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**Report of the Head of Corporate Policy**

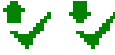


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

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update of quarter 3 performance for the authority’s priorities for improvement and the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPs) relevant to our Corporate Aim, Ensuring Effective Corporate Leadership.
  
2. To gain maximum impact of performance management intelligence from Performance Plus, the Authority’s performance management system, tolerances and milestones have been set for 2007/08 targets.

Key to Tables	Key to CPA Indicators
Improved performance	below lower threshold
Deteriorated performance	between thresholds
Maintained performance	above upper threshold
On target (<10% better)	Key to Quartile Positions
Over performance (>10% better)	bottom quartile
Worse than target	third quartile
	second quartile
	top quartile

Please note – there are no CPA indicators aligned to Corporate Scrutiny.

3. Performance and comments relating to indicators relevant to the Corporate Aim, Ensuring Effective Corporate Leadership are reported in Appendix A. An overview of performance is as follows;

Direction of Travel since year-end 2006/07	Number of measures	% of total
 Improved	10	67%
 Maintained	3	20%
 Deteriorated	2	13%
Total	15	

Comparison to target	Number of measures	% of total
 Worse than	8	53%
 Better than by <10%	3	20%
 Better than by 10% or more	4	27%
Total	15	

Comparison to target	Number of measures	% of total
Predicted to be on target at 2007/08 year-end	8/14	57%

4. Only one indicator aligned to Ensuring Effective Corporate Leadership is included in the authority's priorities for improvement. That indicator is BV 12, the number of working days lost to the Local Authority due to sickness absence.

Performance worse than county average  Deteriorated performance	12 months ending 30 Sept 2007		12 months ending 30 Dec 2007	
	Days Lost	Days lost per FTE	Days Lost	Days lost per FTE
<b>Adult and Community Services</b>	35,440	15.2	35,439.1	15.2
- adult care	31,873	15.9	31,873.0	15.9
- libraries, learning & culture	2,678	10.2	1,885.0	7.16
- community support	888	13.9	623.1	9.8
Chief Executive's Office	1,813	12.3	1,283.4	8.4
Children and Young People's Services	86,243	8.3	80,542.9	7.6
- support staff in schools	34,168	8.5	29,116.1	7.1
- teachers	28,926	6.3	27,078.0	5.9
- headquarters staff	10,758	7.8	16,319.0	10.2
- former social care and health staff	12,390	25.5	8,029.8	8.2
Corporate Services	2,535	8.1	2,067.0	6.5
County Treasurer's	1,824	8.3	2,022.0	9.2
<b>Environment</b>	4,268	8.5	5,044.0	9.9
<b>Service Direct</b>	10,339	12.2	10,488.0	12.7
County	142,462	9.6	136,850.9	9.2

5. Current performance is the best recorded since December 2001. It is also a 30% improvement on our poorest performance in December 2003 when absence levels peaked at 13.10 days per FTE.
6. Sickness is reported as a 12 month rolling total. Q3, 2006/07 was a particularly poor quarter for sickness and has now been replaced by Q3, 2007/08. This has led to an improvement in the performance of this indicator. However, Q4, 2006/07 was much more in line with expectations and an improvement during Q4, 2007/8 is not expected. Consequently, we are expecting the year-end outturn to be similar to the current level of sickness. However, sickness rates often fluctuate and it is too early to determine if we have made a breakthrough below the 9.5 benchmark. Another factor that prompts caution is the potential ongoing effects of the disaggregating and re-aggregation of the two biggest Services. Hence, at this stage, the projected end of year figure remains unaltered at 9.85.
7. The Authority is continuing work to improve sickness rates and is working with the Audit Commission on a review they are conducting on the management of sickness absence across local authorities in Durham and Teesside. This study is aimed at establishing what is working well, identify areas for development, and examine the approaches which lead to reductions in absence levels. It is anticipated that outcomes will include the identification of areas of good practice that can be shared, while establishing reasons for the disparity between best and worst performing Councils.

8. The Stress Management Group is continuing to meet and has updated the policy, the release of which is expected in the near future. Following feedback from managers, the policy will include guidance relating to practical measures that they can use to support staff. The group is also seeking to identify good practice in Services to share across the Council.
9. A Working Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is examining the whole area of stress management, including how to identify stress in the workplace and what processes are in place to deal with stress related issues and sickness absence in general.
10. Last year, the County Council was successful in achieving the Bronze Health at Work Award in the region. A Working Party has recently been recalled to work toward the Silver Award. Work is ongoing on this project, for example, some measures will be included to mark the national 'No Smoking Day' on Wednesday 12 March.
11. A summary of all BVPIs is shown in the table below,

	Achieved target	Did not achieve target
Improved from year-end	% of top-paid 5%: women (11a) % of top-paid 5%: disability (11c) Ill-health retirements (15) Buildings accessible to people with a disability (156) Racial incidents (174) Days lost to sickness (12)	Invoices paid on time (8) % of top-paid 5%: ethnic minority (11b) Employees with a disability (16a) Employees from ethnic minority communities (17a)
Remained static	Racial incidents resulting in further action (175)	Equality Standard for local government (2a) Duty to promote race equality (2b)
Deteriorated from year-end		Early retirements (14) % e-enabled interactions (157)

**Areas of concern,**

(indicators not achieving quarter 3 target with deteriorating performance since 06/07 year-end)

12. **% of employees retiring early (excluding ill-health retirements) (BV 14)**  
 Performance of this indicator has deteriorated due to a number of ongoing factors. There has been a lengthy exercise involving a rationalisation of Services, brought on by a mixture of Government direction and internal reorganisation which has particularly affected our largest two Services. The situation has been further augmented by strategic changes affecting our schools with school numbers dropping, reflecting amalgamation of smaller schools in some instances.

14. **% of e-enabled interactions (BV 157)**  
30 additional PIDs (process identifiers) have been added to the database during January. It is necessary to sort through these and make the necessary adjustments to work back towards 100%.
15. Year-end predictions suggest that 6 indicators will not meet their year-end targets. Further details relating to BV 12 (working days lost due to sickness absence) can be found in paragraphs 4 to 10. Details of BV 14 (% of employees retiring early (excluding ill-health retirements)) can be found in paragraph 12. Details of the remaining 4 indicators can be found below;
16. **Level of the Equality Standard for local government (BV 2a)**  
Level 4 is self-declared and we don't go through another assessment until November. The focus is information and monitoring and we've already put things in place such as quarterly CMT reports.
17. **Duty to promote race equality (BV 2b)**  
The authority has achieved 16 of the 19 standards but is not quite in the position to claim 17 which would take performance of this indicator to 89%. We've improved slightly due to recent work on migrant workers & Eastern European communities as well as continuing existing work around Gypsy and Traveller communities but this hasn't given us additional indicators, just strengthened those we had. Darlington and Durham County Racial Equality Council are still operating below capacity so we're trying to resolve how we support & work with them in the future. This has had an impact on some of the engagement work we may otherwise have been able to progress over the last year with BME communities. Quarter 4 may increase but it is unlikely that a score of 17 will be achieved. 08/09 targets will be reviewed at year-end.
18. **% of top-paid 5% of local authority staff from an ethnic minority (BV 11b)**  
**% of local authority staff from ethnic minority communities (BV 17a)**  
Both figures have marginally improved over the course of the year, but not by enough to apparently meet our targets. We are continuing to work with partnership bodies like Job Centre+ to target specific groups within the community when they are considering employment opportunities. We have also looked to improve consistency within our recruitment communication through encouraging applications from underrepresented groups, for example through our job spot, general vacancy publications and press adverts. As indicated previously, the addition of one person can make a difference to the overall indicator.
19. It is recommended that Corporate Scrutiny Sub-Committee Members:
  - (i) note the contents of this report
  - (ii) agree to receiving subsequent quarterly performance progress reports

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