



Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date Monday 3 March 2025
Time 9.30 am
Venue Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham

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 18 December 2024 (Pages 3 - 16)
- 4 Declarations of Interest, if any
- 5 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties, if any
- 6 County Durham Skills Development: (Pages 17 - 54)
 - (i) Report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth.
 - (ii) Presentation by the Head of Inclusive Growth and Partnerships.
- 7 Social Housing Allocations Policy Review - Consultation on Key Issues: (Pages 55 - 126)
 - (i) Report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change.
 - (ii) Presentation by the Head of Planning and Housing.

- 8 Quarter Two 2024/25 Performance Management Report:
(Pages 127 - 188)
Report of the Chief Executive.
- 9 Minutes of the County Durham Economic Partnership Board held on 4
December 2024 (Pages 189 - 200)
- 10 Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of
sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

Helen Bradley
Director of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
21 February 2025

To: **The Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and
Scrutiny Committee:**

Councillor S Zair (Chair)
Councillor A Surtees (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Abley, A Batey, G Binney, R Crute, M Currah, D Freeman,
P Heaviside, G Hutchinson, A Jackson, C Lines, L Maddison, R Manchester,
J Miller, B Moist, R Ormerod, K Shaw, M Stead, A Sterling and D Wood

Co-opted Members:

Mrs R Morris and Mr E Simons

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DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the **Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 18 December 2024** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor S Zair (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Batey, R Crute, M Currah, P Heaviside, G Hutchinson, C Lines, R Manchester, B Moist, K Shaw, M Stead, A Sterling and D Wood

Co-opted Members:

Mrs R Morris and Mr E Simons

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Surtees, G Binney and R Ormerod.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members.

3 Minutes

Councillor Moist made reference to page 7 of the minutes from the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 4 November, which referred to him submitting additional questions in relation to the Leisure Transformation Programme, following the Special Joint meeting focusing on the programme which had been held on the 23 September. The minutes of the meeting held on the 4 November stated that the Chair of the committee was liaising with Overview and Scrutiny Officers to get a response from the Service Grouping to Councillor Moist's additional questions. Councillor Moist informed the committee that he had still not received a response from the Service Grouping.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that a response had been sent to Councillor Moist and to the members of the committee. Councillor Moist commented that he would speak to the Overview and Scrutiny Officer outside of the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or interested parties.

6 Council House Delivery Programme - Update

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth and presentation which provided an update on the council house delivery programme; background to the programme; update on activities since the January 2024 report to Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee (EEOOSC); update on the delivery pipeline for new build development and an overview of the building conversions and acquisitions scheme (for copy of report and presentation slides, see file of minutes).

The Housing Delivery Manager provided Members with a detailed presentation which outlined that in October 2020, the council agreed to begin a council house delivery programme of up to 500 homes by 2026. Cabinet reports in February 2021 and December 2021 agreed Phase 1 and Phase 2 sites for the programme, however progression of the council house delivery programme had been impacted by a series of global factors: Covid 19, the war in Ukraine and the global energy crisis.

On the 12 July 2023, Cabinet approved an updated business case for the council house delivery programme, including a revised financial model which responded to three challenges for the programme: macro-economic changes had seen both inflation and interest rates rise significantly since the first business case was prepared, the opportunity to revisit both the delivery approach and assumptions to support viability considerations within the programme, and to understand how the programme could support a reduction in the cost of temporary accommodation provision.

A progress update was then provided since January 2024, which saw the conclusion of the procurement exercise to appoint a main contractor to deliver the programme, the development of a delivery pipeline and detailed work undertaken with the main contractor to refine the pipeline, the progression of the first three sites towards the planning application stage with planning applications for all three sites submitted in November 2024, with a further two sites at pre-application planning stage. It was noted that should these sites be granted planning permission, be viable and successful in attaining Homes England Grant and subject to all other contractual agreements and funding gateway approvals, work would start on site in 2025. A further procurement exercise had been undertaken to appoint a Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) provider to deliver the Merrington View and

Spennymoor site. Work was ongoing to prepare a report to Cabinet outlining the operational and management consideration of the programme which would also include a Financial Strategy for a Housing Revenue Account.

With regards to the delivery pipeline, it was originally intended to deliver 500 new build council houses by 2026, however owing to macro-economic factors, the programme would be delivered by 2029. Sites would be delivered in phases, progressing two or three at a time across a rolling programme with any sites that were considered unsuitable for development being removed from the pipeline. The suitability of sites would consider factors including the site topography and elevation, the size of the site, and the scope of the developable area. It was highlighted that if the programme proved to be a viable proposition, it was intended that the programme would be extended beyond 2029 and the number of new homes built would exceed 500.

The Housing Delivery Manager then provided an overview of the progress at the first three sites: Portland Avenue Seaham, Greenwood Avenue Burnhope and Merrington View Spennymoor, noting that that the Portland Avenue, Seaham development was part of a wider local plan allocation being delivered jointly alongside Homes England. In relation to Portland Avenue, Seaham, this would include 33 units consisting of a mix of two bedroom bungalows along with two and three bed houses. In addition, the site would include Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and he confirmed that the planning application had been submitted in November 2024 and that subject to planning approvals and Homes England grant and contractual gateways, work would commence in Spring 2025. Concerning Greenwood Avenue Burnhope this site will consist of 32 units, a mix of two bed roomed bungalows along with two, three and four bedroom houses with a SUDS pond at the bottom Corner of the site. He confirmed that the planning application had been submitted in November 2024 and that work would commence on site in Spring 2025, subject to planning approvals, Homes England grant and contractual gateways. Concerning Merrington View, he confirmed that this site would consist of eight one-bedroomed properties and was an MMC scheme as part of the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP) with the planning Application submitted in November with work on site commencing in Spring 2025, subject to planning approvals and contractual gateways

In relation to the wider pipeline, it was envisaged that 372 units would be delivered, however site density had increased significantly and it was expected that the sites in the pipeline would deliver more units than originally anticipated, with delivery monitored against targets. The council would also continue to consider other opportunities as they arise including actively exploring opportunities to the west of the A68 in rural communities.

It was expected that a number of sites originally allocated to the programme had been identified as unsuitable and that this is anticipated to total 197 units with sites having various issues. It was highlighted that the further review of the identified

sites may show that other sites are unsuitable in which case alternative sites would need to be considered.

The Housing Delivery Manager continued by commenting that repurposing and converting surplus buildings within the Council's property portfolio and property acquisitions formed an important part of the delivery programme and in meeting housing needs across the county. He highlighted that current activity as part of the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP) would provide 10 units at the former Children's Home in Tow Law and the Registry Office at Bishop Auckland with both of these units completed and ready for occupation by the end of March 2025. He continued by commenting that targeted acquisition were a way to supplement the new build element of the programme and provide an opportunity to meet housing needs in locations where there were limited land opportunities. It was confirmed that targeted acquisitions had taken place historically to meet various housing needs including the general need for affordable housing, the need for temporary accommodation and to provide accommodation for rough sleepers. In relation to the distribution and form of properties, the Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that the properties are distributed across a range of settlements within the county and consist of studio apartments, 1,2,3 and 4 bed roomed properties. It was highlighted that 2 bedroom properties are the largest element of the stock with the range of property sizes reflecting housing need within the county.

In terms of the next steps, the Housing Delivery Manager advised that progression would continue in relation to the first schemes, with further sites brought forward within the pipeline, the continuation of the acquisitions programme and a future report to Cabinet looking at the operational management and maintenance of the properties within the council house delivery programme.

Councillor Heaviside commented on the significant progress made since the report was presented in January 2024 and asked for clarification as to who provided the support in relation to the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP). The Housing Delivery Manager responded that a specialist support provider had been commissioned to support the SHAP programme and confirmed that Emmaus had been awarded the contract, noting that the scheme would be managed by the Council.

Councillor Heaviside commented that he would seek advice as to whether he needed to declare an interest.

Councillor Currah asked for clarification as to whether sites included in the County Durham Plan that were not in development would be considered under the Council House Delivery Programme. The Housing Delivery Manager advised that a lot of the sites in the County Durham Plan were in private ownership and that the Council House Delivery Programme used sites in Durham County Council ownership. However, the Council were looking at opportunities to purchase sites, in relation to the rural west of the county. He confirmed that if the Council were approached by developers or private landowners, they would explore and consider the offer.

With regards to the Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), Councillor Currah asked about the difference in timeline between this method of construction and conventional methods and concluded by commenting that the SHAP programme was not popular with residents in local communities. The Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that the difference could be months as with MMC a lot of the construction was done in the factory which could be carried out in bad weather and on multiple units at the same time. He highlighted that the external finishes on MMC properties would provide the look and feel of traditional builds. With regards to the SHAP programme, he would be happy to discuss any concerns/queries outside of the meeting.

Councillor Shaw commented that in 2011 it was intended that there would be a Targeted Delivery Plan for every ward, with fifteen developed and asked whether there had been any progress in the development of these plans. The Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that Targeted Delivery Plans had not progressed and that there were still the same number of plans. He commented that work had taken place looking at confirming their role with the focus on those already in place. He continued that work had taken place in 2019 on those Targeted Delivery Plans already in place.

Councillor Shaw continued by commenting that no work had taken place in relation to housing needs within the various areas of the county. The Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that work is undertaken to identify housing needs with housing need being looked at separately. He confirmed that Targeted Delivery Plans are separate to the Housing Delivery Plan.

Councillor Shaw responded that Target Delivery Plans identify outstanding housing need, the housing priorities, within an area. He continued that there are 11,500 requests for housing within the county. He continued that private developers do not build to meet outstanding housing need and that Targeted Delivery Plans would identify where need is within the council area to then focus delivery of the Council House Delivery Programme. He then asked what the split of housing was in relation to the Portland Avenue site at Seaham

With regards to the Portland Avenue site at Seaham, the Housing Delivery Manager responded that the site included the erection of thirty-three dwellings that consisted of six two bed three person bungalows at the southern end of the cul-de-sac, twelve two bed four person houses, six two bed four person 'corner turner' house, five three bed five person houses and four three bed five person 2.5 storey houses. He continued that work had taken place looking at the site layout and local housing need together with the viability of the site. He highlighted that originally, 20 units were identified for the site and that this diversification resulted in a greater mix to meet housing need.

Councillor Shaw added that the site layout moved away from the original design layout which had been mostly bungalows. He was concerned that the Council

House Delivery Programme (CHDP) was doing the same as the private sector and not meeting housing need as there was a shortfall in bungalow provision within the local area. The Housing Delivery Manager referred to the Cabinet report in July 2023 that reported the need for a greater mix of housing in order to get the sites up and running.

Councillor Shaw then asked that as the site now had a greater mix of housing, how would the need for more bungalows be met locally and whether cumulative sums were used. The Housing Delivery Manager responded that if they only looked towards building bungalows, there would be difficulties with the viability of sites, however over the life of the programme, bungalow development would be delivered. He confirmed that cumulative sums could not be used in relation to this locality.

Mr Simons was pleased to see progress in relation to the programme and referred to the sites in the initial stage of the programme where it stated that viability was subject to Homes England grant. He was surprised that these sites were so far down the development process without confirmation of funding. The Housing Delivery Manager explained that it was normal at this stage of the process not to have funding in place and that Homes England would want to see that sites had planning consent before funding was allocated. He confirmed that it was expected that as the schemes were within the required parameters, Homes England would support the projects and provide grant funding.

Mrs Morris commented that the programme seemed academic when Government had stated that a total of 2,210 new homes were to be delivered in the county every year until 2029. The Strategy and Delivery Manager confirmed that the figure had reduced to 2,011 each year, however this was a big increase from the 1,500 new homes that were currently being delivered. He continued by commenting that Durham County Council was sceptical about the sector delivering the new total set by Government as developers cannot deliver the numbers required due to skill shortages. He confirmed that discussions had taken place with developers in relation to penalties and land banking to encourage them to deliver.

Mrs Morris highlighted that she had concerns as the figures from government were not negotiable and asked for confirmation that the Committee would continue to receive updated delivery plans and that when identifying areas of land, they would be looking at different areas of the county. The Strategy and Delivery Manager explained that the CHDP would deliver a small part of the total housing delivery numbers for the county and confirmed that in March a report looking at reviewing the County Durham Plan would be considered. He also confirmed that a new Housing Market Assessment would be produced.

Mrs Morris commented that the Committee would want to see the new County Durham Plan as soon as possible. The Strategy and Delivery Manager confirmed that the review of the plan would be a long process starting at high level first and then down to local level.

Councillor Wood asked for clarification as to how the mix of properties were determined in relation to the various sites and used the example of the Portland Avenue site where one in five units would be a bungalow. He continued that private developers deliver a lower number of bungalows, as they cost more to develop. He asked what the difference would be with the CHDP developments and whether the long-term housing need within an area is being considered. He concluded by commenting that within Pelton, some older people were occupying family homes and that if there were more bungalows available, this would free up family homes.

In relation to identifying housing needs, the Housing Delivery Manager advised that they looked at data from DKO's which identified the type of properties that were bid on within an area with a site needing to be varied in mix of housing. He confirmed that all housing within the CHDP would be affordable not just 30% which was the figure private developers were required to provide. The properties would be managed by Durham County Council and would be built to the required standard and could be adapted to meet the needs of the tenant.

Councillor Wood commented that if density on sites were increasing, there was a danger that this would become more like the private sector with smaller floor space per unit. The Housing Delivery Manager advised that the programme was elevating standards and that the County Durham Plan had shown that developers were not meeting standards and the resulting impact this has. He added that the density on the sites was the best use of the land for the viability of the scheme which would then pay off the borrowing incurred for the programme.

With regards to the Portland Avenue site and the shared driveways, Councillor Wood asked how this would work in practice and why this approach had been used. The Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that they would have their own points of access and curtilages and that the roads had to be built for access, not to adoptable standards. He continued that the approach of shared driveways could be looked at going forward.

Councillor Stead felt that it was a positive move that the CHDP included bungalow provision as there are a lot of older people living in four-bedroom houses as bungalows are unavailable. He referred to appendix 7 of the report and the fourteen available one-bedroom properties in Stanley and asked for detail in relation to the properties, what would be the cost of bringing them back into use and how quickly this could be done. The Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that the properties were currently in use as part of the acquisitions programme and used by Housing Management colleagues to meet housing needs.

Councillor Moist thanked the officer for the report and presentation and commented that he could see the progress that had been made and the planned delivery in relation to the targets and assumed there would be no delays in relation to the planning process. He noted the monitoring of the targets going forward and the reference that Cabinet would receive detail of performance in relation to targets. He referred to previous minutes which had asked that monitoring information also be

considered by Overview and Scrutiny. He also noted from the information provided that delivery would still be behind target and recommended that future monitoring information be considered by Overview and Scrutiny. He asked for clarification as to whether financially unviable sites would be dropped from the programme and alternative sites considered. He concluded by highlighting the need for the Council to provide affordable homes via this programme and that he would have liked to have seen this progress four to five years ago.

The Housing Delivery Manager advised that the planning process was entirely independent and in relation to monitoring, the Housing Strategy included targets in relation to the scheme. He confirmed that he would be happy to come back to Overview and Scrutiny and provide an update on the development of the scheme and its performance in relation to targets. With regard to site viability, it was explained that the design of the scheme was quite a bit down the line in the development process and it was at this stage when it becomes apparent as to whether a site would be determined as viable or not. He confirmed that the programme would provide affordable homes within the context of the definition used to determine affordable homes within the county.

Councillor Moist added that he was aware that one site previously identified had Japanese Knot Weed and another site planned for bungalows had gradient issues. He highlighted that these issues should be identified quicker so that another suitable site could be identified.

Councillor Batey commented that there was a history of private developers not consulting local Members and highlighted the need for Officers to consult with local Members on the design of future sites in programme. She concluded by highlighting that local Members know the housing need within their local communities.

The Chair agreed with Councillor Batey that it was essential that local Members be consulted.

Resolved:

- i) That the contents of the report and presentation be noted.
- ii) That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive further updates on the progress of the Council House Delivery Programme, including monitoring information on the performance of the programme in relation to delivery targets.

7 Supported Housing Improvement Programme - Update

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth and presentation which provided an update on the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) working with non-commissioned

supported housing providers across County Durham (for copy of report and presentation slides, see file of minutes).

The Housing Team Leader provided Members with a detailed presentation that focused on: the background to the programme; context for County Durham and providers operating in County Durham; SHIP Funding; Objectives and Outputs of the scheme including detail of reviews and inspections undertaken with initial findings, added value, social impact including case studies and what next including details of priorities until March 2026 and the government consultation on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023.

The Housing Team Leader explained that there is currently no regulator of non-commissioned supported accommodation with providers being able to set up provision in the county without Local Authority approval. She continued that some providers often set up for commercial gain, buying cheap properties often in deprived locations. She highlighted that this housing supports the most vulnerable and that both nationally and regionally there is an increase in this type of accommodation being provided together with an increase in reports of substandard accommodation. As the tenants require support above and beyond what normal housing providers would provide, if the support is not of the required standard then this type of housing provision can have a detrimental impact on communities, the health and wellbeing of the tenants and public services.

The Housing Team Leader provided detail of the providers operating in the county confirming that there are 600 properties across the county providing this type of accommodation with some having multiple tenants with shared space. She continued that within County Durham there are 20 providers with a total of 754 units with the largest number of units in East Durham, Mid Durham followed by North, North West and South Durham with far fewer properties providing this type of accommodation in Durham City, South East Durham and West Durham.

In relation to funding of the scheme, the Housing Team Leader reminded members that the national scheme had a funding pot of £20m to address poor quality supported housing, improve standards of support and accommodation. She confirmed that Durham was awarded £578,795 to implement the SHIP with funding lasting to March 2025. This funding had been used to establish a multi-disciplinary team consisting of six posts. Concerning the objectives of the scheme

The Housing Team Leader confirmed that a review is being undertaken by the team of the existing provision with 17 of the 20 providers having been reviewed. This involves property inspections being undertaken with 168 to date being completed. In addition, 336 tenant reviews have been completed to validate Housing Benefit decision and ensure tenants are receiving the correct levels of support. These reviews have resulted in 18 claims suspended/cancelled and 4 claims amended. The Housing Team Leader continued by informing members that supported housing is for a maximum period of two years during which support is provided for the tenant to move to independent living, again the review process had resulted in 48 tenants

signing up for Durham Key Options with 5 being moved onto their own tenancy and 6 in band 1 waiting for a property. Concerning property inspections, it was confirmed that 168 had been inspected with 154 failing the first inspection with 83 improving to meet the necessary standards.

The Housing Team Leader then highlighted other activity undertaken by the Team in relation to housing benefit subsidy loss. She explained that subsidy loss is the shortfall in housing benefit payment made to local authorities from the DWP, when the provider is not registered with the Regulator for Social Housing and is set up as a charity, community interest company etc. This had resulted in a £1.6m subsidy loss for DCC on non-commissioned housing in 2023-2024. The SHIP team is actively working to encourage providers to become registered with the Regulator for Social Housing or partner with an existing registered provider to help tackle this issue. As a result of the work of the SHIP it is expected that the subsidy loss has increased at a slower rate in 2024-2025.

In relation to the Gateway approach used by the SHIP Team, the Housing Team Leader explaining that this is the approach used by DCC to manage new and existing providers with processes in place to enable the Council to scrutinise costs, referrals, governance, support and procedures together with the mapping of properties geographically. She continued by highlighting that 25 new approaches had been made since January 2023 with only 2 progressed to provide supported housing in the County. She confirmed that potentially the Gateway approach had saved £114k. Concerning added value and social impact, the Housing Team Leader commented that the training provided by the programme had resulted in better partnership working and collaboration, health and wellbeing support provided at the correct standard, the development of the Non-commissioned Supported Housing Charter which had been co-produced with providers and collaboration with the ASB Teams and police to understand trends and promote initiatives to reduce both ASB and crime. Members were then provided with detail of two case studies.

The Housing Team Leader concluded by highlighting to members a government consultation on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023. The Act had been initiated in response to the challenges linked to the non-commissioned supported housing sector to give local authorities greater control within the sector. The act had come into force in August 2023 with a consultation on the Act expected in early 2025. It was confirmed that as a result of the positive work undertaken by the SHIP, the Corporate Management Team had agreed to fund the programme until March 2026.

The Chair thanked Officers for the report and detailed presentation. He commented that 168 properties had been inspected with 154 failing, 83 had improved to the required standard and 5 properties had been returned to the landlord. He asked as to whether there was further information regarding those that failed and had not improved to the required standard. The Housing Team Leader advised that further inspections would be carried out and enforcement action taken in relation to some

of the providers. She confirmed that further detail would be provided at a future meeting.

Councillor Wood referred to the 40% of non-commissioned supported housing, not to the required standard with the Team having currently reviewed 17 of the 20 providers. He asked if there were any concerns regarding the tenants with the remaining three providers that had not been reviewed and what could be done with regards to ensuring that those providers engage with the Council. The Housing Team Leader confirmed that the relevant officers were carrying out further inspections and that a firmer approach was being undertaken, including enforcement action. She added that they continued to work with landlords and providers to bring properties up to the required standard. She confirmed that by the end of March 2025 the Team would have worked with all 20 providers and from April 2025 onwards reinspection's would be ongoing.

Councillor Wood asked for clarification that the measures available via the SHIP programme were separate from Selective Licensing Scheme measures. The Housing Team Leader advised that some properties providing non-commissioned supported housing fall within Selective Licensing areas and as part of the property inspection the Team work closely with the Selective Licensing Team to ensure that landlords had a licence. The Assessment and Awards Manager added that the SHIP programme was voluntary, however there were opportunities to apply pressure from a financial point of view. He highlighted that under Housing Benefit regulations, DCC has the power to review active Housing Benefit claims, so the Council would be able to conduct a review of a live Housing Benefit claim and ensure sufficient care/support etc is in place and progress is being made and if not cancel/suspend any Housing Benefit claim. This wouldn't be the full remit of a SHIP review but is a disincentive should providers refuse to work with the local authority.

Councillor Crute commented that there were worrying parallels with this sector and HMOs with regards to how providers were regulated and held to account and the potential detrimental impact on neighbourhoods surrounding these schemes. With regards to the Government consultation on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, he acknowledged the tight timescales, however felt it was imperative that the consultation comes back to the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that Members have an opportunity to feed into the consultation and raise concerns.

Councillor Crute then highlighted the need for Local Authorities to be given powers to require that providers were registered and asked whether there were any opportunities under Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) in relation to the County Durham Plan. In relation to the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, should the Act not provide Local Authorities the necessary powers to require that providers were registered then the County Council needed to develop the appropriate measures/policy to hold providers to account, ensure the standard of accommodation and quality of support was provided, regulate the number of providers and units available and value for money.

The Housing Team Leader responded that the information coming forward with regards to the consultation and what it would include was limited. The Strategy and Delivery Manager explained that it was a licensing issue and not within the scope of the County Durham Plan. He clarified that with regards to SPDs, there must be a link to something already included within the existing plan and highlighted that SPDs were being abolished as part of the new development plan process.

Councillor Crute commented that he was concerned with loopholes in relation to either the national legislation or any resulting local powers that would provide the opportunity to convert a property or house being used as an HMO to non-commissioned supported accommodation. He continued that the necessary 'checks and balances' needed to be in place to prevent this from happening and allowing landlords to move from one model to another.

Councillor Manchester made reference to the Panorama documentary which had focused on a national organisation operating within the County and commented that whilst My Space no longer provided accommodation in Tow Law, he was aware that they provided accommodation in Crook area. He was under the impression that Durham County Council were no longer making referrals to this provider and asked for clarification. He then asked whether the Team were aware of the Compassionate Care Group that operated in the County. The Housing Team Leader confirmed that referrals to My Space were from outside the County and more intense work had been undertaken in relation to the 3 properties that My Space had within the County. She added that through the Charter, they were asking providers to keep referrals within the County Durham area and only take referrals from Housing Solutions or recognised organisation within the County, this provides more background in relation to individuals, ensures a more controlled process and reduces the impact on other services. She confirmed that the Team were in contact with the Compassionate Care Group who provide accommodation and support for individuals leaving hospital care.

Councillor Shaw commented that 40% of provision was in the East Durham area because of the low property values and highlighted that these areas were in special measures, noting that the poor quality of the housing in these areas and the transient population were adding to the existing issue, which was having a significant impact on local communities. He commented that housing providers build up an evidence base of people who have been excluded from social housing and asked where Local Lettings Agencies sit within this provision. The Housing Team Leader responded that historically the Authority did not have the oversight in relation to this type of provision. The Gateway approach and the introduction of the strategy now provided this oversight and provided a guidance tool for more informed conversations and engagement with new providers coming forward with regards to diversifying away from hotspots and the more densely populated areas. In terms of the Local Lettings Agencies, she confirmed that there were over 100 properties that solely take referrals from Housing Solutions which was the stepping stone to independent living.

Responding to a query from Councillor Currah with regards to new providers and engagement with Durham County Council, the Housing Team Leader advised that a lot of providers do engage with the Authority on a voluntary basis at which point they would be directed to the Gateway process. She confirmed that providers do not have to participate as this is not regulated, however if they choose to go forward without the approval of the Local Authority, then pressure could be applied via the Housing Benefit system.

Resolved:

- i) That the contents of the report and presentation be noted.
- ii) That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee are engaged within the Government consultation process in relation to the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023.

8 Quarter Two Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2024/25

The Committee received a joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources and Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth which provided details of the forecast outturn position for quarter 2 revenue and capital for Regeneration, Economy and Growth (REG) as at 30 September 2024 (for copy see file of minutes).

Mrs Morris referred to the overspend in relation to Culture Leisure and Sport and asked whether there was any additional support/funding available to assist in reducing the level of overspend, and when the Committee would receive a further update on the overspend situation. The Finance Manager, Resources and Regeneration confirmed that plans were being put in place to mitigate the level of overspend. He advised that two leisure centre sites were now complete which would increase the levels of income achieved. He continued that the overspend could be looked at as a budget pressure and confirmed that the service was looking at measures to increase the levels of income. He concluded by highlighting that update reports would be provided on a quarterly basis to the committee.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

9 Minutes of the County Durham Economic Partnership Board

The minutes of the County Durham Economic Partnership Board held on 25 September 2024 were noted for information.

10 Any Other Business

The Chair reminded Members that arrangements had been made for an Informal Information Session on the 20 January 2025 focusing on DCC's approach to land management. There was also a further Informal Information Session on the 30 January 2025 providing an opportunity for Members to see the new Place Brand for County Durham, prior to its formal launch. There was also a Special joint meeting with members of the Environment OSC to be held on the 31 January 2025 focusing on the County Durham visitor economy and a Special meeting of the Economy and Enterprise OSC had been arranged for the 25 February 2025 to provide an update on the IES Delivery Plan and an overview of industrial/employment sites in the County.

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3 March 2025

County Durham Skills Development



Report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report sets out the current progress in supporting skills developments across County Durham in line with the Inclusive Economic Strategy and Delivery Plan.
- 2 Specifically, the report highlights recent policy changes and reflects current funding opportunities presented by the County's UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation in addition to work underway at a regional level as part of the devolution of the adult skills budget.

Executive summary

- 3 Skills are an essential component of economic growth and prosperity. However, there have been long standing challenges to improving skills levels of the County's working age population. The skills system remains complex with multiple policy drivers at a national level.
- 4 The Creation of the North East Combined Authority (North East CA) in May 2024, led to the devolution of the Adult Skills Budget and provided the opportunity to develop regional strategic framework incorporating skills alongside the other drivers of growth.
- 5 Critical to increasing the skills of residents are the levels of investment in workforce skills. These include the Apprenticeship Levy paid by large companies, the devolved Adult Skills Budget (including Free Courses for Jobs), skills bootcamps and at a local level flexible programmes funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) including the Multiply programme.

- 6 The County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) and its accompanying Delivery Plan recognise the importance of improving the skills of the County’s residents, focussing on highlighting strategic and sector priorities, directing resources and improving accessibility to appropriate skills provision.

Recommendation(s)

- 7 Economy & Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
- (a) Note the recent developments influencing the delivery of workforce skills.
 - (b) Note the development, commissioning and delivery of skills initiatives in line with the People theme of the Inclusive Economic Strategy.

Background

- 8 Previous reports to Economy & Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented in December 2022 and March 2024 have set out the wide ranging policy interventions and immediate priorities which shape the skills component of the Inclusive Economic Strategy.
- 9 The skills profile of the County’s working age population continues to mirror that of the wider North East but also presents areas for improvements against the national picture as shown in table 1 below.

<i>Qualification level</i>	<i>County Durham (Numbers)</i>	<i>County Durham (%)</i>	<i>North East (%)</i>	<i>Great Britain (%)</i>
<i>RQF4 and above</i>	<i>111,200</i>	<i>35.9</i>	<i>39.6</i>	<i>47.3</i>
<i>RQF3 and above</i>	<i>188,600</i>	<i>60.9</i>	<i>62.8</i>	<i>67.8</i>
<i>RQF 2 and above</i>	<i>264,200</i>	<i>85.4</i>	<i>85.0</i>	<i>86.5</i>
<i>RQF 1 and above</i>	<i>273,900</i>	<i>88.5</i>	<i>88.1</i>	<i>89.0</i>
<i>Other Qualifications</i>	<i>9,700</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>4.6</i>
<i>No Qualifications</i>	<i>25,800</i>	<i>8.3</i>	<i>8.5</i>	<i>6.5</i>

Table 1: County Durham Qualifications (Jan-Dec 2023)

Source: ONS Annual Population Service

- 10 Skills policy and interventions remain complex with a mixture of National policy and direction supported by increasing elements of devolved skills delivery.

- 11 In May 2024, the NECA took over management of the Adult Skills Budget and related skills programs. A commissioning program was quickly put in place to make sure the budget could be used to fund skills training starting in August 2024. The Combined Authority is now working to create a unified approach to skills development that will cover various employment and skills initiatives and support broader investment goals.
- 12 The UK skills system is undergoing a period of significant change, with a focus on creating a more responsive, flexible, and employer-led system that supports lifelong learning and addresses skills shortages. The success of these reforms will be crucial for ensuring the UK's future economic competitiveness and social prosperity.

National Skills Priorities

- 13 The UK skills system has seen wide ranging policy changes and drivers over the last 12 months, with a strong focus on addressing skills shortages, boosting economic growth, and ensuring lifelong learning opportunities, linked back to the new government's mission statements. Key developments include:

Skills England

- 14 A new public body, Skills England, launched in July 2024, incorporating the former Unit for Future Skills. Its objectives include:
 - Developing a comprehensive national overview of skills gaps and strategies to address them, working closely with the Industrial Strategy Council and the Migration Advisory Committee.
 - Unifying the skills landscape to ensure the workforce possesses the skills needed for economic growth. This involves collaboration with Mayoral Combined Authorities, local partners, businesses of all sizes, training providers, and unions.
 - Shaping technical education to meet skills needs, including identifying training available through the Growth and Skills Levy.
 - Advising on the highly skilled workforce required to support a clear, long-term economic plan.
- 15 In its initial report, Skills England announced its intention to consult with employers and other key stakeholders to advise the Department for Education (DfE) on priority training areas for the Growth and Skills Levy.
- 16 This new levy will replace the existing Apprenticeship Levy and introduce new foundation apprenticeships. These apprenticeships will

provide young people with entry routes into careers in critical sectors, enabling them to earn while developing essential skills. The new levy will also fund shorter apprenticeships, offering learners and employers greater flexibility than the current system, which requires apprenticeships to last at least 12 months.

- 17 Skills England conducted an engagement exercise in November and December 2024 to inform the DfE's development of the Growth and Skills offer. This initial engagement prioritized 10 sectors: the eight growth-driving sectors identified in the Industrial Strategy, and construction and health and social care, deemed essential to the government's missions.
- 18 Skills England plans to publish its engagement findings in early 2025. This publication will expand upon the skills needs assessments in the first Skills England report by providing assessments for each of the 10 priority sectors and contribute to the ongoing Industrial Strategy planning process.
- 19 In February 2025 Skills England announced that they will introduce shorter and flexible apprenticeships as well as new English and maths requirements to boost skills and support employers. Businesses will now be able to decide whether adult learners over the age of 19 when they start their apprenticeship course will need to complete a level 2 English and maths qualification (equivalent to GCSE) in order to pass it. This means up to 10,000 more apprentices may be able to qualify per year as the government cuts red tape to boost economic growth by giving employers more flexibility over maths and English requirements.
- 20 The minimum duration of an apprenticeship will be reduced to eight months, down from the current minimum of 12 months. Changes to the minimum length of an apprenticeship will be introduced from August 2025 subject to the legislative timetable, with changes to English and maths requirements coming into effect immediately.
- 21 In February, Skills England announced its senior leadership appointments. Phil Smith, former chair of semiconductor materials supplier IQE plc and previously chair of TechSkills.org, Innovate UK, and Cisco, will serve as Chair. Sir David Bell, former Ofsted chief inspector and DfE permanent secretary, will be Vice Chair. Tessa Griffiths and Sarah Maclean, current directors for post-16 skills and strategy at the DfE, will be joint Chief Executives.

The Industrial Strategy

- 22 In October 2024, the government released "Invest 2035: The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy" for public consultation. This strategy

outlines a 10-year roadmap focused on driving economic growth, fostering innovation, and enhancing global competitiveness with a focus on eight key growth sectors set out at appendix 2.

23 Skills are a central component of this Industrial Strategy, recognized as a crucial driver of economic growth and prosperity. The strategy aims to equip individuals with the skills necessary to thrive in the modern economy and ensure businesses have access to a highly skilled workforce. Its skills-focused ambitions include:

- Developing a world-class technical education system: The strategy aims to create a technical education system comparable to the best globally, mirroring the UK's renowned higher education system. This involves strengthening apprenticeships, T-levels, and other vocational qualifications to provide individuals with practical, industry-relevant skills and knowledge.
- Investing in STEM skills: Recognizing the importance of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) skills for the future economy, the strategy prioritizes investment in these areas. This includes initiatives to enhance STEM education in schools, encourage students to pursue STEM careers, and support upskilling and reskilling in STEM fields.
- Creating a National Retraining Scheme: The strategy proposes a National Retraining Scheme to help individuals retrain and upskill, particularly in sectors experiencing skills shortages. This will enable people to adapt to evolving labour market demands and acquire the skills needed for future employment.
- Promoting lifelong learning: The strategy acknowledges the need for continuous skills and knowledge development throughout working lives. It aims to promote lifelong learning opportunities and encourage participation in upskilling and reskilling activities.
- Strengthening employer engagement: The strategy emphasises strong collaboration between employers and education providers to ensure training aligns with industry needs. It encourages employers to actively shape skills development and provide apprenticeships and work experience opportunities.

Get Britain Working White Paper

24 The "Get Britain Working" White Paper outlines a comprehensive strategy to address economic inactivity and equip individuals with the skills and support needed to enter and succeed in the workforce. Its key focus areas and priorities include:

Early Intervention and Prevention:

- 25 Youth Guarantee: A core commitment is the Youth Guarantee, ensuring all 18-21 year-olds have access to education, training, or assistance in finding employment or apprenticeships. This aims to prevent young people from becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) and establish a foundation for long-term career success.
- 26 Strengthened Careers Advice: The white paper prioritizes improved careers guidance in schools and smoother transitions from education to employment. This includes expanding work experience opportunities and addressing school attendance issues to prevent disengagement from learning.

Integrating Skills and Employment Support:

- 27 New Jobs and Careers Service: A new digital platform will provide personalized support to help individuals find work, develop skills, and advance in their careers. This will be coupled with a clear expectation of active job seeking.
- 28 Improved Jobcentre Plus: Jobcentre Plus will undergo reforms to better integrate with local partners and combine employment support and careers advice for a more holistic and effective service.

Focus on Progression and "Good Work":

- 29 The white paper emphasizes not just employment, but progression to "good work" characterised by better pay, security, and development opportunities. This includes addressing job insecurity and promoting flexible work arrangements.

Addressing Skills Gaps and Employer Needs:

- 30 Apprenticeship Levy Reform: The Apprenticeship Levy will be transformed into a more flexible Growth and Skills Levy, supporting a broader range of training and skills development aligned with employer needs and providing individuals with necessary skills.
- 31 Employer Engagement: The white paper highlights the importance of strong employer involvement in skills development, encouraging active participation in shaping training and providing work experience and apprenticeship opportunities.

Supporting People with Health Conditions:

- 32 Integrated Work and Health Support: The white paper recognizes the need to support individuals with health conditions in entering and remaining in employment. This includes closer collaboration between

health services and employment support, and initiatives to improve workplace health and wellbeing.

Local and Regional Focus:

- 33 Local Get Britain Working Plans: Local areas will receive support to develop tailored "Get Britain Working" plans to address specific needs and challenges, ensuring skills and employment support are responsive to local labour market conditions.

Devolution White Paper

- 34 In December 2024, the government published the Devolution White Paper, "Levelling Up the United Kingdom," outlining its devolution ambitions across various policy areas, including significant implications for skills development, particularly in England. Key aspects include:

Greater Local Control over Skills:

- 35 Joint Ownership of LSIPs: Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), which identify local skills needs and guide training provision, will be jointly managed by Strategic Authorities (often combined authorities) and employer representative bodies, giving local leaders greater influence over skills development in their areas.
- 36 Devolved Funding: The government plans to devolve more adult skills funding to Strategic Authorities, consolidating various funding streams into a single pot for greater local flexibility in resource allocation.
- 37 Influence over Employment Support: Strategic Authorities will have increased influence over employment support services, including the National Jobs and Careers Service, to better integrate skills training with job opportunities and facilitate employment.

Focus on Local Needs:

- 38 Tailored Solutions: Devolution aims to create more responsive skills systems, adapting training provision to the specific needs of businesses and individuals in each local labour market.
- 39 Collaboration: The white paper emphasizes collaboration between local authorities, employers, and education providers to ensure skills training meets local economic demands.

Potential Benefits:

- 40 Improved Skills Alignment: Increased local control over skills aims to improve the alignment of training with employer needs, reducing skills gaps and boosting productivity.

41 Increased Responsiveness: Devolution can make the skills system more responsive to local economic changes, enabling quick adaptation to new challenges and opportunities.

42 Greater Efficiency: Funding consolidation and improved coordination can potentially lead to a more efficient and effective skills system.

Potential Challenges:

43 Capacity and Expertise: Local authorities must possess the necessary capacity and expertise to effectively manage devolved skills funding and make strategic decisions about skills development.

44 Coordination: Effective coordination between local areas and with national skills bodies will be crucial to avoid fragmentation and duplication of effort.

45 Accountability: Clear accountability mechanisms are needed to ensure devolved skills funding is used effectively and local areas achieve their skills objectives.

Regional Skills Priorities

46 Bringing together initially separate strategies, **North East CAs Employment and Skills Strategy** has been developed to establish clear strategic priorities to tackle unemployment and inactivity in the North East whilst also providing a framework to focus and prioritise the planning, funding and delivery of services aligned to resident and employer needs both current and future.

47 Following extensive engagement six key strategic objectives have emerged;

- Grow the economy through a bigger and more productive workforce.
- Reduce labour market exclusion among residents with health conditions, disabilities and other barriers to employment.
- Boost employment, skills and prosperity in local places.
- Tackle in-work poverty and insecurity and create rewarding work for all.
- Create a simpler, efficient, stable employment and skills system.
- Build a strategic regional partnership focussed on achieving shared employment and skills goals.

- 48 The strategy is currently being finalised before a series of stakeholder feedback sessions which will be delivered in advance of the strategy being considered by the North East CAs Cabinet.
- 49 **Devolved Adult Skills Funding.** The North East CA;s Devolution Deal includes a fully devolved Adult Skills Fund (ASF) of circa £68m which includes a ringfenced allocation for the delivery of a Level 3 Adult Skills offer 'Free Courses for Jobs' (FCFJ). With Cabinet approval the devolved ASF has been allocated to 45 further education providers across 20 Grant Funding Agreements and 25 procured Contract for Services.
- 50 Delivery of the devolved ASF has been underway since 1 August 2024, with over 49,900 starts on programmes to date. The ASF investment is reaching residents most disadvantaged in terms of poverty and skills with 35% of learning opportunities being undertaken by residents living in the North East CAs top 20% deprived areas. 22718 (51%) of enrolments are in the top 10% deprived wards across the region. Providers have also established a wide range of provision to support unemployed residents, 80% of learning opportunities are being undertaken by residents who are unemployed, with 54% of these residents unemployed and actively looking for work.
- 51 For the financial year (FY) 2024-25 the North East CA successfully secured a grant funding agreement of £17.9m from the Department of Education (DfE) for the delivery of Wave 5 Skills Bootcamps across the region, this funding has successfully been deployed to 23 organisations. Delivery of the provision commenced on 1 June 2024 with support from over 200 employers, providing residents with access to in-demand skills training, guaranteed interviews as well as more sustainable higher skilled jobs. which will result in higher wages over time.
- 52 Over 2200 residents have undertaken training to date in a range of sectors which include industry specific skills in areas such as Offshore Wind and Offshore Cables as well as E.V battery manufacture and energy storage. Provision is also taking place in the foundational economy in areas such as Early Years, Adult Care and Hospitality.
- 53 Devolution of the ASF has enabled the North East CA to strengthen the strategic focus of skills provision across the region. It continues to build on an approach of creating close collaborations, bringing together employers, colleges, training providers, local commissioners and the VSCE sector to construct an adult skills offer which focuses on achieving outcomes directly linked to local labour market needs.
- 54 Development of skills provision to address skills shortages in our region's key growth areas and opportunity sectors continues to be a

priority. The North East CA funded providers have responded well and developed routes into sectors such as Construction, Civil Engineering including Rail Track Maintenance, Transportation and Warehousing, Welding and Engineering and Manufacturing Technology. A wider offer is also available in the Digital and Technology sector with new course additions such as Cyber Security and Coding.

- 55 As a result of the above there are increasing enrolments in: Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies, Construction, Planning and the Built Environment: Information, Communication Technology as well as Retail and Commercial Enterprise, this sector encompasses provision in warehousing and logistics.
- 56 17 % of the overall ASF enrolment opportunities are undertaken by County Durham residents, with 55% of these opportunities undertaken by residents living in County Durham’s top 20% deprived areas. 2060 (22%) of enrolments are in the top 10% deprived wards across the local authority. Providers have established a wide range of provision to support unemployed residents, 62% of learning opportunities are being undertaken by residents who are unemployed, with 42% of these residents unemployed and actively looking for work.
- 57 Providers in County Durham have utilised flexibilities available through the devolved ASF and developed new innovative provision to support skills demand in sectors such as social care, construction, and the visitor economy. engineering and manufacturing, creative industries, hospitality, and catering. Provision continues to support the health & social care sector with 24% of enrolment opportunities offered in this area
- 58 The ASF continues to provide fully funded statutory entitlements which include basic, maths, English, and English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) – an area of increasing demand. Table 2 below illustrates statutory entitlement enrolments by Local Authority to 6 Feb 2025.

Local Authority District	English	Maths	ESOL	Digital Entitlement	Full Level 2 Entitlement	Full Level 3 Entitlement	Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs
County Durham	376	429	858	8	131	144	296
Gateshead	225	299	1659	15	79	56	89
Newcastle	310	268	4169	204	109	101	180
North Tyneside	111	124	1014	23	64	58	118
Northumberland	91	118	699	5	56	39	165
South Tyneside	127	184	1174	10	44	41	77
Sunderland	115	224	675	10	63	126	165
Total	1355	1646	10248	275	546	565	1090

Table 2: Statutory Entitlements by Constituent Local Authority

- 59 First Full Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications for young people aged between 19 and 24 are also part of the statutory entitlement. The qualifications in this entitlement provide skills in key sectors.
- 60 The ASF includes additional funding for Free Courses for Jobs, this targeted Level 3 provision has been developed to support adults without an existing full Level 3 qualification and has recently been extended to include a second Level 3 qualification. It introduces free fully funded Level 3 qualifications for learners aged 24 years and over. Over 1000 residents have engaged in this provision since the start of the academic year, undertaking full level 3 qualifications in subjects such as Adult Care, Engineering, Electrical installation and E.V. maintenance.
- 61 Skills Bootcamps aim to secure benefits for unemployed adults by giving them access to in-demand skills training and a guaranteed interview, and for in work adults a more sustainable, higher skilled job and higher wages over time. The benefits for employers include helping them to fill specific skills shortage vacancies, enabling them to become more productive, more quickly.
- 62 Wave 5 (FY 2024-25) Skills Bootcamp provision commenced in June 2024 and is delivered in a range of sector areas which includes digital, logistics, technical and engineering, construction, green skills, and the culture and creative sector. Provision is also taking place in the foundational economy in areas such as Early Years, Adult Care and Hospitality.
- 63 Employer engagement is a fundamental element of Skills Bootcamp delivery, to date over 200 employers are engaged in Skills Bootcamps across the region either designing or co-delivering courses, offering job vacancies or co-funding existing employees. To date, 700 learners have received positive outcomes through our Skills Bootcamps. 386 learners have been successful at interview and are now in employment; 224 learners have received new roles or responsibilities with their current employer; and 90 self-employed learners have secured new work or contracts following completion of their bootcamp.
- 64 **The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)** covering County Durham was developed through 2023 and is specifically focussed on five high impact sectors which closely align with IES priority sectors: Digital; Advance Manufacturing; Construction, Health and Health Science; and Transport and Logistics. The North East LSIP report was submitted to government in May 2023 and approved in September.
- 65 Since then, the North East Automotive Alliance (NEAA), the Employer Related Body (ERB) responsible for the delivery of the LSIP has been

working with businesses, along with education and training providers to implement the findings of the report and ensure regional skills needs are addressed. Additional resources have been provided to help drive implementation with East Durham College selected as the lead provider in the delivery of the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), which will implement the recommendations of the NELSIP final report.

66 Developed in advance of the formation of the North East CA a parallel LSIP was prepared by the NE Chamber of Commerce to cover the former North of Tyne Area. The two Employer Related Bodies responsible for the delivery of the LSIPs in the North East continue to update their plans while working towards convergence with a single LSIP covering the North East CA expected to be in place during 2026.

67 A new English Devolution Bill is expected in 2025 along with a n agreed approach to Developing **Local Growth Plans** for Mayoral Combined Authorities

68 The Intentions of Local Growth Plans are to:

- Set out each MCAs growth and delivery priorities over a 10 year Horizon.
- Set out areas of Investment opportunity.
- Be a platform for Mayors and MCAs to communicate with government, focussing on opportunities to unlock funding and delivery.
- Guide the implementation of multi-year funding settlements.
- Be a vehicle to connect local and national industrial strategies.

Local Skills Priorities

UKSPF Funded Commissions

69 Skills Support in County Durham is in its penultimate month of delivery and the three component projects have formed part of a co-ordinated approach to improve skills across the county, to contribute towards higher levels of economic inclusion, productivity, and economic growth. Contract management and liaison with senior figures at the colleges and within the council has ensured they complement existing activity and focus on priorities for the county:

- 70 UKSPF Communicate Programme, aimed at Supporting people furthest from the labour market through access to basic skills is making good progress against output and outcome targets to date with all outputs ahead of profile at the end of December.
- 71 Exceeding targets for engagement through a partner focussed engagement strategy working with a wide range of organisations from housing associations to community centres, charities, the NHS and schools over 50 schools.
- 72 The programme works with primary schools across the county through the support of Headteachers, Curriculum Leads and Parents Liaisons and has seen the engagement of hundreds of parents/carers and children in workshops and courses to help them build their confidence and understanding of how to support their children with their English curriculum, online safety and healthy living.
- 73 Provision has been tailored to the needs of partners and service users, for example, Little Chefs Big Chefs charity organisation requested bespoke courses for specific learner groups ; ARFID (Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder).
- 74 The approach to delivery has opened up more opportunities to work with disadvantaged groups that we would not have perhaps been able to and has created an informed and rich curriculum offer.
- 75 **The Durham Upskilling Opportunities (DUO)** program provides specialized support to employed individuals who lack access to mainstream education and training resources, helping them overcome barriers to further learning.
- 76 The program was divided into four geographic regions. In North and mid-Durham, services were delivered by a partnership led by New College Durham, while in East and South West Durham, the program was managed by East Durham College and its subcontractors.
- 77 DUO prioritized small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often preferred shorter, more focused qualifications due to time constraints and the availability of longer programs through mainstream funding.
- 78 Employers seek qualifications that enhance employees' current roles and potentially lead to increased responsibilities, demonstrating short-to-medium-term benefits. Participating companies represent diverse sectors and sizes, with a focus on priority sectors within each region.
- 79 The program supports a range of qualifications, including technical certifications (e.g., CSCS, SSSTS, Plant Operations), legislative

qualifications (e.g., First Aid, Health and Safety), and modular programs (e.g., lean management).

- 80 DUO complements provision funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and aligns with the colleges' broader skills offerings, effectively addressing a skills gap.
- 81 East Durham College collaborated with GSK to develop customized training through the North East's Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) and the Strategic Development Fund (SDF), which East Durham College led. This initiative aimed to help further education providers meet skills training needs in the healthcare and health science sectors. While the bespoke training is not yet accredited and thus ineligible for mainstream funding, it was supported through this contract.
- 82 Since the contract bidding process, the mainstream skills landscape has evolved, notably with increased flexibility from the North East CA. Consequently, some qualifications initially planned for delivery under this contract are now eligible for local funding through the North East CA's Adult Skills Fund.
- 83 Colleges report that a key achievement of this funding has been increased engagement with businesses across the county. For example, East Durham College has engaged with 50 existing clients and 100 new ones.
- 84 The **Pathways to Success program** funds local skills development by supporting technical and vocational qualifications and courses up to Level 2. It also funds training for vocational licenses relevant to local needs, and high-value qualifications where skills gaps exist and are not addressed by other programs. New College Durham holds the contract, but delivery is handled through a partnership of independent private providers and other further education colleges.
- 85 While the contract was designed to serve economically active individuals in insecure or limited-hour employment, nearly all participants at registration have been unemployed. Key achievements of the program so far include:
- 408 of the 493 registered participants have earned a qualification.
 - 213 participants have secured employment, with the potential for additional job placement outcomes still being recorded.
 - Two participants have transitioned to further education, one of whom has progressed to higher education within the region.

All Age Careers Guidance Framework

- 86 The IES delivery plan highlighted the aspiration of developing an all age careers framework for County Durham which should identify the breadth of careers delivery in place and highlight good practice, gaps in delivery and explore opportunities for developing shared materials which can be made available to careers professionals, learners and parents / carers.
- 87 An extensive programme of engagement with learners, delivery organisations, businesses and key stakeholders has been undertaken throughout to inform the framework with the results set to be presented to the County Durham Economic Partnership in Spring 2025.
- 88 The All-Age Careers Framework Report calls for a culture change across the County to harness the significant Careers, Information, Advice & Guidance (CIAG) expertise, experiences and resources that currently exist, alongside opportunities for new hybrid approach where human-centred services remain a priority, complemented by digital advancements. This will involve:
- A shift from ‘silos’ to ‘simplicity’
 - A mechanism(s) for smoothing transitions
 - An explicit well-publicised County Durham careers and employability offer for everyone
 - Improve employer engagement in CIAG activities.
- 89 A strengthened County Durham CIAG eco-system, through a more co-ordinated and collaborative multi-agency partnership approach, will draw together significant experience and expertise from across the whole system to maximise the impact of its collective resources to develop and deliver an impactful local delivery model.
- 90 The proposed vision for County Durham will involve,
- “ Careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) will be a vital, embedded element of personal development, enhancing wellbeing and providing more equitable career and employability support opportunities for all residents in every community, across all stages of life.”

UKSPF Transitional Funding

- 91 The initial UKSPF allocations have been delivered as part of the 2022/5 UKSPF Investment Plan which aligns closely to the IES delivery plan. The Budget on 30 October 2024 confirmed a UKSPF allocation for a ‘Transition Year’ in 2025/26 of £900m, this is approximately 54% of current year three (2024/25 FY) funding. A breakdown of the funding to local areas was provided by Government in mid-December 2024, and it

was also confirmed that the North East CA would become the lead local body for UKSPF next year.

92 It has been agreed (in principle) with North East CA, that each constituent local authority will continue to act as if they were a Lead Local Authority and they will be responsible for deciding how to allocate the resources in their area for 2025/26, to continue to contract with and monitor projects and to report to North East CA on spend and achievement of outputs and outcomes so that north east performance can be aggregated and reported to Government. This arrangement will be managed through a Service Level Agreement.

93 Initial proposals for the transitional UKSPF programme in County Durham include proposals to continue Skills Support in County Durham with precise proposals and delivery mechanisms currently under development.

Conclusion

94 As an essential component of economic growth, a number of policy announcements by the new government have sought to refocus skills delivery and provide a more holistic view of needs and delivery.

95 However, the skills system remains complex with a mix of national policy, regional strategy and local priorities, which the IES delivery plan seeks to summarise into key actions with the overall aim of improving the skills profile of the County's working age population.

96 Significant resources are currently deployed in support of skills programmes including the devolved Adult Skills funding which commenced in August 2024. Public funding pressures highlighted in the October 2024 budget mean resources going forward may be reduced placing more importance on effective prioritisation and co-ordination of skills initiatives.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- [County Durham Skills Development](#) report to Economy & Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee March 2024
- [Invest 2023 the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy](#) HM Government 2024
- [Get Britain Working White Paper](#) HM Government 2024
- [English Devolution White Paper](#) MHCLG 2024

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Skills and Post 16 Education Act places a duty for all skills providers - including the Council, to co-operate with Employer Related Bodies in the development and review of Local Skills Improvement Plans.

Finance

The delivery of Skills interventions across County Durham involves a complex mix of funding inputs including National funding programmes, Devolved Skills funding and through to March 2026, Business funding through Apprenticeship Levy contributions and locally identified priorities supported through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

County Durham UKSPF Skills programmes have been brought forward following an open procurement exercise in December 2023.

A further regional procurement event has also been undertaken for devolved skills delivery through contacts for service covering Adult Education, Skills Bootcamps and Free Course For Jobs programmes.

Appendix 2: UK Industrial Strategy Growth Sectors

The eight Growth Sectors are:

1. **Advanced Manufacturing:** This sector encompasses high-value manufacturing activities that leverage innovation, technology, and skilled labour. It includes areas like aerospace, automotive, pharmaceuticals, and advanced materials.
2. **Clean Energy Industries:** With the UK's commitment to net zero, this sector is vital. It focuses on developing and deploying renewable energy technologies, including wind, solar, hydrogen, and nuclear power, as well as energy efficiency solutions.
3. **Creative Industries:** This vibrant sector encompasses a wide range of activities, including film, television, music, gaming, design, and fashion. It's recognized for its significant contribution to the economy and its role in shaping the UK's cultural identity.
4. **Defence:** The defence sector plays a crucial role in national security and contributes to technological advancements. It involves the development and manufacturing of military equipment, as well as related services and technologies.
5. **Digital and Technologies:** This sector is at the forefront of innovation and drives transformation across all industries. It includes areas like artificial intelligence, software development, cybersecurity, and telecommunications.
6. **Financial Services:** The UK has a world-leading financial services sector, which plays a vital role in the economy. It encompasses banking, insurance, investment management, and fintech, and is crucial for supporting businesses and driving investment.
7. **Life Sciences:** This sector focuses on developing and commercializing innovative healthcare solutions, including pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and biotechnology. It's crucial for improving health outcomes and driving economic growth.
8. **Professional and Business Services:** This sector provides essential support to businesses across various industries. It includes areas like legal services, accounting, consulting, and recruitment, and plays a key role in enhancing productivity and competitiveness.

These eight sectors are not mutually exclusive and often have strong interconnections.

The industrial strategy aims to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing between these sectors to maximize their collective impact on the UK economy.

Source Invest 2035: The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy

County Durham Skills Developments

Economy & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee

3 March 2025



- Position
- Policy
- Performance
- Pressures

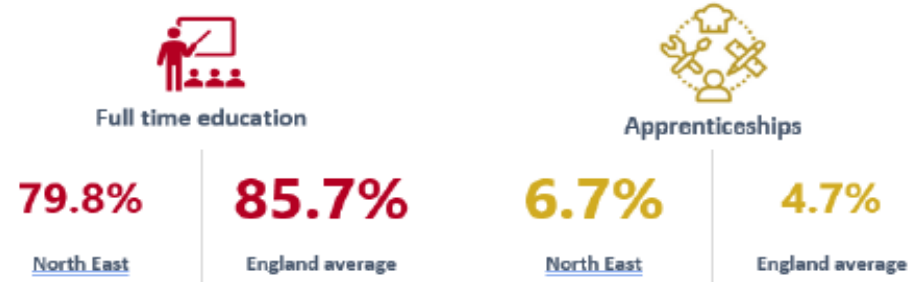
County Durham Skills Position

Qualification level	County Durham (Numbers)	County Durham (%)	North East (%)	Great Britain (%)
RQF4 and above	111,200	35.9	39.6	47.3
RQF3 and above	188,600	60.9	62.8	67.8
RQF 2 and above	264,200	85.4	85.0	86.5
RQF 1 and above	273,900	88.5	88.1	89.0
Other Qualifications	9,700	3.1	3.4	4.6
No Qualifications	25,800	8.3	8.5	6.5

Regional Skills Position



Participation rates for young people aged 16-17



Policy Changes and Priorities

National

- Skills England
- Industrial Strategy
- Get Britain Working White Paper
- Devolution White Paper

Policy Changes and Priorities

National

- Identifying and Addressing Skills Challenges
 - Skills Gaps
 - Barriers to opportunity
- Aligning Skills with economic needs
 - Growth and Skills Levy
 - Sector Specific Focus
- Collaboration and systems wide approach
- Improving quality and access
 - Apprenticeships and Technical education
- Focus on essential skills
 - Literacy & Numeracy
 - Digital skills



**Skills England:
Driving growth and
widening
opportunities**

September 2024



Policy Changes and Priorities

National

- Focus on eight high growth sectors
- Addressing Skills Shortages
 - Improving the education system
 - Investing in apprenticeships & technical education
- Collaboration and Partnerships
- Data Driven approach
 - Analysing skills gaps
 - Monitoring Skills Outcomes
- International Talent



Policy Changes and Priorities

National

- Youth Guarantee
 - Transforming the Apprenticeship levy into a Growth and Skills Levy
- New Jobs and Careers Service
- Local Skills Improvement
 - A data led approach to skills planning using vacancy data and LSIPs
- Focus on Key Skills
 - Growth in non clinical healthcare
 - STEM skills
 - Green Jobs
 - Impact of automation on low skilled work
- Collaboration and Co-ordination



Get Britain Working white Paper

Policy Changes and Priorities

National

- Devolution of Adult Skills
- Joint ownership of LSIPs
 - Ensuring LSIPs reflect the priorities of local leaders, communities and employers
- Greater influence over skills provision
- Alignment of Skills with Local Economic Strategies
 - Skills as a key tool for driving economic growth
- Potential for greater local accountability



Policy Changes and Priorities

Regional



Employment and Skills Strategy - Emerging strategic objectives



1. Grow the economy through a bigger, more productive, skilled workforce



2. Reduce labour market exclusion among residents with health conditions, disabilities and other barriers to employment



3. Boost employment, skills and prosperity in local places



4. Tackle in work poverty and insecurity and create rewarding work for all



5. Create a simpler, efficient, stable employment and skills system



6. Build a strategic regional partnership focused on achieving shared employment and skills goals

Policy Changes and Priorities








Regional



Employment and Skills Strategy
- emerging priority themes



----- Priority themes connected through interdependent pillars of WORK, HEALTH and SKILLS -----

						
Getting into and getting on at work	Positive futures for young people	Healthier lives through work and skills	Skills for Growth	Employers leading the way	Providing the right environment for work and learning	Supporting the employment & skills sector to deliver

Policy Changes and Priorities

Local

- All Age Careers Framework

- Proposed vision

“Careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) will be a vital, embedded element of personal development, enhancing wellbeing and providing more equitable career and employability support opportunities for all residents in every community, across all stages of life”

- A shift from ‘silos’ to ‘simplicity’
- A mechanism(s) for smoothing transitions
- An explicit well-publicised County Durham careers and employability offer for everyone
- Improve employer engagement in CIAG activities

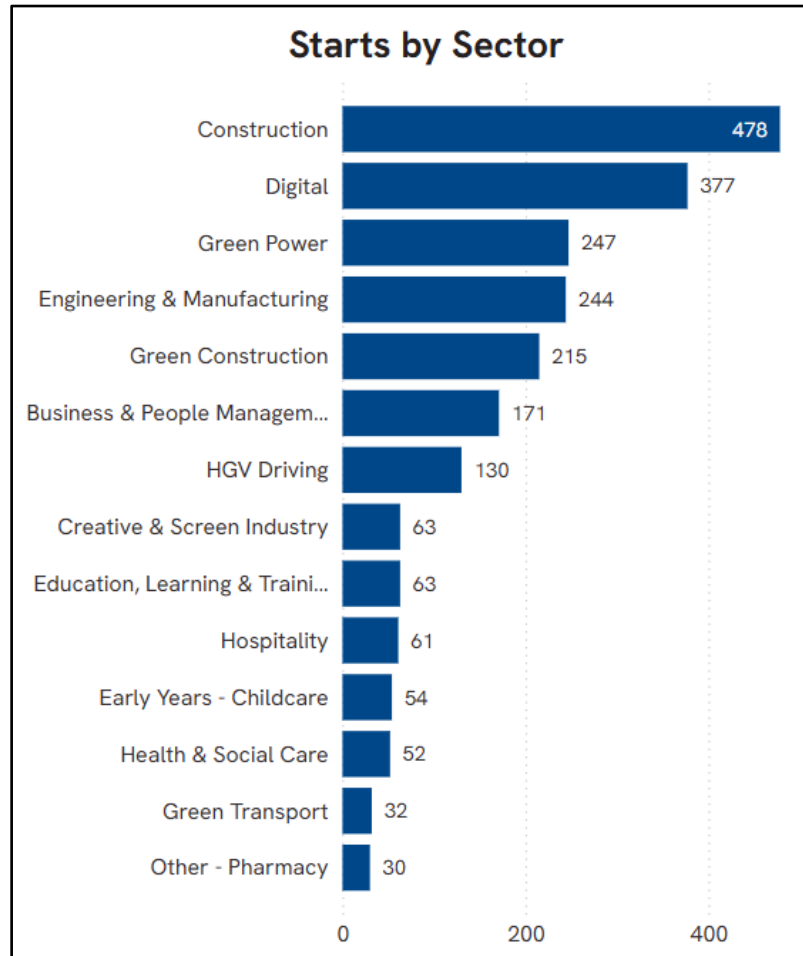
Performance – ASF August 2024- Feb 2025

Enrolments by Local Authority	R06-Feb 2025			
	ASF Adult Skills	Tailored Learning	Total	% of enrolments
County Durham	7,271	1,943	9,214	18%
Gateshead	4,731	2,319	7,050	14%
Newcastle	11,755	1,986	13,741	27%
North Tyneside	3,799	876	4,675	9%
Northumberland	3,616	380	3,996	8%
South Tyneside	3,091	1,843	4,934	10%
Sunderland	5,467	893	6,360	13%
Total	39,730	10,240	49,970	

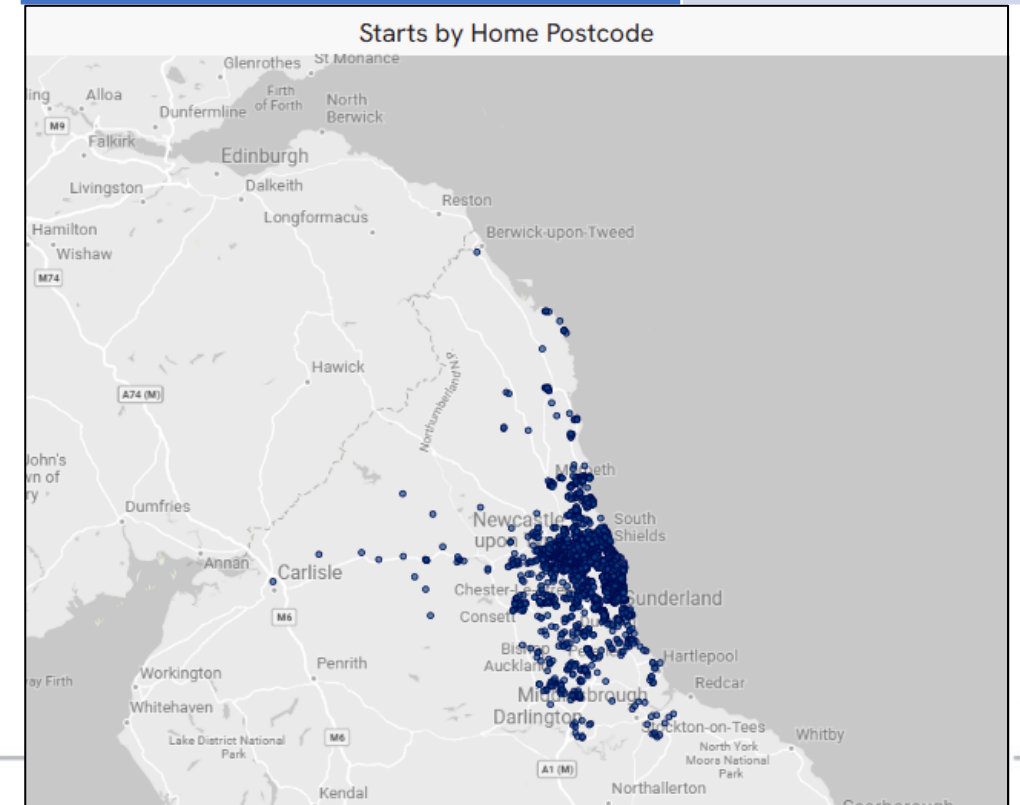
County Durham ASF enrolments by sector

County Durham Enrolments by Subject Sector	No	%
01 - Health, Public Services and Care	1,787	24%
02 - Science and Mathematics	93	1%
03 - Agriculture, Horticulture & Animal Care	101	1%
04 - Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	1,016	13%
05 - Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	454	6%
06 - Information and Communication Technology	140	2%
07 - Retail and Commercial Enterprise	439	6%
08 - Leisure, Travel and Tourism	14	0%
09 - Arts, Media and Publishing	81	1%
10 - History, Philosophy and Theology		0%
11 - Social Sciences		0%
12 - Languages, Literature and Culture	87	1%
13 - Education & Training	229	3%
14 - Preparation for Life and Work	2,894	38%
15 - Business, Administration and Law	226	3%
Total	7,561	

Skills Bootcamps delivery



Local Authority	Total Starts
Sunderland	440
Newcastle upon Tyne	390
County Durham	353
Northumberland	292
North Tyneside	265
Gateshead	182
South Tyneside	157



Pressures

- 1 year funding settlements for 25/26 provides no long term security, e.g. UKSPF
- Bootcamps – awaiting update for future delivery - wave 5 extensions or wave 6 competition. Current programme concludes 31/3/25
- Adult Skills Fund – 2-3 % reduction in funding for 25/26 just announced which does not align with industrial / growth strategies
- Employers NI pressures - No notification yet from DfE on 24/25 in year growth funding and NI funding to cover increased rates ,
- No change in VAT status of FE which puts us at a disadvantage compared to schools and academies
- Growth sector demands for skills in NE (Offshore wind, Onshore wind, advanced manufacturing, constructions , engineering etc) are significant and will cause competition amongst employers / outstripping supply

County Durham Skills Developments Questions?

Economy & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee

3 March 2025



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**Economy and Enterprise
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**



3 March 2025

**Social Housing Allocations Policy Review –
Consultation on Key Issues**

**Report of Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods
and Climate Change**

Electoral divisions affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report and presentation (attached as Appendix 3) is to set out why a review of the council's social housing allocations policy is needed and how Overview and Scrutiny will be involved in both stages of the consultation process. The report:
 - (a) outlines the key issues and consultation questions that are set out in the allocations policy review issues paper as detailed at Appendix 2.
 - (b) outlines the two-stage approach to public consultation.
 - (c) Provides an opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny members to comment in relation to the six key issues being consulted upon.
 - (d) Confirms that Overview and Scrutiny members will have an opportunity to comment on the draft policy, Phase 2 of the consultation process.

Executive Summary

2. In accordance with the Housing Act 1996, housing authorities must have a social housing allocations scheme regardless of whether they own housing stock. The allocations policy sets out the council's eligibility, qualifying, and housing need criteria to ensure priority is fairly assigned and allocated to households in the greatest need. It also sets out how decisions are made on how social housing is allocated and how the council assess applications to the housing register.

3. In County Durham, a choice based allocations scheme is in operation to allocate social housing to people on the housing register, as part of the Durham Key Options (DKO) partnership. The DKO Partnership is made up of Durham County Council and its four key housing partners. The wider partnership is also used to advertise and allocate other types of housing including low-cost home ownership and those in the private rented sector however this consultation is relevant only to how social housing is allocated via the allocations policy.
4. This housing allocation process must be clear, fair, and consistent, and prioritise applicants that are in the greatest need. Considering the current housing crisis and considerable sustained pressure on the supply of social housing, the DKO Partnership, which comprises of Durham County Council and its housing provider partners, believes that the allocations policy requires a comprehensive review and it's the council's responsibility to lead on this review.
5. The proposed vision for the final allocations policy is to:
 - (a) ensure that social housing across the county is allocated consistently and fairly to those in the greatest housing need in an open and transparent way.
6. The objectives of the allocations policy review are as follows:
 - (a) work collaboratively and transparently with DKO partners and other stakeholders, including residents and users of the allocations scheme, to develop a joint allocations policy;
 - (b) ensure that the policy complies with current legislative and regulatory expectations and considers the Code of Guidance issued by central government;
 - (c) ensure that housing is allocated to those most in need;
 - (d) help prevent homelessness and offer a realistic choice to those with a housing need; and
 - (e) contribute to creating balanced and sustainable communities.
7. The outcome of the allocations policy review is that:
 - (a) people in housing need will have access to social housing of the right type and in the right place to meet their needs.
8. The purpose of this first consultation document is to understand the view of the public and key stakeholders on several key issues related to how the allocations scheme works. The council are seeking the views of:

- (a) registered provider partners;
 - (b) other housing professionals;
 - (c) members of the public; and
 - (d) key stakeholders including current and former applicants on the housing register.
9. Consultation materials will be tailored according to the audience. In the consultation document, the council will be asking consultees if the vision, objectives, and outcomes for the review are correct and then asking a number of questions on six key issues that the partnership believes need addressing to achieve an up-to-date allocations policy.
10. The proposed six key issues to be consulted on are as follows:
- (a) qualification criteria to access the housing register;
 - (b) better use of social housing stock;
 - (c) local lettings policies;
 - (d) priority of homelessness cases;
 - (e) priority of medical and domestic abuse cases; and
 - (f) monitoring and service standards.
11. A summary of each key issue and the questions that will be asked is contained within the main body of this report.
12. In summary, the allocations policy review gives the council and its partners an opportunity to consult on, and then later agree formally, to a new housing allocations policy that responds to the current housing crisis and policy changes at a local and national level.
13. A report was considered by Cabinet in December detailing the two-stage approach to consultation and seek Cabinet's approval to commence an eight-week consultation on the first stage of the consultation process. The eight-week consultation process commenced in January 2025 and concludes on the 12 March 2025. Cabinet agreed to the two-stage consultation process.
14. When determining its work programme in July 2023, the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee included an item to come to a future meeting of the committee, outlining the proposals for the review of the Social Housing Allocations Policy. It was intended that Overview and Scrutiny members would be given the opportunity to feed

into any consultation process being undertaken concerning a revised allocations policy.

15. It is intended that Overview and Scrutiny members will have the opportunity to feed into phase 1 and phase 2 of the consultation process. It is anticipated that the draft policy, Phase 2 of the consultation process will be considered at a future Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2025.

Recommendations

16. The Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
 - (a) note the content of this report and the allocations policy review issues paper detailed at Appendix 2;
 - (b) provide comment in relation to the six key issues identified in the report and presentation which form the phase 1 consultation. The comments made by members will be formulated into an Overview and Scrutiny response which will be shared with the Service Grouping.
 - (c) note that a further report, draft policy and presentation will be presented to members in Autumn 2025, providing an opportunity for members to comment on the draft policy. The comments made by members will be formulated into an Overview and Scrutiny response which will be shared with the Service Grouping and will inform the resulting final policy.

Background

17. In County Durham, an allocations policy is in operation to allocate social housing to people on the housing register. The allocations policy, which is sometimes referred to as the 'DKO Policy,' is a shared set of rules on how properties are advertised and allocated. Much has changed since the allocations policy was last reviewed and adopted by the council in 2017.
18. The housing register in County Durham has increased from 7,686 active applicants in 2020 to 10,999 in 2024, a rise of approximately 30%. This is thought to be, in part, due to the cost-of-living crisis. As tenancies and communities have become more sustainable, the number of lets (or turnover of social housing) has significantly decreased in recent years, meaning longer waiting times for those on the register. Prior to Covid, the numbers on the waiting list were higher. The register had approximately 10,000 applicants in 2017 and as many as 17,500 in 2011; however, pre Covid, there was a much higher number of lets and turnover of stock so waiting times for housing were shorter.
19. Properties are currently allocated in order of band and priority date. For example, when properties are advertised, applicants within Band 1 are considered first, then Bands 2, 3 and 4. If two or more eligible applicants with the same band (e.g. Band 1) bid for a property, the applicant with the earliest date has priority. National legislation gives housing authorities the power to create an allocation scheme that gives higher priority to groups of people who fall within the statutory reasonable preference categories and who have urgent housing needs. The council's allocations policy allows the council to give additional priority to:
 - (a) applicants who are severely overcrowded;
 - (b) those with urgent medical needs;
 - (c) those fleeing domestic abuse; and
 - (d) those with a connection to the armed forces.
20. The banding system is ready for a review. In 2023/24, 88% of all lets went to those in Band 1 and Band 2 as more people are presenting with complex needs.
21. The DKO Partnership, which comprises the council and its housing provider partners, believes that due to the current housing crisis and considerable sustained pressure on supply of social rented housing stock, the allocations policy needs to be comprehensively reviewed. This review is also an opportunity to consider whether the DKO

Partnership makes best use of available social housing stock given the considerable and sustained rise in demand since 2020.

Housing Crisis

22. The combination of ageing housing stock in the United Kingdom in need of regeneration and a lack of supply of new houses, including affordable houses, has resulted in a long-term increase in house prices, as well as increasing rents in the private rented sector. This means that owning a property is beyond the reach of many in the United Kingdom and private rented accommodation is becoming increasingly expensive for households as demand increases.
23. Since Covid, the council have seen the waiting list in County Durham increase by approximately 30% and waiting times for social houses have also grown significantly with a reduced number of lets available. The allocations policy needs to reflect the changes in the wider market and the fact that people are presenting with more complex needs and Registered Providers (RPs) are struggling to meet demand for properties.

National and Local Policy and Legislative Response

24. To deal with the housing crisis, both the previous and current Government have made and are in the process of, making some key legislative changes. These include:
 - (a) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): the Labour Government is now proposing the re-introduction of mandatory housing targets for individual local authorities, and this has the potential to significantly increase the housing targets in County Durham by 69%; it has also promised there will be much greater emphasis on affordable housing being truly affordable with more social rent products;
 - (b) Social Housing Act 2023: this is being delivered through strengthened consumer regulation via the Regulator of Social Housing. Important for this review of the allocations policy is that under the regulations housing providers should demonstrate that allocations are fair, equitable, and meet local housing needs as required; and
 - (c) housing strategy and the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy: at a county level, both the draft housing strategy and the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy include a review of the allocations policy as a key action; among other things, the draft housing strategy seeks to address the lack of affordable

housing being delivered in the county and the housing strategy refers to the County Durham Plan target of 836 new affordable houses per year to meet need; however, notes that for several years, developers in the county have only managed to deliver approximately half of this need, and has failed to achieve the target of 836 in any of the last 10 years. The council have also had due regard to the Tenancy Strategy 2022-27 which sets out the council's expectations to the registered providers of social housing operating within the county.

25. The homelessness and rough sleeping strategy sets out the authority's vision to eradicate homelessness and rough sleeping. The number of people presenting as being homeless with complex needs has increased significantly. There are increasing pressures in utilising temporary accommodation (TA) due to the lack of council owned stock. This has been exacerbated by the number of people requiring TA in recent years with approximately 145 new households needing placement every quarter in 2023/24. This has resulted in increased costs to the council. The allocations policy review will consider whether the current banding structure provides the appropriate level of priority for homeless applicants.

Durham Key Options Partnership

26. There is an active partnership between housing RPs and the council, and this partnership was established in 2009. The DKO Partnership is governed by a DKO Board that has its own, legally sealed, partnership agreement that sets out Board membership and voting rights.
27. A full partnership agreement is in place with:
 - (a) Durham County Council;
 - (b) Believe Housing;
 - (c) Karbon Homes;
 - (d) Livin; and
 - (e) North Star Housing.
28. The partnership of these five organisations enables a consistent policy and procedural approach to be followed by all registered housing providers and the council when receiving nominations and allocating housing. As part of the partnership, the housing RPs let 100% of their housing stock in County Durham via the allocations policy.

29. In addition to the formal full partnership, a further 15 RPs are signed up to a nomination agreement which assists the council in addressing housing need. This agreement requires the signatories (sub-partners) to nominate at least 50% of their empty properties to be let to applicants from the housing register. The sub-partners are:
- (a) Accent Group;
 - (b) Anchor Hanover;
 - (c) Bernicia Homes;
 - (d) Castle and Coasts Housing;
 - (e) Durham Action on Single Housing;
 - (f) Durham Aged Miners Homes;
 - (g) Gentoo;
 - (h) Hellens Residential;
 - (i) Home Group;
 - (j) Housing 21;
 - (k) Johnnie Johnson;
 - (l) Places for People;
 - (m) Railway Housing Association;
 - (n) Riverside North-East; and
 - (o) Thirteen Group.
30. In terms of the governance of DKO, the sub-partners do not sit on the DKO Board but have a say on procedural issues as members of the DKO steering groups. The steering groups meets regularly to update procedures and working practices related to housing register applications.
31. The council estimates that around 92% (43,000 properties) of available social housing is advertised and allocated via the council's allocations policy.

Consultation on Allocations Policy Issues Paper

32. The first stage in creating a new allocations policy is to understand the key issues relating to allocating social housing and how the council, RPs, and stakeholders, use the policy in County Durham. The key issues paper, as detailed at Appendix 2, has been written by the council following discussions with the RPs on the DKO Board. The project initiation document (PID) was agreed with the RPs on the Board in advance of the council starting work on the key issues paper.
33. The consultation paper on the six key issues is a technical document with questions which go into specific detail regarding housing terminology and how applicants with housing needs can be prioritised. This paper is aimed primarily at engaging with both the council's four full partners and 15 sub-partners. To successfully engage with residents, residents' groups, and other stakeholders, the council has developed a consultation plan and a more accessible (plain English version) document and public survey in conjunction with our consultation team and this is available on the councils new webpage <https://letstalkcountydurham.co.uk/en-GB/> . At the time of writing the response to the consultation has been excellent with over 400 responses, with 350 responders using our online survey. The Equalities Impact Assessment screening has guided us in identifying groups and partnerships which we should particularly contact to raise awareness of the opportunity to take part.
34. In terms of communicating the consultation, it is proposed to contact those on the housing register to let them know of the consultation and the policy changes which are being considered. It is then up to them whether they respond, but we will be able to demonstrate that we have let them know about the proposals. Current tenants be made aware via RPs websites and comms mechanisms including via tenants' panels and groups. We will also contact our partners and Elected Members, have an online event for members and also present at Overview and Scrutiny. The consultation will also be promoted on the DKO website, and via a variety of social media channels.
35. A second consultation will take place later in autumn 2025 where the council will consider key findings from this consultation paper and provide a revised allocations policy for consideration by stakeholders and the public. Cabinet will approve the final allocations policy, reflecting democratic accountability on the way in which social housing in County Durham is allocated.

Policy Review - Vision, Objectives and Outcome

36. The vision for the final allocations policy is that it ensures that social housing across the county is allocated consistently and fairly to those in the greatest housing need in an open and transparent way.

37. The objectives of the DKO allocations policy review are as follows:
- (a) work collaboratively and transparently with DKO partners and other stakeholders to develop a joint allocations policy;
 - (b) ensure that the policy complies with current legislative and regulatory expectations and considers the Allocations Guidance issued by central Government;
 - (c) ensure that housing is allocated to those most in need;
 - (d) help prevent homelessness and offer a realistic choice to those with a housing need;
 - (e) contribute to creating balanced and sustainable communities; and
 - (f) provide a clear mechanism to ensure that the council can be satisfied that the policy is applied fairly and consistently.
38. The output of the objectives is to have an up-to-date joint allocations policy that responds to national and local policy and helps to address the housing crisis. The outcome will mean that more people in housing need will have access to social housing of the right type and in the right place to meet their needs.
39. The first question of the public consultation for both the technical consultation document and the public facing summary is a question asking whether the vision, objectives and outcome are the correct ones.

Key Issues for Consultation

40. For the consultation, the council have broadly split the consultation into the six key issues. These six issues are covered below in the report but will also be summarised within the presentation which will take place at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting. The six key issues are as follows:
- (a) qualification criteria to access the housing register;
 - (b) better use of social housing stock;
 - (c) local letting policies (LLPs);
 - (d) priority of homelessness cases;
 - (e) priority of medical and domestic abuse cases, and
 - (f) monitoring and service standards.

Key Issue A: Qualification Criteria to Access the Housing Register

41. With reference to the qualification criteria to access the housing register, the council will ask four questions relating to this key issue.
42. The first question considers whether only people with a recent connection to County Durham should qualify to join the register. The current policy contains a preference to those applicants with a local North East connection at the point when properties are being offered; however, there is no geographical limit within the United Kingdom to people qualifying to join the housing register.
43. The second question considers whether people who do not have a housing need should be allowed to join the housing register in the county. Since Covid the number of properties being allocated to people without a housing need (now in Band 4) has significantly reduced and the partnership is now considering whether it is necessary, in a time of housing crisis, to have people on the register with no housing need. Band 4 has the largest number of people active within it, with 5,477 on the register in 2023/24 and the band accounts for 47% of the register but only 9% of the lets. There were 289 Band 4 lets in 23/24. This is more than double the number of people in TA. These Band 4 lets were allocations for low demand properties, usually located in low demand areas in the East of the county but also 10% were in our more rural communities in the west. 29% of the Band 4 lets were for flats which are also usually in less demand. The council are proposing that any voids created from removing those with no housing need could be better used helping those in genuine housing need to get re-housed. For example, these properties could go to those in current Bands 1-3 or these homes could be better used to house individuals who are in urgent homelessness situations.
44. The third question in this section relates to whether a review of unacceptable behaviour is required and what 'type' of unacceptable behaviour should result in an applicant being excluded from the housing register. Nine types of behaviour are set out and the consultees are asked to select their top five unacceptable behaviours that should result in disqualification from the housing register. This will help the council and its allocation partners understand where an applicant should be disqualified from accessing the register.
45. Under the Localism Act 2011, local authorities and social housing providers have some discretion to exclude people from the register on the grounds of "unacceptable behaviour". Excluding people because of tenancy related matters (i.e. non-payment of rent, damage to property and a history of causing neighbour disputes) is relatively objective and

straight forward to assess; however, excluding people for past criminal behaviour is more subjective. When determining how the policy should be framed, it should be recognised that excluding people for non-housing related criminal activity does not mean that they will not end up living in a specific area. People excluded for criminal behaviour may end up living with friends or family, privately renting a property directly next door to a social housing property or living on the streets. This can make it harder for them to be rehabilitated whilst making it harder for the justice system to monitor their progress and whereabouts and housing providers to respond to complaints from their tenants. Conversely being allowed access to housing can improve people's life chances and help them integrate fully into the community whilst enabling the Police, Probation Service, housing providers and the council to better monitor and support them.

46. Recognising the sensitivity of the question, responders will be given the opportunity to make other comments in a comments box underneath their choices.
47. The final question in this section addresses the issue of an applicant's financial resource when they join the housing register. In the context of the housing crisis and a lack of affordable housing, the council are asking if people who have an income, savings, and equity over a certain amount, should be permitted to qualify for the housing register. In this first consultation, the council are asking about the principle of this, as opposed to specifying a cash threshold.

Key Issue B: Better Use of Social Housing Stock

48. This acknowledges there is a severe shortage of four-bedroom properties and a low turnover of three-bedroom properties when compared with demand. There are two questions in this section. The first question asks what incentives can or should be given to tenants to downsize their current property. The second question asks whether a single person, or a couple, should be entitled to a three-bedroom property when they are waiting to be re-housed. This is allowed within the current allocations policy.

Key Issue C: Local Letting Policies

49. There is one question on LLPs. There are currently 26 active LLPs within County Durham, all of which, deal specifically with new build housing and are sometimes the result of a S106 planning agreements. LLPs introduce additional specific criteria for letting property in a defined area

and effectively replace the main allocations policy on the basis that there are important local issues that must be addressed when allocating housing. The national 'Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England' gives local authorities permission to use LLPs as a local tool to allocate housing to those outside reasonable preference groups. LLPs are therefore a policy that allows local 'issues' and 'people' to take precedence over the countywide allocations policy. The question in this section asks what local issues are important enough to override the countywide allocations policy.

Key Issue D: Priority of Homelessness Cases

50. The next issue relates to homelessness cases and the first question in this section asks if people who are at risk of becoming homeless (at the prevention stage of a homeless application) should be awarded a higher priority for housing than people who are already homeless (at a relief or statutory stage of homeless application), in order to prioritise homelessness prevention.
51. The second question asks if those applicants living in TA should be awarded the highest priority for housing. This would include all applicants at both a relief and statutory duty stage of their homeless application. It would build on a successful pilot where those in TA were automatically awarded the highest priority grouping on the register.

Key Issue E: Priority of Medical and Domestic Abuse Cases

52. There are two questions in this key issue. They are both related to how in a future allocations policy, the correct priority is given to those who have issues related to medical need and domestic abuse. Presently, all those applicants on the register assessed with non-urgent medical needs or with any type of welfare need, including those victims of domestic abuse, are currently all banded together; therefore, the band currently hosting these applicants (Band 2) contains 75% of the total active applicants on the register who have an identified housing need. Most of this banding, 3,000 people, are in this band for medical or welfare reasons. This section asks questions on how it may be possible to prioritise those with higher medical and welfare needs over those with more moderate medical or welfare needs.
53. We are asking whether any medical category should need to be backed up with appropriate medical assessment and validated by a medical professional.
54. The council are also seeking feedback from all stakeholders if applicants with medical needs should be split into three separate categories; for example:

- (a) severe;
- (b) substantial; and
- (c) moderate medical need.

55. Secondly, the council are asking whether those people who are current victims of domestic abuse should have their own banding category which prioritises their housing need over other applicants in the general welfare banding. Other welfare reasons could include the need to be near family or friends to give or receive support or people who need to receive or give care and an urgent move is required from their home. It is the council's position that those who are current victims of domestic abuse should be given additional priority over other people in the welfare category.

Key Issue F: Monitoring and Service Standards

56. The council will be asking the public what their impressions and experiences of using the DKO social housing application process is like.
57. There are wide ranging questions within the full consultation document that will be targeted at RPs and housing professionals. This full consultation document on the key issues is detailed at Appendix 2. In time for the public consultation, members of the public will be given a plain English summary of the key issues paper and an easily accessible survey with non-technical questions. The council will replicate the questions across the technical version, the plain English-speaking version, and the online survey to help staff assimilate all consultation responses.

Conclusion and Next Steps

58. Following the eight-week consultation starting in January 2025, the next steps are to consider and, where appropriate, incorporate feedback into an amended allocations policy. Once the feedback has been analysed and considered, there will be a requirement for the new full draft policy to be taken back to cabinet and then subject to another round of public consultation.
59. Having produced this allocations policy consultation issues document, the council now want to open the allocations policy to consultation with:
- (a) RPs;

- (b) the public; and
- (c) a wider group of stakeholders including residents' groups, elected council members and Town and Parish Councils.

Background papers

[Existing DKO Allocations Policy.](#)

[Allocation of accommodation: Guidance for local housing authorities in England.](#)

Other useful documents

None.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Local authorities must ensure that they meet the legal requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002), the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The policy must also have regard to any additional statutory guidance where appropriate.

Section 166A (3) of the Housing Act 1996 gives housing authorities the power to create an allocation scheme that gives higher priority to groups of people who fall within the statutory reasonable preference categories and who have urgent housing needs. The allocations policy allows the council to give higher priority to applicants who are severely overcrowded (overcrowded by two bedrooms) and applicants who need to move for urgent medical reasons. The council give an even higher priority to applicants in these two groups if they have a prescribed connection to the armed forces as set out in the current policy.

The DKO partnership is governed by a DKO Board that has its own legal partnership agreement that sets out Board membership and voting rights.

The Armed Forces Covenant Duty places a legal obligation on public bodies to pay 'due regard to the principles of the Covenant' and requires decisions about the development and delivery of certain services to be made with conscious consideration of the needs of the Armed Forces community.

Finance

The cost of undertaking the consultation will be met by existing budgets in the Strategy and Delivery Team.

Consultation and Engagement

A consultation plan has been drafted. The consultation plan outlines the two-stage approach to consultation and tailors the consultations materials so that it is appropriate for both technical (housing professionals) and non-technical audiences (public, social prescribers, resident groups).

The purpose of the first stage of consultation is to understand the view of the RPs, other housing professionals as well as members of the public and key stakeholders. The consultation will be tailored so consultees will be asked on

the proposed vision and objectives of the DKO Allocations policy review, and the six key issues related to how the allocations scheme works.

There will be a technical paper (appendix 2) for RPs and jargon free public summary document that will be developed in time for public consultation that will be used to consult with the general public, residents groups and other non-housing professionals. This jargon free document will also be used as the basis of the online survey.

As agreed with partners, the questions related to six key issues have been written to avoid pre-determining the outcome of the consultation.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The council acknowledges that, in exercising its functions, it has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This duty applies to all people defined as having protected characteristics under that legislation.. A full draft of the EQIA will be ready in time for the second stage of the consultation when a full draft allocations policy will be consulted upon.

The current allocations policy allows the council to give higher priority to applicants who are severely overcrowded (overcrowded by two bedrooms) and applicants who need to move for urgent medical reasons. The council give an even higher priority to applicants in these two groups if they have a prescribed connection to the armed forces as set out in the current policy.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

The first question on disqualification asks whether the definition of unacceptable behaviour in the current DKO allocations policy is correct. Unacceptable behaviour is currently defined as:

- (a) they have been convicted of a drug related offence*;
- (b) they have been convicted of a violent criminal offence that the council consider makes them a threat to the local community;

- (c) they have been convicted of a sex-related offence that the council consider makes them a threat to the local community*;
- (d) they have any other conviction which, in the council's opinion, makes them a threat to the local community*;
- (e) they have perpetrated violence, domestic violence, racial violence, or harassment;
- (f) they have been abusive to, attacked or threatened staff;
- (g) they have a history of anti-social behaviour or are subject to an anti-social behaviour order;
- (h) they have a record of unacceptable rent/mortgage arrears to local councils or other landlords/lenders (including associated court costs);
- (i) they have a record of unacceptable garage rent arrears owed to the full partner landlords of DKO (Believe housing, Karbon Homes, Livin and North Star);
- (j) they have been evicted on any of the grounds in Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 or any statutory amendment or re-enactment of it;
- (k) they have unsatisfactory tenancy reports;
- (l) they have damaged a current or previous rented home and owe money for 'rechargeable repairs;' and
- (m) they have knowingly given a false statement or given false information when applying to join our housing register.

** Spent convictions are not considered during our assessment.*

Staffing

There is a resource implication in undertaking the consultation; however, this will be met within the strategy and delivery team.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

The risks pertaining to this DKO allocations policy review are all set out within the PID. The PID was co-produced with the RPs who are part of the DKO Partnership.

Procurement

None.

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Social Housing Allocations Policy Review – Consultation on Key Issues

Introduction and Purpose of Consultation Document

In accordance with the Housing Act 1996, housing authorities must have a social housing allocations scheme, regardless of whether they own housing stock. This scheme determines how individuals and families are prioritised for social rented housing. This housing allocation process must be done in a fair, equitable, transparent and consistent way and prioritises applicants that are most in need.

In County Durham, a Choice Based Lettings scheme is in operation to allocate social housing to people on the housing register, as part of the Durham Key Options (DKO) partnership. The DKO Partnership is made up of Durham County Council and its four key housing partners. The wider partnership is also used to advertise and allocate other types of housing including low-cost home ownership and those in the private rented sector, however this consultation is relevant only to how social housing is allocated via the Allocations Policy.

The Allocations Policy was last reviewed in 2017, it is therefore timely to take account of the relevant changes across the housing sector including the current housing crisis and the considerable sustained pressure on the supply of social housing. There are also changes in National and Local Policy that need to be considered when allocating social housing. Durham County Council and its partners have agreed that the time is now right to comprehensively review the Durham Allocations Policy.

The purpose of this first consultation document is to understand the view of the public and key stakeholders on several key issues related to how the allocations scheme works. The first consultation will run from the 15 January and close on the 12 March 2025. This full consultation issues paper will contain some technical questions and will be appropriate for Registered Providers (RPs) and other housing professionals. There is also a shorter less technical summary paper for the public and a shorter consultation survey which will seek the views of the general public. The public version will cover the same issues and ask the same questions, only in Plain English.

A second consultation will take place later in 2025 where the key findings from this consultation on the Issues paper will be taken into consideration and a revised allocations policy aired for public consultation.

The final allocations policy will be approved by Durham County Council's Cabinet in accordance with our statutory duty to set an allocations scheme.

[How is the Current Allocations Policy Managed?](#)

The Allocations Policy and the local authority housing register is the statutory responsibility of the Council. In Durham there is an active partnership between registered housing providers and the County Council that was established in 2009 to implement and oversee the scheme. The partners are:

- Durham County Council
- Believe housing
- Karbon Homes
- Livin, and
- North Star Housing

The partnership enables a consistent policy and procedural approach when allocating properties. The Council estimates that around 92% (43,000 properties) of available social housing is advertised and allocated via the allocations policy.

As part of the partnership, the housing providers listed above let 100% of their housing stock in County Durham via Durham Key Options. As part of the scheme, partners are committed to a joint Allocations Policy. The policy covers all partners when allocating properties within the County boundary. Any other policy that partners may have is only used by them outside County Durham. All of the partners own stock outside of County Durham and a couple of the RPs have separate lettings policies for stock outside of the boundary of the County.

In addition to the formal partnership a further 15 registered providers (RPs) are signatories to a nomination agreement which assist the Council in addressing housing need. This agreement requires the signatories (sub-partners) to nominate at least 50% of their empty properties to be let to applicants from the housing register. The sub-partners are:

- Accent Group

- Anchor Hanover
- Bernicia Homes
- Castles and Coasts Housing
- DASH – Durham Action on Single Housing
- DAMHA – Durham Aged Miners Housing Association
- Gentoo
- Hellens Residential
- Home Group
- Housing 21
- Johnnie Johnson Housing
- Places for People
- Railway Housing Association
- Riverside North-East
- Thirteen Group

The sub-partners request nominations via Durham County Council's allocations team. The nominating provider will then allocate from the shortlist of applicants and then rehouse. The nomination agreement with the sub-partners is monitored monthly by Durham County Council to check compliance.

The total stock of houses that would fall solely under the allocations policy from the main four partners in County Durham is approximately 39,500 houses. The sub-partners have in addition approximately 7,000 properties, of which at least 50% are allocated via the allocations policy.

Why are we reviewing the Social Housing Allocation Policy?

There are several reasons why the Allocations Policy requires a revision. Some of the key reasons for review are as follows:

- Help address the Housing Crisis
- Changing National Policy and Legislative Context
- Changing Local Policy Context
- Current Policy is Outdated

Help address the Housing Crisis

The combination of ageing housing stock in the UK in need of regeneration and a lack of supply of new houses, including affordable houses, has resulted in a long-term increase in house prices, as well as increasing rents in the private rented sector. This means that owning a property is beyond the reach of many in the UK and private rented accommodation is becoming increasingly expensive for households as demand increases. When people are unable to access suitable housing, it can result in overcrowding as more young adults are living with their parents and unable to afford their own property for starting a family.

Since Covid, we have seen the waiting list in County Durham increase by around 30%. Waiting times for social houses have also grown as the cost of rent and properties in the private sector increases. The allocations policy needs to reflect the changes in the wider market and the fact that RPs are no longer struggling with demand for properties. There are very few difficult to let houses and the number of bids on each property is increasing year on year. The number of houses going to individuals with no housing assessed need (in Band 4) is reducing year on year, showing greater demand from those in housing need. During 2020/21 608 properties went to people in Band 4 (19% of the total lets), which reduced to 289 properties going to people in Band 4 during 2023/24 (9% of the total lets).

Changing National Policy and Legislative Context

The National Housing Federation estimates that around 340,000 new houses need to be supplied in England each year, of which 145,000 should be affordable. The Government have set a national target for 1.5 million new homes to be built over the next five years to tackle the acute shortage of housing across the country. Relevant policy and legislation are summarised below.

- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** - The Labour Government are now proposing the re-introduction of mandatory housing targets for individual Local Authorities as part of their National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) reforms. Nationally, this has a target of 1.5 million more homes by the end of the parliament and has the potential to significantly increase the housing targets in County Durham. They have also promised there will be much greater emphasis on affordable housing being truly affordable with more social rent products, as opposed to First Homes, Starter Homes or shared ownership products.
- **Social Housing Act 2023** - aimed at improving the regulation of social housing, strengthening tenants' rights, and ensuring better quality and safer homes for residents. This is being delivered through strengthened Consumer Regulation via the Regulator of Social Housing.
- **Renters Rights Bill** - The Renters' Rights Bill is a proposed bill in the UK Parliament that aims to improve the rights of renters by making it safer, more secure, and more affordable to rent. Some areas of consideration include abolishment of no-fault evictions, limits to rent increases, creation of an ombudsman service and strengthened enforcement powers.
- **Homes England Strategic Plan 2023-2028** - The strategy sets out how Homes England will play its part in delivering the previous government's levelling up and housing agendas. Its mission was to "drive regeneration and housing delivery to create high-quality houses and thriving places. The strategy has five interconnected objectives to deliver on the mission: create vibrant and successful places, build a housing and regeneration sector that works for

everyone, enable sustainable houses and places, promote creation of high-quality houses in well-designed places, facilitate the creation of homes people need.

- **The Armed Forces Covenant** is a promise by the nation that the armed forces community should be treated fairly and face no disadvantage when accessing public and commercial services. In our current allocations policy, those applicants who have a connection to the armed forces are awarded a band 2 priority on receipt of their discharge papers. Additional priority is awarded to those applicants leaving the armed forces if they have an urgent medical need and or they are overcrowded by 2 or more bedrooms and awarded Band 2 and a 6-month backdate. The Armed Forces Covenant as a legal responsibility.

Changing Local Policy Context

Durham County Council has strategies in place to improve the quality of the housing stock generally and work proactively with RPs to reduce the waiting list and the numbers of people who are Homeless and in Temporary Accommodation.

The County Durham Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has recently been adopted by Full Council and the County Durham Housing Strategy is expected to be approved in early 2025. Both strategies highlight the need for a review of the allocations policy to ensure it meets current housing need and demand as well as ensuring it complies with current legislation. The Council also updated its Tenancy Strategy in 2022 out the Council's expectations to the registered providers of social housing operating within the County regarding the types of tenancy they should offer to their tenants.

- **The Housing Strategy** sets out a key principle that everyone should have access to a home that is affordable to them. By ensuring that there is a sufficient supply of all types of housing we can help prevent homelessness and reduce reliance on temporary accommodation. One of the key actions for the Council is to begin its own Council house building programme which will deliver at least 500 new build properties over the next five years and beyond.

- **The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy** sets out Durham County Council's vision to eradicate homelessness and rough sleeping. The number of people presenting as being homeless with complex needs has increased significantly.

There are increasing pressures in utilising temporary accommodation due to the lack of Council owned stock. This has been exacerbated by the number of people requiring Temporary Accommodation (TA) increasing with around 145 new households needing placement in TA every quarter in 2023/24 resulting in increased costs to the Council. The allocations policy review will consider whether the current banding structure provides the appropriate level of priority for homeless applicants.

Recent increases in interest rates are having an impact on landlords, forcing them to sell properties or increase their rents, which is resulting in people being evicted or making the sector less affordable for those on lower incomes. This has resulted in an increase in the number of people who have been unable to remain in their existing home which has resulted in them becoming homeless. Around 30% of homeless applicants have stated their reason for homelessness is because their private tenancy is ending or has ended.

- **The Tenancy Strategy 2022-27** sets out the Council's expectations to the registered providers of social housing operating within the County. The Strategy sets out a commitment to provide a range of tenancies to meet all housing needs, providing security of tenure and a safety net for those facing financial difficulties. It also seeks to tackle under occupancy by giving people the opportunity to move to smaller accommodation and where appropriate, supporting the adaptation of homes so people can remain in existing homes.

[Current Allocations Policy is Outdated](#)

Much has changed since the existing joint allocations policy was reviewed and adopted in 2017 following a full public consultation exercise. Since then, there has been several incremental reviews which have reacted to issues the DKO Board have identified. For example, a light touch review was carried out in 2022 with additional

preference for those people with a connection to the Armed forces. There were then some minor changes relating to medical need and the appeals process, which were implemented in May 2023. These incremental changes add up, and in light of the changes outlined above, it is felt appropriate that Council Members are given the opportunity to consider draft proposals for a new Allocations Policy.

Customer expectations on service have grown in the information age where data can be assessed in real time online. Part of this review will seek to improve the quality of the application experience by ensuring expectations are effectively managed, processes are streamlined and responsive to the diverse needs of applicants, and process efficiencies leveraged to speed up administration. A clear and transparent policy is one way to make sure the policy responds to the needs of customer expectations.

The review gives the Council the opportunity to work with its partners to agree formally to a new housing allocations system that responds to the current Housing Crisis and to comprehensive policy changes as Local and National Government's responds to the Housing Crisis. There is an opportunity to comment on the current bands in the allocations policy and the banding reasons in the consultation document.

The housing register in County Durham has increased from 7,686 in 2020 to around 10,600 in 2024, a rise of over 38%. This review is a tool to further demonstrate that the Partnership makes best use of available social housing stock given the considerable and sustained rise in demand since 2020.

Key Definitions when Framing Allocations Policies

Before we ask questions around the key issues, we will need to explain some key definitions that are used to frame housing allocations policies.

Definition of Housing Need

Housing need is a particularly relevant term in a housing allocation policy. Prioritising properties for those most in housing need is a fundamental requirement of an allocations policy and is a key objective of this review. It's important to understand the difference between housing need and housing demand.

Housing demand often refers to an individual's wants or aspirations and is usually limited (or not) by an individual's ability to afford a property. Housing need is based on the premise that everyone requires a suitable home to live in regardless of how much money they have. An individual's need may vary depending on several factors including location, affordability, property condition and suitability, health, and welfare.

Definition of Reasonable Preference

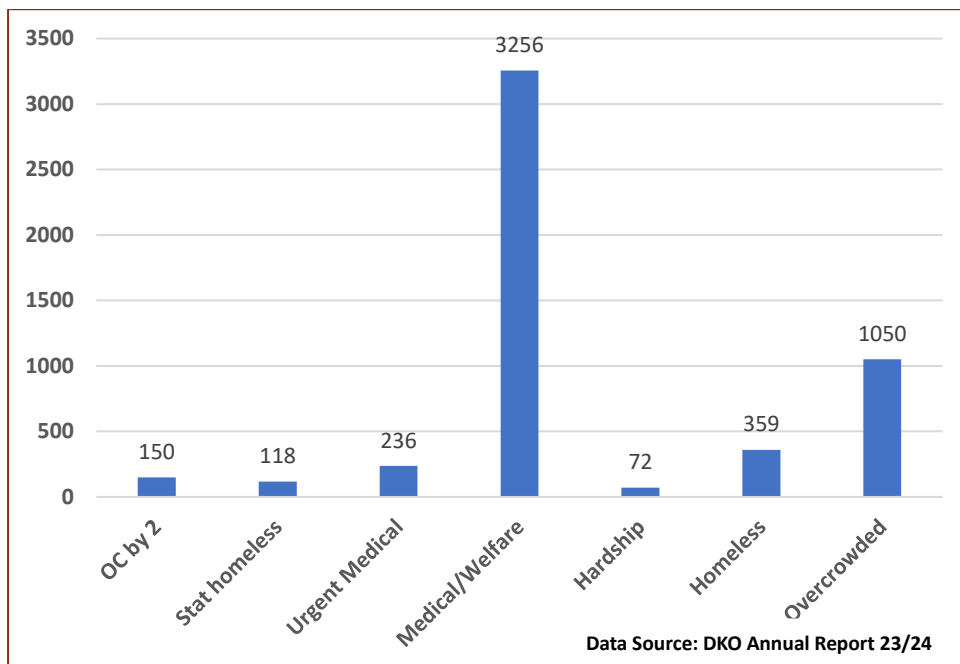
In framing the allocation policy to determine allocation priorities, National legislation via the Housing Act 1996, and the 'allocation of accommodation, guidance for local authorities' states that housing authorities must ensure that 'reasonable preference' is given to people in housing need:

- People that are homeless or threatened with homelessness,
- People living in overcrowded or unsanitary conditions,
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds,
- People who need to move to avoid hardship.

At the time of the last annual DKO report (April 2024), there were 10,879 active applicants, of which 5,241 (44%) were in a reasonable preference group, as listed above.

Graph 1 shows the numbers of applicants in each of the reasonable preference groups, the majority of people have a medical or welfare housing need. These people in reasonable preference are usually placed into the top two bands of applicants requiring re-housing.

Graph 1: Reasonable Preference Groups

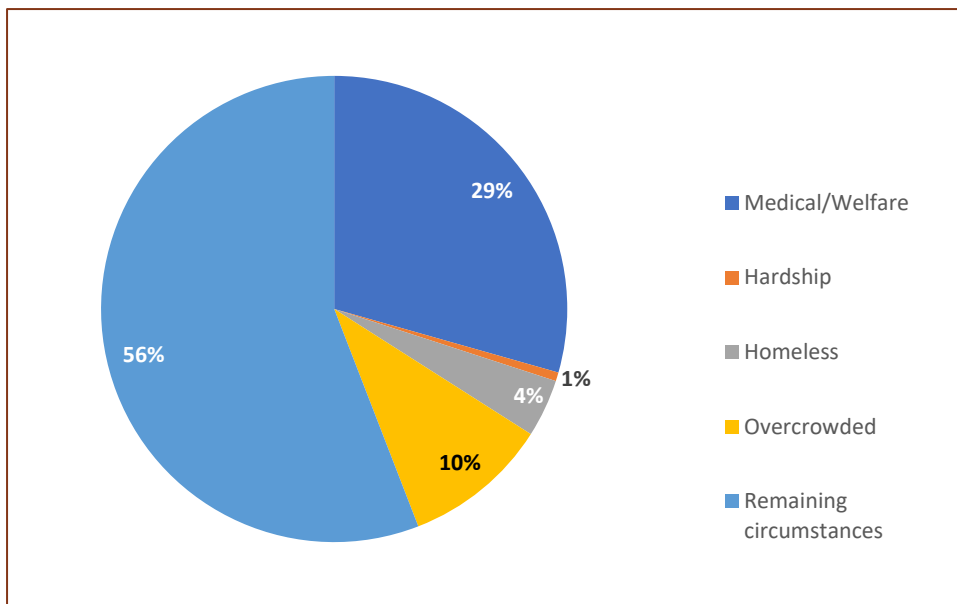


*OC by 2 is where an applicant is overcrowded by 2 additional bedrooms

Graph 2 shows the breakdown of the total active applicants by reasonable preference group and those who don't fall within a reasonable preference group. The breakdown for total of 'Remaining Circumstances' include those applicants that fall within the following categories:

- care leavers,
- living in intensive supported housing,
- regeneration schemes,
- leaving the armed forces and do not fall within homelessness legislation with an additional preference,
- those wishing to live independently with no other housing need,
- adequately housed and have no housing need.

Graph 2: Reasonable preference groups compared to the total housing Register



Additional Preference

Section 166A (3) of the Housing Act 1996 gives housing authorities the power to create an allocation scheme that gives higher priority to particular kinds of people who fall within the statutory reasonable preference categories and who have urgent housing needs. Our allocations policy allows us to give higher priority to applicants who are severely overcrowded (overcrowded by 2 bedrooms) and applicants who need to move for urgent medical reasons. We give an even higher priority to applicants in these two groups if they have a prescribed connection to the armed forces as set out in the current policy.

Vision and Objectives of Allocations Policy Review

Vision

We want a policy that *“ensures that social housing across the county is allocated consistently and fairly to those in the greatest housing need in an open and transparent way”*.

Objectives

The draft objectives of the review and consultation is to:

1. Work collaboratively and transparently with DKO partners and other stakeholders to develop a joint allocations policy.
2. Ensure that the policy complies with current legislative and regulatory expectations and considers the Allocations Guidance issued by central government.
3. Ensure that housing is allocated to those most in need.
4. Help prevent homelessness and offer a realistic choice to those with a housing need.
5. Contribute to creating balanced and sustainable communities.
6. Provide a clear mechanism to ensure that the Council can be satisfied that the policy is applied fairly and consistently.

Outcome

The draft outcome of the review and consultation is to have an up-to-date joint allocations policy that responds to national and local policy and helps to address the housing crisis. The outcome will mean that *“people in housing need have access to social housing of the right type and in the right place to meet their needs”*.

Question 1 – Do you agree or disagree with the proposed vision, objectives and outcome?

- **Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree/ Strongly disagree**

Q1a - Why do you feel this way? Open text

Q1b - Do you feel there is anything missing from the proposed vision, objectives or outcome? Open text

Key Issues for Public Consultation

For the consultation, we have broadly split the consultation into six key Issues.

1. Housing register qualification criteria.
2. Better Use of Social Housing Stock.
3. Local Lettings Policies.
4. Priority of Homeless Cases.
5. Priority of Medical and Domestic Abuse Cases.
6. Monitoring and Service Standards.

Key Issue 1 – Housing register qualification criteria

Introducing a residency test for qualification?

The partnership wants to ensure that the housing register reflects the housing needs of residents and effectively manages applicant expectation. The register has grown by around 30% since 2020 while the time spent on the register waiting for appropriate housing in the County has grown for individuals and families across all preference bands.

The current allocations policy states that anyone over 16 who needs help to find affordable housing in County Durham can apply to join our register. If a resident is eligible, they can then 'qualify' to join the housing register providing their 'behaviour' is acceptable to the partnership.

The current policy contains a preference to those applicants with a local North East connection at the point when properties are being offered. However, there is no 'geographical limit' within the UK to people qualifying to join the housing register. These people won't be prioritised over people with a local connection, but they will qualify to join to the register.

The current allocations policy does include a 'local connection test' at the point a property is being shortlisted. This test gives priority or a higher priority to those people with a local connection, which is the wider North-East region with no more 'local' connection than that required. The 'local connection test' does not currently affect those people when they apply to join the register, but it may affect them when they are short listed for a property.

We are seeking views as to whether you think only people with a recent connection to County Durham should qualify to join the register here. By recent connection, we mean someone who has lived or worked in County Durham for at least 12 months or has been offered a permanent employment opportunity in the County. We would also consider applications from people whose circumstances mean they need support from family who live in the County.

A residency test to qualify for the register would not apply to those with exemptions, including those with reasonable preference, namely veterans, domestic abuse victims and care leavers.

Question 2 – Do you agree or disagree that only people with a recent connection to County Durham should qualify to join the register here? (with some exceptions such as those outlined above).

- **Strongly agree / Agree / Neither Agree or Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree**

Q2a - Why do you feel this way? OPEN TEXT BOX

Q2b - Do you think this change would affect you / the people you represent in a positive or negative way?

- **Extremely positive / Positive / No change / Negative / Extremely negative**

[Qualification with no Housing Need?](#)

Houses are currently allocated based on a banded approach. There are 4 bands. Everyone in Bands 1-3 have some form of housing need. A description of all the bands is set out in key issue 4. Those in Band 4 are both 'eligible' and 'qualify' to join our housing register but at the time of applying for the register, they are adequately housed and have no 'housing need'. Band 4 has the largest number of people active within it, with 5,477 in 2023/24 at the end of the previous financial year.

The partnership is now considering whether it is necessary, in a time of housing crisis, to have people on the register with no housing need i.e. those currently in Band 4. The providers of social housing are telling us that they have very few voids and most of their lets are going primarily to people in the highest bands of need, i.e Band 1 and Band 2 of housing need.

In 2023/24, 88% of lets (from the full partners) were allocated to residents in Band 1 and 2. Band 3 only has 3% of total lets although there is only 749 people in this Band (8th October 2024). The percentage of lets to applicants going into Band 4 has decreased year on year since Covid. In the year 2020/21, 23% of lets were to people in Band 4 this reduced to 17% in 2021/22, 14% in 2022/23 and is now down to 9%. Therefore, band 4 accounts for about 47% of the housing register but only about 9% of the annual lets. Put another way, only 6% of applicants from Band 4 received a social rented property because of being on the register so 94% of residents in this Band are not being housed.

It should be noted that, even where applicants are accepted onto the Housing Register, there is no guarantee that an offer of accommodation will be made to those in the lower banding priorities. There were 289 Band 4 lets in 23/24. This is more than double the number of people in TA. These Band 4 lets were allocations for low demand properties, usually located in low demand areas in the East of the county but also 10% were in our more rural communities in the west. 29% of the Band 4 lets were for flats which are also usually in less demand.

The Council are suggesting that any voids created from removing Band 4 applicants would be better used helping those in bands 1-3 get re-housed or those homes would be better used to house individuals who are in urgent homelessness situations.

Question 3 - Do you agree or disagree that people who are already adequately housed should be allowed to join the housing register? (e.g. because they want to move to another property or location).

- **Strongly agree / Agree / Neither Agree or Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree**

Q3a - Why do you feel this way? OPEN TEXT BOX

Q3b - Do you think this change would affect you / the people you represent in a positive or negative way?

- **Extremely positive / Positive / No change / Negative / Extremely negative**

[Exclusion from Housing register](#)

During 2023/24 19,452 applications were received, and a total of 1758 (9% of the total applications) were disqualified at the point of application. The current allocations policy states that everyone who is eligible for social housing will qualify to join the housing register except applicants (or households) who fall into the three categories below. The allocations policy excludes applicants that fall into one of the following categories:

1. People whose behaviour makes them unacceptable to us.

2. People we have previously removed from our register – if they refused or did not respond to 3 offers of any suitable property in any rolling 12-month period.
3. Tenants who have (a) signed up to a new tenancy in the last 12 months through DKO and (b) who we regard as adequately housed.

During 2023/24 1758 (9%) of applicants were disqualified from accessing the housing register, of which 97% were due to behaviour which is unacceptable as identified within category 1 above, as part of the allocations policy. As this is the main reason for disqualification, it is important to review what constitutes 'unacceptable behaviour' as part of this consultation.

[People whose behaviour makes them unacceptable to us](#)

Upon assessment, the applicant will not qualify to join the register if they or a member of their household who they live with has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour. The behaviour must be serious enough to make the person unsuitable to be offered housing. Until the applicant can demonstrate better behaviour, we will not consider another application from them if we have disqualified them from our register. It's important to the Council though that appropriate housing solutions are available to those with multiple complex needs and that past, non-tenancy related transgressions are not an automatic barrier to social housing.

Tenancy related behaviours such as damage to property, causing neighbourhood disputes or non-payment of rent are easy for us to assess, but non-housing related criminal activity is more subjective and difficult to manage. People with a history of criminal behaviour may still live in the area with family or friends, private renting or end up homeless.

Access to social housing, however, could improve someone's life chances and help them integrate fully into the community. It would also help the police, probation service, housing providers and the council to better monitor and support them.

With this in mind, we are reviewing what we mean by unacceptable behaviour, and we would like your thoughts on this.

Question 4 - Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to review what constitutes unacceptable behaviour?

- **Strongly agree / Agree / Neither Agree or Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree**

Q4a - Why do you feel this way? OPEN TEXT BOX

Q4b - Do you think this change would affect you / the people you represent in a positive or negative way?

- **Extremely positive / Positive / No change / Negative / Extremely negative**

Q4c – Which of the following statements do you think should be considered as unacceptable behaviour so someone is not able to join the housing register? (Please choose up to five)

(add digitised box for people to select top 5 choices)

- Convicted of a drug-related offence.
- Convicted of a violent criminal offence that we consider makes them a threat to the local community, including domestic abuse, racial violence or harassment
- Convicted of a sex-related offence that we consider makes them a threat to the local community.
- Been abusive to, attacked or threatened staff.
- Have a history of anti-social behaviour or are subject to an anti-social behaviour order.
- Have a record of unacceptable rent arrears (including garage arrears owed to DKO partners), or mortgage arrears.
- Have unsatisfactory tenancy reports.
- Have damaged a current or previous rented home and owe money for 'rechargeable repairs.'
- Have knowingly given a false statement or given false information when applying to join our housing register.

*Spent convictions will not be taken into account during our assessment.

Q4d - Do you have any other comments to make in relation to disqualification from the housing register due to unacceptable behaviour? OPEN TEXT BOX

Financial Resources

It is evident that there is a shortfall between the supply and demand for social housing, with around 10,700 active applicants on the housing register and on average around 3,000 lets each year. It is therefore important to consider whether people who have the resources to buy or rent their own property on the open market without public subsidy should be allowed access to the housing register and ultimately social housing, thereby reducing the number of properties available for those people who cannot afford to buy or rent a property on the open market.

The current allocations policy allows anyone to access the housing register, regardless of their income, savings or equity. There are currently around 593 active applicants on the housing register with an income of £30,000 or more, making up around 6% of the total register.

Question 5 – Do you agree or disagree that income, savings or equity should be taken into account when assessing if someone should access the housing register?

- **Strongly agree / Agree / Neither Agree or Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree**

Q5a – Why do you feel this way? OPEN TEXT BOX

Q5b - Do you think this change would affect you / the people you represent in a positive or negative way?

- **Extremely positive / Positive / No change / Negative / Extremely negative**

Key Issue 2 – Better Use of Social Housing Stock

Under occupation arises where a household lives in a property that is deemed too large for its needs. Under occupancy is a problem in County Durham because there is a shortage of larger family homes accessible via the housing register. This is particularly the case for 4 bedroomed houses, with only 648 properties across the DKO partnership, accounting to 1.6% of the total housing stock. Although there are more three-bedroom properties, underoccupancy is also an issue too, where single people or a couple are under-occupying a three bedroomed property.

The annual turnover of these four bedroomed properties is very low, only 1% of all lets in 2023/24 were made to four-bedroom properties (18 properties). The current housing register has 223 active applicants who require a property with four or more bedrooms. Therefore, the demand for larger properties is rarely being met so we are seeking views whether it is possible to free up these larger properties where they are being under-occupied and make better use of the social housing stock. Under occupancy is considered below in relation to both existing tenants and applicants

Underoccupancy for existing tenants

The current allocations policy doesn't have a separate banding reason to address existing tenants who are under occupying and who wish to downsize, with no other housing need.

Question 6 – Do you agree or disagree that we need to encourage people to downsize if they are under occupying their home?

- **Strongly agree / Agree / Neither Agree or Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree**

Q6a - Why do you feel this way? OPEN TEXT BOX

Q6b - Do you think this change would affect you / the people you represent in a positive or negative way?

- **Extremely positive / Positive / No change / Negative / Extremely negative**

Q6c – Do you have any ideas how we can encourage or support people to downsize? OPEN TEXT

Under occupancy for applicants

Like the lack of four bedroomed properties, there is also shortage of single person properties with only one bedroom. Only 19% (7686) of the total housing stock across the partnership are one-bedroom properties, of which at least 5327 are bungalows and predominantly for older people. The shortage of one-bedroom properties means single people and couples should be eligible to access a two-bedroom property via a future allocations policy.

The current allocations policy allows single persons and couples to apply and bid for three-bedroom properties, subject to passing an affordability assessment. There are 12,400 three-bedroom properties across the DKO partnership, however the turnover of these properties is low, with only 17% of total lets during 2023/24 going to properties with three bedrooms. There are over 1,700 active applications/households that are eligible for a minimum of a three-bedroom property, making it extremely difficult for families or single people with multiple children to be allocated a property of this size.

Between April 2022 and September 2023, there were only 21 lets of a three-bedroom property to single persons and a further 10 to 'other households' which could include a couple without children.

In the current allocations policy, a single person or a couple with no children could be allocated a three-bedroom property if their income is sufficient to pay the rent for a property larger than what they need. Given the under supply of accommodation for families, it is therefore important that the current stock is utilised in the most appropriate way to meet the housing need.

Question 7 – Do you agree or disagree that a single person or a couple (with no children) should be entitled to apply for a three bedroomed property?

- **Strongly agree / Agree / Neither Agree or Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree**

Q7a - Why do you feel this way? OPEN TEXT BOX

Q7b - Do you think this change would affect you / the people you represent in a positive or negative way?

- **Extremely positive / Positive / No change / Negative / Extremely negative**

Key Issue 3 – Local Lettings Policies

Local Lettings Policies (LLPs) can override the allocations policy on the basis that there are important local issues that must be addressed when allocating households to housing. There are currently 26 active LLPs within County Durham which deal specifically with new build housing.

LLPs can be introduced so that the LLP effectively replaces the allocation policy on a defined housing area to address a specific local issue.

The allocation of accommodation guidance advises that LLPs are allowed under Section 166 of the 1996 Act. LLPs allows local authorities to allocate particular accommodation to people of a particular description whether or not they fall within the 'reasonable preference' categories. Cohorts of people in reasonable preference could be people who are classed as homeless, people living in overcrowded conditions, people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds or people who need to specific local authority to avoid hardship.

LLPs are therefore a policy that allows local 'issues' to take precedence over the countywide allocations policy.

Q8 – What local issues do you think are important enough to override the countywide allocations policy? (Please tick as many as you want)

- **Demand for affordable housing**
- **High levels of anti-social behaviour in a particular area**
- **A shortage of a particular type of housing eg bungalows, larger family homes**
- **Requirement to work within a certain area of a particular location**
- **Housing in regeneration areas**
- **New build housing**
- **Age related housing eg older persons sheltered accommodation**
- **Rural issues eg affordability of housing**
- **Other (please specify)**

If you ticked 'other' above, please can you state in the comments box below what other local issues would require a Local Lettings Policy. Do you have any

**other comments to make on Local Letting Policies and the use of them? OPEN
TEXT BOX**

Key Issue 4 – Priority of Homeless cases

The current allocations policy has four bands (set out in Table 1 below). All qualified applicants will have their circumstances assessed and will be placed in the relevant band, according to their level of housing need. Those that are homeless are currently banded into the top two categories and the Council are seeking views if there is a better way to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place and also to create a safety net for those without a roof over their heads.

Table 1- Housing Register by bands in 2024

Band	Banding Reason	No. active applicants	% of total active applicants	No. of lets 23/24	% of total lets
1	Accepted as statutorily homeless	119	1.1%	251	7.8%
	Care leavers	18	0.1%	27	0.8%
	Living in intensive supported housing	161	1.5%	257	8.0%
	Overcrowded by at least two bedrooms	127	1.2%	150	4.6%
	Regeneration scheme within County Durham	34	0.3%	19	0.5%
	Urgent medical reasons	220	2.1%	285	8.8%
Band 1 Total		679	6.3%	989	30.8%
2	Leaving the armed forces and you do not fall within homelessness legislation	18	0.2%	10	0.3%
	Move to a locality to avoid hardship	59	0.6%	35	1.2%
	Need to move on medical or welfare grounds	2880	26.9%	1125	35%
	Occupying unsanitary, overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing	977	9.1%	348	10.8%
	Prevention/Relief duties owed by local authority (Homeless)	353	3.2%	305	9.5%
Band 2 Total		4287	40%	1823	56.7%
3	Wishing to live independently with no other housing need	749	7%	111	3%
4	Adequately housed and have no housing need	4996	47%	289	9%
Grand Total		10,711		3,212	

Table 1 shows that on 08 October 2024, there were 10,711 active applicants on the housing register, it also shows the breakdown of active applicants within each band and the number of lets within each band during 2023/24.

Homeless applicants

There are around 7,500 people each year who approach the Council when they require housing advice, are homeless, or are at risk of being homeless, of which around 2,500 people are owed a homelessness duty from the Council and require some form of accommodation.

Each person with an active homelessness application will be at a different stage of homelessness and therefore will have a differing level of priority in terms of requiring accommodation.

If someone is still housed but is at risk of becoming homeless within the next 56 days, for example has been asked to leave their current accommodation by a landlord or friends/family, they will be in a 'Prevention Duty'. After 56 days have lapsed and if no accommodation has been found, they will move into a 'relief duty'. Someone can be placed immediately into a relief duty if they are homeless upon application. The applicant will remain in relief duty for a further 56 days and if no accommodation has been found they will move into a 'main duty' and be classed as 'statutory homeless', providing they have a priority need and have not made themselves intentionally homeless.

Where suitable accommodation cannot be sourced for people who are homeless, temporary accommodation is utilised. The number of placements into temporary accommodation has increased significantly, resulting in increased costs to the Council. It is therefore important that homeless people are assessed and placed in the most appropriate band, to ensure that they can access accommodation as quickly as possible, to avoid the need to use temporary accommodation.

Currently, homeless applicants accepted as 'statutorily homeless' with a full duty to be rehoused are placed in Band 1 on the housing register. Statutory homeless people are those people who have been assessed as homeless by the local authority, are unintentionally homeless and are in a 'priority need' group.

Band 1 has the least number of active applicants, making up just over 6% of the total housing register (679 applicants), of which just over 1% are statutory homeless (119 applicants). During 2023/24, almost 31% of total lets went to people within Band 1. Band 2 is the second largest band containing 40% of the total active applicants. Of the total number of applicants in band two around 8% are 'non statutorily' homeless. This priority includes applicants that are at risk of becoming homeless within the next 56 days and are at a 'prevention' stage in their homelessness application with the local authority's housing service. It also includes applicants that are currently homeless and in a 'relief' stage of their homelessness case (stage after the 56 days of prevention). The Council want to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place so want to prioritise those in the prevention stage. The question below is seeking views on the Councils position on prevention.

Question 9 – Do you agree or disagree that people who are at risk of becoming homeless be awarded a higher priority than people who are already homeless?

- **Strongly agree / Agree / Neither Agree or Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree**

Q9a - Why do you feel this way? OPEN TEXT BOX

Q9b - Do you think this change would affect you / the people you represent in a positive or negative way?

- **Extremely positive / Positive / No change / Negative / Extremely negative**

Temporary Accommodation

There are a high number of people that approach the Council's housing service each year who are at risk of becoming homeless within the next 56 days. It is important that they can access affordable housing as quickly as possible to prevent the use of temporary accommodation, which is very costly to the Council. These people would currently be awarded the second priority grouping (Band 2, table 1) on the housing register. The average waiting time in the current Band 2 is around 251 days.

Anyone who presents to the Council's housing service as homeless and requires temporary accommodation are currently assessed as having a relief duty and would

be awarded the second banded group on the housing register. A pilot was agreed by the DKO Board members to place all applicants living in temporary accommodation into the first banded group to assist these applicants get permanently rehoused. The pilot was successful and therefore as part of this consultation the Council would like to ask views on making this change to the allocations policy a permanent change.

Question 10 – Do you agree or disagree that homeless applicants living in temporary accommodation should be given the highest priority in the new allocations policy?

- **Strongly agree / Agree / Neither Agree or Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree**

Q10a - Why do you feel this way? OPEN TEXT BOX

Q10b - Do you think this change would affect you / the people you represent in a positive or negative way?

- **Extremely positive / Positive / No change / Negative / Extremely negative**

Key Issue 5 – Priority of Medical and Domestic Abuse Cases

There are two questions in this key issue. They both relate to how a future allocations policy awards the correct priority to those who are seeking re-housing due to medical need and Domestic Abuse (DA).

Nearly 27% of the total current active register (around 3,000 applicants) are classed as having medical (non-urgent) or welfare needs, and these applicants currently are all banded together. The band currently hosting these applicants (Band 2) contains 75% of the total active applicants on the register who have an identified housing need. Waiting times for this group of people has grown from a historic average of 312 days to a current average waiting time of 428 days. This section asks questions on how it may be possible to prioritise those with higher medical and welfare needs.

Medical Assessments

Currently, the policy allows people who have prescribed medical issues relating to their need for re-housing to be allocated within one of only two categories, urgent or non-urgent.

People with chronic illnesses receive a higher banding and are placed into current Band 1 such is the urgency of their medical condition. The level of evidence required for 'urgent' is significant. A medical professional, such as an occupational therapist, a Community Psychiatrist Nurse (CPN), General Practitioner (GP), or social care professional, is required to provide written evidence of chronic illness and how it relates to the unsuitability of the patients current housing. Of the current active register, 2% (220 applicants) are assessed as being in urgent medical need. The Council believe this classification prioritises those most in need and is correctly based on the requirement for a professional medical assessment.

For non-urgent medical cases the same level of evidence is not required. There have been increasing numbers of people seeking a housing related assessment on medical grounds and it has become increasingly challenging for housing providers, medical organisations, occupational therapists etc to provide suitable evidence to demonstrate a medical need. Therefore, to cope with demand, the Council and some RP partners now accept desktop assessments, while GPs and applicants are reliant on social prescribers to submit medical evidence.

As all non-urgent housing applicants do not require an assessment from a medical professional, there is a risk that people with a more substantial medical need are not being provided with a new home while those with a moderate medical condition are being re-housed. The question below seeks feedback on how we can better categorise people in medical need by moving to a three-tiered system so those with more substantial medical issues can be prioritised over those with moderate medical issues. We are also asking if medical assessments should be validated by a medical professional.

Question 11 – Do you agree or disagree that a medical professional should carry out an assessment to categorise the medical need of individual applicants who believe they should have medical priority?

- **Strongly agree / Agree / Neither Agree or Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree**

Q11a - Why do you feel this way? OPEN TEXT BOX

Q11b - Do you think this change would affect you / the people you represent in a positive or negative way?

- **Extremely positive / Positive / No change / Negative / Extremely negative**

11c - Do you agree or disagree that we should move to a three-tiered system of assessing medical need?

- **Strongly agree / Agree / Neither Agree or Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree**

Q11d - Why do you feel this way? OPEN TEXT BOX

Q11e - Do you think this change would affect you / the people you represent in a positive or negative way?

- **Extremely positive / Positive / No change / Negative / Extremely negative**

Domestic Abuse

People on the housing register who are victims of DA, are currently banded together with people with other welfare needs in accordance with the allocations policy.

Other welfare reasons could include the need to be near family or friends to give or receive support or people who need to receive or give care and an urgent move is required from their home. It is the Council position that those who are current victims of DA should be given additional priority over people in the welfare category.

Question 12 - Do you agree or disagree that victims of domestic abuse should be given greater priority than those with other welfare needs?

- **Strongly agree / Agree / Neither Agree or Disagree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree**

Q12a - Why do you feel this way? OPEN TEXT BOX

Q12b - Do you think this change would affect you / the people you represent in a positive or negative way?

- **Extremely positive / Positive / No change / Negative / Extremely negative**

Key Issue 6 – Monitoring and Service Standards

The housing register has two service standards regarding the processing of applications. These are key to achieving customer satisfaction and ensuring that forms are processed quickly enough to allow access to housing in a suitable timeframe and assist with housing demand.

The first service standard is that all applications received will be registered by a staff member within five working days of the application date. The second service standard is that all applications will be activated within 20 working days (where we have received the information requested when registering the form).

The targets for all partners for both standards are 95%.

Question 13 – Have you had experience of accessing the housing register in the last three years? Yes / No

Q13a If yes, how do you rate your experience of the following:

- **The DKO website**
- **Applying to join the housing register**
- **Acceptance to the register (banding)**
- **Searching and bidding for properties**
- **Allocation of a property**
 - **Very good / Good / Neither good nor poor / Poor / Very poor / Not applicable (for each option)**

Q13b Please tell us about why you think this way? OPEN TEXT

Any Other Comments?

On behalf of Durham County Council, thank you for taking the time to engage in the consultation. Two final questions.

Question 14 - Do you have any other comments on social housing allocations in County Durham? OPEN TEXT BOX

Glossary of Terms

Additional Preference – Additional preference in housing allocations policies is when local authorities give priority to certain groups of people who have both a reasonable preference and urgent housing needs. Some examples of people who may be given additional preference include:

- People who need to move quickly due to a life-threatening illness or sudden disability
- People who are severely overcrowded and this poses a serious health hazard
- People who are homeless as a result of violence or threats of violence
- Members of the armed forces

Local authorities can also consider other factors when determining priority, such as financial resources, behaviour, and local connection.

Bands - In housing allocations policies, a band is a category that applicants are placed into based on their housing need. The bands are used to prioritise applicants, with those in the highest band having the highest priority.

Care Leavers - are young people aged 16-25 years old who have been in care at some point since they were 14-years old and were in care on or after their sixteenth birthday. These young people are statutorily entitled to some ongoing help and support from the local authority after they leave care.

Domestic Abuse - (sometimes called 'domestic violence' or 'intimate partner violence') is an incident or a pattern of behaviour that is used by someone to control or obtain power over their partner or ex-partner.

Durham Key Options (DKO) – is a Choice Based Lettings scheme established to allocate social housing in County Durham. DKO is a partnership, made up of Durham County Council (DCC) and its four housing provider partners; believe housing, Livin, Karbon Homes and North Star.

Housing Need – is based on the premise that everyone requires a suitable home to live in regardless of how much money they have. An individuals need may vary

depending on several factors including location, affordability, property condition and suitability, health, and welfare.

Local Connection Test - gives priority or a higher priority to those people with a local connection when houses are being offered, regardless of priority banding.

Medical Assessments - is a process used to determine if an applicant qualifies for medical priority in a housing allocation scheme. The assessment considers how an applicant's current home affects their health or disability, and if they would benefit from moving to a different property.

Prevention – Those that are at risk of becoming homeless in the next 56 days.

Reasonable Preference - Cohorts of people in reasonable preference could be people who are classed as homeless, people living in overcrowded conditions, people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds or people who need to specific local authority to avoid hardship.

Registered Provider (RP) - is a social housing provider that is registered with the Regulator of Social Housing. RPs are responsible for meeting the standards set by the regulator, which includes codes of practice and regulatory guidance.

Relief Duty – A relief homeless duty is a local authority's obligation to help a homeless household find suitable accommodation. This applies to all households that are homeless and eligible for assistance, regardless of priority need and can last up to 56 days. The authority must take reasonable steps to help the applicant find accommodation. The relief duty ends when; accommodation is found or if the applicant refuses suitable accommodation offered by the authority. If the relief duty fails and no accommodation is found within 56 days, the main homelessness duty comes into effect.

Residency Test - is a test for allocations policies is a requirement for some applicants to qualify for social housing in a particular area. The test requires applicants to have lived in the area for a certain amount of time, or to have a family or work connection to the area.

Social Prescribers – is a role who helps patients to improve their health, wellbeing and social welfare by connecting them to community services which might be run by

the Council or a local charity. For example, signposting people who have been diagnosed with dementia to local dementia support groups.

Statutory Homeless - This is often referred to as the main homelessness duty. Statutory homeless people are those people who have been assessed as homeless by the local authority, are unintentionally homeless and are in a 'priority need' group.

Social Housing Allocations Policy Review

Durham County Council



Summary of Contents

What is the Durham Key Options (DKO) Scheme?

What is the Allocations Policy?

Why are we reviewing the Allocations Policy?

Key issues and questions for consultation

Details of consultation and contact info

What is the Durham Key Options (DKO) Scheme?

- The DKO scheme is a social housing partnership that allocates 43,000 social houses across the county to residents on the council's housing register
- The allocations process must be fair, consistent, and prioritise applicants in greatest need
- The DKO partnership is between DCC and our housing provider partners. DCC has four full partners and 15 sub-partners
- The four main partners are Believe Housing, Livin, Karbon Homes and North Star who let 100% of their properties via the DKO Scheme
- There are a further 15 registered housing providers who let a minimum of 50% of their empty properties to residents
- Houses are allocated according to an 'Allocations Policy'

believe
housing

Livin

karbon
homes

 NORTH STAR

Durham
County Council 

What is the Allocations Policy ?

The allocations policy is a shared set of rules on how social houses are advertised and allocated to those on the housing register.

The allocations policy allows people on the housing register to bid for available properties based on the Band 'of need' they are placed in.

On the current register, our policy categorises applicants into 4 bands of need. The band a person is placed within should match their level of housing need.

Properties are currently allocated in order of band. When properties are advertised, applicants within Band 1 are considered first, then Bands 2, 3 and 4.

In terms of level of need, Band 1 is for those with the most urgent housing need and Band 4 is for those with no housing need.



Why are we reviewing the Allocations Policy?

The Social Housing Allocations Policy has not been fully reviewed since 2017 and much has changed:

- We have a housing crisis with a shortage of affordable housing (and people priced out of the private rented sector).
- More people are becoming homeless and require temporary accommodation.
- Since the pandemic, we have seen the waiting list for social housing in County Durham increase by around 30% from 7,000 people to nearly 11,000.
- In 2023/24, 88% of all lets went to those in Band 1 and Band 2 as more people are presenting with more pressing needs for housing.
- The average number of bids on social houses in the county has increased from 4 bids per property in 2017 to 44 bids per property in 2023-24.
- We have identified six key issues that we want to consult on as part of the policy review.

Key Issue 1. Who qualifies for the housing register? (4 parts on qualification)

Part A qualification – Should people have a recent connection to County Durham?

- Recent connection is someone who has lived or worked in County Durham for at least 12 months or someone who requires care support from someone in the county.
- Certain groups who would be exempt from requiring recent connection: armed forces veterans, domestic abuse victims and care leavers.
- *Q - Should only people with a recent connection to County Durham qualify to join the register here?*

Part B qualification – Should we remove those with no housing need?

- Band 4 (no housing need) has the largest number of people in it, over 5,000 people and 47% of total people on our housing register.
- Only 6% of Band 4 were allocated a house in the last year.
- We are considering removing Band 4 to ensure that we make best use of our available properties.



Key Issue 1. Who qualifies for the housing register? (parts C and D of qualification)

Part C qualification - Disqualified for unacceptable behaviour

- People can be disqualified from joining the housing register if they, or a member of their household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour.
- Current policy sets out the disqualification behaviours.
- During 2023/24, 9% (1,758) of those who applied to join the register were disqualified - 97% of these were due to unacceptable behaviour.
- Is this too many? We are reviewing what constitutes unacceptable behaviour.

Part D qualification – Should we remove people who have the money to choose from more housing options?

- We are considering applying a financial test to understand if people have the finances to access other housing options based on their circumstances.
- The current policy allows anyone to access the register regardless of income, equity of assets. **Should there be a financial test to qualify?**



Key Issue 2. Better use of our social housing stock (two parts based on under occupation).

Under occupation by existing tenants

- There is a shortage of larger family homes (3 or 4-bedroom properties) in County Durham
- Current register has 223 active applicants who want properties with 4-bedrooms or more
- But only 1% of all lets in 2023/24 were for 4-bedroomed properties (18 properties) while the under occupancy of social housing is a problem
- How can we encourage people to downsize if they are under occupying their home?

Single person or couples applying (future tenants)

- Single people and couples can currently apply for two and three-bedroomed properties
- We are considering removing the ability to apply for a three-bedroomed property by a single person or couple (with no children).



Key issue 3. Local Lettings Policies (LLPs)

- Local Lettings Policies are a tool that allows local issues to override the Countywide Allocations Policy in local areas
- We need to understand what local issues justify a LLP in the future and will be asking a question on this:
- For example, here are three examples of issue but there could be more:

Demand for
affordable
housing

ASB

New Build
Housing

Key issue 4. How best to prioritise people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

More priority for people 'at risk' of becoming homeless?

- Those at risk of becoming homeless within the next 56 days are currently placed in Band 2 on the housing register.
- We are proposing to give people at risk of becoming homeless in the next 56 days greater priority for housing than those already homeless.

Temporary accommodation

- We have been running a trial with our housing provider partners to place all applicants living in temporary accommodation into the highest priority band to get them permanently rehoused.
- This has been successful; therefore, we would like to ask your views on making this change to the allocations policy a permanent change.



Key Issue 5. The priority given to medical and domestic abuse cases

Medical assessments for housing

- In the current policy if you have an urgent medical condition, you are given Band 1 priority if this medical condition is related to your current housing (about 220 applicants).
- But most people (around 3,000 people) go into Band 2 with non-urgent medical condition.
- We are considering how we can better categorise those with medical issues by moving from the current two categories of urgent and non-urgent to a three-tiered system to provide greater priority to those in most housing need.
- We are asking if all medical assessments should be validated by a medical professional.

Victims of domestic abuse

- People on the housing register who are victims of domestic abuse are currently banded together with people with other welfare needs.
- We are considering whether to change this by giving additional priority to victims of domestic abuse.



Key issue 6. Our monitoring and service standards

Service Levels

- We will be looking at how we can make improvements to our applications process and customer experience.
- We will be asking people on the register what currently works well and what does not work well when they contact the DKO housing providers.

Vision and Objectives

- On the survey, we will also be asking whether our vision and objectives for the Policy Review are the correct ones

Summary

The allocations policy review gives DCC an opportunity to consult on a new housing allocations policy that:

- Should respond to the current housing crisis and policy changes at a local and national level.
- Incorporates views on these six key issues from our partners and the public from the two phases of public consultation.

The response we get to this consultation, will provide an excellent evidence base, so we can consult on a new draft policy later in 2025.





Consultation and Contact details

Consultation

- The consultation takes place from 15 January to 12 March 2025 for an 8 week period.
- Consultees will include RP partners, tenants' groups, Elected Members, AAPs and Town and Parish Councils.
- Detailed consultation paper on website.
- Online survey for everyone that takes people through the key issues and consultation questions.

Contact details

- Website – www.letstalkcountydurham.co.uk
- Contact us by e-mail – choicebasedlettings@durham.gov.uk 
- Contact us by phone – 03000 260000 
- DCC on Facebook- www.facebook.com/durhamcouncil
- DCC on X - x.com/durhamcouncil (formerly twitter)

Any
Questions or
Comments?



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**Economy and Enterprise
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

3 March 2025

**Quarter Two, 2024/25
Performance Management Report**



Report of Corporate Management Team

John Hewitt, Chief Executive

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To inform members, senior managers, employees and the public of our progress towards achieving the strategic ambitions and objectives set out in our [Council Plan 2024-28](#).

Executive Summary

- 2 This report contains the most recent performance data available on 30 September 2024, alongside contextual information of activity and events taking place in the second quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (July to September).
- 3 It should be noted that since this report was written, the government has closed the [Office for Local Government](#). A new way of ensuring local authorities are fit, legal and decent, incorporating the benefits of relevant work completed by Oflog to date, is being developed. Therefore, although Oflog's suite of metrics is included in this report (as Oflog was still in operation over the reporting period) we intend to review their inclusion in future reports once clarity is received on the new assurance methodology.
- 4 We are a large organisation providing a broad range of services. Our operating environment, which can be challenging, is heavily influenced by many interconnected factors including inflationary and demand pressures, demographic shifts and the changing needs of our residents, economic uncertainties, and the ongoing impacts of global events.
- 5 The government presented its [Autumn Statement](#) to Parliament on 30 October. This set out the government's financial plans for this year and next, alongside the estimated impact of changes to tax, welfare and public spending.
- 6 A real term increase in total core spending power was announced, alongside additional funding to fund Bus Service Improvement and repair potholes.
- 7 Our [provisional finance settlement](#) has now been received and the detail presented to Cabinet in January 2025.

- 8 We continue to show strong performance across our key outcomes.
- (a) We are showing strong economic performance across the county. Key areas such as jobs, investment, demand for employment land and industrial premises, and employment are all favourable compared to previous years. We continue to exceed targets for securing investment for companies and supporting businesses. Increased attendances have been recorded at all our cultural venues. However, challenges for the council include improving processing times for non-major planning applications and improving occupancy and yield from cinema screenings.
 - (b) Performance against homelessness outcomes is improving. Although we perform worse than our benchmarks we are closing the gap. We are continuing to see an increase in people presenting as already homeless. Leisure centres are performing well with increased numbers of visits and memberships above target. Our substantial leisure transformation programme and new membership scheme are having a positive impact.
 - (c) Bus patronage and punctuality continue to improve. Of the private sector rented properties covered under the selective licensing scheme, 58% are fully licensed or have legal proceedings instigated. Delivery of affordable homes is below target; delivery is dependent on viable sites coming forward for development.

Recommendation(s)

- 9 Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
- (a) note the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter two performance (July to September), and the actions being taken to address areas of challenge.

Background

- 10 The Council Plan is our principal corporate planning document. It explains how we will effectively deliver our day-to-day services, our longer-term ambitions and contribute to achieving the [County Durham Vision¹](#).
- 11 Our plan is supported by other strategies and service plans. These contain the detail for the actions and projects we will undertake to help achieve our priorities. It also aligns to our Medium-Term Financial Plan which sets out how our priorities will be resourced, and our County Durham Plan which sets out a vision for housing, jobs and the environment until 2035, as well as the transport, schools and healthcare to support it.
- 12 We track progress towards achieving our strategic ambitions and objectives through our performance framework – a collection of key performance indicators contextualised with benchmarking data from similar authorities, and information from our service teams.
- 13 Progress is reported quarterly on an exception basis, using ‘easy to read’ dashboards focusing on trends, direction of travel, benchmarking and performance to target. Key messages are aligned to our five thematic areas (our economy, our people, our communities, our environment, our council) and are grouped into ‘things that are going well’ and ‘issues we are addressing’.
- 14 Our performance management processes align with [statutory guidance²](#) produced by the government. The guidance sets out the ‘characteristics of a well-functioning authority’ and the ‘indicators of potential failure’. In relation to performance management, this includes:

Characteristics of a well-functioning authority

- (a) The corporate plan is evidence based, current, realistic and enables the whole organisation’s performance to be measured and held to account.
- (b) The use of performance indicators to manage risk and to benchmark against similar authorities and manage risk.
- (c) The council has complete, timely and accurate data, and the skills to interpret it, to inform decisions.
- (d) There are clear and effective mechanisms for scrutinising performance across all service areas. Performance is regularly reported to the public to ensure that citizens are informed of the quality of services being delivered.
- (e) Partners and local residents are involved in developing indicators and targets, and monitoring and managing lack of performance.

Indicators of potential failure

- (a) A lack of ‘good quality’ data and insight to understand services.

¹ Developed with our County Durham Together partners, the Vision describes what we want the county to look like over the next decade and beyond.

² [Best Value Standards and Intervention](#)

- (b) A lack of corporate capacity or capability, resulting in a lack of strategic direction, oversight and sense of accountability.
 - (c) Performance management information is not consistently used, does not measure outcomes where relevant and underperformance is not effectively addressed.
 - (d) Data quality is poor and there is a lack of capacity or capability to interpret it to inform decisions.
 - (e) Services data suggests poor performance and outcomes compared to similar local authorities.
- 15 We continue to operate in line with the characteristics of a well-functioning authority, and over the last 18 months we have further strengthened these functions with:
- (a) A higher level, more strategic Council Plan which gives the reader a more immediate sense of the strategic direction of the council and what we are intending to do.
 - (b) A renewed service planning process which simplifies and brings together organisational planning into the strategic planning cycle.
 - (c) A refreshed approach to quarterly performance reporting which provides greater insight into how our services are performing.

Conclusion

- 16 This report informs members, senior managers, employees and the public of our progress towards achieving the strategic ambitions and objectives set out in our [Council Plan 2024-28](#).
- 17 It contains the most recent performance data available on 30 September. Contextual information relates to activity and events taking place in the second quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (July to September). It provides insights into what is going well and the issues we are addressing.

Background papers

- [County Durham Vision](#) (County Council, 23 October 2019)

Other useful documents

- [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#) (current plan)
- [Quarter One, 2024/25 Performance Management Report](#)
- [Quarter Four, 2023/24 Performance Management Report](#)
- [Quarter Three, 2023/24 Performance Management Report](#)
- [Quarter Two, 2023/24 Performance Management Report](#)

Author

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Appendix 1: Implications

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 the Safe Durham Partnership and its sub-groups.

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.



Corporate Performance Report

Quarter Two, 2024/25



Contents (blue text links to sections of the report)

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- ◆ [Business investments, portfolio and employment land](#)

[Business support and job creation](#)

[Employability](#)

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Executive Summary

- 1 This report shows how we are performing against the priorities set out in our Council Plan 2024-28.
- 2 We are reporting performance on an exception basis with key messages structured around the five thematic areas of, our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, and our council.
- 3 We are reporting the most recent performance available as at 30 September. Contextual information relates to activity and events taking place in the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (July to September).

Our economy

- 4 The aim of this priority is to create an inclusive economy with more and better jobs, major employment sites which cement our position as a premier place in the region to do business, a good tourism base and cultural offer, and employability support programmes which help people back into jobs or to start their own business. Our children and young people will receive the education and training required to access opportunities.

Going Well

- 5 As our Inclusive Economic Strategy progresses, we see our overall economic performance remains strong across a range of performance measures, with however some variation within the county and across the region compared to national levels.
- 6 There has been a 9% increase in available jobs across the county since 2014. And demand for employment land, and industrial and office premises of all sizes remains high. Our employment rate is statistically better than the rate 20 years ago and better than the North East average and our unemployment rate is low. Our GVA increased by £1.6 billion between 2020 and 2022.
- 7 We continue to exceed target in securing investment for companies and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Productivity and Growth Programme is now established, and delivery is on track. We are engaging with and supporting more businesses than our target and continue to create or safeguard jobs.
- 8 Although referrals and registrations to our employability programmes were affected by the six-week school holiday period, we are still on track to achieve programme targets by March 2025. The cohort of clients we are working with have multiple barriers and therefore are further away from the labour market. We have developed various community activities to engage target clients.
- 9 We have recorded increased attendances at all our cultural venues, exceeding target, and strengthening our position as the culture county and contributing significantly to the local economy. Our new venue, 'The Story' surpassed pre-launch projections, with the potential to significantly exceed annual targets. The number of library borrowers and digital borrowers continue to grow and performed better than target.
- 10 Average occupancy rate for programmed theatre performances was better than target. Although average yield was worse than target, both were better than the same period last year. Programmed and produced shows at Gala and BATH performed well, however quarter two is the quietest period for the cultural venues. Theatre

performances at the Empire recommenced in October and there is a full programme in place for the remainder of the year.

Issues we are addressing

- 11 Processing times of non-major planning applications are worse than target and latest data shows our performance to be worse than most of the benchmarking groups. Resource issues and resources allocated to clearing a back log of non-major planning applications continues to impact performance. We have now cleared the backlog, so we expect performance to improve.
- 12 The occupancy rate for business floorspace owned by the council is worse than target, impacted by two companies at Jade Business Park and Derwentside Business Centre going into administration in quarter one. Enquiries in the pipeline for these units are expected to complete in quarter three.
- 13 Both average occupancy rate and average yield across all programmed cinema screenings were worse than target and the same period last year. The public lift at Gala was out of service sporadically over five weeks during the quarter, this affected the occupancy and yield due to reduced accessibility for screening which went ahead and as some planned screenings were cancelled. Programmed screenings at BATH continue to be affected by competing demands on the theatre space, however this has improved occupancy and yield for live performance. We anticipate performance to improve in quarter three with additional event cinema being programmed at the Gala and customer levels rapidly returning to normal at the Empire following re-opening, particularly with a strong response to autumn blockbusters.

Our people

- 14 This priority aims to help our residents live long and independent lives and remain in good health for as long as possible. We will protect and improve health by tackling the leading causes of illness and early death, inequalities and the challenges around mental health. We will ensure a sustainable high-quality care market and invest in a multi-million pound programme to transform our leisure centre venues.

Going Well

- 15 Visits to leisure centres and Thrive Memberships performed better than target and the same period last year, with events, promotions and our new membership scheme contributing to improved performance. Our substantial leisure transformation programme continues to deliver upgraded and new facilities and is having a positive impact.

Issues we are addressing

- 16 During 2023/24, the proportions of approved housing units that met the needs of older people were worse than targets set out in the County Durham Plan (CDP). Some schemes received outline planning permission before adoption and were therefore required to meet the CDP requirements.
- 17 Following changes to processes and the use of the homelessness prevention grant, performance against homelessness outcomes is improving. Increased numbers of households presenting as already homeless persists, but we continue to review and develop initiatives to improve outcomes across all stages of homelessness. We remain worse than latest regional and national benchmarking averages (January to

March 2024) for prevention and relief outcomes. However, as performance has since improved, we are closing the gap and expect this positive trajectory to continue.

Our communities

- 18 The aim of this priority is to ensure our communities are well connected and supportive of each other, with vibrant and accessible towns and villages which are well-used, clean, attractive and safe. We will support our most vulnerable residents, particularly those isolated or financially vulnerable. We will maintain a strong focus on tackling poverty throughout the cost-of-living crisis.

Going Well

- 19 Bus patronage improved compared to the same period last year. Improved performance by the two main operators has led to punctuality continuing to improve. We continue to work with other councils across the region to implement the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Issues we are addressing

- 20 During 2023/24 delivery of affordable homes was worse than the CDP target, although better than 2022/23. The target is set against identified need and is extremely challenging to achieve as delivery is dependent on viable sites coming forward for development.
- 21 Of the private sector rented properties covered under the selective licensing scheme, 58% are fully licensed or have legal proceedings instigated.

Risk Management

- 22 The government's statutory guidance for best value authorities sets out the characteristics of a well-functioning authority. This details the arrangements that councils should have in place for robust governance and scrutiny including how risk awareness and management should inform decision making. The latest [Strategic Risk Management Progress Report](#) provides an insight into the work carried out by the Corporate Risk Management Group between January and May 2024.

Priority Aims:

County Durham has a thriving and inclusive economy with more and better jobs and fewer people suffering from the hardships of poverty and deprivation. We are continuing to,

- deliver a range of employment sites across the county
- deliver a strong, competitive economy where County Durham is a premier place in the North East to live and do business
- ensure a broader experience for residents and visitors to the county
- ensure young people will have access to good quality education, training and employment
- help all people into rewarding work
- ensure fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation within the county
- improve employment opportunities for disabled people

National, Regional and Local Picture

23 Although overall economic performance remains strong across a range of performance measures, there is variation within the county and across the region compared to national levels.

24 There has been a 9% increase in available jobs across the county since 2014. And demand for development land, and industrial and office premises of all sizes remains high. Our employment rate is statistically better than 20 years ago and our unemployment rate is low.

	County Durham	England Average	Statistical comparison
Employment Rate	72.4%	75.7%	similar
Unemployment Rate	3.4%	4.5%	not available

25 Between 2019 and 2020, Gross Value Added (GVA) fell across England and the North East. However, County Durham experienced modest growth. Between 2020 and 2022, the county's GVA increased notably - from £9.1 billion to £10.7 billion.

26 This post-Covid growth was mainly driven by the manufacturing, education and construction sectors, and supported by modest growth in motor and wholesale trades, and the visitor economy. However, sectors such as retail, information and communication technology, and financial services had not recovered by 2022.

27 Our GVA per filled job continues to improve and remains on par with the North East average. However, it is worse than the England average – and the gap with England is getting worse.

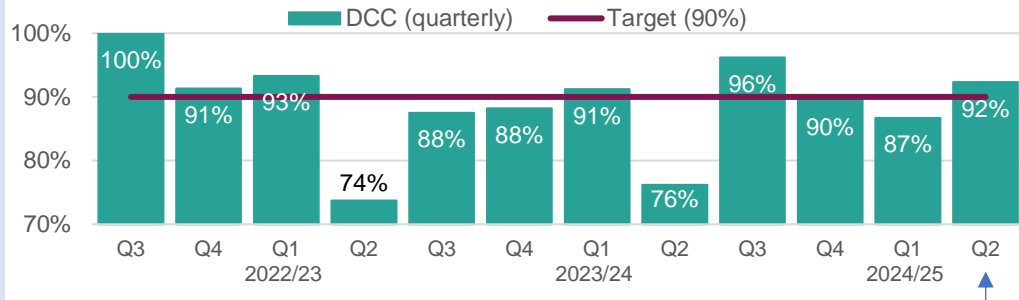
28 More people are achieving higher levels of education and training and moving into better paid jobs. However, we continue to lose many people to urban areas which offer higher wages and a greater choice of private sector jobs.

29 The cost-of-living is a long-term problem, especially for the large numbers of people with health conditions, disabilities, and caring responsibilities.

Economic Growth Dashboard: Planning Applications

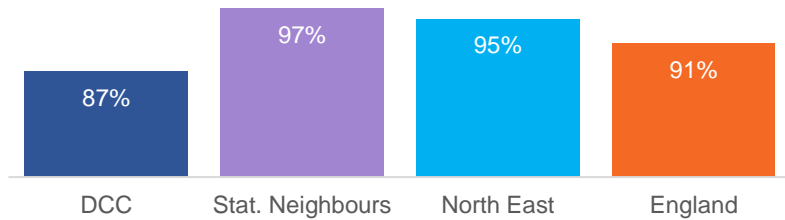
(quarterly data 30 September 2024 / benchmarking data 30 June 2024)

Major planning applications completed within deadline



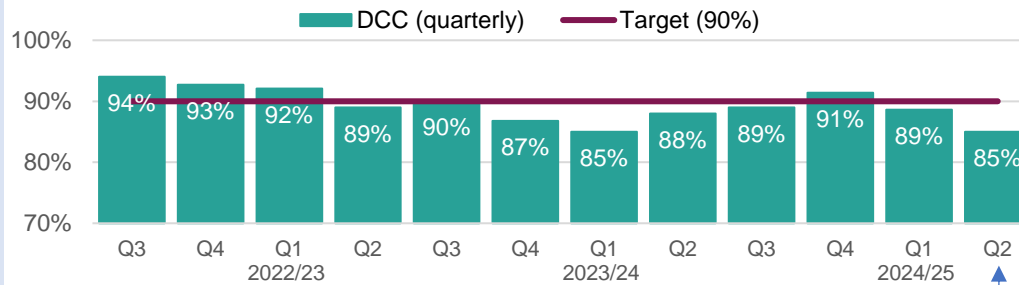
24 of 26 applications completed within deadline.

Major planning applications completed within deadline (data as at June 2024)



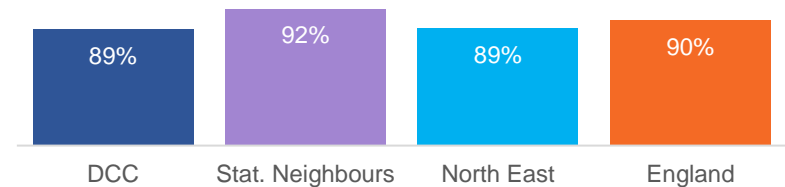
Benchmarking data is at June 2024, 3 month time lag

Non-major planning applications completed within deadline



379 of 444 applications completed within deadline.

Non-major planning applications completed within deadline (data as at June 2024)



Excellent, efficient service as usual
Planning service user

You said: main concern highlighted in planning survey was insufficient or delayed communication. We did: included a commitment in our customer charter to respond to enquiries within specific time frames.
Planning survey respondent.

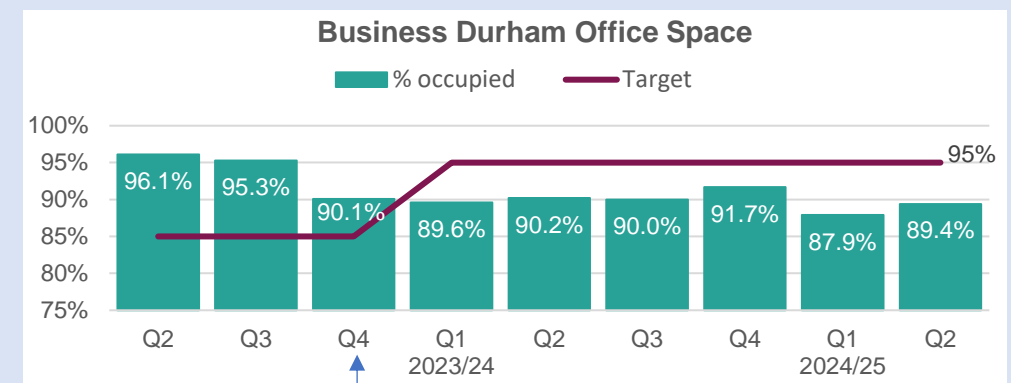
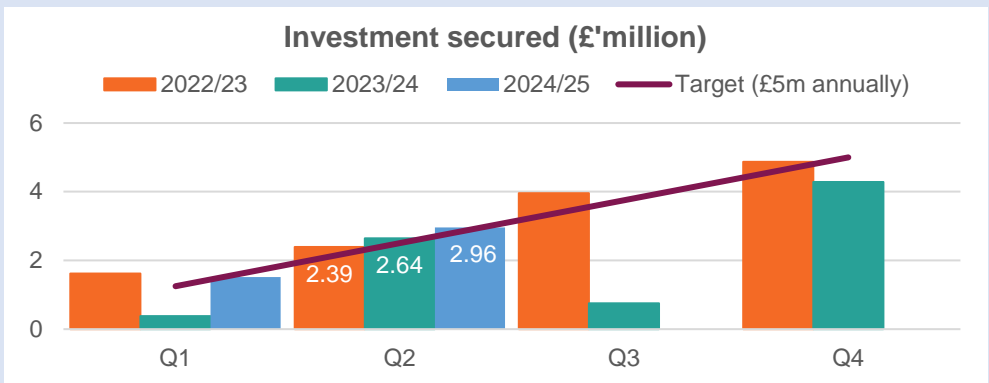
Planning Applications

- 30 During quarter two (July to September), we determined 92% of major planning applications within 13 weeks (24 of 26), performance was better than target (90%).
- 31 Although we determined 85% of non-major planning applications within deadline (379 of 444), performance was worse than target (90%). Resource issues and resources allocated to clearing a back log of non-major planning applications continued to impact performance. However, we have now cleared the backlog, so performance is expected to improve.
- 32 Latest benchmarking data (June 2024) shows our performance for major planning applications to be worse than the national average, the North East average and our statistical neighbours. Although performance for non-major applications is on par with the North East average, it is worse than the national average and our statistical neighbours.

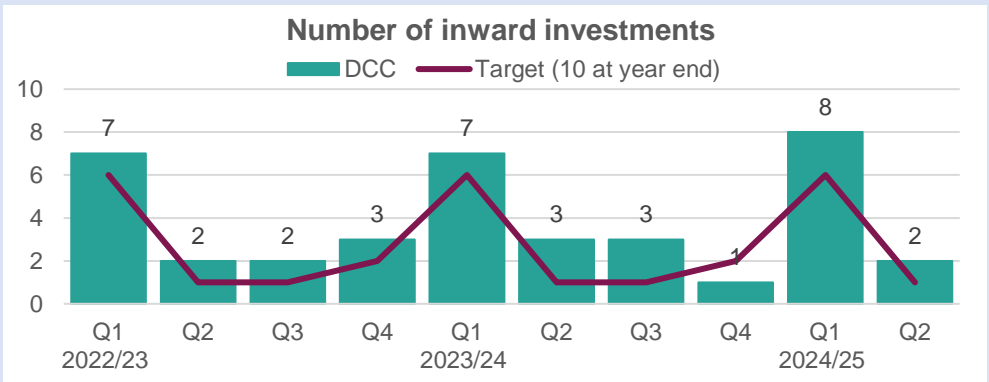
Planning application type	Our performance	National average	North East average	Statistical Neighbours
Major	86.7%	91.2%	95.0%	96.6%
Non-major	88.6%	90.0%	88.7%	91.8%

Economic Growth Dashboard: business investments, portfolio and employment land

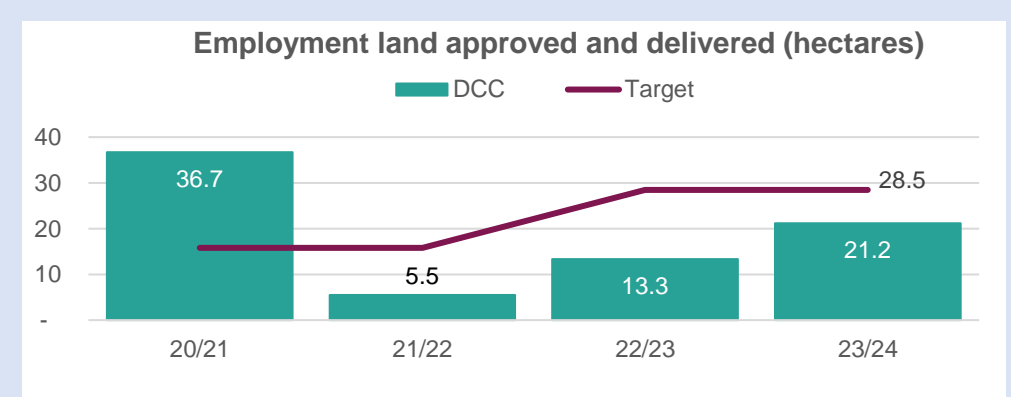
(year to date ending 30 September 2024 / discrete quarterly data)



Additional floorspace added to portfolio reduced occupancy rate.



over the last two years we have performed better than the annual target of 10 investments



114.2 hectares of employment land delivered since the start of the County Durham Plan period (2015/16)

Investments

- 33 During quarter two (July to September), we secured just over £1.44 million of investment for companies, bringing the total in the year to date to £2.96 million - better than our profiled target of £2.5 million. Investment included Finance Durham Fund, New Cluster Development Fund, Enterprising Durham and County Durham Growth Fund approved grants.
- 34 Over the same period, we supported two inward investments - achieving our target (2). These were Power Roll (follow on investment) and PervasID.

Business Durham floor space

- 35 At the end of September, our occupancy rate was 89%, worse than target (95%). Occupancy across the property portfolio was impacted by two companies going into administration in quarter one. These companies had occupied a large amount of floorspace at Jade Business Park and Derwentside Business Centre. Enquiries in the pipeline for these units are expected to complete in quarter three. There are also challenges with being able to let vacant offices at Crook Business Centre due to the age of the heating system impacting the EPC rating.
- 36 On a positive note, occupancy of the new units at Station Place has improved, increasing to 73%.

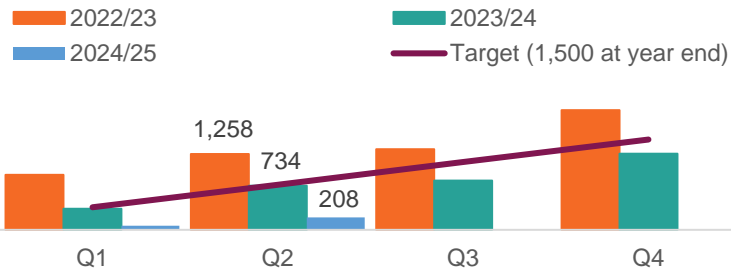
Employment Land

- 37 During 2023/24, 21.2ha of land were developed for employment use. This latest position shows an increase of 7.9ha compared to the previous year. This is mainly due to completion of a large area of the Integra 61 site, as well as Plot C at Aykley Heads. However, performance is worse than the target set out in the employment land trajectory (28.46ha).

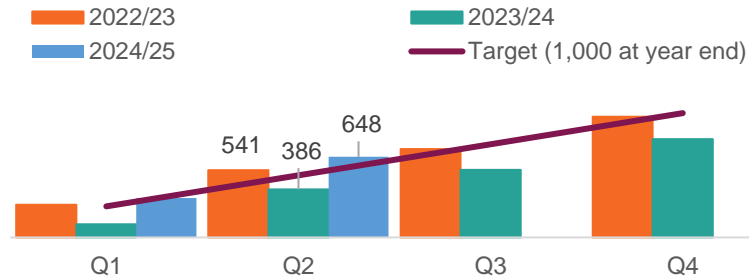
Business Support and Job Creation Dashboard

(year to date ending 30 September 2024 (cumulative) / discrete annual data)

Jobs created or safeguarded by Business Durham

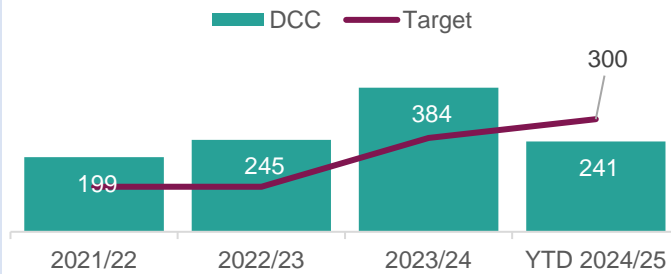


Businesses supported by Business Durham

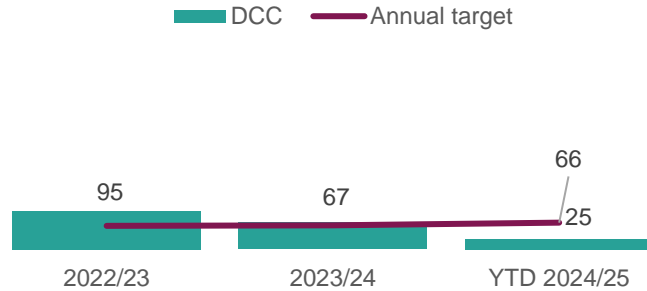


UKSPF Productivity and Growth Programme is now established, and delivery is back on track.

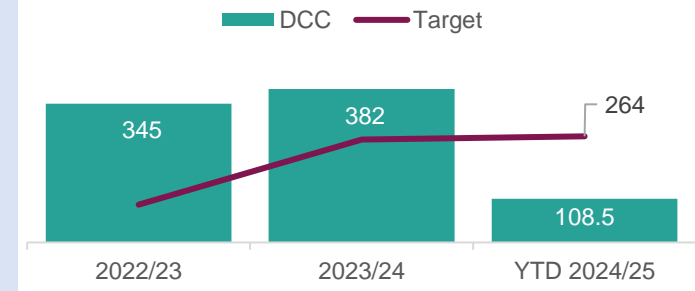
Businesses supported by Community Economic Development Team



Businesses supported by regeneration projects



FTEs created / safeguarded via regeneration projects



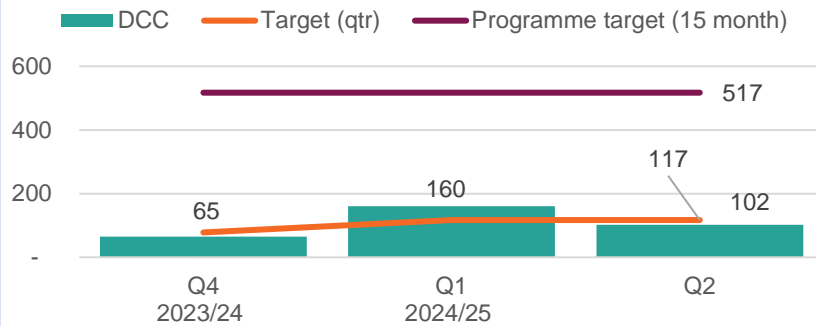
Businesses supported and jobs created/safeguarded

- 38 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Productivity and Growth Programme is now established, and delivery is on track.
- 39 Between July and September, we engaged with 332 businesses, bringing the total in the year to date to 648, better than the target of 500, and created or safeguarded 139 FTE jobs, bringing the total in the year to date to 208. Although jobs created or safeguarded is worse than the target of 750, the target is based on programmes that capture output towards their end, and the success of inward investments, new tenancies and other programmes which are more fluid throughout the year. We are closely monitoring this in relation to achieving target by the end of the financial year.
- 40 Over the same period, we engaged with 99 new retail businesses, better than target (75), and supported 15 businesses through our regeneration initiatives which created / safeguarded 71.5 FTE jobs. A further six schemes are on site, and another 14 businesses in progress, including grants awarded for two historic building schemes. Performance is in line with projections for the year to date and on track to achieve annual targets.

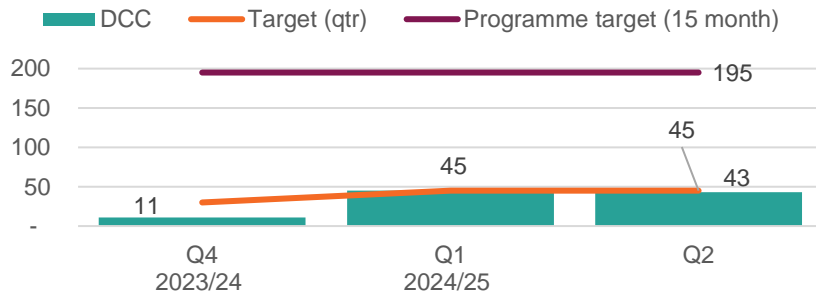
Employability Programmes Dashboard

(July - September 2024)

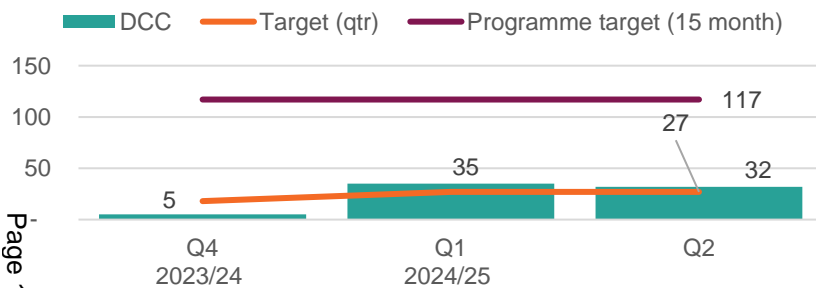
Registrations on employability programmes



Employability programmes: Participants receiving support to help gain employment



Employability programmes: Participants receiving support to sustain employment



Between January and September 2024:

- 327 registrations onto employability programmes
- 99 participants received support to help gain employment
- 72 participants received support to sustain employment

It should be noted that the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) employability programme outcomes are not comparable with the previous European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) ones.

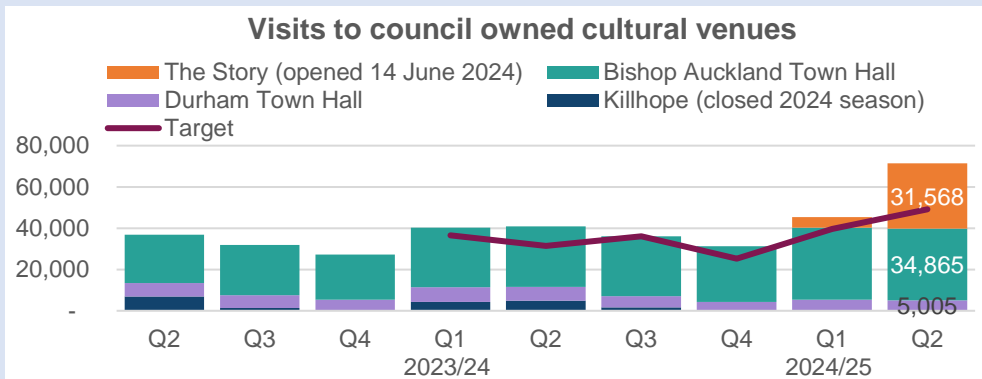
Employability programmes

- 41 Our UKSPF employability programme commenced in January 2024 and runs to March 2025. It helps economically inactive clients gain employment and employed participants in unstable positions to sustain their employment.
- 42 During quarter two (July to September), 102 clients registered onto our programmes, fewer than last quarter (160) and worse than profiled target (117). Referrals and subsequent registrations have been affected by the six-week school holiday period as clients with children did not engage with us.
- 43 However, registrations of economically inactive clients (+55) are still ahead of schedule with numbers expected to increase over the coming months. We are also on track to achieve programme target of 517 registrations by March 2025.
- 44 During this period, 43 clients received support to help gain employment and 32 clients currently employed received support to sustain their employment. This brings the totals since the start of the scheme for these two measures to 99 (target 195) and 72 (target 117) respectively.
- 45 The cohort of clients we are working with have multiple barriers to employment and therefore are further away from the labour market. We have developed various community activities to engage target clients including drop-in sessions, events and short courses.
- 46 We also developed and released educational videos highlighting the support we provide and feedback from clients as part of our Employability Day celebrations.
- 47 Over the coming months we will continue to engage new clients as well as support current clients to improve their interpersonal skills and secure progression opportunities. We will also continue to actively advertise the programme to JobCentre Plus offices and liaise with both internal and external community organisations.

Cultural Offer Dashboard: cultural events, venues and libraries

(30 September 2024 / discrete quarterly data)

Cultural events and venues

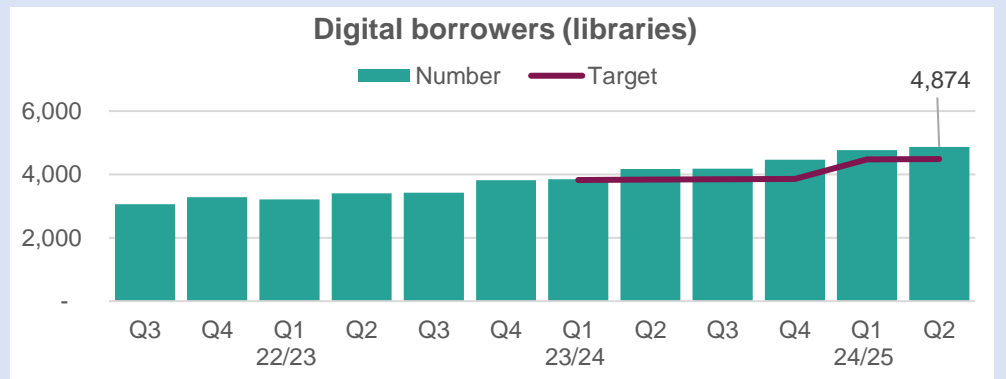
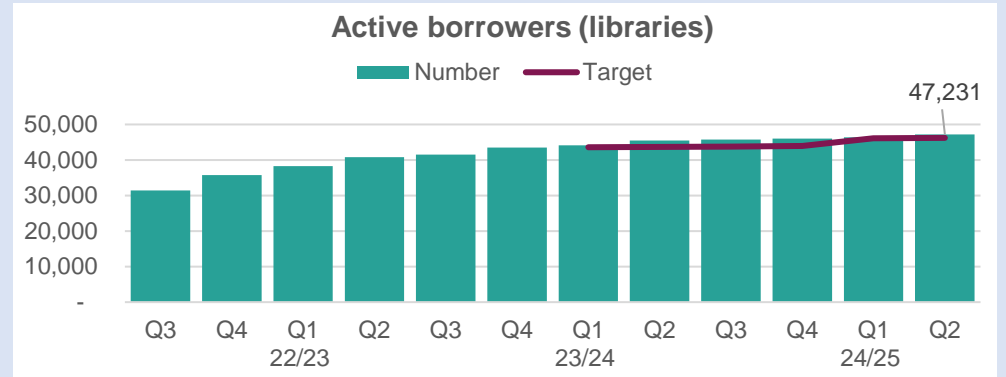


Due to Killhope closure for 2024 season and the opening of The Story (14 June), data is not comparable.
NB: The Story figures include visits to the County Registrar's office.

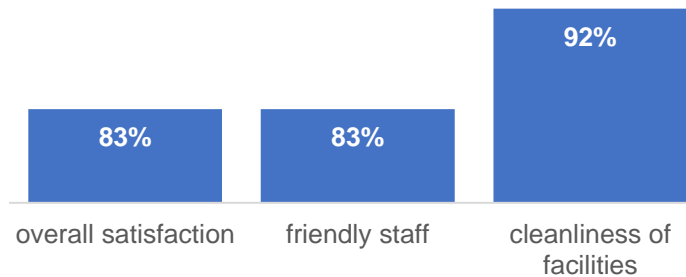
Reporting dates of official figures:

quarter one	quarter two	quarter three
Bishop Auckland Food Festival	BRASS Festival Seaham Food Festival	Durham Book Festival

Libraries



customer satisfaction - culture



Cultural events

48 We continue to invest in our cultural events programme.

- **Seaham Food Festival** - 28,000 people attended the festival in August, an increase of 8,000 visitors compared to 2023. The two-day festival generated a direct economic impact of £405,142, better than last year (increase of £151,500). Great weather and a larger cultural programme, including a dedicated music stage, contributed to the success of this year's festival.

Visitors thought the event atmosphere, range and variety of produce available and overall quality of the event to be standout strengths. 99% of visitors rated the whole experience positively, and 97% of visitors felt the festival was a worthwhile event for the council to support. Parking for the event was rated the lowest at 76%.

Traders also rated the overall event positively. The atmosphere was a stand-out aspect, with the event staff and volunteers and overall quality of the event also prominent. Many anticipate long-term benefits from their involvement and a high majority wish to participate again.

Both visitors and traders strongly agreed that the festival raises the profile of County Durham and has benefits for the regional economy.

Local businesses generally supported the festival and understood the local benefits to the town and its economy. However, the impact of the festival on these businesses was varied, seemingly dependent on the business type.

- **BRASS Festival** - almost 29,000 people attended the festival in September, a decrease of 3,000 visitors compared to 2023. Poor weather, European football fixtures, one cancelled commission and less ticketed events contributed to lower attendance figures this year.

Despite lower attendance, the two-day festival generated a direct economic impact of £874,248, an increase of £272,299 compared to last year. Two sold out headliner gigs, with more possible overnight stays, helped contribute to the increase.

Ninety-eight percent of visitors rated the whole experience positively, and 98% of visitors felt the festival was a worthwhile event for the council to support. Visitors highly rated the quality of performances (99%) and range and variety of performance (96%). Although still very positively perceived, value of tickets scored the least at 91%.

All the artists rated the overall event positively, and felt that taking part will have a positive long-term impact in terms of exposure, networking and increased bookings.

Participating schools were positive about all elements of the event and unanimously agreed the festival gave pupils the opportunity to hear live music. The quality of performances was a standout strength.

Visits to council owned cultural venues

49 Between July and September there were more than 70,000 visits to our cultural venues. Most were to BATH (34,865 visits) and The Story (31,568), both better than target.

50 Performance was achieved through a successful summer gallery exhibition and continued good café and event attendance at BATH.

51 Visits to The Story surpassed pre-launch projections, with the potential to significantly exceed annual targets. This is the first full reporting period for The Story since the venue

opened in June. As such, targets have been pro-rated to reflect the actual reporting period for 2024/25 (14 June to 31 March 2025).

- 52 There were just over 5,000 visits to Durham Town Hall, worse than target (6,500). Increased hire charges for 2024/25 have affected the number of events. Uncertainty around the start date of significant planned repairs also affected performance. The venue is undergoing a wider condition review that may impact targets going forward.

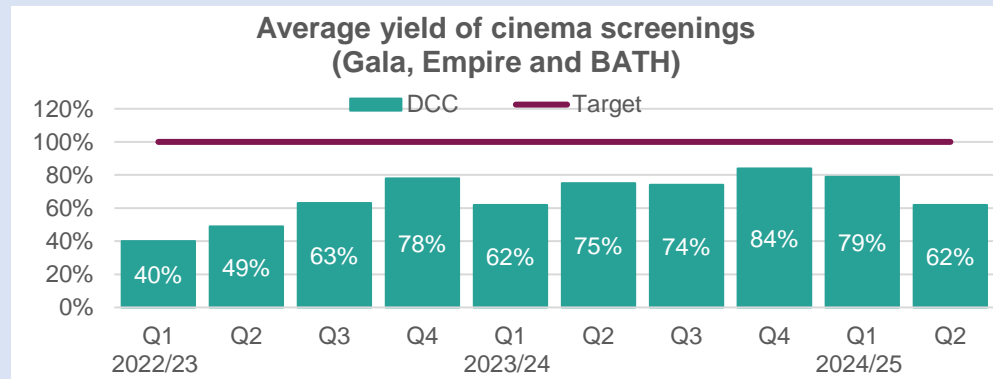
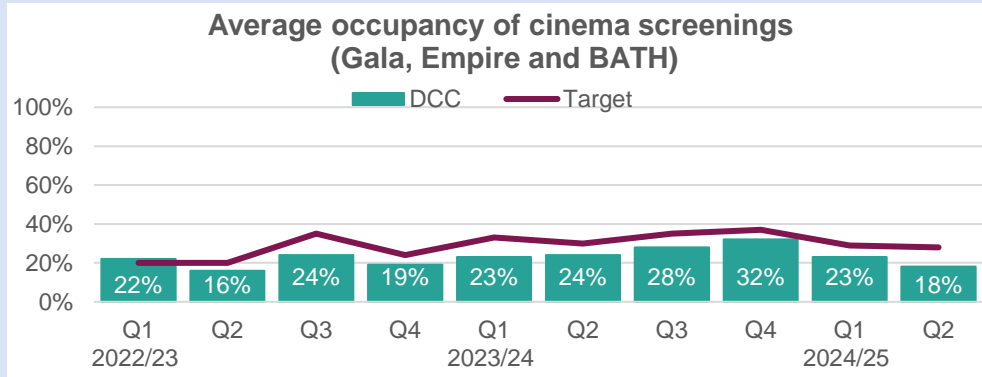
Libraries

- 53 Between July and September there were just over 47,000 active borrowers and 4,800 digital borrowers. Performance is better than target for both measures and active borrowers continue to rise in line with expectations.
- 54 Our online newspaper and magazine offer continues to grow ahead of expectations. We expect this to become even more popular as more local interest items are introduced - The Northern Echo is expected to be available by March 2025.
- 55 We are working to help promote and grow the service. Recent initiatives include:
- **Summer Reading Challenge (Marvellous Makers).** 2,823 children registered, and 2,036 children completed. 2.5% increase compared to 2023 completers. 23 celebration events held.
 - **Library Roadshows.** Three events, 128 people and 34 organisations attended.
 - **Author Events.** Six author events, attended by 86 people. Included children's author event as part of NE Summer Author Tour, and one Northern Bookshelf Live event in partnership with New Writing North.
 - **Heritage Open Days.** Three pop-up library information sessions in partnership with The Story attended by 47 people.
 - **Living Library event for schools.** 25 adults and 77 children attended.
 - **Community Wellbeing (MOVE).** Two scavenger walk and story-based craft events, attended by 27 people.

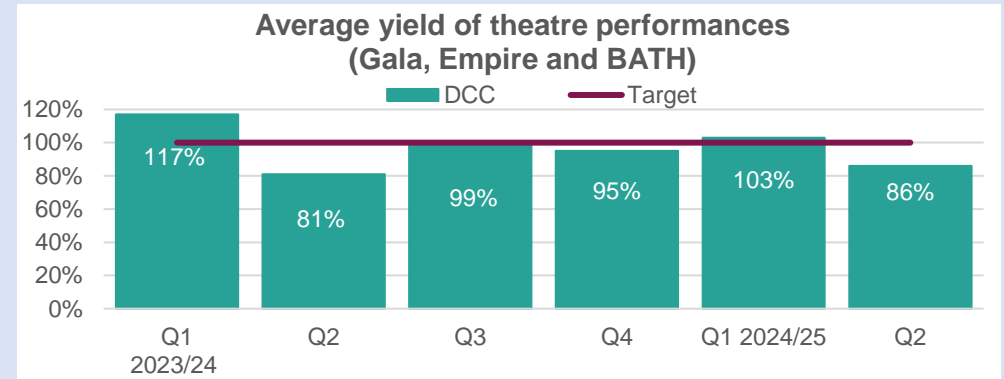
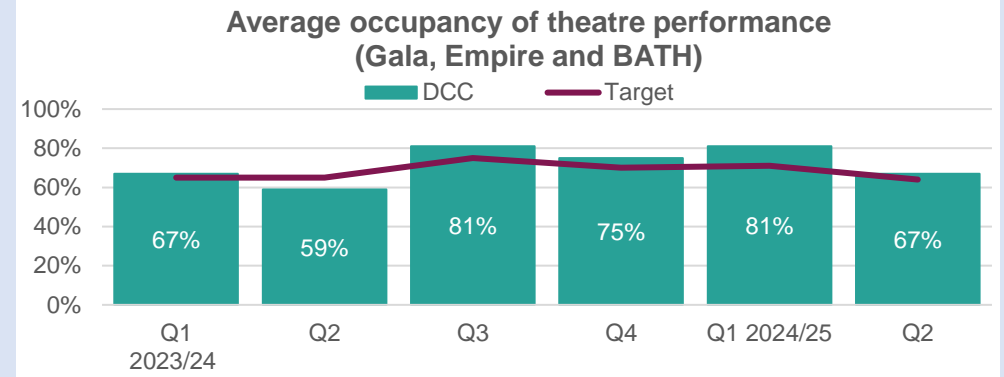
Cultural Offer Dashboard: cinemas and theatres

(discrete quarterly data)

Cinemas



Theatres



Note: Theatre data prior to 2023/24 not comparable due to change in definition

Yield = proportion of target sales amount achieved

Cinemas: Gala, Bishop Auckland Town Hall and Empire

- 56 Both average occupancy rate and average yield across all programmed cinema screenings were worse than target this quarter (July to September) and the same period last year.

	July to September 2023	July to September 2024	Target
Occupancy	24%	18%	28%
Average Yield	75%	62%	100%

- 57 The public lift at the Gala was out of service sporadically over five weeks during the quarter. This affected the occupancy and yield where audiences with accessibility requirements were unable to access the cinema as there was no level access for customers or where screenings with specific accessibility requirements were unable to go ahead such as 'Gala Seniors' and 'Bringing Baby'. The lift was repaired in time for the Durham book festival and to mitigate against the lower performance, in quarter three we have programmed additional event cinema particularly around Christmas and expect both yield and occupancy to overachieve against the quarter three target. Our social media channels have been utilised to promote screenings through activities such as public film votes and linked 'Food & Beverage' offers.
- 58 Programmed screenings at BATH continue to be affected by competing demands on the theatre space. We programmed more live performance at BATH than expected during the quarter which delivers a higher yield and higher revenue. This reduces the space available for screenings, impacting cinema occupancy and yield, however theatre occupancy and yield has improved compared to last year.
- 59 Empire re-opened to the public mid-September following closure for essential roof repairs, affecting the usual number of screenings held during the period. We expect to exceed targets in quarter three as since reopening there has been a quick return to our normal customer levels and a strong response to autumn blockbusters such as the film Wicked.

Theatres: Gala, Bishop Auckland Town Hall and Empire

- 60 Average occupancy rate across all programmed theatre performances performed better than target this quarter (July to September 2024). However, average yield was worse than target by 14 percentage points. Both were better than the same period last year.

	July to September 2023	July to September 2024	Target
Occupancy	59%	67%	64%
Average Yield	82%	86%	100%

- 61 No theatre performances took place at Empire this quarter due to temporary closure to allow for essential works. Following re-opening in September, theatre performances recommenced and there is a full programme in place for the remainder of the year.
- 62 Programmed and produced shows both performed well at Gala and BATH. However, quarter two is the quietest period for the cultural venues as it includes a period of maintenance and the Gala's programme was also limited by the ongoing demolition works taking place on Claypath.

63 This quarter was the first time we marketed school performances, with a week of performances taking place before and during the summer holidays. The newly appointed learning and engagement team began to build relationships with schools to offer engagement opportunities at our venues, for example, tours and workshops. As this work continues it will help boost audience figures for future productions.

Our Environment

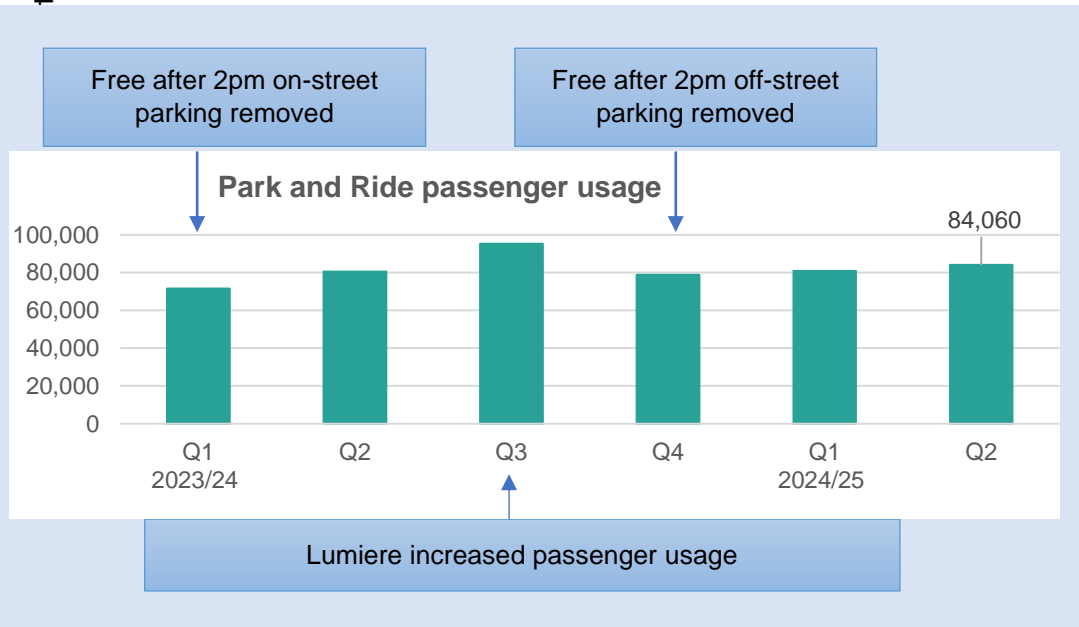
Priority Aims:

County Durham has taken action to tackle the climate emergency, reduce the impact of pollution and waste on our county and protect, restore and sustain our natural environment. We are continuing to,

- create a physical environment which will contribute to good health
- work with others to achieve a carbon neutral county by 2045
- reduce the impact of waste and pollution on our environment
- protect, restore and sustain our natural environment for the benefit of future generations

Sustainable Transport Dashboard

(12 months ending 30 September 2024 / discrete quarterly data)



Park and ride passenger usage

- 64 During quarter two (July to September) 3,533 more passengers used the park and ride service compared to the same period last year. The increase in use is related to the park and ride service now operating all bank holidays (excluding 25, 26 December and 1 January) as well as the Belmont to Sniperley service (PR1) operating on Sundays.

Our People

Priority Aims:

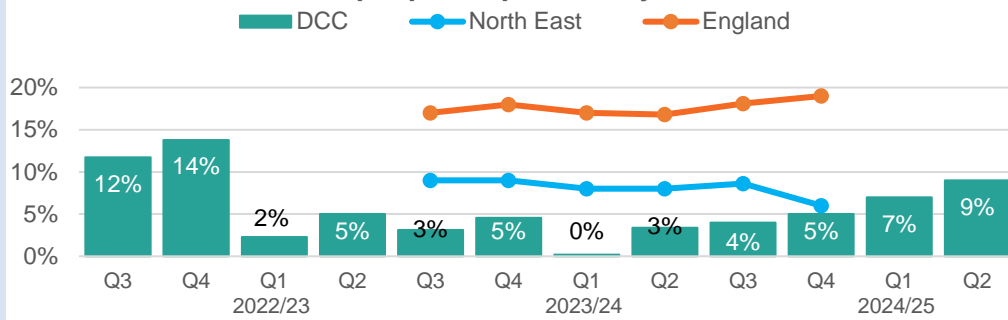
County Durham is a place where people will enjoy fulfilling, long and independent lives. We aim to,

- ensure children and young people will enjoy the best start in life, good health and emotional wellbeing
- ensure children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will achieve the best possible outcomes
- ensure all children and young people will have a safe childhood
- promote positive behaviours
- better integrate health and social care services
- tackle the stigma and discrimination of poor mental health and build resilient communities
- people will be supported to live independently for as long as possible by delivering more home to meet the needs of older and disabled people
- support people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and protect adults with care and support needs from harm
- protect and improve the health of the local population, tackling leading causes of illness and death

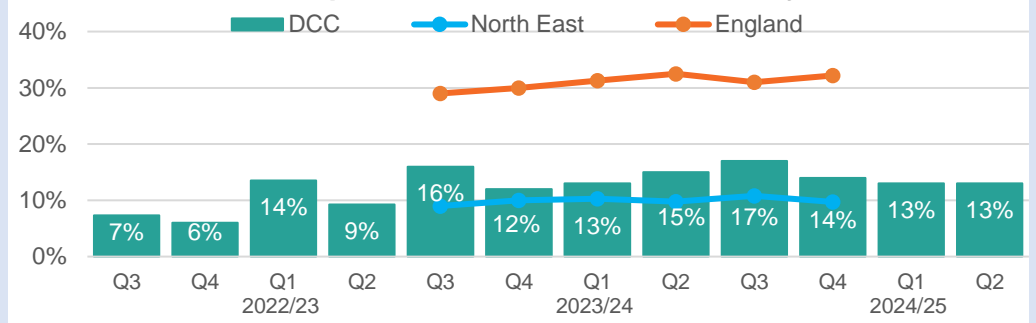
Housing Vulnerable People Dashboard - Homelessness

(discrete quarterly data)

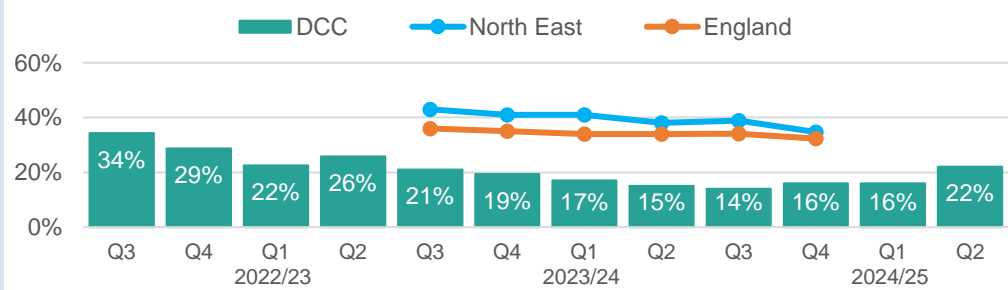
Prevention: people helped to stay in their home



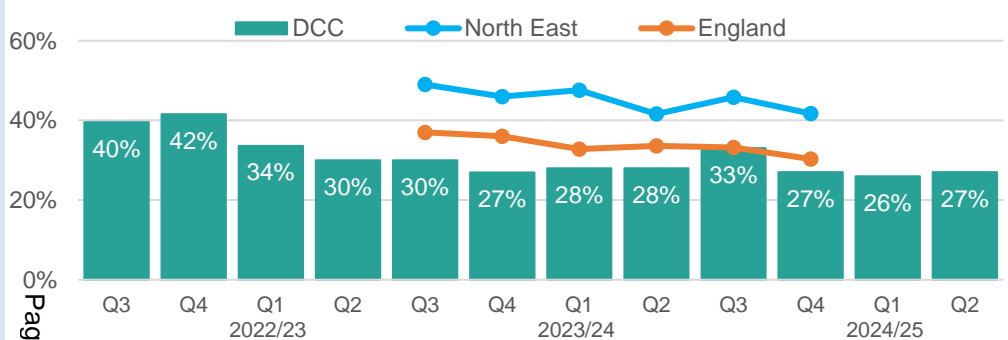
Acceptance of the main homeless duty



Prevention: people helped to move to alternative accommodation



Homelessness relief



Customer raised complaint against our housing service, unhappy with lack of contact and support received within a significant period. We reviewed the case and reassigned it to a different Housing Officer. As a result, further follow up training around case management was identified. Complaint was then turned into a compliment from the customer.

Housing Service User

Pregnant female presented with her one-year-old child after being asked to leave grandparents' home. Client was not open to any services at the time of presentation. Referred into First Contact, but the case initially closed due to being assessed as having no support needs. This was challenged and she has now been allocated a SW and is engaging well. Client has moved into a property with tenancy support

Successful customer interaction

Homelessness

Prevention Duty

- 65 We have a duty to work with people who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days to prevent them from becoming homeless (the prevention duty). The outcomes for households threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance over the last six months, are shown below.

	April to June %	July to September %	July to September Number
Households helped to remain in their current home	7%	9%	31
Households helped to move to alternative accommodation	16%	22%	79

- 66 Of the 79 households moved to alternative accommodation between July and September; 29 moved to private rented sector (37%), 29 to social housing (37%), 18 to social rented supported housing (23%), and three to other alternative accommodation (3%).
- 67 We continue to support clients to remain in their existing home. Frontline processes have been reviewed and prevention grants aligned to intervene at an earlier stage. We also continue to improve access to private rented sector accommodation.
- 68 A review of the financial thresholds for which the homeless prevention grant can be spent has allowed for increased financial payments to be made to secure accommodation.
- 69 The review of the Durham Key Options Letting Policy is ongoing and will assist with increased allocations to this client group.
- 70 A new IT portal for supported accommodation referrals is now live and streaming operational processes. This, alongside initiatives to increase our housing portfolio, will assist with an increase in preventions into alternative accommodation overtime.

Relief Duty

- 71 If homelessness cannot be prevented within 56 days (the prevention duty) or if an applicant is already homeless, we have a duty to help secure accommodation (relief duty).
- 72 Households (homeless and eligible for assistance) which had their homelessness relieved over the last six months, are shown in the table below:

April to June %	April to June Number	July to September %	July to September Number
26%	228	27%	230

- 73 There continues to be an increase in households presenting as already homeless. We continue to review processes to separate the initial assessments and outcome work to improve outcomes across all stages of homelessness.

Main Housing Duty

- 74 When the relief duty ends and we are satisfied the applicant is eligible for assistance, in priority need for accommodation and not intentionally homeless, we owe them a main

housing duty. Cases where there has been an acceptance of the main homelessness duty over the last six months are shown in the table below:

April to June %	April to June Number	July to September %	July to September Number
13%	117	13%	110

Benchmarking Comparisons

- 75 Latest available benchmarking data (January to March 2024) shows our performance across the four key homelessness measures was worse than all national and regional averages, except the national average for homelessness duty (which we were better than).
- 76 Performance has since improved, closing the gap with the national average. We expect this positive trajectory to continue into quarter three.

Homelessness outcome	DCC	Regional	National
Prevention: stay in their home	5%	6%	19%
Prevention: move to alternative accommodation	16%	35%	32%
Relief	27%	42%	30%
Homelessness Duty	14%	10%	32%

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Delivery Plan

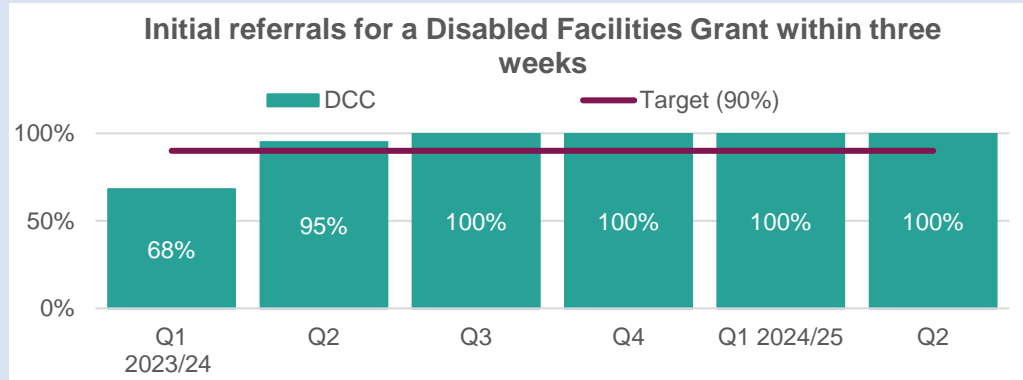
- 77 The Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) funding is in its final year with the next round of funding (April 2025 onwards) is dependent on provision set out in the local government settlement grant.
- 78 The team continue to verify rough sleepers by carrying out sweeps and outreach work. Support is then provided to source and sustain long term accommodation.
- 79 The Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) programme is progressing with specific properties now identified for elements of the programme.
 - Works are scheduled to commence in the coming months to provide five apartment hubs at a former children’s home in Tow Law and five at Bishop Auckland Registry Office (as part of the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP)).
 - Funding has now been secured from Homes England and MHCLG to provide eight apartments in Spennymoor. Corehaus has been appointed to carry out the works.
 - Work continues to identify and acquire 11 dispersed units and a suitable property to provide a three apartment unit.
 - Following a procurement exercise, special support providers Emmaus (over-25 year old cohort) and Depaul (18-25 year old cohort) have been appointed to deliver support elements of the SHAP programme.
- 80 Since April 2023, we have secured 88 private rented sector tenancies as part of our Accommodation for ex-Offenders initiative (AFEO). Forty-five tenancies have been sustained past six months and have successfully graduated from the scheme. AFEO is in its final year and funding beyond March 2025 is dependent on provision set out in the local government settlement grant.
- 81 The property acquisitions and leasing programme is on track to acquire 40 temporary accommodation properties by March 2025. Thirty-four properties have been acquired

since the start of the scheme and a further six are in the process of acquisition. Beyond this phase, a further programme of acquisitions is in development.

- 82 The review of all 19 supported housing providers within the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) to ensure properties provide the correct level of support to tenants is on track for March 2025. Thirty-nine tenant reviews have taken place in quarter two. Tenant reviews validate housing benefit decisions and ensure tenants are receiving above minimal amount of care, support and supervision.
- 83 Additionally, 43 non-commissioned supported housing properties have been inspected since the start of SHIP (April 2023). Defect reports identifying where property repairs are needed have been sent to providers. The SHIP continues to support housing providers to become registered providers (RPs) or partner with RPs, supporting Housing Benefit subsidy loss.

Housing Vulnerable People Dashboard – Disabled Facilities Grants

(discrete quarterly data / as at 31 March 2024 / year to date ending 31 March 2024)

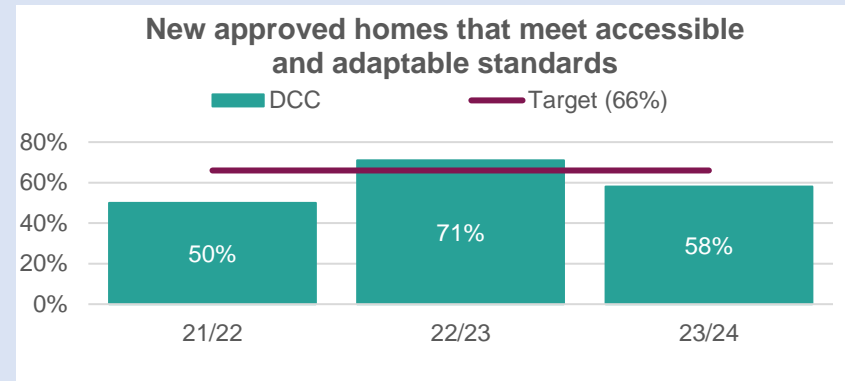
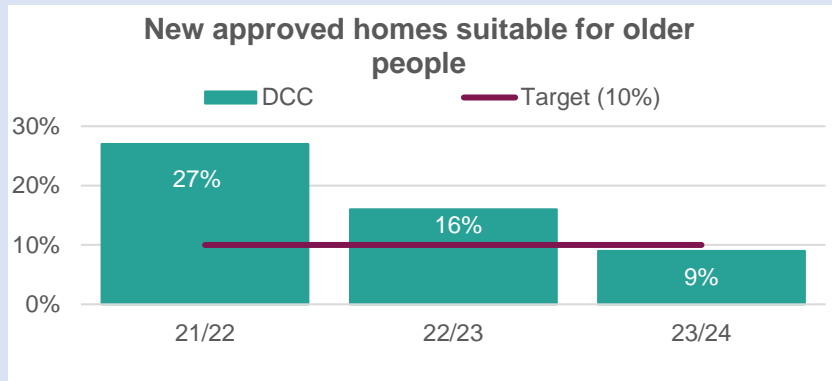


Disabled Facilities Grants

- 84 During quarter two (July to September), 100% of clients were contacted within three weeks of receiving a referral for a Disabled Facilities Grant. This is better than target (90%), and the same as quarter one (April to June).
- 85 Dedicated officers allocated responsibility to deal with first contact continues to have a positive impact on performance.

Housing Vulnerable People Dashboard – Housing Delivery

(as at 31 March 2024)



Housing Delivery

86 We continue to help support older people to live independently for as long as possible by ensuring a proportion of units approved on new housing developments meet their needs.

87 During 2023/24, 9% (136) of units approved on new housing developments of 10 units or more met the specific needs of older people. These consisted of:

Bungalows	Multi-generational homes
105	31

88 This is worse than the 10% target set out in the County Durham Plan (CDP). Some of the schemes approved that year received outline planning permission before the CDP was adopted and were therefore not required to meet the 10% requirement.

89 However, 75 more older persons units were approved in 2023/24 compared to 2022/23 (61) which shows Policy 15 of the CDP to address the housing need for older people is being applied to housing applications.

90 Fifty-eight percent (930) of units approved on new housing developments of five units or more were built to building regulations M4(2) standard (accessible and adaptable) and contribute towards meeting the needs of older people.

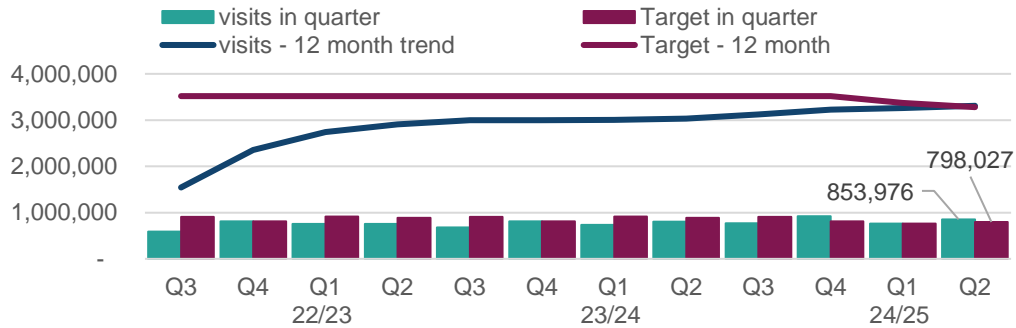
91 This is worse than the 66% target set out in the CDP, again as some of the schemes approved that year received outline planning permission before adoption and were therefore not required to meet the 66% requirement.

92 612 units more were approved in 2023/24 compared to 2022/23 (318). This shows Policy 15 of the CDP is being applied to housing applications.

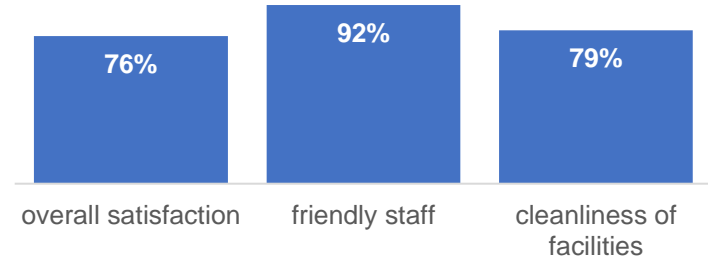
Physical Activity Dashboard

(as at 30 September 2024 / year to date ending 30 September 2024)

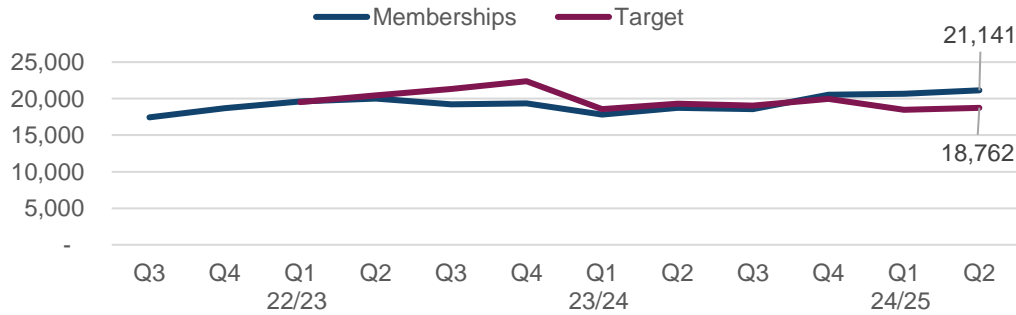
Visits to leisure centres



customer satisfaction - wellbeing sport and leisure



Thrive memberships



Leisure Centre Visits

- 93 During quarter two (July to September), we recorded almost 854,000 visits to our leisure centres, better than both the target (798,027) and the same period last year (802,459).
- 94 Events such as athletics at Shildon, BRASS programme at Newton Aycliffe and our Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme contributed to improved performance this quarter.
- 95 The HAF programme during the summer school holidays offered a range of free sessions at participating leisure centres including water safety camps and sports camps.
- 96 For National Fitness Day in September, activities and promotions were held across leisure centres, including a seven-day free pass to encourage new members.
- 97 Our substantial leisure transformation programme continues across some of our sites. Works at both Teesdale leisure centre and the swimming pool at Spennymoor are to be finished and reopened during quarter three.

Thrive (Leisure) Memberships

- 98 Thrive (leisure) memberships continues to improve and latest performance is better than target.

	September 2023	June 2024	September 2024
Memberships	18,748	20,678	21,141
Target			18,762

- 99 Our new membership scheme, pricing structure, website, app and digital enquiry system continue to have a large influence on sales and retention of members. We have received more than 23,000 enquiries since the system launched (September 2023), 1.3 million website views (since January 2024) and 15,780 app downloads (since April 2024).

Our Communities

Priority Aims:

Durham is a great county in which to live, with flourishing communities which are connected and supportive of each other. We aim to,

- ensure standards will be maintained or improved across County Durham’s housing stock
- have towns and villages which are vibrant, well-used, clean, attractive and safe
- ensure people will have good access to workplaces, services, retail and leisure opportunities
- ensure communities will be able to come together and support each other
- deliver new high-quality housing which is accessible and meets the needs of our residents
- ensure our rural communities will be sustainable whilst maintaining those characteristics which make them distinctive
- narrow the inequality gap between our communities
- build inclusive communities

National, Regional and Local Picture

100 County Durham is a large and diverse county with some of the lowest population densities in the country. Of 300 recognised settlements, only 23 have a population of 5,000 or more.

Land Type ³	% of the county	% of the population	People per hectare ⁴
Rural	57%	7%	0.3
Rural town and Fringe	32%	37%	2.7
Urban	11%	56%	12.1

101 The county has good North-South connectivity both by road and rail, and the improved A66 connects east to west. However, some areas have limited public transport or major roads, especially in more rural areas. Our large, rural geography means residents are often reliant on cars for commuting. 80% of those surveyed for the [Inclusive Economic Strategy](#) said they travel to work by car, compared to 5% who use public transport.

102 There are approximately 250,000 dwellings⁵ across the county. Of these, 63% are owner-occupied, 20% are social rented and 17% private rented.

103 Median house prices across the county are consistently lower than those across the North East and the England⁶.

	County Durham	North East	England
Median house price <i>Between April 2022 and March 2023</i>	£125,000	£152,000	£290,000

104 Although median house prices across the county have increased by 166% since 2000, from £47,000 to £125,000, there is significant variation.

³ [Rural Urban Classification for LSOAs 2011](#)

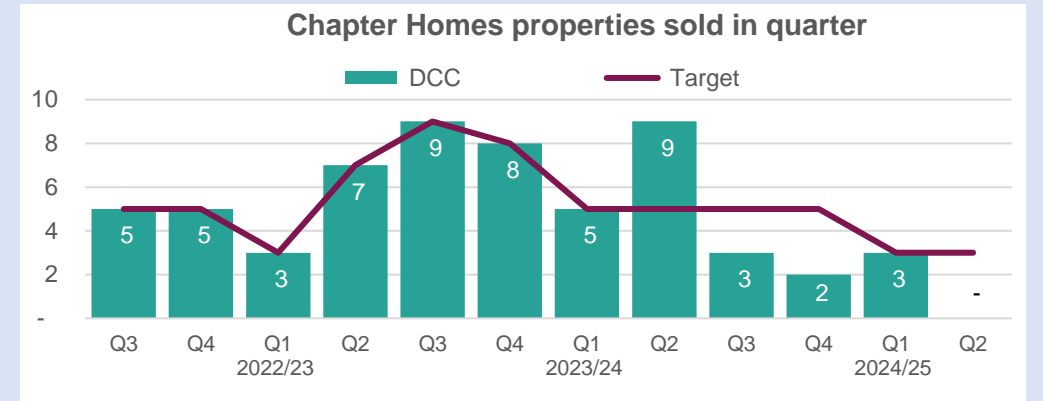
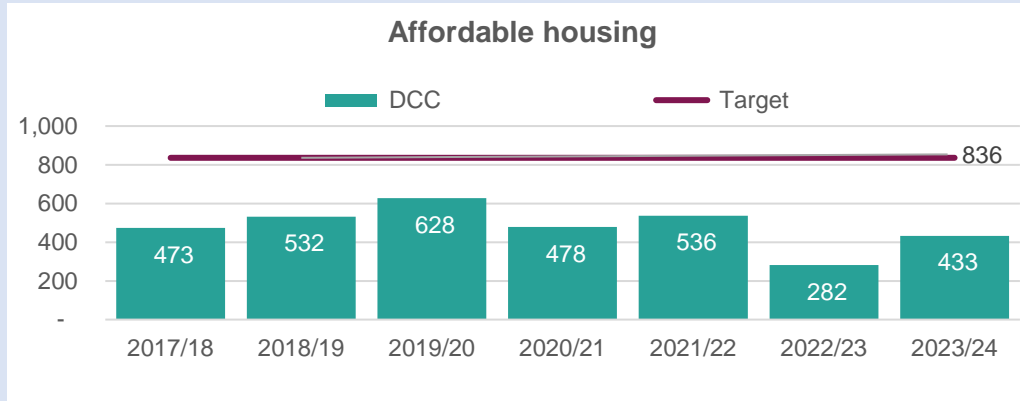
⁴ [Durham Insight - Rural](#)

⁵ [Durham Insight - Housing](#)

⁶ [Median House Prices](#)

Housing Delivery Dashboard

(At the end of 31 March 2024 / discrete quarterly data)



Affordable homes

105 There were 433 affordable housing units were completed in 2023/24. This consisted of:

Via Homes England grant	Via Section 106 Agreement
378	55

106 Performance is worse than target set out in the County Durham Plan to deliver 836 affordable housing units per annum. The target is set against identified need and is extremely challenging to achieve as delivery is dependent on viable sites coming forward for development.

107 However, performance is better than 2022/23, with Section 106 affordable completions increasing by 11 units. This shows that Policy 15 (to meet the need for affordable housing) is now being implemented on sites.

108 Completions through Homes England grants, increased by 140 affordable units compared to 2022/23 and comprised of:

Affordable Rent	Shared Ownership	Social Rent
169	154	55

Chapter Homes

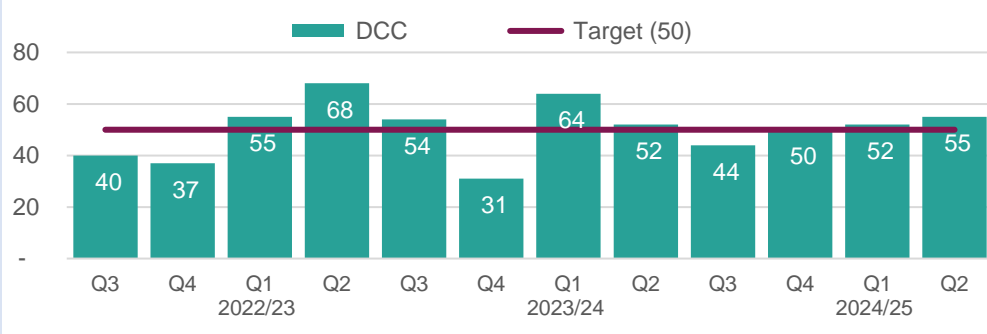
109 No properties sold during quarter two. The four affordable properties due to the sold in the quarter have been reprofiled to complete in quarter three. To allow us to explore additional Homes England funding opportunities and Section 106 commuted sum.

110 Although the quarter two position is not in line with projections, we are still on track to achieve the overall target of 10 properties sold by end of March 2025.

Housing Standards Dashboard

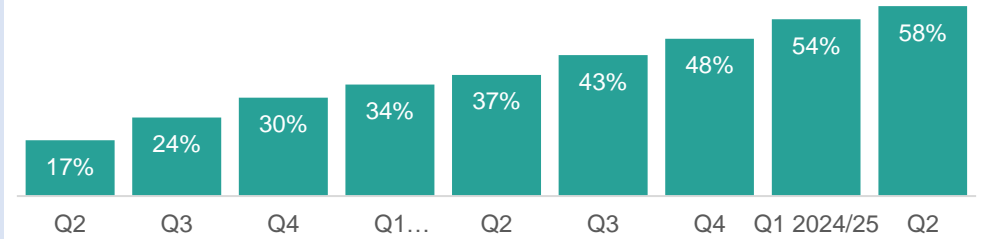
(discrete quarterly data)

Empty homes brought back into use

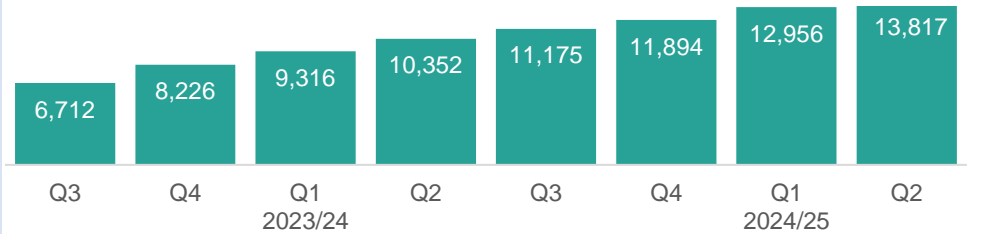


Selective Licensing (Private Rented Sector properties - PRS)

% of PRS properties covered by SL scheme that are fully licenced or legal proceedings instigated (YTD)
Target: 100% by 2027



No. PRS properties covered by SL Scheme that are fully licenced (YTD)
Target: 29,000 by 2027



Empty Homes

- 111 We brought 55 long term empty properties back into use during quarter two (July to September), five better than target (50) and two better than quarter one and the same period last year.
- 112 In most cases, this was achieved through negotiations with owners (43). Other methods included; inspections through Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (10) and empty homes interest free loan (two).
- 113 There are significant challenges in bringing empty properties back into use which means the process can take considerable time. This can relate initially to difficulties in identifying the owner, that the property is in the process of changing ownership or is currently subject to probate. The owner may not want or be able to do anything with the property, for example, if they are in residential care. Similarly, there may not be an incentive to bring the property back into use because it is located within a low demand area.

Selective Licensing

- 114 Our selective licensing scheme covers an estimated 29,000 privately rented properties, and their status at 30 September was:

Status	Number	% of total
Fully licenced or legal proceedings instigated	16,607	58%
Fully licensed	13,817	48%
Being processed	1,080	4%
Live temporary exemptions in place	12	0%
Family exemptions in place	449	1.5%

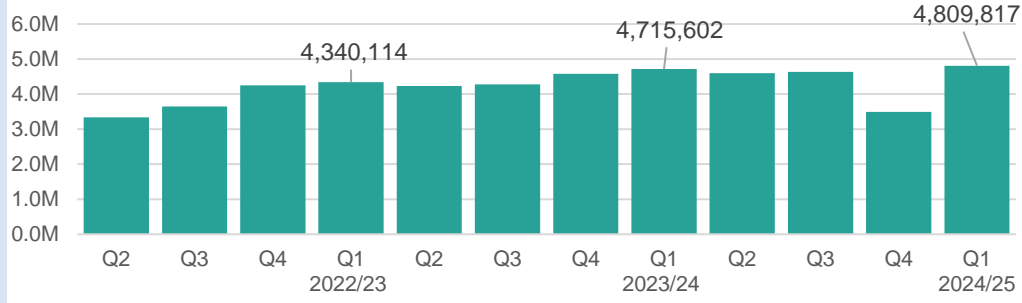
- 115 We have raised a further 918 service cases. These are informal enquiries, requests to licence properties or requests to make repairs (if already licensed). Once the facts have been established, some cases could progress to investigations. However, we would encourage landlords to apply for a licence to avoid legal action.
- 116 We are progressing prosecution files for 22 properties (a further three already successfully prosecuted) and have issued 86 civil penalty notices for not obtaining a licence (relating to 54 properties). 255 properties are no longer private rented sector properties.
- 117 Our recently implemented financial penalty policy continues to assist with enforcement action (as an alternative to prosecution) and encourage unlicensed landlords to apply.
- 118 It requires significant effort and resource throughout the lifetime of a selective licensing scheme to promote the scheme and identify properties subject to licensing. No scheme receives all applications for licences in the first two years. Many schemes do not reach the 100% target by the end of the five years and continue enforcement action beyond the five-year period.
- 119 There are also additional challenges to a vast county wide scheme (split into smaller designations) compared to a complete smaller city or borough scheme which is simpler to administer.
- 120 There is currently no requirement for a person to register their property as privately rented. Therefore, we do not have a complete list of all PRS addresses, which is why the PRS figure was modelled. The team utilise multiple sources of data to identify properties

that may require a licence. Where the owner and/or managing agent is committing an offence, we commence enforcement action. A dedicated team of officers has been assigned to target properties without a licence and has been successful by using a combination of informal measures and pursuing robust enforcement action.

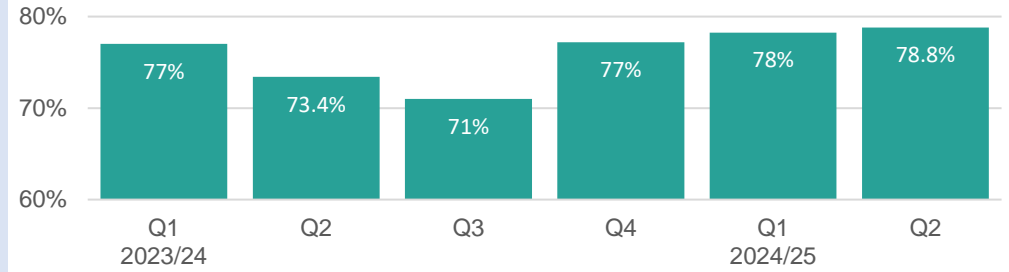
Transport Connectivity Dashboard: public transport patronage and punctuality

(discrete quarterly data / year to date ending 30 June 2024)

Local passenger journeys on the bus network



% of timetabled bus services on time



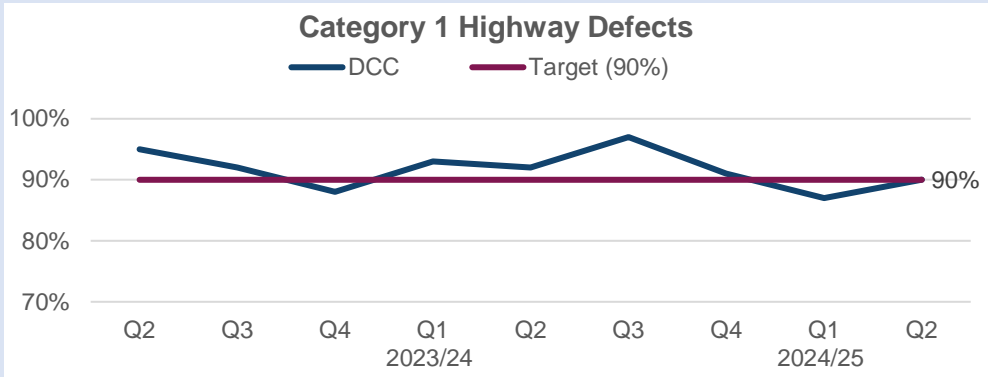
Both patronage and punctuality were impacted as a result of industrial action during quarter three 2023/24.

Public transport patronage and punctuality

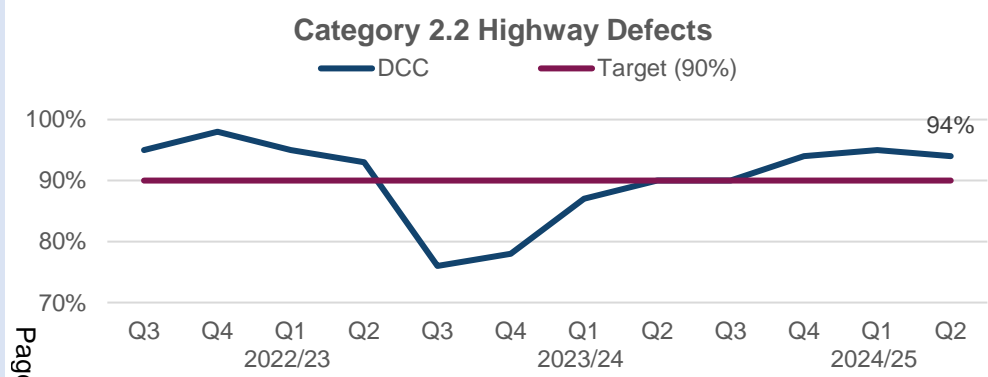
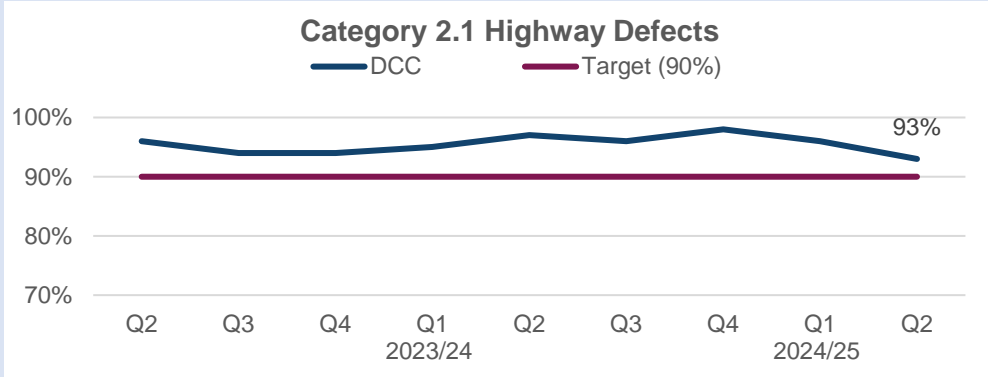
- 121 Bus patronage has slowly increased over the last two years and is back to within 95% of pre-Covid levels.
- 122 Between April to June, there were just over 4.8 million passengers, 2% better than the 4.7 million passengers recorded the last year (April to June 2023). However, the increase masks operational delivery issues of larger operators.
- 123 During quarter two (July to September), punctuality was 79%. Slightly better than last quarter (78%) because of continued performance improvement from the two main operators; Arriva and Go North East.
- 124 We continue to implement the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in partnership with bus operators and other councils to encourage patronage growth and improve punctuality.

Highway Maintenance Dashboard

(discrete quarterly data)



- ### Highway Maintenance
- Defects are categorised on a risk basis, resources targeted at those likely to pose the greatest risk of harm.
 - Category 2.2 highway defects pose the lowest risk based on footfall and location.



Highways Maintenance

- 125 Highway defects are categorised by risk. Resources are directed toward those with the potential to cause the greatest harm. Category 2.2 defects pose the lowest level of risk to the public based on footfall and location.
- 126 We have committed to repair 90% of all highway defects, regardless of category, within a set time. During quarter two (July to September), we achieved the target for all defect categories.

Defect	90% to be repaired within	July to September 2023	July to September 2024
Category 1	2 or 72 hours	92%	90%
Category 2.1	14 days	97%	93%
Category 2.2	3 months	90%	94%

Data Tables

D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
				Household waste re-used, recycled or composted	Oct 22-Sep 23	36.5%	Tracker	37.7%	Apr 21-Mar 22	38.1%	42.5%	33.5%	Yes

D = Direction of Travel	T = compared to target	C = compared to England average	G = Gap between our performance and England average
meeting or exceeding the previous year	Meeting or better than target	meeting or better than the England average	The gap is improving
worse than the previous year but is within 2%	worse than but within 2% of target	worse than the England average but within 2%	The gap remains the same
more than 2% worse than the previous year	more than 2% behind target	worse than the England average	The gap is deteriorating

This is the overall performance assessment. Its calculation is dependent upon whether the indicator has an agreed target.

Key Target Indicator	Key Tracker Indicator
targets are set as improvements, can be measured regularly and can be actively influenced by the council and its partners. When setting a target, the D, C and G have already been taken into account.	no targets are set as they are long-term and / or can only be partially influenced by the council and its partners. Therefore, D, T, C and G are used to assess overall performance
better than target	Direction of Travel (D) is meeting or exceeding the previous year AND the gap with England (G) is improving
worse than but within 2% of target	Direction of Travel (D) is worse than the previous year OR the gap with England (G) is deteriorating
more than 2% behind target	Direction of Travel (D) is worse than the previous year AND the gap with England (G) is deteriorating

More detail is available from the Strategy Team at performance@durham.gov.uk

Our Economy: summary data tables

Economic Growth KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Major planning applications determined within 13 weeks	Jul-Sep 24	92.3%	90%	76.2%	Apr-June 24	86.7%	91.2%	95%	Yes
					Non-major planning applications determined in deadline	Jul-Sep 24	91%	90%	85%	Apr-June 24	88.6%	90%	91.8%	Yes
					Major planning applications overturned on appeal	Oct-Dec 22	0%	10%	0%	Jan-Mar 23	0%	1%	0%	No
					Non-major planning applications overturned on appeal	Oct-Dec 22	0.2%	10%	0.2%	Jan-Mar 23	0.3%	1.1%	0.5%	No
					Inward investments secured	Jul-Sep 24	2	2	3					Yes
					Investment secured for companies	Jul-Sep 24	£1,434,257	£1.25 million	£2,639,595					Yes
					Occupancy of Business Durham floor space	Jul-Sep 24	89.4%	95%	90.2%					Yes
					Private sector employments per 10,000 population	2023	2,820	Tracker	2,772	2023	2,820	4,059	3,216	Yes
					Private sector businesses per 10,000 population	2024	270	Tracker	272	2024	270	409	265	Yes
					GVA per filled job	2022	£51,361	Tracker	£50,154	2022	£51,361	£62,751	£51,395	No
					Employment land approved and delivered	2023/24	21.2Ha	28.46Ha	13.32Ha					Yes

Business Support KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Businesses engaged by Business Durham	Jul-Sep 24	332	250	281					Yes
					Businesses supported by regeneration projects	Jul-Sep 24	15	Tracker	not comparable					Yes
					New businesses supported by CED Team	Jul-Sep 24	99	Tracker	not comparable					Yes

Employability and Skills KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Jobs created or safeguarded due to Business Durham activity	Jul-Sep 24	139	375	384					Yes

				Jobs created or safeguarded through regeneration schemes	Jul-Sep 24	71.5	Tracker	not comparable					Yes
				Registrations to employability programmes	Jul-Sep 24	102	117	N/A					Yes
				Number of participants receiving support to help gain employment	Jul-Sep 24	43	45	N/A					Yes
				Number of employed participants receiving support to sustain employment	Jul-Sep 24	32	27	N/A					Yes
				Employment rate for 16-64 year olds <i>Confidence intervals +/-4.1pp</i>	Jul 23-Jun 24	72.4%	Tracker	71.8%	Jul 23-Jun 24	72.4%	75.7%	71.1%	Yes
				Disability employment rate <i>Confidence intervals +/-7.9pp</i>	Jul 23-Jun 24	46.3%	Tracker	44.5%	Jul 23-Jun 24	46.3%	56.9%	46.7%	Yes
				Residents with higher level skills <i>Confidence intervals +/-4.4pp</i>	2023	60.9%	Tracker	59.1%	2023	60.9%	67.4%	62.8%	No
				16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship	Apr-Jun 23	7.3%	Tracker	8.5%	Apr-Jun 23	7.3%	4.8%	7%	No

Cultural Offer KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					People attending cultural events ran and commissioned by CS&T	Jul-Sep 24	56,901	Tracker	52,000					Yes
					People attending council owned cultural venues (Town Halls and The Story)	Jul-Sep 24	71,438	49,160	Not comparable					Yes
					Average % occupancy of cinema screenings (Gala, Empire & BATH)	Jul-Sep 24	18%	28%	24%					Yes
					Average % yield of cinema screenings (BATH, Gala & Empire)	Jul-Sep 24	62%	100%	75%					Yes
					Average % yield of theatre performances (BATH, Gala & Empire)	Jul-Sep 24	86%	100%	81%					Yes
					Average % occupancy of theatre performances (Gala, Empire & BATH)	Jul-Sep 24	67%	64%	59%					Yes
					Council owned/managed heritage assets classed as 'at risk'	2023	3	Tracker	3					No
					Heritage assets 'at risk' categorised as 'Priority A' and/or in 'very bad condition'	2023	7	Tracker	6					No
					Active borrowers (libraries)	Jul-Sep 24	47,231	46,222	45,519					Yes
					Digital borrowers (libraries)	Jul-Sep 24	4,874	4,487	4,172					Yes

Visitor Economy KPIs

Page 180	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Visitors to the county	2023	20.15m	21.49m	17.91m					No
					Money generated by visitor economy	2023	£1.23bn	£1.25bn	£1.04bn					No
					Jobs supported by the visitor economy	2023	13,178	14,069	11,274					No
					Visitor attractions served by public transport	2023	67%	Tracker	67%					No
					Tourism businesses actively engaged with Visit County Durham	2023	55%	Tracker	27.8%					No

Our Environment: summary data tables

Sustainable Transport and Active Travel KPIs

D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
				Park and Ride passenger journeys	Jul-Sep 24	84,060	Tracker	80,527					Yes

Our People: summary data tables

Housing Vulnerable People KPIs

D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
				Potential clients contacted within 3 weeks of initial referral for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	Jul-Sep 24	100%	90%	95%					Yes
				Households prevented from homelessness and helped to stay in their home	Jul-Sep 24	9%	Tracker	3.4%	Jan-Mar 24	5.1%	19%	6%	Yes
				Households prevented from homelessness and helped to move to alternative accommodation	Jul-Sep 24	22%	Tracker	16%	Jan-Mar 24	15.6%	32.3%	34.7%	Yes
				Households where homelessness has been relieved, and the client moved into alternative accommodation	Jul-Sep 24	27%	Tracker	32%	Jan-Mar 24	27%	30.3%	41.7%	Yes
				Households where there has been an acceptance of the main homeless duty	Jul-Sep 24	13%	Tracker	16%	Jan-Mar 24	13.80%	32.2%	9.7%	Yes

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Successful move-ons from Local Lettings Agency accommodation at the end of their licence agreement	2023/24	100%	90%	new					No
					Approvals on new housing sites of 10+ units, minimum of 66% of the total number of dwellings meet accessible and adaptable standards (building Regulations requirements M4(2)).	2023/24	58%	66%	71%					Yes
					Approvals on new housing sites of 10 units or more, a minimum of 10% of the total number of dwellings meet a design and type for older persons	2023/24	9%	10%	16%					Yes

Physical Activity KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Visits to Leisure Centres	Jul-Sep 24	853,976	798,027	802,450					Yes
					Leisure memberships	Jul-Sep 24	21,141	18,762	18,748					Yes

Our Communities: summary data tables

Housing Delivery KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Net affordable homes	2023/24	433	836	282					Yes
					Net additional dwellings	2023/24	1,291	1,308	1,551					No
					Chapter Homes properties sold	Jul-Sep 24	0	4	not comparable					Yes

Housing Standards KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Empty homes brought back into use as a result of local authority intervention	Jul-Sep 24	55	50	52					Yes
					Properties covered by Selective Licence Scheme that are licensed, or legal proceedings instigated	Jul-Sep 24	58%	100% (by 2027)	37%					Yes

					ASB incidents per 10,000 population within the Selective Licensing Scheme	2023/24	966	976	962					No
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Transport Connectivity KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Satisfaction with ease of access (<i>confidence intervals +/-4pp</i>)	2023	73%	Tracker	73%	2023	73%	71%		No
					Overall satisfaction with bus journey	2023	75%	Tracker	New	2023	75%	80%		No
					Households who can access key service locations using public transport within a 15-mile radius	2023	97.30%	97.73%	97.63%					No
					Households who can access key service locations using public transport within a 5-mile radius	2023	65.50%	67.80%	66.81%					No
					Residents who can access employment sites by public transport	2023	30.18%	32.10%	29.42%					No
					Timetabled bus services no more than 5 min late or 1 min early	Jul-Sep 24	78.80%	Tracker	N/A					Yes
					Local passenger journeys on public transport	Jan-Mar 24	4,664,453	Tracker	4,597,196					Yes

Highways and Footways Maintenance KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					A roads where maintenance is recommended	2023	2.6%	Tracker	3.7%	2023	2.6%	4.0%	3.0%	No
					B & C roads where maintenance is recommended	2023	2.65%	Tracker	3.4%	2023	2.65%	6.0%	3.0%	No
					Unclassified roads where maintenance is recommended	2023	23%	Tracker	25%	2023	23%	17%	22%	No
					'Footways' structurally unsound	2022	30.9%	Tracker	31.3%					No
					Bridge condition: principal roads	2020	82.0%	Tracker	81.1%					No
					Bridge condition: non-principal roads	2020	81.0%	Tracker	80.1%					No
					Category 1 highway defects repaired within 2 or 72 hours (depending on severity)	Jul-Sep 24	90%	90%	92%					Yes
					Category 2.1 highway defects repaired within 14 days	Jul-Sep 24	93%	90%	97%					Yes
					Category 2.2 highway defects repaired within 3 months	Jul-Sep 24	94%	90%	90%					Yes

				Highways Maintenance Backlog	awaiting data		Tracker							No
				Satisfaction with highway maintenance. (<i>confidence intervals +/-4pp</i>)	2023	46%	Tracker	47%	2023	46%	43%			No

Glossary

Term	Definition
ACD	Automatic Call Distribution Telephone calls are received either through our 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). Only calls received via our ACD system are included in our telephone statistics.
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area Geographical area where air pollution levels are, or are likely to, exceed national air quality objectives at relevant locations (where the public may be exposed to harmful air pollution over a period of time e.g., residential homes, schools etc.).
ASB	Anti-social behaviour
ASCOF	Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework Measures how well care and support services achieve outcomes that matter most to people (link)
BATH	Bishop Auckland Town Hall A multi-purpose cultural venue situated in Bishop Auckland. It offers regular art exhibitions, live music, cinema screenings and theatre performances, as well as a library service.
BCF	Better Care Fund A national programme that supports local systems to successfully deliver the integration of health and social care.
Budget	An annual statement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the House of Commons that sets out the UK government's planned spending and revenue gathering for the foreseeable future. Two major financial announcements are given in a financial year (the Autumn Budget and the Spring Budget).
CAP	Customer Access Point A location where residents can get face-to-face help and information about council services. There are eight CAPs across County Durham.
CAT	Community Action Team Project team which includes members of our community protection service, planning, neighbourhood wardens and housing teams, who work alongside police and community support officers, fire and rescue teams and residents to tackle housing and environmental issues in a specific area by identifying local priorities and making best use of resources.
CDP	County Durham Plan Sets out the council's vision for housing, jobs and the environment until 2035, as well as the transport, schools and healthcare to support it (link)
CED	Community Economic Development
CERP	Climate Emergency Response Plan A community-wide call to action to help align all sectors on the actions required to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve our resilience to the impacts of climate change.
CLD	Client Level Dataset A national mandatory person-level data collection (to be introduced) that will replace the existing annual Short and Long Term (SALT) Support data collected by councils. CLD will be added to the single data list and will become mandatory for all local authorities.
CNIS	Child Not In School
CPN	Community Protection Notice Can be issued to anyone over the age of 16 to deal with a wide range of ongoing anti-social behaviour issues or nuisances which have a detrimental effect on the local community. There are three stages: the first stage is a written warning (CPW), the second a notice (CPN) the third is an FPN or further prosecution for failure to comply with the previous stages
CRM	Customer Relationship Management system

Term	Definition
CS&T	Culture, Sport and Tourism
CTR	Council Tax Reduction reduces council tax bills for those on low incomes
DCC	Durham County Council
DEFRA	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs A ministerial department, supported by 34 agencies and public bodies responsible for improving and protecting the environment. It aims to grow a green economy and sustain thriving rural communities. It also supports our world-leading food, farming and fishing industries (link)
DHP	Discretionary Housing Payments Short term payments which can be made to tenants in receipt of the housing benefit element of Universal Credit, to help sort out housing and money problems in the longer term.
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care Supports the government in leading the nation's health and care system.
DLE	Daily Living Expenses Available for those whose circumstances have changed unexpectedly. Payments can be made for up to seven days to help with food, travel and some clothing (restrictions apply).
DoLS	Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Set of checks that are part of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, which applies in England and Wales. The DoLS procedure protects a person receiving care whose liberty has been limited by checking that this is appropriate and is in their best interests.
EAP	Employee Assistance Programme Confidential employee benefit designed to help staff deal with personal and professional problems that could be affecting their home or work life, health, and general wellbeing.
EET	Employment, Education or Training Most often used in relation to young people aged 16 to 17, it measures the number employed, in education or in training.
EHCP	Education, Health Care Plan Legal document which describes a child or young person's (aged up to 25) special educational needs, the support they need, and the outcomes they would like to achieve.
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund Funding that helps to create economic development and growth; it supports businesses, encourages new ideas and supports regeneration. Although the UK has now left the EU, under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement, EU programmes will continue to operate in the UK until their closure in 2023-24.
EHE	Elective Home Education A choice by parents to provide education for their children at home or in some other way they desire, instead of sending them to school full-time.
ETA	Extension of Time Agreement An agreement between the council and the customer submitting a planning application to extend the usual deadline beyond 13 weeks due to the complex nature of the application.
FPN	Fixed Penalty Notice Conditional offer to an alleged offender for them to have the matter dealt with in a set way without resorting to going to court.
FTE	Full Time Equivalent Total number of full-time employees working across the organisation. It is a way of adding up the hours of full-time, part-time and various other types of employees and converting into measurable 'full-time' units.
GVA	Gross Value Added Measure of value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.

Term	Definition
HSF	Household Support Fund Payments support low income households struggling with energy and food costs, or who need essential household items.
ICO	Information Commissioner's Office The UK's independent body's role is to uphold information rights in the public interest (link)
IES	Inclusive Economic Strategy Clear, long-term vision for the area's economy up to 2035, with an overarching aim to create more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy (link)
JLHWS	Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy JLHWS supports vision that County Durham is a healthy place where people live well for longer
KS2	Key Stage 2 The national curriculum is organised into blocks of years called 'key stages.' At the end of each key stage, the teacher will formally assess each child's performance. KS2 refers to children in year 3, 4, 5 and 6 when pupils are aged between 7 and 11.
KS3	Key Stage 3 The national curriculum is organised into blocks of years called 'key stages.' At the end of each key stage, the teacher will formally assess each child's performance. KS3 refers to children in year 7, 8 and 9 when pupils are aged between 11 and 14.
LGA	Local Government Association The national membership body for councils which works on behalf of its member councils to support, promote and improve local government.
LINKCD	Programme that brings together a number of delivery partners to support people with multiple barriers to address these underlying issues and to move them closer to or into the labour market or re-engage with education or training.
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategies Propose how and where to recover nature and improve the wider environment.
MTFP	Medium Term Financial Plan A document that sets out the council's financial strategy over a four year period
MW	MegaWatt is one million watts of electricity
NESWA	North East Social Work Alliance A social work teaching partnership made up of 12 North East councils and six Higher Education Institutes. The Alliance is one of several teaching partnerships across the country which were created to improve the quality of practice, learning and continuous professional development amongst trainee and practicing social workers.
NQSW	Newly Qualified Social Workers a social worker who is registered with Social Work England and is in their first year of post qualifying practice.
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification A work-based qualification that recognises the skills and knowledge a person needs to do a job.
PDR	Performance and Development Review Is an annual process which provides all staff with the valuable opportunity to reflect on their performance, potential and development needs.
PRS	Private Rented Sector This classification of housing relates to property owned by a landlord and leased to a tenant. The landlord could be an individual, a property company or an institutional investor. The tenants would either deal directly with an individual landlord, or alternatively with a management company or estate agency caring for the property on behalf of the landlord.
PSPO	Public Space Protection Order To deal with a nuisance or problem in a particular area that is detrimental to local community.
QoL Page 186	Quality of Life

Term	Definition
RIDDOR	Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations A RIDDOR report is required for work-related accidents which result in a reportable injury .
RQF	Regulated Qualifications Framework RQF helps people understand all the qualifications regulated by government and how they relate to each other. It covers general and vocational in England, and vocational in Northern Ireland.
SALT	Short and Long Term Relates to the annual Short and Long Term (SALT) Support data collected by councils. It is to be replaced by a national mandatory person-level data collection (Client Level Data).
SEN	Special Educational Needs Term is used to describe learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for children to learn than most children of the same age. Children with SEN are likely to need extra or different help from that given to other children their age.
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities SEND can affect a child or young person's ability to learn and can affect their; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ behaviour or ability to socialise (e.g., they struggle to make friends) ▪ reading and writing (e.g., because they have dyslexia), ▪ ability to understand things, ▪ concentration levels (e.g., because they have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) ▪ physical ability
SG	Settlement Grants Help people stay in their home or move back into housing after living in supported or unsettled accommodation (such as leaving care or being homeless). They provide help towards furniture, white goods, flooring, curtains, bedding, kitchen equipment, removal costs etc.
SME	Small to Medium Sized Enterprise A company with no more than 500 employees.
Statistical nearest neighbours	A group of councils that are similar across a wide range of socio-economic. Durham County Council uses the CIPFA nearest neighbours model which compares us to Northumberland, North Tyneside, Barnsley, Rotherham, Wakefield, Doncaster, Redcar and Cleveland, Wigan, St Helens, Cornwall, Sefton, Sunderland, Wirral, Plymouth and Calderdale
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Children and young people who are seeking asylum in the UK but who have been separated from their parents or carers. While their claim is processed, they are cared for by a council.
UKSPF	UK Shared Prosperity Fund Part of the government's Levelling Up agenda that provides funding for local investment to March 2025. All areas of the UK receive an allocation from the Fund to enable local decision making and better target the priorities of places within the UK that will lead to tangible improvements to the places where people work and live.
WEEE	Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Any electrical or electronic waste, whether whole or broken, that is destined for disposal. The definition includes household appliances such as washing machines and cookers, IT and telecommunications equipment, electrical and electronic tools, toys and leisure equipment and certain medical devices.
Yield	Proportion of potential income achieved

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Meeting: County Durham Economic Partnership Board
Date & Time: 4th December 2024 at 2pm
Venue: Conference Room, Salvus House, Durham/hybrid via Teams



Better for everyone

Present:	Name	Organisation/Pillar Rep
	Glyn Llewellyn (GL)	Chair
	Alan Smith (AS)	Believe Housing (lead for Inclusive Growth)
	Andy Kerr (AK)	Durham County Council
	Duncan Peake (DP)	Raby Estates
	Michelle Cooper (MC)	County Durham Community Foundation (VCS Voice)
	Reshma Begum (RB)	Federation of Small Business
	Sarah Slaven (SS)	Business Durham (lead for Business Competitiveness)
	Glenn Martin (GM)	Durham County Council – presenting Item 5
	Andy Bailey (ACB)	Durham County Council
	Paul Cooper (PC)	Durham County Council – presenting Item 7
	Angela Brown (ABro) (Minutes)	Durham County Council
Also, in attendance via Teams:		
	Ailsa Anderson (AA)	Engineering & Manufacturing Network
	Andy Broadbent (AB)	New College Durham (lead for People)
	Kirsty Wilkinson (KW)	Public Health, DCC
	Sue Parkinson (SP)	CDEP Vice Chair
	Richard Baker (RBaker)	Durham University (lead for Innovation)
	Kate Burrows (KB)	Durham Community Action (VCS Voice)
	Alison Gittins (AG)	Durham Business Group
Apologies:		
	Amy Harhoff	Durham County Council
	Rhiannon Bearne	Northeast Chamber of Commerce
	Cllr Elizabeth Scott	Durham County Council
	Alison Clarke	Culture, Sport & Tourism
	Paul Marsden	Head of the Association of Secondary Schools

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
1.	Welcome and apologies	<p>GL welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>He congratulated partners for the following achievements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durham County Carers Support have received The King's Award for Voluntary Service – as a VCSE anchor organisation in County Durham and provider of a County Durham Commissioned service it is wonderful to see them rewarded in this way. • Durham County Council's DurhamEnable service was ranked as "excellent" in its Supported Employment Quality Framework assessment - the service received this accreditation in both its main UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) backed service and its Local Supported Employment Programme (LSE) making it one of the only providers in the UK to have an "excellent" rating for both areas • New College Durham has recently been selected as an AoC Beacon Awards finalist for both The Bell Foundation Award for Excellence in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)" and "The Association of Colleges (AoC) Award for Widening Participation. 		
2.	Minutes of the meetings: 25th Sept 2024	The Minutes from the meetings of 25th September 2024 were agreed as a true record of the meeting.		
3.	Matters Arising	There were no matters arising.		
4.	Update from Special Rural Issues Meeting – Duncan Peake	<p>DP gave an update from the Special Rural issues meeting that took place on 4th November. He thanked colleagues who attended the meeting at Raby Castle and gave special thanks to Caroline from the NFU, Melanie Thomas-Glen from National Innovation Centre and Edward Perry a rural surveyor, who were also in attendance.</p> <p>Main Barriers to Growth in Rural Areas:</p>		

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transport 2. Housing 3. Skills/Training 4. Connectivity <p>Discussion Highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Towns: Recognised as critical hubs for economic activity in rural areas. Emphasis on ensuring their continued prosperity. • Devolution: Seen as beneficial for rural areas, with potential opportunities in climate change, farming, and rural land management. • Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES): The delivery plan should be more visible, and the CDEP Board should be the accountable board for this work. • Ambassadors: CDEP Board members can act as ambassadors for the economic strategy, raising its profile within the business community in the County. • Task and Finish Groups: Agreed to set up these groups to address specific challenges. <p>Questions/Comments:</p> <p>GL praised the meeting as excellent and well-organised.</p> <p>SS suggested reviewing the next delivery plan in the New Year, with potential pilot projects focused on rural aspects.</p> <p>AS noted that rural solutions in the housing sector are more expensive to deliver.</p> <p>DP highlighted the willingness of landowners to offer land for affordable housing, suitable for registered housing providers.</p>		

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
		<p>KB thanked DP for the meeting and mentioned ongoing surveys in Middleton in Teesdale, looking for project opportunities.</p> <p>RBaker agreed with the accuracy of the discussions and emphasized aligning Durham's intervention with the NECA agenda.</p> <p>SS mentioned a meeting with Northumberland early in the New Year to explore further opportunities.</p>		
5.	<p>IES Delivery Plan Progress Report – Andy Kerr/Glenn Martin</p>	<p>GL informed the Board that this was Andy Kerr’s last CDEP Board meeting as he leaves to take up his new post as the Director of Economy at York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority in the New Year. GL thanked him for his contributions, particularly in developing the Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES).</p> <p>GM presented on IES Delivery Plan progress report.</p> <p>Discussion Highlights:</p> <p>RB raised concerns about carbon emission spikes during building projects. GM acknowledged the need for further detailed examination.</p> <p>AS mentioned the high costs of building NetZero homes due to evolving technology and the struggle with their carbon footprint from day-to-day repairs.</p> <p>SS questioned what the partnership aims to measure, the desired changes, and how to manage them.</p> <p>MC highlighted the difference in place-based work in Durham compared to the London-centric view often seen in the voluntary sector.</p>		

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
		<p>DP inquired about the completion status of actions in the delivery plan. GM confirmed some actions were complete but might need review for relevance.</p> <p>SP noted the difficulty in overseeing all 139 actions and suggested focusing on key areas to present to the Board. DP agreed, emphasising the need to know milestones and progress for accountability.</p> <p>Productivity:</p> <p>SS discussed the use of UKSPF for integrated business support, with key projects like Durham Business Growth and Enterprising Durham Framework nearing completion by 31st March.</p> <p>Investment in the Intune partnership and commissioned work on Deeptech inward investment and growth plans for opportunity sectors.</p> <p>Utilising SPF resources to enhance working methods and invest in projects.</p> <p>Places:</p> <p>AK highlighted major regeneration programmes, including the £25m Towns and Villages Programme, with a report to Cabinet next month. Future place-based investment programmes for High Streets and Town Centres are also being considered.</p> <p>Efforts in green energy, EV charging, and 5G rollout.</p> <p>Promotion:</p> <p>GM noted improvements in the visitor economy, with the culture county programme for next year being a major initiative. Efforts to decarbonise visitor attractions and the establishment of Place Labs were also mentioned.</p>		

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
		<p>Awaiting new strategies and investment plans from the government and NECA, with the Local Growth Plan being crucial for future agreements.</p> <p>Additional Comments:</p> <p>RBaker emphasised the importance of knowing the programme's progress and the impact of the Intune Programme, which is central to the 5 Universities' strategy.</p> <p>The UKSPF has leveraged additional funding, including £9m from Research England and a joint commercialisation spin-out fund with NECA, totalling £30m.</p> <p>SS suggested better utilisation of the CDEP website for updates and getting messages out.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was agreed to share with Board how many actions are now closed off. 	GM	
6.	Update from TFG – Sue Parkinson	<p>SP provided an update on the next iteration of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the general principles behind it. She also shared an update from evaluators on how the partnership has functioned in relation to the UKSPF Fund.</p> <p>Technical Funding Group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subgroup: The Technical Funding Group is a subgroup of the CDEP Board. • Consultants: Wave Hill consultants were engaged to conduct work, and their findings were circulated. <p>Recommendations:</p>		

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication: Improve communication about the partnership's activities, with a suggestion to use the CDEP website. 2. Impact Evaluation: Increase efforts to evaluate the impact and worth of the partnership, with ongoing work involving the University. 3. Private Sector Involvement: Encourage more private sector involvement in the partnership. 4. Cross-Sector Working: Strengthen cross-sector collaboration, particularly around environmental and green agendas. 5. Lobbying: Increase lobbying efforts for Durham. <p>SPFUK Budget Announcement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding: An additional £900m was announced for 2025/26, but details on allocation and the split between revenue and capital are unknown. • Multiply Programme: No continuation of current funding for the Multiply Programme. • Transition Year: NECA will be the lead local authority, with a group set up to manage the transition year. Discussions are ongoing about using the same allocation formulas as the government, with Durham acting as the lead local authority. <p>Delivery Group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Management: The group continues to manage 139 programmes and is open to taking a different approach if the Board wishes. • Preparation for Review: Preparation work for a review needs to start. <p>Questions/Comments:</p>		

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
		<p>RBaker highlighted the pressing issue of managing staffing in relation to SPF timings and hoped for a simple notification process from the government.</p> <p>SP mentioned that it is a new programme for the transitional year.</p>		
7.	Pension Fund Impact Investing – Paul Cooper	<p>Paul Cooper, Head of Pensions at DCC, presented an item on the proposed Pension Fund Impact Investment Strategy, to seek view from the Board.</p> <p>GL recapped that they are investing in businesses in County Durham and need a return on these investments, so they are looking for positive outcomes. PC explained that they never invest directly into corporate entities but always appoint an asset manager to safeguard returns. GL appreciated having the fund available.</p> <p>Discussion Highlights:</p> <p>Finance and Investment:</p> <p>RBaker found the presentation interesting. They highlighted the long-standing finance gap for spinouts and asked about attitudes towards early-stage investments. They also mentioned a £22.5m joint project between NECA and the five North East Universities, including co-investment opportunities for slightly later stages.</p> <p>PC welcomed the question on early-stage investments and suggested a conversation outside the meeting, which RBaker agreed to.</p> <p>Asset Management and Efficiency:</p>		

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
		<p>SP praised the efficient use of assets. She discussed the potential for including social value in investments and questioned whether investments could align with the strategy's ambitions.</p> <p>MC discussed the need to deliver certain outcomes and considered how to link these outcomes to IES for consumer impacts.</p> <p>Professional Management and ESG:</p> <p>PC emphasised that investment brings greater focus. He highlighted the role of professional managers in helping companies lacking frameworks and capacity. He also mentioned the importance of ESG and the primary responsibility to generate returns and discussed the foresight fund as an example of early-stage investments.</p> <p>It was agreed for PC to meet with GL.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RBaker to link with PC outside this meeting. • PC to meet with GL. 	<p>RBaker PC/GL</p>	
8.	<p>State of Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reshma Begum FSB 	<p>RB noted that business confidence has declined since the budget, with some measures having a detrimental impact. She hopes that positive aspects will emerge in the coming months. She mentioned the limitations of increasing prices to cover rising living wages and employment allowances. Despite some businesses thriving, they are not turning enough profit. She emphasised the need to continue advocating for business rates relief, which is set to end for lower rates.</p> <p>MC highlighted that the charity sector in the NECA region has no choice but to raise prices, resulting in a net cost of £19.5m, which is a significant concern.</p>		

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="309 571 562 643">Ailsa Anderson EMN 	<p data-bbox="633 272 1778 344">KB mentioned raising this issue from the VCS perspective at the County Durham Partnership Board and will share a paper on the matter once it is ready.</p> <p data-bbox="633 384 748 416">Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="680 424 1547 456">KB to share paper with Board from VCS point of view. <p data-bbox="633 571 1093 603">SS gave update on behalf of AA</p> <p data-bbox="633 643 1733 715">The initial positivity in the sector following the launch of the Industrial Strategy has diminished since the announcements on 31st October.</p> <p data-bbox="633 754 1778 826">87% of manufacturers view the Industrial Strategy positively, believing it provides a long-term strategy.</p> <p data-bbox="633 866 1771 970">It is expected to increase manufacturing's contribution to GDP from 10% to 15%, address long-term skill gaps, and boost regional growth outside London and the South East.</p> <p data-bbox="633 1010 1771 1121">The increase in employers' National Insurance contributions has been widely condemned, impacting profitability, growth, and employment across large, small, and medium manufacturing companies.</p> <p data-bbox="633 1161 1771 1305">The combination of increased NI contributions, a lower NIC threshold, and rising wage costs is creating significant financial pressure, leading many manufacturers to consider workforce reductions to manage costs while fulfilling existing orders.</p> <p data-bbox="633 1345 1742 1417">Automation and digitisation are expected to increase efficiency, but profitability constraints limit the necessary upfront investment.</p> <p data-bbox="633 1425 1615 1457">Positive feedback on the extension of the Made Smarter Programme.</p>	KB	

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
		<p>Focus on reducing costs through lower GHG emissions, though initial investment in these technologies remains a barrier.</p> <p>The sector anticipates a challenging 9-12 months ahead.</p>		
9.	Any Other Business	There was no other business to discuss		
	Date and time of Next Meeting	<p>GL mentioned that the dates for 2025 are to be confirmed and ABrown will send out shortly. We are looking to hold 5 meetings next year to keep the momentum going, in February, April, June, September and November.</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABrown to confirm dates for future board meetings and send invites to Board members. 	ABrown	

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