



## **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board**

**Date**            **Monday 25 October 2021**  
**Time**            **9.30 am**  
**Venue**           **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham**

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### **Business**

#### **Part A**

**Items which are open to the Public and Press**  
**Members of the public can ask questions with the Chair's agreement,**  
**and if registered to speak**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2021 (Pages 3 - 10)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Report on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Q1 and Q2 2021/22 - Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 11 - 14)
6. Medium Term Financial Plan (12) 2022/23 to 2025/26 - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Interim) (Pages 15 - 44)
7. Resources - Quarter One, June 2021 Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2021/22 - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Interim) (Pages 45 - 58)
8. Quarter One, 2021/2 Performance Management - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Interim) (Pages 59 - 128)
9. Quarter One, 2021/22 Customer Feedback- Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Interim) (Pages 129 - 160)

10. Annual Statutory Representations 2020/21 report - Corporate Director Adult and Health Services (Pages 161 - 182)
11. Notice of Key Decisions - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 183 - 192)
12. Information Update from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (interim). (Pages 193 - 198)
13. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

**Helen Lynch**

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
15 October 2021

To: **The Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

Councillor C Martin (Chair)  
Councillor C Lines (Vice-Chair)

Councillors E Adam, B Avery, A Batey, R Charlton-Lainé, J Charlton,  
J Cosslett, B Coult, R Crute, J Elmer, D Freeman, O Gunn, C Hood,  
L Hovvells, J Howey, A Jackson, P Jopling, R Manchester, C Marshall,  
B Moist, K Shaw, M Stead, A Surtees and M Wilson

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**Contact: Lucy Gladders**

**Tel: 03000 269 712**

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## DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 2 September 2021 at 9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor C Martin (Chair)**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors E Adam, B Avery, A Batey, J Charlton, J Cosslett, B Coult, R Crute, J Elmer, D Freeman, C Hood, J Howey, A Jackson, P Jopling, C Lines (Vice-Chair), R Manchester, C Marshall, K Shaw, M Stead and A Surtees

**Apologies:**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Charlton-Lainé, O Gunn, L Hovvels, L Maddison, B Moist and M Wilson

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Moist and M Wilson

**2 Substitute Members**

There were no substitutes.

**3 Minutes of the meetings held on 18 June and 28 July 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair with the following amendment:

Page 13 Paragraph 5 to read:

*Councillor Surtees commented that in her opinion Question 1 could not be answered without real discussion taking place with the collection owners.*

**4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **5 Medium Term Financial Plan(12) 2022/23 - 2025/26 and Review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Interim) which provided an update on the development of the 2022/23 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP (12)) covering the period 2022/23 to 2025/26 and further provided details for consideration regarding a review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2022/23 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services provided a thorough overview of the report highlighting the ongoing level of financial uncertainty faced by the council due to a combination of the ongoing impact of the pandemic, the inherent low tax raising capacity due to the low tax base and significant pressures in social care and waste services alongside unfunded pressures arising from pay and inflation.

He went on to explain that this level of uncertainty made financial planning difficult and required the council to be flexible and adaptable in its financial planning. In this regard the strong financial position of the council would ensure that the council is well placed to react effectively to any outcome.

Further details were then provided in respect of funding shortfalls and anticipated savings which would need to be achieved over the 4-year period.

Councillor Crute commented that it was difficult to make too hard and fast comments at this stage because there were a lot of assumptions contained in the report. He added that the council always had a good reputation for consultation on the budget and on medium term financial planning and hoped that this level of consultation would continue as a minimum and be enhanced where possible. He further made reference to newly elected members who had won their seats on a pledge to reduce council tax so it would be important to get the consultation right.

He further referenced the timetable contained in the report and noted previous frequent calls from the floor for the MTFP report to be considered by scrutiny before Cabinet. He therefore asked what had been done to make sure that that happens or if that was not going to be the case, what the reasons for that change were.

In response the Chair advised that he had undertaken discussions with the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services to do exactly that and so long as the council was willing it was hoped that this could be achieved. Councillor Crute subsequently suggested that the Board note therefore that this was an indicative timetable and subject to change.

Councillor Surtees for clarity suggested that the report be amended to say that it was an indicative timetable subject to receiving the funding settlement from government.

Councillor Marshall thanked the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services for the thorough report noting how difficult it was at this stage to plan, given the level of uncertainty surrounding budgets. He therefore felt it was important that the cabinet and the leadership of this council set out very clearly what it is intended to be delivered over the next four years and its intended programme. He went on to note that there were a number of quite alarming statements in the report one regarding disinvestment which he took to mean cuts to services and cuts to jobs and asked for some clarification on this point.

Councillor Marshall went on to note the unfairness of the government settlement noting that the current government does not allow for the low council tax base that we have in County Durham and the assumptions that we will maximise the council tax increases in order to balance our budgets. He further noted his concerns regarding uncertainty regarding funding that will replace the EU structural fund and felt that the council needed assurances from government quickly regarding these areas of uncertainty.

The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services in response to the point raised regarding disinvestment and investment, noted that he would expect that position to become clear as the council moves through the MTFP process. He noted that without the additional pressures coming from children's services and from energy the position could become worse for 2023, He added the council had built in assumptions around loss of funding which may or may not manifest in the Comprehensive Spending Review. Officers were working tirelessly to identify efficiency savings and ways of raising extra income.

He went on to acknowledge that the challenges that the council faced were quite extreme financially and this was further impacted by rising inflation costs. He further touched upon the Fair Funding Review and the need to know the outcome of this alongside any impacts from the ongoing Social Care Review which could have a massive impact on local government finances.

Further discussion took place regarding the impact of the pandemic on the council's finances and the unknown scale of its impact at this stage. The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services noted that the council were currently in a strong position and were able to rest upon reserves, which were of fundamental importance to provide balance sheet strength and allowed some flexibility within the budget.

## **Resolved:**

- (a) That the content of the report and comments made be noted.
- (b) Note the indicative timetable for scrutiny discussions subject to receiving the funding settlement from government.

## **6 Quarter 4 2020/21 Budget Outturn**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director Resources (Interim) which provided details of the final revenue and capital outturn position for the Resources service grouping in 2020/21, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Freeman noted that the council's reserves increased last year by £43 million to £272 million and noted the increase may be partly due to COVID grants. He commented that the money held in reserve was that paid by the people of County Durham which could have been spent on services rather than in the council's accounts. In conclusion he asked whether reserves were likely to increase this year and was they were forecast to be at year end.

In response the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services reported that the vast majority of the increase in reserves last year was because of treatment of COVID funding. He explained that the government last year gave the council around £25 million of extra grant to mitigate the massive discounts that were provided for business rates. But due to accounting methods the council's collection fund carried this forward into the following year as a reserve. However, whilst that did account for a large proportion of the increase in reserves, he also noted the council did underspend in a number of areas last year mainly due to the government providing more funding than was required for COVID and secondly due to a number of projects not being fulfilled as anticipated due to the pandemic. He went on to explain that he did not expect the council's reserves to increase next year due to a number of reasons including the application of £23 million in business rates which must be applied this year. He further added that he expected that council reserves would fall to around £140 million within 3-4 years.

Councillor Marshall asked whether the council was on target for capital programme delivery this year as it would be important to know ahead of budget setting and noting that in the recovery from the pandemic it would be vital and key for the council to continue to place key investments into the community.

In response the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services explained that the council had a significant capital programme and whilst there had been some slippage in the programme due to early issues of and impact of the pandemic, the programme for the current financial year was close to £200 million. He explained that further detail would be available in the quarter one forecast outturn report. He further went on to provide an explanation of how the capital programme was funded through prudential borrowing and how this was reflected as a cost pressure within the council's MTFP.

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be noted.

## **7 County Durham Partnerships update**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided an update on issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership (CDP), including updates on other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Partnerships Team Manager went on to provide a detailed presentation, which highlighted that whilst the scale of the coronavirus pandemic was still impacting services across County Durham, partnership work continued and had done so throughout the pandemic. It furthermore highlighted its importance in supporting the voluntary and community sector with work helping to prevent widening of health and wellbeing inequalities and improving outcomes for local people in line with the County Durham Vision.

In referencing the County Durham Partnership Annual Event, Councillor Adam asked whether any further detail on the event was available at present including who the key-note speakers were. The Partnerships Team Manager advised that details were still being finalised with confirmed arrangements expected to be communicated within the next few weeks.

Councillor Marshall added his recognition for the dedication and commitment of the AAPs and their coordinators, noting in addition the excellent work which had been done to support the voluntary and community sector and how this work had helped communities react quickly to the pandemic and ever-changing situation.

Councillor Crute also added his thanks and agreed that the report highlighted the excellent work undertaken to support the community and voluntary sector during the pandemic. He further noted that some initiatives had similar themes running through them and noted that public transport and bus services was key to joining up our communities. He further made reference to Petition 405 detailed in the Petition report on the agenda and noted that

the council had a responsibility to the people of County Durham to support the proposed Enhanced Partnership Arrangement and push for better and more attractive bus services in County Durham. He suggested that the relevant scrutiny committee look at this topic more closely.

Councillor Marshall noted that whilst the report highlighted the key outcomes, it did not focus on what the partnerships challenges and difficulties were and how these could be overcome.

Councillor Lines noted that there was a level of frustration from AAP staff in his area (East Durham AAP) because they were unable to get out into communities as they had previously done so, due to COVID restrictions. He added they felt that some connections had been lost as a result and deep insights not gained through no face to face contact.

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be noted.

## **8 Update in relation to Petitions**

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided for information the quarterly update in relation to the current situation regarding various petitions received by the Authority (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Transformation and Strategy advised that the schedule provided a list of those petitions that were active, and those that are to be closed and which will be removed from the list prior to the next update.

Since the last update no new e-petitions have been submitted. Three new paper petitions had been submitted however, two of which had now been completed and a response was awaited on the third. A list giving details and the current status of all active petitions was attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be noted.

## **9 Notice of Key Decisions**

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which detailed the key decisions that were scheduled to be considered by Cabinet from 15 September 2021 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Transformation and Strategy highlighted that

since publication of the Board's agenda and reports the Notice of Key Decisions had been republished on the Councils' website (for the same time period) with the following changes to page 135.

- The report on the Strategic Investment Proposals has been deferred from September Cabinet to October Cabinet.
- An additional item for the Leisure Transformation Review has been added to the Notice. The review is scheduled for the special meeting of Cabinet on 29 September 2021.

He went on to highlight items new to the plan as follows:

- Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Support Payments
- Council Tax Base 2021/22 and Forecast Surplus / Deficit on Collection Fund
- MTFP(12) - Update on development of MTFP(12) including analysis of the Comprehensive Spending Review
- Minerals and Waste Development Plan Document and Developer Contributions, Parking and Accessibility and Residential Amenity Supplementary Planning Documents
- NETPark Phase 3 Development Funding
- Strategic Investment Proposals (Exempt Report)
- Leisure Transformation Review

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be noted.

## **10 Information Update from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director Resources (Interim) which provided an information update of overview and scrutiny activity from June 2021 – September 2021 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Crute suggested that it would be helpful in future reports to receive more detail on the thematic committee's work programmes to ensure that there was no duplication of work and whether some issues were aligned and could be collated.

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be noted.

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**25 October 2021**



**Report on the Council's use of powers  
under the Regulation of Investigatory  
Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 1 and 2 -  
2021/2022**

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**Report of Helen Lynch, Head of Legal and Democratic Services**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform members about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period 1 April 2021 and 30 June 2021 (quarter 1) and 1 July 2021 and 30 September 2021 (quarter 2) to ensure that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

**Executive summary**

2. This report provides an update of the activity for quarter 1 and 2 of 2021/22 for Durham County Council in exercising its use of powers under RIPA for Directed Surveillance (DS) and Covert Human Intelligence Surveillance (CHIS).
3. The Council's Senior Responsible Officer is satisfied that the Council's use of its powers under RIPA during quarter 1 and 2 is consistent with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

**Recommendation**

4. It is recommended that Members:
  - i. Receive the quarterly report on the Council's use of RIPA for the period covering quarter 1 and quarter 2 2021/22.
  - ii. Resolve that the powers are being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

## **Background**

5. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) enables local authorities to carry out certain types of surveillance activity provided that specified procedures are followed.
6. Directed surveillance is covert surveillance that is not intrusive and is carried out in relation to a specific investigation or operation in such a manner as is likely to result in the obtaining of private information about any person (other than by way of an immediate response to events or circumstances such that it is not reasonably practicable to seek authorisation under the 2000 Act).
7. The Local Authority is able to rely upon the information obtained from those surveillance activities within court proceedings.
8. This report gives details of RIPA applications that have been authorised during the quarter 1 and 2, with the outcomes following surveillance.

## **Quarter 1 Activity**

- 9 During quarter 1 there was one RIPA directed surveillance application and one CHIS application presented to the Court.
- 10 The authorisation for directed surveillance and the operation for CHIS were granted in June 2021. Both relate to a single operation regarding illicit tobacco products within County Durham. As the operation is part of an ongoing investigation an update will be brought to a future meeting to update on the outcome.

## **Quarter 2 Activity**

- 11 During quarter 2 there were no directed surveillance or CHIS applications presented to the Court.

## **Comparison Quarter 1 and 2 2020/21**

- 12 For information the comparison of authorisations granted for the previous year in quarter 1, there were no authorisations for directed surveillance or CHIS authorisations.
- 13 For information the comparison of authorisations granted for the previous year in quarter 2 were no authorisations for directed surveillance or CHIS authorisations.

## **Background papers**

- None.

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## **Appendix 1      Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Council's objective is to make lawful and appropriate use of surveillance techniques where required whilst complying with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998, in particular the provisions of Article 8 of the ECHR securing respect for an individual's (qualified) right to privacy. Quarterly oversight by the board helps secure this objective.

### **Finance**

Not applicable.

### **Consultation**

Not applicable.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Not applicable.

### **Climate Change**

Not applicable.

### **Human Rights**

Use of investigatory powers potentially engages the Human Rights Act 1998 and in particular the qualified right to private and family life under article 8 of the European Convention. This right may only be interfered with in circumstances where it is necessary and proportionate to do so in pursuit of the public interest. Oversight by the Board of the Council's RIPA operations is designed to facilitate compliance with the Human Rights Act.

### **Crime and Disorder**

The appropriate use of an oversight of RIPA powers will enable the Council to provide evidence to support appropriate prosecutions and tackle crime.

### **Staffing**

Not applicable.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable.

### **Risk**

An individual may complain to Investigatory Powers Tribunal that surveillance has been unlawful and if found to be unlawful could result in financial penalties and reputational damage.

### **Procurement**

Not applicable.

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**25 October 2021**

**Medium Term Financial Plan (12)  
2022/23 to 2025/26**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources (Interim)**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) with an update on the current forecast position for the Budget 2022/23 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) (12) 2022/23 to 2025/26.
- 2 COSMB have prioritised scrutiny of the MTFP and budget as part of their work programme.

**Executive summary**

- 3 The report to Cabinet sets out the plan for the MTFP (12) covering the four year period from 2022/23 to 2025/26. The report details the MTFP financial forecasts which have been reviewed in the light of recent government announcements.
- 4 The report highlights the period of significant financial uncertainty that local government is operating in brought about by a combination of the ongoing impact of the pandemic, our inherent low tax raising capacity due to our low tax base and significant budget pressures in social care and waste services alongside other unfunded pressures arising from pay and price inflation.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 5 Members are asked to:
  - (a) Consider and comment upon the October Cabinet report on the MTFP (12) 2022/23 to 2025/26.

## Background

- 6 The report states government has announced the Comprehensive Spending Review will be published on 27 October 2021 and will cover the three year period 2022/23 to 2024/25.
- 7 The local government finance settlement is expected to be published in early December.
- 8 The Cabinet report includes information on
  - (a) Review of MTFP Forecasts
  - (b) Health and Social Care Levy
  - (c) Council Tax increases 2022/23 to 2025/26
  - (d) 2022/23 Savings Shortfall
  - (e) MTFP (12) – 2022/23 to 2025/26 update
  - (f) Consultation proposals
- 9 COSMB has prioritised scrutiny of the MTFP and budget as part of the committee's work programme.

## Background papers

- None

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**Contact:** Andy Palmer

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None specific with the report.

### **Finance**

Financial implications are identified within the Cabinet report of 13 October 2021.

### **Consultation**

The report includes information on the consultation process.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Equality considerations are built into the approach to developing MTFP (12) as a key element of the process.

### **Climate Change**

The impact of final budget decisions will take into account climate change impacts

### **Human Rights**

Any Human Rights issues will be considered for any detailed MTFP (12) proposals as they are developed and decisions made to take these forward.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None specific with the report.

### **Staffing**

The savings proposals in MTFP (12) will impact upon employees.

### **Accommodation**

None specific within this report.

### **Risk**

None specific within this report.

### **Procurement**

None specific within this report.

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**Appendix 2: Report to Cabinet 13 October- 2021 Medium Term  
Financial Plan (12), 2022/23 - 2025/26**

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Attached as a separate document.

**Cabinet**

**13 October 2021**

**Medium Term Financial Plan(12),  
2022/23 – 2025/26**



**Key Decision No. CORP/R/21/01**

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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources (Interim)**

**Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for  
Finance**

**Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide an update on the current forecast position for the 2022/23 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP(12), 2022/23 to 2025/26, which factor in working assumptions in terms of Council Tax increases. Final budget setting and Council Tax increase proposals will be considered by Full Council on 23 February 2022.

**Executive Summary**

- 2 Local government continues to operate in a period of significant financial uncertainty brought about by a series of one-year financial settlements, significant budget pressures in social care, special educational needs, disability services and other unfunded pressures arising from demographic and pay and price inflation. Forecasting the likely ongoing impact of COVID-19 upon the council's expenditure, income and government funding levels adds a further layer of complexity and uncertainty.
- 3 Unless additional government funding is provided in the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), the financial outlook for the sector will continue to be extremely challenging for the foreseeable future, even more so in County Durham due to the inequities of the

Council Tax system which make self-funding local service delivery pressures from council tax revenues generated alone impossible.

- 4 There continues to be significant uncertainty in terms of the financial settlement for local government and how the available funding will be shared between local authorities through the funding formula from next year. The government has announced that the upcoming CSR will be published on 27 October 2021 and that the CSR will cover the three-year period 2022/23 to 2024/25. Government is already indicating that there will be tough choices in relation to investment in public services, particularly in light of the huge budget deficit forecast the country faces as a result of COVID-19 and the ongoing impact of Brexit upon the economy.
- 5 It is expected that the outcome of the Fair Funding Review (FFR), including the move to 75% Business Rate Retention will be delayed with no expectation of implementation until at least 2023/24. This adds a further layer of uncertainty and complexity to our medium term financial planning.
- 6 A significant added uncertainty at this stage is the impact of the introduction of the Health and Social Care levy and the upcoming Social Care White Paper. This will have a significant impact upon government grant, council expenditure and council income. It is hoped that the CSR will provide clarity in this regard but the impact upon the council will be significant, with a risk of the council facing additional financial pressures arising from these reforms. It is uncertain at this stage whether these reforms will include additional Council Tax raising powers through further Adult Social Care precept raising powers beyond the flexibility provided in 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- 7 The lack of clarity in relation to the CSR, the FFR and social care at this stage is exacerbated by uncertainties in relation to future council tax referendum levels, future funding of the Improved Better Care Fund, short term funding provided to local authorities in 2021/22 for adult and children social care pressures, funding for the High Needs Special Educational Needs Dedicated Schools Grant and the ongoing impact of the pandemic upon council expenditure and income.
- 8 This level of uncertainty is making financial planning extremely difficult and requires the council to be flexible and adaptable as it considers setting the 2022/23 budget and the medium term financial plan 2022/23 to 2025/26. Financial planning within the council will ensure that the council is well placed to react effectively to any outcome, however planning with this level of uncertainty is not conducive to effective long-term decision making.

- 9 Planning at this stage remains on the basis that the council will lose a further £16 million of government funding over a five-year transition period as a result of the outcome of the CSR and the forecast FFR implementation in 2023/24. This position primarily reflects ongoing concerns regarding the expected utilisation of the Advisory Council for Resource Allocation (ACRA) methodology for apportioning Public Health Grant which would result in a loss of £18 million of funding. It has been assumed that the £17.6 million of one-off funding received in 2021/22 for Adult and Children's social care pressures will continue a recurrent basis.
- 10 At this stage no assumption has been made in relation to the financial impact upon the council of the Health and Social Care levy and the attendant Social Care Command Paper. The impact will need to be fully assessed once the CSR is published and the detail of the white paper are known. The cost of the increases to employer's national insurance for the council have however been factored into the forecasts, offset by receipt of Government grant, in line with the announcements made on 7 September 2021.
- 11 The forecasts still factor in an assumed annual increase in Council Tax of 1.99% and that in 2022/23 a further 2% Adult Social Care precept will be applied, taking up the balance of the 3% tax raising capacity through this precept that was provided across 2021/22 and 2022/23. Final proposals on council tax increases for 2023/23 will need to be considered and approved at Full Council on 23 February 2022. The forecast increases factored into the MTFP12 model at this stage are in line with Government expectations and are key components of the Governments spending power calculations.
- 12 No long-term financial impacts from COVID-19, other than a short-term depression in tax base increases, has yet to be factored into our forecasts. This applies to both any increased cost pressures (we continue to experience budget pressures in waste management because of waste tonnages collected not yet returning to pre-covid levels for example) and loss of income (we continue to face reduced income from use of leisure and cultural assets for instance). This position will be kept under continual review and assumptions will be amended if it becomes apparent that there will be a financial impact in 2022/23.
- 13 In line with previous practice and further to the initial update report provided in July, the MTFP financial forecasts have been reviewed. The updated position includes a range of budget pressures that were not factored into the previous report and revised assumptions on the

council's resource base. The updated forecasts contained in this report indicate that savings of £47.156 million will be now be needed to balance the budget over the 2022/23 to 2025/26 period – this is a net increase of circa £2 million compared to the position reported previously. Savings are forecast to be required in all years of MTFP(12) as unavoidable budget pressures and the impact of funding reductions continue to outstrip the council's ability to generate additional income from business rates and council tax.

- 14 The council suffers from low house values and therefore a low tax base and low tax raising capacity as a result. Annual pay and price inflation alone outstrips the additional revenues that can be generated from annual council tax increases in line with the referendum limits imposed by government.
- 15 The achievement of an additional £47.156 million of savings over the next four years will undoubtedly be extremely challenging – more so given the level of savings already made. The emphasis since 2011/12 has been to minimise savings from front line services by protecting them wherever possible whilst maximising savings in management and support functions and by generating additional income. The opportunity for further savings in these areas is becoming much more difficult after the delivery of £247 million of savings up to 31 March 2022.
- 16 The total savings required at this stage for 2022/23 to balance the budget amount to £7.344 million. A sum of £1.502 million of savings already agreed in MTFP(11) are available in 2022/23. This leaves a savings shortfall at this stage of £5.842 million to balance the budget next year and £45.654 million in total across the next four years.
- 17 Additional savings plans are being developed to enable the council to be able to react to the outcome of the 2022/23 local government finance settlement, which is expected to be announced in December 2021 being very much influenced by the CSR to be published later this month. If required, the council can utilise the Budget Support Reserve (BSR) to assist in balancing the budget in 2022/23. The current balance on the BSR, after utilising £3.778 million to balance the 2021/22 budget, is £12.6 million.
- 18 To enable the council to be able to set a balanced budget for 2022/23, a range of options will need to be considered including additional savings and utilisation of the BSR. The level of savings shortfall will be influenced by the local government settlement and the ongoing impact of emerging base budget pressures. Careful consideration of any ongoing financial impacts for the pandemic will need to be considered further in future reports.

- 19 A base budget review across Adult and Health Services (AHS) and Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) has been concluded, with proposals outlined in the report to permanently transfer £4.5 million of budget from AHS to CYPS to help offset spending pressures in the children's looked after placement budgets and alleviate the need for further growth to be included in the MTFP forecasts next year.
- 20 Based on the best practice that has developed over previous consultations, we will consult using our existing County Durham Partnership networks during October and November. The primary focus of the consultation will be on the 14 AAP Boards who will be asked to comment on the overall approach set out in this report.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 21 Cabinet is recommended to:
- (a) agree to the in-year transfer of £4.5 million of revenue budget from Adult and Health Services to Children and Young Peoples Services, with this transfer being built into the base budget for 2021/22 onwards;
  - (b) note that at this stage no long-term financial impact from the pandemic have been factored into the financial forecasts, but that this position will be kept under review;
  - (c) note the requirement to for savings of £47.156 million for the period 2022/23 to 2025/26;
  - (d) note the £1.502 million of savings for 2022/23 previously agreed in MTFP(11);
  - (e) note that there is a forecast £45.654 million savings shortfall across MTFP(12), although this forecast could change significantly based upon outcomes of the Comprehensive Spending Review, the local government finance settlement and after addressing future base budget pressures being faced by the council especially resulting from COVID-19;
  - (f) note the additional uncertainty introduced by government announcements in relation to the Health and Social Care levy and the upcoming Social Care white paper;
  - (g) note that in addition to the already agreed £1.502 million of savings further savings of £5.842 million are forecast to be required to balance the 2022/23 budget; and

- (h) agree the approach outlined for consultation on the 2022/23 budget and MTFP(12);

## Background

- 22 The MTFP(12) report presented to Cabinet on 7 July 2021 provided an initial update on the development of the 2021/22 revenue budget and the forecast medium term position for the council over the period 2022/23 to 2025/26, which factored in working assumptions in terms of Council Tax increases. This report builds on those forecasts, provides a further update, and considers recent government announcements. Final budget setting and Council Tax increase proposals will be considered by Full Council on 23 February 2022.

## Review of MTFP Forecasts

- 23 The financial outlook for the council continues to be extremely challenging. The national finances are in a highly uncertain position due to COVID-19 and the impact of the UK exit from the European Union.
- 24 The government are indicating that unprotected government departments could face further funding reductions with announcements expected in the CSR, which it has been announced will be published on 27 October 2021 and following local government finance settlement which is expected to be published in early December.
- 25 It is still forecast therefore that future settlements for local government will result in a loss of £6 million of government funding alongside a £10 million funding reduction as a result of the FFR which is expected to be implemented from 2023/24 at the earliest.
- 26 The council will need to continually review the MTFP(12) projections and savings requirements over the coming months in light of the volatility of the current financial position for local government.
- 27 In line with previous years, a thorough review of the Council's budget has taken place subsequent to the 7 July 2021 Cabinet MTFP(12) report and considering the quarter one forecast of outturn 2021/22 presented to Cabinet last month. This has resulted in several changes to the assumptions for 2022/23 and future years. The key adjustments and major areas for consideration are detailed below:

(a) **National Insurance – impact of Health and Social Care levy**

The government has announced a 1.25% increase in employers' national insurance from 1 April 2022. The forecast cost to the council of this policy is £2 million. The government announcement however also indicated that the impact of this upon the public sector would be funded. Intimation from the Ministry of Housing,

Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is that local authorities will receive a monthly Section 31 grant based upon the national insurance paid across to HMRC the previous month. This is therefore assumed to be cost neutral to the council.

(b) **New Homes Bonus (NHB)**

Government is presently carrying out a review into NHB. In recent years reductions in NHB have been utilised to finance new funding streams across local government. Recent indications from MHCLG are that some form of NHB could continue in the future although at this stage it is not clear what the impact upon the council may be. The council has previously taken a pessimistic view on the outcome of the NHB review, building in an assumption that all funding would be lost.

Based upon the possibility of a continuation of some form of scheme the updated MTFP forecasts assumes 50% of the NHB will be lost over the next two years rather than 100%. The impact of these revised assumptions is that the Council will retain £2.185 million of funding that the previous forecasts assumed we would lose.

(c) **Section 31 Grants**

A reconciliation of S31 grants has highlighted that additional grants are being received in 2021/22 than were originally forecast and these are expected to continue into 2022/23.

In addition, the consumer price index (CPI) is presently higher than previously forecast. The CPI rate at the end of September each year is utilised to uplift business rates and the Top Up grant.

In the 7 July 2021 MTFP Cabinet report, it was forecast that CPI would be 1% at the end of September. The rate of CPI at the end of August 2021 has increased to 3.2%. Inflation rates are volatile at this time, but a CPI forecast of 3% is now included in the MTFP(12) model. Overall, these changes have increased the income expectations for section 31 grants by £4.0 million.

(d) **Housing Benefit Admin Grant Reductions**

Up to 2019/20 the government were reducing grants payable to local authorities for administering housing benefit. In the last two years however the grant allocations have been broadly cash flat. On that basis the forecast annual loss of housing benefit admin grants of £0.1 million have been removed from the MTFP(12) model.

(e) **Council Tax / Business Rate Tax Base Increases**

Regular reviews are carried out in relation to both council tax and business rate taxbase forecasts. The council tax taxbase is impacted by new builds, the incidence of uptake of discounts and exemptions, with a further major variable being the impact of the local council tax reduction scheme. The business rate taxbase is impacted by new builds, business expansions, demolitions and business failures.

The forecast tax base growth position as at 7 July 2021 assumed a £1.5 million increase for 2022/23. This position continues to be reviewed as 2021/22 progresses, especially in relation to the impact of COVID-19 both upon future levels of house building and business growth but also on the incidence of local council tax reduction claims.

Based upon current forecasts the taxbase growth for 2022/23 will be £2.5 million, enabling additional support to be provided to the 2022/23 budget. The tax base forecasts across the remaining years have also been updated. These future years forecasts are considered prudent and will be updated on an annual basis. The additional council tax base growth factored into the latest forecasts across the four years is an additional £1.0 million of tax base growth.

(f) **National Living Wage (NLW)**

These budget pressures are based upon the Low Pay Commission's November 2020, report with an agreed rate for 2021/22 of £8.91 per hour being the base. Indications at that time were that the intention was for the NLW to move towards 66% of median wages by 2024/25.

Over recent months national wage increases have been higher than forecast and it is expected that NLW increases in excess of 5% will be required over the next three years to achieve the 2024/25 target.

The forecast cost of NLW increases upon the council has increased from £4.4 million to £5.3 million. The vast majority of this requirement (£5.0 million) is required to pay increased fee costs to private sector providers of adult social care where the majority of staff are paid at or close to the NLW.

(g) **Energy Prices**

Energy markets are in a very volatile position at the present time, with significant increases in energy prices and demand being higher than expected, green energies not producing at expected levels over recent months and increased international demand for gas.

All these factors are distorting the market and resulting in high price increases for both gas and electricity. The council has been protected against these increases to some extent in the current year through the forward purchasing arrangements via the North East Purchasing Organisation, though those deals only cover so much of the pressures.

At this stage it is forecast that energy prices will increase by at least 20%, with this increase impacting partially upon 2021/22 but fully upon 2022/23. The forecast additional cost for the council from a 20% increase for 2022/23 is £2.2 million. This position is so volatile at the present time that prices will need to be kept under constant review. It is assumed at this time that costs in 2023/24 and beyond can be contained within the general price inflation figures contained in the model. The volatility in this area poses a significant risk to future budgets based on current market conditions and will be monitored carefully.

(h) **Adult and Health Service (AHS) and Children and Young Peoples Services (CYPS) social care base budget pressures**

In recent months thorough reviews have been carried out into the pressures being encountered across the two service areas. In the 7 July 2021 Cabinet report a £1 million base budget pressure was included for social care demographics for AHS and £1.5 million for CYPS next year.

The review process has identified that overall activity levels in AHS are lower than the 2020/21 base budget and pre-pandemic levels. At this time, it is forecast that base budget activity levels, which assumes a return to pre-pandemic levels of occupancy in residential and nursing care and usage in terms of home care, are £4.5 million below baseline levels. This position is broadly reflected in the AHS quarter 1 forecast of outturn 2021/22. The service is underspending further, based on activity levels currently being below pre-pandemic levels, with that underspend being treated as a Covid underspend. Based on the work undertaken, the £1 million base budget pressure included in the 7 July MTFP(12) Cabinet report for 2022/23 is not required and the opportunity exists to rebase the AHS budget in the current year.

For CYPS social care however the position continues to deteriorate. Although the number of children in the care system in the county is not increasing significantly now, the complexity of cases and ongoing impact of the pandemic continues to drive up costs and prices in this budget. It is forecast that to achieve a balanced budget for 2022/23 a £5.5 million base budget uplift is required. An increase of £4 million on the sum included in the 7 July 2021 Cabinet report.

It is practical at this point to seek agreement for the £4.5 million forecast base budget capacity in AHS to be transferred in year to CYPS via a permanent budget transfer. This 2021/22 in year budget virement will then be built into the 2022/23 base budgets for AHS and CYPS going forward. This action will reduce the required base budget growth in CYPS social care from £5.5 million to £1 million next year and have the effect of reducing the in-year overspend in CYPS and the in-year underspend in AHS. The assumptions for demographic growth beyond 2022/23 remain in line with the previous forecasts.

(i) **Home to School Transport**

This budget area continues to face pressures, especially in relation the cost of transport for children with special needs to school. A new base budget pressure of £3 million is included for 2022/23 reflecting the quarter one forecast of outturn position reported to Cabinet in September. A review of this area of activity, which has seen costs increase by 100% over the last five years, is currently underway to explore options to reduce the pressures being experienced but any corrective action, if implemented, could not be introduced until September 2022 now and it is prudent to increase the budget provision at this stage in order to ensure a balanced and sustainable budget in this area.

(j) **Electrification of the vehicle fleet**

Most of the council fleet of 745 vehicles are leased.

In line with the council commitment to move to net zero by 2030, plans are being developed and implemented to replace all future vehicles with electric vehicles. Over the next two to three years all smaller vehicles coming up for renewal will be replaced with electric vehicles. Although the annual lease costs will be higher the savings achieved in reducing fuel costs will broadly offset the lease cost for these smaller vehicles.

Beyond 2025 however the council will need to consider replacing the larger vehicles in the fleet. This policy will come at a

significant net revenue cost to the council, forecast to be in excess of £9 million per annum up to 2030.

The first element of this base budget pressure of £1.328 million has been included in the MTFP(12) model in 2025/26. These unfunded cost pressures present a significant risk to future years budgets, with no Government subsidies or funding currently available to offset the impacts this will have on the councils operating costs.

(k) **Low Carbon Team**

The council has approved short term revenue funding of £1.5 million for both 2020/21 and 2021/22 to put resource in place to progress the drive towards achieving net zero carbon by 2030. An element of this funding has been utilised to increase the staffing resource in the Low Carbon team. It is now vital that this staffing resource is secured and mainstreamed to enable progress to continue, supporting invest to save project delivery and secure external funding. The mainstreaming of this investment will require budget growth of £0.297 million.

(l) **Multi-Storey Car Parking**

The council will take ownership of two new multi storey car parks in 2022/23 in Durham city. The car parks will require 24/7 coverage, which is forecast to require budget growth of £0.2 million to cover the necessary maintenance and other security costs with these facilities. The income generated from these car parks has been accounted for in the financing of the capital investment in these facilities.

(m) **Corporate Property and Land Team**

Investment in additional staffing resource is required to address the increasing demands from large regeneration schemes, as well as other initiatives such as the council housing Land Release Fund and the authority's future ambition to drive forward disposal and acquisition programme work and valuation services including capital accounting.

In addition, there are increasing demands on the team to deliver increased compliance activity to the required standards for the changing council asset estate, where a more corporate approach to managing the estate has highlighted that some buildings have not previously been included in the necessary compliance checks. Altogether it is forecast that additional staffing of £0.600 million is required.

(n) **Legal Services**

Additional staffing resource is required to offset pressures in legal services driven by the increasing numbers of looked after children and to also address increasing demand due to commercial work and support large capital programmes, including the Levelling Up agenda.

Additional funding is also required to address budget pressure due to the cost of barristers required to advise on looked after children cases. Overall, a budget pressure of £0.310 million is now included in the updated MTFP model.

(o) **Coroners Budget**

A budget pressure of £0.158 million are being faced linked to the provision of pathology services, which are now provided from Newcastle RVI but at a higher cost and with increased transport costs following a re-procurement exercise. In addition, there are increased costs of £40,000 associated with shared management costs with Police following the TUPE transfer of some coroner support officers earlier this year. Overall budget pressures in this area are £0.198 million.

(p) **Human Resources / Organisational Development Team**

The council has an ambitious workforce development strategy which will address the shortfalls in training and development across the council and help transform the council's workforce. This programme was approved by Cabinet earlier this year and will need the temporary additional staffing resource within the HR team to be made permanent to deliver on these aspirations and help transform our workforce planning arrangements. The additional growth required is £0.185 million

(q) **Brought forward council tax deficit**

As a result of the pandemic local authorities were able to carry forward any collection fund deficit generated in 2020/21 and recover this over the three years 2021/22 to 2023/24 with this cost partially offset by government grant. The net deficit carried forward by the council at 31 March 2021 was £1.284 million.

At this point, based upon the quarter one forecast of outturn position, the council is confident that the in-year collection fund position surplus position, factoring in the business rates collection fund position, will be slightly higher than the £1.284 million carried forward into 2022/23. On that basis the £1.284 million has been withdrawn from the 2022/23 but remains as a cost to be budgeted

for in 2023/24. The impact of these latest forecasts is to delay the impact by one year, with this pressure dropping out in 2024/25 as originally envisaged.

- 28 At this stage no long-term financial impact from COVID-19 has been factored into the budgets. The council has faced significant additional costs from for example waste tonnages still exceeding pre-pandemic (and base budgeted) levels, but at this stage the MTFP forecasts assume these will dissipate over the coming months. In terms of income loss within service groupings, where we continue to face reduced income from usage of our leisure and cultural venues for example, it is assumed that income levels will be back to pre-Covid levels by April 2022. This position will be kept under constant review and future updates will include consideration of the need for any permanent or temporary budget adjustments in 2022/23 and beyond.

### **Health and Social Care levy**

- 29 On 7 September 2021 the government made a range of announcements in relation to additional funding to be provided to the NHS and social care, to be financed by an increase in both employers and employee's national insurance of 1.25% as well as a similar increase in dividend tax. Alongside these announcements the government published a command paper 'Build Back Better. A plan for health and social care'.
- 30 At this stage the full detail of the changes expected to social care and the funding to be provided to local government are unclear. The total sum to be raised from the announced tax rises is forecast to be circa £12 billion per annum, with the NHS expected to receive the majority of the funding (85%) in each of the next three years to help to address the current backlogs. The expectation being that after three years the backlogs will be at a manageable level and additional funding will flow to social care.
- 31 It is expected therefore that a sum of £4.9 billion will be made available to local government over the next three years. The major draw over time for this additional funding will be to address the changes to charging for social care services, where the government has announced a range of changes to charging for social care. These proposals will have a profound impact upon the income that local authorities receive for providing social care services.
- 32 The major change will be the introduction of a cap of £86,000 that can be charged for care services, but in addition, the personal savings and asset values that is taken into account when determining whether a

person can afford to pay for their care charges is to increased from £23,500 to £100,000. Anyone with assets between £20,000 and £100,000 will be eligible for some means-tested support. Once implemented these changes will significantly reduce the income which can be raised by local authorities, with a particular impact upon more affluent areas where people have more personal wealth and currently have to contribute more towards their social care needs.

33 The changes are expected to be implemented from 1 October 2023. Little detail is available at this time in relation to how this implementation will work and the cohort of service users the changes will apply to and how e.g., will this only apply to people who begin a service after 1 October 2023? Or will it apply to all people who receive a service at and after 1 October 2023? (any costs incurred before October 2023 will not be counted as part of the cap). The impact of these changes will be significant, will not necessarily provide the council with any additional resources and will need to be the subject of further separate reports to Cabinet in due course.

34 An additional concern for local government is the announcement that in the future all self-funders for care services will be able to access local authority contract prices to purchase social care. Self-funders are people who require social care services, but their assets (property and savings) mean that they currently need to arrange and fund their own care. This will have a significant impact for local authorities including in the following areas:

- (a) **Impact on care fees** – private sector providers normally charge self-funders a significantly higher fee for care than the fees paid for by local authorities. This is particularly the case where the local authority share of the market is significant and therefore the local authority rate is impacted by its influence in the market, where more advantageous rates are paid by the local authority. This tends to be the case in more deprived areas (like Durham).

If all self-funders can access council contract prices then whilst self-funders can realise a significant saving, the care providers will lose revenue and will expect local authorities to increase their care fees accordingly to recover their lost income from self-funders.

The impact on individual providers will vary and complicate further an already complex set of discussions that occur with providers over the councils contracted rates.

- (b) **Impact on social care assessment** – presently most self-funders contract directly with care providers and are not supported by local authorities. In the future self-funders may require support from social workers and from financial assessment teams if they are accessing council contracts. This will place pressure on the sustainability of existing staffing resources.

- 35 In addition to the issues above, care providers will also be faced with the 1.25% employer's national insurance increase from 2022/23, inflation rates are presently running at 2% but are expected to increase across the next four months. As detailed earlier in this report energy prices are rising by circa 20%, plus the pandemic continues to increase costs and there are staffing shortages in this sector. It is highly likely therefore that care providers will be expecting significant fee uplifts for 2022/23.
- 36 It is evident therefore that local authorities and their suppliers are likely to face significant additional budgetary pressures as a result of the government announcements and that some of these pressures are uncertain, particularly the dates at which they will manifest. It is likely that these costs will continue to escalate across the period from October 2023 as the charging regulations change. It is expected that the cost impact of these changes will be funded from the £4.9 billion available to local government over the next three years Officers will need to carefully consider both the phasing of any additional costs and lost income impacts alongside the phasing of the receipt of additional government funding once further detail is published.
- 37 A significant risk to the council in this regard however is how the £4.9 billion will be apportioned to local government. There is no guarantee that this sum will suffice for the pressures faced but there is not information available at this stage as to how the funding will be apportioned.
- 38 At this stage the sums built into the budget relate solely to the impact of the NLW increases and normal inflationary provisions. It is expected that greater detail on the health and social care changes will be released as part of the CSR later this month and the local government settlement in December. It is hoped that the funding available is apportioned fairly and covers the cost of all changes and all ongoing pressures in this part of the council's budget. If this is not the case, then additional pressures will be faced across MTFP(12) and will need to be factored into future updates.

## Council Tax increases 2022/23 to 2025/26

- 39 In line with the planning assumptions built into the previous report, the forecasts included in this report assume the council will increase its council tax in each of the next four years. This is a planning assumption at this stage as final decisions on council tax levels for 2022/23 will need to be considered and agreed by Full Council on 23 February 2022.
- 40 The MTFP(12) forecasts assume a 3.99% council tax increase in 2022/23, with 1.99% increases across the remainder of the MTFP(12) period.
- 41 The 3.99% increase in 2022/23 utilises the 2% adult social care precept flexibility deferred from 2021/22 and is in line with government recommendations as maximum increases in line with the referendum limits are factored into the Spending Power calculations and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Red Book forecasts.
- 42 In making the announcements on NHS and social care funding on 7 September 2021, the government stated that they expect demographic and unit cost pressures to be met through Council Tax, social care precept, and long-term efficiencies with the overall level of Local Government funding, including Council Tax and social care precept, to be determined in the round at the Spending Review.
- 43 This is particularly challenging for Durham given our low tax base and low tax raising capacity, where the additional revenue generated from council tax increases is insufficient alone to cover basic inflationary pressures, let alone any demographic and other unfunded and unavoidable cost pressures the council faces. This is exemplified below:

	<b>2022/23 £m</b>	<b>2023/24 £m</b>	<b>2024/25 £m</b>	<b>2025/26 £m</b>
Council Tax Increases				
- Base 1.99%	4,700	4,800	4,900	5,000
- ASC precept 2.00%	4,700	0	0	0
<b>Total CT Revenues</b>	<b>9,400</b>	<b>4,800</b>	<b>4,900</b>	<b>5,000</b>
Inflationary Pressures				
- Pay Inflation	4,650	4,800	4,950	5,100
- Price Inflation	3,900	4,000	4,100	4,200
- National Living Wage	4,700	4,925	5,150	550
<b>Total Inflation</b>	<b>13,250</b>	<b>13,725</b>	<b>14,200</b>	<b>9,850</b>
<b>SHORTFALL</b>	<b>3,850</b>	<b>8,925</b>	<b>9,300</b>	<b>4,850</b>

## 2022/23 Savings Shortfall

- 44 The total savings required to balance the 2022/23 budget at this point are forecast to be £7.344 million, which includes the recovery of £3.778 million of the BSR utilised in 2021/22 to balance the budget and delay the impact of savings upon front line services.
- 45 MTFP(11) approved savings of £1.502 million have already been approved for 2022/23, resulting in a forecast 2022/23 saving shortfall of £5.842 million.
- 46 This savings figure could significantly change before Full Council sets the budget in February 2022.
- 47 Whilst this report proposes a budget virement between AHS and CYPS to address the budget shortfall in our looked after children budgets, the continuing significant additional budget pressures in this area are a particular concern and ongoing pressures in CYPS could impact upon the savings requirements going forward. Similarly, the CSR and local government settlement will have an impact alongside the need for any adjustments in relation to the continuing impact of COVID-19 upon the council's budget and the uncertainties surrounding the financial impact of the UK withdrawal from the European Union.
- 48 With this uncertainty in mind, work will continue in the coming months to identify additional savings to address any future shortfall. If there is still a shortfall in savings at the time Full Council agree the budget in February 2022, then the Budget Support Reserve (BSR) will need to be utilised. The current balance on the BSR is £12.6 million.

#### **MTFP(12) – 2022/23 to 2025/26 Update**

- 49 The adjustments to previous MTFP(12) planning assumptions detailed in this report have impacted upon the forecast savings requirements for the MTFP(12) planning period – 2022/23 to 2025/26.
- 50 The current forecast of savings required for the period 2022/23 to 2025/26 are detailed below:

	<b>Savings Requirement</b>	<b>Less Savings Approved</b>	<b>Savings Shortfall</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
2022/23	7.344	(1.502)	5.842
2023/24	17.018	0	17.018
2024/25	13.016	0	13.016
2025/26	9.778	0	9.778
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47.156</b>	<b>(1.502)</b>	<b>45.654</b>

- 51 The table above highlights that it is forecast that savings of £47.156 million will be required across the MTFP(12) planning period to balance the budget. Savings of £1.502 million approved in MTFP(11) are available in 2022/23, leaving a forecast saving shortfall of £45.654 million across the MTFP(12) planning period. These forecasts assume that the council applies a 3.99% council tax increase in council tax in 2022/23, with 1.99% increases each year thereafter across the remainder of the MTFP(12) period. Final budget setting and Council Tax increase proposals will be considered by Full Council on 23 February 2022.
- 52 Unless additional government funding is provided, there is an increasing risk that savings plans in the future will begin to impact on front line service delivery and as such will become more complex and require significant planning and consultation. It will be vital that timeframes for delivery are planned effectively to ensure the Council continues to balance the budget across the MTFP(12) period.
- 53 The realisation of additional £47.156 million of savings will have resulted in the Council being required to save £294 million from 2011/12. The updated MTFP(12) financial modelling is attached at **Appendix 2**.

## **Consultation Proposals**

- 54 Based on the best practice that has developed over previous consultations, we will consult using our existing County Durham Partnership networks during October and November. The primary focus of the consultation will be on the 14 AAP Boards who will be asked to comment on the overall approach set out in this report. The AAP Boards are now meeting virtually on a regular basis, and for those boards where a meeting does not fall within the period of the consultation, the

individual board members will be asked to provide comments on the content of this report.

## **Background papers**

Medium Term Financial Plan(12), 2022/23 - 2025/26 and Review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme – Report to Cabinet 7 July 2021

Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2021/22 – Period to 30 June 2021 and Update on Progress towards achieving MTFP(11) savings – Report to Cabinet 15 September 2021

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

There is a statutory requirement for the council to adopt a local council tax support scheme for the ensuing financial year by 11 March. Where the council is proposing any changes to its scheme, there is a statutory requirement to consult on these proposals in advance of making any changes.

### **Finance**

The report highlights that at this stage £7.344 million of savings are required to balance the 2022/23 budget. After taking into account £1.502 million of savings previously approved, this leaves a £5.842 million shortfall in 2022/23, with a shortfall across the MTFP(12) period of £45.654 million. These forecasts assume that the council apply a 3.99% council tax increase in council tax in 2022/23, with 1.99% increases each year thereafter across the remainder of the MTFP(12) period.

The forecasts included in this report could change significantly based upon outcomes of the Comprehensive Spending Review, the local government finance settlement and after addressing future base budget pressures being faced by the council especially resulting from COVID-19.

Work will continue over the coming months to identify savings to balance the budget across the MTFP(12) period.

### **Consultation**

The approach to consultation on the 2022/23 budget and MTFP(12) is detailed in the report, which is to utilise our existing County Durham Partnership networks and our AAPs during October and November.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Equality considerations are built into the proposed approach to developing MTFP(12) savings. No new additional savings are included in the MTFP at this stage.

### **Climate Change**

The impact of final budget decisions will take into account climate change impacts. The updated MTFP forecasts include provision to mainstream the Low Carbon Team and makes provision for the first phases of the electrification of the vehicle fleet, which will make a positive contribution to the council's carbon reduction targets.

## **Human Rights**

Any human rights issues will be considered for any detailed MTFP(12) and Council Plan proposals as they are developed, and decisions made to take this forward.

## **Crime and Disorder**

None

## **Staffing**

Where any savings proposals in MTFP(12) impact upon employees, HR processes will be always followed. The report includes proposed investments in a number of teams to address corporate priorities and capacity issues.

## **Accommodation**

None specific within this report.

## **Risk**

There continues to be significant risk in terms of planning across the MTFP(12) period. The uncertainty faced by local government at the present time is unprecedented and local authorities have already delivered the vast majority of all possible efficiency savings. Any additional funding reductions or unfunded budget pressures will leave all local authority with difficult choices.

No long-term financial impacts from COVID-19, other than a short-term depression in tax base increases, has yet to be factored into our forecasts.

The financial impact upon the council of the Health and Social Care levy and the attendant Social Care Command Paper is not yet fully understood. The impact will need to be fully assessed once the CSR is published and the detail of the white paper are known.

The council will continue to plan effectively in this regard working up savings plans to assist in balancing future savings requirements. As required the BSR is in place to provide short term cover for budget shortfalls.

## **Procurement**

None specific within this report.

## Appendix 2: Medium Term Financial Plan – MTFP(12) 2022/23 – 2025/26 Model

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Government Funding</b>				
Revenue Support Grant and Fair Funding Review	2,000	4,000	4,000	2,000
Funding to cover cost of NI increase	-2,000	0	0	0
B Rates/S31 - S31 Adj & CPI increase (3%/1.5%/1.5%/1.5%)	-2,500	-750	-750	-750
Top Up - CPI increase (3%/1.5%/1.5%/1.5%)	-2,100	-1,050	-1,050	-1,050
New Homes Bonus (50% loss)	1,360	825	0	0
<b>Other Funding Sources</b>				
Council Tax Increase - 1.99%	-4,700	-4,800	-4,900	-5,000
Council Tax Increase - Adult Social Care Precept (2%)	-4,700	0	0	0
Council Tax Base increase	-2,000	-2,000	-2,000	-1,500
Business Rate Tax Base increase	-500	-500	-500	-500
<b>Estimated Variance in Resource Base</b>	<b>-15,140</b>	<b>-4,275</b>	<b>-5,200</b>	<b>-6,800</b>
Pay inflation (2%)	4,650	4,800	4,950	5,100
Price Inflation (1.5%)	3,900	4,000	4,100	4,200
<b>Base Budget Pressures</b>				
National Living Wage Adult Social Care	5,000	4,300	4,700	500

National Living Wage Other Service Areas	300	325	350	50
National Insurance Increase	2,000	0	0	0
Pension Fund Auto Enrolment costs	500	0	0	0
Energy Price Increases	2,200	0	0	0
Social Care System Licenses	0	100	0	0
Adults Service Fees and Demographic Pressures	0	1,000	1,000	1,000
Childrens Services Demographic Pressures	1,000	1,500	1,500	1,500
Home to School Transport	3,000	0	0	0
Loss of School SLA Income and Sales support	100	0	0	0
Materials Recycling Facilities Contract	1,000	0	0	0
Waste Haulage Contract	200	0	0	0
Household Waste Recycling Contract	0	1,000	0	0
Low Carbon Team - mainstream staffing	213	84	0	0
Vehicle Fleet - Transfer to electric vehicles	0	0	0	1,328
Drainage Inspections - mainstream investment	250	0	0	0
Multi Storey Car Parks - 24/7 management	200	0	0	0
Corporate Property and Land - additional staffing	600	0	0	0
Legal Services - Staffing and Barristers costs	310	0	0	0
Coroners Service - Pathology Services and staffing	198	0	0	0
HR/OD Development	185	0	0	0
Unfunded Superannuation	-100	-100	-100	-100

Prudential Borrowing	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Net Collection Fund Position after 75% Grant applied	0	1,284	-1,284	0
<b>Short Term Investments</b>				
Investment in climate change initiatives	-1,500	0	0	0
Additional investment in highways infrastructure	-2,500	0	0	0
Investment in Housing Initiatives	-500	0	0	0
Investment in clean and green neighbourhoods	-1,000	0	0	0
Investment in reducing poverty and inequality	-1,500	0	0	0
Investment in library services	-1,000	0	0	0
Investment in Childrens services initiatives	-1,000	0	0	0
Other One Off Initiatives	-1,000	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL PRESSURES</b>	<b>18,706</b>	<b>21,293</b>	<b>18,216</b>	<b>16,578</b>
<b>Use of One Off funds</b>				
Adjustment for use of BSR in previous year	3,778	0	0	0
<b>Savings</b>				
Savings Agreed in MTFP(10)	-1,252	0	0	0
MTFP(11) Savings	-250	0	0	0
<b>SURPLUS FUNDS (-)/ SAVINGS SHORTFALL</b>	<b>5,842</b>	<b>17,018</b>	<b>13,016</b>	<b>9,778</b>
	<b>TOTAL SHORTFALL</b>			<b>45,654</b>

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**25 October 2021**



**Resources – Quarter 1 June 2021:  
Forecast of Revenue and Capital  
Outturn 2021/22**

**Ordinary Decision**

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**Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources (Interim)**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide details of the forecast revenue and capital outturn budget position for the Resources service grouping, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of June 2021.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The initial forecast position shows that the service is forecasting a cash limit underspend of £0.290 million against a revised budget of £21.832 million.
- 3 The Resources Cash Limit balance carried forward at 31 March 2022 is forecast to be £2.683 million. Other earmarked reserves under the direct control of RMT are forecast to total £10.004 million at 31 March 2022.
- 4 The revised Resources capital budget is £16.806 million for 2021/22, with a total expenditure to 30 June 2021 of £1.362 million (8.1%). The profiled budget for this period is £0.269 million, therefore expenditure is above profiled / expected spend in the year to date.
- 5 In arriving at the forecast outturn position, the service is declaring £2.414 million of additional costs, and lost income and relating to Covid-19 and £0.407 million of Covid-19 related underspends. The net Covid-19 impact is therefore £2.007 million, and this will be covered corporately by utilising Central Government grants wherever possible.

## **Recommendation(s)**

- 6** Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is recommended to note the forecast of outturn position.

## Background

7 County Council approved the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2021/22 at its meeting on 24 February 2021. These budgets have subsequently been revised to account for grant additions/reductions, corporate savings/adjustments, budget transfers between service groupings and budget profiling between years. This report covers the financial position for the following major accounts maintained by the Resources service grouping:

- a) Revenue Budget - £21.832 million (original £21.425 million)
- b) Capital Programme - £16.806 million (original £16.334 million)

8 The original Resources General Fund budget has been revised in year to incorporate a number of budget adjustments as follows:

	<u>£,000s</u>
Transfer from Contingencies - Web Development Group	117
Transfer from Contingencies - Coroners Budget Pressures	187
Transfer from Contingencies - RC Lost SLA Income	103
Transfer to Interest Payable & similar Charges-Leasing	(9)
Transfer from CYPS - Business Support Post	23
Transfer to REG - Business Support Post	(26)
Transfer from AHS - Centralisation of First Aid Budgets	4
Transfer from CYPS - Centralisation of First Aid Budgets	5
Transfer from REG - Centralisation of First Aid Budgets	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>407</b>

The revised General Fund Budget for Resources is £21.832 million

9 The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2021/22 and show:

- The approved annual budget;
- The actual income and expenditure as recorded in the Council's financial management system;
- The variance between the annual budget and the forecast outturn;
- For the Resources revenue budget, adjustments for items outside of the cash limit to take into account such items as redundancies met from the strategic reserve, capital charges not controlled by services and use of / or contributions to earmarked reserves.

- 10 The service is forecasting a cash limit underspend of £0.290 million (1.33%) against a revised budget of £21.832 million.
- 11 The tables below compare the actual expenditure with the budget. The first table is analysed by Subjective Analysis (i.e. type of expense), and the second by Head of Service.

### Type of Expenditure (Subjective Analysis) (£000's)

	2021/22 Budget	YTD Actual	Forecast of outturn	Variance (under) / over spend	Items Outside Cash Limit	COVID-19 Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
Employees	67,139	16,753	67,249	110	(411)	(112)	(413)
Premises	7,912	55	7,901	(11)	(2)	-	(13)
Transport	765	146	596	(169)	(3)	178	6
Supplies and Services	17,018	8,109	17,557	539	(341)	(22)	176
Third Party Payments	51	4	51	-	-	-	-
Transfer Payments	-	36,886	35,714	35,714	(4,237)	-	31,477
Central Support and Capital	27,477	51	27,714	237	1	-	238
<b>Gross Expenditure</b>	<b>120,362</b>	<b>62,004</b>	<b>156,782</b>	<b>36,420</b>	<b>(4,993)</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>31,471</b>
Income	(99,030)	(39,157)	(128,740)	(29,710)	-	(2,051)	(31,761)
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>21,332</b>	<b>22,847</b>	<b>28,042</b>	<b>6,710</b>	<b>(4,993)</b>	<b>(2,007)</b>	<b>(290)</b>
HB Transfer payments	115,406	27,677	115,406	-	-	-	-
HB Central Support and Capital	300	87	300	-	-	-	-
HB Income	(115,206)	(208)	(115,206)	-	-	--	-
<b>HB Net Expenditure</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>27,556</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total Net Exp</b>	<b>21,832</b>	<b>50,403</b>	<b>28,542</b>	<b>6,710</b>	<b>(4,993)</b>	<b>(2,007)</b>	<b>(290)</b>

## By Head of Service (£000's)

	2021/22 Budget	YTD Actual	Forecast of outturn	Variance (under) / over spend	Total Items Outside Cash Limit	COVID-19 Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
Central Establishment Recharges	(27,556)	-	(27,556)	-	-	-	-
Corporate Finance & Commercial Services	2,798	908	2,784	(14)	-	9	(5)
Financial & Transactional Services	9,885	8,702	15,433	5,548	(4,748)	(1,158)	(358)
Digital & Customer Services	17,220	5,296	17,915	695	(3)	(591)	101
Internal Audit and Insurance	1,085	243	1,068	(17)	-	4	(13)
Legal & Democratic Services	8,281	2,864	8,815	534	(225)	(365)	(56)
Service Management / Central Charges	(11,277)	61	(11,275)	2	-	1	3
People & Talent Management	2,527	449	2,816	289	(237)	17	69
Procurement, Sales & Business Services	15,529	3,810	15,564	35	-	56	91
Transformation	1,198	173	786	(412)	327	8	(77)
Strategy	1,642	341	1,692	50	(107)	12	(45)
<b>Net Expenditure Excluding HB</b>	<b>21,332</b>	<b>22,847</b>	<b>28,042</b>	<b>6,710</b>	<b>(4,993)</b>	<b>(2,007)</b>	<b>(290)</b>
Housing Benefit	500	27,556	500	0	-	-	-
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>21,832</b>	<b>50,403</b>	<b>28,542</b>	<b>6,710</b>	<b>(4,993)</b>	<b>(2,007)</b>	<b>(290)</b>

- 12 The table below provides a brief commentary on the variances against the revised budget analysed by Head of Service. The table identifies variances in the core budget only and excludes items outside of the cash limit (e.g. redundancy costs) and technical accounting adjustments (e.g. capital charges):

Head of Service	Service Area	Description	Year End (under) / overbudget £000s	Year End (under) / overbudget £000s
Central Establishment Recharges	Central Establishment Recharges	No material variances	0	0
Corporate Finance & Commercial Services	Management	£7,000 overbudget on supplies & services.	7	(5)
	Financial Systems	£1,000 underbudget on employees.	(1)	
	Pensions	No material variances.	0	
	Strategic Finance	£3,000 underbudget on supplies & services.	(3)	
	Occupational Health	£37,000 underbudget on employees. £3,000 overbudget on supplies & services	(34)	
	Health and Safety	£48,000 overbudget on employees. £7,000 overbudget on supplies & services. £29,000 additional income.	26	
People & Talent Management	People & Talent Management	£64,000 managed overspend on employees. £5,000 overbudget on supplies & services.	69	69
Finance & Transactional Services	Management	£39,000 underbudget on supplies & services.	(39)	(358)
	Payroll & Employee Services	£28,000 overbudget on employees. £41,000 underachieved income.	69	
	Financial Management	£12,000 underbudget on employees.	(12)	
	Revenues and Benefits	£7,000 overbudget on employees. (linked to additional income of £352,000 New Burdens Funding received) £18,000 overbudget on supplies & services. £401,000 additional income.	(376)	

Head of Service	Service Area	Description	Year End (under) / overbudget £000s	Year End (under) / overbudget £000s
Digital and Customer Services	Digital and Customer Services	<p>£367,000 underbudget on employees.</p> <p>£27,000 underbudget on premises.</p> <p>£3,000 overbudget on transport</p> <p>£10,000 overbudget on supplies &amp; services, which includes an overspend of £218,000 relating to Oracle software as the saving will not be realised until next financial year.</p> <p>£148,000 overbudget on central expenses (Direct Revenue Funding for capital scheme).</p> <p>£334,000 underachieved income.</p>	101	<b>101</b>
Internal Audit and Risk	Insurance and Risk	£7,000 overbudget on employees.	7	<b>(13)</b>
	Internal Audit	<p>£37,000 underbudget on employees.</p> <p>£1,000 overbudget on supplies &amp; services.</p> <p>£2,000 overbudget on central charges.</p> <p>£31,000 additional income.</p>	(65)	
	Corporate Fraud	<p>£58,000 overbudget on employees.</p> <p>£13,000 underbudget on supplies &amp; services.</p>	45	
Legal and Democratic Services	Corporate and Democratic Core	<p>£99,000 underbudget on employees.</p> <p>£4,000 underbudget on supplies &amp; services.</p> <p>£3,000 additional income.</p>	(106)	

Head of Service	Service Area	Description	Year End (under) / overbudget £000s	Year End (under) / overbudget £000s
	Legal and Other Services	£41,000 overbudget on employees. £14,000 overbudget on premises. £196,000 overbudget on supplies & services including £123,000 relating to barrister costs. £201,000 overachieved on income.	50	(56)
Service Management	Service Management	Only minor variances	3	3
Strategy		£39,000 underbudget on employees. £6,000 underbudget on supplies & services	(45)	(45)
Transformation		£64,000 underbudget on employees. £13,000 underbudget on supplies & services.	(77)	(77)
Procurement, Sales and Business Services	Business Support	No significant variances	0	0
	Procurement	£126,000 overbudget on employees. £2,000 overbudget on supplies & services. £37,000 additional income.	91	91
Benefits Payments and Subsidy	Benefits		0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>(290)</b>

13 In summary, the service grouping is on track to maintain spending within its cash limit.

- 14 The council has faced significant additional costs in relation to the Covid-19 outbreak and significant loss of income. In many areas the costs and loss of income for the first quarter are known. The likely impact over the remainder of the year however is much more uncertain. All additional costs and loss of income, net of Covid-19 related underspending, is being treated corporately and is therefore excluded from the cash limit.
- 15 The major areas of forecast additional cost and loss of income in respect of Resources are as follows:
- a) £0.243 million lost income in respect of the Registration Service;
  - b) £0.730 million shortfall in income in respect of court fees;
  - c) £0.276 million lost income in respect of Design & Print Services;
  - d) £0.268 million lost income in respect of traded ICT services;
  - e) £0.525 million lost income in respect of the new In-House Enforcement Service;
- 16 The major areas of forecast Covid-19 related savings in respect of Resources are as follows:
- a) £0.178 million in respect of vehicles and staff travelling;
  - b) £56,000 in respect of postages;
  - c) £45,000 in respect of other hired and contacted services;
  - d) £29,000 in respect of court costs;
  - e) £27,000 in respect of stationery; and
  - f) £21,000 in respect of office printing.

### **Capital Programme**

- 17 The original Resources capital programme was £16.334 million, and this has been revised for additions/reductions, budget transfers and budget profiling. The revised budget now stands at £16.806 million.
- 18 Summary financial performance to the end of June 2021 is shown below:

	<b>Original Annual Budget 2021/22</b>	<b>Revised Annual Budget 2021/22</b>	<b>Profiled Budget 2021/22</b>	<b>Actual Spend 30/06/2021</b>	<b>Remaining Budget</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Digital & Customer Services	16,309	16,781	269	1,360	15,421
Corporate Finance & Commercial Services and Finance & Transactional Services	25	25	-	2	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,334</b>	<b>16,806</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>1,362</b>	<b>15,444</b>

- 19 The revised Resources capital budget is £16.806 million with a total expenditure to 30 June 2021 of £1.362 million (8.1%). The profiled budget for this period is £0.269 million, therefore spend is above profiled / expected spend in the year to date. A full breakdown of schemes and actual expenditure to 30 June 2021 is given in Appendix 2.
- 20 At year end the actual outturn performance will be compared against the revised budgets and at that time service and project managers will need to account for any budget variance.

### **Background papers**

- a) County Council Report (24 February 2021) – Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2024/25 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2021/22.
- b) Cabinet Report (15 September 2020) – Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn – Period to 30 June 2021.

### **Other useful documents**

- a) None

### **Author(s)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The consideration of regular budgetary control reports is a key component of the Council's Corporate and Financial Governance arrangements. This report shows the forecast spend against budgets agreed by the Council in February 2021 in relation to the 2021/22 financial year.

### **Finance**

Financial implications are detailed throughout the report which provides an analysis of the revenue and capital outturn position.

### **Consultation**

Not applicable.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Not applicable.

### **Climate Change**

Not applicable.

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable.

### **Staffing**

Not applicable.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable.

### **Risk**

The consideration of regular budgetary control reports is a key component of the Councils Corporate and Financial Governance arrangements.

## **Procurement**

The outcome of procurement activity is factored into the financial projections included in the report.

## Appendix 2 Resources Capital Programme 2021/22 – Detailed Monitoring Statement to 30 June 2021

Resources	Revised Annual Budget	Profiled Budget	Actual Spend	Remaining Budget
	2021/22	2021/22	30-Jun-21	2021/22
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Big Data	56	-	45	11
Broadband / Digital Durham	8,932	56	171	8,761
Code of Connection Compliance	270	27	-	270
Corporate Mail Fulfilment	33	-	4	29
Dark Fibre installations and Circuit/Microwave Upgrades	166	-	-	166
Homeworking	733	73	11	722
ICT Business Continuity	-	-	-	-
Mobile Device Management	144	-	-	144
Ongoing Server replacement	826	25	72	754
Replacement of Desktop ICT Equipment	1,993	14	748	1,245
Sharepoint Architecture	23	-	-	23
Tanfield Datacentre LAN Switching Replacement	30	-	-	30
Applications and Development	-	-	-	-
Archiving Of Obsolete Systems Based On Non Supported Hardware	-	-	-	-
Customer Relation Management System	1,778	-	-	1,778
Switch Replacement -Hardware	177	-	-	177
Middleware Software - Enterprise Application Integration	230	-	11	219
Integrated Customer Service Programme	147	-	-	147
End Device Patching	4	-	-	4
ICT Performance Management	200	-	-	200
Learning Gateway	-	-	-	-
Technical Services	739	74	292	447
ICT Service Desk Replacement	300	-	6	294
<b>ICT Services Include Design and Print Total</b>	<b>16,781</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>1,360</b>	<b>15,421</b>
Civica Pension Fund Administration System	-	-	-	-
Migration of HR/Payroll Functionality	25	-	2	23
<b>Financing Resources Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>RESOURCES TOTAL</b>	<b>16,806</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>1,362</b>	<b>15,444</b>

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**25 October 2021**

**Quarter One, 2021/22  
Performance Management Report**

**Ordinary Decision**



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**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources (Interim)**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present an overview of progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework and highlight key messages to inform strategic priorities and work programmes.
- 2 The report covers performance in and to the end of quarter one, April to June, 2021.

**Performance Reporting**

- 3 The performance report is structured around the three components.
  - (a) High level state of the County indicators to highlight areas of strategic significance. These are structured around the [County Durham Vision 2035](#).
  - (b) Council initiatives of note against the ambitions contained within the vision alongside a fourth 'excellent council' theme contained within our [Council Plan](#)<sup>1</sup>.
  - (c) A long list of key performance indicators against the themes of the Council Plan.
- 4 It also includes an overview of the continuing impact of COVID-19 on council services, our staff, and residents.

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<sup>1</sup> approved by full council October 2020

## More and Better Jobs

- 5 UK gross domestic product (GDP) is currently 8.8% below its pre-pandemic level<sup>2</sup> and there are 553,000 fewer payrolled employees<sup>3</sup> (the hospitality sector, those aged under 25, and those living in London continue to be impacted the most). However, latest figures suggest that the jobs market is showing some signs of recovery with an increase in the number of payrolled employees for the sixth consecutive month and fewer planned redundancies.
- 6 Although we estimate the employment rate across County Durham has remained static - the estimated employment rate for County Durham is 71.7% for May 2021 below both regional and national rates - we are preparing for it to deteriorate, as the support schemes of furlough and income support (for the self-employed) are phased out in the coming months. A recent survey<sup>4</sup> suggests one in five firms could make staff redundant or cut their working hours in response to the change to furlough. Within County Durham, the majority of furloughed employees work in the accommodation and food service sector.
- 7 The impact of COVID-19 on the visitor economy has been significant. Visitor numbers, revenue generated from visits, and jobs supported are all half of pre-COVID levels. However, we are continuing to assist this sector, by attaining almost £2 million in grants to support the return of festivals and events and to develop a five-year programme of activities and exhibitions linked to our new History Centre, having renovated our cultural venues and through bidding for UK City of Culture status for 2025.
- 8 We remain concerned about the longer-term impacts of the pandemic. The economic situation is contributing to financial pressures across the county, with 20,000 children across the county eligible for free school meals (one in four) and many households in or at risk of falling into poverty.
- 9 The number of young people who remain not in employment, education or training continues to be a concern. The number of young people aged 16-17 undertaking an apprenticeship is however higher than the national average. School attendance rates remain close to the national average.
- 10 To mitigate against these economic challenges, we are continuing to move forward with significant investment and regeneration projects which will create new infrastructure, transform our towns and villages,

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<sup>2</sup> Office of National Statistics: [GDP quarterly national accounts, UK: January to March 2021](#)

<sup>3</sup> Office of National Statistics: [Labour Market Overview, UK: June 2021](#)

<sup>4</sup> by the Chamber of Commerce – surveyed 250 businesses, with 18% saying they were likely to make staff redundant in response to the change to furlough

and boost the visitor economy. The County is well placed in the heart of the region to take advantage of growth sectors of warehousing and logistics. Promoting employability may become a greater priority for the council and its partners as the full longer term impacts of the pandemic upon employment levels becomes clearer. The council leads the DurhamWorks programme to support young people into working or learning.

## **Long and Independent Lives**

- 11 Although less affected than other age groups by COVID itself, studies suggest young people have been disproportionately impacted by the social, educational and economic impacts of the pandemic. Increasing numbers of young people are being prescribed anti-depressants, facing longer wait times for psychological support, or needing urgent or emergency crisis care, and those already facing challenges, such as poverty or living with a disability, seem to have been the hardest hit in this regard.
- 12 In addition to the uncertain employment situation, poverty pressures continues to be a major issue and with the Universal Credit £20 per week pandemic uplift due to be withdrawn in October, we expect the situation to deteriorate. Increases in basic living costs continue to hit those with little disposable income hard, and we remain concerned that although about 20,000 pupils registered at schools are eligible for free school meals (27%, up from 24% last year), a quarter of them are not claiming them.
- 13 We are continuing to support people to live longer healthy lives. Focused activity across mental and physical well-being, physical activity for children, smoking quitters (particularly pregnant women and new mothers) and breastfeeding is continuing to make a difference to the lives of our residents. The number of teenage conceptions continued to fall during the quarter.
- 14 Throughout 2020/21, we continued to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and their families and we remain on track to achieve 'significant and sustained outcomes' for around 6,000 families as part of our stronger families programme. This work has continued into quarter one this year.
- 15 As a positive picture emerges from our health services, with high vaccination rates in our care homes and across our communities, we are now able to consider the longer-term health consequences of COVID-19. We are concerned that many residents are suffering long-lasting symptoms of COVID-19 (Long-COVID) and many more have suffered impacts on their mental wellbeing, gained weight and become more inactive.

## Connected Communities

- 16 Reduced overall crime rates continued throughout quarter one, more noticeably across theft-related offences, which fell by a quarter, and may reflect people spending more time at home, with fewer opportunities for theft in public spaces and the closure of non-essential retail and the night-time economy.
- 17 However, we remain concerned about domestic abuse. Statutory referrals related to domestic abuse (parent/carer) was at a rate of one in five in the 12 months to May 2021, this increased to one in four during June 2021, which coincided with the start of the UEFA Euro 2020 football tournament.
- 18 Anti-social behaviour has also increased, mainly litter related incidents, but also driven by more residents spending more time at home (thereby witnessing and reporting events, as well as driving increases in areas such as noise) and the enforcement of COVID-19 restrictions.
- 19 Environmental cleanliness is showing a slight deterioration against last year in the categories of litter and detritus (based on a sample survey), and the number of reported fly-tips has started to return to pre-COVID levels, having decreased during the height of the pandemic.
- 20 One consequence of the pandemic has been the generation of additional tonnages of household waste due to people spending more time in their homes. An additional 12,000 tonnes of household waste was collected in 2020/21, however, contamination of kerbside recycling bins remains high.
- 21 We are concerned about the lifting of the eviction ban as lockdown continues to ease. More households are living in temporary accommodation, and for longer, due to a shortage of suitable properties, a consequence of action taken to house rough sleepers during the pandemic. We are sourcing additional properties to help alleviate these problems.
- 22 The complexity of referrals to children's social care continues to increase and COVID-19 is continuing to prevent the closure of some cases, due to being unable to complete actions identified in children's plans, for example, parental attendance at domestic abuse perpetrator courses as these courses are not running at present.
- 23 During quarter one, free public wi-fi has been installed in some of our town centres (with further roll-out planned later in the year), we have also initiated phase one of our plans to improve the county's housing stock and tackle wider environmental issues.

## **An Excellent Council**

- 24 As steps two and three of the government's COVID-19 roadmap were achieved in quarter one, we have been able to lift some restrictions. However, work-related control measures in relation to hands, face and space remain in place, and greater emphasis placed on fresh air and ventilation of indoor spaces. The delay in achieving step four of the roadmap, primarily due to the emergence of a new delta variant of the virus, means working at home arrangements remained in place across quarter one.
- 25 As a consequence of the restrictions put in place throughout the pandemic (e.g., working from home, handwashing, social distancing and ventilation) both health and safety and days lost to sickness absence have remained low.
- 26 Our latest sickness rate is the second lowest level since 2010/11, with circa 80% employees recording less than 5 days sickness and almost 70% recording no sickness. Throughout the quarter, we continued to promote support mechanisms to increase the emotional resilience of our staff and protect their mental health.
- 27 Most services have now reopened in line with the government's roadmap to recovery. However, the redeployment of our Customer Access Point (CAP) staff to support other critical services, and the ongoing impact of self-isolation on service delivery has meant we have needed to delay the re-opening of our CAPs.
- 28 However, we are continuing to provide support via alternative channels and are continuing to expand our online alternatives to face to face contact which are encouraging more customers to liaise with us digitally.
- 29 The council continues to face significant financial pressure resulting from the pandemic. The additional costs incurred and loss of income are presently forecast to be around £21 million this year, offset by COVID-19 related underspends (relating to closure of facilities and disruption to normal service activity as a result of the pandemic) of £7.771 million – a net overspend of £14.522 million, which is presently within the forecast circa £17.2 million the council expects to receive from the government to cover the financial impact of the pandemic.

## **The impact of COVID-19**

- 30 The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented health emergency across the globe. [Restrictions](#) to contain the virus, minimise deaths and prevent health and social care systems being overwhelmed remain in place, and are continuing to impact our everyday lives, our health and the economy.

- 31 However, roll-out of the UK's vaccination programme, which has reduced both hospital admissions and deaths, has allowed the government to implement plans for a [gradual and phased route out of lockdown](#).
- 32 Working with government organisations and within the context of national developments, we continue to protect our communities, support those affected by the pandemic, and develop plans for future recovery.
- 33 The COVID-19 surveillance dashboard can be accessed [here](#).

### **Risk Management**

- 34 Effective risk management is a vital component of the council's agenda. The council's risk management process sits alongside our change programme and is incorporated into all significant change and improvement projects. The latest report can be found [here](#).

### **Recommendation**

- 35 That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considers the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter one performance, the impact of COVID-19 on performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of underperformance including the significant economic and well-being challenges because of the pandemic.

### **Author**

Andy Palmer

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Not applicable.

### **Finance**

Latest performance information is being used to inform corporate, service and financial planning.

### **Consultation**

Not applicable.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Equality measures are monitored as part of the performance monitoring process.

### **Climate Change**

We have declared a climate change emergency and consider the implications of climate change in our reports and decision-making.

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable.

### **Crime and Disorder**

A number of performance indicators and key actions relating to crime and disorder are continually monitored in partnership with Durham Constabulary.

### **Staffing**

Performance against a number of relevant corporate health indicators has been included to monitor staffing issues.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable.

### **Risk**

Reporting of significant risks and their interaction with performance is integrated into the quarterly performance management report.

### **Procurement**

Not applicable.



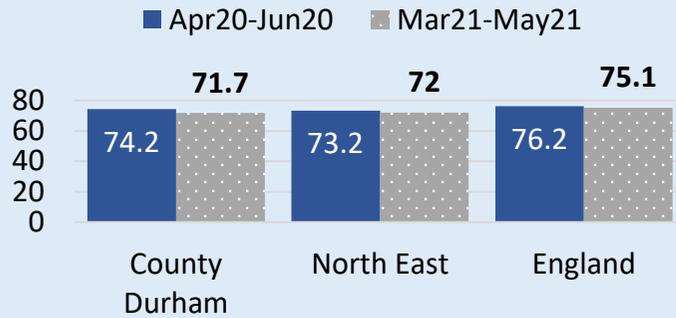
# Durham County Council Performance Management Report

## Quarter One, 2021/22

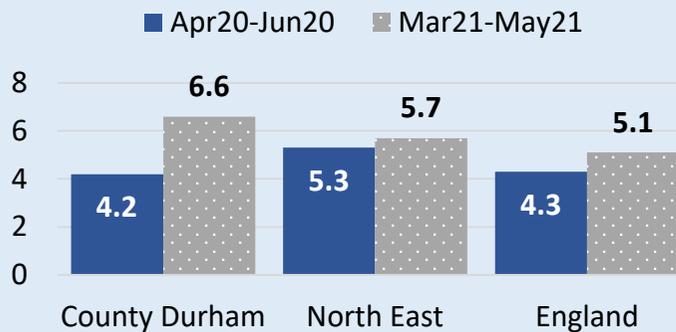


# MORE AND BETTER JOBS

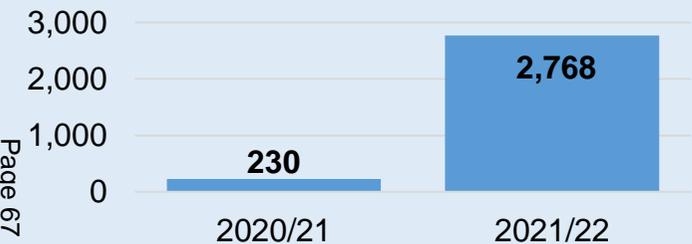
## Experimental Employment Rate



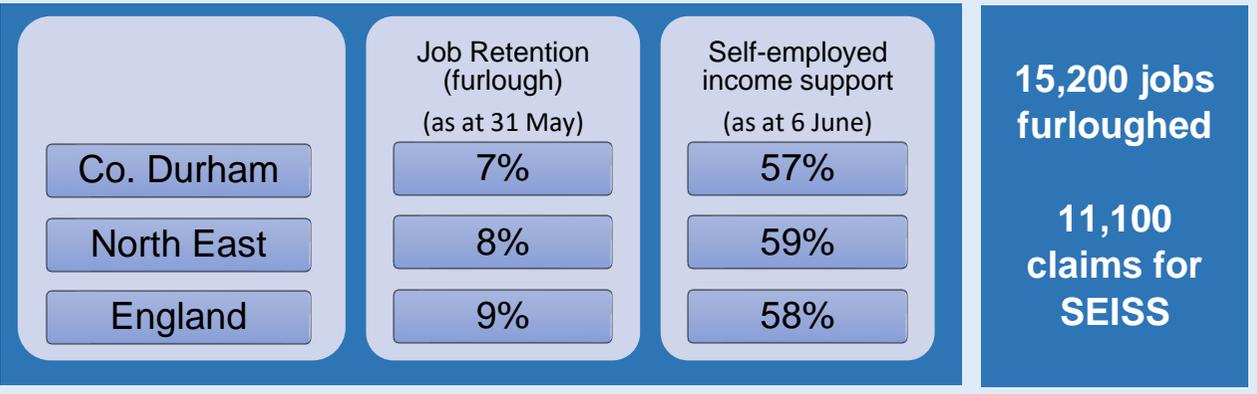
## Experimental Unemployment Rate



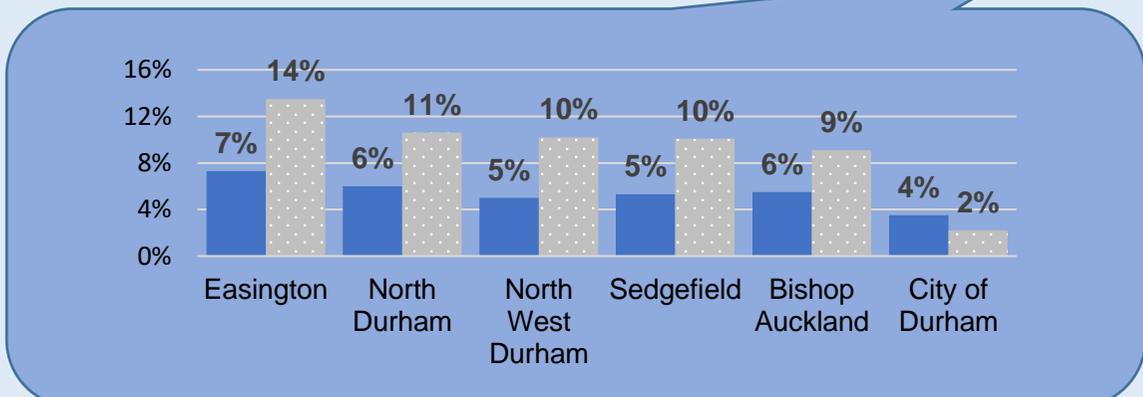
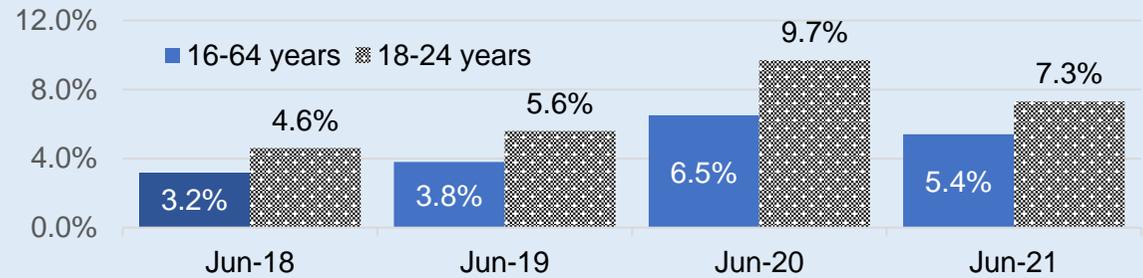
## Jobs created/safeguarded by Business Durham



## Support Schemes



## Claimant Count (as at June 2021)



## More and Better Jobs

- 1 The ambition of More and Better Jobs is linked to the following objectives:
  - (a) Delivery of a range of employment sites across the county;
  - (b) A strong, competitive economy where County Durham is a premier place in the North East to do business;
  - (c) A broader experience for residents and visitors to the county;
  - (d) Young people will have access to good quality education, training and employment;
  - (e) Helping all people into rewarding work;
  - (f) Fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation within the county.

## National, Regional and Local Picture

- 2 The County Durham Regeneration Statement sets the direction of regeneration and economic development of the county up to 2022. This document contains a number of long-term measures of success. A key aim within this strategy is the employment rate for the county to converge to and be maintained at pre-2008 recession levels (73% of working age population.)
- 3 The Office of National Statistics (ONS) has delayed release of the Annual Population Survey (APS) data to March 2021 which includes the official employment rate. In lieu of this, an experimental estimate using Labour Force Survey (LFS) employment data has been used. Using this data, the estimated employment rate for County Durham is 71.7% for May 2021, this is below both regional and national LFS rates but does not yet show a significant COVID-19 effect due to the support provided by the furlough and income support schemes.
- 4 HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) data shows that around 15,200 employments in County Durham (7%) were furloughed under the government's Job Retention scheme. This is in line with both regional (8%) and England (8%) rates and a decrease from the most recent peak of 13% in January 2021 when there were 29,400 employments furloughed. Throughout the pandemic the trend for the proportion of employments furloughed in County Durham has closely mirrored the regional and national picture, being consistently slightly below the regional and national averages.
- 5 The most recent data available on the breakdown of furloughed employments by sector shows the majority of County Durham's furloughed employees work in the accommodation and food service sector, which has been particularly impacted by the pandemic restrictions; and the retail and manufacturing sectors which not only have also been impacted by the pandemic restrictions but are two of the largest employment sectors in County Durham.

- 6 The furlough scheme is currently being phased out. The table below shows the level of government contribution available in the coming months, the required employer contribution and the maximum amount the employee receives per month.

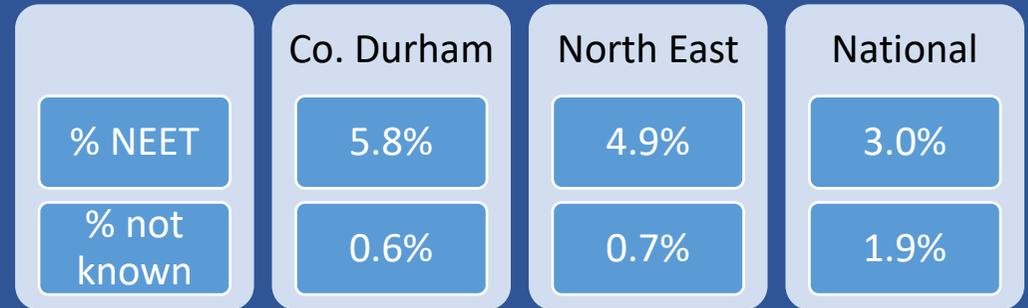
	<b>To June</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>August</b>	<b>September</b>
Government contribution for hours not worked	80% up to £2,500 per month	70% up to £2,187.50 per month	60% up to £1,875 per month	60% up to £1,875 per month
Employer contribution wages for hours not worked	None	10% up to £312.50	20% up to £625	20% up to £625
For hours not worked the employee receives	80% up to £2,500 per month	80% up to £2,500 per month	80% up to £2,500 per month	80% up to £2,500 per month

- 7 The furlough scheme will end on 30 September 2021. A national survey carried out by the British Chambers of Commerce has highlighted that retraining is essential as one in five firms consider redundancies post-furlough. Recent HMRC data show that older workers are far more likely to remain furloughed than younger ones, raising concerns about what plans are in place to re-skill those left without jobs once the scheme winds down, and whilst a continuing skills shortage exists across the UK labour market.
- 8 Following a significant rise in people claiming employment benefits between March and May 2020, the claimant count continued to remain relatively static throughout 2020/21 until the first notable drop in May 2021 and now stands at 5.4% (June 2021). County Durham remains below the regional and national rate but is still significantly higher than the pre-COVID position.
- 9 The impact of the pandemic on the visitor economy in 2020 has been significant. Visitor numbers fell by 43.4% compared to 2019, impacting on both 'day' and 'staying' visitor numbers. Consequently, the amount generated by the visitor economy also fell, decreasing by 48.3%. The number of jobs supported (both direct and indirect) by the visitor economy dropped by 44%.
- 10 Across the county the greatest impact was seen in Durham City in relation to staying visitor expenditure, with the least impacted area being the Durham Coast in relation to day visitors to this area. As over 50% of visitors to County Durham are day visitors from the North East, the impact of the pandemic has not been as sizeable as other areas of the country which are more reliant on overnight stays and overseas travel.

**Business Durham Activity**

	Apr-Jun 2021	Compared to last year	
inward investments secured: • Maze Rattan • MAP Group	<b>2</b>	+1	↑
Businesses engaged	<b>474</b>	64	↑
floor space occupied	<b>87%</b>	+2pp	
GVA from jobs created or safeguarded (million)	<b>£81.2</b>	+£74	↑

**16-17 year olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (Apr-Jun 2021)**



additional information on businesses is available via [Durham Insight](#)

**Visitor Economy**

	2020	Compared to last year	
Visitors to County Durham (millions)	11.39	- 43%	↓
Jobs supported by visitor economy (FTEs)	6,794	- 44%	↓
£ generated by visitor economy (£'millions)	£506.75	- 48%	↓

- 11 The most recent COVID impact survey by Visit County Durham shows a more positive picture with most businesses being able to open as restrictions are lifted, the majority reporting they had lots of enquiries and bookings and 18% predicting their occupancy between June and August will be higher than pre-COVID levels. However, there were still concerns about further national lockdowns or further restrictions and the majority reported that customers were booking less than a month in advance.

## **Council Services**

### **A strong competitive economy and premier place to do business**

- 12 The £220m UK Community Renewal Fund<sup>5</sup> was launched by the government as part of the budget statement 2021. The programme will:
- provide funding to test innovative ideas and pilot activity;
  - invest in skills;
  - help people into employment;
  - support local businesses to grow and develop;
  - help local communities become more resilient and sustainable.
- 13 The government identified 100 places to be prioritised for funding according to a new Index of Economic Resilience, although there is no guarantee of receiving funding, County Durham is one of the 100 priority areas. Following a call for applications, four bids have been selected for submission based on projects which most strongly fit the government's criteria. Announcements on successful bids are expected late July onwards, with all project activity needing to be delivered by March 2022.
- 14 The £5 million Durham Business Recovery Grant launched in January 2021, to help businesses implement recovery plans to overcome the effects of the pandemic has now closed. We received over 780 applications to the scheme requesting over £12 million in total. Three hundred and eighteen applications were approved, totalling more than £4.54m, with the potential to safeguard up to 3,554 jobs.
- 15 Grants are being used to enable businesses to purchase new equipment, develop new products, adapt their operational models and expand into new markets. Businesses whose applications were not accepted, either because they did not meet key eligibility criteria or their recovery plans required further development, have been signposted to other support programmes.

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<sup>5</sup> the aim being to trial new approaches to support communities and the local economy and help areas prepare for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, due to launch in 2022.

- 16 In its first two years of operation the County Durham Growth Fund<sup>6</sup> has awarded £5.53 million in grants to 36 companies. To date:
- £3.06m has been paid out;
  - 184 jobs have been created;
  - with a further 375 jobs projected before the end of the project.
- 17 In addition to the £5.53 million, the County Durham Growth Fund levered a further £8.66 million in private sector investment.
- 18 The ‘Size and Health of the UK Space Industry’ report (June 2021) revealed the number of people employed in the space sector in the north east is more than 1,000 (up 12%). The report also highlighted that the number of space organisations in the region is up 50% from 34 to 51 with income from the north east’s space sector totalling £88 million. The North East Centre of Excellence in Satellite Applications, based at North East Technology Park (NETPark) in Sedgefield, has played an important role in the growth of the region’s space sector. Led by Business Durham, the North East Satellite Applications Centre of Excellence has engaged with over 670 organisations, establishing links between 277 businesses and universities, and helped companies secure £9.2m worth of funding.
- 19 During the quarter, 305 businesses were intensively assisted which reflects the increasing number of businesses that have been taking up support through Business Durham's various programmes.
- 20 Durham Ambitious Business Start-ups (DABS) programme has assisted 71 pre-start entrepreneurs and 48 newly registered businesses during the quarter and three companies have been awarded a £5,000 jobs grant from the programme to take on a new member of staff.

## **Helping all people into rewarding work**

- 21 COVID-19 restrictions continue to impact delivery of our employability programmes. Face to face contact with participants has not recommenced and referrals from Job Centres and delivery partners has been varied. However, participants progressing into employment has increased slightly and levels are on par with pre-COVID levels, through our support for people setting up as self-employed, moving into job sectors experiencing high demand or to assist employers to replace furloughed workers who have moved to other jobs.

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<sup>6</sup> established Apr-19, the fund is £8.9 million capital scheme providing grants to small and medium enterprises in County Durham to accelerate their growth, enable them to purchase new equipment, increase their capacity, improve efficiency, or expand into new markets.

- 22 Although a large proportion of our clients have limited digital skills which prevent them from completing online courses, there has been a number of clients completing education or training courses through our delivery partners on the LINKCD employability programme.
- 23 Delivery of the LINKCD programme has been severely hit by the pandemic and this is set to continue until referrals increase and face to face meetings can resume. We have recently applied for additional funding to extend LINKCD project until December 2023 to increase capacity and re-profile the programme outputs. Community led local development (CLLD) projects (north and south) have received additional funding to extend the projects to December 2022, and although both projects are on track progressions into employment are slightly behind schedule. However, the position is expected to improve with easing of lockdown restrictions and extra capacity working on the programme from January 2021.

### **A broader experience for residents and visitors to the county**

- 24 We have been awarded £724,000 of Culture Recovery Fund Grant by Arts Council England, which will support the return of festivals and events that were impacted by the pandemic.
- 25 In preparation for Lumiere 2021, the creative commissioning scheme BRILLIANT was launched in January. Following a record number of applications being received, six winners have been commissioned to create a new piece of light art for the event. This was the first time the competition was opened up to people outside of the north east and received 272 applications, an increase of over 250% on 2019. A fifth of applicants identified as having a disability or being from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups supporting the scheme's mission to broaden the diversity of those working in the medium of light art.
- 26 During the quarter, the decision was taken to postpone the Durham BRASS event which was due to take place from 14 to 18 July. The festival had been planned with COVID safety measures in mind, with a largely outdoor programme and social distancing arrangements, however due to uncertainty regarding national announcements on restrictions and the publication of safety guidance on large scale events, we have decided to postpone the event until 2022.
- 27 The council has secured a £1.2 million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver a five-year programme of countywide activities and temporary exhibitions linked to the county's new History Centre. The funding will also support an innovative digital offer:
- including a new dedicated History Centre website;

- an online platform for people to search the collections, comment on heritage items and share their own stories;
  - and the digitisation and cataloguing of thousands of photographs, objects, maps and other historic documents.
- 28 This will allow people all over the world to connect with the county's historic collections and archives in unique ways. The History Centre is expected to attract up to 70,000 visitors a year, but the engagement programme will extend the centre's reach further still with more than 40% of the activities planned to take place offsite in schools and community venues
- 29 With the lifting of restrictions, we have been able to open a number of our cultural venues which have seen extensive renovation work carried out over the last year:
- Empire Theatre, Consett - £823,000 refurbishment of the auditorium, toilets, and front of house area, as well as a new stage and technical equipment;
  - Gala Theatre, Durham - £600,000 refurbishment, fitted with new flooring and seating in the auditorium, as well as a new-look box office, display screens, signage and furniture;
  - Bishop Auckland Town Hall - opened in May with a touring exhibition, 'Gladiators: A Cemetery of Secrets', following its major refurbishment in 2020. The renovated town hall offers a newly refurbished contemporary gallery space, a brand-new café and menu using high-quality, locally sourced produce and a fully digitised cinema.
  - Durham Town Hall - partially re-opened to visitors to enable the ongoing structural repair and restoration programme.
- 30 Killhope Museum re-opened to visitors in May with a planned programme of outdoor events and guided tours, alongside the exhibitions, play park, gift shop and new café. The waterwheel and jigger house however remain closed following delays in essential maintenance due to the pandemic. Binchester Roman Fort re-opened on 1 July, although there will be no organised events this year, visitors are once again able to see the two restored Roman baths and one of the most well preserved Roman heating systems in the country.
- 31 On 19 July, we submitted an expression of interest for UK City of Culture status for 2025 on behalf of Culture Durham, a partnership including Beamish Museum, Durham Cathedral and Durham University.
- 32 Durham hopes to secure the title for both the city and the county, following the announcement that, for the first time, groups of towns are able to work together to submit joint bids. Schemes will include the opening of a new dedicated history centre, a programme of events around the display of the Lindisfarne Gospels in the north east and a celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025 of the first

passenger railway. Following the deadline for bids, a panel will draw up a shortlist of six locations, with successful applicants being announced in September; they will then have until January 2022 to submit their full bids with the winner revealed in May 2022.

## **Young people will have access to good education, training and employment**

- 33 There have been three Section 8 inspections by Ofsted to Durham schools during the quarter one reporting period. These are monitoring visits to confirm that schools remain good or outstanding and that safeguarding is effective. Whilst Ofsted were not grading these visits, all schools received the judgement that 'leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances'. The focus for further action for these schools is continued well-being support for children and young people as they returned to school.
- 34 The role of local authorities in dealing with safeguarding complaints regarding schools has changed in recent years. Complainants should follow the school's published complaints policy. Once a complainant has exhausted the school's procedure then the matter may be escalated to Ofsted, who request the local authority to investigate. There have been 11 qualifying safeguarding complaints made to Ofsted relating to Durham schools during quarter one. This compares to two in the same period last year, and eight during quarter one in 2019. The increase from last year is quite significant and could be a result of the impact of the pandemic, given most children and young people were accessing virtual learning rather than attending schools during quarter one 2020 and therefore their social interaction with staff and peers was somewhat limited.
- 35 At the commencement of the summer term, 93.6% of pupils were in attendance at state-funded schools in County Durham. Rates were the same nationally. There were 94.6% in primary, 90% in secondary and 90.1% in special schools. For vulnerable groups, these rates were 87.6% for those children with a social worker, compared to 85.1% nationally and 90.2% for pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) compared to 88.8% nationally.
- 36 Attendance rates decreased locally and nationally as the quarter progressed around the same time as there were increases in infection rates associated with the new COVID-19 variant and consequently school bubble closures.
- 37 During quarter one, local elective home education (EHE) numbers were subject to ongoing fluctuation. During the 2020/21 academic year despite the increases in numbers of EHE nationally and locally, 163 pupils were supported to return to school and year 11 pupils became non-compulsory school age as of 25 June which has resulted in a local overall decrease in local EHE figures. Overall numbers continued to remain low at any point in the quarter fluctuating between

0.6% and 0.7% of the school age population. Staff support families to return to school where this was the preferred choice of families and a multi-agency EHE panel continues to support EHE children and young people via meetings, safe and well calls and other checks.

- 38 During the summer term, 663 personal education plan (PEP) meetings have taken place with current reports being quality assured by the virtual school team to ensure children looked after are receiving high quality education and their bespoke needs are being met.
- 39 Our behaviour and inclusion panels continue to address high rates of exclusion through early identification and a proactive approach to pupil support. Throughout quarter one, 20 pupils at risk of exclusion were supported by the primary panel (none were permanently excluded) and the secondary panel supported 256 pupils (there were 29 permanently excluded pupils). No pupils from special schools were permanently excluded. 29 reports have been produced relating to permanent exclusions, the reports are shared with governing bodies and parents as part of the exclusion procedures.
- 40 Thirty-one secondary managed moves have been arranged to support students at risk of permanent exclusions and one primary managed move. There have been 364 primary in-year transfers with 233 Durham to Durham schools, 121 out of county to Durham schools and 10 EHE returning to school. There were 123 secondary in-year transfers, 26 in total with 53 Durham to Durham schools, 60 out of county to Durham schools, one Independent Durham Schools to Durham and nine EHE returning to school.
- 41 In terms of secondary best advice transfer meetings there were 14 held in total (one out of county to Durham, 13 Durham to Durham schools). Ten students transferred following the meeting with four remaining at their home school. A total of 512 year six students identified as requiring enhanced transition support have been shared with transition leads for every secondary school in County Durham.
- 42 The early years panel considered 98 requests for early years SEND support, an increase of 40 (145%) on the previous year and 28 requests to initiate statutory assessment with 21 (75%) agreed in comparison to 53 with 24 (45%) agreed in the previous year. In addition, the team provided information to 85 infant and primary schools to support transition and enable pre-emptive funding requests where appropriate.
- 43 Across County Durham, the proportion of young people (aged 16-24) Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) is 5.8%, which equates to 621 young people from a cohort of 10,691. This represents a period where young people are completing academic programmes and moving to a summer transitional period, as they secure places in learning (and await their start) for the forthcoming

academic year. [DurhamWorks](#) is identifying young people for support and moving them to a NEET destination in order to be able to register them on the programme. This is to allow us to offer support at the earliest possible opportunity but can result in an increase of NEET and lower participation rates at an earlier point in the year. The whereabouts of 2% of the national cohort is not known compared to 0.6% across County Durham and 0.7% in the North East.

- 44 Whilst some face to face contact with young people has returned in County Durham, the intensive face to face re-engagement programmes offered prior to COVID have been unavailable to our NEET young people during Apr to June. This has therefore directly increased the number, and proportion, currently identified as NEET. We have seen this impact particularly on our priority groups and most vulnerable who require this type of supportive post-16 provision
- 45 Across County Durham, 5.5% of young people aged 16-17 are undertaking an apprenticeship, significantly higher than the 4.1% national average. However, the overall proportion in apprenticeships has reduced due to COVID-19 with more of those aged 16-17 year continuing in full time education or training as opposed to employment.

## **Long and Independent Lives**

- 46 The ambition of Long and Independent Lives is linked to the following key objectives:
- (a) Children and young people will enjoy the best start in life, good health and emotional well-being;
  - (b) Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will achieve the best possible outcomes;
  - (c) County Durham will have a physical environment that will contribute to good health;
  - (d) We will promote positive behaviours;
  - (e) Health and social care services will be better integrated;
  - (f) People will be supported to live independently for as long as possible by delivering more homes to meet the needs of older and disabled people;
  - (g) We will tackle the stigma and discrimination of poor mental health and build resilient communities.

# LONG AND INDEPENDENT LIVES

age 78

## Think Family

**5,462 families turned around**  
(2015 - Jun 21)

following intervention...

**2,166** workless families progressed to work

**2,585** families reported reduced mental health issues

**983** families reported reduced substance misuse

**4,748** families achieved significant & sustained outcomes  
(2015 - Jun 21)

## Healthy Start Vouchers

(Jun 2021)

Co. Durham

North East

England

**% take up**

65%

66%

58%

## Adult Social Care

**175.0**

per 100,000 adults aged 65+ admitted to residential or nursing care  
(Apr-mid Jun 2021)

**87%**

of patients discharged into reablement/ rehabilitation services still at home after 91 days  
(Apr-mid Jun 2021)

**87%**

of service users receiving an assessment or review within the last 12 months  
(2020/21)

**95%**

of individuals achieved their desired outcomes from the adult safeguarding process  
(Apr-mid Jun 2021)

## % EHCP completed within 20 week time period



worse than last year

better than last year

similar to last year

Not comparable

## National, Regional and Local Picture

- 47 A briefing summarising the [impact of COVID-19 on young people](#)<sup>7</sup> concludes that young people have been less affected than other age groups by COVID-19 itself, but have been disproportionately impacted by the social, educational and economic impacts of the pandemic.
- 48 It also highlights that young people already facing challenges in their lives (such as living in poverty, living with a disability or in challenging family situations) seem likely to have been hardest hit. There is particular concern about the ‘slow burn’ impacts of educational and employment constraints, and the role the pandemic is playing in widening health inequalities.
- 49 An article on the [impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of young people](#)<sup>8</sup> suggests that increasing numbers of young people were prescribed anti-depressants during the pandemic, while facing ever longer waits for psychological support. The article states that NHS data, analysed by the Royal College of Psychiatrists (published in April 2021), show that 80,226 more children and young people were referred to mental health services between April and December 2020, an increase of 28% on 2019.
- 50 In addition, the analysis revealed that the number of children and young people needing urgent or emergency crisis care had increased by 18%, compared with 2019.
- 51 The article also highlighted that in the five years ending April 2020, there was a 26% increase in the number of 0-17 year olds in England who were prescribed anti-depressants. The trend appeared to accelerate further during the pandemic, particularly during the national lockdown periods.
- 52 During quarter one, permanent admissions to residential and nursing care are almost twice the number seen in the same period last year. However, it should be noted that that admissions 12 months ago were significantly lower due to the pandemic. The latest data for permanent admissions are only slightly less than two years ago (pre-COVID), suggesting that public confidence in care homes is returning.
- 53 Latest data for the percentage of older people remaining at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement services are the highest (86.7%) for almost two years and significantly higher than the figure from the same period last year (82.6%). This percentage has continued to rise during the pandemic.

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<sup>7</sup> written by Ann Hagell and published by Association for Young People’s Health in February 2021

<sup>8</sup> published by The Pharmaceutical Journal in June 2021

- 54 Recently published data from the Active Lives survey (November 2019 to November 2020) clearly reflect the impact of the pandemic on people's ability to take part in sport and physical activity. In line with the national trend, reported levels of 'inactivity' increased over that period, which unfortunately has an impact on the gradual gains made over the last five years. With regard to 'active' participation (150+ minutes a week), we remain relatively static (at 60.6%) compared to the previous 12 months and just below the national average (61.4%).

## **Council Services**

- 55 The breastfeeding action plan has been reviewed, with a refreshed multi-agency action plan being developed, linking into the regional work being undertaken by the Local Maternity System (LMS). Key actions in the plan include:
- developing a suite of videos which can be shared via social media to raise awareness of the support available for those choosing to breastfeed;
  - exploring the potential to develop a targeted mass marketing campaign focused on changing societal attitudes and beliefs to breastfeeding, which is jointly funded by key partners;
  - developing a joint communication plan with key partners to deliver significant messages via social media platforms in line with the agreed 'call to action';
  - reviewing the scope of the Infant Feeding Team, taking into account national and regional best practice as part of standard commissioning processes;
  - working with the Pioneering Care Partnership to make the Breastfeeding Friendly County Durham accreditation scheme part of the silver level Better Health at Work Award;
  - conducting focus groups in targeted areas of the county to obtain insights from mothers and families on barriers and experiences of feeding choices in County Durham;
  - a deep dive by Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust to explore the specific details behind feeding decisions - the outcome will be used to identify barriers and opportunities, to improve service delivery.
- 56 The council continues to support the Active 30 campaign including help with resource development, communications, and increasing physical activity in schools and communities. By June 2021, 76 schools had pledged to work with the programme.
- 57 As part of the Schools and Education Settings Health and Wellbeing Framework, a quality framework for schools has been co-developed with partners from children services and schools to provide a clear understanding of the health and well-being needs of children and young people in County Durham. The quality

framework for schools is aligned to the early years and settings framework, with local branding developed. A peer review tool will provide evidence for improved outcomes and measures of success. A soft launch took place in March and a full launch will take place in summer 2021.

- 58 To support the national Holiday Activities with Healthy Food programme, a new County Durham [website](#) (created to promote physical activity within our local communities) has been updated for the summer holidays. This aims to ensure that physical activity quality standards are embedded, with a planned timetable of resources to support activities.
- 59 In our Early Help service, development work is underway with partners to look at how we capture the volume of assistance provided. A new signs of safety assessment is being developed for partners to use and submit centrally. A further piece of work will follow to look at the quality of early help with a view to establishing a shared quality assurance framework.
- 60 Our early help provision, such as the Young Adult Support Café (YASC), continues to operate online alongside existing online support (such as Rollercoaster and Kooth). Thirty six YASC sessions were delivered during quarter four with 20 young people attending in total.
- 61 This quarter saw the return of face to face YASC sessions. The east project launched face to face at The Art Café in east Durham Trust on a Wednesday evening. Young people have attended the project supported by a One Point family worker. Due to an increase in positive COVID cases and staff having to isolate, the south project delayed returning to Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP) in Newton Aycliffe until June however as a result two new young people have started to access the project. As part of the transition to face to face the south group met for a socially distanced walk. The south group continues to meet weekly face to face on a Monday. The north group at Waddington Street is currently scheduled to return face to face during the next quarter, with a provisional date set for 7 September.
- 62 Now that face to face sessions are returning the promotion of YASC offer has continued to be a priority to ensure young people that could benefit from informal peer support are aware of the service. Efforts have been made to re-engage with young people that were not comfortable meeting virtually during the pandemic.
- 63 Investing in Children continues to provide opportunities to meet young people one to one either virtually or socially distanced to support them to access the projects.
- 64 Young people accessing YASC have been continuing to work with Investing in Children and Rollercoaster family support to engage in the United Voice agenda, supporting discussions in relation to service development for both the prevention

admissions work and the Emily's Gifts projects. A young person and a parent/carer attended the launch of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership to present the priorities of United Voice in relation to involving young people and families in meaningful engagement and true co-production of services.

65 One young person from YASC co-chaired the relaunch of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Network as part of the activities for Mental Health Awareness Week.

66 In the lead up to Mental Health Awareness Week young people worked on creating a series of social media campaigns to encourage conversations about mental health linked to the Five Ways to Well-being. These campaigns were shared via Investing in Children and Stamp It Out social media as well and circulated through local networks including the emotional well-being locality forums.

67 Throughout the summer young people will be able to access training opportunities:

- ASDAN accredited peer mentoring training which is a full day session (two dates to choose from);
- A three hour virtual session on Zoom (two dates to choose from) for any individual with mental health lived experience supporting people challenge mental health stigma and discrimination.

68 Feedback from the Children and Young People's Transformation Partnership (LTP) identified difficulties for professionals, adults and families when navigating the support services available in County Durham to support mental health and emotional well-being.

69 Following this feedback, the council has developed guides for adults and children and young people known as 'rainbow resources'. The interactive guides promote and signpost the services available across County Durham to support mental health and emotional well-being.

70 The rainbow guides were widely promoted and cascaded to internal and external partners and were positively received. Feedback from partners and service users was excellent. Several iterations of these resources have been produced and utilised to support the COVID-19 response and recovery agenda.

71 Funding was secured in early 2020 to introduce a public health practitioner to develop a project in the Children and Young People's service to improve the response to the emotional well-being and mental health of our children and young people. The project was based around a number of thematic areas:

- joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) self-assessment;
- implementing the Thrive model (re-writing practice toolkits and resources);
- upskilling and training children's social care staff (training offer).

72 Working with the Jigsaw Project, additional training has been undertaken to enhance the bereavement offer, with online materials developed and shared on our website and with partners to aid parents and carers to support children and young people who have experienced loss during the pandemic.

73 County Durham is currently within the top 5% of local authorities for take-up of the Healthy Start voucher, with 65% of those eligible, claiming the voucher. Through the Healthy Weight Alliance, a Healthy Start Task and Finish Group has been set up to promote and raise awareness with families and partners. This aims to increase the uptake of families accessing the Healthy Start vouchers and to increase the uptake of fruit and vegetables. In addition to previous work of the group (for example, delivery of bitesize training sessions to over 500 staff), as part of the communications plan currently County Durham specific resources being developed in line with the national Healthy Start campaign.

### **Fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation within the county**

74 As expected due to the protections offered while Universal Credit is being rolled out, latest data show an increase in pupils eligible for free school meals. More than 27% of County Durham pupils are known to be eligible (January 2021), similar to the North East levels, but higher than national. Around 15,500 of the 20,000 eligible pupils are claiming them, meaning almost 5,000 children are eligible for but not claiming them.

### **Promoting positive behaviours**

75 Tobacco control continues to be a priority for action, with links to poverty, second-hand smoke / smoke free housing, mental health and tobacco dependency in pregnancy proposed as priorities during 2021/22.

76 The most recent quarterly data (2019) highlight a continuing trend of reduction in teenage conceptions, with County Durham (18.7) below the North East average (19.3) but still greater than England (14.1). Over the last twelve months, work to reduce under-18 conceptions has included the following innovative practice:

- online access to C Card<sup>9</sup>;
- increased access to online testing / sexual health advice and guidance;
- delivery of sexual health / C Card packs to young people who are at risk;

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<sup>9</sup> The C Card scheme is aimed at young people between 13-24 years old who can register to get a range of free condoms, femidoms, lube, dams, information and advice. The aim of the service is to promote reproductive and sexual health and help young people to access local services.

- remote delivery to young people (and parents) of programmes which support them in remaining sexually healthy.

77 The COVID Awareness Team supported staff from the Cabinet Office at a roadshow at the Arnison Centre to pass out key messages and speak to local people about testing, vaccinations and general COVID-19 information. The Awareness Team are also supporting the COVID vaccine bus around the county.

### **Better integration of health and social care services**

78 The new 'County Durham Care Partnership Executive' arrangements to further integrate health and social care services came into place in April 2021. This will stand County Durham in good stead for the proposals outlined in the Health and Social Care white paper relating to integrated care systems coming into force. The County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group will cease to exist on 1 April 2022. Health and Well-being Boards will continue to have a leadership role at the place-based level in these new arrangements to represent the views/plans of County Durham.

79 During the pandemic, data for the indicator outlining the percentage of service users receiving an assessment or review in the previous 12 months increased, which demonstrates that frontline social care teams were able to improve the timeliness of care package reviews for clients. However, latest data, is similar to that saw pre-COVID.

### **Physical environment that will contribute to good health**

80 Discussions with key stakeholders are ongoing regarding Play Streets.<sup>10</sup> Public Health presented the initiative to the Community Action Team (CAT) working in South Moor for a 12 week period, to consider piloting it in this area, as partners and the community are already engaged. As a result, community meetings will take place on 23 and 27 August, with support from CAT partners.

81 A draft strategic framework and strategy has been developed for the Physical Activity Strategy Committee (PASC). The committee has agreed to the formation of a task and finish group to engage key stakeholders, map the local system, assets and gaps in provision, establish priority areas of intervention and agree areas for collaboration, to develop a whole systems action plan to increase levels of physical activity across the life course in County Durham. The updated Physical Activity Strategic Framework will be published in September 2021.

82 In March 2021, the government announced funding to help people living with excess weight and obesity to lose weight and maintain healthier lifestyles.

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<sup>10</sup> a scheme which enables streets to be closed to through traffic for 2-3 hours, creating a safe space for children and families to play.

Durham County Council received £545,000 to be spent during 2021/22, for the commissioning of tier 2 weight management services, which are multi-component programmes addressing dietary intake, physical activity, and behaviour change. Following focused discussion with key public health stakeholders and partners, it was agreed to target a very specific population group linked to perioperative care<sup>11</sup> and 'The Well-Being for the Time Being programme'. Discussions are ongoing with a potential provider, for the service to start in September 2021.

- 83 The Self Harm Task and Finish group has worked with key stakeholders to identify current provision in relation to self-harm and to identify barriers in the identification and support offered to children and young people and families across the mental health system. A number of workshops were conducted, which found gaps in relation to professionals' confidence and an understanding of the scale of the issue in County Durham. In response, the Practitioners Toolkit was updated to reflect current guidance, the guidance for schools was updated and rolled out, and training was conducted via the Emotional Well-being Locality Forums to increase practitioner confidence.
- 84 Throughout the pandemic, due to people spending more time in their homes, we have been collecting increased tonnages of waste. During 2020/21 243,493 tonnes of waste was collected from households an increase of 5.3% on the previous year or just over 12,000 tonnes.
- 85 Contamination of kerbside recycling bins remains high. Data for 2020/21 shows a 6.5pp increase on the three-year average. Tonnages of glass sent for recycling continues to surpass the three-year average with the latest data for January to March 2021 showing a 27% increase and for 2020/21 a 32% increase.
- 86 For 2020/21 the HWRC's landfill diversion rate was 78% against the three-year average of 89%. However, improvements to the diversion rate can be seen in the most recent data for January to March 2021 which is 83%, the three-year average for the period is 88%.
- 87 The Small Electrical Recycling Project has been launched providing free drop-off points for small electrical and battery-operated items, there are currently 29 collection points across the County.

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<sup>11</sup> Perioperative care, also referred to as perioperative medicine, is the practice of patient-centered, multidisciplinary and integrated medical care of patients from the moment of contemplation of surgery until full recovery.

## **Tackling the stigma of poor mental health and building resilient communities**

- 88 The council, in conjunction with the County Durham Time to Change Hub, promoted Mental Health Awareness Week during May 2021. The theme was 'Nature', which provided an opportunity to promote the mental health and well-being benefits of being out and about, taking advantage of various locations across the county. The campaign centred around the 'Five Ways to Well-being' and focused on a separate topic each day.

## **Connected Communities**

- 89 The ambition of Connected Communities is linked to the following key objectives:
- (a) All children and young people will have a safe childhood;
  - (b) Standards will be maintained or improved across County Durham's housing stock;
  - (c) Our towns and villages will be vibrant, well-used, clean, attractive and safe;
  - (d) People will have good access to workplaces, services, retail and leisure opportunities;
  - (e) Communities will come together and support each other;
  - (f) Delivery of new high-quality housing which is accessible and meets the needs of our residents.

## **National, Regional and Local Picture**

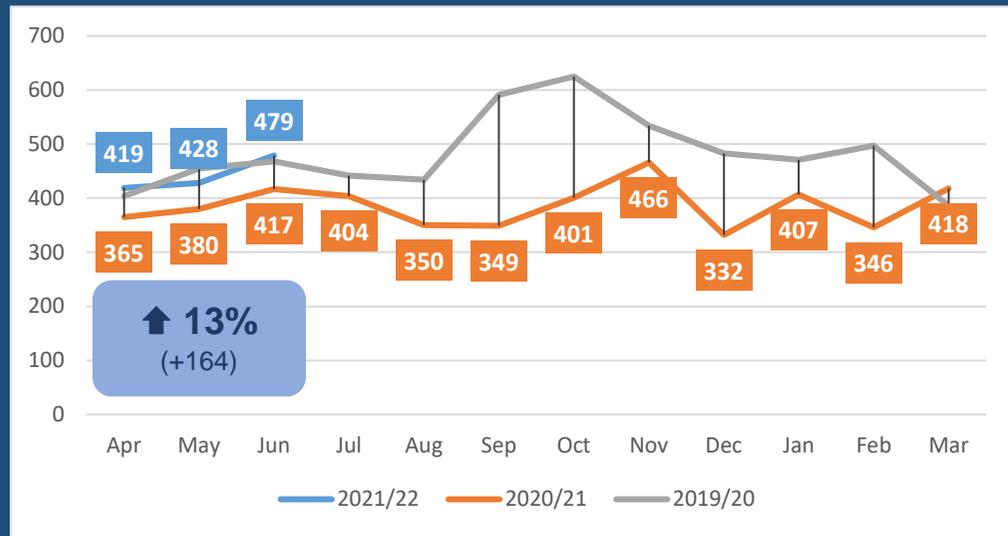
- 90 Parliament has debated a petition calling for more water safety content as part of the curriculum and swimming lessons. The petition calls on the government to "review and enhance curriculum content on water safety, so schools are required to ensure that all children know about and know how to deal with issues such as cold water shock and rip currents". Through representation on the Local Government Association (LGA) the council has previously pushed for water safety to be taught in schools and also led the Safe Durham Partnership's Dying to be Cool<sup>12</sup> campaign.

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<sup>12</sup> Which/ aim to raise more awareness in 10-16 year olds of cold water shock and the risks of going into water without acclimatising first.

# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

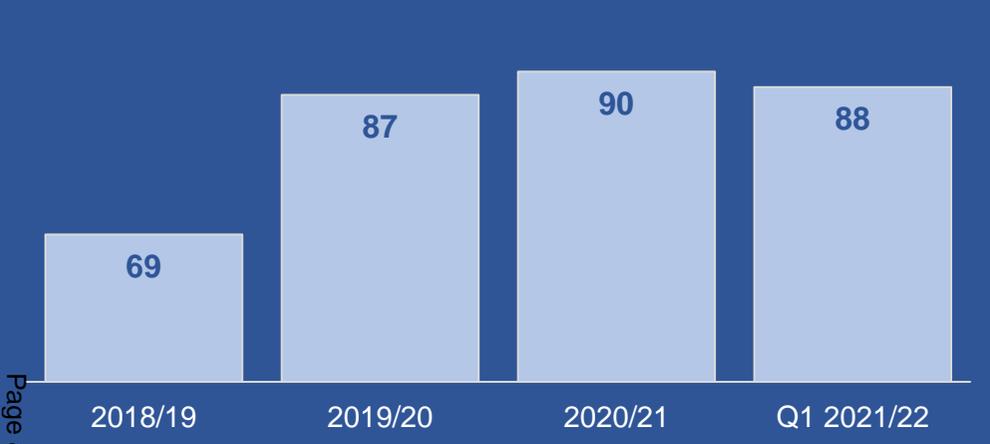
## Referrals



## No. of open cases



## % ICPC held within 15 days of S.47 investigation commencing



## No. of children subject to a child protection plan



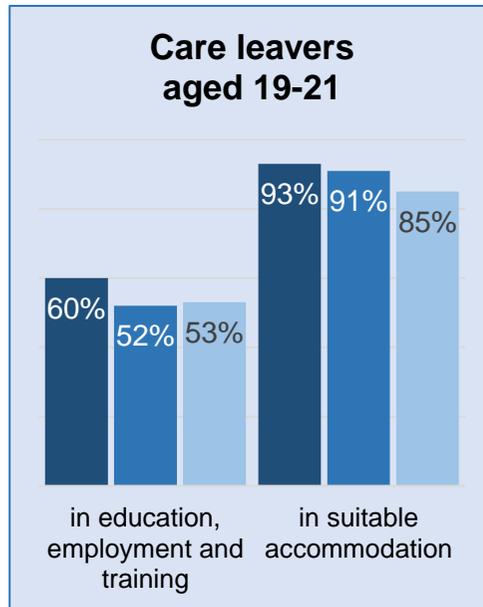
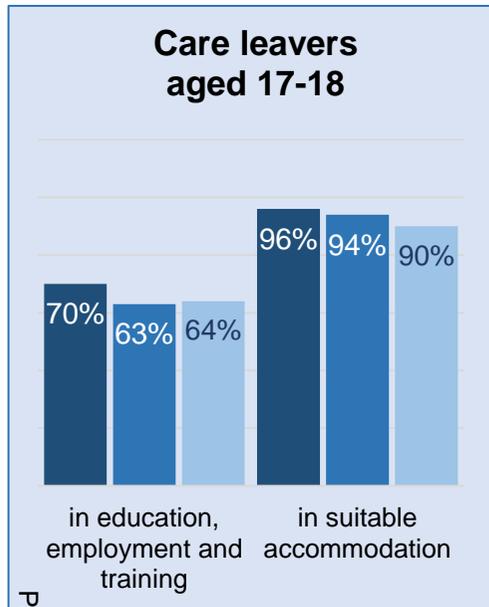
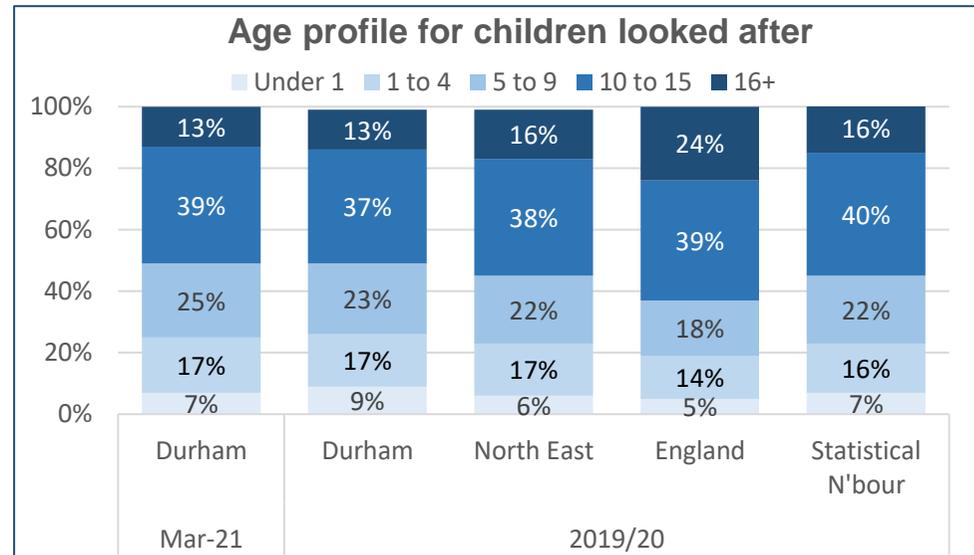
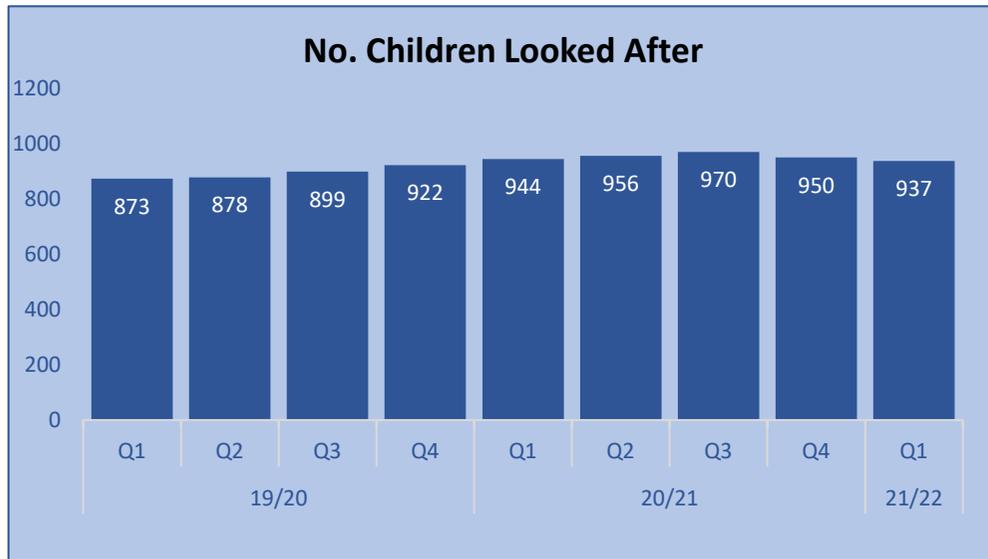
- 91 Throughout 2020/21, there was a 6% decrease in recorded crime compared to the previous year, equating to more than 2,700 fewer crimes. Although, reductions were across most crime categories, the decrease was more noticeable across theft-related offences, including vehicle crime, which has reduced by more than 10%.
- 92 During the 12 months ending June 2021, reported fly-tipping incidents increased by 10%. However, incidents are now starting to return to pre-COVID levels, during quarter one, the number of incidents was 24% less than the same period last year.

## **Council Services**

### **All children and young people will enjoy a safe childhood**

- 93 Ofsted has recently concluded a short focused visit of children's social care in Durham County Council. We await formal feedback from this visit, however initial feedback from the inspectors was positive in many areas and we received excellent feedback on our social workers and how well they know their children. Inspectors focused on:
- quality of matching, placement and decision-making for children in care;
  - the experiences and progress of disabled children in care;
  - the experiences and progress of children living in unregulated and/or unregistered provision;
  - child sexual/criminal exploitation;
  - missing from home, care or education;
  - risks associated with gangs, radicalisation, trafficking and modern slavery.
- 94 Numbers of children's social care referrals returned to pre-COVID levels during quarter one, a 13% increase on the same period during 2020. This increase, alongside COVID and complexity of cases has led to an increase in children and young people who are open to statutory social care teams.
- 95 This has impacted on the caseloads of social workers and some social workers have higher caseloads than we would want. Senior Managers are aiming to address this with service redesign and continued close work with colleagues in early help. The Council continues to support children's social care to recruit staff over-establishment.

# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES



### Where our children in care live

In-house foster care	43%	Independent living (incl. supported lodgings)	3%
Independent fostering agency	17%	Placed for adoption	4%
Friends and family	13%	In-house residential (incl. children's homes)	3%
Placed with parents	9%	NHS/ Health Trust	<0.5%
External residential (incl. children's homes and res school)	6%	Secure (incl. YOI and prison)	<0.5%

- 96 Statutory referrals related to domestic abuse (parent/carer) was at a rate of one in five in the 12 months to May 2021, this increased to one in four during June 2021. Several factors are likely to have impacted this increase including easing of COVID restriction/s and re-opening of pubs and bars leading to an increase in the use of alcohol; as well as the start of the UEFA Euro 2020 football tournament.
- 97 The re-referral rate has continued to reduce, 19% (down from 26% last year), and this is now lower than England and North East.
- 98 The timelessness of key areas of work, such as assessments and initial child protection conferences have been maintained or improved. Social workers continue to visit children and their families in line with required timescales.
- 99 High numbers of CLA nationally, and also regionally, have led to placement and budget pressures. Since the first lockdown, our in-house foster care capacity has reduced, primarily due to some foster carers de-registering or taking a break due to the pandemic. New recruitment campaigns are active.
- 100 We are progressing with our Residential Care and Fostering Transformation Programmes, having opened one small children's home this year and planning to reconfigure / develop homes for children and young people with complex needs through to 2023.
- 101 Aycliffe Secure Children's Home has retained its 'outstanding' status following a recent Ofsted inspection in April. Inspectors found that the actions of the home contributed to "significantly improved" outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people, its child-focused staff "go the extra mile", and children are involved in their own care, adding that the young people feel safe at the home. More information can be found [here](#).
- 102 The national 'Supporting Families' programme (formerly 'Troubled Families') and known in County Durham as 'Stronger Families' is on the first year of a possible three year extension. As at January 2021, the national programme has achieved more than 400,000 successful family outcomes and continues to deliver significant and sustained outcomes with families despite the difficult circumstances in 2020 and 2021.
- 103 Across County Durham, since the programme commenced in 2015, we have supported 5,462 vulnerable families in achieving sustained positive outcomes. We exceeded our target of 730 in 2020/21 and are confident we will exceed our 2021/22 target of turning around 761 families having already reached 372 families (49% of target).
- 104 All local authorities are required to make arrangements to identify children missing from education in their area. A protocol involving the council, police and NHS is triggered when children are deleted from school registers. This is to

ensure children moving between areas are tracked in appropriate cases. In quarter one, 116 students were referred. The local authority is therefore aware of the individual circumstances of all cases of CME and is monitoring carefully.

- 105 More than 100 safeguarding leads in schools across County Durham have completed the updated Prevent train the trainer accreditation, and can now provide awareness raising to school staff on how to spot signs of vulnerability to being radicalised and how to report through the appropriate pathways. Two Prevent awareness sessions were held with school governors which will ensure they are aware of their responsibilities in relation to Prevent and to ensure their schools are meeting their safeguarding duties. Training has also been carried out for East Durham Trust, Social Care Direct.
- 106 County Durham has volunteered to take part in MHCLG commissioned research. The previous evaluation of the then 'Troubled Families' Programme provided robust evidence the programme delivers positive impacts for families. This research project will build on these findings and seeks to explore how this positive impact is generated in different local authorities. The project will also explore how services have adapted delivery with COVID-19 restrictions.

### **Our towns and villages will be vibrant, well-used, clean, attractive and safe**

- 107 In June we secured £33.2 million government funding for Bishop Auckland as part of the Stronger Towns Fund. The funding will be allocated to a number of regeneration projects across the town which will help to attract an additional one and half million visitors to the town each year and substantially boost the county's visitor economy by £240 million, creating almost 4,000 jobs.
- 108 It will also attract almost £200 million of private sector investment into the town, including seven new significant all year-round visitor attractions and 225 special events, and a potential £100 million of additional investment.
- 109 A new road connection into Auckland Castle is central to the plans as it will allow a range of new visitor attractions to come forward across the site and provide a catalyst for increased visitor numbers. Investment in new infrastructure will accommodate high visitor numbers without impacting on the town's use and help support job creation and the recruitment of local people into new opportunities.
- 110 The grant is set to provide a further stimulus for development and investment across Bishop Auckland, following a £19.9 million award from the Future High Streets Fund in December to support the town's high street and recovery from the effects of the pandemic. Combined, the investments will help transform Bishop Auckland, creating new opportunities for the retail and hospitality sectors and helping to increase footfall through improved accessibility.

- 111 Free public wi-fi was introduced and went live in Chester-le-Street, Barnard Castle and Seaham town centres in June 2021. Work continues to implement the scheme in Durham City with plans for Crook, Spennymoor and Consett later in the year.
- 112 The scheme has been introduced to encourage people to spend more time in our town centres which will, in turn, boost the local economy. The project will also provide another way for businesses to connect with customers, with new local apps being developed to promote special offers and encourage people to explore the towns. As well as the economic benefits free wi-fi can bring to town centres, the project will provide valuable information through the anonymous footfall data the system collects. This can be used to identify trends and monitor the impact of changes to the high street, which can then be used to shape future regeneration projects.
- 113 Both water safety forums, responsible for managing water safety in the city centre and countywide, met during quarter one 2021/22. The multi-agency groups reviewed risk assessments and planned controls for open water across the county, with a particular focus on Durham City centre.
- 114 The City Safety Group reviewed its action plan and reiterated its commitment to interventions that reduce risks associated with open water. These interventions include proactive assessment of new developments within the city centre and implementing control measures prior to student induction week.
- 115 In advance of the summer holiday period, the countywide Open Water Safety Group reviewed its risk assessments for higher risk locations across the county. The group also started work to increase awareness of the risks linked to open water – with particular focus on the council’s dying to be cool campaign.
- 116 All partners worked together to promote national drowning prevention week (12 to 19 June) and increase community awareness.

### **Communities will come together to support each other**

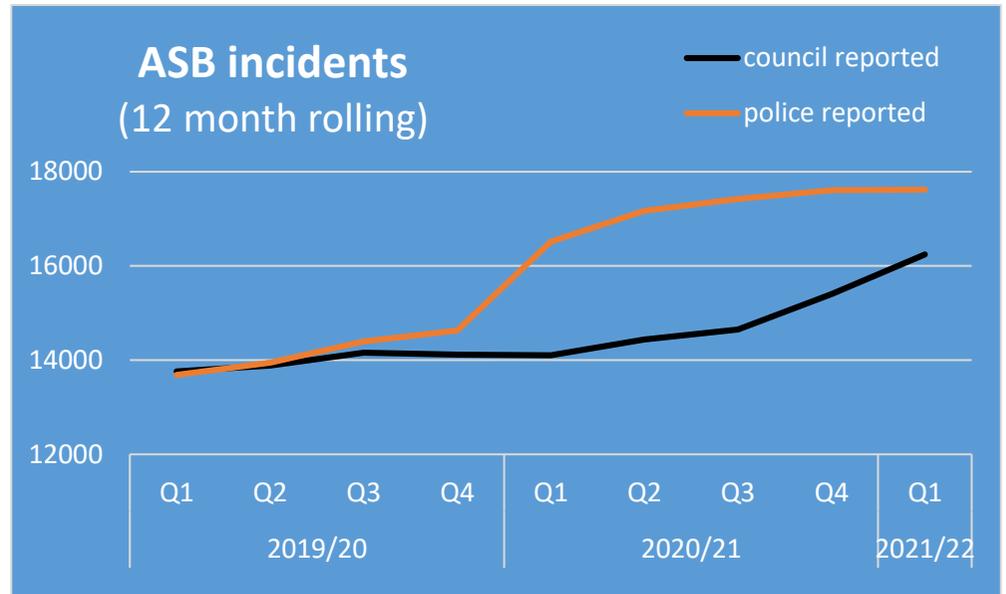
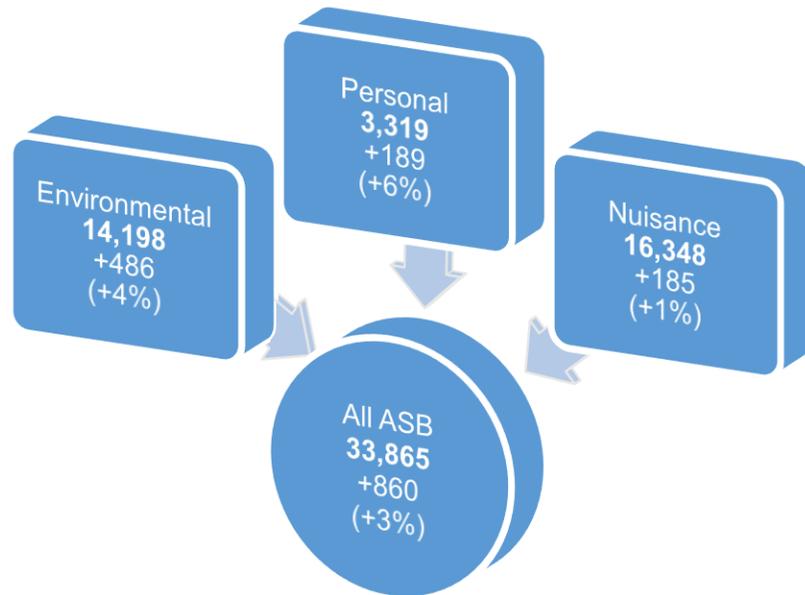
- 117 The issue of nuisance motorcycles and quad bikes was highlighted by the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a particular gap, which has now been included within the anti-social behaviour work area. Actions will include developing a partnership action plan to tackling nuisance motorcycles and quad bikes which will include actions from a range of partners including the Police, Neighbourhood Wardens, Neighbourhood Initiatives team, Highways and Crimestoppers.
- 118 Over the last 12 months there has been an increase of approximately 14% in the number of ASB incidents reported to the council, equating to over 2,000 additional

incidents. Most of this increase has been within nuisance, mainly noise incidents and enviro-crime, mainly litter incidents. Over 1,000 FPNs/Community Protection Notices have been issued by the neighbourhood wardens for environmental offences over the last 12 months.

- 119 Following significant increases during the first half of 2020, police reported alcohol related ASB has significantly fallen to below pre-COVID levels most noticeable between November and December. However, since then, these incidents have increased month on month with quarter one being higher than the last two years.
- 120 Daily multi-agency screening of all domestic abuse incidents continues to be jointly undertaken by children's services, child health and police staff from the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). Sharing information and decision making reduces any delay for children who need to be safeguarded. Over 6,000 incidents have been triaged in the last 12 months.
- 121 Following concerns raised by local residents, a bus-gate has been installed on a section of road near the primary school in Coxhoe aimed at improving road safety. It will be monitored with an approved camera to help enforce the restrictions, there is a £60 fine (discounted to £30 if paid within 14 days) for non-compliance.
- 122 To help deter fly-tipping, during the last quarter, our neighbourhood wardens carried out 636 further investigations, deployed cameras at eight locations with 22 incidents caught on camera, undertook 12 stop and search operations, issued 11 producers, instigated six prosecutions and issued 28 Fixed Penalty Notices.
- 123 Our Find and Fix programme, which focuses on issues raised by residents, communities and elected members, has been running for over six months now and has completed more than 240 tasks across the county. Work has included clearing drainage channels on public walkways, removing graffiti, planting trees, clearing and renovating public art installations, scraping and edging paths and installing new street furniture such as bins and benches.
- 124 Our Community Action Team recently focused on reviewing three previously targeted areas at Crook, Eldon and Ferryhill Station, rubbish accumulations, dog fouling and fly-tipping were the main concerns. Whilst improvements had been made since previous visits more cases were logged for attention. The team will move on to South Moor in July.
- 125 The latest environmental cleanliness surveys, undertaken between April and July 2021, show a slight deterioration against the average for last year in the litter and detritus categories with 5.96% and 12.14%, respectively. However there has been an improvement in the dog fouling results to 0.79%.

# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

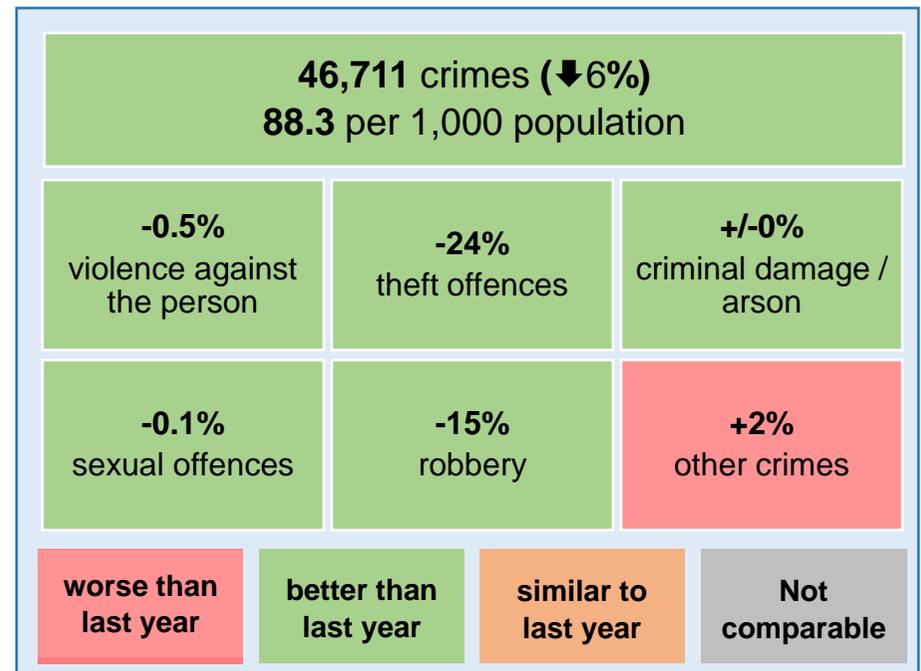
Police and council reported ASB



		12 months ending		Change	
		Jun 20	Jun 21		
Deliberate primary fires <sup>1</sup>	all	455	454	-1	0%
	relating to road vehicles	319 (70%)	272 (60%)	-47	-15%
Deliberate secondary fires <sup>2</sup>	all	2,085	1,836	-249	-12%
	relating to rubbish	1,188 (57%)	1,047 (57%)	-141	-12%

<sup>1</sup> more serious fires that harm people or damage property

<sup>2</sup> generally small outdoors fires



## **Delivery of new high-quality housing which is accessible and meets the needs of our residents**

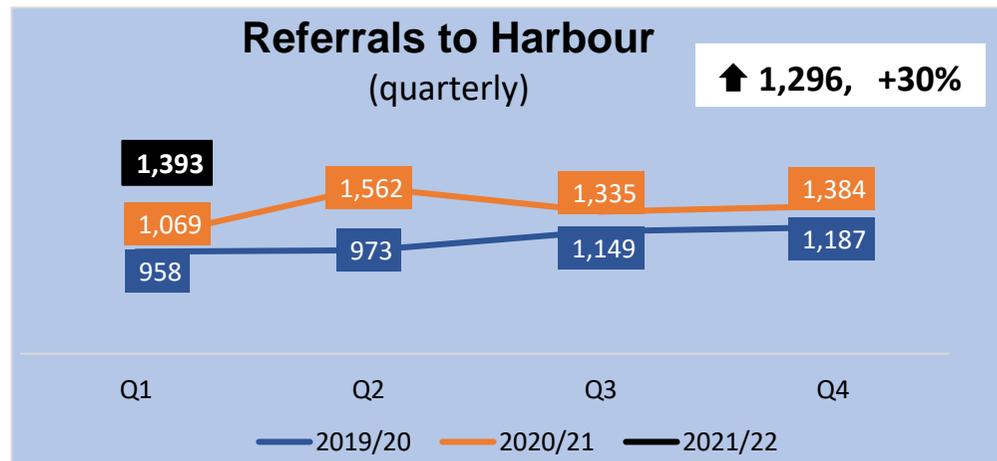
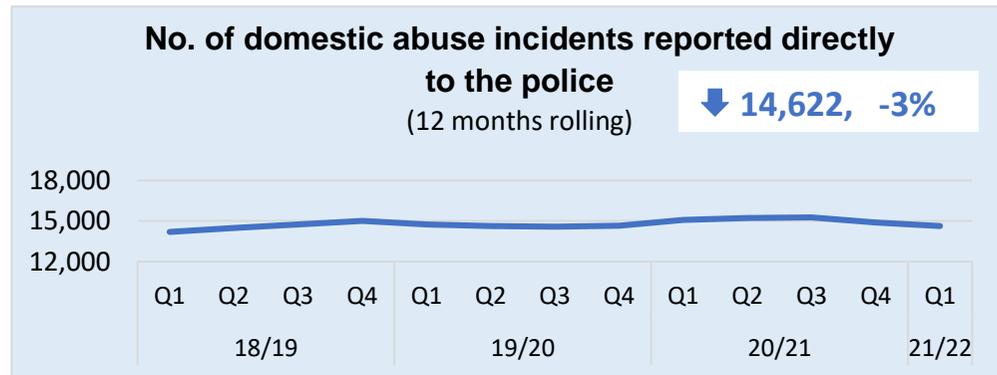
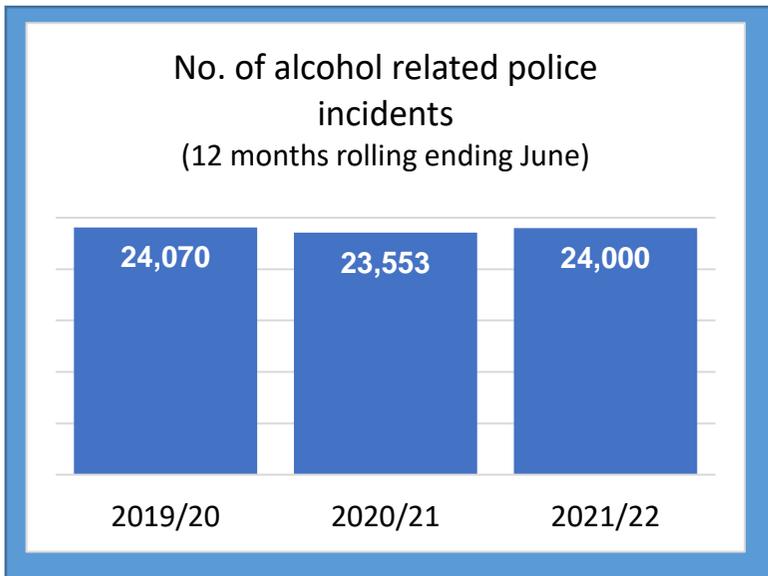
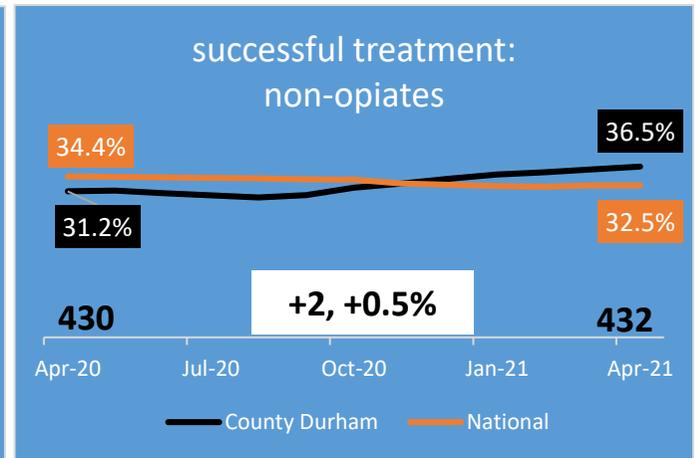
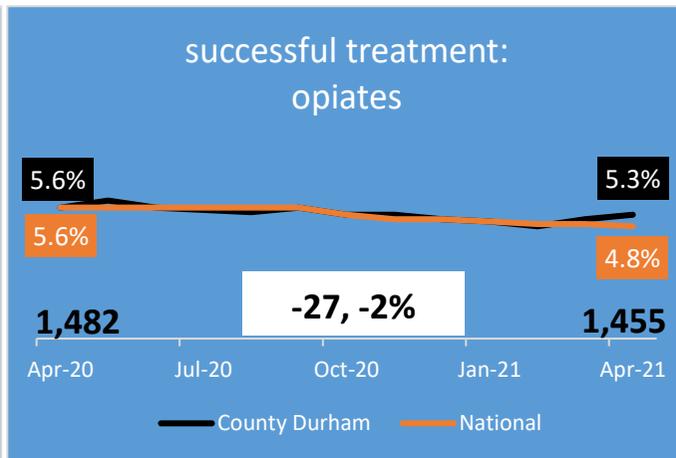
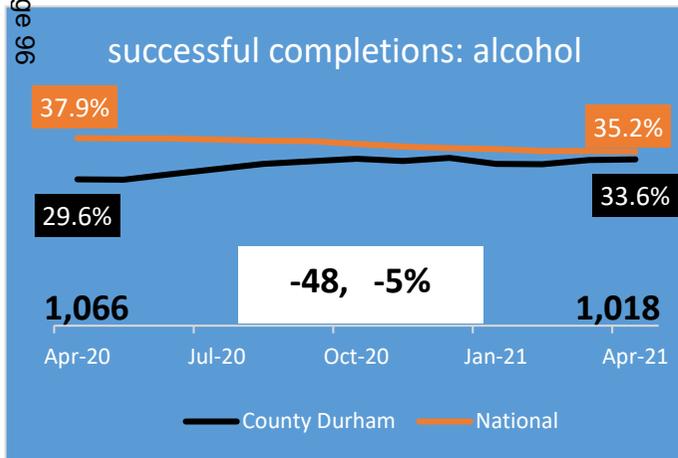
- 126 Although COVID-19 restrictions initially reduced the number of net homes completed, build rates have now returned to pre-COVID levels.
- 127 Work has commenced on the first phase of Targeted Delivery Plans (TDP) as part of our Housing Strategy to improve the county's housing stock and wider residential environmental issues. The first phase will focus on New Kyo; Coundon Grange; Blackhall Colliery South; Thickey; Deneside East; and Stanley Hall West, with the work being undertaken reflecting the issues that are relevant to each area, including addressing long term empty homes. TDPs will be expanded to other communities across the county in future phases of the scheme.
- 128 We have been named local authority of the year at the Northern Housing Awards recognising our work to deliver more housing and investment in local services for communities as part of the County Durham Housing Strategy. Our initiative, Project Beta, which works with high risk offenders for up to six months prior to their release from prison to ensure housing and support is secured also received 'high commended' recognition at the awards.

## **Standards will be maintained or improved across County Durham's housing stock**

- 129 Following a rise in quarter four, less households contacted Housing Solutions this quarter, with key areas of the service such as housing officers, private landlords teams and key workers all seeing a slight drop. However, the number of contacts remain higher than the previous 12 months, with an increase of 275 contacts.
- 130 The eviction ban was lifted on 31 May, landlords now only have to give four months' notice instead of six months. However, this effectively means that clients are still not classed as threatened with homelessness when a notice is served. If a tenant is engaging in significant anti-social behaviour or owes four months' rent or more, the notice period is now four weeks. We continue to work with both landlords and tenants to provide advice and early intervention through the Stop Before You Serve Scheme.
- 131 The number of verified rough sleepers has increased significantly due to the lifting of lockdown restrictions and being asked to leave by family/friends or relationship breakdown. However, the service has seen more local lettings agency properties become available allowing more of our vulnerable clients who are not eligible for Durham Key Options and other social housing tenancies due their complex needs move into temporary accommodation.

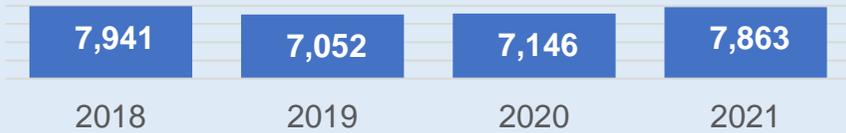
# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

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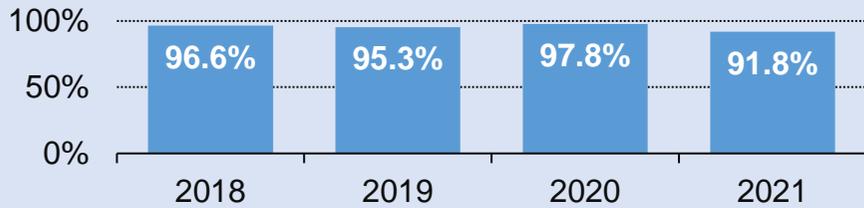


# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

## reported fly-tipping incidents (12 months ending 30 June)



## municipal waste<sup>2</sup> diverted from landfill<sup>4</sup>



## household waste re-used, recycled or composted<sup>4</sup>



## household waste collected from the kerbside which is contaminated<sup>4</sup>



## Road traffic collisions

- Killed
- Seriously injured
- Slightly injured

## All casualties Jul 20-Jun 21 (Jul 19-Jun 20)

16  
(18)

175  
(168)

499  
(565)

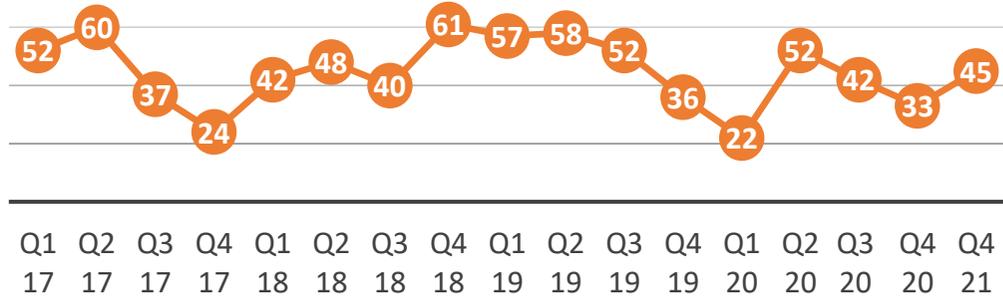
## Children Jul 20-Jun 21 (Jul 19-Jun 20)

1  
(0)

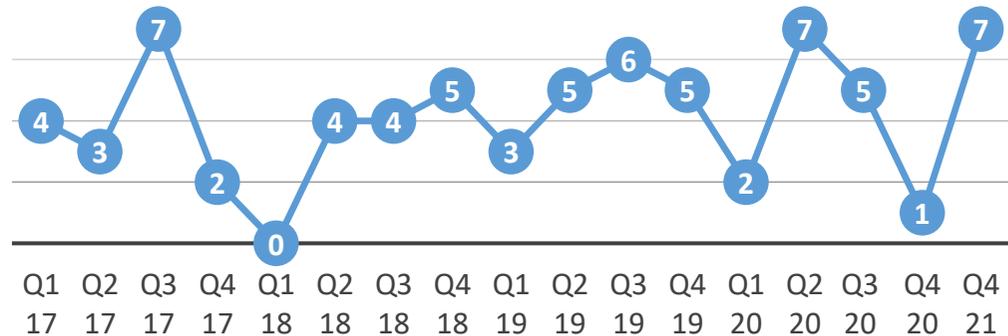
20  
(21)

71  
(42)

## Serious Injuries



## Fatalities



- 132 As part of the Rough Sleepers Initiative 14 funding bid (RSI14), County Durham was awarded £460,000 of the £1.17M bid awarded to the north east region in May 2021. RSI14 runs from July 2021 to March 2022.
- 133 Some of the funding has been used to recruit an additional Tenancy Sustainment Officer and Navigator to assist with the increase in rough sleepers.
- 134 We are also reviewing our rough sleeper action plan alongside MHCLG which will pull together targets for 2021/22. As well as existing and new staffing, RSI14 funds has allowed Somewhere Safe to Stay scheme to be extended from six to nine beds; three beds each are provided at Jigsaw, Shaid and YMCA. The team are focusing on moving those left in temporary accommodation from Everybody In into longer term provision. In addition to this, County Durham Letting Agency received funding to purchase 45 properties in 2021/22 and a further eight properties in 2022/23 to provide accommodation for rough sleepers, both temporary via eight crash pads (for two month stays) and the rest for up to two years. County Durham Letting Agency has applied for funding to lease and repair 20 properties in both 2021/22 and 20 properties in 2022/23.
- 135 Due to the relaxation of government guidelines, we are no longer required to accommodate clients through the Everyone In scheme, which has seen a decrease in the number of new households placed in temporary accommodation during quarter one. However, the average length of time spent in temporary accommodation has increased by six days to twenty nine days due to difficulties in securing settled accommodation in both social and private sectors for households with complex needs, e.g., mental health, convictions.
- 136 It is anticipated that the number of days in temporary accommodation will reduce next quarter as more accommodation becomes available via the North Eastern project (to provide accommodation for single people in priority need as part of Changing Lives initiative) and County Durham Lettings Agency to accommodation those households where additional support needs have been identified to help them move on from temporary accommodation. Proactive work continues across the service to ensure we work with all clients to discharge our homeless duty.
- 137 The number of empty properties brought back into use as a result of local authority intervention has decreased this quarter due to the challenging way the team has had to work. However, the latter part of the quarter saw an increase in the number of properties brought back into use due to the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions and this trend should continue going forward as further restrictions are removed.

**Housing advice and support**

properties improved, adapted or brought back into use

938

up 300%

households accessing Housing Solutions

3,014

up 8%

households helped to move to alternative accommodation

236

up 14%

**411**

households helped to stay in their homes



**26% on last year**

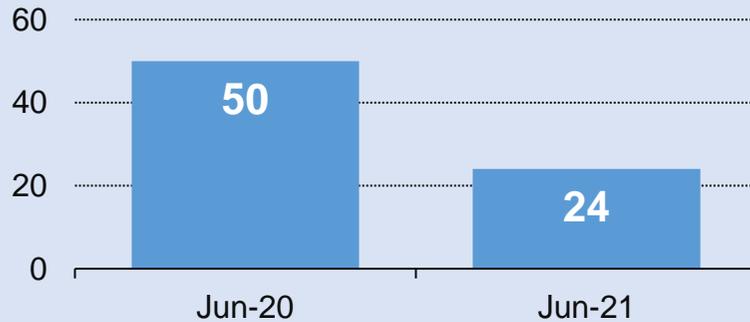
**52**

'new' households placed in temporary accommodation



**39% on last year**

**properties brought back into use as a result of LA intervention**



Impacted by COVID:

- essential visits only
- Staffing levels

average time household spends in temporary accommodation (days)



## **People will have good access to workplaces, services, retail and leisure opportunities**

- 138 Improving connectivity for rural communities, reducing transport times and expanding economic and cultural opportunities are the focus of three schemes, forming the Bishop Auckland constituency submission for a £20 million contribution in the first round of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF). The submission, supported by Cabinet on 16 June, was considered good value for money and the most advance in its readiness. Included in the proposals are schemes to reopen Whorlton Bridge to vehicles and pedestrians, re-routing the A68 to bypass Toft Hill, and further development at the Locomotion site in Shildon including a new walking and cycling route along the old railway line to link Newton Aycliffe, Shildon and Bishop Auckland. The timing of further rounds of LUF has yet to be announced but is expected within the next 12 months. Projects across the county for culture, regeneration and transport will be put forward.
- 139 New Elvet Bridge in Durham City which was fully closed in July last year to allow essential repairs to be carried out to make the bridge structurally sound, will reopen to all traffic and pedestrians at the end of October 2021. Major progress has been made and the central span of the bridge has now been lowered back into position, allowing the project to move into the final phases. The major repairs are critical to the safety of the bridge, which carries an average of 17,000 vehicles a day each year.
- 140 To help support the economic recovery from COVID-19 free parking after 2.00 pm is to continue in all council car parks. The scheme will be reviewed every three months. In line with the Government's roadmap to recovery, the free parking COVID-19 permit scheme for NHS staff, health and social care workers and NHS volunteers (critical care workers) ended on 21 June 2021.

## **An Excellent Council**

- 141 The ambition of an excellent council is structured around the following key objectives:
- (a) Our resources will be managed effectively;
  - (b) We will create a workforce for the future;
  - (c) We will design our services with service users;
  - (d) We will use data and technology more effectively
  - (e) We will actively performance manage our services.

## **Our resources will be managed effectively**

- 142 The council continues to face significant financial pressure resulting from the pandemic. The additional costs incurred and loss of income are presently forecast to be around £21 million this year, offset by COVID-19 related underspends (relating to closure of facilities and disruption to normal service activity as a result of the pandemic) of £7.771 million – a net overspend of £14.522 million, which is presently within the forecast circa £17.2 million the council expects to receive from the government to cover the financial impact of the pandemic.
- 143 Most services have now reopened in line with the government’s roadmap to recovery. However, the redeployment of our Customer Access Point (CAP) staff to support other critical services, and the ongoing impact of self-isolation on service delivery has meant we have needed to delay the re-opening of our CAPs.
- 144 ‘In person’ council meetings were re-introduced in May, more than a year after moving them online, using venues that support social distancing and can be made COVID secure.
- 145 We are moving forward with an £8.1 million project to create a solar farm at our Morrison Busty depot, in Annfield Plain. The solar farm will power the whole depot, including electric vehicle charge points for our fleet. The project is part of a wider refurbishment to improve energy efficiency including new cladding, windows and doors and LED lights. Works have commenced on site and are due for completion in summer 2022.
- 146 An additional 200 electric charging points are to be provided in car parks and on street locations across the county to provide residents with fast charging (22kwh) facilities. We are also testing rapid charging points. All installations are expected to be completed by October 2021.
- 147 Delivery of the Climate Change Emergency Plan continues with a number of projects underway. Works include additional solar PV installations, heating and lighting replacements, and the planning of an additional solar farm and wind turbine.
- 148 We continue to work with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through the Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP). Grant offers this quarter were for installations such as LED lighting and heating systems with an estimated total of 117.6 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e saved this quarter.

## **We will create a workforce for the future**

- 149 During quarter one, steps two and three of the government’s COVID-19 roadmap were achieved. Therefore, although we could lift some restrictions, work-related

control measures in relation to hands, face and space remain in place, and greater emphasis placed on fresh air and ventilation of indoor spaces.

- 150 The delay in achieving step four of the roadmap, primarily due to the emergence of a new delta variant of the virus, means working at home arrangements remain in place.
- 151 Throughout the quarter, we continued to promote support mechanisms available to our staff that would increase emotional resilience and protect mental health – some long-established<sup>13</sup>, others developed in response to COVID-19<sup>14</sup>.
- 152 As a consequence of the restrictions put in place throughout the pandemic (working from home, hand-washing, social distancing) both health and safety incidents and days lost to sickness have remained low.
- 153 With the exception of year-end 2020/21 (which was 0.07 days per FTE lower than the 12 months ending 30 June), our sickness rate is at its lowest level since 2010/11. Reductions in days lost have been noted across nearly all sickness types, most notably stress (both work and non-work related), flu, stomach upsets, chest infections and musculo-skeletal problems.
- 154 We are now planning a gradual and phased return to our workplaces, in line with the government's roadmap. We appreciate that some employees have struggled with home working, whilst others have found it to be a positive experience with reduced travel, greater productivity, and an improved work-life balance. Therefore, we intend to permanently change working arrangements, in line with the principles of our transformation programme, by adopting a hybrid model which will empower our office-based employees to split their working hours between offices and home in the most appropriate manner.
- 155 Although we suspended our Performance Development Review (PDR) process early in the pandemic due to increased pressures on services and changes to our staffing structures (through furlough, redeployment, shielding, illness and self-isolation), we plan to reinstate the process, starting October 2021. In the meantime, managers continue to use existing PDRs as an ongoing support tool, maintaining regular online catch-ups and structured one to one/supervision meetings, reiterating the support mechanisms available and offering flexible working arrangements to any staff who need them.
- 156 During quarter one, we started planning for our employee engagement survey, which is a requirement of the Better Health at Work maintaining excellence

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<sup>13</sup> e.g., [employee well-being guide](#), [Employee Assistance Programme](#), 'mental health awareness for managers' training

<sup>14</sup> Our well-being portal, CMT vlogs, e-learning courses (including building personal resilience; how to be effective, productive and maintain your resilience; managing remote teams; leading and managing dispersed teams; working at home in extraordinary circumstances)

award. The survey would repeat our 2020 survey and provide further insights into employee health and well-being, as well as support an organisational action plan.

- 157 Our apprenticeship programme remains integral to both workforce development, and addressing current and future skills needs. Around 2.5% of our workforce is currently enrolled in the programme<sup>15</sup>, and the £6.8 million<sup>16</sup> invested to date has allowed almost 900 employees to participate.
- 158 We have started our 2021 campaign to recruit to 68 apprentices - successful candidates will start their new jobs in September.
- 159 In addition to our apprenticeship recruitment campaign, we are also recruiting to the 88 job placements<sup>17</sup> identified as part of the government's kickstart scheme for young people (aged 16-24) claiming Universal Credit.

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<sup>15</sup> Made up of 204 apprentices and 185 employees upskilling – as at 31 March 2021.

<sup>16</sup> invested via the apprenticeship levy since May 2017 - £334,000 has expired (i.e., not used within 24 months of entering our digital account) so was transferred to central government to fund apprenticeships for small employers. This equates to 0.5% of the total fund

<sup>17</sup> The placements provide opportunities to build confidence, increase skills in the workplace and gain meaningful work experience – thereby increasing their likelihood of going on to find long-term, sustainable work.

## Training & Development

**1,045** apprenticeships started since 2017

started

completed

in progress

new posts

507

201

306

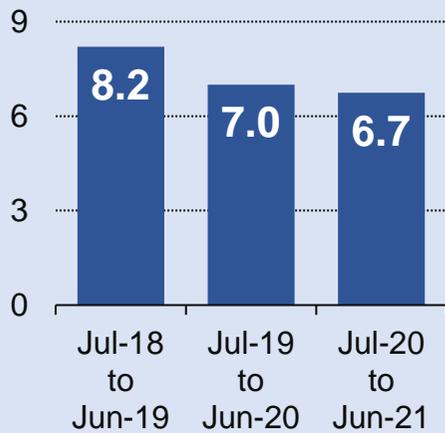
existing staff  
upskilling

537

241

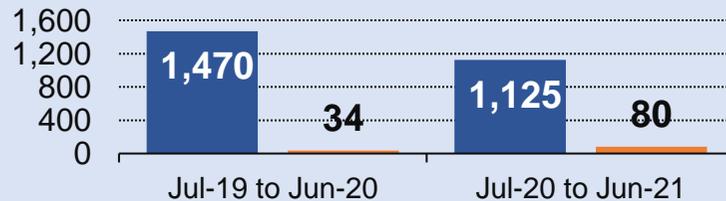
296

### Staff Turnover (excl. school staff)



### work related accidents/incidents

■ all ■ reportable



121 routine  
physiotherapy  
sessions

217  
Mental Health  
First Aiders

94  
Time to Change  
Champions

67  
Health  
advocates

## Health & Wellbeing support

### Paid Absence

63,511 days sick

747 days bereavement leave

433 days compassionate leave

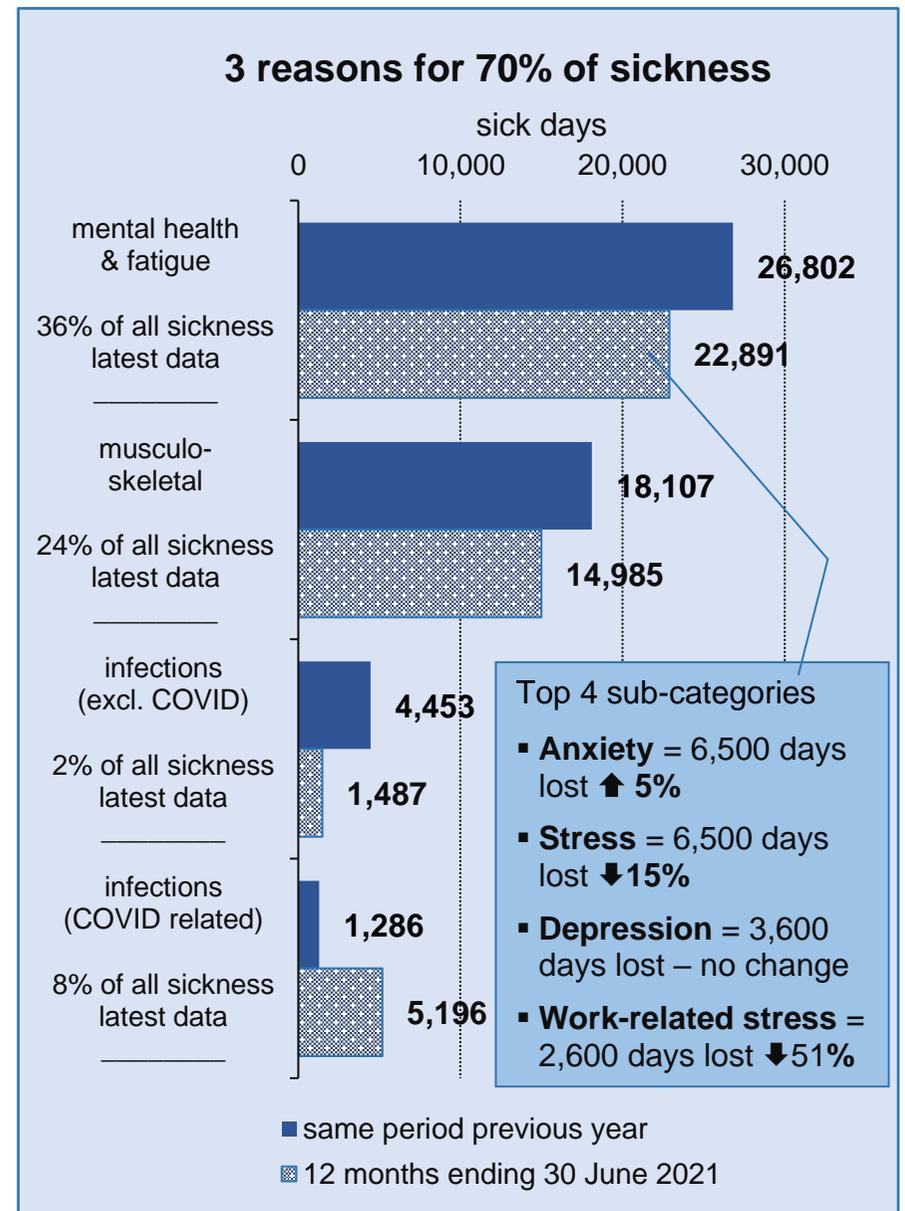
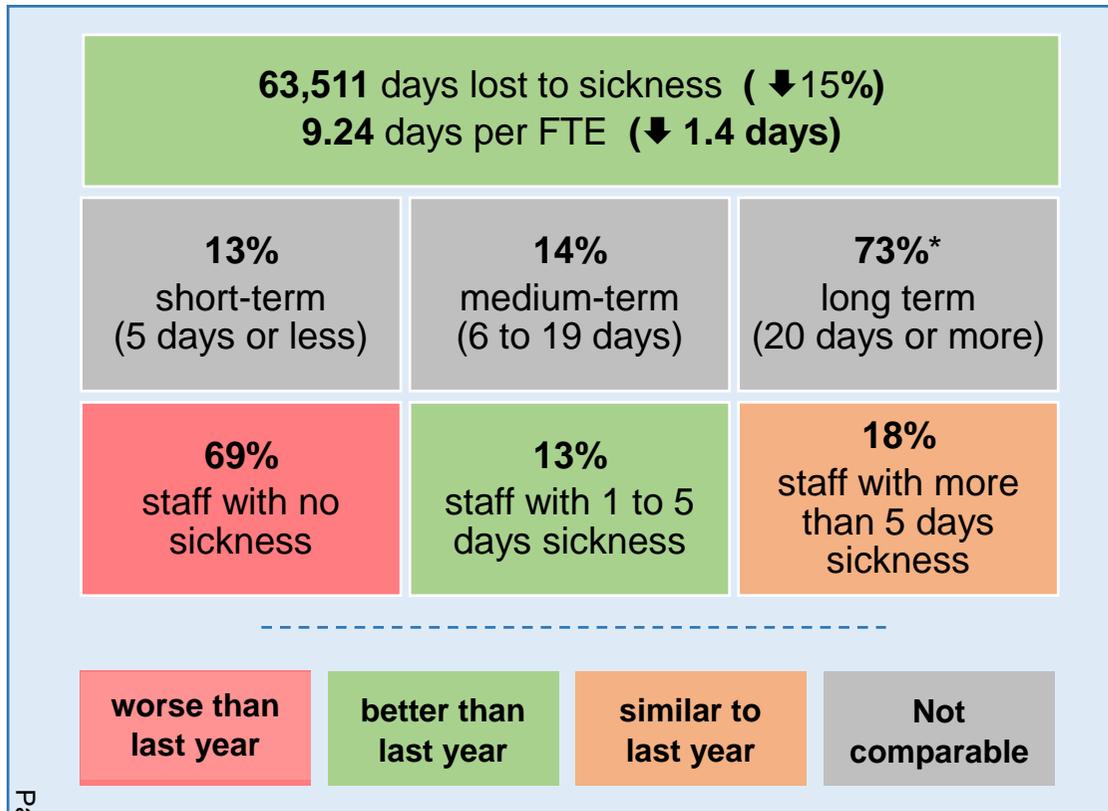
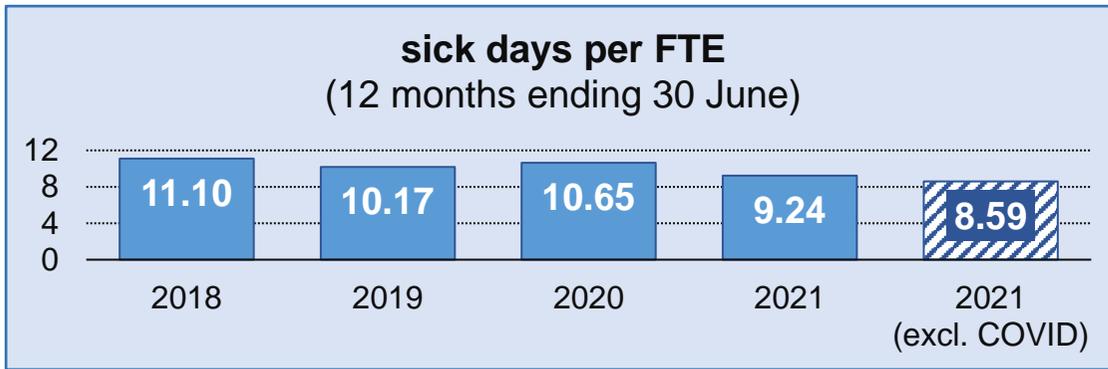
### Employee Assistance Programme

658 calls

54% mental health concerns, 15%  
work, 14% relationships, 9% life event

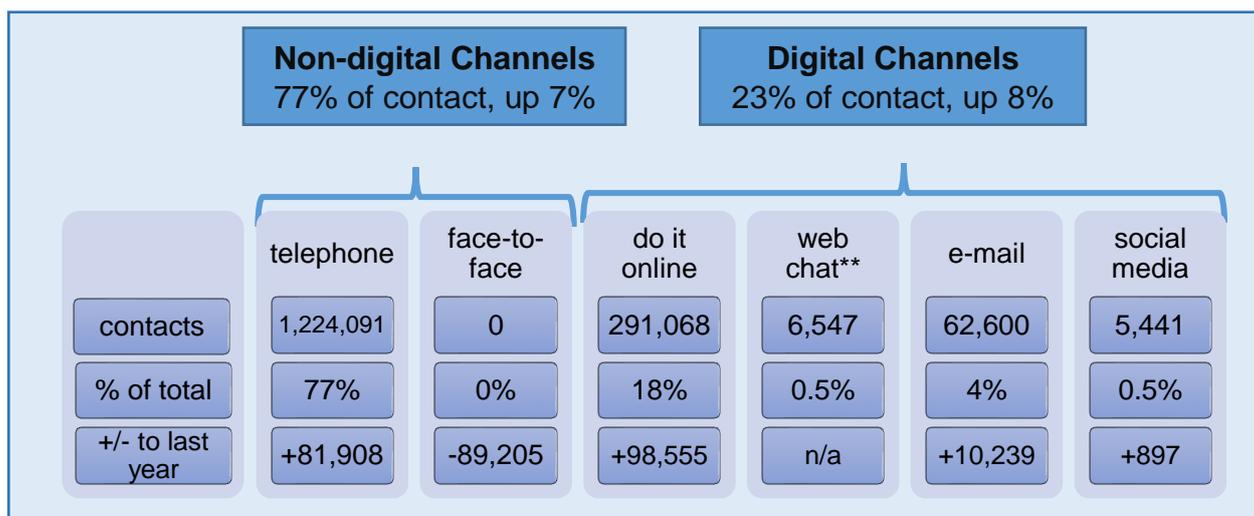
607 counselling calls &  
430 counselling sessions

# AN EXCELLENT COUNCIL



## We will design our services with service users and will use data and technology more effectively

- 160 The ongoing response to COVID-19 continues to shape our customer service offer in terms of new and existing services delivered and the ways in which our customers and residents can contact us.
- 161 Throughout the 12 months ending 30 June 2021, we received almost 1.6 million contacts through our customer services team. This contact, through both non-digital and digital channels is summarised in the infographic below.



### Non-Digital Channels

- 162 The telephone remains the most frequently used channel for contacting us, with nearly eight in every ten customers choosing this method. Whilst reported call volumes appear to have increased during the pandemic, this is in the main a result of our ongoing initiative to increase and enhance the volume and quality of data we hold and report on through the transfer of non-ACD lines to our ACD system.
- 163 Broadly speaking, telephone calls we receive are either through our Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system, which routes calls to groups of agents based on a first-in-first-answered criteria, or directly to a telephone extension (non-ACD).
- 164 Historically, only calls received via our ACD system have been included in our telephone statistics. However, as part of our initiative to develop a customer-focused, one-council approach to service delivery, we are transferring non-ACD lines into the ACD system. This change supports the development of a holistic view of telephony demand and performance across the council and allows us to monitor and identify opportunities to improve and enhance the customer experience.

165 Indeed, call volumes decreased by a fifth during quarter one (6,758 fewer calls) compared to the same period last year – mainly because of covid-related enquiries dropping from 6,557 to 998 contacts (5,559 fewer).

### Digital Channels

166 Although the telephone remains popular overall, we continue to see more customers choosing to interact with us via our digital channels.

167 During quarter one, 22,000 more residents signed up for an online account - taking the number of residents who can engage with us through this method to 225,000. This equates to 142,000 unique properties – almost 60% of households across the county.

168 If we look at the contact channels chosen by customers who want to log a service request within our CRM system, we can see a clear shift from telephone to online.

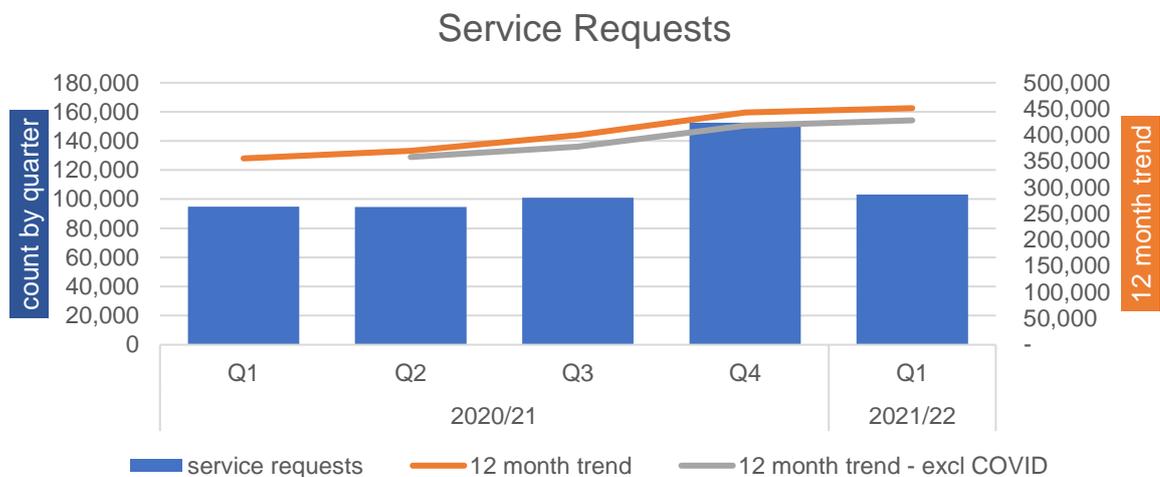
		proportion of service requests logged by channel – 12 months ending 30 June	
		2020	2021
Non digital	Telephone	34%	28%
	Face-to-face	2%	0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>28%</b>
Digital	Do it online portal	57%	65%
	Other digital	7%	7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>72%</b>

169 In addition to their online account residents can contact us, at their convenience, through additional digital methods which include, social media (Facebook and twitter), web chat and virtual appointments.

170 Our webchat service, launched in May 2020, is now available across more than 30 web pages, and whilst there has been a quarter-on-quarter decrease in webchat interactions, this correlates with a reduction in customers accessing COVID-19 specific support and advice.

171 Generally, just over a quarter of all contact leads to the creation of a service request in our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The remaining three quarters are from customers seeking advice or more information, wanting to be transferred to another team, booking an appointment, or requesting a progress update.

- 172 Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a steady increase in the number of service requests received (+27%, +96,000 over the 12 months ending 30 June 2021).



- 173 This increase reflects the impact of the pandemic across many areas of the organisation with additional residents contacting us to seek financial help (both personal and business related) or report issues arising from spending more time at home (especially environmental issues such as litter and fly-tipping, and anti-social behaviour issues such as noise), and the need to enforce various COVID-19 restrictions.
- 174 To support the monitoring of delivery timescales of service requests logged within our Customer Relationship Management (CRM), we have applied a service level agreement (SLA) measure within the system where possible.
- 175 We do not apply SLAs if the process is not fully managed within the CRM. We also did not apply SLAs to many of the COVID-related service requests, partly due to the speed of the set-up, but also due to the complexity and unknown elements of the request which often resulted in required modifications as the pandemic progressed.
- 176 75% of service requests processed during the 12 months ending 30 June were assessed against a SLA. And, of these, the SLA was met in 59% of cases – slightly lower than the 60% recorded for the same period last year. However, it should be noted that over the same period, service requests increased by 27%.
- 177 Our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System is configured to automatically send customer satisfaction surveys (CSS) to the customer when their service request (SR) is closed.
- 178 We initially applied this survey to 25 service request types in October 2017. Today, it is available across an additional 92 service request types, giving more

customers the opportunity to provide feedback in relation to both their experience of contacting us and their satisfaction with service delivery.

31 October 2017	30 June 2020	30 June 21
25	105	117

179 This allows us to potentially reach customers linked to around 70% of the service requests recorded in our CRM. However, as we are only able to reach those who have provided a valid e-mail address, we can only contact around 55%. To improve on this percentage, we are continuing to deliver a range of activity to increase the number of valid email addresses and other contact information we hold.

180 As can be seen in the table below, our overall survey response rate as a proportion of service requests is low – albeit improved over the last two years, as we have linked the survey to more service requests and captured more customer e-mail addresses.

Service requests linked to our customer satisfaction survey		
Number	1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020	1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021
SR types	105	117
SRs received	289,498	348,595
Surveys emailed to customer	214,049 (74%)	273,148 (78%)
Responses to survey	8,163 (3.8%)	14,817 (5.4%)
Response as a % of service requests	2.8%	4.2%

181 Whilst the satisfaction survey is linked to 117 service request types, 90% of survey responses received during the 12 months ending 30 June related to 21 service request types, with two thirds relating to one of seven service request types (missed collection, complaints, fly-tipping, join the garden waste scheme, road or footpath, street lighting, tree or hedge removal/pruning).

182 Whilst increased response percentages were seen over 12 of the 21 service request types there was also significant variance in response rates ranging from 19% to 0.5%. This can be linked to both the volume of requests we receive for these types of request and the nature of the requests and we continue to identify options to reduce this variance and additional ways to capture feedback. Having analysed all survey responses received during the 12 months ending 30 June

2021 against our nine key measures (see infographic) we can see that overall: one improved, four remained the same and three reduced (compared to the same period last year):

- 183 Further analysis has been completed to support an understanding of satisfaction with service delivery based on service request type. Our council tax account, council tax change of payment method, early help referral and birth death and marriage certificate requests attracted the highest levels of satisfaction. With new bin replacement/repair, dog and litter bins and service level complaints recording the lowest levels of satisfaction.
- 184 Analysis has identified that reasons for increased levels of dissatisfaction are mainly linked to not keeping customers informed of progress, not explaining our decision making and taking too long to complete tasks and respond. These areas will be the focus of a more detailed review over coming months.
- 185 We continue to develop the quality of our customer satisfaction data to inform our first point of contact offer. We are in the process of updating the survey to reflect our recently refreshed Customer Charter and Standards which now align with recent changes to our customer service offer and operating model and better reflects how we will work with our customers across all contact channels.
- 186 We are also carrying out detailed analysis on our data to better understand our customers' experiences and put actions in place to improve their experiences. Over the next three to six months, we will focus on deep dives of our satisfaction data (and link back to service provision) and customer suggestions. We will include our findings in the quarter two, customer feedback report.
- 187 Despite the pandemic, we are continuing with developments that enhance the customer experience.
- 188 Extending channel choice is a core element of our digital transformation programme, and we have included new modern communication channels on platforms such as Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp within our refreshed Unified Communications Programme .
- 189 We are continuing to drive improvements across customer services through our Integrated Customer Service Initiative which will develop a unitised model for customer service across the council. This will be achieved by implementing consistent first point of contact principles in line with the following three main workstreams:
  - (a) Standardisation: Unifying and standardising our technology platform to support an agile and flexible workforce in delivering high quality services to customers, wherever and whenever they are needed.

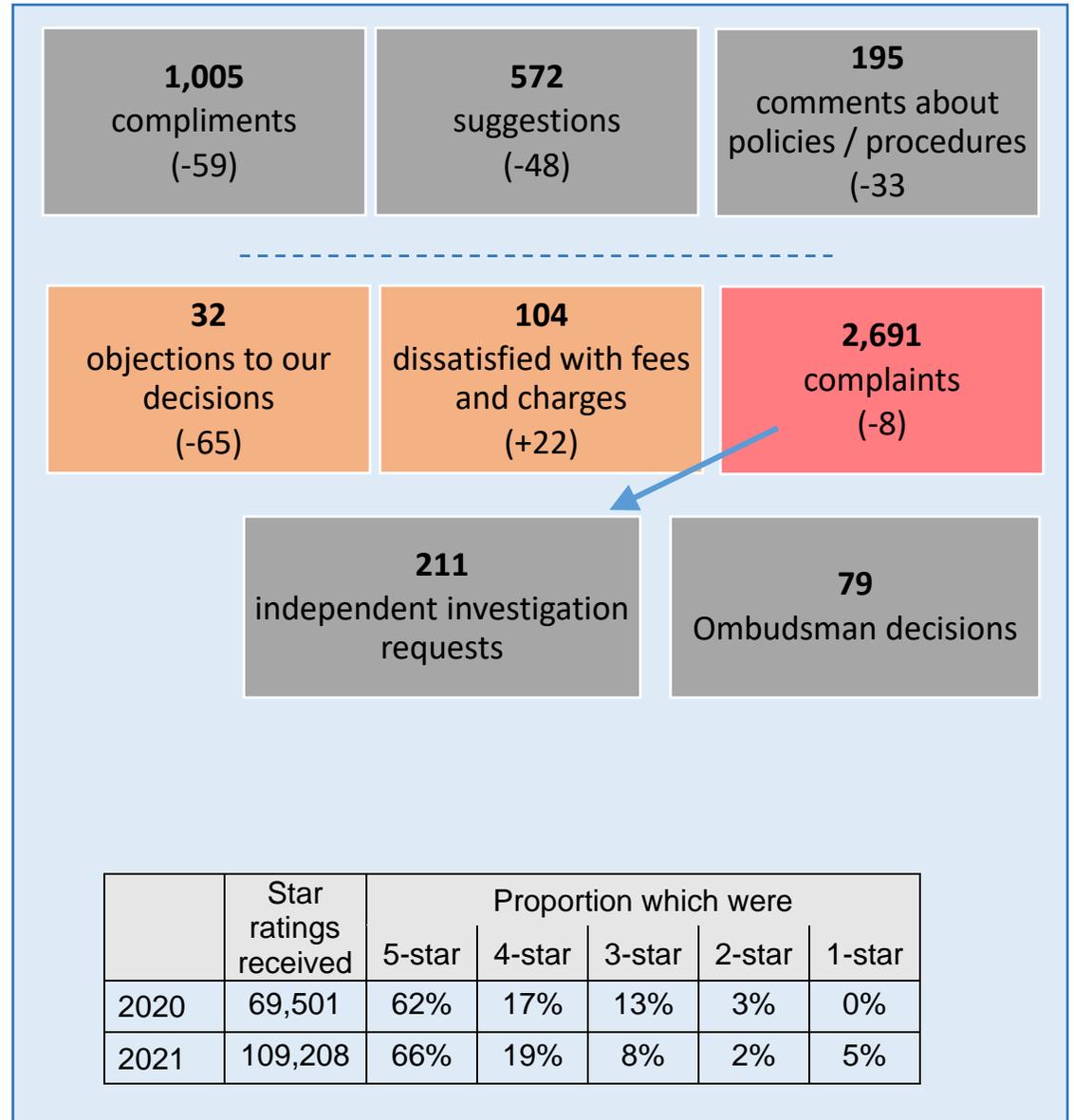
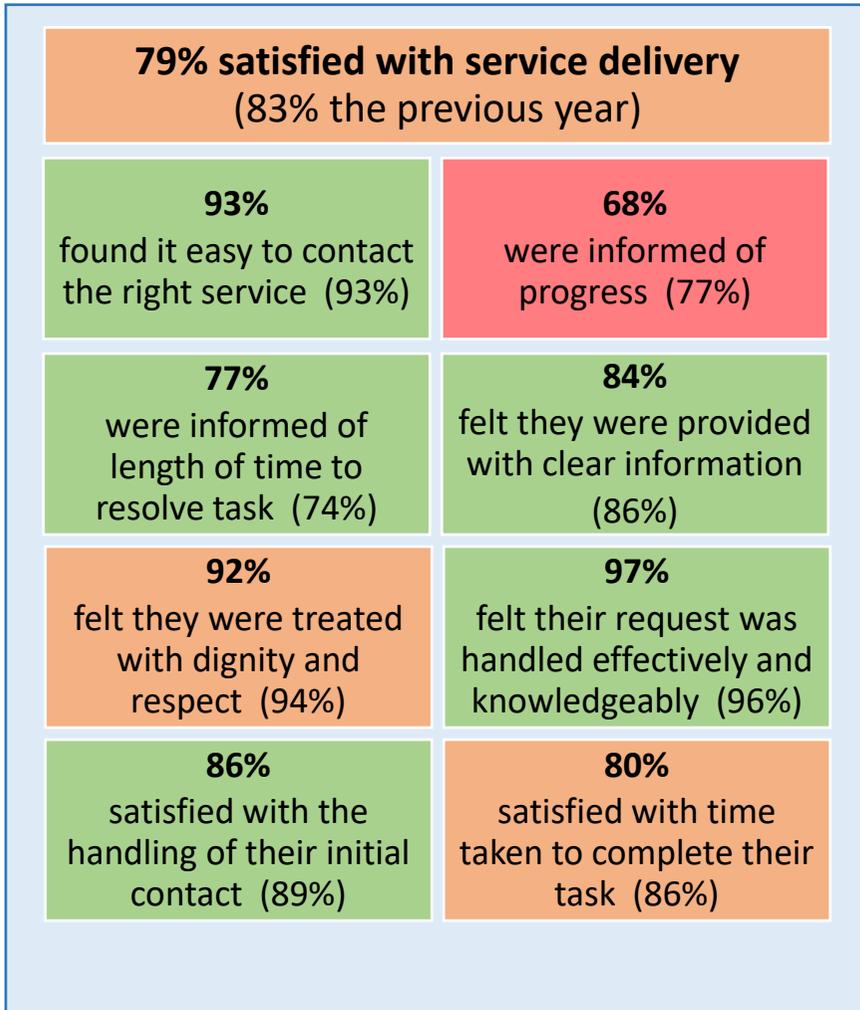
- (b) Harmonisation: Using technology and data to gather more robust and wide-reaching demand, quality, and satisfaction data to support a holistic view of our customer.
  - (c) Unitisation: delivering all first point of contact interactions through a single unitised customer service function to ensure consistency when responding to customers and improving the overall customer experience.
- 190 As we move to new modern ways of working in line with our transformation programme, it essential we ensure that agents have the right tools to do the job.
- 191 Over the last six months, we extensively tested a new softphone-based telephony platform within the corporate contact centre. This platform gives users access to contact centre features from their laptop allowing them to work from any location with an adequate internet connection.
- 192 During quarter one, this solution was deployed beyond corporate customer service and into our Care Connect out of hours service, Durham Music Service, County Durham Offending Service, Social Care Direct administration team, and Environmental Health and Consumer Protection administration team with the remaining contact centres due to be standardised by quarter three.
- 193 Also during quarter one, we reviewed our Customer Access Point operating model in readiness for reinstating face to face interactions. The revised model has an additional focus on digital inclusion through access to devices and assisted self-service support.
- 194 Upon reinstatement, all face-to-face interactions will be 'appointment only', freeing up time for officers to provide fully supported self-serve sessions with those customers who need it.
- 195 These changes are now included in our revised Customer Service Charter and Standards and reflect our customer service ethos and the changing needs and expectations of our customers. We are also in the process of updating our customer satisfaction survey and will provide an update in the next report.
- 196 Throughout the quarter we continued to migrate telephone lines to our Automated Call Distribution (ACD) system<sup>18</sup>. Migrating these lines enables us to see an enhanced view of demand and performance statistics for all telephony contact, and thereby allows us to identify opportunities to improve the customer experience.

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<sup>18</sup> Broadly speaking, we receive telephone calls either through our Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system, which routes calls to groups of agents in line with 'first-in-first-answered' criteria, or directly to a telephone extension (non-ACD).

- 197 42% of services have now been fully migrated to the ACD technology – with County Durham Offender Service, Wolsingham Leisure Centre, Durham Music Services, Care Connect out of hours, Blue Badge administration and Environmental Health and Consumer Protection customer support teams migrating in quarter one.
- 198 Since October 2020, we have been working to streamline the management of incoming priority correspondence and remove duplication from our processes. The new process will provide a single point of contact, achieve a consistent approach in handling of correspondence, capture and store all data in one system and realise efficiencies.
- 199 All incoming enquiries are now managed centrally within our Business Services corporate support team, using a single point of contact email address (with the exception COVID-19 enquiries which are handled separately by the Chief Executive’s office). The team is working to a response deadline of 10 working days from receipt of enquiry (the Resources service grouping is the exception – with a response deadline of four working days).
- 200 Following improvements to our process for dealing with priority correspondence, we are now reviewing other channels of incoming correspondence with a view to further project scoping in order to determine future requirements.
- 201 We are also continuing to work with services and our customers to act on their feedback, understand their changing expectations and identify new ways for them to contact, request services and report issues.
- 202 The following CRM improvements were delivered during quarter one following customer feedback: improved anti-social behaviour information which ensures customers correctly report incidents to the most appropriate service; improvements to the pest control appointment reminders process, ensuring that reminders are timely and at appropriate times of the day
- 203 In addition, the following new online forms and processes were delivered: Deaf or Hearing impairment - application for registration; Grant for new school shoes and coats; Covid-19 Lateral Flow Tests; Environment Awards; Bishop Auckland and Seaham Food Festival Trader application; Temporary Road Closure; Street Name and Numbering.

# AN EXCELLENT COUNCIL



## Key Performance Indicators – Data Tables

There are two types of performance indicators throughout this document:

- (a) Key target indicators – targets are set as improvements can be measured regularly and can be actively influenced by the council and its partners; and
- (b) Key tracker indicators – performance is tracked but no targets are set as they are long-term and/or can only be partially influenced by the council and its partners.

A guide is available which provides full details of indicator definitions and data sources for the 2020/21 corporate indicator set. This is available to view either internally from the intranet or can be requested from the Strategy Team at [performance@durham.gov.uk](mailto:performance@durham.gov.uk)

### KEY TO SYMBOLS

	Direction of travel	Benchmarking	Performance against target
GREEN	Same or better than comparable period	Same or better than comparable group	Meeting or exceeding target
AMBER	Worse than comparable period (within 2% tolerance)	Worse than comparable group (within 2% tolerance)	Performance within 2% of target
RED	Worse than comparable period (greater than 2%)	Worse than comparable group (greater than 2%)	Performance >2% behind target

### National Benchmarking

We compare our performance to all English authorities. The number of authorities varies according to the performance indicator and functions of councils, for example educational attainment is compared to county and unitary councils however waste disposal is compared to district and unitary councils.

### North East Benchmarking

The North East figure is the average performance from the authorities within the North East region, i.e., County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-On-Tees, South Tyneside, Sunderland.

More detail is available from the Strategy Team at [performance@durham.gov.uk](mailto:performance@durham.gov.uk)

## MORE AND BETTER JOBS

### Do residents have good job prospects?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
1	% of working age population in employment	71.4	2020	73 (red)	72.2 (amber)	75.7 (red)	71.5 (amber)			No
2	Per capita household disposable income (£)	16,542	2018	Tracker	15,875 (green)	21,609 (red)	16,995 (red)			No
3	Gross jobs created / safeguarded as a result of Business Durham activity	2,768	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	280 (green)					Yes
4	% of 16 to 17 year olds in an apprenticeship	5.5	as at Jun 2021	Tracker	6.8 (red)	4.1 (green)	6.0 (amber)	5.8 (amber)		Yes

### Is County Durham a good place to do business?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
5	Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita in County Durham (£)	16,763	2018	Tracker	16,388 (green)	29,356 (red)	20,554 (red)			No
6	No. of registered businesses in County Durham	14,105	Mar 2020	Tracker	13,795 (green)					No
7	Value (£ million) of new contracts secured	8,173,215	2020/21	8 (green)	907,439 (green)					No
8	Value (£ million) of GVA growth from jobs created	81,251,872	Apr-Jun 2021	7,000,000 (green)	8,219,120 (green)					Yes
9	No. of Inward Investments secured	2	Apr-Jun 2021	1 (green)	3 (red)					Yes
10	% of Business Durham business floor space that is occupied	87.2	Apr-Jun 2021	85	92.0 (red)					Yes

## How well do tourism and cultural events contribute to our local economy?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
11	No. visitors to County Durham (million)	11.39	2020	Tracker	20.13 (red)					Yes
12	No. jobs supported by the visitor economy	6,794	2020	Tracker	12,133 (red)					Yes
13	Amount (£ million) generated by the visitor economy	506.75	2020	Tracker	980.72 (red)					Yes

## Do our young people have access to good quality education and training?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
14	Average Attainment 8 score	48.8	2019/20 (academic year)	Tracker	Not comparable	53.1 (red)	48.4 (green)			No
15	Average point score per A level entry of state-funded school students	39.9	2019/20 (academic year)	Tracker	Not comparable	39.5 (green)	38.3 (green)			No
16	% of pupils achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths (KS2)**	65	2018/19 (academic year)	Tracker	67	65 (green)	67 (red)	61 (green)		No
17	% of 16-17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training	5.8	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	4.8 (red)	3.0 (red)	4.9 (red)			Yes
18	Gap between average Attainment 8 score of Durham disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally (KS4)	-14.4	2019/20 (academic year)	Tracker	Not comparable	-13.5 (red)	-15.1 (green)			No
19	% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieving a Good Level of Development**	71.8	2018/19 (academic year)		64 (green)	72.8 (amber)	71.8 (green)	71.8 (green)		No
20	Gap between % of Durham disadvantaged pupils and % of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally who achieve expected standard in reading, writing and maths (KS2)**	-19.8	2018/19 (academic year)	Tracker	-15.1 (red)	-20 (green)	-18 (red)			No

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
21	Ofsted % of Primary schools judged good or better	89	as at 30 Jun 2021	Tracker	89 (green)	87 (green)	91 (red)			Yes
22	Ofsted % of secondary schools judged good or better	64	as at 30 Jun 2021	Tracker	64 (green)	76 (red)	60 (green)			Yes
23	Exclusion from school of all Durham children - percentage of children with at least one fixed exclusion	1.88	2019/20 (academic year)	Tracker	2.2 (green)	1.87 (amber)	2.22 (green)	2.39 (green)		Yes

\*\*not reporting for 2019/20

## LONG AND INDEPENDENT LIVES

### Are children, young people and families in receipt of universal services appropriately supported?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
24	% of free school meals (FSM) eligible pupils taking FSM	76.0	Jan 2021	Tracker	75.8 (green)	82.6 (red)	82.6 (red)			Yes
25	Under-18 conception rate per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 17	26.4	2018	Tracker	23.7 (red)	16.7 (red)	24.9 (red)	25.0 (red)		No
26	% of five year old children free from dental decay	73.2	2019	Tracker	74.2 (amber)	76.6 (red)	76.7 (red)	71.7 (green)		No
27	Alcohol specific hospital admissions for under 18s (rate per 100,000)	52.8	2017/18-2019/20	Tracker	54.7 (green)	30.7 (red)	55.4 (green)	55.3 (green)		No
28	Young people aged 10-24 admitted to hospital as a result of self-harm (rate per 100,000)	361.2	2019/20	Tracker	354.3 (red)	439.2 (green)	536.6 (green)	656.3 (green)		No
29	% of children aged 4 to 5 years classified as overweight or obese**	24.9	2019/20	Tracker	24.0 (red)	23.0 (red)	24.8 (amber)	25.0 (green)		No
30	% of children aged 10 to 11 years classified as overweight or obese**	37.6	2019/20	Tracker	37.7 (green)	35.2 (red)	37.5 (amber)	37.2 (amber)		No

Page Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
118 31	% of Education Health and Care Plans completed in the statutory 20 week time period (excl. exceptions)	65	Jan-Jun 2021	Tracker	64 (green)	58 (green)	75.9 (red)	82.0 (red)	2020	Yes

\*\*The National Child Measurement Programme ended in March 2020 when schools closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Comparisons to North East and Nearest Statistical Neighbours should be treated with caution as not all submitted of their measurements.

### Are children, young people and families in receipt of early help services appropriately supported?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
32	% of successful interventions (families turned around) via the Stronger Families Programme (Phase 4)	49% <sup>19</sup> [372/761]	Apr-Jun 2021	190 (green)						Yes
33	% of children aged 0-2 years in the top 30% IMD registered with a Family Centre and having sustained contact	87.8	2020/21	80 (green)	89.6 (amber)					Yes

### Are our services improving the health of our residents?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
34	% of mothers smoking at time of delivery	15.0	Jan-Mar 2021	14.7 (amber)	16.6 (green)	8.9 (red)	12.8 (red)	13.4 (red)		Yes
35	Four week smoking quitters per 100,000 smoking population	1,789 [1,335]	Apr-Dec 2020	Tracker	2,356 [1,540] (red)	1,140 (green)	1,507 (green)	1,944 (red)		Yes
36	Male life expectancy at birth (years)	78.3	2017-19	Tracker	78.2 (green)	79.8 (amber)	78.0 (green)	78.3 (green)		No
37	Female life expectancy at birth (years)	81.8	2017-19	Tracker	81.5 (green)	83.4 (red)	81.8 (green)	82.0 (amber)		No
38	Female healthy life expectancy at birth (years)	58.3	2017-19	Tracker	58.4 (amber)	63.5 (red)	59.0 (amber)	61.0 (red)		No

<sup>19</sup> Annual target of 761

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
39	Male healthy life expectancy at birth (years)	59.6	2017-19	Tracker	59.3 (green)	63.2 (red)	59.4 (green)	60.5 (amber)		No
40	Excess weight in adults (Proportion of adults classified as overweight or obese)	64.8	2019/20	Tracker	63.3 (red)	62.8 (red)	67.6 (green)	69.6 (green)		Yes
41	Suicide rate (deaths from suicide and injury of undetermined intent) per 100,000 population	13.4	2017-19	Tracker	12.8 (red)	10.1 (red)	11.6 (red)	12.3 (red)		No
42	Prevalence of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks from birth (%)	30.2	Jan-Mar 2021	31.8 (amber)	25.9 (green)	48.2 (red)	36.0 (red)	34 (red)	Q3 2019/20	No
43	Estimated smoking prevalence of persons aged 18 and over	17.0	2019	Tracker	15.0 (red)	13.9 (red)	15.3 (red)	15.2 (red)		No
44	Self-reported well-being - people with a low happiness score	10.9	2019/20	Tracker	9.5 (red)	8.7 (red)	10.6 (amber)	9.6 (red)		No
45	Participation in Sport and Physical Activity: active	60.6%	Nov 2019-Nov 2020	Tracker	59.9% (amber)	61.4% (amber)	60% (amber)			Yes
46	Participation in Sport and Physical Activity: inactive	30.1%	Nov 2019-Nov 2020	Tracker	28% (red)	27.1% (red)	28.9% (amber)			Yes

### Are people needing adult social care supported to live safe, healthy and independent lives?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
47	Adults aged 65+ per 100,000 population admitted on a permanent basis in the year to residential or nursing care	175.0	1 Apr-16 Jun 2021	N/a	97.0 (red)					Yes
48	% of older people who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services	86.7	1 Apr-16 Jun 2021	N/a	82.6 (green)	82.0 (green)	83.5 (green)	80.3* (green)	2019/20	Yes
49	% of individuals who achieved their desired outcomes from the adult safeguarding process	95.1	1 Apr-16 Jun 2021	Tracker	94.5 (green)	92.2 (green)	85.4 (green)	92.1* (green)	2019/20	Yes

Page Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
120 50	% of service users receiving an assessment or review within the last 12 months	86.7	2020/21	Tracker	93.2 (red)					Yes
51	Overall satisfaction of people who use services with their care and support	69.6	2019/20	Tracker	67.8 (green)	64.2 (green)	67.5 (green)	66.2* (green)		No
52	Overall satisfaction of carers with the support and services they receive (Biennial survey)	51.2	2018/19	Tracker	43.3** (green)	38.6 (green)	47.2 (green)	41.8* (green)		No
53	Daily delayed transfers of care beds, all, per 100,000 population age 18+	2.9	Feb 2020	Tracker	1.5 (red)	11.0 (green)	7.0 (green)	11.0* (green)		No
54	% of adult social care service users who report they have enough choice over the care and support services they receive	77.6	2019/20	Tracker	75.1 (green)	66.6 (green)	73.0 (green)	69.2* (green)		No

\*unitary authorities

\*\* results from 2016/17 survey

## CONNECTED COMMUNITIES – SAFER

### Are children, young people and families in receipt of social work services appropriately supported and safeguarded?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
55	% of statutory referrals received by the First Contact Team or Emergency Duty Team processed within 1 working day	94 [1,145 / 1,217]	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	94 (green)					Yes
56	% of statutory children in need referrals occurring within 12 months of a previous referral	19 [256]	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	23 [274] (green)	23 (green)	22 (green)	20 (green)	2019/20	Yes
57	% of single assessments completed within 45 working days	86 [1,019]	Apr-Jun 21	Tracker	85.5 [1098] (green)	84 (green)	89 (amber)	87 (amber)	2019/20	Yes
58	Rate of children subject to a child protection plan per 10,000 population aged under 18	44.3 [448]	as at Jun 2021	Tracker	47.7 [480]	43	70	58	as at 31 Mar 20	Yes

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
59	Rate of children in need per 10,000 population (Cases open to Children's Social Care)	386 [3,902]	as at Jun 2021	Tracker	357.6 [3,596]	324	463	414	as at 31 Mar 20	Yes
60	Rate of children open to One Point (early help) 10,000 population aged under 18	153 [1,553]	as at Jun 2021	Tracker	161 [1,625]					Yes
61	% of strategy meetings initiated which led to an initial child protection conference being held within 15 working days	88 [196 of 222]	2020/21 [prov.]	75 (green)	89 [508] (green)	78 (green)	83 (green)	82 (green)	2019/20	Yes
62	% of Social Workers with fewer than 20 cases	49	as at Jun 2021	Tracker	58 (red)					Yes
63	% of Statutory Case File Audits which are given a scaling score of 6 or above	94.9 [37 of 39]	Oct-Dec 2020	80 (green)	85.7 (green)					No

### Are we being a good corporate parent to Children Looked After (CLA)?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
64	Rate of CLA per 10,000 population aged under 18	92.7 [937]	as at Mar 2021	Tracker	93.8 [944]	67	108	99	as at 31 Mar 20	Yes
65	% of children adopted from care (as % of total children leaving care)	17	2020/21 [prov.]	Tracker	16 (green)	12 (green)	12 (green)	18 (amber)	2019/20	No
66	% of CLA who are fostered incl. friends and family, independent fostering agency, In-house foster care	73 [685]	as at 29 Jun 2021	Tracker	76 [716]	72	74	73	2019/20	Yes
67	% of external residential placements	6 [53]	as at 29 Jun 2021	Tracker	4 [34]					Yes
68	% of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more who had a dental check	48	Jun 2021	Tracker	74 (red)	90 (red)	86 (red)	86 (red)	2019/20	Yes
69	% of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more who have had the required number of health assessments	90	Jun 2021	Tracker	90 (green)	90 (green)	92 (red)	93 (red)	2019/20	Yes

Page Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
122 70	Emotional and behavioural health of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more (score between 0 to 40)	14	2020/21 [prov.]	Tracker	15.5 (green)	14.2 (green)	14.1 (green)	14.0 (green)	2018/19	Yes
71	Average Attainment 8 score of Children Looked After	20.5	2019/20	Tracker	25.6 (red)	21.4 (red)	21.7 (green)	22.4 (red)		No
72	% of CLA achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths (at KS2)**	55	2018/19	Tracker	39.5 (green)	36 (green)	47 (green)			No
73	% of care leavers aged 17-18 in education, employment or training	70	Jun 2021	Tracker	78 (red)	64 (green)	63 (green)	65 (green)	2019/20	Yes
74	% of care leavers aged 19-21 in education, employment or training	60	Jun 2021	Tracker	60 (green)	53 (green)	52 (green)	53 (green)	2019/20	Yes
75	% of care leavers aged 17-18 in suitable accommodation	96	Jun 2021	Tracker	95 (green)	90 (green)	94 (green)	100 (red)	2019/20	Yes
76	% of care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation	93	Jun 2021	Tracker	95 (red)	85 (green)	91 (green)	90 (green)	2019/20	Yes

\*provisional data \*\*not reporting for 2019/20

### How effective are we are tackling crime and disorder?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
77	First time entrants to the youth justice system aged 10 to 17 (per 100,000 population aged 10 to 17)	176	2019/20	Tracker	262 (green)	220 (green)	303 (green)	231 (green)		No
78	Overall crime rate per 1,000 population	88.1	2020/21	Tracker	93.3 (green)	77.0 (red)				Yes
79	Rate of theft offences per 1,000 population	18.7	2020/21	Tracker	24.5 (green)					Yes
80	Proportion of all offenders who re-offend in a 12 month period (%)	30.6	Apr-Jun 2019	Tracker	30.8 (green)	31.7 (green)	35.7 (green)	30.0 (red)	2016/17	No
81	Proven re-offending by young people (who offend) in a 12 month period (%)	51.9	2017/18	Tracker	41.4 (red)	38.4 (red)	41.8 (red)			No

## How effective are we at tackling anti-social behaviour?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
82	Satisfaction with the way that the council and police are dealing with local concerns about ASB and crime issues in your area.	56.4	Mar 2020	Tracker	50.1 (red)			53.7 (red)	Jun 2019	No
83	No. police reported incidents of anti-social behaviour	17,621	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	16,511 (red)					Yes
84	No. council reported incidents of anti-social behaviour	16,244	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	14,101 (red)					Yes

## How well do we reduce misuse of drugs and alcohol?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
85	% of successful completions of those in alcohol treatment	33.6	May 2021-Apr 2021	Tracker	29.6 (green)	35.2 (amber)	31.2 (green)			Yes
86	% of successful completions of those in drug treatment - opiates	5.3	May 2021-Apr 2021	Tracker	5.6 (amber)	4.8 (green)	3.9 (green)			Yes
87	% of successful completions of those in drug treatment - non-opiates	36.5	May 2021-Apr 2021	Tracker	29.6 (green)	32.5 (green)	27.3 (green)			Yes
88	% of anti-social behaviour incidents that are alcohol related	15.7	2020/21	Tracker	18.7 (green)					Yes
89	% of violent crime that is alcohol related	32.1	2020/21	Tracker	31.1 (amber)					No
90	Alcohol seizures	194**	Apr-Jun 2018	Tracker	398 (green)					No

\*\*under review

## How well do we tackle abuse of vulnerable people, including domestic abuse, child exploitation and radicalisation?

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Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
91	Building resilience to terrorism (self-assessment). Score - level 1(low) to 5(high)	3*	2017/18	Tracker	3 (green)					No
92	No of individuals with a referral for 1:1 CSE Support from Supporting Solutions Team**	61	2020/21	Tracker	new**					Yes

\*under review \*\* New definition – Includes all children - High/Medium/Low Risk (Previously only High-Risk referred to Supporting Solutions)

## How do we keep our environment safe, including roads and waterways?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
93	No. of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents - No. of fatalities - No. of seriously injured	164 15 149	2020/21	Tracker	222 (green) 19 146					No
94	No. of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents - No. of fatalities - No. of seriously injured	17 1 16	2020/21	Tracker	31 (green) 0 31					No

## CONNECTED COMMUNITIES – SUSTAINABILITY

### How clean and tidy is my local environment?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
95	% of relevant land and highways assessed as having deposits of litter that fall below an acceptable level	5.96	Apr-Jul 2021	Tracker	N/a					Yes
96	% of relevant land and highways assessed as having deposits of detritus that fall below an acceptable level	12.14	Apr-Jul 2021	Tracker	N/a					Yes

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
97	% of relevant land and highways assessed as having deposits of dog fouling that fall below an acceptable level	0.79	Apr-Jul 2021	Tracker	N/a					Yes
98	Number of fly-tipping incidents	7,863	Jul 20 – Jun 21	Tracker	7,146 (red)					Yes

### Are we reducing carbon emissions and adapting to climate change?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
99	% reduction in CO <sub>2</sub> emissions in County Durham (carbon neutral by 2050)	55.2	2018	Tracker	54 (green)					No
100	% reduction in CO <sub>2</sub> emissions from local authority operations compared to the 2008/09 baseline, 70% by 2025	51	2019/20	Tracker	47 (green)					No

### How effective and sustainable is our collection and disposal of waste?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
101	% of municipal waste diverted from landfill	91.8	2020/21	95 (red)	97.8 (red)	91.5 (green)	94.4 (red)		2019/20	Yes
102	% of household waste that is re-used, recycled or composted	37.3	2020/21	Tracker	41.1 (red)	43.8 (red)	35.5 (green)		2019/20	Yes

### Do residents have access to decent and affordable housing?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
103	Number of properties improved, adapted or brought back into use	938	Apr-June 2021	Tracker	236 (green)					Yes

Page Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
126 104	Number of empty properties brought back into use as a result of local authority intervention	24	Apr-Jun 2021	50 (red)	59 (red)					Yes
105	Number of net homes completed	471	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	101 (green)					Yes
106	Number of affordable homes delivered	466	2020/21	300 (green)	628 (red)					Yes
107	Number of households accessing the Housing Solutions Service	3,014	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	2,793 (green)					Yes
108	Number of households helped to stay in their home	411	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	325 (green)					Yes
109	Number of households helped to move to alternative accommodation	236	Apr-Jun 2021	Tracker	207 (green)					Yes

### Is it easy to travel around the county?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
110	% of A roads where maintenance is recommended	3.0	2019	Tracker	2.6 (red)	3.38 (green)	1.92 (green)		2019	No
111	% of B roads where maintenance is recommended	3.3	2019	Tracker	4.7 (green)	4.57 (green)	2.83 (green)		2019	No
112	% of C roads where maintenance is recommended	4.3	2019	Tracker	3.7 (red)	4.57 (green)	2.83 (green)		2019	No
113	% of unclassified roads where maintenance is recommended	21.3	2019	Tracker	21.0 (amber)	15.08 (red)	16.25 (red)		2019	No
114	Highways maintenance backlog (£millions)	172.6	2019	Tracker	179.7 (green)					No
115	Bridge Stock Condition – Principal Roads*	80.7**	2019	Tracker	80.7 (green)					No
116	Bridge Stock Condition – Non-Principal Roads*	79.9**	2019	Tracker	79.9 (green)					No

\* Bridge stock condition (>=90 very good condition / >=80 good condition / >=65 fair condition / >=40 poor condition / <40 very poor condition)

\*\* last year's data has been used due to issues with obtaining current values

## EXCELLENT COUNCIL

### How well do we look after our people?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
117	% of performance appraisals completed on current posts in rolling year period (excluding schools)***	N/a*	N/a	N/a	N/a					No
118	Days / shifts lost to sickness absence (all services excluding schools)	9.24	Jul 20 – Jun 21	11.20 (green)	10.65 (green)	9.2** (red)			2017/18	Yes
119	% posts with no absence in rolling year (excluding schools)	69.48	Jul 20 – Jun 21	Tracker	57.9 (green)					Yes
120	% of sickness absence which is short term	12.93	Jul 20 – Jun 21	Tracker	7.76					Yes
121	% of sickness absence which is medium term	14.04	Jul 20 – Jun 21	Tracker	13.76					Yes
122	% of sickness absence which is long term	73.02	Jul 20 – Jun 21	Tracker	78.48					Yes
123	% of employees having five days or less sickness per 12 month period	82.22	Jul 20 – Jun 21	Tracker	79.83 (green)					Yes

\*Due to new system introduction

\*\*includes school support staff but excludes teachers. All single/upper tier councils [Local Government Workforce Survey 2017/18](#)

\*\*\* Having put all Personal Development Reviews on hold due to COVID-19, we are now reinstating the process, starting with our leaders in October 2021.

### Are our resources being managed for the best possible outcomes for residents and customers?

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
124	% of council tax collected in-year	27.7	Apr-Jun 2021	Not Set	27.7 (green)					Yes
125	% of business rates collected in-year	27.6	Apr-Jun 2021	Not Set	33.8 (red)					Yes

## How good are our services to customers and the public?

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Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	12 months earlier	National figure	North East figure	Nearest statistical neighbour	Period covered if different	updated this quarter
126	% Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to within 20 working days	77	Apr-Jun 2021	90 (red)	75 (green)					Yes
127	Customer contacts: telephone*	1,224,091	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	1,142,183					Yes
128	Customer contacts: face to face**	n/a	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	89,205					Yes
129	Customer contacts: web forms	291,068	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	192,513					Yes
130	Customer contacts: emails	62,600	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	52,361					Yes
131	Customer contacts: social media	5,441	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	4,562					Yes
132	% of calls answered	94	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	94*					Yes
133	% of calls answered within 3 minutes	90	Jul 20 - Jun 21	Tracker	89*					Yes

\*data is not comparable as new telephony lines are continuing to be added to ACD

\*\* data is not available as customer access points have been closed since March 2021

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**25 October 2021**

**Customer Feedback Report, Quarter 1,  
2021/22**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources (interim)**

**Councillor Susan McDonnell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Digital  
and Customer Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 This report brings together a wide range of information collected from our customers to describe their experiences of using our services over the last 12 months, to the period ending 30 June 2021, compared to the same period in the previous year.

**Executive summary**

- 2 Information, as to whether customers are satisfied or dissatisfied with our services, as well as their general experience when accessing services and support, is an important resource for improving customer service and determining our actions in line with customer needs.
- 3 This report covers the range of feedback that can be summarised as follows:
  - (a) an overview of contact through our Customer Services team;
  - (b) a summary of customer satisfaction outcomes through completed surveys and compliments received;
  - (c) a selection of customer suggestions and their outcomes;
  - (d) an overview of comments relating to our policies, procedures, and decision-making;

- (e) our performance in dealing with complaints (both statutory and non-statutory corporate complaints); and
  - (f) recent developments that enhance the customer experience.
- 4 The ongoing response to COVID-19 continues to shape our customer service offer in terms of new and existing services delivered and the ways in which our customers and residents can contact and interact with us.
  - 5 Throughout the 12 months ending 30 June 2021 we received almost 1.6 million contacts through our customer services team. The telephone remains the most frequently used channel for contacting us, with nearly eight in every ten customers choosing this method.
  - 6 Call volumes decreased by a fifth during the period 1 April to 30 June 2021, with 6,758 fewer calls received compared to the same period last year. This was mainly due to a reduction in COVID-related enquiries, which fell from 6,557 to 998 contacts.
  - 7 Although the telephone remains popular overall, we continue to see an increasing volume of customers who choose to interact with us via our digital channels.
  - 8 During first quarter of this financial year, 22,000 more residents signed up for an online account - taking the number of residents who can engage with us through this method to 225,000. This equates to 142,000 unique properties.
  - 9 Generally, just over a quarter of all contact leads to the creation of a service request in our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The remaining three quarters are from customers seeking advice or more information, wanting to be transferred to another team, booking an appointment, or requesting a progress update.
  - 10 Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a steady increase in the number of service requests received (+27% / +96,000 over the 12 months ending 30 June 2021).
  - 11 To support the monitoring of delivery timescales of service requests logged within our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, we have applied performance standards within the system where possible.
  - 12 We do not apply performance standards if the process is not fully managed within the CRM. We also did not apply performance standards to many of the COVID-related service requests, partly due to the speed of the set-up, but also due to the complexity and unknown elements of

the request which often resulted in required modifications as the pandemic progressed.

- 13 75% of service requests processed during the 12 months ending 30 June 2021 were assessed against a performance standard. Of these, the standard was met in 59% of cases – slightly lower than the 60% recorded for the same period last year.
- 14 Those service requests that are logged within our CRM system but are not currently assessed against a performance standard will be the focus of a detailed review over coming months. We will also be conducting additional analysis at an individual service request level and will aim to provide an update in future reports.
- 15 Our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System enables customer satisfaction surveys (CSS) to be automatically sent to the customer when their service request (SR) is closed.
- 16 Over the 12 months ending 30 June 2021 we sent 273,148 surveys to our customers and received 14,817 responses (5.4%) which was an increase on the previous period where 8,163 responses (3.8%) were received.
- 17 From the feedback received, 79% of customers were satisfied with the level of service they received, a reduction of 4% points on the same period in the previous year, where 83% of customers were satisfied.
- 18 Increased levels of dissatisfaction are mainly linked to not keeping customers informed of progress, not explaining our decision making and taking too long to complete tasks and respond. It is important to note that the ongoing response to the pandemic and increased demand have led to extended service delivery times over the reporting period. These areas will be the focus of a more detailed review over coming months.
- 19 During the 12 months ending 30 June 2021, we received 2,691 corporate complaints – 327 or 14% more than the previous year. Of those investigated, 51% were upheld, which, is on par with previous years. The increase in complaints coincided with an increase in service requests over the same period.
- 20 During the 12 months ending 30 June 2021, 211 complainants were dissatisfied with the response to their complaint (52 of these relate to the period 1 April to 30 June 2021) and asked for it to be escalated to independent investigation by the Customer Feedback Team.
- 21 Analysis of a sample of these investigations highlights that 84% could have been avoided through either timelier or more comprehensive

updates from the services and or completion of the agreed action in the first instance.

- 22 We continue to monitor our performance for statutory complaints that arise from our duties as a local social services authority.
- 23 As of 30 June 2021, around 18,000 adults and 3,900 children and young people were being supported by Adult and Health Services (AHS) and Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) respectively.
- 24 AHS received a total of 78 complaints over the reporting period, a 1.3% increase on the previous year with 16% of these upheld and 24% partially upheld. This correlates with an increase in adults open to services (18,753 compared to 16,746 last year).
- 25 The most frequent reasons for making a complaint were dissatisfaction with charges (17 complaints) and 'COVID-19 related' (16 complaints). Notably, there were no "COVID-19 related" complaints during the period 1 April to 30 June 2021 .
- 26 CYPS received a total of 46 complaints over the reporting period, a 38% decrease on the previous year with 11% upheld and 28% partially upheld. This contrasts with an increase in children receiving social care (3,902 compared to 3,596 last year).
- 27 During the 12 months ending 30 June, the most frequently recorded reason for making a statutory complaint (18 complaints) was disagreement (with action/ assessment/ decision/ recorded information). Communication featured in 16 complaints, supervised contact (family time) in 12 complaints, and staff behaviour in 12 complaints.
- 28 During the 12 month period to 30 June 2021, the Ombudsman delivered decisions relating to 79 complaints, of which 19 were upheld. Of the 21 decisions delivered during quarter one, five were upheld (24%).
- 29 Despite the pandemic, we have continued to act on feedback from our customers and conduct focused service improvement activity which has led to the implementation of a range of developments to enhance their experience. We continue to measure the impact of this activity and analyse and utilise feedback to support ongoing improvements.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 30 Corporate overview and scrutiny management board is recommended to note the content of the report.

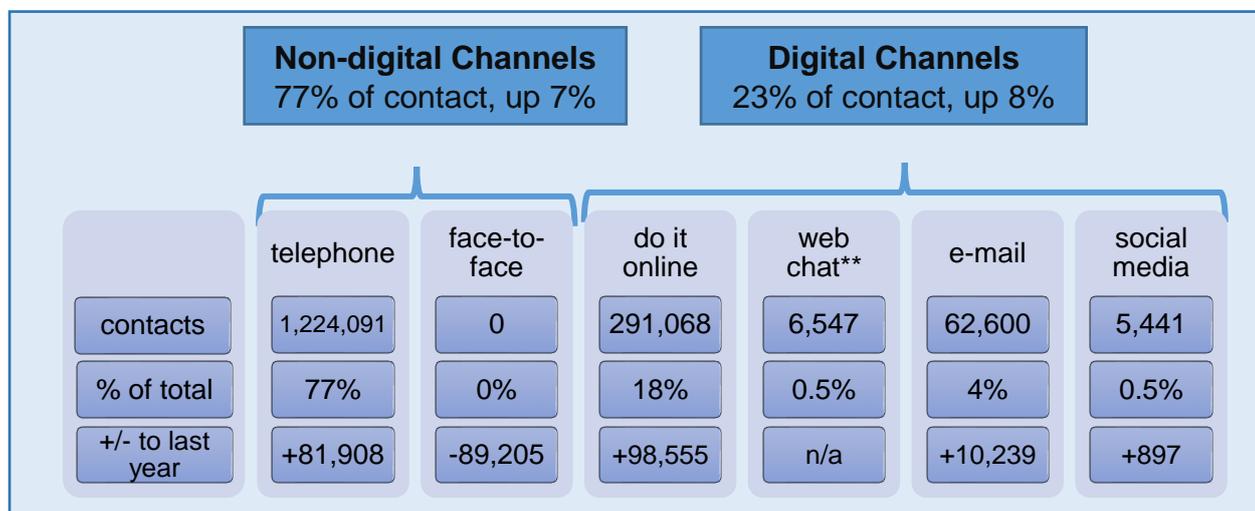
## **Background**

- 31 Successful organisations understand their customers and one way to gain this valuable insight is by gathering and utilising customer feedback.
- 32 The customer feedback report brings together a wide range of information collected from our customers which describes their experiences of using our services.
- 33 Information, as to whether customers are satisfied or dissatisfied with our services, as well as their general experience when accessing services and support, is an important resource for improving customer experience and determining our actions in line with customer needs.
- 34 The report covers the range of feedback that can be summarised as follows and is detailed in the sections below:
- (a) an overview of contact through our Customer Services team;
  - (b) a summary of customer satisfaction outcomes through completed surveys and compliments received;
  - (c) a selection of customer suggestions and their outcomes;
  - (d) an overview of comments relating to our policies, procedures, and decision-making;
  - (e) our performance in dealing with complaints (both statutory and non-statutory corporate complaints); and
  - (f) recent developments that enhance the customer experience.

## **Contact through our customer services team**

- 35 The ongoing response to COVID-19 continues to shape our customer service offer in terms of new and existing services delivered and the ways in which our customers and residents can contact us.
- 36 Having closed all council buildings including our Customer Access Points at the start of the pandemic, we were hoping to resume face-to-face contact in line with the government's roadmap to recovery on 19 July 2021. However, although most council buildings have now reopened, the re-opening of our Customer Access Points (CAPs) has been delayed until the end of September 2021. This is due to CAP staff needing to be deployed to support other critical services impacted by staff absences / self-isolation.

37 Throughout the 12 months ending 30 June 2021, we received almost 1.6 million contacts through our customer services team. This contact, through both non-digital and digital channels is summarised in the infographic below.



### Non-Digital Channels

38 The telephone remains the most frequently used channel for contacting us, with nearly eight in every ten customers choosing this method. Whilst reported call volumes appear to have increased during the pandemic, this is in the main a result of our ongoing initiative to increase and enhance the volume and quality of data we hold and report on through the transfer of non-ACD lines to our ACD system.

39 Broadly speaking, telephone calls we receive are either through our Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system, which routes calls to groups of agents based on a first-in-first-answered criteria, or directly to a telephone extension (non-ACD).

40 Historically, only calls received via our ACD system have been included in our telephone statistics. However, as part of our initiative to develop a customer-focused, one-council approach to service delivery, we are transferring non-ACD lines into the ACD system. This change supports the development of a holistic view of telephony demand and performance across the council and allows us to monitor and identify opportunities to improve and enhance the customer experience.

41 Our data shows that call volumes decreased by a fifth during quarter one (6,758 fewer calls) compared to the same period last year – mainly because of covid-related enquiries dropping from 6,557 to 998 contacts (5,559 fewer).

## Digital Channels

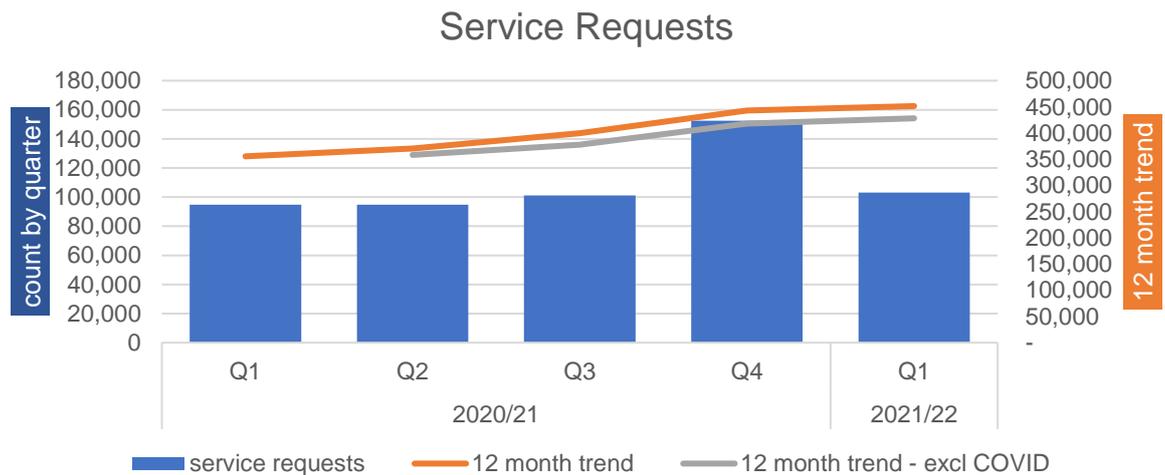
- 42 Although the telephone remains by far the most popular method overall, we continue to see an increasing volume of customers who choose to interact with us via our digital channels.
- 43 During quarter one, 22,000 more residents signed up for an online account - taking the number of residents who can engage with us through this method to 225,000. This equates to 142,000 unique properties – almost 60% of the total households across the county.
- 44 If we look at the contact channels chosen by customers who want to log a service request within our CRM system, we can see a clear shift from telephone to online.

		proportion of service requests logged by channel – 12 months ending 30 June	
		2020	2021
Non digital	Telephone	34%	28%
	Face-to-face	2%	0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>28%</b>
Digital	Do it online portal	57%	65%
	Other digital	7%	7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>72%</b>

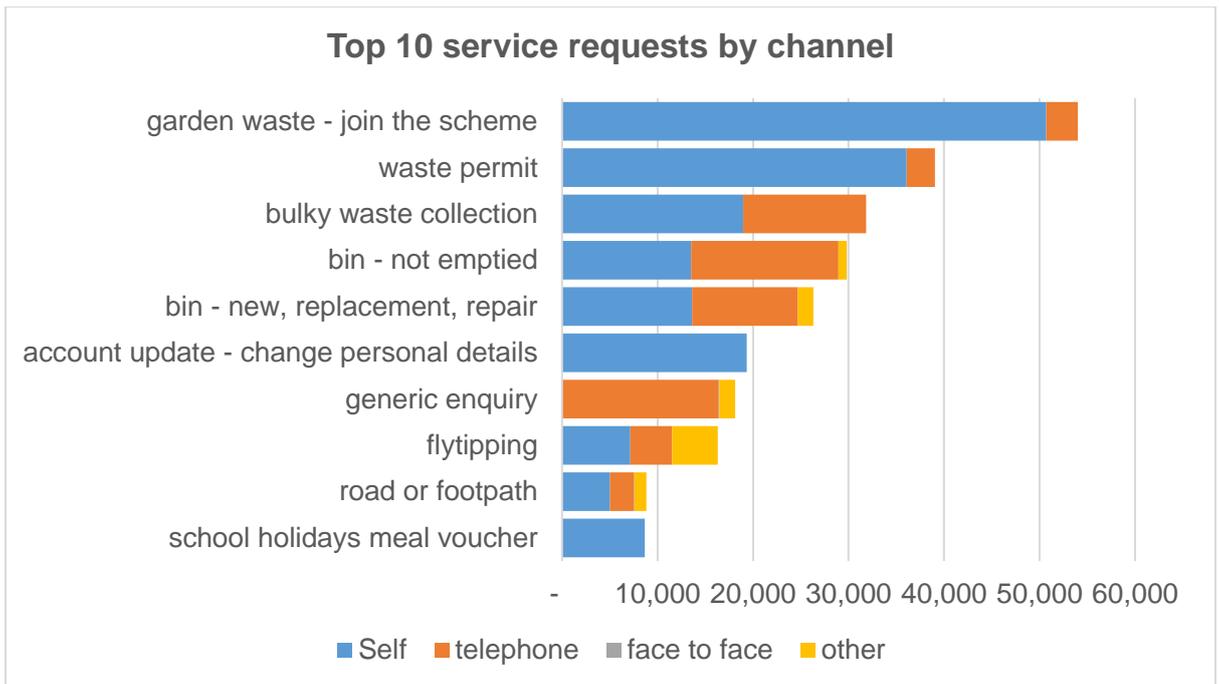
- 45 In addition to their online account residents can contact us, at their convenience, through additional digital methods which includes social media (Facebook and twitter), web chat and through virtual appointments.
- 46 Our webchat service was launched in May 2020 and is now available across more than 30 web pages. Whilst there has been a quarter-on-quarter decrease in webchat interactions, this correlates with a reduction in customers accessing COVID-19 specific support and advice.

	Q4, 2020/21	Q1, 2021/22	Change
Webchat interactions	2,572	1,295	-1,277
COVID related	1,438	756	-682
Non-COVID related	1,134	539	-595

- 47 Generally, just over a quarter of all contact leads to the creation of a service request in our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The remaining three quarters are from customers seeking advice or more information, wanting to be transferred to another team, booking an appointment, or requesting a progress update.
- 48 Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a steady increase in the number of service requests received (+27%, +96,000 over the 12 months ending 30 June 2021).



- 49 This increase reflects the impact of the pandemic across many areas of the organisation with additional residents contacting us to seek financial help (both personal and business related) or report issues arising from spending more time at home (especially environmental issues such as litter and fly-tipping, and anti-social behaviour issues such as noise complaints), and the need to enforce various COVID-19 restrictions.
- 50 Over the 12 months ending 30 June, the ten most frequently requested services were:



- 51 To support the monitoring of delivery timescales of service requests logged within our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, we have applied performance standards within the system where possible.
- 52 We do not apply performance standards if the process is not fully managed within the CRM. We also did not apply performance standards to many of the COVID-related service requests, partly due to the speed of the set-up, but also due to the complexity and unknown elements of the request which often resulted in required modifications as the pandemic progressed.
- 53 75% of service requests processed during the 12 months ending 30 June were assessed against a performance standard. The standard was met in 59% of cases – slightly lower than the 60% recorded for the same period last year. However, it should be noted that over the same period, service requests increased by 27%.
- 54 Those service requests that are logged within our CRM system but are not currently assessed against a performance standard will be the focus of a detailed review over coming months. We will also be conducting additional analysis at an individual service request level and will aim to provide an update in future reports.

## Customer satisfaction - surveys and compliments

- 55 Our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System enables customer satisfaction surveys (CSS) to be automatically sent to the customer when their service request (SR) is closed.
- 56 We initially applied this survey to 25 service request types in October 2017. Today, it is available across an additional 92 service request types, giving more customers the opportunity to provide feedback in relation to both their experience of contacting us and their satisfaction with the handling of the service request / delivery. The number of service request types that the CSSs are applied to is summarised below:

Position at 31 October 2017	Position at 30 June 2020	Position at 30 June 21
25	105	117

- 57 This provides us with the potential to reach customers linked to approximately 70% of the service request types recorded in our CRM. It is important to note that we are only able to do this if a valid email address is provided and as a result, we currently contact around 55% of customers and continue to deliver a range of activity to increase the number of valid email addresses and other contact information we hold.
- 58 As can be seen in the table below, our overall survey response rate as a proportion of service requests is low – albeit improved over the last two years, as we have linked the survey to more service requests and captured more customer email addresses.

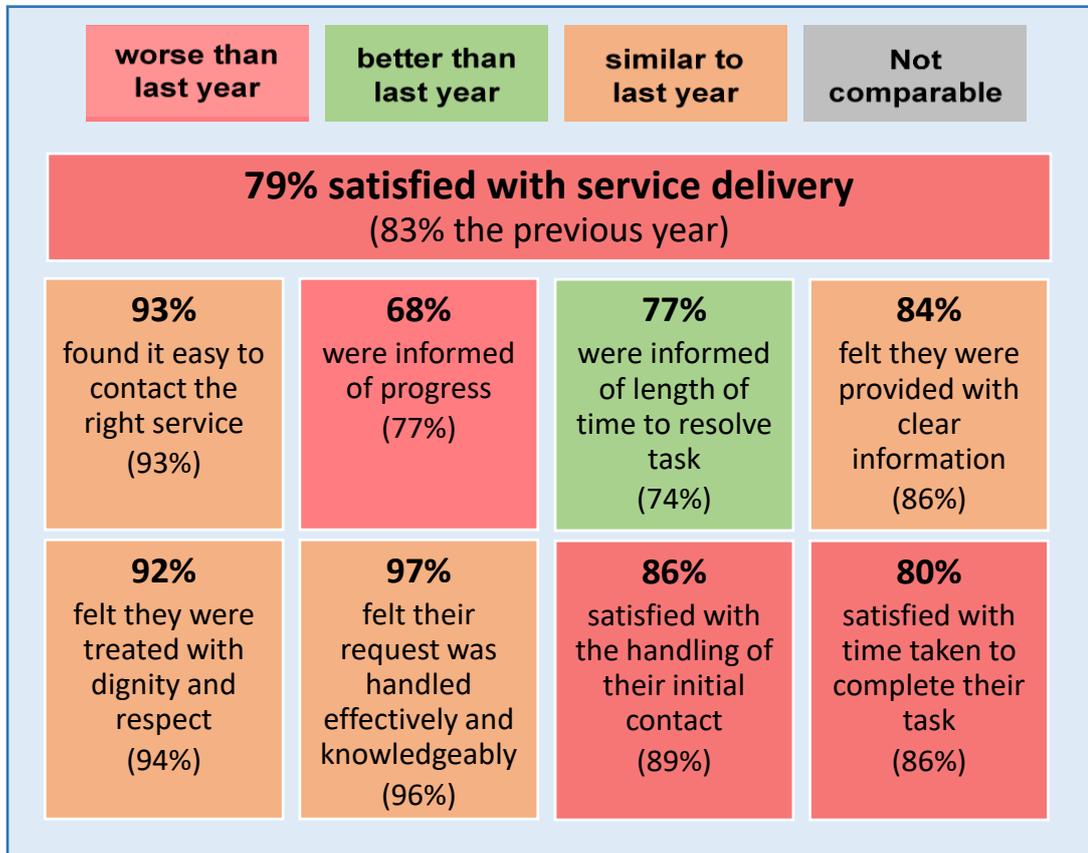
Service requests linked to our customer satisfaction survey		
Number	1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020	1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021
Service Request types	105	117
Service Requests received	289,498	348,595
Surveys emailed to customer	214,049 (74%)	273,148 (78%)
Responses to survey	8,163 (3.8%)	14,817 (5.4%)
Response as a % of service requests	2.8%	4.2%

- 59 Whilst would like to gather feedback from all customers submitting a service request, we recognise that linking the survey to every request will not necessarily add value to our processes, e.g., surveying parents who use our form to add their children to the waiting list for swimming lessons is unlikely to lead to an improved process, nor will adding the survey where established mechanisms for collecting satisfaction data already exist.
- 60 It is also important to note that due to the speed at which we set up our COVID-specific service requests, we were unable to add any survey methodology. We are now considering options for retrospective surveying those we helped through the pandemic to determine if there was anything we could do differently or better if similar circumstances present again.
- 61 Whilst the satisfaction survey is linked to 117 service request types, 90% of survey responses received during the 12 months ending 30 June related to 21 service request types (see appendix five), with two thirds relating to one of seven service request types.

	Response Rate	
	Surveys returned / total SRs	
	1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020	1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021
Bin: missed collection	Not available	<b>19.2%</b> 5,712 / 29,804
Complaint	<b>5%</b> 223 / 4,101	<b>15.9%</b> 786 / 4,950
Fly-tipping	<b>5%</b> 617 / 13,637	<b>5.7%</b> 922 / 16,317
Join the garden waste scheme	<b>3%</b> 370 / 34,903	<b>1%</b> 479 / 54,008
Road or footpath	<b>8%</b> 497 / 6,072	<b>7.2%</b> 635 / 8,826
Street lighting	<b>10%</b> 633 / 6,198	<b>12%</b> 797 / 6,632
Tree or hedge pruning/ removal	<b>10%</b> 461 / 4,611	<b>10.3%</b> 459 / 4,455

- 62 Whilst increased response rates have been achieved over 12 of the 21 service request types, there was also significant variance in response rates ranging from 19% to 0.5%. This can be linked to both the volume of requests we receive for different types of request and the nature of the requests themselves. We continue to identify options to reduce this variance and additional ways to capture feedback.

63 Having analysed all survey responses received during the 12 months ending 30 June 2021 against our nine key measures, we can see that overall: one improved, four remained the same and four reduced (compared to the same period last year):



64 It is important to acknowledge that satisfaction rates vary significantly across different service request types and satisfaction needs to be considered in line with the volume of service request and volume of responses (see appendix five).

65 Further analysis has been completed to support an understanding of satisfaction with service delivery based on service request type. Our council tax account (96%), council tax change of payment method (93%), early help referral (96%) and birth death and marriage certificate requests (93%) attracted the highest levels of satisfaction. With new bin replacement/repair (44%), dog and litter bins (62%) and service level complaints (55%) recording the lowest levels of satisfaction.

66 Increased levels of dissatisfaction are mainly linked to not keeping customers informed of progress where requests fall outside of agreed delivery timeframes, not explaining our decision making, taking too long to complete tasks and requests being closed as resolved yet the matter is still outstanding. These areas will be the focus of a more detailed

review which will inform our service improvement activity with related services over coming months.

- 67 We continue to develop the quality of our customer satisfaction data to inform our first point of contact offer. We are in the process of updating the survey to reflect our recently refreshed Customer Charter and Standards which now align with recent changes to our customer service offer and operating model and better reflects how we will work with our customers across all contact channels.
- 68 We are also carrying out more detailed analysis of our data to better understand our customers' experiences and put actions in place to improve their experiences. Over the next three to six months, we will focus on deep dives of our satisfaction data (and link back to service provision) and customer suggestions. We will include our findings in the quarter two and quarter three, customer feedback reports.

### Customer Compliments and Star Rating Feedback

- 69 During the 12 months ending 30 June, we received 1,257 compliments – 20% more (+195) compared to the same period the year before.
- 70 In line with previous reports, most of the compliments related to satisfaction with service provision – although we did also receive praise due to the actions of specific individuals.
- 71 A small sample of the 210 compliments received during quarter one, 2021/22 is attached at Appendix two.
- 72 In addition to compliments, we collect star ratings from customers requesting a service via an online form. This helps us understand the customer's experience when logging their request and identifies opportunities for improvement.
- 73 During the 12 months ending 30 June, we received more than 109,000 ratings, 60% more (+39,707) than the same period last year. Almost half related to five star rated service requests handling.

All Service Request Types 12 months ending 30 June...	Star ratings received	Proportion of star ratings received				
		5-star	4-star	3-star	2-star	1-star
<b>2020</b>	<b>69,501</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>109,208</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Garden waste – join the scheme	20,964	62%	23%	9%	3%	3%
Customer Satisfaction Survey	12,450	60%	19%	8%	3%	9%

All Service Request Types 12 months ending 30 June...	Star ratings received	Proportion of star ratings received				
		5-star	4-star	3-star	2-star	1-star
Waste permit	7,523	85%	10%	3%	1%	2%
Bin: missed collection	6,332	63%	15%	7%	2%	12%
Bulky waste collections	5,561	71%	20%	5%	2%	3%

## Customer suggestions

- 74 During the 12 months ending 30 June 2021 we received 572 customer suggestions, 48 fewer than the same period last year.
- 75 Whilst we receive and review a considerable number of suggestions, the majority have been addressed previously and/or considered as part of service development.

## Comments relating to policies, procedures, decision-making and fees and charges.

- 76 To understand the impact of our policies, procedures and decision making and to support development in these areas we capture and analyse the comments we receive.
- 77 During the 12 months ending 30 June 2021 we received 195 comments about our policies and/or procedures, an increase of 33 on the previous period. 104 of these related to expressions of dissatisfaction with fees and charges, an increase of 22 and 32 related to objections to decisions reached, a reduction of 65.
- 78 We continue to provide feedback to the relevant service areas and teams to support opportunities for improvement and development of policies and procedures.

<b>32</b> objections to our decisions (-65)	Eight objections to operating hours or building closures and three for not proceeding with a customer's complaint. The remainder were mainly operational decisions, e.g., road closures.
<b>104</b> dissatisfied with fees and charges (+22)	Charges most frequently complained related to leisure centres (32 occasions), waste (19 complaints covering replacement bin (13), garden waste (4) and bulky waste (2)), and council tax (13 complaints)

**195**  
 comments about  
 policies /  
 procedures  
 (+33)

three quarters of this feedback related to the policies and procedures of our Household Waste Recycling Centres (83 comments, 43%) or Refuse and Recycling Service, e.g., not collecting side waste or contaminated bins (64 comments, 33%)

## Priority Correspondence

- 79 During the 12 months ending 30 June, we received 2,113 items of priority correspondence<sup>1</sup>.
- 80 Since October 2020, we have been working to streamline the management of incoming priority correspondence and remove duplication from our processes as often a CRM request will have been raised / will be in process in tandem. The new process will provide a single point of contact, achieve a consistent approach in handling of correspondence, capture and store all data in one system and realise efficiencies.
- 81 All incoming enquiries are now managed centrally within our Business Services corporate support team, using a single point of contact email address (with the exception COVID-19 enquiries which are handled separately by the Chief Executive's office). The team is working to a response deadline of 10 working days from receipt of enquiry (the Resources service grouping is the exception – with a response deadline of four working days having been established).

	<b>No. enquiries received</b>	<b>Responded on time</b>	<b>Responded late</b>
Jan – Mar 2021	423	319 - 75%	104 – 25%
Apr – Jun 2021	542	373 - 69%	169 – 31%

- 82 Although the proportion of correspondence responded to within our performance standard decreased in quarter one 2021/22 compared to quarter four 2020/21, the volume of correspondence increased by 28% (+119 additional correspondence over the three-month period).

<sup>1</sup> Priority correspondence relates to correspondence sent directly to the Chief executive, Member of Parliament or Corporate Directors

## Our performance in dealing with complaints (both statutory and corporate)

83 Each of the complaint types (statutory complaints that arise from our duties as a local social services authority and corporate complaints that cover all other complaints) is subject to its own processes and policy, so is reported separately.

### Corporate Complaints

84 During the 12 months ending 30 June 2021, we received 2,691 corporate complaints – 327 more (+14%) than the previous year. Of those investigated, 51% were upheld, which is on par with previous years.

85 As shown in the graph below most of the increase occurred in the final quarter of 2020/21 (January to March) and coincided with a significant increase in service requests over the same period. Even so, as of 30 June 2021, the ratio of complaints to service requests was 0.6% or six complaints for every 1,000 service requests.

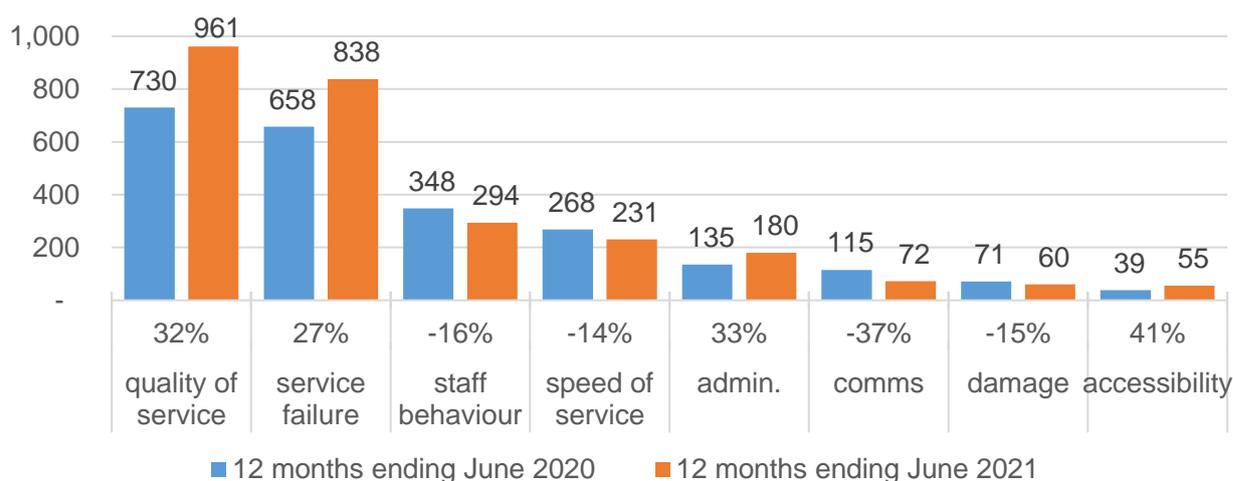


86 81% of service level complaints were completed and responded to within timescale, 19% were responded to outside of timescale. Compared with 89% and 11% the previous year.

87 Broadly speaking, corporate complaints can be categorised across eight specific areas. i.e.

Complaint Area	Complaint Area Description
1. Accessibility	We were inaccessible to the customer
2. Administration	Our administrative processes were poor causing inconvenience to the customer
3. Communication	We did not communicate effectively
4. Staff Behaviour	Our staff behaved badly

Complaint Area	Complaint Area Description
5. Service Failure	We did not do what we said we would
6. Speed of Service	We did not provide the service when we said we would
7. Quality of Service	We did not provide the service to the expected standard
8. Damage	We caused damage whilst carrying out our duties



88 'Quality of Service' (not providing the service to the expected standard) and 'Service Failure' (not doing what we said we would) are the most frequent causes for complaint. Although both categories increased over the last 12 months, it is important to reflect that this also coincides with an increase in demand for services across this period.

89 For example, the main driver behind the increase in service failure complaints was 'not actioning a service request'. This increased from 93 to 193. Given that we received almost 100,000 additional service requests during the same period (when we were dealing with the pandemic and had reduced staffing levels) it is not considered unusual that some progressed to complaints.

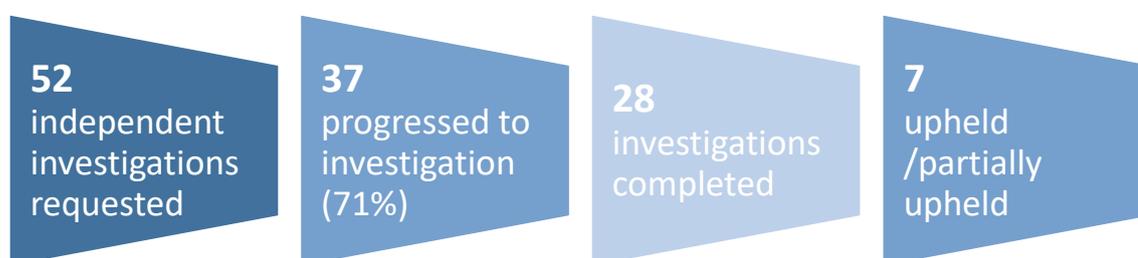
90 Furthermore, if we consider complaints as a percentage of service requests (0.6% in the 12 months ending 30 June 2020, compared to 0.7% for the same period the previous year), we can see that proportionally, complaints have not increased.

91 Looking at more specific reasons for complaint. The most frequent cause remains missed bin collections – which continue to make up 20% of all complaints. Of those received and investigated in the 12 months ending 30 June 2021, 77% were upheld. However, it is important to note that whilst we received 561 missed bin complaints in the 12

months ending 30 June, 13 million bins were collected which represents a complaint to delivery ratio of just 0.004%.

### **Corporate complaints subjected to independent investigation**

- 92 During the 12 months ending 30 June 2021, 211 complainants were dissatisfied with the response to their complaint (52 during quarter one 2021/22) and asked for it to be escalated to independent investigation by the Customer Feedback Team. 83% of these were responded to within the performance standard compared to 95% the previous year.
- 93 Analysis of a sample of these investigations highlights 84% could have been avoided through either timelier or more comprehensive updates from services and or completion of the agreed action in the first instance.



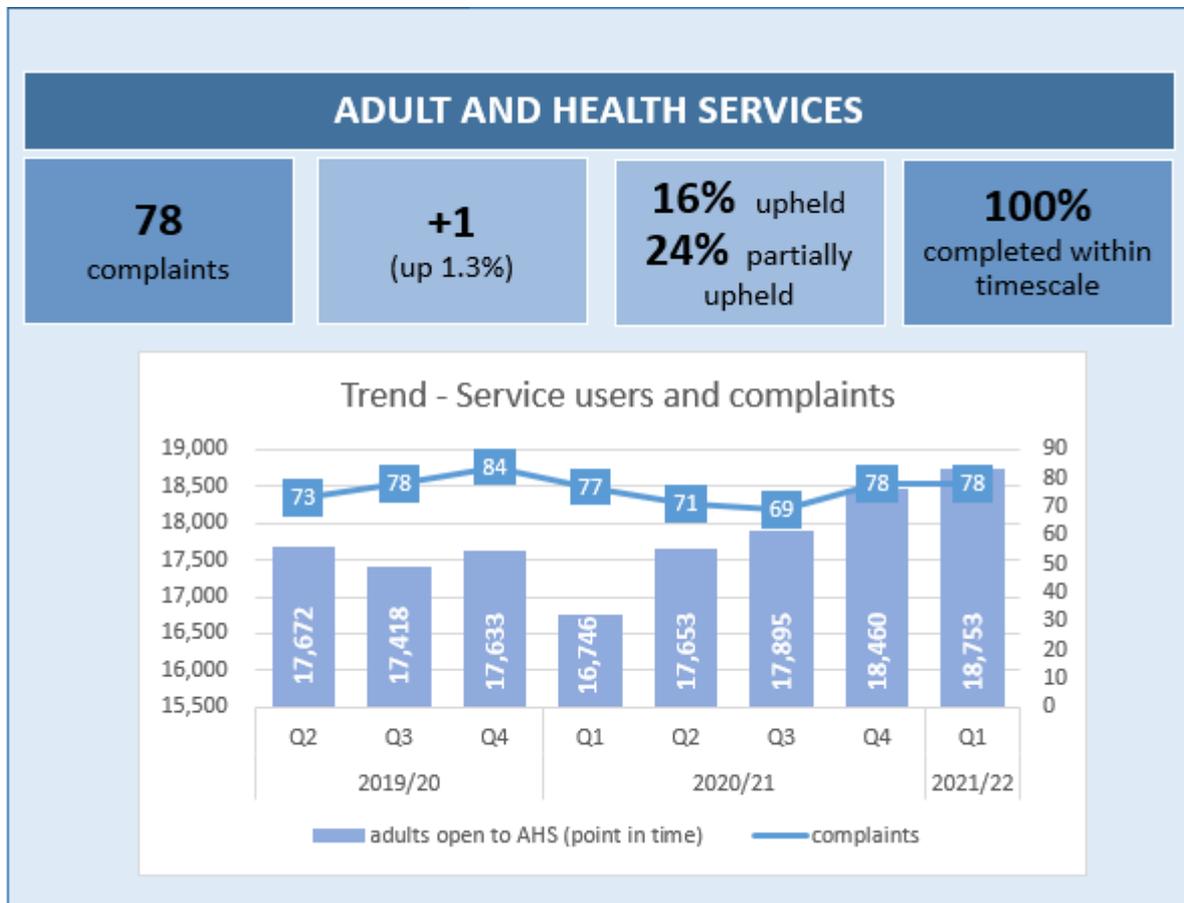
- 94 Details of complaints upheld by independent investigators during quarter one are included in Appendix three.

### **Statutory Complaints**

- 95 As of 30 June 2021, around 18,000 adults and 3,900 children and young people were being supported by Adult and Health Services (AHS) and Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) respectively.
- 96 Each service has its own distinct statutory complaints procedures, so the complaints made under each of these procedures are not directly comparable. Broadly speaking, users of AHS have voluntarily requested access to the service whereas the involvement of CYPS is primarily due to a child or young person being in need or at risk of significant harm.
- 97 Statutory complaints have traditionally been logged and tracked through a clerical system, overseen by a complaints officer who monitors progress, adherence to timescales, quality of response and completion of recommended actions.
- 98 However, new case management systems have now been introduced across social care within both AHS (Azeus) and CYPS (LiquidLogic). Both systems have a complaints module that will allow complaints to be

logged upon receipt and updated in real-time. Quality assurance will remain the responsibility of the complaints officer.

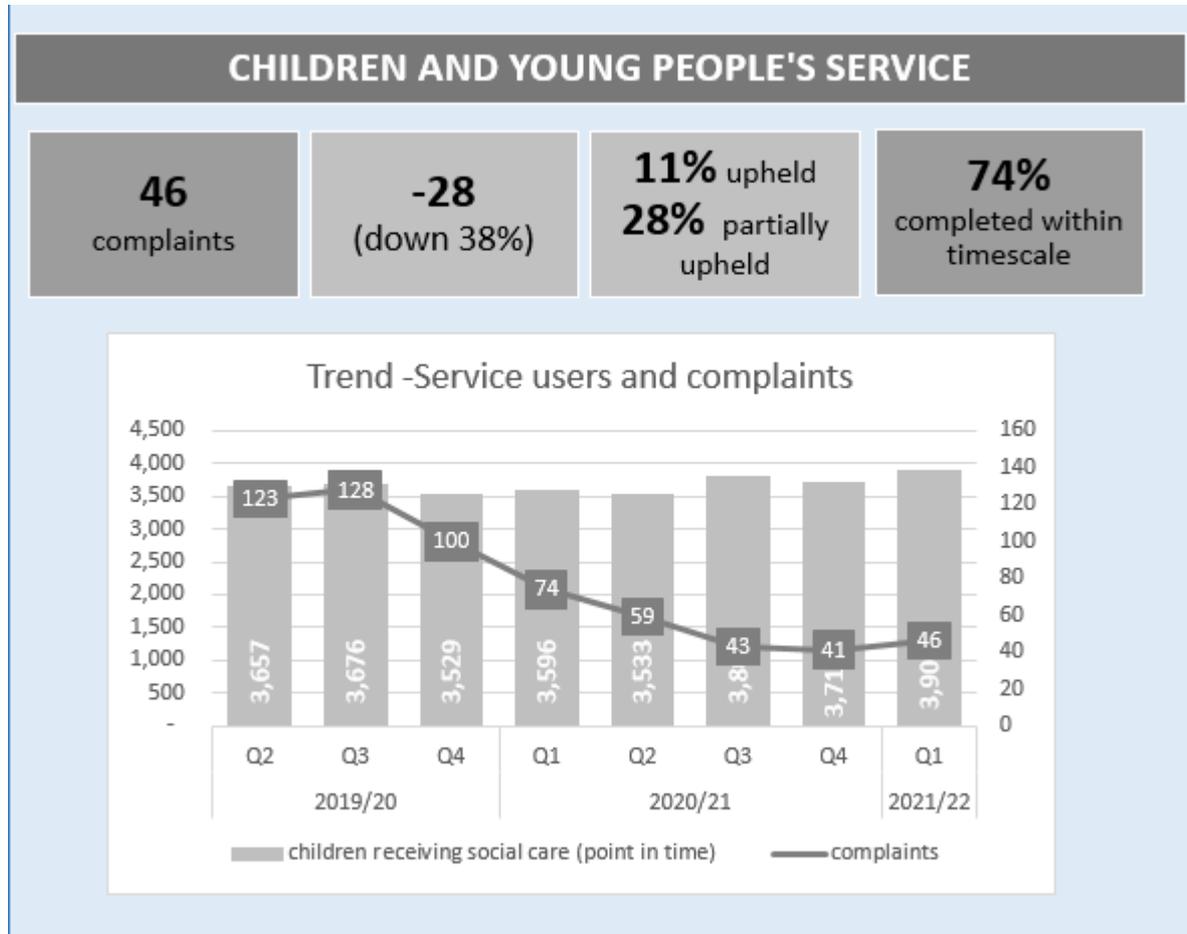
## Adult Health Services



- 99 Of the 78 statutory AHS complaints received during the 12 months ending 30 June: 29% related to older people/physical disabilities/sensory impairment (23 complaints), 19% to Transactional Services (15 complaints) which deals with financial assessments/charging, and 18% to learning disabilities/mental health/substance misuse (15 complaints).
- 100 The most frequent reasons for making a complaint were dissatisfaction with charges (17 complaints) and 'COVID-19 related' (16 complaints). Notably, there were no "COVID-19 related" complaints during quarter one 2021/22.
- 101 During quarter one 2021/22, actions taken in response to complaints included:
- (a) reminding care provider staff of the importance of adding information to their IT systems promptly and accurately.

- (b) auditing specific social work cases after identifying a service user's review document to be poor quality.
- (c) refunding three days of service provision costs that should have been covered by COVID-19 funding.

## Children and Young People's Services



- 102 Of the 46 statutory CYPS complaints received during the 12 months ending 30 June: 74% (34 complaints) related to the Families First teams – responsible for children in need, child protection plans, child, and family assessments (in cases of parental dispute), 22% (10 complaints) were spread across teams relating to Looked After Children, and 4% (2 complaints) related to the Children with Disabilities team.
- 103 Due to the complexity of these complaints, up to 3 reasons can be recorded for each. During the 12 months ending 30 June, the most frequently recorded reason for making a complaint (18 complaints) was disagreement (with action/ assessment/ decision/ recorded information). Communication featured in 16 complaints, supervised contact (family time) in 12 complaints, and staff behaviour in 12 complaints.

- 104 During quarter one, actions taken in response to complaints included:
- (a) Paying money owed to a family and friends' carer from when they had first taken a young person into their care.
  - (b) Updating an assessment report with corrected information.
  - (c) Allocating a new social worker to improve communication with a parent.

### **Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman)**

- 105 During the 12 months ending 30 June 2021, the Ombudsman delivered decisions relating to 79 complaints. Conclusions were reached based on details supplied by complainants, and in some instances, supplemented with contextual information from council officers.
- 106 Of the 21 decisions delivered during quarter one, five (24%) were upheld – details are including in Appendix four.
- 107 Additional information regarding complaints escalated to the Ombudsman is available [here](#).

### **Recent developments that enhance the customer experience**

- 108 Despite the pandemic, we have continued with developments that enhance the customer experience.
- 109 Extending channel choice is a core element of our digital transformation programme, and we have included new modern communication channels on platforms such as Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp within our refreshed Unified Communications Programme.
- 110 We continue to drive improvements across customer services through our Integrated Customer Service initiative which will develop a unitised model for customer service across the council. This will be achieved by implementing consistent first point of contact principles in line with the following three main workstreams:
- (a) **Standardisation:** Unifying and standardising our technology platform to support an agile and flexible workforce in delivering high quality services to customers, wherever and whenever they are needed.
  - (b) **Harmonisation:** Using technology and data to gather more robust and wide-reaching demand, quality, and satisfaction data to support a holistic view of our customer.

- (c) **Unitisation:** delivering all first point of contact interactions through a single unitised customer service function to ensure consistency when responding to customers and improving the overall customer experience.
- 111 As we move to new modern ways of working in line with our transformation programme, it essential we ensure that agents have the right tools to do the job.
- 112 Over the last six months, we have extensively tested a new softphone-based telephony platform within the corporate contact centre. This platform gives users access to contact centre features from their laptop allowing them to work from any location with an adequate internet connection.
- 113 During quarter one 2021/22, this solution has been deployed beyond corporate customer services and into our Care Connect out of hours service, Durham Music Service, County Durham Offending Service, Social Care Direct administration team, and within the Environmental Health and Consumer Protection administration team, with all the remaining contact centres due to be standardised by 31 December 2021.
- 114 During quarter one 2021/22, we reviewed our Customer Access Point operating model in readiness for reinstating face-to-face interactions. The revised model has an additional focus on digital inclusion through access to devices and assisted self-service support.
- 115 Upon reinstatement, all face-to-face interactions will be 'appointment only', freeing up time for officers to provide fully supported self-serve sessions with those customers who need it.
- 116 These changes are now included in our revised Customer Service Charter and Standards and reflect our customer service ethos and the changing needs and expectations of our customers. We are also in the process of updating our customer satisfaction survey and will provide an update in the next report
- 117 Throughout the quarter we continued to migrate telephone lines to our Automated Call Distribution (ACD) system<sup>2</sup>. Migrating these lines enables us to see an enhanced view of demand and performance statistics for all telephony contact, and thereby allows us to identify opportunities to improve the customer experience.

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<sup>2</sup> Broadly speaking, we receive telephone calls either through our Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system, which routes calls to groups of agents in line with 'first-in-first-answered' criteria, or directly to a telephone extension (non-ACD).

- 118 42% of services have now been fully migrated to the ACD technology – with the County Durham Offender Service, Wolsingham Leisure Centre, Durham Music Services, Care Connect out of hours, Blue Badge administration and Environmental Health and Consumer Protection customer support teams migrating in quarter one 2021/22.
- 119 Following improvements to our process for dealing with priority correspondence, we are now reviewing other channels of incoming correspondence with a view to further project scoping to determine future requirements.
- 120 We are also continuing to work with service teams and our customers to act on their feedback, understand their changing expectations and identify new ways for them to contact, request services and report issues.
- 121 The following CRM improvements were delivered during quarter one 2021/22 following customer feedback:
- (a) improved anti-social behaviour information, which ensures customers correctly report incidents to the most appropriate service; and
  - (b) improvements to the pest control appointment reminders process, ensuring that reminders are timely and at appropriate times of the day.
- 122 In addition, the following new online forms and processes were developed and delivered / made live:
- (a) Deaf or hearing impairment - application for registration;
  - (b) Grant for new school shoes and coats;
  - (c) COVID-19 Lateral Flow Tests;
  - (d) Environment Awards;
  - (e) Bishop Auckland and Seaham Food Festival trader application;
  - (f) Temporary road closure, street name and numbering.

## **Conclusion**

- 123 Information as to whether customers are satisfied or dissatisfied with our services, as well as their general experience when accessing services and support, is an important resource for improving customer service and determining our actions in line with customer needs.

- 124 The ongoing response to COVID-19 continues to shape our customer service offer in terms of new and existing services delivered and the ways in which our customers and residents can contact us.
- 125 Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a steady increase in the number of service requests received and this has impacted the volume of complaints received as well as overall customer satisfaction.
- 126 However, despite the pandemic, we have continued with range of new customer focused developments aimed at enhancing user experience and continue to analyse and utilise feedback to support opportunities for improvement.

### **Background papers**

- None

### **Other useful documents**

- Previous Customer Feedback reports presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

### **Author(s)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Not applicable.

### **Finance**

Information on financial remedies in relation to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is included within the report.

### **Consultation**

None.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Complaints regarding any equality and diversity aspect are handled in consultation with the Council's Equality Team.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None.

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

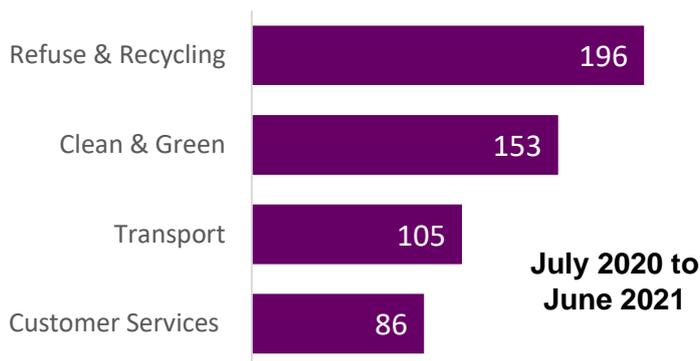
### **Risk**

None.

### **Procurement**

None.

## Appendix 2: Sample of compliments received during quarter one, 2021/22



I have just spoken to Customer Services and would like to say how excellent their customer service was. So helpful / polite and very engaging.

Customer wanted to pass on her thanks for helping her after her fall yesterday

Thanks for very quick service

Litter collector and bin emptier, Seaham Harbour, area around Tommy statue. Young man does a great job, very polite and cheerful, always says hello

so friendly and polite and extremely helpful

A heartfelt thanks for sorting sort out the problem we were having, what a truly lovely and caring person, who presented herself well. She made sure that everything was working properly before leaving us.

Thanks to the staff at Thorpe Road Cemetery for the work there do like keeps cemetery beautiful

Thanks for clearing up the significant mess left after an illegal encampment.

would like to congratulate the lads who have started to cut the grass at Sudbury Avenue and

Customer dropped his keys down the drain and a crew came straight out to get them out for him. Customer very grateful and wanted to thank crew.

The pest control officer was the most polite, helpful, nicest man the customer has had come out to her property.

Thanks for sorting voucher.

the service is fantastic, ALL staff, are very professional, lovely, and friendly

Ref Rowley footpath. We visited this area today and were amazed and over the moon to see the improvements and the quality of work carried out to repair this bridge and footpath.

the bin crew is fabulous, today was recycling day - they are "poetry in motion" they work so well together, they are pleasant, they tidy up and the young man (not the driver) always smiles and waves. The driver is an older gentleman and is also pleasant. Would like the bin men to know how good they are!

huge thank you to the crews of the rubbish collection for working in the atrocious weather this morning. A heavy rain and a hailstone shower at Newton Hall left the guys absolutely drenched. I still got a friendly wave

would like to compliment and thank the team of litter pickers who keep the grass at Seaham Marina entrance and North Terrace so clean and tidy despite the large number of visitors and associated rubbish. A job very well done and appreciated by both local residents and the many visitors who come to the area.

They were an excellent communicator, very helpful with a reassuring, calm voice and I felt they would ensure that the matter would be resolved.

Thanks for help with the attendance allowance form, which was successful. Can't thank them enough

### Appendix 3: Independent investigations by Customer Feedback Team where corporate complaints were upheld

Complaint upheld	Recommendation
Customer dissatisfied that bins are emptied earlier than advertised collection times and the way the initial complaint was handled	Apologise that the initial complaint was not fully addressed. The area manager to rectify the issue of early collections
Customer dissatisfied with lack of communication from the refuse and recycling team following missed collections.	Apologise to the customer. The service is recommended to note the importance of timely communication and the requirement to respond fully to all elements of the complaint

Complaint partially upheld	Recommendation
Customer dissatisfied with the outcome of complaint regarding highways maintenance works.	Apologise for the time taken to resolve the matter. Identify any additional training and review the process to determine why the information supplied was not passed to relevant team.
Customer dissatisfied with the way initial complaint was logged and the issues were not addressed.	Apologise to the customer for failing to log all elements of the complaint and for not explaining processes clearly during discussions with officers.
Customer dissatisfied with the decision not to carry out extensive tree pruning/ removal.	Apologise for the delay in responding to enquiries and for lack of detail in the responses.
Customer dissatisfied that highways works could continue.	Apologise for not contacting with the outcome of an associated highways inspection.
Customer dissatisfied with the handling of their calls regarding council tax	Apologise to customer for not providing the expected of level of service.

## Appendix 4: Complaints upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman)

Ombudsman's final decision	Agreed action
The council was at fault in how it handled an appeal following a decision not to award a concessionary bus pass.	No action necessary
The council was at fault for refusing home to school transport to the only school named in an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan	The council should make clear, in all new and amended EHC plans, whether the school named was the parent's preference - and if there is a nearer suitable school, clarify that the family is responsible for any extra transport costs
The council was wrong to conclude that putting a property into Trust had been to avoid care and support charges (deprivation of assets).	The council should review its decision to determine if, considering the information, deprivation of assets occurred, in line with what has been set out in the Care Act and its Statutory Guidance.
The council failed to keep complainant informed of its visits and actions, and left materials behind which led to damage to contents of the property.	To apologise, and to pay £250 to acknowledge the complainant's distress, time, and trouble.
The council was at fault for not fully assessing the complainant's care needs.	To apologise for the faults identified, and to undertake a fresh assessment with appropriate persons involved.

## Appendix 5: Customer Satisfaction Survey: response rates and satisfaction with service delivery

	Response Rate		Satisfaction with service delivery		Main reason(s) for dissatisfaction
	Surveys returned / total SRs		(change is only significant if it is =>2pp)		
	12 months ending		12 months ending		
	30 June 2020	30 June 2021	30 June 2020	30 June 2021	
Anti-social behaviour	<b>4.1%</b> 95 / 2,335	<b>3.5%</b> 101 / 2,852	79%	<b>81%</b>	The issue has not been resolved long term
Bin: new, replacement or repair	<b>0.5%</b> 121 / 22,597	<b>0.5%</b> 142 / 26,324	43%	44%	not keeping customers informed of progress and taking too long to complete task
Bin: missed collection	Not available	<b>19.2%</b> 5,712 / 29,804	58%	<b>76%</b>	Time taken to return for the bin
Birth, death, or marriage certificate	<b>6.1%</b> 178 / 2,937	<b>8.8%</b> 319 / 3,644	97%	<b>93%</b>	Time taken to respond
Complaints	<b>5%</b> 223 / 4,101	<b>15.9%</b> 786 / 4,950	54%	55%	not keeping customers informed of progress nor providing them with clear information. Also taking too long to complete task.
Council tax – change of payment method	<b>10.6%</b> 530 / 4,992	<b>11%</b> 598 / 5,422	94%	93%	Communication issues
Council tax account	<b>6.6%</b> 1,343 / 20,427	<b>7.8%</b> 550 / 7,044	96%	96%	Communication issues
Dog bins or litter bins	<b>8%</b> 120 / 1,534	<b>6.2%</b> 113 / 1,825	80%	<b>62%</b>	not explaining our decision when unable to install/ relocate/ renew bin. Also not completing task when we agreed to action in line with our existing schedule.

## Appendix 5: Customer Satisfaction Survey: response rates and satisfaction with service delivery

Page 158	Response Rate Surveys returned / total SRs		Satisfaction with service delivery (change is only significant if it is =>2pp)		Main reason(s) for dissatisfaction
	12 months ending		12 months ending		
	30 June 2020	30 June 2021	30 June 2020	30 June 2021	
Dog fouling	<b>9.3%</b> 187 / 2,013	<b>8.6%</b> 179 / 2,092	64%	73%	The issue remains unresolved
Drainage and flooding	<b>6.7%</b> 155 / 2,315	<b>7.6%</b> 175 / 2,316	74%	78%	The issue remains unresolved
Early help referral	<b>5.4%</b> 41 / 754	<b>10.5%</b> 197 / 1,883	98%	96%	
Fly-tipping	<b>5%</b> 617 / 13,637	<b>5.7%</b> 922 / 16,317	85%	85%	The issue remains unresolved
Free school travel - apply	<b>8.5%</b> 121 / 1,311	<b>13%</b> 243 / 1,874	99%	99%	NA
Garden waste – join the scheme	<b>3%</b> 370 / 34,903	<b>0.9%</b> 479 / 54,008	96%	94%	
Litter	<b>8.9%</b> 276 / 3,116	<b>4.4%</b> 186 / 4,188	70%	66%	The issue remains unresolved
Road or footpath	<b>8%</b> 497 / 6,072	<b>7.2%</b> 635 / 8,826	73%	81%	The issue remains unresolved
Rubbish in gardens and yards	<b>3.2%</b> 133 / 4,167	<b>4.3%</b> 200 / 4,693	81%	83%	The issue remains unresolved
Street lighting	<b>10%</b> 633 / 6,198	<b>12%</b> 797 / 6,632	86%	85%	The issue remains unresolved
Tree or hedge pruning, removal	<b>10%</b>	<b>10.3%</b>	66%	68%	The issue remains unresolved

## Appendix 5: Customer Satisfaction Survey: response rates and satisfaction with service delivery

	Response Rate		Satisfaction with service delivery		Main reason(s) for dissatisfaction
	Surveys returned / total SRs		(change is only significant if it is =>2pp)		
	12 months ending		12 months ending		
	30 June 2020	30 June 2021	30 June 2020	30 June 2021	
	461 / 4,611	459 / 4,455			
Warm homes	<b>8%</b> 63 / 786	<b>12.4%</b> 205 / 1,655	92%	73%	Nobody contacted the customer
Waste permit	<b>0.5%</b> 149 / 31,005	<b>0.5%</b> 179 / 39,046	94%	96%	

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**Overview and Scrutiny Management  
Board**

**25 October 2021**

**AHS Annual Statutory Representations  
Report 2020/21**

**Ordinary Decision**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Jane Robinson, Corporate Director- Adult and Health Services**

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide an overview of statutory representations relating to adult social care services for the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The Annual Statutory Representations Report is prepared under the provisions and requirements of the '*Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009*'. The report content reflects the requirements detailed in the regulations.
- 3 Analysis of performance has identified the following are the key messages for 2020/21:
  - a) There has been a decrease in the number of complaints investigated from 81 in 2019/20 to 75 in 2020/21.
  - b) There was also a reduction in the number of complaints that the Council declined during 2020/21; 10 compared to 16 in the previous performance year.
  - c) DCC AHS received 4 complaints where the contribution of colleagues from Health were needed to inform upon the Council's response, leading in these investigations and responding on behalf of all involved organisations in line with joint protocols. This was a reduction from 11 in the previous performance year. The Council also contributed to a further 6 investigations led by Health, one more than the previous performance year.

- d) Older People/Physical Disabilities/Sensory Impairment received 31% of the overall complaints about adult social care services, down from 47% in 2019/20. In contrast, complaints relating to Finance more than doubled from 9% in 2019/20 to 20% in 2020/21.
- e) The new category of **Covid-19 related**, which was added in March 2020, was the highest reason (21) for making a complaint in 2020/21.
- f) The LGSCO raised 22 adult social care complaints with the Council during 2020/21, compared to 17 in 2019/20, taking action and/or reaching a decision on 10 of these cases with 12 still being investigated at the time of writing this report.
- g) The service received 66 compliments about adult social care services during 2020/21, a significant decrease from 130 in 2019/20 with compliments for County Durham Care and Support totalling only 10, representing a significant reduction when compared to the previous performance year (82).

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 4 Overview and Scrutiny Management board are requested
  - a) to note the contents of the report and approve the AHS Annual Statutory Representations Report;
  - b) to agree to the publication of the AHS Annual Statutory Representations Report as required in line with the regulations.

## Background

- 5 Complaints handling and the production of the annual report are managed under the provisions and requirements of the '*Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009*'. This is a single joint complaints process for both social care and health services where there are no fixed timescales for managing a complaint with a greater focus on local resolution. If all proportionate resolution mechanisms have been exhausted and if the complaint remains unresolved, the complainant can refer outstanding issues to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The regulations also introduced a duty for health and social care services to cooperate, should this be required, in complaints investigations.
- 6 The report aims to identify the topics and trends from the compliments and complaints received, as well as illustrating where this feedback has been used to improve services.

## Main Implications

- 7 Information contained within the Annual Statutory Representation Report was considered by Corporate Management Team (CMT) on 23 June 2021.

## Conclusion

- 8 The complaints function is a statutory requirement for social care services, and it plays a vital role in contributing to quality improvement across adult social care as it provides an understanding of the service users' experiences. Acting upon the learning arising from complaints provides the opportunity to change practice and improve service delivery with transparency and accountability.
- 9 A collaborative approach is continually promoted during the management of complaints, where the complainant is central to the process and resolution is proactively sought and encouraged.

## Background papers

- AHS Annual Statutory Representations Report 2020/21

## Other useful documents

- None

## Author(s)

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The report has been developed in line with the 'Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009'. Day to day management of complaints is supported by Legal Services when appropriate.

### **Finance**

Complaints can lead to financial claims for remedy, in 2020/21 this equated to £1,600.

### **Consultation**

None.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Consistent with national and local requirements, with the representations procedure taking into account equality and diversity whilst ensuring accessibility.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Human Rights**

Compatible with Human Rights Act – able to record and respond to complaints about alleged breaches.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None.

### **Staffing**

Staff are made aware of compliments and feedback given, any areas of underperformance highlighted as a consequence of staff actions within a complaint are acted upon with the individuals/teams concerned.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Risk**

Upheld complaints can lead to reputational risk for the Local Authority.

### **Procurement**

None.



Adult and Health Services

**Annual Statutory Representations Report**  
Adult Social Care Services 2020/21

# Annual Statutory Representations Report

Adult and Health Services 2020/21

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## Part One - Introduction

Welcome to Durham County Council's (DCC) Adult and Health Services (AHS) Annual Report which details representations made in relation to adult social care services. The report covers the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The report is published under the provisions and requirements of the relevant regulations: *The Local Authority Social Services and NHS Complaints (England) Regulations 2009*. This is a single joint complaints process for both social care and health services where there are no fixed timescales for managing a complaint with a greater focus on local resolution. If all proportionate resolution mechanisms have been exhausted and if the complaint remains unresolved, the complainant can refer outstanding issues to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The regulations also introduced a duty for health and social care services to cooperate, should this be required, in complaints investigations.

This process aims to:

- Make it as easy and accessible as possible for service users or their nominated representatives to raise complaints;
- Foster an organisational culture in which complaints are accepted, owned and resolved as efficiently as possible;
- Ensure high levels of customer satisfaction with complaints handling;
- Resolve individual issues when they arise and reduce the number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman; and
- Enable the Council to identify topics and trends in relation to adult social care complaints and improve services as a result.

In recording and reporting upon the Council's performance in relation to the above, the Local Authority has a statutory duty to produce an annual report under Regulation 18 of the statutory instrument detailed above.

Other key features of the Regulations include:

- the requirement for local authorities to appoint a Complaints Manager; and
- a 12-month time limit to make complaints.

During 2020/21 the AHS Development and Learning Manager fulfilled the role of 'Complaints Manager' in accordance with the requirements of the regulations, with a Complaints Officer allocated to undertake the day-to-day supervision of the complaints function, both being independent of social care services' operational line management, thus ensuring a high level of independence in the way social care complaints are managed within the Council.

## Part Two - Summary of key messages

The key headlines from this report are as follows:

There has been a decrease in the number of complaints investigated from 81 in 2019/20 to 75 in 2020/21.

There was also a reduction in the number of complaints that the Council declined during 2020/21; 10 compared to 16 in the previous performance year.

DCC AHS received 4 complaints where the contribution of colleagues from Health were needed to inform upon the Council's response, leading in these investigations and responding on behalf of all involved organisations in line with joint protocols. This was a reduction from 11 in the previous performance year. The Council also contributed to a further 6 investigations led by Health, one more than the previous performance year.

Older People/Physical Disabilities/Sensory Impairment received 31% of the overall complaints about adult social care services, down from 47% in 2019/20. In contrast, complaints relating to Finance more than doubled from 9% in 2019/20 to 20% in 2020/21.

The new category of **Covid-19 related**, which was added in March 2020, was the most common reason (21) for making a complaint in 2020/21.

The LGSCO raised 22 adult social care complaints with the Council during 2020/21, compared to 17 in 2019/20, taking action and/or reaching a decision on 10 of these cases with 12 still being investigated at the time of writing this report.

The service received 66 compliments about adult social care services during 2020/21, a significant decrease from 130 in 2019/20 with compliments for County Durham Care and Support totalling only 10, representing a significant reduction when compared to the previous performance year (82).

Complaints continue to provide invaluable information and learning from which adult social care services can improve. Some examples of which are detailed below:

- As a result of failing to give clear advice on the costs of care before a service user was discharged from hospital into a care home, the Council reviewed its procedure for sharing information about care charging, staff were instructed to share relevant information at an early stage and, wherever possible, before a final decision is made about the care to be provided.
- A Care Act assessment took longer than permitted as per the statutory timescale and as a result a training need was identified and addressed within the wider integrated team in relation to financial assessments, to ensure that the correct procedures were followed by both health and social care professionals.

### **Part Three - The adult social care complaints process**

When a complaint is received, it is risk-assessed to ensure that there are no safeguarding or other procedural issues that might supersede the complaints procedure and that it is within the 12-month limitation period. Consent must be obtained to confirm that someone making a complaint on another's behalf has been given the authority to do so.

Once the above determinations have been made, complainants are engaged in planning how their complaint is to be addressed and the timescales for doing so, along with what they hope to see happen as a result of making a complaint in the form of desired outcomes. A Complaints Resolution Plan (CRP) is produced which summarises this information along with the specific elements of complaint for investigation and the complainant is encouraged to suggest any changes to this document so it accurately reflects the issues they wish to be examined.

The Council's focus is always on the resolution of the complaint and engagement with the complainant in order to resolve matters to their satisfaction. Where resolution is not achieved, the complainant remains dissatisfied and the Council's complaints procedure is deemed to have been exhausted, the complainant is invited to raise any outstanding issues with the LGSCO.

Whilst a complainant can refer their complaints to the LGSCO from the outset, the Ombudsman will not usually investigate a complaint until the Council has conducted its own investigation and provided a response. In some circumstances where there has been a joint investigation with Health Services, progression may involve the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO).

### **Part Four- Complaints made to the Local Authority (AHS)**

AHS formally investigated 75 complaints during 2020/21, noting that the outcomes of 4 of these investigations were still pending at the time of writing this report.

In addition to this number, 10 complaints were declined. In 3 cases, a Mental Capacity Act assessment was undertaken and the service user in each case did not have the capacity to give informed consent to a complaint being made on their behalf about the services they had received. A subsequent Best Interests decision concluded that each complainant was not acting in the services user's best interests. Three further complaints were declined because the complainant did not produce a valid form of authority to confirm they were acting with the service user's knowledge and consent.

In one case, it was reported that the service user had the capacity to understand the complaint and when questioned they did not agree to it being made on their behalf, nor to the release of their personal information in response. Another submission was declined because it was a repeat of issues previously complained about and the complainant was invited to escalate their complaint to the LGSCO.

Two further complaints were outside of AHS's jurisdiction to investigate. One related to a care provider based in County Durham but the service user lived in Morpeth and the service had been commissioned by Northumberland County Council. The other related to a private housing provider and again, the service was not commissioned by the Local Authority, so it was outside of the Council's jurisdiction to investigate and report upon.

Complainants can approach the LGSCO with a request that they review the Council's decision to decline their complaint. At the time of writing this report the Ombudsman has not approached the Council with an instruction to investigate any of these declined complaints.

AHS led on 4 complaint investigations that incorporated contributions from our partners in Health which was a significant decrease from 11 in 2019/20. This involved joint complaint investigations with Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV) (2) and County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) (2). These 4 complaints are included in the figures presented in this report.

The Council also contributed information to complaint investigations led by TEWV (1) and CDDFT (5). This was a slight increase from 5 in the previous performance year. These figures are not included in this report as the lead organisation will include these within their own annual reporting.

#### **Comparison of number of complaints received by service area 2019/20 to 2020/21**

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Number of Complaints 2019/20</b>	<b>% of Total Complaints 2019/20</b>	<b>Number of Complaints 2020/21</b>	<b>% of Total Complaints 2020/21</b>
<b>Older People/ Physical Disabilities/Sensory Impairment</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Learning Disability/Mental Health/Carers/Substance Misuse</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Commissioning</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>County Durham Care and Support</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Safeguarding, Practice Development &amp; Access</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Finance*</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>

*\*Finance is no longer part of AHS, but the complaints were regarding statutory adult social care services*

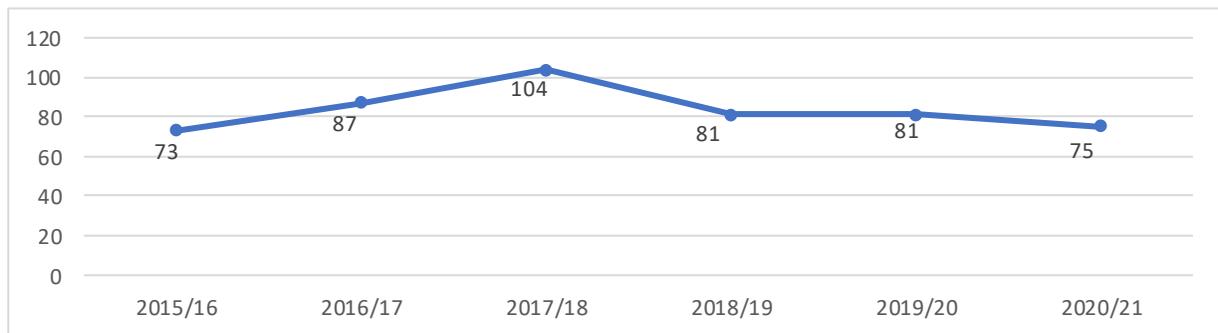
The number of complaints for some service areas remained relatively consistent with changes representing an increase or reduction in complaints by only 1 or 2.

The significant changes relate to Older People/Physical Disabilities/Sensory Impairment whose complaints reduced significantly, down 15 from the previous year, representing 23% of overall complaints. Complaints relating to Finance more than

doubled due to an increase in dissatisfaction relating to charging and matters linked to areas such as billing, deliberate deprivation of assets and Covid-19 funding.

The graph below shows the number of complaints received by adult social care services over the last 6 years. Submissions began to increase and peaked in 2017/18, only for these to fall quite significantly in 2018/19, maintain in 2019/20, then fall again in 2020/21.

### Year on year trend - adult social care complaints 2015 – 2021



### Complaints completed within timescales

Complaints Resolution Plans (CRPs) were completed in all but 1 of the 75 complaints received in the year, with 1 relatively straightforward complaint being immediately responded to on the day of receipt, meaning no CRP was necessary. Of the CRPs compiled, all included a projected timescale for a response which was initially calculated based upon the perceived complexity of the case.

In 13 complaints investigations (17%), AHS needed more time to fully complete their enquiries for a variety of reasons such as the availability of staff for interview, unforeseen complexity, further information required from the Complainant and the need to seek legal advice. This figure is fluctuating as it increased from 25% to 29.5% between 2018/19 and then has dropped by 12.5% in this performance year. This has been linked to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown and re-opening of services instigated by the Government from March 2020.

As a consequence, the projected response dates on some complaint investigations had to be extended. The impact on complaints investigations and the need to extend timescales was most keenly felt by the Commissioning Service at that time whose focus was on working with domiciliary and residential care providers.

In the 2020/21 performance year, it has been noted there has been a greater degree of complexity in the matters raised within complaints. Equally, the prevalence that 21 of the overall 75 (28%) complaints received are linked to Covid-19 have had an impact on the deadlines set with the complainants to look to ensure the Service manage expectations and provide robust responses.

Where the Council needed more time to fully investigate and report upon a complaint, the complainant in each case was updated and fully informed of developments along with a new projected response date.

Of the 75 complaints received, 71 had been responded to at the time of writing this report with 4 outcomes pending. All other complaint investigations relating to complaints submitted in 2020/21 were completed and associated responses issued within the projected or extended timescales notified to the complainant.

### Categories of complaints received and findings in 2020/21

When complaints are received, they are recorded and categorised according to the subject matter of the issues raised.

Detailed below is the outcomes of complaints in 2020/21 in the associated categories (the highest four totals are shown in bold):

Complaint Category / Issue	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Pending	Total
Application of Service Guidance/Procedures	1	1	4	1	7
Confidentiality	1	2	1	-	4
<b>COVID-19 related</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>21</b>
Discrimination	-	1	3	-	4
Disputed Decision – disagreement with an action	-	2	2	1	5
Disputed Decision – disagreement with an assessment	-	2	1	-	3
Disputed Decision – disagreement with a report	-	-	1	-	1
<b>Disputed Decision – disagreement with an explanation or decision</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>
Eligibility Criteria	1	-	-	-	1
Finance – Assessment	2	1	4	-	7
<b>Finance – Charging policy</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Lack of Communication – no information received</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	-	<b>13</b>
Lack of Communication – not updated about case	1	-	2	1	4
Lack of Communication – unreturned phone calls/texts	-	1	-	-	1
Lack of Communication – other	2	2	2	-	6
Lack of Explanation / Explanation not understood	2	2	5	-	9
Lack of Service – denied service	-	5	5	2	12
Lack of service – referral of concern not actioned	1	-	1	-	2
Provision of Service – assessment	-	2	2	-	6
Provision of Service – equipment	-	1	1	-	2
Quality of Service – missed or incorrect medication	-	1	1	-	2
Quality of Service – missed/late domiciliary care calls	1	1	-	-	2
Quality of Service – personal care	-	2	1	-	3
Quality of Service – personal financial issues	1	1	-	1	3
Quality of Service – work of other agencies	2	1	3	-	9
Refusal of service	-	-	1	-	1
Safeguarding	2	2	3	2	9
Speed of service	3	3	1	1	8
Staff attitude	-	3	2	1	6
Staff being or seeming to be biased	-	1	-	-	1
Staff being or seeming to be untruthful	-	2	2	-	4
Staff not acting in best interest of service user	-	1	2	1	4
Staff not adhering to statutory timescales or responsibilities	-	1	1	-	2
Standard of care	1	2	4	1	8
Overall Total					<b>201</b>

*It should be noted that a complaint can have more than one category assigned to it.*

From the 201 categories used to assign the 75 complaints received in 2020/21, the top 4 reasons for making a complaint are listed below:

**Covid-19 related**, a category only added in March 2020, was the most common reason, appearing 21 times (10.5%). Complaints linked to this category were about matters such as visiting restrictions within care homes, residential or domiciliary care providers allegedly failing to follow the government advice to stop the risk of the spread of the virus, funding for residential placements under Covid arrangements and charges once this funding ceased.

**Finance – Charging policy** was the second most comment reason, appearing 17 times (8.5%). This category was also second on 2019/20 and often relates to the charges services users are asked to pay for adult social care services where the amounts are disputed, for example, where the services have not been delivered as frequently or to the standards expected. In 2020/21, this category often appeared alongside **Covid-19 related** when government funding for residential care placements ended and service users disputed charges going forward.

**Disputed Decision – disagreement with an explanation or decision** was relegated to joint third place, after being the most common reason for making a complaint in the previous performance year. This was alongside **Lack of Communication – no information received**, which also appeared 13 times (6.5%).

#### Outcome of complaints by service area 2020/21

Service Area	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Ongoing	Total	Not Upheld as a % of Total	Upheld/Partially Upheld as a % of Total
Older People/ Physical Disability & Sensory Impairment	3	7	11	2	23	14.7%	13.3%
Learning Disability/ Mental Health / Substance Misuse	3	4	9	1	17	12%	9.3%
Safeguarding, Practice Development & Access	-	-	3	-	3	4%	-
Commissioning	3	4	6	1	14	8%	9.3%
County Durham Care and Support	-	-	3	-	3	4%	-
Finance	3	5	7	-	15	9.3%	10.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>42.6%</b>

(+5.4% ongoing)

In 2020/21, 52% of complaints investigated through to a finding were not upheld with 5.4% still under investigation and an outcome pending. Less than half the complaints received were upheld in full or in part, meaning that the dissatisfaction reported by the complainant was justified in some way. Of the 75 complaints, only 16% of complaints (12) were fully upheld.

Complaints that are upheld or partially upheld are of particular interest to adult social care services. In these cases, the service actively looks to identify what it could have

done better and what action it can take with the aim of resolving matters to the complainant's satisfaction.

These complaints give the service the opportunity for learning, on an individual level for example, where a social worker can be supported by management to improve their personal performance and sometimes across the whole service, where a policy or procedure is improved as a result of a complaint. Further examples of learning and service improvement as a consequence of complaints received are outlined in Part Six of this report.

## Part Five - The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint, they can refer any outstanding issues to the LGSCO who will determine what action to take after considering the presenting issues.

### Complaints considered by the LGSCO 2020/21

Service Area	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Declined/ No Action	Ongoing	Total
Older People/ Physical Disability & Sensory Impairment	1	-	-	2	4	7
Learning Disability/ Mental Health / Substance Misuse	1	-	-	1	1	3
Finance	1	-	-	-	3	4
Commissioning	1	-	-	1	4	6
Other	-	-	-	2	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>

Since mid-March 2020 the Ombudsman took steps to manage their service due to the Coronavirus pandemic which impacted upon their ability to complete existing complaints investigations. The LGSCO also indicated that they would not accept new complaints due to Covid-19 and suspended all casework activity that demanded information from, or action by, local authorities to allow them to concentrate on their response to the crisis.

The LGSCO began to accept new complaints from 29 June 2020 and restarted their enquiries into existing complaints submissions that same month.

In the 2020/21 performance year the Ombudsman approached AHS in relation to 22 adult statutory social care complaints, up from 17 in 2019/20, and concluded their enquiries in only 10 of these cases.

Of the 6 cases declined, closed or identified as needing no further action:

- One case was redirected as the Ombudsman had mistakenly identified Durham County Council as the responsible local authority.
- The LGSCO closed a complaint about the decision to move a service user from his own home to a residential placement without family involvement because the complainant was given the Ombudsman's contact details at the conclusion of the Council's own investigation in January 2018. The Ombudsman decided not to

investigate this late complaint because there was no good reason why daughter did not complain to the LGSCO within 12 months of events occurring.

- The Ombudsman decided not to investigate a late complaint about the care given to the complainant's mother following her discharge from hospital because there was no good reason to disapply the law to investigate more than one year later and concluded that the LGSCO could not provide a different outcome to that already received from the Council's own investigation.
- The Ombudsman identified 2 separate complaints where the complainant had not exhausted the Council's own complaints procedure and advised that the Local Authority should conduct their own investigation before any unresolved matters would be considered by the Ombudsman.
- The LGSCO decided not to investigate a complaint about an allegation of false statements made by the Council in a court hearing as the Ombudsman cannot investigate matters that have been to court. It was open to those with Lasting Power of Attorney to challenge any Council evidence they disputed in court, rather than to do so via the complaints procedure, nor could the Ombudsman recommend disciplinary action against individuals because they cannot investigate personnel matters.

Of the 4 cases upheld where the Ombudsman identified maladministration and injustice:

- In one case, the Ombudsman concluded that the Council was not at fault for deciding a service user had capacity to manage their own finances in early 2019, however, it was at fault for failing to properly record the date of a capacity assessment, for a delay in relinquishing control of the bank account after deciding the service user had capacity and for failing to arrange further support in November 2019. A payment of £500 was made in resolution of the complaint.
- The Ombudsman found that the Council was correct to continue to charge a service user whilst they were in hospital in order to ensure they had a placement to return to upon discharge, but when it was decided that the service user could not return to the care home, the Council continued to charge for the placement for a further three days, hence the upheld finding and a recommendation that the Council refund the equivalent of 3 days charge.
- The LGSCO decided not to investigate a complaint relating to an email trail that had inadvertently been sent to a service user as the Council had already upheld the complaint, but did find that there should have been a financial remedy alongside the unreserved apology already given by the Council and recommended a payment of £300.
- The LGSCO found that the Local Authority should have more closely evaluated a care provider's complaints investigation before accepting their findings and given consideration to a further remedy alongside merely upholding the complaints. On occasion there was a lack of visits, missed medication and a failure to report a fall which placed the service user at risk of harm. The Ombudsman recommended a

payment of £500 in resolution of the complaint and that the Council should further review the improvements put in place by the care provider.

## Part Six - Learning and service improvement

Complaints provide invaluable information from which the service learns how to improve. Complaints also act as a prompt to ensure all staff work consistently to policies and procedures. Even where complaints are not upheld, full explanations, further information and often apologies are given.

Some of the learning outcomes and remedies for resolution in the reporting year are as follows:

- An investigation identified issues relating to a domiciliary care provider's attendance and whilst records indicated that they did notify the service user that they would be late or unable to attend, it was acknowledged that this was of little use when in need of care and support, especially in situations where the provider failed to attend. It was agreed that the Commissioning Service would conduct a visit to the care provider as soon as could be practically arranged to check that their business processes and staff training are to the standard the Council expects.
- A service user's move from a residential placement to supported living accommodation, which prompted the deliberations of the Joint Validation & Decision-Making Forum, should have resulted in the service user and his financial advocate being notified of the outcome in writing. An apology was given for this omission and a written outcome provided, with a chronology of events also compiled to allow the service to reflect upon areas for practice improvement. These were presented as a formal agenda item in a Learning Disability Management Team meeting and Regional section 117 Forum with areas of learning to be addressed by the relevant services.
- Invoices were sent to a service user's home address when they had been placed in a care home and their information was not updated to include a finance contact within the family. The Council's processes were altered to make it clear that the Financial Assessment Team should take on the responsibility for updating the records to reflect finance contact information, as part of dealing with the service user's Financial Assessment, which would avoid similar problems in future.
- A letter was issued by the Sensory Support Service on behalf of the Royal National Institute for the Blind with advice for those on the Visual Impairment Register, offering support during the Covid-19 pandemic, but the service user was deceased. An apology was given, and scoping work undertaken, to look at the potential options to obtain information on a more regular basis and ensure the register was regularly updated.
- The Mental Health Practice Development Group was charged with considering how social workers or nurses can check with service users to ensure that they have felt supported throughout the review process and to reaffirm that a review should be achieved in partnership with service users, after a service user expressed distress at a decision to reduce their care package during the course of a review.

- A service user experienced multiple falls whilst on a respite placement but at no time did the care provider inform the family who visited daily. An electronic Care Plan system was introduced which required the monitoring and reviewing of all incidents and also required a review of all falls sustained by residents, which was linked to a Management Reporting system where reporting is added and managed by the Home Manager with lessons learnt forming part of the review for all incidents and accidents.

Payments were made where failures constituted maladministration and/or injustice as defined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. See the LGSCO section in Part Five of the report. Within the 2020/21 performance year payments of £1,600 were made. It should be noted that financial redress was only considered (and agreed in line with the Council's Scheme of Delegation) where there was strong evidence of shortcomings.

It is recognised that where adult social care services are responsible for service failures that have caused losses and significant emotional distress, there is clearly the duty for this to be acknowledged and further distress to the complainant be avoided. In each of the complaint responses issued, full explanations and where appropriate, apologies were offered.

Complaints continue to provide invaluable information and learning from which adult social care services can improve. At the conclusion of each complaint investigation, the Strategic Manager with responsibility for the service area being complained about ensures that any proposed action is completed. They also disseminate any learning across their own area of the service and to a wider audience across AHS where appropriate.

## **Part Seven - Compliments**

There is no statutory requirement to publish data on compliments for the period in question. These are included in this report in order to provide a more holistic view of what service users and their nominated representatives think about the services they receive and to understand what elements of the service that are valued.

There were 66 recorded compliments during 2020/21, a significant decrease from the 130 received in 2019/20. As shown in the table below, the majority of the compliments in 2019/20 were for County Durham Care and Support (CDCS), the in-house provider services.

## Total number of compliments by service area 2020/21

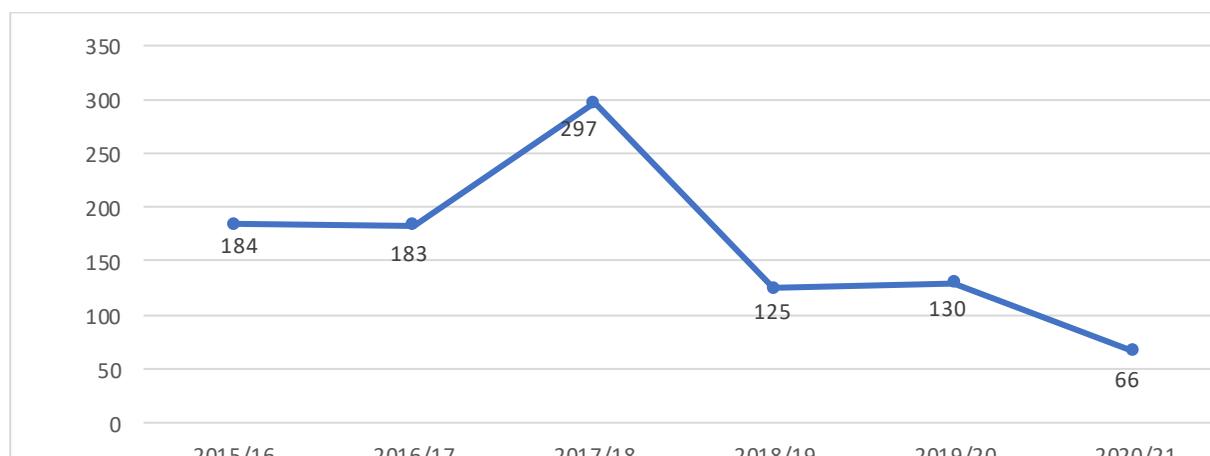
Service	Total Compliments 2020/21	% of Total Compliments 2020/21	Total Compliments 2019/20	% of Total Compliments 2019/20
Older People/ Physical Disabilities/ Sensory Impairment	33	50%	47	36.2%
Learning Disability/Mental Health/ Carers/Substance Misuse	23	35%	-	-
County Durham Care and Support	10	15%	82	63.1%
Legal Services*	-	-	1	0.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Although not part of AHS, this compliment was given during the course of dealing with adult social care issues

Prior to the significant increase in compliments in the 2017/18 performance year, there has previously been a similar number of compliments received year on year until 2020/21 and the Covid-19 pandemic. It is noted that during 2017/18 the CDCS teams affected by the prospect of outsourcing captured a lot of positive feedback for their area of the service. Now that these elements of the service are no longer part of DCC, the number of compliments plateaued, followed by a significant reduction in 2020/21.

Staff are relied on to share compliments so that they can be logged and as colleagues have been given the instruction to work from home where possible, as well as the focus within Extra Care on keeping tenants safe, this appears to have impacted upon the receiving and recording of compliments.

## Year on year trend - adult social care compliments 2015 – 2021



Compliments for reporting purposes must meet specific criteria. Managers are encouraged to ensure that all compliments in the form of positive comments, letters, emails and cards are captured and shared with their staff and teams to re-inforce their value.

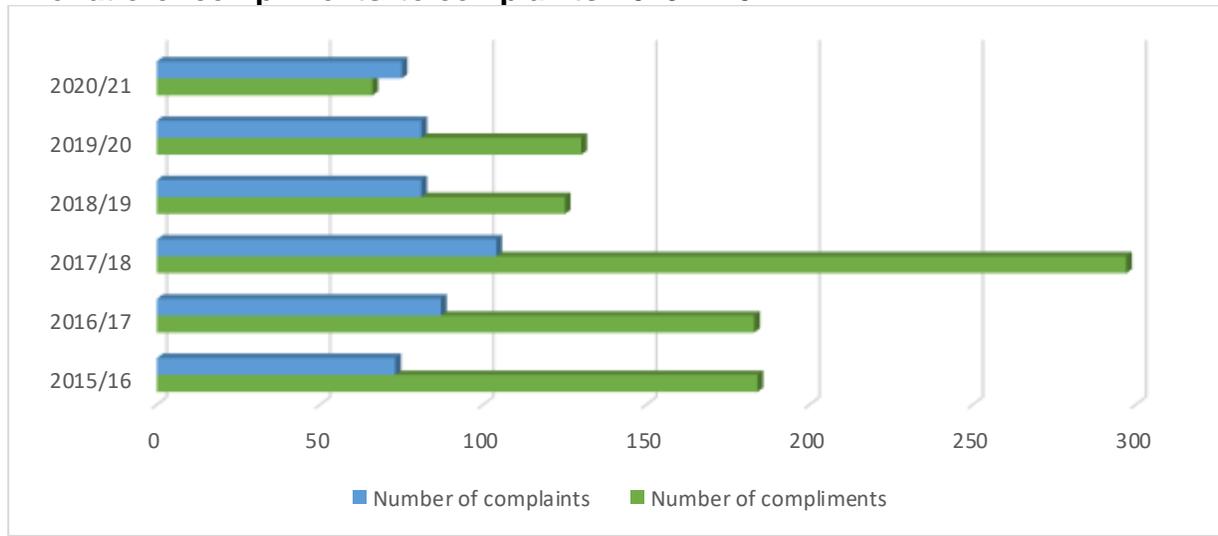
Compliments highlight that service users have appreciated the following:

- Feeling respected, listened to and supported.
- Having decisions explained to them.
- Being kept informed.

- Staff explaining issues in a way the client understood.
- Professionalism, care and commitment of staff.
- Being able to contact staff easily.

The number of compliments received has consistently been higher than the number of complaints received as shown in the graph below, until 2020/21, when for the first time there were more complaints than compliments. The ratio of compliments to complaints received across AHS is 0.88:1. This means that for every 1 complaint received, there were 0.88 compliments. In 2019/20 this ratio was actually 1.6:1.

### The ratio of compliments to complaints 2015 – 2021



## Part Eight – Developments and Conclusion

### Developments

Whilst the Local Authority has a statutory duty to operate and administer a system for dealing with and reporting upon adult social care complaints, DCC AHS does not simply meet that duty but continuously strives to achieve and maintain a high level of service in relation to the management of complaints. With this aim in mind, a number of developments have been undertaken during 2020/21 to include:

- The continuous improvement of tracking and monitoring systems to ensure actions and learning outcomes arising from complaints are implemented in a timely and effective way and fully embedded, in order to compliment the LGSCO’s focus on the monitoring of improvement actions as a consequence of decisions they have made on complaints.
- Close working with the development team charged with implementing the new Azeus computer system which will include a bespoke representations function within the new system for use by AHS, designed to replace and update current systems currently in use.
- Closer working with the Commissioning service to deal with complaints about domiciliary and residential care services which have been commissioned by the Council with the aim of continuing to strengthen the interface between the

complaints function and commissioning to improve the quality of complaints investigations, more effective information gathering and faster response times.

- Closer working with the complaints teams in health services, such as the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG), North of England Commissioning Support (NECS), Tees, Esk, Wear Valley (NHS) Foundation Trust (TEWV) and County Durham and Darlington (NHS) Foundation Trust (CDDFT) , with a focus on a consistency in approach for complaints requiring joint investigations.

## Reporting

Complaints information is reported on a quarterly basis corporately and to AHSMT once at 6 months and then at the financial year end, for cascading to managers and staff.

## Conclusion

The complaints function is a statutory requirement for social care services and it plays a vital role in contributing to quality improvement across adult social care as it provides an understanding of the service users' experiences. Acting upon the learning arising from complaints provides the opportunity to change practice and improve service delivery with transparency and accountability.

A collaborative approach is continually promoted during the management of complaints, where the complainant is central to the process and resolution is proactively sought and encouraged.

Further information regarding anything in this report is available by contacting:

Lesley Martin  
AHS Development and Learning Manager  
Durham County Council - County Hall  
Tel: 03000 267393

## Appendix 1 - Glossary of abbreviations

<b>AHS</b>	Adult and Health Services
<b>CCG</b>	Clinical Commissioning Group
<b>CDCS</b>	County Durham Care and Support
<b>CDDFT</b>	County Durham and Darlington (NHS) Foundation Trust
<b>CHC</b>	Continuing Healthcare
<b>CRP</b>	Complaints Resolution Plan
<b>DCC</b>	Durham County Council
<b>LGSCO</b>	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
<b>NECS</b>	North of England Commissioning Support
<b>PHSO</b>	Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
<b>SSID</b>	Social Services Information Database
<b>TEWV</b>	Tees, Esk and Wear Valley (NHS) Foundation Trust



## Adult and Health Services

### **Annual Statutory Representations Report Adult Social Care Services 2020/2021**

Lesley Martin, AHS Development and Learning Manager  
Tel: 03000 267393

Mark Pickering, AHS Complaints Officer  
Tel: 03000 266855

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format, such as Braille, Audio or Large Print.

**Equality & Diversity, Room 4/139, County Hall,  
Durham, DH1 5UF      Tel: 03000 268019**

**Corporate Overview and  
Scrutiny Management Board**



**25 October 2021**

**Notice of Key Decisions**

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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Helen Lynch, Head of Legal and Democratic Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To consider the list of key decisions that is scheduled to be considered by the Executive.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 2 You are recommended to give consideration to items listed in the notice.

**Background**

- 3 New rules in relation to Executive decisions were introduced by The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, which came into force on 10 September 2012.
- 4 The regulations took away the requirement for the Executive to produce a Forward Plan of key decisions, however introduced that the decision maker cannot make a key decision unless a document has been published at least 28 clear days before the decision is taken, unless either a general exception or special urgency requirements have been met. The document which has to be published must state:
  - a) that the key decision is to be made on behalf of the relevant local authority
  - b) the matter in respect of which the decision is to be made

- c) where the decision maker is an individual, that individual's name and title if any and where the decision maker is a decision making body, its name and list of its members
  - d) the date on which or the period within which the decision is to be made
  - e) a list of the document submitted to the decision maker for consideration in relation to the matter of which the key decision is to be made
  - f) the address from which, subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure copies of, or extracts from any document listed as available
  - g) that other documents relevant to those matters may be submitted to the decision maker
  - h) the procedure for requesting details of those documents (if any) as they become available.
- 5 The requirements also apply to an exempt matter as previously it did not strictly have to be included in the Forward Plan. Now a publicity document must contain particulars of the matter, but may not contain any confidential exempt information or particulars of the adviser or political adviser or assistant.
- 6 Notices of key decisions that are being produced meet the legal requirements of publication, as well as continuing to provide information for a four month period. Members will therefore be able to consider key decisions as previously for the four month period.

**Current Notice of Key Decisions**

- 7 The notice of key decisions that is attached to the report at Appendix 2, is the latest to be published prior to the papers for the Board being dispatched to members. The notice complies with the requirements for Cabinet to be able to take key decisions at the meeting held on 13 October 2021. It also contained information on those key decisions that are currently scheduled to be considered by the Executive up to 31 January 2021.

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<b>Contact:</b>	Ros Layfield	Tel: 03000 269708
	Andy Palmer	Tel: 03000 268551

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet. To publish the notice of key decisions in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

### **Finance**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Consultation**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Climate Change**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Human Rights**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Staffing**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Accommodation**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Risk**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Procurement**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

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**SECTION ONE - CORPORATE**

<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)</b>	<b>Description of Decision to be Made</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Main Consultees &amp; Means of Consultation</b>	<b>Contact details for further information</b>	<b>Scrutiny Involvement</b>
CORP/R/21/05	13-Oct-21	Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Support Payments.		Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Leader of the Council		Mary Readman, Head of Transactional Services, Tel. 03000 268161	
CORP/R/21/02	13-Oct-21	MTFP(12) Update on development of MTFP(12) including consideration of options for consultation.		Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Leader of the Council		Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services, Tel. 03000 261946	Scrutiny members will have input into the formulation of MTFP 12 through Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meetings
CORP/R/21/06	13-Oct-21	Newcastle Airport - Shareholder Loan Guarantee		Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Leader of the Council		Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services Tel. 03000 261946	
CORP/R/21/03	17-Nov-21	Council Tax Base 2021/22 and Forecast Surplus / Deficit on Collection Fund.		Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Leader of the Council		Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services, Tel. 03000 261946	
CORP/R/21/02	15-Dec-21	MTFP(12) - Update on development of MTFP(12) including analysis of the Comprehensive Spending Review.		Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Leader of the Council		Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services, Tel. 03000 261946	Scrutiny members will have input into the formulation of MTFP 12 through Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meetings
CORP/R/21/02	19-Jan-22	MTFP(12) - Details of Provisional Finance Settlement		Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Leader of the Council		Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services Tel. 03000 261946	Scrutiny members will have input into the formulation of MTFP 12 through Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meetings

**SECTION TWO - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)</b>	<b>Description of Decision to be Made</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Main Consultees &amp; Means of Consultation</b>	<b>Contact details for further information</b>
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**SECTION THREE - ADULT AND HEALTH SERVICES**

<b>Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)</b>	<b>Description of Decision to be Made</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Main Consultees &amp; Means of Consultation</b>	<b>Contact details for further information</b>
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## SECTION FOUR - REGENERATION, ECONOMY AND GROWTH

Ref. No.	Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)	Description of Decision to be Made	Background Documents	Lead Cabinet Member	Main Consultees & Means of Consultation	Contact details for further information
REG/06/21	13/10/21	Bishop Auckland Asset Strategy		Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships		Susan Robinson, Head of Corporate Property and Land, Tel: 03000 267332

**SECTION FIVE - NEIGHBOURHOODS AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)</b>	<b>Description of Decision to be Made</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Main Consultees &amp; Means of Consultation</b>	<b>Contact details for further information</b>

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**25 October 2021**



**Information update from the Chairs of  
the Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

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**Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources (Interim)**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present to members an information update of overview and scrutiny activity from September 2021 – October 2021.

**Executive summary**

- 2 This report sets out a chairs' update of all scrutiny activity for the period from the last COSMB meeting up to October 2021.
- 3 The report is for information only and will be submitted to all Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Boards.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 4 Members are invited to receive the report and note the information.

**Background**

- 5 Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) are encouraged to be involved in any area of overview and scrutiny activity via thematic committees and talk to scrutiny committee chairs and overview and scrutiny officers on areas of project and overview activity.

### Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB)

Update on Previous Reviews	There are no systematic reviews to report on for this period.
Scrutiny Review Activity	No scrutiny review activity currently identified  A report containing the comments from the special COSMB meeting was reported to Cabinet on 29 September 2021.
Overview reports/ Presentations	COSMB on 2 September 2021 received reports on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MTFP (12) 2022/23 – 2025/26 and Review of Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme</li> <li>• Q4 2020/21 Budget Outturn- Resources</li> <li>• County Durham Partnerships update</li> <li>• Update on Petitions</li> <li>• Notice of key decisions</li> <li>• Chair's update</li> </ul>

### Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (AWH OSC)

Update on Previous Reviews	There are no systematic reviews to report on for this period.
Scrutiny Review Activity	No scrutiny review activity currently identified.
Overview reports/ Presentations	AWH OSC on 1 October 2021 received reports and presentations on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shotley Bridge Hospital Update</li> <li>• Winter Planning</li> <li>• Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust update</li> <li>• Local Outbreak Management Plan Update</li> <li>• Q1 2020/21 Performance Management</li> <li>• Q4 2020/21 and Q1 2021/22 Adults and Health Services Budget Outturn</li> </ul>

## Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CYP OSC)

Update on Previous Reviews	There are no systematic reviews to report for this period.
Scrutiny Review Activity	No scrutiny review activity currently identified
Overview reports/ Presentations	<p>The CYP OSC on 27 September 2021 received reports and presentations on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of Child Protection Process</li> <li>• Relationship Based Social Work Practice</li> <li>• Developing a New County Durham SEND Strategy</li> <li>• Q4 2020/21 and Q1 2021/22 Budget and Revenue Outturn</li> </ul>

## Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee (E&E OSC)

Update on Previous Reviews	There are no systematic reviews to report on for this period.
Scrutiny Review Activity	No scrutiny review activity currently identified.
Overview reports/ Presentations	<p>A meeting of the E&amp;E OSC on 20 September 2021 considered reports and presentations on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Job Creation Plan</li> <li>• Strategic Employment Sites in County Durham</li> <li>• Q4 2020/21 and Q1 2021/22 Revenue and Capital Outturn</li> </ul> <p>In addition, a briefing report together with the Minerals and Waste Policies and Allocations Development Plan Document Draft Plan was circulated to members of the committee for comment</p>

## Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (E&S OSC)

Update on Previous Reviews	There are no systematic reviews to report for this period.
Scrutiny Review Activity	No scrutiny review activity currently identified
Overview reports/ Presentations	<p>ESC OSC on 8 October 2021 received reports and presentations on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate Emergency Response Plan</li> <li>• Renewable Energy Projects</li> <li>• Q4 2020/21 Outturn report and Q1 Outturn report 2021/22</li> <li>• Q1 2021/22 Performance Management report</li> </ul> <p>In addition, the following briefing reports were circulated to members for comments and questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Minerals and Waste Policies and Allocations Development Plan Document together with the draft plan.</li> <li>• Fuel poverty</li> <li>• Low carbon funding</li> </ul>

## Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SSC OSC)

Update on Previous Reviews	There are no systematic reviews to report on for this period
Scrutiny Review Activity	No scrutiny review activity currently identified
Overview reports/ Presentations	<p>SSC OSC on 9 September 2021 received reports and presentations on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County Durham Youth Justice Service – Overview, Performance and Service Improvement Plan 2021/22</li> <li>• Open Water Safety Update</li> <li>• Alcohol and Drug Harm Reduction Group Update 2021</li> <li>• SSC OSC Work Programme update</li> </ul>

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## **Regional Scrutiny**

- 6 The NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14 October 2021 received reports and presentations on:
- Economic Recovery
  - Broadband – access and exclusion
  - Forward Plan and Work Programme Update
- 7 The NECA & North of Tyne CA Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14 October 2021 received reports and presentations on:
- Transport Budget 2022/23 and MTFP
  - Zero Emission Vehicle Policy Update
  - Go Smarter, Go Active Update
  - Transport North East – Transport Plan progress Update

## **Conclusion**

- 13 This report contains the key issues considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for the period September – October 2021 and is provided for members information only.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

N/A.

### **Finance**

N/A.

### **Climate Change**

Any climate change implications will be included in individual reports to the appropriate scrutiny committee.

### **Consultation**

N/A.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

N/A.

### **Human Rights**

N/A.

### **Crime and Disorder**

N/A.

### **Staffing**

N/A.

### **Accommodation**

N/A.

### **Risk**

N/A.

### **Procurement**

N/A.