significant improvement in the percentage of pupils attending "Good" or "Outstanding" schools, with Darlington also now outperforming the regional average on this measure. Furthermore, no schools are currently judged "Inadequate" in Darlington.

Assistant Director Education and Inclusion - Tony Murphy

2.2 Working to remove barriers to young people reaching their potential

Percentage inequality gap in achievement across all the Early Learning Goals

School year	Darlington	England	North East	Statistical Neighbour
2013/14	42.7	33.9	37.8	36.4
2014/15	40.5	32.1	35.3	34.3
2015/16	37.9	31.4	33.3	33.5
2016/17	36.9	31.7	32.3	33.3
2017/18	38.2	31.8	32.9	34.2
2018/19	40.0	32.4	33.4	34.5

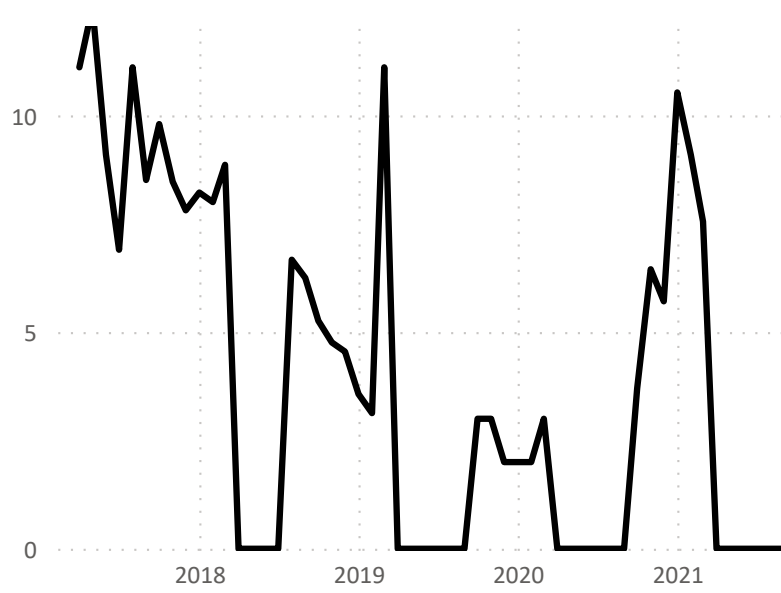
The percentage of children in Darlington schools achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception has been stable for the last 4 years and in line with national, regional and statistical neighbour comparators. The percentage of these children entitled to free school meals achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception in 2018/19 is greater than the regional and national averages. The percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths has improved year on year since 2015/16, and is currently 4% above the national average, with the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils narrowing at a greater rate than nationally.

Assistant Director Education and Inclusion - Tony Murphy

2. MAXIMISE THE POTENTIAL OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE BY

2.2 Working to remove barriers to young people reaching their potential

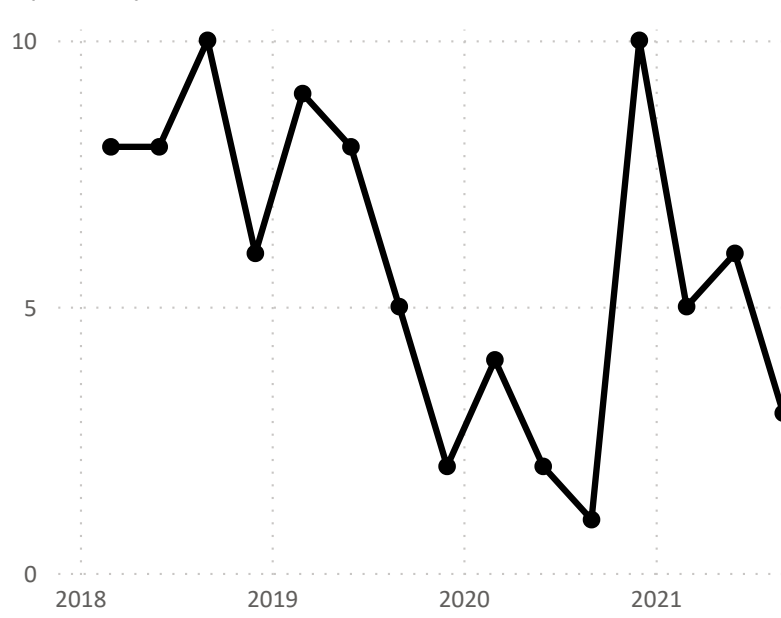
Percentage of reoffending rate of clients receiving a PCD



The Council's Youth Offending Service (YOS) had 20 young people referred to the service for diversionary disposals i.e., Pre-Caution Disposals (19) and Restorative Disposals (1) over the first six months of 2020/21. Over the same period, the team has achieved a 100% success rate in terms of young people not reoffending following engagement with the service.

Assistant Director Children's Services - Chris Bell

Number of First Time entrants to the Youth Justice System (quarterly)



The number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System in Darlington remained lower than comparator areas in both 2019/20 and 2020/21. This continued positive performance reflects the good work of Council services and partners in early identification of young people in need of support, as well as impressive engagement levels with the Council's Youth Offending Service (YOS) team.

Assistant Director Children's Services - Chris Bell

2. MAXIMISE THE POTENTIAL OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE BY

2.2 Working to remove barriers to young people reaching their potential

School Readiness: all children achieving a good level of development at the end of reception as a percentage of all eligible children (Early Years Foundation Stage profile)

School year	Darlington	England	North East	Statistical Neighbour
2013/14	55.3	60.4	55.8	56.1
2014/15	66.3	66.3	63.1	63.4
2015/16	69.6	69.3	68.4	67.3
2016/17	72.2	70.7	70.7	68.7
2017/18	72.6	71.5	71.5	70.0
2018/19	71.7	71.8	71.8	70.4

All end of key stage attainment data collections were cancelled for 2019/20 and 2020/21 due to Covid, so 2018/19 is the last academic year where data is available.

The 2018/19 results show that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has increased significantly since 2013/14 and, at 71.7%, remains in line with the national average (71.8%), those of statistical neighbours (70.4%) and North East local authorities (71.8%).

Director Public Health - Penny Spring

Child development: percentage of children achieving a good level of development at 2-2½ years

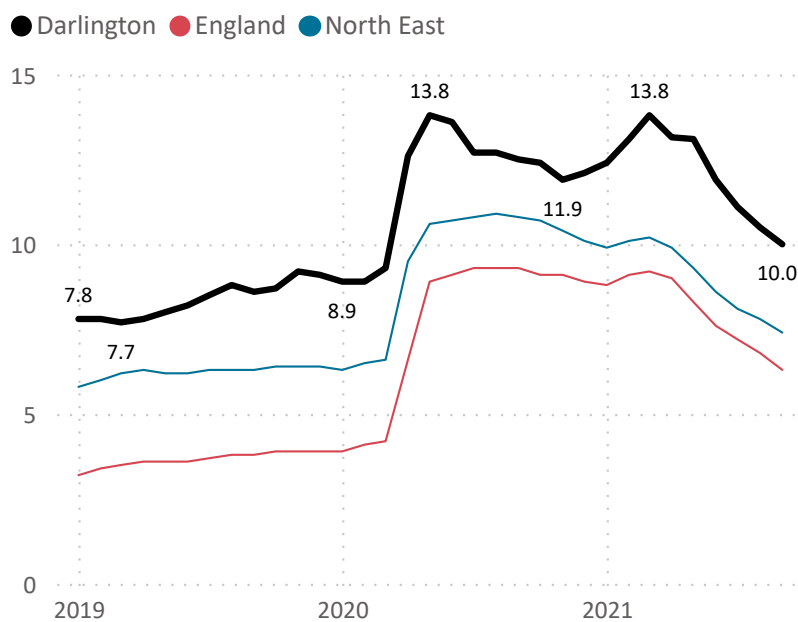
School year	Darlington	England	North East
2017/18	80.9	83.3	85.6
2018/19	91.8	84.1	87.6
2019/20	93.9	83.3	87.4
2020/21	93.9	82.9	87.2

The percentage of children achieving a good level of development at 2-2½ years, defined as the proportion of children who received a review who were at or above the expected level in all five domains, remains statistically better than the England and the North East averages, at 94% in 2020/21. The national average for this measure is 83%.

Director Public Health - Penny Spring

2.3 Working at a Tees Valley level to match jobs with skills and training

18-24 Unemployment claimant count (%)



The 18-24 year old claimant count in Darlington has dropped steadily since March 2021 when reached its highest point at 13.8% or 1,005 young people. As of September 2021 it was down to 9.9% or 725 young people, and down from 12.5% in September 2020, but still above the North East average of 7.4% and the England average of 6.3% and above pre-pandemic levels - the local figure in September 2019 was 8.5% or 625 young people. The Council continues to proactively address this issue, with a number of working groups established to develop a partnership approach to supporting young people struggling to find suitable employment.

Assistant Director Education and Inclusion - Tony Murphy

3. WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO MAXIMISE THEIR POTENTIAL

3.1 Maximising the benefits of a growing economy for all communities

Percentage of workers earning the real living wage			
Year	Darlington	England	North East
2016	81.1	79.5	76.1
2017	77.7	80.5	77.1
2018	78.0	79.9	75.8
2019	77.3	82.4	78.1
2020	75.8	82.8	79.2
2021	80.3	85.2	81.3

The proportion of in-work Darlington residents earning the real living wage, calculated by the Resolution Foundation as being £9.50 an hour in 2021, significantly increased this year, to 80.3% but remained below the regional average of 81.3% and England average of 85.2%. This metric is based on sample data, and therefore should be treated with some caution as smaller areas such as Darlington tend to show relatively high volatility between years.

Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman

3.2 Targeting services where most needed

Council services, often in partnership, regularly engage with communities to help them to maximise their potential with The Bread and Butter Thing, the Northgate Initiative, and other activities through Darlington Cares just a few examples of innovative new approaches delivered in the last few years. More recently:

- a council-wide approach, working with partners, was undertaken to support communities throughout the pandemic.
- our Housing team secured funding to eradicate rough sleeping, have worked closely with the Public Health Team to run Covid-19 vaccination clinics for homeless people, and won a NEPACS Ruth Cranfield award in recognition of their dedication to residents through the pandemic.
- the Lifeline Team has delivered tenant engagement sessions within their Sheltered and Extra Care tenants, and local good neighbour communities, to give residents a say in tenancy management, policy, activity and all aspects of scheme development. The brilliant work of the team was evidenced by their recent win of the Exceptional Care award at the Darlington Stronger Communities Awards.
- a new digital inclusion initiative by the Council is offering residents the chance to borrow iPads, access training and support, and receive refurbished devices donated by fellow residents.

Head of Strategy, Performance & Comms - N. Bowerbank

3.3 Working with partners

The Council has a long history of working well with partners to effectively address local priorities, which has continued during the course of the pandemic. Having recognised a need for affordable food in local communities, for example, Darlington Borough Council collaborated with Cummins and Darlington Building Society to bring the charity The Bread and Butter Thing to Darlington, which now operates from 7 community hubs located in areas identified as in greatest need across the borough. During 2020 it became apparent that some families were going to struggle to buy uniform for their children's return to school. DBC worked with businesses through Darlington Cares to open a Uniform Exchange Scheme. DBC has established a Public Sector Executives Group which brings together the public sector agencies in Darlington to address shared concerns.

Director Darlington Partnerships - Seth Pearson

3. WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO MAXIMISE THEIR POTENTIAL

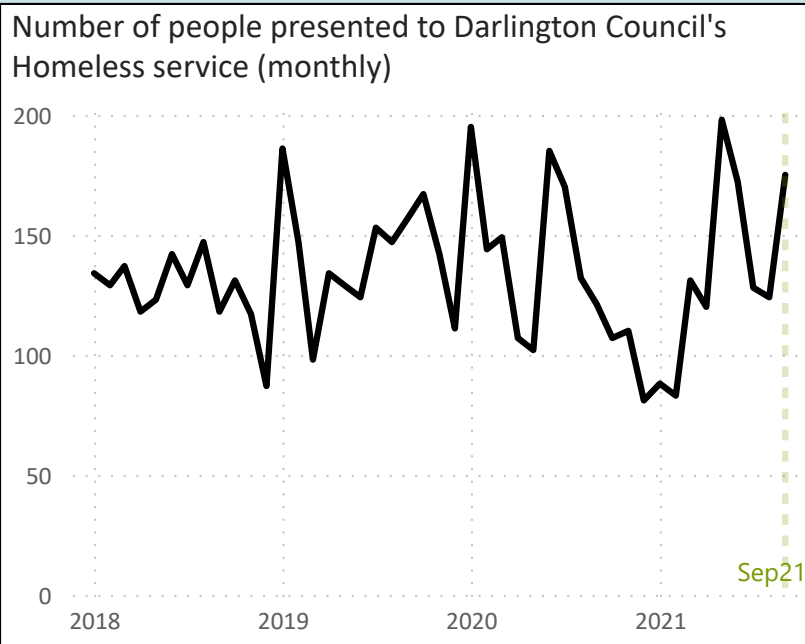
3.4 Working with communities

The Council is considering how it can generate activity to complement the national Levelling Up programme, ensuring that national investment generates the greatest prosperity for the people of Darlington. The focus would be on ensuring that residents of Darlington, no matter where in the borough they live, have the same access to opportunities to make the best of their talents and live a healthy and happy life as in any other part of the UK. In-depth engagement with local communities would be a core principle of activity. The Council is leading a multi-agency programme in Northgate which is acting as a testbed for how focused activity can help residents access opportunities. The Towns Fund presents an opportunity to create an adult learning facility to improve skills for work. In addition the Council is conferring with partner agencies to consider how all young people in Darlington can be supported to maximise their employment potential.

Director Darlington Partnerships - Seth Pearson

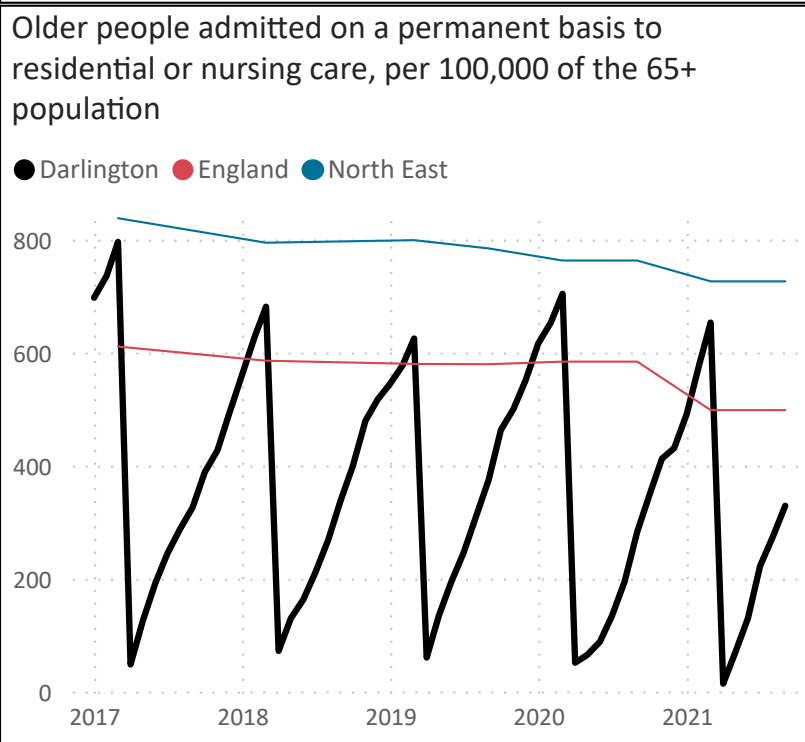
4. SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE IN THE BOROUGH

4.1 Providing care and support when needed



Whilst there was a decrease in homeless placements during Quarter 2, the number of people presenting to the Council's Homelessness services remains high as a result of the pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic and this is considered likely to increase during the winter months. Successful bids for Government funding has allowed the service to recruit additional staff to help manage growing demand, including an Outreach Support Worker, to deliver street support and floating support to prevent rough sleeping, and a new Housing Options Navigator, to carry out triage, duty to refer and low level case work.

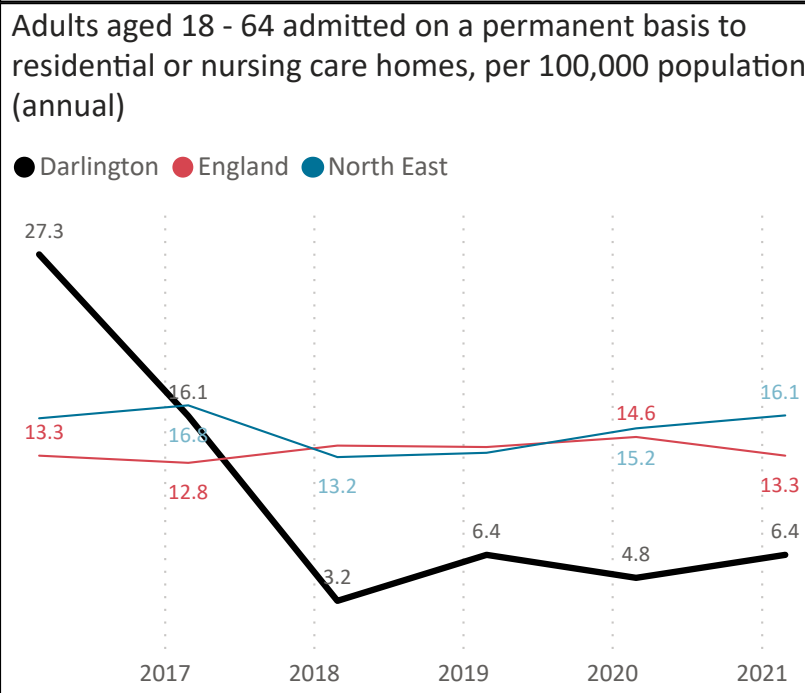
Assistant Director Housing & Revenues - Anthony Sandys



Between April and September 2021, the number of older people admitted into residential or nursing care was 71 (328.9 per 100,000 population). This is an increase from last year, when the number of permanent admissions during the same period was 61 (282.6 per 100,000 population), but still significantly below the pre-pandemic comparable figure from 2019 of 81 (375.2 per 100,000).

Note: The graph shows the monthly rate of older people being admitted into permanent care in Darlington from April of each year. As regional and national benchmarking data is only available for the end of each year, the 'peaks' for Darlington should be used to determine the borough's relative performance for this measure.

Assistant Director Adults - Joss Harbron

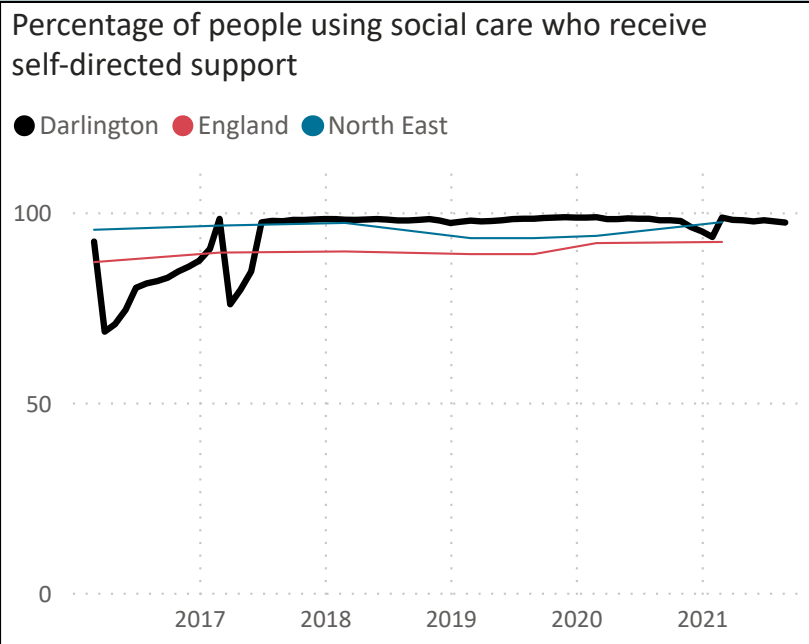


Between April and September 2021, 5 working age individuals (6.4 per 100,000 population) were admitted permanently into residential or nursing care homes, continuing trend since 2018 of being significantly below both regional and national average for this metric. A robust assurance process undertaken by Team Managers and the Council's Validation Panel continues to ensure that clients only enter permanent care when necessary, with clients supported to live independently with support wherever this is possible.

Assistant Director Adults - Joss Harbron

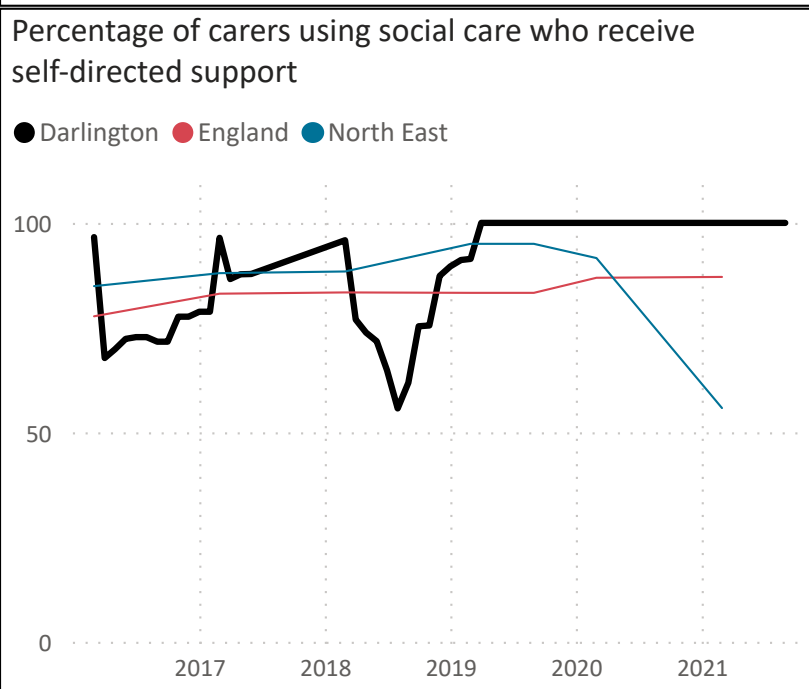
4. SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE IN THE BOROUGH

4.1 Providing care and support when needed



As of the end of September 2021, 97.3% of 770 clients using social care were receiving self-directed support. Darlington typically exceeds both the national and regional averages for this measure, reflecting the strong ethos of the Council's Adult Social Care team of taking a strengths-based approach to support residents in need, maximising service users' choice and control over the services they receive to ensure these best suit peoples' particular needs and preferences.

Assistant Director Adults - Joss Harbron



Over the first half of 2021/22, 100% of 91 carers using social care receive self-directed support. This data, which shows Darlington exceeds both the national and regional average for this metric, reflects how all carers who are in receipt of a commissioned service now have a personal budget to maximise their independence and choice and, ultimately, to support their wellbeing and ensure they are able to access the support that best suits their needs.

Assistant Director Adults - Joss Harbron

4.2 Working with people to build on their strengths to maximise their potential

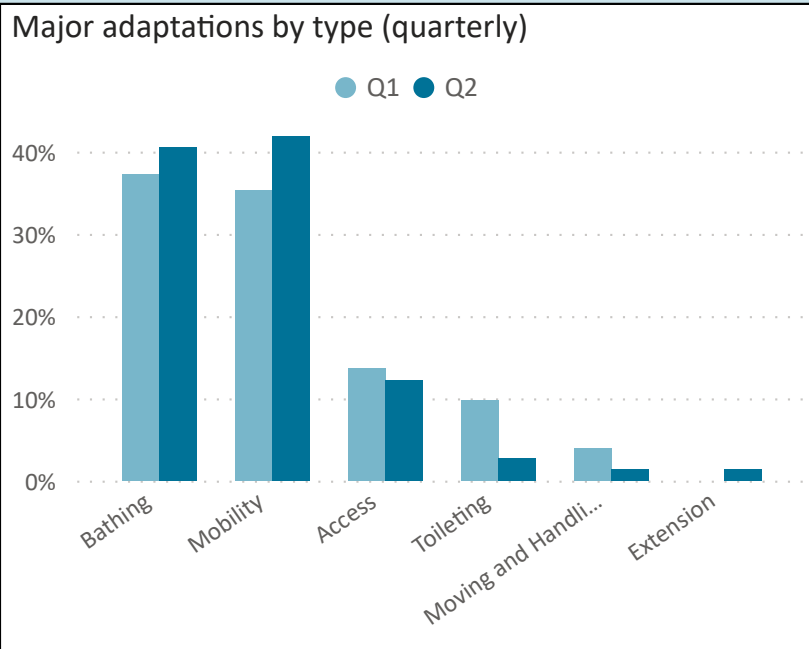
The Council's Adult Social Care team provides care and support to the most vulnerable adults in the community. This includes adults with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, sensory impairments, and older people with long term conditions. The majority of what we do is governed by the Care Act 2014 and associated regulations and guidance. We actively seek to promote the wellbeing of the people that we work with and take a personalised approach to providing support. We also work closely with the NHS and other partners.

As a service we take a 'Strength Based' approach to practice and assessment. This means that we support people to become more resilient in meeting their care needs by developing their networks and personal strengths. We take this approach because it is the right thing to do and it is also consistent with our duty to 'prevent, delay or reduce' the need for formal support. Support plans focus on the abilities of the person, what resources and support they currently have and what they can access in their local community. The teams will encourage the use of aids and adaptations to ensure people remain as independent as possible for as long as possible.

Assistant Director Adults - Joss Harbron

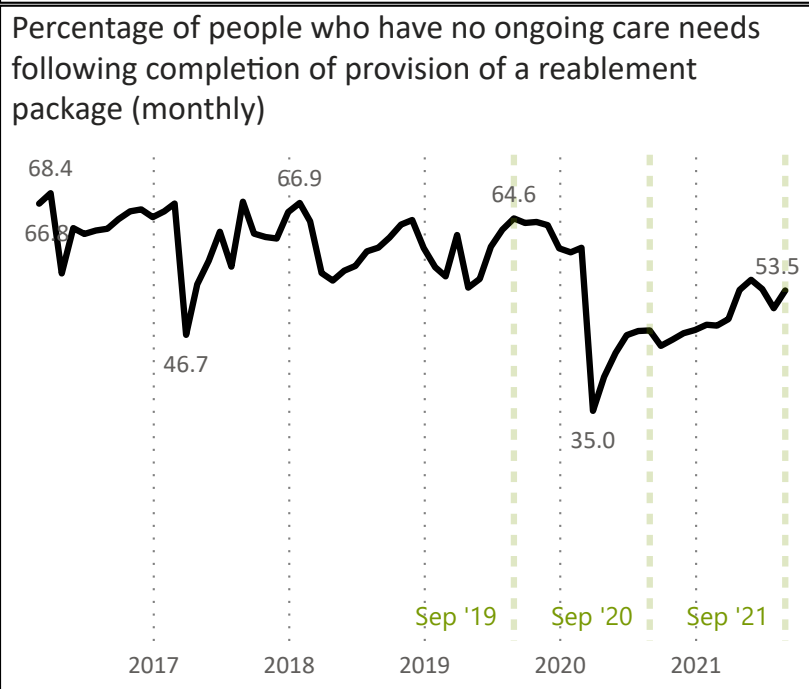
4. SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE IN THE BOROUGH

4.2 Working with people to build on their strengths to maximise their potential



A increase in the number of service users receiving a bathing and/or mobility major adaptation was recorded in Quarter 2 of 2021/22. The increase in the number of people with less mobility is one of many possible impacts of Covid-19, and potentially related to people remaining in their homes more than pre-pandemic. In response to these increases, and to support people to remain independent, the Council's Reablement team are undertaking a project to encourage residents to undertake armchair exercises to improve and maintain their mobility levels.

Assistant Director Adults - Joss Harbron



Of the 230 clients who completed a reablement package between April and September 2021, 123 had no ongoing care needs. The current performance of 53.5% is a significant improvement from the same time in 2020/21 (47.4%). As the Council's Reablement team has become more established, using small aids and a strengths-based approach, outcomes for service users has improved, with increases in high need clients receiving reablement packages. We aim to improve performance in this indicator further by introducing chair-based exercises to reduce the number of falls by residents which can have a detrimental impact on mobility and wellbeing.

Assistant Director Adults - Joss Harbron

4. SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE IN THE BOROUGH

4.3 Working with partners

In 2019 the Council brought together a 'Third Sector Steering group' to advise on how a limited amount of discretionary funding should be used at local community level to improve the wellbeing of young people, people with disabilities and the elderly. The focus of the group was to provide small amounts of money to community organisations to enable them to make their services more available and/or pilot new approaches to addressing priority issues, including nine social isolation projects, support for the School Uniform Exchange to help low income families and a discretionary fund for schools to improve attendance. The steering group was chaired by Inclusion North, a regional organisation focused on developing local projects which increase the opportunities for people to participate. Following allocation of grants, the Council is now discussing with the group how it could become a more formal engagement body between the public and third sector in Darlington, enabling greater collaboration and advising the Council and its partners on third sector concerns.

Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation - Christine Shields

5. SUPPORTED BY

5.1 A dedicated workforce who are proud to serve the borough and an accessible, effective and engaged council

Darlington Borough Council's workforce is committed to Delivering Success for Darlington; we have a proud and dedicated workforce, a large percentage of who live in Darlington and who want the borough to flourish and grow. We employ over 2,000 people across a vast range of services and welcome approximately 200 new starters each year. It is therefore important to have a workforce strategy and plan to ensure staff are motivated with the right skills, at the right time who are flexible and customer focused. The newly adopted workforce strategy and plan, 'Working Together to Deliver Success' outlines how the Council will develop, support and motivate our staff to meet our business and community priorities, and is being embedded across the council. The strategy outlines four new values we work to and are at the heart of what the workforce does; Respect, Innovation, Collaboration and Deliver. Priorities in the plan over the next twelve months include rolling out new agile working processes, supporting staff's wellbeing and mental health, improving absence and attendance management, and increasing the intake and promotion of apprenticeships. Monitoring of the success will be evaluated through regular employee surveys, community surveys and via staff exit procedures.

Assistant Director Resources - Brett Nielsen

A1. Continue to implement initiatives that tackle social isolation

Since 2019, a partnership group, coordinated by Inclusion North, has been commissioning and monitoring a number of pilot projects being delivered across the borough by the local voluntary and community sector (VCS). Outcomes from these projects have been overwhelmingly very positive and, pre-pandemic, work was underway with partners to secure future funding to enable these initiatives to continue and to develop new projects aimed at alleviating social isolation.

Following a pause, due to the pandemic, this work with Inclusion North with regard to vulnerable groups has now resumed, and the group's scope and priorities are being reviewed and will be reset in light of:

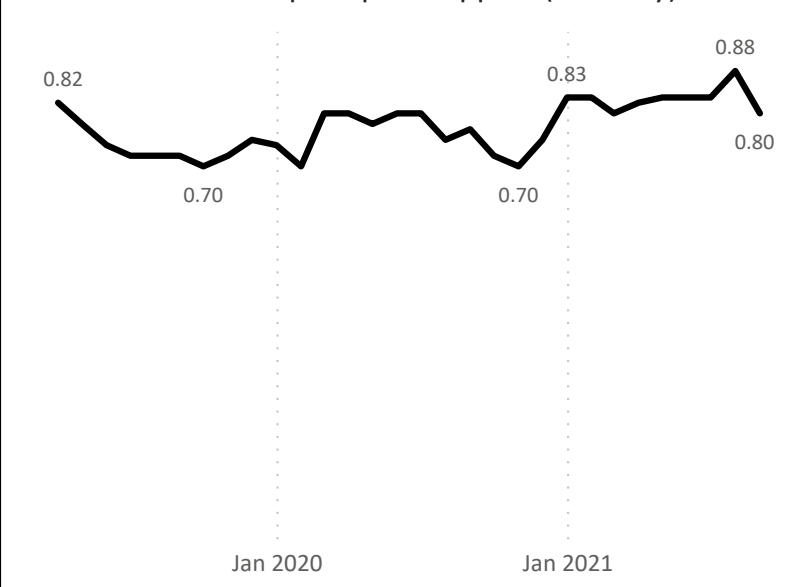
- o the new local health & well being priorities agreed by the Darlington Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB),
- o the need to:

- re- target the work to address the changed local landscape
- sense check with local communities what is needed in the post-pandemic environment.

Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation - Christine Shields

A2. Work with individuals to maximise independence and reduce demand on services

Proportion of adults with mental health needs helped to live at home in receipt of paid support (monthly)

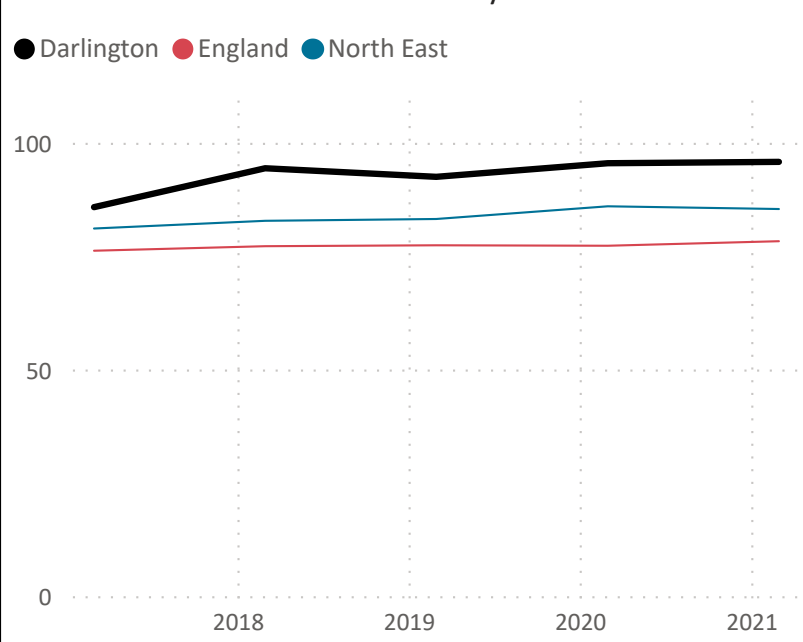


This indicator is primarily focussed on supporting adults with mental health to remain independent and living in their own homes.

Darlington has a very low number of people (50) with mental health requiring paid support. The Mental Health team within Adult Social Care work closely with the local trusts to support people to minimise escalation and maintain high levels of wellbeing and support to delay or prevent admission into hospital. We also have a number of support workers who support rehabilitation, reablement and recovery

Assistant Director Adults - Joss Harbron

Percentage of adults with a learning disability who live in their own home or with their family



This measure relates to working age individuals with a primary need of learning disability, which equates to just 285 of Darlington residents. Of these, 273 (95.8%) were living either in their home or with their family at the end of 2020/21, up from 95.5% the year before and significantly above national and regional averages. Darlington has one of the highest North East figures for individuals living in their own accommodation.

Again, this reflects the strong culture of Adult Social Care and the Life Stages team to support residents in need to be independent and have maximum control over their lives.

Assistant Director Adults - Joss Harbron

A3. Continue to deliver modern transformed Adult Social Care that results in positive outcomes

Adult Social Care in Darlington has undergone a significant transformation in recent years. The services are focused on preventing and reducing need, improving people's independence and providing care and support where needed and teams have a range of responsibilities, including to:

- Provide information and advice including signposting to other resources and / or agencies
- Deliver Occupational Therapy including screening, advice, signposting and provision of low-level equipment
- Maximise independence by undertaking a strengths-based assessment, involving the person/carer/advocate to identify the individual's strengths and capabilities and their wider support networks. Assessments are carried out in accordance with the Care Act (2014) eligibility criteria
- Support individuals to undertake a self-assessment if they choose to do so
- Provide short term support and provide urgent social care support in a crisis
- Formulate support plans with individuals to meet their needs and work towards clearly defined outcomes
- Undertake carers assessments/support planning
- Undertake Mental Capacity assessments
- Ensure the safeguarding of adults at risk of abuse and in need of care and protection
- Maintain significant and strong relationships with the voluntary sector, the Foundation Trust and Community Nursing to support and promote admission avoidance, discharges from hospital and home care where required.

Assistant Director Adults - Joss Harbron

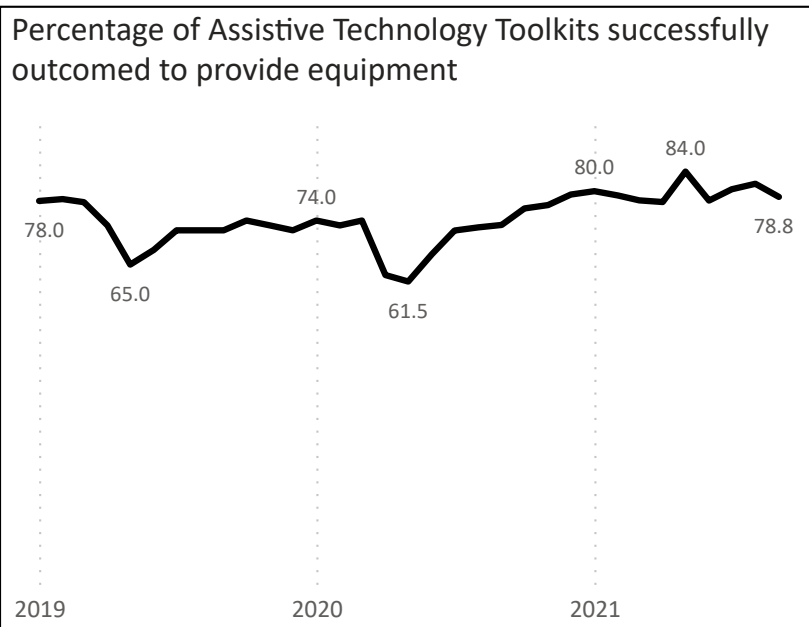
A4. Promote and increase the use of assistive technology

Assistive technology is actively promoted within Darlington, with potential beneficiaries encouraged to use the technology available such as Lifeline, a local service which means a person can call for help 24 hours a day, and /or Telecare. In addition, over the first half of 2021/22, the Lifestages and Mental Health teams have been piloting a number of digital self-management support tools, including Buddi and Brain in Hand apps, which are packed with features to enable people to live as independently as possible. The Sensory team have also been working directly with deaf, hearing-impaired, visual loss, and dual hearing people in the community, undertaking home assessments and identifying equipment which will improve a person's quality of life and independence, including;

- Items to assist with hearing the television, telephone, doorbell & alarm clocks.
- Alerting systems like the Lisa pager, doorbell sensors, smoke alarms, baby alarms, clock vibrating pads and tabletops (devices that sit on the TV and flashes to alert).

The Council also continues to make referrals to lip-reading classes and specialist hearing support groups, support residents with daily living tasks, signpost and encourage clients to learn and develop their skills, and deliver one-to-one community-based support.

Assistant Director Adults - Joss Harbron



In the first six months of 2021/22, 108 of 137 Assistive Technology toolkit referrals assigned to Lifeline resulted in equipment being provided (78.8%). This is above the equivalent figures for same period for the past two years, which were 73.1% in 2020/21 and 72.3% during 2019/20.

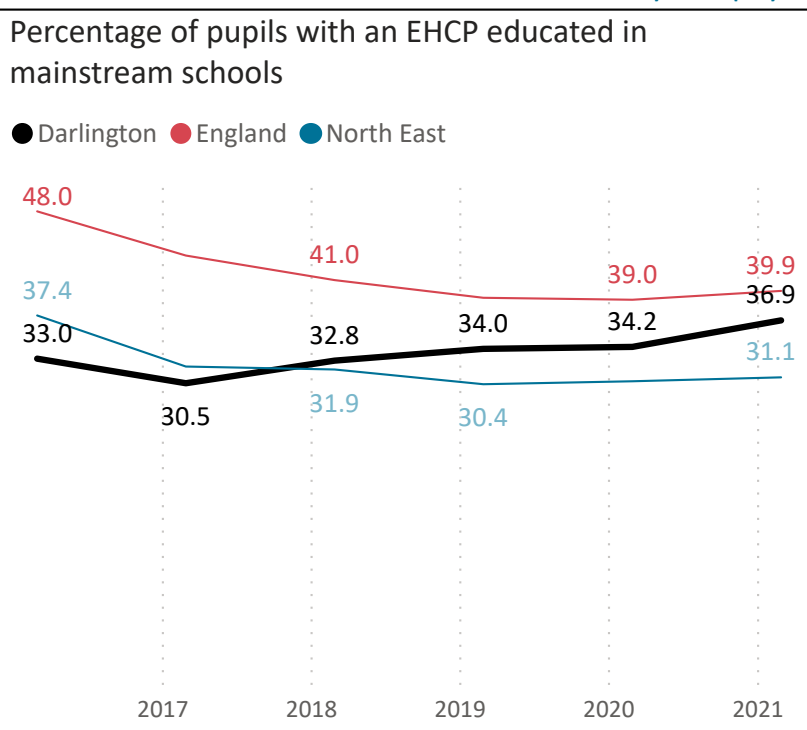
For more information on how the Council's Adult Services support local residents to maximise their independence, please see Section 4 of this report.

Assistant Director Adults - Joss Harbron

C1. Provide excellent services for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) - implement a new SEND strategy, increase the number of SEND places in schools and work to raise SEND funding levels from central government

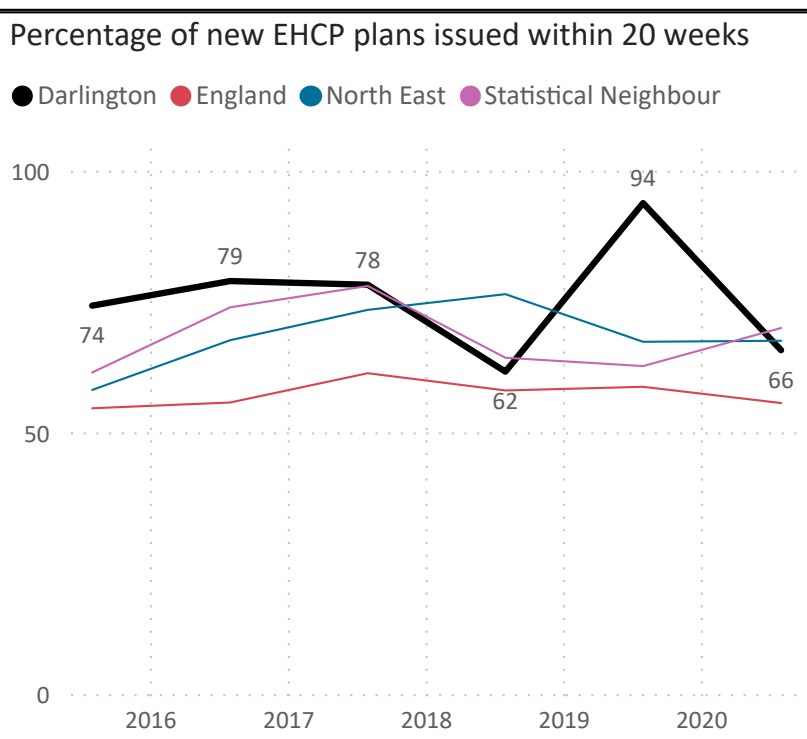
Covid-19 undoubtedly had a major influence on how children and young people with SEND were supported but the Darlington local area responded proactively: all services continued without pronounced interruption or disruption, schools remained open to those in need, statutory assessments largely continued to be completed within 20 weeks, health services remained being delivered and Darlington Parent Carers Forum continued a very active role. The Council's Education Partnerships services have also actively and continuously supported schools and settings over the course of the pandemic to maintain delivery of this offer. For example, the Darlington Educational Psychology Service, SEND Advisory team, Schools and Early Years settings have remained in frequent contact with local authority officers and all schools attended the virtual network for Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) at least once in the last year. Moreover, enhancements to the local offer have continued to be delivered, with 31 new places created for pupils with SEND across two new facilities, in Red Hall and Rise Carr, in September 2021. Officers are also currently consulting with the Darlington Parent Carer Forum to establish usage of additional SEND Capital Grant to further expand places in Darlington.

Assistant Director Education and Inclusion - Tony Murphy



The Darlington local area SEND Strategy emphasises that children and young people with SEND should, where possible, be educated in their local community with the right support that they need. The data shows more children with SEND are attending Darlington mainstream schools. The proportion of Darlington pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) attending mainstream school settings in the borough has been steadily increasing since 2016/17, and is now significantly above average for neighbouring authorities but remains below the national average. The majority of pupils with an EHCP attend Beaumont Hill and Marchbank schools, which are the two special schools in Darlington and work continues to expand the number of SEND places available in the borough.

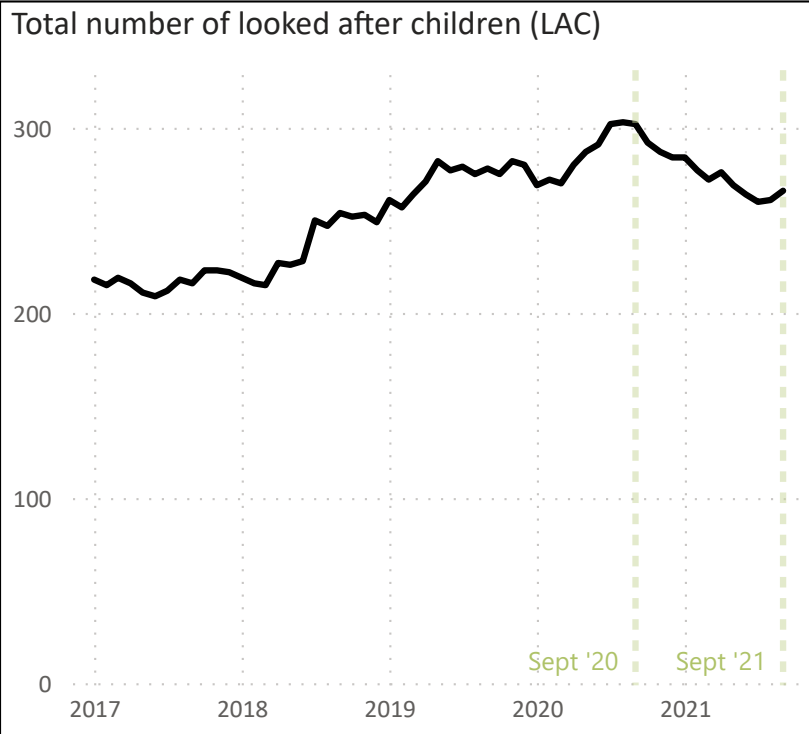
Assistant Director Education and Inclusion - Tony Murphy



The percentage of new Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) issued by Darlington within twenty weeks (including exceptions) has consistently been above the national average since 2015. In 2020 the Darlington percentage for this timeliness measure, which excludes exceptions, was 65.7%, in line with regional and statistical neighbours and significantly above the national average of 55.6%.

Assistant Director Education and Inclusion - Tony Murphy

C2. Reduce the need for looked after children placements through effective implementation of the Darlington Strengthening Families programme



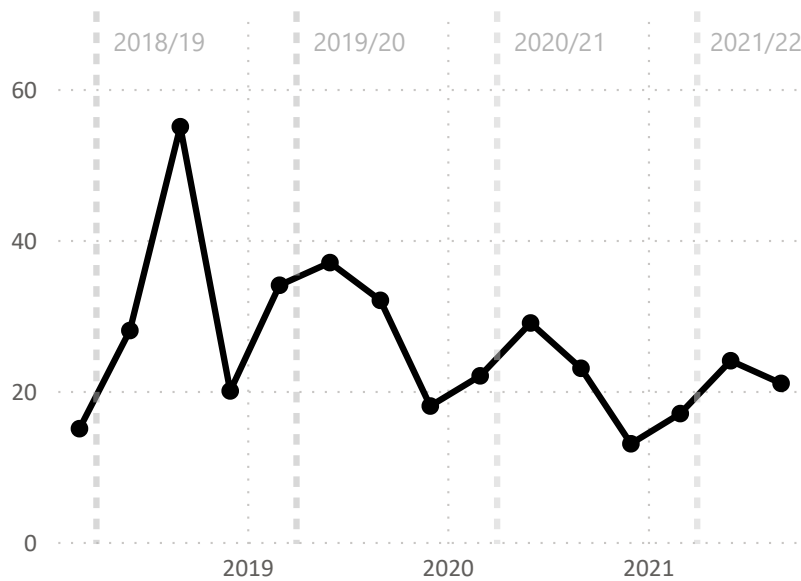
266 children were in care as at September 2021, a 12% reduction from the 303 children who were in care at the same point in 2020.

The Children's Services Front Door team has continued to effectively manage demand over the first two quarters of 2021/22 compared with neighbouring local authorities. By ensuring children, young people and their families receive the correct and appropriate support when needs are identified, and advising other practitioners of the correct routes for support, the team ensure safe decisions are taken about children at the earliest opportunity. This approach has led to a reduction of over 25% in referrals since its launch, which is being maintained despite the increasing demands reported elsewhere related to Covid-19.

[Assistant Director Children's Services - Chris Bell](#)

C2. Reduce the need for looked after children placements through effective implementation of the Darlington Strengthening Families programme

Total number of new cases of looked after children (LAC) within the quarter

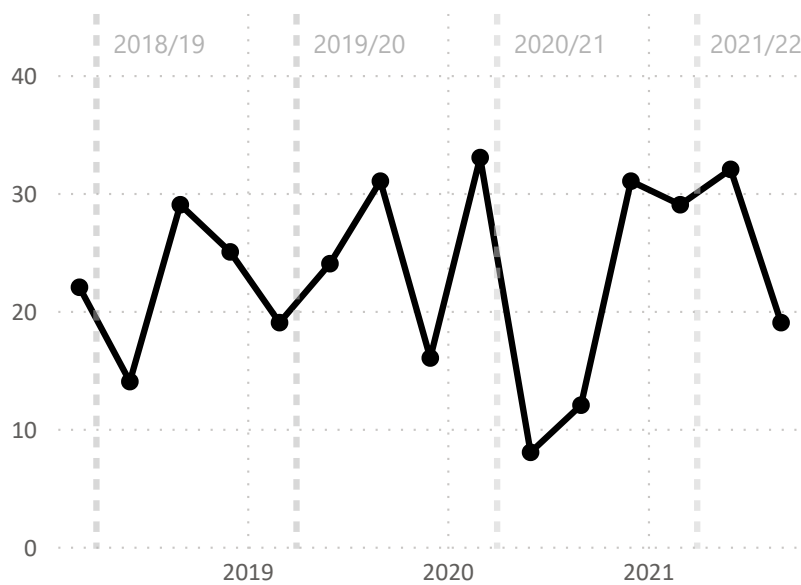


Twenty one children came into care in Quarter 2 2021/22, a 9% decrease compared to the same period in 2020/21 (23) and a 34% decrease compared to the year before that (32).

Over the last six months, the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme has continued to be embedded across Darlington Borough Council's Children's Services, utilising relational practice to ensure timely interventions which support families to stay together and reduce the need for children to become Looked After.

Assistant Director Children's Services - Chris Bell

Total number of children that have ceased to be looked after children (LAC) within the quarter



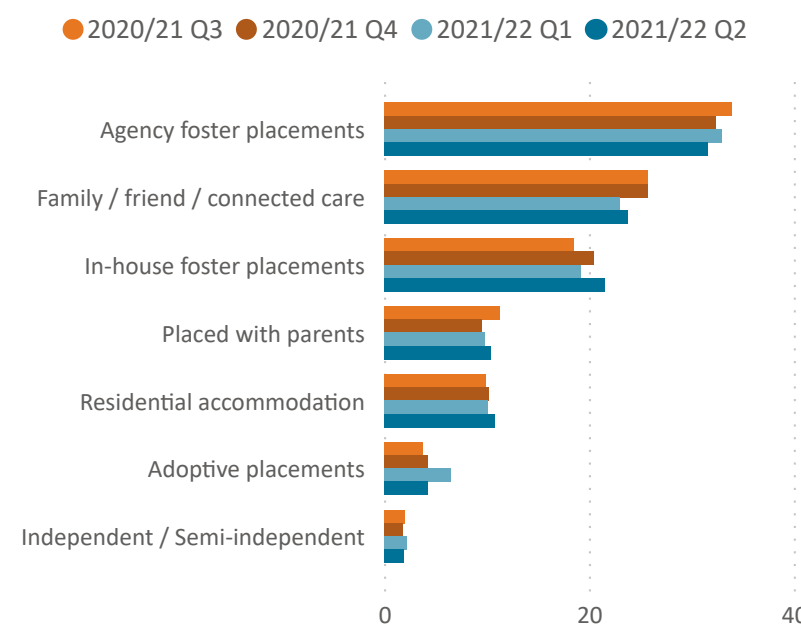
Nineteen children and young people ceased to be in care during in Quarter 2 2021/22, an increase from the same period last year (12) but down from the same time in 2019/20 (31). Of those:

- One young person became a care leaver
- Three children were adopted
- Five children had a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) granted
- Eight children returned home to their parent(s)
- Two young people, aged 16 and 17, moved to the YMCA

A further fifteen children are waiting to move into an adoptive placement or for an order to be granted, and eight children are waiting for a care order discharge

Assistant Director Children's Services - Chris Bell

Percentage of looked after children by placement type



The majority of Darlington children in care at the end of September 2021 were in foster placements (181), of which 79 were agency, 57 were in-house and 45 were with a friend relative or connected carer. Half (91) of all foster placements were long-term.

Of the remaining Looked After Children in Darlington, 31 were placed with parents, 28 were living in residential accommodation and 13 were placed for adoption.

All placements have been confirmed as appropriate for the child enabling them to have the best support either with family links or specialised care, and the proportion of children placed for adoption or with in-house foster carers has been increasing.

Assistant Director Children's Services - Chris Bell

C3. Continue to increase the number of in-house foster carers to reduce the need for independent placements

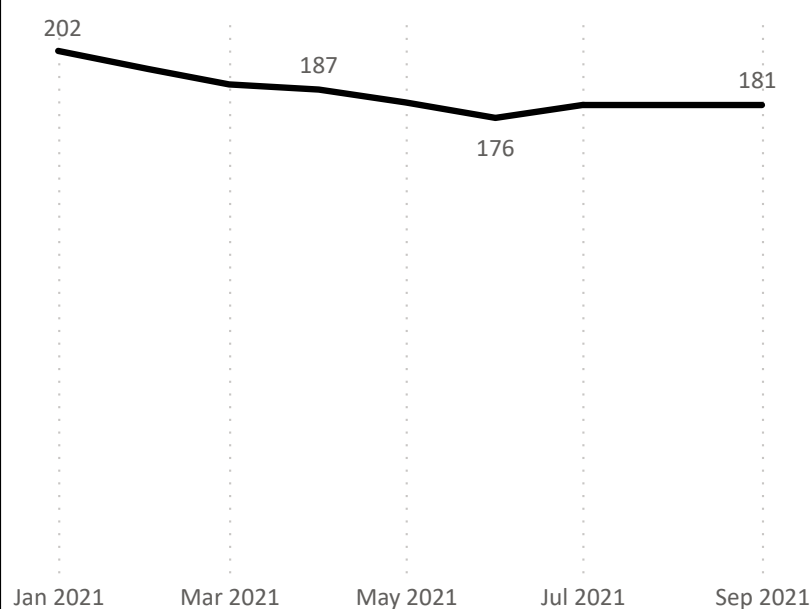
Total number of approved foster carers

54

There are currently 54 approved foster carer families in Darlington to provide placements to local children and young people in need. In addition, a further 9 families are going through the foster carer assessment process which, if approved, will represent a 17% increase and reflect the significant work undertaken by the Fostering and Communications teams to promote foster carer opportunities to residents.

[Assistant Director Children's Services - Chris Bell](#)

Total number of foster care placements



Darlington's 54 approved foster carer families provided a total of 181 placements in Quarter 2 of 2021/22, which was a slight increase from 176 in the previous quarter.

It is anticipated that the number of placements available will further increase as new families are approved to be registered foster carers.

[Assistant Director Children's Services - Chris Bell](#)

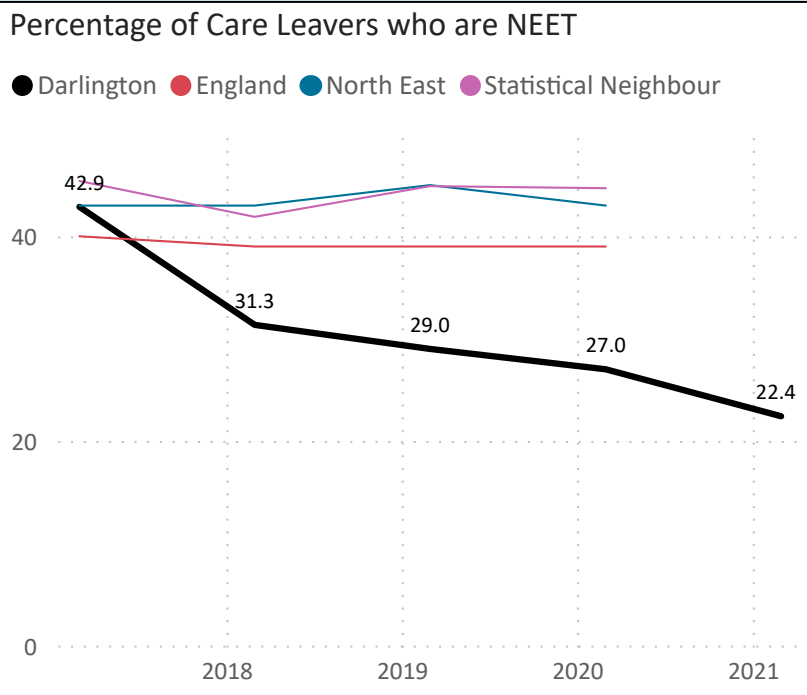
C4. Review in-house residential care and consider the council's place in providing services

The Council's Children's Services team continue to explore ways to make our foster carer offer as attractive as possible to encourage more prospective foster carers to come forward, including awareness raising and advertising on via social media and promoting access to online information events for prospective foster carers. Engagement also takes place regularly with existing foster carers to enhance our support and offer.

In terms of residential care, the service is seeking to modernise and diversify the offer within children's homes to ensure it best meets the needs of children and young people, and to reduce reliance upon the external market. Recent work includes incorporating the existing children's homes into the Council's new build programme, and the first home to move to a new build is scheduled for May 2022. The existing home will then be repurposed into an Ofsted-registered residential short breaks service to provide earlier targeted support and so avoid escalating pressures and support needs. This service will support young people and work with the whole family in a relational way to address emerging needs and pressures and so reduce the risk of family breakdown. Staff recruitment for this service is due to commence in January 2022.

[Assistant Director Children's Services - Chris Bell](#)

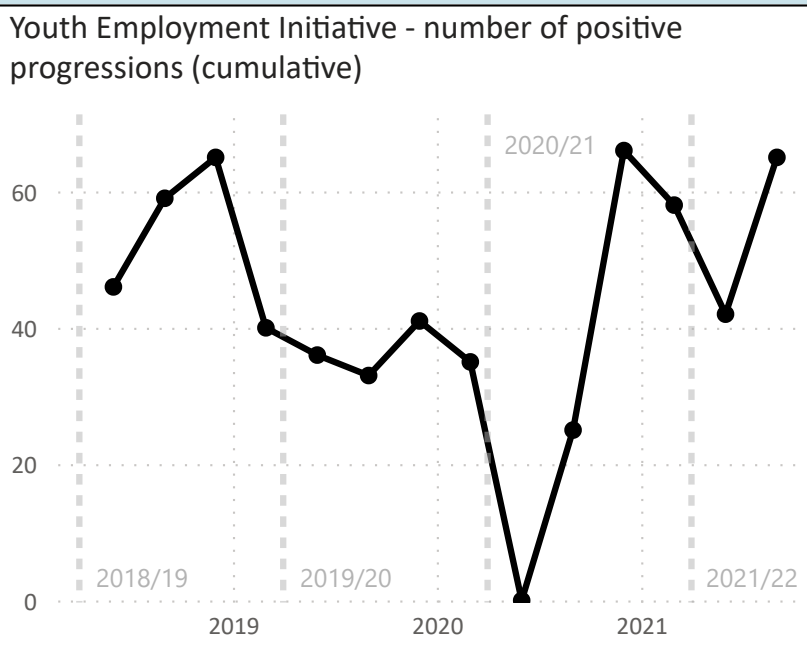
C5. Improve employment opportunities for looked after children and care leavers



The proportion of Darlington care leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET) has continued to fall, to 22.4% at the end of 2020/21 from 27% in 2019/20, which is below the most recently available national and regional averages. This performance is particularly impressive given the impact of Covid-19, which has generally led to increases in NEETs nationally, and reflects the considerable work undertaken by the Care Leavers service, including with Job Centre Plus and businesses to increase opportunities. 10 care leavers are currently attending university and the teamwork with Learning and Skills officers to understand all school leaver destinations so further learning, training, and/or employment opportunities are encouraged.

Assistant Director Children's Services - Chris Bell

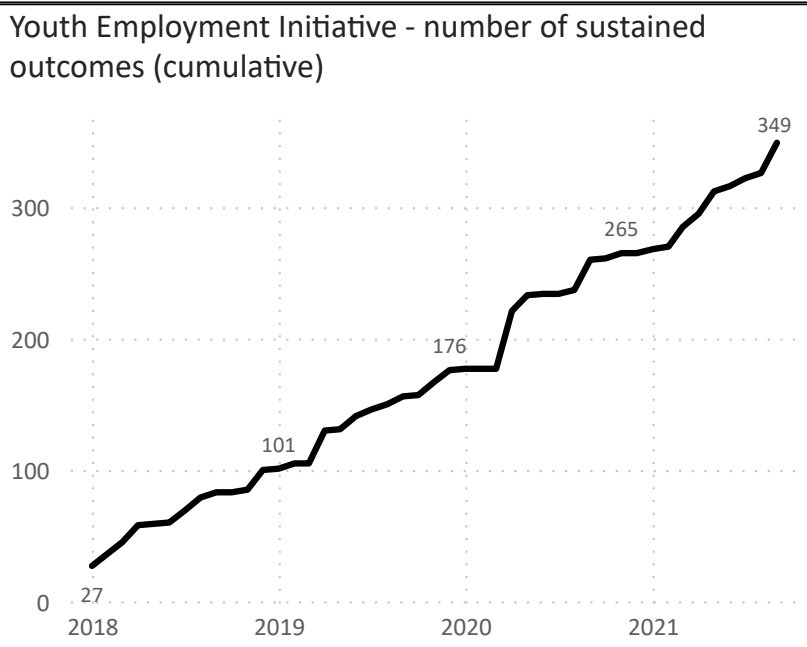
C6. Work with partners to reduce youth and long-term unemployment, by increasing the opportunity for retraining and apprenticeships leading to gainful employment



Referrals to the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) have remained high during the first half of 2021/22 with young people continuing to move into education, employment and training. Having an embedded Job Centre Plus Youth Adviser within the service is working well and has helped increase client numbers over the period and local employment opportunities have also been rising.

The team have reported some reticence amongst some young people to engage with the service after, in some cases, almost two years of being out of employment, education and/or training, and are working to rebuild participants' confidence where required.

Assistant Director Education and Inclusion - Tony Murphy



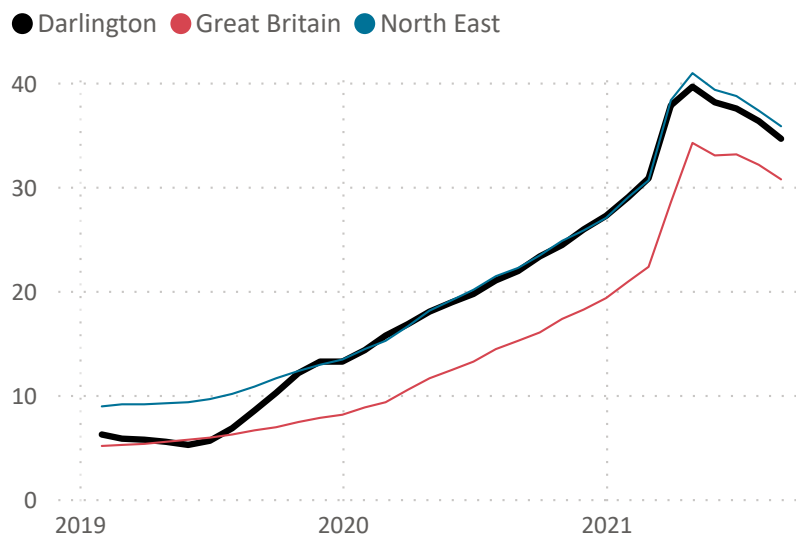
Young people using the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) service have continued to go into sustained outcomes between April and September 2021. As officers are sometimes unable to contact some young people at the six month sustained point or obtain the necessary evidence from employers (particularly due to home working), the true number achieving sustained employment is considered likely to be even higher.

Over the same period, however, some participants did not manage to sustain employment for a number of reasons, including a lack of necessary behaviours to succeed in a professional environment which will help inform future service delivery.

Assistant Director Education and Inclusion - Tony Murphy

C6. Work with partners to reduce youth and long-term unemployment, by increasing the opportunity for retraining and apprenticeships leading to gainful employment

Long-term UC Claimant Count Rate



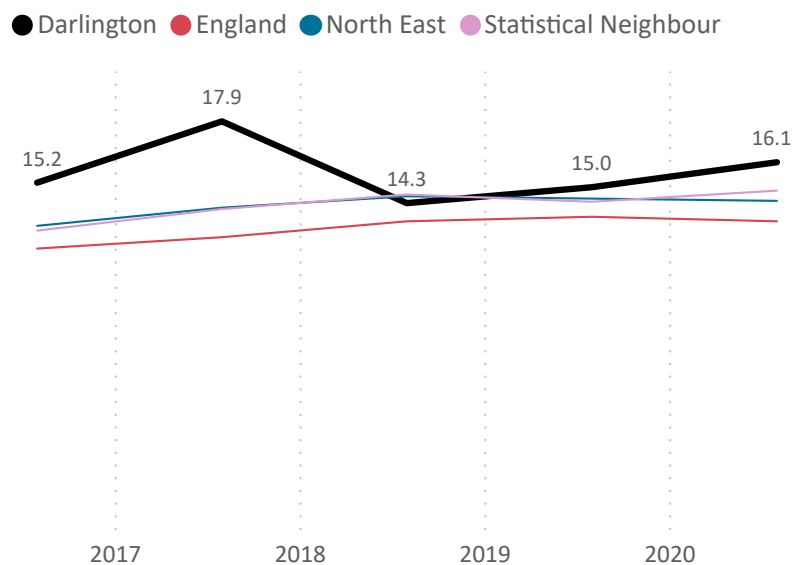
This measure shows the number of working age local residents claiming Universal Credit (UC) who are currently searching for work and who have been claiming UC for more than 12 months, per 1,000 working age population.

The rate has been falling since hitting a peak of 39.6 in May 2021 and, as of September 2021, was 34.6, still above the national comparator of 30.7 but below the regional average of 35.8. Numbers are expected to continue falling as the economy recovers from the pandemic and growing vacancy numbers feed through into reduced unemployment.

Assistant Director Education and Inclusion - Tony Murphy

C7. Work with schools and the Regional Schools Commissioner to increase educational achievement across the borough and, in particular, for young people from deprived backgrounds

Inequality gap between the average Attainment 8 score of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils at KS4



Attainment 8 is a measure of a pupil's average grade across a set of eight subjects. A high attainment 8 score indicates a pupil did well across a range of subjects including English and Maths. The most recent available data shows the average Attainment 8 score per pupil in Darlington increased from 45.8 in 2017/18 to 46.6 in 2018/19. This was greater than the regional and statistical neighbour averages, and only 0.2 points below the national average. Whilst average regional, national and statistical neighbour Attainment 8 scores for disadvantaged pupils decreased since the 2016/17 academic year, the scores for Darlington increased. The average score for Darlington disadvantaged pupils was above the regional average and only 0.8 points below the national average.

Assistant Director Education and Inclusion - Tony Murphy

% of schools judged good or outstanding by Ofsted (of schools inspected)

78.1%

OfSTED Rating	Number of schools
▲ Outstanding	2
Good	23
Requires Improvement	7
No inspection since converting to academy	9

Although the percentage of Darlington schools rated as Good or Outstanding has been below the national and regional averages since 2017, the gaps have been narrowing since 2018.

Since March 2021, two of Darlington's secondary schools have been inspected and had their ratings upgraded from Requires Improvement to Good. The percentage of Darlington secondary schools rated Good or Outstanding therefore increased from 50% to 75% between the end of March and September 2021.

Assistant Director Education and Inclusion - Tony Murphy

C8. Deliver and review the In2 Project to support disadvantaged children to participate in Arts, Leisure and Culture to maximise their potential

The series of Covid-19 lockdowns meant that face-to-face In2 activity was paused for much of 2020 and early 2021. The programme has now resumed with a new intake of 115 Year 6 pupils signed up to the programme to broaden their opportunities and experience of the arts, leisure and culture. There are 32 children from Corporation Road Primary School, 37 from Firthmoor Primary School and 46 from Northwood Primary School.

Activities undertaken by and/or planned for the new intake include a theatre heritage project in the Hullabaloo in September, 'Refresh' workshops with Zest Theatre and dance workshops at the Hippodrome in October, a Little Inventors project designed around Locomotion No 1 in November and a trip to the pantomime at the Hippodrome in December.

The programme continues to be closely monitored to understand its impact on participants including the transition to secondary school which has been identified as a key priority area for work to improve educational outcomes amongst local children and young people.

[Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson](#)

C9. Look for innovative ways to try and deliver school homework clubs and holiday enrichment activities

Council officers have worked with a range of community settings to deliver activities over the Easter and Summer school holidays including at Firthmoor, Skerne Park and Red Hall and Eastbourne, the Kings Centre and Hummersknott Academy. The Dolphin Centre, Head of Steam Museum and Darlington Hippodrome have all also provided added value to the programme supporting additional activities.

Following on from this successful engagement, an exciting timetable of activities has been organised for free school meal-eligible children in Darlington to access over the festive period, with 17 events arranged throughout December with a total of 715 places available.

The activities on offer at various locations across the town include:

- trips to the pantomime
- travelling pantomimes being performed at schools
- bowling
- Santa at the station
- arts and crafts
- ice skating
- a magician
- drama sessions.

A hot cooked meal will continue to be provided at each event and children and families will be further supported by providing comprehensive activity packs and food bags to take home.

Finally, the Government have recently confirmed funding will be available for a continuation of the Holiday Activities Programme for the next 3 years, meaning the Council and partners will be able to continue delivering and enhancing local holiday enrichment activities.

[Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson](#)

E1. Work with Market Asset Management to deliver a refurbished and vibrant covered market and successful outdoor market

The first phase of the improvement to the market opened in August 2021 and a great deal of positive feedback has already been received on the current offer to residents and visitors. Phase 2, which includes improvements to the existing trading area and market stalls, is due to commence in early 2022. Meanwhile, Phase 3 (the building of a temperate garden) has now received planning consent however an issue with gaining vacant possession of one of the existing units is causing delays in work.

In terms of the outdoor market, this has now been relocated to High Row and, as a result, experienced an increase in traders.

The work to support the local business and hospitality industry to re-open amidst Covid-19 rules has supported the town centre and the market. The successful events programme in the Market Square and town centre has also supported delivery of the market project.

[Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman](#)

E2. Deliver the Town Centre Strategy leading to a diversified and successful town centre

A key element of the Town Centre Strategy was the acquiring of strategically positioned buildings and land. Accordingly;

- Skinnergate residential development has now received planning consent and tendering and procurement process for the delivery of the development has commenced. It is anticipated that development will commence in February 2022 and will take 12 months to complete.
- Acquisition of former Northern Echo building has been completed, with architects now commissioned. The ground floor development for this project is due to commence in June 2022, subject to planning permission, for an opening date in September 2022.
- Various funding has been received for delivery of Towns Fund projects and all required business cases have been completed and forwarded to government. Stakeholder engagement has also commenced on Phase 2 of the Skinnergate, Yards and Coniscliffe Road elements of the project
- Examination of procuring a development partner for land and buildings with the town centre has commenced.
- Discussion with the owners of Queens Street continue with regard to future opportunities in the centre and on Commercial Street
- An options appraisal for the former Sports Direct Site as a residential site is being finalised
- Darlington Economic Campus has confirmed its temporary town centre location as Feethams House - more details at E4 below.

[Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman](#)

E3. Develop key economic sites to be investor ready at Central Park, Ingenium Park and Faverdale

Progress against this action remains strong, with recent developments including:

- commencement of the procurement of a development partner for Faverdale Business Park
- commencement of Phase 2 of the National Biologics Centre by the Centre for Process Innovation (CPI), which is due to be completed by the end of December 2021
- continuing construction of the new Innovation Central development on site with a completion date set for August 2022, with North East Business Innovation Centre being appointed as the building operator. Landscaping and further remediation at the site is also being developed, linked to the upcoming Treasury North economic campus opportunity.
- conclusion of a procurement exercise for drainage works at Ingenium Park
- development of land treatment and landscaping designs for Central Park with delivery anticipated next year to provide a high quality public realm to attract further investment and linked to the upcoming Treasury North economic campus opportunity
- development of Ingenium Park Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems for the whole site with delivery during the ecological window

[Assistant Director Transport & Capital Projects - Ant Hewitt](#)

E4. Encourage new investment in the Borough and maximise employment opportunities for Darlington residents

Despite the pandemic, good progress has continued to be made in respect of securing new investment and employment opportunities in the borough. A temporary lease between the Treasury and Darlington Borough Council for Feethams House has been agreed, with Treasury and other government departments' staff due to start populating the building between March and July 2022. It is further anticipated that, following due process, the permanent location for staff from the seven government departments who have so far confirmed a Darlington base will also be decided in early 2022.

In addition, an outline planning application has been received for development of land adjacent to Lingfield Point to provide several commercial units with total potential provision of 328,900 square feet. Finally, interest in the availability office space in the town centre remains very high, in particular from sectors in the professional support services.

[Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman](#)

E5. Work with indigenous companies to identify and attract further job creating investment

The Covid-19 pandemic has undeniably had a detrimental impact upon the growth of local smaller indigenous companies. The Council has accordingly responded by facilitating and delivering various grants and support workshops to assist in the inevitable downturn in business activity. The total value of Covid-19 financial support grants awarded to Darlington businesses by the Council since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 was £44,007,072 as of the end of September 2021.

In addition, following Darlington Borough Council's successful allocation of Additional Restrictions Grants to local businesses, the Council received a bonus grant of £631,000, an element of which will be used to further support and encourage indigenous growth and start-ups.

[Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman](#)

E6. Successful adoption of the Local Plan

The Examination In Public by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) of Planning of the draft Local Plan commenced in May 2021, with hearings now complete. A number of main modifications were subsequently proposed by the Council to make the plan sound and were due to be the subject of a six week public consultation over October and November. Following consultation, the Council will prepare a report listing all representations received; a summary of the main issues raised; and the Council's response to those issues. This will be provided to the Inspector, along with all representations. The Inspector will then consider this evidence before finalising his report and it is anticipated that the Council will receive HMI's report by end of 2021. Should the report be favourable and supportive of the Local Plan, the next steps of the necessary decision-making process will commence in early 2022.

[Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman](#)

E7. Create the conditions to deliver hundreds of new homes each year, ensuring sufficiency of affordable homes

Significant progress continues to have been made against this action over the last six months, including:

- Officers are continuing to work closely with Homes England to bring forward the proposed Burtree Garden Village, with a planning application anticipated to be received in early 2022.
- The developers of the Skerningham site are also looking to submit a planning application in mid-2022, subject to the outcome of the draft Local Plan.

Overall, the latest monitoring data shows circa 550 house completions due in 2020-21, with 317 starts and 277 completions in the first half of the financial year. Compared to the same period last year starts have increased by 108 units and completions are up by 49, although it must be remembered that there was a lockdown of building sites in the first quarter of the last financial year. The Council has completed 20 affordable new homes and is now on site at Neasham Road and Sherbourne Court.

If the Local Plan is adopted, it is expected more applications will be received over the coming months and years.

[Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman](#)

E8. Develop the council's response to the agreed Climate Change Emergency and begin delivery of the agreed plan

A local climate change action plan has now been completed by the Council's Climate Change Working Group and was agreed by Cabinet in October 2021. Milestones and a reporting mechanism will accordingly be established and agreed with the responsible lead officers, with future reports regularly produced to demonstrate progress towards our carbon neutral target. Each service area has already been tasked with delivering their respective actions under the plan.

In addition, the capacity of the Climate Change team has recently doubled with the creation of a new post of Climate Change Officer, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to delivery of the plan. Work has also continued over the last six months on the development of a District Heating System within the town centre and the Sustainable Darlington page on the website is being used to promote messages with a new section written by and for young people being developed. Regular articles are also produced and published in the One Darlington magazine and on social media.

[Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman](#)

E9. Develop the Darlington Station project and regeneration opportunities for the surrounding areas including Victoria Road, the cattle market and Neasham Road areas

A strong delivery partnership has formed with Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), the Department for Transport (DfT), Network Rail and the train operators to drive forward this project, and recent updates include:

- Planning permissions being secured for the East and West Transport Interchanges that are being delivered by Darlington Borough Council and continuing development of detailed design
- Detailed design progressing on the station and rail track improvements that are to be delivered by Network Rail
- Acquisition of the land required for the project continuing to be progressed by agreement where possible. A Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) has been progressed in parallel and the public Inquiry is scheduled for January 2022 to consider any land and properties that the Council has not been able to secure by agreement.
- Phase 1 of the improvements to Victoria Road were completed to enhance the public realm and improve walking and cycling connections from the station to the town centre.
- Planning permission is being sought for the cattle market site as temporary car parking whilst the station project is delivered.
- Regeneration opportunities will be developed for the cattle market in readiness for its availability.

[Assistant Director Transport & Capital Projects - Ant Hewitt](#)

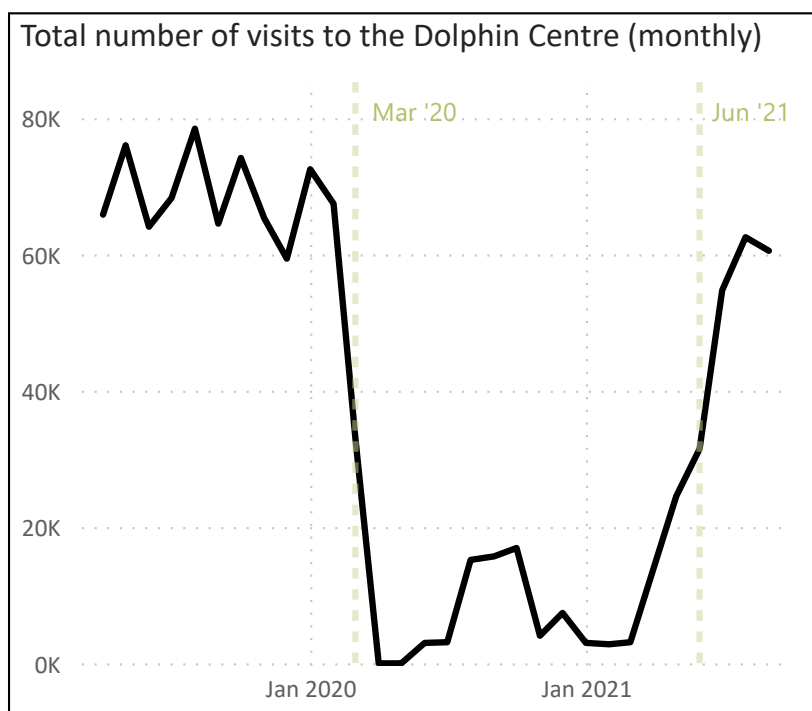
H1. Review the vacant space within the Dolphin Centre to improve the leisure offer and so maximise income

In line with the government's announcement to ease restrictions from Monday 19 July 2021, operational changes were made at the Dolphin Centre to the safe systems of work but continued with a cautious approach over the summer. The key changes were around casual access to family swimming, soft play and the gym rather than having to pre book these activities, which was a welcomed change by customers.

Capacities have remained slightly lower than usual levels to avoid overcrowding and all good practice in relation to sanitising and hygiene have remained in place.

The remodelling of space to create the indoor bowling alley and extension to soft play have opened successfully and are proving to be extremely popular. There has been an excellent response from residents and visitors to the town for both facilities. Feedback has been very positive around the quality, look and overall experience. The space vacated by Council registrars and burial services has also been repurposed for a new commercial tenant, Connect Health.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson



As Covid-19 limitations have been relaxed, the Dolphin Centre has reopened in line with ongoing national restrictions with customers returning to use the facilities, with the data showing dramatic increases in visitor numbers over the course of 2021, from 3,100 in March 2021 to 60,541 in September 2021, a nearly twenty-fold rise.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

H2. Work to, and continue to review the Local Outbreak Plan for Coronavirus

The Local Outbreak Plan was initially developed in June 2020 and a review was undertaken in February 2021. The Health Protection Board continues to meet monthly and Outbreak Control meetings operate as required to continue to deliver the Local Outbreak Plan. The Health Protection Board continues to meet on a monthly basis. Darlington is also part of a Local Tracing Partnership with NHS Test & Trace with local dedicated capacity to follow up hard-to-reach contacts and cases in Darlington to ensure that they are isolating and the chain of infection is broken.

Director Public Health - Penny Spring

H3. Continue to build new council houses and ensure the existing council housing stock is maintained to a high standard and environmentally friendly

Housing Condition - Percentage of Council properties meeting the decent homes standard

March 2020

100%

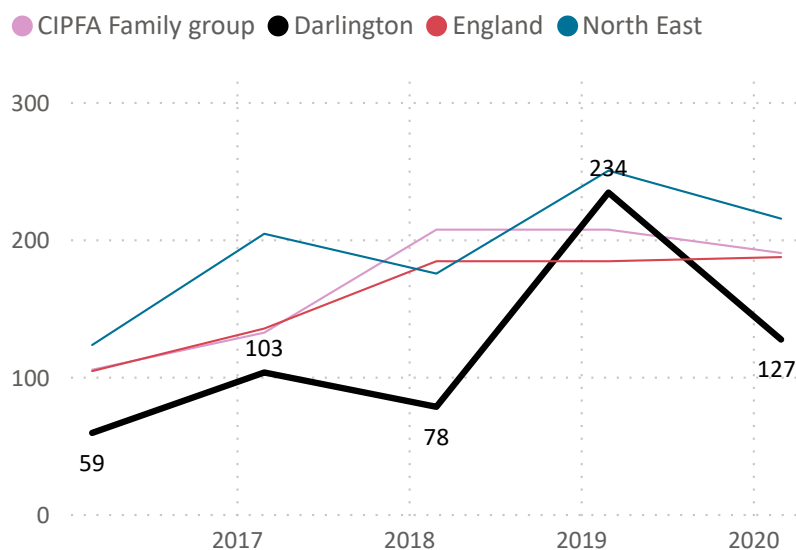
March 2021

100%

All of Darlington Borough Council social housing stock continued to meet the Decent Homes Standard in 2020-21, demonstrating the ongoing commitment and good work of the Housing and Building Services teams over the course of the pandemic.

Assistant Director Housing & Revenues - Anthony Sandys

Additional Affordable Housing Supply - Completions



The Council's Housing new build programme was significantly disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, however one scheme was still able to be completed in 2020/21.

Building work has since recommenced with further new build 'pipeline' sites identified; these are currently being worked up in more detail to enable the appropriate planning permission to be sought.

Assistant Director Housing & Revenues - Anthony Sandys

H4. Maximise rental and service charge income from council tenants to ensure we are able to provide them with a comprehensive range of good quality housing management and support services

Rent collected as a proportion of rents owed on HRA dwellings

Year	Quarter	Value
2019/20	Q1	107.7%
	Q2	96.8%
	Q3	96.5%
	Q4	97.5%
2020/21	Q1	96.1%
	Q2	96.6%
	Q3	97.1%
	Q4	101.6%
2021/22	Q1	98.1%
	Q2	97.4%

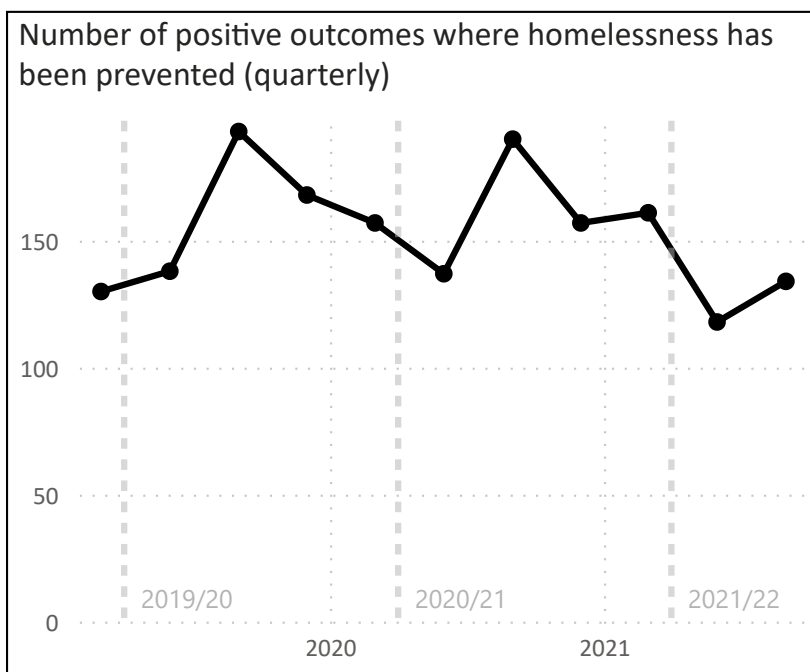
Rent collection rates for Council housing reduced slightly from Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 2021/22 but are still higher than previous years and remain within expected levels. Officers continue to promote help and guidance to tenants needing support, make affordable repayment plans with customers, and assist with benefit claims and budgeting skills. The number of tenants, at 1,650, in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) is at its highest level since UC was introduced, however average rent arrears for tenants receiving UC is lower than the regional average. Court hearings have recommenced and enforcement and eviction warrants have been carried out where orders have continually been breached; but levels of evictions, as a last option, remain low.

Assistant Director Housing & Revenues - Anthony Sandys

H5. Review the Darlington Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Progress against the new strategy is good, with 19 of the 28 actions already completed. Of the remaining actions, only 2 are currently not on track to meet their target timescales for completion due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During Covid, the number of homeless people placed in emergency accommodation by the Council in 2020/21 increased by 32% compared to the previous year and this increase has continued into 2021/22. However, despite these challenges the Council has successfully increased the number of temporary accommodation units by 36%, from 11 to 15, as well as purchased and refurbished 4 empty properties to provide 8 new units of accommodation. Officers have also successfully bid for additional funding through the government's Rough Sleeper Initiative to recruit 4 additional staff to deliver a range of support and advice services to homeless people, including a specialist mental health Housing Options Officer and an outreach support worker to deliver street support and prevent people from rough sleeping. In addition, the Housing Options Team have been recognised by the NEPACS Ruth Cranfield Award for their outstanding dedication to housing and success in tackling homelessness during the pandemic.

Assistant Director Housing & Revenues - Anthony Sandys



Despite ongoing challenges and restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council's Housing Options team continued to achieve an increase in positive outcomes for homeless customers during Quarter 2. This has included negotiating with landlords, friends and family and support providers to find sustainable accommodation for residents in need of support with housing. The Council also been successful in bidding for a number of Government funding opportunities, which has further enabled the team to find the best outcomes for customers experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of being homeless.

Assistant Director Housing & Revenues - Anthony Sandys

H6. Maintain oversight and offer challenge to health and care services that support individuals to achieve good mental, physical and emotional health as identified in a wide range of partnership plans such as Best Start in life, autism awareness, alcohol plan, suicide prevention, healthy workforce, and ageing well

The Council's Public Health team have continued this work during Covid, including:

- Securing suicide prevention funding to promote 'Postvention' work with partners and distributing information and training across the borough.
- Coordinating a local Mental Health prevention funding opportunity
- Concluding work on an autism awareness programme, which delivered quiet times in the town centre and training to local businesses
- Rolling out 'Make Every Contact Count' training to frontline services and partners across the borough, using a train the trainer approach, and developing a range of toolbox talks to support delivery
- Reviewing and delivering the Healthy Lifestyle Survey to 8,400 local pupils across 32 Darlington schools including a new section on Covid-19 impacts
- Implementing a new Council healthy workforce programme
- Beginning work to re-procure the 0-19 Service.
- Continuing to develop a joint application for a local Mental Health Prevention Concordat which will be submitted to the Organisation for Health Improvement and Disparities.

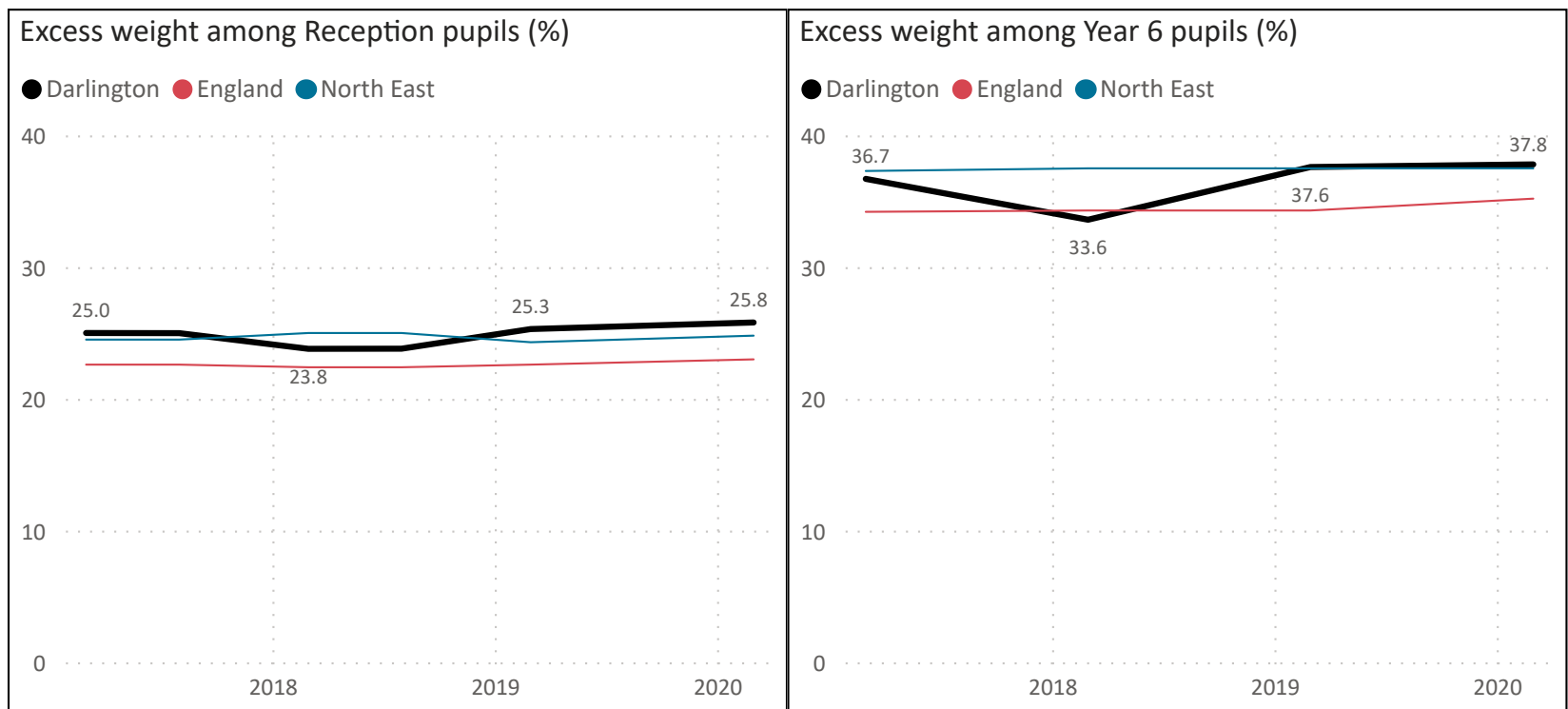
Director Public Health - Penny Spring

H7. Implement the Darlington Child Healthy Weight Plan with partners

The Darlington Child Healthy Weight Plan has begun to deliver on a number of its objectives, including :

- Launching a Healthy Families catering award
- Developing a healthy schools meal standard and training
- Training foster families in healthy meal options
- Encouraging utilisation of green spaces by supporting health campaigns and signage and delivering a town centre treasure hunt.
- Producing a children’s home food policy, guidance and workable menus, and training children’s home staff using a young people’s nutrition toolkit.
- Producing and piloting a new Healthy Early Years Toolkit with three nursery settings and an initial 10 childminders
- Developing, with the Learning and Skills team, an online Darlington School Food Award module to support individual schools to achieve school food standards.
- Working in partnership with the Cornmill Centre to display ‘Change4life’ weaning and healthy lifestyle messages in the form of posters and vinyls, and to implement a ‘Play on the way’ initiative with the use of a colourful hopscotch to share simple messages on why physical activity is good for children

Director Public Health - Penny Spring



The prevalence of overweight (including obesity) amongst Reception and Year 6 pupils rose slightly in Darlington in 2020, the rise is not a statistically significant and Darlington is in line with the regional average for these measures.

The Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan has identified a number of evidence-based interventions that are now being delivered with partners to systematically address some of the underlying causes of obesity in children and young people in Darlington, with some recent new work including activity with schools and local commercial food premises to develop a healthy catering standard to ensure a consistent and healthy food offer for children and their families across the borough.

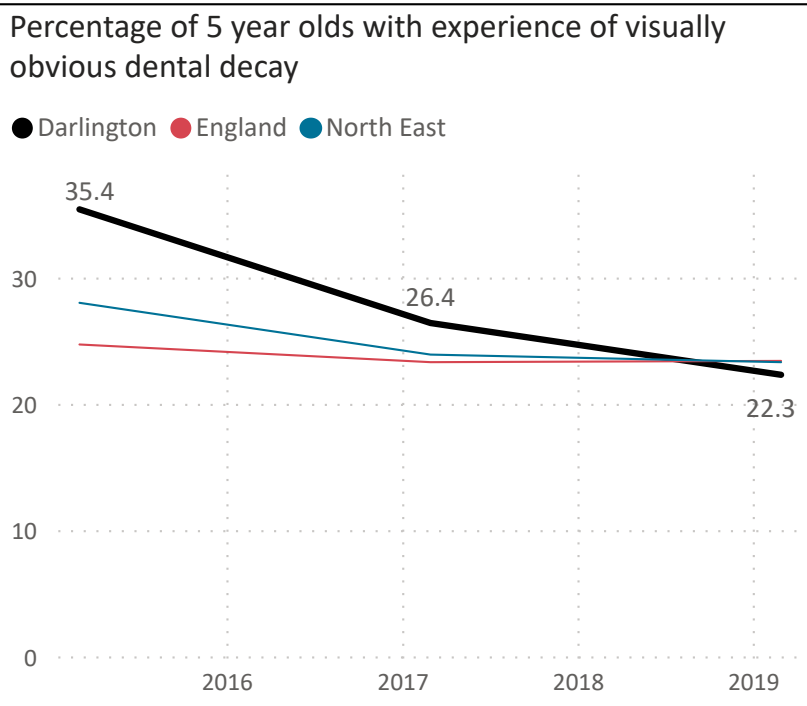
Director Public Health - Penny Spring

H8. Implement the Darlington Oral Health Plan 2017-2022 with partners

The Darlington Oral Health Plan has been refreshed by Council's Public Health team to capture the impact on oral health from the pandemic and recent changes to legislation, and will be, subject to consultation and agreement by Members, in place in 2022. Meanwhile, recent work against the existing plan includes:

- o Implementation of a new toothbrushing scheme
- o Completion of a joint oral health needs assessment in conjunction with neighbouring Tees Valley local authorities

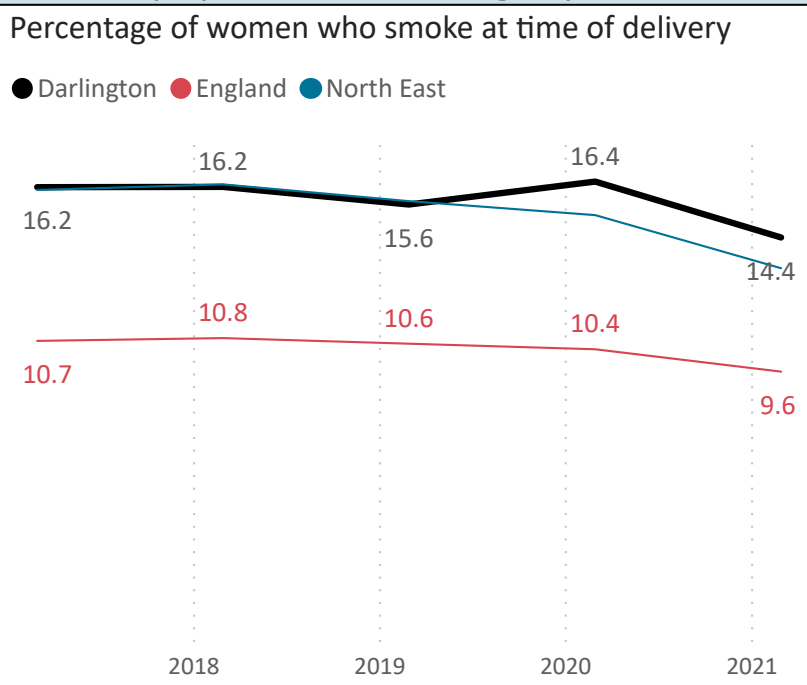
Director Public Health - Penny Spring



The percentage of Darlington 5 year olds with experience of visually obvious dental decay is statistically similar to both the England and North East averages, at 22.3% in 2018/19, and the proportion has been reducing for the past 3 years.

Director Public Health - Penny Spring

H9. Continue the reduction in smoking to achieve a smoke free Darlington (i.e. just 5% of total population smoking) by 2030

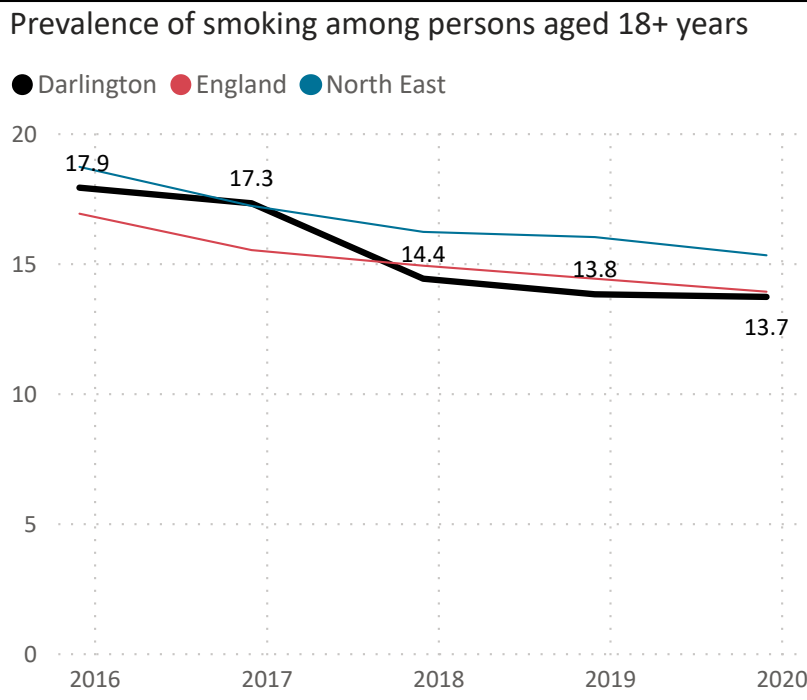


The proportion of Darlington women smoking at the time of delivery of their baby fell by two percentage points in 2020/21, from 16.4% to 14.4%.

Darlington remains statistically similar to our neighbouring North East authorities for this measure, and work continues with local maternity services, midwives and health visitors through the Council's commissioned Stop Smoking Service to continue supporting and encouraging residents, including pregnant mothers, to quit smoking at every opportunity.

Director Public Health - Penny Spring

H9. Continue the reduction in smoking to achieve a smoke free Darlington (i.e. just 5% of total population smoking) by 2030



The prevalence of smoking among persons aged 18 years and over remains slightly below the England (13.9%) and North East (15.3%) averages, at 13.7%.

The trend is also continuing to reduce in line with elsewhere, and it is anticipated that further falls may be recorded going forward as the increase in people giving up smoking during the Covid-19 pandemic feeds through into the data.

Director Public Health - Penny Spring

H10. Continue to deliver the Lifeline services and increase promotion and take up

Number of clients receiving a Lifeline service

Year	Quarter	Value
2019/20	Q4	10,077
2020/21	Q1	10,100
	Q2	10,046
	Q3	10,053
	Q4	10,059
2021/22	Q1	10,072
	Q2	10,166

The Lifeline service continues to record consistent take up as experienced in earlier quarters, with an increase of 94 clients receiving a service in Quarter 2 of 2021/22. Due to the nature of the service, total numbers of service users tends to stay fairly steady as the growth in new clients requesting support is counteracted by other users not requiring the service anymore, due to moving into a care environment or passing away.

Feedback amongst service users remains positive with 10 compliments and no formal complaints received in Quarter 2. The Lifeline team also won the Stronger Communities award for 'Exceptional Care', and restarted tenant engagement sessions and resident activities.

Assistant Director Housing & Revenues - Anthony Sandys

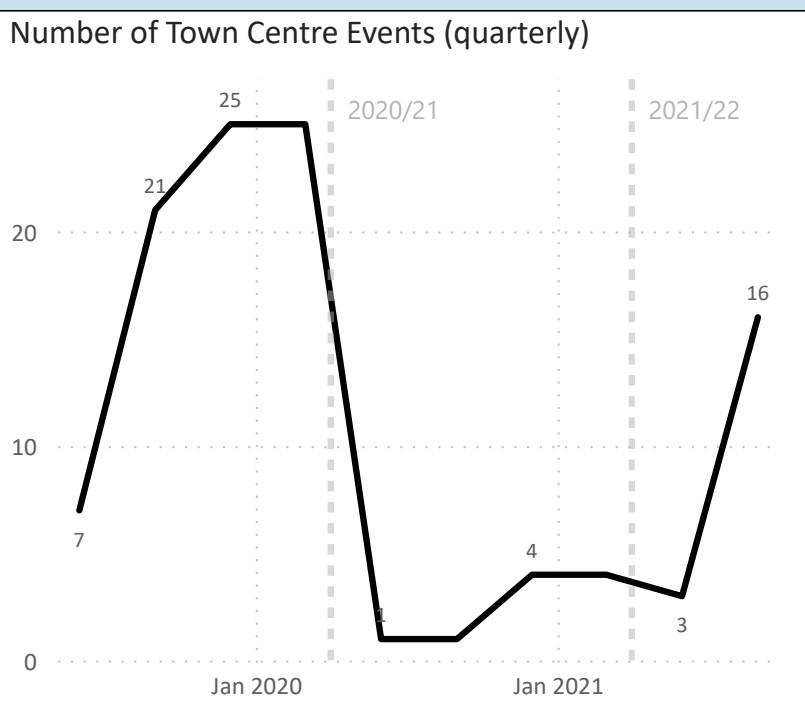
L1. With the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), plan the 2025 celebrations for the Stockton and Darlington Passenger Railway

In addition to the significant capital investment at Darlington Station to ensure a new modern station is part of the 2025 celebrations, and the transformational project at the Rail Heritage Quarter to celebrate our heritage, work has continued through the period with partners to develop the 2025 celebrations programme. The partnership is seeking to deliver a core programme for 2025, built around the following core elements:

- Live steam and motive power;
- Exhibitions of early steam locomotives;
- Education and school projects;
- Knowledge sharing and conferences;
- Community events;
- Large-scale outdoor arts and street theatre.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

L2. Ensure the town centre is clean, animated, and vibrant with an extensive range of events and festivals



As Covid-19 restrictions have been relaxed, the number of town centre events during Quarter 1 and Quarter 2, at 16, including Darlington Daytime Pride, the Vintage Vehicle Rally, the Darlington Food & Music Festival, the R&B Festival and the Darlington Arts Festival. This is significantly above both the previous two quarters, when there were just 3, and the same period last year, when there was just 1. As the borough continues to recover from the pandemic, more events will be held to support the town centre and encourage visitors to the borough.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

Town Centre cleaning - % pass rate of the 33 transects inspected for litter across the Town Centre

Year	Month	Value
2020	October	100%
	November	100%
	December	97%
2021	February	100%
	March	100%
	April	100%
	May	100%
	June	100%
	July	100%
	August	97%
	September	100%

The LAMS (Land Audit Management System) is a quality inspection system to monitor grounds maintenance and/or street cleansing, whereby a number of 'transects' or zones, covering a variety of amenity types, are inspected on a regular basis to identify issues such as litter. Overall, the data shows that the cleanliness of the town centre has continued to remain at a very high standard during the first half of 2021/22, with 100% of town centre transects passing their inspection in 5 of the 6 months inspections were undertaken, and thirty two out of thirty three zones passing in August.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

L3. Finalise plans for the Rail Heritage Quarter and initiate implementation of the plans together with partners

Work has continued developing and finalising the proposals for the Rail Heritage Quarter project during the first two quarters of 2021/22.

A planning application has been submitted and will be determined in January 2022.

The outcome of the development phase of the project will be subject to a future report to Cabinet, with project programmed to commence on site in April 2022 subject to approvals.

[Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson](#)

L4. Deliver the refurbishment and modernisation of the Crown Street Library service

The Crown Street Library refurbishment and modernisation project has been delayed due to a number of technical issues associated with the age, complexity and restrictions on the building. However, the project commenced on site in late November.

The work will include repairs to the roof and structure of the building, upgrading the mechanical and electrical installations as well as restoration of the interior of the library. The work is anticipated to take between 12 and 14 months to complete.

The outcome will be a refurbished and restored library undertaken in a sympathetic way to reflect its heritage but also bring new technology and improvements to the service and building.

[Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson](#)

L5. Review and deliver a revised car parking strategy

The town centre parking offers remain in place to support the town centre's recovery from Covid-19. Following the adoption of the Tees Valley Strategic Plan a new Darlington Transport Plan is being developed that will include a new parking strategy. The strategies will specifically consider transport and parking in the town centre to support recovery and align with the town centre strategy.

The draft plans are being developed in preparation for consultation this financial year and adoption early in the new financial year.

[Assistant Director Transport & Capital Projects - Ant Hewitt](#)

L6. Work with TVCA to deliver improved transport links within Darlington and the Tees Valley

The Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan has now been agreed and a prospectus was submitted to Government to secure over £300m transport investment in the next 5 years. There is strong governance and partnership working in place between Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), the local authorities and the national agencies to deliver the programme of improvements.

Key updates of the programme are:

- Continued lobbying and development of key road projects including New Tees Crossing, Darlington Northern Link Road, A689. Development work on the A68 corridor also continued, looking at all modes of transport.
- Development and delivery of Darlington, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool station projects that will unlock national and local capacity issues. Feasibility is continuing on rail freight to improve access to and from TeesPort without having to utilise Darlington Station.
- The submission of a Bus Service Improvement Plan and development work towards an Enhanced Partnership with operators by the end of the financial year.
- Further development of walking and cycling schemes, including consultation and engagement on the Duke Street and Woodland Road Scheme with an anticipated start on Woodland Road of November 2021.
- Feasibility of electric vehicle charging with a planned investment of over £2m in the region expected to commence this financial year.

[Assistant Director Transport & Capital Projects - Ant Hewitt](#)

L7. Modernise Darlington's crematorium service

Work commenced in April on the refurbishment of the cremators and associated building works. Delivery of the new chapel was delayed due to evidence of newts on the adjacent allotments site with work accordingly only commencing early June.

The revised programme has been developed with a view to try to catch up with a target end date for the project of early April 2022. As of the end of Quarter 2, work continues on the project with both the crematorium and new chapel progressing, with the crematorium due to be finished in early 2022 and the chapel in Spring 2022. The outcome will be a new modern chapel facility and crematorium that meets current environmental requirements. The project will also create capacity for further burials in West Cemetery.

[Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson](#)

L8. Work with TVCA to develop a sustainable Teesside International Airport

Teesside International Airport continues to develop as an airport and location that attracts businesses that are related to aviation industries. Recent developments, led by Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) with support as appropriate from the Council, include a number of new flights agreed and large scale improvements to passenger facilities within the airport, including an extensive, multi-million pound refit which has seen major changes to areas including check-in, security, departure gates and even, the addition of a restaurant and duty-free retail offer.

[Assistant Director Economic Growth - Mark Ladyman](#)

R1. Deliver a balanced Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and a positive Value for Money (VFM) outcome

The current Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is on track and, despite pressures from Covid-19 and utility costs, is anticipated to show an improved position at year end.

The draft MTFP for 2022/23 - 2025/26 is now out for consultation and is showing an affordable four-year position. Following consultation and scrutiny feedback Members will review the revised MTFP at full Council in February.

The Council accounts are scrutinised annually by Ernst and Young and have consistently delivered a positive Value for Money outcome.

[Assistant Director Resources - Brett Nielsen](#)

R2. Oversee the successful completion of existing house building joint venture companies

The Council has invested in six joint ventures for house building to date, with all sites progressing well. Two of the projects, at Eastbourne and Heighington, are completed with the investment repaid and dividends received. There is one final plot at Middleton St George but all financing has been repaid and an interim dividend received. West Park joint venture, which is part of a larger scheme and will be completed over a seven year period, is progressing well with sales buoyant and ahead of target at present. The Council's out-of-borough joint venture with Esh Group is still in its infancy however one site has been purchased for the development of 75 houses and pre-construction works are progressing. Finally, Neasham Road joint venture has commenced with infrastructure works in progress on site. The first homes from this project are anticipated to be on sale from 2022.

[Assistant Director Resources - Brett Nielsen](#)

R3. Maximise the council's income from the council's Investment Fund, including further joint venture housing companies

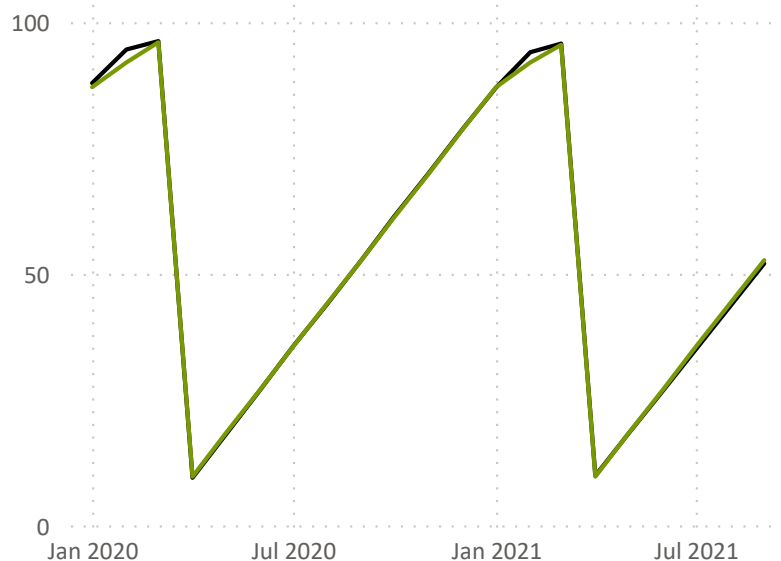
The Investment Fund provision of £50m is being utilised for Joint Venture (JV) and economic regeneration initiatives. Returns on JV's are anticipated to be over £6m and two of the schemes have completed with the investment fully repaid and recycled back into the fund. The agreed Investment Fund of £50m has a commitment against it of £37.64m leaving a balance of £12.36m uncommitted. Officers are actively looking at schemes which subject to approval could utilise the fund to provide returns to the Council and wider economic benefits to the borough.

[Assistant Director Resources - Brett Nielsen](#)

R4. Maximise council tax and business rate income through robust income collection processes

Percentage of Council Tax collected in-year

● Value ● Target



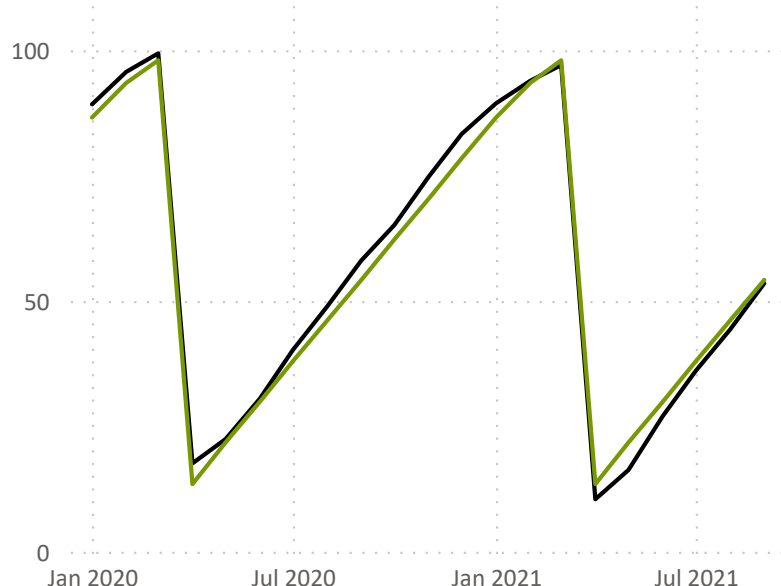
The percentage of local council tax collected is currently on course to meet the Council's target for 2021-22. £36.4 million was collected in Quarter 2 by Revenues and Benefits officers, exceeding the amount collected in the same period last year by £3.03 million.

Year	Darlington	England
2016/17	95.8	97.2
2017/18	95.6	97.1
2018/19	96.0	97.0
2019/20	96.2	96.8
2020/21	95.8	95.7

Assistant Director Housing & Revenues - Anthony Sandys

Percentage of Business Rates collected in-year

● Value ● Target



The percentage of local business rates collected in Quarter 2 is currently below target, due to businesses qualifying for retail and hospitality relief receiving 100% for Quarter 1 only and therefore only having to start paying business rates from Quarter 2 onwards. Collection rates are therefore expected to increase through the remainder of 2021-22, with the overall target for the year still anticipated to be met.

Year	Darlington	England
2016/17	97.9	98.2
2017/18	98.9	98.4
2018/19	97.7	98.3
2019/20	99.4	98.0
2020/21	97.1	93.0

Assistant Director Housing & Revenues - Anthony Sandys

R5. Adopt a local wealth building approach to council procurement and work with the wider public sector in Darlington to do the same

A Public Sector Executives Group has been established, chaired by the Council's Chief Executive, which is a key mechanism through which the Council works with its public sector partners. It has accepted the role of 'Anchor Institutions Network' to further develop a joint approach to social value. The group has established a sub group of procurement leads which is focusing on two objectives:

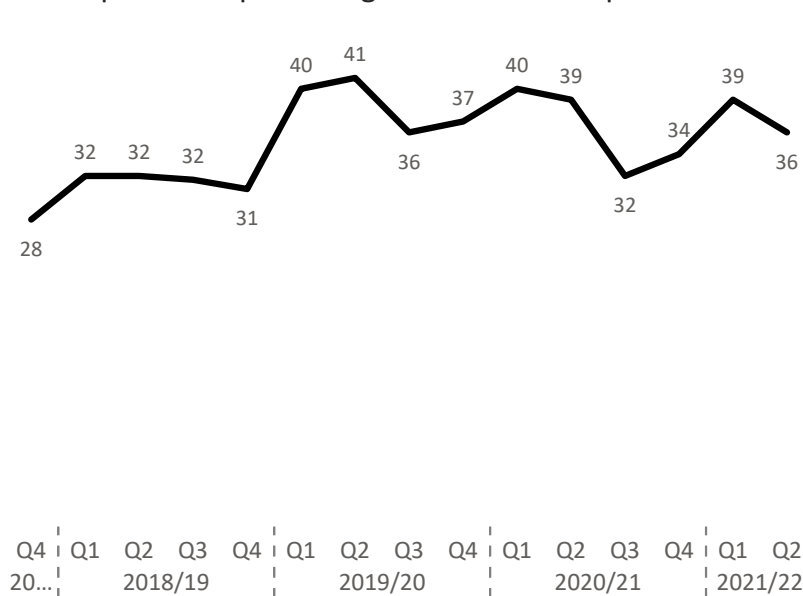
1. Extract the maximum social value from public spend in Darlington
2. Tailor social value to the specific needs of Darlington

The group provides a space for agencies to share practice and is working through issues including assimilating social value output data and how agencies report outputs over differing geographies.

Director Darlington Partnerships - Seth Pearson

R5. Adopt a local wealth building approach to council procurement and work with the wider public sector in Darlington to do the same

Local spend as a percentage of contracted spend



Despite a slight drop in Quarter 2, the proportion of Council spend with Darlington-based suppliers increased in the first half of 2021/22 and equated to more than £17.6M.

This improvement reflects the continued embedding of the Council's social value procurement framework for contracts which encourages officers to invite local providers where possible to tender for contracts. It also reflects ongoing work by the Council's Procurement and Economic Growth teams to support local businesses to find and bid for Council opportunities.

Assistant Director Law & Governance - Luke Swinhoe

R6. Increasing the availability of council services online

Number of transactional services available via the corporate website

September 2021

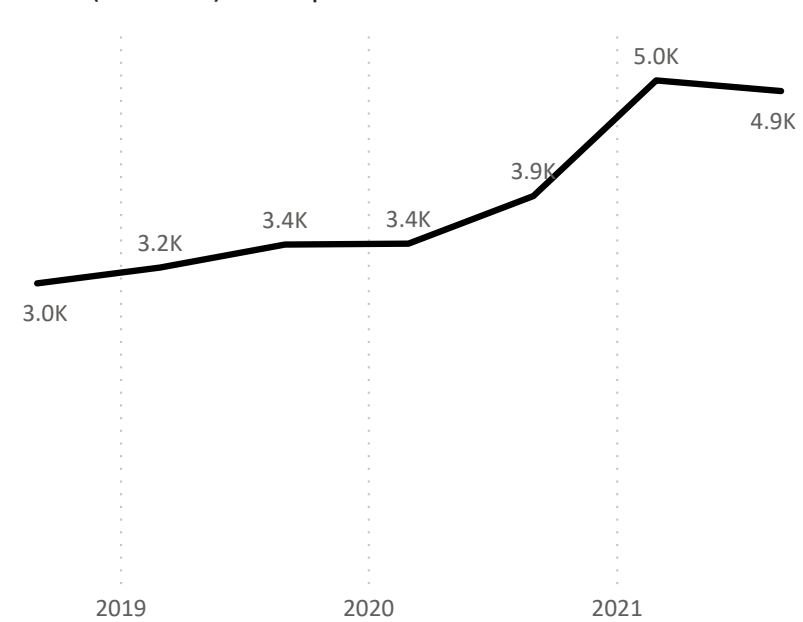
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This is the first time data has been captured, following an initial audit exercise to identify the current number of online functions offered by the council. It is expected, however, that there are likely more online services to be captured and therefore a further, more detailed piece of work is now underway to capture this additional information and so this number is expected to increase further.

The 2021 National Highways & Transport Public satisfaction survey ranked Darlington first out of 111 councils for 'Ease of contact for Enquiries'. The new Online "Report it" facility launched in June 2021 has seen over 500 reports made directly to delivery teams ensuring a quicker response to reported issues.

Head of Strategy, Performance & Comms - N. Bowerbank

Visits (sessions) to corporate website



There has been a steady increase in average daily visits to the Council website over the past 3 years, which is continually being improved with new information and functions, easier to understand content, and better navigation.

The spike in visits in 2020 was due to national Covid-19 announcements leading to people seeking information on local restrictions and Council services.

There was a small reduction in average usage from April 2021 compared to the previous period due to fewer pandemic-related visits, however numbers remain significantly higher than the same period in the previous year and future data will determine if Covid-19 has led to a step change in website usage going forward.

Head of Strategy, Performance & Comms - N. Bowerbank

R7. Review and refresh the council's workforce strategy

The Council's new Workforce Strategy and Plan was agreed by the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC), a forum comprising Elected Members, senior managers and trade union representatives, in July 2021. Rollout of the strategy commenced in October with communication to all staff through "The Briefing", a weekly staff email update, and a briefing session at Senior Managers Network. Work is ongoing to ensure that the strategy is embedded into everyday practices and monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken to assess the impact of the strategy. Further media presentations are being developed to widen the promotion throughout the whole workforce and how the strategy can be incorporated into employee induction. JCC and chief officers will receive an update on the impact of the strategy after one year.

[Assistant Director Resources - Brett Nielsen](#)

S1. Utilise the skills and resources of businesses to increase volunteering and corporate social responsibility primarily through Darlington Cares

The lockdowns resulting from Covid-19 brought employer-supported volunteering to an almost standstill for much of 2020 and 2021, with many businesses not willing to potentially put their staff at risk in a volunteering situation. Despite this, some Darlington Cares member organisations continued to supply volunteers to support the roll-outs for both flu and Covid vaccinations, all of which were coordinated by the Darlington Cares programme officer. All business members are now back volunteering and, despite the hiatus, Darlington Cares has collectively delivered more than 7,000 hours of volunteer activity in 2020-21. As activity picks up to their previous levels, including the reintroduction of flagship initiatives such as Pick, Pie and a Pint, the board are focusing on growing member numbers, with a number of significant local employers keen to join.

Director Darlington Partnerships - Seth Pearson

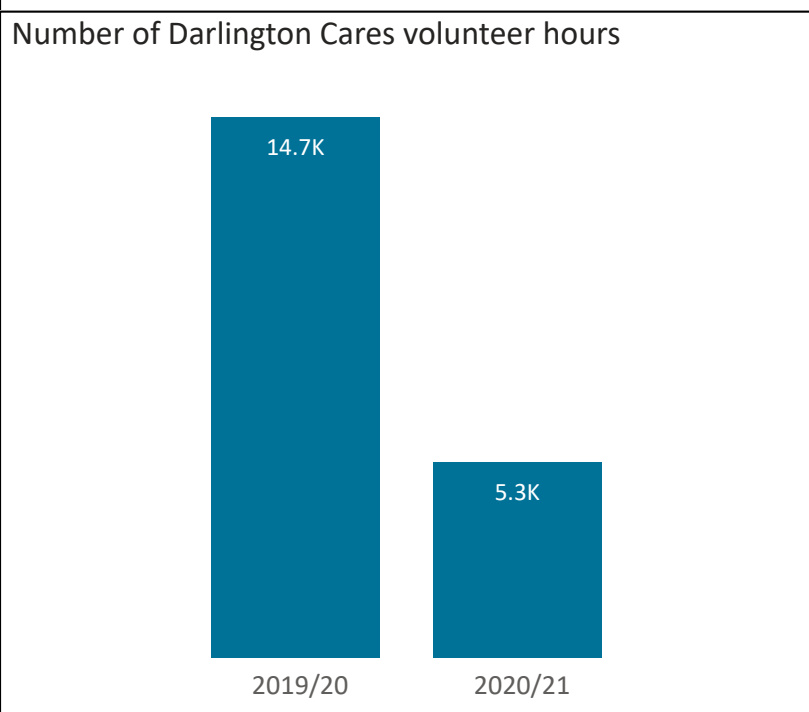
Year	Month	Value
2019	June	22
	September	23
	December	24
2020	March	24
	June	24
	September	24
	December	24
2021	March	24
	June	26
	September	26

During the lockdown stages of the pandemic, the majority of Darlington Cares member organisations were unable to release staff to volunteer due to health and safety concerns.

Covid-19 and its effects on both local employer and officer capacity also meant recruitment of new members was suspended during this period.

However, as restrictions are continuing to ease, the Board is now focusing on recruiting new members in 2022, with conversations currently being undertaken with a number of local interested organisations.

Director Darlington Partnerships - Seth Pearson



Many of the volunteering programmes that Darlington Cares runs had to be suspended during the pandemic. However, Darlington Cares performed a pivotal role in the borough's Covid-19 response, including by providing and coordinating volunteer stewards and drivers to support various vaccination programmes. As restrictions are lifted the pre-pandemic programme is being rebooted, including the popular Pick, Pie and a Pint litter picks, and new volunteering opportunities are being explored.

The recovery in activity is demonstrated by 4,302 volunteer hours being delivered in the first two quarters of 2021/22, compared to 0 hours over the same period last year and 6,087 in 2019/20.

Director Darlington Partnerships - Seth Pearson

S2. Produce, deliver and appraise a pilot for a local neighbourhood renewal scheme including reviewing the approach to private sector landlord operations to ensure residents are best supported and protected

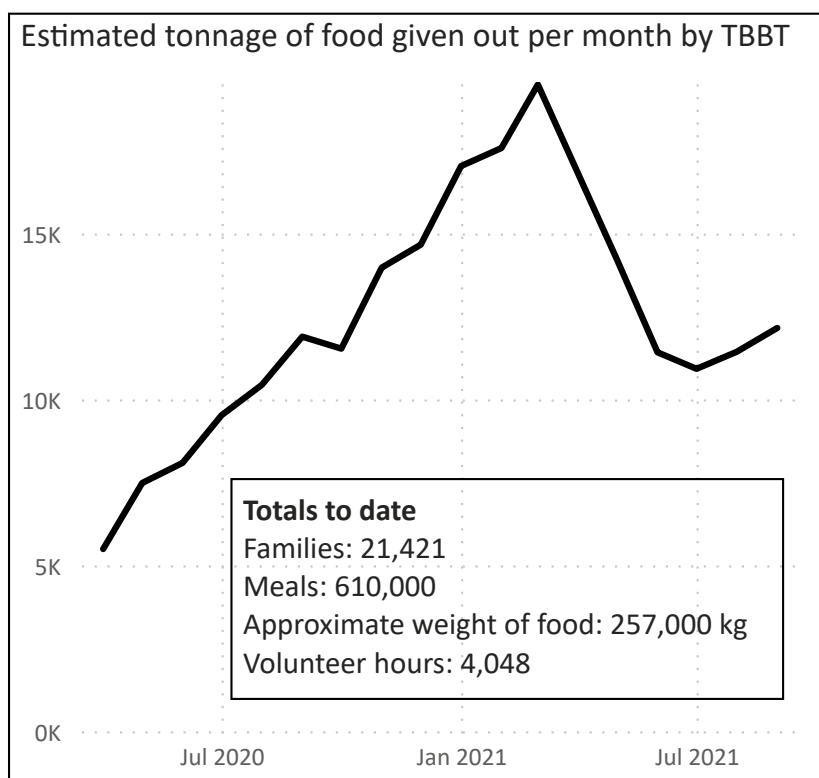
The Northgate initiative, a multi-agency programme which seeks to pilot a range of interventions in order to improve outcomes for local residents in all areas of wellbeing including economy, education and childhood, health, environment and social relationships, is now well established and delivering results across all domains, from improvements to the public realm and quick responses to reports of environmental crime, to delivery of an innovative new 'Eyes and Ears' training course to local stakeholders, purchasing and bringing back into use a number of long-term empty properties, implementing significant new capital projects as part of the Towns Fund programme, and preparing to roll out a groundbreaking new wellbeing service to support local residents' health outcomes. Appropriate workstreams have been developed which are held to account by a steering group chaired by the Deputy Leader of the Council. As we come out of the pandemic the partnership steering group are also revisiting the initiative's ambitions and undertaking a target setting exercise to refresh the programme's structure and focus, and ensure it reflects emerging priorities.

Director Darlington Partnerships - Seth Pearson

S3. Work with partners to address food instability

At the outset of the pandemic, in March 2020, the Council put an emergency package together to support the Kings Church Foodbank which, in addition to being the largest foodbank in the borough also supports the wider foodbank network in Darlington. Council staff from the Dolphin Centre staff were redeployed to support activity and food, purchased wholesale through the Dolphin Centre's suppliers, was provided. Also in March 2020, The Bread and Butter Thing - an initiative food surplus redistribution charity - began to operate in Darlington, undeterred by the first national lockdown which was announced 2 days before their first service. There are now 7 hubs established across Darlington which, as of the end of September 2021, have provided local families with 21,421 sets of groceries, equating to 257 tonnes of food and 610,000 meals. As each grocery set includes an average of £35 worth of shopping (one bag of fresh fruit and vegetables, one of chilled goods and one of cupboard items) for a set cost of just £7.50, this means that Darlington households have collectively saved over half a million pounds in food costs since the scheme began.

Director Darlington Partnerships - Seth Pearson



The launch date for the first The Bread and Butter Thing (TBTT) hub in Darlington was two days into the first Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020.

Despite this incredibly difficult operating environment, TBTT - supported by the Council and its partners - has stuck to and delivered its core mission of providing affordable food across the borough and reducing food waste, and there are now seven hubs located in areas of highest need across Darlington.

The success of the initiative is evidenced by the data showing that, as of September 2021, 610,000 meals have been provided to local families.

Director Darlington Partnerships - Seth Pearson

S4. Embed the new Community Safety service and review its effectiveness and priorities

The Community Safety Unit continues to perform well and support a range of partners and services.

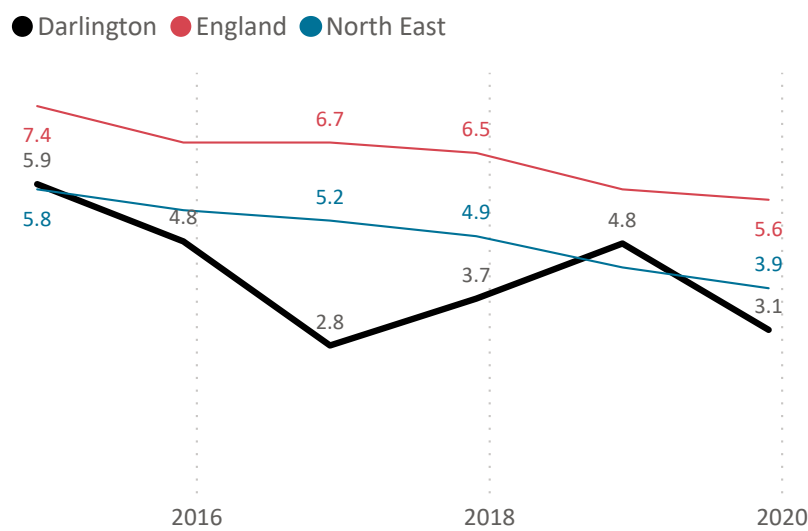
A review of the Civic Enforcement team's priorities was carried out at the beginning of 2021 to inform a refreshed service plan and ongoing management of the service's resources versus priorities is being kept under review with the portfolio holder. Following the review, the Civic Enforcement team continues to focus on three key areas of work: anti-social behaviour, environmental crime and parking enforcement, and there has been a particular focus in recent months on back lanes and environmental crime.

The effectiveness of the service is demonstrated by the fact the team have successfully won funding from all three government 'Safer Streets' funds, enabling significant resource to be targeted at burglary-prevention, increasing CCTV coverage across the borough and preventing violence against women and girls.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

S5. Work with Durham Constabulary and other key partners to improve our collective response to dealing with drug and alcohol issues

Percentage of opiate users successfully completing their treatment

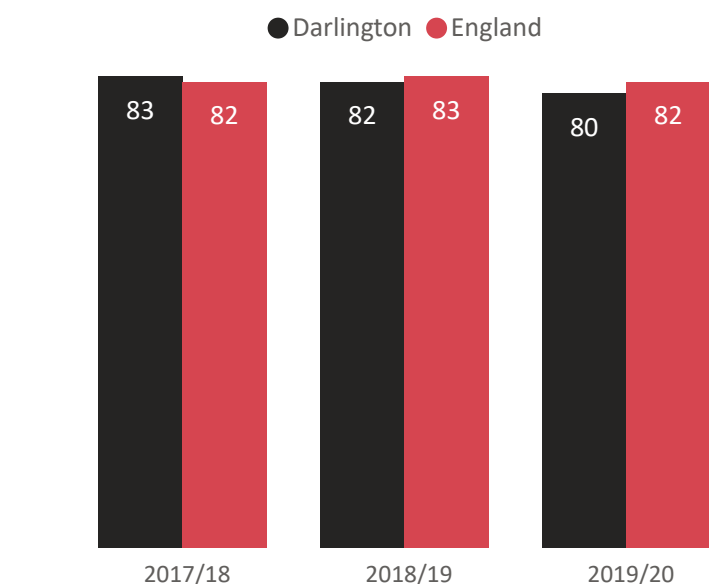


Darlington remains statistically similar to our neighbouring North East authorities for the proportion of opiate users successfully completing drug treatment, despite a small drop in the overall number of individuals who are successfully completing treatment.

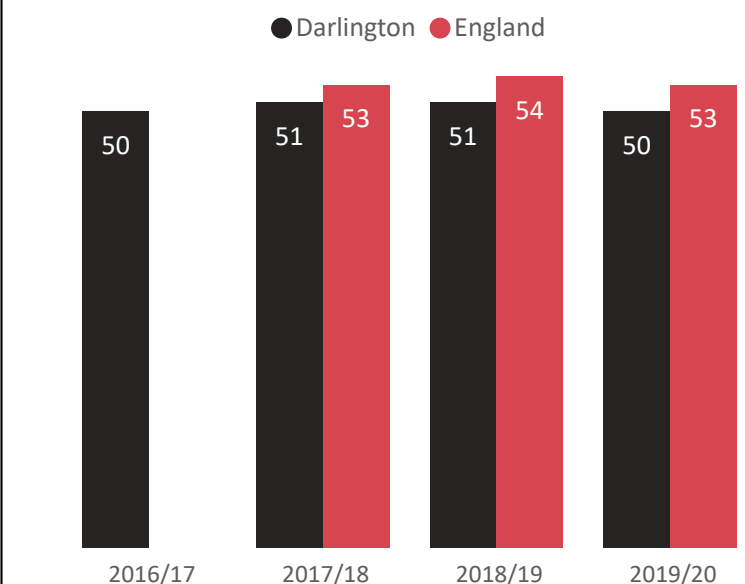
The slight fall follows a period of sustained increase over the previous two years and occurred during a period of change where local services in Darlington were reprocurd through a competitive tendering process. Performance issues have been identified and are being tackled by the service's providers and it is hoped this will lead to further increases for this measure going forward.

Director Public Health - Penny Spring

Estimated unmet need for alcohol treatment (%)



Estimated unmet need for drug treatment (%)



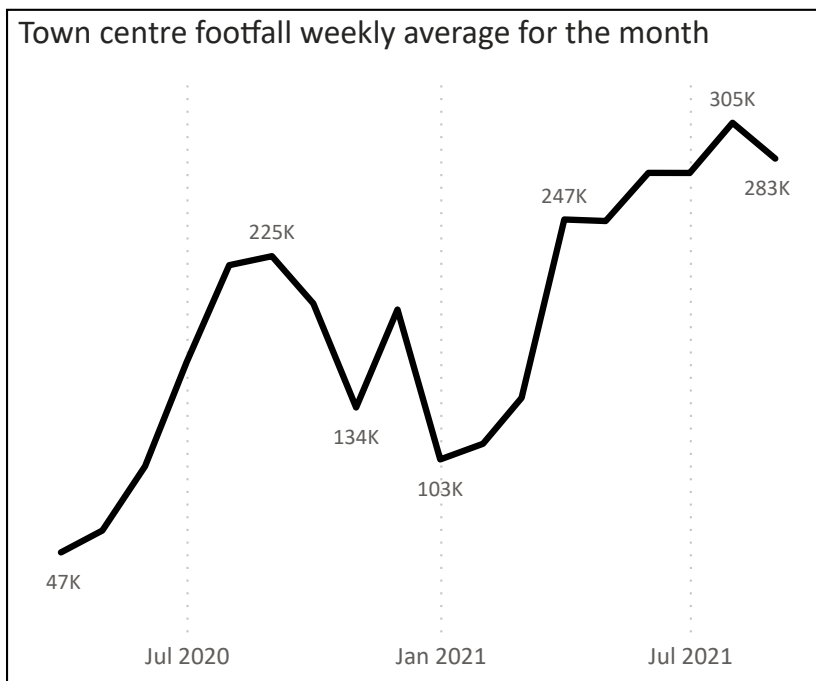
The estimated proportions of adults in need of alcohol and/or drugs (opiates and/or crack) treatment that are estimated not to be in it is lower in Darlington than the England averages and have been falling.

Director Public Health - Penny Spring

S6. Support the development of the town centre economy by putting appropriate measures in place and demonstrating it is a safe place to visit

The Community Safety team have continued to support the recovery process across the town centre through the Covid-19 pandemic and continue to lead the Prevention and Compliance group, working across the Council and with partners. The Head of Community Safety has been working closely with both the Town Centre Partnership and Events Manager to inform the next renewal submission for Purple Flag status, a national accreditation scheme that identifies town and city centres that meet or surpass the standards of excellence in managing the evening and night time economy. The renewal application was due in October and will be followed by a virtual assessment in December 2021, with reaccreditation due to be announced, if successful, in January 2022. Reported town centre crime, incidents and anti-social behaviour were all down by approximately a third in the first two quarters of 2021 compared to the same period pre-pandemic, in 2019.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson



Town centre footfall levels have been closely correlated with Covid-19 lockdown periods during the course of the pandemic, with significant drops recorded during periods of tighter restrictions which have also been reported elsewhere. As these Covid-related restrictions have continued to reduce through the first two quarters of 2021/22, footfall in the town centre has continued to increase and, whilst directly comparable benchmarking data is not available, community mobility data released by Google since the beginning of the pandemic shows that Darlington mobility trends for 'retail and recreation' have recovered more strongly than the UK average.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

S7. Review our approach to the use of CCTV in supporting community safety and work with partners to enhance the service further

A review of the Council's CCTV system has now taken place and options for the development of the service are being considered.

It is anticipated an action plan and business model will be developed this financial year.

Assistant Director Community Services - Ian Thompson

S8. Oversee the implementation of the council's equality policy

Percentage of staff who have completed equality and diversity training

September 2021

51.5%

The Council's bespoke half day equality and diversity training has been available to and mandatory for all staff since January 2020, however the pandemic has led to delays in delivery with, for example, restrictions on maximum numbers for in-person training meaning significant numbers of frontline staff have not yet been able to attend. More in-person sessions, however, are planned for 2022 and online staff who have not yet attended are being sent reminders. Staff feedback from the training has been overwhelmingly positive and since its inception the proportion of staff who agree that the Council takes equalities issues seriously has increased from 93% to 96% on the staff survey.

[Head of Strategy, Performance & Comms - N. Bowerbank](#)

Percentage of elected members who have completed equality and diversity training

September 2021

68.0%

This indicator includes any Members who have completed at least one of two distinct and bespoke training sessions on equality and diversity on offer.

Engagement on the Members sessions has been excellent and more training sessions for those Members who have not yet been able to attend will be made available in the new year.

[Head of Strategy, Performance & Comms - N. Bowerbank](#)

S9. Work with partners to assess flood risk for Darlington and develop solutions

Strong partnership and project teams are in place developing two studies that will inform and assist future planning, investment and bidding opportunities:

1. The Darlington Northumbria Integrated Drainage Partnership (NIDP) study. This is assessing all areas across the north and south Darlington catchments to determine risks and issues in relation to flood for the Environment Agency (EA), Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL) and the Council. The outcome will be evidence for a plan of interventions for the highest priority locations to inform bids to secure funding.
2. Flood Asset Risk Study. Looking at the risks and impact associated with the possible failure or blockage of key assets such as bridges and culverts to determine investment and maintenance strategies to minimise the risk of flooding. The outcome of the study will be evidence to inform bids to secure funding or re-prioritise existing resources.

Operational meetings occur on a regular basis between EA and officers and work has recently taken place to clear out debris from the River Skerne.

[Assistant Director Transport & Capital Projects - Ant Hewitt](#)