

Darlington Borough Council

Council Plan Performance Management Report

2024/25 Quarter 4

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Core Principle: Addressing inequalities

Darlington is a wonderful place to live and work and we want opportunities to be accessible to everyone. We will have a long-term focus on understanding and addressing the causes of inequality ensuring our communities are safe and can thrive.

Develop a cross-council approach based on an in-depth understanding of inequalities and their causes, with a focus on local communities experiencing disadvantage

The council's policy team is undertaking analysis of data on child poverty in Darlington and the actions the Council is currently undertaking to address poverty in the Borough. This work will be considered by the Council's Chief Officers Board and Chief Officers Executive. The analysis of this work is intended to inform the approach the council takes to addressing this challenge, how collaborating with voluntary, public and business partners could be focused to address inequality, and how discretionary funding, such as the Plan for Neighbourhoods, may be deployed. The team has also taken an active role as a member of the NE Child Poverty Commission to support their work and lobbying on the key issues for the national child poverty strategy.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Core Principle: Addressing inequalities

Ensure all new strategies and plans consider inequalities, starting with the development of an inclusive growth strategy and a review of the health and wellbeing strategy

The Equality Policy and Objective 2023-27 sets out the council's approach to meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty established in the Equality Act 2010. One part of our equality objective is to provide training, support and guidance to staff and members to help them meet their duties under the equality act. Equalities are considered within the policy and strategy development process, and the training embeds equality thinking into daily activities.

Data from a wide range of sources is regularly gathered and analysed to ensure the council has a good understanding of inequalities across the Borough and wider region. A profile report of the Borough will be published annually and used across the council to inform decision making.

Last year an internal policy network was established through which officers from across the council, who have a responsibility for policy development come together to share learning and receive briefings on the latest insights into the Borough.

The Chief Officers Executive is responsible for ensuring all new strategies and plans consider inequalities. Information regarding progress with the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy can be found elsewhere within this performance report.

Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

Core Principle: Addressing inequalities

Strengthen partnership working with key stakeholders and the voluntary and community sector with a long-term focus on opportunity and addressing the causes of inequality and short-term focus on reducing the burden of the cost of living. We will work with communities to understand first-hand the challenges they face

Household Support Fund (HSF) Round 7 is being delivered through voluntary and community organisations including:

- Vouchers during holiday period for children currently in receipt of Free School Meals
- Support for Care Leavers
- 1523 Vulnerable households requiring additional support including lone parents and low income pensioners.
- Elderly residents will be offered support in energy proofing their homes via Age UK
- Darlington-based foodbanks will be supported with food provision
- Support through citizens advice for 1500 households experiencing financial hardship

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Core Principle: Addressing inequalities

Core Principle: Tackling climate change

The changing climate impacts all our lives now and we know this is particularly important to our younger residents. One of the first things we did when we came to office was bring forward by 10 years, to 2040, the Council's commitment to being carbon neutral.

Deliver the climate change action plan to make Darlington Borough Council carbon neutral by 2040

The climate change action plan is reported on twice a year to Cabinet and Council. An annual report is also published on the Council's website. The Council has made progress on the actions within the plan and is following the trajectory of 40% reduction in the council's carbon emissions every five years. The Council is over half way towards the carbon neutral target.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Core Principle: Tackling climate change

Involve all parts of the council in a cross-council approach to sustainability and climate change

The Council's Climate Change commitment is a cross-council ambition, with actions in our action plan from directorates across the Council. Climate change is now a key principle in the Council Plan.

In December 2024, we submitted a report to the Department for Food and Rural Affairs as part of their trial on expanding the Secretary of State's adaptation reporting power. This required involvement from officers from across the Council, to help ensure we are resilient to future climate change.

This year will see the third year of the popular Eco Fair held in June 2025.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Core Principle: Tackling climate change

Work alongside our business community collaborating with groups such as the Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership to transition to net zero

The Council continues to be an active member of the Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership and is also a member of the steering group for the partnership.

The Council's Business Development Team newsletter carries information and articles relevant to Darlington businesses, including sources of help and funding to support the business community transition to net zero.

The Council's Communications Team creates content to showcase what businesses have been able to achieve and use it's own successes to inspire and encourage. The climate change pages of the website also have sources of advice and information for businesses.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Core Principle: Tackling climate change

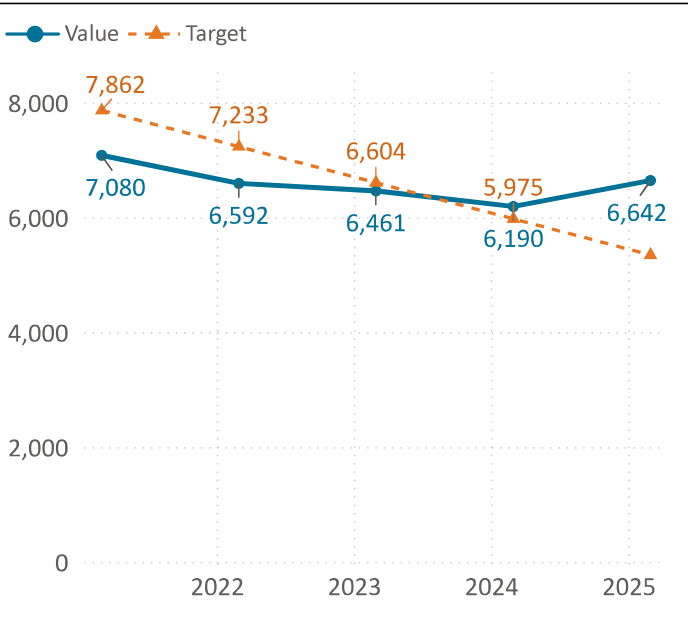
Work with partners, government, public and private sectors and residents for a resilient Darlington so we are able to respond and adapt to change.

Darlington Employers Environment Partnership (DEEP) was set up in 2023. It brings together like-minded local businesses to generate more sustainable outcomes from products, services and approaches. There are three primary benefits for businesses who join: to network and learn from each other, to make direct contact with businesses that can help them reduce their carbon footprint and to promote their businesses achievements towards Net Zero. Within the last 6 months membership has doubled to over 40.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director
Core Principle: Tackling climate change

Darlington Borough Council emissions (tonnes of CO2 equivalent)

There has been an increase in emissions from last year. We need to explore this further, but the opening of Hopetown will have had an impact. For the first time we have included the fuel cards which adds to fleet emissions. Actions continue to be taken to reduce our energy use, for example, solar panels are currently being installed on The Dolphin Centre, which will reduce the electricity required from the grid. This work is due to be completed ahead of schedule. Solar panels have been installed on 5 refuse collection vehicles, reducing the amount of fuel used for radios, lights etc. The licensed taxi fleet now has 76 hybrids and 5 fully electric cars. This is over 30% of the fleet.



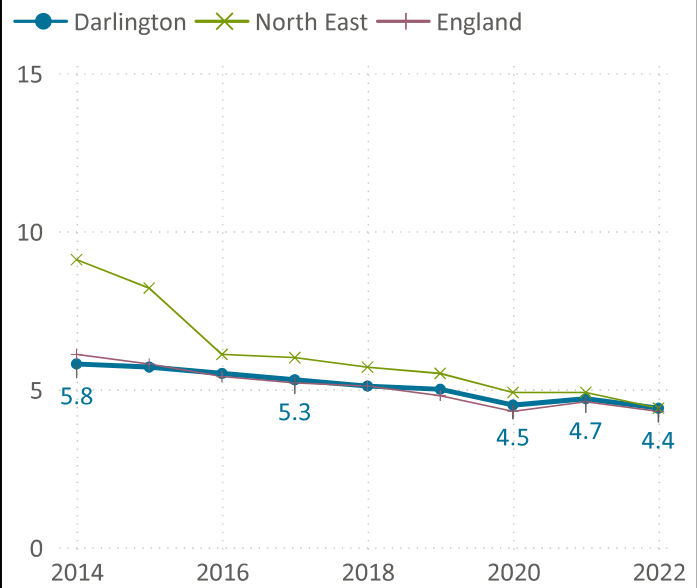
Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection
Core Principle: Tackling climate change
Key Deliverable: Deliver the climate change action plan to make Darlington Borough Council carbon neutral by 2040

CO2 emissions per capita (tonnes of CO2 equivalent)

Data for this indicator is published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, two years in arrears. Data is published in summer, so we cannot update figures at present.

We are continuing to push social media and communications messages to residents, young people and businesses to encourage action from everybody. Our Eco Fair in June 2024 saw more than 5,000 people attending the event, and we are currently planning the 2025 event.

We are supporting the Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership and its efforts to reach out to businesses across Darlington.



Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Core Principle: Tackling climate change

Key Deliverable: Work alongside our business community collaborating with groups such as the Darlington Employers Environmental Partnership to transition to net zero

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

We will remain focussed on the financial sustainability of the council, ensuring good governance and delivering the best services possible, with the resources we have, for our residents, communities, and businesses.

Deliver a balanced Medium Term Financial Plan and positive Value For Money outcome

Council approved the 2025/26 to 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) at their February 2025 meeting. The revenue budget management outturn report for 2024/25 shows an improved position of £1.149m on the 2025/26 MTFP opening balance with an overall positive position against the 2024/25 MTFP of £0.264m. Further detail can be found in the July Cabinet report.

All services continue to scrutinise all their budgets to assist with the current and future years budgets and to ensure value for money.

The latest audit report of the Council's accounts for 2023/24 undertaken by our external auditors Forvis Mazars did not identify any actual significant weakness in the arrangements to secure value for money in the use of Council resources.

Lead Officer: Elizabeth Davison: Executive Director - Resources & Governance

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

Deliver high quality governance and decision making

Statutory officers met to review the Local Code of Corporate Governance and work progress on 7 March 2025.

The Member Working Group to review Council Decision Making and the role of Scrutiny Committees continues to meet regularly.

Training was ongoing throughout 2024 on a range of topics including: Code of Conduct, Procurement, Governance and Political Awareness.

Council, Cabinet and Committee papers have been reviewed throughout the year for compliance and delegated decisions review meetings have also been held.

The Register of gifts and hospitality has been updated throughout the year.

Staff and member comms have been circulated during the year, including topics such as the pre election period, Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act and Whistleblowing.

Lead Officer: Elizabeth Davison: Executive Director - Resources & Governance

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

Review and refresh the Asset Management Plan

The production of a draft Strategic Asset Plan (to replace the existing, now dated, Asset Management Plan) has been delayed due to resource capacity and awaiting completion of the Council Plan. The draft now needs updating to accord with the Council Plan and the Council's priorities and it is intended to refer the report to Cabinet in September 2025, subject to input from the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, if considered necessary.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

Review and refresh the Procurement Strategy

The Council spends millions of pounds every year and we want to use money effectively and achieve value by purchasing and procuring what we need at the right price and quality. The Council Plan prioritises growing the local economy and procurement activity can help in delivering this goal.

The Procurement Strategy 2025 – 2027 was developed to ensure the Council procures goods, services and works in line with the Procurement Act 2023 (which came into force on 24 February 2025), the Council Plan and our key objectives. The plan will direct and inform our procurement activity and was approved by Cabinet on 8 April 2025 following consultation. The council’s procurement activity will be driven by the following key objectives and be kept under review;

1) Working together, 2) Delivering quality and value for money, 3) Social Value, 4) Climate change, 5) Governance and compliance, 6) Local economy, 7) Innovation, improvement and forward planning.

Lead Officer: Amy Wennington: Assistant Director - Law & Governance

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

Build on the Capital Project Management process by introducing an enhanced ICT system to improve efficiency and effectiveness

In order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Capital Project delivery, the Capital Projects team have worked alongside the Xentrall team to develop a bespoke project management system within Microsoft Teams. This system, which is known as ProBox will allow a more efficient flow and recording of information. It will feed into the Project Position Statement which is reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis. The system is currently being tested by the Capital Projects team with new projects utilising the system.

Lead Officer: Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

Review and deliver the workforce strategy

After a period of careful design and collaboration with key stakeholders on our new workforce strategy and its supporting frameworks, we have completed the staff consultation phase. This important step enabled us to gather valuable insights and perspectives, ensuring employee voices are integral to shaping our future direction. We are now reviewing feedback in advance of progressing to the approval stage, followed by rollout to staff commencing in the summer.

Lead Officer: Brett Nielsen: Assistant Director - Resources
Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

Maximise income through new joint venture companies, increase levels of business rates by growing the local economy; and maximise grant opportunities

The Council has an ongoing relationship with ESH Homes Ltd to deliver a number of housing sites in the Borough. The parkland for the Blackwell development is complete and the associated housing site is well underway for the delivery of 44 units. The Neasham Road development is progressing well and will deliver circa 200 units and arrangements are progressing with all parties to bring forward a total of 368 units on the Burtree site. Initial feasibility is also underway to bring forward development on the Coniscliffe Road site for circa 80 units.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection
Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

Explore opportunities to exploit digital assets to create efficiencies and increase productivity, including online delivery

Following public consultation and consideration by Economy and Resources Scrutiny, the Digital Darlington Strategy 2025-30 was approved by Cabinet on 4 March 2025. This sets a clear direction that helps the council increase its productivity and efficiency through the use of technology. Based around 4 themes and underpinned by a delivery plan, the strategy aims to ensure (1) online services are designed around the needs of the customer, (2) that we maintain an awareness of digital exclusion and use this knowledge to inform our adoption and application of technology, (3) that we raise awareness of our online services and the support available to help people overcome digital exclusion, and (4) that we maximise the benefits of our existing systems and emerging technology such as artificial intelligence (AI) where there is a clear business case to do so.

Implementation of the delivery plan has started. Highlights include a successful campaign raising awareness of our online service; being one of only 25 councils participating in a pilot of an AI tool called MINUTE that has been developed by the Government; we are reviewing all of the pages on the corporate website; a programme to implement Microsoft Teams across the council is well under way; and we are increasing use of productivity tools such as Power BI.

Lead Officer: Neil Bowerbank: Head of Strategy, Performance & Communications

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

Continue to build strong relationships with partners, residents and communities.

The Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group continues to be an effective way for the Council to engage with the sector. It is working with the Council to deliver Household Support Fund and is supporting the Plan for Neighbourhoods Board.

The Public Sector Executive Group continues to provide a means for the Chief Executive to meet with her counterparts in the other public sector agencies.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Core Principle: Efficient and effective use of resources

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Building a strong sustainable economy and highly skilled workforce with opportunities for all

Develop and deliver an inclusive economic growth strategy to create the conditions for businesses and the economy to thrive and provide good work opportunities for residents

An Inclusive Growth Strategy is being developed to set out a clear strategic direction and framework on which to further develop the local economy. The Inclusive Growth Strategy presents:

- a long term approach to enable the fair distribution of economic growth across the Borough
- accessible opportunities for all residents

In May 2025, the first engagement workshop with local employers and key stakeholders took place. This provided an opportunity to understand the challenges, barriers, and opportunities for growth from local employers. This valuable feedback will help shape the development of the Strategy.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Establish a place-based partnership to support the continued renewal of the town centre delivering more jobs and more homes

A new place-based partnership with stakeholders will form part of the new Plan for Neighbourhoods. The Plan for Neighbourhoods brings together community representatives, business, strategic partners to prioritise funding into areas of local need. Darlington will receive funding and support totalling up to £20m. The Board is now in place and currently includes representatives from retail, hospitality and other businesses within the town centre, and other employers in sub-centres such as Cockerton.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Ensure that the borough is safe, clean and maintained to levels that support the economy and encourage inward investment

Street Scene continues to sustain levels of cleanliness to high standards within the constraints of available resources. Overall cleanliness of the area following independent auditing confirms an average score of 85% which falls within the 'excellent' category.

Prevention and education measures are used to intervene in problems, with enforcement being a tool that can be used as and when appropriate to help protect the appearance of the town, damage to the environment and public health issues. During this reporting year 467 environmental cases were reported (of which 439 are closed). Some of the results are as follows:

3 x Duty of Care Fixed Penalty Tickets (£1,800)

1 x Duty of Care Fail to pay Fixed Penalty Ticket (Fined £458)

10 x Section 110 Prosecutions (Total Fines £4122)

Prosecutions for Fly Tipping and Waste Management Offences x 2 (Total Fines £2754).

The Council is considering an update the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for the town centre (with some revisions) and proposing a Boroughwide PSPO to support activity. This is due to be considered by Cabinet in June.

Lead Officer: Ben Grabham: Assistant Director - Environmental Services & Community Safety

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Work with employers, national and local employability providers, and TVCA to promote good jobs and career opportunities for all, particularly young people and those with barriers to work, to access good employment outcomes.

The Council continues to work with employers in the local area to develop good job and career opportunities. Working with individual or clusters of local businesses, they are encouraged to develop their skills pipeline and invest in recruiting and sustaining talent by helping identify the support and training they need. The Council also continues to host the Darlington Jobs Fair, with the last event in February 2025 attracting almost 1000 jobseekers. At the event around 100 employers and support organisations helping people find work, and support in overcoming any barriers to employment. Plans are in place for a Skills Booster event in the summer, and a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) focussed event for school children in the autumn.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Provide more education and skills opportunities for residents by delivering the Adult Skills Centre and collaborating with providers and Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA)

The Council's Learning & Skills Service and Darlington College are jointly developing an adult skills centre in the old Northern Echo building to provide additional town centre learning opportunities. The planned date for completion of the centre is November 2025.

As part of the government's Getting Britain Working initiative, council staff are working with TVCA, DWP and the DfE, to develop the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer programme, to encourage 18-21 year old into employment, and the Connect to Work programme which supports those with disabilities, long term health issues, or multiple and complex barriers into work. Both of these programmes are expected to start later in 2025 and will be administered by TVCA.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Work with Market Asset Management to deliver improvements to the historic indoor market

Following the successful completion of Phase 3 works, the market hall has welcomed several exciting new businesses, breathing fresh life into the space. New additions include a traditional Fish & Chip shop, a specialist Italian delicatessen, and a baking school that has transformed the former Millets unit into a creative culinary hub. Over the past year, the market hall has also become a thriving events destination. It played host to the national Up & Running Head Office event, which drew attendance from several international brands, as well as hundreds of runners. The Vault continues to be a popular venue for regular networking events, offering a unique and atmospheric setting for professionals to connect. Meanwhile, the markets team has been busy curating a diverse and vibrant programme of regular markets. These include farmers markets, craft fairs, record markets, and other speciality trading events that attract independent traders from across the region - enhancing the market hall's reputation as a dynamic hub for both commerce and community.

The establishment of an Advisory Board to inform future development and management of the market remains an outstanding item but is in development.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Accelerate the delivery of key sites to the market to attract private sector investment, including Darlington Science Park, Ingenium Parc and Symmetry Park

The Council continues to work with key stakeholders, investors and individual businesses to attract new investment to Darlington. Over 400,000 sq.ft. of top-tier, sustainable logistics and industrial space is now available in Darlington, thanks to specialist commercial developer Greenbox. The development, on Tornado Way, is a joint venture by Partners Group and Citivale, and comprises of three industrial units boasting EPC 'A' and BREEAM 'Excellent' rated facilities. It is hoped that a tenant for some of this space will be announced soon.

Working with partners from CPI and Teesside University a new marketing and promotion of the remaining sites at Darlington Science Park (formally known as Central Park) is under development and will complement the wider branding/promotion of opportunities at Darlington Science Park.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Deliver the Towns Fund projects, including the refurbishment of the Northern Echo building to secure new business occupiers

The Towns Fund Programme remains in the latter stages of delivery. The refurbishment of the former Northern Echo Building is in progress and the Adult Skills hub is due for completion in November 2025. The upper floors will be complete early 2026. Improvements to shops and public realm along Skinnergate and the Yards together with improvements along Victoria Road continue. The redevelopment of Coniscliffe Road is now complete. The redevelopment of 156 Northgate into office accommodation is underway and the refurbishment of Edward Pease House is in the tender stage. The approach to the management of the Northgate Tower development area is still under review.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Work effectively with Darlington Economic Campus to fully realise the opportunities this investment presents to the town and its communities

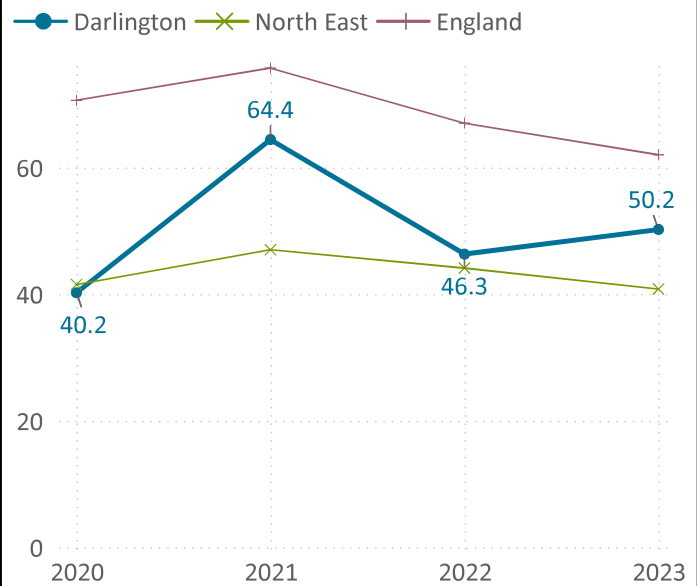
The Council continues to work closely with officers from the Darlington Economic Campus (DEC) on a range of activities. The Council has worked with Government Property Agency to complete the necessary planning requirements to enable construction of the new DEC building on Brunswick Street. It is anticipated that this will commence in summer 2025. At a wider engagement level, DEC have played a major role in supporting the Council with the delivery of a number of skills and workforce development events, such as the Darlington Jobs Fair, Skills Booster and STEM activities, promoting the various career opportunities and skills requirements that are available within the civil service in Darlington.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

New business registration rate per 10,000 residents

New business formation rates tend to fluctuate in Darlington year on year. Between 2022 and 2023, the rate increased from 46.3 to 50.2 new business registrations per 10,000 residents. However, the longer term trend is that the rate has fallen since 2018, an overall trend mirrored by both the rates for the North East and England. In 2023, the number of new business registrations per 10,000 residents in Darlington was 50.2, higher than the north east (40.8), but still lower than the England rate of 62.0.



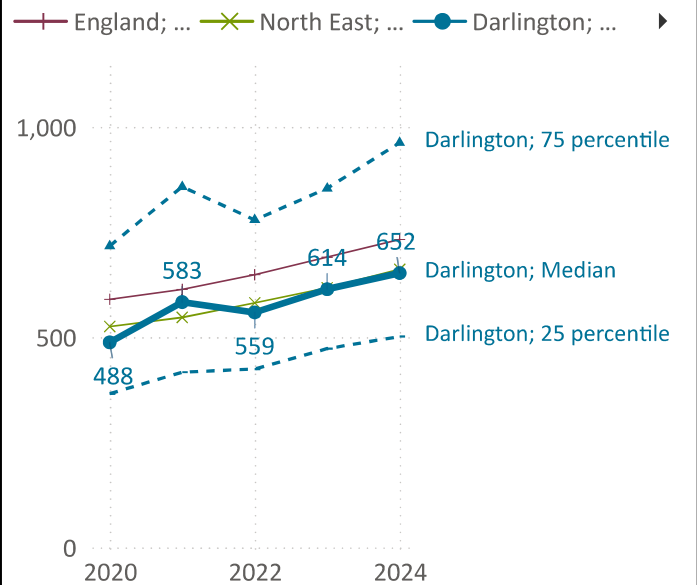
Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: Develop and deliver an inclusive economic growth strategy to create the conditions for businesses and the economy to thrive and provide good work opportunities for residents

Weekly gross pay for full time workers (Residents)

The resident income graph reveals a skewed distribution, where the median income (652.2) is closer to the lower quartile (501.30), indicating that half of the population earns within a relatively narrow range. Meanwhile, the upper quartile (962.30) is much higher, suggesting a significant income disparity for higher earners. Given these values, the income distribution for residents suggests a substantial spread between lower and upper earners, with a high level of inequality.



Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

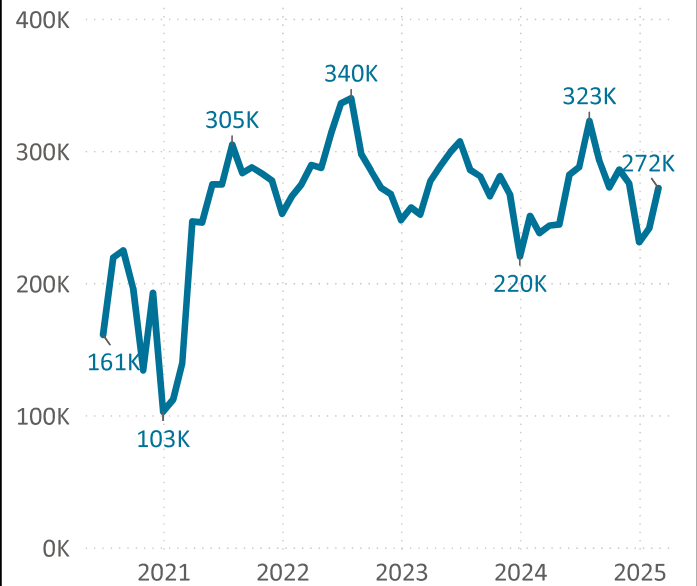
Key Deliverable: Develop and deliver an inclusive economic growth strategy to create the conditions for businesses and the economy to thrive and provide good work opportunities for residents

Town centre footfall weekly average for the month

Footfall in Darlington is following consistent trendlines, with a peak of 322,650 recorded in August 2025. The traditional dip in January was less pronounced compared to 2024. March 2025 footfall also exceeded 2024 levels, reflecting positive momentum and increasing visitor confidence.

Occupancy rates across the town centre are stable at around 85%, supported by the opening of several new businesses, adding to the vibrancy and offer of Darlington.

Ongoing town centre animation and a calendar of events continue to drive increased footfall. These initiatives are designed to encourage visitors to dwell longer, explore a wider range of locations, and enjoy an enhanced overall experience, further boosting activity across Darlington.



Lead Officer: Mike Crawshaw: Head of Culture & Heritage

Council Plan Priority: Economy

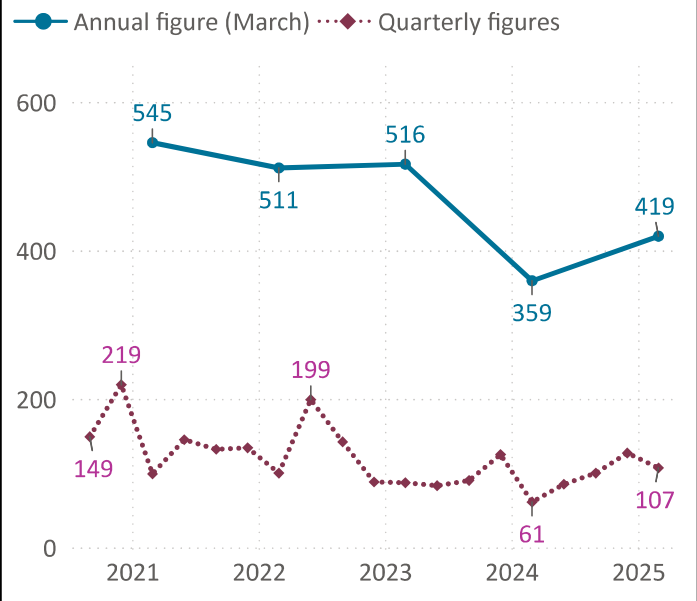
Key Deliverable: Establish a place-based partnership to support the continued renewal of the town centre delivering more jobs and more homes

New homes delivered, annually

Housing delivery has seen a significant recovery since the 2023/24 financial year. The previous fall in delivery can be directly attributed to 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.

Latest monitoring indicates this recovery trend will continue. Q4 period of 2024/25 saw more construction than in the same quarter in 2023/24. In Q4 of 2024/25, 145 starts were made and 107 units were completed, in Q4 of 2023/24, 74 starts were made and 61 units were completed which represents a significant increase.



Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

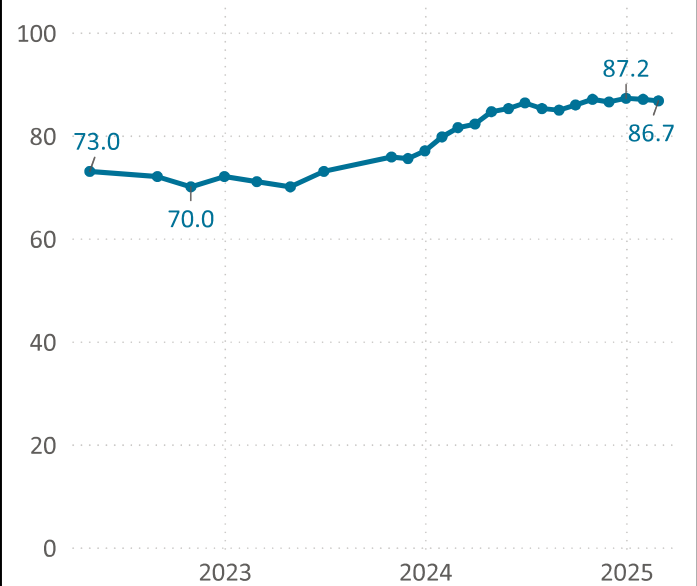
Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: Establish a place-based partnership to support the continued renewal of the town centre delivering more jobs and more homes

Land Audit Management System - Litter Score (Environmental Quality Survey)

The Litter Score is a 12 month rolling average percentage score of the 40 transects inspected for litter every month. Two wards are covered each month, in which twenty areas of the ward are inspected. Each ward is covered once within a twelve month period. An inspection scores cleanliness of an area based on the grading system of the Association For Public Service Excellence (APSE). Sites are graded from a grade A to a grade D. A score over 70% represents 'good' performance.

The average pass rate over the last 12 months for litter has increased from 84.9% to 86.7%. As well as litter, the inspections include detritus, weeds, dog fouling, grass, shrubs and hedges, flowerbeds and overflowing public bins. The 12 month average pass rate for all has risen from 82.2% to 84.2%.



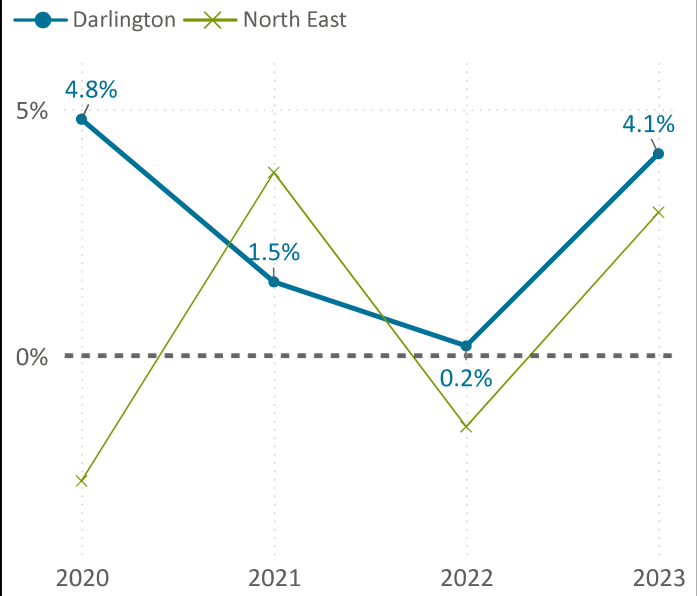
Lead Officer: Ben Grabham: Assistant Director - Environmental Services & Community Safety

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: Ensure that the borough is safe, clean and maintained to levels that support the economy and encourage inward investment

Change in total employment since previous year

This measure shows the difference in total employment (both Public and Private) compared to the same point 12 months previously, in order to show the number of jobs created in Darlington within the last year. The number of new employment opportunities shows an increase in 2023 to 4.1%, slightly better than the North East regional rate of 2.9%. This measure currently shows that the growth in total employment has now recovered to pre-pandemic levels of 2020 and 2019.



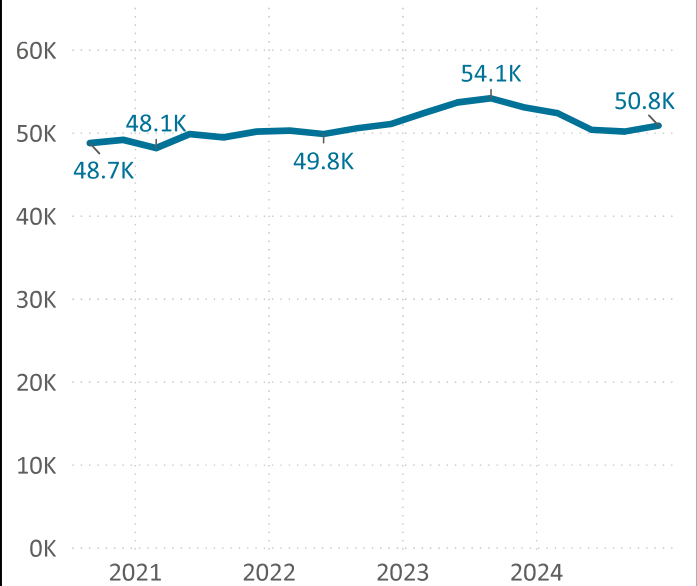
Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: Work with employers, national and local employability providers, and TVCA to promote good jobs and career opportunities for all, particularly young people and those with barriers to work, to access good employment outcomes.

Number of people employed including self-employed

As of December 2024, the total number of people employed (including both employees and self-employed individuals) now stands at 50,800. This is a decrease of 2,100 on the same time 12 months previously. The number peaked at 54,100 in September 2023. There's no stand out reason for this decline, and it could be due to a variety of factors such as national economic challenges, shifts in local industries, or broader regional trends. Nevertheless, the long-term trendline (since 2020) demonstrates a gradual increase.



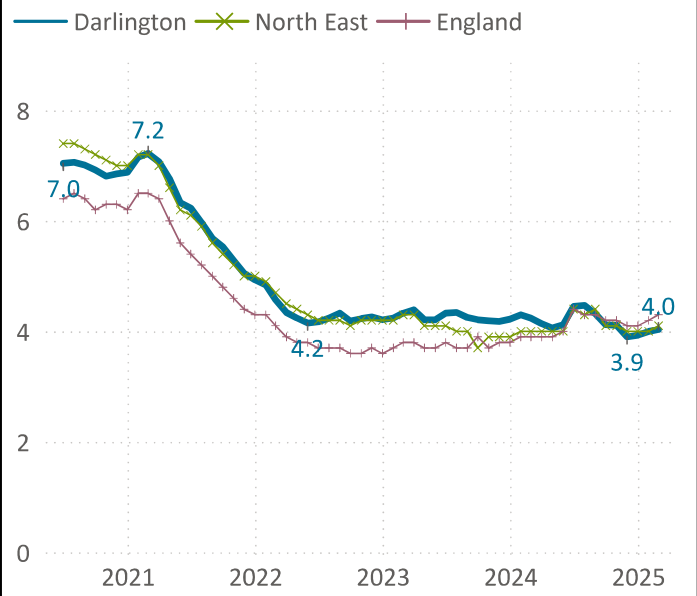
Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: Work with employers, national and local employability providers, and TVCA to promote good jobs and career opportunities for all, particularly young people and those with barriers to work, to access good employment outcomes.

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 and regional statistics. The claimant count in March 2025 now stands at 4.0%. The rate in Darlington is slightly below both the regional (4.1%) and national (4.3%) rates. The static nature of this measure can be attributed to several factors, including economic inactivity, post-pandemic labour market mismatches and economic uncertainty.



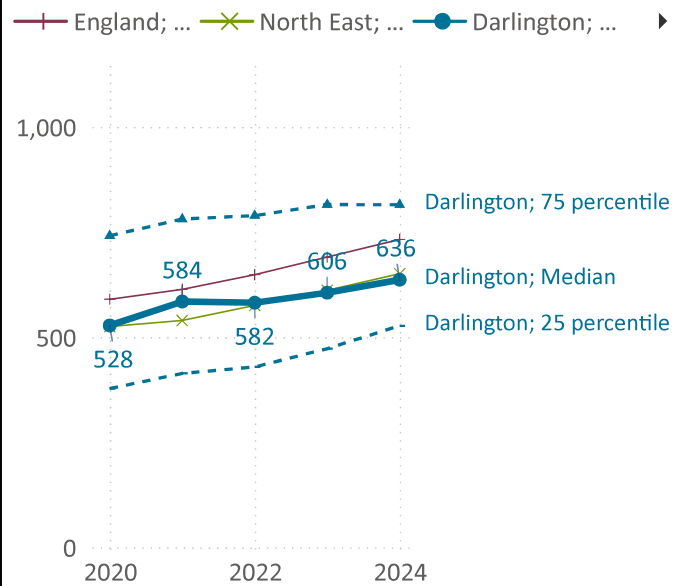
Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: Work with employers, national and local employability providers, and TVCA to promote good jobs and career opportunities for all, particularly young people and those with barriers to work, to access good employment outcomes.

Weekly gross pay for full time workers (Employees)

The employee income graph shows moderate variability, where the median income (£636.30) is closer to the lower quartile (£526.80), but the upper quartile (£814.70) is higher, but not significantly. This means the middle 50% of earners (between £526.80 and £814.70) demonstrate only moderate wages differences. As the employee median is closer to the lower quartile than the upper quartile, this shows that lower earners are more clustered, while upper income earners have more variation.



Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Economy

Key Deliverable: Work with employers, national and local employability providers, and TVCA to promote good jobs and career opportunities for all, particularly young people and those with barriers to work, to access good employment outcomes.

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Affordable and secure homes that meet the current and future needs of residents

Review and refresh the preventing homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, working with partners to ensure the provision of the right support and services to help people avoid homelessness and support those who are

A new Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2025-30 was developed with our partners and stakeholders in 2024 and a full public consultation was undertaken in November 2024. The strategy was then considered by Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee in January 2025, before approval by Cabinet in March 2025. Our key priorities in the strategy are:

- Working in partnership with charities and voluntary organisations, other social housing providers, Public Health and other statutory agencies to prevent homelessness.
- Tackling rough sleeping by implementing our agreed Rough Sleeper Plan.
- Increasing the amount and improving the quality of temporary accommodation.
- Addressing homelessness faced by particular groups of people, including those presenting with multiple or complex needs.
- Improving move on accommodation provision, including specialist housing and support provision.
- Securing funding to increase accommodation and resources.

In particular, the priorities for 2025-26 will be the establishment of a multi-agency homelessness forum and undertaking actions to reduce the use of hotels and bed and breakfasts, for temporary accommodation.

Progress against the strategy will be formally reviewed by Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee in 2026.

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

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Review our approach to empty homes across the borough so more quality homes are available

According to Government data (October 2024) there were 1921 empty properties on the database. This equates to approximately 3% of all properties registered.

At this time there was 666 long-term empty homes, those dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for over six months.

The Council does not have a dedicated resource to deal with empty homes, service requests are currently received from several sections of the council using various pieces of legislation. While planning and environment legislation have been used on several occasions, the complexity of housing legislation has been less employed.

The use of legislation may address a particular problem in time it does not necessarily address the fundamental issue of the property being vacant, however the number of problematic long-term empty properties has been found to be very low.

A review of empty homes and the legislation used by each section of the Council will be carried out and a report will be produced to detail developing a council approach to empty homes and the resources required for recommended changes.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Support the delivery of more social houses and supported accommodation by building more council homes and working with other social landlords and charities

Our Council housing new build site at Neasham Road will deliver 150 new homes, including 130 affordable rented properties, 19 rent to buy properties and one property for Children's Services. The first 40 homes have already been completed with tenants moved in by March 2025. Further phases will be released during 2025 and 2026, with the site due for completion by mid-2026. The scheme has been partly funded by Homes England, with a grant of £7.35 million.

Our Council housing new build site at Sherborne Close (phase 2) commenced in July 2024 and will deliver 14 new homes, including 11 affordable rented properties, 2 rent to buy properties and one property for Children's Services. Completion of the site is due in September 2025. The scheme has been partly funded by Homes England, with a grant of £0.91 million.

Our Council housing site at Skinnergate is due to commence in 2025, following demolition of the existing commercial buildings. The site will deliver new shops and 16 new homes, all of which will be affordable rented properties, and is due to be completed in 2026. A bid for Homes England funding is currently being made and we are expecting a grant of £1.12 million to help fund the project.

Further Council housing new build schemes are currently being worked up to increase the availability of social housing in Darlington to help meet additional demand, with over 2,000 households currently registered on our waiting list.

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

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Develop and deliver a new homes strategy, to address housing need, including ensuring social and affordable homes across the borough, in accordance with the Local Plan

The draft New Homes Strategy has been prepared and is currently under review from Cabinet Members. A meeting has been arranged for 28th May for final review prior to a report being presented to Cabinet in July seeking approval for a wider consultation.

Following consultation, the Strategy will be reviewed and returned to Cabinet and Council for approval hopefully by the end of the year.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Continue to improve the quality of housing through healthy home design principles and ensuring developers create greater energy efficiency in new homes

The Council is still awaiting the Government's consideration on Future Homes Standards and changes to Building Regulations as it is still not clear how Planning Authorities can exceed Building Regulation requirements. The Council will continue to monitor Government announcements and advise Members when the situation is clear. The Council may be able to alter planning policy in the review of the Local Plan depending on Government advice.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Continue investment in Council housing to ensure quality and greater energy efficiency

Improving the energy efficiency of our Council homes is a key priority for the council and work is ongoing to achieve the Government targets of all properties rated as Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C or above by 2030 and net zero carbon by 2050, as set out in our approved Housing Services Climate Change Strategy.

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) wave 1 has already scheme delivered external and cavity wall insulation, Air Source Heat Pumps, loft insulation and solar panels to 23 Council homes using £0.24 million of Government funding and £0.28 million of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital expenditure.

SHDF wave 2 commenced in September 2024 and is due to complete in June 2025. The scheme is delivering external and cavity wall insulation, solar panels, loft insulation, double glazing, and low energy lighting to 130 Council homes using £1.27 million of Government funding and £1.27 million of HRA capital expenditure.

In March 2025 we were successful in bidding for £3.5m Government funding as part of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund wave 3. This scheme will deliver upgrades to approximately 1,600 Council homes over a three year period, using the Government funding and HRA capital expenditure. Delivery of SHDF wave 3 is expected to significantly increase the percentage of Council homes rated as EPC C or above, which is currently 54%.

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

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Ensure effective use of the Disabled Facilities Grant to enable people to remain independent in their own homes for as long as possible.

The Disabled Facilities Grant process continues to include a risk prioritisation tool to ensure those in most urgent need of the grant due to risk are prioritised within the application process and timescales. This is monitored through bi-monthly meetings. An Equality Impact Assessment was completed with no adverse impacts as individuals waiting for grant applications will be provided with appropriate advice or support. All individuals have regular communication from Adult Services to update on their position

Lead Officer: Christine Shields: Assistant Director - Commissioning, Performance & Transformation

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Introduce additional licensing for homes of multiple occupation, a voluntary landlords charter and work towards the introduction of selective licencing in areas with a high number of private rented sector homes

Office of National Statistics data indicates that Darlington’s private rented stock is at 20.77%, higher than the national average and the highest in the Tees Valley region.

The regulation of rented properties and property management is carried out by several organisations in addition to Darlington Borough Council.

Following a review of existing and proposed legislation the following schemes will be investigated -

- A voluntary landlords charter
- The introduction of additional licensing for homes of multiple occupation
- Introduction of selective licencing in areas with a high number of private rented sector homes

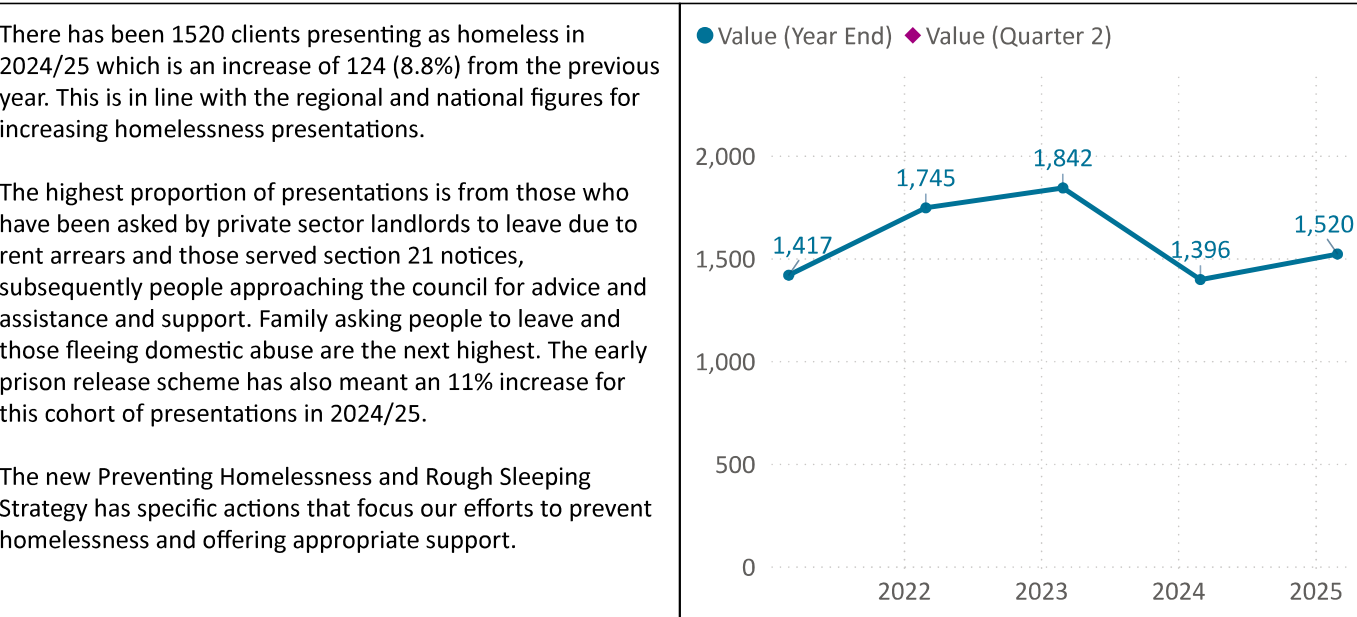
The Renters’ Rights Bill is expected to be introduced in 2025 which will have a significant impact on these proposed schemes.

A report has been produced highlighting the development of the Council’s approach to its responsibilities for enforcement of the private rented sector, in line with the introduction of the Renters’ Rights Bill. This report will be updated following the Bill’s introduction to detail the resources required for the changes to be implemented.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Number of people presented to Darlington Council's Homeless service



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

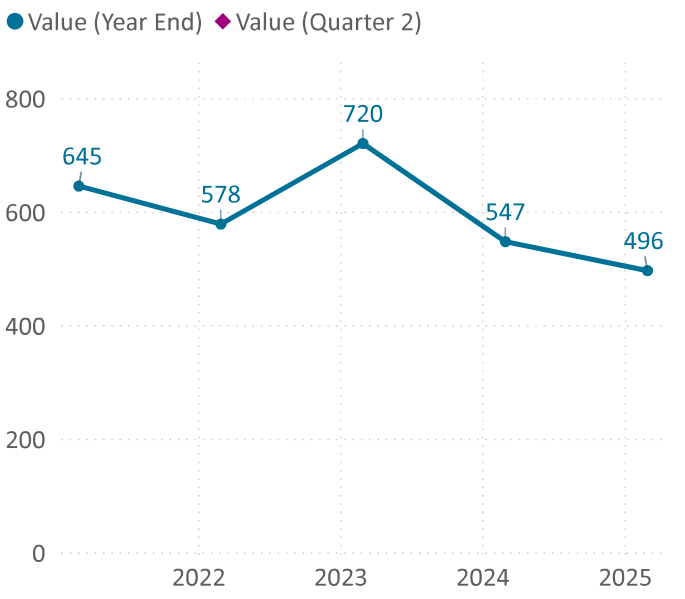
Council Plan Priority: Homes

Key Deliverable: Review and refresh the preventing homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, working with partners to ensure the provision of the right support and services to help people avoid homelessness and support those who are

Number of positive outcomes where homelessness has been prevented

Positive outcomes where homelessness has been prevented has reduced by 9.3% this year, in comparison with 2023-24. However we have still seen 496 positive outcomes where the Housing Options team have strived to find long-term solutions for their clients.

The slight reduction in positive outcomes is due to a number of factors including homeless cases being open for longer, as there are delays in moving clients on from temporary accommodation to permanent accommodation and increasing demands on the social and private housing waiting lists with options for move on becoming more difficult. This is also reflected in the increased times spent in temporary accommodation.



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

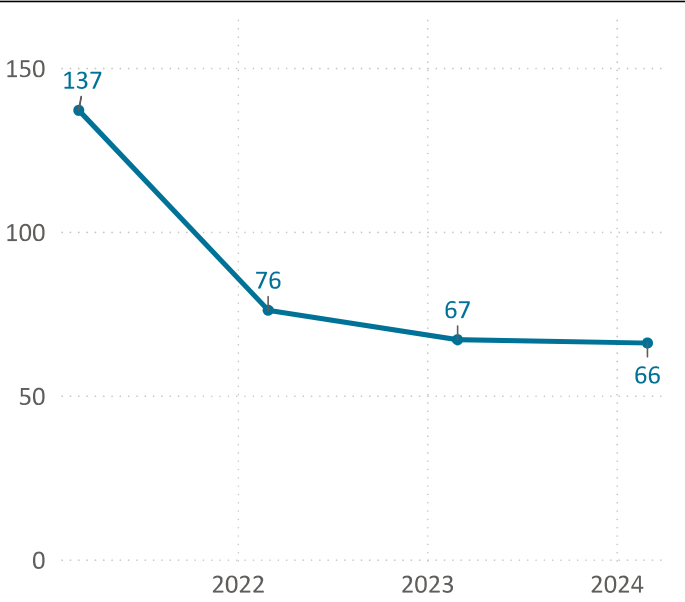
Council Plan Priority: Homes

Key Deliverable: Review and refresh the preventing homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, working with partners to ensure the provision of the right support and services to help people avoid homelessness and support those who are

Additional Affordable Housing Supply - Completions

This annual figure is obtained from the Government "Live Tables on Affordable Housing Supply". The figure for this year will not be published until about November 2025.

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 2022/23. The most recent 2023/24 figure (66) is hopefully indicating this decline is slowing. In addition to delivery from the private sector as part of delayed planning permissions, work is continuing on Snipe Lane which will see further delivery of affordable council owned units in the near future.



Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

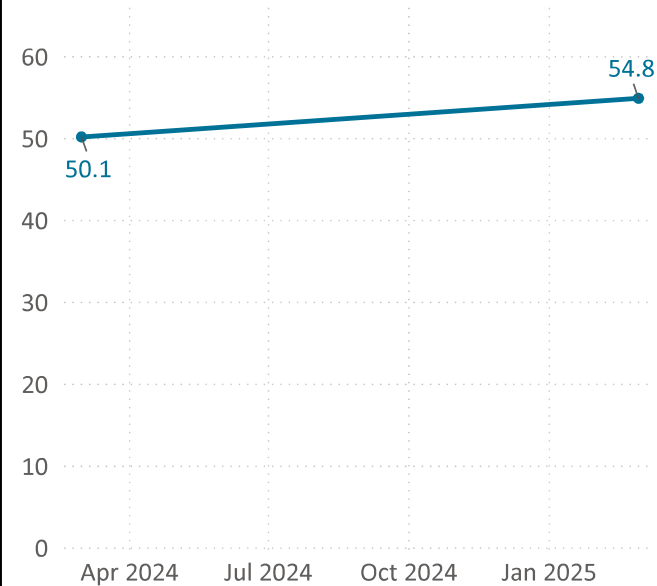
Council Plan Priority: Homes

Key Deliverable: Develop and deliver a new homes strategy, to address housing need, including ensuring social and affordable homes across the borough, in accordance with the Local Plan

Percentage of Council properties at EPC C and above

We currently have 54.8% of council dwellings with an EPC graded C or above which is an increase of 4.7 percentage points from the same period last year (50.1%).

This increase is primarily due to successful grant funded works being completed in council homes. Work is ongoing, with a large number of the properties already upgraded and improved via the grant funding in 2024/25. These properties have not yet been regraded, so we anticipate this trend to continue upwards.



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

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Key Deliverable: Continue investment in Council housing to ensure quality and greater energy efficiency

Council Plan Priority: Living well

A healthier and better quality of life for longer, supporting those who need it most

Continue to develop joint working with the NHS and key partners to support people to lead healthier lives, stay in their homes for longer and reduce hospital stays

Adults Services and Commissioning Teams continue to work with the Integrated Care Board and NHS Foundation Trusts to develop, maintain and deliver joint approaches to health and social care for people with care and support needs in Darlington. We have established a task and finish group to review the intermediate care offer and this continues to meet. It is currently reviewing best practice across the region and is developing option appraisals to share with Partners. We continue to have quarterly collaboration meeting with Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV) and are working with the Trust and the 4 other Tees valley local authorities on exploring discharge hub models.

Lead Officer: Christine Shields: Assistant Director - Commissioning, Performance & Transformation

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Health and Wellbeing Board to agree and deliver a new strategy to improve health outcomes and reduce inequalities, and lead the creation of a health and wellbeing network

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which has a clear focus on improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities was published in December 2024. Implementation of the Strategy is being monitored by the Health and Wellbeing Board through an annual review and scheduled multiagency 'deep dives' examining 2 of the 4 themes of the Strategy each year. This will monitor actions and identify any risks, gaps or areas for action. This will also allow the Health and Wellbeing Board to receive assurance around the key performance indicators in the Strategy.

Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

The development of public health strategies are informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, which provides a summary of the local health needs in Darlington, including an understanding of health inequalities. The Physical Activity Strategy has been approved. The Healthy Weight Plan, Oral Health Promotion Strategy and local suicide prevention plan are also being developed with local stakeholders.

Strategic priorities and actions on domestic abuse and sexual violence continue to be driven through the County Durham and Darlington Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG), which is a partnership board. The Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy is currently being refreshed in partnership with Durham County Council. The review of the needs assessment is to be completed. A multi agency Domestic Abuse Local Working Group has also been established, to develop actions for achieving compliance with local authority duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021,

The local delivery plan for drugs and alcohol are monitored through the governance arrangements of the County Durham and Darlington Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Partnership which is chaired by the PCC. The additional funding for drug and alcohol treatment services, inpatient detox and employment services have been continued for a further year, until end of March 2026 with a separate monitoring and assurance framework managed by OHID.

Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Widen participation in recreation and leisure facilities including the Dolphin Centre and Eastbourne Sports Complex

Following the reopening of the full pool complex at the Dolphin Centre in August 2024, we have continued to see a rise in footfall with the popular introduction of the toddler pool and return of the slides. Swimming lessons are accommodating over 900 children each week, with school lessons also averaging 500 pupils per week in term time. The school holidays that have fallen between quarter 3 and 4 have proven to be very successful with October and February both breaking previous years' records in terms of footfall and income.

Membership numbers continue to rise with the centre recording their highest overall numbers. Darlington College has extended their partnership with us by offering staff memberships on top of their current student membership contract. Due to the reputation of our Christmas party nights, we held another four successful events in December followed by further re-booked events such as Stronger community Awards, Mixed Martial Arts and White-Collar Boxing to name a few.

Eastbourne Sports Complex's new facilities and investment has proven a great success with the pitches being at full capacity on an evening with partner clubs. The team are now exploring funding options to improve the wider grass pitches that would support a further increase of visits to the site.

Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Deliver the key aims of the adult social care transformation plan to prevent, reduce and/or delay the need for care by supporting people to manage their own independence and wellbeing.

The work of the transformation plan is ongoing. In this quarter we have undergone an inspection through the Care Quality Commission who have rated the Local Authority in relation to compliance to the Care Act Part one as Good, with an overall score of 73%. The report highlights numerous strengths, including:

- A consistent, strength-based assessment programme.
- Effective hospital discharge arrangements and reablement services.
- High satisfaction among unpaid carers.
- A responsive and person-centred approach from social workers.
- Strong multi-agency partnerships and a commitment to continuous improvement demonstrated by a clear transformation programme.

The service continue on a monthly basis to review the transformation plan to ensure we continue to meet the objectives of service improvement, efficiencies, effective use of resources and meeting statutory regulations. A reviewed transformation plan will be developed taking into account any further areas for development outlined in the Care Quality Commission inspection report.

Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Shape a sustainable and accountable care market which delivers support focussed on promoting, regaining and maintaining people's independence and wellbeing

The Commissioning, Contract and Brokerage team are responsible for shaping and sustaining the local care market. They have worked with operational colleagues and partners across health, housing and the VCSE sector to develop a Market Position Statement and Commissioning Strategy with an associated Accommodation with Care and Support Needs Strategy (Adults) and a Sufficiency Statement (Children). These documents provide information about the care market in Darlington which will enable providers to understand the local context, how this is likely to change over the next couple of years and where development opportunities might arise in the future particularly those which support us to prevent, reduce, and delay care and support needs. The documents are for both existing and prospective providers and will support the delivery of both the Council Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Government grant funding has been allocated to care and support providers with the aim of addressing key pressures and challenges.

Outcome based contracts have been relet or retendered across key areas of service provision including homecare, residential care and supported living. A review of Day Opportunities provision will be undertaken in 2025 in preparation for retendering the contract in early 2026.

Lead Officer: Christine Shields: Assistant Director - Commissioning, Performance & Transformation

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Develop an Adult Social Care engagement strategy to ensure people requiring care and support, and their carers, are involved in service development and commissioning activity

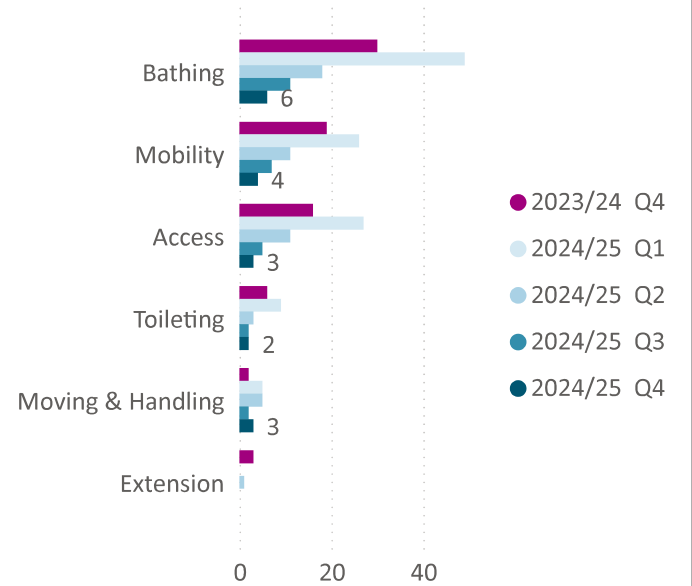
The engagement and co-production strategy- "Stronger Together" is completed. The Care Quality Commission undertook an inspection in January 2025 and acknowledged the work Adult Services are undertaking to ensure improved engagement, inclusion and communication with people who use services. The work is continuing with recent work with Partners in Health and Care on Diversity by Design project to self assess people's current level of involvement and support the development of an engagement and co-production action plan to support the strategy. One of the actions to undertake the development of an all age Autism Strategy has been initiated by the the forming of steering group with partners and although in early stage will be led and co-produced with the voluntary sector and people with lived experience.

Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Major adaptations by type (quarterly)

There have been a total of 45 major works completed during the final 2 quarters of the year. This is a significant reduction compared to the first half of the year when 165 major works had been completed. A new procedure for Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) requests is now in place. The new system ensures that DFG monies are utilised in the most appropriate way. A risk prioritisation approach has been introduced to assess the urgency of need of each referral.



Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

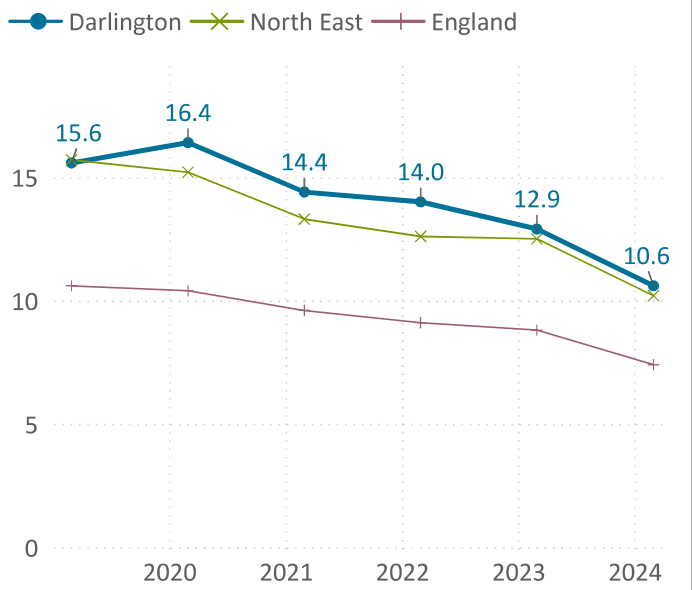
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Continue to develop joint working with the NHS and key partners to support people to lead healthier lives, stay in their homes for longer and reduce hospital stays

Percentage of women who smoke at time of delivery

The latest data from 2023/24 shows that only 10.6% of mothers are known to be smokers at the time of delivery. This has been reducing every years since 2020 with Darlington 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.

Stop Smoking support is provided by the NHS provides through local maternity services and the Council, which commissions a specialist stop smoking service that supports women to stop smoking before and after being pregnant. There is new investment into stop smoking services to target extra support to more pregnant women quit smoking at every opportunity.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

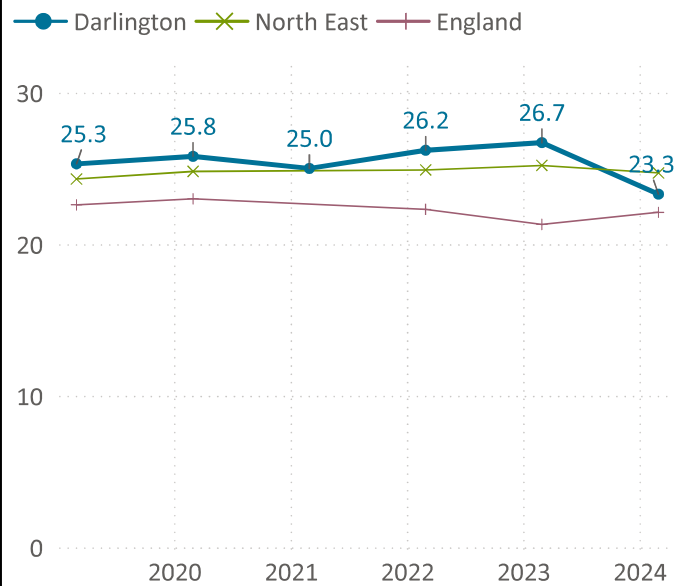
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Excess weight among Reception pupils (%)

The latest data from 2023/24 shows that 23.3% of reception children aged 4-5 years that were measured were found to be overweight or obese. This has reduced from the last period with Darlington is now 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.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

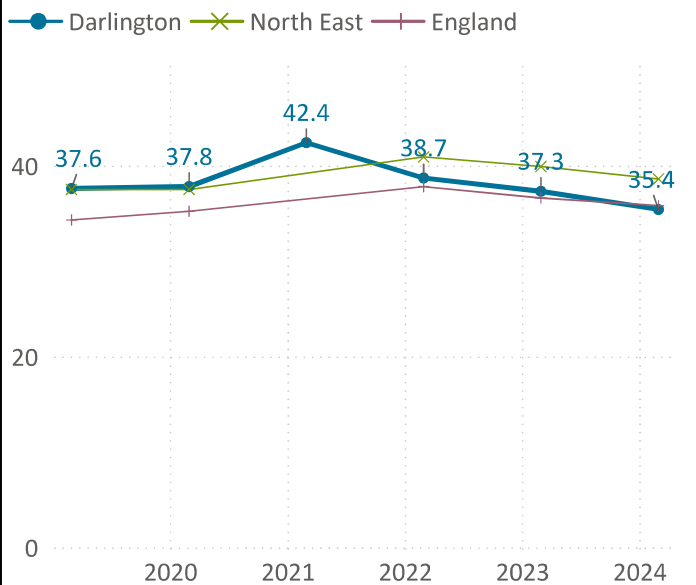
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Excess weight among Year 6 pupils (%)

The latest data from 2023/24 shows that 35.4% of Year 6 children aged 10-11 years who were measured were found to be overweight or obese. There has reduced each year since 2021, with Darlington statistically better than the North East and statistically similar to 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.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

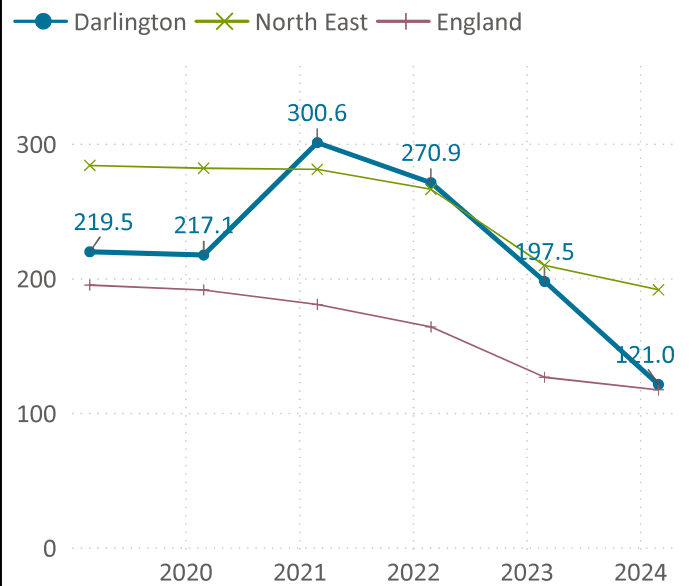
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Emergency Hospital Admissions for Intentional Self-Harm (per 100,000 population)

The latest data for 2024, a rate of 121 per 100,000, which is statistically similar to England and is statistically better than the North East. This data also shows a decreasing trend for Darlington from 2021.

Self-harm is a complex and poorly understood act with varied reasons for a person to harm themselves, irrespective of the purpose of the act. There is a significant and persistent risk of future suicide following an episode of self-harm. This indicator is a measure of intentional self-harm events severe enough to warrant hospital admission and not a measure of the actual prevalence of severe self-harm.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

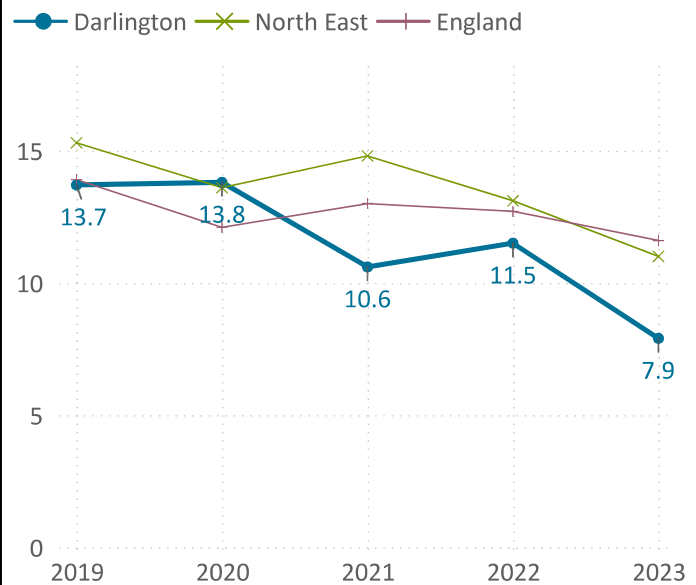
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Prevalence of smoking among persons aged 18+ years

This latest data from the 2023 Annual Population Survey (APS) shows that 7.9% of those who responded aged 18+ self-reported themselves as smokers in Darlington. This is the 3rd year with a reduction from a peak of 13.8% in 2020. Darlington is statistically better than the North East and England.

There is now an established downward trend with fewer people in Darlington identifying themselves as smokers. It is expected that this reduction will be sustained due to the impact of new and existing measures to reduce smoking in the community, including new legislation and extra funding to increase access to stop smoking interventions.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

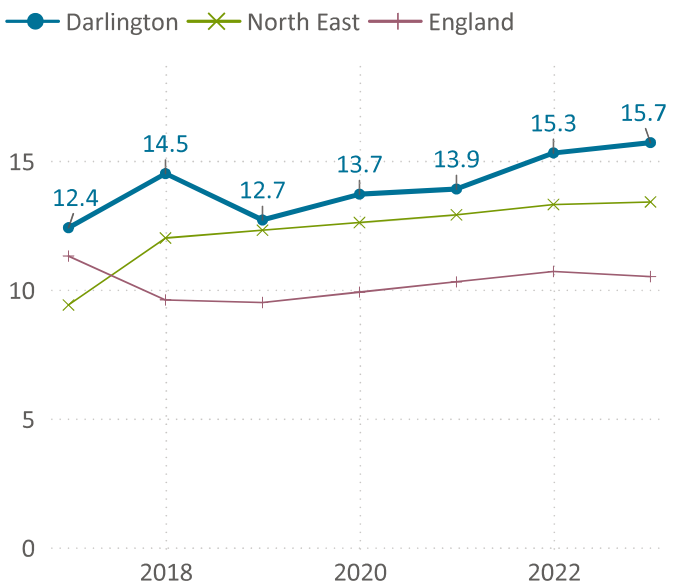
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Inequality in life expectancy at birth (male)

Inequality in life expectancy at birth for males in Darlington has widened in 2023, from 15.3 (2022) to 15.7 years, and is statistically worse than England and the North East.

The Public Health team is working with partners including the NHS to put into place evidence based interventions to tackle the wider determinants of health that contribute to health inequalities. Examples include the commissioning of NHS Health Checks, developing a Food Partnership and work to develop a suicide prevention plan for Darlington.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

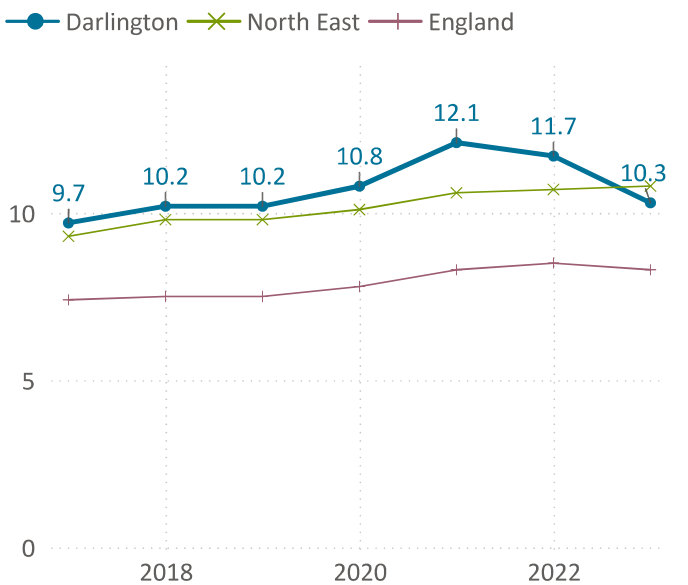
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Inequality in life expectancy at birth (female)

Inequality in life expectancy at birth for females in Darlington has narrowed in 2023, from 11.7 in 2022 to 10.3 years, and is statistically similar to England and the North East.

The Public Health team is working with partners including the NHS to put into place evidence based interventions to tackle the wider determinants of health that contribute to health inequalities. Examples include the commissioning of NHS Health Checks, targeted work to increase the uptake of screening and reduce smoking in women.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

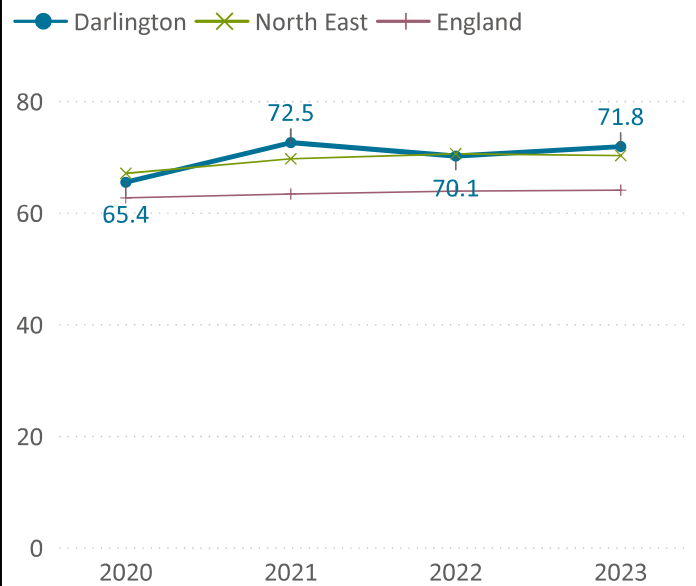
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Overweight (including obesity) prevalence in adults (18+ yrs)

This data from the responses to the 2022/23 sample of the Active Lifestyles Survey estimates an increase in the rate of prevalence of overweight (including obesity) in adults in Darlington to 71.8% . Darlington is statistically similar to the North East, but worse than England.

The causes of obesity are complex and it is associated with reduced life expectancy and is a risk factor for a range of chronic diseases. There are significant health inequalities in relation to the prevalence of obesity in Darlington with some communities more affected than others. The Public Health team is working together with key partners to develop a system-wide approach to addressing these inequalities.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

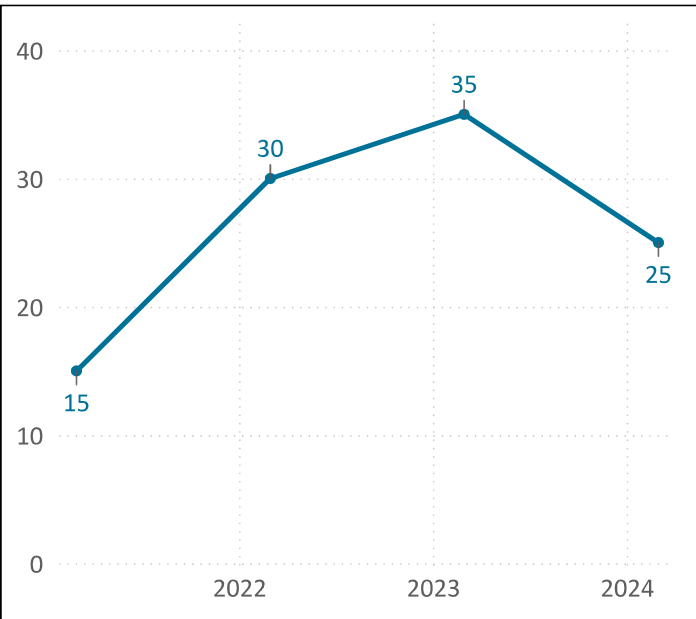
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Young people (under 18) in treatment for substance use alcohol

Recent data for 2023/24 shows a decline in the number of young individuals under 18 receiving treatment for alcohol-related substance use, compared to 2022/23.

The Public Health team commissions treatment and recovery services for Darlington, and there is a specialist service for young people. There has been work with partners, including education, youth offending, and probation, to increase the number of referrals into the system and targeted work with the provider to reduce barriers for young people to access and engage with services. The Public Health team works with partners, including schools and parents, through PHSE in promoting safer drinking messages for young people.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

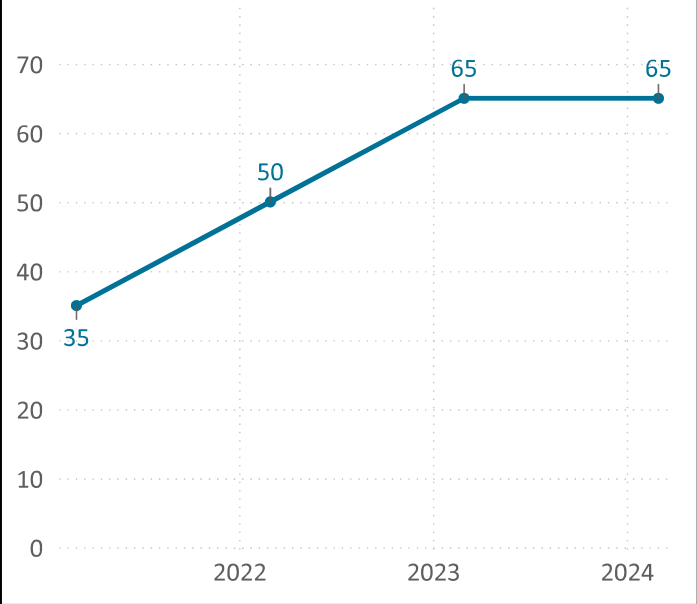
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Young people (under 18) in treatment for substance use drugs

Recent data for 2023/24 indicates the same number of young individuals under 18 who are in treatment for drug-related substance use.

The Public Health team commissions treatment and recovery services for Darlington, and there is a specialist service for young people. There has been work with partners, including education, youth offending, and probation, to increase the number of referrals into the system as well as targeted work with the provider to reduce barriers for young people to access and engage with treatment services. The Public Health team works with partners, including schools, police, and parents, to deliver prevention messages and programmes for young people.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

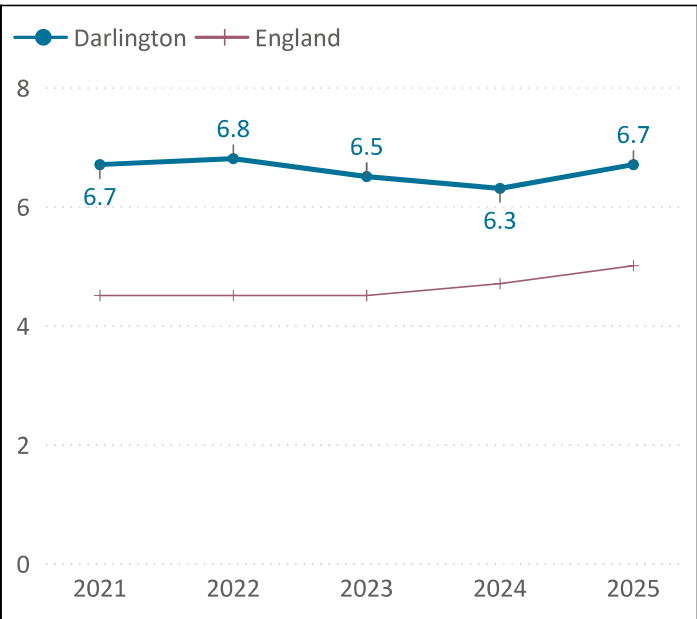
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Adults in treatment at specialist drug misuse service (per 1,000 population)

Recent data for 2024/25 indicates an improvement in the number of adults in treatment at specialist drug misuse services, with 6.7 per 1,000 currently in treatment. This is higher than the rate for England at 5 per 1000 and similar to the NE average.

The Public Health team is working with partners and local providers to continue to work to make high quality and effective services available and accessible to people in Darlington. This has included recent work with local GPs to provide a specialist in-reach offer for their patients so that they can access services more quickly. Other work includes quicker access to triage and assessment, reducing waiting times for treatment.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

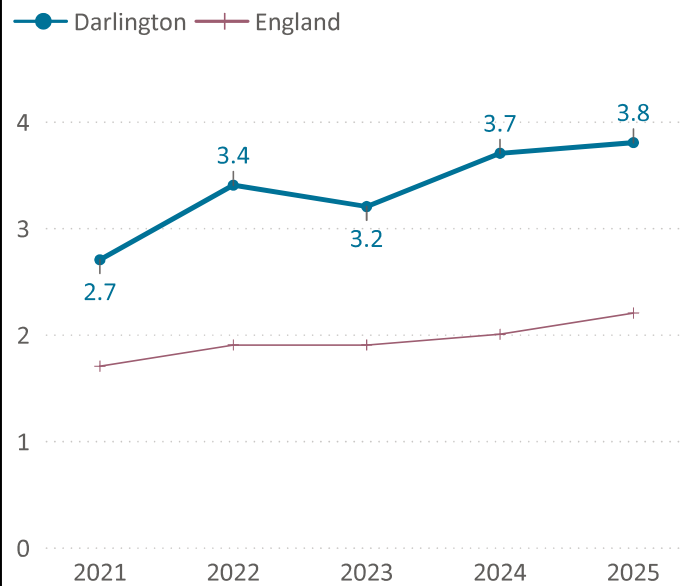
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Adults in treatment at specialist alcohol misuse service (per 1,000 population)

Recent data for 2024/25 indicates an improvement in adults in treatment at specialist alcohol misuse services, with 3.8 per 1,000 currently in treatment. This is better than the England average and similar to the NE average.

The Public Health team is working with partners and providers to continue to provide quality and effective treatment and recovery services for people in Darlington. This has included reducing barriers to accessing services with the provider improving the assessment and triage processes to ensure more timely access to treatment for those seeking help. Work continues with a broad range of prevention activities including supporting national and regional campaigns.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

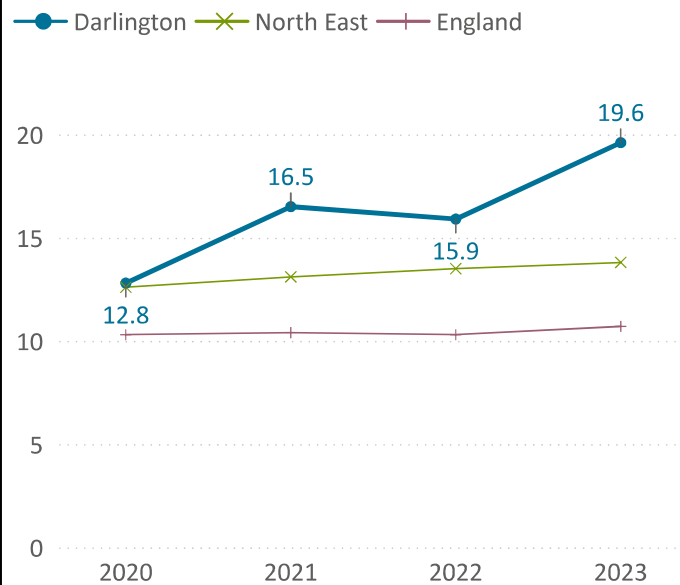
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Suicide rate (per 100,000 population, 10+ yrs)

Recent statistics from 2023 indicate that the suicide rate for Darlington has increased to 19.6 per 100,000 individuals, This figure is the highest when compared to both England and the North East region.

Work is underway with partners to develop a suicide prevention plan for Darlington, coordinating actions across the borough. The public health team, Integrated Care Board (ICB), mental health trust TEWV, and others are building a local intelligence system to identify trends and risk factors. The ICB has also commissioned a regional support programme for families bereaved by suicide.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

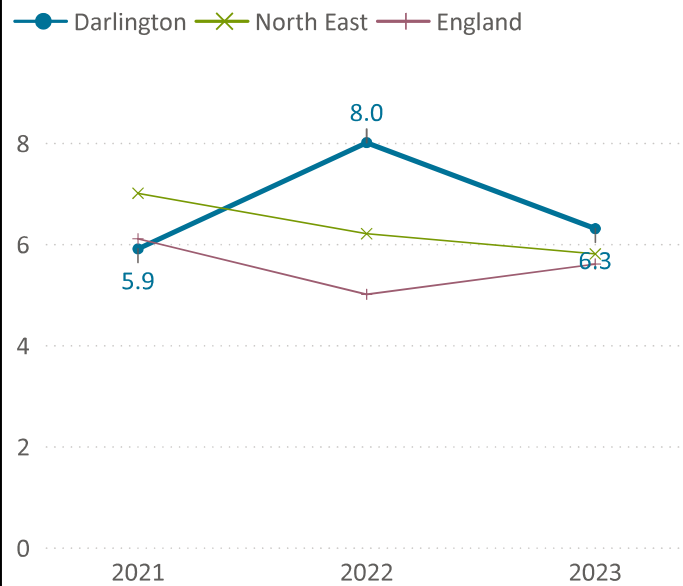
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Self-reported wellbeing: people with a low satisfaction score (percentage of respondents)

This indicator reflects the percentage of respondents to the national Integrated Household Survey who rated their overall life satisfaction as low. The most recent data from 2022/23, indicates that there has been a reduction in those reporting a low score with 6.3% of respondents now reported a low satisfaction score regarding their wellbeing. This is statistically similar to England and the North East.

The authority is working with a broad range of stakeholders to address the wider determinants of health and some specific targeted actions and plans address improving mental and physical health as well as wider economic and social determinants of health including access to work.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

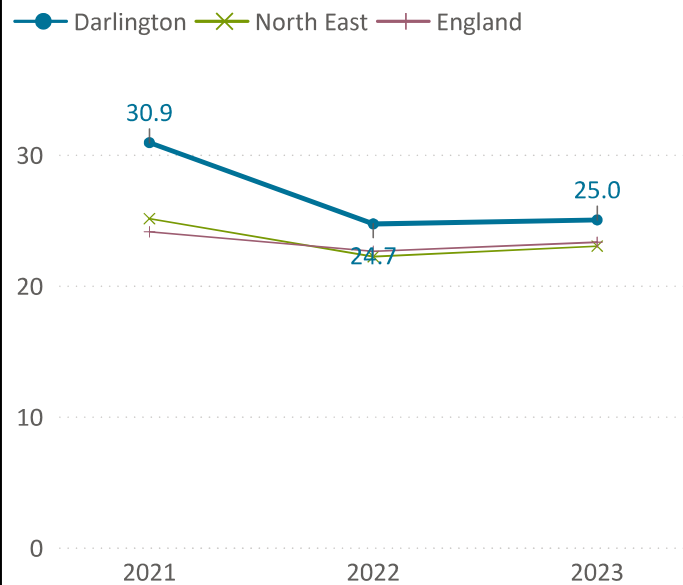
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Self reported wellbeing: people with a high anxiety score (percentage of respondents)

The most recent data from the National Household Survey shows that 25% of respondents in Darlington reported a high anxiety score which has reduced from a peak in July 2021. This is statistically similar to the England and North East, averages.

The authority continues to work with a range of stakeholders to put into place plans and programmes to reduce community stresses and anxiety. This includes actions in improving public mental health and community safety. Other targeted programmes to reduce isolation and community cohesion and connectiveness are also being delivered with partners including the Police, Police and Crime Commissioner and NHS.



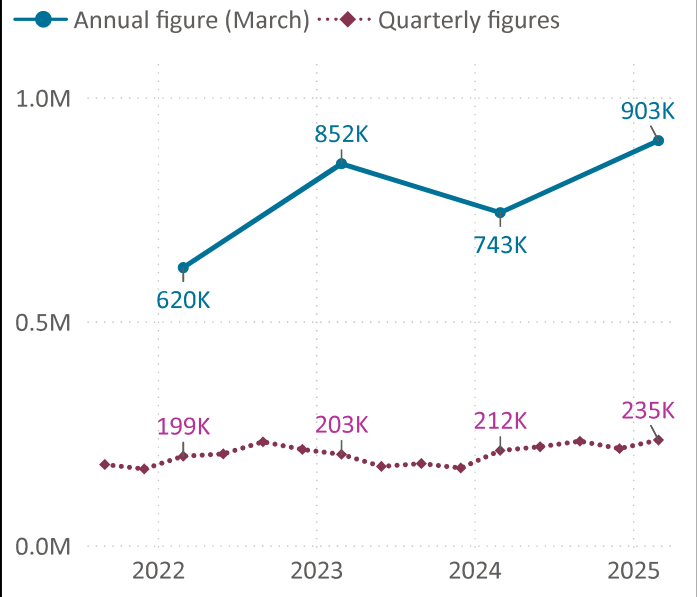
Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Develop and implement a new public health strategy, focussed on tackling health inequalities, including developing strategies on domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol and physical activity

Total number of visits to the Dolphin Centre (all areas)

Visits to the centre have continued to grow since Quarter 2 with the toddler pool and slides reopening in September 2024, and two very successful half term holidays in October 2024 and February 2025. All quarters are showing higher levels of participation in the centre facilities in comparison to 2023/2024. Memberships have continued to grow, hospitality has continued to thrive and further growth has been experienced in racket sports and swimming lessons. 2024/2025 has been an extremely busy year in the Dolphin Centre.



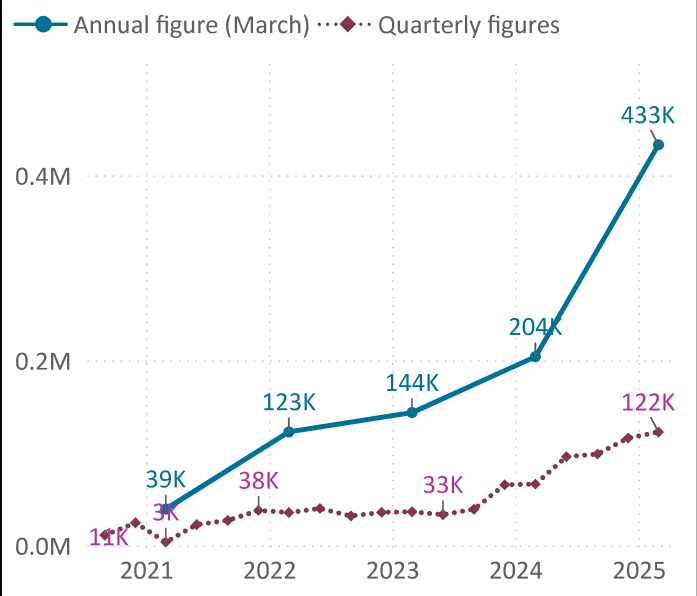
Lead Officer: Lisa Soderman: Head of Leisure

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Widen participation in recreation and leisure facilities including the Dolphin Centre and Eastbourne Sports Complex

Total attendances at Eastbourne Sports Complex

Attendances at Eastbourne Sports Complex has increased following the recent capital project that included the refurbishment of the athletics track and the addition of a stadia specification artificial grass pitch on site. This has had a significant impact on numbers due to now having 9 local football clubs utilising the site for training and fixtures, supporting the increase in footfall for girls, boys and adults. The site has also had an increase in school games events and a full diverse range of activities on site in the multi activity room delivered by the Move More team.



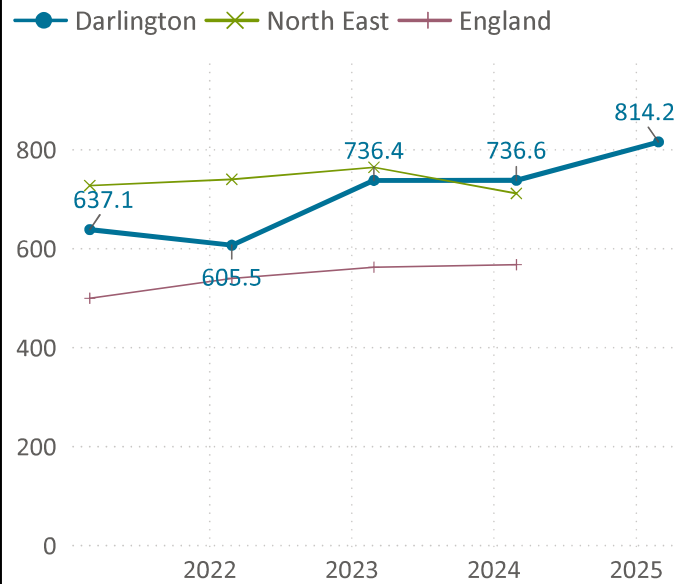
Lead Officer: Lisa Soderman: Head of Leisure

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Widen participation in recreation and leisure facilities including the Dolphin Centre and Eastbourne Sports Complex

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

The Council acknowledge that there is an increase in residential care by older people. Demand, complexity and need are the contributing factors for this increase. The Council is actively working to reduce reliance on residential care through our strength based practice approach and where possible ensuring a home first approach for people being discharged from hospital. The Council will continue to monitor this trend.



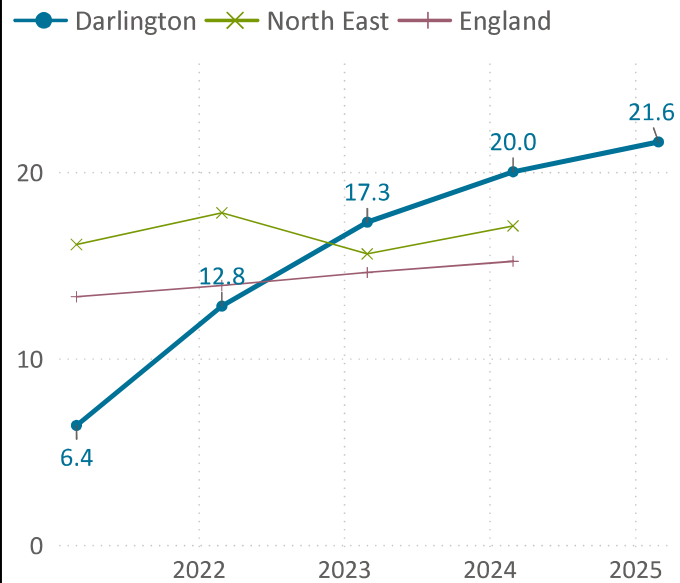
Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Deliver the key aims of the adult social care transformation plan to prevent, reduce and/or delay the need for care by supporting people to manage their own independence and wellbeing.

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

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.



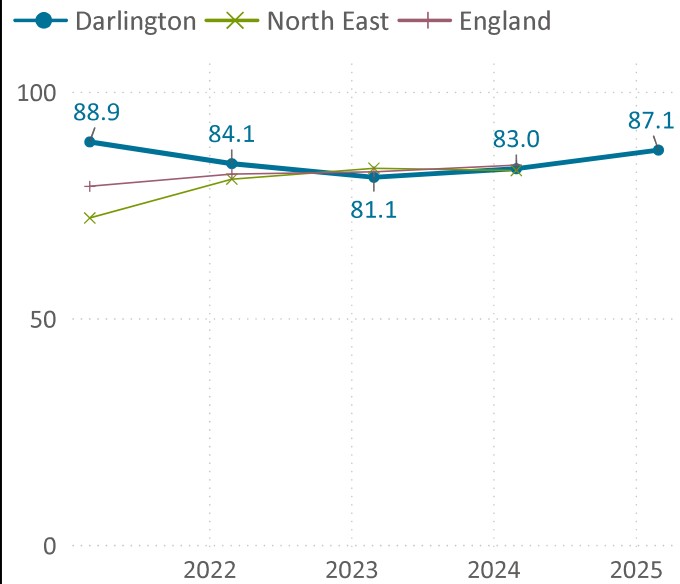
Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Deliver the key aims of the adult social care transformation plan to prevent, reduce and/or delay the need for care by supporting people to manage their own independence and wellbeing.

Proportion of older people who are still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement or rehabilitation services

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 2025, the proportion of older people who are still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services was 87.1%. Performance in this indicator is the highest it has been since March 2021. Performance in this indicator remains high despite an increase in the complexity of hospital discharges.



Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

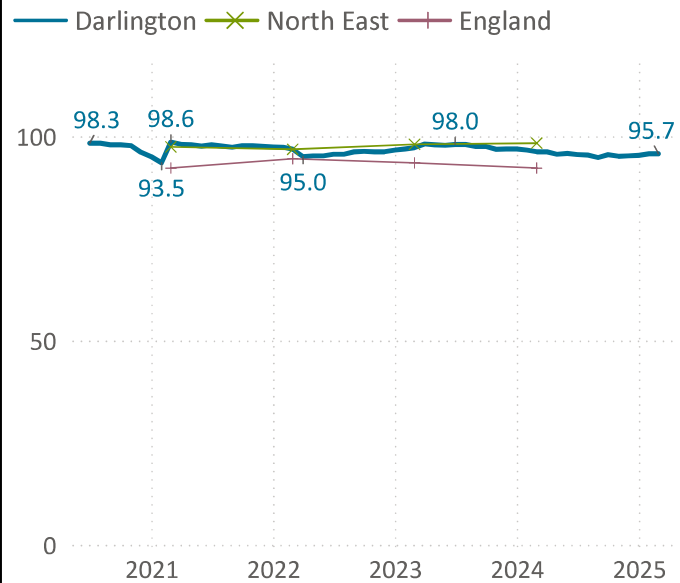
Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Deliver the key aims of the adult social care transformation plan to prevent, reduce and/or delay the need for care by supporting people to manage their own independence and wellbeing.

Percentage of people using social care who receive self-directed support

As at the end of March 2025, 95.7% of people using social care were receiving self directed support. This is remains a relatively static level.

Darlington typically exceeds both the national and regional averages for this measure, reflecting our strong ethos of taking a strengths-based approach to support residents in need. The Council maximises service users’ choice and control over the services they receive, to ensure these best suit peoples’ particular needs and preferences. The Council continues to commission Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) to provide the direct payments support service which promotes people to manage their own personal support budgets.



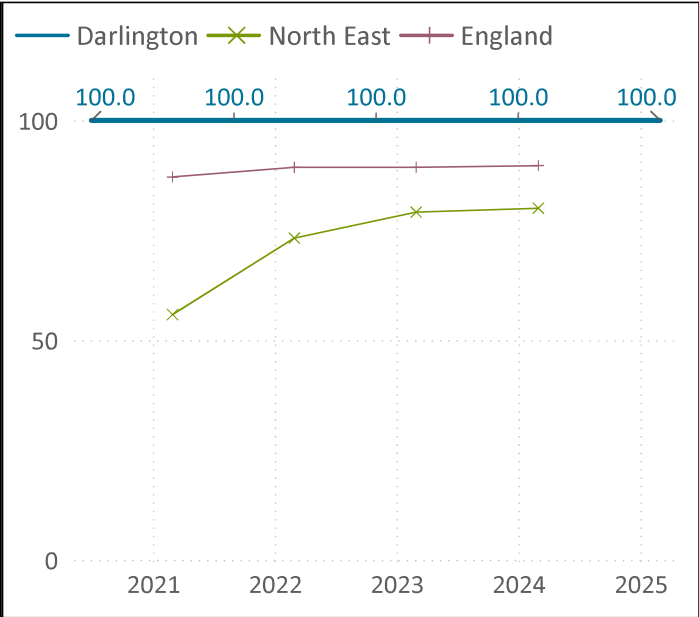
Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Deliver the key aims of the adult social care transformation plan to prevent, reduce and/or delay the need for care by supporting people to manage their own independence and wellbeing.

Percentage of carers using social care who receive self-directed support

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. The Council continues working with carers and carers support groups to listen to the needs of carers. The Council has established Carers Champions within the service, and report on the Carers Action quarterly to the Commitment to Carers Strategy group.



Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Key Deliverable: Deliver the key aims of the adult social care transformation plan to prevent, reduce and/or delay the need for care by supporting people to manage their own independence and wellbeing.

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Supporting the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations

Provide a safe and supportive living environment for children cared for by the council by increasing the number of children placed in council foster care and, when appropriate, council-run residential homes.

There are currently 57 approved Foster Carer Households, which is an increase from 52 Foster Carer households at the same period in 2024. 11 Foster Carers were approved at Panel during 2024/25 compared with 5 the previous year.

Our Childrens Homes continue to be at full capacity with 5 out of our 6 homes being graded as Good by Ofsted.

Lead Officer: Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Work with multi-academy trusts and schools to develop a high quality and inclusive education sector in Darlington

In line with the Council Plan priorities on inclusion in schools the Education Strategy Group (ESG) has developed the Darlington Inclusion Charter which was launched at an all-schools event on 21st June 2024. The Inclusion Charter exemplifies key characteristics of inclusive practice that all schools in Darlington can sign up to. This was informed by shared challenges relating to attendance, suspensions and more complex Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

The ESG has entered a national Evidence Exploration Partnership to support this work. It is anticipated that the Inclusion Charter will provide a helpful starting point for the Evidence Exploration Partnership which will support the Local Authority and schools to develop evidence-informed practices and strategies to embed this commitment to inclusion. Darlington Educational Psychology Service has been trialling a model of training / briefing senior leaders, pastoral and curriculum leads in relation to the Charter and its principles at a trust-wide level. Small groups of influential staff within each school are then positioned to work closely with their teams to share and discuss the charter and use the reflection tools to delve deeper into school systems and practices in a way that feels appropriate for the individual school. The hope is that they can then continue to support the implementation of the Inclusion Charter over time. 57% of Darlington schools and colleges have taken part in these sessions to date.

Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Work with the Department for Education and the successful academy trust sponsor to ensure the free school for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is developed on schedule, providing vital additional specialist capacity in Darlington

Darlington was awarded a special free school following our successful bid as part of Wave 3 of the programme. A sponsor multi academy trust has been assigned to operate the school. We have been informed by the Department for Education that the Darlington school is now subject to value for money consideration, in line with the government's vision for the special educational needs system. We have been informed by the Department for Education that they are not yet able to update beyond that but will do so as soon as possible.

Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Develop more meaningful services by ensuring children and young people are involved in service development and commissioning activity

A number of projects/groups undertake work which enable young people to be involved in service development and commissioning activity, for example Youth Parliament, Darlington Youth Partnership, Darlo Care Crew, the Care Leavers Forum Youth Healthwatch, Family Action and the YMCA.

Engagement work with children has been ongoing throughout 2024/25 particularly in the development of the new Young Carers service and the development of the Children and Young Peoples Plan.

Lead Officer: Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Widen access of eligible children to the Holiday Activities and Food Programme which focusses on health, wellbeing and raising aspirations

HAF (Holiday Activity and Food) programme provides free holiday club places to primary and secondary aged children on benefits-related free school meals, as well as other vulnerable children, giving them a chance to enjoy extracurricular activities and healthy meals during the school holidays. The Move More Team deliver activity weeks at numerous community venues with a wide geographical spread across the town, so children are given the greatest opportunity to participate in the programme in their relative local ward and community. In the Christmas holidays, over 1,600 places were booked for children aged 5-16 years of age, 908 free school meal children attended with 29% SEND children. Future funding will see further development to engage more eligible children into the programme.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Work in partnership with the early years sector and health services to promote school readiness and the delivery of the expansion of funded childcare entitlement

Evidence suggests that the childcare market in Darlington has been able to accommodate an increase in demand following the first two phases of childcare entitlement expansion. There is an overall sufficiency of places to meet the current demand from parents in Darlington. For summer and autumn 2024, Darlington's take up has been above the national rate. However, the anticipated increase in demand for hours in September 2025 is likely to require a further shift in the market.

In early 2023, funding was made available by the Department for Education for local authorities to fund capital projects in schools and settings to deliver expansion of entitlement and/or wraparound places. 6 projects are being funded in Darlington schools and settings. These projects will deliver up to an additional 65 wraparound places, 36 entitlements places for 2-year-olds and 60 entitlement places for mixed ages. Towards the end of 2024 DfE invited eligible state-funded primary-phase schools to apply for the School-Based Nursery Capital Grant. 4 Darlington schools applied for capital funding and all 4 were successful in securing the funding to enable them to open or expand their nursery in September 2025.

A working group has been established to identify key actions to further improve levels of school readiness amongst children in Darlington, and also specifically for children with free school meal status or special educational needs and disability (SEND).

Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Refresh and deliver the Children and Young People's Plan working with services across the council, key stakeholders, and children and young people in Darlington

The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) is the key delivery plan for children within the Council Plan. It identifies what key actions will be taken to deliver the agreed priority for children – the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations. It is a partnership plan which shows how organisations and agencies in Darlington will work together to improve outcomes for children. The plan for 2024 – 2027 takes the form of a video and poster which have been designed and produced by local children. Extensive data analysis and engagement activity with children, young people and key stakeholders identified five priorities which will form the basis of the plan: Health; Education; Family and Carers; Employment, and Community. The CYPP was launched in November 2024 with regular updates on progress being posted on the Council website.

Lead Officer: Christine Shields: Assistant Director - Commissioning, Performance & Transformation

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Continue the successful management of the Safety Valve plan for the education budget to improve outcomes for young people with SEND, eliminate the historic deficit on funding and deliver a financially sustainable system

The Department for Education (DfE), as part of its wider Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms, initiated the ‘Safety Valve’ intervention programme. The DfE recognises that over recent years, pressures on high needs budgets have contributed to many local authorities accruing deficits on their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Darlington, in common with many areas, built up a deficit on the high needs block element of the DSG. If a local authority can demonstrate sufficiently that their DSG management plan creates lasting sustainability, including reaching an in-year balance as quickly as possible, then the department will enter into an agreement with the authority (subject to Ministerial approval). Darlington entered into an agreement in March 2023.

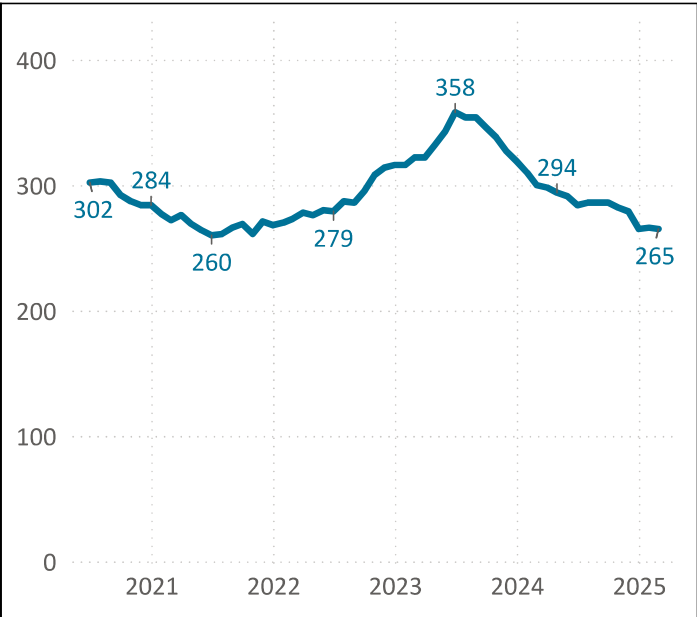
The plan has been progressing well with Darlington achieving an in year balance on the high needs block in 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25. The combined deficit reduction work along with the contributions through the Safety Valve Agreement has reduced the deficit to circa £1.6 million and the council is currently on track to have eliminated the deficit within the terms of the agreement which is due to end in 2026/27. This will enable the council and partners to proceed with driving improvements in a financially sustainable way.

Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion
Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Total number of looked after children (LAC)

265 children are being supported in the Council's care at the end of March 2025, 8.3% of which have come into the Council's care after being accepted by the Home Office as UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child).

This equates to a 14% reduction in the number of children (excluding those needing care as UASC) that were in the Council's care when compared to the end of March last year.

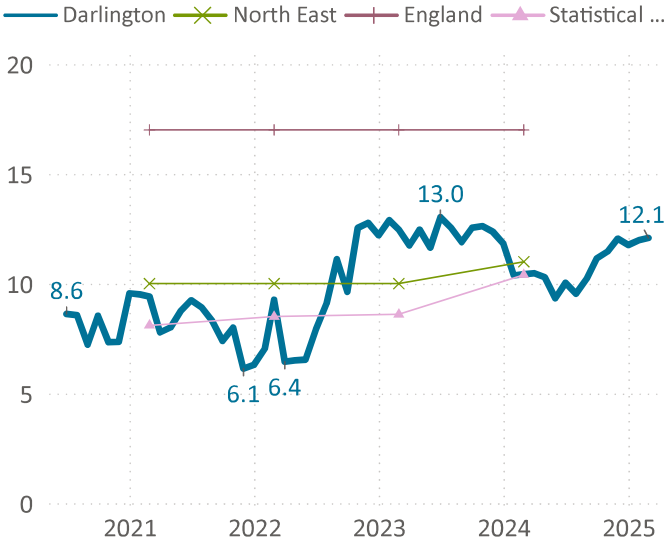


Lead Officer: Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services
Council Plan Priority: Children and young people
Key Deliverable: Provide a safe and supportive living environment for children cared for by the council by increasing the number of children placed in council foster care and, when appropriate, council-run residential homes.

Percentage of total looked after children (LAC) placed more than 20 miles away from home, inside or outside the boundary, as at the end of each reporting period (excludes children placed for adoption or where home address is "of no fixed abode")

12.1% of our Children in Care have been placed 20 or more miles away from their primary home as of March 2025. This is positively below the national average of 17%.

Every placement is scrutinised and reviewed ensuring that it is the most appropriate for the child enabling them to have the best support either with family links or specialised care.



Lead Officer: Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

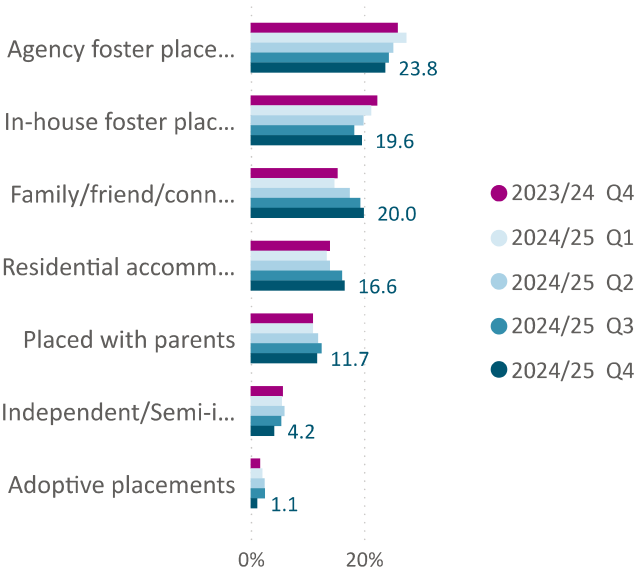
Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Provide a safe and supportive living environment for children cared for by the council by increasing the number of children placed in council foster care and, when appropriate, council-run residential homes.

Percentage of looked after children by placement type

A large proportion of Darlington children in care were in a foster placement (43%) at the end of March 2025. 20% of children were placed in kinship care with relatives (including temporarily approved), 12% were placed with a parent, 21% were living in forms of supported residential accommodation, 1% were placed for adoption, the remaining 3% were in placements classified as other.

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 over the year, and the use of agency foster placements has been reducing.



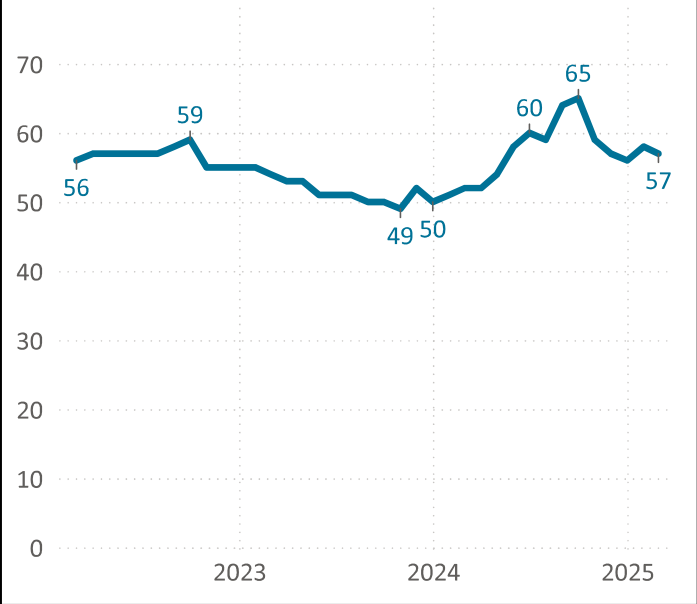
Lead Officer: Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Provide a safe and supportive living environment for children cared for by the council by increasing the number of children placed in council foster care and, when appropriate, council-run residential homes.

Total number of approved foster carers

Currently the Council has 57 approved foster care families with 53 kinship connected carers approved. At the end of March 2025, the Council had 8 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 the Council website and social media and during 2024/25 the Council received a further 26 new fostering enquiry applications and approved 11 new foster care families.



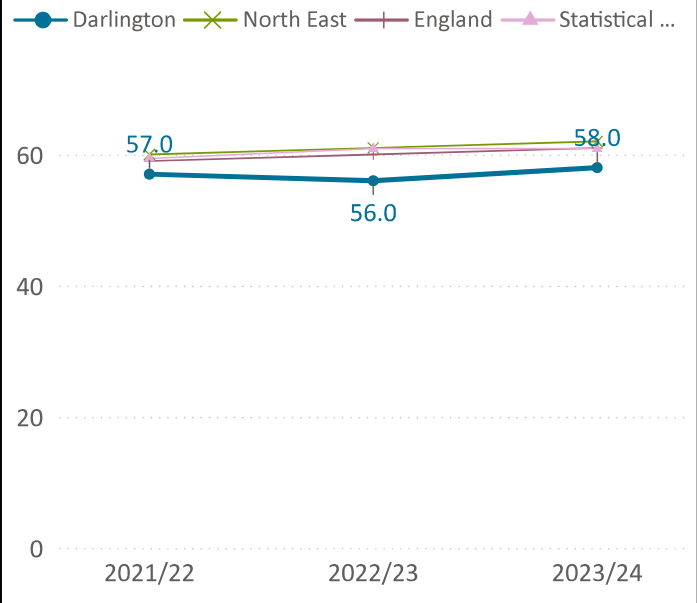
Lead Officer: Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Provide a safe and supportive living environment for children cared for by the council by increasing the number of children placed in council foster care and, when appropriate, council-run residential homes.

Pupils reaching expected standard in Key Stage 2 for Reading, Writing & Maths (Percentage of all pupils)

The percentage of Darlington pupils achieving the expected standard in Key Stage 2 for Reading, Writing & Maths (RWM) has increased slightly between academic year 2022/23 and 2023/24 after a small decrease the previous year. Darlington still remains below the national, regional and statistical neighbour comparators, which have risen slightly year-on-year, but the gap is slightly narrower than last year.



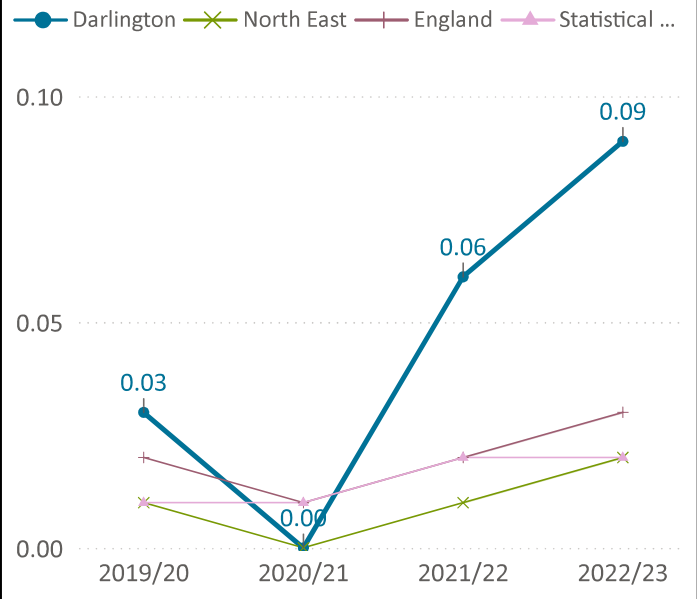
Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Work with multi-academy trusts and schools to develop a high quality and inclusive education sector in Darlington

Permanent exclusions in Primary schools (Percentage of total pupils)

Permanent exclusion rate for Darlington's primary school children has increased greatly again this year from 0.06 in academic year 2021/22 to 0.09 in academic year 2022/23, rising much higher than the national, regional and statistical neighbour comparators which have been rising slightly but not to the same extent. Note that this is due to a small number of primary schools excluding a large number of pupils rather than an authority-wide trend.



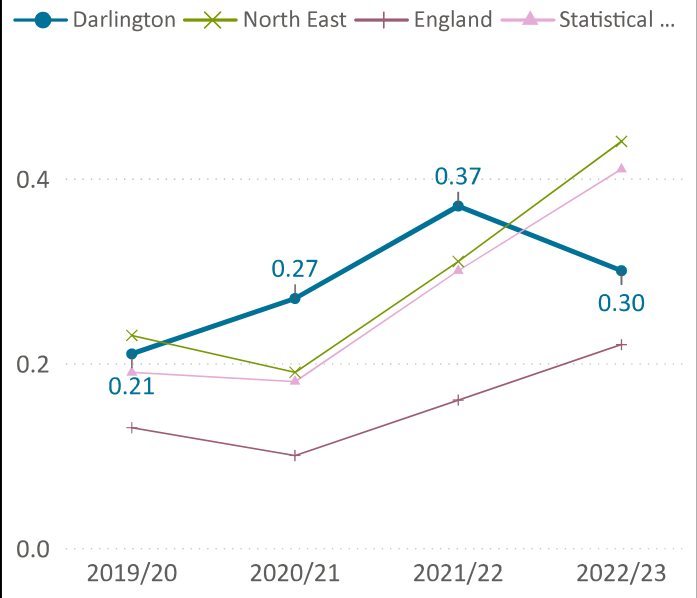
Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Work with multi-academy trusts and schools to develop a high quality and inclusive education sector in Darlington

Permanent exclusions in Secondary schools (Percentage of total pupils)

The permanent exclusion rate of Darlington's secondary school pupils has decreased somewhat between academic year 2021/22 and 2022/23, falling below the regional and statistical neighbour comparators but still remaining above the national average. Note that this high value is due to a small number of secondary schools excluding a large number of pupils rather than an authority-wide trend, which is a trend seen across the region.



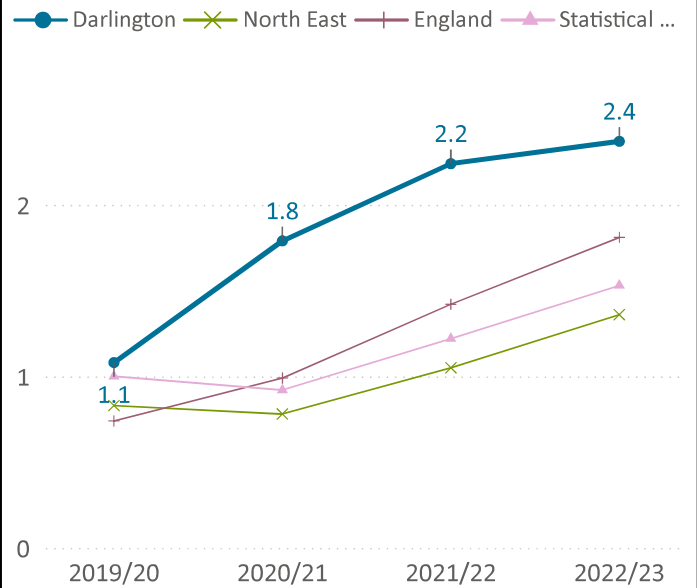
Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Work with multi-academy trusts and schools to develop a high quality and inclusive education sector in Darlington

Suspensions in Primary schools (Percentage of total pupils)

The suspension rate of Darlington's primary school pupils has increased slightly on last year, although the relative increase is lower than previous years and appears to be slowing. It still remains well above the national, regional and statistical neighbour comparators. Note that this high value is due to a small number of primary schools excluding a large number of pupils rather than an authority-wide trend.



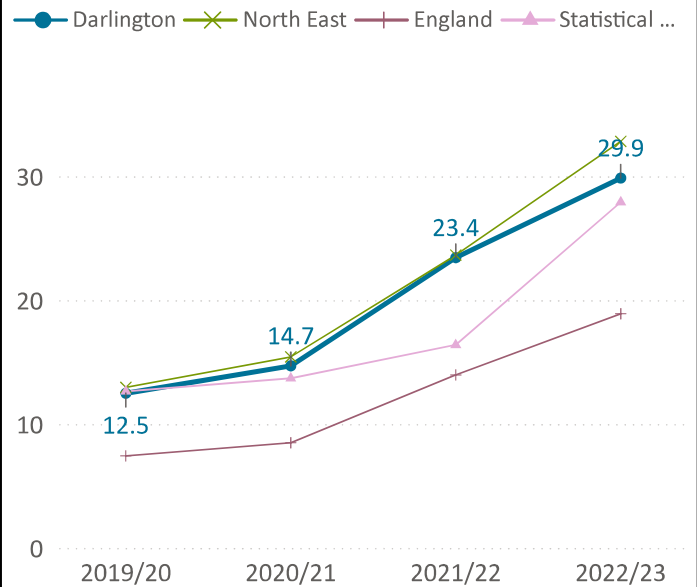
Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Work with multi-academy trusts and schools to develop a high quality and inclusive education sector in Darlington

Suspensions in Secondary schools (Percentage of total pupils)

The suspension rate of Darlington's secondary school pupils has increased again between academic year 2021/22 and 2022/23, sitting above the national and statistical neighbour comparators but below the regional comparator. Note that this high value is due to a small number of secondary schools excluding a large number of pupils rather than an authority-wide trend. This trend is reflected across the region.



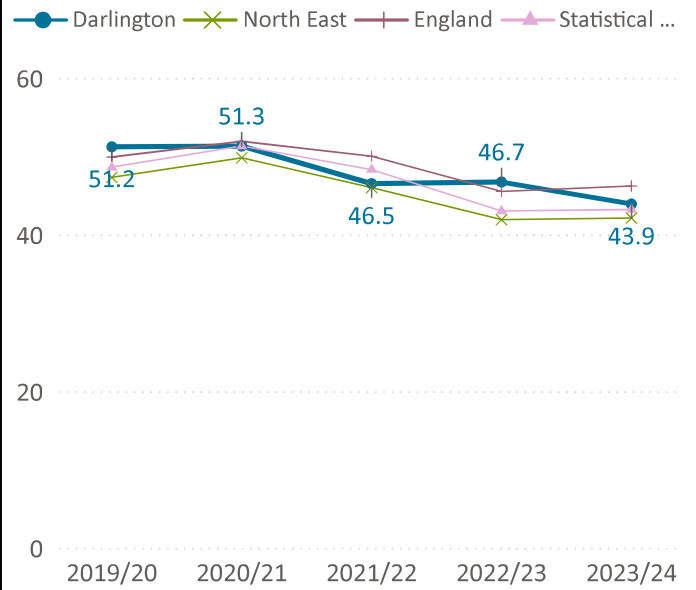
Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Work with multi-academy trusts and schools to develop a high quality and inclusive education sector in Darlington

Pupils achieving 9-5 pass in English and Maths (Percentage of pupils)

The percentage of Darlington's KS4 pupils achieving a grade 9-5 pass in English and Maths has decreased slightly between academic year 2022/23 and 2023/24 after a small increase last year. This decrease is reflected in the overall trend of the national, regional and statistical neighbour comparators over the last 5 years although they all saw a very small increase in this past year.



Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

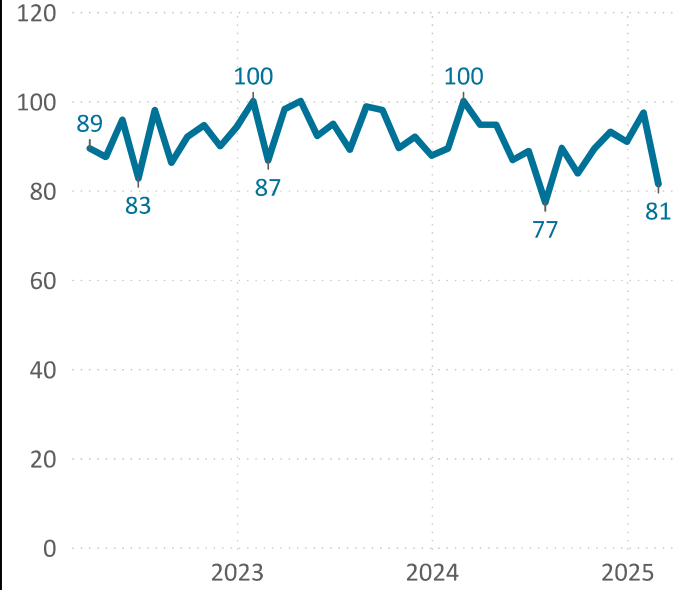
Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Work with multi-academy trusts and schools to develop a high quality and inclusive education sector in Darlington

Percentage of looked after children (LAC) within the month who participated in their review (excludes children under the age of 4yrs)

During the 2024/25 period, cumulatively 89.3% of reviews for children in care, specifically those over the age of four, participated either by attending the review or by submitting their opinions for inclusion.

Over the past 12 months, we have seen a minor decrease in participation compared to the cumulative participation in previous years, which may be attributed to the transition back to in-person meetings, as opposed to the virtual formats utilised during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Lead Officer: Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

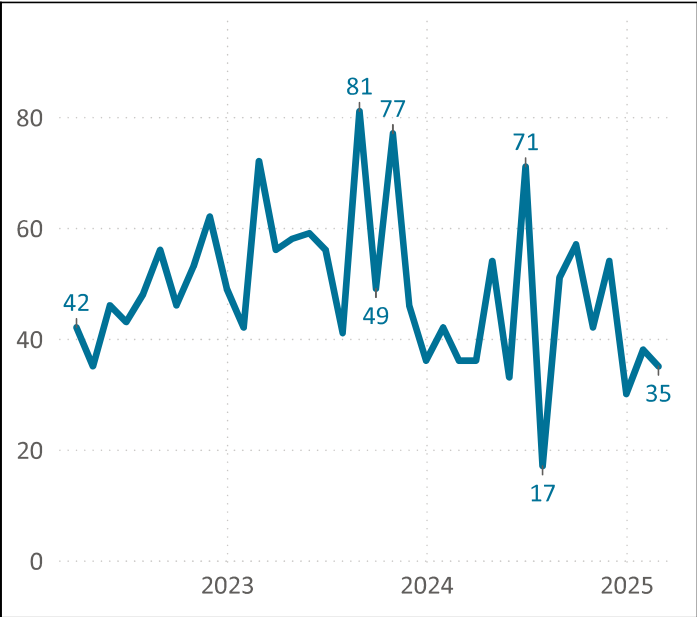
Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Develop more meaningful services by ensuring children and young people are involved in service development and commissioning activity

Number of looked after children (LAC) within the month who participated in their review (excludes children under the age of 4yrs)

During the 2024/25 period, a total of 692 looked after reviews were conducted, with 580 specifically for children and young people aged over four years. The number of reviews can vary from month to month based on their scheduled due dates.

It is important for all children to participate in their reviews to ensure they are actively involved in the decision-making process.



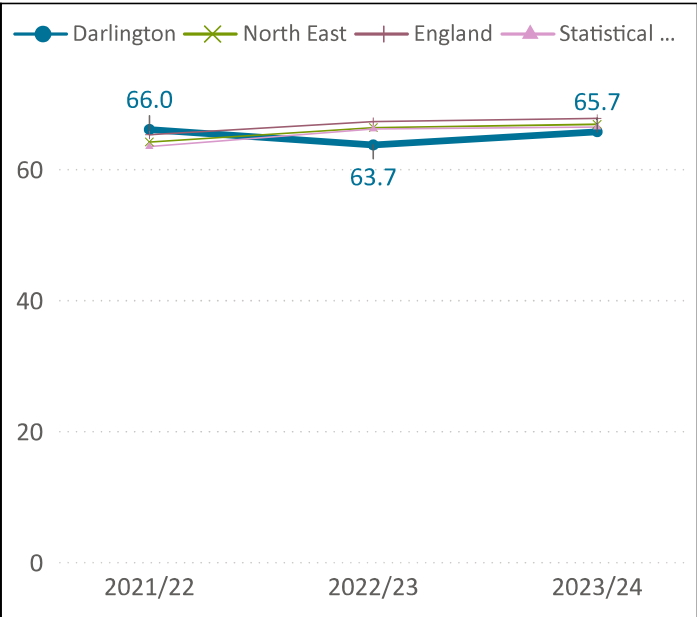
Lead Officer: Chris Bell: Assistant Director - Children's Services

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Develop more meaningful services by ensuring children and young people are involved in service development and commissioning activity

School Readiness: all children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception (Percentage of all eligible children)

After a large decrease between academic year 2021/22 and 2022/23, the percentage of Darlington children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception has increased slightly to fall roughly in line with the national, regional and statistical neighbour comparators in academic year 2023/24, however it still sits below its 2021/22 value of 66% which was higher than all comparators.



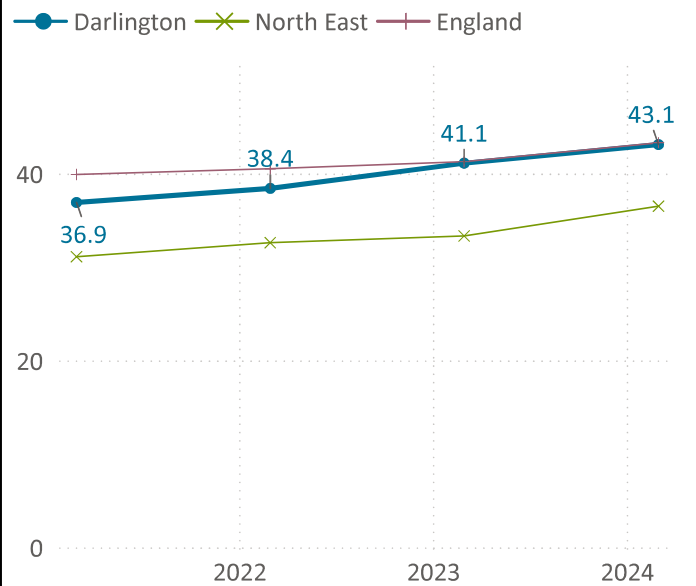
Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Work in partnership with the early years sector and health services to promote school readiness and the delivery of the expansion of funded childcare entitlement

Pupils with an EHCP educated in mainstream schools (Percentage of pupils with an EHCP)

With the support of mainstream schools and continued partnership working Darlington's percentage of pupils with Education Health and Care Plans educated in mainstream settings has risen from 34.2% in 2020 to 43.1% in 2024, higher than the North East average of 36.5% The Darlington performance is now in line with the England average of 43.3%. There has been a year on year increase in pupils supported in mainstream settings since 2020.



Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Key Deliverable: Continue the successful management of the Safety Valve plan for the education budget to improve outcomes for young people with SEND, eliminate the historic deficit on funding and deliver a financially sustainable system

Council Plan Priority: Communities

Working together for safer, healthier and more engaged communities

Support communities to remain safe and resilient by working with key agencies and communities to address anti-social behaviour and crime issues in the community

Over the last 12 months, officers have continued to tackle problems associated with, anti-social behaviour (ASB), fly-tipping and waste in back lanes. The below figures provide an overview of activity:

- (a) 467 Cases reported (of which 439 closed)
- (b) 3 x Duty of Care Fixed Penalty Tickets (£1,800)
- (c) 1 x Duty of Care Fail to pay Fixed Penalty Ticket (Fined £458.00)
- (d) 10 x Section 110 Prosecutions (Total Fines, £4,122)
- (e) Prosecutions for Fly Tipping and Waste Management Offences x 2 (Total Fines, £2,754)

Number Forty supports anybody who needs assistance during an evening in Darlington. Volunteers do a great job in providing support.

To address ASB, the Shopwatch scheme continues to grow, with the Yarm Road and North Road retail parks starting schemes shortly. The Council continues to contribute to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's 'Safer Businesses Group'.

The begging figures for this reporting year compared to the previous year show a reduction in reported begging of 11.5%. There is currently a cohort of 20 people begging, who partners are engaging with, offering all available support mechanisms. An intelligence document is maintained of the top 6 individuals and reviewed during bi-monthly multi-agency meetings. Various support is offered through a dedicated outreach worker who engages and signposts individuals to the service best suited to their needs.

Lead Officer: Chris Knox: Head of Community Safety

Council Plan Priority: Communities

Work with partners to reduce the burden of the cost of living, with a focus on food and fuel insecurity

In addition to the Household Support Fund, the Council has been in discussion with the network of Food Banks that operate across Darlington. A meeting was called which was attended by 8 of the 10 foodbanks that are known of in Darlington. It provided an opportunity for them to talk with one another which revealed that there would be great benefit in them collaborating. The Council has agreed to collate a survey of them which will form the basis of a discussion at a further meeting.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Council Plan Priority: Communities

Support and strengthen partnership working with voluntary and community groups with a focus on addressing the causes of inequality, financial inclusion, social exclusion, and vulnerable families with children and young people

Largely as a result of the strong relationships with the voluntary sector that have emerged through the work of the Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group (VCSE), the Household Support Fund programme is being delivered through the sector as third party providers.

The group has established three working groups looking at social exclusion, financial exclusion and children and families.

Last year, the group selected four of its members to join the Long Term Plan for Towns Board which has subsequently become the Neighbourhood Board. The group has now been invited to be the primary link for the voluntary and community sector. It is anticipated that it will play a significant role in delivering community engagement and capacity build for the Plan for Neighbourhoods.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Council Plan Priority: Communities

Support a strong Community Safety Partnership to ensure the issues affecting the safety and security of our communities are addressed collectively, including addressing hate crime

The Community Safety Partnership thematic group 'Building Stronger and Cohesive Communities' meets regularly to support our hard to reach communities and address community concerns. In support of this process Darlington has a strong Unity Group which meets on a regular basis and has members in the group from all sections of our community.

North Road and Northgate Community Cohesion Panel has been set-up focusing upon geographical areas and behaviours in the area. Uptake by partners and in particular, residents, is encouraging with initial grant funding to support locally driven community based initiatives, which will address issues negatively affecting those communities. Problem Solving techniques and co-ordinated partner approaches to those initiatives will be evaluated with lessons learned and best practice helping future work Borough wide. Recent projects funded through this group are: improved lighting on areas of concern in North Road, the installation of 6 defibrillators and bleed kits along the North Road Corridor and funding of two youth provision initiatives in the North Road area.

Darlington Town Centre has also seen the installation of a 5 further defibrillators and bleed kits which are accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, along with 50 trauma kits deployed across the town centre.

Lead Officer: Chris Knox: Head of Community Safety

Council Plan Priority: Communities

Ensuring business activity is regulated, licensed and enforced effectively to protect the health and wellbeing of residents, visitors and businesses.

Environmental Health officers have carried out visits to check products being sold are safe for consumption. Many sweets and fizzy drinks imported from the US contain chemicals which are banned in the UK or additives which may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children. The team have been liaising with local businesses about the risks posed by imported confectionary and asking them to withdraw stock that is not compliant with UK regulations. The warning comes following a series of inspections carried out by Environmental Health, where nearly £1,600 of confectionary containing dangerous ingredients was seized from eight local shops. Media reports and TV interviews have helped to promote the campaign.

Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Communities

Work with the voluntary and community sector to develop a strategy for informal volunteering which empowers people to volunteer and directs volunteering to areas of greatest need, including working with Darlington Cares to deliver an enhanced volunteering programme

A draft strategy framework has been produced for internal consultation in advance of a discussion at the Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group. It proposes a focus on:

- structured volunteering
- employer supported volunteering
- community volunteering.

After describing the positive messages to be promoted to encourage volunteering, it then outlines a series of actions that the Council could take to positively support the growth of each type of volunteering.

Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

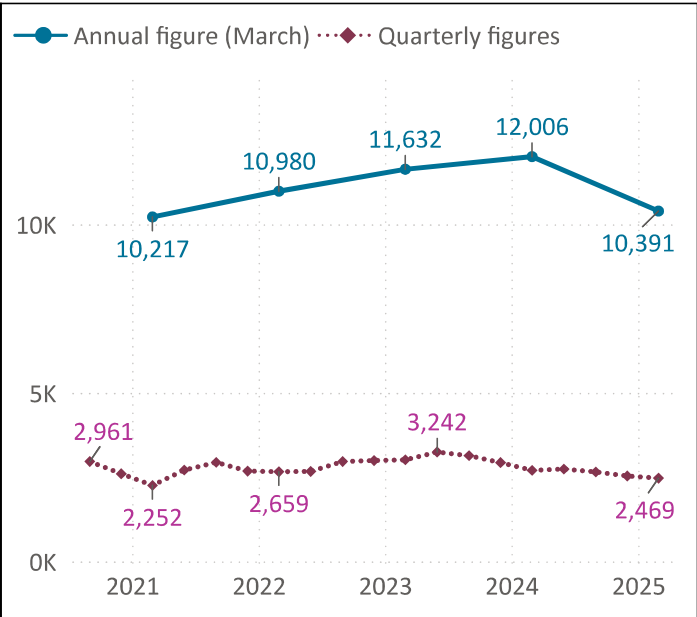
Council Plan Priority: Communities

Number of crimes (total)

The number of crimes reported in 2023-24 was 12,006. The figure for the end of 2024-25 was 10,391 reported crimes, showing a decrease of 13.4%. This equates to 1,614 less victims of crime across Darlington.

The town centre shows a reduction in crime, 1,493 victims of crime in 2023-24 and 1,357 victims in 2024-25, a decrease of 9.1%. This equates to 136 less victims of crime in Darlington town centre.

A number of initiatives have been delivered between Community Safety, the Police and partners to target criminality. Shopwatch was relaunched to support business and assist the police in their operations against shoplifting. Shoplifting offences in the town centre have reduced by 21.8%.



Lead Officer: Chris Knox: Head of Community Safety

Council Plan Priority: Communities

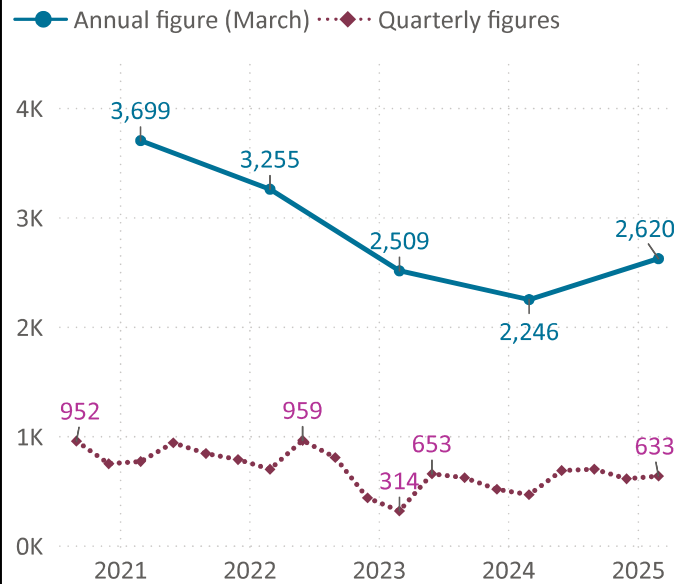
Key Deliverable: Support communities to remain safe and resilient by working with key agencies and communities to address anti-social behaviour and crime issues in the community

Number of ASB incidents, excluding duplicates (total)

Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) has been on a downward trajectory. However, 2024-25 has seen an increase in ASB in Darlington of 16.7%, equating to 374 more reports compared to the previous year.

The increase has been seen across all areas of Darlington with the town centre having an increase of 61.7%, which equates to 116 more reports compared to the previous year.

Targeted action has been taken by the Council, Police and partners to address the increase with extra resources being deployed by the Police, Council and partners. The latest monitoring shows this is starting to have an impact and this will be monitored with ongoing evidence-led action.



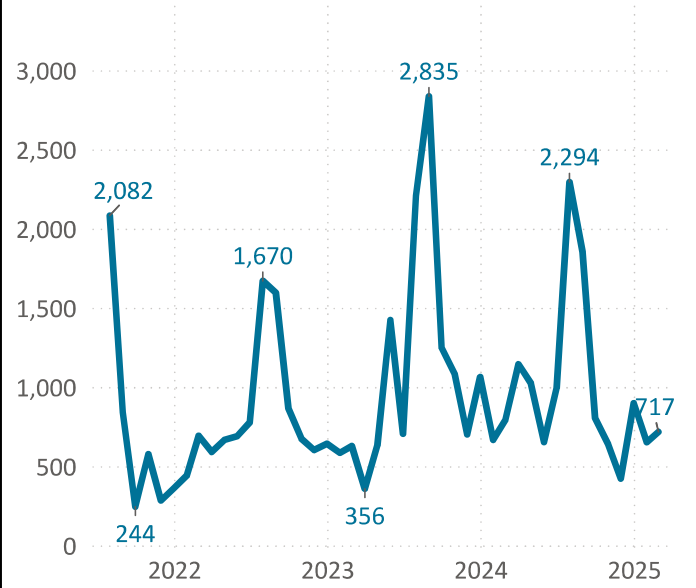
Lead Officer: Chris Knox: Head of Community Safety

Council Plan Priority: Communities

Key Deliverable: Support communities to remain safe and resilient by working with key agencies and communities to address anti-social behaviour and crime issues in the community

Number of items of school uniform distributed

The Uniform Shop continues to be a valued resource for parents in Darlington. Levels of donation remain high as does the number of people accessing the service. The project is a collaboration between the Council and Darlington Cares. Along with the help it provides parents in coping with the cost of uniforms it also has a positive environmental impact in reducing the volume of uniform being discarded.



Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

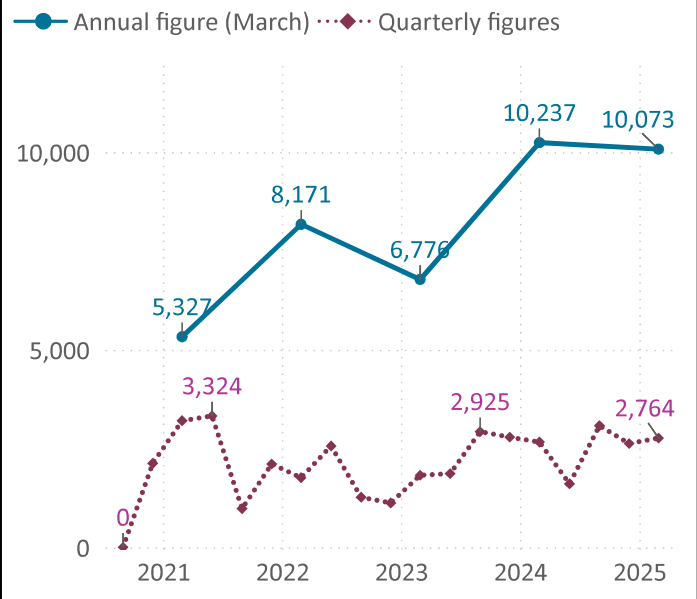
Council Plan Priority: Communities

Key Deliverable: Work with partners to reduce the burden of the cost of living, with a focus on food and fuel insecurity

Number of Darlington Cares volunteer hours

Darlington Cares volunteering continues to grow as does its membership. The programme of activities delivered under the three areas of focus; environment, education and social justice, attract growing numbers of company volunteers.

The Darlington Cares Board at its last meeting considered how it could increase its impact and contribution of its members to Darlington with a particular interest in the ambitions of young people. Proposals are to be considered at its next meeting.



Lead Officer: Seth Pearson: Darlington Partnerships Director

Council Plan Priority: Communities

Key Deliverable: Work with the voluntary and community sector to develop a strategy for informal volunteering which empowers people to volunteer and directs volunteering to areas of greatest need, including working with Darlington Cares to deliver an enhanced volunteering programme

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

A well-connected, clean and sustainable borough

Enable improvements in transport systems by working in partnership with TVCA and public transport operators to deliver the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme, including the improvement of bus facilities and the reliability of services

Work is progressing on the delivery of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme across the Tees Valley. In Darlington this means investment in the Darlington station project, development of walking and cycling schemes and improvements to key bus corridors. The walking and cycling and bus corridor schemes are currently at the end of feasibility stage and are moving into detailed design in early 2025. Construction works will commence later in 2025 subject to business cases demonstrating value for money. We are also working closely with the Tees Valley Combined Authority to develop projects for the second round of CRSTS funding.

Lead Officer: Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Work with local stakeholders and businesses to promote a diverse and accessible programme of events that maximises footfall in the town centre and has a positive impact on the local economy

The Town Centre Partnership team collaborates closely with high street businesses to develop a dynamic events programme aimed at stimulating foot traffic and enhancing dwell time in Darlington. These annual events are strategically designed to draw visitors to the town centre, encouraging them to explore, enjoy, and return. The programme features a diverse range of events, from niche experiences such as the Misfits Market, hosted by a local independent retailer, to family-friendly animation days like Dinosaur Day, and large-scale music events like the Rhythm and Tunes Weekend, as well as smaller trails.

As a Purple Flag-awarded town, Darlington is recognised for its safe and vibrant evening economy, further enhancing the town's appeal. Additionally, Darlington's commitment to excellence was showcased when the town won Gold at the Northumbria in Bloom 2024 awards, earning the prestigious opportunity to represent the region at the 2025 Britain in Bloom competition.

This variety of events ensures broad regional appeal, offering free, inclusive activities that attract a diverse audience. The events team continuously engages with the community to refine and evolve the programme, ensuring that both visitors and town centre businesses benefit from the increased activity and engagement.

Lead Officer: Mike Crawshaw: Head of Culture & Heritage

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Introduce food waste collections and support residents to increase overall recycling rates to move towards the national average

Cabinet approved the introduction of weekly food waste collections from April 2026 in line with national changes as part of the Government's wider Simpler Recycling reforms. All English local authorities will be collecting food waste from April 2026 onwards (unless they already do so). Cabinet also approved the move to weekly collections of recycling materials when the food waste collections launch. This should increase the amount of waste that is recycled and provide enhanced opportunities for residents to recycle as much of their waste as possible.

Plans are being developed for the introduction of these changes coupled with the procurement of containers, vehicles and disposal arrangements required to treat food waste. The Council are utilising resources and expertise provided by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to inform the development of a communications programme to inform residents of the changes and maximise opportunities to recycle. Further updates will be provided in the coming months.

Lead Officer: Ben Grabham: Assistant Director - Environmental Services & Community Safety

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Celebrate the opening of Hopetown and deliver a successful 2025 festival programme that helps to promote Darlington as a destination for visitors and investment

Hopetown Darlington opened on 16 July 2024 and has been well received by visitors, achieving a number of awards in recognition of the excellent facilities and the offer available at Hopetown. Throughout the year, planning continued on developing an exciting, varied and spectacular festival for the Bicentenary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR). The S&DR200 festival was launched at Kynren, Bishop Auckland, with a spectacular show, 'All Change', enjoyed by an audience of more than 6,500. 'Railway Pioneers - celebrating the railway rockstars of the past', a display of early locomotives, launched at Hopetown on 4 April 2025 and will be on show until 22 June 2025. The festival programme runs through to October 2025, across County Durham, Darlington and Stockton. The events to enjoy in Darlington during this period are as follows:

Steam to the Future (11 July to 5 October) - an immersive, steam inspired installation at Hopetown.

Ghost Train (20 September) - a one day festival featuring performers, live music and a procession of large-scale art installations from the Town Centre to Hopetown.

Anniversary Journey (26-28 September) - a working replica of Locomotion No 1 will come across the historic Skerne Bridge on Saturday 27 September, 200 years to the day of the world's first steam powered passenger rail journey.

Lead Officer: Ian Thompson: Assistant Director - Community Services

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Work with statutory bodies to progress studies of flood risk in Darlington and enable funding to be sought to mitigate the impact of climate change.

Two studies are being progressed in partnership with key agencies that will inform and assist future planning, investment and bidding opportunities. The two studies that are taking place are:

* The Darlington Northumbria Integrated Drainage Partnership (NIDP) study. The initial study is complete and a priority scheme has been identified which covers the West Beck and Cocker Beck watercourses, including Cockerton area. The current outline programme is for the stage 1/2 report to be complete by the end of 2025, development of the business case for Government Grant in Aid (GiA) funding to take place in 2026-27, with construction from 2028 onwards (subject to successful business case and support from Northumbrian Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (NRFCC)).

* Flood Asset Risk Study. This is looking at the risks and impact associated with the possible failure of blockage of key assets such as bridges and culverts to determine investment and maintenance strategies to minimise the risk of flooding. A high level study identified a number of locations where further investigation was warranted due to the impact that a blockage or partial blockage of the channel or culvert would cause to properties. The main scheme identified was on West Beck, which was incorporated into the NIDP scheme. Another scheme has been identified at Killerby and costed options have been drawn up. The Council is continuing to assess the business case for this scheme.

A number of smaller schemes are being developed to address local issues.

Lead Officer: Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Deliver revised supplementary planning documents that guide better design in new developments and contribute to a sense of pride in place

The Council recently approved a revised Local Development Scheme, which in effect is a timetable for the production of planning policy documents. One of the documents within the timetable is a Supplementary Planning Document on design. This will replace the existing document which was adopted in 2011. The intention is to consult on this document before the end of the year and to hopefully adopt a final version early in the new year. The document when adopted will be a material consideration in determining planning applications.

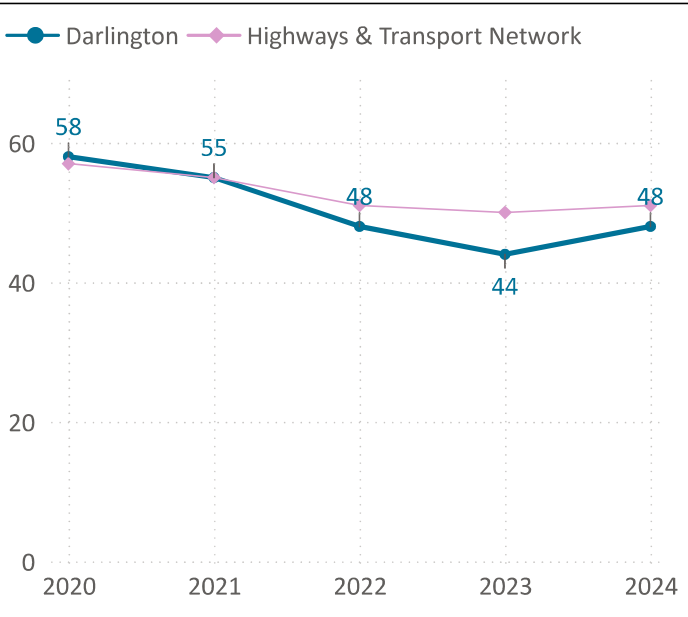
Lead Officer: Trevor Watson: Executive Director - Economy & Public Protection

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Overall Public Satisfaction with Public Transport Theme (National Highways and Transport Survey)

The satisfaction survey results are taken from a survey conducted by the National Highways and Transport Network, an organisation which provides a range of benchmarking services to Local Authorities. The overall public satisfaction with public transport has increased from 44% in 2023 to 48% in 2024. This is below the Highways and Transport Network average of all the authorities taking part of 51%.

Tees Valley Combined Authority is the Local Transport Authority responsible for public transport and the Council will continue to work in partnership to steer investment into public transport in Darlington to improve satisfaction levels utilising Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding.



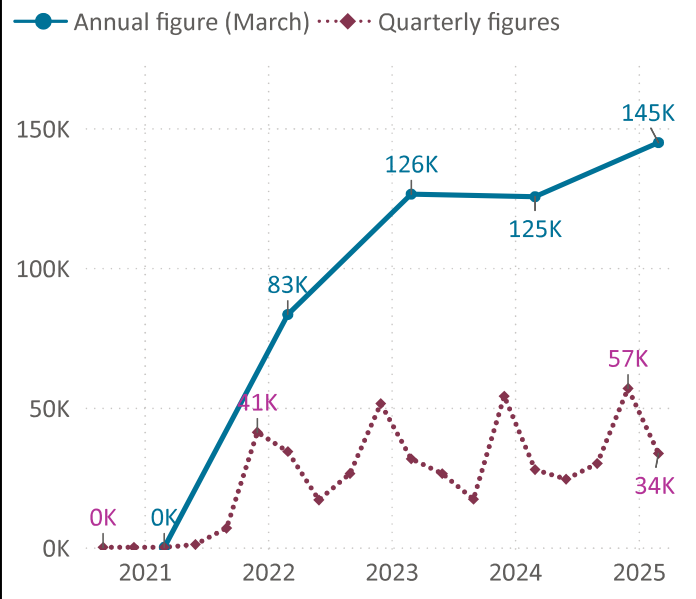
Lead Officer: Anthony Hewitt: Assistant Director - Highways & Capital Projects

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Key Deliverable: Enable improvements in transport systems by working in partnership with TVCA and public transport operators to deliver the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme, including the improvement of bus facilities and the reliability of services

Number of individual attendances at theatre shows

Audience attendances at Darlington Hippodrome shows for Q4 2024/25 were 33,571 compared to 27,803 for the same quarter last year. 18,357 people attended performances in March alone including sold out performances for Jasper Carrott and Alistair McGowan and Franki Valli and The Four Seasons starring Peter Andre. The Hippodrome has achieved an annual attendance of 144,780, up 19,351 in attendances compared to last year.



Lead Officer: Mike Crawshaw: Head of Culture & Heritage

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

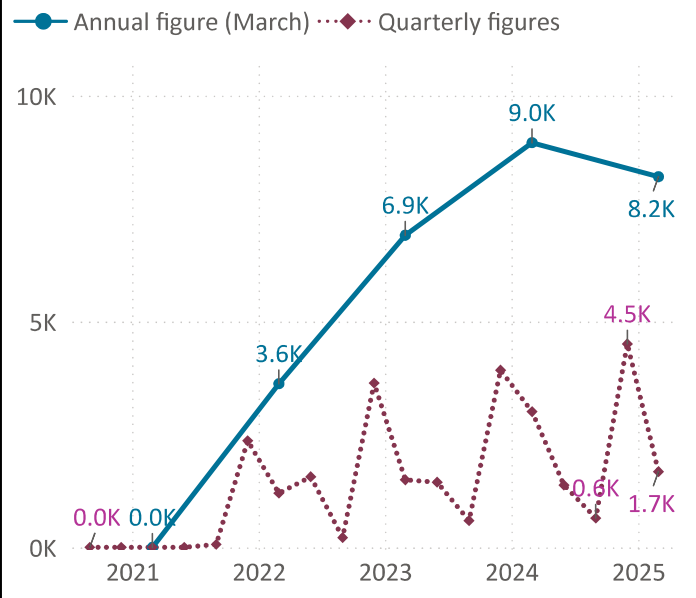
Key Deliverable: Work with local stakeholders and businesses to promote a diverse and accessible programme of events that maximises footfall in the town centre and has a positive impact on the local economy

Number of individual attendances at Hullabaloo shows

1,676 people have attended performances at The Hullabaloo in Q4 compared to 3,004 across the same period last year.

8,203 people have attended shows at The Hullabaloo this year, which is 754 less than the previous year despite an increase in the number of performances.

A review of programming has taken place for the next financial year to address the downturn, which will focus more on comedy, which attracted higher attendances.



Lead Officer: Mike Crawshaw: Head of Culture & Heritage

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

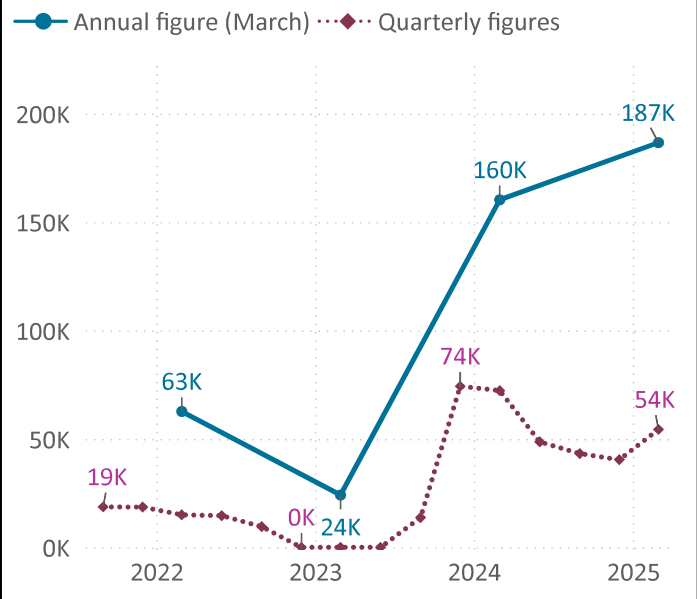
Key Deliverable: Work with local stakeholders and businesses to promote a diverse and accessible programme of events that maximises footfall in the town centre and has a positive impact on the local economy

Number of physical visits to Darlington Library (door count)

Our visitor count is managed from door counters positioned on the entrance ways on Crown Street, Priestgate and East Street. Visitor numbers have increased by 16% from the previous year.

More school classes are visiting the library for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) visits to The Hive or to borrow books. The Study is well used for work, researching and computer use. This year the Centre for Local Studies has also appeared busier, with solitary working and researching, but also groups visiting for information and support from staff.

The lending library appears quieter which corresponds with less adult stock being borrowed. However, the children's library is well used.



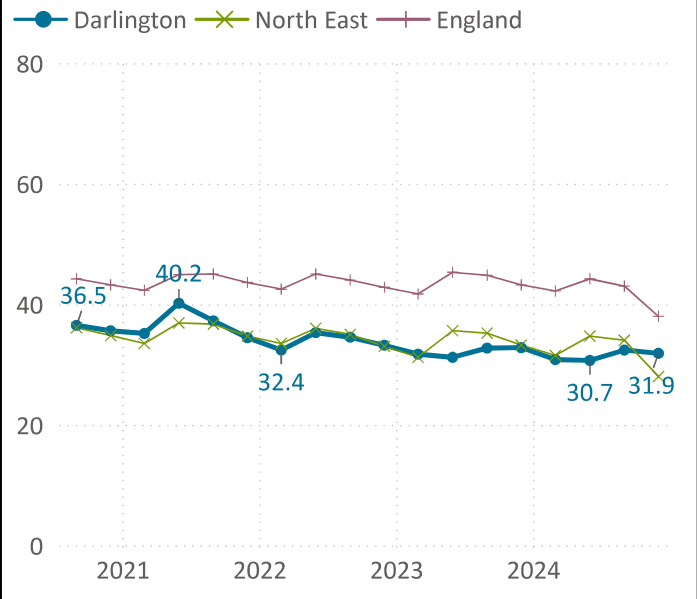
Lead Officer: Mike Crawshaw: Head of Culture & Heritage

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Key Deliverable: Work with local stakeholders and businesses to promote a diverse and accessible programme of events that maximises footfall in the town centre and has a positive impact on the local economy

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

The amount of waste that is recycled, composted or reused has fallen in recent years. However, the Council's performance to the end of December (31.9%) is slightly above the North East average (28.0%), but below the England average (38.0%). Work continues to be undertaken by Street Scene and communication teams to try to increase recycling and reduce contamination. Cabinet approved a report in January 2025 to introduce a weekly food waste collection service (as part of the Government's Simpler Recycling Reforms) and as part of this change to service, recycling collections will also move from fortnightly to weekly from April 2026. This should help to increase overall recycling rates.



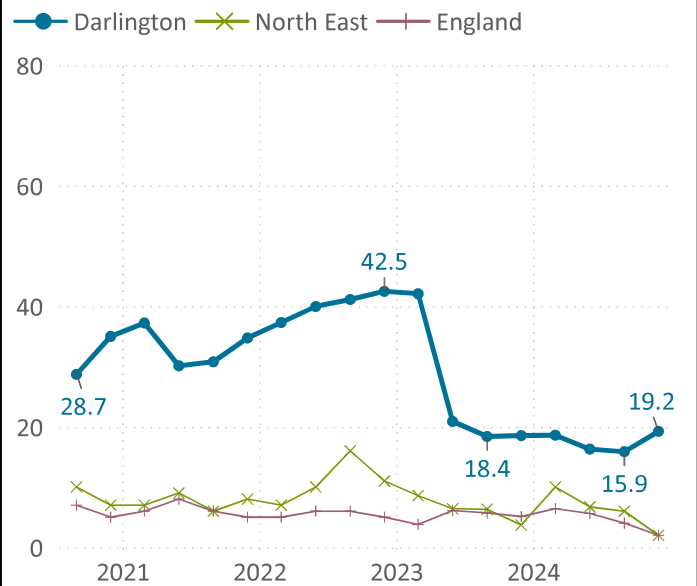
Lead Officer: Ben Grabham: Assistant Director - Environmental Services & Community Safety

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Key Deliverable: Introduce food waste collections and support residents to increase overall recycling rates to move towards the national average

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

Data is only available up to December 2024 due to the lag in data verification through the national system. The percentage of household waste sent to landfill stands at 19.2%. Over time, more waste has been sent to energy recovery, which is higher up the waste hierarchy, causing less environmental impact than landfill. The Council is above the North East average for landfill, as the majority of other North East Council's have primary contracts with energy recovery facilities.



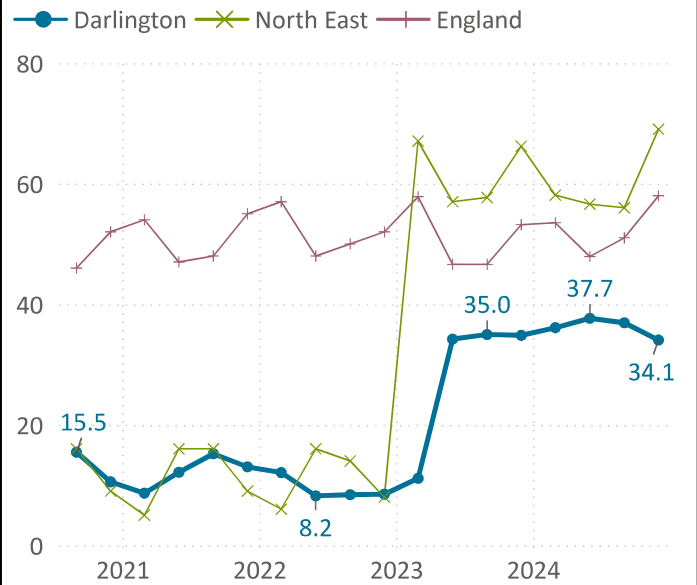
Lead Officer: Ben Grabham: Assistant Director - Environmental Services & Community Safety

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Key Deliverable: Introduce food waste collections and support residents to increase overall recycling rates to move towards the national average

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

Data is only available up to December 2024 due to the lag in the national verification process. The percentage of household waste sent to energy recovery sits at 34.1%. Performance is generally 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 other North East authorities have a primary contract through energy recovery facilities.



Lead Officer: Ben Grabham: Assistant Director - Environmental Services & Community Safety

Council Plan Priority: Local Environment

Key Deliverable: Introduce food waste collections and support residents to increase overall recycling rates to move towards the national average