

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 scheme has already 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 was completed in June 2025. The scheme delivered 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 (WHSHF) wave 3. This scheme will deliver external and cavity wall insulation, solar panels, loft insulation, double glazing, and low energy lighting to approx. 680 Council homes using matched funding from the HRA. Delivery of WHSHF 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.

The Council are maintaining a balanced approach of monthly requests and approvals. The budget is well managed and the process has been acknowledged as coherent and equitable.

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 licensing in areas with a high number of private rented sector homes

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 Act. The Renters’ Rights Act 2025 was enacted in October 2025 which will have a significant impact on these proposed schemes:

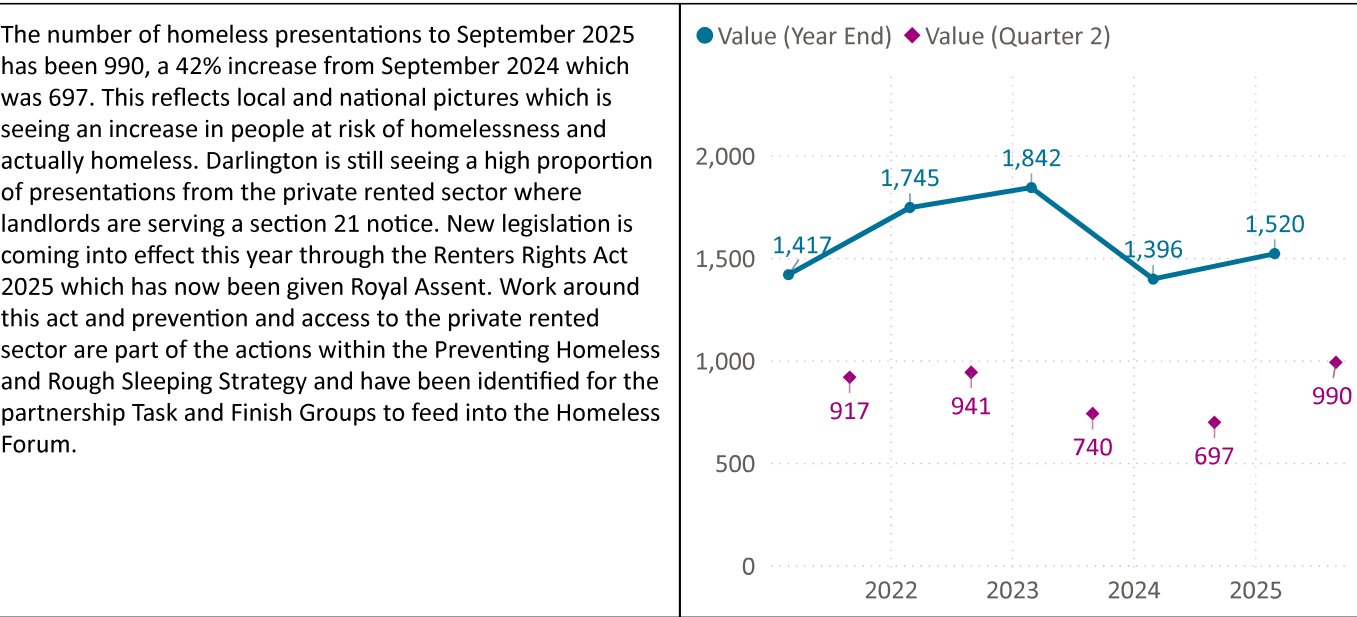
- The Act includes greater Investigatory Powers. These powers will be introduced from 27 December 2025.
- A Landlords' Portal is currently being piloted across England this will require the mandatory registration of each rented property. This is expected to be introduced in 2026.

Article 4 will also have an impact on the development of Houses in Multiple Occupation once this is introduced across Darlington in 2026.

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

Council Plan Priority: Homes

Number of people presented to Darlington Council's Homeless service



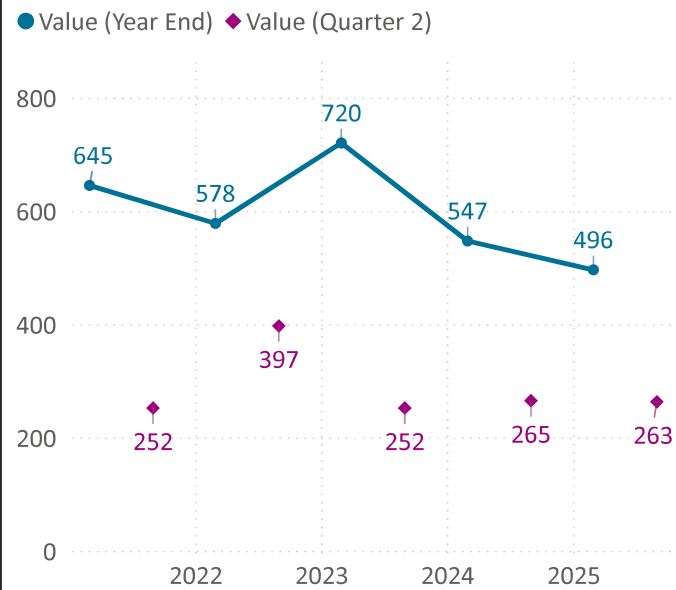
Lead Officer: Anthony Sandys: Assistant Director - Housing & Revenues

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 for homeless cases remain consistent to this time last financial year which is good to see with the continuing pressures of lack of move on accommodation. September 2024 there were 265 positive outcomes and September 2025 we have seen 263 positive outcomes. This shows the Housing Options team are working well to achieve long term housing solutions for clients.



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

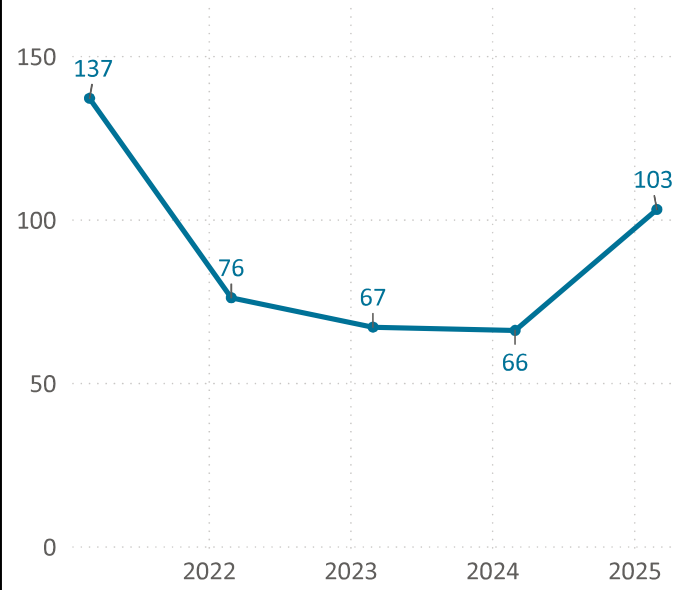
Council Plan Priority: Homes

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Additional Affordable Housing Supply - Completions

This annual figure has been obtained from the Government "Live Tables on Affordable Housing Supply". The number of affordable homes completed in 2024/25 has increased after three consecutive years of falls by 37 homes taking the total to 103.

Affordable homes continue to be delivered on Council sites (40) and by private developers (63). Of the total 77 were rented and the other 26 were affordable products.



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

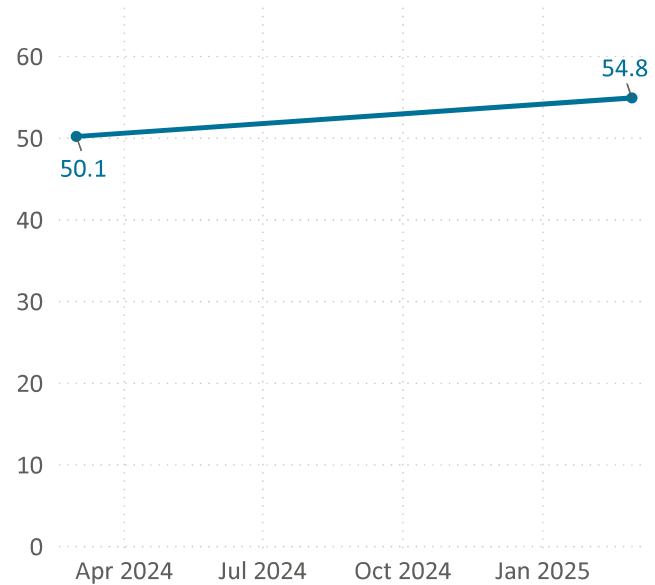
Council Plan Priority: Homes

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. Additional funding has also been awarded under the Warm Homes: Social housing fund, which is a three year scheme to 2027/28, which will further improve the EPC rating of our properties.



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

The Adults Services and the Commissioning, Contracts and Brokerage 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 a quarterly collaboration meeting with Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV) and are working with the Trust and the four other Tees valley local authorities on exploring discharge hub models. A Trusted Assessment approach has been applied across the discharge pathway with County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) with positive feedback and experiences for people.

In addition the Council has developed a "winter initiative" project lasting until end of March 2026. This involves developing a smoother transition from discharge to intermediate care at home or in a care facility. This will be monitored through a multi-disciplinary approach for effectiveness and experience with the purpose of supporting people to return home, with support if required, quicker and will increase independence.

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 multi-agency 'deep dives' examining two of the four themes of the strategy each year. A deep dive on pregnancy and early years was undertaken in quarter 1 and the annual review was presented in quarter 2, providing an update on progress of key actions and identifying any areas of risk.

An approach has been agreed for the development of the health and wellbeing network, implementation will be led by the Public Health Team.

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 Darlington Domestic Abuse Local Working Group continues to meet to drive forward work locally.

The local delivery plan for drugs and alcohol is monitored through the governance arrangements of the County Durham and Darlington Combating Drugs and Alcohol Partnership, which is chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner. The additional funding for drug and alcohol treatment and recovery 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

The Dolphin Centre has experienced the highest visitor numbers on record for quarters 1 and 2. The pool facilities have continued to be very popular following the recent investment and water education has followed a consistent positive trend. Strong partnership with local colleges has resulted in excellent student engagement through targeted student membership and student discount schemes to encourage participation in positive activity during off peak times at a reduced rate.

Memberships are at an all time high, with popular classes such as Pilates and aqua aerobics hitting capacity weekly. The school holiday programming included a new addition, the weekly pool party which has proven to be very popular. New promotions have been introduced including Active Afternoons and Kids Eat Half Price which has helped generate footfall to bowling and the Bistro in off peak times. Soft Play has continued to maintain positive attendance figures with birthday parties proving a popular choice for local families.

The team is looking forward to work starting on the next phase of mechanical and electrical upgrades. Approval was also given for the installation of indoor golf to compliment DC Bowl plus a modern spinning studio adjacent to our existing fitness studio which will be refurbished and modernised. These investments are expected to retain and grow visitor numbers.

Attendances at Eastbourne Sports Complex have remained very positive as users continue to utilise the new facilities from the previous capital project investment. Darlington Academy is now using the site throughout the year which has increased daytime usage. The site has also had an increase in school games events and a full diverse range of activities has been delivered 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

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 Adult Services Transformation Plan is a strategic initiative designed to modernise service delivery, improve outcomes for residents, and ensure sustainability within available resources. It aims to drive efficiencies through streamlined processes through the “right team first time” approach, reducing duplication and delays, an enhanced Front Door model to manage demand early, promoting independence and reducing reliance on costly long-term care and targeted reviews and improved financial oversight to ensure care packages deliver value for money.

The Services utilise a Strength-Based Practice Framework, focusing on individual and community assets rather than defaulting to formal care and are investing in digital solutions (self-assessment tools, assistive technology, virtual training) to reduce administrative overhead and improve accessibility.

The plan supports the Council Plan 2024–2027 principles of addressing inequalities by promoting inclusive access to services, tackling climate change through digital delivery and reduced travel and efficient and effective use of resources by embedding prevention and independence. It contributes to the “Living Well” priority by enabling residents to maintain health and independence, and strengthens “Communities” through improvements outlined in the Care Quality Commission inspection report by developing co-production, shared experiences and reaching out to people/groups who do not always traditionally access Adult Services.

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.

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 has been completed and a review of Extra Care services will start in early 2026. A new service based on the Shared Lives model is currently being mobilised. This model offers adults who need support the opportunity to live in the home of a trained carer and share family and community life. This approach promotes community-based solutions delivering cost-effective care that improves quality of life.

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 is undertaking to ensure improved engagement, inclusion and communication with people who use the 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 formation of a steering group with partners and co-produced with the voluntary sector and people with lived experience. The draft strategy will align and be underpinned with other Council strategies such as the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Strategy. It will be shared for wider consultation in early 2026.

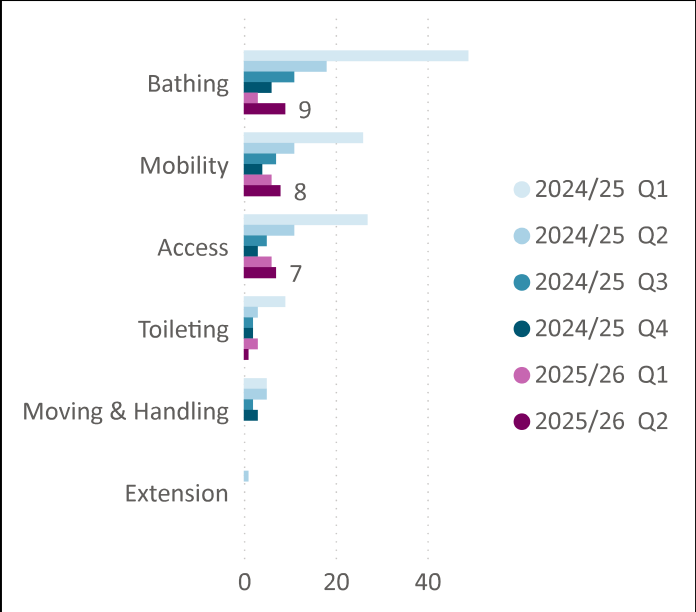
Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

Council Plan Priority: Living well

Major adaptations by type (quarterly)

There have been a total of 43 major works which have been approved during the first 2 quarters of the year. This is a significant reduction compared to the first half of the previous year when 165 major works had been approved.

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

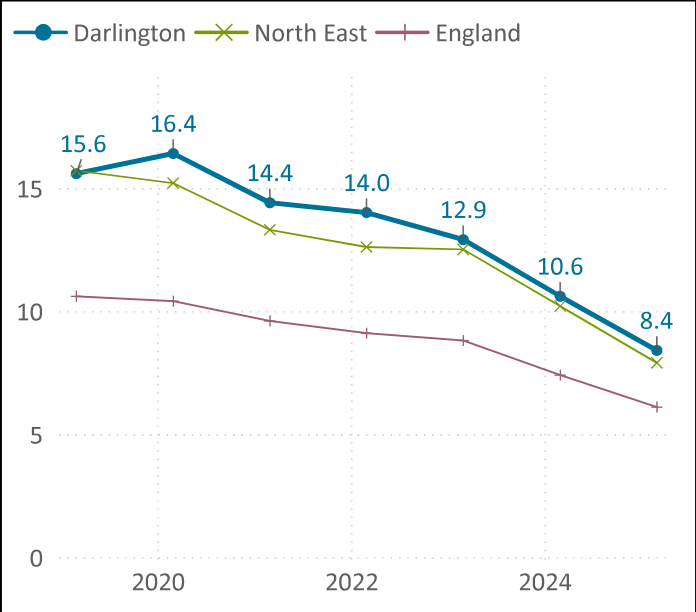
Council Plan Priority: Living well

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 2024/25 shows that 8.4% of mothers are known to be smokers at the time of delivery. This has reduced steadily since 2020. Darlington is statistically similar to the North East and statistically worse than England. The gap between Darlington and England has continued to narrow.

There is new investment in stop smoking services to provide additional support for pregnant women to quit smoking at every opportunity. Existing support is delivered by the NHS through local maternity services and by the Council, which commissions a specialist stop smoking service to help women quit before and after pregnancy.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

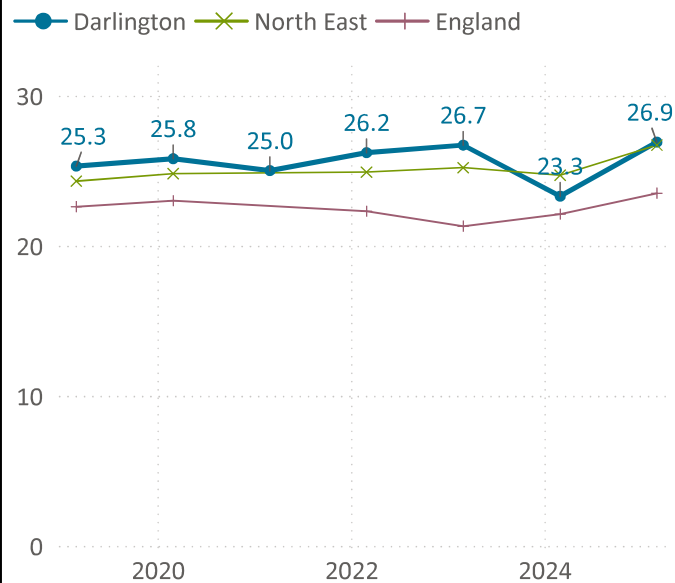
Council Plan Priority: Living well

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 2024/25 shows an increase in the proportion of reception children aged 4-5 years who were found to be overweight or obese when measured which is now at 26.9%. Darlington is now statistically similar to the North East but higher than the England average.

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.

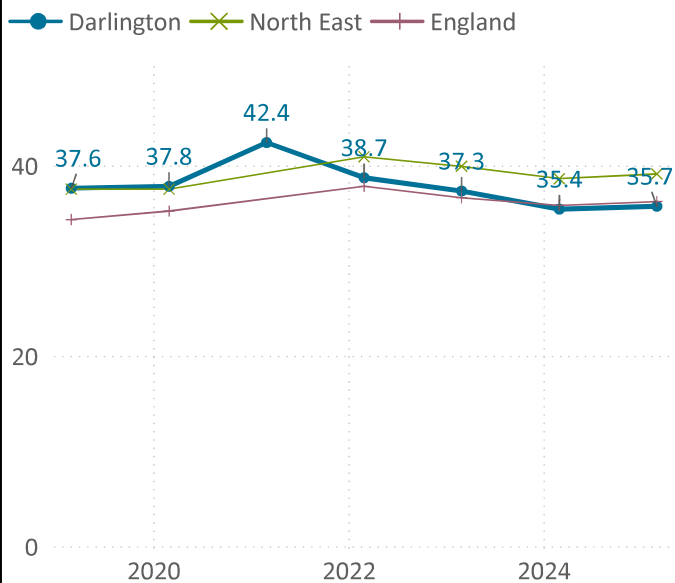


- Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health
- Council Plan Priority: Living well
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Excess weight among Year 6 pupils (%)

The latest data from 2024/25 shows that 35.7% of Year 6 children aged 10-11 years who were measured were found to be overweight or obese. There has been a reduction each year since 2021, with Darlington being statistically lower 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.

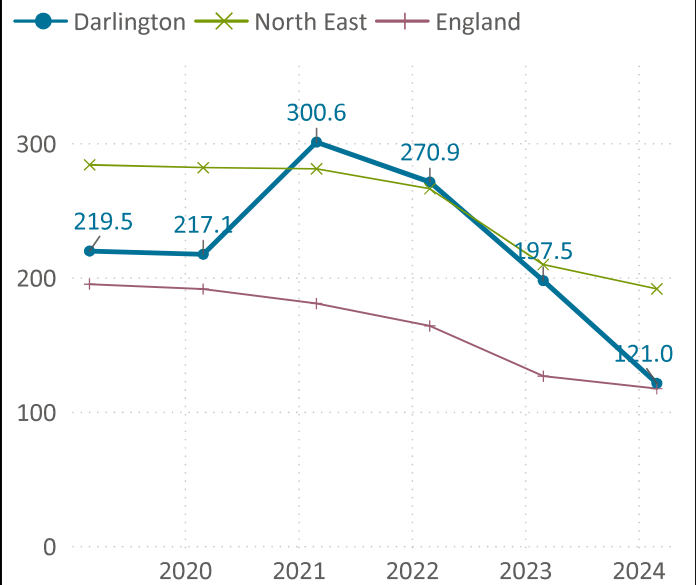


- Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health
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Emergency Hospital Admissions for Intentional Self-Harm (per 100,000 population)

The latest data for 2024 shows a rate of 121 per 100,000 population, 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 that warranted a hospital admission and not a measure of the actual prevalence of self-harm.



Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

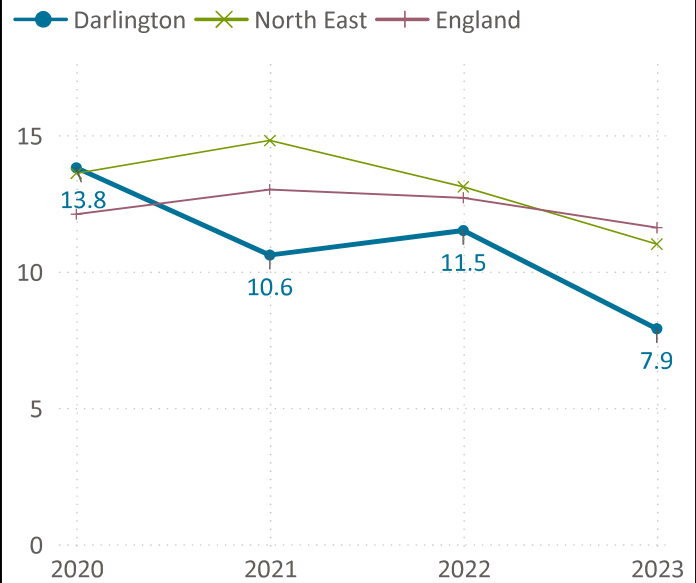
Council Plan Priority: Living well

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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

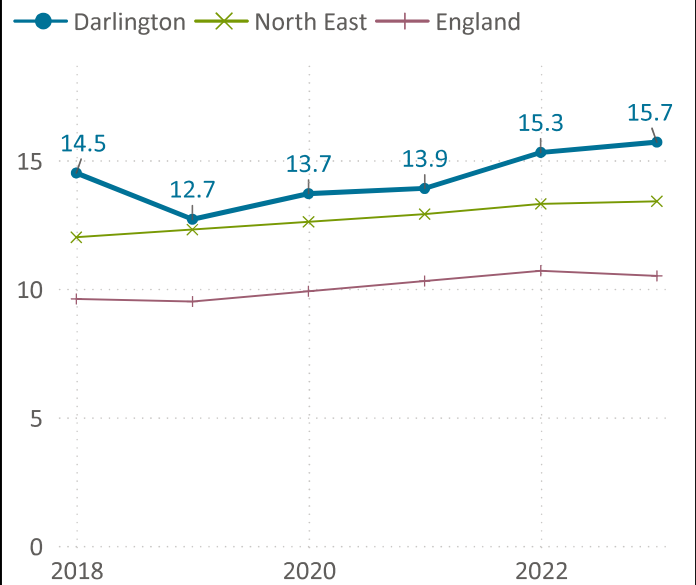
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Inequality in life expectancy at birth (male)

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 working to develop a suicide prevention plan for Darlington.



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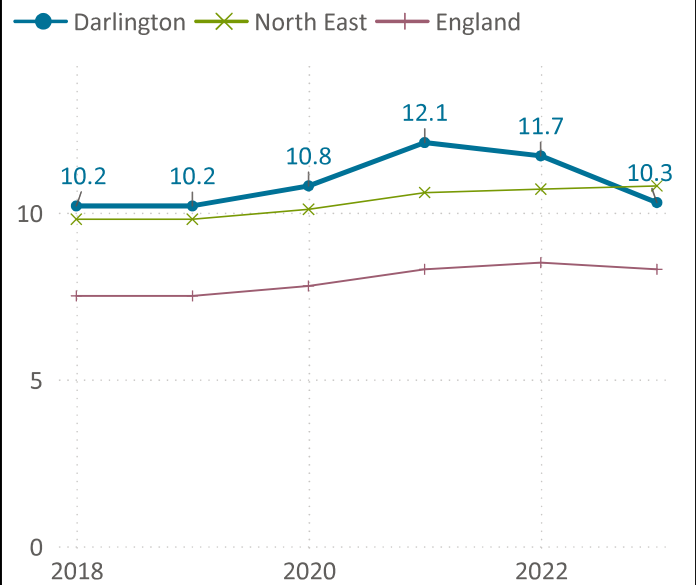
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Inequality in life expectancy at birth (female)

Inequality in life expectancy at birth for females in Darlington has narrowed in 2023, from 11.7 years 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

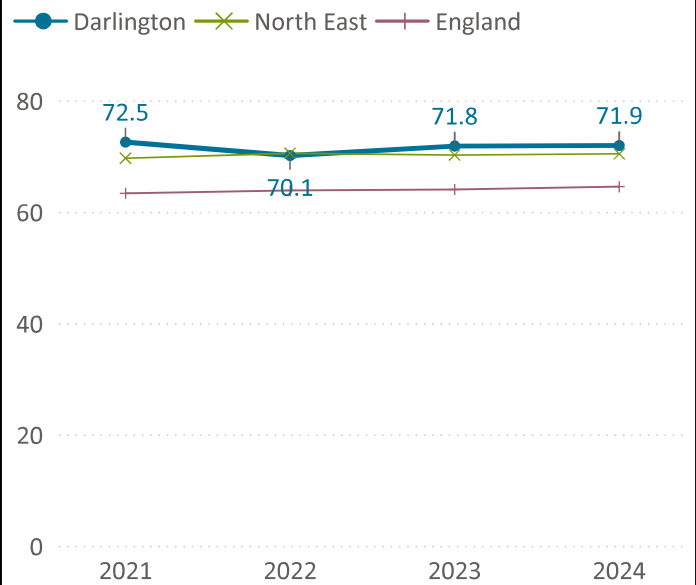
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Overweight (including obesity) prevalence in adults (18+ yrs)

This data from the responses to the 2023/24 sample of the Active Lifestyles Survey estimates very small increase in the rate of prevalence of overweight (including obesity) in adults in Darlington to 71.9%. Darlington is statistically similar to the North East, but worse than England.

The causes of obesity are complex, 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

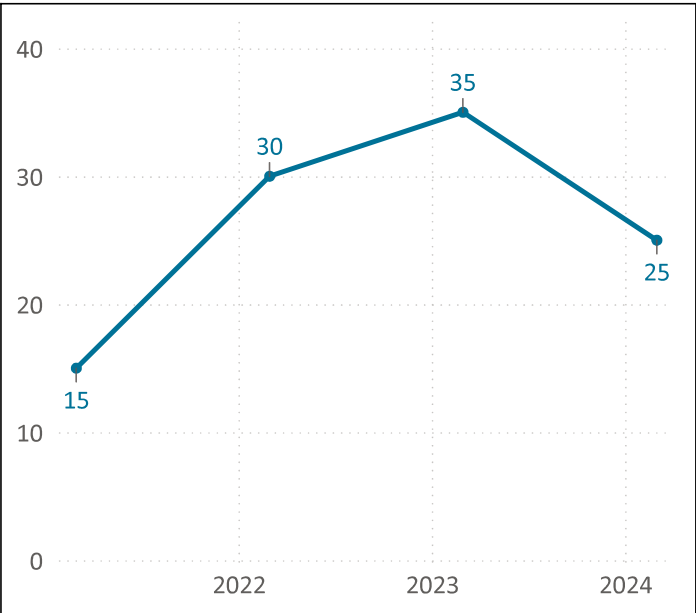
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Young people (under 18) in treatment for substance use alcohol

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.



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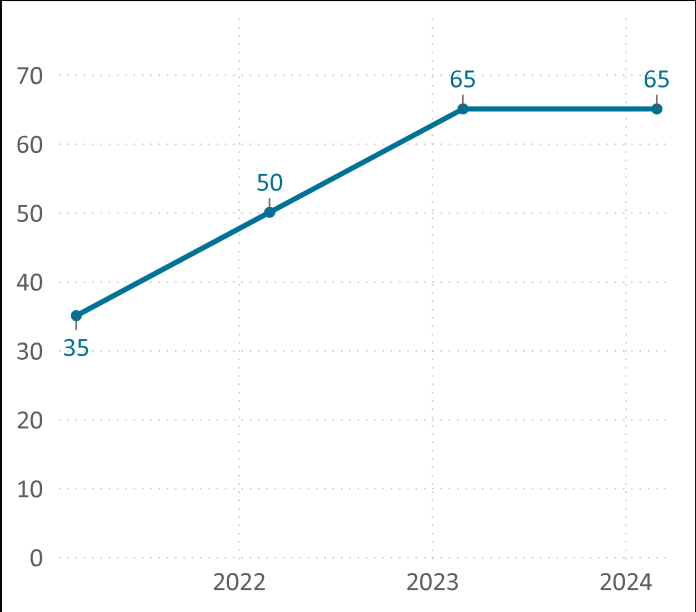
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Young people (under 18) in treatment for substance use drugs

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

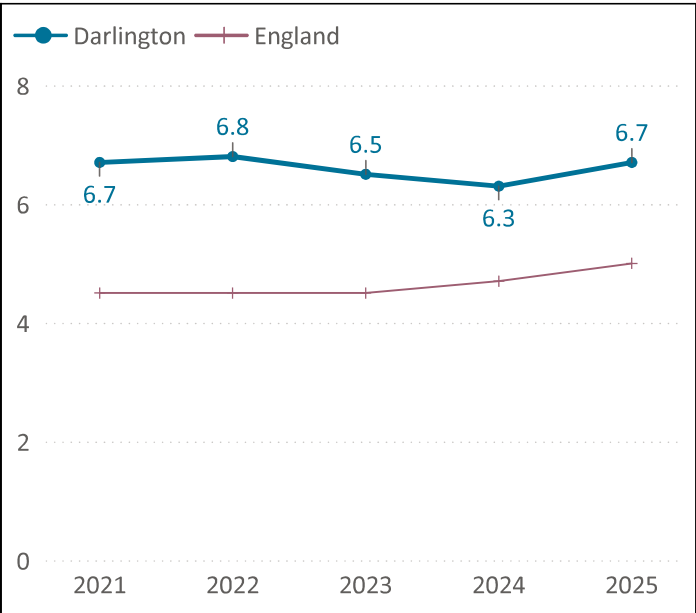
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Adults in treatment at specialist drug misuse service (per 1,000 population)

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 population currently in treatment. This is higher than the rate for England at 5 per 1,000 and similar to the NE average.

The Public Health team is working with partners and local providers to continue 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.



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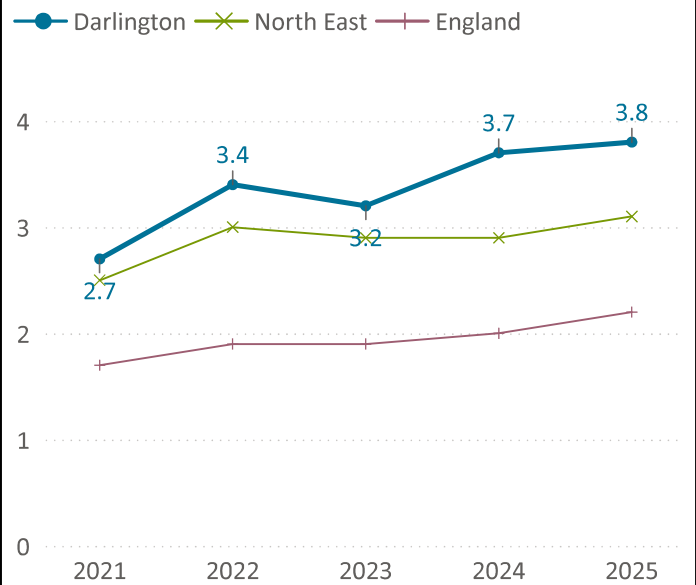
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Adults in treatment at specialist alcohol misuse service (per 1,000 population)

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 but more 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

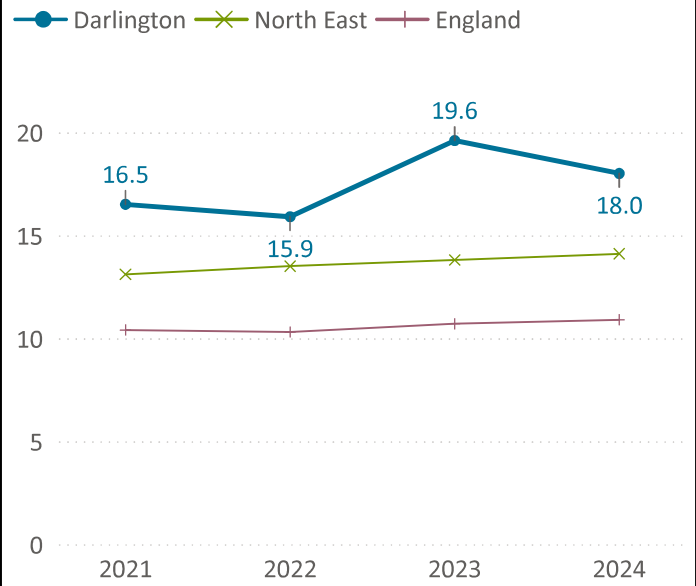
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Suicide rate (per 100,000 population, 10+ yrs)

Recent statistics from 2024 indicate that the suicide rate for Darlington has decreased to 18 per 100,000 individuals, This figure is the higher than England but statistically similar to 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

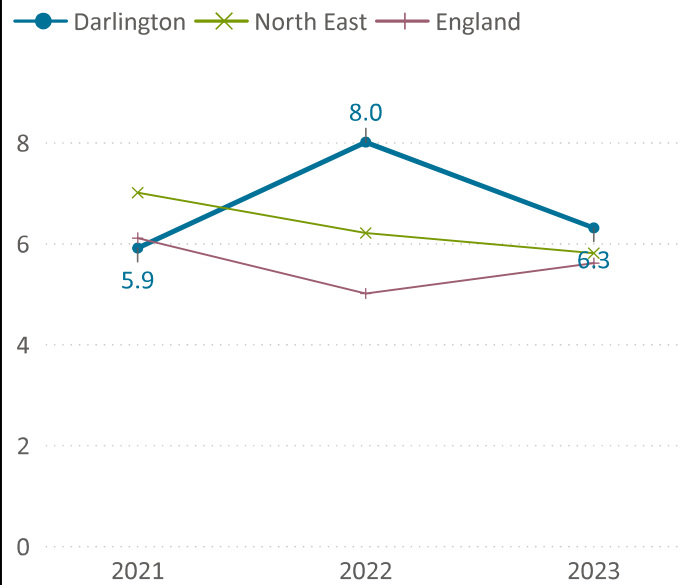
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Self-reported wellbeing: people with a low satisfaction score (percentage of respondents)

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 reporting 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

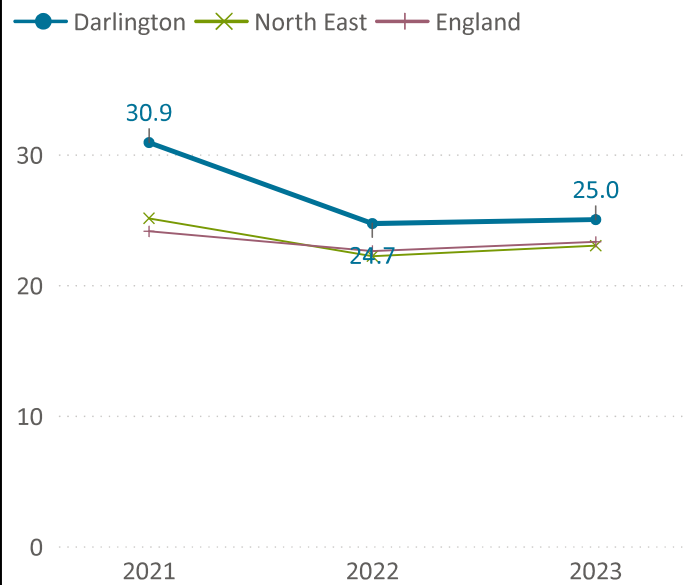
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Self reported wellbeing: people with a high anxiety score (percentage of respondents)

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 to improve 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.



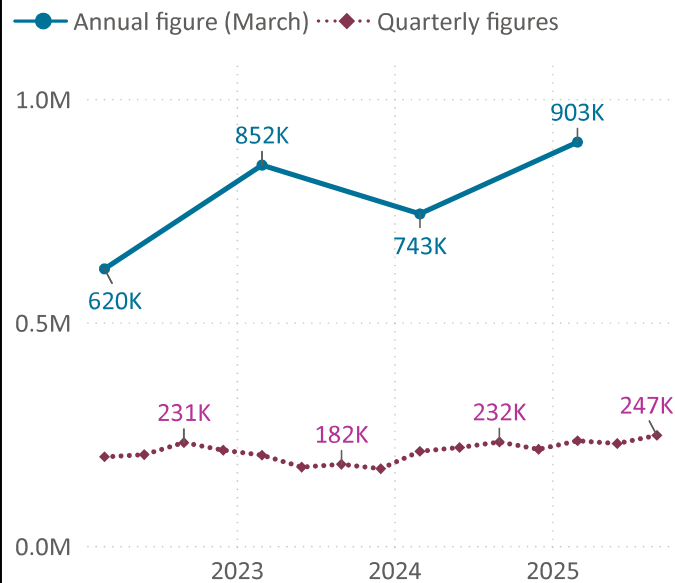
Lead Officer: Lorraine Hughes: Director of Public Health

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)

The first six months of this year have shown positive growth in visits compared to the same period in 2024/2025. The successful introduction of a weekly pool party in the school holidays has contributed to a very popular May and Summer holiday programme. New promotions across business areas including 'Active Afternoons' has increased footfall in bowling and soft play during term time. Membership numbers continue to rise to an all-time high, with popular fitness classes including Pilates and aqua aerobics continually hitting full capacity. This quarter has had the highest visitors on record for The Dolphin Centre, with many repeat customers contributing to growth in overall visitor numbers.



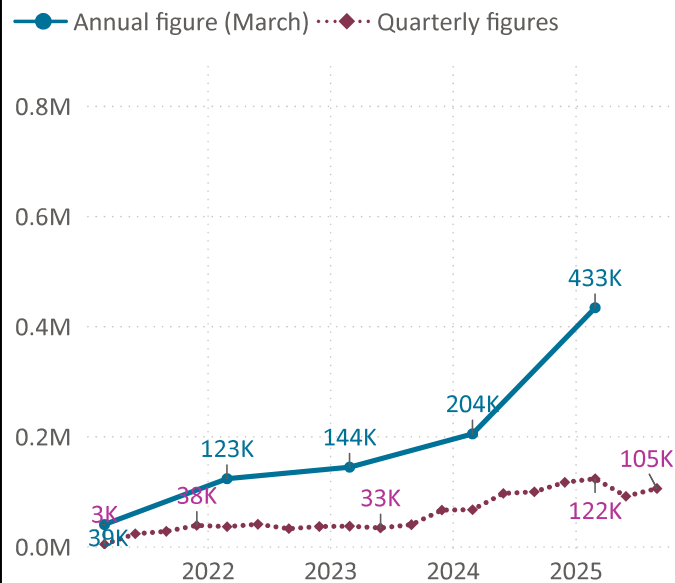
Lead Officer: Lisa Soderman: Head of Leisure

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 have remained consistent from last year as users continue to utilise the new facilities from the previous capital project investment. Darlington Academy is now using the site throughout the year which has increased the day time usage. 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

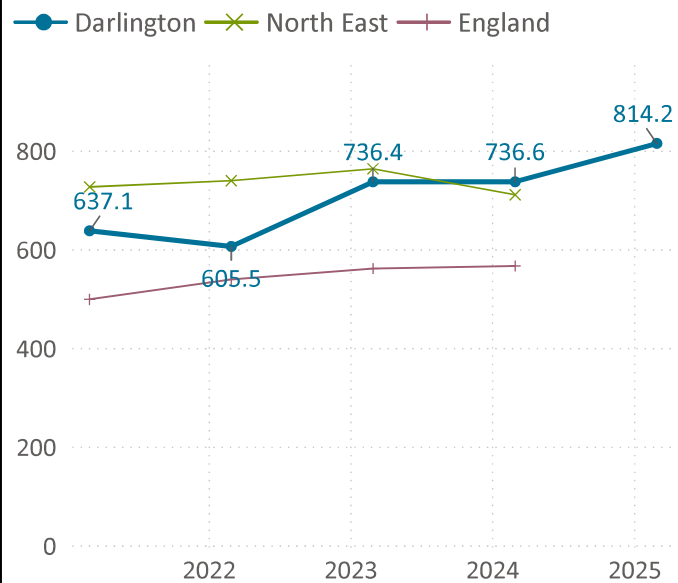
Council Plan Priority: Living well

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 acknowledges that there is has been an increase in residential care by older people since 2022. 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.

Currently at the end of Quarter 2 2025-26 the total number of individuals who moved into permanent residential or nursing care is 63. This is lower than the same period last year when the figure was 93 and 96 in 2023-24.



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

Council Plan Priority: Living well

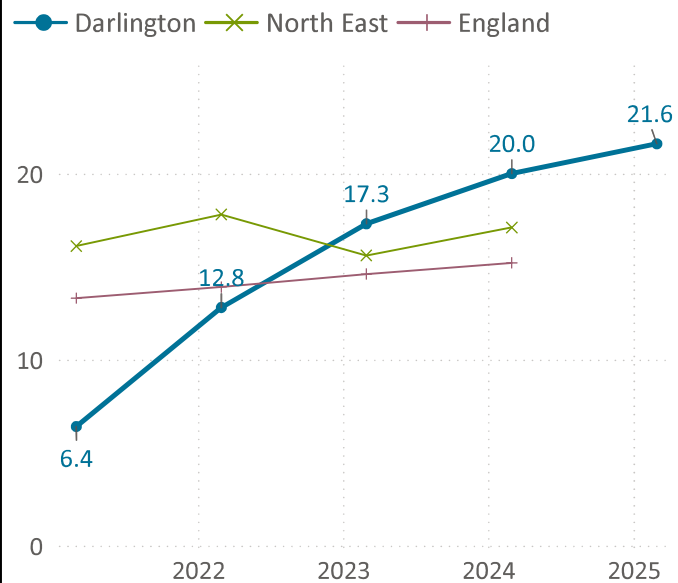
Key Deliverable: Deliver the key aims of the adult social care transformation plan to prevent, reduce and/or delay the need for care by supporting people to manage their own independence and wellbeing.

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.

There have been 7 18–64-year-olds who has entered permanent care since April 2025.

There are currently 60 individuals aged between 18 and 64 living in permanent care. The average age of these people is 49, and the average length of time they have been in permanent care is 4 years.



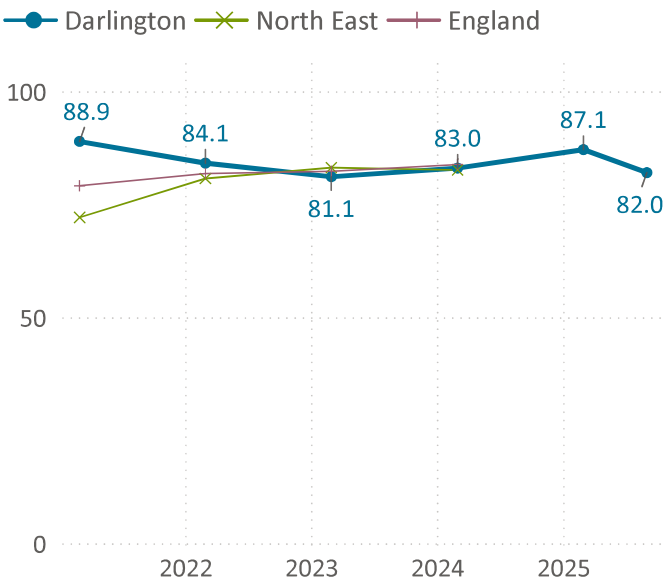
Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

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 September 2025, the proportion of older people who are still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services was 82%. Performance in this indicator remains high despite an increase in the complexity of hospital discharges.



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

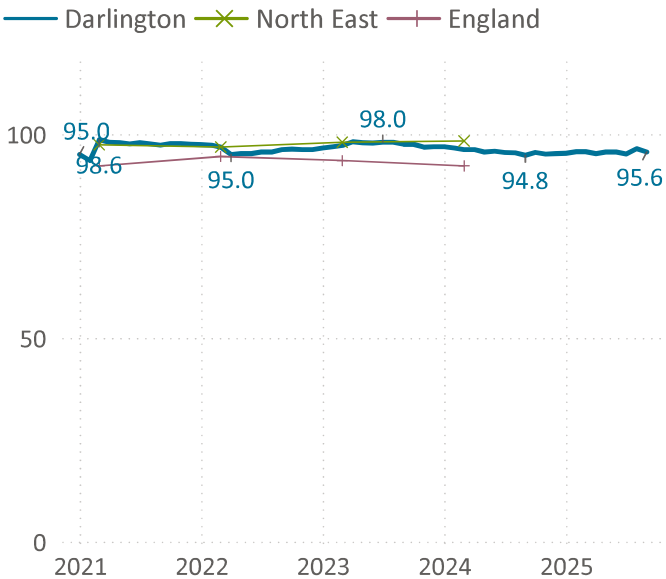
Council Plan Priority: Living well

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 September 2025, 95.6% of people using social care were receiving self directed support. This 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.



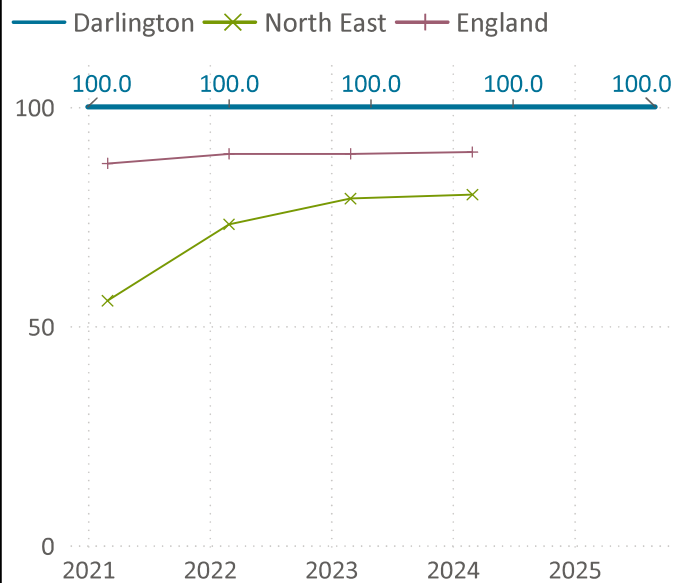
Lead Officer: Joss Harbron: Assistant Director - Adult Social Care

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 59 approved Foster Carer Households, which is an increase from 57 Foster Carer households at the previous quarter. We have 65 Children placed with in house foster carers, which is an increase compared with 57 at quarter 2 last year.

11 Foster Carers were approved at Panel during 2024/25 compared with 5 the previous year. We have approved 4 new carers this year so far, with a further 8 prospective carers going through the assessment process.

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

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

The Education Strategy Group (ESG) consisting of Trust and council senior leaders developed an Inclusion Charter for Darlington schools which was launched at an all-schools event on 21st June 2024. In response to data and anecdotal evidence suggesting that the challenges of providing inclusive education were increasing, the Darlington Education Strategy Group initiated work with the Educational Psychology Service to explore the latest evidence base for inclusion.

It was proposed that a Charter be developed as a vehicle for collective activity to support inclusion in Darlington. The Charter was co-produced with senior leaders from schools and colleges, using the evidence base and relating this to the context in which they found themselves. The Education Psychology Service facilitated the discussions, ensuring that research evidence underpinned the discussions and outputs. The Charter defines 4 essential pillars of inclusive education, presence, engagement, achievement and belonging.

An Inclusion Charter reflective tool and self-evaluation tool were developed for use in taking the Charter forward. The Charter and tools are designed to be flexible to meet the diverse range of individual circumstances, needs and aspirations of institutions and multi-academy trusts. All schools and colleges are signed up to the Charter. As at October 2025 79% of schools/trusts had attended a development session.

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

There are a number of avenues for the voice of children and young people to be involved in service review, development, design and commissioning activity. These include but are not limited to the Youth Parliament, DAD youth group, YMCA youth focused Darlo Care Crew, Youth Watch, focused Participation Officer engagement and Peer Mentor engagement.

Engagement with Darlington young carers has progressed during 2025/6 through the development of a number of YouTube videos designed and delivered by Darlington young carers to support other young carers and raise with professionals what is important for young carers in their interactions. Using the voice of children and young people Tees Valley YMCA have continued to develop a comprehensive youth work offer with a comprehensive universal and targeted weekly engagement programme.

Peer Mentors have led on a review of Corporate Parenting Panel arrangements to improve the experience and input from Care Experienced Young People. A focused piece of work is scheduled for the early part of 2026 with the Looked After Children Peer Mentors obtaining the voice of the child in relation to placement stability.

A key workstream of the Children's Reforms will involve engagement with Children and Young People to contribute to co-design of new services.

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 Summer holidays, over 7,000 places were booked for children aged 5-16 years of age, 1,108 free school meal children attended with 27% 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 introduction of the third and final phase of childcare entitlement expansion from September 2025. Sufficiency of places will continue to be monitored through the remainder of the academic year as more children become eligible for entitlement places.

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. Six 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. Four Darlington schools applied for capital funding and all four were successful. Three opened or expanded their nursery in September 2025 and one will open in September 2026.

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. Work is now being initiated to refresh and update the CYPP with a final report on the 2024 - 2027 plan to be completed by September 2026 and a fully revised plan to be in place by September 2027

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 our current projected deficit to circa £0.481 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.

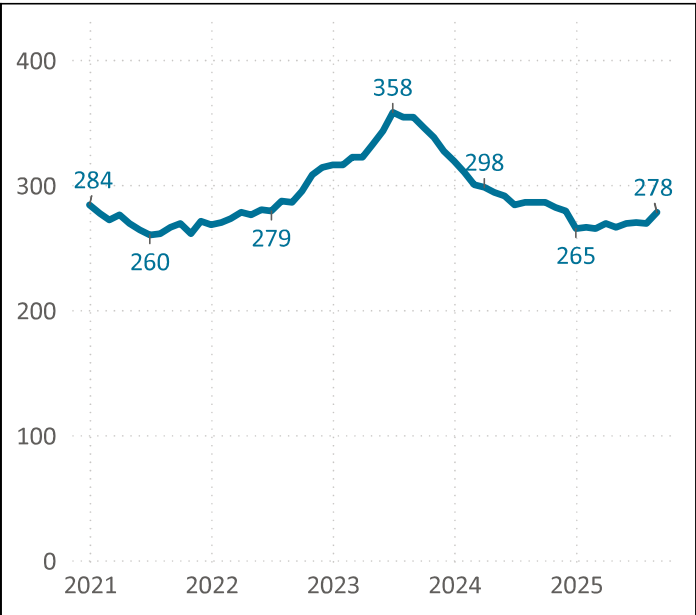
Lead Officer: Tony Murphy: Assistant Director - Education & Inclusion

Council Plan Priority: Children and young people

Total number of looked after children (LAC)

278 children are being supported in the Council's care at the end of September 2025, 8.6% 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 -4.5% 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 September 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.