

**Children and Young People  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**6 July 2023**

**Quarter Four, 2022/23  
Performance Management Report**

**Ordinary Decision**



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**Report of John Hewitt, Chief Executive**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present an overview of progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework and highlight key messages to inform strategic priorities and work programmes.
- 2 The report covers performance in and to the end of quarter four, 2022/23, January to March 2023.

**Executive Summary**

- 3 This report is structured around a performance framework which reflects our current [Council Plan](#) (2022-2026), and its format has been developed to provide greater focus on how the council is contributing to achieving the people's vision.
- 4 The performance report is structured around two main components.
  - (a) State of the County indicators to highlight areas of strategic importance and reflected in both the [County Durham Vision 2035](#) and the [Council Plan](#).
  - (b) Performance of council services and progress against major initiatives as set out in the [Council Plan](#).
- 5 Performance is reported on an exception basis with key messages against the five thematic areas within the Council Plan 2022-2026: our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, and our council. It is broken down into national, regional and local picture, things that are going well, areas which require attention and other areas to note.
- 6 The [Council Plan](#) has undergone its annual refresh and the plan for 2023-2027 was approved by Council on 22 February. The performance framework is now being adjusted accordingly and will form the structure of this performance report from quarter one, 2023/24.

## Context

7 2022/23 continues to be a challenging period and this report sets out the council's continued strong performance. COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis have all impacted on our residents, our businesses and the council. The current cost-of-living crisis has steadily worsened over the last 12 months. High inflation, currently at 10.1%<sup>1</sup>, has largely been driven by the rise in the cost of fuel and energy bills, which is being impacted significantly by world events, including the war in Ukraine. This is having a triple impact.

- (a) Impact on our residents. High inflation is outstripping wage and benefit increases, so income is falling in real terms. This is driving demand for services which support people facing financial hardship or who are in crisis, as well as services provided to vulnerable people such as social care for children and adults.

We are receiving more contact from households seeking financial assistance, with a continuing high volume of applications for Welfare Assistance. Both elements of our scheme increased during 2022/23, although the increase in claims for Daily Living Expenses<sup>2</sup> was more significant (10,812 this year, compared to 4,875 last year) than the increase in claims for Settlement Grants<sup>3</sup> (1,576 claims this year, compared to 1,310 last year). We are continuing to support residents through the crisis with various initiatives and funds, including our Council Tax Reduction Scheme, food and fun initiatives, food surplus activity and 'cutting the cost of the school day' initiative.

- (b) Increased costs for the council. Premises and transport increased in line with higher energy costs and fuel prices, most noticeably across service areas such as waste and Home to School Transport. Contract prices were also affected, and more contracts reflected changes in demand.

We created a £10 million Budget Support Reserve to assist with inflationary pressures within 2022/23.

- (c) Reduced income for the council. Users of council services may seek to save money resulting in a fall in income from discretionary services such as leisure centres and theatres. We estimate that during 2022/23 our income will be under budget by £1.858 million.

8 The council's low tax raising capacity continues to place pressure on our budgets. If core spending power 'per dwelling' across the county was raised

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<sup>1</sup> UK Consumer Price Index for 12 months to March 2023. Indicative [modelled consumer price inflation estimates](#) suggest that the CPI rate would have last been higher in October 1981, where the estimate for the annual inflation rate was 11.2%.

<sup>2</sup> helps people whose circumstances change unexpectedly and who do not have access to money. It provides help with daily living expenses (for up to seven days) – includes food, travel and some clothing (restrictions apply).

<sup>3</sup> helps people stay in their home, or move back into housing, after living in supported or unsettled accommodation, e.g., when leaving care of having been made homeless. It includes help towards beds and/or bedding, furniture, white goods (for example, cooker, fridge, washing machine), kitchen equipment, floor coverings, curtains, removal costs.

to the England average of £2,360 (+£167), the council would receive an additional £42 million each year.

- 9 Budget pressures of around £79 million are expected during 2023/24. This is due to factors such as the 9.7% uplift in the National Living Wage, energy costs, pay awards, high levels of inflation and higher demand across social care services.
- 10 Pressures will be partly financed by the additional £57 million received from the Local Government Settlement and from council tax and tax base increases, with the remainder split £12 million from savings and by utilising £10 million from the MTFP Support Reserve.
- 11 Despite this challenging financial environment, the 2023/24 budget includes:
  - support for low-income households through our Council Tax Reduction Scheme
  - maximisation of health and social care funds for the benefit of our vulnerable clients
  - significant investment in capital expenditure with a £770 million capital programme, the most ambitious the council has ever agreed.

## **Recommendation**

- 12 That Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes:
  - (a) the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter four performance;
  - (b) the continuing impact of COVID-19 pandemic recovery and the external international factors driving inflation and cost-of-living on the council's performance; and
  - (c) the actions being taken to address areas of underperformance including the significant economic and well-being challenges because of the pandemic and other external factors.

## **Analysis of the Performance Report**

- 13 The areas identified in this section are contributory indicators linked to the priorities of the Council Plan. Performance is reported on an exception basis with key messages against the five thematic areas within the Council Plan 2022-2026.

### **Our people**

- 14 The aim of this priority is 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 will invest in a multi-million pound programme to transform our leisure centre venues.

### **Going Well**

- 15 Referral rates per 10,000 0-17 year olds have reduced slightly and remain below benchmarks. Improved practice over the last few years has led to better performance in key areas such as our re-referral rate, which has reduced from 28% (and in the top 20 highest in the country in 2019/20) to 17% in 2022/23 and this is now consistently below our national (22%), regional (21%) and statistical neighbours (20%).
- 16 Between April 2022 and March 2023, 1,384 families were turned around through the Stronger Families programme, 1,286 attained significant and sustained outcomes, and 98 maintained continuous employment. Performance surpassed our annual national target of 760 families turned around.

### **Areas which require attention**

- 17 Our caseload policy (for children and young people) states that a full time equivalent (FTE) social worker should have no more than 22 cases, and we regard 25 cases as being very high. Although fewer children are requiring statutory children's social care support, staff vacancies across the service means that more than one in three social workers has more than 25 cases.
- 18 Caseload pressures arise from an increasing number of vacancies for children's social work practitioners. This is a national issue with most English councils struggling to recruit and retain their workforce. In Durham there were 12 FTE fewer case holders this quarter compared to the same period last year, and at the end of March, 62 social work vacancies. This equates to a vacancy rate of 18.3%, the highest recorded since monitoring began in 2018, lower than the latest national vacancy rate of 20%, also the highest recorded. We are undertaking a significant amount of activity to improve social work recruitment and retention which we expect will reduce the number of vacancies over the next 4-6 months but caseloads are likely to remain a challenge in this period.

- 19 Increases in children in care (currently 1,071), and changes to the composition of children entering care, continue to cause placement pressures. Our rates of children in care (105 per 10,000 children population) remain higher than national averages (70) but below our regional (110) and statistical neighbours (107). Our transformation plans aim to increase capacity within our in-house children's homes, recruiting more foster carers and working with children and their families to prevent them entering care.
- 20 In Special Education Needs and Disability Services (SEND), we continue to see sustained growth in requests for EHCP assessments, with significant increases over the last few years which are also evidenced nationally. In 2022/23, the service received 948 requests for an EHCP, 14% higher than in 2021/22 and 71% higher than the same period last year, and more than prior to COVID (554 in 2019/20).
- 21 Pressure is compounded by high levels of demand in partner organisations, such as health who are a key part of the assessment process. We have invested in and restructured our SEND Casework Teams and Educational Psychologists, however, there are national shortages for this specialist role. More requests for EHCP assessments is affecting our ability to meet the 20-week statutory timescale, with none completed within timescale in the year to date. The service has 602 open assessments, 194 of which are already outside of the 20-week timescale. Work has begun to investigate this further and establish where the delays are occurring in the system.

## **Risk Management**

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

## **Background papers**

- County Durham Vision (County Council, 23 October 2019)  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s115064/Draft%20Durham%20Vision%20v10.0.pdf>

## **Other useful documents**

- Council Plan 2022 to 2026 (current plan)  
<https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/34954/Durham-County-Council-Plan-2022-2026/pdf/CouncilPlan2022-2026.pdf?m=63796952367360000>
- Quarter Three, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s171720/Item%205%20Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q3%202022-23.pdf>
- Quarter Two, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s166398/Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q2%202022-23%20v2.1.pdf>

- Quarter One, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s161902/Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q1%202022-23%20Revised.pdf>
- Quarter Four, 2021/22 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s157533/Year%20End%20performance%20report%202021-22.pdf>

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Not applicable.

### **Finance**

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

### **Consultation**

Not applicable.

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

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

### **Climate Change**

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

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable.

### **Crime and Disorder**

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

### **Staffing**

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

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable.

### **Risk**

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

### **Procurement**

Not applicable.



# Durham County Council Performance Management Report Quarter Four, 2022/23





## 1.0 Our People: National, Regional & Local Picture

- 1 During 2022/23, we received almost 20,000 contacts for early help and children's social care at First Contact (children's services front door), a reduction of nearly 2,000 on 2021/22. The Children Services Portal was launched in October 2022, and this has also had just over 1,000 forms submitted. The partner led early help assessment, child and family plan and making requests for additional early help all require use of the Children Services Portal.
- 2 Over the same period, almost 4,800 statutory children's social care referrals were received, a slight reduction on last year. The rolling annual rate per 10,000 children (468, n=4,775) is lower than in our benchmarks (England: 538, Statutory Neighbours: 608 and North East: 644).
- 3 Rates of children in need, children on child protection plans and children in care per 10,000 children population remain higher than national averages but below our regional and statistical neighbours.

	2022/23	2021/22		
	County Durham	England	Statistical Neighbours	North East
Children in need	381	334	445	471
Children on a child protection plan	53	42	62	63
Children in care	105	70	107	110

## 1.1 Council Activity: Going Well

### Children's Social Care

- 4 Referral rates per 10,000 0-17 year olds have reduced slightly and remain below benchmarks. Improved practice over the last few years has led to better performance in key areas such as our re-referral rate, which has reduced from 28% and in the top 20 highest in the country in 2019/20 to 17% in 2022/23 and this is now consistently below our national (22%), regional (21%) and statistical neighbours (20%). This means fewer children and their families require further support from safeguarding services following support.
- 5 The national transfer scheme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) continues with 59 of our children in care having a UASC status; this will further increase over the rest of the year, as we take UASC into the care of the council in line with national Home Office targets.

- 6 Despite increasing caseload pressures, our social workers continue to see children in line with statutory timescales through regular performance monitoring and our managers have oversight of children's cases. Latest data to March 2023 shows 87% of children open to our Families First Teams on the day had been seen within the last four weeks. For children with a child protection plan, 96% had a visit and were seen in the last four weeks.
- 7 We continue to see an increasing trend in children in care (n=1,071), and whilst this is high for County Durham the rate of 105 per 10,000 0-17 population remains lower than in our regional and statistical neighbours. We continue to experience placement pressures and are focusing on increasing capacity within our in-house children's homes, recruiting more foster carers, and working with children and their families to prevent them entering care.
- 8 As we haven't seen an increase following COVID-19 like some of our neighbouring local authorities, a multi-agency audit is ongoing, led by the Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership, to assure ourselves that we are receiving the right referrals at the right time from our partner organisations.
- 9 While caseload and capacity issues remain a key concern, we are undertaking a significant amount of activity to improve social work recruitment and retention which we expect to will reduce the number of vacancies over the next 4-6 months.
- 10 Our long-term investment in supporting social work qualification programmes has brought us six Step Up to Social Work participants who are already with us as family workers, and are expected to be in social work posts in May and six social work apprentices who are completing their programme and are expected to commence in social work posts in late summer/autumn. We are building on this by working within our regional partnership to recruit up to ten further Step Up to Social Work participants who will qualify in spring 2025. We have also changed our model for allow us to support apprentices and are on track to recruit 20 social work trainees who will be able to support our teams as they train from the autumn, qualifying as social workers in autumn 2026. The programme has exceeded all expectations, with 41,859 advert views, 564 people booked onto/attended briefings and 420 applicants. Shortlisting is now underway.
- 11 The introduction of a £2,000 welcome payment for newly qualified social workers in March 2023 made our offer more competitive in the region and increased the number of applicants for roles. This year 32 applications were received (approximately double the number we received in a similar recruitment process the previous year). Following the interview process a further 15 newly qualified social worker are expected to commence in late summer/autumn. Although this will fill gaps in some our teams who have been struggling, we have not yet managed to find the number of newly qualified social workers we would have liked to, and a further recruitment exercise is expected to commence at the end of May.

- 12 All of our development and recruitment activity targeting newly qualified social workers is currently expected to bring us 41 new social workers, more than double the number we were able to recruit last financial year.
- 13 We continue to recruit very actively to a range of permanent posts and are finding that social media promotion is the most useful way to increase the number of potential applicants we reach. We have advertised posts in our Children in Care teams through a contract with a social media specialist. The advert had a very wide reach with 51,704 video views but led to only one candidate of the calibre we need. We have learned from the process and are now planning adverts for our Families First and ASET teams.

### **Stronger Families Programme**

- 14 During the 12 months ending 31 March, 1,384 families were turned around via the Stronger Families programme. Of these, 1,286 attained significant and sustained outcomes, and 98 maintained continuous employment. We have already surpassed our annual national target of 760 families turned around.

## **1.2 Council Activity: Areas which require attention**

### **Children's Social Care**

- 23 More children are being supported in statutory safeguarding services resulting in some of our children's social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers having higher caseloads than we would like. More than one in three have a high caseload, over 25 cases, but there are 12 FTE fewer case holders than the same period last year.
- 24 Caseload pressures arise from an increasing number of vacancies for children's social work practitioners. This is a national issue with most English councils struggling to recruit and retain their workforce. In Durham there were 12 FTE fewer case holders this quarter compared to the same period last year, and at the end of March, 62 social work vacancies. This equates to a vacancy rate of 18.3%, the highest recorded since monitoring began in 2018, lower than the latest national vacancy rate of 20%, also the highest recorded. We are undertaking a significant amount of activity to improve social work recruitment and retention which we expect to will reduce the number of vacancies over the next 4-6 months but caseloads are likely to remain a challenge in this period.

### **Special Education Needs and Disability Services (SEND)**

- 15 Requests for Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments have significantly increased over the last few years - a trend which is also evidenced nationally. In 2022/23, the service received 948 requests for an EHCP, 14% higher

than in 2021/22 and 71% higher than the same period last year, and more than prior to COVID (554 in 2019/20).

- 16 Pressure is compounded by high levels of demand in partner organisations, such as health services which are a key part of the assessment process. Although we have invested in and restructured our SEND Casework Teams and Educational Psychologists, there is a national shortage for this specialist role.
- 17 More requests for EHCP assessments is affecting our ability to meet the 20-week statutory timescale, with none completed within timescale in the year to date. The service has 602 open assessments, 194 of which are already outside of the 20-week timescale. Work has begun to investigate this further and establish where the delays are occurring in the system.

## 6.0 Data Tables

### Key to Symbols

Performance against target and previous performance		Performance against comparable groups		Direction of Travel	
✓	meeting or exceeding	✓	Performance is better than national or north east	↑	higher than comparable period
○	within 2%	×	Performance is worse than national or north east	→	static against comparable period
×	more than 2% behind	S	Performance is the same as national or north east	↓	lower than comparable period

*NB: oldest data in left column*

### Types of indicators

There are two types of performance indicators throughout the report:

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

### National Benchmarking (N)

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

### North East Benchmarking (NE)

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

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

## Our Economy

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
% uptake of free early education entitlement for 3-4-year-olds	93.7% (2022)	Tracker -	92.8% ✓	96.1% x			→	↑	↓	↑	No
Improve the proportion of children achieving expected standards in maths and reading at KS2 in line with 2030 ambitions <sup>4</sup>	65% (2018/19)	Tracker -	67% x	65% ○			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	No
Improve the average grade of achievement of all our pupils within GCSE English and Maths to a Grade 5 (in line with 2030 ambitions)	new PI	5 by 2030	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
Improve the educational attainment of our most disadvantaged cohorts to meet basic threshold measures in English and Maths	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
Increase proportion of young people in education, employment and training to be consistently higher than regional and national levels	94.7% (March 2023)	above N / NE ○	94.6% ✓	85.6% ✓			↑	↓	↑	↑	Yes

## Our People

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieving a good level of development (reported as academic year)	64.5% (2021/22)	Tracker -	N/A	-			↓	n/a	n/a	n/a	No
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – all	86.5% (at 16 Jan 23)	Tracker -	n/a	-	x	✓	↑	↑	↑	n/a	Yes

<sup>4</sup> Not reported for 2019/20 or 2020/21 academic years as no Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) or Key Stage 2 (KS2) assessments took place

<sup>2</sup> 2021 figures include Lumiere visitors

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – primary	94.3% (at 16 Jan 23)	Tracker -	n/a	-	✓	✓					Yes
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – secondary	75.3% (at 16 Jan 23)	Tracker -	n/a	-	x	✓					Yes
No. of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan	4,366 (Mar 2023)	Tracker -	4,065 -	3,496 -	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes
No. of Children Looked After per 10,000 population	105 [1,071] (at 31 Mar 23)	Tracker -	96 [Mar 22]	-	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes
No. of Children in Need per 10,000 Population	381 [3,885] (at 31 Mar 23)	Tracker -	386 [Mar 23]		-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
% of Children Looked After placed within 20 miles of their home address	85% (at 31 Mar 22)	Tracker -	87% [2020/21] ○	89% x	✓	✓	↓	↓	→	↑	No
No. of families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes	1,384 (Apr 22-Mar 23)	760 [2022/23] ✓	693 ✓	311 ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes
Increase the % of children aged 4-5 who are of a healthy weight <sup>5</sup> <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i>	75.5% (2021/22)	90% x	Not reported	74.6% ○	○	○	-	-	-	→	No
Increase the % of children aged 10-11 who are of a healthy weight <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i>	59.2% (2021/22)	79% x	Not reported	61.5% ○	○	○	-	-	-	→	No

<sup>5</sup> National Child Measurement Programme ceased March 2020 when schools closed due to the pandemic, therefore, north east and nearest neighbour comparators should be treated with caution due to missing data from some LAs. Whilst the data for the academic year 2020/21 has been published, local authority data is not available as only a 10% sample of data was recorded.

## Other relevant indicator

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
Increase the % of 16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship	7.1% (March 2023)	Tracker -	8.5% x	6.8% ✓			↑	↓	↓	↑	Yes
Reduce % point gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and national average	18.7pp (2021/22)	Tracker -	17.4pp x	20.2pp ✓	-	x	↑	↑	↓	↑	No
	12.7% (Oct-Dec 22)	0% x	14.0% ✓	16.3% ✓	x	x	↑	↑	↓	↓	Yes