



Darlington Borough Council

Council Plan Performance Management Report

2023/24 Quarter 4

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



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 shows a slight 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
2021	June	49,800
	September	49,400
	December	50,100
2022	March	50,200
	June	49,800
	September	50,500
2022	December	51,000
	March	52,300
	June	53,600
2023	September	54,100
	December	53,000

The number of people employed (including self-employed) now stands at 53,000. This is an increase of 2,000 on the same time 12 months previously. The overall trendline demonstrates a gradual increase, as the economy continues to recover and grow from the challenges of the pandemic. Since March 2022, the number of people employed has increased, showing a 6.4% growth. 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	September	44,200
	December	44,900
2022	March	45,200
	June	44,800
	September	44,700
2022	December	45,700
	March	46,000
	June	47,200
2023	September	49,100
	December	47,500

In December 2023, the number of employees in Darlington stood at 47,500, slightly down on the September 2023 figure of 49,100. The number of employees measure does fluctuate significantly quarter on quarter, but the long-term trendline shows the number of employees in Darlington continuing to increase year on year. Between December 2022 and December 2023, the number of employees recorded in Darlington increased by 4%, equating to an additional 1,800 employees.

[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
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	480	537	490
2023	531	577	528

Darlington resident median weekly earnings increased by 10.6% to £531 in 2023. This annual increase was greater than both the North East figure (7.7%) and the England figure (7.5%). The weekly median all residence based earnings is now £46 less than the England level and £3 more than the north east level. The long term trend projection for Darlington shows gradual increases.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

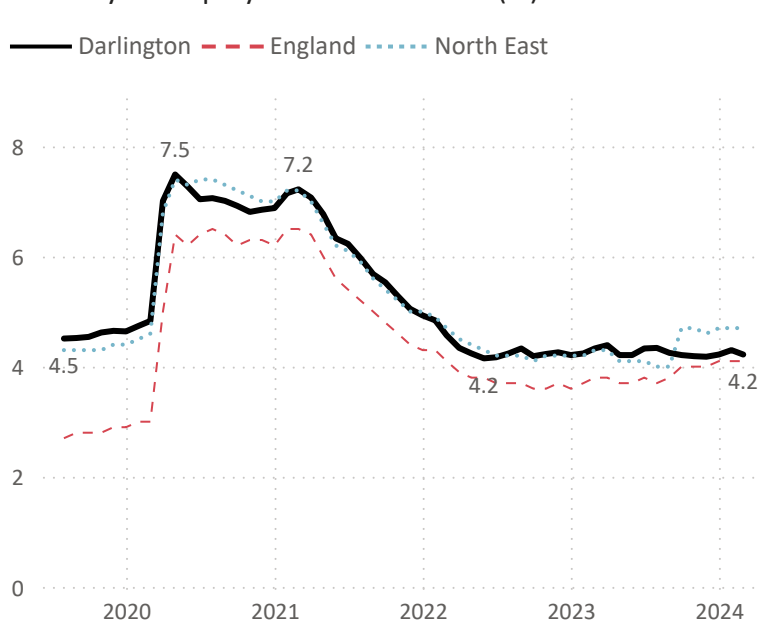
Median weekly full-time employee based earnings

Year	Darlington	England	North East
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	491	537	481
2023	538	577	519

The Darlington full-time employee weekly based earnings increased between 2022 and 2023 from £491 to £538. This increase of £47 (9.6%) was higher than both the England rate of 7.4% and the North East rate of 7.9%. This has closed the gap between Darlington full-time employee weekly based earnings (£538) and England full-time employee weekly based earnings (£577). In addition, Darlington is now increasing the gap with the North East rate (£519).

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Monthly unemployed claimant count (%)



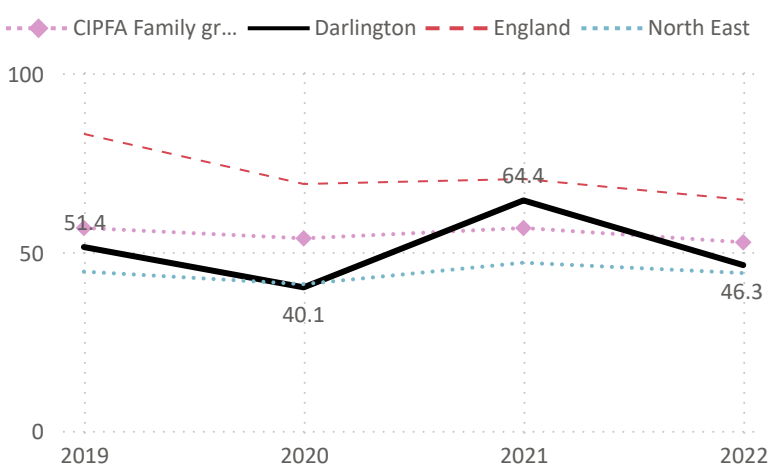
Since mid-2022 to date, the monthly unemployed claimant count in Darlington has remained relatively static - a trend which is mirrored in national statistics. The claimant count in March 2024 now stands at 4.2% (identical to July 2022). The rate in Darlington (4.2) is marginally higher than the England rate of 4.1%. The overall North East rate however is now at 4.7%, having increased from 4.2% since July 2022.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

1. GROWING DARLINGTON'S ECONOMY

1.2 Delivering - More businesses

New business registration rate per 10,000 residents

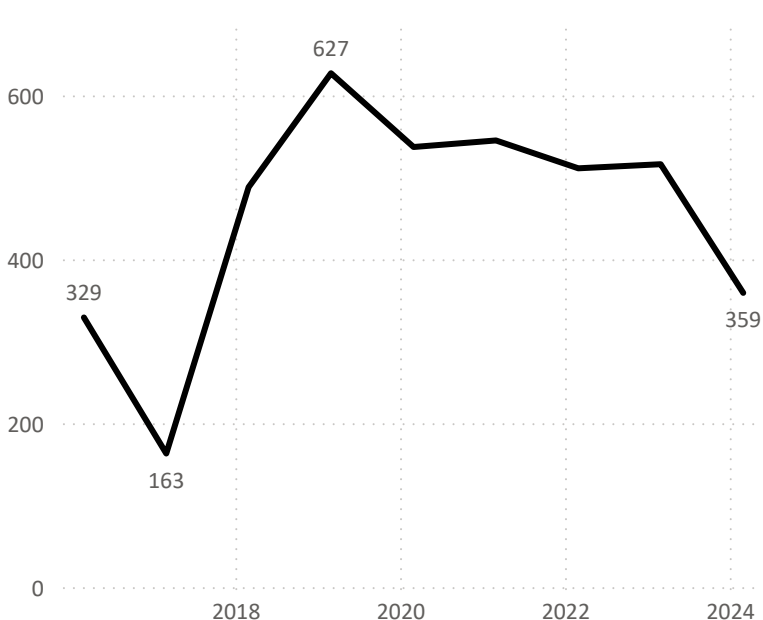


New business formation rates have fallen in Darlington since 2018, an overall trend mirrored by both the rates for the North east and England. The data shows figures up to 2022 and are significantly impacted by the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2022, the number of new business registrations per 10,000 residents in Darlington was 46.3, significantly lower than the England rate of 64.6

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

1.3 Delivering - More homes

New homes delivered, annually



Housing delivery has seen a drop in the 2023/24 financial year largely due to the delayed 'lag' effect as a result of the Nutrient Neutrality designation affecting the whole Tees Catchment.

Applications are now progressing and gaining consent largely due to the Natural England Nutrient Neutrality credits scheme. The borough has fared well in the proportion of credits allocated to developments in Darlington helping to unlock around 2000 homes.

Looking at the latest monitoring data on housing starts this lag in delivery may continue for the current financial year 2024/25 but will hopefully recover beyond that with the permissions currently being granted likely to have started building out.

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)

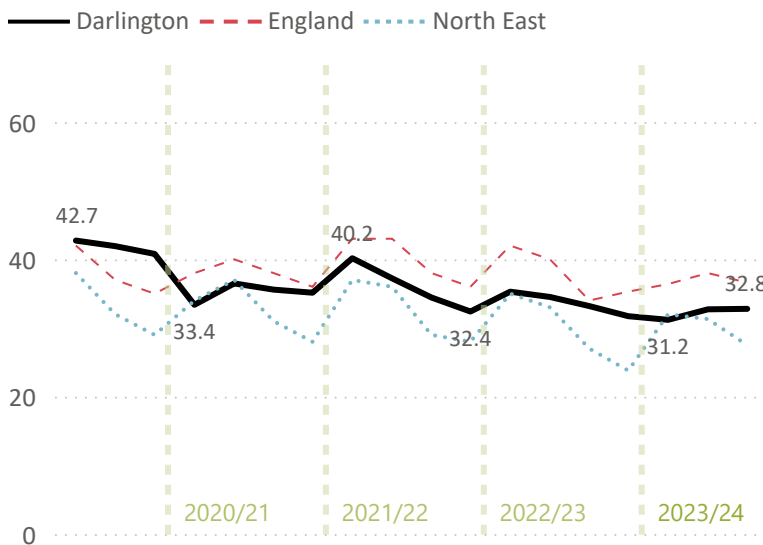
Year	Month	Darlington
2022	June	91.8%
	September	89.9%
	December	91.3%
2023	March	89.8%
	June	94.7%
	September	95.8%
	December	95.4%
2024	March	95.4%

The majority of complaints relate to refuse accumulations in the rear yard and gardens of domestic properties and performance consistently achieves the target. Priority is given by Environmental Health to large accumulations of household refuse that is causing a public health nuisance and attracting rats. The Council has successfully prosecuted a number of individuals who did not comply with legal notices to remove refuse accumulations.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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

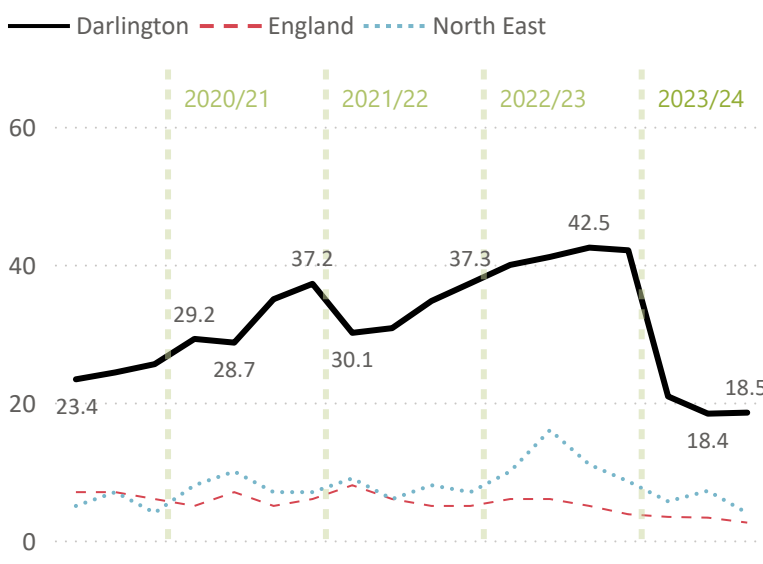
Percentage of household waste that is collected that is either reused, recycled or composted



The data is only up to the end of December 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 currently above 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

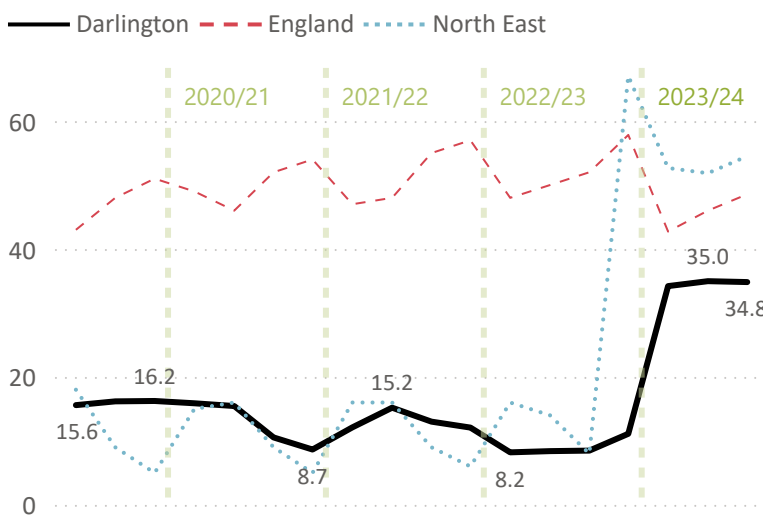
Percentage of overall waste that is collected by the Council that is landfilled



Data is only available up to December 2023 due to the lag in data verification through the national system. The percentage of household waste sent to landfill has fallen significantly in to its lowest level in recent years to only 18.5%. 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

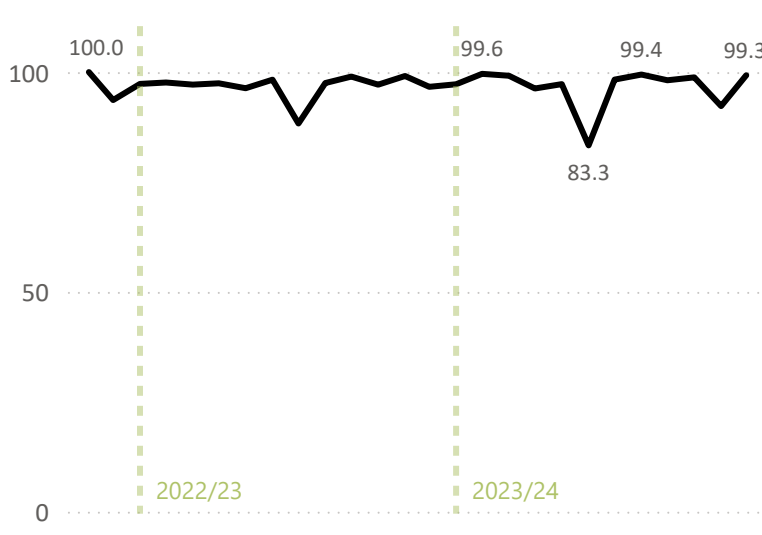


Data is only available up to December 2023 due to the lag in the national verification process. The percentage of household waste sent to energy recovery is significantly up at 35%. The increase is as a result of available markets to accept the material from the Mechanical Biological Treatment process 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

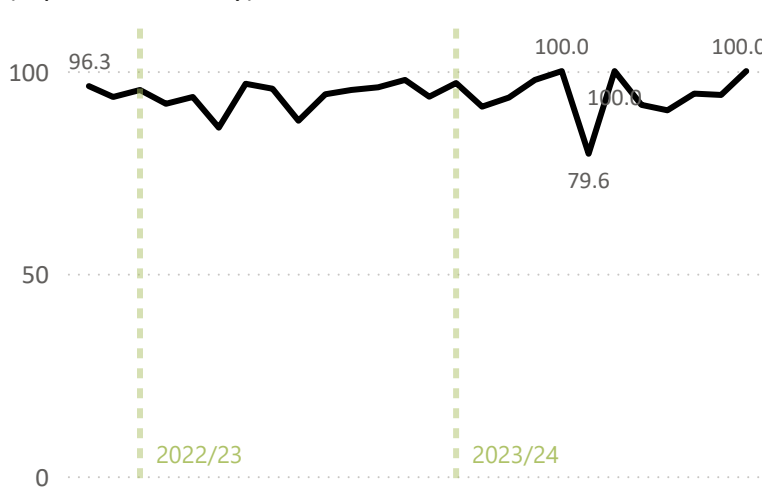
Percentage of small fly tips removed within target time (reported monthly)



The number of small fly tips reported over the year increased by 557 to 3,048 when compared to 2022/23. The performance of street cleansing teams remains consistently high with the average for 2023/24 of 96.6% 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 was as a result of limited resources across the service to inspect and collect fly tips.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

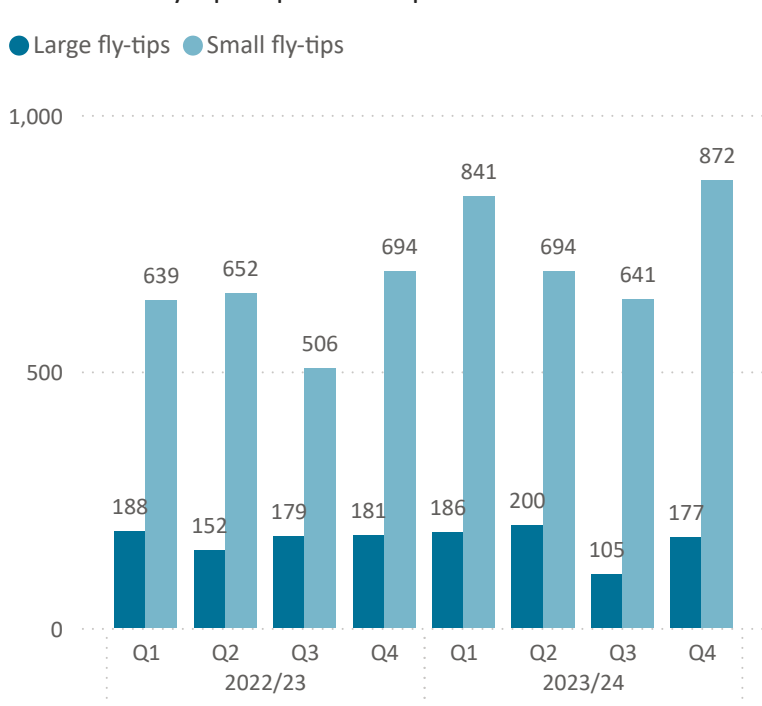
Percentage of large fly tips removed within target time (reported monthly)



The number of large fly tips reported over the year fell slightly by 32 to 668 when compared to 2022/23. The performance of street cleansing teams remains consistently high with the average for 2023/24 of 94.2% of large fly tips removed within their target time, larger incidents take longer due to the complexity of the items (e.g. asbestos) that require significant resources. The reduction in performance in September was as a result of limited resources across the service to inspect and collect fly tips.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

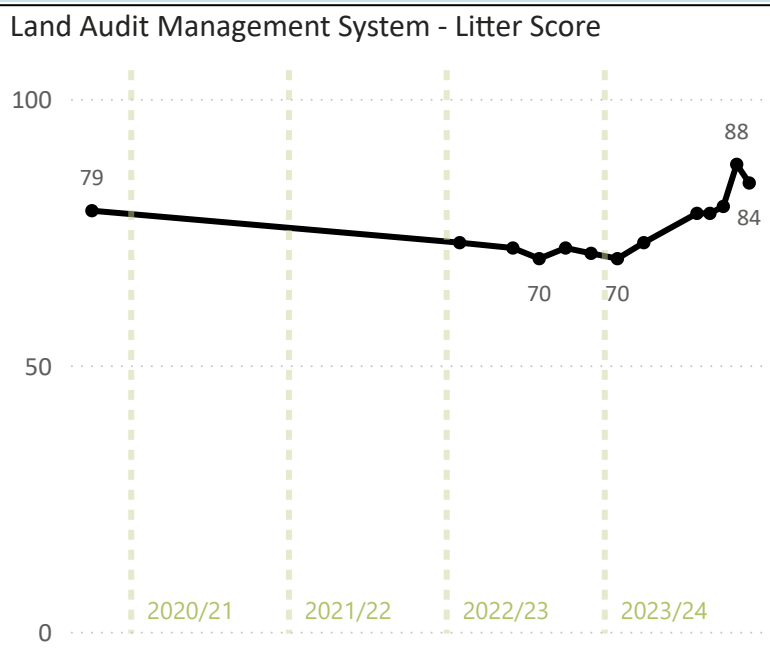
Number of fly-tips reported in quarter



Number of small fly tips rose in all quarters of 2023/24 when compared to 2022/23. Quarter 1 (Q1) by 202, Q2 by 42, Q3 by 135, and Q4 by 178. On average 96.6% of small fly tips were collected within target of 5 days. Number of large fly tips has fallen in three of the quarters during 2023/24 when compared to 2022/23. Q1 fell by 2, Q2 rose by 202, Q3 fell by 74 and Q4 fell by 4. On average 94.2% of large fly tips were collected within target. A longer time can be required due to the complexity of the collection and requirement for special resources (e.g. asbestos). Increased fly-tipping is due to additional reporting of side waste (classed as fly-tipping) by both Enforcement Officers and Fire Service. Overall, 95.4% are being removed within the time scales irrespective of numbers. Hence, the additional crew afforded to clearing rear lanes is working to keep them clean & tidy.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

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



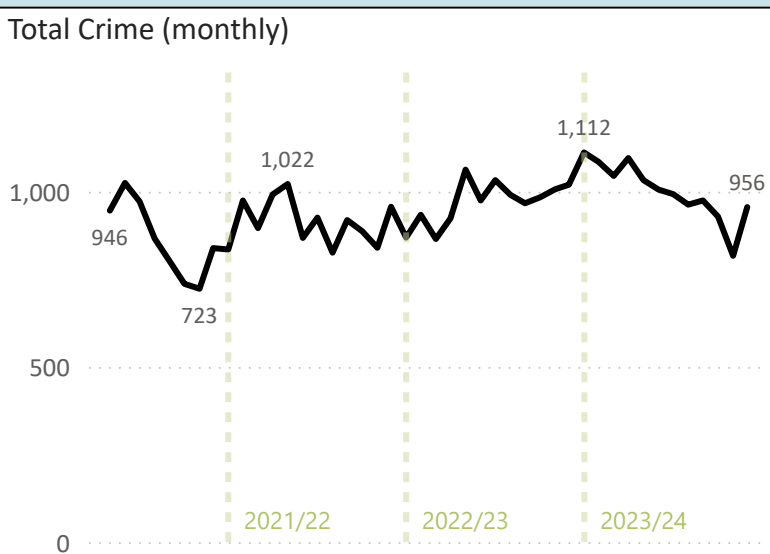
This is a rolling average percentage score of the 40 transects inspected for litter every other month, as defined by the Association For Public Service Excellence Land Audit Management System grading system and covering all wards of the borough.

Refresher training on the grading of cleanliness for inspection staff has taken place over the past year. It has improved the inspection process, resulting in more accurate measurements.

An average of 82 has been recorded over the last five inspections since November 2023. 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

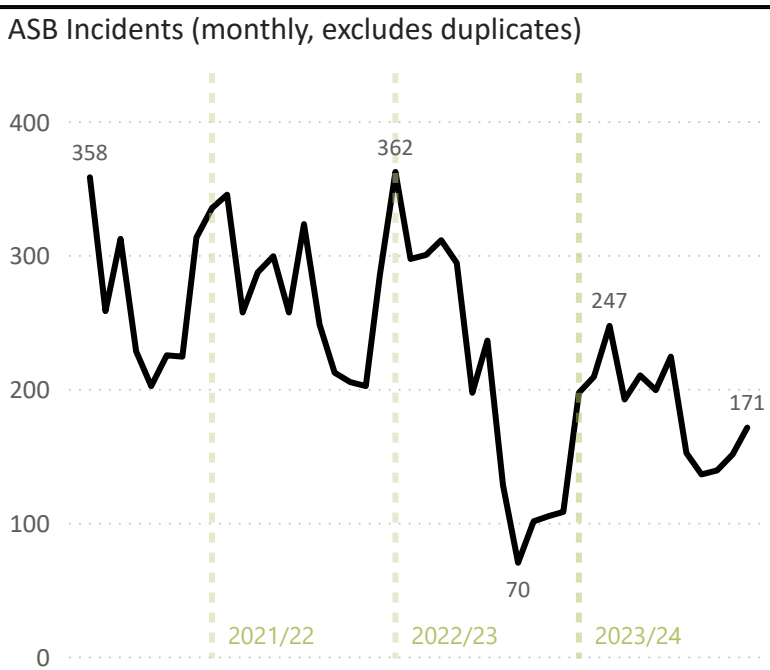


During the 12-month period ending quarter 4 (2023/24) there has been an overall 4% increase in crime when compared with 2022/23.

The crime increase equates to 416 offences, with vehicle crime (82% increase), theft (40% increase), theft of pedal cycle (20% increase) and shoplifting (89% increase) showing notable increases.

The Police, together with partners have responded to the increase through crime prevention campaigns, dedicated and additional patrol, proactive operations and targeting suspects which has resulted in the region of 2,500 arrest throughout the year.

[Dave Winstanley: Group Director of Services](#)



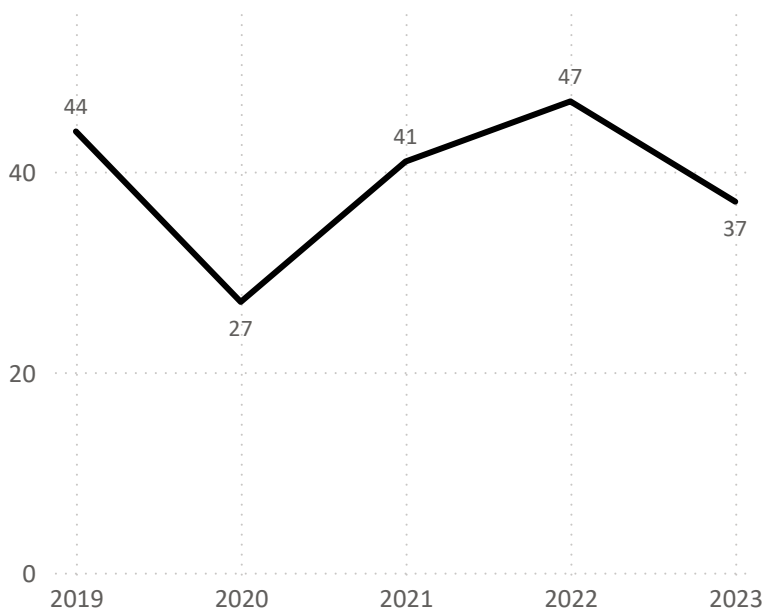
The number of anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents, 2,246 in 2023/24, has dropped by 263 (10.5%) from that reported for 2022/23. A combination of changed reporting requirements, good partnership work and the Trailblazer project that targets high harm areas of ASB within Darlington has aided this reduction of reports.

Areas showing a current increase include Cockerton East and Haughton North. Partners have increased patrols, targeted offenders and identified individuals who are now subject of further investigation. During this period 48 first warnings, 35 acceptable behaviour agreements (ABA), 13 breach of ABA's and 7 final warnings have been completed. In addition, no further action was taken in 14 cases and 5 young people progressed to criminal proceedings.

[Dave Winstanley: Group Director of Services](#)

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 2023-24 calendar year. The data is collected through Durham Police via the Stats 19 reporting system.

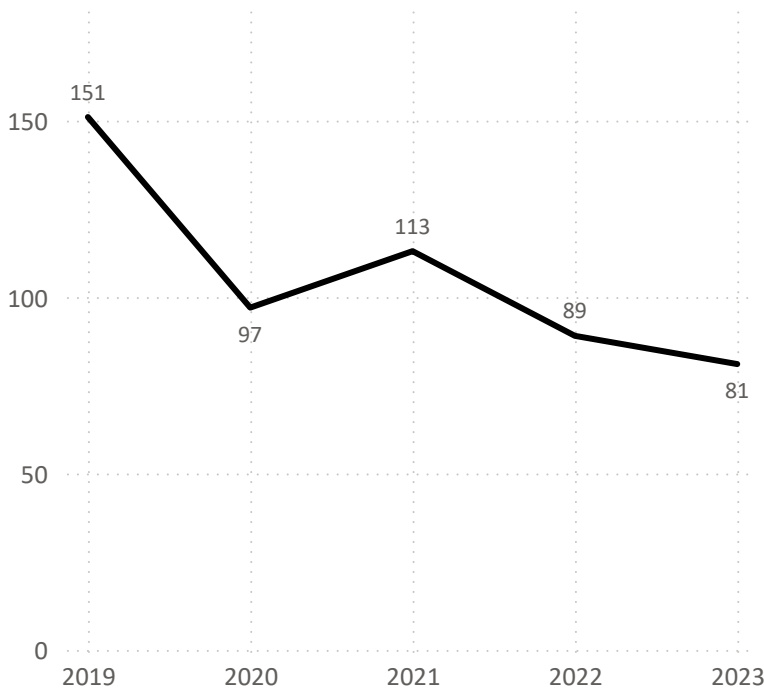
Figures for 2023 show a decrease over 2022 although an increase over 2020-21. However, 2020-21 is a statistical outlier due to the impact of Covid-19 on traffic levels (15% of normal traffic levels at its lowest). Since 2020 traffic levels have recovered to similar volumes to that recorded in 2019 prior to Covid-19.

Figures for 2023 show a decrease based on pre-pandemic traffic data and volumes.

Of the 37 Killed or seriously injured on our roads in 2023, there were 3 fatalities.

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

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



This is an annual indicator based on the 2023-24 calendar year. The data is collected through Durham Police via the Stats 19 reporting system.

Data for 2023 shows a decrease over 2020-22 despite traffic volumes recovering to similar levels to that recorded in 2019 prior to Covid-19 showing a downward trend since the pandemic.

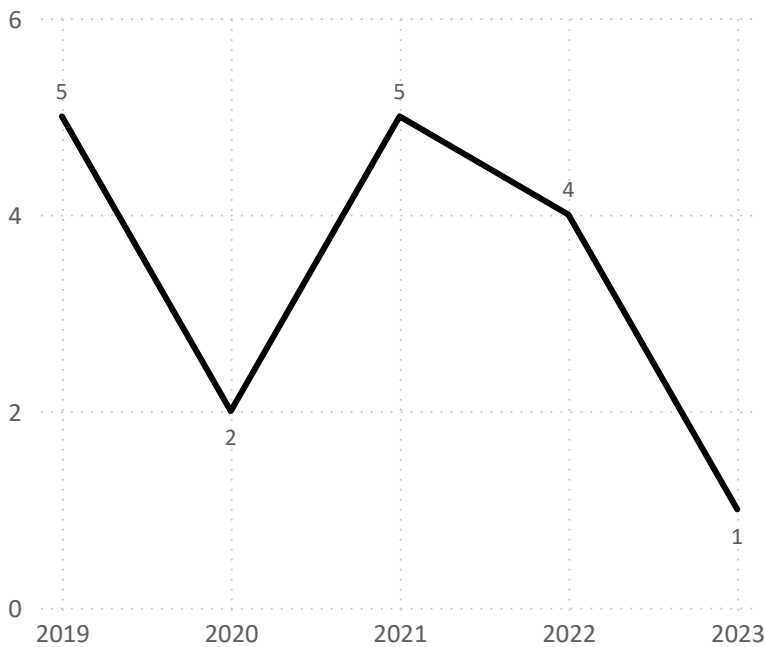
Based on the years prior to Covid-19, we are still seeing a substantial reduction with accidents halving, and this level is significantly below the baseline.

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 Proj](#)

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 2023-24 calendar year. The data is collected through Durham Police via the Stats 19 reporting system.

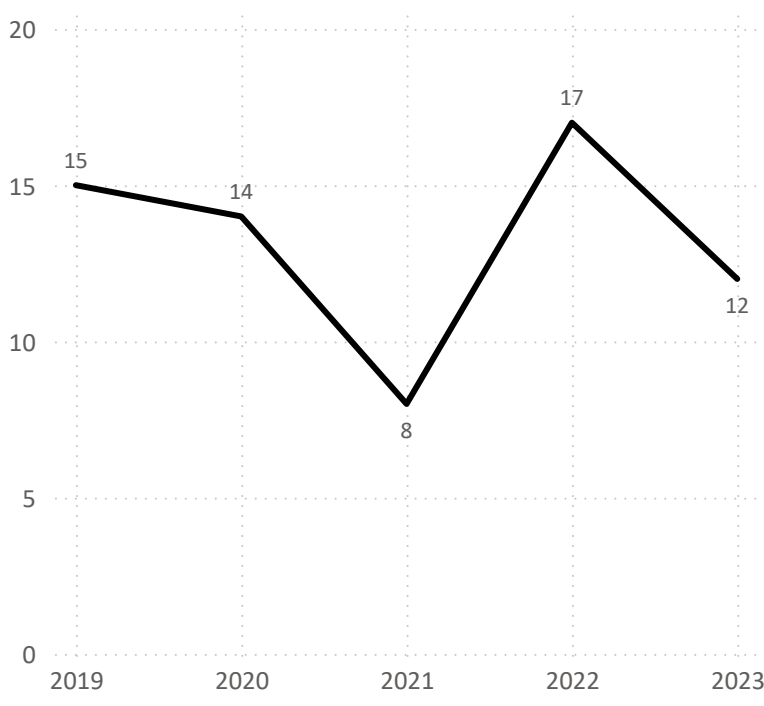
Data for 2023 shows a decrease over 2022 despite traffic volumes recovering to similar levels to that recorded in 2019 prior to Covid-19.

Based on the years prior to Covid-19, we are at a lower level which falls below the baseline. 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 Proj](#)

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



This is an annual indicator based on the 2023-24 calendar year.

Data for 2023 shows decrease over 2021-22 which appears to follow the downward trend before the 2019-20 Covid-19 pandemic. At 12, this is now below the baseline. It should be noted that the long term trend shows significant reductions from the 45 child slight casualties recorded in 2012.

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 Proj](#)

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
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.

Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

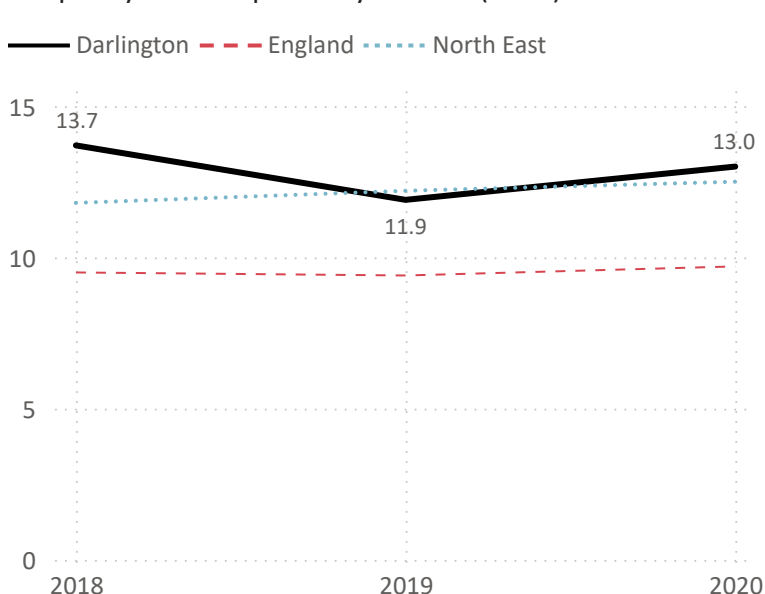
Female healthy life expectancy at birth

Year	Darlington	England	North East
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.

Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

Inequality in life expectancy at birth (male)

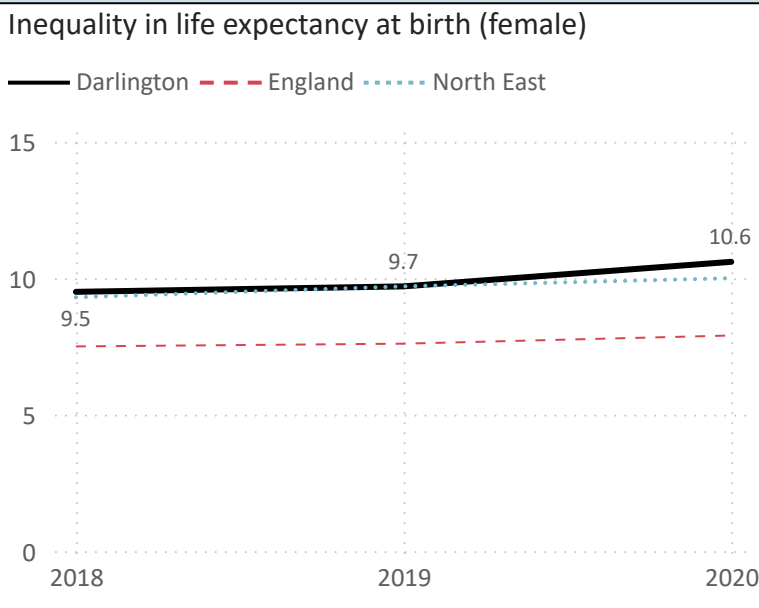


Inequality in life expectancy at birth for males in Darlington has widened in 2020, from 11.9 (2019) to 13.0 years, and is worse than England. Compared to the North East region Darlington is statistically similar to with the North East average.

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.

Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

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

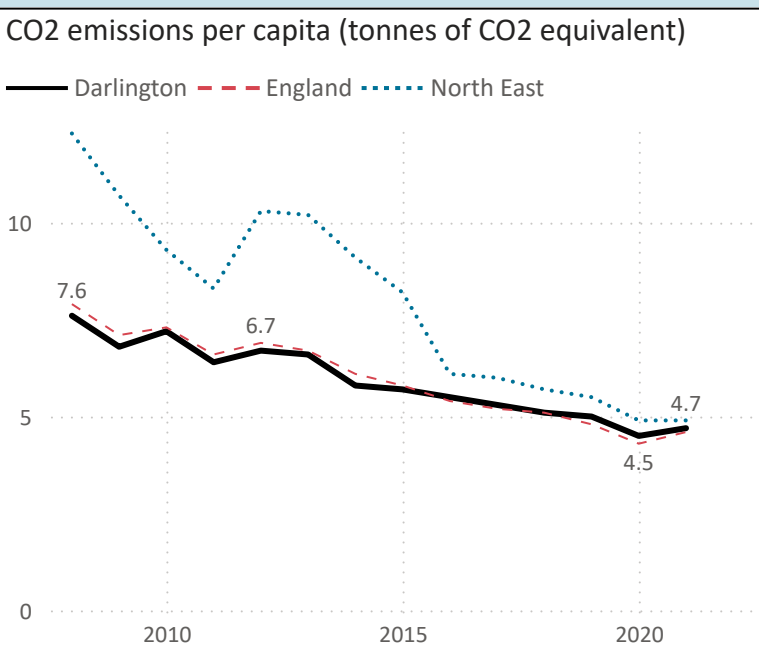


Inequality in life expectancy at birth for females in Darlington widened in 2020, from 9.7 (2019) to 10.6 years, and is statistically worse than England. Compared to the North East region Darlington is statistically similar to the North East average.

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.

Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

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



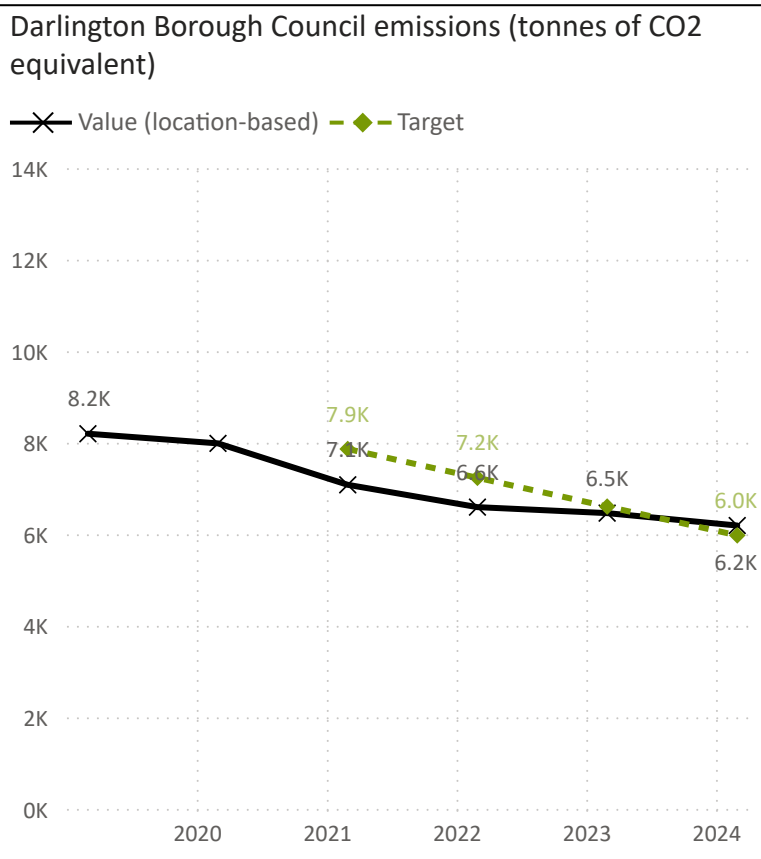
Data for this indicator is published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, two years in arrears. Therefore the latest data is for 2021 and shows a slight upturn in emissions as we started to emerge from COVID lockdowns.

In 2023, Council amended the date for the Council becoming carbon neutral to 2040 and added more emphasis on our role as an influencer.

With this in mind, we are developing actions to work with young people; promoting good practice to local businesses; holding quarterly events at the libraries and encouraging sustainable behaviours at our events and visitor attractions.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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



The overall carbon emissions for the council continue to fall. The year 2023/24 sees us at 6,190 tonnes. This is a 60% decrease from our baseline at 2010/11. We continue to take actions to improve the energy efficiency of our buildings and we have been trialling different methods to reduce emissions from our corporate fleet. This includes increasing the number of electric vehicles and using low carbon fuel to replace diesel in some of our refuse vehicles.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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

Several large scale planning applications have been approved in the last quarter of 2023/24. Burtree Garden Village was approved in May it is anticipated that the spine road which will connect the north and south of the garden village will commence in October 2024. Prior to this planning decision both Coniscliffe Park and Blackwell Grange were approved with the latter contributing to large scale improvements to Blackwell Country Park.

As a requirement of the Local Plan the developers of Skerningham Garden Village carried out consultation and engagement on the comprehensive masterplan for the area. This has been shared with the Council and officers are reviewing the document to ensure it is compliant with Policy H10 of the Local Plan and the Design Code SPD.

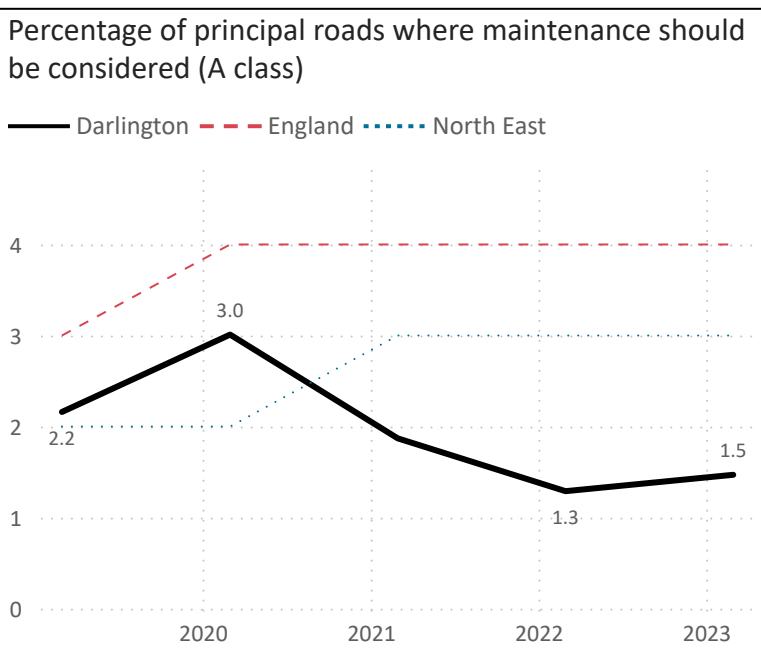
Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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

The Council continues to work in partnership with the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and the other Tees Valley local authorities to deliver the 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 corridor improvements 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.

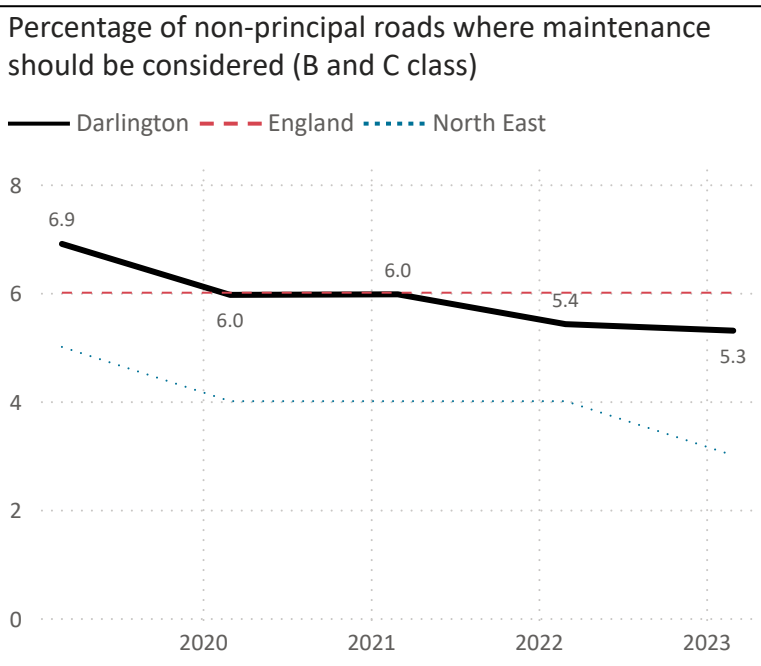
We participate in the National Highways Transportation Survey each year, and the results of this, along with evidence from investigations, statutory testing and surveys, asset management planning, other data sources and Government and local policies inform our investment decisions in our transport infrastructure.

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



The method used to establish the maintenance needs of the highway network has changed from an automated survey using a SCANNER vehicle to a visual Annual Engineering Inspection. The survey provides the Highway Asset Management with treatment selection information to assist with the planning of five-year highways maintenance schemes. The 2023/24 inspection figure is 7.2% of principal roads needing consideration for maintenance. Due to the change in method, this data is not comparable with previous years. Over the past year maintenance was carried out at the following two A Road schemes, Feethams Roundabout and Merrybent, a total road length of 0.6km.

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

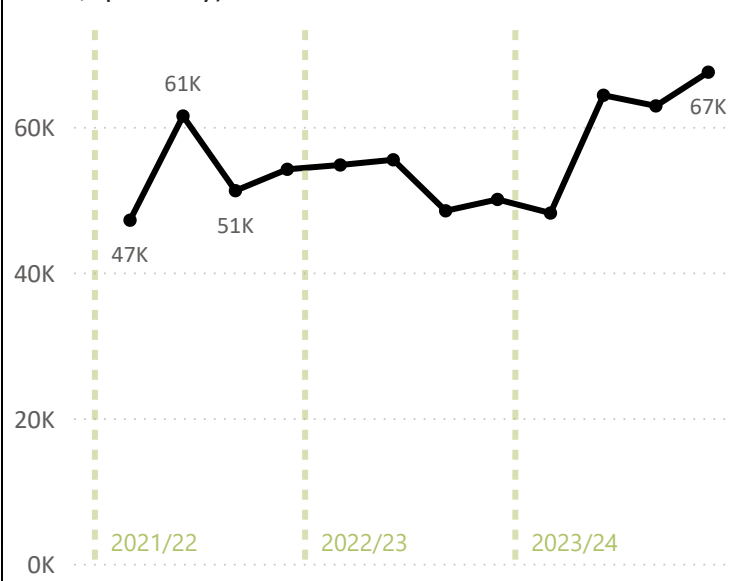


The method used to establish the maintenance needs of the highway network has changed from an automated survey using a SCANNER vehicle to a visual Annual Engineering Inspection. The survey provides the Highway Asset Management with treatment selection information to assist with the planning of five-year highways maintenance schemes. The 2023/24 inspection figure is 4.7% of non-principal roads needing consideration for maintenance. Over the past year maintenance was carried out on six B & C Road schemes, giving a total road length of 2.3km.

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

1.10 Whilst - Valuing our heritage and culture

Library items borrowed (including physical and digital stock, quarterly)



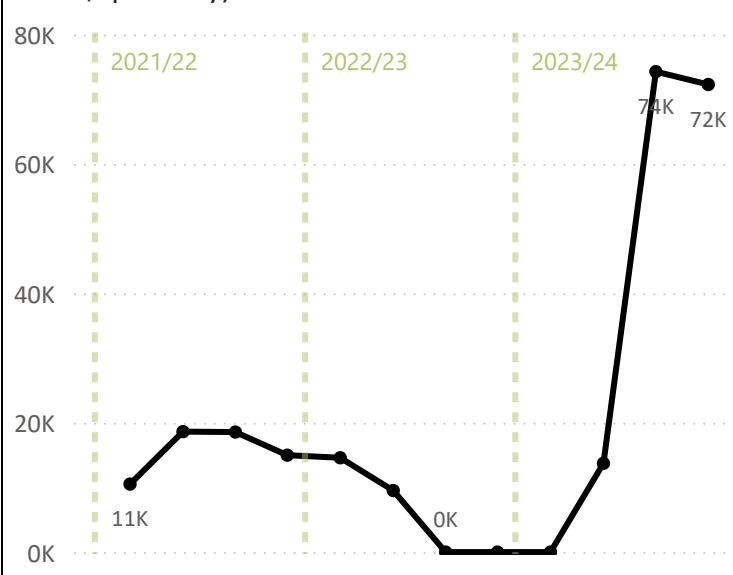
Darlington Library reopened in September 2023 and the increase in borrowed items has been very positive. The figure for July to September was 64,331, a 33.6% rise from the 48,149 for April to June. The higher level of item borrowing remained for the rest of the year.

The total number of items borrowed for the year was 242,843, a 16.4% rise from 208,702 in 2022/23. Figures include physical books, audio books and digital stock, with 71% of items borrowed from in branch.

Adult and children's fiction are our most borrowed items. When compared with 2019/20, the last year before the library closure for the pandemic and restoration, children's borrowing is at a similar level, adult borrowing has declined and there is a large rise in digital borrowing.

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

Number of physical visits to Darlington Library (door count, quarterly)



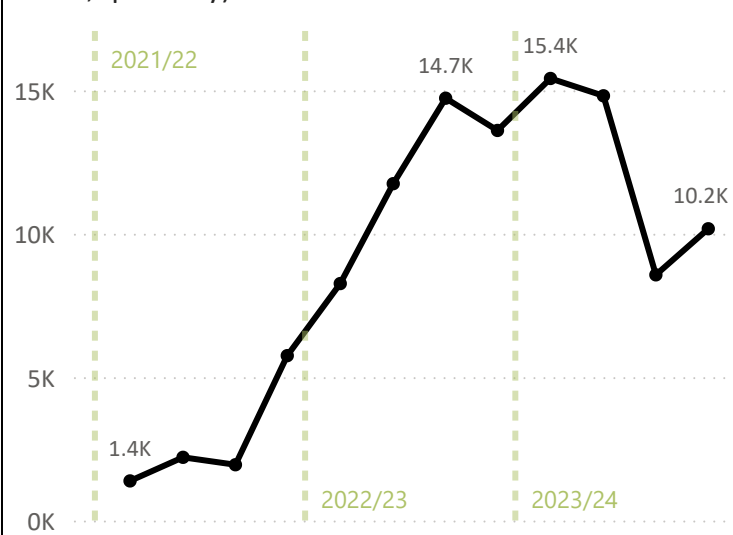
Darlington Library footfall has been extremely good with 160,260 through the doors since reopening in September 2023 to March 2024. This compares with 201,562 people during the whole fiscal year of 2019/20, the last year before the library closure for the pandemic and restoration.

The increase in school visits within The Hive brings in many more young people, and the library team are offering a range of activities to encourage differing demographics.

The library feels a more vibrant and welcoming place to be, and we notice a diverse range of customers using the space which is wonderful to see.

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

Number of physical visits to Cockerton Library (door count, quarterly)



Visitor numbers were predictably high whilst Darlington Library was closed for restoration, now both libraries are accessible there is a reduction in those visiting the branch. However, the annual total of visitors remains higher than pre-pandemic levels. (37,250 in 2019/20 compared with 48,961 in 2023/24)

The part-time team at Cockerton Library are providing a varied activity programme which is noticeably increasing footfall and creating a positive and welcoming atmosphere for all ages.

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

2. MAXIMISE THE POTENTIAL OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE BY

2.1 Working with partners to maximise educational achievement

After declining for 3 years in a row, the percentage of 2-year-olds in Darlington benefitting from funded early education in good/outstanding settings increased to 100% in 2020/21. It fell slightly in 2021/22 to 97.0% but was still 1% point above the regional and national comparators. In 2022/23 it is now back at 100%.

Similarly, the percentage of 3 and 4-year-olds in Darlington benefitting from funded early education in good/outstanding settings had increased to 92.9% in 2022/23.

Final Key Stage 2 data confirms that 56% of Darlington pupils are achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths, which is lower than the current regional, statistical neighbour and national averages.

The average Attainment 8 score per pupil in Darlington has decreased from 50.7 in 2020/21 to 46.2 in 2022/23. However, this places Darlington performance slightly higher than the regional, statistical neighbour and national averages. In 2022/23, the Darlington score for disadvantaged pupils (33.7) was above our statistical neighbour by 0.3 points and the regional average by 0.2 points.

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

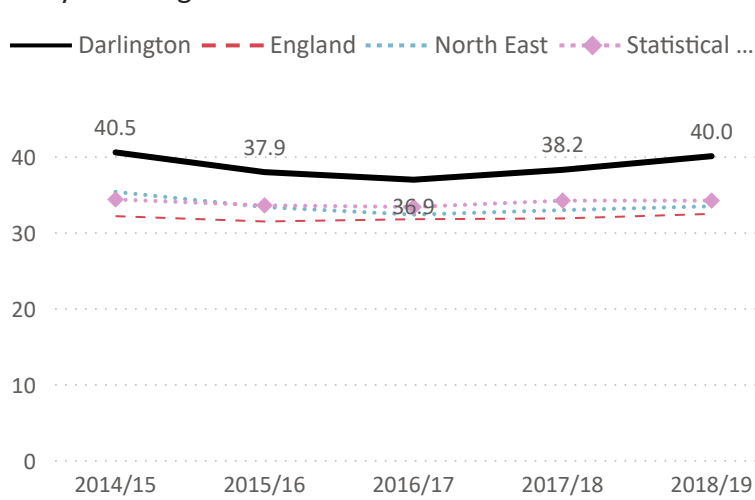
School year	Darlington	England	North East
2017/18	80.9	83.3	85.6
2018/19	91.8	84.1	87.6
2019/20	93.9	83.3	87.4
2020/21	93.9	82.9	87.2
2021/22	95.3	81.1	83.8
2022/23	91.8	79.2	82.7

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 91.8% in 2022/23.

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 developmental goals.

Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

Percentage inequality gap in achievement across all the Early Learning Goals



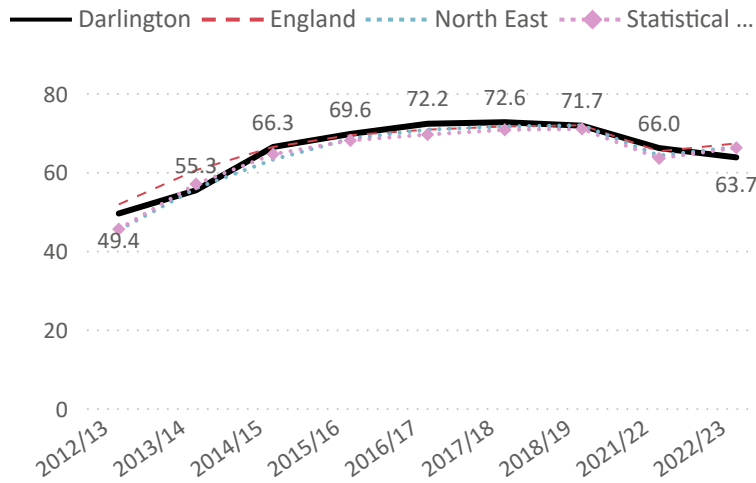
The standard score and percentage inequality gap in achievement across all the Early Learning Goals, based on the latest published available data (2018/19), has widened slightly since 2017/18 (by 1.8%) from that of the regional (by 1.3%), national (by 1.2%) and statistical neighbour (by 1.8%) comparators. 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

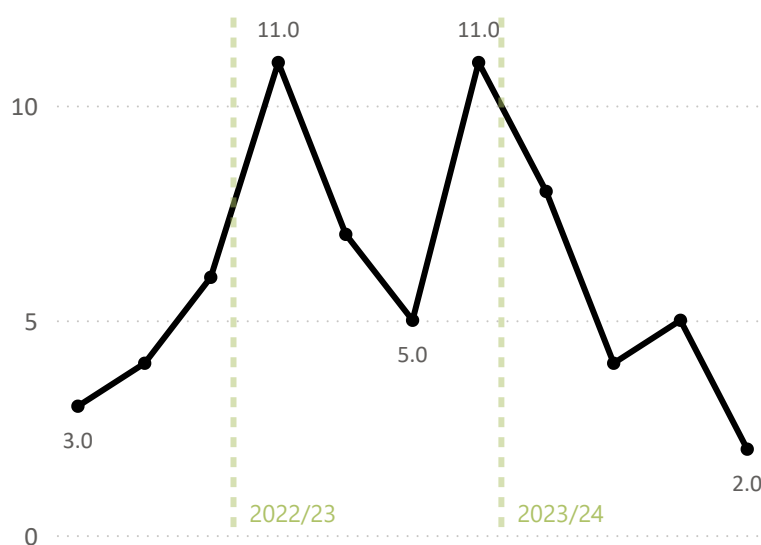
School Readiness: all children achieving a good level of development at the end of reception as a percentage of all eligible children (Early Years Foundation Stage profile)



The 2022/23 results for school readiness with children achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception years has seen a decrease from 66.0% in 2021/22 to 63.7% in 2022/23 (which is the latest published data available). Our 3 benchmarking averages have all seen a rise in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22, and as such we are just below the national average (67.2%), those of statistical neighbours (66.1%) and North East local authorities (66.3%).

Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

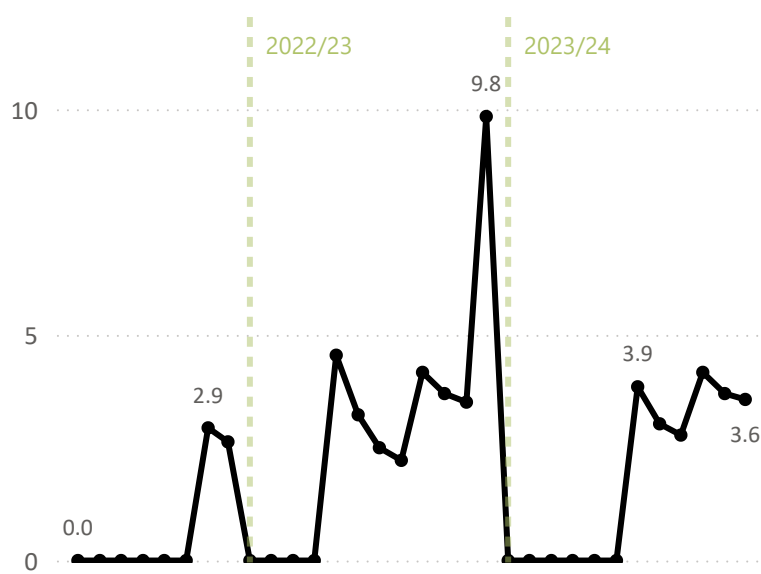
Number of First Time entrants to the Youth Justice System (quarterly)



The number of young people identified as a First Time Entrant being referred to the Young Peoples Engagement and Justice Service between April 2023 and March 2024 is 19. This is a reduction when compared with the same period last year which was 34. This is an area that the service are monitoring through our management board and Youth Justice Board (YJB) given the significant increase in 2022/23.

Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

Percentage of reoffending rate of clients receiving a PCD

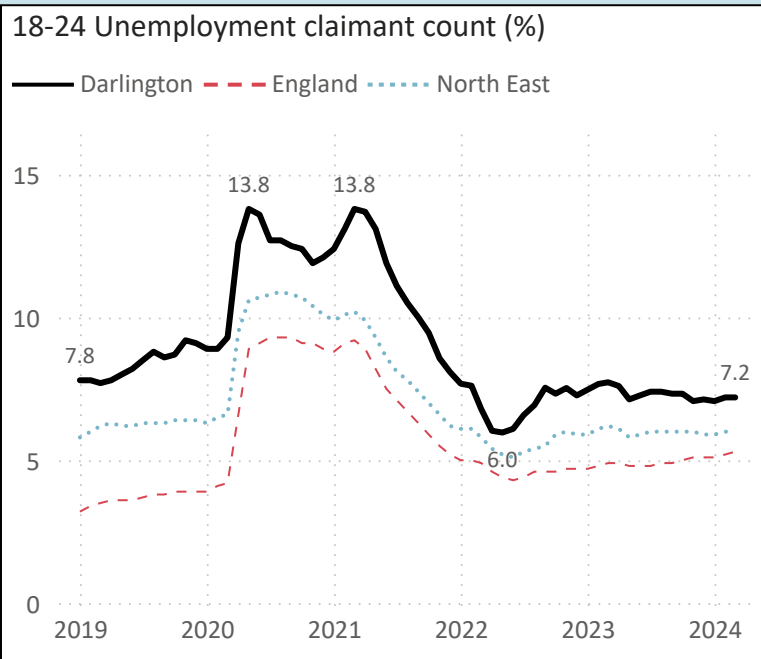


The Young Peoples Engagement & Justice Service (YPEAJS) have had 57 young people (35 Male and 22 Female) referred to the service for diversionary disposals i.e., Pre-Caution Disposals (56) and Restorative Disposals (1). There has been a 96% success rate in terms of young people not reoffending. Two young people have reoffended, one received a Referral Order for Violence against the Person and the other received a further Pre Caution Disposal for Violence against the Person and Drug Offences.

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. In March 2024, the rate in Darlington was 7.2%. This figure is higher than the North East rate of 6% and the rate for England at 5.3%. The rate in Darlington is consistently higher than both the regional and national levels, although the rate for England has shown month on month increases throughout 2023, reducing the gap with the Darlington rate.

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
2023	85.9	87.7	84.2

The proportion of in-work Darlington residents earning the real living wage, calculated by the Resolution Foundation as being £12 an hour in 2023-24, increased to 85.9% but remained below the England average of 87.7%. The overall trend for Darlington 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 (Benefits Entitlement Action Team) is a service funded by Darlington Borough Council and delivered by Citizens Advice Darlington, Redcar & Cleveland. The annual cost for this service is £30k. The 2023 annual report which covers January – December 2023, shows the service supported 249 cases of people residing in Darlington to apply for £1.38m worth of benefits. The service also supported a small number of cases beyond the borough, raising this amount to £1.47m. Wide ranging benefit advice was provided, with the most notable being Pension Credits (£81.9k), Disability Living Allowance (£83.7k), Attendance Allowance (£103.8k), Personal Independence Payment (£870.1k), and Universal Credit (£225.6k).

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.

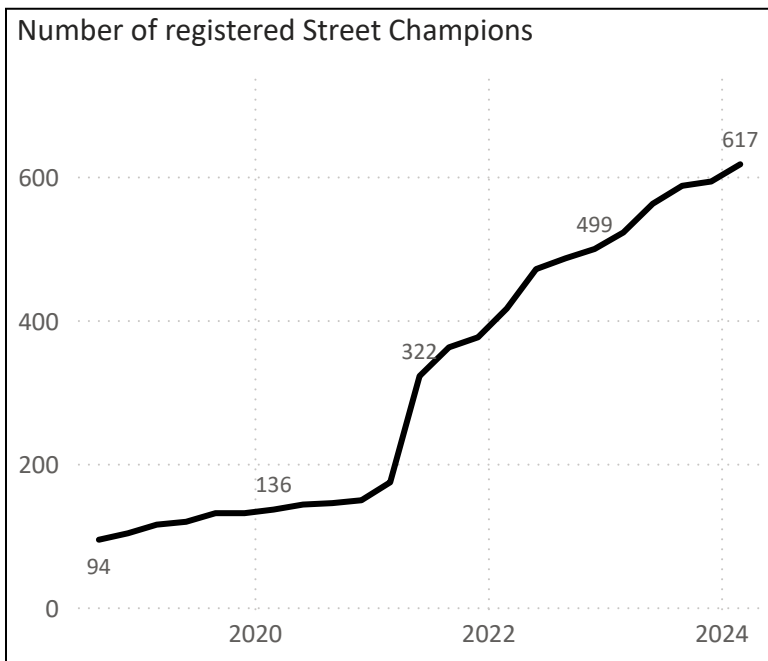
Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

3. WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO MAXIMISE THEIR POTENTIAL

3.4 Working with communities

Work is underway in planning the Stronger Communities Awards for 2024. The awards are the premier awards ceremony in Darlington and are now well known and widely respected. Last year's awards attracted 334 nominations, the highest ever. However it is now common to receive around 300. The ceremony itself attracts 440 people and provides an opportunity for those individuals, groups and businesses to be recognised for their extraordinary efforts and achievements. Officers are working hard to maximise the sponsorship income and cut costs to allow it to continue to be affordable whilst still providing a suitably prestigious way of celebrating achievements in the town.

Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director



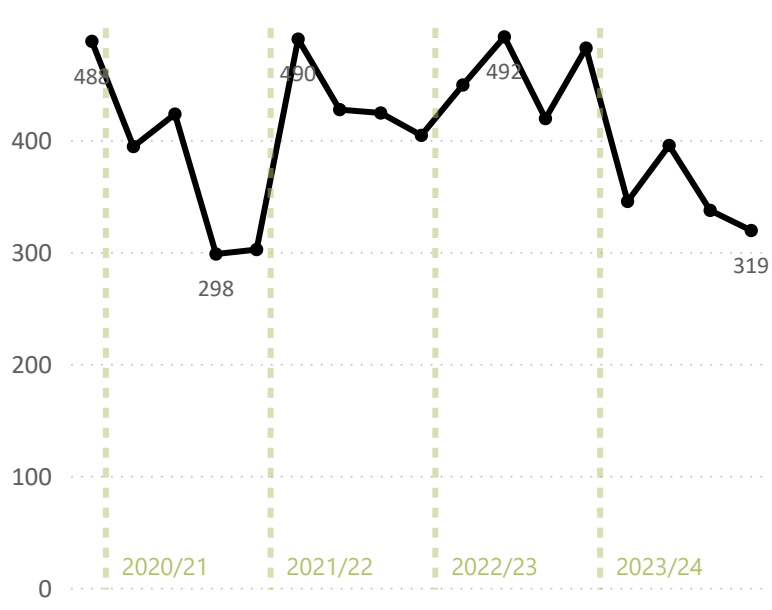
The number of street champions has risen by 95 over the last year to 617. The Keep Britain Tidy Spring and Autumn Clean the Litter Free Durham and Darlington campaigns of 2023 and 2024 have all resulted in new volunteers signing up as Street Champions. These campaigns have encouraged other groups, for example Talking Out The Trash, Haughton Wombles, Eastbourne Hubs and The Denes and The Well, and groups at Sadberge, Heighington and Middleton St George, to set up regular litter picking events throughout the year, which are supported through Street Champions. Some of these groups help improve the mental health / wellbeing for individuals, who had become self-isolated during lock downs.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

4. SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE IN THE BOROUGH

4.1 Providing care and support when needed

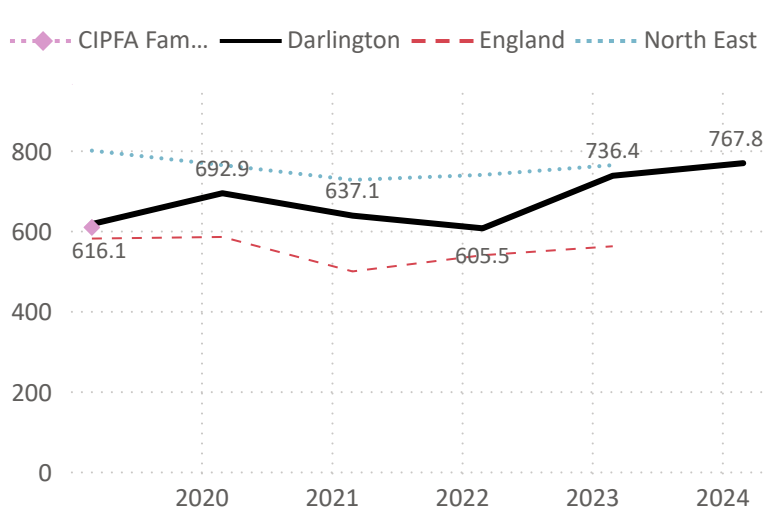
Number of people presented to Darlington Council's Homeless service



The number of presentations to the Housing Options Service has decreased by 31.9%, 1,842 in 22/23 and 1,393 in 23/24. Additional staffing for the Housing Options Team, funded through The Rough Sleeper Initiative, has enabled a dedicated rough sleeper co-ordinator, a navigator, and an outreach worker, to be embedded within the team, delivering effective early intervention and prevention. The early intervention and triage work enables referrals (Duty To Refer) from other organisations to be managed and acted upon in order to plan where applicants can go when released from hospital or prison. For those applicants served with eviction notices in the private rented sector, the team work with landlords and applicants to proactively look for accommodation before their tenancy comes to an end.

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

Older people admitted on a permanent basis to residential or nursing care, per 100,000 of the 65+ population



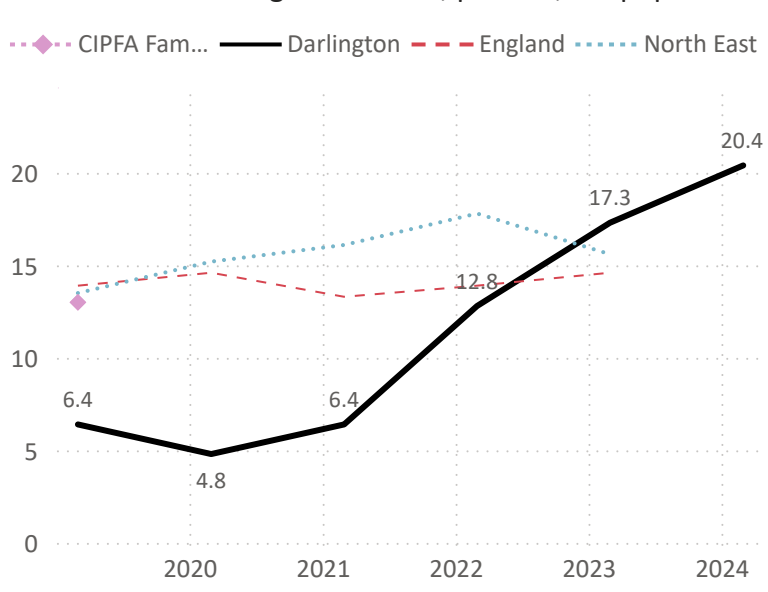
The total number of individuals who moved into permanent residential or nursing care is 171. This is an increase from 164 in 2022-23 and 131 in 2021-22.

Since April, 141 (82%) individuals moved into permanent residential or nursing care straight from an short break stay. The current average length of stay in a short break stay before moving to permanent care is 16 weeks, this is an improvement on the average figure of 19 weeks for 2022-23 and 20 weeks for 2021-22.

Regional benchmarking data show that as it currently stands Darlington has the 6th highest proportion of individuals aged 65+ entering residential / nursing on permanent basis during 2022-23.

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

Adults aged 18 - 64 admitted on a permanent basis to residential or nursing care homes, per 100,000 population



There have been 13 18–64-year-olds who have entered permanent care since April 2023. 2023-24 has seen the highest number of 18–64-year-olds entering permanent care in the past 6 years. The ages of the 13 individuals are:

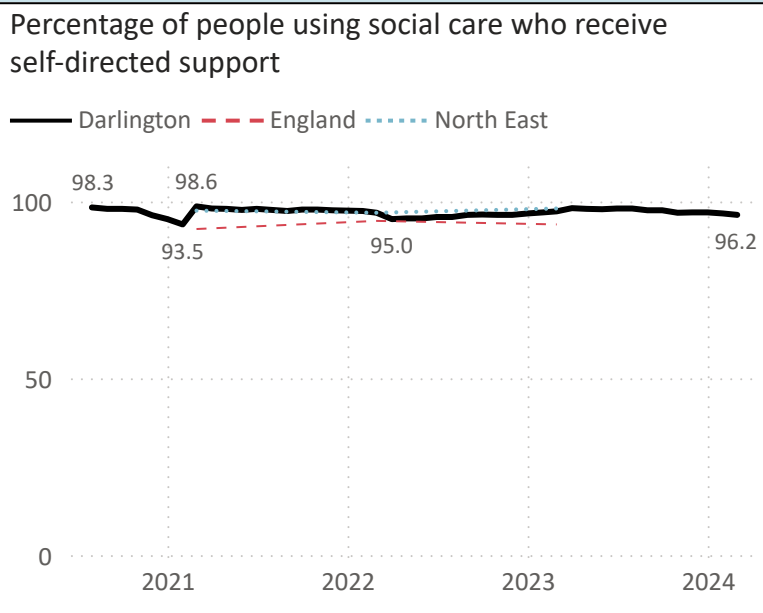
40, 47 (2), 52, 55 (2), 56, 57, 61, 62 (2), 63 (2)

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](#)

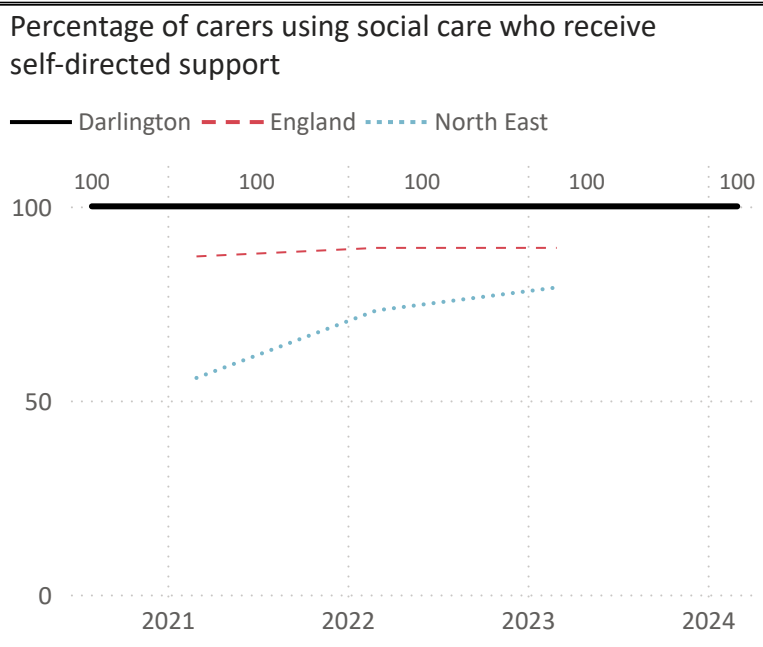
4. SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE IN THE BOROUGH

4.1 Providing care and support when needed



As at the end of March 2024, 96.2% 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](#)

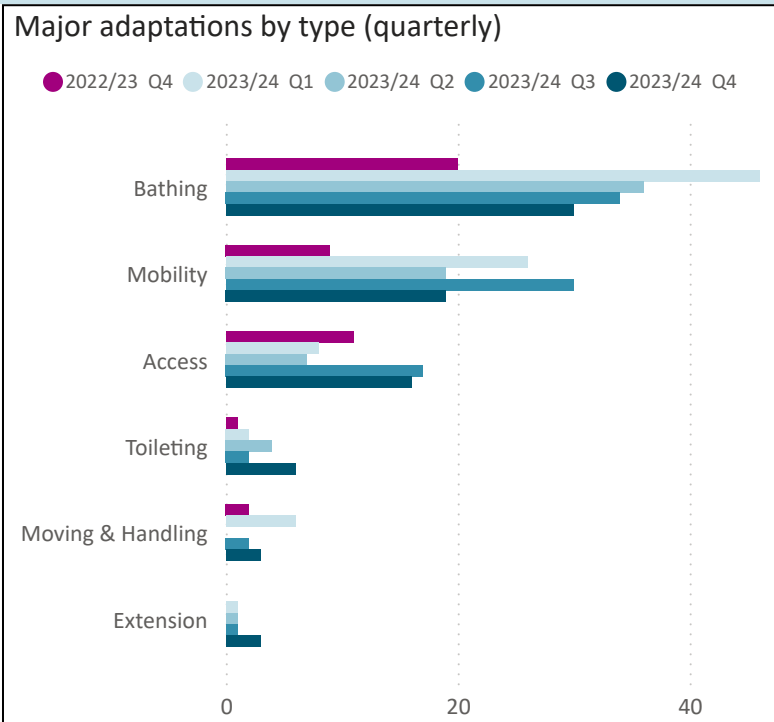
4.2 Working with people to build on their strengths to maximise their potential

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 2023/24 81.7% people who use services (who responded to the ASC survey) stated they have control over their 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

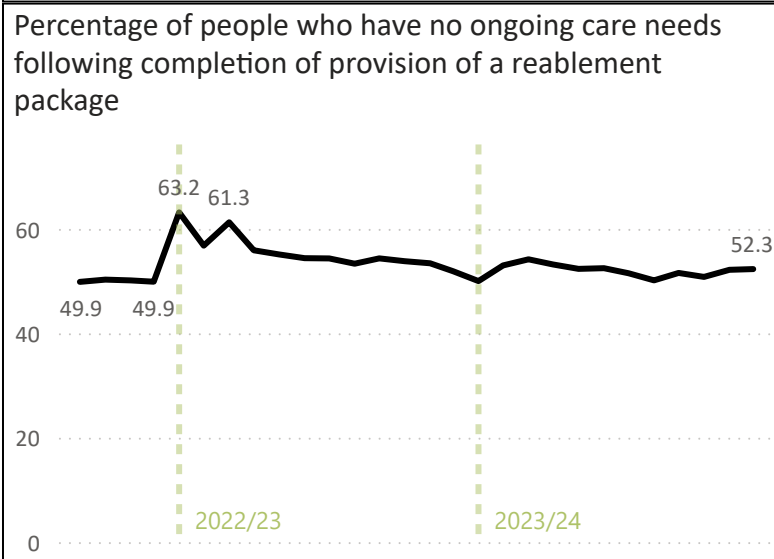


Of the 202 major works completed during 2023-24, some of which were for client with multiple works, the work was for:
 128 - level access showers
 96 – stairlifts
 35 – ramps

A new contractor (HES) has now been brought onboard, which has resulted in the average time from order to start date falling from 143 days to 84 days.

So far, this financial year HES has completed 17 shower jobs, and a further 9 are approved with contractors already on site or waiting a start date. By bringing this third contractor into price for work the other 2 contractors have been able to reduce the number of cases they have waiting a start date from over 40 days to 13.

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



Performance for this indicator continues to stay consistent. At the end of 2023-24 it was reported that 29.3% client needs had decreased, 13.8% needs had increased and 4.6% stayed the same. The remaining 52.3% are those who no longer had ongoing care needs.

The number of clients being referred to RIACT as part of a hospital discharge remains consistently high, with an average of 87 hospital discharges being received per month during 2023-24. The total number of hospital discharges for 2023-24 was 1044, compared to 1006 during 2022-23 and 759 in 2021-22.

[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

The Council's workforce is committed to delivering success for Darlington. We have a proud and dedicated workforce of over 2,000 people, the majority 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 we 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, the wellbeing programme to promote and maintain a healthy and safe workforce, the creation of the Employee Ambassador Group and changing how we undertake staff surveys to capture the staff voice. We have launched the new My Journey process to promote staff development and succession planning. Our workforce strategy runs until 2026, but we are planning ahead to the next strategy to ensure our staff are supported and equipped to deliver in an every changing environment.

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

A1. Continue to implement initiatives that tackle social isolation

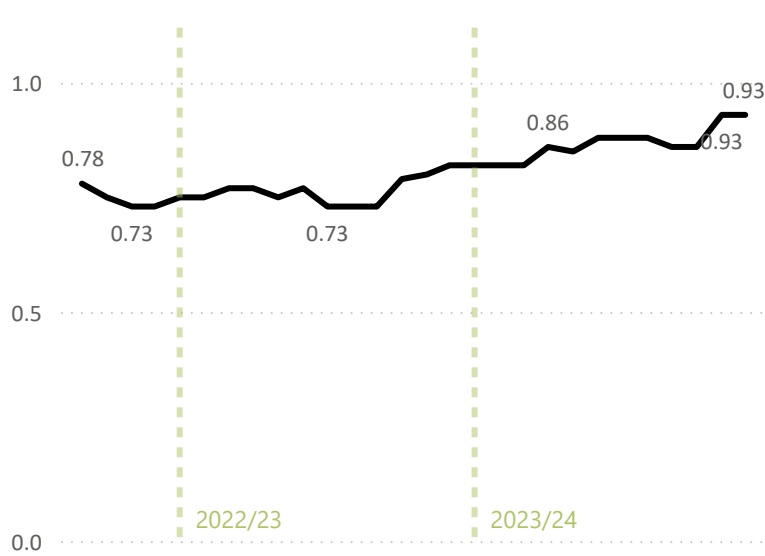
We continue to work with the voluntary sector on a vulnerability strategy which has recognised isolation and loneliness as being a key factor in individuals vulnerability. We are working to incorporate this work into the draft Council Plan. The Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group is leading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

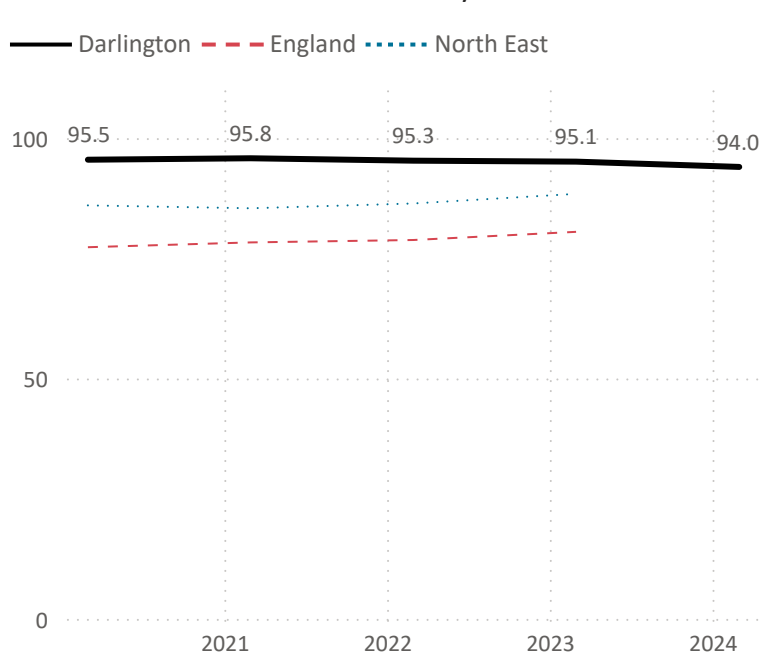


This indicator is primarily focused on supporting adults with mental health needs to remain independent and living in their own home.

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 281 of Darlington residents. 264 people (94%) are living in settled accommodation with:

- 119 living in settled mainstream housing with family/friends
- 100 living in supported accommodation
- 25 tenant - local authority, arms length management etc
- 15 tenant - private landlord
- 3 sheltered housing
- 2 owner occupier / shared ownership scheme

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

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

We continue to review and implement the aims of our transformation plan, with the focus for the upcoming year being the review of our systems within Safeguarding, Occupational Therapy, and the Adult Contact Team. We are aiming to provide systems which streamline activity and enable a more responsive pathway for people accessing adult social care services. In addition, we are developing a new care recording system within the Reablement team and enhancing adult social care webpages to support the public to access the information they require easily.

In 2023/24 66.8% of people who used services found it easy to find information about 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

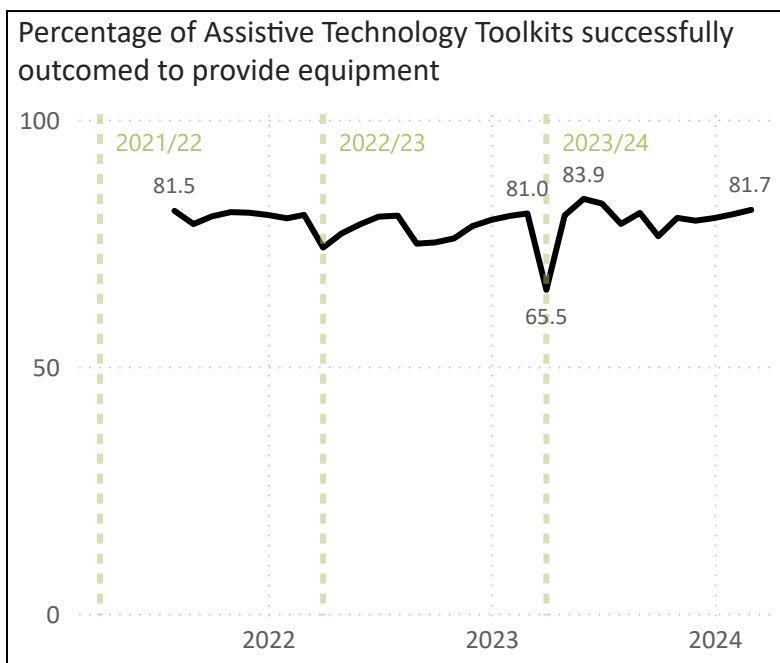
enable users of Adult Social Care services to have more access and ownership of their records, support staff to have the tools, systems and equipment they need to do their jobs.

We will also 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 a high uptake of Assistive Technology Toolkit Referrals assigned to Lifeline resulted in equipment being provided.

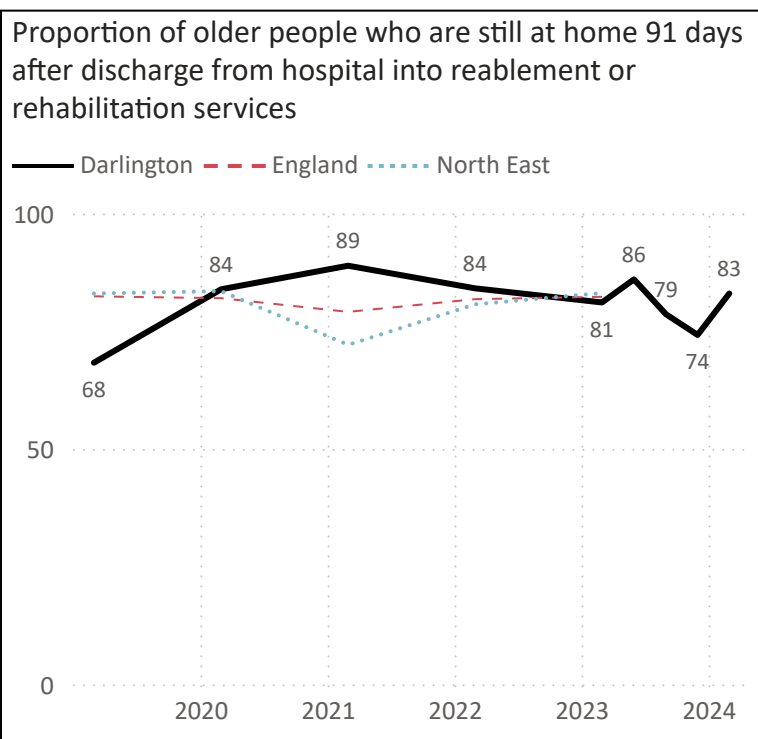
The slight upward trend since the same period last year is indicative of the objective to support people to remain independent in their own homes. Teams continue to promote this offer at the point of referral to adult social care as well as at reviews. Lifeline continues to work closely with the Adults 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.

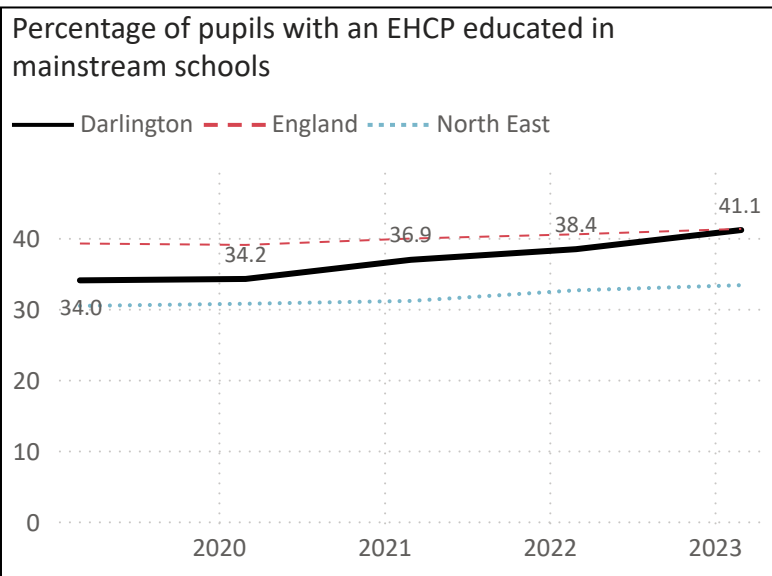
This graph illustrates that at the end of March 2024, the proportion of older people who are still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services was 83%. Despite an increase in complex cases being discharged from hospital into reablement, Responsive Integrated Assessment Care Team (RIACT) have managed to ensure that people are being placed on the correct pathway and appropriate packages are being put in place to support people to stay at home.

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

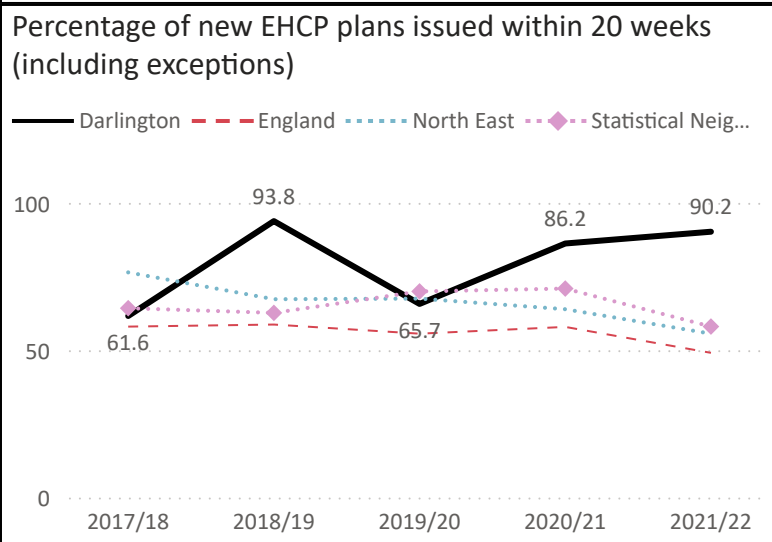
- In 2023 Darlington’s Special Educational Needs (SEN): Support (K) cohort of 159 pupils had an average Attainment 8 score of 34.4. (40th percentile nationally)
- Education Health Care (EHC) Plan cohort's Attainment 8 score has increased by 4.7 from 6.9 in 2021/22 to 11.6 in 2022/23. (75th percentile nationally)
- EHC Plan cohort's Progress 8 score has increased by 0.10 from -1.69 in 2021/22 to -1.59 in 2022/23.
- SEN: Support cohort's English & Maths 5+ percentage has increased by 4.7% from 17.3% in 2021/22 to 22.0% in 2022/23. (42nd percentile nationally)
- SEN: EHC Plan cohort's English & Maths 5+ percentage has increased by 4.1% from 0.0% in 2021/22 to 4.1% in 2022/23. (75th percentile nationally)
- 39% of SEN: Support cohort achieved English & Maths 4+ in 2022/23 (37th percentile nationally)
- Improved Ofsted profile of secondary schools (7 out of 8 schools are good or above) with specific reference to good support for pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) in a number of reports.
- There are some strengths evident in the latest Key Stage 4 performance data - KS4 attainment in 2022/23 shows an average Attainment 8 score per pupil with SEN Support as 34.4 (North East average 31.7, national average 33.2)

Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion



The Darlington local area Special educational needs and disabilities (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%.

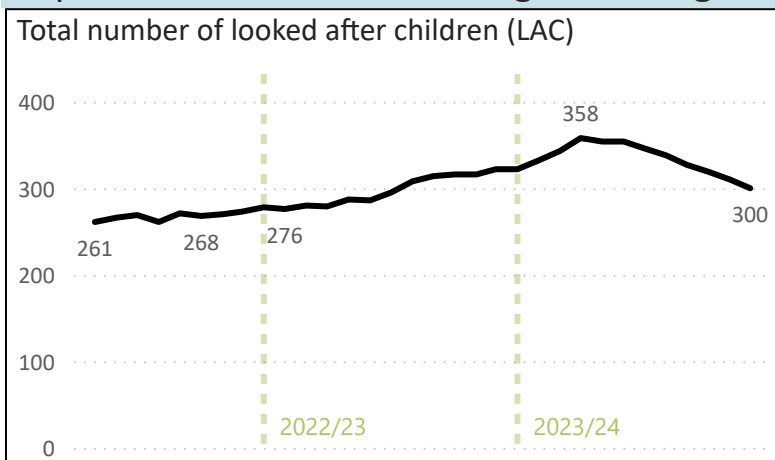
Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion



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

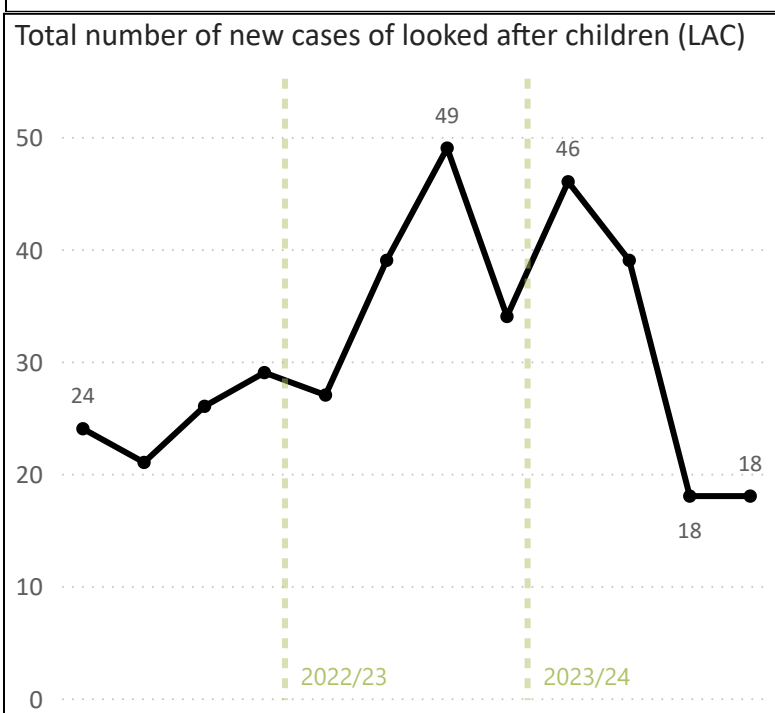
C2. Reduce the need for looked after children placements through effective implementation of the Darlington Strengthening Families programme



300 children are being supported in our care at the end of March 2024, 6.0% of which have come into our care after being accepted by the Home Office as UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child).

This equates to 282 children, excluding UASC, that were in our care at the end of March 2024, a decrease from 305 children in our care at the end of March last year.

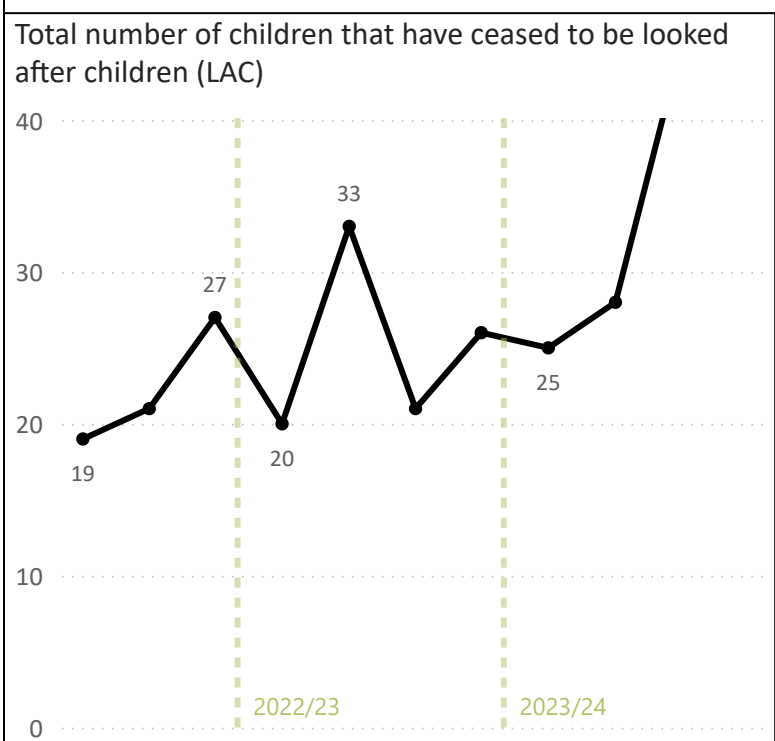
Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services



109 children from 69 families have come into our care since April 2023, a further 12 young people came into care after accepted by the Home Office as an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child (UASC). This is a decrease when compared with the 131 children who came into care in 2022/23 from 86 families (excluding UASC).

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 abuse towards the child and substance misuse of the parent.

Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services



143 children and young people from 112 families have ceased to be in care since April 2023.

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

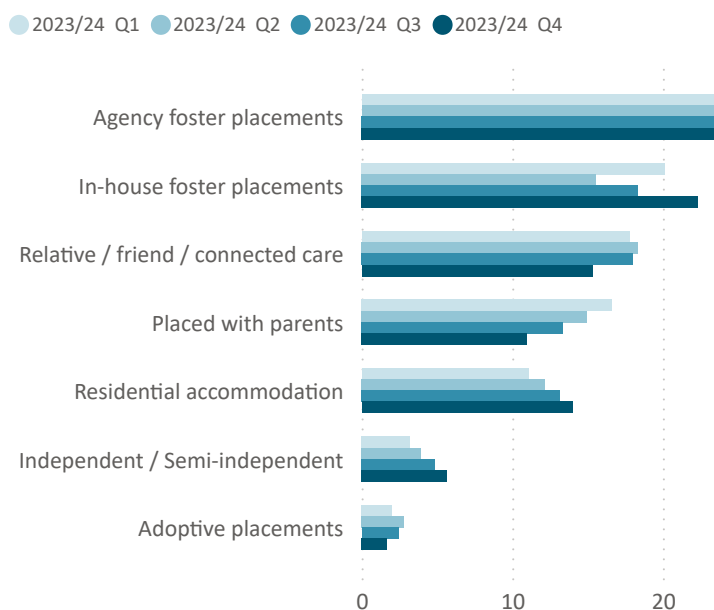
- 42.7% returned home to a parent.
- 30.1% had a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) / Child Arrangement Order (CAO) granted to a relative.
- 15.4% due to turning 18 and becoming a care leaver and supported by that service.
- 8.4% were adopted.
- 3.5% moved away from Darlington.

This year we have increased the number of children who have been reunified home to a parent compared to 21.0% in 2022/23.

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 (48.3%) at the end of March 2024. 19.3% of children were placed in kinship care with relatives (including temporarily approved), 11.0% were placed with a parent, 19.7% were living in forms of supported residential accommodation and 1.7% 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

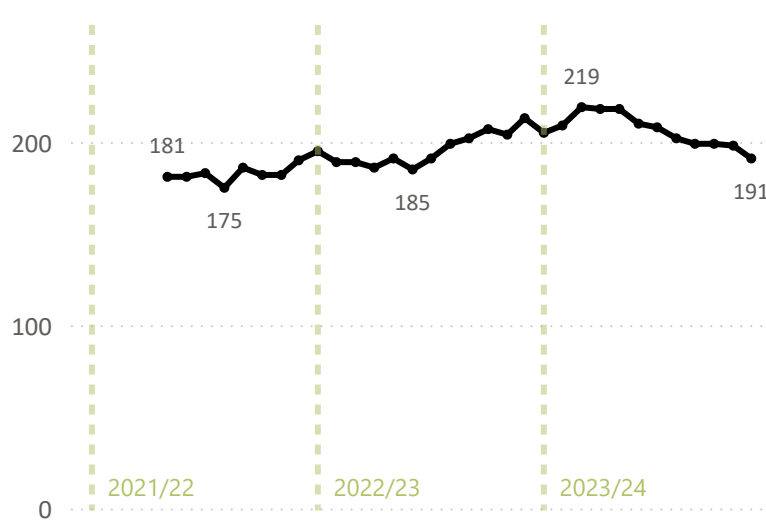
Total number of approved foster carers

Date	Number
March 2022	56
June 2022	57
September 2022	58
December 2022	55
March 2023	54
June 2023	51
September 2023	50
December 2023	52
March 2024	52

Currently we have 52 approved foster care families with 41 kinship connected carers approved with a further 12 families that have temporary approval to support the children. At the end of March 2024, we had 17 families with an open application / going through the mainstream assessments looking to become an approved foster carer to support Darlington's children in care. Work continues to raise the foster caring profile in Darlington via our website and social media and during 2023/24 we have received 59 new fostering enquiry applications.

Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

Total number of foster care placements



At the end of March 2024, 191 children and young people were placed with a foster care family. 40.8% of the children were with an agency foster carer, 24.1% were with an in-house foster carer and 31.0% were with an approved kinship connected carer. 35.6% of all foster placements were long-term.

We have seen an increase with children being supported by Darlington foster carers with a corresponding decrease in the use of agency carers.

Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

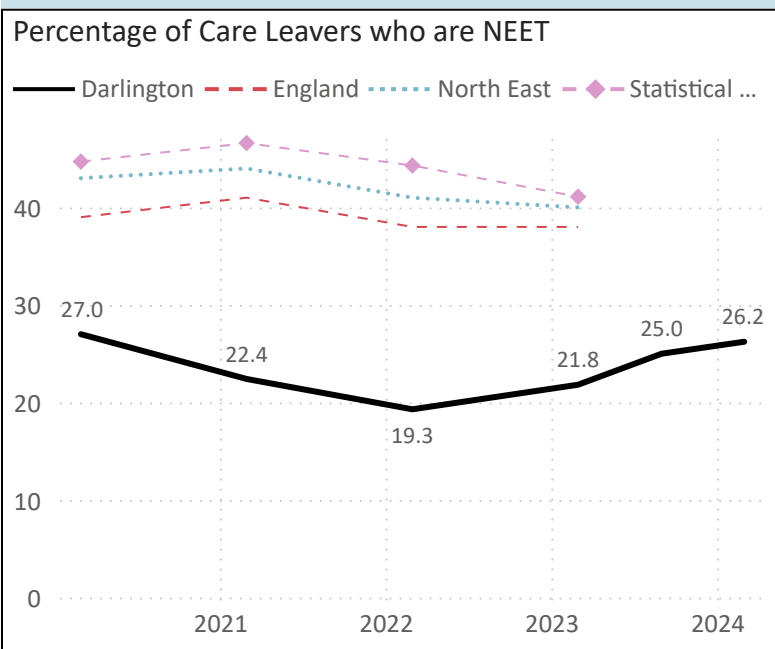
C4. Review in-house residential care and consider the council's place in providing services

We now have Five fully functional children's homes, which are all registered with Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED). All 5 homes have been inspected by OFSTED and judged as "Good". Further placement sufficiency proposals have been approved at Full Council which will see a further planned expansion of our number of in house children's homes as well as an enhanced foster carer offer to ensure that we maximise the number of high quality in house local placements available for Children in Care.

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

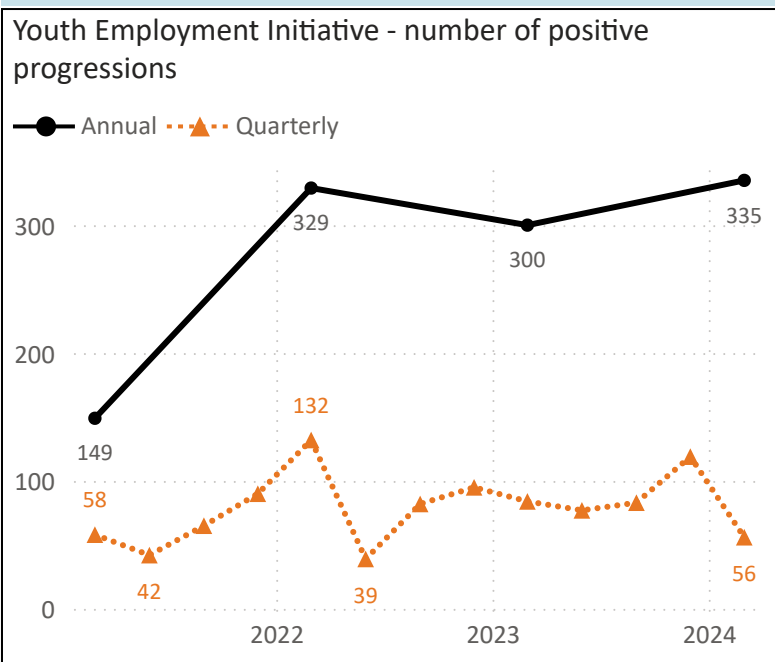


The proportion of Darlington care leavers (DfE measure aged 19-21) Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at the end of March 2024 was 26.2%, which outperformed the most recently available published national and regional averages. This low number of NEET care leavers continues to inspire and is evidence of the commitment our young people give to their personal development.

21.3% of our care leavers are engaged in further education and 52.5% 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

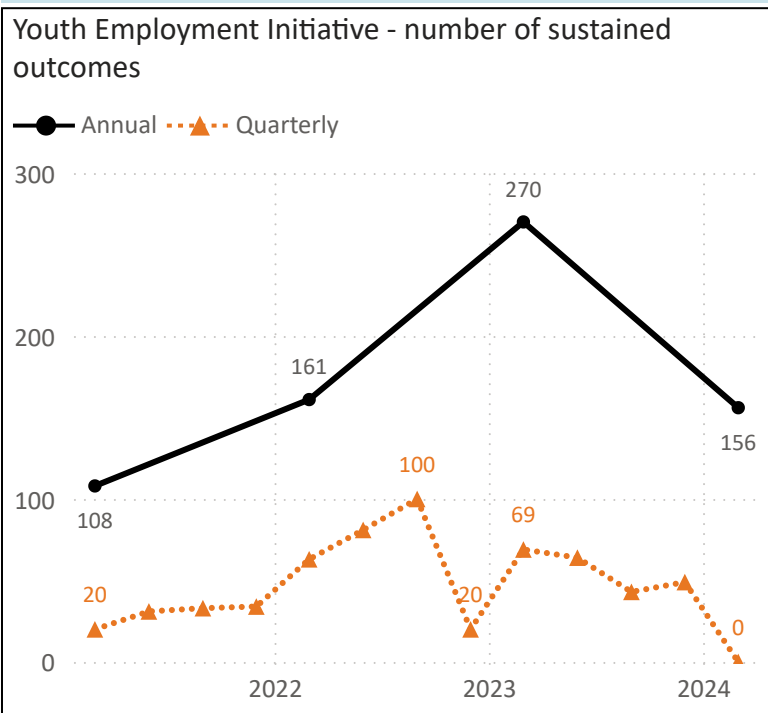
C6. Work with partners to reduce youth and long-term unemployment, by increasing the opportunity for retraining and apprenticeships leading to gainful employment



Darlington YEI was a European funded programme and was delivered across all of Tees Valley running from 2016-2023, to offer employment support to NEETs aged 16-29, with a priority for those aged 16-25. The YEI Programme was delivered by the 5 Tees Valley LA's and 18 other providers and Darlington's performance exceeded other partner in the consortium and with the lowest number of early leavers and with 97.1% moving into employment or full time education.

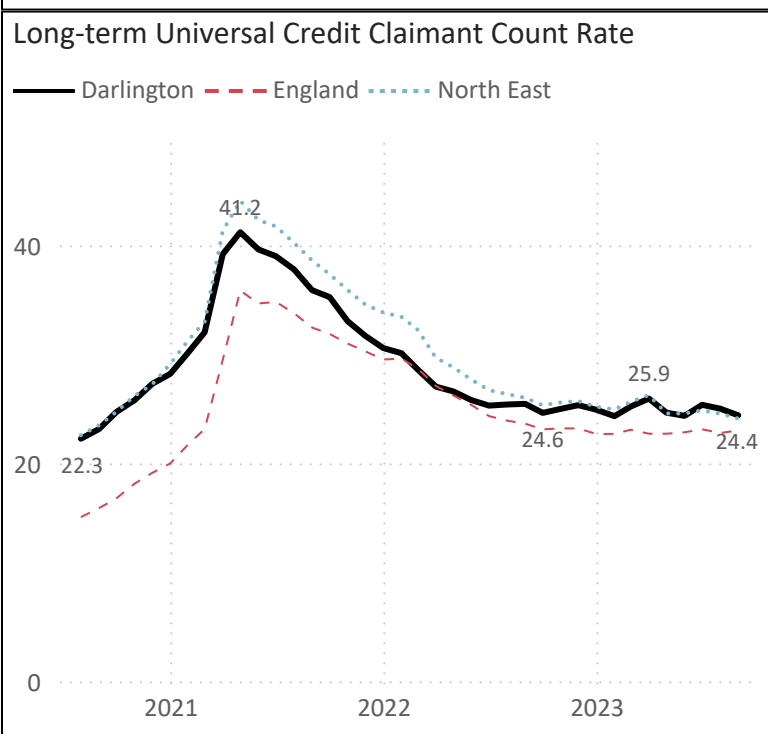
Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

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 seen a consistent progression in education, employment or training over the past 12 months. 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%
March 2023	81.1%
March 2024	89.2%

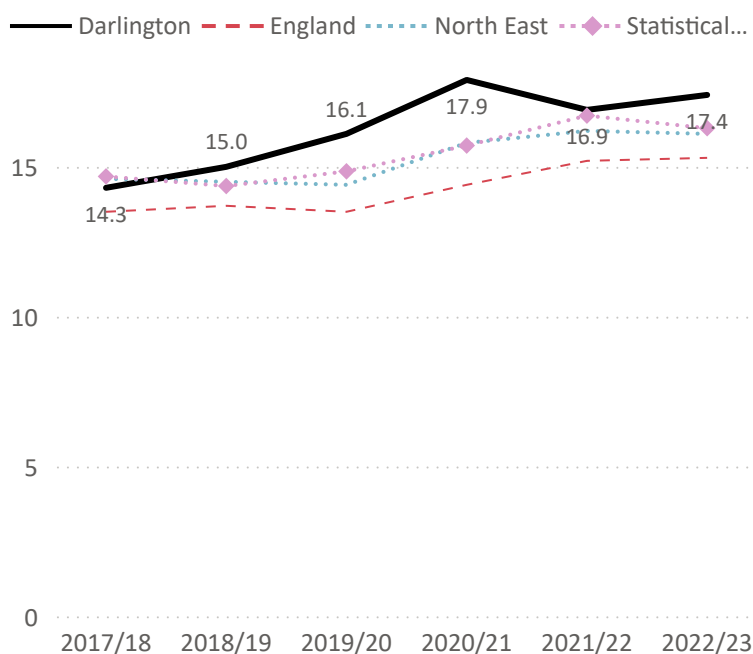
The percentage of schools judged good or outstanding by Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted):

At the end of March 2024, 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 March 2023 (81.1%).

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 had positively decreased from 17.9 in 2020/21 to 16.9 in 2021/22, then saw a small rise to 17.4 in 2022/23. Although 2022/23 saw a rise, so has our regional (16.1) and statistical neighbours (16.3) and the national comparator (15.3) compared to 2021/22.

[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

The new cohort of Year 6 pupils worked with Zest Theatre, an Non Profit Organisation (NPO) specialising in creating work devised by and for young people. Over two workshops the children were encouraged to reflect on their experiences, hopes, and ambitions, and their words were turned into giant artworks which were shared with the wider community on the railings outside of each school. The children's words were also turned into films, created by Tees Valley Artist of the Year, Andy Berriman – The Children's Manifesto: My Voice Matters. The banners and films were shared with the local councillors for each school at a special event, and the councillors shared the works on their own social media and websites.

This year's Cohort of 156 children were from the following schools:

Corporation Road Primary - 48 pupils

Firthmoor Primary - 48 pupils

Northwood Primary - 60 pupils

Later in the term, the children had a trip to 4Motion to try out scootering and BMX riding. To close the year they worked with a cardboard artist to create eco Christmas crackers, had a festive dance session with the DProject, and attended the Hippodrome pantomime.

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

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

The Easter programme was provided over 9 days and was well attended providing a wide variety of both physical and enrichment activities. During Easter 2023, 485 children attended the programme compared to 956 during Easter 2024. Councillor Wallis provided assistance to promote the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme with all ward councillors and a social media push included a digital billboard and a piece in One Darlington magazine to try and increase the reach.

Attendance figures for Easter 2024 were as follows:-

- Overall attendance 2,031
- Total number of individual children 956
- Primary children 729
- Secondary 227
- Of which 170 were children with Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- 888 children were eligible for free school meals

Specialist SEND sessions were provided working alongside SEND charities.

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

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

The overall operation of the indoor market continues to improve with the various street food stalls being fully let and the venue being used for various events which includes the food festival which was a great success in 2024. In addition two new catering operations have opened on the west row of the market building. Due to supplier and contractor issues the opening of the phase 3 redevelopment has been delayed however the newly erected stalls have gained a great deal of interest with potential traders with a new continental deli, high quality florist, jewellery vendor and traditional deli all due to open in May/June 2024.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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

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 successfully granted in April 2024. 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 2023. Following due diligence contracts have been signed between the Council and the preferred partners Adavo to develop the the building into high quality office space in the upper floors and with an Adult Skills facility on the ground floor. It is anticipated that work will commence in August 2024 and will take 18 months to redevelop. Work will commence on Coniscliffe Road in October 2024 to provide permanent facilities for outdoor seating for the various cafes and bars in the vicinity.

A planning application for the permanent location of Darlington Economic Campus (DEC) has been received. If granted it is anticipated work will commence in October 2024.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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

Progress to develop key economic sites to be investor ready at Central Park, Ingenium Park and Faverdale continues to be strong.

At Central Park the works are complete and the handover process to our Estates for active marketing and Streetscene teams has commenced.

On Ingenium Parc all remaining landscaping works are now complete. The site has been handed over to Estates for active marketing and Streetscene for the ongoing management of the area.

Demand for plots at Faverdale Business Park continues to remain high and discussions with potential occupiers for the few remaining plots are ongoing which should see the site fully occupied soon.

Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Proj

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

Work has commenced on two sites adjacent to Tornado Way. Between them the two developers, Greenbox and TrtaxSymmetry will deliver over 500,000 sqft of operational and warehouse facilities with a minimum of 250 new job opportunities being made available. 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. Further work on the marketing of Ingenium Parc will commence in summer 2024.

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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

The number of business growth enquiries continues to increase, but the numbers remain lower than pre-pandemic levels, with the main types of enquiries for new business starts ups rather than existing business growth. The main areas of interest from new business start-ups are from the leisure and hospitality sectors, and primarily focused on town centre locations.

With the expiry of many of the European funded business support programmes during 2023/24, there has been a significant drop-off of opportunities for meaningful engagement with businesses, as the support offer has diminished. It was only in early 2024 that the funding replacement, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, began delivering funded support programmes.

In this business support vacuum, the Business Investment Team have worked to promote the available support services, and where possible, instigated the provision of free support for Darlington businesses, using connections with stakeholders and delivery partners, such as the "Business Growth Masterclass programme" to provide mentoring and coaching support, the Innovation Growth network programme to provide advice and connections for innovation, and business start-up advice and guidance through links with North-East Enterprise Agencies.

Meanwhile, the Business Team have continued to work with indigenous companies to support business growth opportunities, connecting with a number of major employers. These connections have helped support the successful delivery of major events in the town, such as the Darlington Jobs Fair and STEMfest.

The team continue to promote Darlington as a better place for business, regularly showcasing the key opportunities of Ingenium Parc, Darlington Science Park and Faverdale as well as other private sector opportunities.

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. Officers have been supporting the progress of both Garden Villages. A planning application for Burtree Garden Village was approved in 2024. Consultation on the masterplan relating to Skerningham Garden Village was completed in early 2024.

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

Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

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

Housing delivery has seen a drop in the 2023/24 financial year largely due to the delayed 'lag' effect as a result of the Nutrient Neutrality designation affecting the whole Tees Catchment.

Applications are now progressing and gaining consent largely due to the Natural England Nutrient Neutrality credits scheme. The borough has fared well in the proportion of credits allocated to developments in Darlington helping to unlock around 2000 homes.

Looking at the latest monitoring data on housing starts this lag in delivery may continue for the current financial year 2024/25 but will hopefully recover beyond that with the permissions currently being granted likely to have started building out.

The planning team continues to actively engage with the development industry through hosting 'Developer Forums' these forums are well attended and feedback received is that Darlington remains an attractive area in which the industry is keen to invest.

[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 change to its target date to reach carbon neutral, our climate change strategy and action plan have been revised. A new Climate Change Officer has been recruited to support this work, doubling the capacity of the team. We continue to develop relationships with businesses in Darlington to encourage them to take their own actions towards net zero, and use our communications networks to share information so residents can make their own choices. We are also looking to see how we can better include young people in the way we work to ensure we are hearing their ideas and concerns.

[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

As stated in our previous update, the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) is leading on the delivery of the Darlington Station project. However, Darlington Borough Council continues to provide support where required and attends board level Project meetings with the Tees Valley Combined Authority, Network Rail, the Department for Transport and London North Eastern Railway (LNER).

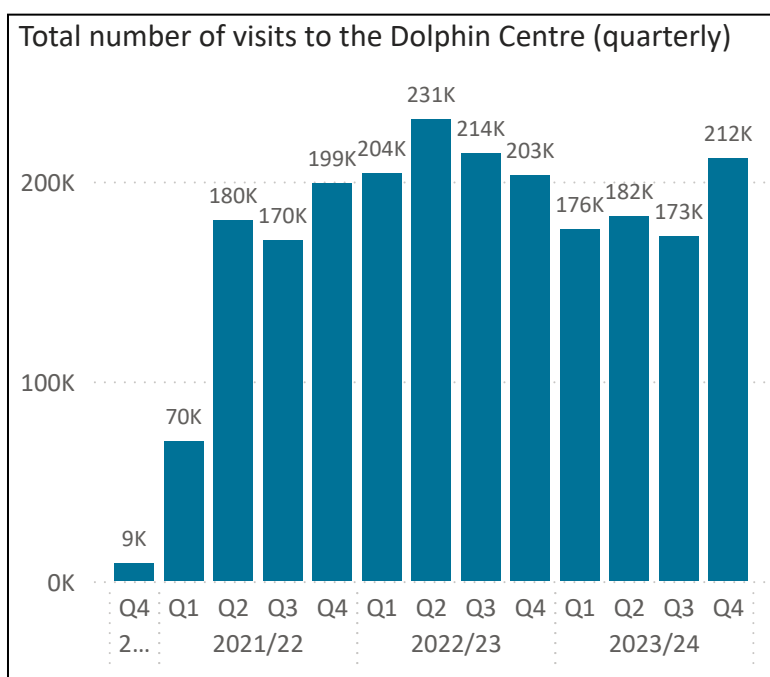
On the Eastern side work is progressing well with the structure of the new multi storey car park nearing completion. The next stage will be to complete highway alterations on Neasham Road which will start later this year. On the western side the Cattle market temporary car park has been operational since the 26th of April 2023, demolition is complete on the former public house site, and TVCA have secured additional funding from Active Travel England to deliver the Western gateway works. Network Rail are progressing the rail infrastructure works for the new platforms and the improvements within the existing station to link across to the new station building.

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

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

The Dolphin Centre has experienced high footfall, particularly since the reopening of the main pool in January 2024 following a 12-month refurbishment programme. Memberships are currently sitting at the highest level in the history of the centre with full membership, seniors and students representing the majority. Holiday programmes have seen record performance, including business areas such as bowling and soft play with primary and secondary spend on catering boosting income levels. Currently over 40 clubs are hiring space in the centre bringing a consistent footfall and further opportunity for secondary spend and the events programme has continued to bring in footfall from across the country; including, conferences delivered by government departments, Office for National Statistics and the HM Treasury ball.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services



Visits to the Dolphin Centre were up in Quarter 4 compared to the same quarter in 22-23, demonstrating the impact on footfall with the reopening of the main pool in January 24. Income levels are also reporting a rise with February half term celebrating the highest ever performance levels. Memberships have also hit the highest level in the history of the Dolphin Centre with a clear rise directly after opening the main pool.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

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

With the end of the Pandemic and the return to business as usual United Kingdom Health Security Agency takes the national lead for monitoring and responding to outbreaks of communicable and non communicable disease in our local communities and provide expert guidance and information in relation to these. As a local authority we discharge our statutory duties and cooperate and participate in the systems and processes put in place by the United Kingdom Health Security Agency. The Director of Public Health has a duty to have assurance that there are appropriate systems and processes in place to protect the health of the population. The Director of Public Health provides a report to Scrutiny on an annual basis outlining the threats and hazards with the current mitigating actions and plans.

Lorraine Hughes: 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

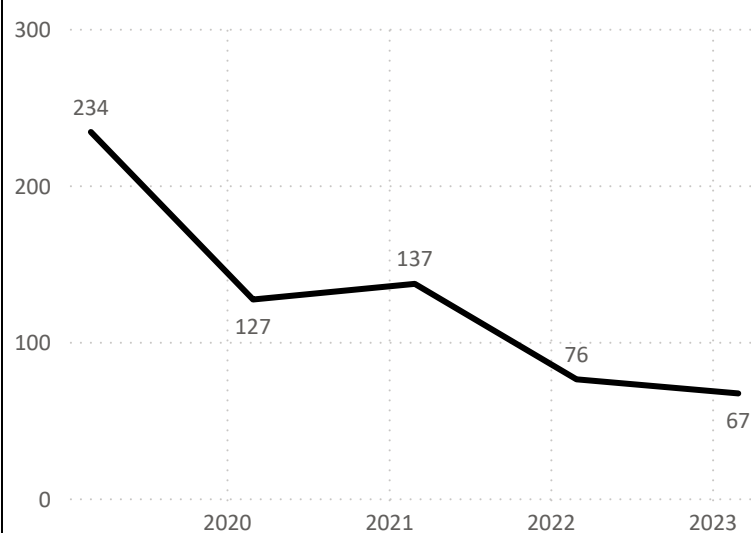
Housing Condition - Percentage of Council properties meeting the decent homes standard

Year	Value
2019/20	100.0%
2020/21	100.0%
2021/22	100.0%
2022/23	100.0%
2023/24	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 still under review and the outcome should be announced in 2024.

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

Additional Affordable Housing Supply - Completions



This annual figure is obtained from the Government "Live Tables on Affordable Housing Supply". These figures will be published in late 2024 (Expected November/December).

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 and 22/23 (Data is not yet available for 2023/24). However, work concluded on Allington Way phase 3 site, which delivered 55 Council properties in 2022/23. Work is also continuing on Snipe Lane which will see further delivery of affordable council owned units in the near future.

[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
2022/23	Q1	96.2%
	Q2	97.3%
	Q3	96.4%
	Q4	95.9%
2023/24	Q1	98.1%
	Q2	98.8%
	Q3	97.2%
	Q4	96.0%

Collection rates have slightly decreased in Q4 2023/24 to 95.9%, this was affected by a double bank holiday and delayed payments hitting accounts.

Over 2040 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 around 5 weeks average rent.

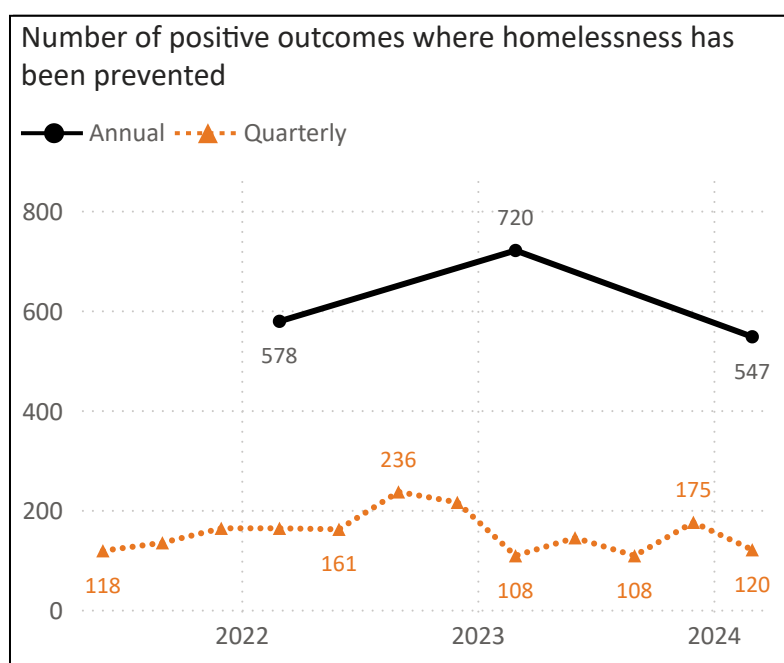
Managed Migration to UC is due to commence in Darlington from spring/summer 2024 and collection rates are expected to be affected as tenants await their payments and move from weekly to monthly payments. The team are planning some joint events with the DWP to support and guide tenants through the period of migration.

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

H5. Review the Darlington Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was reviewed by Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee on 28 February 2024. As previously reported, all of the actions within the strategy are complete. However, the Committee also considered the current pressures on our Housing Options service; the number of homeless presentations remains high, with 1,396 in 2023-24. In addition, the need for emergency accommodation continues to increase, with 9,616 days spent in emergency accommodation in 2023-24. This compares with 7,308 days in 2022-23 and 3,697 days for the previous year. However, our approach to dealing with homeless clients is unchanged in that every person matters and can, with the appropriate intervention, move from rough sleeping into long-term, sustainable accommodation. The Committee agreed to develop a new Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy during 2024, to meet the current challenges, and this will be considered by the Committee in early 2025.

Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues



There has been a decrease of 446 (24.2%) in the number of presentations to the Housing Options Service, from 1,842 in 22/23 to 1,396 in 23/24. The percentage of positive outcomes remained at 39% for the second year, with the number of positive outcomes decreasing from 720 in 22/23 to 547 in 23/24. There have been changes in the housing market, less private rented accommodation is available and the demands on the social housing waiting lists has increased.

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 drug treatment grant for both adults and young people

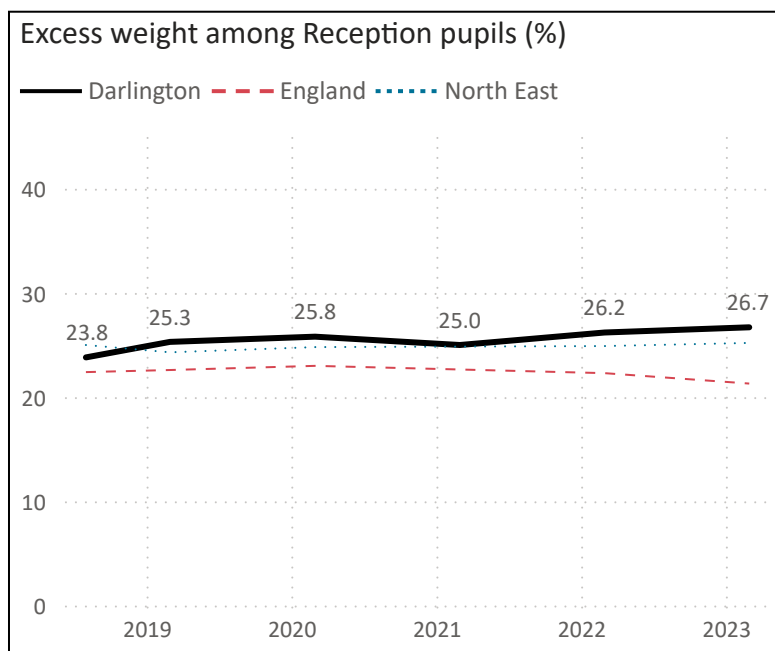
H7. Implement the Darlington Child Healthy Weight Plan with partners

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 with a report being prepared for Health and Housing Scrutiny later in 2024.

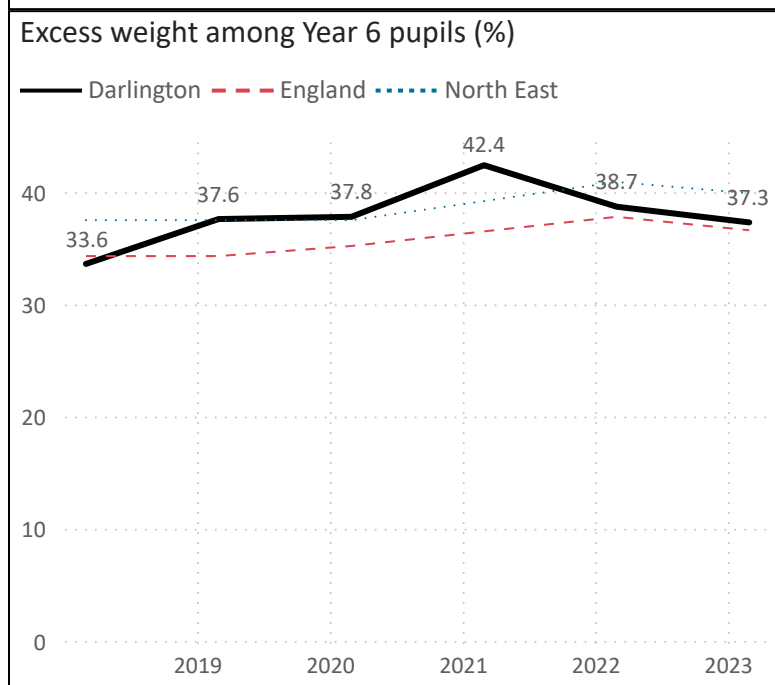
[Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health](#)



This data (from 2022/23) shows that there is no significant change to the trend for Reception prevalence of overweight (including obesity). 26.7% of reception children aged 4-5 years were classified as overweight or obese. Darlington is 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.

[Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health](#)



This data (from 2022/23) shows that 37.3% of year 6 children aged 10-11 years were classified as overweight or obese. Darlington is 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.

[Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health](#)

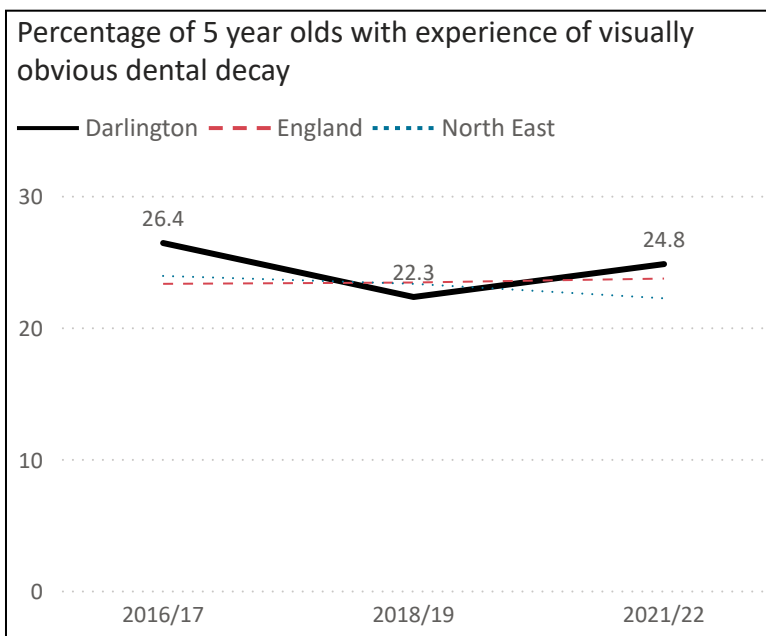
H8. Implement the Darlington Oral Health Plan 2017-2022 with partners

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.

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.
- continue to work with colleagues in the NHS and local authorities across the North East to promote the consultation for the Secretary of State for Health proposal for a Community Water Fluoridation Scheme for North East England which will include Darlington.

Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

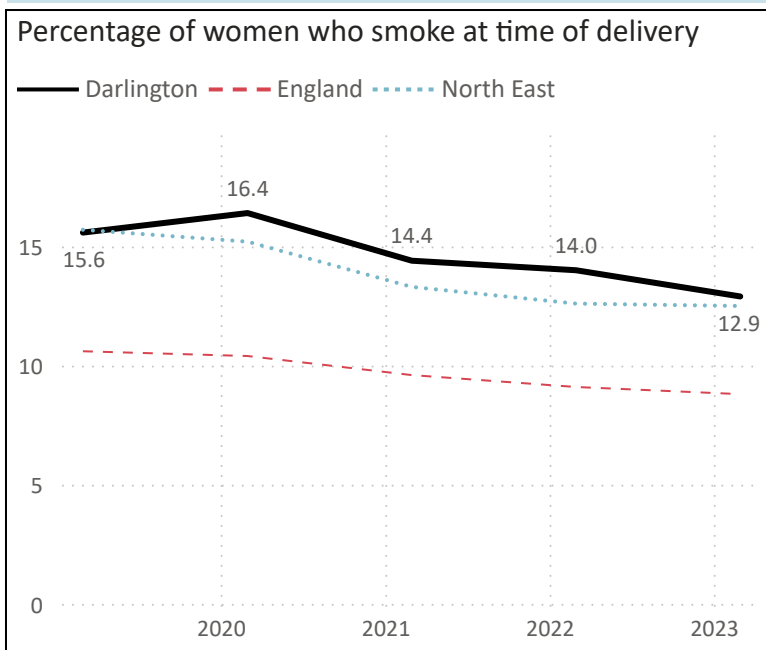


The latest data shows that the the percentage of Darlington 5-year-olds with experience of visually obvious dental decay has increased to 24.8%. This is statistically similar to both the England and North East

It is a preventable cause of avoidable pain and illness in children in Darlington. Dental decay is the most common cause of hospital admissions for 5 to 9 year olds and a significant contribution to the days absent from school. The Childhood Healthy Weight Plan for Darlington includes actions such as reducing sugar and fizzy drinks in settings such as schools and working with families on healthy weaning for babies, to help reduce dietary sources of sugar.

Lorraine Hughes: 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

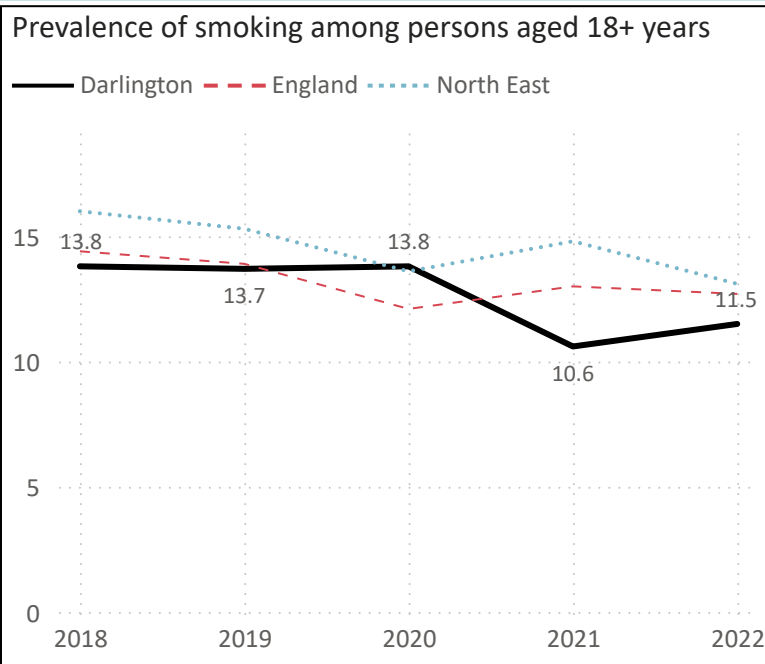


The data (from 2022/23) shows that there is no significant change to the trend for women who smoke at time of delivery. 12.9% of mothers are known to be smokers at time of delivery. Darlington is statistically similar to the North East and statistically worse than England. The gap between Darlington and the North East and England has narrowed since 2020.

The NHS provides stop smoking support through local maternity services. The Local Authority commissions a specialist stop smoking service that supports women to stop smoking before and after being pregnant. The authority works with partners to encourage all residents, including pregnant mothers, to quit smoking at every opportunity.

Lorraine Hughes: 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) shows that 11.5% of persons aged 18+ self-reported themselves as smokers in the Annual Population Survey (APS). This has increased slightly from 2021 but is not statistically significant. Darlington is statistically similar to the North East and England.

The trend over time continues to reduce and it is anticipated that further falls will be recorded in future due to the ongoing impact of measures to reduce smoking in the community such as the raising of the smoking age and funding to increase access to stop smoking interventions.

Lorraine Hughes: 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
2022/23	Q1	3,367
	Q2	3,388
	Q3	3,414
	Q4	3,425
2023/24	Q1	3,480
	Q2	3,457
	Q3	3,493
	Q4	3,528

The figure comparison from Quarters 1-4 in 2022/23 to 2023/24 show a consistent increase in users of the Lifeline Service.

In 2024 Q1 and Q4, the data informs us that there was an increase of 100 additional users to the same quarters in the previous year.

This could be attributed to the colder months when people are potentially more vulnerable or becoming symptomatic of their health conditions and require additional support so refer in to our service to access this.

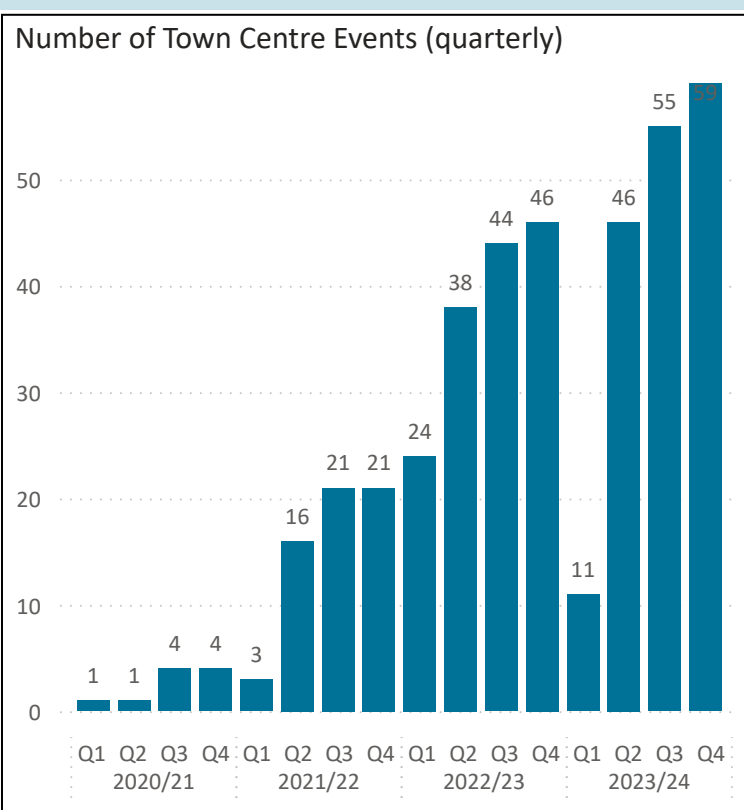
Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues

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 of 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 programme will be formally launched on 19th September to local, national and the international media at the Hippodrome.

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

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



The events season for 2023/24 began with large scale celebrations of the King's Coronation and hosting a live screen for the BBC of Eurovision, in partnership with Tees Valley Combined Authority. Throughout May to September the events team delivered a wide-ranging animation programme including a full Summer Stage programme for the holiday season. Autumn and winter programming saw the addition of Diwali and Chinese New Year celebrations. These new additions attracted new audiences and were very well received. Christmas events continued to attract huge numbers of people, supporting both retail and hospitality venues gaining good press coverage and feedback for Darlington. Restaurant Week in February was very popular with offers and promotions being extended and more locations signing up. Engaging with communities has connected more people, to build stronger events and new relationships.

[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	September	97%
2023	June	100%
	September	91%
	December	52%
2024	March	94%

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 recommenced in April this year. The percentage is calculated using the number getting a "pass" rating.

The March figure of 94% gives the average score over the last 12 months is 85%. The reduction in the December figure was due an inaccurate recording of the cleanliness levels.

Refresher training on the grading of cleanliness for inspection staff has taken place within the past year. It has improved the inspection process, resulting in more accurate measurements.

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

L3. Finalise plans for Hopetown and initiate implementation of the plans together with partners

The restored Goods Shed, is now the entry point to Hopetown and this restored facility houses a café, shop, and digital media experience.

North Road Station Museum (formerly the Head of Steam), celebrates the past, present and future of rail travel and engineering brilliance with a £3 million investment into a brand new interactive permanent exhibition.

In the Carriage Works, the opening special exhibition is 'Brick Journeys', a tour through the world of transport made entirely from LEGO® bricks. Also within this Grade II listed building is The Stores, where people of all ages can explore Hopetown's archive and discover artefacts and objects not on permanent display.

The investment in the site and our assets recognises our proud rail heritage and Hopetown Darlington celebrates the innovation and experimentation that put Darlington on the map - and that all starts with play. Children's imaginations can run free in Wagon Woods, the attraction's railway-themed immersive outdoor adventure play park, based on a Georgian feat of engineering: The Stockton & Darlington Railway's Brusselton Incline. Developed in consultation with local primary schools, the play park includes an accessible incline track with interactive features and a companion slide suitable for wheelchair users.

[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 reopening to the public in September 2023. The combination of preserving the heritage of the Grade II 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, which 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 and the Borough's 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 is now progressing on implementing the measures identified in the plan. A review of resident parking zones is underway, we are working with Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to provide on street electric vehicle charging using Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding, Pay by Phone will be expanded to include on-street parking later this year and new parking machines have been ordered which will allow contactless payment as well as cash in on-street locations.

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

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

The Tees Valley has secured £310m in transport investment between 2022 and 2027 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. In Darlington, CRSTS is delivering the Darlington Station project, an Enhanced Partnership with bus operators, a programme of interventions on priority bus corridors, further development of walking and cycling routes and installation of electric vehicle charging points throughout Darlington.

In addition, the Tees Valley has been given an indicative allocation of £978m in the second round of CRSTS. We will be working closely with TVCA to develop and deliver the programme which includes a £250m allocation for the Darlington Northern Link Road.

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

L7. Modernise Darlington's crematorium service

Work has been completed on 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 last year in April 2023. Feedback received has shown 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 2024-28 was approved by Council in February 2024 and provided a balanced budget until 2025/26. Work continues across all service areas to identify efficiencies and additional income to assist with the financial position to contribute towards the delivery of future years budgets.

The year end projected position for 2023/24 at outturn was an improvement on the original estimate of £0.545m, which is an improvement of £1.283m on the Q3 report and therefore an improvement on the 2024-28 MTFP initial estimate.

Service pressures continue, particularly in Children's services due to significant post pandemic demand which has been seen nationwide. All departments continue to review and challenge expenditure to assist with the Council's financial position.

The Council's accounts are scrutinised by our auditors Ernst and Young and continue to deliver 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 eight joint ventures to date, to build and sell houses. Three of the joint ventures have completed with all the investment repaid and sales dividends received. All of the remaining joint ventures are progressing well and on target to provide dividends as expected.

The West Park, Out of Borough, Elder Brook Park and Hurworth Gardens joint ventures are all progressing well with strong sales/reservations either on target or above target for the 2024 releases. The establishment of a new joint venture between the Council and Esh Homes at Blackwell Grange was approved by Cabinet in January 2024, with the planned construction of 44 new houses for sale.

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

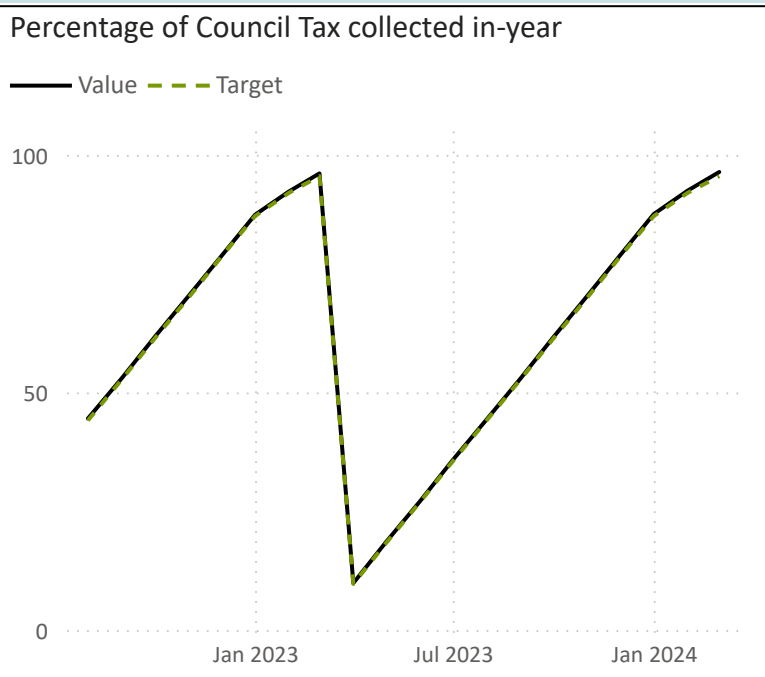
R3. Maximise the council's income from the council's Investment Fund, including further joint venture housing companies

The Investment Fund provision of £50m is being used for joint ventures and economic regeneration initiatives. Returns on joint ventures are forecast to be £7.6 million, with three of the eight schemes completed and the investment repaid and recycled back into the fund.

There are ten current regeneration schemes or joint ventures committed against the £50 million fund totalling £42.65 million, leaving a balance of £7.35 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.

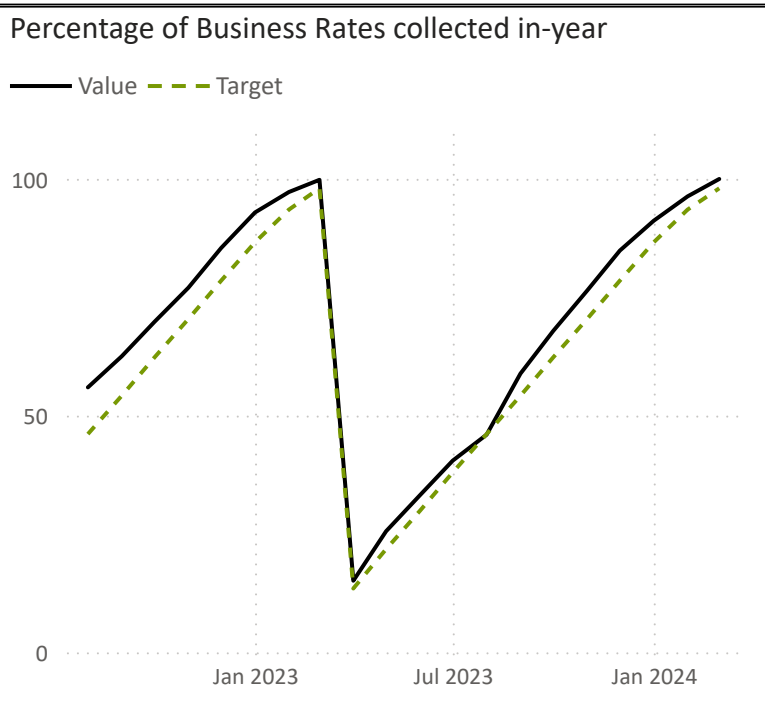
[Brett Nielsen: Assistant Director - Resources](#)

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



The percentage of Council Tax collected exceeded the target for quarter 4, with 96.39% of Council Tax collected in 2023-24. This is an increase in collection, compared to 2022-23, which was 96.09%. The collection rate of 96.39% for 2023-24 is the highest since 2010-11. The overall amount collected by quarter 4 was £72.5m, compared to £68.4m by quarter 4 in 2022-23.

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



The percentage of Business Rates collected exceeded the target for quarter 4, with 99.97% of Business Rates collected, compared to 99.79% in quarter 4 of 2022-23. The overall amount collected by quarter 4 was £31.2 million compared to £31.8 million by quarter 4 of 2022-23. There was a national revaluation of business properties with effect from 1 April 2023, which increased the overall amount of rateable values for Darlington by £2.8 million or 3.2%. However, there was also a generous transitional protection scheme in place, which limited the increase payable for those businesses that would have had an increase in their Business Rates in 2023-24. However, despite the revaluation, the overall rateable values for Darlington decreased slightly in 2023-24 from £90.4m to £90.3m. This was due to some backdated adjustments to rateable values following appeals to the Valuation Office and some businesses being taken out of the rating list temporarily due to development works.

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

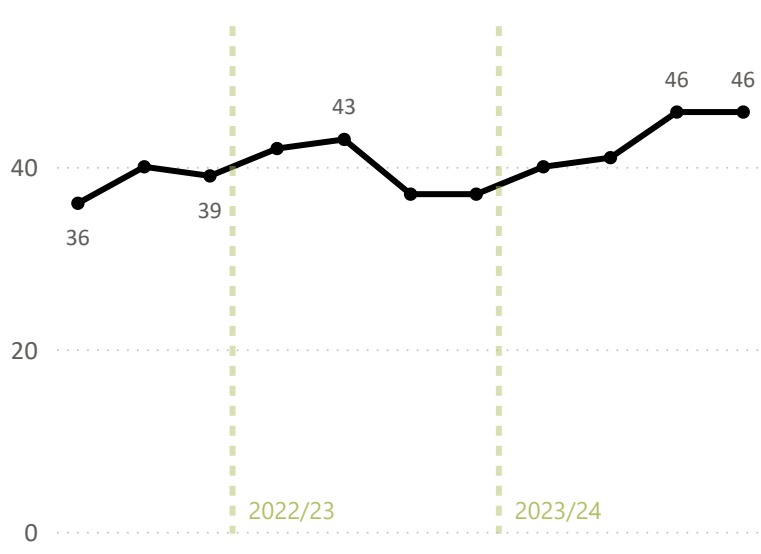
R5. Adopt a local wealth building approach to council procurement and work with the wider public sector in Darlington to do the same

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: Darlington Partnerships Director](#)

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

Local spend as a percentage of contracted spend



The spend with Darlington-based suppliers has increased in the last 2 quarters from 41% to 46%, an increase of 5%.

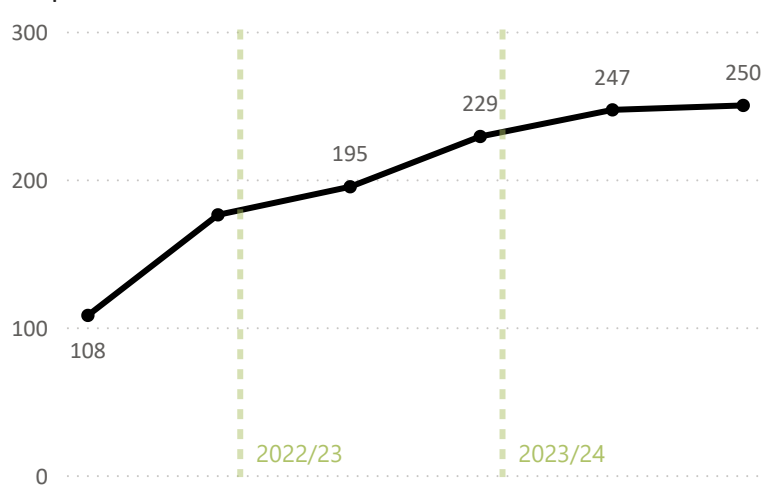
In comparison to the same period in 22/23 this is an increase of 9%.

The procurement team continue to engage with the local supply chain, via the e-tendering system, pre-market engagement and social media prior to any new or reoccurring procurement activity.

Luke Swinhoe: Assistant Director - Law & Governance

R6. Increasing the availability of council services online

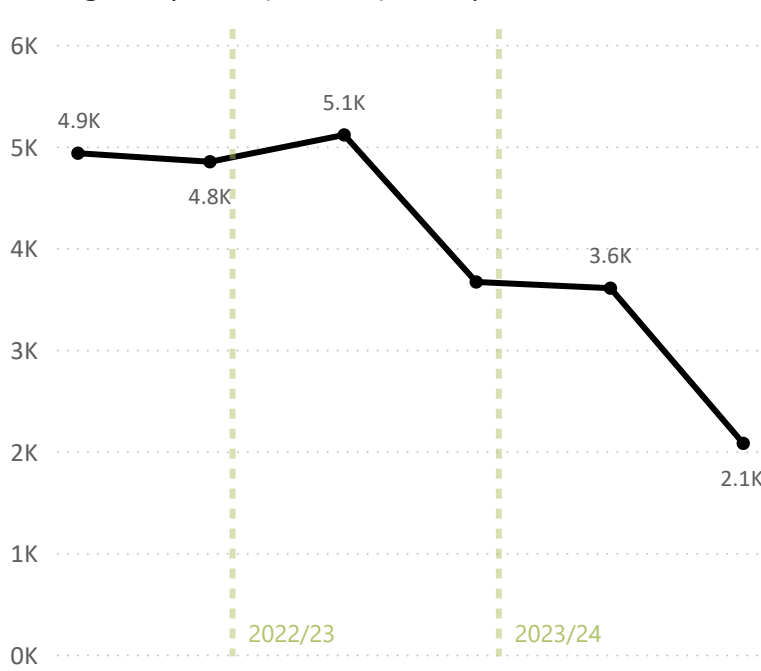
Number of transactional services available via the corporate website



There have been 3 additional Lagan forms added to the site and app in the last reporting period. These were focused around the Street Scene services of reporting broken glass, dead animals and needles. There is now a Lagan upgrade underway, once this is in place a lot of legacy forms which Customer Services use will need to be converted into modern eforms which can then be put online for the public to use as well.

Neil Bowerbank: Head of Strategy, Performance & Communications

Average daily visits (sessions) to corporate website



As noted during the previous reporting period, the cookie acceptance pop-up continues to restrict the website visitor data that we can collect. Compounding this challenge, many web browsers now come with a do not track option set by default so getting reliable statistics in the future will be increasingly difficult. The software used by the Council track web visits (Google Analytics) has recently undergone some significant changes which has further limited our ability to gather reliable data.

Despite these data gathering issues, there has been no indication the corporate website is used any less than previously in the form of customers shifting to other channels of contact.

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 from 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.

As part of monitoring, to increase engagement with staff we have created the Employee Ambassador Group, and refined the way we undertake questionnaires to shorter quicker pulse surveys. We have undertaken a number of surveys already and will repeat these through a rolling programme so we can measure changes in results. We have completed the review of our Personal Development Review process and following the successful completion of the pilot, a new process, "My Journey" will be rolled out to all staff this year. My Journey will incorporate and promote our core values as included 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

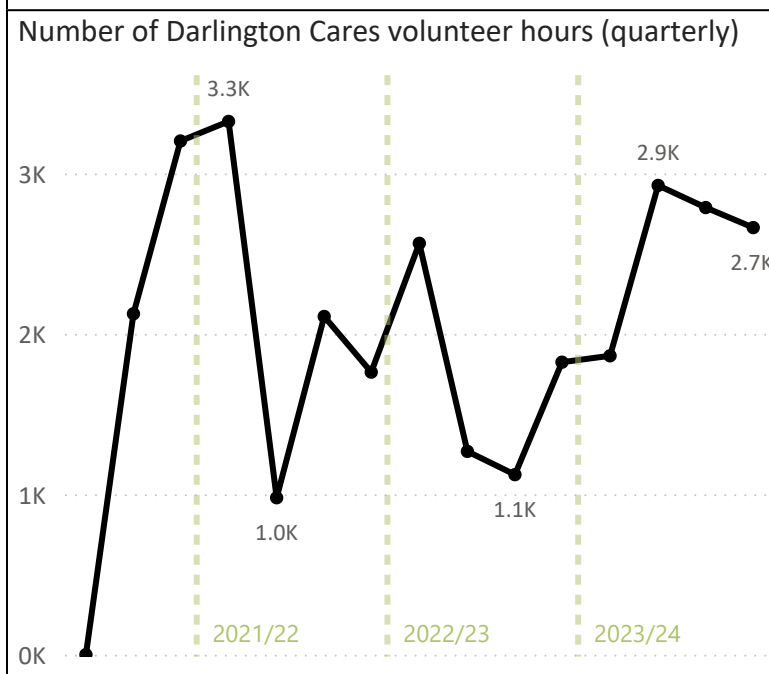
Whilst Darlington Cares continues to help employers deliver their environmental, governance and social commitments through providing resources and volunteering in communities, the recently formed Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership (DEEP) is taking shape and attracting new members. A network and learn event was held at Redde Northgate in March which was attended by the Mayor. It focused on how businesses can move to electric vehicles and a drive for members to Pledge their commitment to changes they intend to make towards net zero has been launched. DEEP is supporting the Council in getting employers views of the Climate Change Risk Assessment it is carrying out.

Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Year	Month	Value
2022	March	30
	June	30
	September	30
	December	30
2023	March	30
	June	32
	September	32
	December	31
2024	March	30

Darlington Cares enjoys strong support from its 30 members whose employees provide thousands of hours of volunteering in the environment, education and social justice. 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. EE has committed to leading a Community Challenge which will involve numerous employers' volunteers working in the Denes over the summer. The sister project, Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership is attracting a range of different employers.

Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director



The number of volunteering hours has increased by 50.9% (3,451) from 6,776 in 2022/23 to 10,227 for 2023/24. Volunteering hours continue to grow after the significant drop off during the pandemic.

The programme of activities delivered under the three areas of focus, environment, education and social justice, attract growing numbers of company volunteers. However, in addition specific initiatives like the great park auction and the forthcoming Community Challenge prove a popular way of attracting more volunteering support. A target of 10,000 hours has been set for 2024.

Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

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.

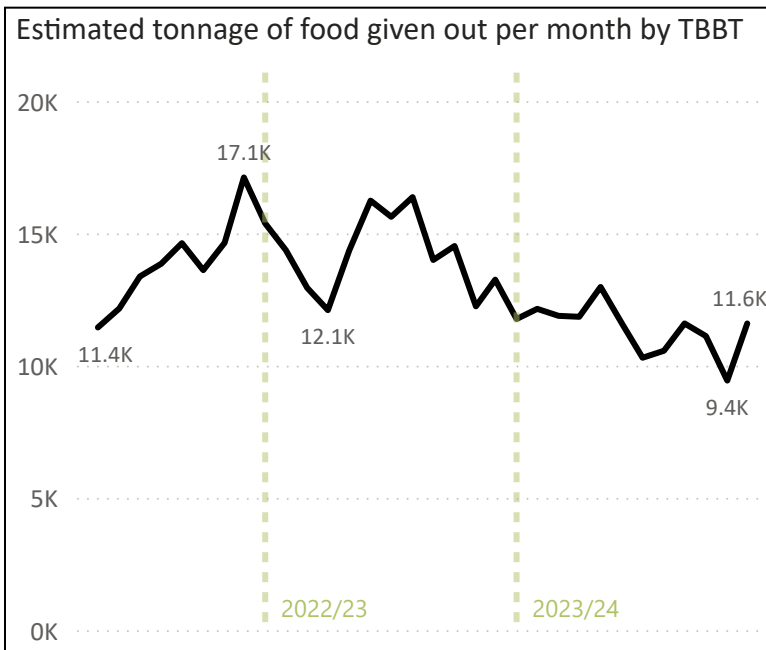
Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

S3. Work with partners to address food instability

The Bread and Butter Thing now hold sessions at nine hubs on a weekly basis across Darlington, a valuable resource for residents struggling with 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 that is 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 a decrease in donations.

Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director



The Bread and Butter Thing (TBBT) has served 20,223 customers which equates to 137,779 kg of food throughout 2023/24. This weight of food has fallen by 34,567 kg (20.2%), from 171,346kg in 2022/23. There have been some issues with the quality and quantity of the food, resulting in a fall in the number of residents using the scheme.

The council are working closely with TBBT to ensure sustained quality and quantity of food across all 9 hubs, based in identified areas of deprivation. The initiative continues to support families through the current cost of living crisis.

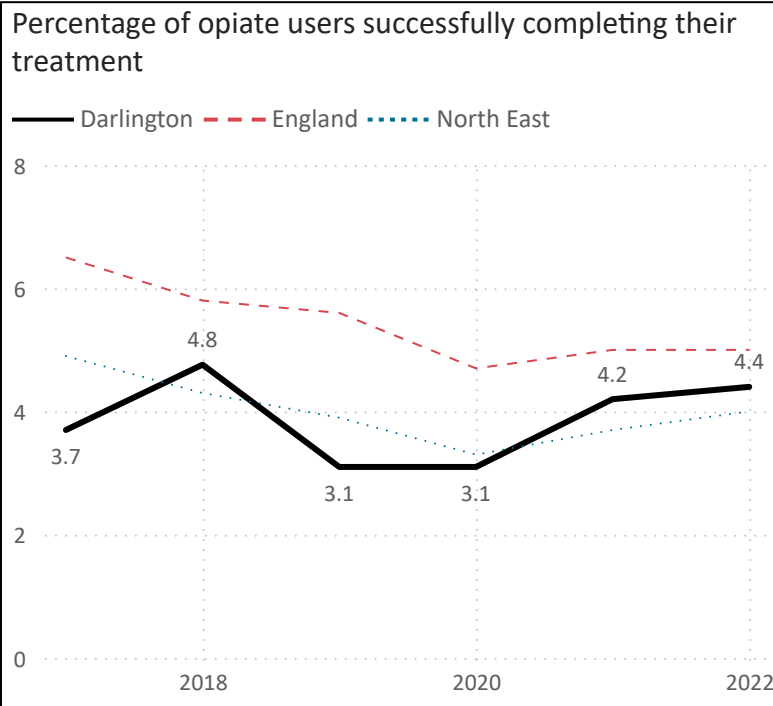
Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

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

The service provides 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 a range of local intervention programmes for young people, continues to provide increased levels of local high visibility patrols through the Home Office Trailblazer initiative, revised policies and procedures and has introduced a new case management system to manage caseloads effectively. A dedicated Environmental Crime Coordinator continues 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. The service 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

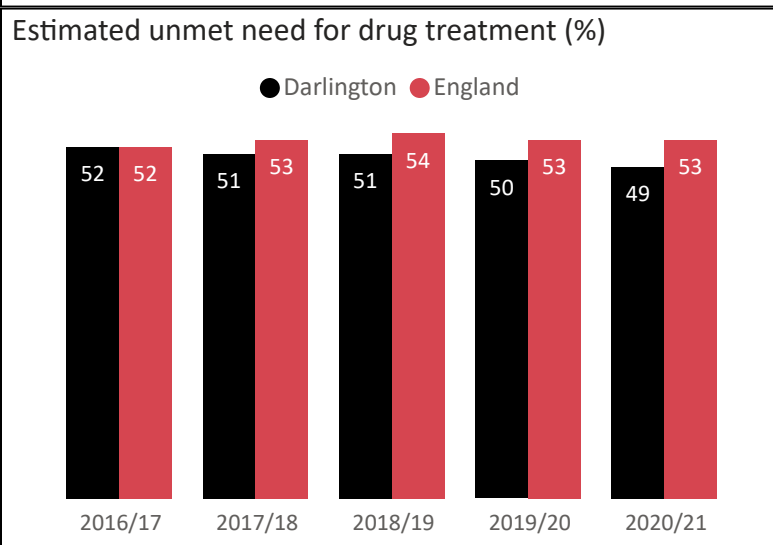
S5. Work with Durham Constabulary and other key partners to improve our collective response to dealing with drug and alcohol issues



This data (from 2022) shows that there is an increasing trend for the proportion of Opiate users who are successfully completing structured drug treatment. This has increased to 4.4% of opiate users for Darlington which is now 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.

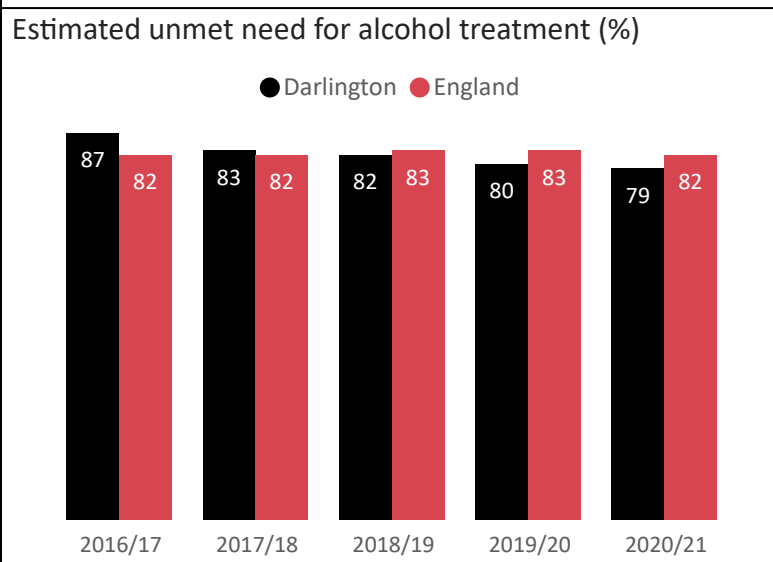
[Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health](#)



This indicator describes the estimated proportion of those who are using drugs who are not accessing treatment, at 49% the estimated unmet need in Darlington is lower than the England average.

Work has been continuing with partners across the whole borough to make our local drug treatment services more accessible and reach those using substances who are not in treatment to support them into treatment.

[Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health](#)



This indicator shows the estimated proportions of adults who are hazardous drinkers in need of alcohol treatment that are not in treatment. The latest data shows that this is a lower percentage at 79% compared to the England average of 82%.

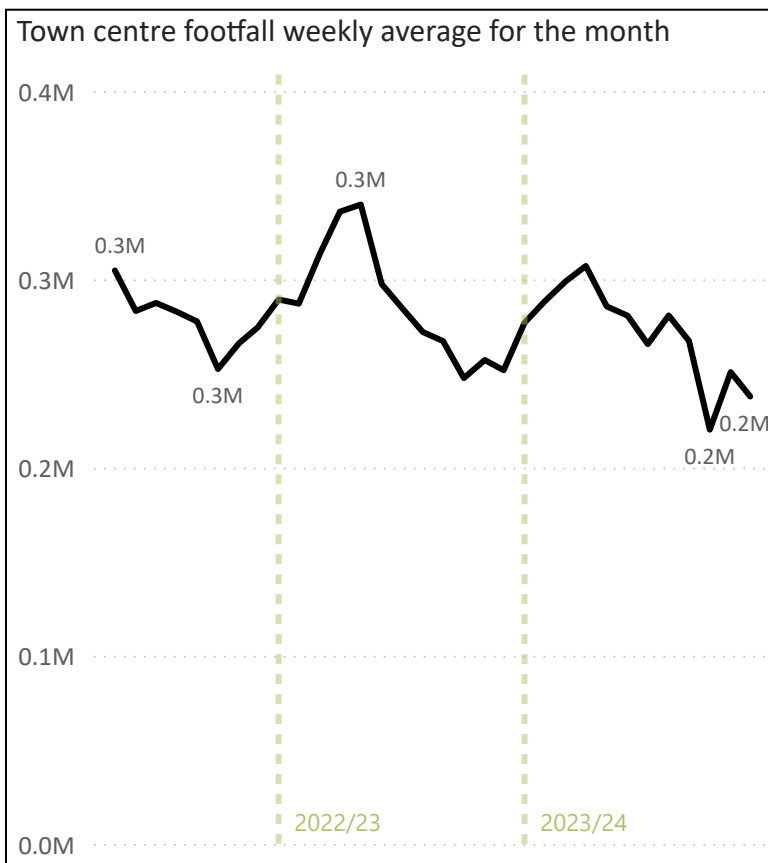
There has been multiagency actions with partners including including the A&E at Darlington Memorial Hospital (DMH) and local GPs to identify those who are hazardous drinking earlier and provide an earlier intervention and referral into local services for support.

[Lorraine Hughes: 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 40 provides a safe space in the night-time economy. There is a newly appointed co-ordinator who manages over 40 volunteers. Number 40 deals with twenty to thirty incidents a weekend and is open between 9pm and 3am. The hub also opens during any Mongay event to provide support to members of the LGBTQ+ community. We now deliver a StreetFriends initiative which involves staff from Number 40 walking the night-time economy area to proactively provide help and assistance to those in need. We have established a network of Taxi Marshalls who work as a member of the multi-agency team to manage the afternoon and night-time economy. DBC Community Safety has delivered various safety measures including licensed premises / traders checks, dedicated police night-time patrols, a self-help facility in the town centre linked to improved CCTV systems, and more recently, the extension of Pubwatch and a revitalised Shopwatch scheme. Key partners also meet weekly to review incidents and introduce measures to promote a safe and vibrant licensed economy. The town centre car parks have achieved reaccreditation of "Park Mark" in recognition of public accessibility and safety, and DBC were awarded Purple Flag accreditation in January 2024.

Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services



The average monthly footfall for 2023/24 has fallen slightly to 271,640 from 286,938 (2022/23), an average reduction of 5.3%. The months of May, November and December had increased footfall when compared to the previous year.

Investment from the Towns Fund is ongoing to support the High Street, a comprehensive programme of 59 events and animation programmes were delivered throughout the year to attract people to the town. A marketing campaign with video, was released to attract new businesses to the town that reached over 30,000 views across all media platforms.

The redevelopment of the covered market is well advanced, with a whole range of new traders now contracted to open soon.

Occupancy rates in the town centre are currently at 88%.

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

Closed-circuit television (CCTV), continues to provide a much-valued service throughout the Borough of Darlington. The Camera Replacement Programme, which has seen the replacement of 74 older analogue cameras and changed to a wireless means of transmitting images, has been completed on schedule. The Council's Public Space CCTV is now a fully IP digital system which brings many benefits. In addition, new software, 'Genetec Clearance', has been successfully introduced, providing several benefits, including the ability to view data remotely. Pubwatch and Shopwatch Apex radio membership continues to welcome 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.

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

Percentage of staff who have completed equality and diversity training

March 2024

76.1%

The total number of current staff (excluding casual staff) who have attended a half day session of training is 1,458. This equates to 76.1% of the current workforce and is a decline from the previous period. The decline is due to the face to face training being paused until Summer 2024 while the trainer is on maternity leave. Alternative arrangements are in place to provide advice and guidance to staff when required during this period.

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

Percentage of elected members who have completed equality and diversity training

March 2024

78.0%

The face to face training has been paused until Summer 2024 due to the trainer being on maternity leave, but a suite of learning resources has been published on the Intranet as an interim arrangement for members to access. Two members have used the online resources within the reporting period, increasing the number of members who have completed the training to 39.

[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.

Queries

Narrative Versions

Data Engine Comments

Current Indicator Queries

Queries from previous report

No queries found from previous report

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