

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

22 September 2023

Quarter One, 2023/24
Performance Management Report



Report of John Hewitt, Chief Executive

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present an overview of progress towards delivery of the key priorities within the Council Plan 2023-27 in line with the council's corporate performance framework.
- 2 The report covers performance in and to the end of quarter one, 2023/24, April to June 2023.

Executive Summary

- 3 The County Council is a key partner within the County Durham Together Partnership. Collectively partners work towards delivering a shared plan - the [County Durham Vision 2035](#). The vision document was developed with partner organisations and the public. It sets out what we would like the county to be like over the next decade and beyond. The vision is for:

a place where there are more and better jobs, people live long, and independent lives and our communities are well connected and supportive.

- 4 We have set out how the council will operate effectively in the delivery of its services and its contribution to achieving this vision in our [Council Plan](#)¹. The Council Plan¹ is structured around five thematic areas: our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, and our council. We monitor our success through a suite of Key Performance Indicators (our corporate performance framework), which forms the basis of this report.
- 5 In line with previous reports, we are continuing to report performance on an exception basis with key messages against the five thematic areas. In any given quarter, we will only include key performance indicators which have been updated during that quarter, for example, educational attainment will be updated annually in quarter three.

¹ The [Council Plan](#) is a rolling four-year plan, refreshed every year in line with the MTFP. Current version covers 2023 to 2027

- 6 However, to allow greater clarity of performance against our objectives, we have introduced a new easy-read report format (attached at appendix two).
- 7 The main difference in the new format, compared to the previous format, is the suite of dashboards (structured around specific service areas) which use greater data visualisation to provide more focus and greater transparency on trends, direction of travel, benchmarking and performance to target. The new report retains a summary highlighting ‘things that are going well’ and ‘issues we are addressing’ for each theme, and a new executive summary has been added.
- 8 To allow the reader, including members of Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees to compare the two formats and understand the changes made, we have also produced the quarter one report in the previous format (attached at appendix three). We are also seeking comments and suggestions on improvements to the new format which will be incorporated in quarter two.
- 9 We want to be a well-functioning local authority in relation to performance. Therefore, we are working to achieve the best practice model as set out in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) recently published (July 2023) proposal for updating Best Value standards². We will continue to develop the following through our performance management processes and the wider Corporate Business Intelligence Review:
 - (a) An organisational-wide approach to continuous improvement, with frequent monitoring, performance reporting and updating of the corporate and improvement plans.
 - (b) A corporate plan which is evidence based, current, realistic and enables the whole organisation’s performance to be measured and held to account.
 - (c) 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.

Context

- 10 The council is a large organisation providing a broad range of services, and our operating environment can at times be challenging. However, we continue to show strong performance across our key outcomes.
 - (a) Across the county, inward investment continues, new infrastructure is being created and new business parks with the potential to create thousands of jobs are being developed. The promotion of the county as a year-round tourist destination continues (in 2022, tourism contributed more than £1 billion to our local economy for the first time).
 - (b) Demand for statutory children’s social care and early help remains consistent overall, though the composition of needs and interventions are

² [Best Value standards and intervention](#)

increasingly complicated. Caseloads are improving and targeted recruitment is proving successful.

- (c) Although health continues to be a challenging area, life expectancy is increasing, and life chances are improving. We are continuing to help households who are financially vulnerable through our financial support schemes.
- (d) Environmental cleanliness remains good, and carbon emissions are reducing significantly from the 1990 baseline.
- (e) We have increased lower cost, more accessible contact options for our customers through our digital work, and user satisfaction with our services remains high.

Recommendation

11 Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (a) Note the overall strong position and direction of travel in relation to quarter one performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of challenge.
- (b) Note the changes and improvements to the new format performance report which will be used exclusively from quarter two 2023/24.

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 2023 to 2027 (current plan)
<https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/34954/Durham-County-Council-Plan-2023-2027/pdf/CouncilPlan2023-2027.pdf?m=638221688616370000>
- Quarter Four, 2022/23 Performance Management Report
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s174900/Item%204%20Q4%202022-23%202%201.pdf>
- Quarter Three, 2022/23 Performance Management Report
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s166398/Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q2%202022-23%20v2.1.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>

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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 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.



Corporate Performance Report

Quarter One, 2023/24



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Executive Summary

- 1 This performance report covers the first quarter of the 2023/24 financial year (April to June 2023). It sets out our progress towards delivering the key priorities set out within our [Council Plan 2023-27](#).
- 2 Performance is reported 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 In any given quarter, we will only include key performance indicators which have been updated during that quarter, for example, educational attainment will be updated annually in quarter three.

Our people

- 4 The 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 will invest in a multi-million-pound programme to transform our leisure centre venues.

Going Well

- 5 Demand for children's statutory social care and early help support remains consistent overall, though the composition of needs and interventions are increasingly complicated. Caseloads are improving and targeted recruitment activity over the spring has been successful with the service hopeful to fill many of their current vacancies in the autumn.
- 6 The Stronger Families programme continues to exceed expectations with 80% of the annual target for families to achieve significant and sustained outcomes completed by quarter one.

Issues we are addressing

- 7 The number of children in care continues to increase in line with national and regional trends. The North East has the highest level of children in care in England and County Durham remains the fifth lowest rate in the North East based on latest benchmarks. Underlying growth in the number of children in care is continuing but is accelerating further due to the increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children placed in County Durham as part of national relocation plans.
- 8 Requests for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continue to increase substantially with 70% growth in the last two years. The assessment process is complex with a number of required inputs in line with the statutory guidance. A shortage of educational psychologists (a national problem) to undertake the required assessment, and capacity challenges in providing suitable provision has meant that the timescales for completion of 20 weeks for Education and Health Care Plans is not currently being met.
- 9 The service is reviewing plans to build capacity to meet increased demand and manage new requests within the context of a graduated approach to ensure children are supported with quality provision in an appropriate setting. There are significant

barriers to increasing educational psychology capacity and also expanding the physical capacity of our special school sector to meet the escalating demand we are experiencing. Despite these challenges at a broader system level Durham performs well and we have recently been invited by DfE to work with three neighbouring LAs to share best practice through newly established Regional Improvement Partnership.

Risk Management

- 10 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 risk management progress report can be found [here](#).

Priority: Our People

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

National, Regional and Local Picture

- 11 Children's social care reform is a key concern nationally and following an [independent review published in 2022](#) the government issued a consultation on their implementation strategy, [Stable Homes, Built on Love](#) which closed in May 2023. The strategy is based on recommendations from three independent reviews in total and sought views on various aspects of the children's social care system including support and protection for children and families, support for kinship carers, and wider family networks, reforms to the experience of being in care, including corporate parenting, support for the social care workforce and delivery and system reform.
- 12 The national context around this new strategy is of growing demand and complexity in the face of chronic staffing shortages requiring significant intervention to reverse an upward trend of children going into care predicted to hit 100,000 by 2025. Some of these pressures are illustrated in this performance report, but not to the extent that some local authorities are facing. Children's services in County Durham, along with regional and sectoral partners try to influence the government strategy to get better outcomes for children and families in the county.
- 13 Demand for special educational needs support through education, health and care plans is rising nationally. The [number of pupils on EHCPs in England stands at 517,026](#) – more than double the total in 2015 (240,183). The government's [SEND improvement plan](#), published in March, sets out new national standards to clarify the support available to children and their families and promises thousands more specialist school places. Growth in new requests for EHCPs in County Durham has been more acute than national or regional levels and the service continues to review their plans to respond to increasing needs in both the short and medium term.

Going Well

Children's Social Care and Early Help

- 14 During quarter one, we received almost 5,000 contacts for early help and children's social care at First Contact (children's services front door), a reduction of 6% (around 300 contacts) on the same period last year. As seen in previous quarters there has been a slight reduction (4%, around 50 referrals) in statutory referrals, which remain lower than benchmarks.
- 15 Improved practice has led to a reduction in our re-referral rate for statutory children's social care referrals to 15% in quarter one. This is the lowest rate in the region and remains below latest benchmarks and means fewer children and their families require further support from safeguarding services following support.
- 16 At quarter one there were 71 social worker vacancies which equates to 20% of posts. This has increased and is now in line with national levels (at September 2022). Targeted recruitment activity over the spring and new recruitment and retention allowances have been successful, and we are expecting 40 newly qualified social workers coming into post in the next few months. A further eight external social workers are also expected, some with start dates in the autumn and others in pre-employment checks. Caseloads are also starting to improve with 27% of social workers having 25 or more cases compared to 35% last quarter.
- 17 Between September 2015 and June 2023, 7,613 families were turned around via the Stronger Families programme, comprised of 6,748 attaining significant and sustained outcomes, and 865 who maintained continuous employment. Progress this year is going well, and we are on track to exceed the government's target of helping 1,230 families by the end of 2023/24.

Free School Meals

- 18 The Education service has been working with schools to encourage eligible pupils to take a free school meal. Latest school census data shows free school meals take up has increased to 23% from 20.6% last year and is now similar to North East levels (23.8%) and higher than national (18.8%).

Issues we are addressing

Children's Social Care

- 19 The number of children in care continues to increase in line with national and regional trends. The North East has the highest level of children in care in England and County Durham remains the fifth lowest rate in the North East based on latest benchmarks. Underlying growth in the number of children in care is continuing but is accelerating further due to the increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children placed in County Durham as part of national relocation plans.
- 20 Capacity issues arising from high caseloads may be impacting the timeliness of statutory children's social care assessments. The proportion completed in the quarter reduced to 75% (from 89% in quarter one 2022/23), and is now lower than national and regional benchmarks. The service continues to monitor this.

SEND

- 21 Requests for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continue to increase substantially with 70% growth in the last two years. The assessment process is complex with a number of required inputs in line with the statutory guidance. A shortage of educational psychologists (a national problem) to undertake the required assessment, and capacity challenges in providing suitable provision has meant that the timescales for completion of 20 weeks for Education and Health Care Plans is not currently being met.
- 22 The service is reviewing plans to build capacity to meet increased demand and manage new requests within the context of a graduated approach to ensure children are supported with quality provision in an appropriate setting. There are significant barriers to increasing educational psychology capacity and also expanding the physical capacity of our special school sector to meet the escalating demand we are experiencing. Despite these challenges at a broader system level Durham performs well and we have recently been invited by DfE to work with three neighbouring LA's to share best practice through newly established Regional Improvement Partnership.
- 23 Department for Education data for the calendar year was released in the quarter, which demonstrate demand for new EHCPs has grown by 68% since 2019 in County Durham, more than national (+39%) and regional levels (+36%) over the same period.

Elective Home Education

- 24 Numbers of children being home educated are rising locally, regionally and nationally. In June 681 children and young people were home educated, an additional 51 since October 2022. The increase is less than that seen nationally, and the proportion remains low at 0.8% of school aged children.
- 25 Last year's Ofsted inspection of Children's services noted there are comprehensive systems in place to check that parents who elect to home educate are providing an appropriate education and where this is not the case, there is a robust response and issuing of return-to-school orders.
- 26 There is appropriate information on any potential safeguarding risks and vulnerabilities of pupils being home educated. This ensures that any potential risks are identified and well managed. County Durham continues to have a strong multi-agency Education at Home group that is well established, meets half-termly with wide service representation including health, SEND and inclusion, education and skills, and wider children's services colleagues to consider suitable education and safeguarding. This continues to be monitored within the service.
- 27 County Durham's collaborative approach to the safeguarding and welfare of children electively home educated has recently been recognised by the national child safeguarding review panel who have approached the council for a case study for use in a national briefing.

Primary KPIs

(same period last year)

1,440
early help open cases
(1,360)

481
CSC referrals per 10,000 population
(496)

15%
CSC re-referrals
(17%)

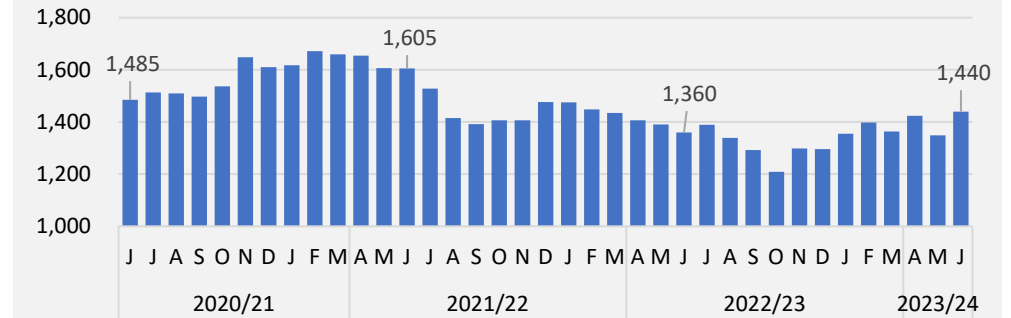
CSC: children's social care

Children's Social Care Dashboard

Early Help

- Overall demand for Early Help support reduced post-covid but have been rising since October 2022 when the number of EH cases were at their lowest at 1,209 cases.
- Feedback from families and young working with the service continues to be very positive with 87% of parent/carers and 85% of young people happy or very happy with the support they received

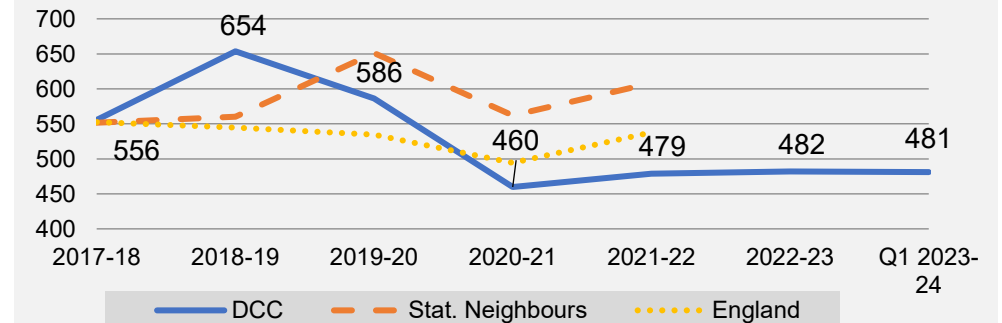
Early Help Open Cases



Rate of Referrals (per 10,000 children aged 0-17)

- Demand for Children's Social Care remains positive.
- Following the reduction during Covid-19, when schools were shut, referrals increased slightly but are not as high as pre-Covid-19 levels.

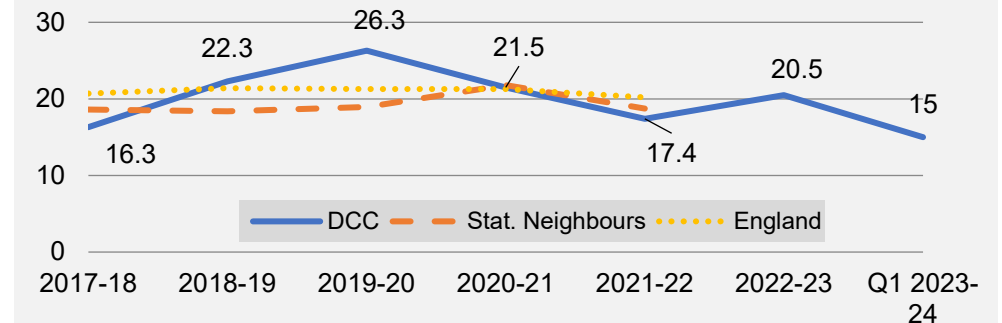
Rate of referrals per 10,000 children aged 0-17



CSC re-referrals within 12 months

- Durham has the lowest re-referral rate in the region which tends to indicate good quality outcomes within the service
- 181 of the 1,226 referrals in quarter one were re-referrals.

% of CSC Re-Referrals Within 12 Months of Previous Referral



Primary KPIs

(same period last year)

75%
CSC assessments
completed within
45 days
(89%)

340
child in need rate
(344)

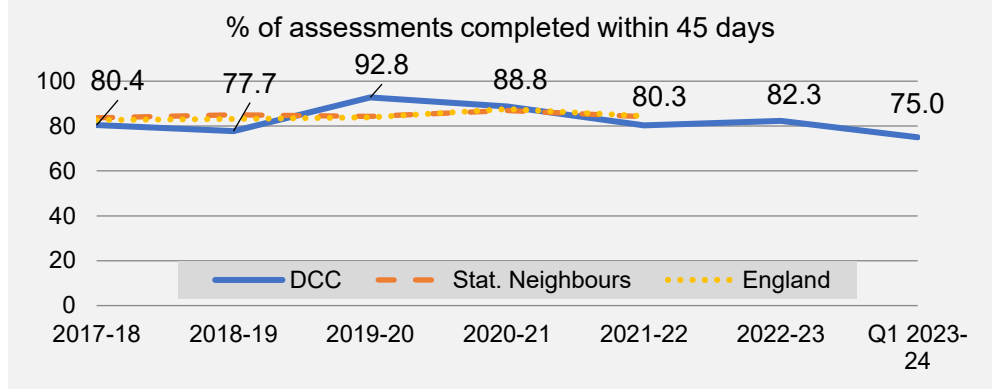
50
child protection
plan rate
(44)

CSC: children's social care
CiN: children in need
CPP: child protection plan

Children's Social Care Dashboard

Assessments completed (within 45 days)

- Assessment timeliness has reduced over this quarter, likely as a result of service capacity issues within specific teams.
- The average assessment is completed within 36 days

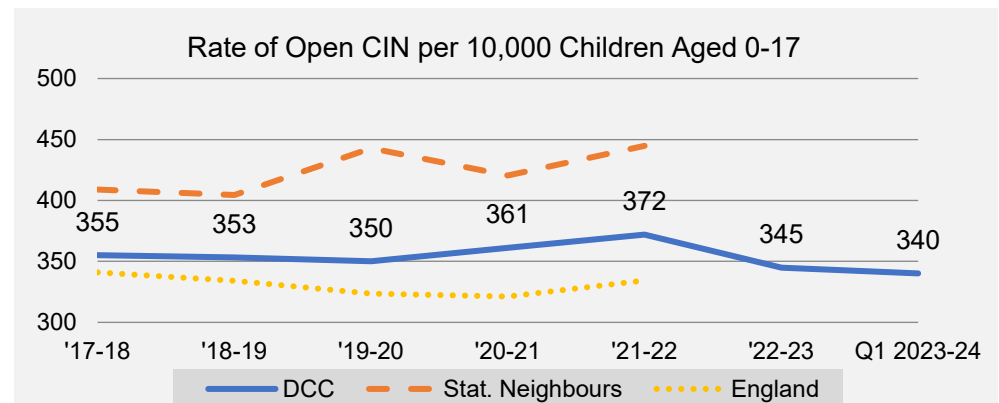


Statutory Social Care Cases

The overall number of open cases remains steady but growing numbers of Children on a Child Protection Plan and in Care are illustrative of increasingly complex caseloads within the service.

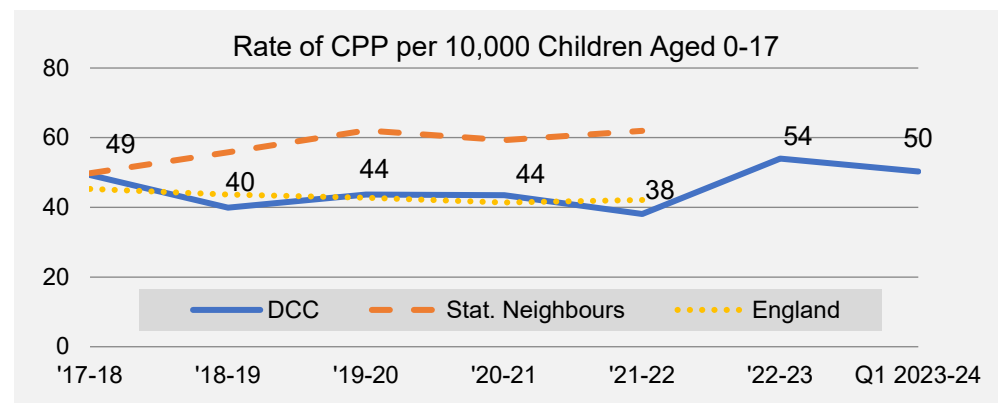
Rate of open CiN (per 10,000 children aged 0-17)

- The rate of CiN episodes ceased per 10,000 children aged 0-17 in Q1 2023/24 is 405
- 84% of CiN have a primary need of abuse/neglect in comparison to 57% in England.



Rate of open CPP (per 10,000 children aged 0-17)

- The rate of children on a CPP has increased over the last year to be higher than national levels.
- Trends in CPP tend to be cyclical and numbers will likely reduce over the next six months.



Primary KPIs

(same period last year)

110
children in care rate
(96)

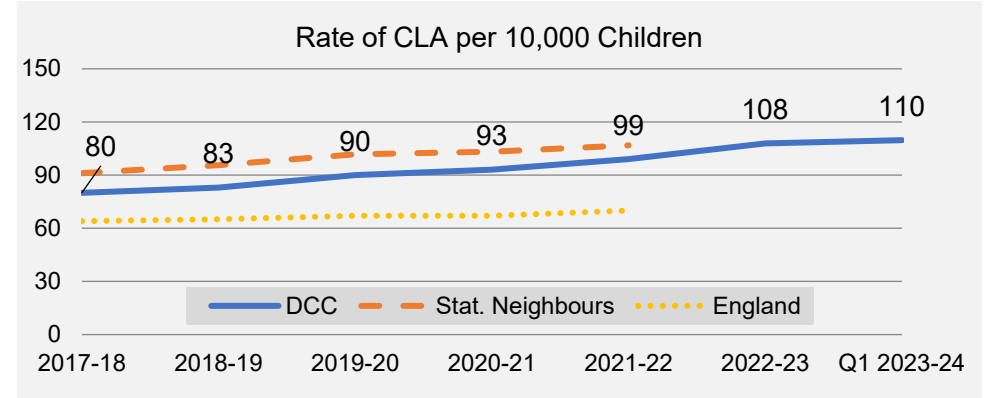
5%
UASC as a
percentage of all
CiC
(2%)

284
care leavers
aged 16-24
(283)

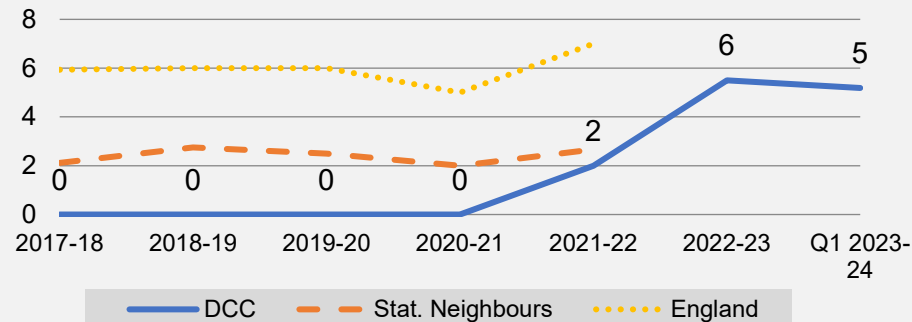
Children's Social Care Dashboard

Rate of children in care (per 10,000 children)

- Numbers of children in care are growing nationally and regionally. Recently growth has been accelerated through UASC referrals from the National Transfer Scheme but underlying long term growth trends remain consistent.
- The North East has the highest level of children in care in England and Durham still has the 5th lowest rate in the North East.



UASC as a Percentage of all CiC



Unaccompanied asylum seeking children

- The percentage of children in our care that are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) is increasing with national trends due to the National Transfer Scheme.
- Further increases are expected with Durham expected to receive a third of all referrals in the North East in the data model.

CiC: children in care
UASC: unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Primary KPIs (same period last year)

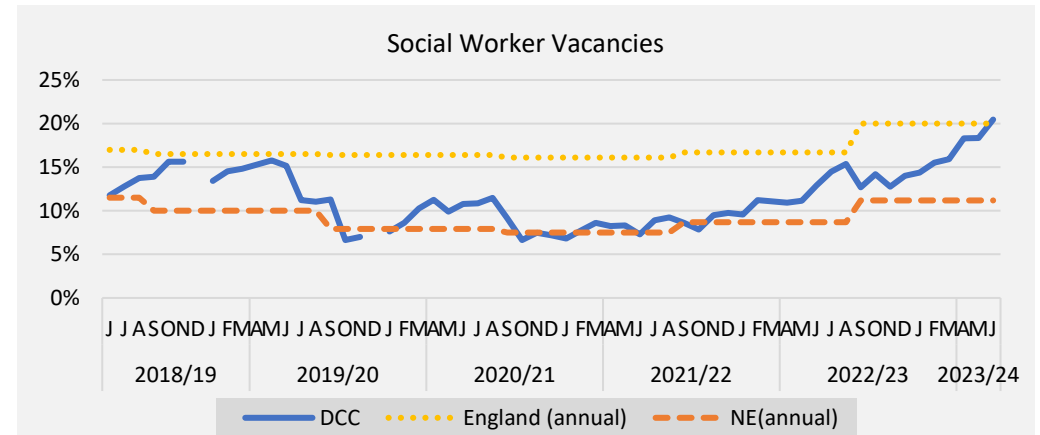
20%
social worker
vacancies
(13%)

83%
children in care in a
family setting
(85%)

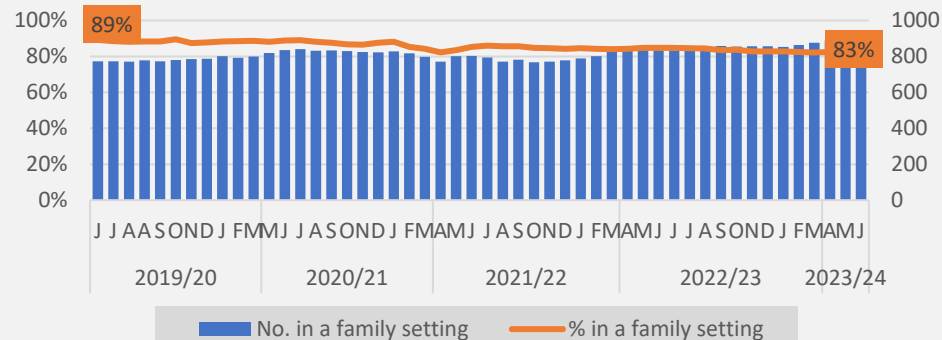
Children's Social Care Dashboard

Social worker vacancies

- At 30 June 2023, there were 71 social worker vacancies which equates to 20% of posts.
- This has increased and is now in line with national levels (at September 2022)
- 48 of these vacancies have been filled and prospective staff will start from September onwards. Recruitment and retention remain a key priority and capacity remains a key concern.



% children in care in a family setting



Children in care in a family setting

- At the end of June, 83% of children in care were in a family setting.
- Although this is a reduction from June 2022 (85%) this is due to an increase in children in care as the number of children placed in family settings has increased by 11%

Primary KPIs

(same period last year)

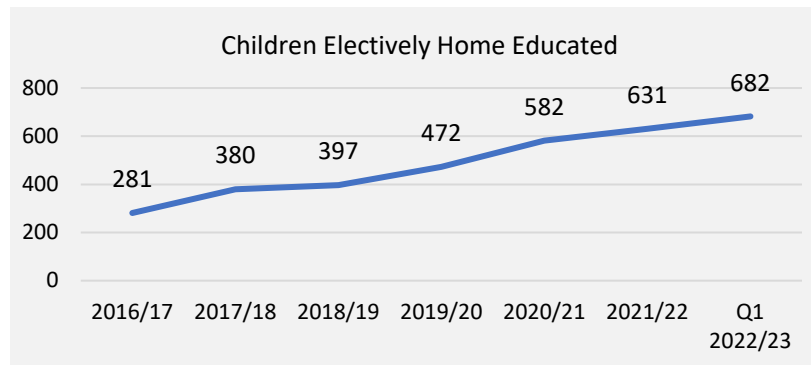
84.1%
pupils in schools
Ofsted judged 'good'
or 'better'
(83.1%)

682
children are
electively home
educated
(631)

30.8%
eligible for free
school meals
(29.1%)

23%
take-up on free
school meals
(20.6%)

Education Dashboard

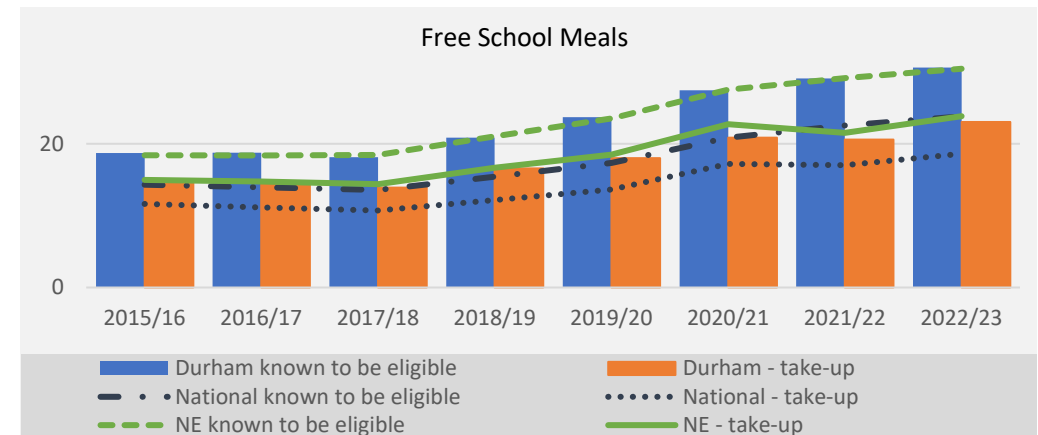


Children electively home educated

- Locally, EHE numbers continue to rise. The rate of local rises is in line with those seen nationally in the 2021/22 academic year and the rate of rises were lower than those seen nationally in the 2020/21 academic year.
- National reporting around EHE is still developing and the DfE will publish new benchmarking data late this year.
- Our proportion of EHE locally remains low at 0.8% of the total school age population.

Pupils eligible for and claiming free school meals

- Free school meals eligibility continues to rise due to the roll out of universal credit (and associated protections) and the cost-of-living
- There are gaps between those being eligible and those taking free school meals on census day also continues to rise along with regional and national trends



EHE: electively home educated
FSM: free school meals

Primary KPIs

(same period last year)

4,489
EHCPs in County Durham
(4,038)

11,174
pupils on SEN support
(10,807)

197
new requests for EHCP in quarter
(179)

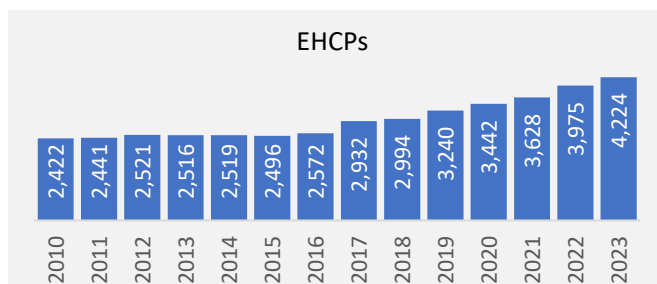
4%
EHCPs completed within 20 weeks
(12m rolling)
(51%)

EHCP: Education Health Care Plan
SEN: Special Educational Need

SEND Dashboard

Education, Health and Care Plans

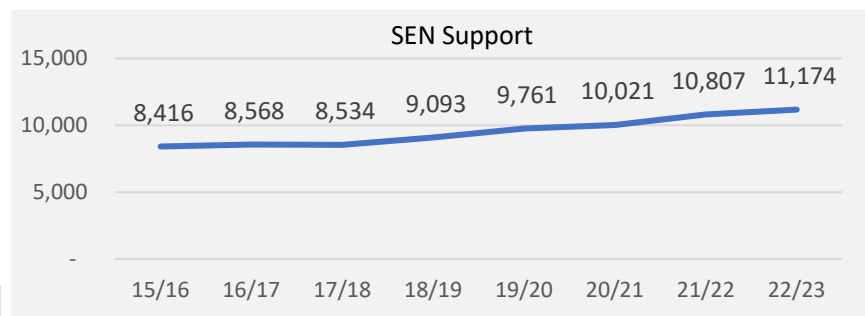
- The number of children and young people with an EHCP continues to increase.
- This is an 11% increase on 12 months ago



EHCPs completed with 20 weeks

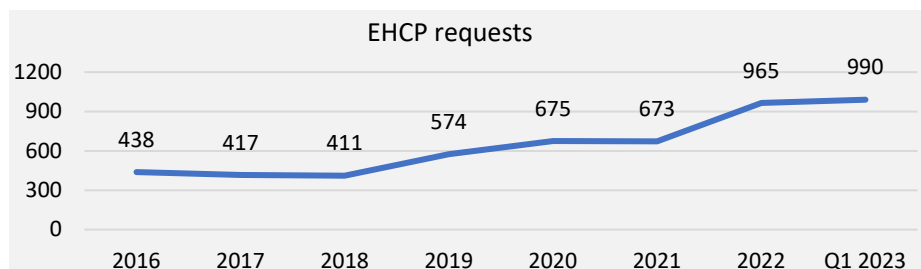
The higher level of demand alongside the shortage of educational psychologists (a national problem) and the time it takes to commission and agree suitable provision has meant that no new EHCPs were fully completed and agreed within the expected 20 week timescale during the quarter.

In 2022 we issued 603 EHCPs an **increase of 79%** since 2019, again greater than regional (+39%) and Eng (+27%)

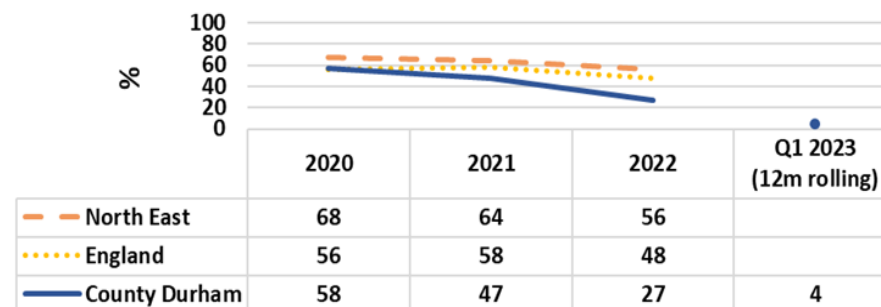


EHCP requests

There has been an increase in new requests for EHCPs. For the whole of 2022 EHCP requests increased by 68% compared to 2019, greater than NE +36% and England + 39% over the same period



% EHCPs completed within 20 weeks



SEN support

Similar to EHCP numbers, the number of pupils on SEN Support continues to increase (3.4% on last year). The average annual increase in SEN Support numbers over the last 8 years is 4.2% compared to 3.7% in North East and 4.7% nationally

Data Tables

Key to Symbols

Performance against target and previous performance		Performance against comparable groups	
✓	meeting or exceeding	✓	Performance is better than national or North East
○	within 2%	×	Performance is worse than national or North East
×	more than 2% behind	S	Performance is the same as national or North East

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

Our Economy

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	N	NE	
% uptake of free early education entitlement for 3-4-year-olds	93.7% (2022)	Tracker -	92.8% ✓			No
Improve the proportion of children achieving expected standards in maths and reading at KS2 in line with 2030 ambitions ³	65% (2018/19)	Tracker -	67% x			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)	4.65 (21/22)	5 by 2030	new PI			Yes
Improve the educational attainment of our most disadvantaged cohorts to meet basic threshold measures in English and Maths	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% (Mar 2023)	above N / NE x	87.4% ✓			Yes

Our People

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	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	64.5%	64.1%	No
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – all	84.1% (at 13 Jul 23)	Tracker -	83.1% ✓	87.6% x	86.4% x	Yes
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – primary	93.9% (at 13 Jul 23)	Tracker -	n/a	90.9% ✓	94.1% x	Yes

³ 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

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	N	NE	
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – secondary	70% (at 13 Jul 23)	Tracker -	n/a	83.1% x	75.9% x	Yes
No. of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan	4,489 (Jun 2023)	Tracker -	4,038 -			Yes
No. of Children Looked After per 10,000 population	110 [1,119]	Tracker -	98 -	70 -	107 -	Yes
No. of Children in Need per 10,000 Population	340 [3,469]	Tracker -	344 -	334 -	445 -	Yes
No. of families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes	983 (Apr-Jun 23)	1,230 [2023/24] ✓	581 ✓			Yes
Increase the % of children aged 4-5 who are of a healthy weight ⁴ <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i>	75.5% (2021/22)	90% x	not reported	x	✓	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	x	✓	No

⁴ 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 Indicators

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	N	NE	
Increase the % of 16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship	7.1% (Mar 2023)	Tracker -	5.5% ✓			Yes
Reduce % point gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and national average	18.7pp (2021/22)	Tracker -	17.4pp x		x	No
% of mothers smoking at time of delivery	15.2% (Jan-Mar 23)	0% x	14.8% x	x	x	Yes

Children and Young People
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
22 September 2023
Quarter One, 2023/24
Performance Management Report



Report of John Hewitt, Chief Executive

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present an overview of progress towards delivery of the key priorities within the Council Plan 2023-27 in line with the council's corporate performance framework.
- 2 The report covers performance in and to the end of quarter one, 2023/24, April to June 2023.

Executive Summary

- 3 The County Council is a key partner within the County Durham Together Partnership. Collectively partners work towards delivering a shared plan - the [County Durham Vision 2035](#). The vision document was developed with partner organisations and the public. It sets out what we would like the county to be like over the next decade and beyond. The vision is for:

a place where there are more and better jobs, people live long, and independent lives and our communities are well connected and supportive.

- 4 We have set out how the council will operate effectively in the delivery of its services and its contribution to achieving this vision in our [Council Plan](#)¹. The Council Plan¹ is structured around five thematic areas: our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, and our council. We monitor our success through a suite of Key Performance Indicators (our corporate performance framework), which forms the basis of this report.
- 5 In line with previous reports, we are continuing to report performance on an exception basis with key messages against the five thematic areas. In any given quarter, we will only include key performance indicators which have been updated during that quarter, for example, educational attainment will be updated annually in quarter three.

¹ The [Council Plan](#) is a rolling four-year plan and is refreshed every year in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan. The current version covers 2023 to 2027

Context

- 6 The council is a large organisation providing a broad range of services, and our operating environment can at times be challenging. However, we continue to show strong performance across our key outcomes.
- (a) Across the county, inward investment continues, new infrastructure is being created and new business parks with the potential to create thousands of jobs are being developed. The promotion of the county as a year-round tourist destination continues (in 2022, tourism contributed more than £1 billion to our local economy for the first time).
 - (b) Demand for statutory children's social care and early help remains consistent overall, though the composition of needs and interventions are increasingly complicated. Caseloads are improving and targeted recruitment is proving successful.
 - (c) Although health continues to be a challenging area, life expectancy is increasing, and life chances are improving. We are continuing to help households who are financially vulnerable through our financial support schemes.
 - (d) Environmental cleanliness remains good, and carbon emissions are reducing significantly from the 1990 baseline.
 - (e) We have increased lower cost, more accessible contact options for our customers through our digital work, and user satisfaction with our services remains high.

Recommendation

- 7 Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
- (a) Note the overall strong position and direction of travel in relation to quarter one performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of challenge.
 - (b) Note the changes and improvements to the new format performance report which will be used exclusively from quarter two 2023/24.

Analysis of the Performance Report

- 8 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 2023-2027.

Our people

- 9 The 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 will invest in a multi-million-pound programme to transform our leisure centre venues.

Going Well

- 10 Demand for children's statutory social care and early help support remains consistent overall, though the composition of needs and interventions are increasingly complicated. Caseloads are improving and targeted recruitment activity over the spring has been successful with the service hopeful to fill many of their current vacancies in the autumn.
- 11 The Stronger Families programme continues to exceed expectations with 80% of the annual target for families to achieve significant and sustained outcomes completed by quarter one.

Areas which require attention

- 12 The number of children in care continues to increase in line with national and regional trends. The North East has the highest level of children in care in England and County Durham remains the fifth lowest rate in the North East based on latest benchmarks. Underlying growth in the number of children in care is continuing but is accelerating further due to the increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children placed in County Durham as part of national relocation plans.
- 13 Requests for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continue to increase substantially with 70% growth in the last two years. The assessment process is complex with a number of required inputs in line with the statutory guidance. A shortage of educational psychologists (a national problem) to undertake the required assessment, and capacity challenges in providing suitable provision has meant that the timescales for completion of 20 weeks for Education and Health Care Plans is not currently being met.
- 14 The service is reviewing plans to build capacity to meet increased demand and manage new requests within the context of a graduated approach to ensure children are supported with quality provision in an appropriate setting. There are significant barriers to increasing educational psychology capacity and expanding the physical capacity of our special school sector to meet the escalating demand we are experiencing. Despite these challenges at a broader system level Durham performs well and we have recently been invited by DfE

to work with three neighbouring LAs to share best practice through newly established Regional Improvement Partnership.

Risk Management

- 15 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 risk management progress 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 2023 to 2027 (current plan)
<https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/34954/Durham-County-Council-Plan-2023-2027/pdf/CouncilPlan2023-2027.pdf?m=638221688616370000>
- Quarter Four, 2022/23 Performance Management Report
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s174900/Item%204%20Q4%2022-23%202%201.pdf>
- Quarter Three, 2022/23 Performance Management Report
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s166398/Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q2%202022-23%20v2.1.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>

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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 Durham Constabulary.

Staffing

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

Accommodation

Not applicable.

Risk

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

Procurement

Not applicable.



Durham County Council Performance Management Report Quarter One, 2023/24



1.0 Our People: National, Regional & Local Picture

- 1 Children's social care reform is a key concern nationally and following an [independent review published in 2022](#) the government issued a consultation on their implementation strategy, [Stable Homes, Built on Love](#) which closed in May 2023. The strategy is based on recommendations from three independent reviews in total and sought views on various aspects of the children's social care system including support and protection for children and families, support for kinship carers, and wider family networks, reforms to the experience of being in care, including corporate parenting, support for the social care workforce and delivery and system reform.
- 2 The national context around this new strategy is of growing demand and complexity in the face of chronic staffing shortages requiring significant intervention to reverse an upward trend of children going into care predicted to hit 100,000 by 2025. Some of these pressures are illustrated in this performance report, but not to the extent that some local authorities are facing. Children's services in County Durham, along with regional and sectoral partners try to influence the government strategy to get better outcomes for children and families in the county.
- 3 Demand for special educational needs support through education, health and care plans is rising nationally. The [number of pupils on EHCPs in England stands at 517,026](#) – more than double the total in 2015 (240,183). The government's [SEND improvement plan](#), published in March, sets out new national standards to clarify the support available to children and their families and promises thousands more specialist school places. Growth in new requests for EHCPs in County Durham has been more acute than national or regional levels and the service continues to review their plans to respond to increasing needs in both the short and medium term.

1.1 Council Activity: Going Well

Children's Social Care and Early Help

- 4 During quarter one, we received almost 5,000 contacts for early help and children's social care at First Contact (children's services front door), a reduction of 6% (around 300 contacts) on the same period last year. As seen in previous quarters there has been a slight reduction (4%, around 50 referrals) in statutory referrals, which remain lower than benchmarks.
- 5 Improved practice has led to a reduction in our re-referral rate for statutory children's social care referrals to 15% in quarter one. This is the lowest rate in the region and remains below latest benchmarks and means fewer children and their families require further support from safeguarding services following support.
- 6 At quarter one there were 71 social worker vacancies which equates to 20% of posts. This has increased and is now in line with national levels (at September 2022). Targeted recruitment activity over the spring and new recruitment and retention

allowances have been successful, and we are expecting 40 newly qualified social workers coming into post in the next few months. A further eight external social workers are also expected, some with start dates in the autumn and others in pre-employment checks. Caseloads are also starting to improve with 27% of social workers having 25 or more cases compared to 35% last quarter.

- 7 Between September 2015 and June 2023, 7,613 families were turned around via the Stronger Families programme, comprised of 6,748 attaining significant and sustained outcomes, and 865 who maintained continuous employment. Progress this year is going well, and we are on track to exceed the government's target of helping 1,230 families by the end of 2023/24.

Free School Meals

- 8 The Education service has been working with schools to encourage eligible pupils to take a free school meal. Latest school census data shows free school meals take up has increased to 23% from 20.6% last year and is now similar to North East levels (23.8%) and higher than national (18.8%).

1.2 Council Activity: Areas which require attention

Children's Social Care

- 9 The number of children in care continues to increase in line with national and regional trends. The North East has the highest level of children in care in England and County Durham remains the fifth lowest rate in the North East based on latest benchmarks. Underlying growth in the number of children in care is continuing but is accelerating further due to the increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children placed in County Durham as part of national relocation plans.
- 10 Capacity issues arising from high caseloads may be impacting the timeliness of statutory children's social care assessments. The proportion completed in the quarter reduced to 75% (from 89% in quarter one 2022/23) and is now lower than national and regional benchmarks. The service continues to monitor this.

SEND

- 11 Requests for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continue to increase substantially with 70% growth in the last two years. The assessment process is complex with a number of required inputs in line with the statutory guidance. A shortage of educational psychologists (a national problem) to undertake the required assessment, and capacity challenges in providing suitable provision has meant that the timescales for completion of 20 weeks for Education and Health Care Plans is not currently being met.
- 12 The service is reviewing plans to build capacity to meet increased demand and manage new requests within the context of a graduated approach to ensure children are supported with quality provision in an appropriate setting. There are significant barriers to increasing educational psychology capacity and expanding the physical

capacity of our special school sector to meet the escalating demand we are experiencing. Despite these challenges at a broader system level Durham performs well and we have recently been invited by DfE to work with three neighbouring LAs to share best practice through newly established Regional Improvement Partnership.

- 13 Department for Education data for the calendar year was released in the quarter, which demonstrate demand for new EHCPs has grown by 68% since 2019 in County Durham, more than national (+39%) and regional levels (+36%) over the same period.

Elective Home Education

- 14 Numbers of children being home educated are rising locally, regionally, and nationally. In June 681 children and young people were home educated, an additional 51 since October 2022. The increase is less than that seen nationally, and the proportion remains low at 0.8% of school aged children.
- 15 Last year's Ofsted inspection of Children's services noted there are comprehensive systems in place to check that parents who elect to home educate are providing an appropriate education and where this is not the case, there is a robust response and issuing of return-to-school orders.
- 16 There is appropriate information on any potential safeguarding risks and vulnerabilities of pupils being home educated. This ensures that any potential risks are identified and well managed. County Durham continues to have a strong multi-agency Education at Home group that is well established, meets half-termly with wide service representation including health, SEND and inclusion, education and skills, and wider children's services colleagues to consider suitable education and safeguarding. This continues to be monitored within the service.
- 17 County Durham's collaborative approach to the safeguarding and welfare of children electively home educated has recently been recognised by the national child safeguarding review panel who have approached the council for a case study for use in a national briefing.

2.0 Data Tables

Key to Symbols

Performance against target and previous performance		Performance against comparable groups	
✓	meeting or exceeding	✓	Performance is better than national or north east
○	within 2%	×	Performance is worse than national or north east
×	more than 2% behind	S	Performance is the same as national or north east

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

Our Economy

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	N	NE	
% uptake of free early education entitlement for 3-4-year-olds	93.7% (2022)	Tracker -	92.8% ✓			No
Improve the proportion of children achieving expected standards in maths and reading at KS2 in line with 2030 ambitions ²	65% (2018/19)	Tracker -	67% x			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)	4.65 (21/22)	5 by 2030	new PI			Yes
Improve the educational attainment of our most disadvantaged cohorts to meet basic threshold measures in English and Maths	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% (Mar 2023)	above N / NE x	87.4% ✓			Yes

Our People

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	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	64.5%	64.1%	No
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – all	84.1% (at 13 Jul 23)	Tracker -	83.1% ✓	87.6% x	86.4% x	Yes
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – primary	93.9% (at 13 Jul 23)	Tracker -	n/a	90.9% ✓	94.1% x	Yes
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – secondary	70% (at 13 Jul 23)	Tracker -	n/a	83.1% x	75.9% x	Yes

² 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

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
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No. of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan	4,489 (Jun 2023)	Tracker -	4,038 -			Yes
No. of Children Looked After per 10,000 population	110 [1,119]	Tracker -	98	70	107	Yes
No. of Children in Need per 10,000 Population	340 [3,469]	Tracker -	344	334	445	Yes
No. of families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes	983 (Apr-Jun 23)	1,230 [2023/24] ✓	581 ✓			Yes
Increase the % of children aged 4-5 who are of a healthy weight ³ <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i>	75.5% (2021/22)	90% x	not reported	x	✓	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	x	✓	No

Other Relevant Indicators

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	N	NE	
Increase the % of 16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship	7.1% (Mar 2023)	Tracker -	5.5% ✓			Yes
Reduce % point gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and national average	18.7pp (2021/22)	Tracker -	17.4pp x		x	No
% of mothers smoking at time of delivery	15.2% (Jan-Mar 23)	0% x	14.8% x	x	x	Yes

³ 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.