



# Darlington Borough Council

## Council Plan Performance Management Report

### 2023/24 Quarter 2

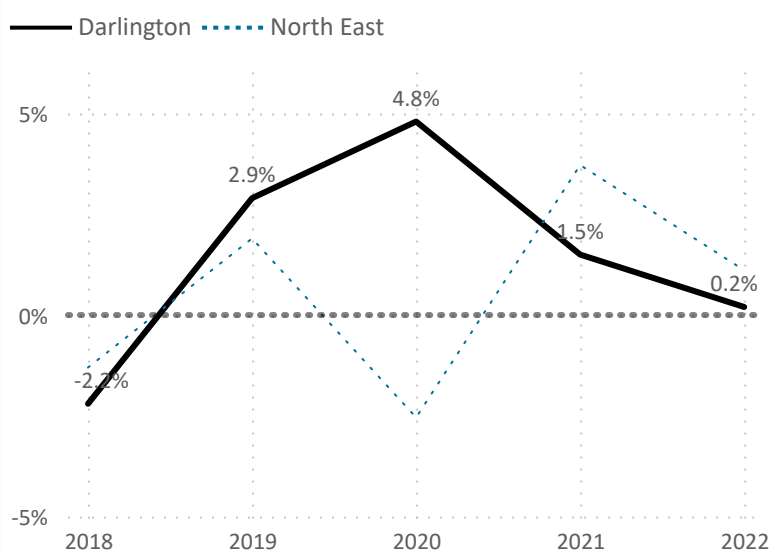
This report outlines council performance up to the end of the second quarter of the 2023/24 financial year.

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 [2-14](#))
  - Maximising the Potential of our Young People (pages [15-17](#))
  - Working with Communities to Maximise their Potential (pages [18-19](#))
  - Supporting the Most Vulnerable in the Borough (pages [20-22](#))
  - Supported by a Dedicated Workforce (page [23](#))
- Sections on each Cabinet portfolio area highlighting progress against key actions and relevant key performance indicators:
  - Adults (pages [24-26](#))
  - Children and Young People (pages [27-33](#))
  - Economy (pages [34-36](#))
  - Health and Housing (pages [37-42](#))
  - Local Services (pages [43-45](#))
  - Resources (pages [46-49](#))
  - Stronger Communities (pages [50-54](#))

## 1.1 Delivering - More sustainable well-paid jobs

Change in total employment since previous year



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. The number of new employment opportunities continued to increase in 2022, although at a slower rate than the regional rate. Over the last three years, the rate of growth in total employment has decreased, and it now stands at 0.2% in Darlington.

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

Number of people employed including self-employed

Year	Month	Darlington
2020	December	49,100
2021	March	48,100
	June	49,800
	September	49,400
	December	50,100
2022	March	50,200
	June	49,800
	September	50,500
	December	51,000
2023	March	52,300
	June	53,600

The number of people employed (including self-employed) now stands at 53,600. The overall trend demonstrates a gradual increase, as the economy continues to grow from the challenges of the pandemic. During the latter parts of 2022 and 2023, this number has increased, showing a 7% growth since June 2022. This demonstrates a significant growth in the number of employees and self-employed.

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

Number of employees

Year	Month	Darlington
2021	March	43,000
	June	44,300
	September	44,200
	December	44,900
2022	March	45,200
	June	44,800
	September	44,700
	December	45,700
2023	March	46,000
	June	47,200

The long-term trend shows the number of employees in Darlington continues to increase, and by June 2023, the number of employees in the Borough is 47,200. Since September 2022, the number has continued to increase every quarter, suggesting the economy is growing and demand for labour is increasing. Local evidence shows that many businesses are implementing growth plans previously delayed by the pandemic.

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

# 1. GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

## 1.1 Delivering - More sustainable well-paid jobs

Median weekly all residence based earnings

Year	Darlington	England	North East
2014	387	422	387
2015	402	429	395
2016	437	442	405
2017	416	454	416
2018	415	466	420
2019	440	483	438
2020	428	484	439
2021	502	510	464
2022	482	537	491

Darlington resident median weekly earnings decreased from £502 to £482 in 2022. This was in contrast to both the North East and English trends. The weekly median all residence based earnings is now £55 less than the England level. The long term trend for Darlington, however, is still increasing. After a few years of closing the gap between Darlington rates and national averages, this reduction has negatively impacted that recovery.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

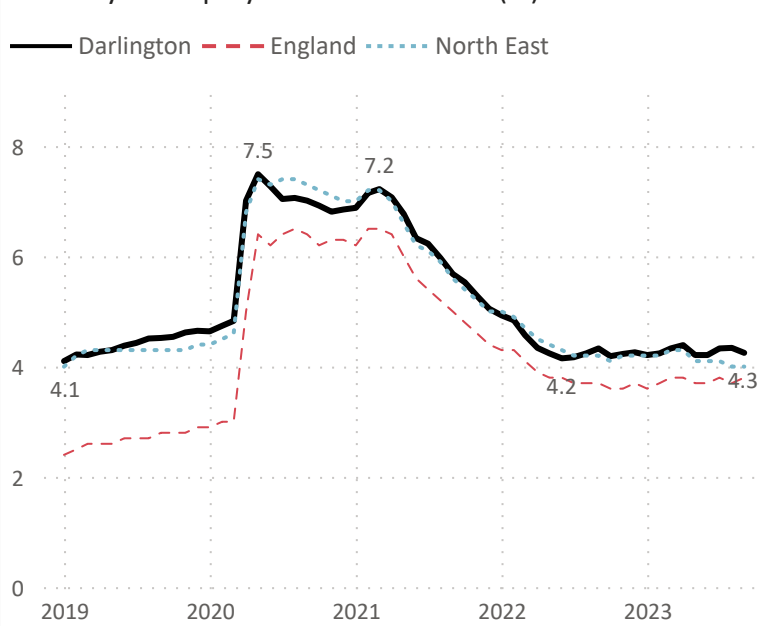
Median weekly full-time employee based earnings

Year	Darlington	England	North East
2014	422	422	390
2015	437	429	395
2016	435	442	403
2017	423	451	417
2018	433	466	418
2019	454	483	438
2020	435	485	436
2021	459	510	459
2022	492	537	484

The Darlington full-time employee based earnings increased in 2022. The rate of increase in Darlington between 2021 and 2022 was £33, an increase higher than both the North-East at £25 and the England rate at £27. This has closed the gap between Darlington full-time employee based earnings and England full-time employee based earnings. In addition Darlington is now above the North East rate.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Monthly unemployed claimant count (%)

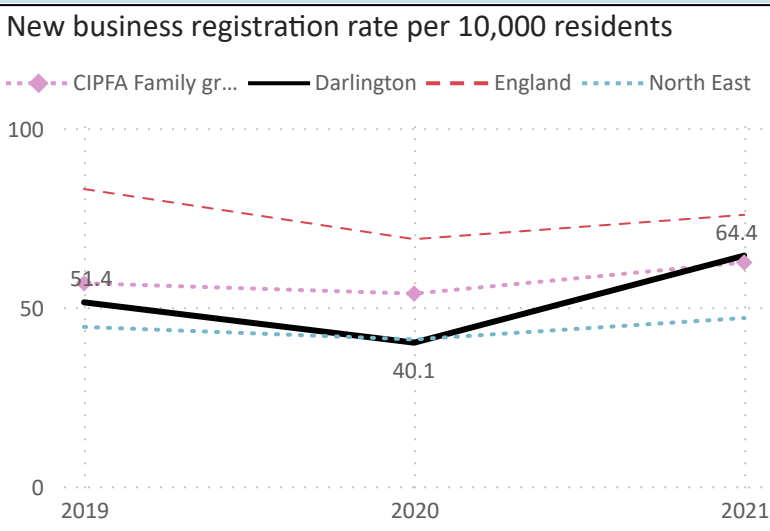


During the latter part of 2022 and 2023 to date, the monthly unemployed claimant count has remained relatively static - a trend which is mirrored in both regional and national statistics. The claimant count in September 2023 now stands at 4.3% (identical to September 2022). The rate in Darlington (4.3) is marginally higher than both the North East rate of 4% and the England rate of 3.8%.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

# 1. GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

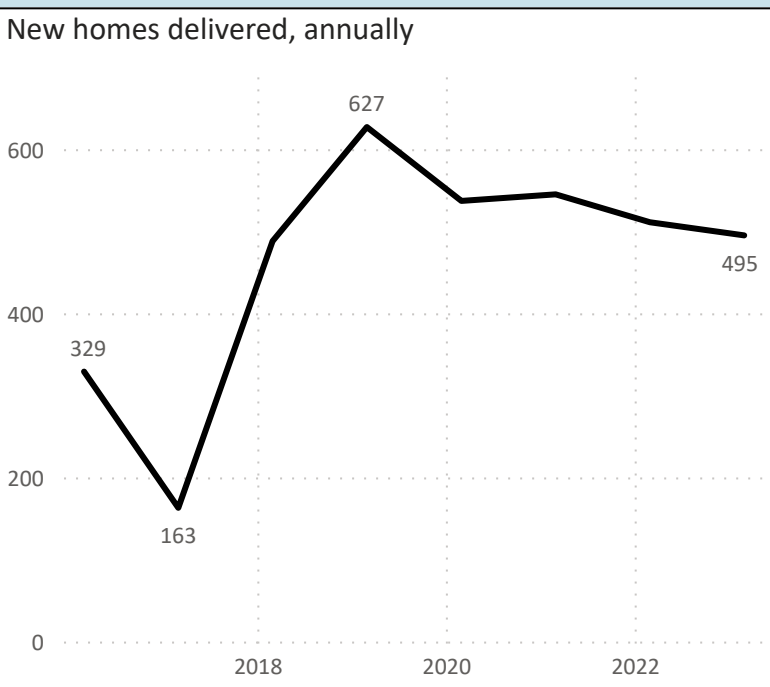
## 1.2 Delivering - More businesses



New business formation rates have fallen in Darlington since 2018, a trend mirrored by the rate for England. The data shows figures up to 2021. There are mix of local and national reasons for this decline. Nationally, the UK's withdrawal from the EU, political uncertainty, and changing start-up support structures have all had an impact. Locally, the continued growth in alternative employment opportunities will impact the motivation for many new business start-ups.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

## 1.3 Delivering - More homes



Housing delivery continues to be strong within the borough despite ongoing challenges with Nutrient Neutrality.

Despite not granting any significant new housing permissions in the past financial year housing completions have still exceeded the annual local plan target.

Options to mitigate Nutrient pollution from new development are now being applied. Two rounds of Natural England credits have now been issued with a third having recently closed. Darlington fared well in the proportion of credits allocated to developments in Darlington helping to unlock around 2000 homes.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

## 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 42 days (except where there is non-compliance with enforcement action taken)

Year	Month	Darlington
2021	December	90.0%
2022	March	90.2%
	June	91.8%
	September	89.9%
	December	91.3%
2023	March	89.8%
	June	94.7%
	September	95.8%

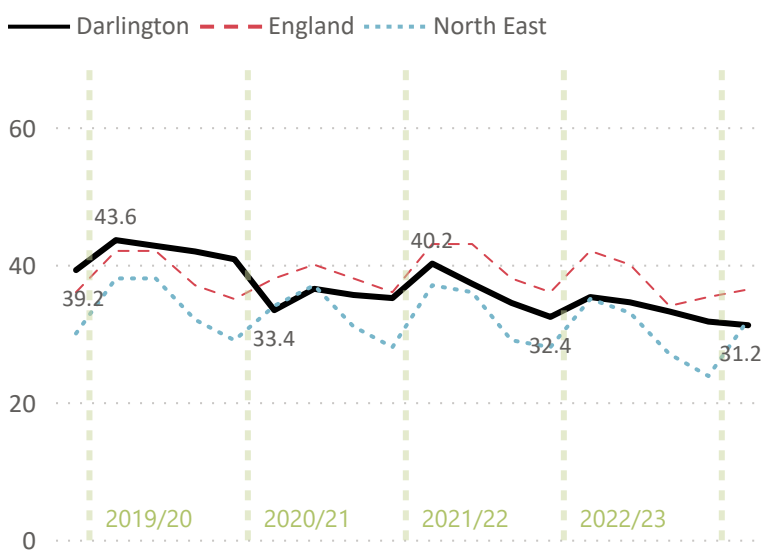
The performance indicator has consistently been met by Environmental Health and there has been a steady increase in performance for 2023 despite there being no reduction in the number of complaints received about refuse accumulations in private yards/gardens. The issuing of Community Protection Warnings is proving successful as a means of securing the removal and disposal of refuse in a proper and hygienic manner from private land.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

# 1. GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

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

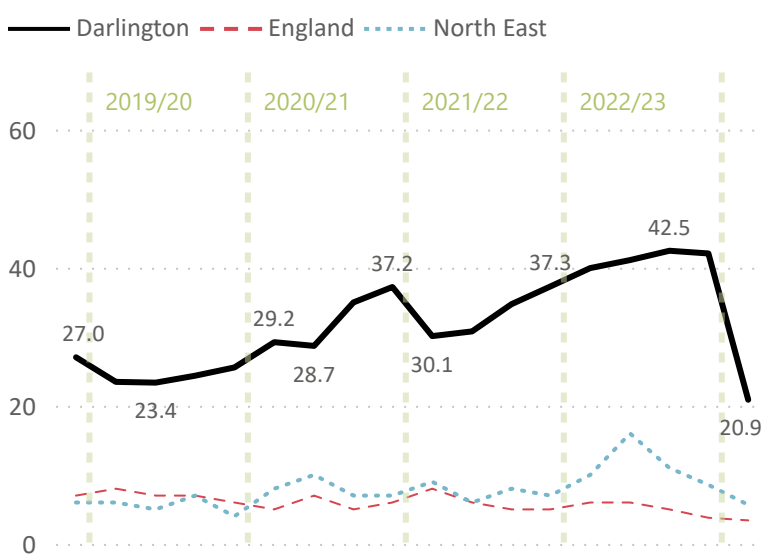
Percentage of household waste that is collected that is either reused, recycled or composted



The data is only up to the end of June 2023 due to lag in verification through the national reporting system. While the amount of waste that is recycled, composted or reused has fallen in recent years. The Council's performance is in line with the North East average. Work continues to be undertaken by Street Scene and Communication teams to increase recycling and reduce contamination, and staff are working with the new waste contractor to maximise the amount of material that is recovered from residual waste and sent for recycling.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

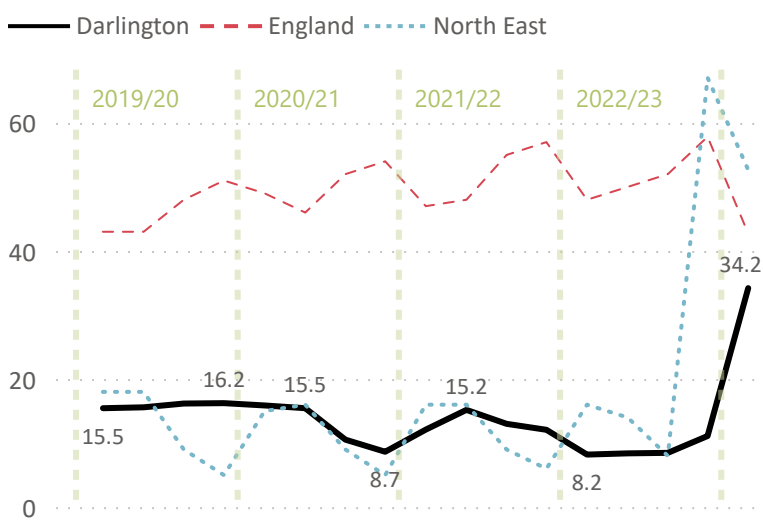
Percentage of overall waste that is collected by the Council that is landfilled



Data is only available up to June 2023 due to the lag in data verification through the national system. The percentage of household waste sent to landfill has fallen significantly in quarter 1 to its lowest level in recent years to only 20.9%. This is as a result of more waste being sent to energy recovery, which is higher up the waste hierarchy, causing less environmental impact than landfill. DBC is above the North East average for landfill as the majority of other North East Councils have primary contracts with energy recovery facilities.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

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

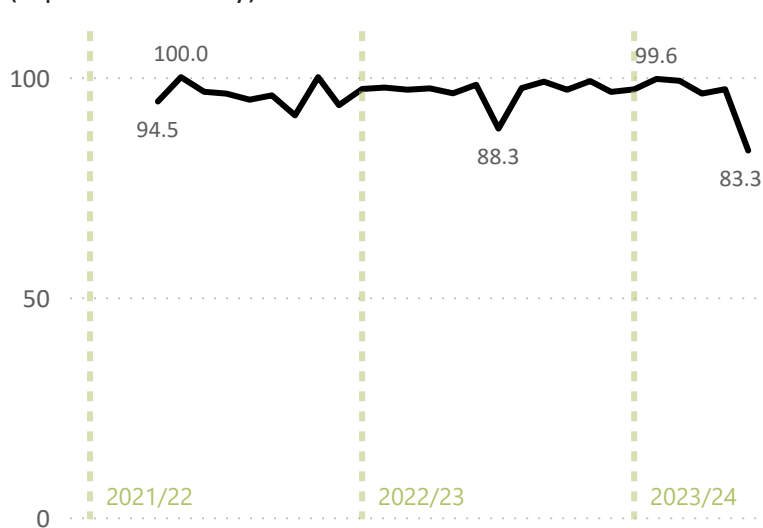


Data is only available up to June 2023 due to the lag in the national verification process. The percentage of household waste sent to energy recovery in the first quarter is significantly up at 34.2%. The increase is as a result of available markets to accept the material from the Mechanical Biological Treatment process at affordable cost. Ultimately, the more waste after recycling that is sent to energy recovery reduces the amount of waste landfilled. Darlington Borough Council is below the North East average, as in most cases their primary contract is through energy recovery facilities.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

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

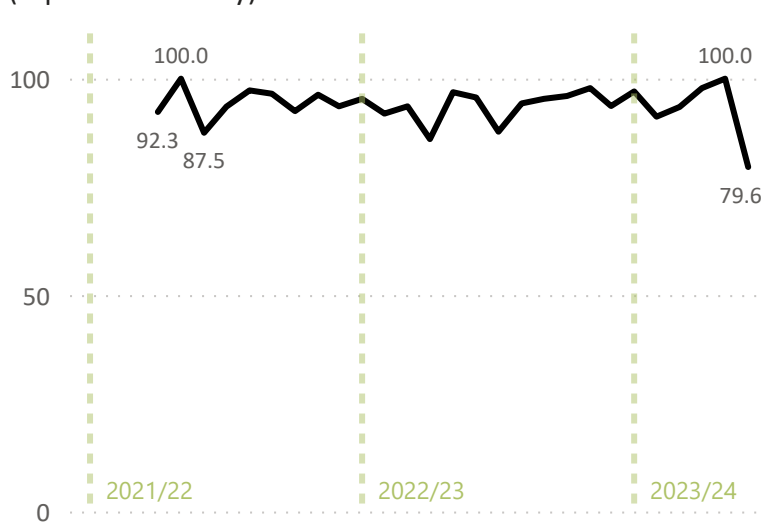
Percentage of small fly tips removed within target time (reported monthly)



The performance of street cleansing teams remains consistently high with an average since April 2023 of 95.9% of small fly tips removed within their target time, with the majority being collected in under 5 days with a significant number in under 2 days. The reduction in performance in September is as a result of limited resources across the service to inspect and collect fly tips.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

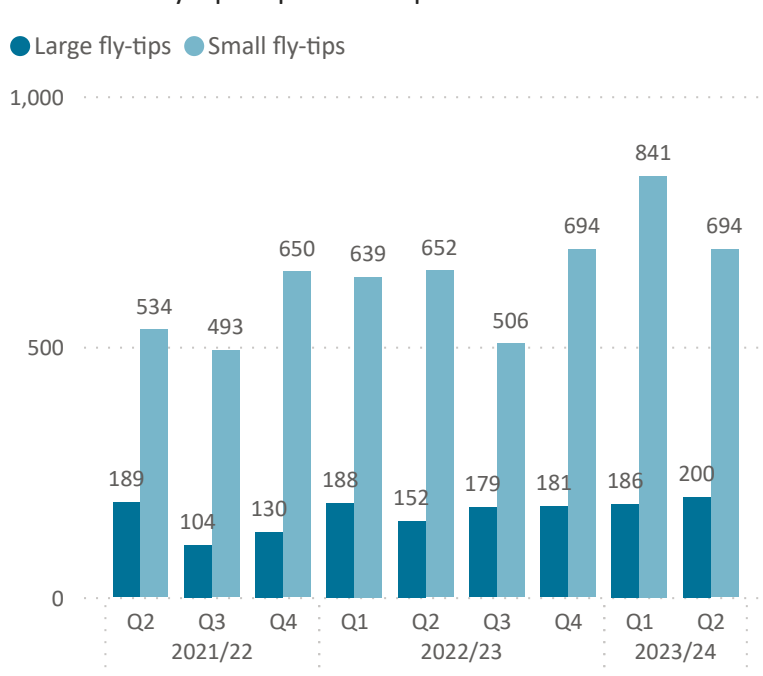
Percentage of large fly tips removed within target time (reported monthly)



The performance of street cleansing teams remains consistently high with an average since April 2023 of 93.2% of large fly tips removed within their target time, with the majority being collected in under 5 days with a significant number in under 2 days. The reduction in performance in September is as a result of limited resources across the service to inspect and collect fly tips.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Number of fly-tips reported in quarter

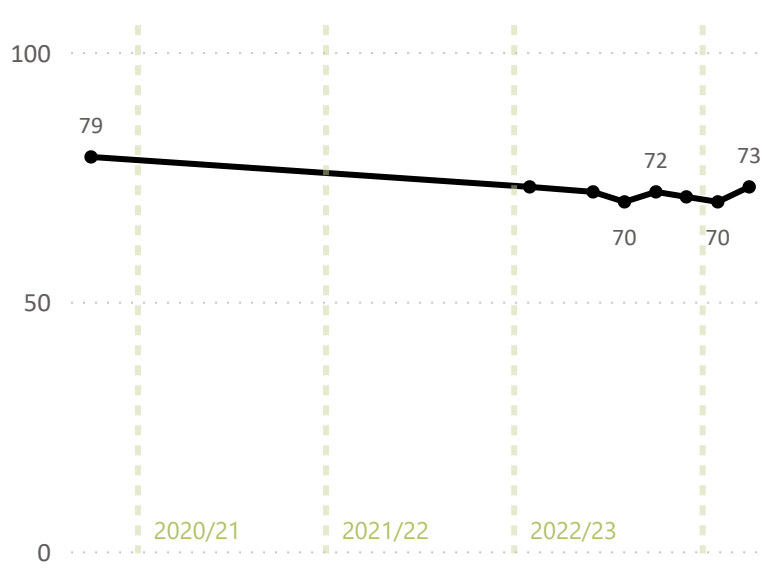


When comparing September data for 2023/24 to 2022/23, the total number of fly tips (1,921) have increased by 17.8%. While small fly tips (1,535), have increased by 18.9% over the period. Large fly tips (386) have increased by 13.5%. A large proportion of small fly tips is side waste, put out particularly in back lanes at the same time as refuse collection. A significant proportion of these fly tips are being identified as part of the back lanes project, which is achieving great success within the areas it is operating. The majority of fly tips are collected within 5 days, larger incidents take longer due to the complexity of the items (e.g. asbestos) that require significant resources.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

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

Land Audit Management System - Litter Score



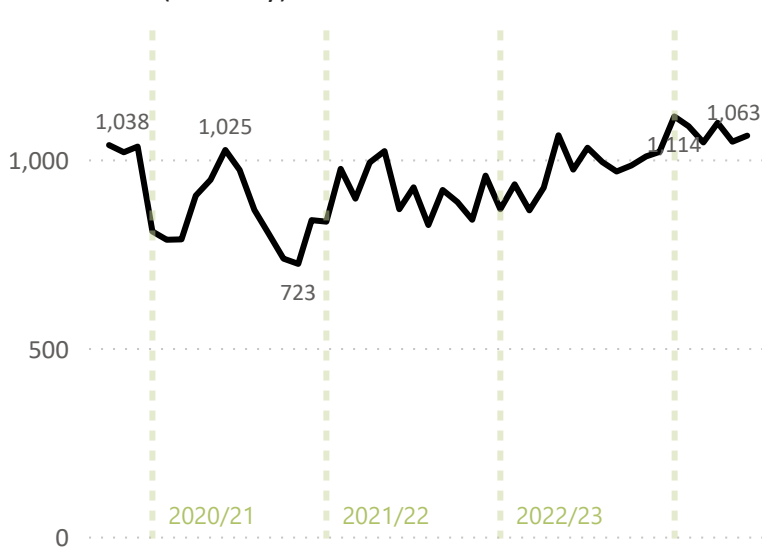
This is a rolling average percentage score of the 40 transects inspected for litter every other month, as defined by the APSE's Land Audit Management System grading system and covering all wards of the borough.

The average has remained consistently over 70 since the inspections re-started after the break due to Covid. Street Scene has continued to assist with the Civic Enforcement back lane project which incorporates litter picking of the front street as well as the back lane.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

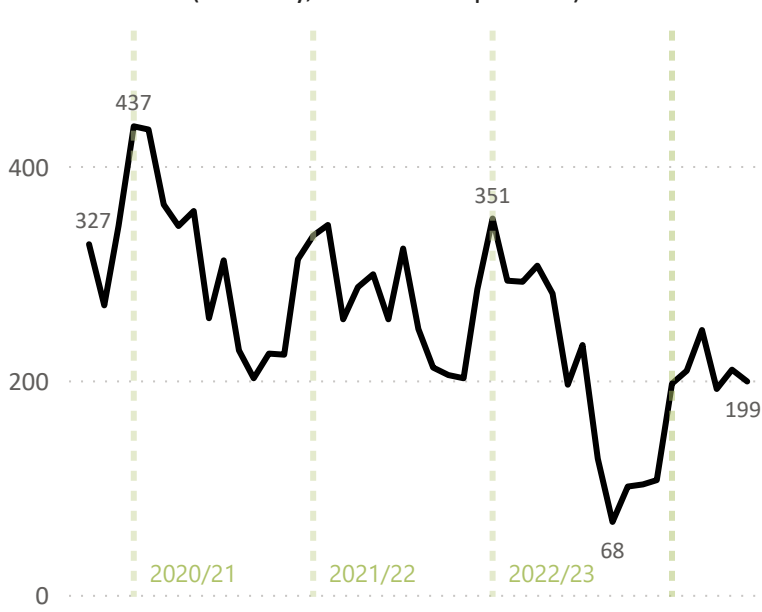
## 1.5 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - Safe

Total Crime (monthly)



Recorded crime for Quarter 2 2023/24 (3207) increased 8.27% from Quarter 2 2022/23 (2962). The types of reported crime showing increases can be attributed to Shoplifting and Vehicle Crime. Darlington Borough Council and Durham Constabulary have re-launched ShopWatch to tackle increases seen in Shoplifting and various operations have been carried out in hot spot areas to target Vehicle Crime. The definition of crime has also changed to include some activity previously reported as ASB, this will contribute to the increase in crime numbers.

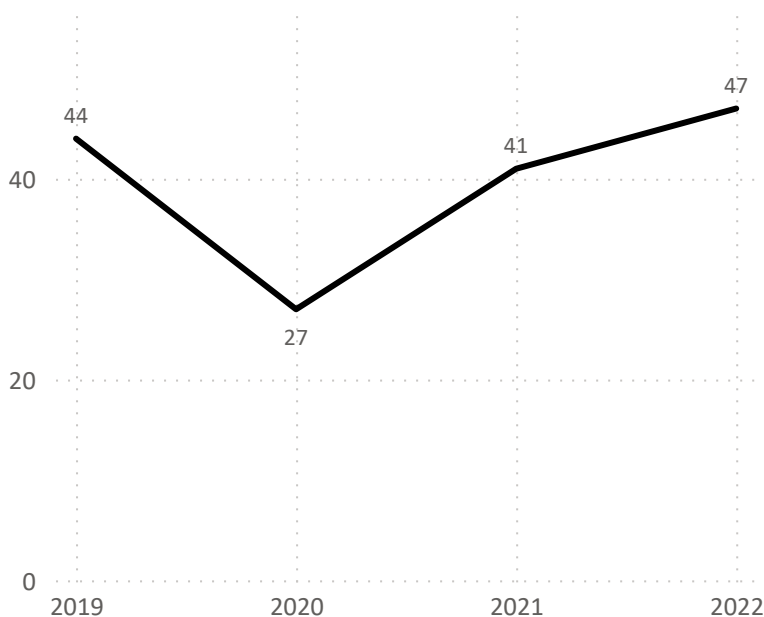
ASB Incidents (monthly, excludes duplicates)



The number of reported antisocial behaviour (ASB) incidents across the borough for Quarter 2 2023/24 (601) has decreased by 23.34% compared to Quarter 2 2022/23 (784). This decrease can be attributed to the proactive measures in place and improved compliance with National Crime Recording Standards, with ASB incidents increasingly categorised as a crime, leading to a reduction of traditional ASB data indicators. Essentially, reports that were previously categorised as an ASB incident are now being categorised as a crime, for example harassment or public order, and therefore do not appear in ASB incident data statistics.

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

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



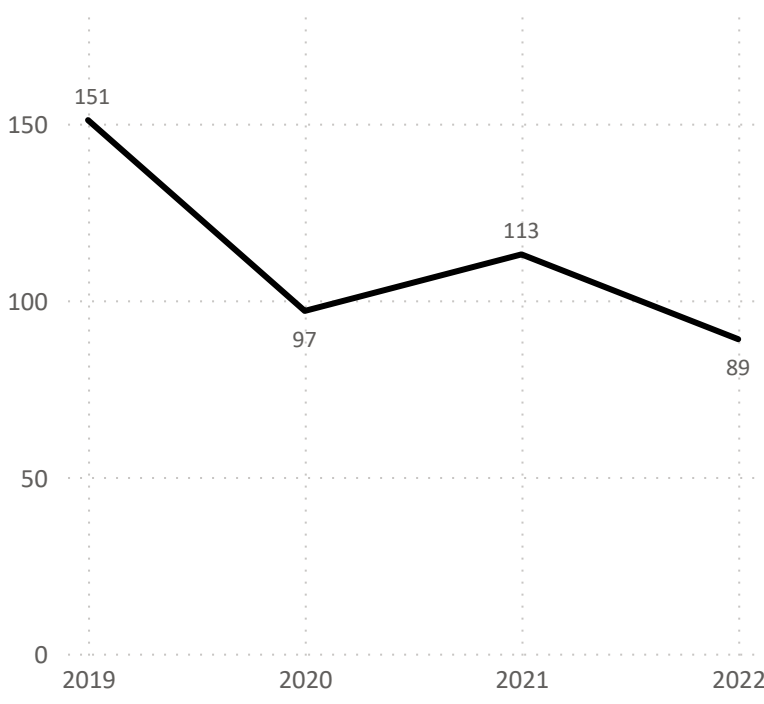
This is an annual indicator based on the 2023 calendar year. The data is collected through Durham Police via the Stats 19 reporting system. This data will be available from the end of February 2023.

Figures for 2022 show an increase over 2020-21. However, 2020-21 is a statistical outlier due to the impact of Covid-19 on traffic levels (15% of normal traffic levels at its lowest). Since 2020 traffic levels have recovered to similar volumes to that recorded in 2019 prior to Covid-19 (within approximately +/- 2% overall)

Of the 47 Killed or seriously injured on our roads in 2022, there were 4 fatalities.

[Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects](#)

Number of people slightly injured in road traffic accidents (annual)



This is an annual indicator based on the 2023 calendar year. The data is collected through Durham Police via the Stats 19 reporting system. This data will be available from the end of February 2023.

Data for 2022 shows a decrease over 2021 despite traffic volumes recovering to similar levels to that recorded in 2019 prior to Covid-19 (within approximately +/- 2% overall).

Based on the years prior to Covid-19, we are still seeing a substantial reduction with accidents halving, and this level is significantly below the baseline.

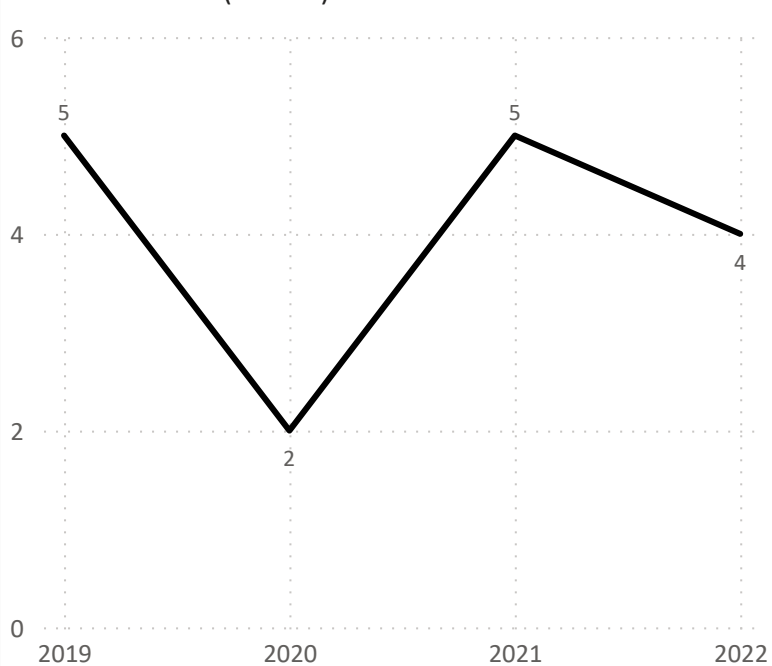
We continue to invest in road safety education and through our Local Transport Plan, we continue to invest in speed management and casualty reduction schemes.

[Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects](#)



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

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



This is an annual indicator based on the 2023 calendar year. The data is collected through Durham Police via the Stats 19 reporting system. This data will be available from the end of February 2024.

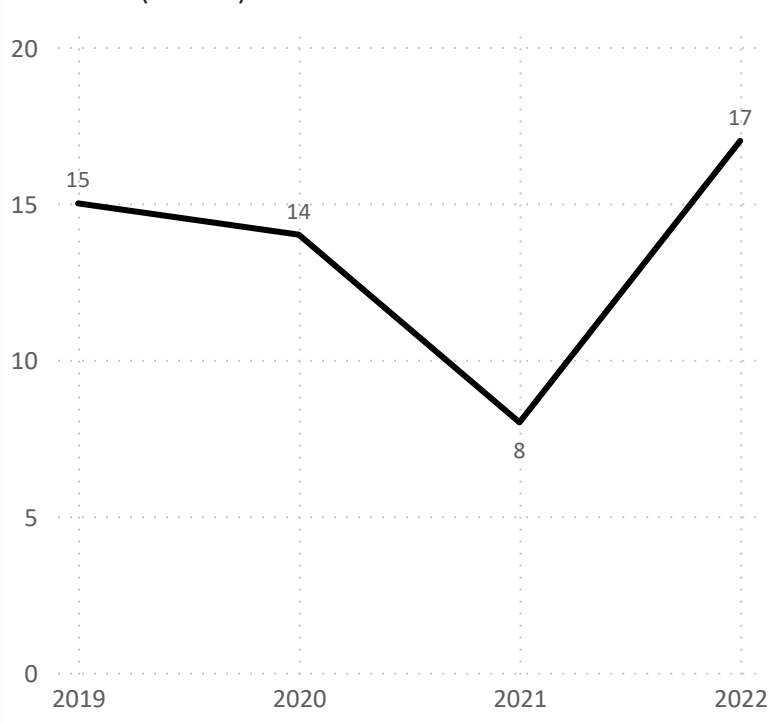
Data for 2022 shows a decrease over 2021 despite traffic volumes recovering to similar levels to that recorded in 2019 prior to Covid-19 (within approximately +/- 2% overall).

Based on the years prior to Covid-19, we are at a slightly lower level which falls marginally below the baseline. However, there have been no child fatalities since 2013.

Through our Local Transport Plan, we continue to invest in speed management and casualty reduction schemes.

[Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects](#)

Number of children slightly injured in road traffic accidents (annual)



This is an annual indicator based on the 2023 calendar year. This data will be available from the end of February 2024.

Data for 2022 shows an increase over 2020-21 which goes against the recent trend of reduction over the longer term. At 17, this is now marginally above the baseline. It should be noted that the long term trend shows significant reductions from the 45 child slight casualties recorded in 2012.

However, 2020-21 is a statistical outlier due to the impact of Covid-19 on traffic levels (15% of normal traffic levels at its lowest). Since 2020 traffic levels have recovered to similar volumes to that recorded in 2019.

[Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects](#)

# 1. GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

## 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
2020	59.5	63.1	59.1

The latest data, for 2018-20, shows Darlington's value of 59.5 years is statistically similar to the North East average of 59.1 years, but statistically worse than the England average of 63.1 years, and fell 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.

Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health

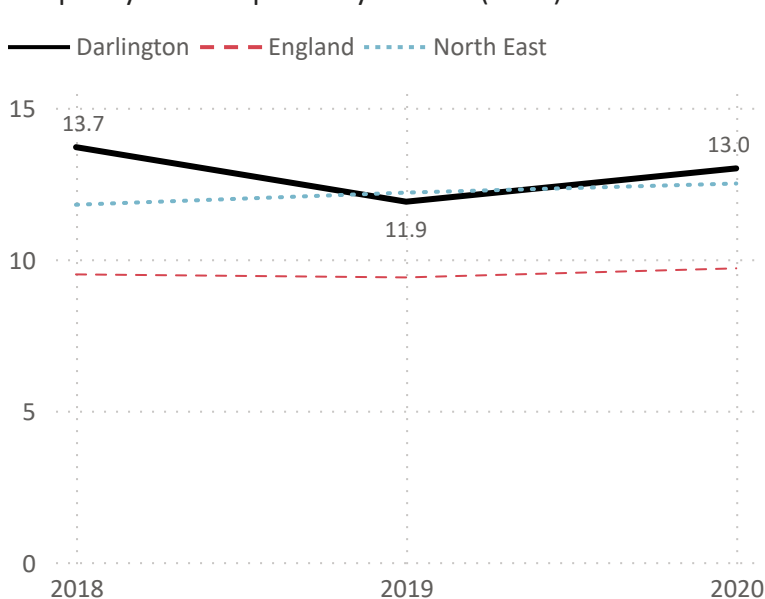
Female healthy life expectancy at birth

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
2020	60.6	63.9	59.7

The latest data, for 2018-20, shows Darlington's value of 60.6 years is statistically similar to the North East average of 59.7 years, but statistically worse than the England average of 63.9 years, and falling at a faster rate than elsewhere. 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.

Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health

Inequality in life expectancy at birth (male)



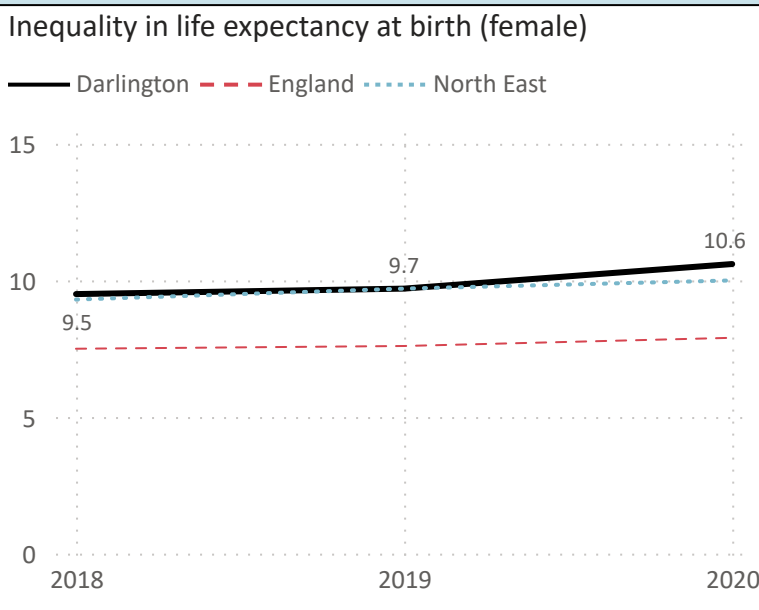
Inequality in life expectancy at birth for males in Darlington has widened in 2020, from 11.9 (2019) to 13.0 years, and is worse than England. Compared to the North East region Darlington is statistically similar to with the North East average.

Life expectancy at birth is a measure of the average number of years a person would expect to live based on contemporary mortality rates. This graph shows that a baby boy born in the most deprived area on average can expect to live 13 years less than a boy born into the least deprived area of Darlington. For England this would be a difference of 9.7 years.

Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health

# 1. GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

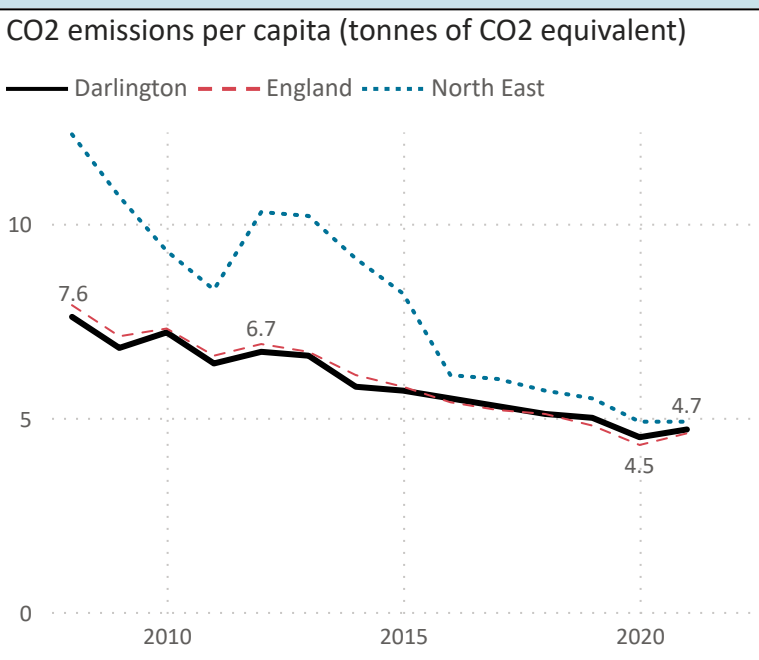
## 1.6 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - Healthy



Inequality in life expectancy at birth for females in Darlington widened in 2020, from 9.7 (2019) to 10.6 years, and is statistically worse than England. Compared to the North East region Darlington is statistically similar to the North East average. Life expectancy at birth is a measure of the average number of years a person would expect to live based on contemporary mortality rates. This graph shows that a baby girl born in the most deprived area on average can expect to live 10.6 years less than a girl born into the least deprived area of Darlington. For England this would be a difference of 7.9 years.

Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health

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

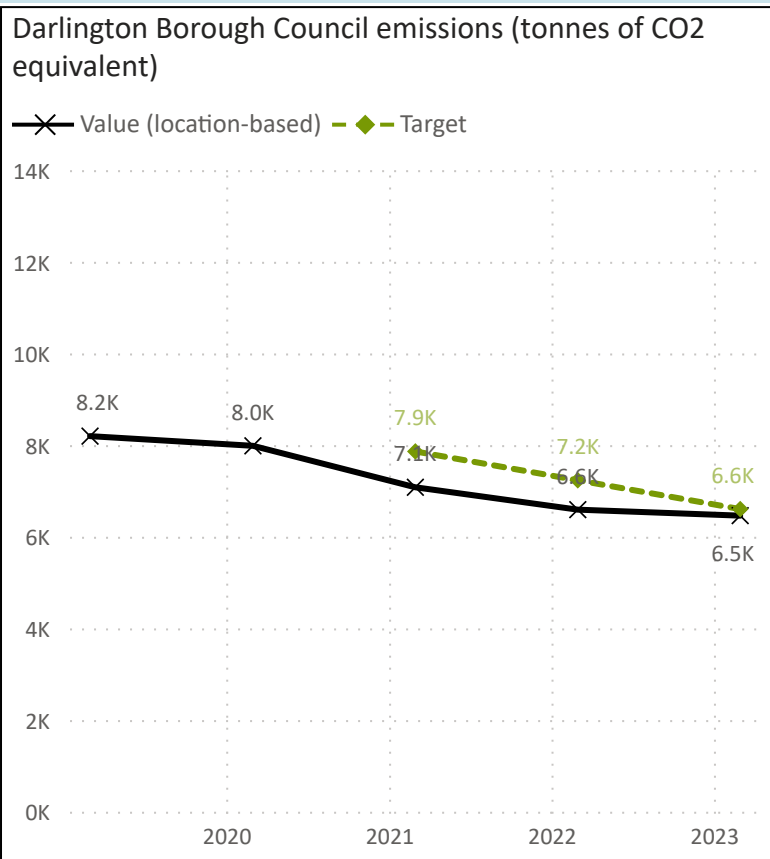


Data for this indicator is published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, two years in arrears. Therefore the latest data is for 2021 and shows a slight upturn in emissions as we started to emerge from COVID lockdowns.

This year, Council amended the date for the Council becoming carbon neutral to 2040 and added more emphasis on our role as an influencer. We are developing new actions to enable us to reach a wider audience.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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



At July Council the target date for the Council to be carbon neutral was brought forward to 2040. The climate change strategy and action plan are being revised in line with the new more challenging target. The baseline for our carbon neutral target is 2010. However, with our first action plan in 2021 we developed a trajectory against which we are measuring our progress. The change in target date means an adjustment of this trajectory and we are now working to a 40% reduction in emissions every 5 years. Alongside the change in date, Council has added more emphasis on external influence on our supply chain as well as with businesses and residents and encouraging young people's involvement.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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

The impact of Nutrient Neutrality continues to prove a challenge for developers. Natural England has issued additional guidance which is welcomed however the introduction of this statutory requirement will take some time to be acknowledged as a planning requirement.

The design code for Skertingham Garden Village was adopted by the Council in September 2023. The developers have produced a comprehensive masterplan for the various phases of the development. There have been several public engagement events and an accessible website for comments.

A planning application for the development of circa 44 house on Blackwell will be considered in December 2023 along with the proposals for the redevelopment of Blackwell Park. A planning application of Coniscliffe Road will also be considered in December.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

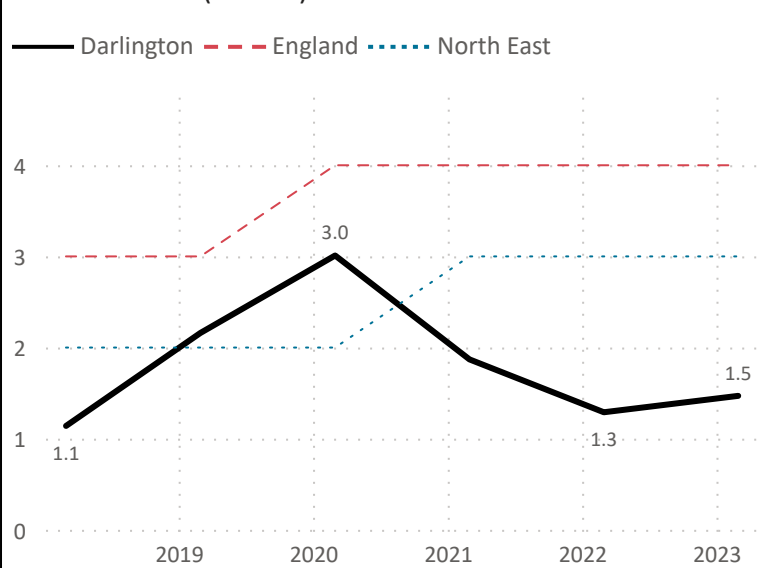
## 1.9 And we will support economic growth by keeping the borough - On the move

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 Enhanced 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.

We participate in the National Highways Transportation Survey each year, and the results of this, along with evidence from investigations, statutory testing and surveys, asset management planning, other data sources and Government and local policies inform our investment decisions in our transport infrastructure.

**Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects**

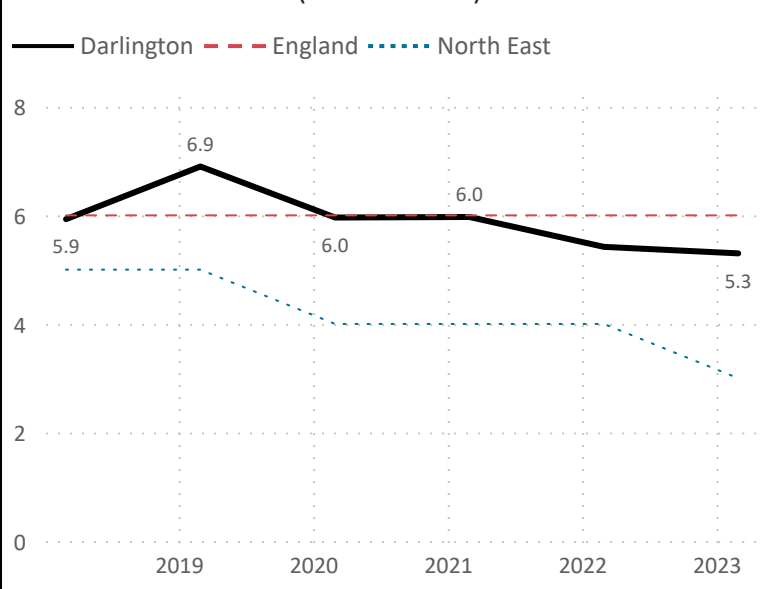
Percentage of principal roads where maintenance should be considered (A class)



The Council continue to invest in road maintenance, however the past year has seen a slight fall in the condition of the A-road network. The percentage of the A-road network which needs to be considered for maintenance is 1.47%, a rise from the 1.3% recorded the previous year. A lower percentage is best for this indicator, so Darlington's figure is better than the England (4%) and the North East (3%) averages and has been better since 2021. Inflation is impacting on the service by reducing the amount of work which can be undertaken for the available budget. This will impact on the ability to improve road condition.

**Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects**

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

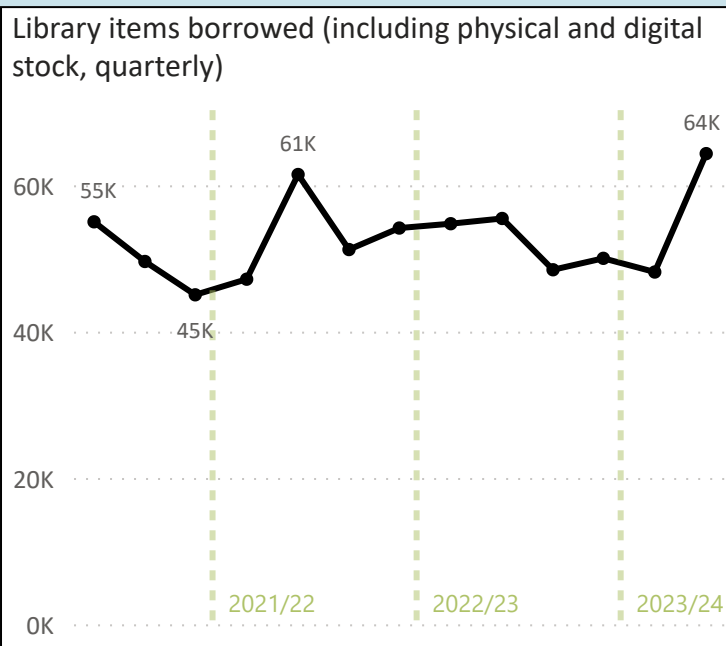


We continue to invest in B & C class roads and this has seen a slight improvement in the quality of the network. The percentage of B & C class roads where maintenance should be considered has improved and is now at 5.3%. This is an improvement on the previous year and is better than the national average. However, this remains above the north east average.

New data will be available in March 2024.

**Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects**

## 1.10 Whilst - Valuing our heritage and culture



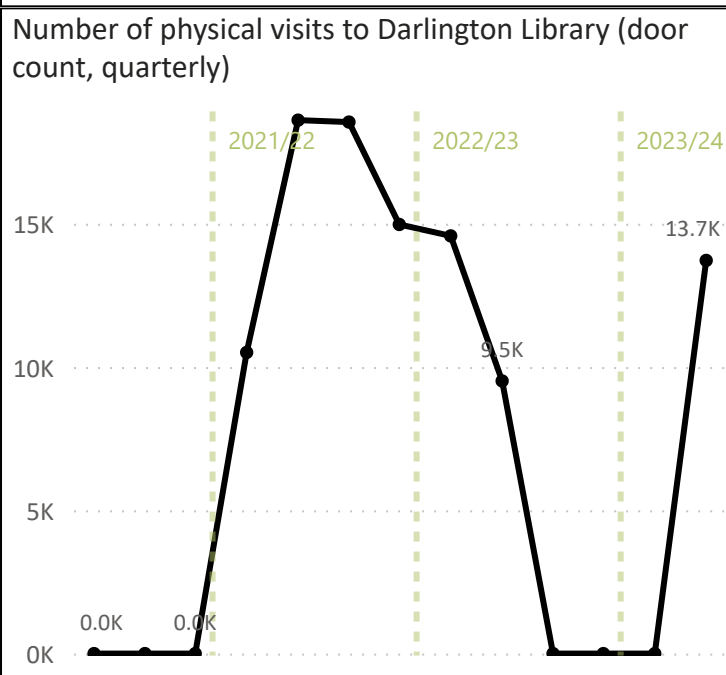
These figures include physical books, audio books and digital stock (eBooks, eAudio, digital magazines, newspapers.)

Our figures are on the rise and are pleasingly higher than this time last year and the previous year. The month of our reopening we saw 17128 items issued compared with 2971 the previous month.

However, we are not complacent as we generally do see a dip after the summer months and it is important we continue to drive figures upwards.

On reopening the Town Library we have seen a dip in usage and borrowing from the branch in Cockerton and an expected rise in book issues from the main branch. We need to monitor this over the upcoming months to understand the trend.

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



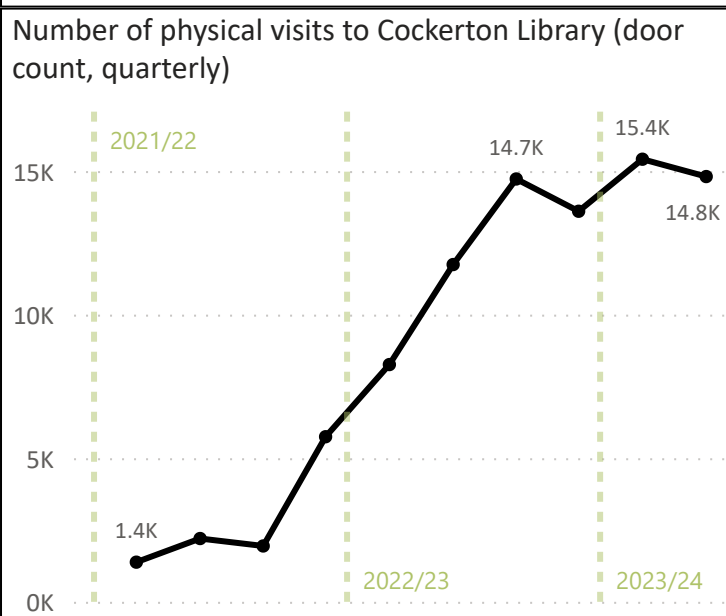
We reopened our doors early September and on our first day saw 1605 visitors through the doors.

During the first week a further 5097 people visited to look around, join an event or use our services. We compare this to an average week pre-closure and pre-covid of 3854 in 2019/20 and 4341 between 2017/20.

Week 2 saw 4291 and week 3 saw 4334.

This information is collected via door counters on our three entrances.

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



The visitor numbers at Cockerton Library have been large whilst the central library has been closed for refurbishment seeing approximately 4500-6500 visitors a month.

We are now seeing a significant reduction as customers return to the central library or make a visit to the town to see the restoration.

Consideration will be given to encouraging continuing use of the branch library and now we have a replacement team member further activity can be programmed in to support this.

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

## 2. MAXIMISE THE POTENTIAL OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE BY

### 2.1 Working with partners to maximise educational achievement

Provisional KS2 data for 22-23 suggests that Darlington's performance is 1.3% lower than last year and the gap between the national average has widened from 1.8% last year to 3.8% in 2023. Prior to Covid, Darlington was achieving 1.6% above the national average for this measure.

The provisional KS4 data for 22-23 shows Darlington as one of the strongest performing areas in the North East. Darlington achieved the 3rd highest % of pupils achieving Grade 5 or above in English and Maths in the region and the 3rd highest average Attainment 8 score.

The Attainment 8 measure shows Darlington performing slightly lower than pre-Covid. The national average has also declined, although Darlington's performance is now at the national average in contrast to 2019, when Darlington performed below national average.

The % of pupils achieving Grade 5 or above in English and Maths GCSEs in Darlington has increased from 42.1% to 46.3%. In 2019 Darlington was below the national average on this measure. Performance has also improved on this measure nationally, though the provisional data shows that Darlington's performance is above national average.

Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

### 2.2 Working to remove barriers to young people reaching their potential

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

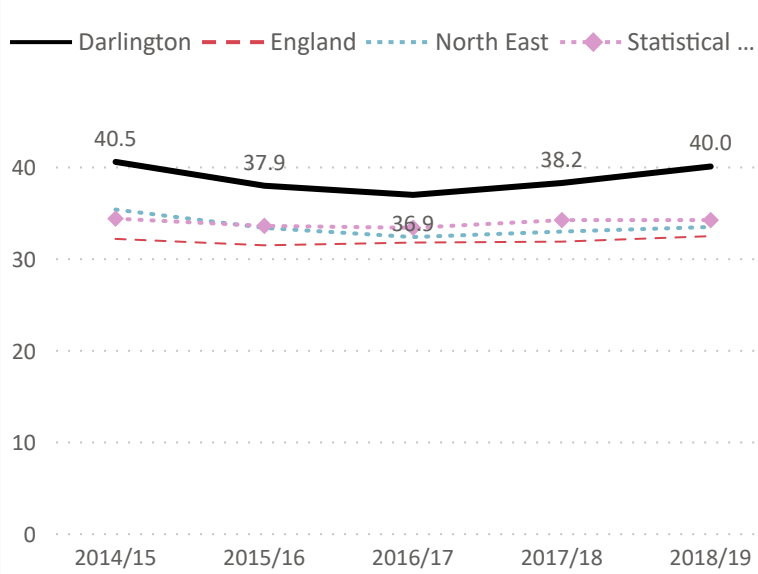
School year	Darlington	England	North East
2017/18	80.9	83.3	85.6
2018/19	91.8	84.1	87.6
2019/20	93.9	83.3	87.4
2020/21	93.9	82.9	87.2
2021/22	95.3	81.1	83.8

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 95.3% in 2021/22.

The Health Visiting service provides surveillance and monitors the development of children with their families during the mandated visits from birth. The service will also provide extra support and/or referral for any child who is perceived to be missing key

Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health

Percentage inequality gap in achievement across all the Early Learning Goals



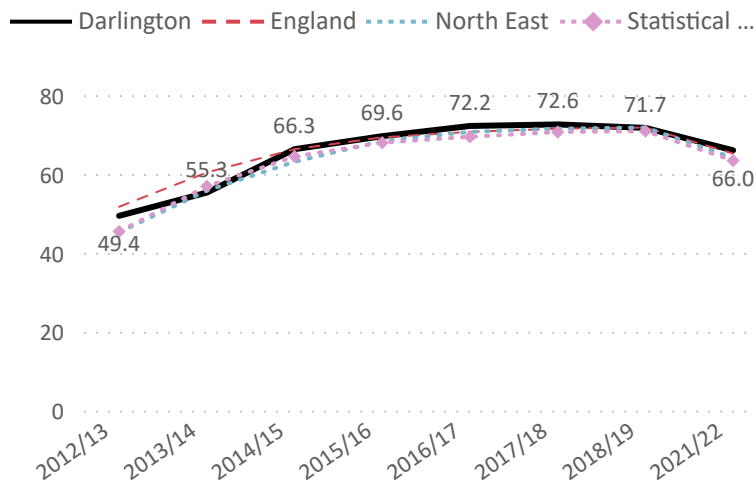
The standard score and percentage inequality gap in achievement across all the Early Learning Goals, based on the latest published available data (2018/19), has widened slightly since 2017/18 (by 1.8%) from that of the regional (by 1.3%), national (by 1.2%) and statistical neighbour (by 1.8%) comparators. This data has not been published by DfE since the start of the pandemic which limits our analytical ability to scrutinise our most recent performance.

Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

## 2. MAXIMISE THE POTENTIAL OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE BY

### 2.2 Working to remove barriers to young people reaching their potential

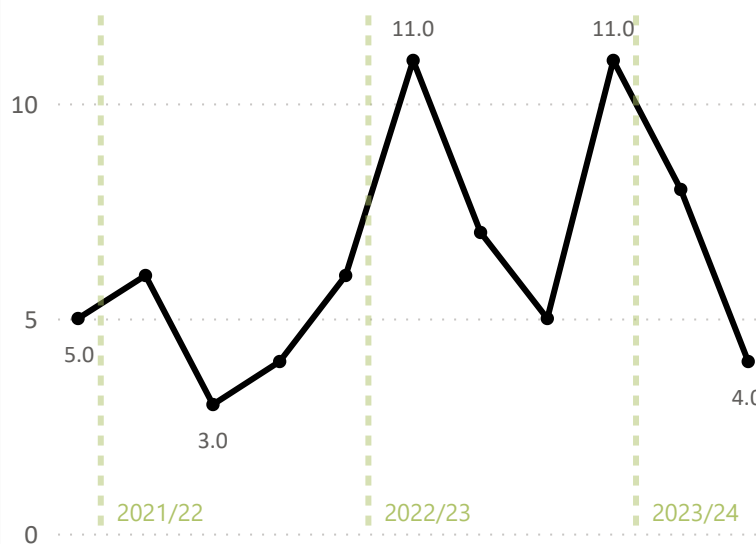
School Readiness: all children achieving a good level of development at the end of reception as a percentage of all eligible children (Early Years Foundation Stage profile)



The 2021/22 results for school readiness with children achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception years has seen a decrease from 2018/19 (71.7%) to 66.0% in 2021/22 (which is the latest published data available). However, we remain just above the national average (65.2%), those of statistical neighbours (63.4%) and North East local authorities (64.1%).

Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health

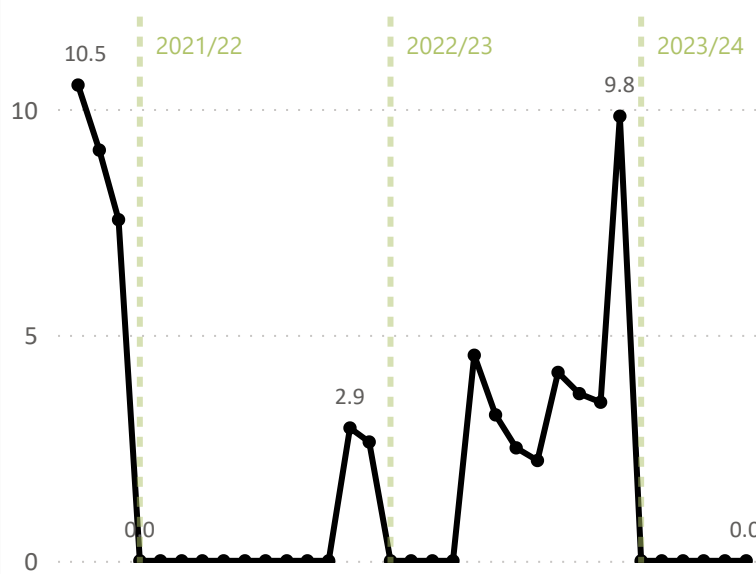
Number of First Time entrants to the Youth Justice System (quarterly)



The number of young people identified as a First Time Entrant being referred to the Young Peoples Engagement and Justice Service between Apr-Sep 23 is 12 (this equates to 9 Males and 2 Females). This is a reduction when compared with the same period last year which was 18. This is an area that the service are monitoring through our management board and Youth Justice Board (YJB).

Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

Percentage of reoffending rate of clients receiving a PCD



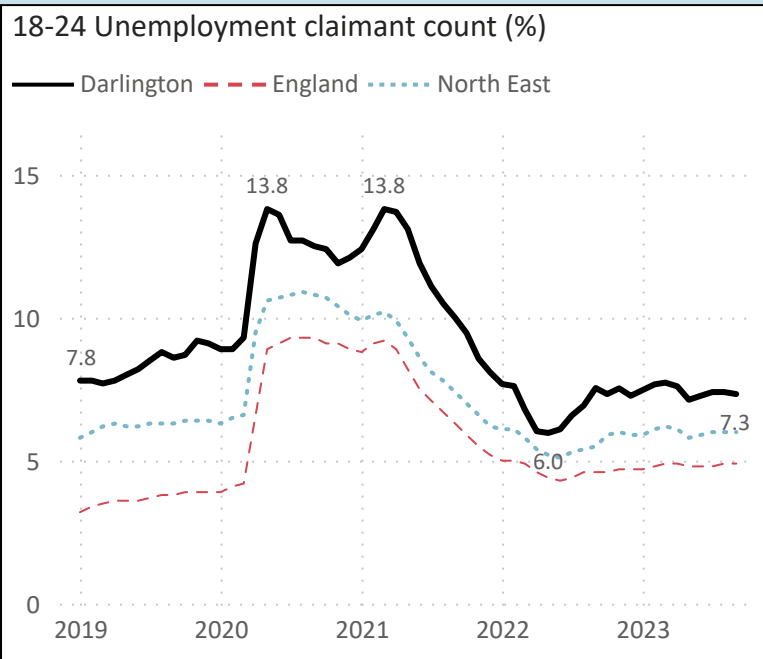
26 young people have been referred to the Darlington Young People's Engagement & Justice Service in Q2 receiving diversionary disposals (Pre Caution Disposals). Those children and young people have been tracked from the point in which they received the disposal and none have gone on to re-offended to date. The tracking will continue until the end of annual period 2023 to 2024.

Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services



## 2. MAXIMISE THE POTENTIAL OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE BY

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



Over the last 12 months, the 18-24 unemployment claimant rate has remained relatively static in Darlington, a trend mirrored in the North East and England figures. In September 2023, the rate in Darlington was 7.3%. This figure is higher than the North East rate of 6% and the rate for England at 4.9%. These figures are significantly lower than those recorded during the pandemic.

Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

## 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	79.8	85.2	81.3
2022	82.0	88.7	84.9

The proportion of in-work Darlington residents earning the real living wage, calculated by the Resolution Foundation as being £10.90 an hour in 2022-23, increased to 82% but remained below the regional average of 84.9% and England average of 88.7%. The overall trend shows gradual improvements in the percentage of workers earning the real living wage or above. In Darlington, less than 1 in 5 workers are now earning less than the Real Living wage.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

### 3.2 Targeting services where most needed

Darlington BEAT is a service funded by Darlington Borough Council and delivered by Citizens Advice Darlington (CAD). It helps people boost their income by supporting them to apply for and maximise benefits they are eligible to receive. The contract with CAD has been extended to 31 March 2024. The latest performance report (April - June 2023) shows that from the start of the financial year residents aged 15+ have been supported to claim over £360k. The most notable claims in the reporting period relate to Personal Independence Payments, Universal Credit, other disability benefits, and Pension Credit. The areas with the highest value of claims in the reporting period are Cockerton, Eastbourne, Haughton and Springfield, North Road, Park East, Pierremont, and Stephenson.

Neil Bowerbank: Head of Strategy, Performance & Communications

### 3.3 Working with partners

Effective partnership structures have been forged with organisations across public, business and voluntary and community. The Public Sector Executives Group brings the chief officers of the main public sector agencies together; this has been established for the past three years. The Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group provides the Council with a means of strategically engaging with the sector. Meanwhile Darlington Cares galvanises and helps focus the business communities support. These forums will provide a means for the Council to carry out early engagement in the development of the Council Plan with meetings being scheduled to fit with the plan's development timetable.

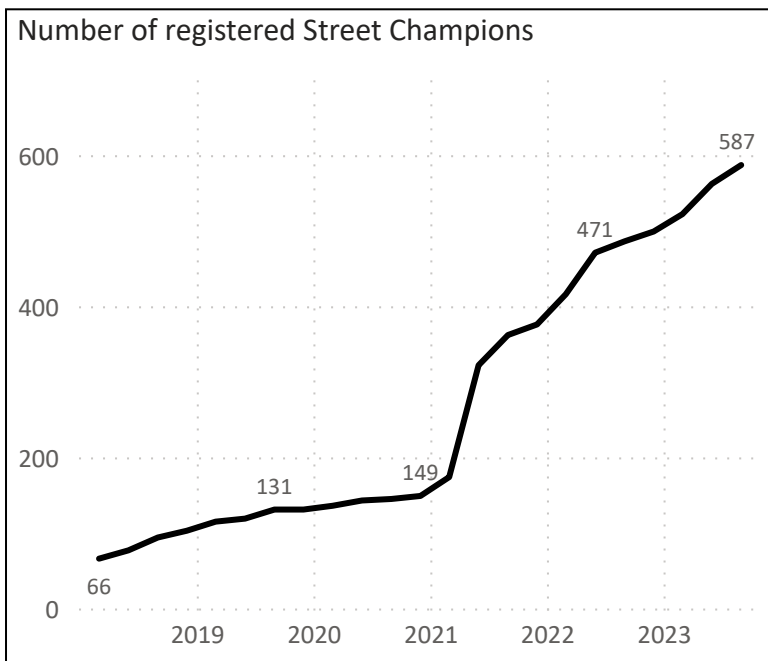
Seth Pearson: Chief Exec Darlington Partnership

# 3. WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO MAXIMISE THEIR POTENTIAL

## 3.4 Working with communities

The Stronger Communities Awards was held on 17th November at the Dolphin Centre. The awards recognise and celebrate the achievements of individuals, groups and businesses of Darlington. Awards cover volunteering, support for communities and a broad range of achievements. The awards are widely recognised as the premiere awards of Darlington and achieve significant engagement with the community. This years awards received 334 nominations, the highest ever with 443 people attending the ceremony. 56 of those seats were bought over and above the ceremony's invitee list, again a record. Significant social media activity is generated celebrating those nominated providing a positive way for the Council to engage with the community.

Seth Pearson: Chief Exec Darlington Partnership

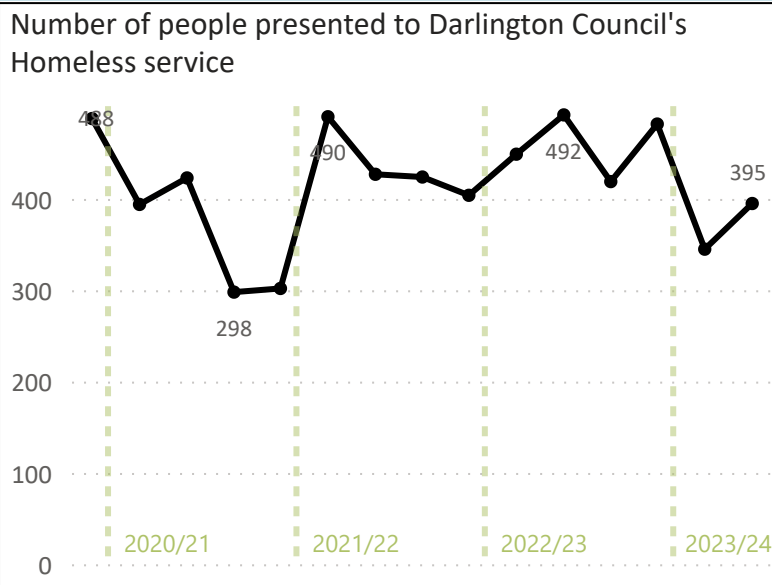


The number of street champions continues to rise steadily. There are 587 registered street champions, the Big spring clean 2023 campaign was a success again and saw more volunteers sign up off the back of an organised litter pick. The scheme has also encouraged other groups to set up a regular litter picking event to improve with mental health / wellbeing for individuals who became self-isolated during lock downs. We have also signed up more street champions through our autumn clean campaign.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

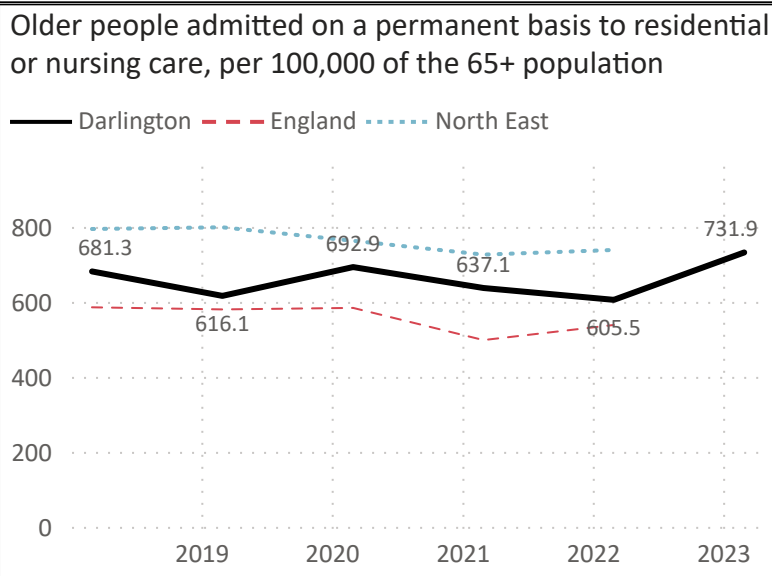
# 4. SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE IN THE BOROUGH

## 4.1 Providing care and support when needed



The number of people presenting to the Council's Homeless service remains high, however there has been a reduction from 2021 and 2022 figures. The lifting of the ban on section 21 ("no fault") evictions in June 2021 continues to create an increase in homeless presentations and requests for housing advice. However, Housing staff continue to provide an advice, support and guidance, ensuring that people who find themselves homeless or at the risk of homelessness receive an excellent service throughout.

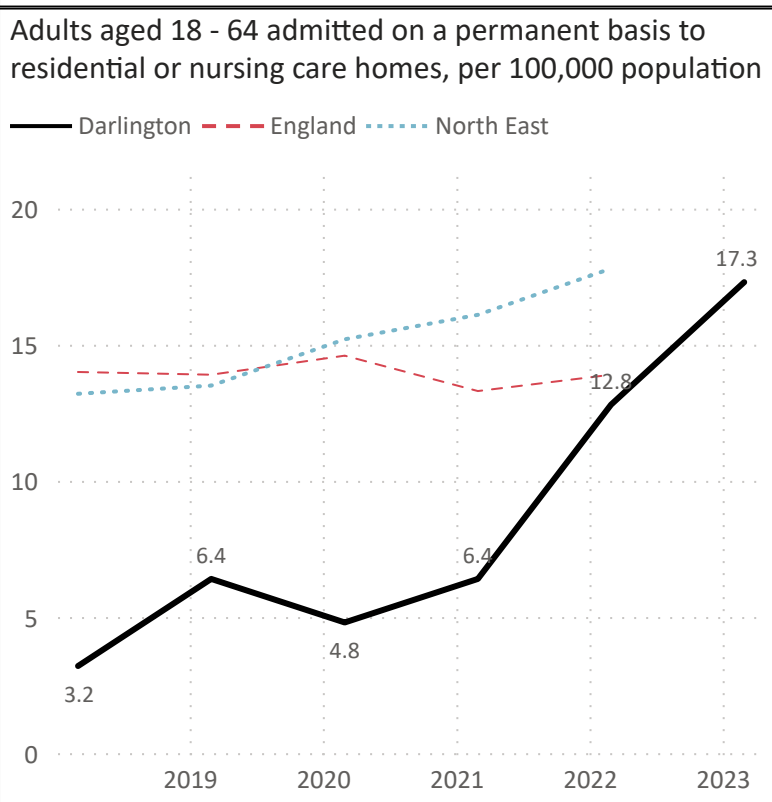
[Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues](#)



The total number of individuals who moved into permanent residential or nursing care for the year to date (April- Oct) is 84.

Since April, 37 (78%) individuals moved into permanent residential or nursing care straight from a Short Stay (SS). As at 10-10-23 there were 37 individuals aged 65+ in SS. Currently the average number of weeks individuals are in SS is 15 weeks, with 19 individuals aged 65+ in short stays for longer than 10 weeks, due to S21s or Best Interest or awaiting support to facilitate a safe return home or awaiting move to extra care. We will continue to work with people, families and partners to support people to return home with appropriate support.

[Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care](#)



7 individuals aged 18-64 entered permanent care since April. Their ages are:

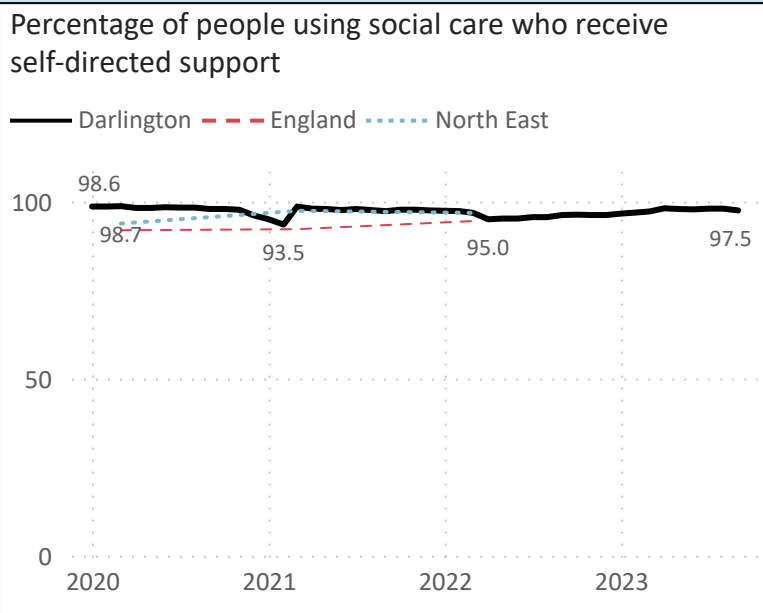
- 18 – no alternative provision at the time of becoming an adult. Alternative placements are continually being explored
- 40
- 52
- 55
- 61
- 63 (2)

Where a community placement would have been appropriate all options were explored, however due to market capacity it was not possible to find suitable placements. Market development has been a key issue and has been identified as a key objective for development with commissioning colleagues. Operational staff are working with commissioning to address the issue of capacity in the provider market and explore market development.

[Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care](#)

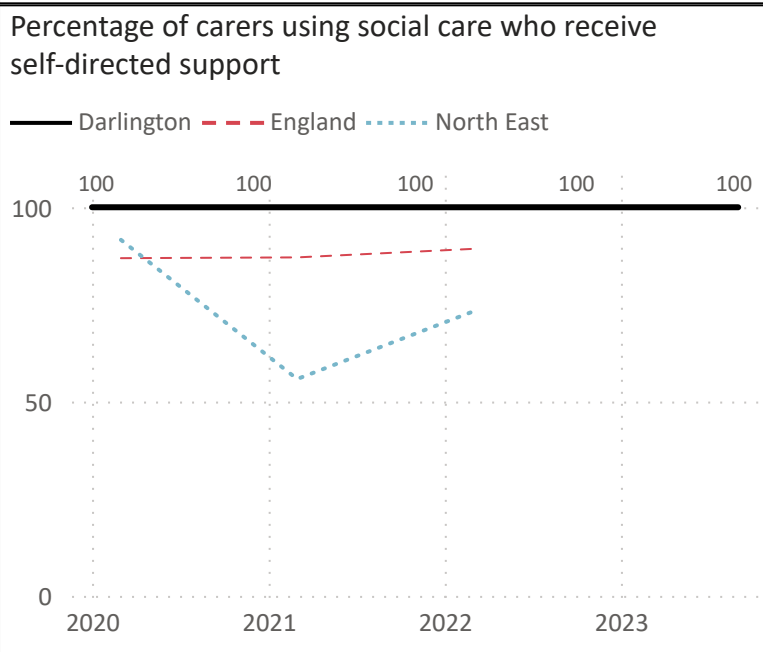
# 4. SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE IN THE BOROUGH

## 4.1 Providing care and support when needed



As at the end of September 2023, 97.5% of people 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. We maximise service users’ choice and control over the services they receive, to ensure these best suit peoples’ particular needs and preferences. The council continue to commission Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) to provide the direct payments support service which promotes people to manage their own personal support budgets.

[Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care](#)



100% of carers using social care received 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. This enables them to maximise their independence and choice, to support their wellbeing and ensure they can access the support that best suits their needs. We are working with carers and carers support groups to listen to the needs of carers.

[Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care](#)

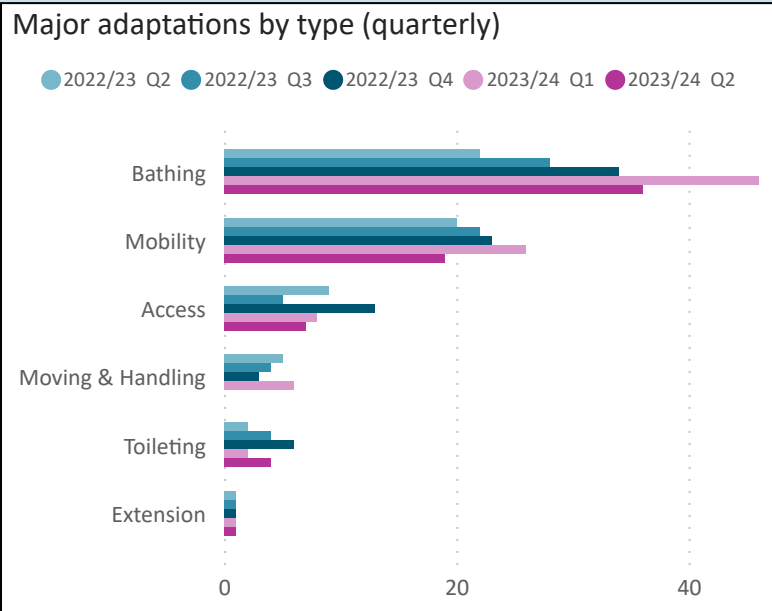
## 4.2 Working with people to build on their strengths to maximise their potential

We continue to deliver care and support to the most vulnerable adults in the community. 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. We continue to work closely with partners and providers including the NHS to promote and support independence. In 2022/23 Darlington was featured in the top 5 in the majority of satisfaction questions, with over 86% of people stating they feel they have control over daily life.

[Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care](#)

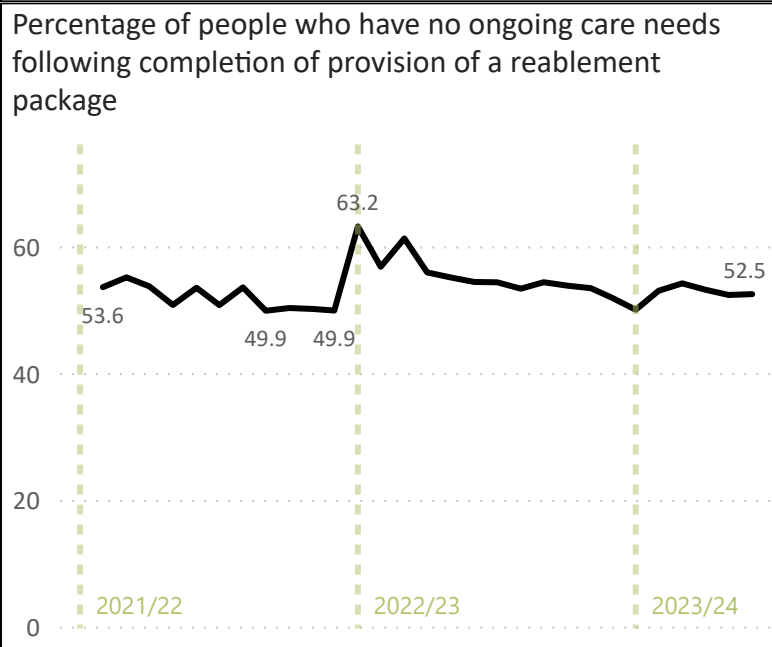
# 4. SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE IN THE BOROUGH

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



There continues to be increases in the majority of adaptation types e.g level access showers, ramps, stair lifts etc during compared to the same period last year. These increases are reflective of the changes to the Disabled Facilities Grant to enable a simpler approval system for the grant to enable more rapid responses to referrals. We are seeing an increase in the number of adaptations within a person's home, this is due to more people with complex or multiple support requirements remaining within their own home. The Occupational Therapy team continue to provide support at the point of initial referral as well as supporting longer term assessment and support.

Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care



Currently 71% of people are still living at home 91 days after discharge from hospital. The number of people being referred to Adult Social Care as part of a hospital discharge has continued to increase year on year. The total number of hospital discharges between April - September 2023 was 497, whilst for the same period during 2022-23 the total was 483. Although not all these referrals progress to receive a service it does demonstrate the increase the service area is currently experiencing. At the end of Q2, it was reported that 29% people's needs had decreased, 12.7% needs had increased and 5.7% stayed the same. The remaining 54.4% are those who no longer had ongoing care needs.

Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

## 4.3 Working with partners

We continue to work with the voluntary sector on a vulnerability strategy. We are working to incorporate this work into the draft Council Plan. The Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group is leading on this work. Encouragingly the group is operating well and has helped forge good working relations with the Council. The group has recognised that people frequently become vulnerable as a consequence of transition points such as the death of a partner, illness or loss of employment. The focus now is how to ensure there is sufficient support at these times.

Through the Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group a collaboration of Voluntary Sector organisation have opened a town centre resource, Darlington Connect which provides practical support for vulnerable families.

## 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 of over 2,000 people, a large percentage of who live in the borough and want Darlington to flourish and grow. The Council provides a vast range of services with approximately 800 roles, therefore it is essential that all staff are motivated, have the right skills and are customer focused to ensure service provision meets the needs of the Council, our businesses and our residents. Our workforce strategy "Working Together to Deliver Success" outlines how the Council will develop, support and motivate our staff, to meet the priorities of all stakeholders. Priorities within the plan have already been delivered to align to our core values, including flexible/agile working and the well being programme to promote and maintain a healthy and safe workforce. We are monitoring the embedding of the strategy and values and continuing initiatives including, giving staff a voice and promoting their development. Our workforce strategy runs until 2025, but we are already thinking ahead to develop the next strategy to ensure our staff are supported and equipped to deliver services in an every changing environment.

[Brett Nielsen: Assistant Director - Resources](#)

## A1. Continue to implement initiatives that tackle social isolation

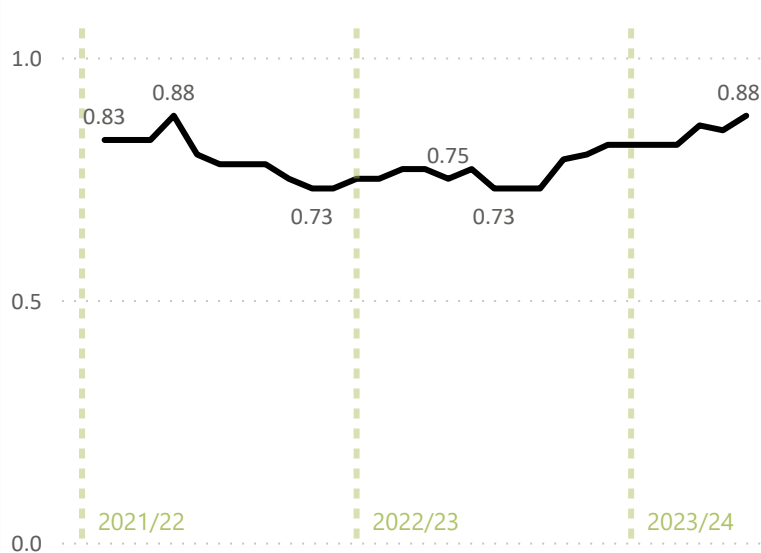
We continue to work with the voluntary sector on a vulnerability strategy which has recognised isolation and loneliness as being a key factor in individuals vulnerability. We are working to incorporate this work into the draft Council Plan. The Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group is leading on this work. Encouragingly the group is operating well and has helped forge good working relations with the Council.

Through the Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group a collaboration of Voluntary Sector organisation have opened a town centre resource, Darlington Connect which provides practical support for vulnerable families including those experiencing loneliness and isolation.

[Christine Shields: Assistant Director - Commissioning, Performance & Transformation](#)

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

Adults with mental health needs helped to live at home in receipt of paid support, per 1000 population (monthly)

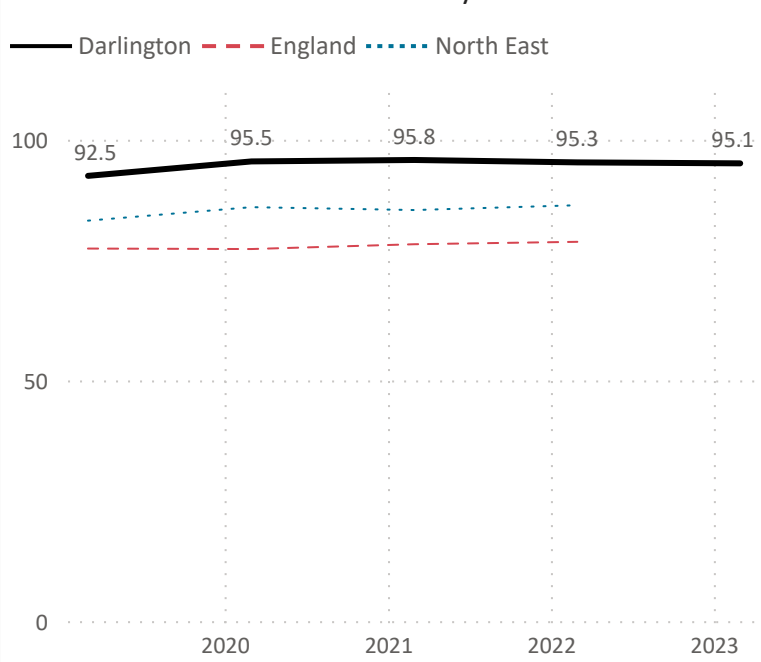


This indicator is primarily focused on supporting adults with mental health needs to remain independent and living in their own home.

The Mental Health team, within Adult Social Care, work closely with the local Trusts and the Primary care Network/GPs to prevent escalation or reduce the need for intervention. They support people, minimise escalation and maintain high levels of wellbeing and support to delay or prevent admission into hospital. We also have several support workers who support rehabilitation, reablement and recovery. This successful working relationship and support system is illustrated in the low number of people with mental health needs requiring long term paid support.

[Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care](#)

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



Darlington has one of the highest figures in the North East for individuals living in their own home. This relates to working age individuals with a primary need of learning disability, which equates to 289 of Darlington residents. 274 people (95%) are living in settled accommodation with:

- 130 living in settled mainstream housing with family/friends,
- 105 living in supported accommodation
- 25 tenant - local authority, arms length management etc,
- 11 tenant - private landlord
- 2 sheltered housing
- 1 owner occupier / shared ownership scheme

There were 15 people in non-settled accommodation living in a registered care home or a acute/long stay healthcare residential facility/hospital.

[Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care](#)



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

We have undertaken a training needs analysis and are currently developing a workforce plan to ensure our staff have the skills and confidence in legal literacy and strength based practices. We have supported teams to undergo a refresh of the safeguarding procedures and practice, Continuing Health Care guidance, as well as extended our awareness of self neglect and hoarding.

We have developed a digital strategy with the purpose of enabling more people to access the information and support they require in a way that suits their lives. We aim to support teams to develop their digital confidence. We have established feedback mechanisms within the care recording system to capture people's feedback and use this to learn, improve outcomes and to ensure we listen to the experience of the person using our services.

Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

## A4. Promote and increase the use of assistive technology

We have developed a digital strategy for adult social care. This strategy is an ambitious programme. It sets out a vision for digital capabilities that meet the range of needs of our community and workforce. This will support and enable effective service delivery.

Through the use of technology we will support service users to:

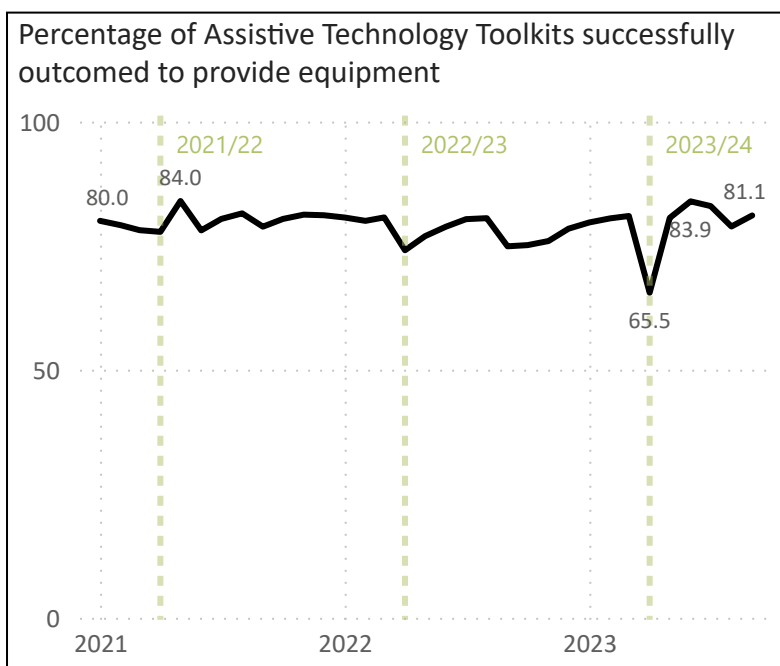
- access to the information they need to make choices about their care and support
- engage with us in a way and at a time that suits them enable users of Adult Social Care services to have more access and ownership of their records, support staff to have the tools, systems and equipment they need to do their jobs.

- We will improve outcomes for people and allow better co-ordination of care across the NHS and Social Care.

Working with teams, services, residents, carers and other organisations we will look at opportunities to; simplify processes, provide greater accessibility through digital tools

we aim to, empower people to do more for themselves through online self-serve, empower and support staff to use digital tools, support and enable care providers to use technology to change the way services are delivered and achieve better outcomes by social care and health working together.

Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care



We continue to see an improving uptake of Assistive Technology Toolkit Referrals assigned to Lifeline resulted in equipment being provided.

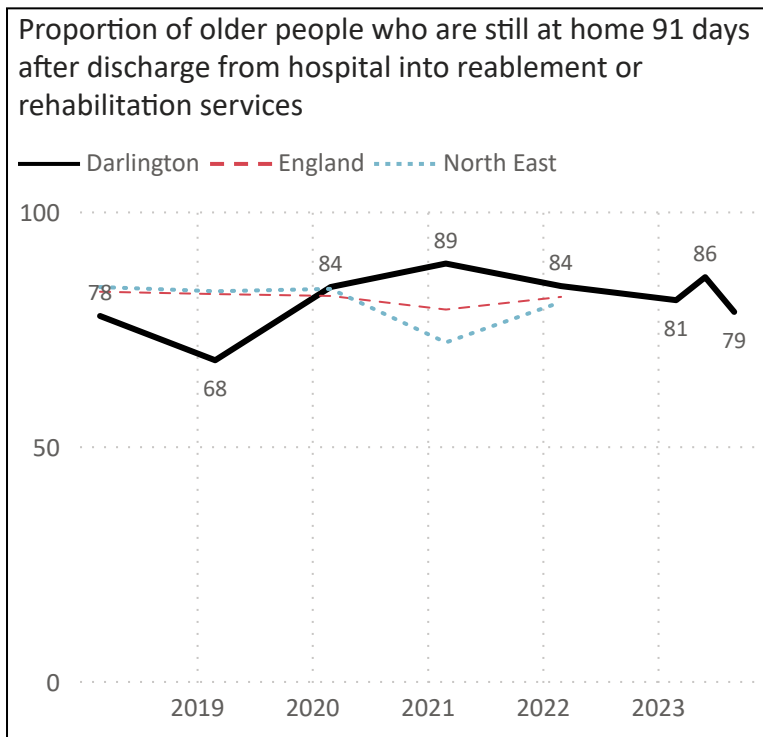
The slight upward trend since April 2022 is indicative of the objective to support people to remain independent in their own homes. Teams continue to promote this offer at the point of referral to adult social care as well as at reviews. Lifeline continues to work closely with the Adults Social Care Team and promotes assistive technology, through attending regular team meetings as well as providing training during the induction of new Adult Social Care staff.

Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

## A5. Maintain significant and strong relationships with the voluntary sector, foundation trust and community nursing to support and promote admission avoidance, discharges from hospital and homecare where required

We continue to build strong and positive relationships with the voluntary sector, partners and providers. We actively participate in the Learning Impairment Network. We meet regularly with the Parent Carers Forum, Darlington Association on Disability (DAD), Age UK, Healthwatch and the Carers Support Service. Our commissioning team work closely with care providers to consider demand, capacity and market development. We have developed a draft engagement strategy to share with people to strengthen our engagement and co-production plans. We work closely with the Director of Place and the ICB, with the development of shared visions and plans. We continue to work with County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) and Tees, Esk & Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), with some co-located teams and social workers present on wards with Darlington Memorial Hospital

### Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care



This data indicated the service provides to support people to return home following discharge from hospital, through assessment, support planning and short term reablement offer.

This graph illustrates that at the end of September 2023, the proportion of older people who are still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services was 71%. This is a consistent with number of referrals for this time of the year with it expected to rise to 81% as more people are contacted.

Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

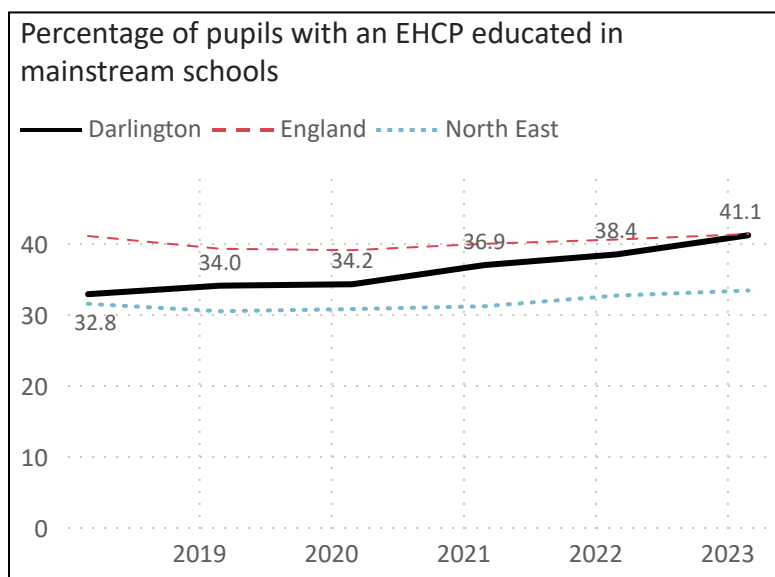
## C1. Provide excellent services for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) - implement a new SEND strategy, increase the number of SEND places in schools and work to raise SEND funding levels from central government

The Department for Education has published data on local authority performance on Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) for young people with SEND for the 2021/22 academic year.

The whole process of EHC needs assessment and EHC plan development, from the point when an assessment is requested (or a child or young person is brought to the local authority's attention) until any final EHC plan is issued, must take no more than 20 weeks. The relevant legislation provides for exceptions to the time limits in certain situations; the values referred to here exclude those exceptions. Nationally of those plans where a decision to issue a new plan was within the 2021/22 year, 50.7% were issued within the twenty week time limit. This is a reduction from 59.9% nationally in 2020/21. In Darlington 90.2% of plans were issued within the twenty week limit in 2021/22, a performance level significantly above both national and regional average.

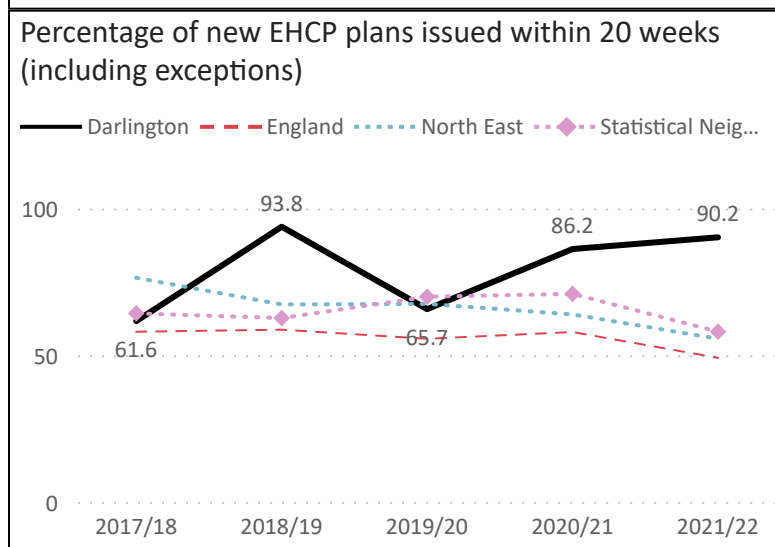
The council has been working with the education sector on the Valuing SEND programme to support improved practice in educational settings. A pilot programme was undertaken in the first half term of Autumn 2023, with 70 educational settings involved from early years, primary, secondary and Further Education phases. The pilot will be evaluated to establish how the work will be progressed.

Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion



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. The data shows increasingly 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 risen from 34.0% in 2019 to 41.1% in 2023. The proportion is now above the regional average of 33.3% and in line with the national average of 41.3%.

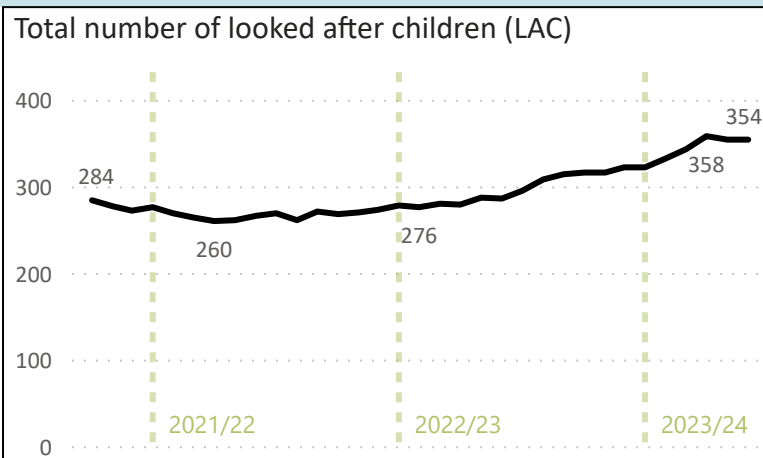
Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion



The percentage of new Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) issued by Darlington within 20 weeks (including exceptions) has been above the national average since 2016. After seeing a decrease in timeliness during 2019/20, we have had a positive increase with our current published data showing 90.2% in 2021/22, compared to regional, statistical neighbour and national averages all seeing a decrease in 2021/22 with of 55.6%, 58.0% and 49.1% respectively.

Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

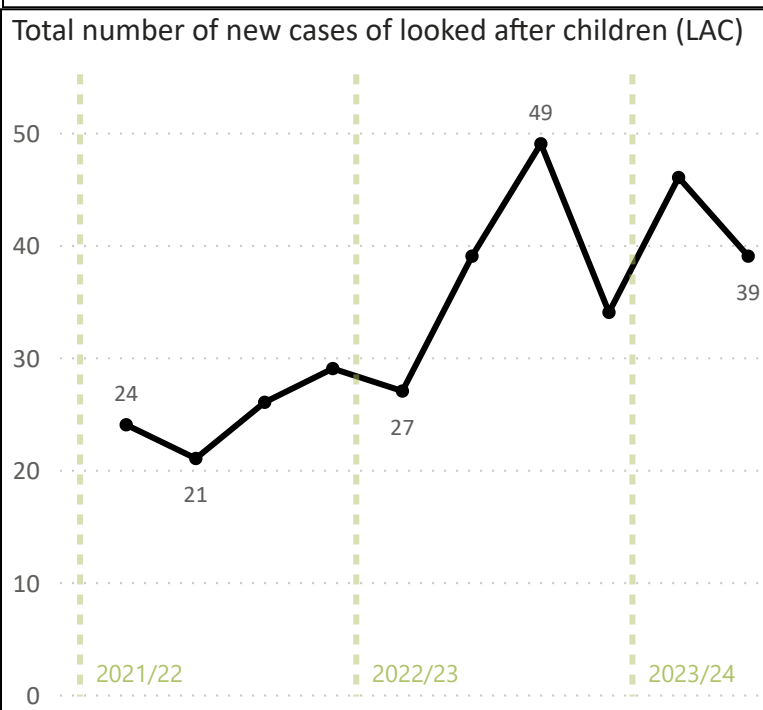
## C2. Reduce the need for looked after children placements through effective implementation of the Darlington Strengthening Families programme



354 children are being supported in our care at the end of September 2023, 5.1% of which have come into our care after being accepted by the Home Office as UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child).

This equates to 336 children, excluding UASC, that were in our care at the end of September 2023, a 23.1% increase from 273 children in our care at the end of September last year.

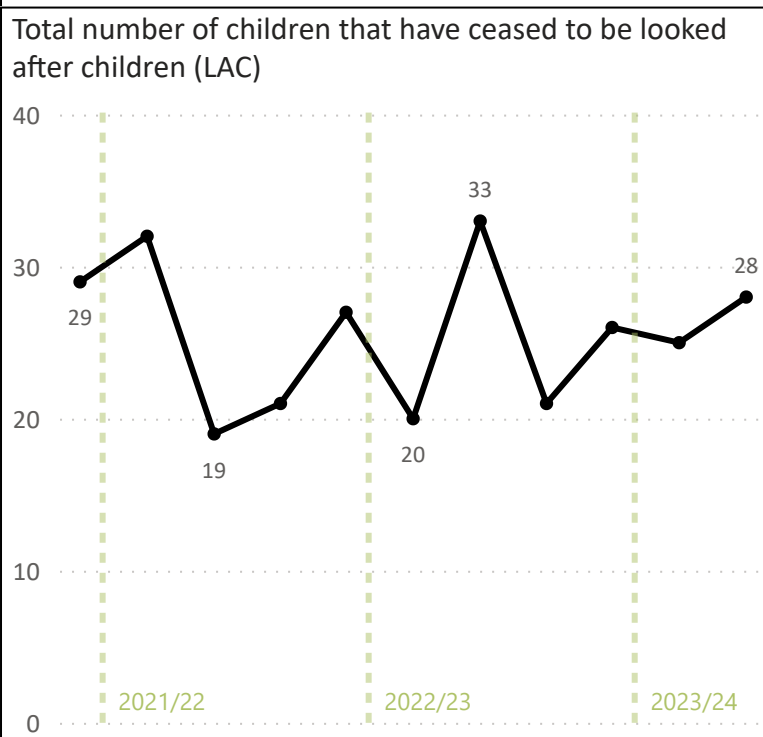
[Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services](#)



79 children from 45 families have come into our care since April 2023, a further 6 young people came into care after accepted by the Home Office as UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child) .

The primary and secondary presenting reasons for the children coming into our care are predominantly due to neglect, domestic violence, parental mental health concerns, physical or sexual abuse towards the child.

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



53 children and young people from 41 families have ceased to be in care since April 2023. This is the same number of children who ceased between April and September 2022 (53), and a small increase in the number of children who ceased to be in care between April and September 2021 (51).

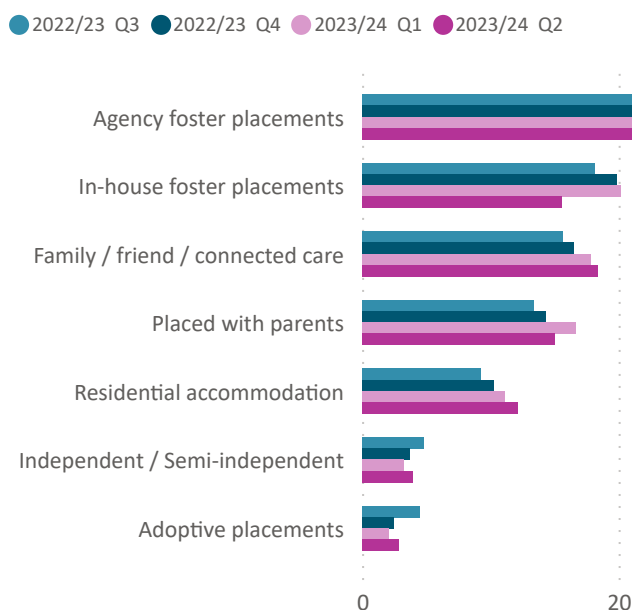
Of the children and young people ceased to be in care so far this year:

- 47.2% returned home to a parent.
- 20.8% had a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) / Child Arrangement Order (CAO) granted to a relative.
- 18.8% due to turning 18 and becoming a care leaver and supported by that service.
- 13.2% were adopted.

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

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

Percentage of looked after children by placement type



A large proportion of Darlington children in care were in a foster placement (41.0%) at the end of September 2023. 22.9% of children were placed in kinship care with relatives (including temporarily approved), 15.0% were placed with a parent, 18.3% were living in forms of supported residential accommodation and 2.8% were placed for adoption.

All placements are confirmed as appropriate for the child, enabling them to have the best support either with family links or specialised care. The proportion of children placed with a parent or kinship carer has been advancing.

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

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

Total number of approved foster carers

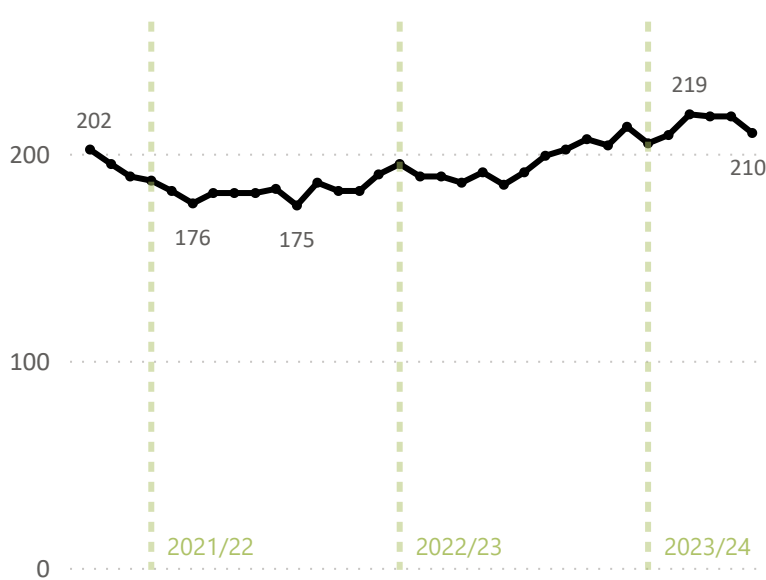
Date	Number
March 2022	56
June 2022	57
September 2022	58
December 2022	55
March 2023	54
June 2023	51
September 2023	50

Currently we have 50 approved foster care families with 51 kinship connected carers approved with a further 16 families that have temporary approval to support the children. At the end of September 2023, we had 22 families with an open application / going through the mainstream assessments looking to become an approved foster carer to support Darlington's children in care.

Nationally, there are difficulties with recruitment. The impact of Covid-19 has meant fewer people being available due to health reasons. Work continues to raise the foster caring profile in Darlington via our website, social media, and on TV. There has been 39 new fostering enquiry applications so far this year.

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

Total number of foster care placements



At the end of September 2023, 210 children and young people were placed with a foster care family. 42.9% of the children were with an agency foster carer, 26.2% were with an in-house foster carer and 31.0% were with an approved kinship connected carer. 38.1% of all foster placements were long-term.

Encouragingly we have seen an increase with children being able to be placed with a parent and kinship connected carers whilst being supported by our care team.

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

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

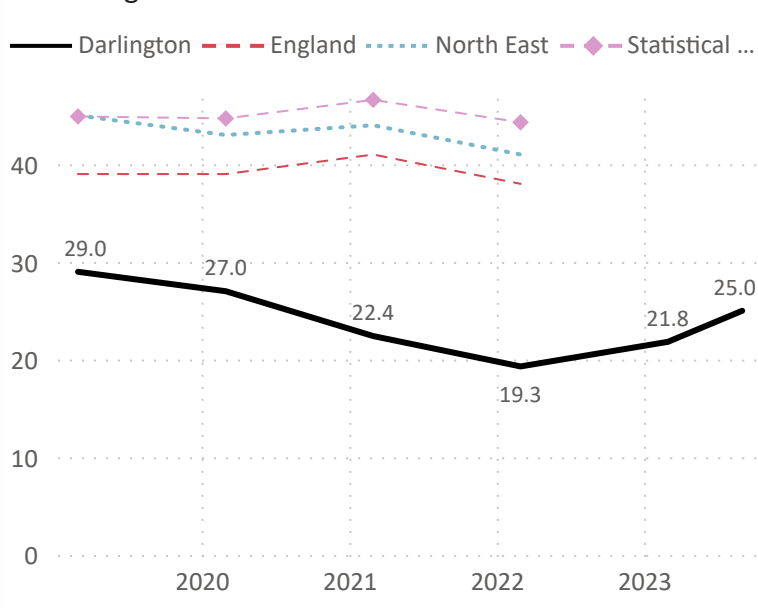
The new home has now been registered with OFSTED and is fully functional. The children have moved to their new home and their former home has now been re-purposed as a short breaks / emergency home in line with service plans.

There are further Placement Sufficiency proposals which are being considered within the Corporate process to maximise the use of inhouse resources and services for Children in our Care. These include proposals to increase the in house residential offer and to review the in house foster carer offer and are being considered within the existing MTFP process. Analysis has shown that in house provision is both more cost effective and leads to better outcomes for Young People.

Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

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

Percentage of Care Leavers who are NEET



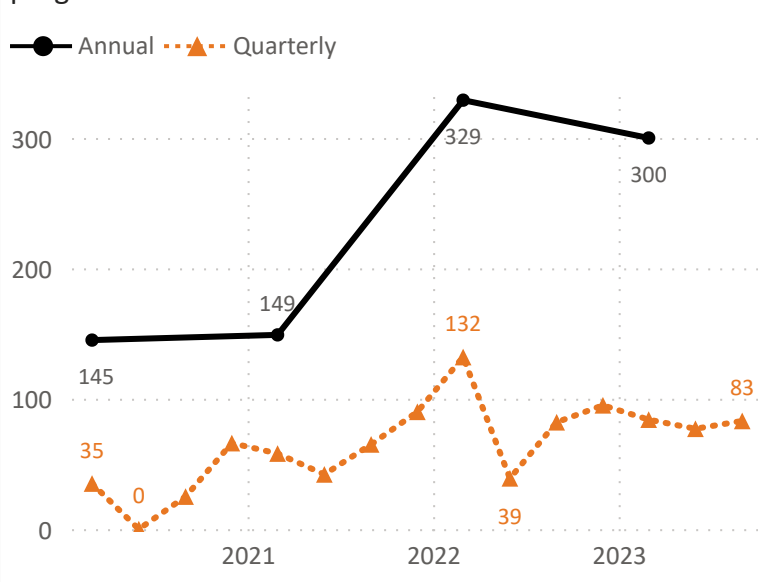
The proportion of Darlington care leavers (DfE measure aged 19-21) Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at the end of September 2023 was 25.0%, which outperformed the most recently available published national and regional averages. This low number of NEET care leavers continues to inspire and is evidence of the commitment our young people give to their personal development.

16.7% of our care leavers are engaged in further education and 58.3% are in employment. There is an excellent relationship with our Learning and Skills officers to understand all school leavers destinations to promote and encourage further learning, training, and/or employment opportunities.

Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

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

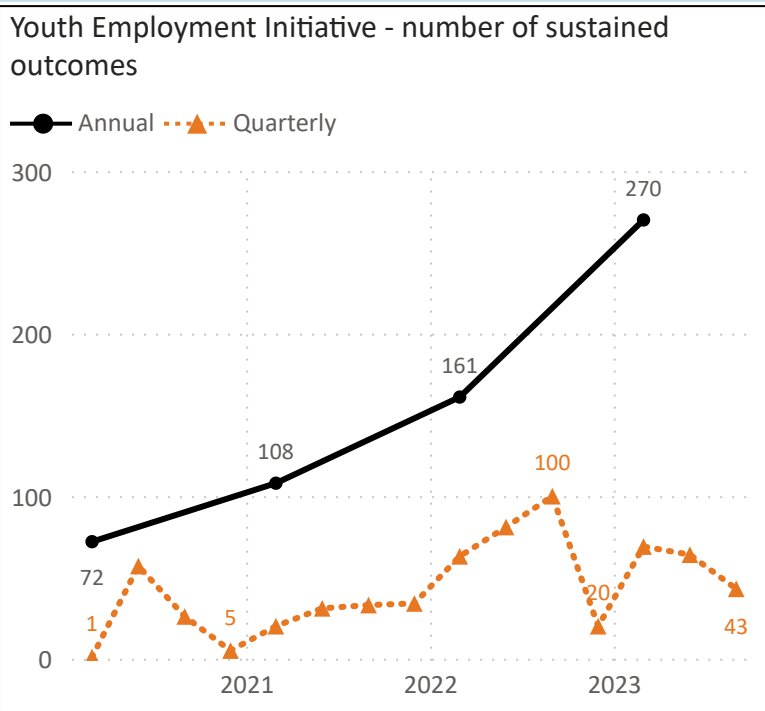
Youth Employment Initiative - number of positive progressions



Referrals to the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) has remained steady, month on month during 2022/23 with young people continuing to move into education, employment, and training. YEI continues to perform well and has exceeded the academic year end (project end) targets already. YEI will continue to run as a DBC funded programme from 1 August 2023 to 31 March 2024. To date the programme had supported 1,493 young people with 93.6% (1,397) of completers moving into employment or training and 58.9% (823) still in that setting at the 6 month point.

Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

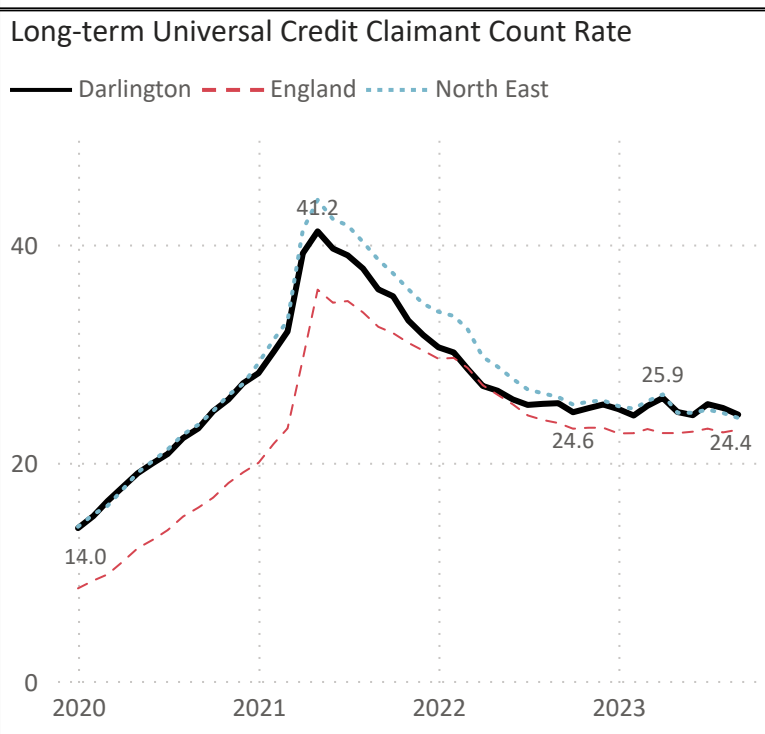
## C6. Work with partners to reduce youth and long-term unemployment, by increasing the opportunity for retraining and apprenticeships leading to gainful employment



Young people using the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) service have continued to see positive progression in education, employment or training over the past 12 months, exceeding our expected target. Sustained outcomes are an important indicator that highlights the determination the young people and YEI service have and is showcased by the year-on-year increase in sustained education, employment or training.

At times we are unable to contact some young people at the six-month sustained point or obtain timely evidence from employers, so the true number achieving sustained employment is considered likely to be higher than recorded.

**Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion**



The long-term Universal Credit claimant count in Darlington has remained relatively constant since the summer of 2022, after a period of post-covid reduction. The rate in Darlington is now 24.41%, higher than both the North-East (24.11%) and the England rate (23.03%). With the increase in number of employees in Darlington over the last 12 months, this figure shows that long term claimants are not accessing the local job opportunities.

**Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion**

## 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

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

Date ▲	Percentage
March 2022	75.7%
September 2022	75.7%
March 2023	81.1%
September 2023	89.2%

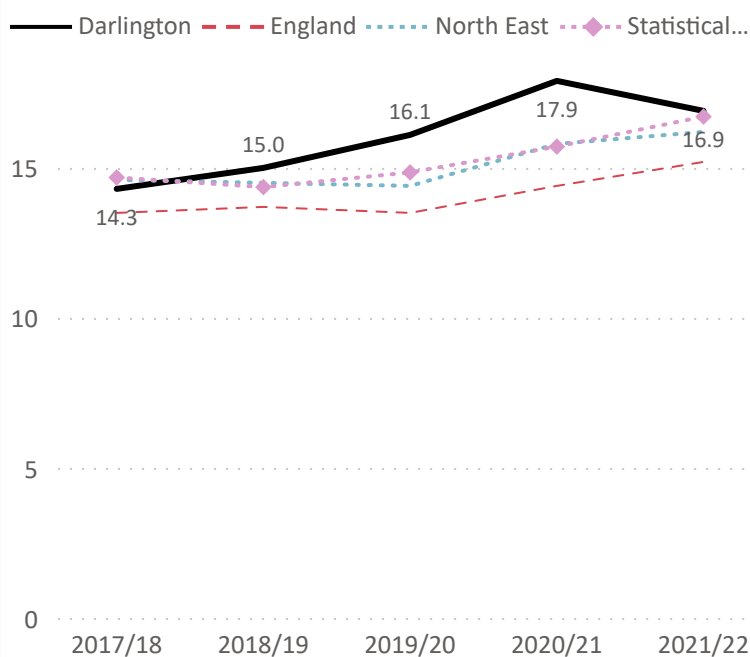
The percentage of schools judged good or outstanding by Ofsted:

At the end of September 2023, 89.2% of schools in Darlington had an Ofsted rating of either Good or Outstanding. This is an increase on previous figures from March 2022 (75.7%) and September 2022 (75.7%).

\*The data provided includes Darlington's mainstream primary and secondary school settings only, excluding nurseries, special schools and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

[Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion](#)

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. The inequality gap between KS4 Attainment 8 average scores for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils has dropped from 17.9 in 2020/21 to 16.9 in 2021/22, reducing the gap of our regional (16.2) and statistical neighbours (16.7) comparators, but higher than the national comparator (15.2). Darlington's improved performance on this measure contrasts with an increase at regional and national level.

[Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion](#)



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

During the Summer term, the participants of the In2 project worked with visual artists and a writer on a project called In Flight, which represented their journey from primary to secondary school.

Across the six weeks the children experimented with different art forms and crafts, including printing, weaving, and sculpting, and they also wrote and recorded a poem. Each element was used to create a giant bamboo bird sculpture which represented their school's ethos (an owl, a hummingbird, and a dove) with an accompanying poetry soundscape. The sculptures and soundscapes were exhibited at the Hullabaloo in the Park festival during July and will also be on show at the Wintertide Festival in Hartlepool during November, before being returned to the schools.

Participants: 141

59 - Northwood Primary

44 - Firthmoor Primary

38 - Corporation Road Primary

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

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

Darlington's Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) programme was further extended for Summer 2023, delivering in communities throughout the Borough. More than 1,000 children engaged with 116 different programmes at 30 sites across Darlington during the 6 weeks holiday. Total number of attendances exceeded 3,500 with 20% of children with SEND. The activities over the summer period included Circus School, STEAM, Arts & Crafts, Forest School, life skills, sports and much more, and a hot meal was provided for every child at each session. As well as established links with social workers and SEN charities, new links have been made with AGE UK, The Forum Music Centre and Family Help Darlington.

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

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

Phase 3 of the market redevelopment commenced in August 2023 and will be completed in January 2024. This phase of the refurbishment focuses on the traditional trading area of the market hall. The aim of these new stalls is to attract a wider demographic to shop in the market while still promoting the existing traders. Interest from prospective tenants is proving strong with one new continental deli trader already signing a lease and an urban deli trader opening up in October 2023.

The monthly pop up markets are proving very successful in particular the misfits market which is very popular.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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

The announcement of the permanent location of Darlington Economic Campus has been positively received by the Council and partners both within the borough and regionally. The Council has conducted an economic impact study on DEC's contribution to the local economy and it is estimated that with 1,200 new civil service jobs from the location of DEC an additional 800 indirect jobs will be created contributing £81m in to the local economy in the first 5 years.

The Towns Fund continues to deliver improvements in the town with new businesses opening along Skinnergate and planning application for the redevelopment of 126 Northgate to transform the property into business space being submitted. The procurement process for a partner to redesign, redevelopment and manage the Northern Echo Building as high quality office space was completed in early November.

The Compulsory Purchase of Northgate House continues with a planning application to support this process being prepared for December 2023.

Work continues to deliver 25,000 sqft of grade A office space on the former sports direct site on East Street.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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

Progress against this action continues to be strong.

At Central Park the works are substantially complete. The exception is the installation of the interpretation panels and these are expected to be installed before the end of the year.

On Ingenium Parc the periphery planting continues to progress having suffered a slight delay due to the weather conditions. This work is due for completion by the end of December. The handover process for the site to our Estates and Streetscene teams has commenced.

The first phase of Faverdale Business Park has been completely let with a number of businesses now operating from the site. Further plots are also being offered for sale.

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

Planning approval has been issued for the development of a logistics centre at Symmetry Park. It is anticipated work will commence in the first quarter of 2024.

Officers are working with possible private sector partners with an aim to develop commercial/employment sites at land in Faverdale. A possible approach would be to explore an option for land sale under an option agreement which will assist in effectively marketing the several potential plots at the site.

Planning approval was awarded to the development of retail and commercial units at Faverdale. It is anticipated that this will commence in quarter 2 of 2024.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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

Business investment enquiries continue, with the main area of interest from new businesses looking to establish either leisure or retail offers in the town centre. There are a number of on-going enquiries for town centre commercial office space.

The Business Growth Masterclasses have continued, delivered in collaboration with Business Doctors. Businesses from a range of sectors have taken part, and each business benefited from 1to1 mentoring support and individual business assessments.

The Business Investment Team have been working with CPI and National Horizons Centre to establish the bioscience sector as a key priority within the Tees Valley Innovation Plan. There are three clusters in the Innovation Plan: Bioscience, Digital and Creative, and Net Zero. The plan highlights the many business innovation assets across the Tees Valley and presents the opportunities for bioscience growth in Darlington in a positive and collaborative way, highlighting Darlington Science Park as a major asset.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

## E6. Successful adoption of the Local Plan

The Local Plan was successfully adopted in February 2022. Our new Local Plan sets out what the opportunities are for development in the area, and what types of development will and will not be permitted and in which locations. Officers continue to monitor the delivery of sites identified in the Local Plan. In addition the necessary adoption of the Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) Design Code was agreed by Council. Officers have been supporting the progress of both Garden Villages. It is anticipated that the planning application for Burtree Garden Village will be considered in early 2024.

Officers are also continuing to review other SPDs relating to conservation and planning obligations.

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

Housing delivery continues to be strong within the borough despite ongoing challenges with Nutrient Neutrality. Despite not granting any significant new housing permissions in the past financial year, housing completions have still exceeded the annual local plan target. Options to mitigate Nutrient pollution from new development are now being applied. Two rounds of Natural England credits have now been issued with a third currently in the process of being issued. Darlington fared well in the proportion of credits allocated to developments in Darlington helping to unlock around 2000 homes. The Council housing site at Neasham Road is progressing well which when completed will deliver approximately 150 affordable homes.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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

Following the Council's climate emergency declaration in 2019, a Sustainability and Climate Change Officer was recruited and a Strategy and Action Plan were produced and passed by Council. This followed on from a Carbon Management Plan developed in 2010. In July 2023, Council reaffirmed the climate emergency and brought the date forward to 2040. The Council also added new aims of encouraging and influencing businesses and residents to also take action towards reducing the wider borough carbon emissions. The Strategy and Action Plan are being revised in line with the new target.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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

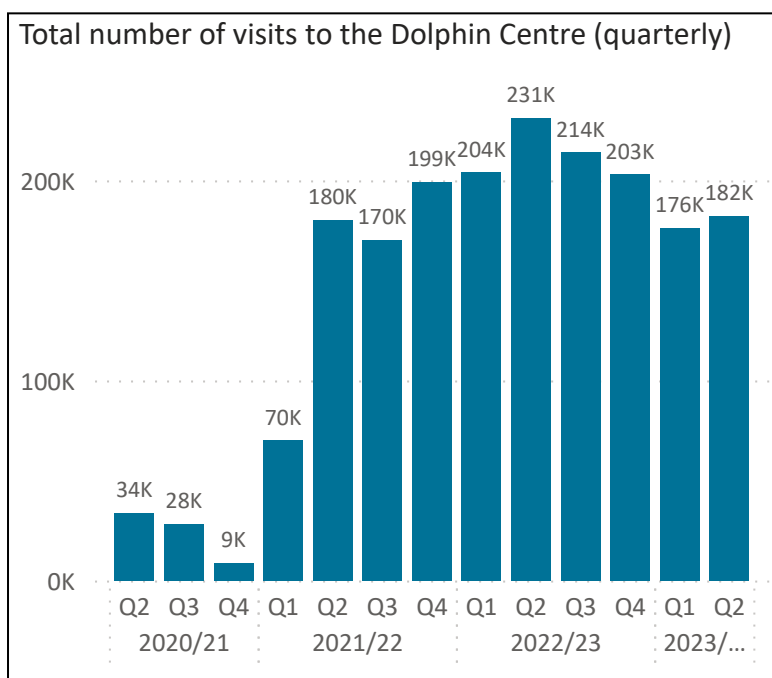
The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) is now taking the lead on the delivery of the Bank Top Station project. However, Darlington Borough Council will continue to provide support where required and will attend board level Project meetings with the Tees Valley Combined Authority, Department for Transport and LNER.

On the Eastern side work is progressing well with the structure of the new multi storey car park now clearly visible. On the western side the Cattle market temporary car park has been operational since the 26th of April, demolition is complete on the former public house site, and discussions are continuing with TVCA on the remaining extent of the Western gateway works.

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

The Centre has celebrated high footfall, despite the main pool closure in January 2023. The Centre continues to facilitate school swimming lessons with 23 schools on site every week and on average 850 children learning to swim in public swimming lessons each week. Membership figures continued at the 2000 mark and a real focus on targeting students with the introduction of the new student discount card. DC Bowl and soft play have seen increased income levels from the same period last year with a very successful summer holiday period in both areas. The same can be said for the catering departments across the building and the external catering facilities at South Park Café and Collaboration. The Centre has hosted a wide range of events throughout this time, which has seen further footfall from Mixed Martial Arts and the introduction of a new Comic Con event to the calendar.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services



Visitors to The Dolphin Centre in Quarter 2 are down on the same quarter in 22-23 which is expected due to the extended main pool closure. Although the total visits for the Centre are down, we have seen a very positive response in other business areas with increased income in bowling, catering and soft play compared to the same period in 22-23.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

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

With the lifting of restrictions the specific action plans for responding to an outbreak of COVID19 were suspended. UKHSA takes the national lead for monitoring and responding to COVID19 and particularly in relation to any variants of concern and provide expert guidance and information in relation to these. A new system framework is being developed with partners to manage, respond to and prevent a range of communicable disease outbreaks in Darlington.

There has been a series of workshops with health, social care and education providers to obtain their input and views in developing a new joint system wide framework for Darlington to manage outbreaks.

Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health

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

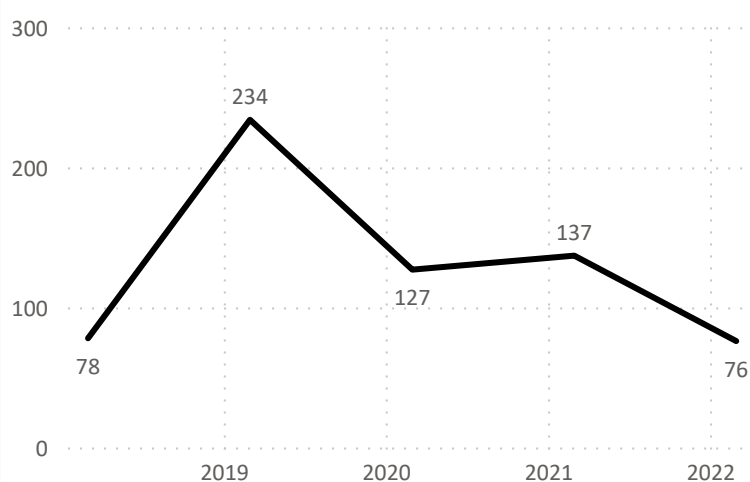
Housing Condition - Percentage of Council properties meeting the decent homes standard

Year	Value
2018/19	100.0%
2019/20	100.0%
2020/21	100.0%
2021/22	100.0%
2022/23	100.0%

A stock condition survey was undertaken by an external contractor in 2022-23. This survey confirmed that our properties are of a good standard and continue to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standards and these standards have been met since 2005. This demonstrates the Council's ongoing commitment to provide excellent quality social housing and reflecting the good work of our Housing teams. The Decent Homes Standard is currently under review and the outcome should be announced in 2024.

[Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues](#)

Additional Affordable Housing Supply - Completions



This 2022/23 annual figure is obtained from the Government "Live Tables on Affordable Housing Supply". These figures will be published in late 2023 (Expected November/December). Therefore updated figures will be available in the final quarter.

The Council's Housing new build programme was significantly disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and then the Nutrient Neutrality announcement, with very few properties completed in 2021/22 (Data is not yet available for 2022/23). However, work has concluded on Allington Way phase 3 site, which will deliver 55 Council properties in 2022/23.

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

## 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
2021/22	Q3	96.3%
	Q4	97.5%
2022/23	Q1	96.2%
	Q2	97.3%
	Q3	96.4%
	Q4	95.9%
2023/24	Q1	98.1%
	Q2	98.8%

Collection rates have slightly increased on Q1 2023/24 and are improved compared to Q2 2022/23 with levels for Q2 standing at 98.78%.

Over 2000 Council tenants are now in receipt of some element of Universal Credit and have the 5 week wait prior to first payments being received, however average arrears for UC customers remains less than 5 weeks average rent.

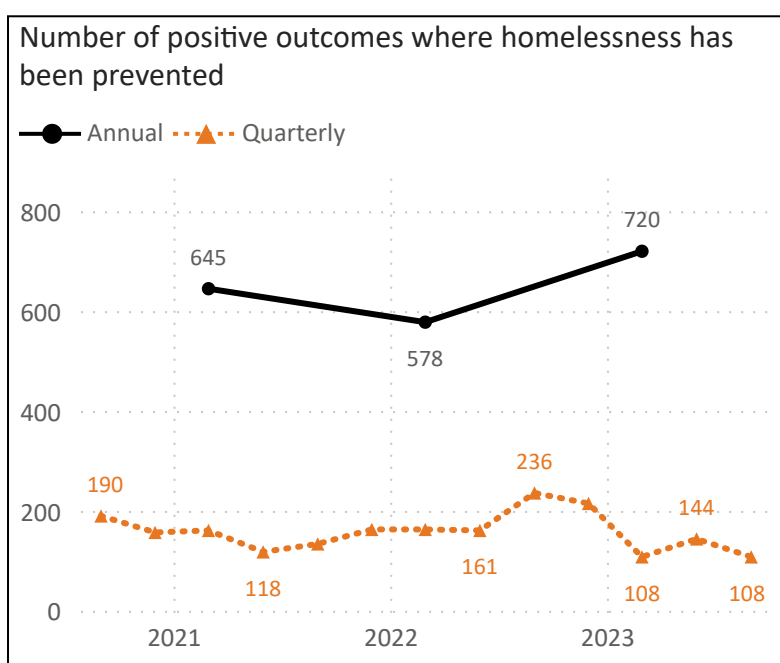
The Income team continue to promote help and guidance and making affordable repayment plans with customers throughout their tenancy, only taking court and enforcement action where all other efforts have failed.

[Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues](#)

## H5. Review the Darlington Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

All the actions in the current Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy are now complete, although pressures on the Housing Options service are ongoing due to the increase in homeless presentations. Despite these challenging times the housing options team have continued to work hard and have prevented 108 people becoming homeless in the first half of the year. The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is being refreshed in light of the Governments new strategy to "end rough sleeping for good" and will be reviewed by Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee next year in February 2024.

Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues



Positive outcomes where homelessness has been prevented have decreased from September 2022 at 236 to September 2023 at 108. This reflects the continued high demand for Homelessness and Housing advice services from the team. The lack of suitable move-on accommodation that meets clients needs and the reduction in available private rented accommodation in the Borough means that cases are now open for longer.

Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues

## 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 Director of public health continues to lead work with key partners and stakeholders on specific programmes and projects including :-

- Reviewing and refreshing the local suicide prevention programme including re-establishing a suicide prevention forum and updating and refreshing the suicide prevention plan in light of the latest evidence and guidance.
- Continue to roll out the making Every Contact Count (MECC) training to a range of internal and external services and professionals including the voluntary sector using the 'train the trainer' cascade approach. A toolbox of courses and training is available to ensure that those providing MECC in their setting can remain updated and competent.
- Continue to undertake the Healthy Lifestyle Survey with 8,400 pupils across schools in Darlington and undertake a new pilot in post 16 settings.
- Continue to expand and improve the quality of provision of local substance misuse treatment and recovery services through the utilisation of the SSMTRG grant for both adults and young people.

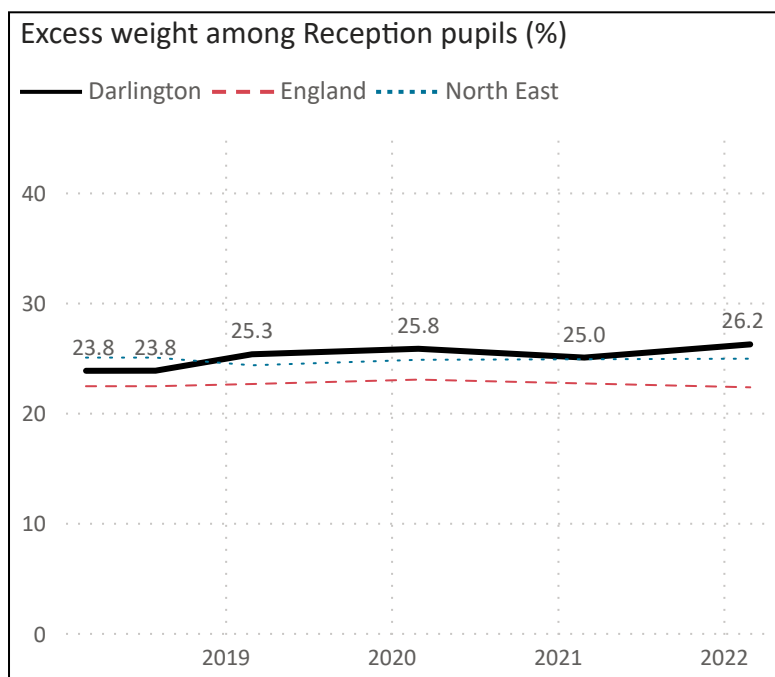
## H7. Implement the Darlington Child Healthy Weight Plan with partners

The Darlington Child health Weight Plan continues to deliver on its key objectives including:

- improving the quality of the local food offer through the successful award awards of Healthy Families Catering awards to more food businesses and outlets across the borough
- continue to work with individual schools to support them in achieving the healthy school meals standard including providing specific training
- Continued to support the utilisation of green spaces for physical activity by young people and families through the successful delivery of the holiday activity programme in 16 outdoor spaces
- refreshing and reviewing the children's home food policy to enable them to continue to provide young people in care the highest quality and healthy balanced diet
- Continue to promote and expand the Health Early Years network

Work has commenced working with key stakeholders to provide public health input into the development of a Physical Activity Strategy for Darlington.

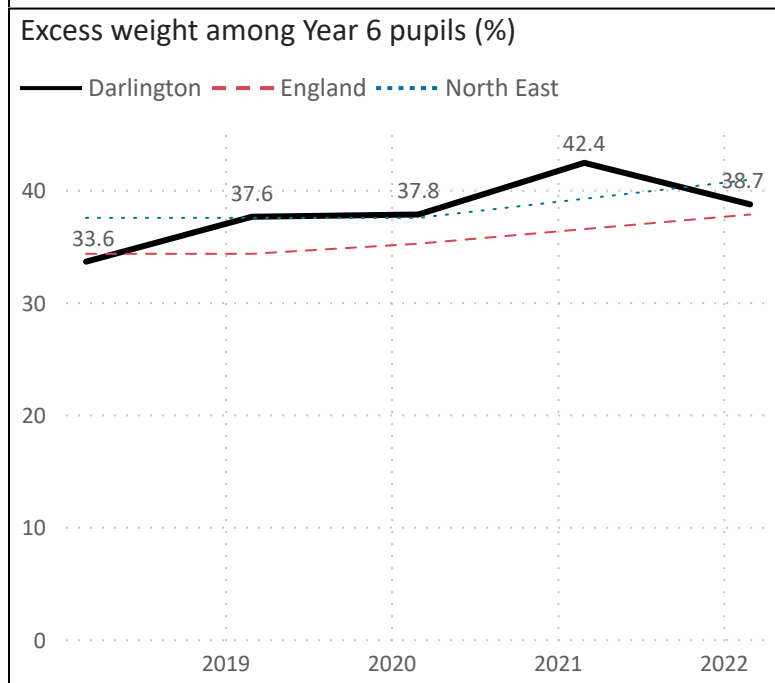
[Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health](#)



This data (from 2021/22) shows that that there is no significant change to the trend for Reception prevalence of overweight (including obesity). 26.2% of reception children aged 4-5 years were classified as overweight or obese. Compared to our North East neighbours Darlington is ranked 3rd. Statistically similar to the North East and statistically worse than England.

The Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan identified evidence-based interventions delivered with partners to address underlying causes of obesity in children and young people. Work includes activity with schools and local commercial food premises to develop a healthy catering standard for a healthy food offer.

[Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health](#)



This data (from 2021/22) shows that the trend compared to the baseline is increasing and getting worse for year 6 prevalence of overweight but reduced from its peak in 2021. 38.7% of year 6 children aged 10-11 years were classified as overweight or obese. Compared to our North East neighbours Darlington is ranked 10th. Statistically similar to the North East and England.

The Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan identified evidence-based interventions delivered with partners to address underlying causes of obesity in children and young people. Work includes activity with schools and local commercial food premises to develop a healthy catering standard for a healthy food offer.

[Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health](#)



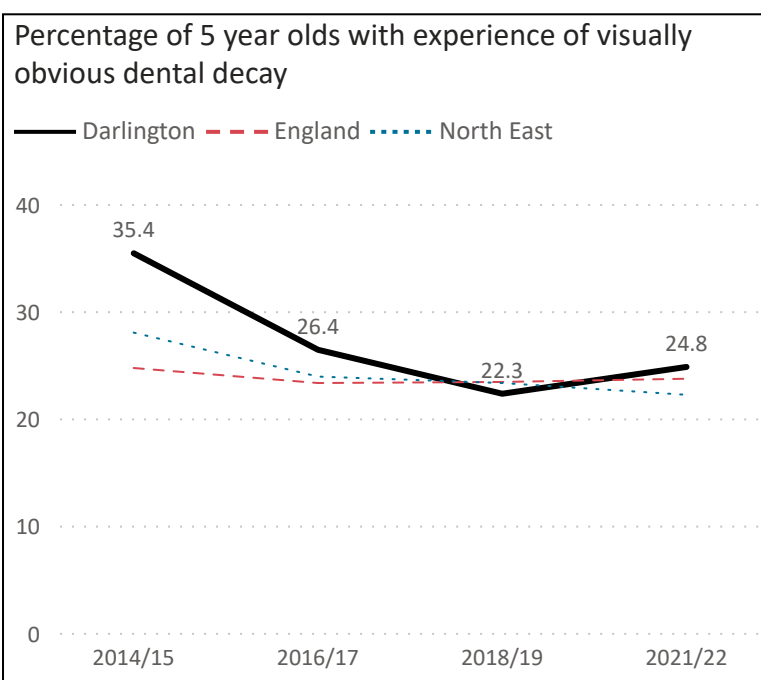
## H8. Implement the Darlington Oral Health Plan 2017-2022 with partners

Work continues to refresh the Darlington Oral Health Plan by the Director of Public Health supported by Dental Public Health experts from the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities. This will be updated to reflect recent changes in legislation as well as changes in behaviours seen in children and families following the recent pandemic. This will be subject to formal consultation and engagement before being agreed by elected Members by the end of 2024.

The Director of Public Health supported by the specialist Public Health team continue to implement the recommendations of the existing plan including:

- continue to promote and support the toothbrushing scheme in a range of targeted local reception classes and nurseries to re-establish healthy habits in cleaning teeth in young children.
- continue to work with local Tees Valley authorities and OHID Dental Public Health colleagues in the delivery of an Oral Health survey in Darlington to monitor the dental health of school aged children.

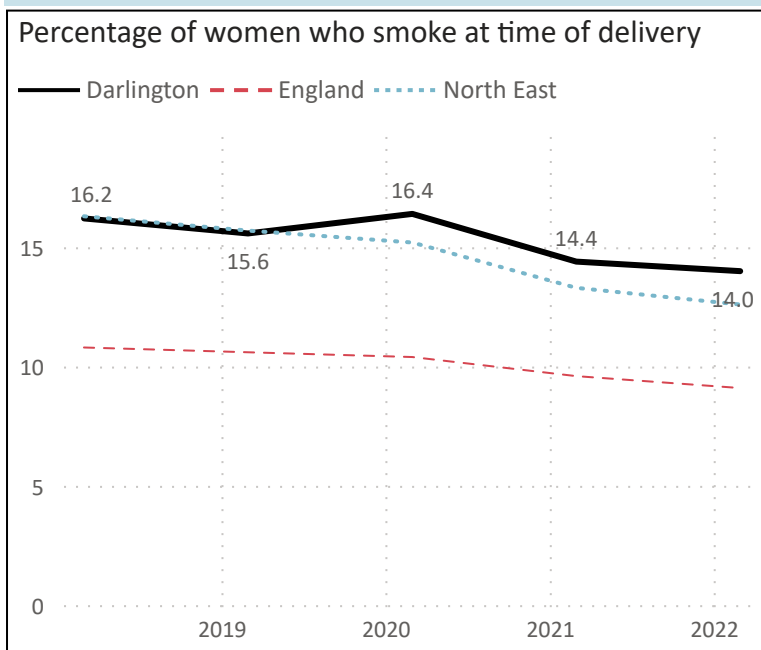
Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health



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 24.8% in 2021/22. The Childhood Healthy Weight Plan for Darlington includes actions such as reducing sugar and fizzy drinks in settings such as schools, working with families in healthy weaning for babies to help reduce dietary sources of sugar.

Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health

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

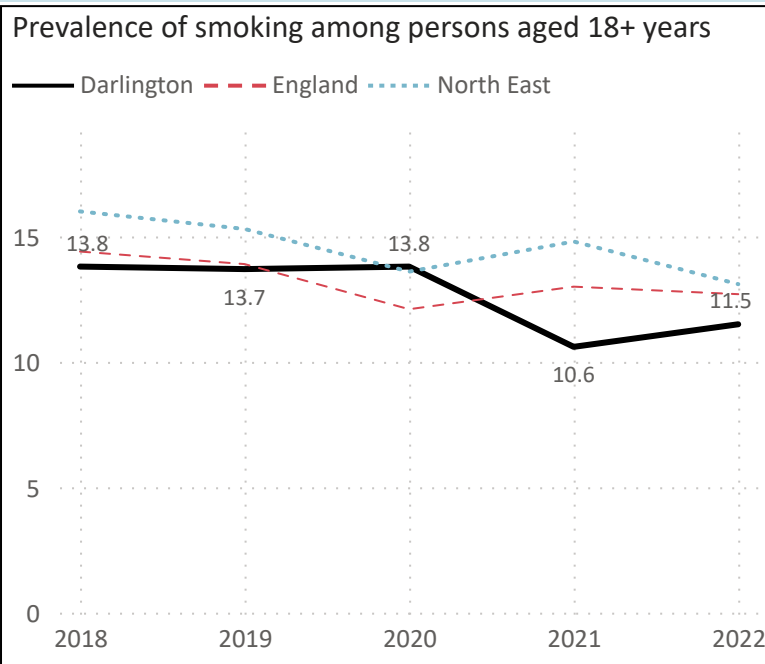


The data (from 2021/22) shows that there is no significant change to the trend for women who smoke at time of delivery. 14.0% of mothers are known to be smokers at time of delivery. Compared to our North East neighbours Darlington is ranked 7th. Statistically similar to the North East and statistically worse than England.

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.

Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health

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



This data (from 2022) 11.5% of persons aged 18 + self-reported themselves as smokers in the Annual Population Survey (APS). Compared to our North East neighbours Darlington is ranked 9th and is statistically similar to the North East and England.

The trend is also continuing to reduce and it is anticipated that further falls may be recorded going forward due to the ongoing impact of measures to reduce smoking in the community such as increased prices and smoke free places. The NHS is also now offering stop smoking interventions for those people currently receiving hospital treatment.

Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health

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

Number of clients receiving a Lifeline service

Year	Quarter	Darlington
2021/22	Q3	3,365
	Q4	3,340
2022/23	Q1	3,367
	Q2	3,388
	Q3	3,414
	Q4	3,425
2023/24	Q1	3,480
	Q2	3,457

Over the last few years, there has been a consistent and steady increase in users of the Lifeline Service. These are people who live in their own home and have either self-referred for the service or have equipment installed to meet their social care need, following an Adult Social care or health assessment. We have seen an increase of Adult Social Care and health referrals and continue to work closely with social care, hospital discharge and reablement services.

Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues

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

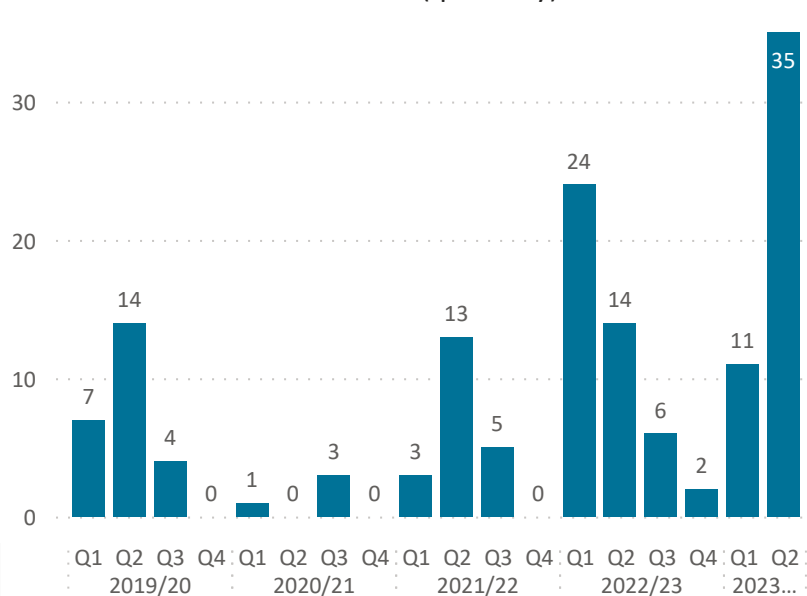
Work continues on developing the exciting Stockton & Darlington Railway 200th (SNDR200) celebrations. The fantastic nine month festival programme developed with partners, will showcase the very first ground breaking journey alongside a range of internationally significant projects, which will shine a spotlight on the history and future transport. The programme of events will include steam train journeys, exhibitions, visual arts and large scale spectacles. There will be something for everyone, from railway enthusiasts and hobbyists, to students, families and visitors of all ages.

The restoration of Loco No1 replica is continuing, with the first Chaldron wagon completed and tested, with the development and building of the coach making good progress.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

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

Number of Town Centre Events (quarterly)



### April - September 2023

The events season for 2023 began with large scale celebrations of the King's Coronation and also hosting a live screen for the BBC of Eurovision in partnership with TVCA.

Throughout May to September the events team delivered a wide ranging animation programme to help welcome people to Darlington including a full Summer Stage programme for the holiday season.

Autumn and winter programme focuses on cultural festivals to support football and engage with communities across the town.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

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

Year	Month	Darlington
2022	March	100%
	June	82%
	September	97%
2023	June	100%
	September	91%

The regular programme of 33 transects inspected for litter every other month, as defined by the Association For Public Service Excellence (APSE) Land Audit Management System grading system to monitor the cleanliness standard recommended in April this year. The percentage is calculated using the number getting a "pass" rating. The average score up to September 2023 is 93.5%, this is maintaining the authority average of being above 90%, the 2021/22 was 98.8% and the 2022/23 was 95.9%.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

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

Work is now completed on the new build rail shed for A1 steam trust and the refurbishment of the 1861 rail shed which Darlington Railway Preservation Society (DRPS) and North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group (NELPG) will occupy. All three partners have now completed their re location. A1 trust with the help of partners have started work on laying the private siding which will be completed by the end of 2024 and will be connected to the main line.

Phase 2 building work is progressing well in the Goods Shed, the Head of Steam and Carriage works, with the outdoor play area, outdoor spaces and car park starting later this year early next. Good progress is being made with an anticipated completion of end of June 2024.

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

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

The refurbishment and restoration of Crown Street Library is now complete with the building re opening to the public in September. The combination of preserving the heritage of the Grade 11 listed Victorian library and embracing modern elements strikes a harmonious balance, creating a library that is both a window into the past and a vibrant hub of knowledge and culture for the present and future. The restoration work has restored:-

- The original entrance, main entrance and accessible entrance
- The lending library a haven for book enthusiasts and curious readers alike
- Children's library a vibrant, magical inclusive space for children and families to come together to experience the joy of reading and story telling
- The study a place that caters to the diverse needs of visitors to study and engage in the service
- The Hive an inspirational space for exploring, learning and creativity
- The Centre for local studies a space to learn and research the history of Darlington
- The Reminiscence room a space to relax and step back in time , designed to inspire nostalgic conversations
- The Hoskins room a meeting space
- The Art Gallery a place to showcase a changing exhibition programme as well as the Boroughs art collection

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

## L5. Review and deliver a revised car parking strategy

Following the adoption of the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan and the subsequent approval of the Darlington Transport Plan framework by Cabinet in March 2021, officers have worked to develop the Darlington Transport Plan, Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan and the Darlington Parking Strategy. These plans and strategies were consulted on throughout the summer of 2022 and have now been approved by both Cabinet and Council at meetings in November of 2022. Work will now progress on implementing the measures identified in the plan.

The objectives of the Parking Strategy are to offer a balanced, fair and well managed, safe and convenient, and modern service.

[Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects](#)

## 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 which has secured £310m in transport investment in the next 5 years from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS). This funding will see the biggest investment in sustainable transport ever seen in the Tees Valley and will assist in delivering climate change objectives across the region. 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:

- o Continued lobbying and development of key road projects including the Darlington Northern Link Road.
- o Development and delivery of Darlington station project
- o An Enhanced Partnership with bus operators to aim to secure improved services and customer experience across the region has been entered into.
- o Further development of walking and cycling schemes with work complete on Woodlands Road Phase 1 and Duke Street.
- o Installation of electric vehicle charging points in car parks throughout Darlington.

[Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects](#)

## L7. Modernise Darlington's crematorium service

Work is now complete for the modernisation of Darlington's crematorium service. The new cremators have both now been operating since December 2022 and the building has been completed and handed over to bereavement who now operate the bereavement service from west cemetery.

The new Chapel and burial ground extension was completed earlier this year in April 2023. Early indications are that the Chapel has been well received by users, providing a new modern chapel that can facilitate larger gatherings and a crematorium that meets current environmental requirements. The project has also created capacity for further burials in West Cemetery.

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

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

Officers have continued to work with the applicants planning agents to address land ownership issues which were delaying the progress of the £25m Jet Centre and Aviation Village. These issues have now been addressed the the planning application is now extant and legal. Officers continue to support the airport in regards to readiness to receive specific cargo. As of yet no future cargo imports of controlled food types e.g. beans from various parts of Africa have yet been agreed. However the current Service Level Agreement between the airport and the council will ensure there is no delay in accepting the import of this type of food goods.

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

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

The MTFP for 2023-27 was approved by Council in February 2023 and provided a balanced budget until 2025/26. The year end projected position at quarter 2 is a decline in the original estimate of £1.119 million which has resulted from pressures in children's services and a higher than budgeted pay award. The Children's services pressure is due to significant demand increases post pandemic, which is being seen nationally. All departments are reviewing their budgets and reducing expenditure where possible to assist with the financial position and as a result, most departments are showing an underspend or improved position on the quarter 1 projection.

Work has commenced on the new MTFP covering the period 2024/25-2027/28, which following approval by Cabinet will be consulted upon between December and January. The budget will return to Cabinet before progressing to full Council for approval in February 2024.

The Council's accounts are scrutinised by our auditors Ernst and Young and have consistently delivered a positive Value for Money outcome.

[Brett Nielsen: Assistant Director - Resources](#)

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

The Council has invested in seven joint ventures to build and sell houses to date, with all sites progressing well and on target to provide profits as expected. Three of the projects have completed with the investment repaid and dividends received. The West Park joint venture is progressing well and is estimated to provide a higher return than originally anticipated, the majority of the units have been sold or reserved for 2023 and reservations have been made against the 2024 release. The Council's out of borough joint venture is progressing, with the majority of units available in 2023 sold or reserved and reservations have been made against the 2024 release. The Elderbrook Park scheme is also progressing well again with the majority of 2023 units sold or reserved and reservations made against the 2024 release. The establishment of the joint venture with Esh at Hurworth Gardens was approved by Cabinet in July 2023 with planning permission granted for the construction of 144 new houses.

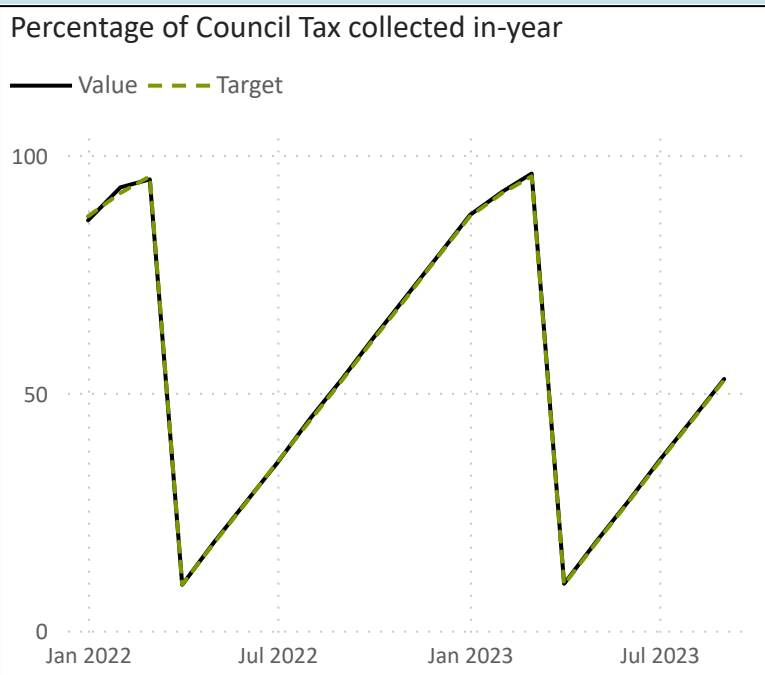
[Brett Nielsen: Assistant Director - Resources](#)

## 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 used for Joint Ventures (JV) and economic regeneration initiatives. Returns on JV's are forecast to be £6.7 million with three of the seven schemes completed, with the investment repaid and recycled back into the fund. Current regeneration schemes and JV's committed against the £50 million fund total £37.41 million, leaving a balance of £12.59 million uncommitted and available for further schemes. Officers from both Finance and the Economic Growth teams are actively looking at schemes, which subject to approval, could utilise the uncommitted fund to provide economic benefit to the Council and the wider borough.

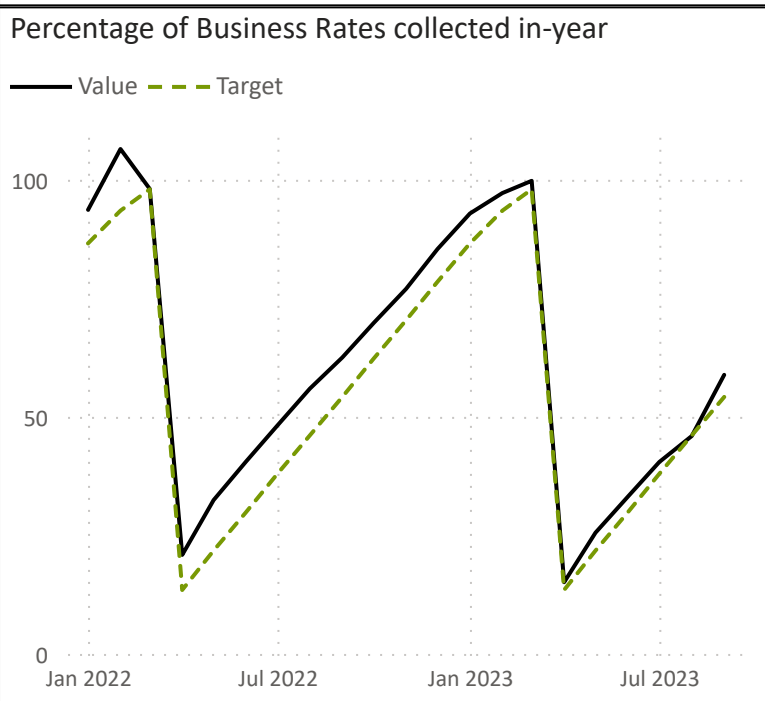
[Brett Nielsen: Assistant Director - Resources](#)

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



The percentage of Council Tax collected is slightly above the target for quarter 2, with 52.9% of Council Tax collected for 2023-24. The overall amount collected by quarter 2 was £39.8 million compared to £37.8 million by quarter 2 in 2022-23, an increase of 5%. The collection target for 2023-24 is on course to be met, despite the pressures of the current economic situation.

[Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues](#)



The percentage of Business Rates collected exceeded the target for quarter 2, with 58.9% of Business Rates collected, compared to 62.5% in quarter 2 of 2022-23. The main reason for this reduction compared to 2022-23 is due to the cessation of the Covid Additional Relief Scheme. There has also been a national Revaluation with effect from 1 April 2023 which increased the overall amount of rateable value for Darlington by £2.8 million or 3.2%. The overall amount collected by quarter 2 was £18.5 million compared to £20.2 million by quarter 2 of 2022-23 and we are on course to meet our target for 2023-24.

[Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues](#)

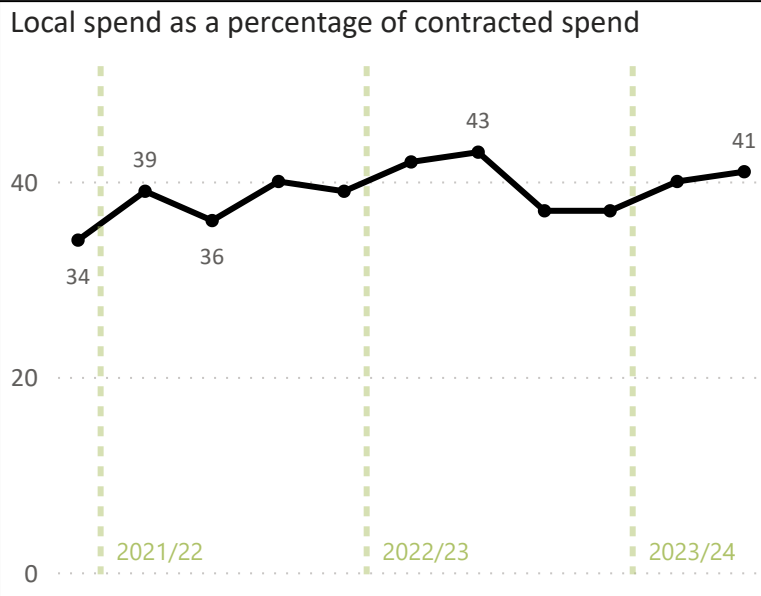
## R5. Adopt a local wealth building approach to council procurement and work with the wider public sector in Darlington to do the same

In line with the Social Value Act of 2013, the Council requires companies tendering for work from the Council to outline what added social value they would deliver. This forms part of the 'quality' assessments of the bids. To help providers deliver their social value commitments, the Procurement Team have directed suppliers to Darlington Cares. This has recently resulted in three new members joining.

Social value through procurement is frequently discussed at the Public Sector Executives Group. For public sector agencies whose geography is wider than Darlington disaggregating what social value benefits apply to Darlington is complicated. However public sector agencies are keen to explore how their roles as 'Anchor Institutions' (a key plank of local wealth building) can benefit Darlington more.

[Seth Pearson: Chief Exec Darlington Partnership](#)

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



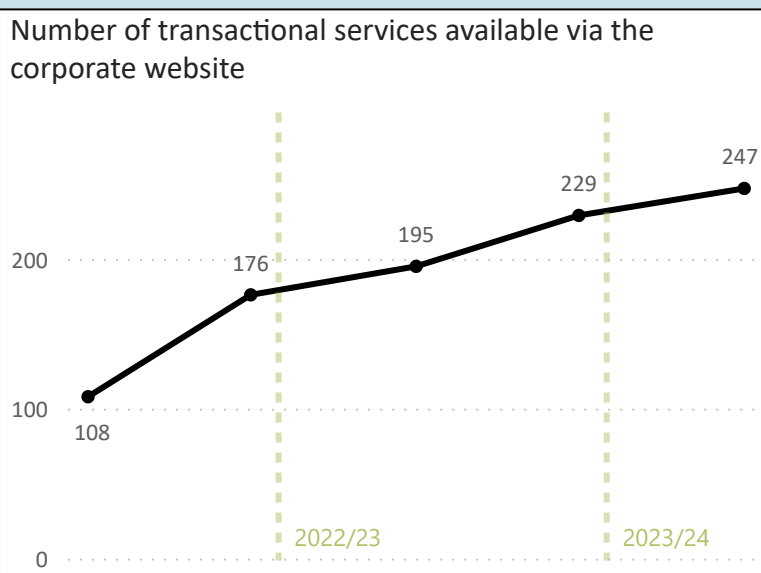
The spend with Darlington-based suppliers has increased in the last 2 quarters from 37% to 41%, an increase of 4%, which equates to £600,000.00 for this period.

In comparison to the same period in 22/23 this is a slight decrease of 2%.

The procurement team continue to engage with the local supply chain, prior to any new or reoccurring procurement activity.

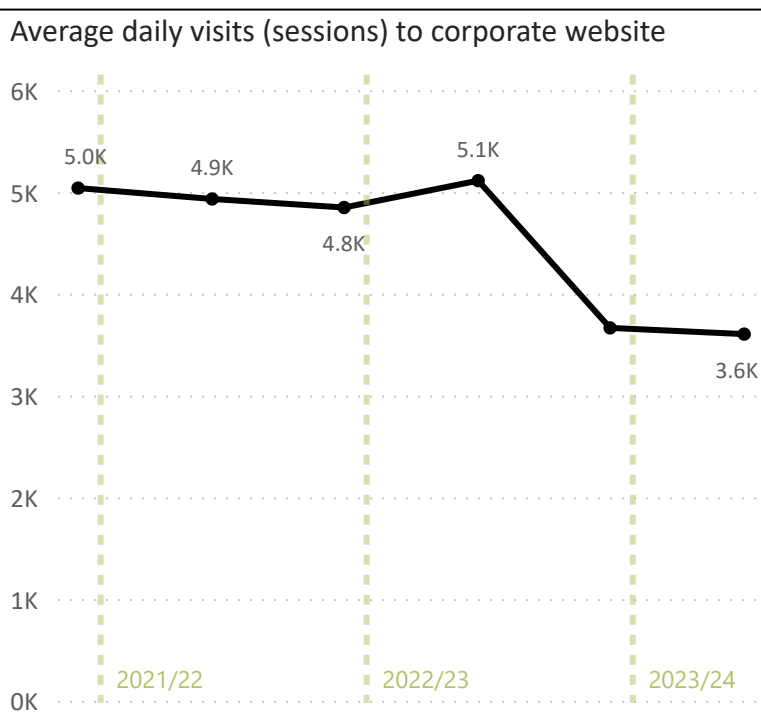
Luke Swinhoe: Assistant Director - Law & Governance

## R6. Increasing the availability of council services online



There have been a further 18 online services added over the last 6 months, increasing from 229 to 247. These are all Umbraco forms that have been added to the website, a large number of which relate to travel surveys. There has been no change to the number of bespoke, Lagan or Civica online services in the last reporting period.

Neil Bowerbank: Head of Strategy, Performance & Communications



Average daily visits have stayed consistent with the previous six months. There is a drop in recorded visits compared to this time last year, but this was expected due to a change in the cookie acceptance popup. This allows people to block all cookies by default which wasn't an option before as the user had to accept all or manually uncheck the ones they didn't want. This should be the base line going forwards however, Google Analytics has recently changed how it tracks visitors and sessions, so the next set of statistics may look different once again.

Neil Bowerbank: Head of Strategy, Performance & Communications



## R7. Review and refresh the council's workforce strategy

The Council's workforce strategy and plan was agreed in July 2021, with rollout commencing in October 2021. Briefings have taken place to promote the strategy and ensure that the values are embedded into everyday working practices. Monitoring and evaluation has also taken place with updates provided to chief officers and the Joint Consultative Committee. We are monitoring progress through increased engagement with staff, including the creation of an Employee Ambassador Group, shorter quicker pulse surveys and we are reviewing the Personal Development Review process to build on the values within the strategy. The current strategy is a live document, however it is due for formal review in 2025, therefore we are already considering how the next strategy will be developed to ensure that our workforce have the right tools and support they need to deliver services in an ever changing environment.

[Brett Nielsen: Assistant Director - Resources](#)

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

Darlington Cares continues to deliver effectively and is now frequently approached by companies seeking to join. A project which has been running over this quarter is the Great Park Auction.

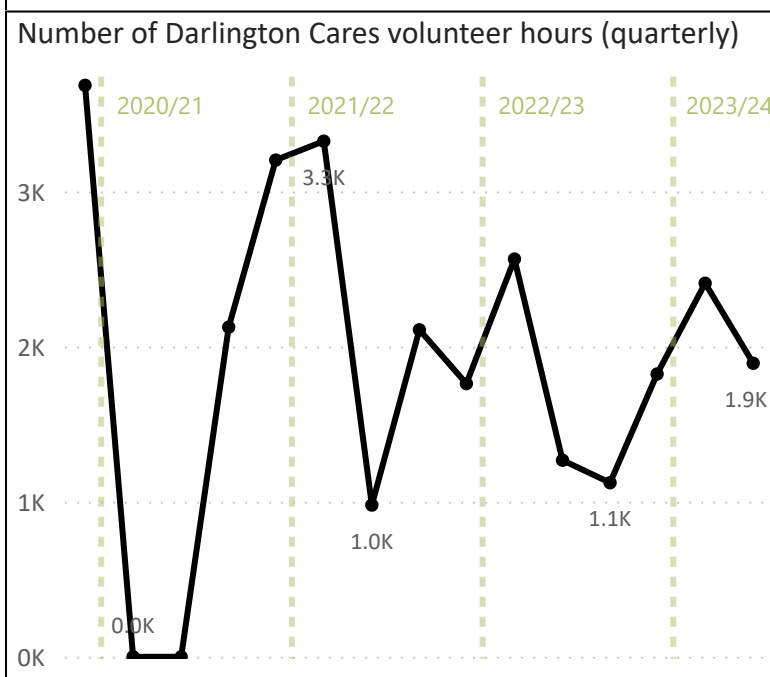
At an event held in March, more than 3,600 hours of volunteering were pledged by five companies to reinvigorate The Denes, Stanhope Park, Eastbourne Park and Fryers Field. An event celebrating their achievement will be held in the New Year. Earlier this year, a number of companies had come together to consider how they could support each others ambition to 'Net Zero' carbon emissions. It has been agreed that Darlington Cares will provide co-ordination for this project, which will support the Council's emerging focus on the climate crisis.

**Seth Pearson: Chief Exec Darlington Partnership**

Year	Month	Value
2021	June	26
	September	26
2022	March	30
	June	30
	September	30
	December	30
2023	March	30
	June	32
	September	32

Over the past 12 months there has been a significant increase in membership, the biggest rate of increase we have seen since the programme began. Notable recent joiners are Amazon, Redde Northgate and Carvers estate agents. The Procurement team have been directing suppliers to Darlington Cares as a way they can fulfil their social value commitment. Once introduced, suppliers quickly see the benefit and sign up.

**Seth Pearson: Chief Exec Darlington Partnership**



Since all restrictions have been lifted, all members have now been able to release their staff which has seen a steady increase in the amount of volunteer hours undertaken. We have slowly been able to get all previous projects back up and running and even have plans for new ones. Darlington Cares is supporting the Council with it tree planting ambition. In addition, a further round of 'The Great Park Auction' was held resulting in 3,600 additional hours being pledged for 2023.

**Seth Pearson: Chief Exec Darlington Partnership**

## 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

As a new Council Plan is in development the approach to neighbourhood renewal is under review.

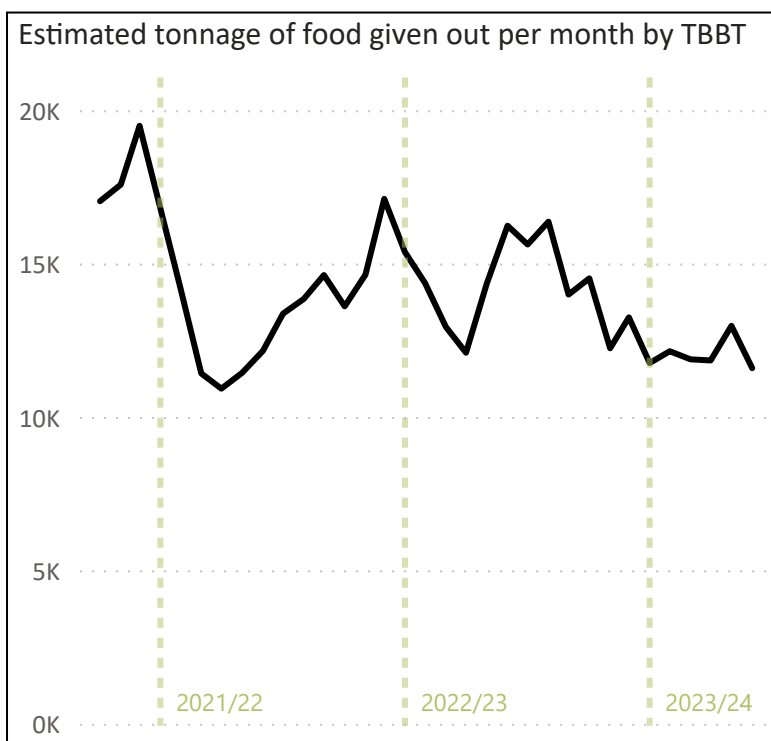
Seth Pearson: Chief Exec Darlington Partnership

## S3. Work with partners to address food instability

The Bread and Butter Thing now holds nine hubs on a weekly basis across Darlington, a valuable resource for residents under the current cost of living crisis. As last year, The Bread and Butter Thing will be providing social spaces as part of their service. This provides the same type of benefits as 'warm spaces'.

As part of the Household Support Fund programme that the Council is delivering funded by the Department of Work and Pensions, The Bread and Butter Thing are providing food to the network of foodbanks operating in Darlington. Demand for Foodbanks has continued to rise whilst there has been some decrease in donations.

Seth Pearson: Chief Exec Darlington Partnership



The Bread and Butter Thing has continued to provide 9 hubs in Darlington across the working week, with all hubs based in identified areas of deprivation. The number of customers has been sustained as the initiative continues to support families through the current cost of living crisis.

Since 31st March to 30th September 2023, The Bread and butter Thing have given out 10,392 bags which equates to 72,192kg of food for the first six months of this financial year.

Seth Pearson: Chief Exec Darlington Partnership

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

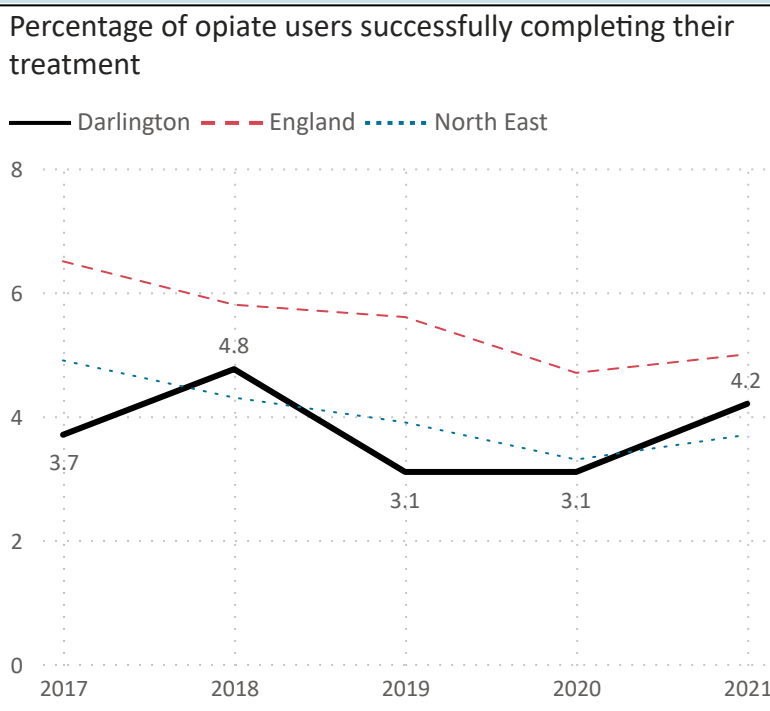
Civic Enforcement delivers a much-valued service to the public through a range of activities around tackling anti-social behaviour, environmental crime, control of dogs, parking enforcement and abandoned vehicles. The service continues to make effective use of legal powers including local intervention programmes for young people, has increased levels of local high visibility patrols through the Home Office Trailblazer initiative, revised policies and procedures and is shortly to introduce a new case management system. The service has also appointed a dedicated Environmental Crime Coordinator to engage, educate and, where necessary, enforce environmental crime issues.

Good progress has also been achieved in relation to the control of dogs where the service works closely with partners to promote various schemes to secure good and responsible ownership in Darlington.

Civic Enforcement continues to promote safer roads and in support has targeted schools, residents parking zones and problem locations to reduce congestion and secure the safety of the public. All activities are coordinated through a threat and risk model which ensures that all resources are effectively deployed throughout the Borough.

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

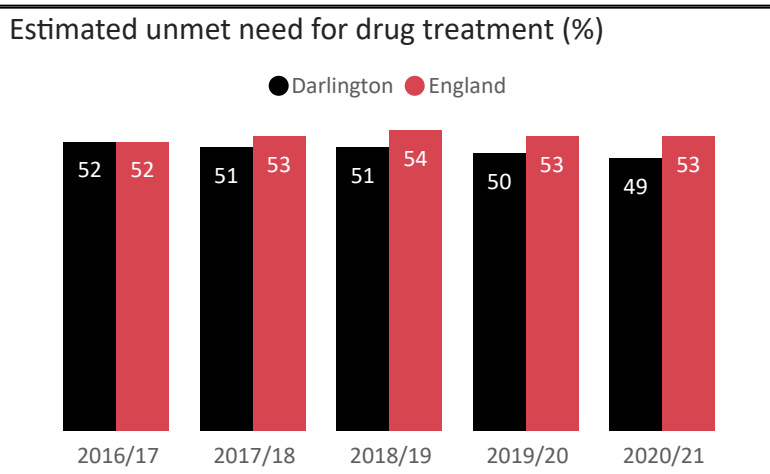
## S5. Work with Durham Constabulary and other key partners to improve our collective response to dealing with drug and alcohol issues



This data (from 2021) shows that there is no significant change to the trend for Successful completion of drug treatment – opiate users. 4.2% of opiate users successfully (free of drug(s) of dependence) who do not then re-present to treatment again within 6 months. Compared to our North East neighbours Darlington is ranked 4th. Statistically similar to the North East and England.

This rise reflects the work the provider of substance misuse services in Darlington has undertaken to increase access to treatment and improve the numbers in treatment. They are also implementing evidence based interventions such as optimising prescribing to ensure treatment is optimised and effective.

[Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health](#)

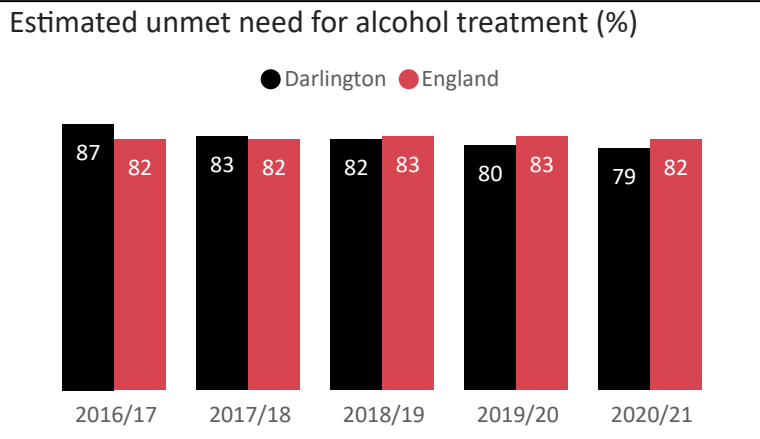


The proportion of estimated unmet need for drug treatment in Darlington is lower than the England average. This proportion has remained stable for the last 4 years.

Work is underway using the recent SSMTRG funding from the home office to make services more accessible and reach those using substances who are not in treatment to give them the support they need to get into treatment.

[Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health](#)

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



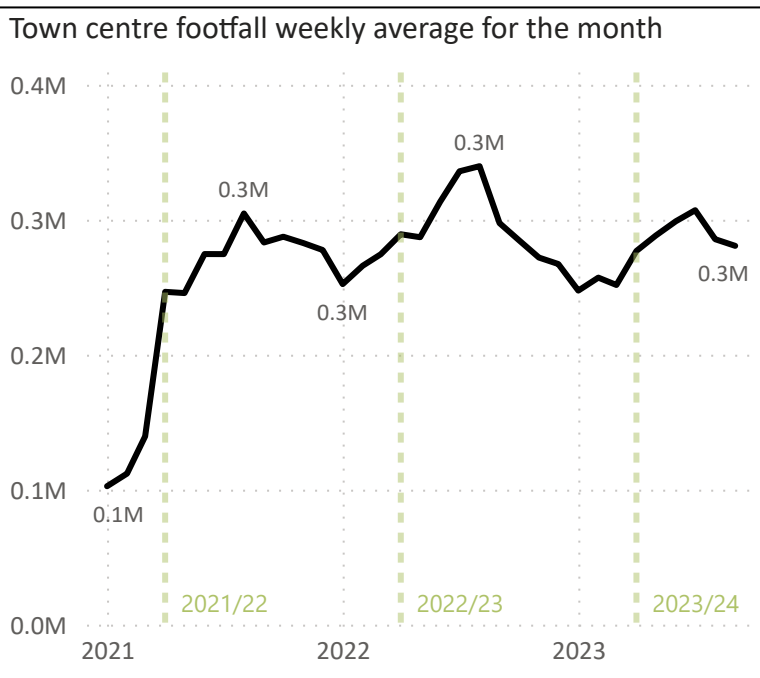
The estimated proportions of adults in need of alcohol treatment that are estimated not to be in treatment. It is lower in Darlington than the England averages and have been reducing.

Numbers of people seeking treatment has increased in STRIDE the local treatment service and work is underway to work with partners including the A&E at DMH and local GPs to increase early identification and referral of hazardous drinkers.

[Miriam Davidson: Director of Public Health](#)

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

Number Forty continues to provide a safe space in the night-time economy. Number Forty has 40 volunteers and since opening on 2 September 2022, has dealt with 520 incidents. DBC Community Safety has delivered various safety measures including licensed premises / traders checks, taxi marshals, dedicated police night-time patrols, improved CCTV systems and more recently the extension of Pubwatch and the launch of Shopwatch with encouraging results. In addition, the town centre car parks have achieved reaccreditation of "Park Mark" in recognition of public accessibility and safety and Purple Flag is now subject of reaccreditation with the outcome due to be announced in January 2024. [Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services](#)



There has been a reduction in Town centre footfall in all months (apart from one) when compared to 2023 .

Investment from the Towns Fund is ongoing to support the High Street, a comprehensive programme of events is being delivered to attract people to the town and a marketing campaign with video was released to attract new businesses to the town that reached over 30,000 views across all media platforms.

Occupancy rates in the town centre are currently approximately 90.6%

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

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

CCTV continues to provide a much-valued service throughout the Borough of Darlington. The Camera Replacement Programme which involves the replacement of 74 older analogue cameras and introducing a wireless network, to replace the leased fibre circuits, is on schedule to be delivered in November 2023. In addition, new software 'Genetec Clearance' has been introduced which provides a number of benefits, including the ability to view data remotely. Pubwatch and Shopwatch Apex radio membership has been refreshed welcoming new members and enhanced products to improve safety in Darlington. Mobile CCTV remains operative throughout the Borough and is deployed in accordance with threat and risk in our communities.

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

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

Percentage of staff who have completed equality and diversity training

September 2023

**81.0%**

The total number of current staff (excluding casual staff) who have attended a half day session of training is 1,514. This equates to 81% of the current workforce. The Equality Policy and Objective was refreshed in March 2023 following a period of consultation. The objective is to continue with the staff and councillor training programme between 2023-27. There will be a temporary pause with the face to face training until Summer 2024 due to maternity leave, although a suite of training materials has been published for staff as an interim arrangement.

[Neil Bowerbank: Head of Strategy, Performance & Communications](#)

Percentage of elected members who have completed equality and diversity training

September 2023

**74.0%**

Following the local elections in May 2023 over 20 new councillors were elected. Equality and diversity training sessions were arranged shortly after the elections with many of the newly elected members and some existing members attending. To date 74% of all elected members have attended the training. The face to face training has been paused until Summer 2024 due to maternity leave but a suite of learning resources has been published on the Intranet for members to access.

[Neil Bowerbank: Head of Strategy, Performance & Communications](#)

## 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. Operational meetings occur on a regular basis between the Environment Agency and council officers. The two studies that are taking place are:

- 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.
- Flood Asset Risk Study. This is 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.

[Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects](#)