Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 July 2025

Quarter Three, 2024/25 Performance Management Report

Report of John Hewitt, Chief Executive

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

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

Executive Summary

2 This report contains the most recent performance data available on 31 December 2024, alongside contextual information of activity and events taking place in the third quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (October to December).

3 The scope of this report is intended to meet a range of monitoring requirements for various audiences. This includes members, senior managers, employees, regulatory bodies and the public. In doing so this report provides an ongoing mechanism for scrutinising the performance of our services and supporting transparency.

4 Our performance framework uses the Council Plan to provide the structure and identify the key measures we report against reflecting both wider outcomes and the performance of our services. The Council Plan is refreshed annually with the latest version approved by County Council on 19 February 2025. This plan was intended to cover the next four years (Council Plan 2025-29) but following the County Council election in May the new Cabinet will review the current Council Plan and re-align with new priorities. Subsequently, reporting against this new framework will begin in due course.

5 We continue to frame the council's performance within the wider national context. We are a large organisation providing a broad range of services. Our operating environment continues to be influenced by political, global and economic factors and remains challenging. These factors include inflationary and demand pressures, demographic shifts and the changing needs of our residents, economic uncertainties and the cost-of-living crisis, recruitment and retention issues, government policy, and the impact of global events such as the ongoing war in Ukraine.

6 The government has published the provisional local government finance settlement for England for 2025/26. Our financial position remains very challenging despite the additional government grant funding being provided next year (budget 2025/26 – report to County Council).

7 Alongside the funding announcements, the Government launched consultation on longer term funding reforms for local government (closed 12 February). The reforms will be implemented through a multi-year settlement, beginning in 2026/27. Spending reviews will take place every two years and cover a three-year period. The one-year overlap gives financial certainty as detailed plans are always available for the next financial year.

8 However, we continue to show strong performance across our key outcomes.

(a) For **Our Economy**;

i. An update of the Economic Review has been undertaken to provide a more detailed assessment of economic changes across a number of measures in recent years. This shows that the economy has largely recovered from Covid-19, and in some parts of the economy, such as employment levels and productivity, pre-Covid levels of performance have been exceeded. Between 2020 and 2022 the county's economy grew by more than 16% to £10.7 billion and around 8,000 more residents are in employment now than before the Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) was adopted, in 2022.

ii. The number of available jobs across the county has steadily increased in recent years to almost 190,000, an all-time high. Job growth has increased at a faster rate than the North East and England.

iii. We continue to exceed targets for securing investment for companies and supporting businesses.

iv. More people are visiting our cultural venues and leisure centres. More people are borrowing from our libraries. More people are members of our gyms. The occupancy rate and average yield at our cinemas and theatres are all better than last year.

v. But some of our targets remain challenging. Our autumn theatre programme was less popular than we anticipated, and issues with the Gala's public lift impacted screenings with specific accessibility requirements (the lift is being replaced).

(b) For **Our Environment**;

i. We are diverting a larger proportion of waste from landfill. And are building, with regional partners, a new 'energy recovery from waste' facility which will meet the future needs of the county.

ii. Our contamination rate, which has steadily declined from its peak in March 2023, is now the second best recorded rate for three years. 27 of the 28 sites within the Durham City Air Quality Management Area are better than the threshold for NO_2 levels.

(c) For **Our People**;

i. Statutory referral demand for children's social care has increased significantly compared to last year. However, improved practice across statutory children's social care has led to a consistently low re-referral rate and despite higher demand performance remains strong.

ii. Children taken into our care remains relatively high though the rate of increase has slowed significantly throughout 2024 and our Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy is delivering against its objectives.

iii. Improved processes and increased capacity which have improved timeliness performance Education Health and Care Plans.

iv. Referrals into adult social care and Care Act assessments remain stable and the percentage of service users receiving an annual review has now met our compliance target

v. Performance against homelessness outcomes is improving and we are closing the benchmarking gaps. But more people are presenting as already homeless. We are aware that some councils are relocating their homeless residents across our county. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has written to all councils to remind them of their legal responsibilities.

(d) For **Our Communities;**

i. Although domestic abuse incidents reported to the police have steadily decreased in recent years, more victims are being referred to our support services.

ii. Of the private sector rented properties covered under the selective licensing scheme, 59% are fully licensed licences in progress, exempt or have legal proceedings instigated.

iii. Reports of fly-tipping remain low, environmental cleanliness is high, and more long-term properties are being brought back into use, however the average town centre vacancy rate is lower than the national average.

iv. Bus patronage continues to improve, though punctuality has been impacted this quarter by road works on the network.

(e) For **Our Council**;

i. Through the work of the Poverty Action Steering Group, we continue to provide significant financial support to our most vulnerable residents - one of a few authorities offering this type and extent of support. Almost 53,000 low income households (38% of pension age) benefit from our Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. And during quarter three, we helped 634 vulnerable residents with £193,000 of Discretionary Housing Payments, Daily Living Expenses or Settlement Grants.

ii. In addition to these 'core' mechanisms, we have also drawn on national funding sources to sustain existing work and develop new programmes. This includes £4.6 million received through the Household Support Fund (HSF) and £1 million received through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

iii. These programmes cover a wide range of projects. This includes supermarket vouchers for vulnerable households, a new cost-of-living and debt advice service, four new food surplus hubs, continuation of the Welcome Spaces programme, two new Financial Inclusion Support Officers helping families across 12 schools and one college, auto-enrolment of children eligible for free school meals and increasing the take-up of pension credit.

iv. The processing times of housing benefit and council tax reduction requests (both new claims and changes in circumstances) have improved further.

v. During the 12 months ending December 2024, we answered more than 470,000 telephone calls - 93% within three minutes. Satisfaction with overall service delivery remains high and we are receiving fewer complaints.

vi. During the reporting period, almost 60% of our employees recorded no sickness. However, more days have been lost to sickness, and our sickness rate is now 0.33 days per full time equivalent employee higher than the same period last year.

Recommendation(s)

9 Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

(a) note the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter three performance (October to December), and the actions being taken to address areas of challenge.

Background

10 The Council Plan is our principal corporate planning document. It explains how we will effectively deliver our day-to-day services, our longer-term ambitions and contribute to achieving the County Durham Vision[1].

11 Our plan is supported by other strategies and service plans. These contain the detail for the actions and projects we will undertake to help achieve our priorities. It also aligns to our Medium-Term Financial Plan which sets out how our priorities will be resourced, and our County Durham Plan which sets out a vision for housing, jobs and the environment until 2035, as well as the transport, schools and healthcare to support it.

12 We track progress towards achieving our strategic ambitions and objectives through our performance framework – a collection of key performance indicators contextualised with benchmarking data from similar authorities, and information from our service teams.

13 Progress is reported quarterly on an exception basis, using ‘easy to read’ dashboards focusing on trends, direction of travel, benchmarking and performance to target. Key messages are aligned to our five thematic areas (our economy, our people, our communities, our environment, our council) and are grouped into ‘things that are going well’ and ‘issues we are addressing.

14 Our performance management processes align with statutory guidance[2] produced by the government. The guidance sets out the ‘characteristics of a well-functioning authority’ and the ‘indicators of potential failure’. In relation to performance management, this includes:

Characteristics of a well-functioning authority

(a) The corporate plan is evidence based, current, realistic and enables the whole organisation’s performance to be measured and held to account.

(b) The use of performance indicators to manage risk and to benchmark against similar authorities and manage risk.

(c) The council has complete, timely and accurate data, and the skills to interpret it, to inform decisions.

(d) There are clear and effective mechanisms for scrutinising performance across all service areas. Performance is regularly reported to the public to ensure that citizens are informed of the quality of services being delivered.

(e) Partners and local residents are involved in developing indicators and targets, and monitoring and managing lack of performance.

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[1] Developed with our County Durham Together partners, the Vision describes what we want the county to look like over the next decade and beyond.
[2] Best Value Standards and Intervention

Indicators of potential failure

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

(b) A lack of corporate capacity or capability, resulting in a lack of strategic direction, oversight and sense of accountability.

(c) Performance management information is not consistently used, does not measure outcomes where relevant and underperformance is not effectively addressed.

(d) Data quality is poor and there is a lack of capacity or capability to interpret it to inform decisions.

(e) Services data suggests poor performance and outcomes compared to similar local authorities.

15 We continue to operate in line with the characteristics of a well-functioning authority, and over the last 18 months we have further strengthened these functions with:

(a) A higher level, more strategic Council Plan which gives the reader a more immediate sense of the strategic direction of the council and what we are intending to do.

(b) A renewed service planning process which simplifies and brings together organisational planning into the strategic planning cycle.

(c) A refreshed approach to quarterly performance reporting which provides greater insight into how our services are performing.

Conclusion

16 This report informs members, senior managers, employees and the public of our progress towards achieving the strategic ambitions and objectives set out in our Council Plan 2024-28.

17 It contains the most recent performance data available on 31 December. Contextual information relates to activity and events taking place in the third quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (October to December). 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 Two, 2024/25 Performance Management Report
- Quarter One, 2024/25 Performance Management Report
- Quarter Four, 2023/24 Performance Management Report
- Quarter Three, 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.

Appendix 2

Corporate Performance Report

Quarter Three, 2024/25

Contents (blue text links to sections of the report)

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 31 December. Contextual information relates to activity and events taking place in the third quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (October to December).

Our economy

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

Going Well

5 An update of the Economic Review has been undertaken to provide a more detailed assessment of economic changes across a number of measures in recent years. This shows that the economy has largely recovered from Covid-19. Across some parts of the economy, such as employment levels and productivity, pre-Covid levels of performance have been exceeded. Between 2020 and 2022 the county's economy grew by more than 16% to £10.7 billion and around 8,000 more residents are in employment now than before the Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) was adopted in 2022.There has been a 9% increase in available jobs across the county since 2016. And demand for employment land, and industrial and office premises of all sizes remains high. Our employment rate is statistically better than 20 years ago and better than the North East average and our unemployment rate is low. Our GVA increased by £1.6 billion between 2020 and 2022.

6 Year to date we have secured £4.26 million of investment for companies exceeding our target and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Productivity and Growth Programme is well underway, and delivery is on track. We are engaging with and supporting more businesses than our target and continue to create or safeguard jobs.

7 Processing times of major and non-major planning applications have improved and are better than target. The back log of non-major applications was cleared at the end of quarter two improving performance, however, there remains significant staffing capacity issues.

8 Registrations to our employability programmes were affected by a greater number of referrals received during the period being ineligible or not subsequently engaged. As it was recognised that we were unlikely to achieve programme targets in relation to registrations and clients receiving support to gain employment, revised targets have been agreed with our contract manager. The cohort of clients we are working with have multiple barriers and therefore are further away from the labour market. UKSPF transition funding for 2025/26 has been confirmed and we await our new funding allocation.

9 We have recorded better than target attendances at all our cultural venues, strengthening our position as the culture county and contributing significantly to the local economy. Our new venue, 'The Story' surpassed pre-launch projections, overachieving on the pro-rata

target for 2024/25 in the first six months. The number of library borrowers and digital borrowers continue to grow and performed better than target.

10 Average occupancy rate for programmed theatre performances was better than target. Average yield was better than the same period last year but did not meet target. Panto at both Gala and Empire performed well. However, other shows in the autumn programme across all venues were less popular.

Issues we are addressing

11 At the end of December, just under 90% of business floorspace owned by the council was occupied. The main reason for not meeting the 95% target was that a unit at Jade Business Park was left vacant by a business going into administration. A new tenant will move into the vacant unit in April and return Jade Business Park occupancy to 100%. We expect to meet the 95% target during quarter one.

12 Average occupancy rate and yield across programmed cinema screenings were better than the same period last year but did not meet target. There was a strong response to autumn blockbuster films and programmed event cinema. But the Gala's public lift was out of service and this impacted screenings with specific accessibility requirements such as 'Gala Seniors' and 'Bringing in baby'. A new lift is being installed and works will be completed in April.

Our people

13 This priority aims to help all children and young people to enjoy the best start in life, have a safe childhood and those with additional needs are supported. In addition our residents are to live long and independent lives remaining 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

14 Visits to leisure centres and Thrive Memberships performed better than target and the same period last year, with events, promotions and our new membership scheme contributing to improved performance. Our substantial leisure transformation programme continues to deliver upgraded and new facilities and is having a positive impact, though various challenging local market conditions have led to unmet income targets.

Issues we are addressing

15 Following changes to processes and the use of the homelessness prevention grant, performance against homelessness outcomes is improving. Increased numbers of households presenting as already homeless persists, but we continue to review and develop initiatives to improve outcomes across all stages of homelessness.

Our communities

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

Issues we are addressing

17 Our county is following national trends with the decline of town centres and online and out of town centre shopping being the most popular options. The average town centre vacancy rate is lower than the national average and is lower than last year.

Risk Management

18 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 June and December 2024.

Our Economy

Priority Aims:

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

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

National, Regional and Local Picture

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

20 In Quarter three, an update of the Economic Review was undertaken to provide a more detailed assessment of economic changes across a number of measures in recent years. This shows that the economy has largely recovered from Covid-19, and in some parts of the economy, such as employment levels and productivity, pre-Covid levels of performance have been exceeded. Between 2020 and 2022 the county's economy grew by more than 16% to £10.7 billion and around 8,000 more residents are in employment now than before the Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) was adopted, in 2022.

21 The number of available jobs across the county has steadily increased in recent years. The rate of increase is better than both the North East and England averages.

	2016 to 2023 (latest data)		
	County Durham	North East average	England average
Increase in available jobs	+9%	+5.3%	+7.3%

22 There are now around 188,899 available jobs across the county[3]. This is the highest number published by the Office of National Statistics. ONS estimate over 230,000 County Durham residents are employed. This is equivalent to a 71.1% employment rate. It has been over 70% for around the last eight years, prior to then, the rate was regularly under 70%, often significantly. Durham's employment rate tends to track regional trends which are lower than the England average. To close the gap and achieve national levels of employment in County Durham, an additional 15,300 people of working age in County Durham would need to enter employment.

	County Durham	North East	England
Employment Rate	71.1% (± 4.1%)	71.0% (±1.2%)	75.7% (±0.3%)

[3] Business Register and Employment Survey 2016 to 2023 (latest data)

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

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

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

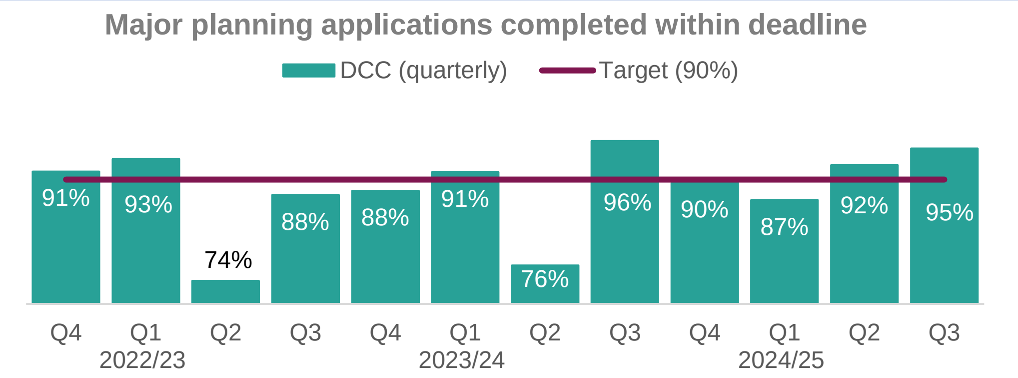
26 Demand for development land, and industrial and office premises of all sizes remains high.

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

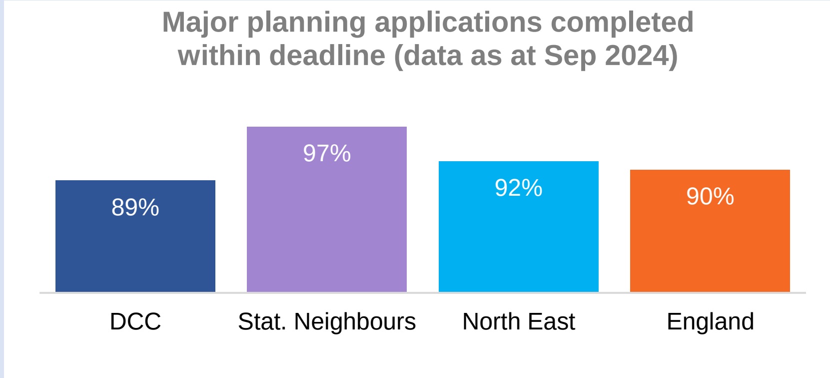
28 The cost-of-living is a long-term problem, especially for the large numbers of people with health conditions, disabilities, and caring responsibilities.

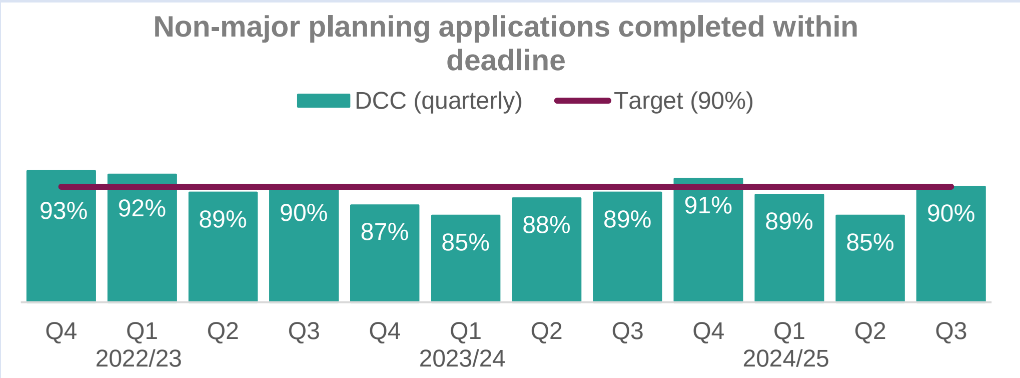
Economic Growth Dashboard: Planning Applications

(quarterly data 31 December 2024 / benchmarking data 30 September 2024)

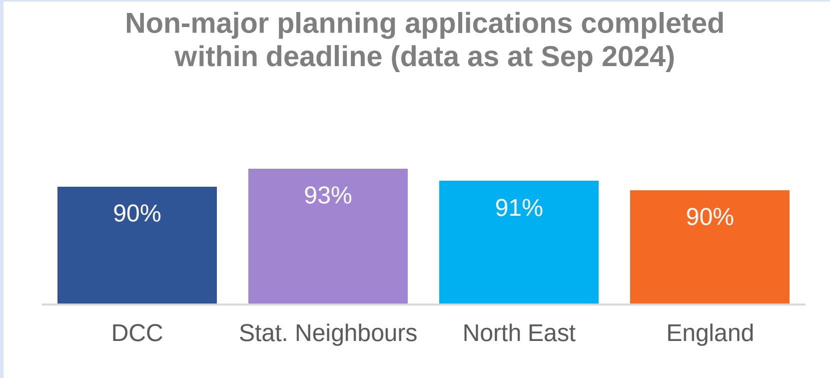


19 of 20 applications completed within deadline.





226 of 383 applications completed within deadline.



"Good communication both online and a face-to-face meeting"
Planning service user

Respondents to our planning service survey described the service as 'fair', 'efficient' and 'helpful'.
Planning survey respondents

Planning Applications

29 During quarter three (October to December), we determined 95% of major planning applications within 13 weeks (19 of 20), performance was better than target (90%).

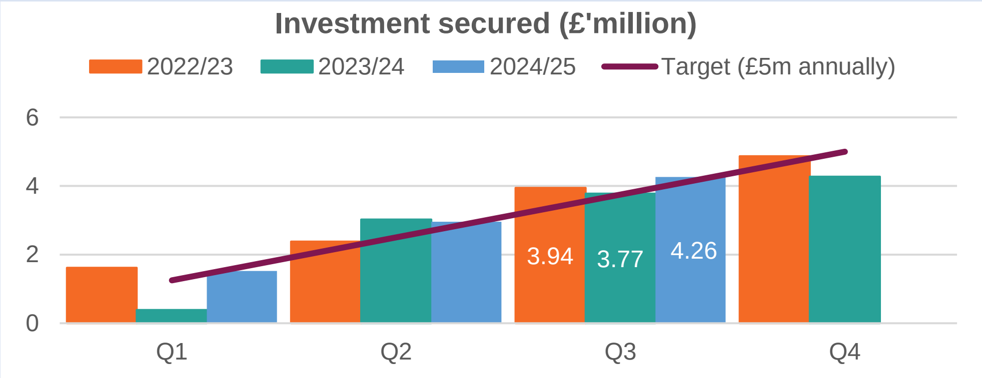
30 In the same period, 90% of non-major planning applications were determined within deadline (226 of 383), achieving target (90%). The back log of applications previously affecting performance was cleared at the end of quarter two and therefore as resource allocation to this was no longer required performance has improved. However, there remains significant staffing capacity issues which continue to impact on resources.

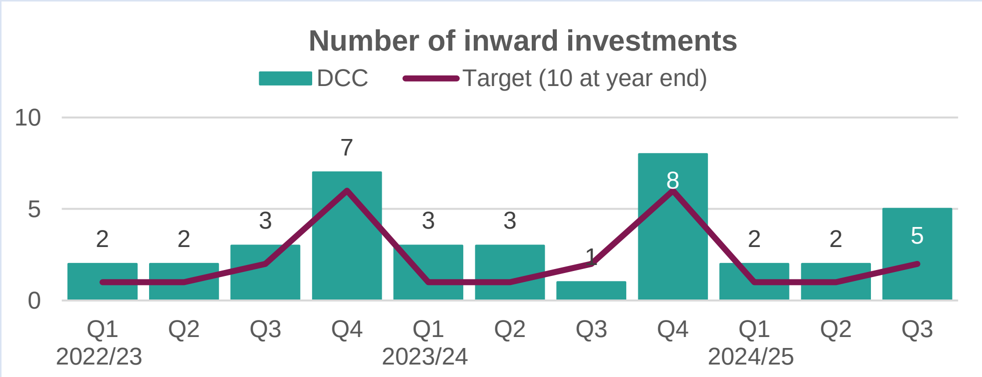
31 Latest benchmarking data (September 2024) shows our performance for major planning applications to be slightly below the national average, and performance for non-major applications is better than the national average

Planning application type	Our performance	Statistical Neighbours	North East average	National average
Major	88.5%	97.4%	91.7%	90.3%
Non-major	90.3%	93.4%	91.3%	89.7%

Economic Growth Dashboard: business investments, portfolio and employment land

(year to date ending 31 December 2024 / discrete quarterly data)





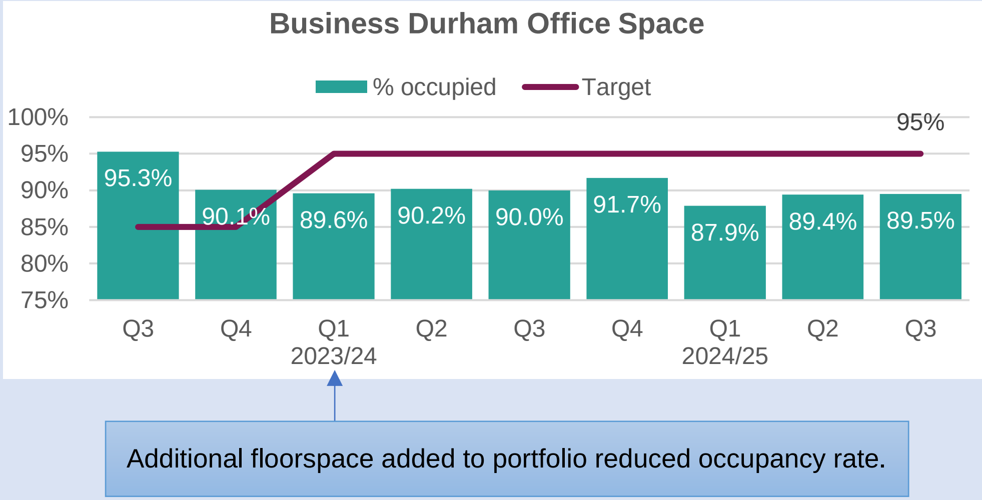
Investments

Between October and December, we secured over £1.27 million of investment for companies, bringing the total in the year to date to £4.26 million - better than our profiled target of £3.75 million. Investment was secured for businesses via the New Cluster Development Fund (Space sector), Enterprising Durham Framework and Durham Business Growth programme.

Over the same period, we supported five inward investments better than our target (2) and are on track to meet our annual target (10).

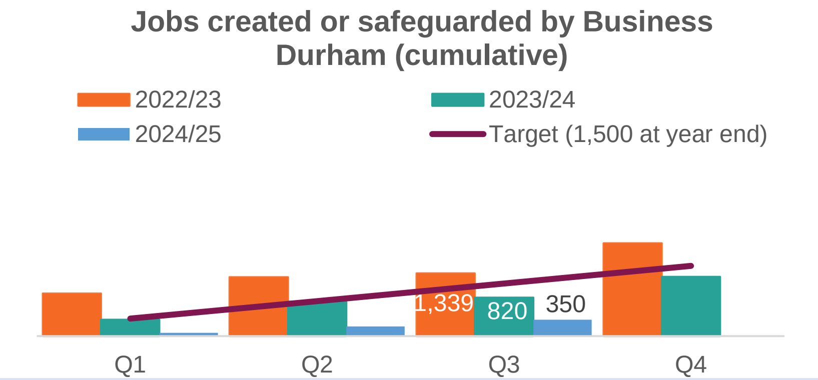
Business Durham floor space

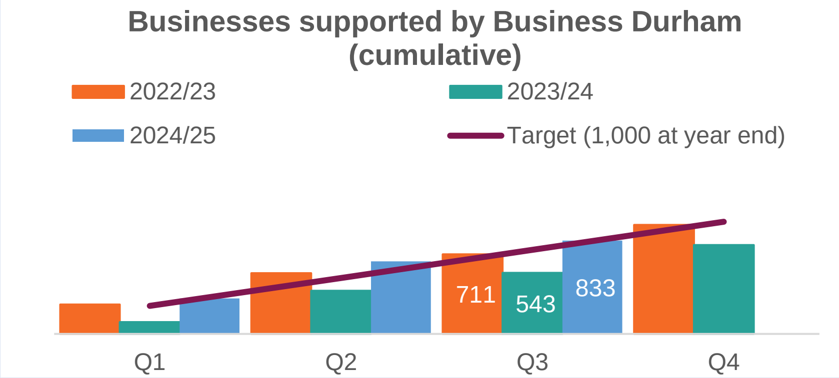
At the end of December, our occupancy rate was 89.5%, below target (95%), largely due to the vacant unit on Jade Business Park. A new tenant will move into that vacant unit in April which will return occupancy on Jade Business Park to 100%. Enquiries for other vacant units across the portfolio are increasing, with several expected to complete in quarter four.



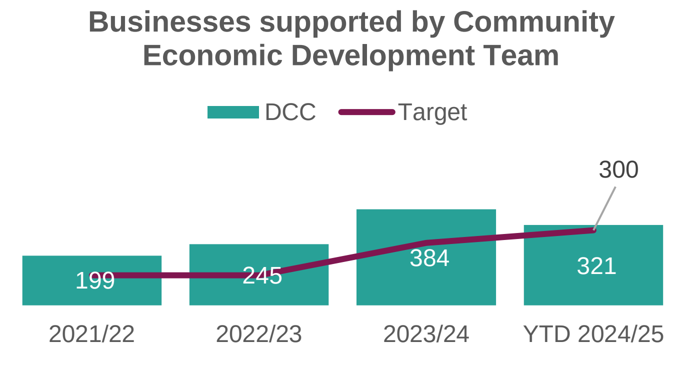
Business Support and Job Creation Dashboard

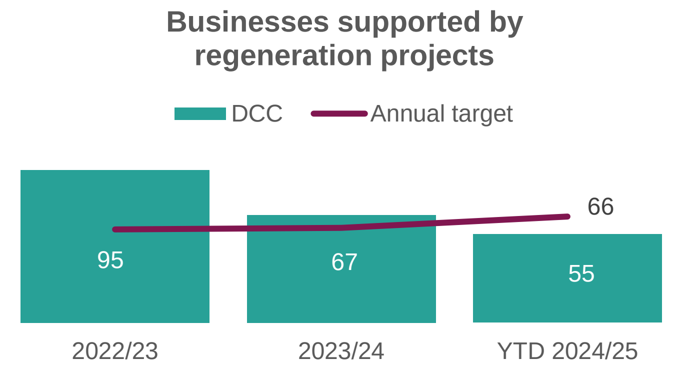
(year to date ending 31 December 2024 (cumulative) / discrete annual data)

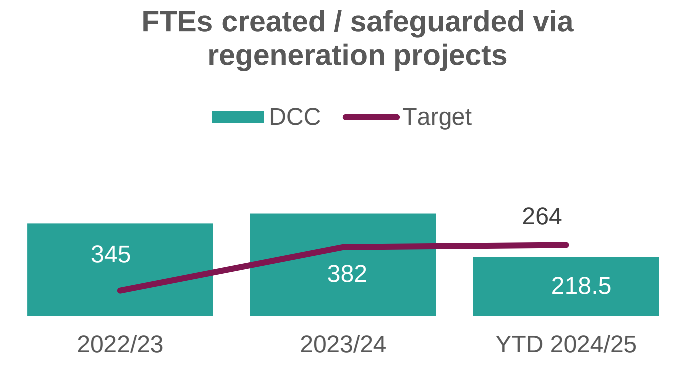




UKSP Productivity and Growth Programme is well underway, and delivery is on track.







Businesses supported and jobs created/safeguarded

32 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Productivity and Growth Programme is well underway, and delivery is on track.

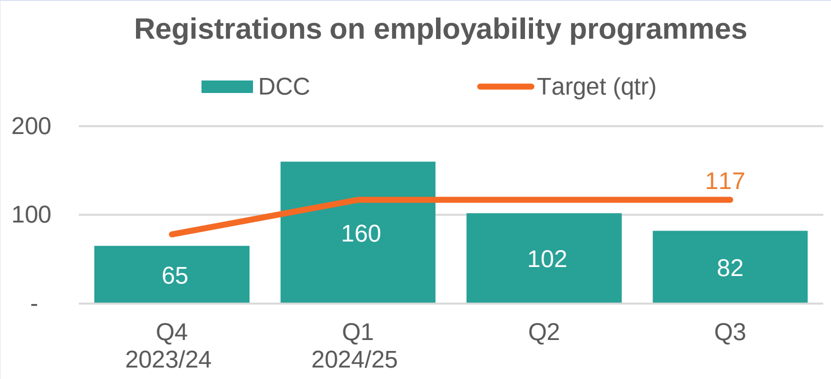
33 Year to date (December 2024) we engaged with a total of 833 businesses, better than target (750) and created or safeguarded 350 FTE jobs, below target for this point in the year. The data is based on programmes that capture outputs at the end of their delivery, in particular the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programmes Durham Business Growth and Enterprising Durham Framework.

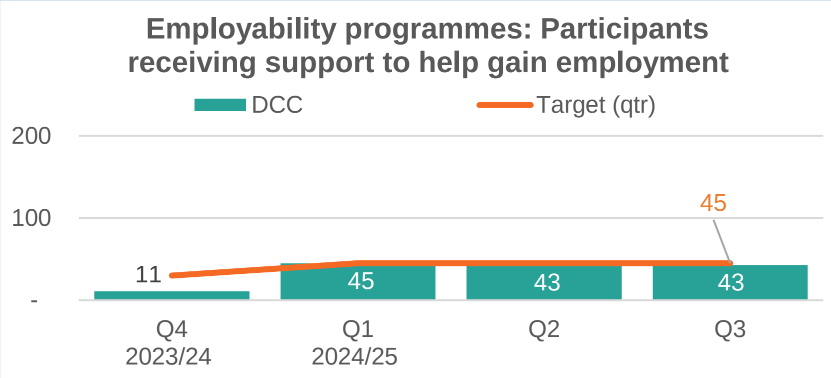
34 We are closely monitoring the target, but due to the challenging business environment it is likely that the end-of-year target for the number of jobs created or safeguarded will not be met.

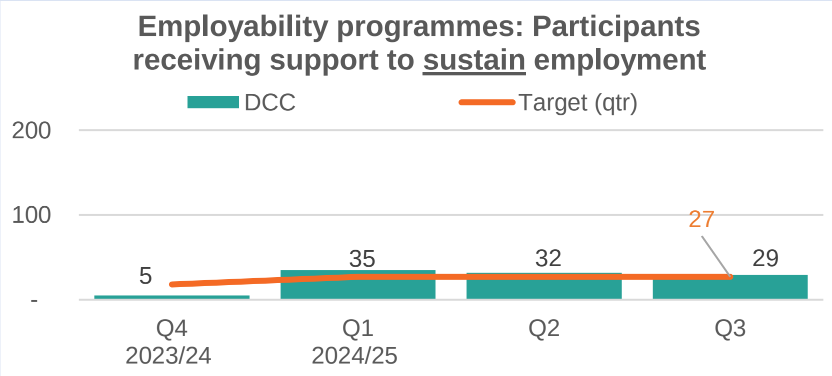
35 Over the same period, we engaged with 321 retail businesses, better than the annual target (300). We supported 55 businesses through our regeneration initiatives which created / safeguarded 218.5 FTE jobs. Performance in the year to date is in line with projections and on track to achieve annual targets.

Employability Programmes Dashboard

(October - December 2024)







Between January and December 2024:

- 409 registrations onto employability programmes
- 142 participants received support to help gain employment
- 101 participants received support to sustain employment

Revised programme targets were agreed with our contract manager in January 2025 in relation to registrations and clients receiving support to gain employment.

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

Employability programmes

36 Our UKSPF employability programme commenced in January 2024 and runs to March 2025. It helps economically inactive clients gain employment and employed participants in unstable positions to sustain their employment.

37 During quarter three (October to December), 82 clients registered onto our programmes, fewer than last quarter (102) and below the profiled target (117). A greater number of referrals received during the period have been ineligible or have not subsequently engaged. The Christmas closure period also reduced the available amount of time for engagement.

38 During this period, 43 clients received support to help gain employment and 29 clients currently employed received support to sustain their employment. Both below profiled targets (45 and 32, respectively).

39 The cohort of clients we are working with have multiple barriers to employment and therefore are further away from the labour market. The short length of the programme can prove challenging to both support clients to overcome these barriers and support them to gain employment.

40 Since the start of the scheme, we have received 409 registrations and supported 142 clients to help gain employment and 101 to sustain employment. It was recognised that we were unlikely to achieve programme targets in relation to registrations and clients receiving support to help gain employment. In January 2025, revised targets were agreed with our contract manager as follows:

- 475 registrations on our employment programmes (from 517)
- 160 participants receiving support to gain employment (from 195).

41 In addition to the 409 registrations to date we have an additional 18 clients awaiting verification, and another 32 participants pending registration. This places us on track to achieve our revised target of 475 registrations on the programme by the end of March.

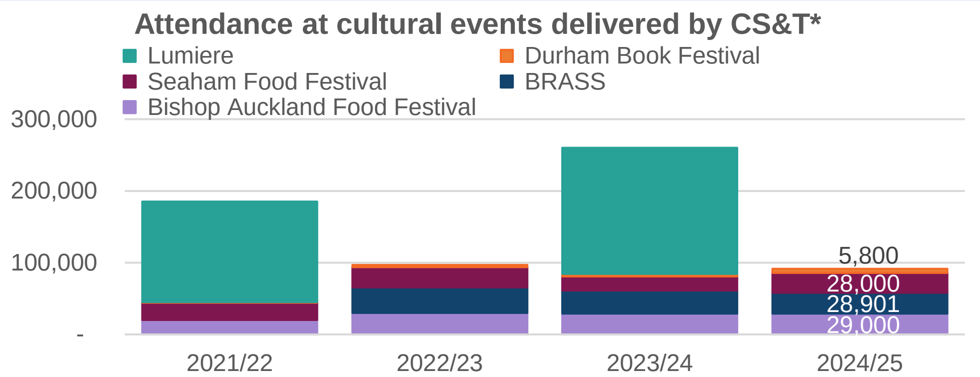
42 Over the coming months we will continue to engage clients to improve their interpersonal skills and secure progression opportunities.

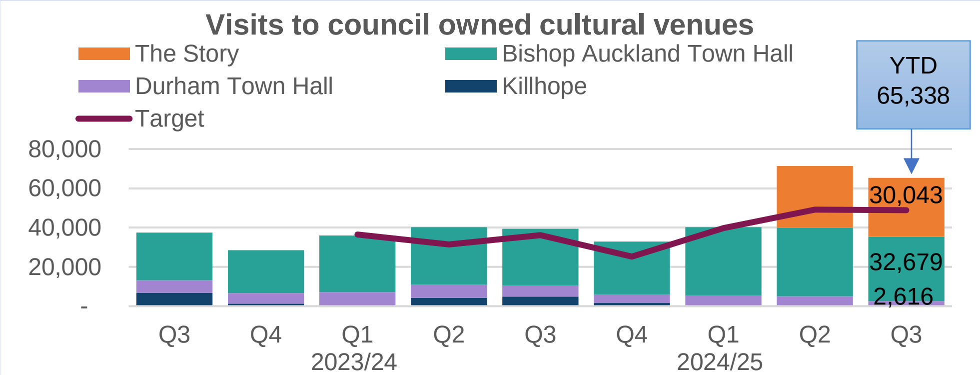
43 The government has confirmed UKSPF transition funding for 2025/26. We await our new funding allocation which will determine the level of support and outcomes we are able to deliver after March 2025.

Cultural Offer Dashboard: cultural events, venues and libraries

(31 December 2024 / discrete quarterly data)

Cultural events and venues





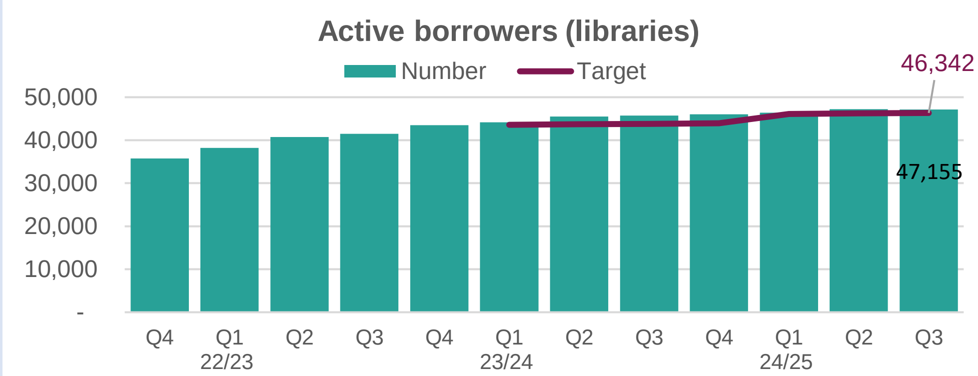
Due to Killhope closure for 2024 season and the opening of The Story on 14 June, data is not comparable.
NB: The Story figures include visits to the County Registrar's office.

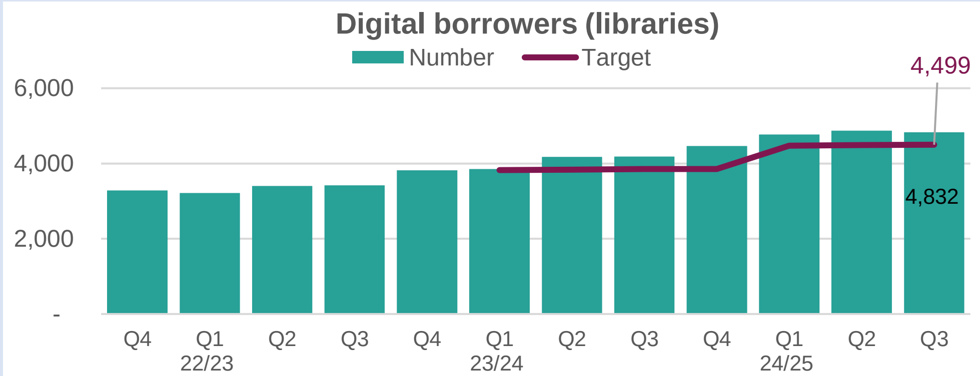
Reporting dates of official figures:

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

*Culture, sport and tourism

Libraries





Cultural events

44 We continue to invest in our cultural events programme.

- **Durham Book Festival** – held in October 2024, was the most successful in the last four years. 5,800 people attended, 2,474 more than 2023. The four-day festival generated a direct economic impact of £92,790, better than last year (increase of £46,156). Driven by an increase in attendance and spend from non-County Durham residents. The strong programme this year included high profile/popular authors which attracted people from outside of the county.

  98% of visitors rated the whole experience positively, and 99% of visitors felt the festival was a worthwhile event for the council to support. Visitors thought the atmosphere at venues and the range and variety of the events were standout strengths. The festival was also perceived highly by authors, with communication and support from event organisers, and the on-site event staff / volunteers being commended.

  The festival has positive social and place impacts. Those who attended largely felt the event had a positive impact on their health and wellbeing, that it is good for Durham's image and profile and feel a sense of pride that it takes place in their home county.

Visits to council owned cultural venues

45 Between October and December there were more than 65,000 visits to our cultural venues. Most were to BATH (32,679 visits) and The Story (30,043), both better than target.

46 Visits to The Story have surpassed pre-launch projections. Overachieving on the pro-rata target for 2024/25 (50,640) in the first six months with 66,738 visits between 14 June and 24 December.

47 Visits to Durham Town Hall (2,616) were below target (6,200) due to the venue closing for repairs in late November. Events at the venue were limited before closure due to uncertainty over the repair works start date. Reopening is planned for spring/summer 2025.

Libraries

48 Between October and December there were just over 47,000 active borrowers and 4,800 digital borrowers. For both measures performance is better than target (46,342 and 4,499, respectively).

49 Active borrowers remains strong compared to footfall, meaning that visitors are converting to borrowers on a consistent basis. Digital borrowers are starting to plateau now that the online offer is consistent, and content is now stable across quarters. Plans to introduce a new library management system will help launch a new offer to borrowers and improve the digital offer making it more accessible and attractive to a wider audience.

50 We are working to help promote and grow the service. Recent initiatives include:

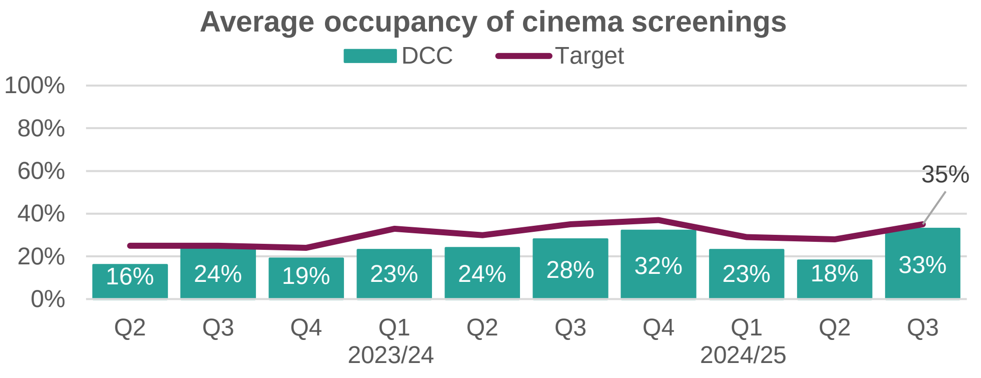
- **National Libraries Week.** Three "book to art" workshops attended by 34 adults.
- **Durham Book Festival.** Seven events at Clayport Library, attended by 119 adults and children. 'Little Reads' events at four libraries, attended by 114 adults and children.

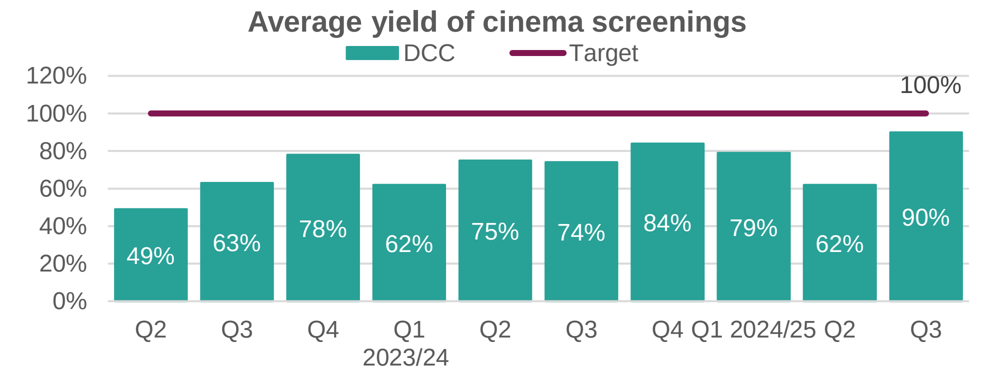
- **Northern Children's Book Festival.** Four authors at five primary schools, attended by 718 children.
- **Author events.** Held in four libraries with local authors Susan Gray, Mark Turnbull, Kaz Hawes and Cait Stott. Attended by 86 people.
- **Kohima poetry workshops in partnership with The Story.** 65 people attended.
- **Partnership events with Gala Theatre and Bishop Auckland Town Hall theatre.** Six events attended by 99 people.
- **Durham Christmas Festival stories in different languages.** Partnership event with Durham University School of Modern Languages. 32 people attended.

Cultural Offer Dashboard: cinemas and theatres

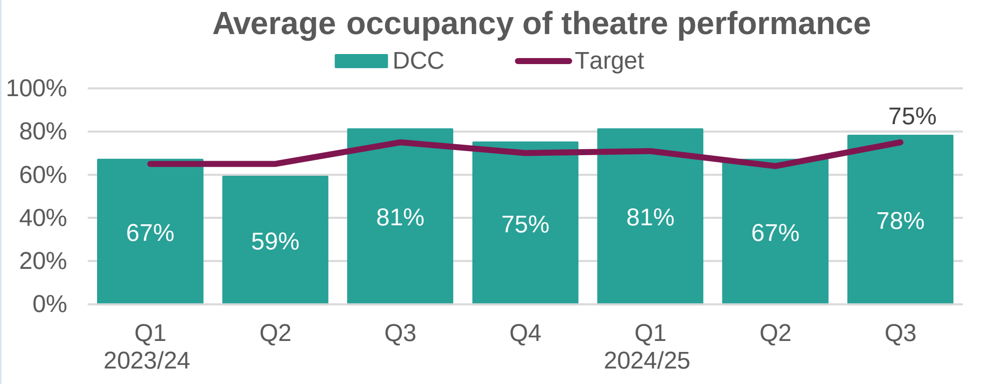
(discrete quarterly data)

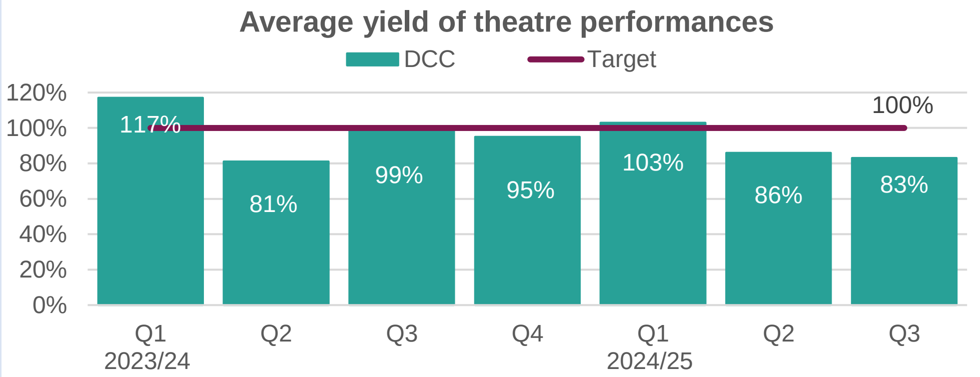
Cinemas (Gala, Empire and BATH)





Theatres (Gala, Empire and BATH)





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

Occupancy = proportion of possible ticket sales achieved (based on venue capacity)
Yield = proportion of target sales amount achieved

Cinemas: Gala, Bishop Auckland Town Hall and Empire

51 Both average occupancy rate and average yield across all programmed cinema screenings were below target this quarter (October to December) but better than the same period last year.

	October to December 2023	October to December 2024	Target
Occupancy	28%	33%	35%
Average Yield	74%	90%	100%

52 Improved performance on last year was due to a strong response to autumn blockbusters such as the films Wicked, Paddington in Peru and Moana 2.

53 Additionally, programmed event cinema particularly around Christmas proved popular, particularly at Gala with some films selling out.

54 The public lift at the Gala is out of service. This has impacted screenings with specific accessibility requirements such as ‘Gala Seniors’ and ‘Bringing in baby’. A new lift is being installed and works will be completed in April.

Theatres: Gala, Bishop Auckland Town Hall and Empire

55 Average occupancy rate across all programmed theatre performances performed better than target this quarter (October to December). However, average yield was below target by 17 percentage points. Both were below the same period last year.

	October to December 2023	October to December 2024	Target
Occupancy	81%	78%	75%
Average Yield	99%	83%	100%

56 Panto at both Gala and Empire performed well. However, other shows in the autumn programme across all venues were less popular, impacting on the average occupancy and yield for the quarter.

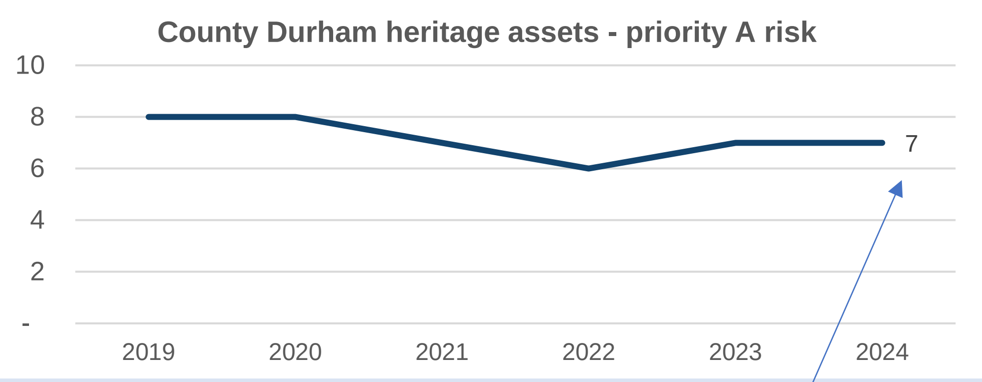
57 Gala's produced Christmas show ‘Breadcrumbs’ at BATH sold 31% average capacity despite this being the fourth year of this show at the venue. BATH's theatre programme requires a review, particularly ahead of next Christmas. The audience development we expected regarding the Christmas show and other family audience targeted work did not translated into sales.

Cultural Offer Dashboard: heritage assets

(annual data released October 2024)

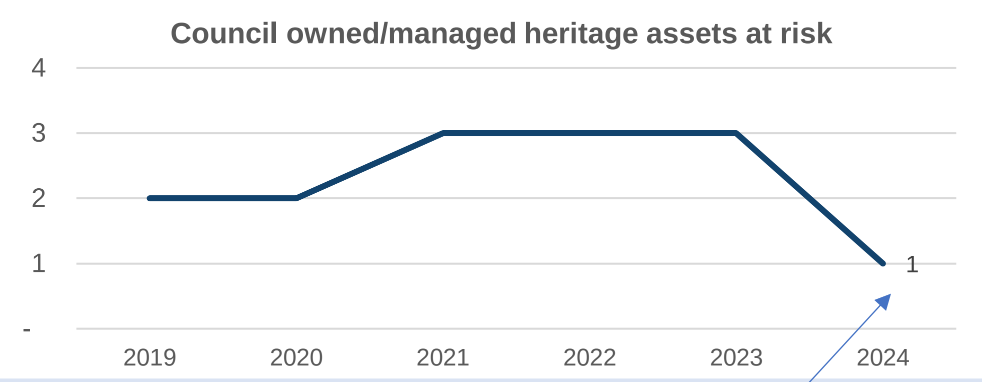
Heritage Assets – at risk

- The latest Historic England Heritage at Risk register for County Durham, released in October 2024, shows that there are 50 entries in the county. An overall reduction of one site from the 2023 register.
- Two sites have been removed, the Coal Drops, Shildon and the Grange and Chapel at Bearpark.
- One asset was added, the Locomotion One public house and east platform, Heighington Lane, Aycliffe.



The assets meeting the worst risk criteria (Priority A):

- Hedleyhill Colliery cokeworks
- Former Junior seminary chapel, Ushaw College
- Sherburn House bridge
- Middle level lead mine, Stanhope
- Harperley Working Camp
- Ushaw Home Farm
- Church of St Anne, Market Place, Bishop Auckland



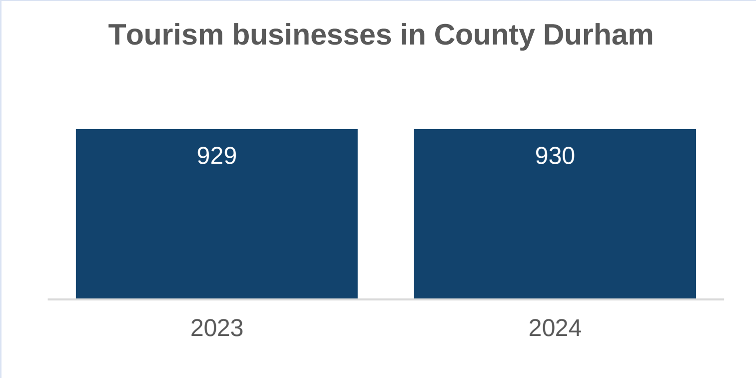
Park Level Lead Mine, Killhope Burn - is the council owned/managed asset at risk.

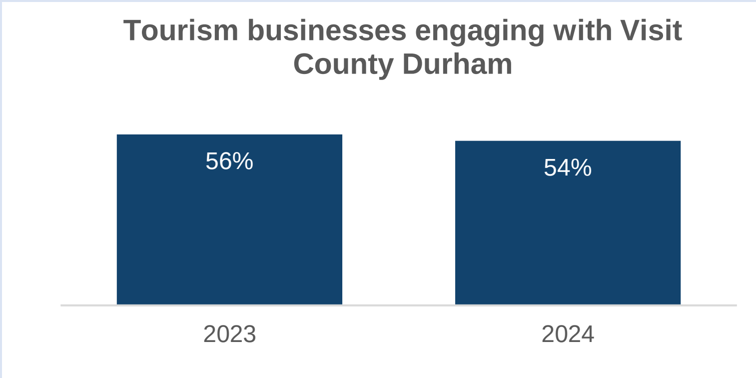
Visitor Economy Dashboard

(annual data as at 31 December 2024)

Tourism Business Engagement

- Raising the profile of Durham as a premier county tourism destination is key to a strong and competitive economy and it is important that tourism related businesses and organisations work together for the success of our county and to grow the visitor economy.
- Latest data (December 2024) shows that there are 930 core tourism businesses across the county, the majority of which are accommodation providers (627).
- Fifty-four percent (503) of core tourism businesses are actively engaged with Visit County Durham (VCD) via our paid for partnership scheme, a deterioration compared to 2023 (56%, 520). This is primarily due to a loss of accommodation providers as a result of a local self-catering agency leaving the partnership and the natural churn of businesses owners retiring or ceasing to trade.
- Broader active engagement extends to all tourism businesses through local business support programmes and national initiatives targeted at the visitor economy. VCD also works with 42 supplier partners who provide B2B products and services to our tourism businesses. B2B refers to selling products and services directly between two businesses as opposed to between businesses and customers.





Note: *Data prior to 2023 for engagement and core tourism businesses is not comparable due to change in methodology in relation to self-catering businesses.*

Our Environment

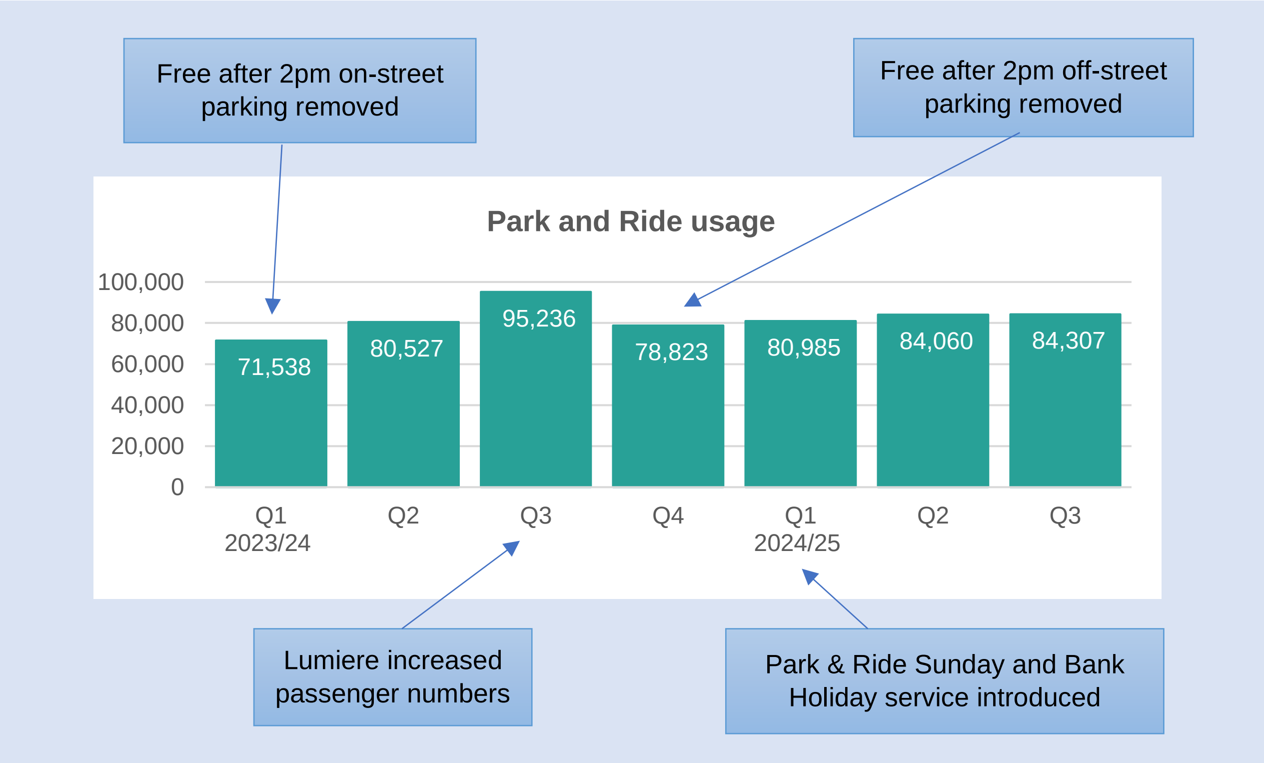
Priority Aims:

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

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

Sustainable Transport and Active Travel Dashboard

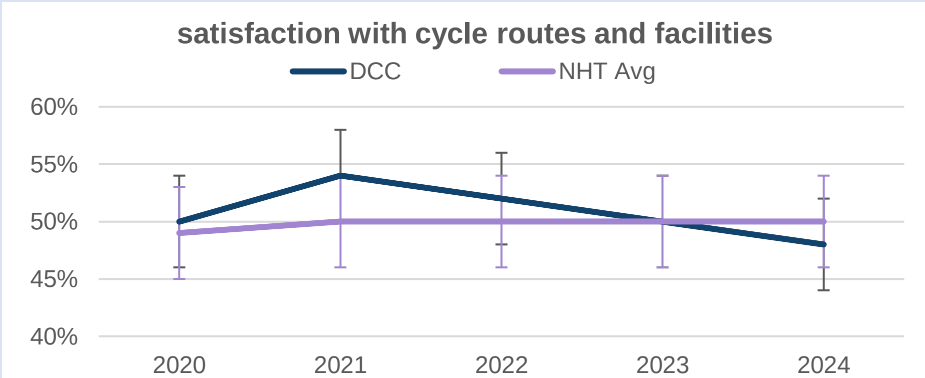
(12 months ending 31 December 2024 / discrete quarterly data)



Satisfaction with cycle routes

National Highways and Transport Survey (NHT Survey)

- Latest data shows satisfaction with cycle routes and facilities is in line with the national average (within confidence intervals +/- 3 percentage points).
- We continue to improve cycling and walking routes to make them more usable and safer for people, including new or improved cycle routes, space for pedestrians, quality surfaces, better crossing and junctions and direct and connected routes.



Park and ride usage

58 Between October and December 2024, 84,307 passengers used our park and ride, 11% less than the same period last year. The main reason for the decrease is due to Lumiere taking place in November 2023. Data prior to 2023/24 is unavailable to enable a more accurate comparison to a non-Lumiere year to be made.

59 The park and ride metric has changed from passenger journeys recorded by the operator to individual passengers verified through electronic payments which has improved data quality.

60 Since the park and ride Sunday and Bank Holiday service was introduced In April 2024 there has been approximately 4,000 Sunday/bank holiday passengers per quarter.

Satisfaction with cycle routes

61 Latest data shows satisfaction with cycle routes and facilities is in line with the national average (within confidence intervals +/- 3 percentage points).

62 To improve cycle routes, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) have been adopted in Bishop Auckland, Chester-le-Street, Consett, Crook, Durham City, Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, Seaham, Spennymoor, Shildon and Stanley.

63 LCWIP scheme designs are being prepared for priority routes within each of our 11 adopted LCWIPS.

64 We are also planning and implementing walking, wheeling and cycling across the county through funded programmes such as Transforming Cities in Durham City and through the Spennymoor Towns Fund award.

65 We are delivering behaviour change initiatives to promote a positive mode shift onto active modes with our partners, including Love to Ride, Park that Bike, Recyke Y'Bike and Borrow a Bike

66 Active Travel Schemes completed with accessible facilities and wide, high quality surfaces for pedestrians, cyclists, and wheelchair and pushchair users include:

- Section of the C2C at Blackhill Consett
- The Auckland Way – Spennymoor to Bishop Auckland
- South Hetton to Pesspool Wood
- Hurworth Burn Reservoir
- Seaham to Wynyard
- Ryhope to Seaham.

Our People

Priority Aims:

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

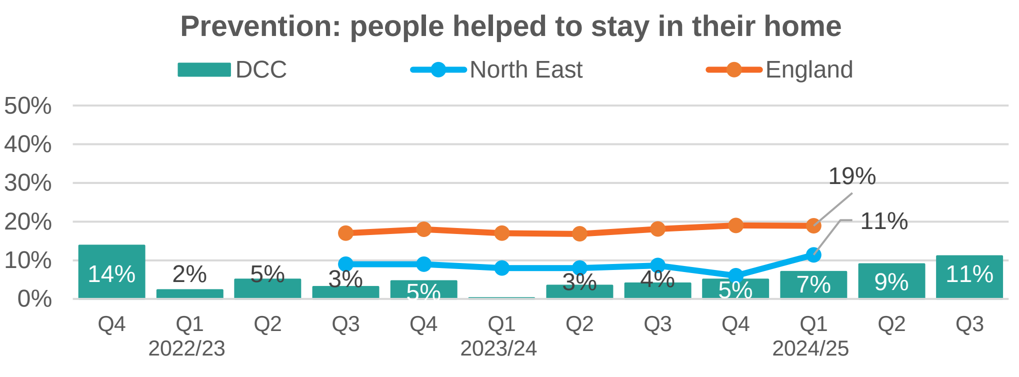
- ensure children and young people will enjoy the best start in life, good health and emotional wellbeing
- ensure children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will achieve the best possible outcomes
- ensure all children and young people will have a safe childhood
- promote 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

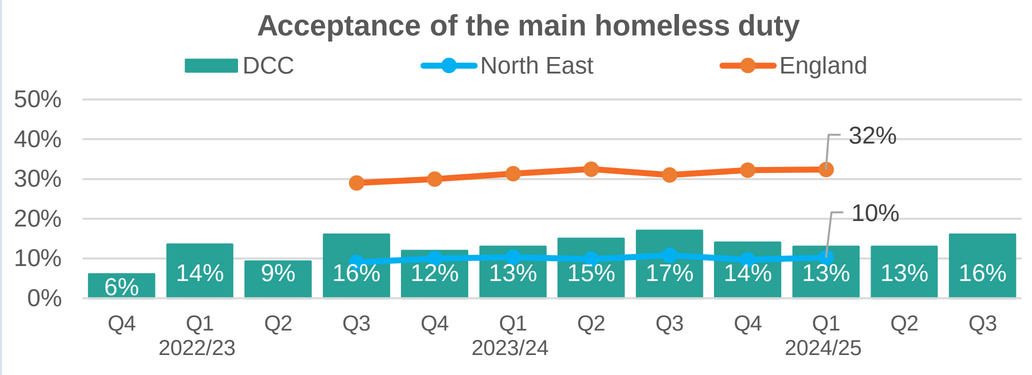
National, Regional and Local Picture

67 The government also announced an additional £86 million to the Disabled Facilities Grant for the current financial year. This will allow more disabled and elderly people to make improvements to their home which should allow them to live independently at home for longer.

Housing Vulnerable People Dashboard - Homelessness

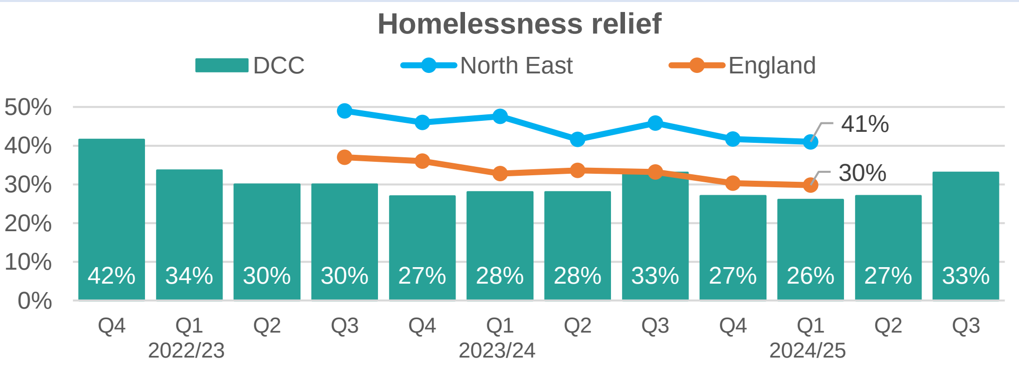
(discrete quarterly data)





Customer raised complaint against our housing service, unhappy with lack of contact which resulted in delay in financial assistance to secure a suitable property.
We reviewed the case and allocated a different Housing Officer who worked with client to secure an alternative property via Positive Directions.

Housing Service User



Testimony regarding selective licensing key worker:
"she loves the new house, the smile on her face at present is priceless you will never understand how grateful we are for all the help and support to me - you have helped save my daughter's life. With your help you made a massive difference"

Mum of client

Homelessness

68 The council has a legal duty to help all eligible applicants who are threatened with homelessness (prevention duty) or who are homeless (relief duty).

69 Between April and June 2024 (most recent nationally published data) the proportion of households threatened with homelessness across the county was 1.36 per 1,000 households. This is better than both the regional average (1.86 per 1,000 households) and the England average (1.54 per 1,000 households).

70 During this same period, the proportion of households assessed as homeless across the county was 2.67 per 1,000 households. This is higher than both the regional average (2.29 per 1,000 households) and the national average (1.90 per 1,000 households).

Prevention Duty

71 The council must take reasonable steps to help prevent any eligible person threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless (prevention duty).

72 This means we must either help them to stay in their current accommodation or help them to find a new place to live before they become homeless. The prevention duty continues for 56 days unless it is brought to an end by an event such as securing accommodation, or by becoming homeless.

73 During quarter three (October to December 2024), 11% of applicants were helped to stay in their current home and a further 24% were helped to move to alternative accommodation.

74 We are helping more people stay in their current home. This follows our review of frontline processes and resources, and alignment of the prevention grant so we can intervene at an earlier stage. In addition, our frontline staff are more experienced – most have now been in post for more than a year – with an increased understanding of housing pathways available.

75 Of those 93 households which we helped move to alternative accommodation: 48 moved to private rented housing (52%), 28 to social housing (30%), 13 to social rented supported housing (14%), and four to other alternative accommodation (4%). The amended financial thresholds for utilising the Homeless Prevention Grant has helped secure alternative accommodation for applicants. Our new IT portal for supported accommodation referrals is embedded and streamlining operational processes. And longer term, an increase in the council's portfolio will further help.

76 We are reviewing (with our partners) the Housing Allocations Policy. This policy sets the criteria for who gets access to social housing. Phase one of the consultation runs until 12 March. It asks people to share their views of some key issues that we must consider as part of the review. This includes reviewing how people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are prioritised.

77 Once the consultation closes, all feedback will be reviewed and used to draft an updated policy. This will undergo a second phase of consultation later in 2025.

Relief Duty

78 If the applicant becomes homeless despite activity during the prevention stage (or is already homeless), we will take reasonable steps to secure accommodation. This relief

duty lasts for 56 days unless ended in another way. If the applicant is eligible for assistance and has a priority need, they must be provided with interim accommodation.

79 Improved staffing stability has allowed us to focus more on relief casework. This has improved move on outcomes. Officer caseloads remain high but we have implemented additional monitoring and audit processes to ensure outcomes are delivered in a timely manner.

80 During quarter three (October to December 2024), 33% of households classed as homeless and eligible for assistance had their homelessness relieved.

Main Housing Duty

81 When the relief duty ends and we are satisfied the applicant is eligible for assistance, in priority need for accommodation and not intentionally homeless, we owe them a main housing duty. A suitable offer of a settled home (whether accepted or refused by the applicant) would bring the main housing duty to an end.

82 During quarter three (October to December 2024), the proportion of cases where there was an acceptance of the main homelessness duty was 16%. This is a higher proportion than in previous quarters. It was caused by an increase in cases received during quarter four 2023/24 (January to March 2024). Due to the timescales involved at each stage, these cases reached the end of the relief duty stage between April and July, and therefore required a main housing duty decision.

Benchmarking Comparisons

83 Latest available benchmarking data (April to June 2024) shows our performance was lower than the regional average for all key homelessness measures. It also shows we were below than the national average for all key measures except homelessness duty.

84 Our performance in relation to prevention and relief outcomes has since improved, and we hope the next data set will show we are closing the gap with the national average.

Homelessness outcome	DCC	Regional	National
Prevention: stay in their home	7%	11%	19%
Prevention: move to alternative accommodation	15%	38%	33%
Relief	26%	41%	30%
Homelessness Duty	13%	10%	32%

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Delivery Plan

85 *

86 We have identified specific properties for elements of the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme:

- Survey and investigation works have started on five apartment hubs at a former children’s home in Tow Law.
- Planning consent has been received to convert Bishop Auckland Registry Office into five units. Works are due to start.
- A planning application is under consideration for eight units in Spennymoor.
- Work continues to identify and acquire 15 dispersed with two complete, five offers accepted and two under offer.

87 Our programme to acquire 40 temporary accommodation properties by March 2025 is back on track. We have acquired 36 properties since the start of the scheme and a further four have offers accepted.

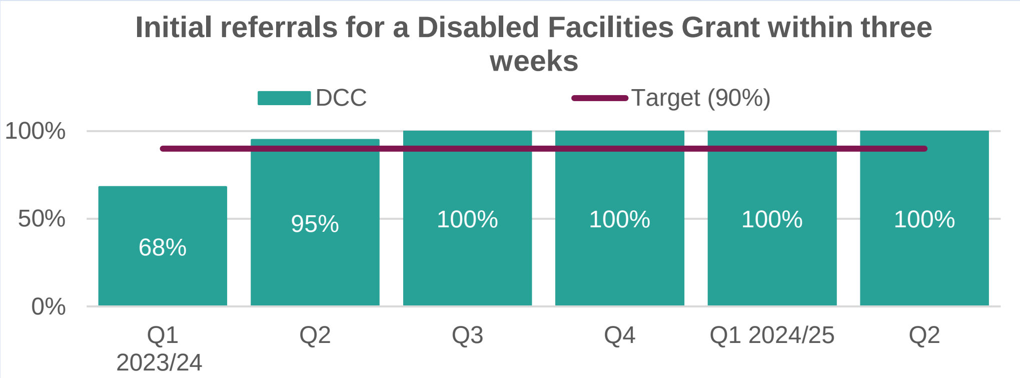
88 The review of all 20 supported housing providers to ensure properties provide the correct level of support to tenants (Supported Housing Improvement Programme) is on track for March 2025. Since the scheme started in April 2023:

- 336 tenant reviews have taken place. Tenant reviews validate housing benefit decisions and ensure tenants are receiving above minimal levels of care, support and supervision.
- 129 support plans, records of contact and referral forms have been scrutinised to ensure contact with the tenants is taking place.
- 168 properties have been inspected. 154 failed the first inspection, of which 83 have since been brought up standard and five have been returned to the landlord. Work ongoing with providers to improve standards in remaining properties

89 A charter has been developed with providers and signed by those we have worked with to date.

Housing Vulnerable People Dashboard – Disabled Facilities Grants

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



We continue a sustained high level of performance in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants.

During quarter three (October to December), 100% of clients were contacted within three weeks of receiving a referral for a Disabled Facilities Grant. This is better than target (90%).

Dedicated officers allocated responsibility to deal with first contact continues to have a positive impact on performance.

Our Communities

Priority Aims:

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

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

National, Regional and Local Picture

90 County Durham is a large and diverse county with some of most sparsely populated areas in the country. Of 300 recognised settlements, only 23 have a population of 5,000 or more.

Land Type[4]	% of the county	% of the population	People per hectare[5]
Rural	57%	7%	0.3
Rural town and Fringe	32%	37%	2.7
Urban	11%	56%	12.1

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

92 There are approximately 255,000 dwellings[6] across the county. Of these, 63% are owner-occupied, 20% are social rented and 17% private rented.

93 Median house prices across the county are consistently lower than those across the North East and the England[7].

	County Durham	North East	England
Median house price *Between April 2022 and March 2023*	£125,000	£152,500	£290,000

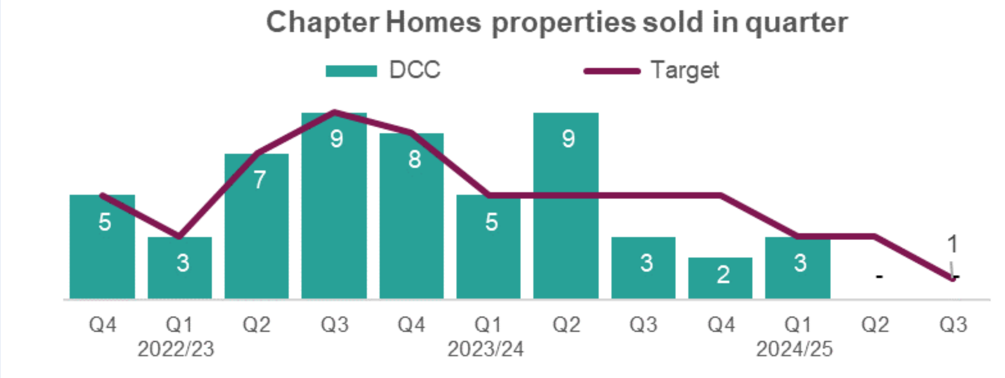
[4] Rural Urban Classification for LSOAs 2011
[5] Durham Insight - Rural
[6] Durham Insight - Housing
[7] Median House Prices

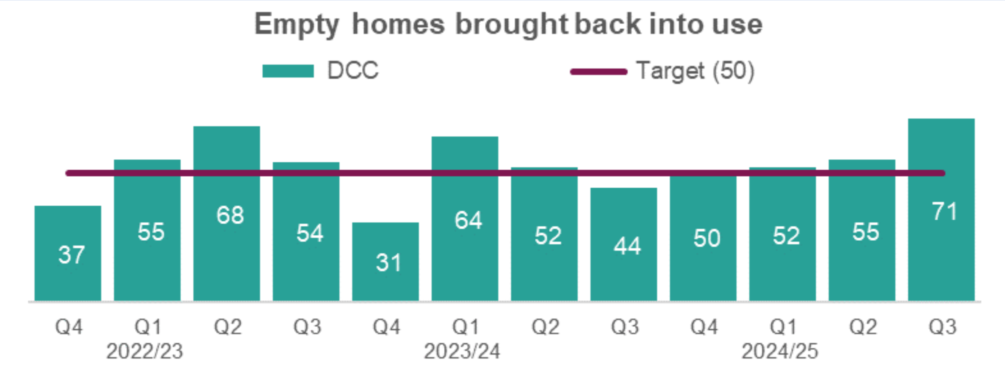
94 Although median house prices across Durham have increased by 166% since the year 2000, from £47,000 to £125,000, there is significant variation within the county.

95 In December, as part of the new National Planning Policy Framework, the government published new house building targets. This increases County Durham targets from 1,309 to 2,011 houses per year. However, this will only come into force once the County Durham Plan reaches five years old in October 2025.

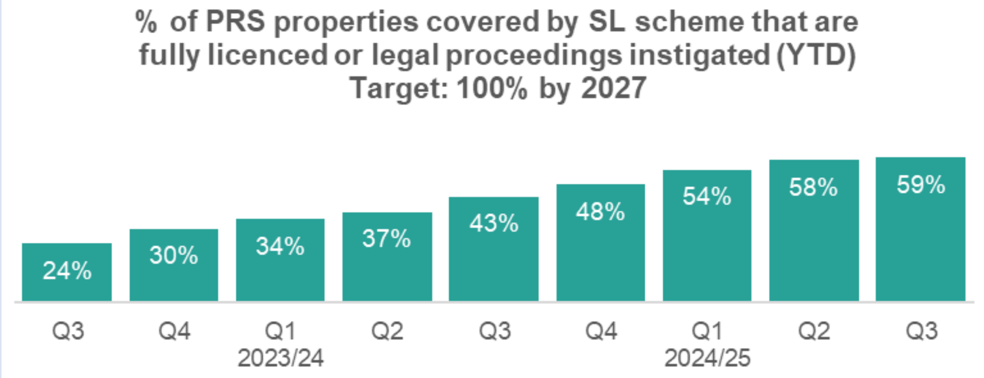
Housing Delivery and Housing Standards Dashboard

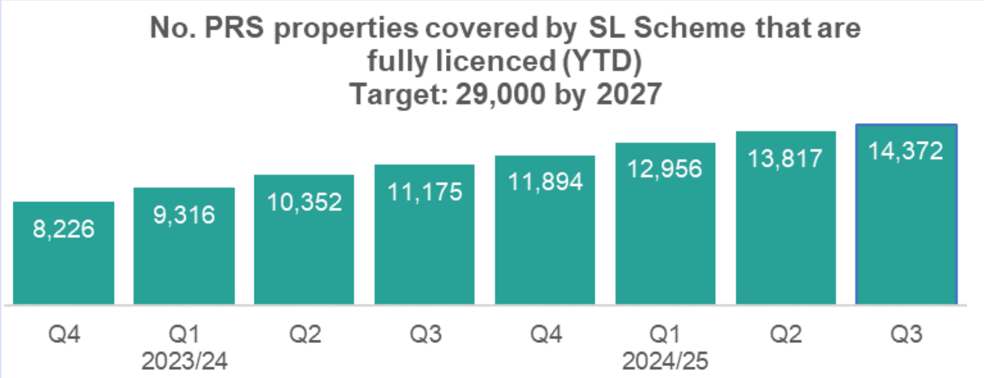
(discrete quarterly data)





Selective Licensing (Private Rented Sector properties - PRS)





Chapter Homes

96 Due to delays in the approval process, no properties were sold during quarter three. The four affordable homes due to be sold, have been re-profiled for completion by the end of March 2025.

97 Although the latest position is not in line with projections, interest in the properties continues. We are closely monitoring progress against the overall target of 10 properties sold by end of March 2025.

Empty Homes

98 Between October and December, we brought 71 long-term empty properties back into use, better than target (50).

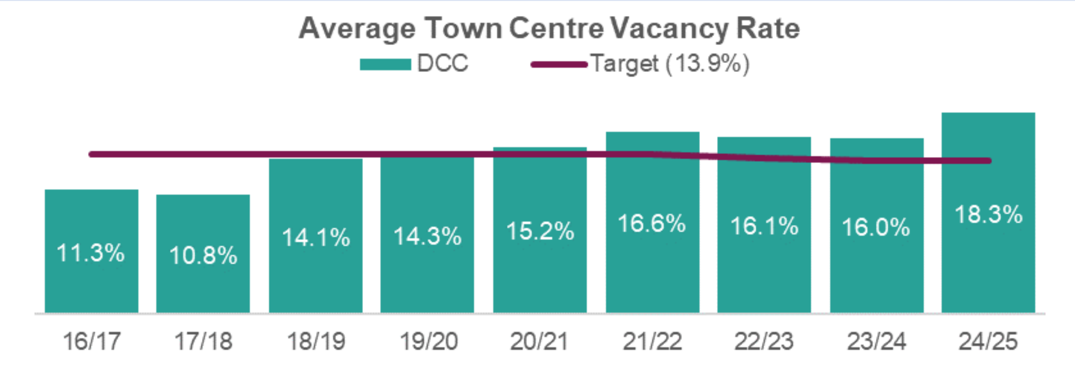
99 This was mostly achieved through negotiations with owners (50). Other methods included: providing advice, assistance, and support to owners (17) and empty homes interest-free loans (four).

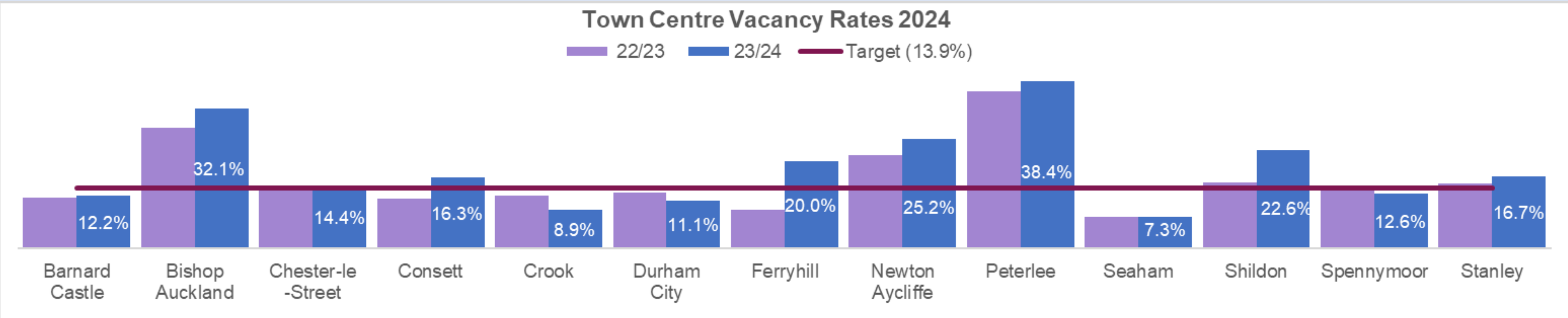
100 In addition to responding to reports and enquiries on empty homes, we have proactively targeted specific areas. During the quarter, several long-term complex cases were resolved and homes brought back into use. The longest property being empty for more than 12 years.

101 There are significant challenges in bringing empty properties back into use; the process can take considerable time. This can relate initially to difficulties in identifying the owner, the property being in the process of changing ownership or being subject to probate. The owner may not want or be able to do anything with the property, for example, if they are in residential care. Similarly, there may not be an incentive to bring the property back into use because it is located within a low demand area.

Vibrant Communities Dashboard

(as at December 2024)





Town Centre Vacancy Rates

102 Town centres are key drivers of our economy, and it is important to ensure our town centres remain viable. To help support this we carry out annual town centre surveys to identify vacancy levels of retail units in our town centres.

103 The latest survey was carried out during June-July 2024, shows the average vacancy rate for retail units across all our town centres is 18.3%, higher than 2023 (16%) and the national average (13.9%). Town centres in County Durham are following national trends with the decline of town centres and changes in retail habits, with online and out of town centre shopping being the more popular options.

104 Of the 13 town centres surveyed, five are better than the national average vacancy rates, and the remaining eight are higher. When compared to last year, two remain unchanged, three show signs of improvement, and eight have vacancy rates which have risen.

105 Of the eight above than the national average:

- **Peterlee -** highest vacancy rate. At 38.4% it is higher than the national average and last year. Despite being anchored by national retailers Asda, B&M and Boots, the non-retail offer is limited. An additional 46 units became vacant in 2024.
- **Bishop Auckland** - at 32.1% it is higher than both the national average and above last year. However, the town is currently undergoing change and is receiving significant investment (Stronger Towns Fund and Future High Street Fund) that is expected to create new opportunities for the retail and hospitality sectors in the town.
- **Newton Aycliffe** - at 25.2% it is above the national average and higher than last year. Despite being anchored by national food retailers Tesco and Aldi, the limited non-retail offer within the town means vacancy rates remains high.
- **Shildon** (22.6%), **Ferryhill** (20%), **Stanley** (16.7%) and **Consett** (16.3%) have vacancy rates higher than the national average and last year. These are relatively small town centres with lower numbers of retail units. It therefore only takes a small change in vacancies to significantly increase the percentage.
- **Chester-le-Street** – at 14.4% is above the national average, but has remained the same as last year.

106 Of the five towns centres with vacancy rates better than the national average:

- **Seaham** - fewest unoccupied retail units (7.3%) and remains unchanged from last year. Anchored by Asda, and home to other national retailers in Byron Place shopping centre, as well as many independent cafes, bars and restaurants.
- **Crook** - at 8.9% it is better than national average and the last year. The town is anchored by national food retailers Aldi and Lidl and is also home to several independent retailers, pubs and bars.
- **Durham City** (11%) and continues to evolve as a popular destination. Whilst the number of retail units has reduced, the number of vacant units has also fallen, improving the vacancy rate compared to last year. Durham City centre has the highest percentage of restaurants and cafes in the county along with the second highest percentage of drinking establishments.
- **Spennymoor** (12.6%) has a vacancy rate better than the national average and last year. As well as being anchored by national food retailers Asda, Aldi and Lidl, it is

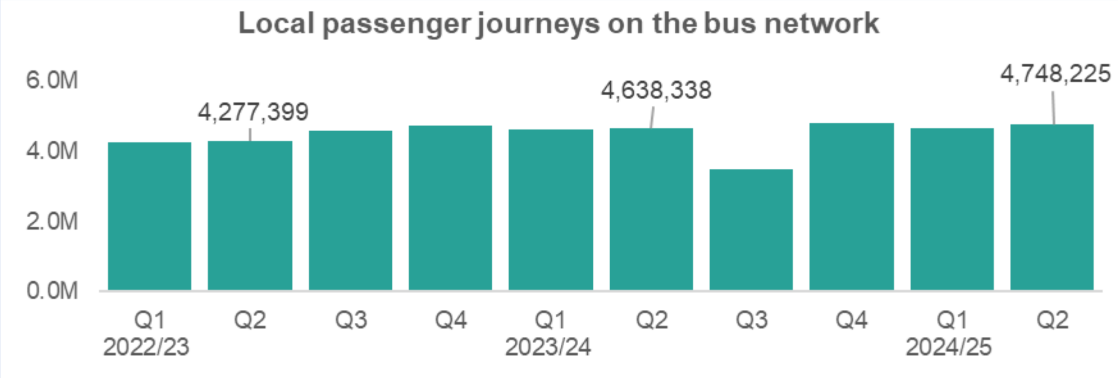
also home to Festival Walk. Located in the heart of Spennymoor town centre, it has been redeveloped to include a free to use town centre car park on the former Kwik Save site alongside a new Aldi store.

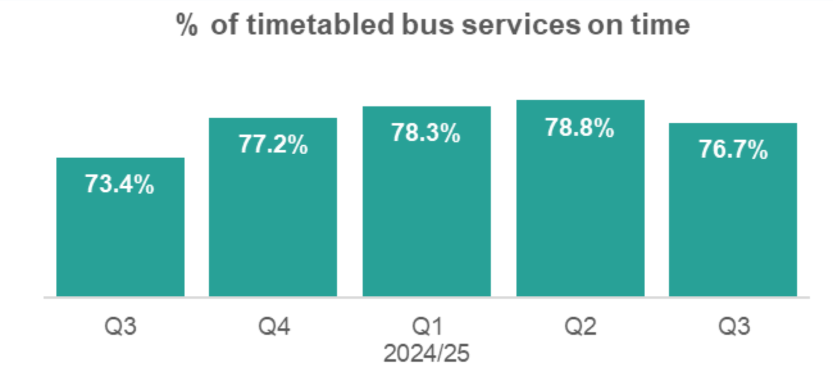
- **Barnard Castle** (12.2%) has vacancy rate better than the national average and similar to last year. The town is anchored by national food retailer Morrisons. It also has a good mix of independent retailers, cafes and restaurants making it a popular and attractive place to visit.

107 We continue to support increased vibrancy of our town centres through various initiatives, including the Towns & Villages Programme and Targeted Business Improvement Scheme. Our strategic place plans will provide a blueprint for future investment and development in town centres shaped by local communities.

Transport Connectivity Dashboard: public transport patronage and punctuality

(discrete quarterly data / year to date ending 31 December 2024)

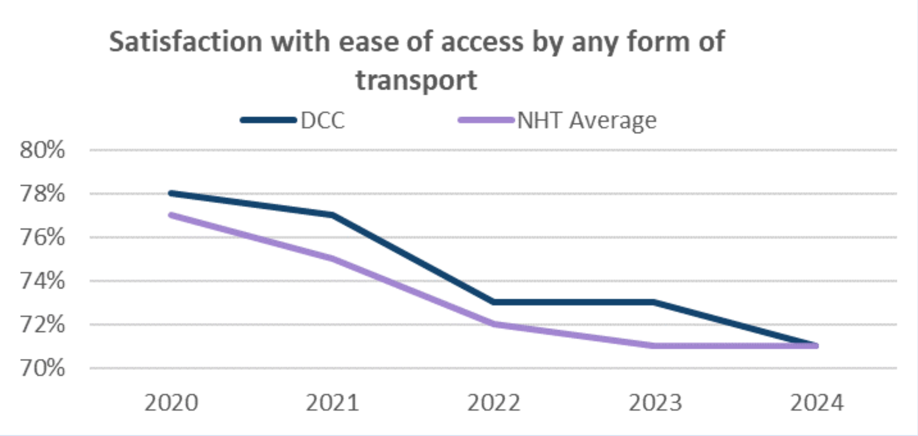




Both patronage and punctuality were impacted as a result of industrial action during quarter three 2023/24.

Satisfaction with ease of access by any form of transport
(National Highways and Transport Survey)

Satisfaction relating to the ease of travelling to work, school/college or local services in 2024 is in line with the national average.



Public transport patronage and punctuality

108 Bus patronage has slowly increased over the last two years and is back to within 95% of pre-Covid levels. Between July and September, there were over 4.7 million passengers using buses in Durham, 2.3% more passengers than the same period last year.

109 During quarter three (October to December), punctuality was 76.7%. Slightly below last quarter (78%) due to the impact of road works on the network. Work is planned to identify pinch points and potential schemes to address this issue.

110 Satisfaction relating to the ease of travelling to work, school/college or local services in 2024 is in line with the national average with performance in previous years remaining within the confidence intervals (+/- 3pp) of the survey and the national average.

111 We regularly monitor the number of bus services in operation in County Durham and feedback on any proposed revisions to operators. We also routinely engage with operators through quarterly meetings on areas including performance, service delivery, punctuality and reliability.

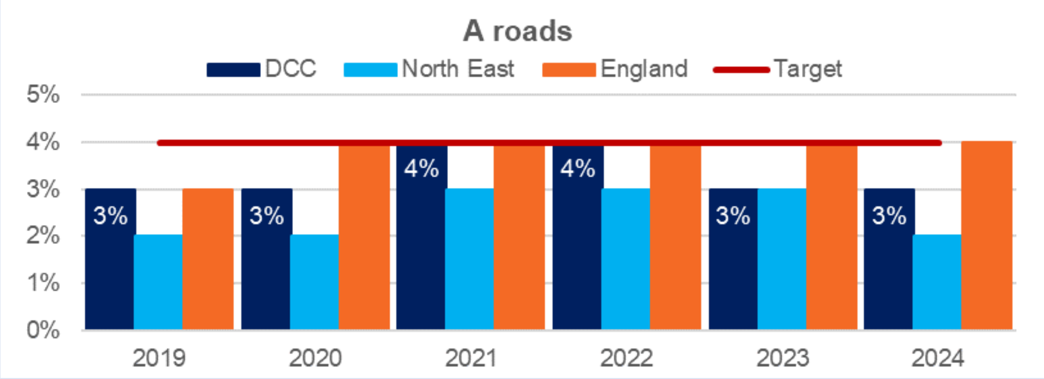
112 Services have seen improvements through the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) including six enhanced and 11 new contracts.

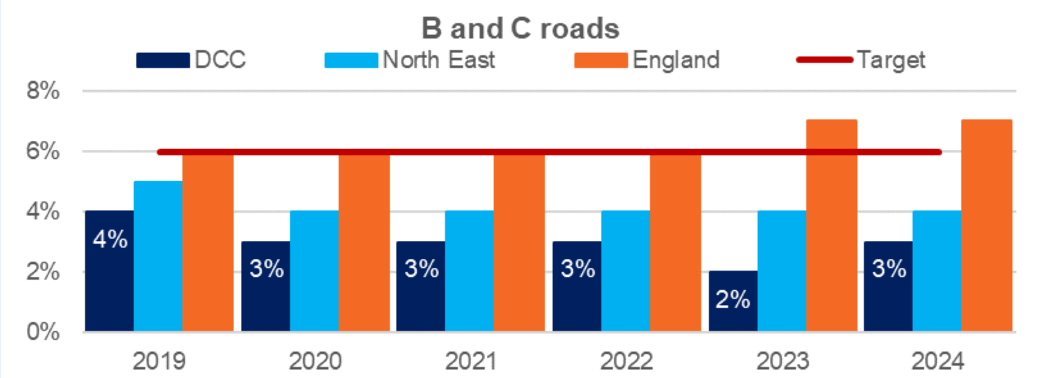
113 Cancellations at short notice are provided by the larger bus operators through their social media channels and websites.

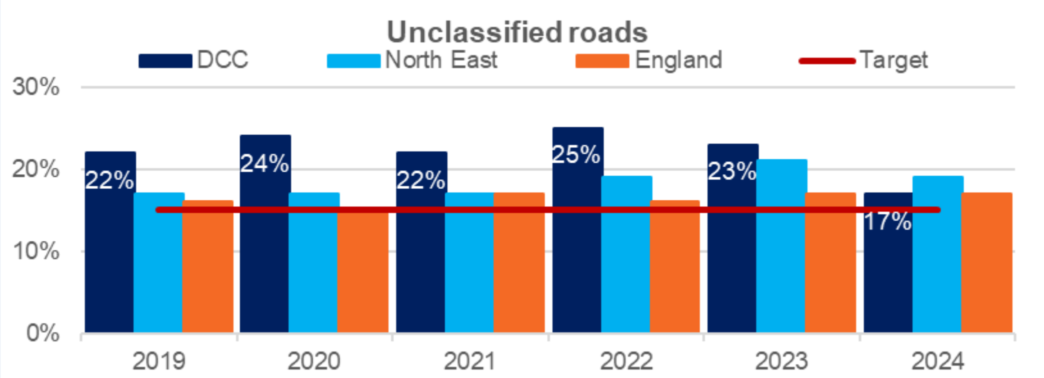
Highway Maintenance Dashboard: Network condition

(year to date ending 31 December 2024)

Percentage of roads where maintenance should be considered…



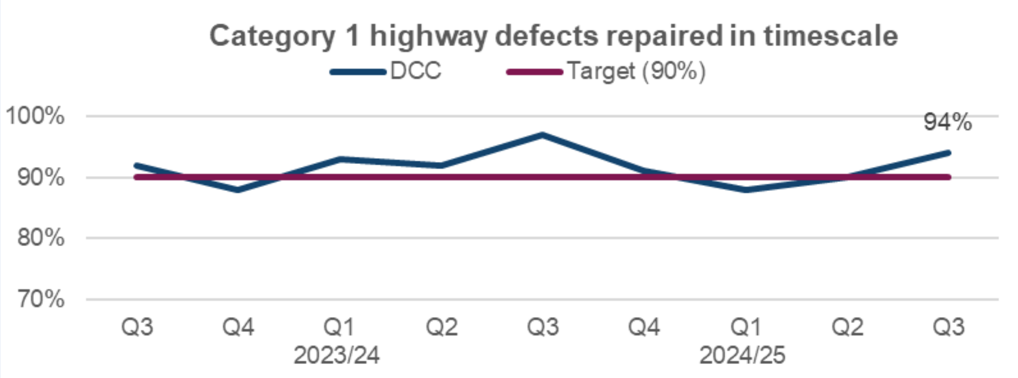


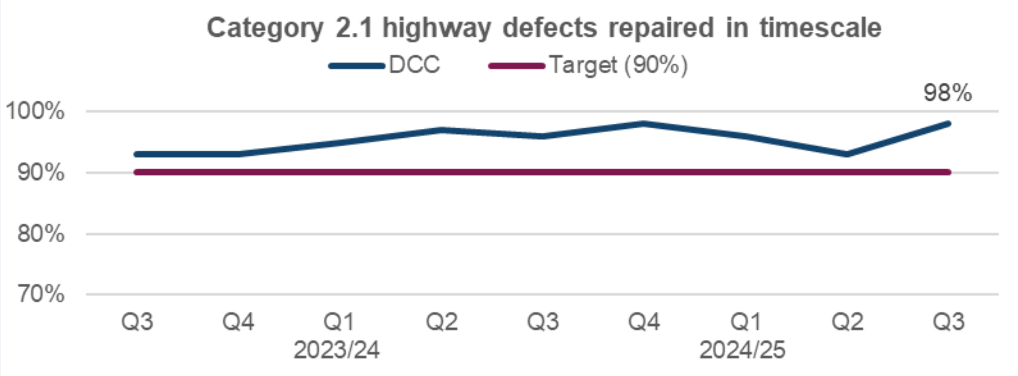


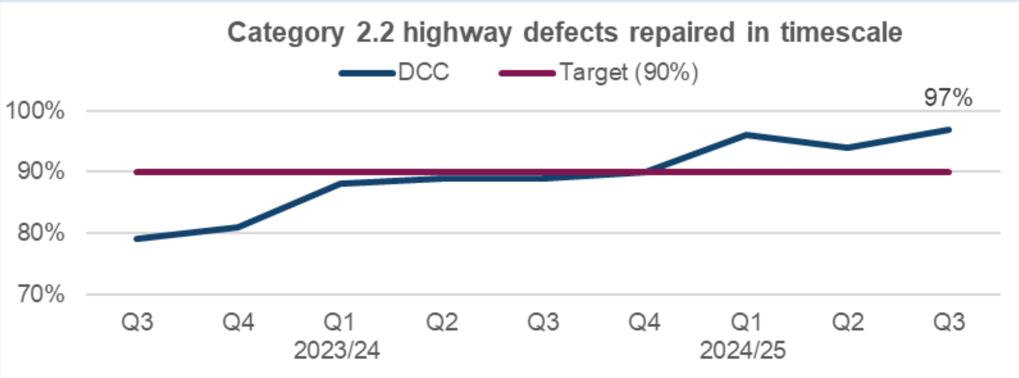
Highway Maintenance Dashboard: defects & satisfaction

(discrete quarterly data)

Highway Maintenance

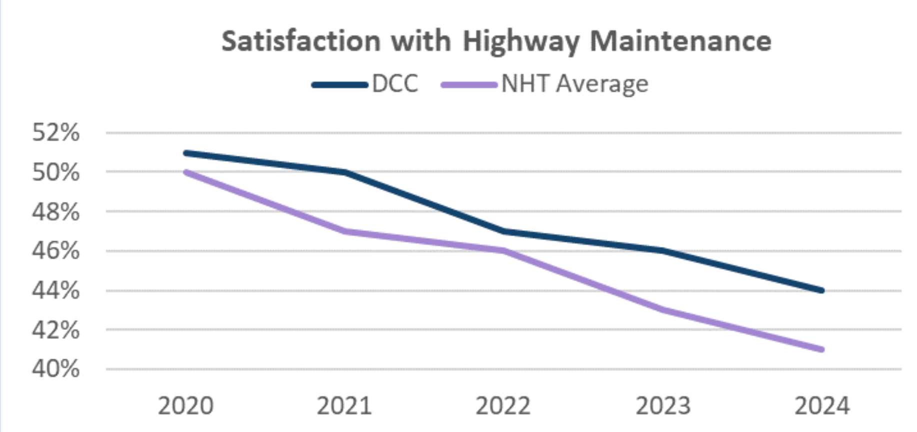






- Defects are categorised on a risk basis.
- Resources are targeted at those likely to pose the greatest risk of harm.
- Category 2.2 highway defects pose the lowest risk based on footfall and location.

Satisfaction with highway maintenance
(National Highways and Transport Survey)



Highways Asset Management Plan

114 The Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) 2023/24 sets out the long-term plan for managing our highway network. The HAMP condition and funding update was agreed at Cabinet in November 2024.

115 The overall condition of our classified network is within target and is better than the national average demonstrating the level of investment over previous years.

116 The condition of A Roads remains in a steady state when compared to last year but is better (3%) than both the target and national average (4%). The B and C road network is much better (3%) than the target (6%) and the national average (7%).

117 Due to unchanged funding and hyperinflation the condition of the classified network has deteriorated slightly.

118 Our priority has been to improve the condition of unclassified roads, which are below target (15%) but in line with the national average (17%). The Unclassified Road Fund provided an additional £8.8 million of investment into the unclassified network over a three-year period; in year £2.5 million supported improvements in this area.

119 This investment has reduced the percentage of network that requires improvement from 23% in 2023 to 17% in 2024, and this trend is expected to continue.

120 A recent benchmarking exercise with all seven regional North East Combined Authorities (NECA) has confirmed the condition of County Durham's unclassified network is better than all but one of its counterparts.

121 Investment into footway capital improvement projects has been paused following the announcement of the government's 'digital rollout programme'. Extensive broadband installation continues to impact on the footway network and until this programme nears completion footway funding has been reallocated to other areas, including the unclassified network. Safety critical footway repairs have continued to ensure public safety, however, in the longer-term additional investment will be required when the capital footway maintenance programme is reintroduced. Once the digital rollout programme nears completion, footway improvement schemes will be reintroduced utilising existing highway capital budget.

122 Structures overall are generally in 'fair' condition; however, a number of structures are coming to the 'end of their design life'. Additional capital funding has been secured for development of feasibility, detailed design and estimated cost packages which will be used to inform future investment.

123 We are currently using the most up to date condition data and treatment costs to enable an accurate highways maintenance backlog to be reported in quarter four. Early indications are that the backlog will have increased significantly driven by inflation which is outside of our control.

Highways Maintenance

124 Highway defects are categorised by risk. Resources are directed toward those with the potential to cause the greatest harm.

125 We have committed to repair 90% of all highway defects, regardless of category, within a set time. During quarter three (October to December), we achieved the target for all defect categories.

126 Category 1 defects (90% repaired within 2 or 72 hours depending on severity) was better than target, but below (94%) the same period last year (97%). Category 2.1 defects (90% repaired within 14 days) were better that the target and better (98%) than the same period last year (96%). Category 2.2 defects (90% repaired within 3 months) were better that the target and better (97%) than the same period last year (89%).

127 The improved performance has been driven by a number of factors including the introduction of new IT systems, improved products and repair techniques.

Data Tables

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

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

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

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

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

Our Economy: summary data tables

Economic Growth KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Major planning applications determined within 13 weeks	Oct-Dec 24	95%	90%	96.2%	Jul-Sep 24	88.5%	90.3%	91.7%	Yes
					Non-major planning applications determined in deadline	Oct-Dec 24	90%	90%	89.4%	Jul-Sep 24	90.3%	89.7%	91.3%	Yes
					Inward investments secured	Oct-Dec 24	5	2	2					Yes
					Investment secured for companies	Oct-Dec 24	£1,279,201	£1.25 million	£750,000					Yes
					Occupancy of Business Durham floor space	Oct-Dec 24	89.5%	95%	90.0%					Yes
					Private sector employments per 10,000 population	2023	2,820	Tracker	2,772	2023	2,820	4,059	3,216	No
					Private sector businesses per 10,000 population	2024	270	Tracker	272	2024	270	409	265	No
					GVA per filled job	2022	£51,361	Tracker	£50,154	2022	£51,361	£62,751	£51,395	No
					Employment land approved and delivered	2023/24	21.2Ha	28.46Ha	13.32Ha					No

Business Support KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Businesses engaged by Business Durham	Oct-Dec 24	185	250	157					
					Businesses supported by regeneration projects	Oct-Dec 24	30	Tracker	not comparable					Yes
					New businesses supported by CED Team	Oct-Dec 24	80	Tracker	not comparable					Yes

Employability and Skills KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Jobs created or safeguarded due to Business Durham activity	Oct-Dec 24	142	375	86					Yes
					Jobs created or safeguarded through regeneration schemes	Oct-Dec 24	110	Tracker	not comparable					Yes

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Registrations to employability programmes	Oct-Dec 24	82	117	N/A					Yes
					Number of participants receiving support to help gain employment	Oct-Dec 24	43	45	N/A					Yes
					Number of employed participants receiving support to sustain employment	Oct-Dec 24	29	27	N/A					Yes
					Employment rate for 16-64 year olds *Confidence intervals +/-4.1pp*	Oct 23 - Sep 24	71.1%	Tracker	70.8%	Oct 23 – Sep 24	71.1%	75.7%	71%	Yes
					Disability employment rate *Confidence intervals +/-4.4pp*	Oct 23 - Sep 24	36.6%	Tracker	42.4%	Oct 23 – Sep 24	36.6%	25.8%	31%	Yes
					Residents with higher level skills *Confidence intervals +/-4.4pp*	2023	60.9%	Tracker	59.1%	2023	60.9%	67.4%	62.8%	No
					16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship	Apr-Jun 23	7.3%	Tracker	8.5%	Apr-Jun 23	7.3%	4.8%	7%	

Cultural Offer KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					People attending cultural events ran and commissioned by CS&T	Oct-Dec 24	5,800	Tracker	179,326					Yes
					People attending council owned cultural venues (Town Halls and The Story)	Oct-Dec 24	65,338	48,860	Not comparable					Yes
					Average % occupancy of cinema screenings (Gala, Empire & BATH)	Oct-Dec 24	33%	35%	28%					Yes
					Average % yield of cinema screenings (BATH, Gala & Empire)	Oct-Dec 24	90%	100%	74%					Yes
					Average % yield of theatre performances (BATH, Gala & Empire)	Oct-Dec 24	83%	100%	99%					Yes
					Average % occupancy of theatre performances (Gala, Empire & BATH)	Oct-Dec 24	78%	75%	81%					Yes
					Council owned/managed heritage assets classed as 'at risk'	2024	1	Tracker	3					Yes
					Heritage assets ‘at risk’ categorised as ‘Priority A’ and/or in ‘very bad condition’	2024	7	Tracker	7					Yes
					Active borrowers (libraries)	Oct-Dec 24	47,155	46,342	45,733					Yes
					Digital borrowers (libraries)	Oct-Dec 24	4,832	4,499	4,181					Yes

Visitor Economy KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Visitors to the county	2023	20.15m	21.49m	17.91m					No
					Money generated by visitor economy	2023	£1.23bn	£1.25bn	£1.04bn					No
					Jobs supported by the visitor economy	2023	13,178	14,069	11,274					No
					Visitor attractions served by public transport	2023	67%	Tracker	67%					No
					Tourism businesses actively engaged with Visit County Durham	2024	54%	Tracker	55%					Yes

Our People: summary data tables

Housing Vulnerable People KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Potential clients contacted within 3 weeks of initial referral for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	Jul-Sep 24	100%	90%	95%					
					Households prevented from homelessness and helped to stay in their home	Oct-Dec 24	11%	Tracker	4%	Apr-Jun 24	6.9%	18.9%	11.4%	Yes
					Households prevented from homelessness and helped to move to alternative accommodation	Oct-Dec 24	24%	Tracker	14%	Apr-Jun 24	15.3%	33.2%	37.5%	Yes
					Households where homelessness has been relieved, and the client moved into alternative accommodation	Oct-Dec 24	33%	Tracker	33%	Apr-Jun 24	25.5%	29.8%	41.0%	Yes
					Households where there has been an acceptance of the main homeless duty	Oct-Dec 24	16%	Tracker	17%	Apr-Jun 24	13.0%	32.4%	10.2%	Yes
					Approvals on new housing sites of 10+ units, minimum of 66% of the total number of dwellings meet accessible and adaptable standards (building Regulations requirements M4(2)).	2023/24	58%	66%	71%					
					Approvals on new housing sites of 10 units or more, a minimum of 10% of the total number of dwellings meet a design and type for older persons	2023/24	9%	10%	16%					

Our Communities: summary data tables

Housing Delivery KPIs

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

Housing Standards KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Empty homes brought back into use as a result of local authority intervention	Oct-Dec 24	71	50	44					Yes
					Properties covered by Selective Licence Scheme that are licensed, or legal proceedings instigated	Oct-Dec 24	59%	100% (by 2027)	43%					Yes
					ASB incidents per 10,000 population within the Selective Licensing Scheme	2023/24	966	976	962					No

Transport Connectivity KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					Satisfaction with ease of access *(confidence intervals +/-3pp)*	2024	71%	Tracker	73%	2024	71%	71%		Yes
					Overall satisfaction with bus journey	2023	75%	Tracker	New	2023	75%	80%		No
					Households who can access key service locations using public transport within a 15-mile radius	2023	97.30%	97.73%	97.63%					No
					Households who can access key service locations using public transport within a 5-mile radius	2023	65.50%	67.80%	66.81%					No
					Residents who can access employment sites by public transport	2023	30.18%	32.10%	29.42%					No
					Timetabled bus services no more than 5 min late or 1 min early	Jul-Sep 24	76.7%	Tracker	77.0%					Yes
					Local passenger journeys on public transport	Jul-Sep 24	4,748,225	Tracker	4,638,338					Yes

Highways and Footways Maintenance KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated
					A roads where maintenance is recommended	2024	3%	Tracker	3%	2024	3%	4%	2%	Yes
					B & C roads where maintenance is recommended	2024	3%	Tracker	2%	2024	3%	7%	4%	Yes
					Unclassified roads where maintenance is recommended	2024	17%	Tracker	23%	2024	17%	17%	19%	Yes
					‘Footways’ structurally unsound	2022	30.9%	Tracker	31.3%					No
					Bridge condition: principal roads	2020	82.0%	Tracker	81.1%					No
					Bridge condition: non-principal roads	2020	81.0%	Tracker	80.1%					No
					Category 1 highway defects repaired within 2 or 72 hours (depending on severity)	Oct-Dec 24	94%	90%	97%					Yes
					Category 2.1 highway defects repaired within 14 days	Oct-Dec 24	98%	90%	96%					Yes
					Category 2.2 highway defects repaired within 3 months	Oct-Dec 24	97%	90%	89%					Yes
					Highways Maintenance Backlog	awaiting data		Tracker						No
					Satisfaction with highway maintenance. *(confidence intervals +/-3pp)*	2024	44%	Tracker	46%	2024	44%	41%		Yes

Glossary

Term	Definition
BATH	**Bishop Auckland Town Hall** A multi-purpose cultural venue situated in Bishop Auckland. It offers regular art exhibitions, live music, cinema screenings and theatre performances, as well as a library service.
Budget	An annual statement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the House of Commons that sets out the UK government's planned spending and revenue gathering for the foreseeable future. Two major financial announcements are given in a financial year (the Autumn Budget and the Spring Budget).
CDP	**County Durham Plan** Sets out the council's vision for housing, jobs and the environment until 2035, as well as the transport, schools and healthcare to support it (link)
CED	Community Economic Development
CS&T	Culture, Sport and Tourism
DCC	Durham County Council
DHP	**Discretionary Housing Payments** Short term payments which can be made to tenants in receipt of the housing benefit element of Universal Credit, to help sort out housing and money problems in the longer term.
DLE	**Daily Living Expenses** Available for those whose circumstances have changed unexpectedly. Payments can be made for up to seven days to help with food, travel and some clothing (restrictions apply).
ERDF	**European Regional Development Fund** Funding that helps to create economic development and growth; it supports businesses, encourages new ideas and supports regeneration. Although the UK has now left the EU, under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement, EU programmes will continue to operate in the UK until their closure in 2023-24.
ETA	**Extension of Time Agreement** An agreement between the council and the customer submitting a planning application to extend the usual deadline beyond 13 weeks due to the complex nature of the application.
GVA	**Gross Value Added** Measure of value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.
Homelessness: **Legislation**	**Prevention Duty** We must take reasonable steps to help prevent any eligible person (regardless of priority need status, intentionality and whether they have a local connection) who is threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless. This means either helping them to stay in their current accommodation or helping them to find a new place to live before they become actually homeless. The prevention duty continues for 56 days unless it is brought to an end by an event such as accommodation being secured for the person, or by their becoming homeless. **Relief Duty** If the applicant is already homeless, or becomes homeless despite activity during the prevention stage, reasonable steps will be focused on helping to secure accommodation. This relief duty lasts for 56 days unless ended in another way. If we believe the applicant is eligible for assistance and has a priority need, they must be provided with interim accommodation. **Main Housing Duty** If homelessness is not successfully prevented, we will owe the main housing duty to those who are eligible, have a priority need for accommodation and are not homeless intentionally. A suitable offer of a settled home (whether accepted or refused by the applicant) would bring the main housing duty to an end.

Term	Definition
IES	**Inclusive Economic Strategy** Clear, long-term vision for the area's economy up to 2035, with an overarching aim to create more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy (link)
LGA	**Local Government Association** The national membership body for councils which works on behalf of its member councils to support, promote and improve local government.
L!NKCD	Programme that brings together a number of delivery partners to support people with multiple barriers to address these underlying issues and to move them closer to or into the labour market or re-engage with education or training.
MTFP	**Medium Term Financial Plan** A document that sets out the council's financial strategy over a four year period
PRS	**Private Rented Sector** This classification of housing relates to property owned by a landlord and leased to a tenant. The landlord could be an individual, a property company or an institutional investor. The tenants would either deal directly with an individual landlord, or alternatively with a management company or estate agency caring for the property on behalf of the landlord.
SG	**Settlement Grants** Help people stay in their home or move back into housing after living in supported or unsettled accommodation (such as leaving care or being homeless). They provide help towards furniture, white goods, flooring, curtains, bedding, kitchen equipment, removal costs etc.
SME	**Small to Medium Sized Enterprise** A company with no more than 500 employees.
Statistical nearest neighbours	A group of councils that are similar across a wide range of socio-economic. Durham County Council uses the CIPFA nearest neighbours model which compares us to Northumberland, North Tyneside, Barnsley, Rotherham, Wakefield, Doncaster, Redcar and Cleveland, Wigan, St Helens, Cornwall, Sefton, Sunderland, Wirral, Plymouth and Calderdale
UKSPF	**UK Shared Prosperity Fund** Part of the government's Levelling Up agenda that provides funding for local investment to March 2025. All areas of the UK receive an allocation from the Fund to enable local decision making and better target the priorities of places within the UK that will lead to tangible improvements to the places where people work and live.
Yield	Proportion of potential income achieved