

ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30 JANUARY 2025

Performance Indicators QTR 2 2024/25

Appendix 2

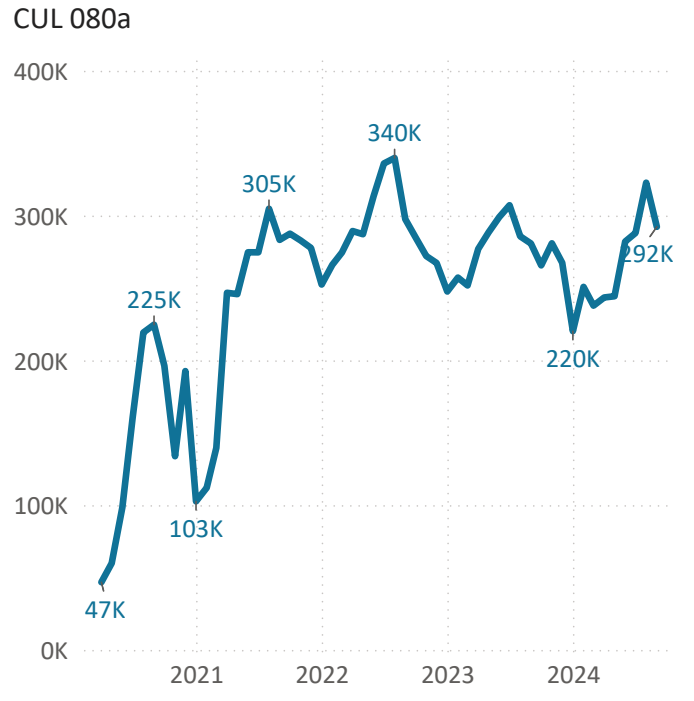
Town centre footfall weekly average for the month

The trendline for town centre footfall continues to follow a similar trendline, August (+12.97%) and September (+4.1%) have been higher than 2023 figures.

The redevelopment of the covered market is well advanced, with another 5 new retailers across a variety of food and retail are now trading on the market floor this has added increased interest and footfall into the market hall building.

Town centre animation and events attract increased numbers into the town centre aimed at encouraging visitors to dwell for longer in Darlington and move around different locations.

Occupancy rates continue to sit at 88% with a number of new businesses opening in units that had become vacant.



Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

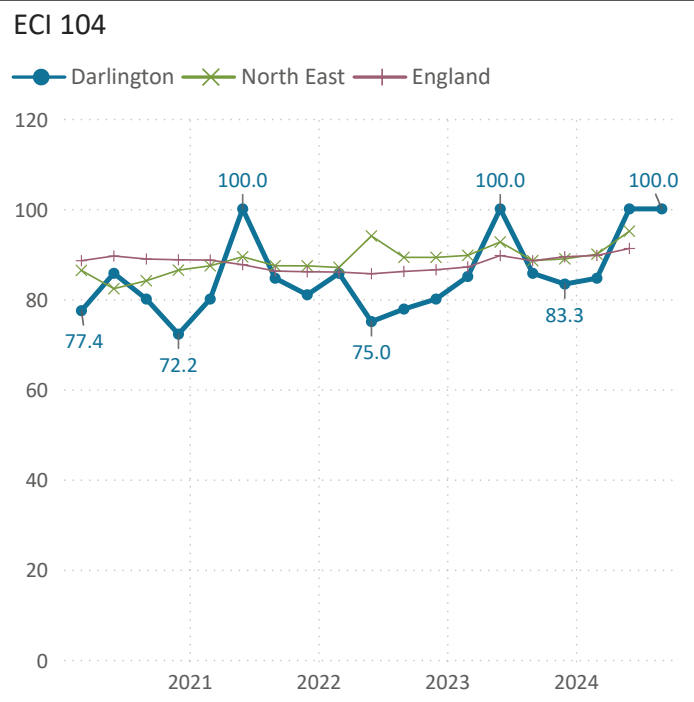
Service Area: Culture

Percentage of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time

The percentage of major planning applications decisions decided within 13 weeks has improved from 84.6% for 2023/24 to 100% for the first two quarters of 2024/2025. A total of 11 major decisions were decided within 13 weeks.

This represents a significant uplift in performance and is above the latest national performance figures available for England of 91.2% and North East of 95.1%.

This has been achievable by addressing a number of areas to ensure that applications move through the system more efficiently.



Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

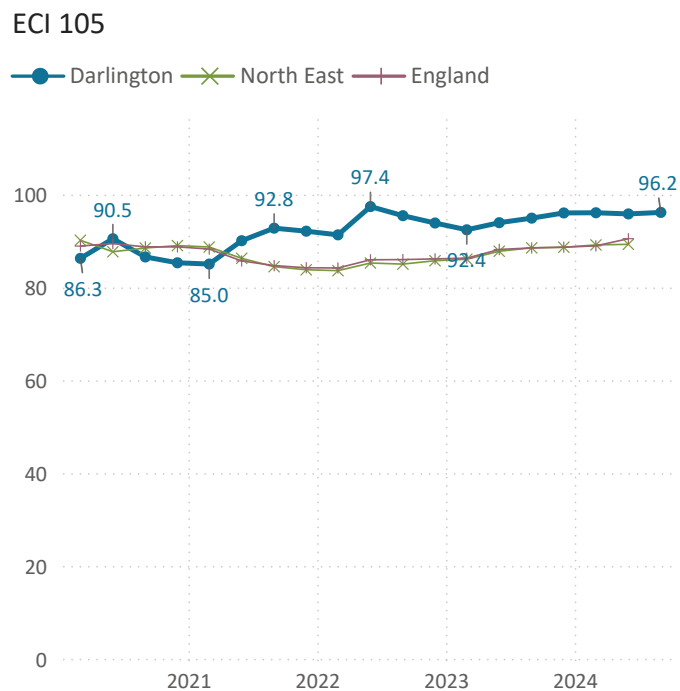
Service Area: Planning

Percentage of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time

The percentage of non-major planning application decisions decided within 8 weeks has remained at 96% for the first two quarters of 2024/25. This percentage is above the latest available England average of 95.8% and North East average of 89.3%.

A total of 175 non-major decisions were decided within 8 weeks from the cumulative total of 182

Of the 7 decisions that did not meet the deadline 3 of these were caused by extension of times not being updated before they expired, which has now been reviewed and corrected.



Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

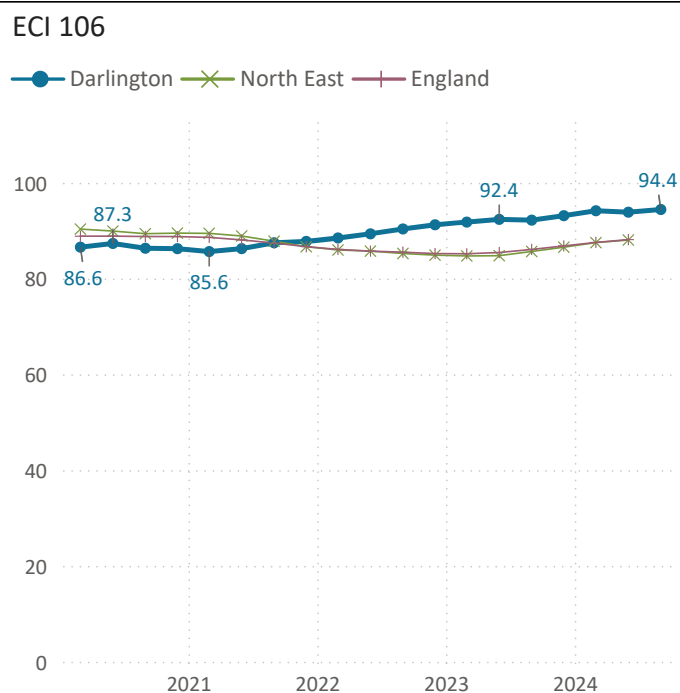
Service Area: Planning

Percentage of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (24 months to date)

The 24 month rolling percentage of non-major planning application decisions decided within 8 weeks has remained the same at 94.4% .

Darlington’s percentage has been above the England and North East averages since December 2021. The latest averages available show England at 88.1% and the North East at 88.0%.

The 40 which were not decided within the target were delayed due to various issues with some caused by Nutrient Neutrality issues and some by missing Extension of Time targets.



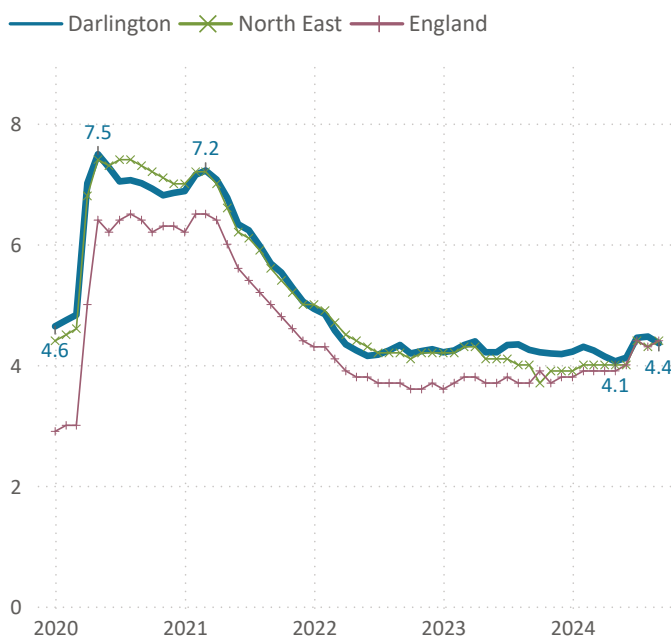
Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Service Area: Planning

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 September 2024 now stands at 4.4%. The rate in Darlington (4.4) is identical to both the North East and England rates. The static nature of this measure can be attributed to several factors, including economic inactivity, post-pandemic labour market mismatches and economic uncertainty.

ECI 321



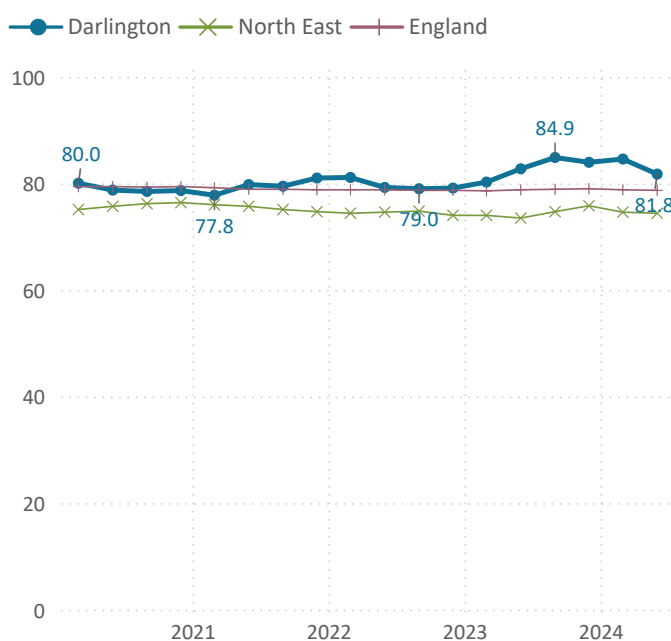
Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Service Area: Economic Growth

Percentage of working age adults who are economically active

The Darlington economically active rate (employed and unemployed) has shown a general increase since March 2023 and is now higher than the rate for both England and North East region. The percentage of working age adults who are economically active in Darlington now stands at 81.8% (June 2024). Meanwhile the rates for both the north-east (74.4%) and England (78.7%) remain lower. Working-age economically inactive people have various reasons for not looking for and/or being able to start work. eg students, sickness, caring and family responsibilities and early retirement. Higher economic activity rates are generally influenced by demographic changes and improved labour market conditions.

ECI 327

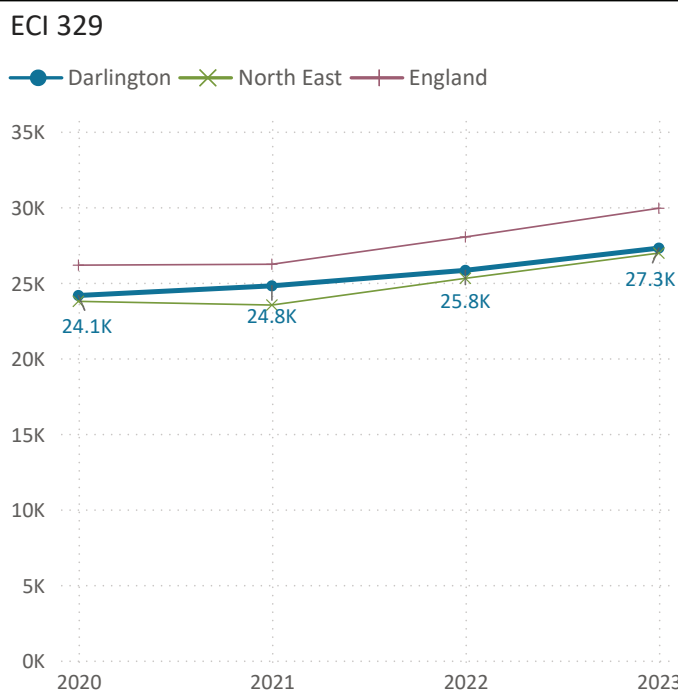


Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Service Area: Economic Growth

Average (median) annual income: Darlington residents

Darlington residents average (median) annual income has risen for the 5th year in succession to £27,282. This is slightly higher than the figure for the North east region (£26,952), but lower than the England average £29,919. Between December 2022 and December 2023, Darlington residents average (median) annual income increased by 5.7%, a rate that is lower than the England and North East rates of 6.8% and 6.7% respectively.

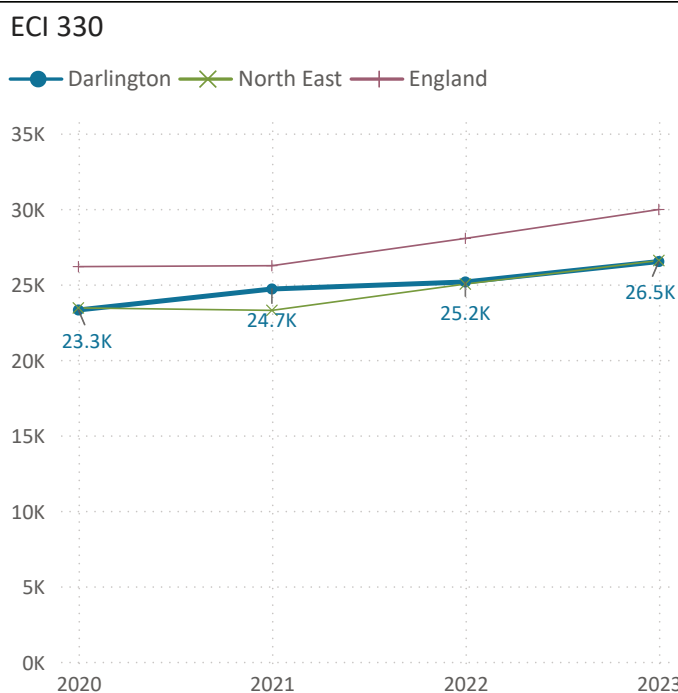


Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Service Area: Economic Growth

Average (median) annual income: Darlington employees

Employees average income in Darlington have increased in 2023 to £26,509 (5.4%) - this represents 4 years of year on year increases. The income level is similar to the North east average at £26,576, and below the England figure of £29,955. Residents who live in Darlington have a higher average income than those employees who work in the borough. However, 2023 saw a reduction in the gap between employees and resident average earnings.



Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Service Area: Economic Growth

New homes delivered, annually

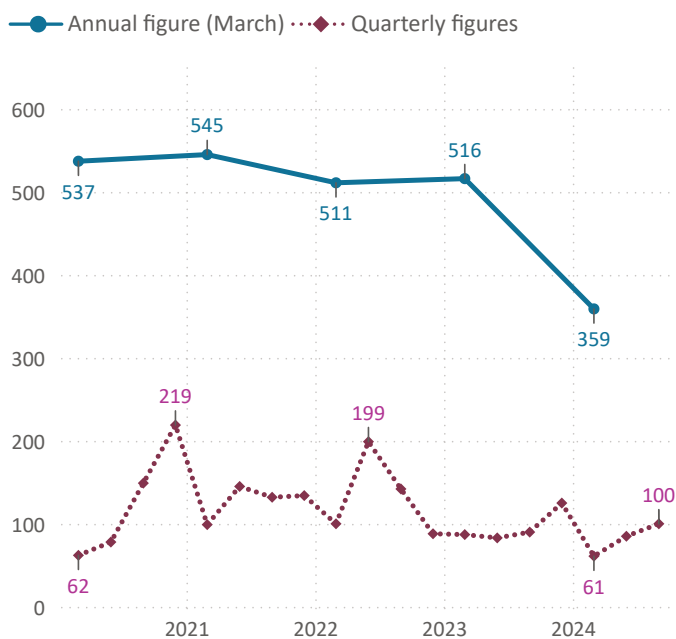
Housing delivery has seen a drop in the 2023/24 financial year largely due to the delayed 'lag' effect as a result of the Nutrient Neutrality (NN) designation affecting the whole Tees Catchment.

Applications are now progressing and gaining consent largely due to the Natural England NN credit scheme. The Borough has fared well in the proportion of credits allocated to developments in Darlington.

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.

There were 100 completions in Q2 of 24/25. This is slightly up from 90 completions at Q2 of last year.

ECI 401



Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

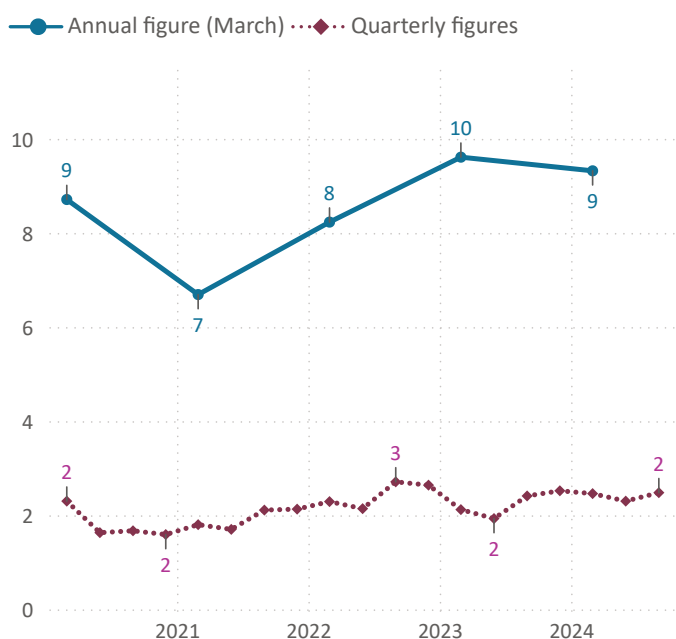
Service Area: Economic Growth

DBC number of working days per FTE lost due to sickness (excluding schools)

At the half year point, the number of days lost to sickness has increased by 0.43 per FTE when compared to the same point in 2023/24. Nationally and locally there has been an increase in sickness absence following the pandemic.

Managers at all levels continue to manage sickness within their teams, using the Council's sickness management policies, supported by Human Resources officers. The development of My Journey and the promotion of quality conversations between managers and their employees will compliment our wellbeing programme and assist with absence going forward.

FHR 001



Lead Officer: Brett Nielsen: Assistant Director - Resources

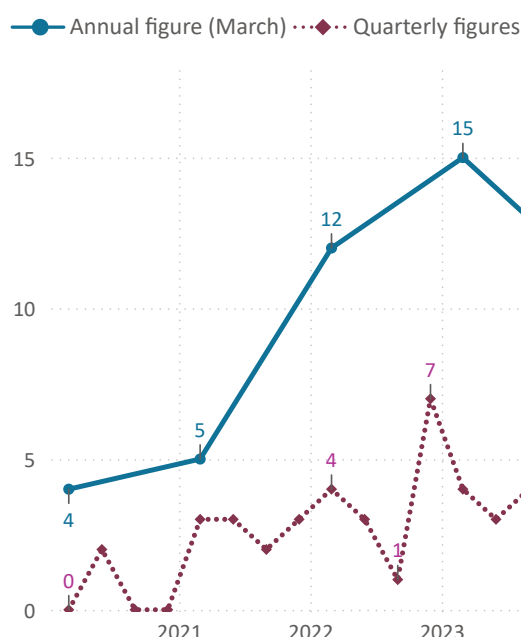
Service Area: Human Resources

Number of reportable employee accidents / ill health

Nine reports were made to the Health and Safety Executive as required by the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations at Quarter 2 in 2024/25, including two diagnosis of a work related occupational disease/ill health.

All accidents and ill health reports are investigated by management and the Health & Safety team to establish the causes, to identify issues or trends and make recommendations to prevent reoccurrence. Health and Safety is a key priority for the Council at all levels and is promoted through all working practices.

FHR 003



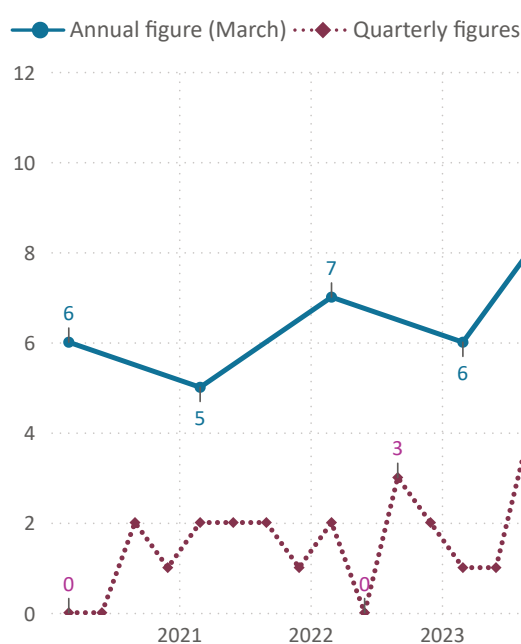
Lead Officer: Brett Nielsen: Assistant Director - Resources

Service Area: Health & Safety

Number of complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman

The number of complaints upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman in quarters one and two has decreased from five to four, compared to 2023. All of the complaints were upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Of the four upheld complaints two related to Adult Services, one to Finance (Adults) and one to Lifeline.

FHR 008



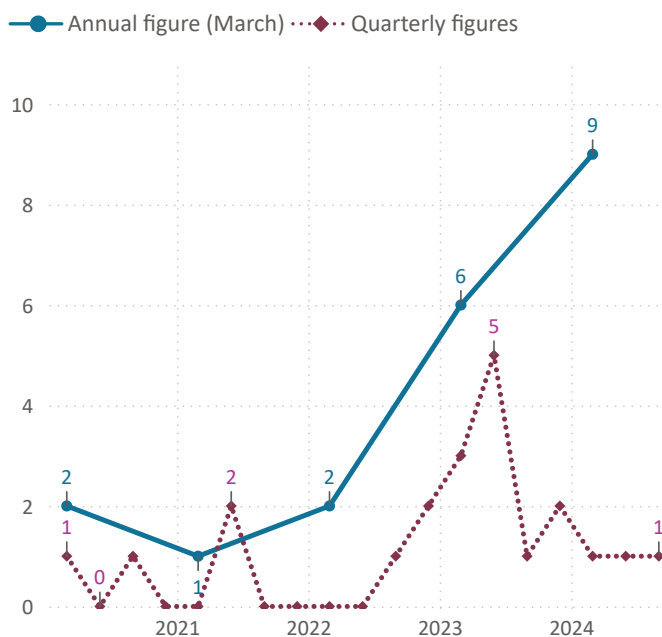
Lead Officer: Luke Swinhoe: Assistant Director - Law & Governance

Service Area: Complaints & Information Governance

Number of complaints upheld by the Information Commissioner's Office

There was a decrease from six to two upheld complaints, compared to quarters one and two of 2023. One of the two upheld complaints related to a delay in responding an Freedom of Information (FOI) request, the other to a delay in responding to a Subject Access Request (SAR). Risk of enforcement action from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in relation to delays in responding to SARs remains on the Council's Risk Register, and work is ongoing to reduce that risk.

FHR 009



Lead Officer: Luke Swinhoe: Assistant Director - Law & Governance

Service Area: Complaints & Information Governance

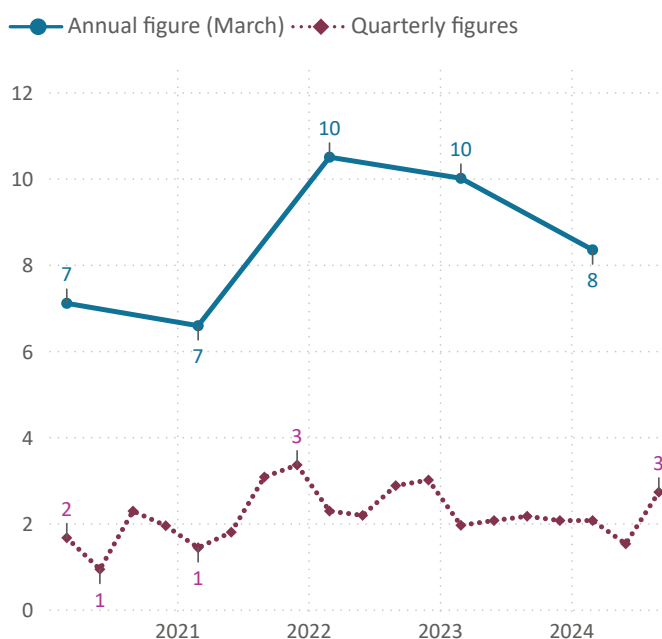
Staff turnover - Voluntary Leavers (Divided by average number of staff in period)

The number of voluntary leavers is slightly higher this year than at the same point in 23/24 (89 v 86).

We undertake exit surveys and interviews to understand why employees leave the Council and to inform improvement. 91% of people who completed an exit survey said they would work for DBC again.

We are continuing to review our processes and to develop and improve our employment package to ensure the Council attracts and retains the best talent for all roles.

FHR 019

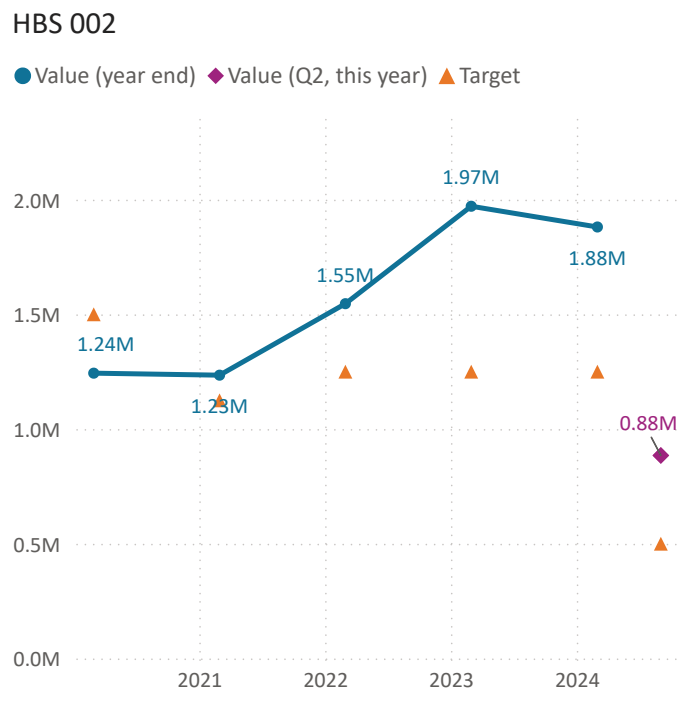


Lead Officer: Brett Nielsen: Assistant Director - Resources

Service Area: Human Resources

Amount of Council Tax arrears collected (£)

The amount of Council Tax arrears collected for quarter 2 has exceeded the target for 2024-25, with £0.88m collected. This is lower than the £0.99m collected for the same period in 2023-24 and the amount of outstanding arrears has increased slightly from £4.8m at the end of quarter 2 in 2023-24 to £5.0m at the end of quarter 2 in 2024-25. However, the majority of this debt is fairly recent and we are confident of meet our collection target for 2024-25.

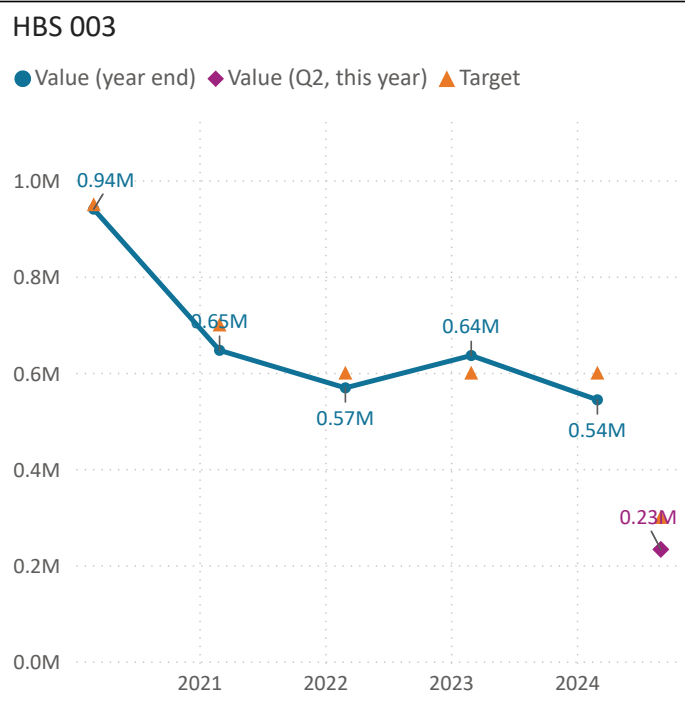


Lead Officer: Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues

Service Area: Housing & Revenue

Amount of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered (£)

The amount of Housing Benefit overpayments collected in quarter 2 has fallen below the target for 2024-25. £233k of overpayments were collected, compared to £328k collected for the same period in 2023-24. However, collection rates are currently at 114% of the new overpayment debt created (£203k), and the overall outstanding debt has decreased (currently at £1.25 million). It is likely that as Housing Benefit claims continue to transfer to Universal Credit, the amount of Housing Benefit overpayments created (and therefore the amount collected) will decrease.

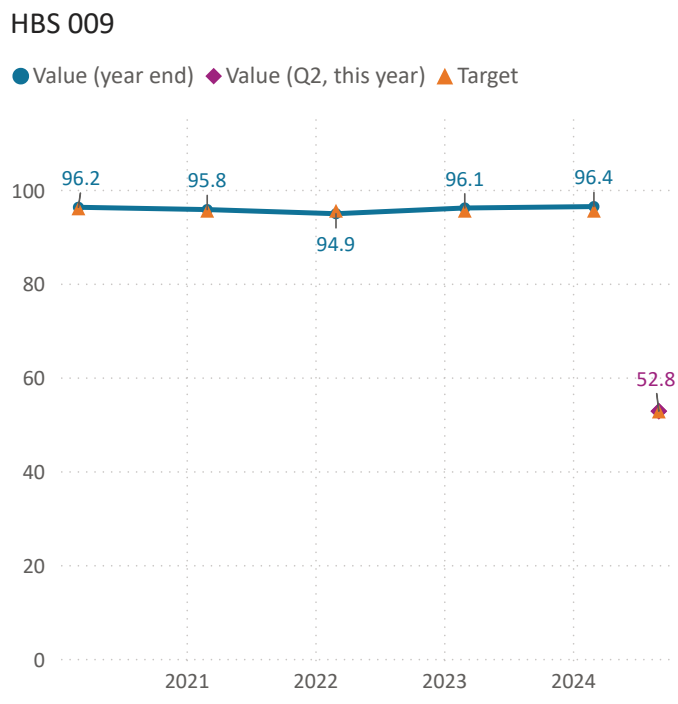


Lead Officer: Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues

Service Area: Housing & Revenue

Percentage of Council Tax collected in-year

The percentage of Council Tax collected slightly exceeded the target for quarter 2, with 52.78% of Council Tax collected in 2024-25. This is a slight decrease in collection, compared to the same period in 2023-24, which was 52.91%. However, performance is on target for 2024-25. The overall amount of Council Tax collected by quarter 2 was £43.7m, compared to £41.1m by quarter 2 in 2023-24.

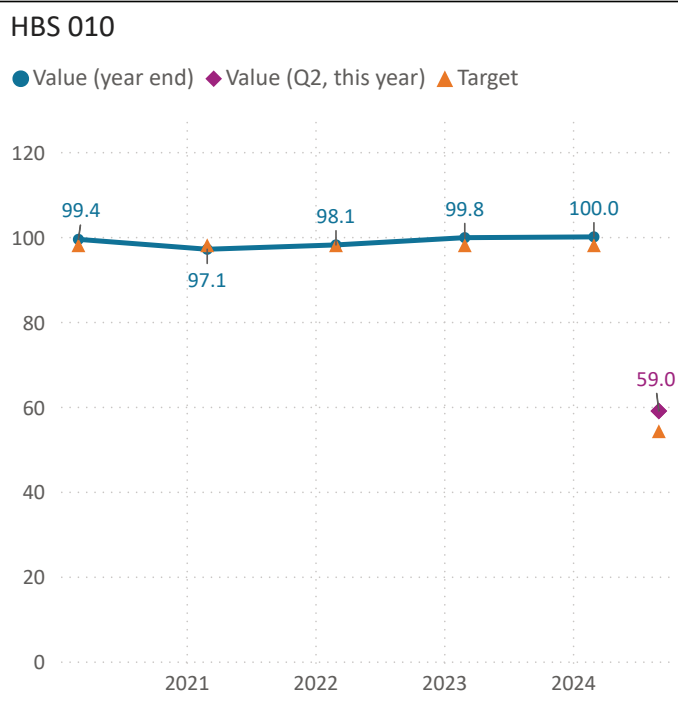


Lead Officer: Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues

Service Area: Housing & Revenue

Percentage of Business Rates collected in-year

The percentage of Business Rates collected exceeded the target for quarter 2, with 58.96% of Business Rates collected, compared to 58.87% in quarter 2 of 2023-24. The overall amount collected by quarter 2 was £19.8 million compared to £18.4 million by quarter 2 of 2023-24. Business Rates collection is therefore on course to meet the 2024-25 target of 98%.



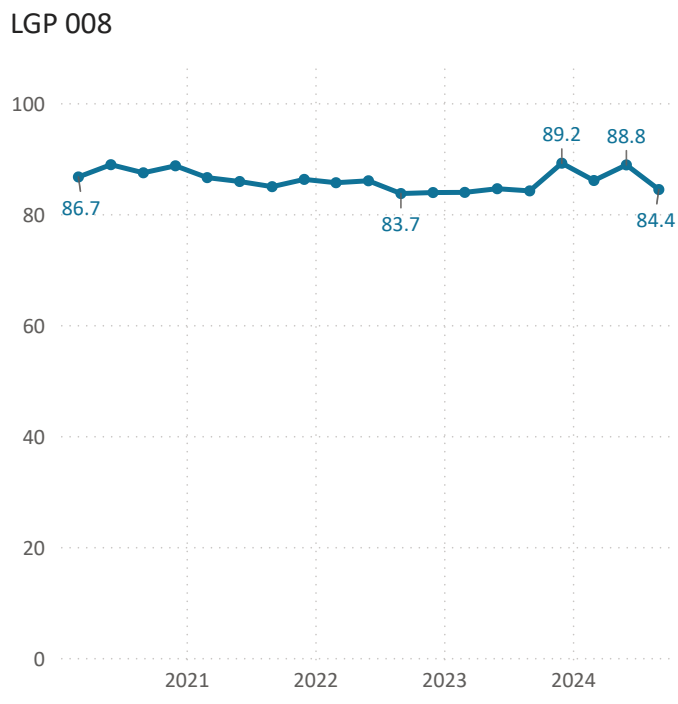
Lead Officer: Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues

Service Area: Housing & Revenue

Contracted spend as a percentage of total non-salary spend

In quarter 1 the figure rose to 88.8% from 86% and in quarter 2 it dropped to 84.4%. This is due to a large amount of spend which hasn't been tracked through the system. This will be rectified in quarter 3.

The team are continuing to raise the profile of procurement through communications announcements which will have an impact on the indicator moving forward.

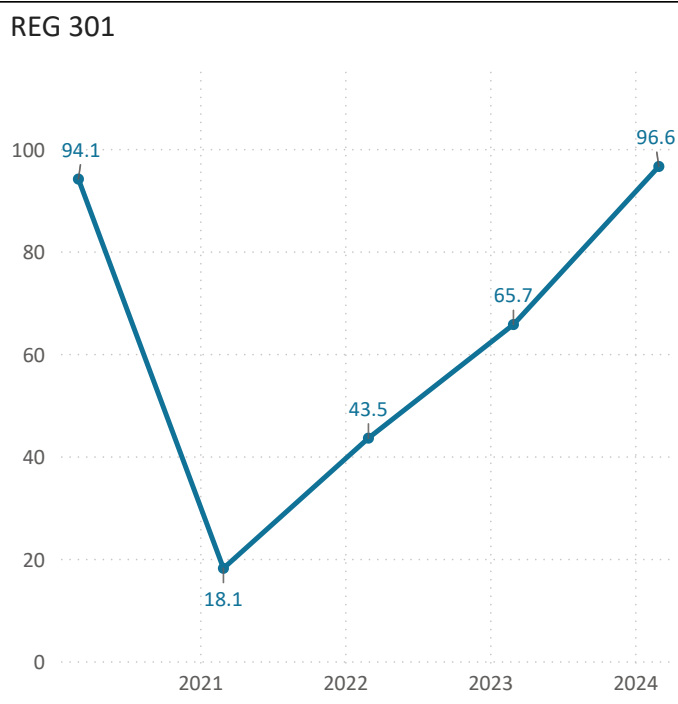


Lead Officer: Luke Swinhoe: Assistant Director - Law & Governance

Service Area: Procurement

Percentage of food premises which are inspected within the year in which they are due

We are currently on track with food hygiene inspections however we are using a contract inspector to help us complete this legal requirement due to a number of vacancies in the team. We are currently trying to recruit suitable inspectors but this is proving difficult due to a national shortage of qualified Environmental Health Officers (EHOs). To help with future requirements we have employed a number of student EHOs to future proof the team.

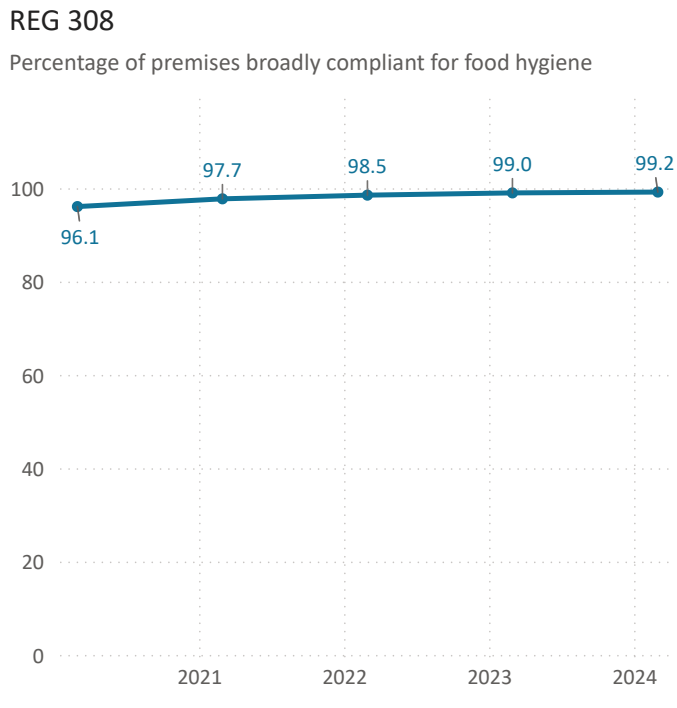


Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Service Area: Environmental Health

Percentage of premises broadly compliant for food hygiene

Premises within the Borough have shown a consistently high level of compliance year on year. This is due to a robust, consistent, and proportionate advice, inspection, and enforcement regime by officers. Inspectors have worked extremely hard to ensure that standards are maintained. This Indicator illustrates the continued high level of compliance of food premises within the Borough of Darlington which is dependant on regular visits by a statutory service.

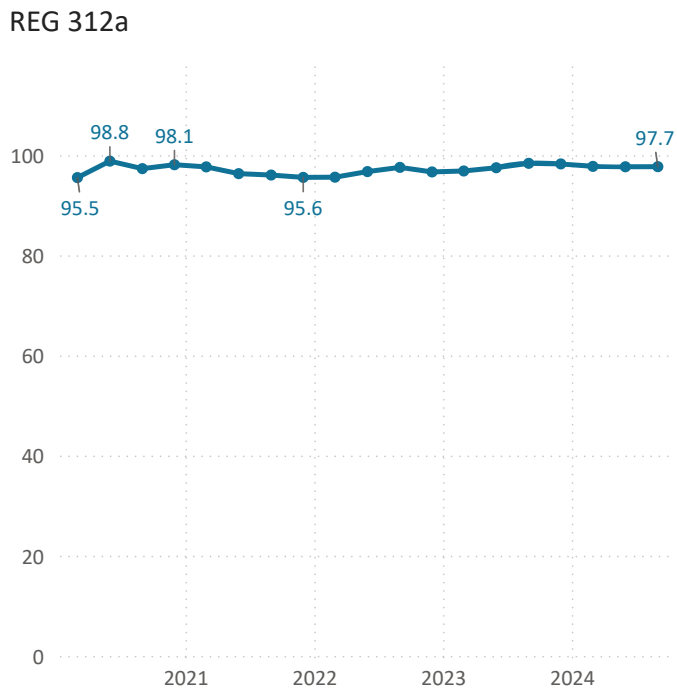


Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Service Area: Environmental Health

Percentage of noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt (except where diary sheet returned)

Environmental Health continue to consistently meet this performance target and have recently successfully prosecuted a noise offender for playing excessive loud music and shouting which persisted into the night and early morning disturbing residents. This resulted in a fine and the Court granting the Council permission to dispose of the music amplifier and speakers which had been seized from the property. Domestic noise complaints can now be reported on line via the following link:
<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/environmental-health/pollution/noise/>



Lead Officer: Mark Ladyman: Assistant Director - Economic Growth

Service Area: Environmental Health