

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 September 2024

Quarter One, 2024/25 Performance Management Report



Report of John Hewitt, Chief Executive

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To report our progress towards achieving the strategic ambitions and objectives set out in our 2024-28 council plan to members, senior managers, employees and the public.

Executive Summary

- 2 This report contains the most recent performance data available on 30 June 2024, alongside contextual information of activity and events taking place in the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (April to June).
- 3 As a large organisation providing a broad range of services, our operating environment can at times be challenging. It has been heavily influenced by various 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.
- 4 In May, the Labour Party won the General Election. This ended 14 years of Conservative Party rule. It is too early to determine how the change of government will impact local government, both in the short-term and long-term. We will continue to provide updates in future reports.
- 5 However, 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 development land / industrial premises, and employment are all favourable compared to previous years. Our visitor economy continues to grow. It is now worth £1.2 billion to the local area and supports more than 13,000 jobs. Increased attendances have been recorded at all our cultural venues. However, challenges for the council include improving our GVA per filled job and improving processing times for planning applications.
 - (b) Key measures around waste collection and disposal show that we are diverting a smaller proportion of waste to landfill, and contamination of our household recycling continues to come down. We are building, with

regional partners, a new 'energy recovery from waste' facility which will meet the future needs of the county. More people are using our park and ride scheme following an expansion of its operating hours. Work is ongoing at national, regional and local levels to improve bus services.

- (c) Statutory demand for children's social care remains relatively consistent and re-referral rates are low compared to comparators. However, children taken into our care remains relatively high. A prolonged increase in requests for education, health and care plans has resulted in backlogs for educational psychologist advice. We have improved our processes and increased our capacity which have improved performance. Referrals into adult social care and Care Act assessments remain stable, and the number of people discharged from hospital to reablement and rehabilitation services is at a historic low. Our home care market is stable, care homes are rated either 'good' or 'outstanding', and waiting times for home care packages have been eliminated. Performance against homelessness outcomes are either stable or improving, although we perform worse than our benchmarks. We are continuing to see an increase in people presenting as already homeless.
- (d) The overall crime rate in County Durham has fallen and compares favourably with many council areas in the region. Although the number of domestic abuse incidents reported to the police remained static, the number of victims referred to our support services increased. Reports of fly-tipping remain low, environmental cleanliness is high, more long-term properties are being brought back into use, and response times to rectify category two highway defects are good. Of the private sector rented properties covered under the selective licensing scheme, 51% are fully licensed, in the process of being licensed, or have exemptions in place. There have been more serious casualties and fatalities from road traffic accidents. We are continuing to support road safety through road improvements and campaigns. Response times to rectify category one highway defects are worse than target (although 20% more were identified).
- (e) We are continuing to provide strong support to our most vulnerable residents through our financial support schemes - one of only a few authorities which offer support of this type and to this extent. The processing times of housing benefit and council tax reduction requests (both new claims and changes in circumstances) have improved further. More calls are being answered, with all telephone lines answering at least 80% within three minutes (our performance standard). Satisfaction with overall service delivery remains high, the majority of service requests meet (or exceed) their performance standard, and we are receiving fewer complaints. Although more days have been lost to and our sickness rate is now 0.08 days per full time equivalent employee higher than the same period last year, 60% of our employees recorded no sickness.

Recommendation(s)

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

- note the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter one performance (April to June), and the actions being taken to address areas of challenge.

Background

- 7 Our current [Council Plan](#) is a four year plan. It runs from the 2024/25 financial year to the 2027/28 financial year. It describes how we will effectively deliver our services whilst contributing to the aims of the [County Durham Vision 2035](#)¹.
- 8 Our plan aligns to both 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.
- 9 We track progress towards achieving our strategic ambitions and objectives through our performance framework – a collection of key performance indicators (including metrics from Oflog’s Local Authority Data Explorer) contextualised with benchmarking data from similar authorities, and information from our service teams.
- 10 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’.
- 11 Our performance management processes align with the [statutory guidance](#)² recently 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

- The corporate plan is evidence based, current, realistic and enables the whole organisation’s performance to be measured and held to account.
- The use of performance indicators and Oflog’s Local Authority Data Explorer to manage risk and to benchmark against similar authorities and manage risk.
- The council has complete, timely and accurate data, and the skills to interpret it, to inform decisions.
- 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.
- Partners and local residents are involved in developing indicators and targets, and monitoring and managing lack of performance.

¹ developed with our partners and the public. It sets out what we want the county to look like by 2035. It provides direction to key public, private and voluntary sector organisations enabling them to work together and improve the quality of life of our residents.

² [Best Value Standards and Intervention](#)

Indicators of potential failure

- A lack of 'good quality' data and insight to understand services.
- A lack of corporate capacity or capability, resulting in a lack of strategic direction, oversight and sense of accountability.
- Performance management information is not consistently used, does not measure outcomes where relevant and underperformance is not effectively addressed.
- Data quality is poor and there is a lack of capacity or capability to interpret it to inform decisions.
- Services data suggests poor performance and outcomes compared to similar local authorities.

12 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 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.
- A renewed service planning process which simplifies and brings together organisational planning into the strategic planning cycle.
- A refreshed approach to quarterly performance reporting which provides greater insight into how our services are performing.

Conclusion

13 This report describes our progress towards achieving the strategic ambitions and objectives set out in our 2024-28 council plan to members, senior managers, employees and the public.

14 It contains the most recent performance data available on 30 June. Contextual information relates to activity and events taking place in the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (April to June). 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 Four, 2023/24 Performance Management Report](#)
- [Quarter Three, 2023/24 Performance Management Report](#)
- [Quarter Two, 2023/24 Performance Management Report](#)
- [Quarter One, 2023/24 Performance Management Report](#)

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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 One, 2024/25



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- ◆ [Assessments, protection plans, in need, social worker vacancies](#)
- ◆ [Children in care, unaccompanied asylum seeking children](#)
- ◆ [Education](#)
- ◆ [SEND](#)

[Data Tables](#)

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 June. Contextual information relates to activity and events taking place in the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (April to June).

Our people

- 4 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

- 5 Demand for children's social care support remains consistent and re-referral rates are low compared to comparators. The new Early Help model is generating more partner-led Early Help assessments strengthening County Durham's system-wide capacity to deliver support to families in need. A wide-ranging programme of activity and support is being delivered in Family Hubs, and other venues with partners.
- 6 As part of our Placement Sufficiency strategy, we are providing more children's homes, and strengthening our existing provision with more management capacity and a "grow your own" approach to recruit new workers with no experience of residential care to tackle sector shortages. In 2023 we opened a new home. In 2024, we replaced another home and will open another new home in December. A new Edge of Care home should be open by the end of the year; to help young people to remain living at home and to prevent them going into care. Furthermore, we secured ongoing capital investment to ensure all our homes continue to be updated, are homely and fit for purpose.
- 7 School attendance is steadily improving following an increase in absence nationally, regionally and locally following the pandemic. We are working with schools to reduce or remove barriers to attendance and are providing opportunities for schools to share support and best practice. This includes regular conversations with schools to identify, discuss and signpost to services those pupils who are, or who are at risk of becoming, persistently absent from school. We are working closely with partners to develop a new Partnership Protocol – 'Working Together to Support School Attendance.'

Issues we are addressing

- 8 There has been a steady increase in requests for new EHCPs over recent years. This, along with a national shortage of educational psychologists (needed to undertake the required assessment) has impacted on the 20 week timeliness performance. We have made improvements to the assessment process and increased EP capacity - this is

starting to have an impact. We expect overall timeliness to steadily improve over the next financial year - 12% of EHCPs were finalised within 20 weeks in June.

- 9 Although statutory demand for children's social care remains low, children taken into our care remains relatively high. This is indicative of ongoing high levels of complexity and a change in the composition of demand.
- 10 The increase in children and young people Electively Home Educated is likely to be in part, a seasonal trend. Latest benchmarking for the autumn term of this academic year places the county in-line with national rates. The service continues to have strong well-established multi-agency Education at Home operational and strategic groups. They meet 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 of children. We are continuing to support 16-17 year olds who do not have a place in education, employment and training with our 'September Guarantee commitment'.

Risk Management

- 11 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 October and December 2023.

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

National, Regional and Local Picture

Children's Social Care

- 12 A recent [report](#)³ highlights that the North of England persistently records the highest rates of children in care, that families in the North experience disproportionately high intervention rates, and services in the North shoulder a greater share of a weighty economic cost. Key headlines from the report (based on 2023 data) include:
 - More than 83,000 children were in care across England in 2023. This is a 15-consecutive-year high.
 - The North East continues to record the highest overall care rates.
 - Two thirds of the local authorities with care rates exceeding one percent were in the North (and most of these have consistently exceeded this threshold since 2019, demonstrating the unrelenting pressures).
 - The North accounts for 28% of the child population, but 36% of the children in care. There are 93 children in care per 10,000 of the child population in the North, compared to 62 in the rest of England.
 - Children's homes increased by 27% between 2020 and 2023 - 1,176 homes are in the North of England, and just 1,704 in the rest of England.
- 13 Another [report](#)⁴ recommends introducing a single, cohesive code for children exploited into criminal activity. This would include a new offence of child sexual exploitation, co-ordinated

³ [Fighting health inequalities through research excellence and collaboration](#): published April 2024 by Health Equity North

⁴ by Action for Children

policy and practice at both a local and national level, and more research into what works to learn from best practice.

Education – Suspensions and Exclusions

- 14 New [official statistics](#)⁵ show the 2022/23 academic year as a new high for suspensions and exclusions in a single school year.
- 790,000 suspensions - almost one for every 10 pupils - is 36% higher than the previous record of 578,000 (recorded the previous year).
 - 9,000 exclusions is 44% higher than the previous record of 7,900 (recorded for the 2017/18 academic year).
- 15 The increases are indicative of the changing and increasingly complex needs of children and young people, and this pattern is reflected in our schools.
- 6,704 suspensions is 42% higher than the previous record of 4,733 (recorded the previous year).
 - 85 exclusions is 12% higher than the previous academic year's (21/22) total of 76.
- 16 However, our suspension and permanent exclusion rates continue to be amongst the lowest in the region and similar to England averages. We are accessing funding that lets us work with schools (through Behaviour and Inclusion Panels) to support children and young people at risk of exclusion.

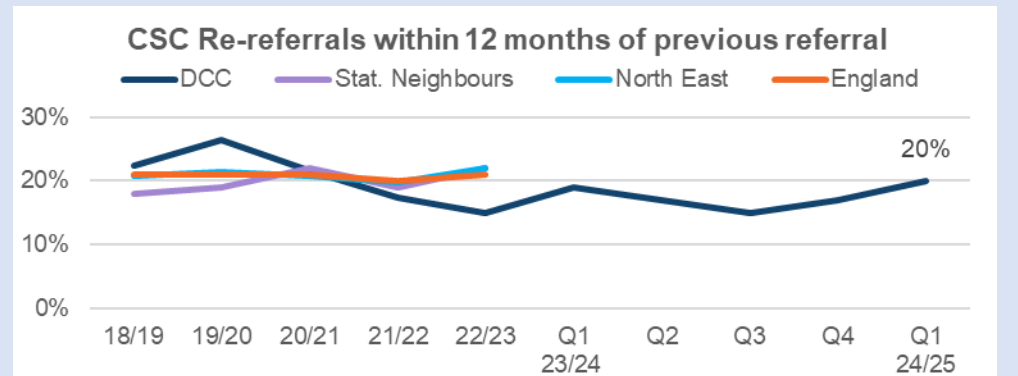
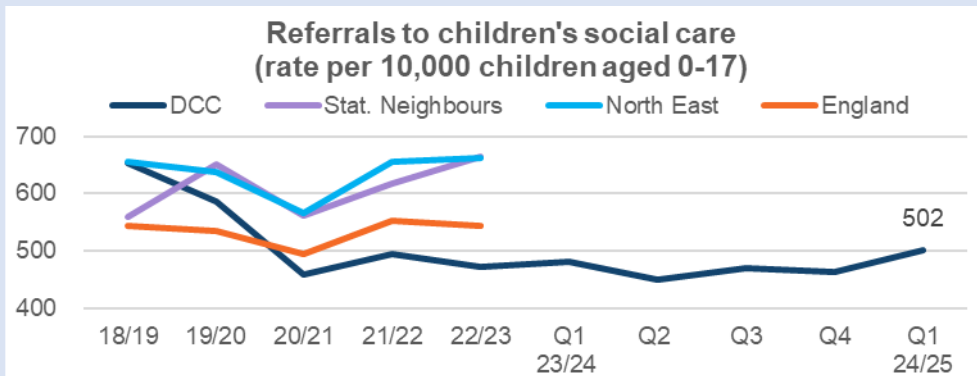
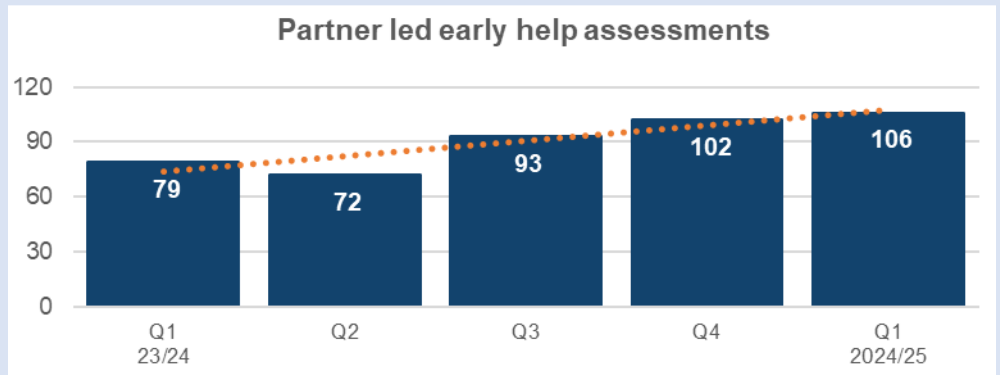
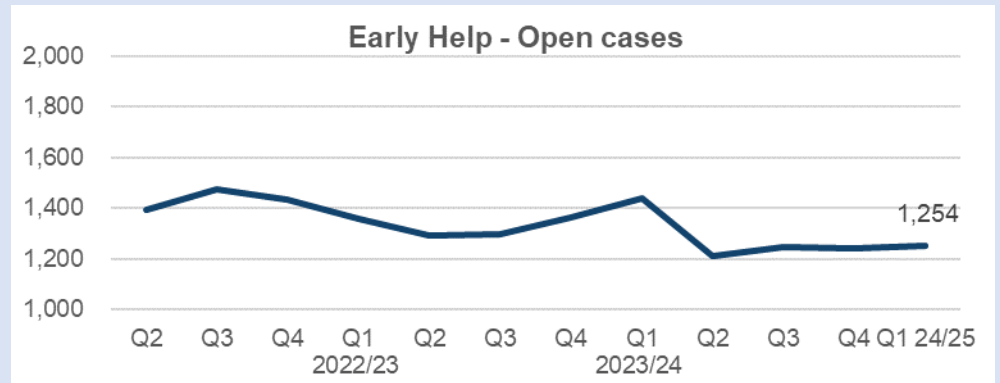
⁵ released by the Department for Education in July

Children's Social Care Dashboard: Early Help and Referrals

(12 months ending 30 June 2024 / at 30 June 2024)

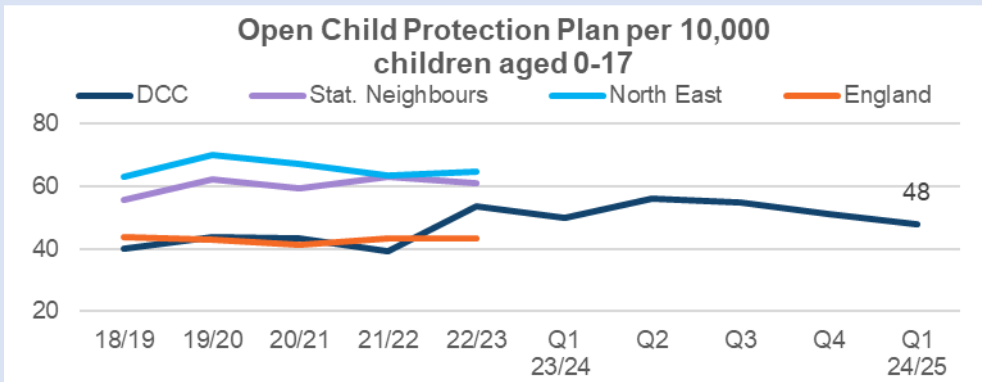
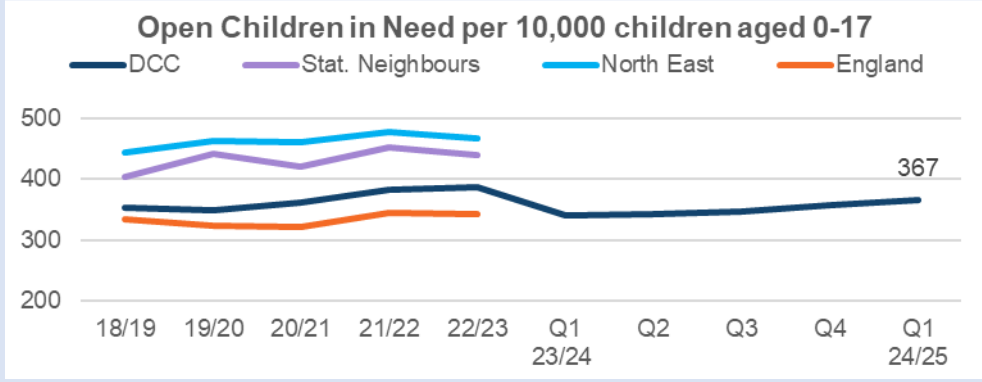
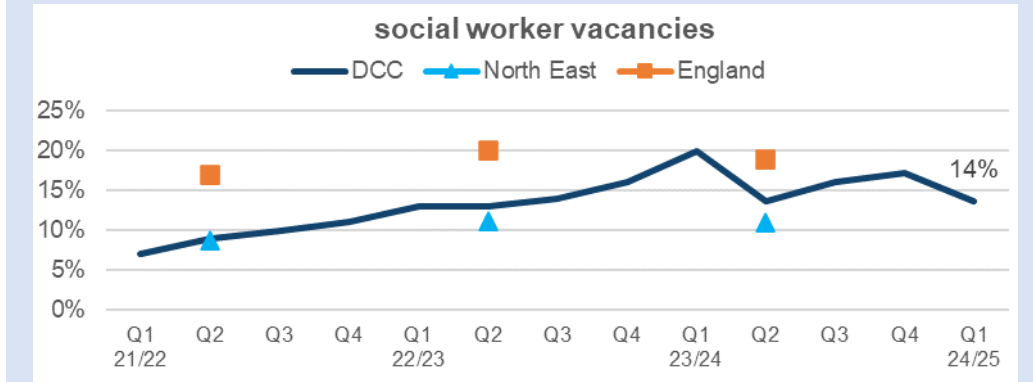
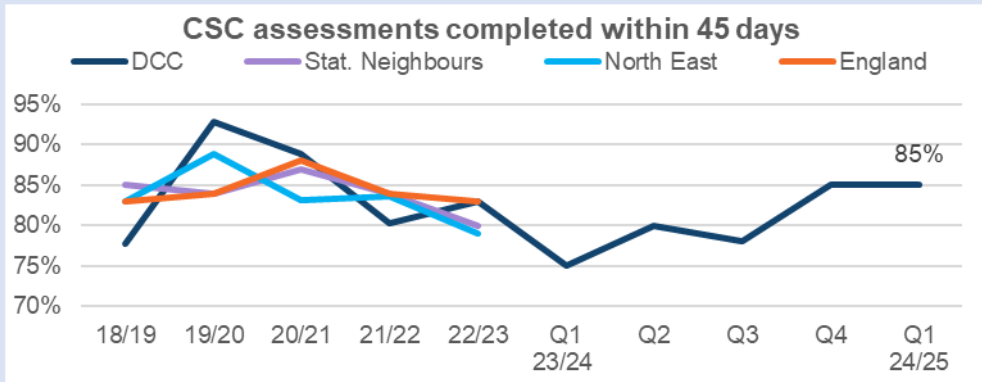
Early Help

- Demand reduced post-Covid, partly due to a change in operating model, with more partner led early help conversations.
- In April 2023, 15 Family Hubs were launched to provide 'one stop shop' access to family support (from conception to age 19, or age 25 for children with SEND). Between September 2023 and June 2024: 6,514 people registered (2,589 families), including 1,021 unborn or aged 0-6 months.
- Feedback from those working with the service remains positive:
 - 100% of parent/carers and 94% of young people are happy or very happy with the support received.
 - 97% of parents/carers and 96% of young people felt services worked well together to meet the needs of the family.
- Between October 2022 and June 2024, 3,565 assessment forms were submitted through the Early Help Assessment Portal. An increasing number (666,19%) were submitted by partners who are leading on assessments. Of these, the majority were from health (37%) and education organisations (22%).



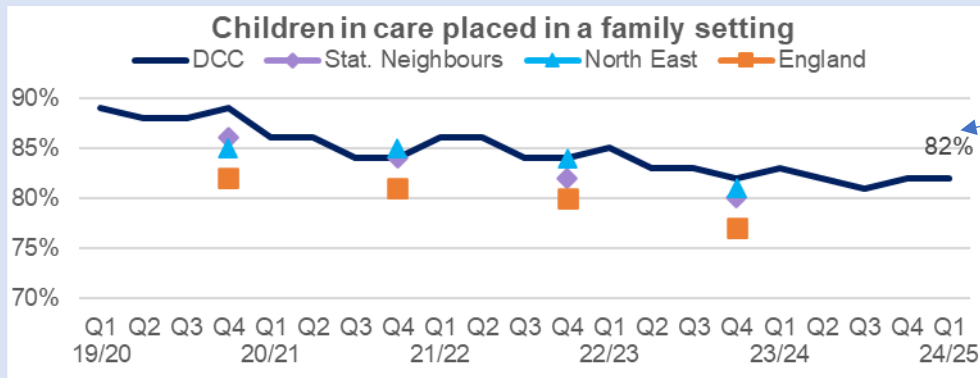
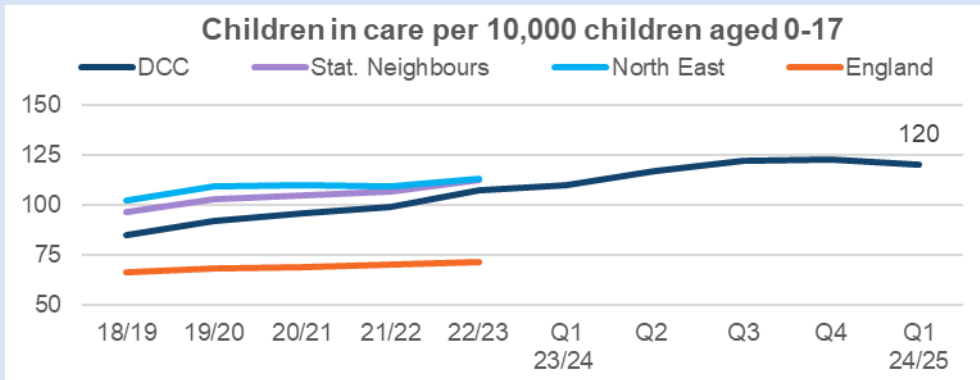
Children's Social Care Dashboard: assessments, protection plans, in need, social worker vacancies

(12 months ending 31 March 2024 / at 31 March 2024)

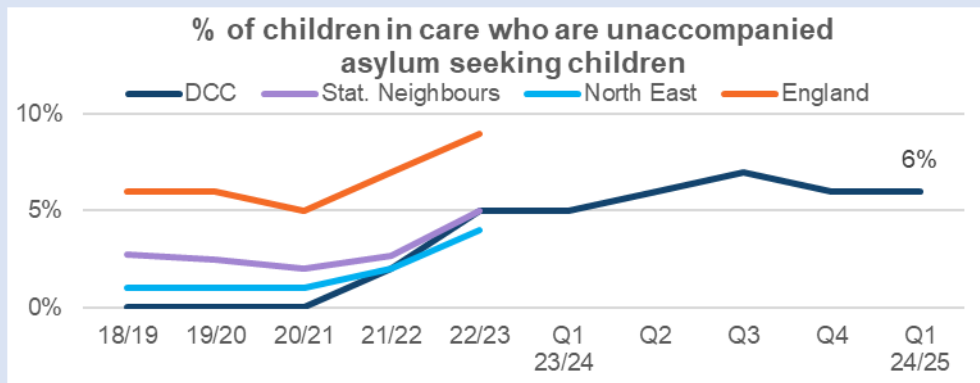


Children's Social Care Dashboard: in care, unaccompanied asylum seeking children

(12 months ending 31 March 2024/ at 31 March 2024)



Slight increase in the proportion placed in a family setting linked to increases in numbers placed in foster care and children in care starting to plateau



Children’s Social Care and Early Help

- 17 Overall demand for early help and statutory support remains consistent with previous reports.
- 18 We have developed (with key partners, children, young people, parents, and carers) a new Early Help Assessment for partners. It is based on an existing practice model and provides a richer picture of early help offered and its impact. Several partners are using the new assessment when a Team Around the Family arrangement is in place. We continue to work with partners who are not engaging with the process, to understand barriers and work with them on a solution.
- 19 Locality Early Help Conversations (LEHCs) are well established across the county. Rather than relying on formal referrals into the council’s Early Help Service, they use the collective resource available across the system. Our Family Hubs and Start for Life provide families with the support they need in a more accessible way.
- 20 Between April and June, we held 205 LEHCs which resulted in referrals and support from the voluntary and community sector (68), partner organisations (54), other support (34), Family Hub programme (19), Family Hub – referred to Early Help (170 and support from Early Help advisor (13).
- 21 Our Family Hubs deliver a broad range of activity and support. During quarter one (April to June), this included:
 - **Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Programme.** 199 children participated in: Chill Kids (133), Teen Zone (29), Staying Cool Teen (24), and Safer Choices (13).
 - **Parenting Programmes.** Teen Stepping Stones (SEND) (34), Fear-Less (school avoidance) (5), Triple P Teen (23), Incredible Years Baby (2), Toddler (7), Pre-school (4), and School Aged (18).
 - **Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities** (a parent-led suite of programmes). Being a parent (24) and Being a parent of an autistic child (8).
 - **Baby & Me (under 1s) and Toddler & Me (1–2-year-olds).** 1,118 individuals attended one or more session (325 available). Combined attendance was 4,621 (average of four sessions each).

22 To date⁶, we have supported 8,158 families through the Stronger Families programme. The target for eligible families achieving all sustained outcomes has steadily increased – doubling since the 2022/23 financial year (April 2022 to March 2023).

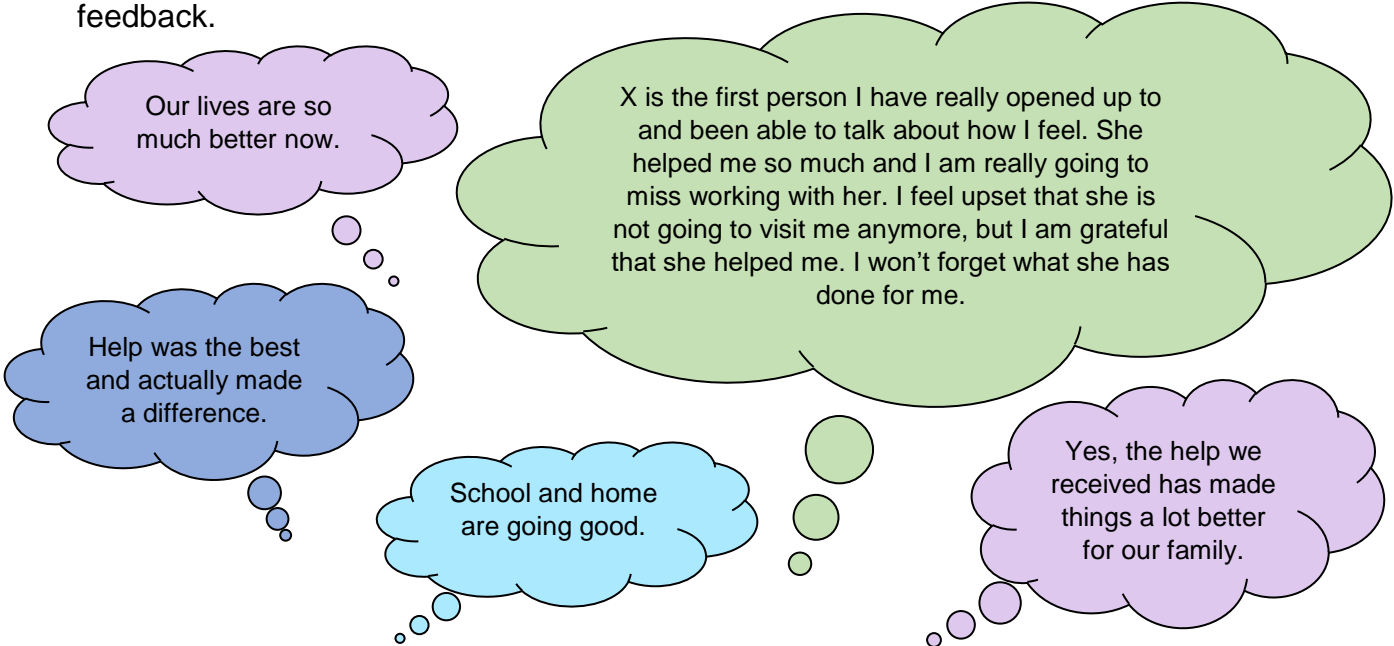
| | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| Target | 760 | 1,230 | 1,522 |

- 23 During the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (April to June), 254 families were claimed. Therefore, the target for each remaining quarter of the financial year is 423.
- 24 In October 2023, a new framework was introduced. It now consists of 10 headline outcomes with changes to the eligibility and claim criteria. For example, for a family to be eligible for the programme, three headlines of identified need are now required (was previously two), and all identified needs require an outcome (previously only one was required for some headlines). Consequently, it is more challenging to meet the agreed

⁶ from its start in 2015 to the end of June 2024

target, but we are confident of achieving it with the system and operational changes we have made.

- 25 Upgrading our case management system in 2023 has enhanced operational efficiency. Innovative dashboards and reporting tools have been introduced, and we are working on data cleansing. Embedding these changes will take time but additional staff training is already yielding positive results, with data showing the programme is on the right path.
- 26 Over the last 15 months (April 2023 and June 2024), we worked with the families of 145 children using our Enhanced Parenting Support Pathway. Early Help Practitioners use family hubs to support families at risk of poor outcomes - from the antenatal period until a child is 2½ years old.
- 27 Between December 2023 and June 2024, we provided the families of 46 children with pre-birth Family Hub support.
- 28 One Point Service manages quality systems and collects feedback to learn and improve services for its users. This includes learning reviews, thematic audits, and service user feedback.



- 29 We continue to provide targeted support for domestic abuse, co-delivered with Harbour Support Services. During quarter one, nine families completed our new DART⁷ programme, 31 parents completed Inspire, and 23 mums completed You and Me Mum.
- 30 Twenty five young people were referred for Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse support. Of these, 23 progressed onto the Respect Young People's Programme and two were offered alternative support (one for bereavement and the other for wider domestic abuse support via Harbour due to being a victim in their own right).
- 31 Improved practice across statutory children's social care has led to a consistently low re-referral rate. The rate at quarter one (20%) is slightly higher than quarter four (17%), however it is still better than latest benchmarks as at 2022/23. This means fewer children and their families require further support from safeguarding services following support.
- 32 Although referrals and re-referrals into children's social care have increased slightly, they remain lower than 2022/23 benchmarks. Children and young people receiving intensive

⁷ Domestic Abuse, Recovering Together

support remains relatively high which is indicative of continuing high levels of complexity and a change in the composition of demand.

Children in Care

- 33 We have 1,201 children in care, slightly fewer than the number recorded at the end of March. The North East has the highest level in England and County Durham is slightly worse than the North East.
- 34 The number of children in care has been increasing. This is partly due to receiving more unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) as part of national relocation plans. At the end of June, 76 children in our care were UASC which equates to around 6% of the total. This is similar to the number recorded at the end of the 2023/24 financial year (April 2023 to March 2024) but higher than the numbers recorded in previous years.

| | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Number | 20 | 58 | 79 |
| % of total | 2% | 5% | 6% |

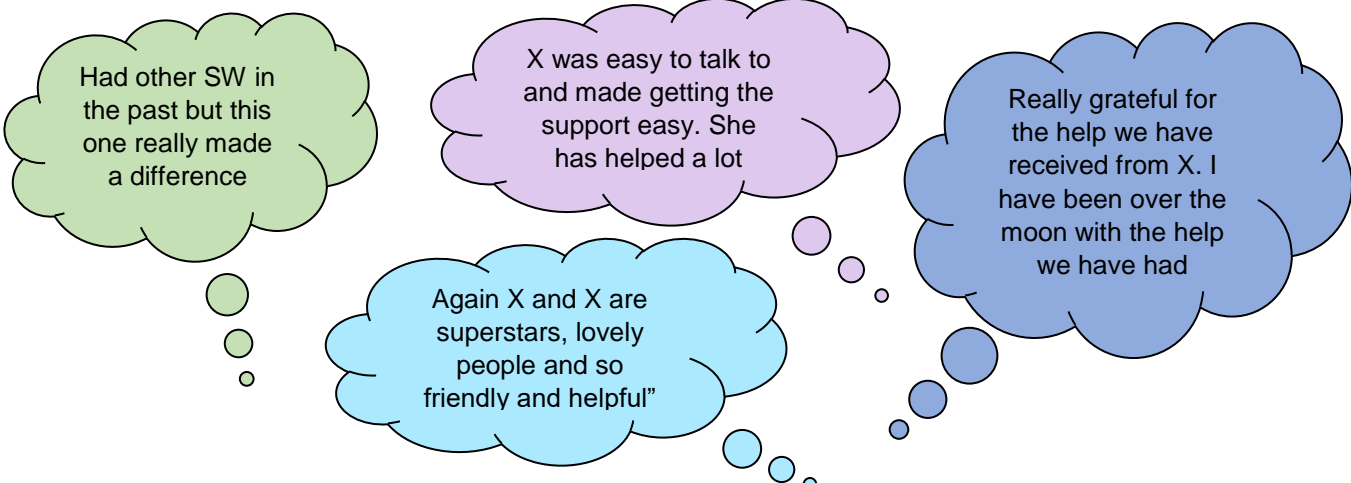
- 35 We have 12 children's homes offering residential care to children and young people. All but one has been inspected by Ofsted, one has been rated as outstanding, seven as good, one as requires improvement and one as inadequate.
- 36 These homes provide support and care for young people who cannot live at home, and short respite breaks for children and young people with disabilities. We are strengthening our residential care teams, with deputy managers in post and a 'grow your own' approach to recruiting new staff with no experience of residential care.
- 37 More homes are being developed to ensure as many children as possible remain within the county and can maintain links with their schools, friends, families and hobbies. The new homes range in size (from one to four places) so that children and young people with more complex needs can be cared for. An Edge of Care home is being planned and should be open by the end of the year; this will offer short breaks and wider support to young people and their families to help them to remain living at home and to prevent them going into care.
- 38 A new home opened in 2023. In 2024, we replaced an existing home and will open a new home in December. We have also secured capital investment to ensure all our homes continue to be updated, are homely and fit for purpose.

Social Worker Caseloads

- 39 We are addressing the capacity issues arising from high caseloads which have been impacting the timeliness of statutory children's social care assessments. During quarter one (April to June) we completed 85% of social care assessments within 45 days. This is our best performance for three years (89% as at 2020/21). Latest performance is also better than the 2022/23 national and regional benchmarks.
- 40 Our social worker vacancy rate has reduced. This is due to ongoing recruitment activity which included increased social media promotion supported by recruitment web pages. Having experienced recruitment challenges for more than two years, our Independent Reviewing Officer team is now fully staffed.
- 41 Recruiting experienced social workers remains challenging. Posts frequently need to be readvertised due to a lack of suitable applicants. New statutory guidance could make agency contracts less attractive to social workers, we are, therefore, encouraging social

workers employed by us on agency contracts to consider permanent employment. We are also promoting the council as a potential employer for agency workers working elsewhere.

- 42 Recruiting newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) is the most effective way to maintain or increase our social work workforce. In 2016, we created a Social Work Academy to support more NQSWs through their first year in practice. Our Academy now provides additional support to social workers in their second year of practice, and there are plans to extend that support into the third year. We anticipate 38 NQSWs will start with us in the summer.
- 43 To help us recruit more NQSWs we are continuing to invest in supporting social work qualifications through:
- **Social work apprenticeship scheme.** 10 apprentices being supported to qualify while in their previous posts, are expected to graduate between 2024-2027.
 - **Social work trainees.** 18 trainees (internal and external recruits) are expected to qualify in 2027. A further 10 are expected to qualify in 2028.
 - **Step Up to Social Work scheme.** Five participants started the programme in January 2024, expected to qualify in spring 2025.
 - **Partnering with Frontline.** We will support nine participants from autumn 2024. These should qualify and join us as NQSWs in autumn 2025.
 - **Increasing social work training capacity.** By working within our regional partnerships. The Department for Education announced in April 2024 that no further funding will be made available for teaching partnerships, so the North East Social Work Alliance is working on proposals to progress this work.
- 44 Recruitment and retention of social workers remains a priority for us. We have enhanced pay, career development, progression and non-pay benefits (including wellbeing support) over the last year. Our wellbeing portal gives our employees information on topics such as physical activity, nutrition, remote working, mental health and emotional wellbeing, bereavement, domestic abuse, and substance misuse. We also provide specialist workshops on wellbeing and self-care.
- 45 We provide specialist support to employees involved in a traumatic event. De-brief sessions, reflection sessions and commissioned specialist support are designed to promote reflection and healing. Following a successful pilot, we are encouraging flexible working across our social work teams. This will help practitioners better balance their work and home life, and support those with caring responsibilities to stay in, or return to, the workforce.
- 46 We have received some feedback from parents about our social workers.

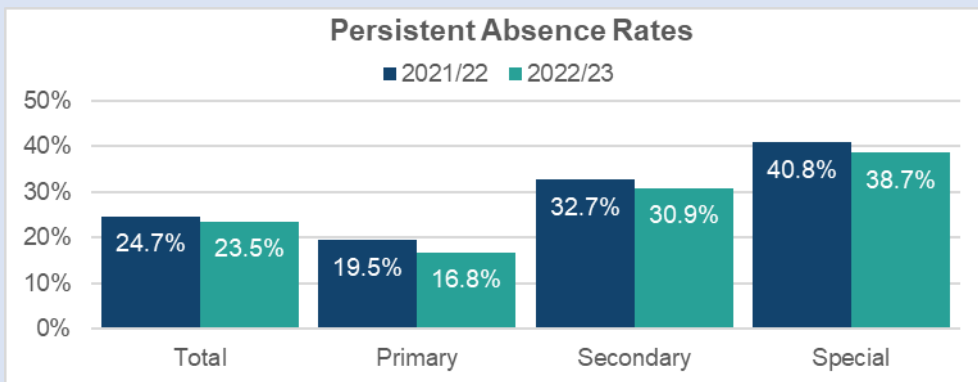
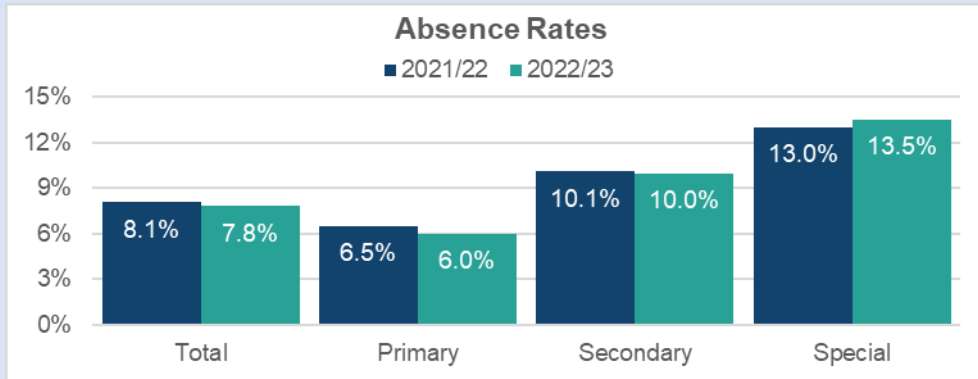


Education Dashboard

(2022/23 academic year / as at 30 June 2024)

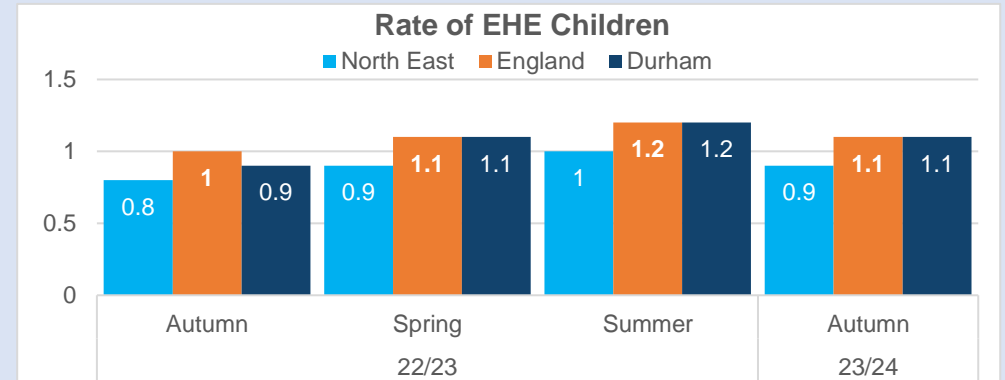
Attendance

- Official published absence data for the 2022/23 academic year shows a slight reduction in overall absence and persistent absence rates.
- Data published for the autumn term 2023/24 shows an improvement on absence rates compared to the same period last year, however it remains worse than pre-pandemic levels.
- Unauthorised absence makes up one-third of all absences in the 2023/24 academic year.



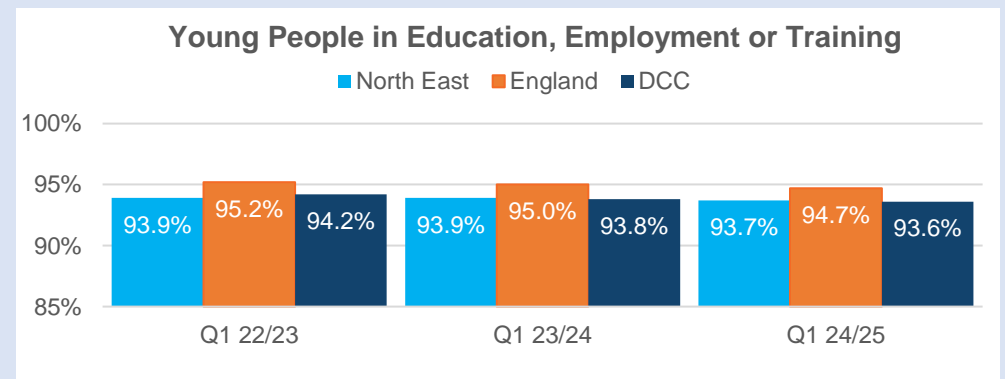
Elective Home Education (EHE)

The latest EHE figure is 1,088. As of the graph below, latest EHE rates show a dip although this figure is always lower in the Autumn Term.



Education, Employment or Training (EET)

A review of the data shows that nationally rates have reduced by 0.5% over the last two-year period – this compares to a decrease of 0.2% regionally and 0.6% in County Durham.



Attendance

- 47 There was a 0.3% reduction in overall absence during the 2022/23 academic year, compared to the previous academic year (2021/22). Over the same period, persistent absence reduced by 1.2%.
- 48 If we compare the autumn terms (September to December) of 2022 and 2023, we note that overall absence reduced by 0.4% and persistent absence reduced by 2.9%.
- 49 Barriers to accessing education are wide and complex and often specific to individual pupils and families. These barriers were exacerbated by the pandemic and school attendance rates nationally, regionally, and locally have reduced. Pupils with the highest attainment at key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance.
- 50 We are working with schools to reduce or remove barriers to attendance and are providing opportunities for schools to share support and best practice. This includes regular conversations with schools to identify, discuss and signpost to services those pupils who are, or who are at risk of becoming persistently absent from school.
- 51 We are developing with partners a new Partnership Protocol – ‘Working Together to Support School Attendance.’

Elective Home Education (EHE)

- 52 At the end of the 2023/24 academic year, 12% more children and young people were being electively home educated than the previous year (2022/23 academic year).

Education, Employment or Training (EET)

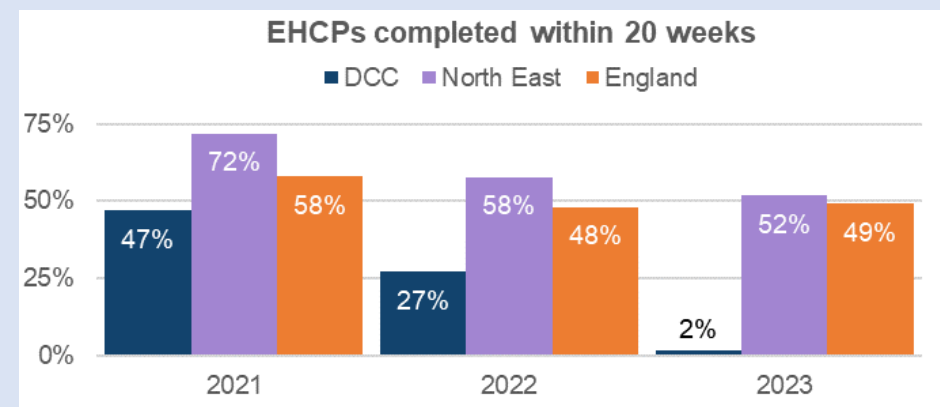
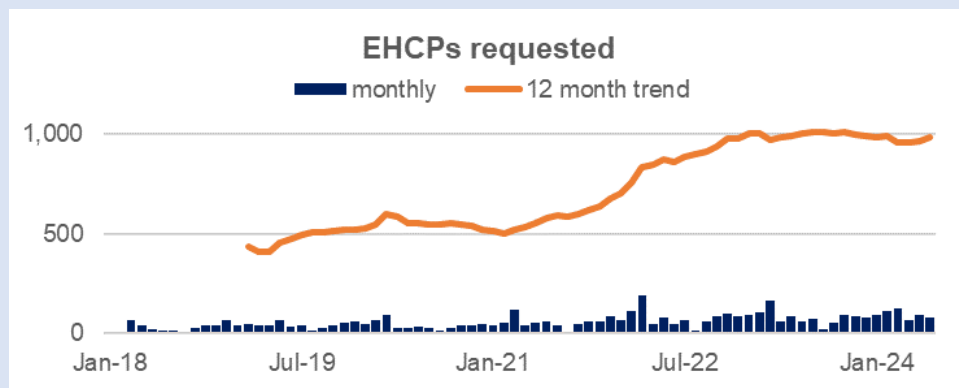
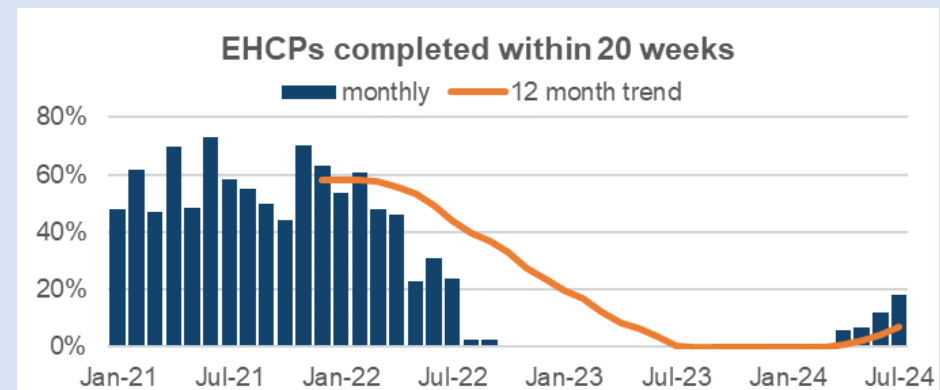
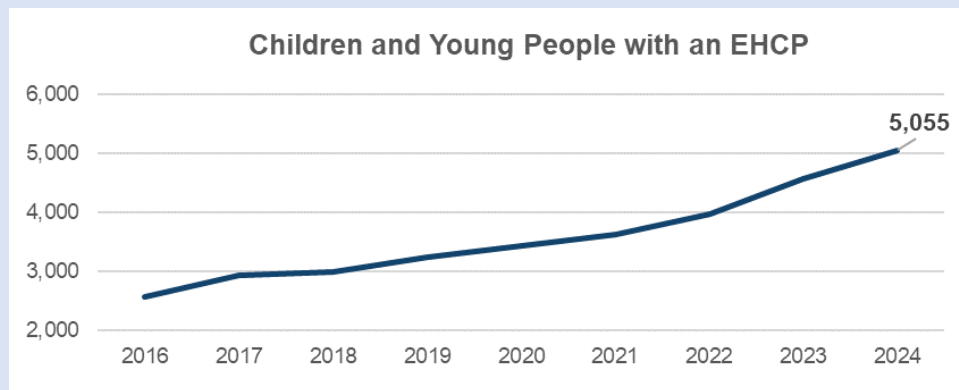
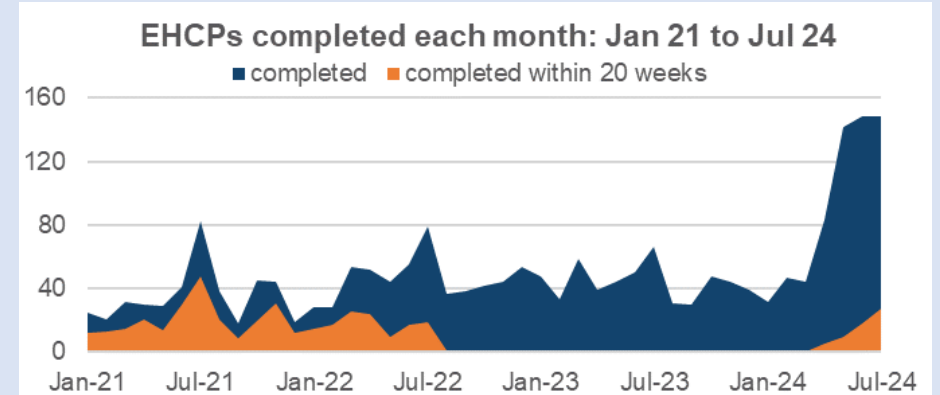
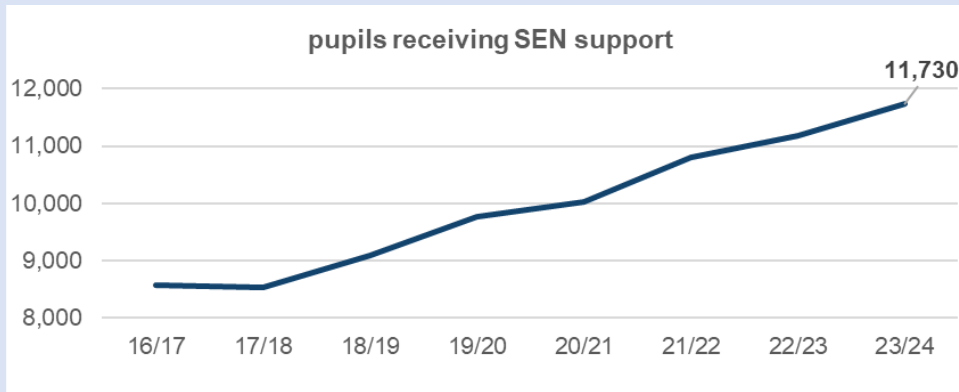
- 53 Almost 94% of young people (aged 16-17) are in employment, education or training. This is similar to the North East average but worse than the England average.
- 54 EET rates have reduced by half a percentage point over the last two years. The reduction is on par with the national reduction of 0.5 percentage points but worse than the regional reduction of 0.2 percentage points.

| | County Durham | North East | England |
|----------------------------|---------------|------------|---------|
| June 2022 | 94.2% | 93.9% | 95.2% |
| June 2024 | 93.6% | 93.7% | 94.7% |
| Percentage point reduction | 0.6 | 0.2 | 0.5 |

- 55 Mental health difficulties, alongside issues with attitude and motivation are becoming more prevalent.
- 56 We are continuing to support young people (aged 16 to 17) who do not have a place in education, employment and training. Over the summer, we are contacting leavers in years 11 and 12 to ensure they have secured, or are being supported to secure, a place for the 2024/25 academic year. This is our September Guarantee commitment – involving more than 11,690 young people.

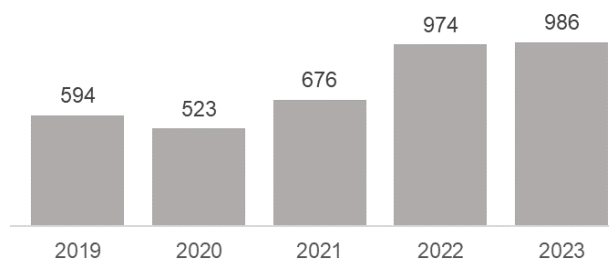
SEND Dashboard

(12 months rolling / annual data)



Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

- 57 Requests for new EHCPs have steadily increased in recent years. On average, during 2019, we received 50 requests each month, we now receive 82.



- 58 The increased demand is impacting the timeliness of EHCPs. As is a national shortage of educational psychologists (EP) which are needed to undertake the required assessment, and the timeliness of education provider responses to consultation and capacity challenges in providing suitable provision.
- 59 As the number of children with an EHCP increases, the workload of our teams increases. More than 5,000 children now have an EHCP and they all require an annual review - we completed 2,348 annual reviews during 2024. In addition, a proportion of plans will result in a dispute so our dispute resolution work increases.
- 60 Improvements to the EHCP assessment process and EP capacity are beginning to impact on the system. A comprehensive action plan is in place to reduce delays, focusing on the backlog for EP advice.
- 61 Since January, two contracts for extra EP support have been in place. This has resulted in more assessments being completed. Since March, three agency workers have been focusing on drafting EHCPs. We are also recruiting two further agency workers to support the team and reduce pressures caused by the increase in EHCPs.
- 62 We have put in place a new process to prioritise cases on complexity of need, the educational stage in relation to key transitions, and the potential increased risk of harm as a result of delay. This is ensuring those in the most need get support at the earliest opportunity - children and young people identified as a priority experience no delay.
- 63 These changes have reduced unallocated cases within the EP service and the average time to allocate has fallen from nine weeks (autumn of 2023) to two weeks (February 2024).
- 64 We estimate the waiting list and waiting times for EP advice to steadily fall and overall timeliness to steadily improve through the next financial year (April 2025 to March 2026). However, this is dependent upon agencies delivering against agreed contract volumes, in-house EP capacity being maintained, and demand remaining steady.
- 65 We are aware that these pressures are also being experienced by other councils. We expect benchmarking data to be released during the summer so will include comparisons of our performance in the quarter two report.
- 66 Our SEND Local Partnership is developing actions to support and inform families whilst they wait for specialised services. It is working to; develop clear policy and guidance in relation to 'waiting well' practices, ensure needs are discussed at the first point of contact, gather feedback at the end of involvement, and greater understanding of the wider SEND offer.

Data Tables

| D | T | C | G | Performance Indicator | Period | Performance | Target | 12 months earlier | Benchmark period | DCC | National average | NE average | updated | Oflog |
|---|---|---|---|--|---------------|-------------|---------|-------------------|------------------|-------|------------------|------------|---------|-------|
| | | | | Household waste re-used, recycled or composted | Oct 22-Sep 23 | 36.5% | Tracker | 37.7% | Apr21-Mar 22 | 38.1% | 42.5% | 33.5% | Yes | 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

Employability and Skills KPIs

| | D | T | C | G | Performance Indicator | Period | Performance | Target | 12 months earlier | Benchmark period | DCC | National average | NE average | updated | Oflog |
|--|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------|-------------------|------------------|------|------------------|------------|---------|-------|
| | | | | | 16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship | Apr-Jun 2023 | 7.3% | Tracker | 8.5% | Apr-Jun 23 | 7.3% | 4.8% | 7% | No | No |

Education KPIs

| | D | T | C | G | Performance Indicator | Period | Performance | Target | 12 months earlier | Benchmark period | DCC | National average | NE average | updated | Oflog |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|----------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|------------------|-------|------------------|------------|---------|-------|
| | | | | | Uptake of free early education entitlement for 3-4-year-olds | 2024 | 95.4% | Tracker | 93.7% | 2024 | 95.4% | 93.7% | 98.6% | No | No |
| | | | | | Children meeting expected standards in maths and reading at KS2 | 2024 | 59% | Tracker | 65% | 2024 | 59% | 60% | 61% | No | No |
| | | | | | Average grade of achievement within GCSE English and Maths to a Grade 5 | 2021/22 | 4.69 | 5 by 2030 | new | | | | | No | No |
| | | | | | Disadvantaged cohorts meeting basic threshold measures in English & Maths | new | | | new | | | | | No | No |
| | | | | | Young people in education, employment and training | Jun 2024 | 93.6% | above N / NE | 93.8% | Jun 2024 | 93.6% | 94.7% | 93.7% | Yes | No |

Our People: summary data tables

Childrens' Social Care KPIs

| | D | T | C | G | Performance Indicator | Period | Performance | Target | 12 months earlier | Benchmark period | DCC | National average | NE average | updated | Oflog |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------------|------------------|-----|------------------|------------|---------|-------|
| | | | | | Early help cases open | at Jun 2024 | 1,254 | Tracker | 1,440 | | | | | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Children's social care referrals per 10,000 population | at Jun 2024 | 502 | Tracker | 481 | 2022/23 | 473 | 545 | 663 | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Children's social care re-referrals | at Jun 2024 | 20% | Tracker | 19% | 2022/23 | 15% | 21% | 22% | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Children's social care assessments completed within 45 days | at Jun 2024 | 85% | Tracker | 75% | 2022/23 | 83% | 83% | 79% | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Children in need per 10,000 population | at Jun 2024 | 367 | Tracker | 340 | 2022/23 | 387 | 343 | 467 | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Children on a child protection plan per 10,000 population | at Jun 2024 | 48 | Tracker | 50 | 2022/23 | 54 | 43 | 65 | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Children looked after per 10,000 population | at Jun 2024 | 120 | Tracker | 110 | 2022/23 | 107 | 71 | 113 | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Care leavers aged 16-24 | at Jun 2024 | 466 | Tracker | 282 | | | | | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as a percentage of all CiC | at Jun 2024 | 6% | Tracker | 5% | 2022/23 | 5% | 9% | 4% | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Social worker vacancies | | 14% | Tracker | 20% | Sep-23 | 14% | 18.9% | 10.9% | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Children in care in a family setting | at Jun 2024 | 82% | Tracker | 83% | at Mar 23 | 82% | 77% | 81% | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes | 2024/25 | 254 | 1,522 | 983 | | | | | Yes | No |

Education KPIs

| | D | T | C | G | Performance Indicator | Period | Performance | Target | 12 months earlier | Benchmark period | DCC | National average | NE average | updated | Oflog |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|--------------|-------------|---------|-------------------|------------------|-------|------------------|------------|---------|-------|
| | | | | | Children in the EYFS achieving a good level of development | 2022/23 | 66.2% | Tracker | 64.5% | 2022/23 | 66.2% | 67.2% | 66.3% | No | No |
| | | | | | Pupils attending a school judged 'good or better' by Ofsted | 2023/24 | 87.2% | Tracker | 83.1% | 2023/24 | 87.2% | 88.1% | 87% | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Pupils attending a primary school judged 'good or better' by Ofsted | 2023/24 | 94.4% | Tracker | 94.3% | 2023/24 | 94.4% | 91.6% | 94.6% | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Pupils attending a secondary school judged 'good or better' by Ofsted | 2023/24 | 76.9% | Tracker | 75.3% | 2023/24 | 76.9% | 83.8% | 76.8% | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Children - electively home educated | Jan-Apr 2024 | 1,088 | Tracker | 699 | | | | | No | No |
| | | | | | Children eligible for free school meals | 2023/24 | 32.4% | Tracker | 30.6% | 2023/24 | 32.4% | 24.8% | 14.8% | No | No |
| | | | | | Take-up on free school meals | 2022/23 | 23% | Tracker | 20.6% | 2022/23 | 23% | 18.6% | 23.8% | No | No |

SEND KPIs

| | D | T | C | G | Performance Indicator | Period | Performance | Target | 12 months earlier | Benchmark period | DCC | National average | NE average | updated | Oflog |
|--|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|---------|-------------|---------|-------------------|------------------|-----|------------------|------------|---------|-------|
| | | | | | Children & young people with an EHCP | 2024 | 5,134 | Tracker | 4,475 | | | | | Yes | No |
| | | | | | New requests for EHCPs | 2023 | 986 | Tracker | 974 | | | | | No | No |
| | | | | | EHCPs completed within 20 weeks | 2023 | 2% | Tracker | 27% | 2023 | 0% | 48% | 56% | Yes | No |
| | | | | | Pupils on SEN support | 2023/24 | 10,953 | Tracker | 11,174 | | | | | No | No |

Public Health KPIs

| | D | T | C | G | Performance Indicator | Period | Performance | Target | 12 months earlier | Benchmark period | DCC | National average | NE average | updated | Oflog |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|---------|-------------|---------|-------------------|------------------|-------|------------------|------------|---------|-------|
| | | | | | Children aged 4-5 who are a healthy weight <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i> | 2022/23 | 73.2% | 100% | 75.5% | 2022/23 | 73.2% | 77.5% | 74% | No | No |
| | | | | | Children aged 10-11 who are a healthy weight <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i> | 2022/23 | 59.1% | 100% | 59.2% | 2022/23 | 59.1% | 61.9% | 58.9% | No | No |
| | | | | | Gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and national average | 2022/23 | 19.0pp | Tracker | 18.7pp | | | | | No | No |