

# Scrutiny Report Corporate & Communities 22-23 Q2

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## Registration and Coroner's

### Birth registration appointments within 5 working days

**RAG:** Green

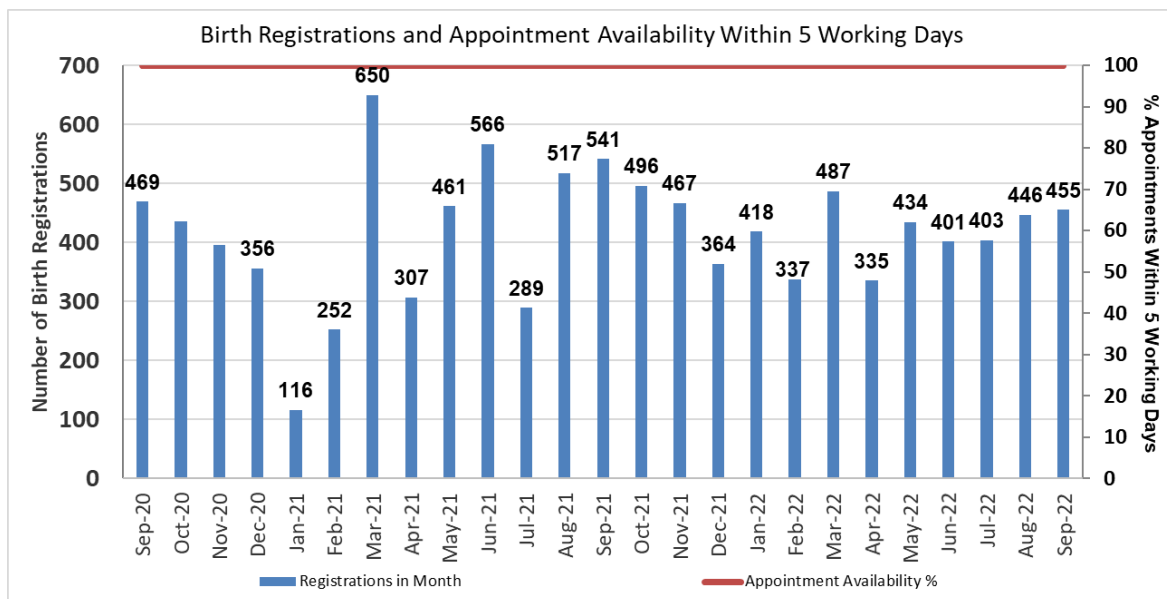
**Direction of Travel:** No Noticeable Change

**Performance Details:** Anyone contacting the service in the first six months of 2022/2023 to register a birth was offered a convenient appointment within 5 working days. The facility for the public to book birth appointments on-line was restricted for three weeks in July last year but was made fully available again in August and has remained so since then. Birth registrations in the April to June quarter totalled 1,170, down 12.3% compared with the 1,334 registered in the same quarter last year.

**Current Activity:** Where possible, additional birth-registration appointments continue to be made available at the Worcester, Redditch, and Kidderminster offices. Evening appointments remain available at Bromsgrove, Evesham, Kidderminster, and Malvern. Late nights at the Worcester Office will commence on 10th October. These measures should help ensure that anyone contacting the service to register a birth can be offered a convenient appointment within 5 working days.

**Future Activity:** The service will follow all national guidelines in respect of the registration of births and will keep residents informed of any changes via the website, social media, and local media.

### **Graph: Number of Birth Registrations and Percentage Appointment Availability Within 5 Working Days**



## Death registration appointments within 2 working days

**RAG:** Green

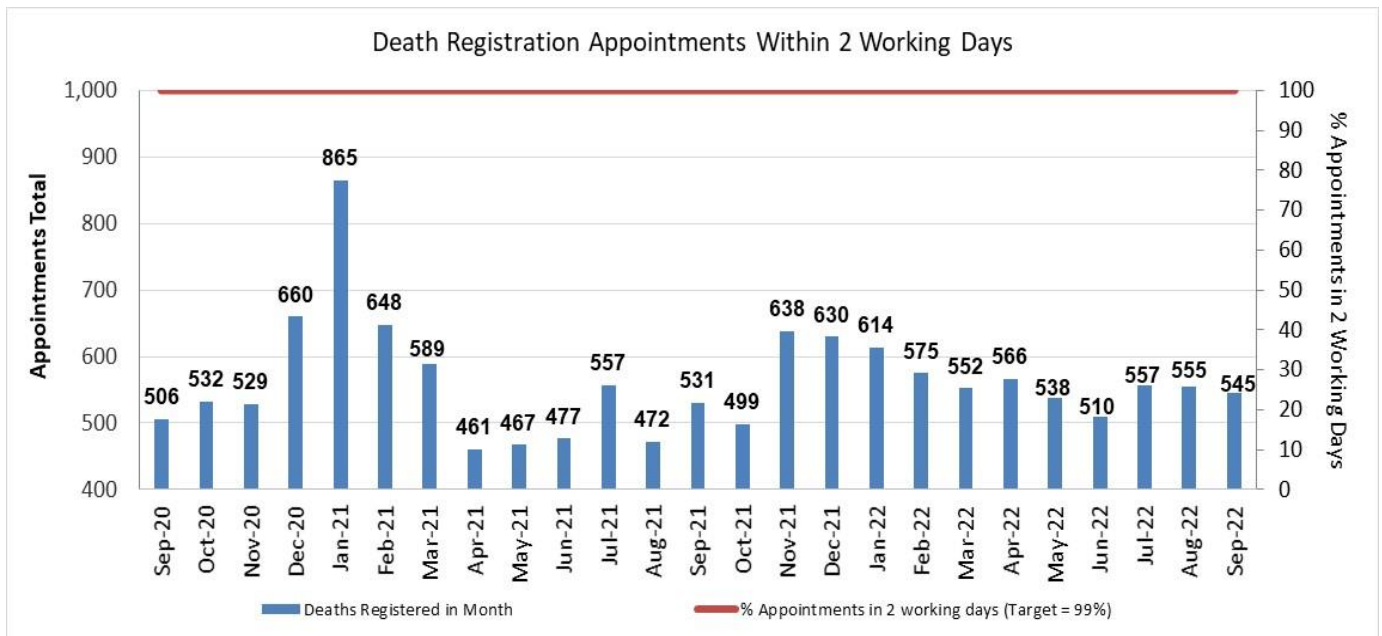
**Direction of Travel:** No Noticeable Change

**Performance Details:** Face-to-face registrations of deaths resumed as soon as the Coronavirus Act lapsed in March. For the whole of the April-to-June quarter, additional appointment calendars were opened to enable more deaths to be registered, with four Registration Offices offering evening appointments and some Saturday opening. The number of deaths registered in the first six months of this financial year was 3,271, up 10.3% from 2,965 in the same six months last year.

**Current Activity:** The procedures in place prior to the pandemic have been restored. However, in anticipation of the increase in workload that would entail, staff have been trained to undertake a variety of roles, ensuring greater service resilience. Increased availability of appointments is beneficial in many cases, such as those in which families require a prompt death registration to facilitate a burial in accordance with faith beliefs. Additional appointments will become available once evening opening at the Worcester Office commences on 10th October.

**Future Activity:** Local arrangements and practices will be reviewed in the light of any further central government and General Register Office guidance and feedback from staff and service users.

### Graph: Number of Death Registration Appointments and Percentage of Availability of Appointments



## Registration of deaths within 5 days

**RAG:** Red

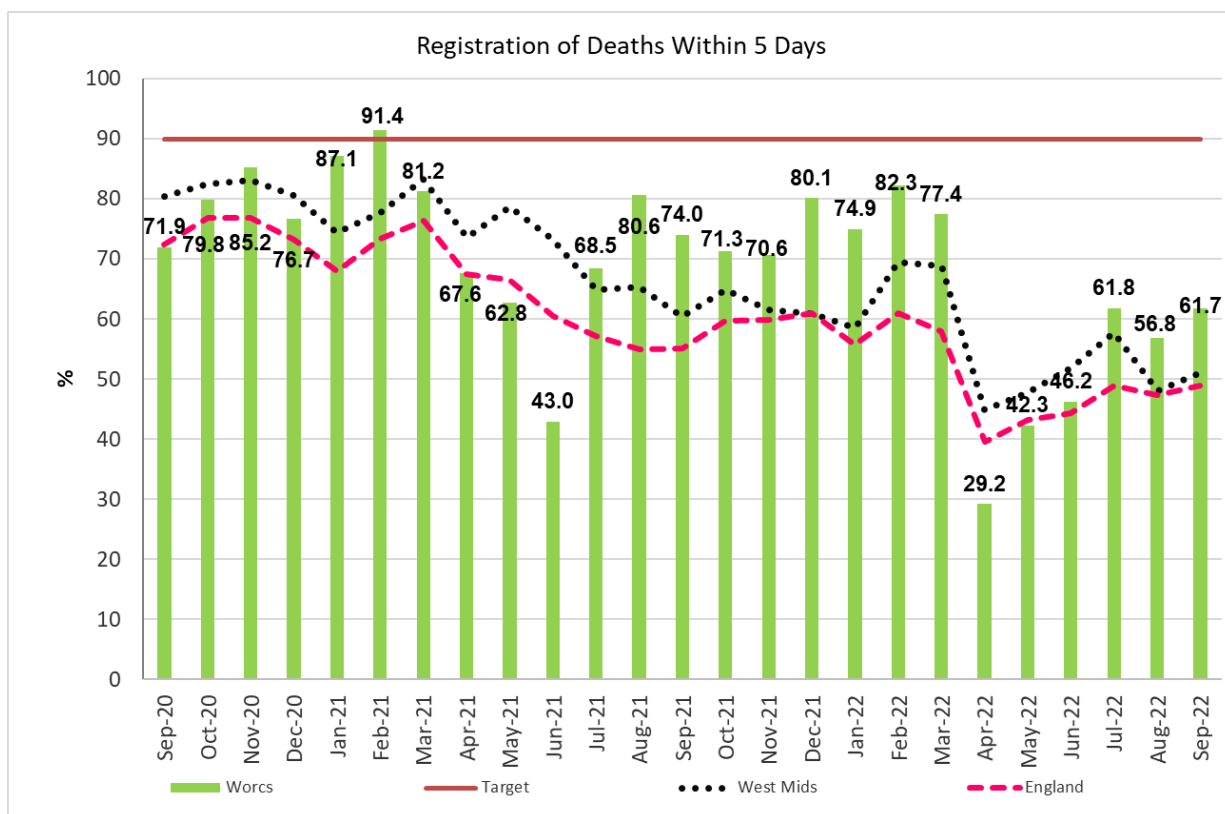
**Direction of Travel:** Improving

**Performance Details:** 329 deaths were registered in September, of which 203 (61.7%) were registered in less than 5 days. This represents an improvement from 56.8% in August and was above the equivalent September percentages for the West Midlands (51%) and England as a whole (49%). Performance for the financial year as a whole continues to improve, the figure for April to September being 49.4%, up from 47% for April to August. The West Midlands and all-England figures for the first half of the current financial year were, respectively, 50.1% and 45.4%. Only 13 (7.5%) of the 174 registration districts achieved General Register Office's 90% target across the April-to-September period.

**Current Activity:** The deterioration in performance locally, regionally, and nationally compared with previous years is mainly due to GPs' processing of paperwork. In some instances where the certifying GP is absent, the rule allowing that GP to refer the death registration to the Coroner for assignment to another GP is not being used. There are also still plenty of instances of paperwork being received from GPs on or after the fourth day following a death. The National Panel for Registration has asked GRO to raise the matter with DHSC and the National Medical Examiner. Locally, there continues to be engagement with GPs and monitoring of how quickly appointments are booked once the appropriate paperwork is to hand.

**Future Activity:** Monitoring of monthly out-turns to continue as a means of gauging the effectiveness of the local and national measures outlined in 'Current Activity'. Local procedures will be revised if any changes to the guidelines or local reviews make such adaptations necessary.

**Graph: Percentage of Deaths Registered in 5 Working Days**



## Communications and Consumer Relations

### Increasing staff engagement

**RAG:** Green

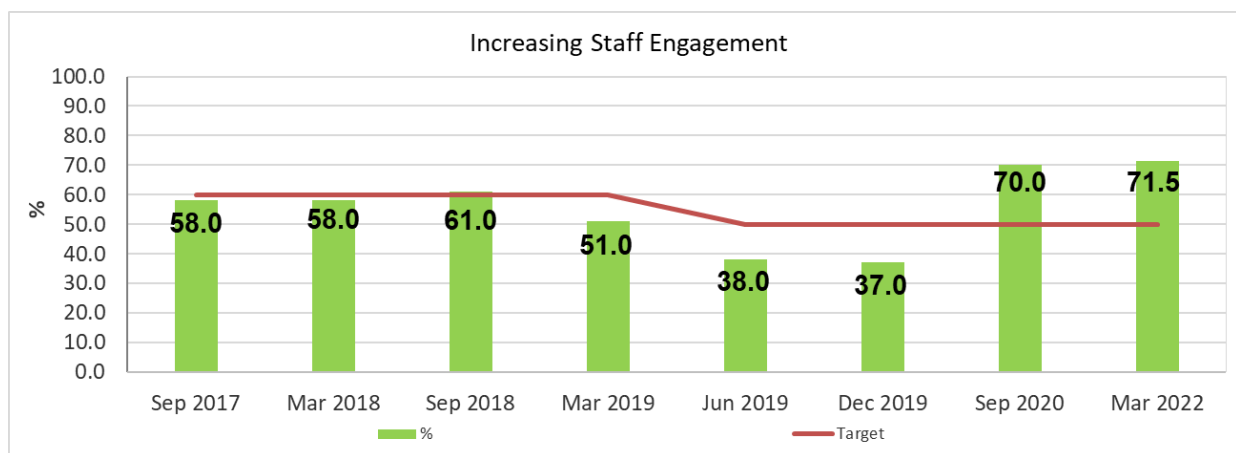
**Direction of Travel:** Improving

**Performance Details:** The staff survey that ran from 7th February to 7th March inclusive had a 71.5% response rate, the best to date. Staff have been thanked for participating. The previous-highest response rate was 70% for the previous survey in September 2020. The extended gap between surveys was due to the County Council's COVID-19 response.

**Current Activity:** Workforce updates to continue to be provided via Staff Briefings and regular emails. These will provide progress reports about the actions put in place in response to the themes raised in the survey, aligned to the Workforce Strategy.

**Future Activity:** The next Staff Survey is planned for January/February 2023

### **Graph: Percentage of Staff That Completed the Staff Survey**



## HR, ICT and Corporate Information Governance Team

### Employees - Actual Full-Time Equivalents

RAG: N/A

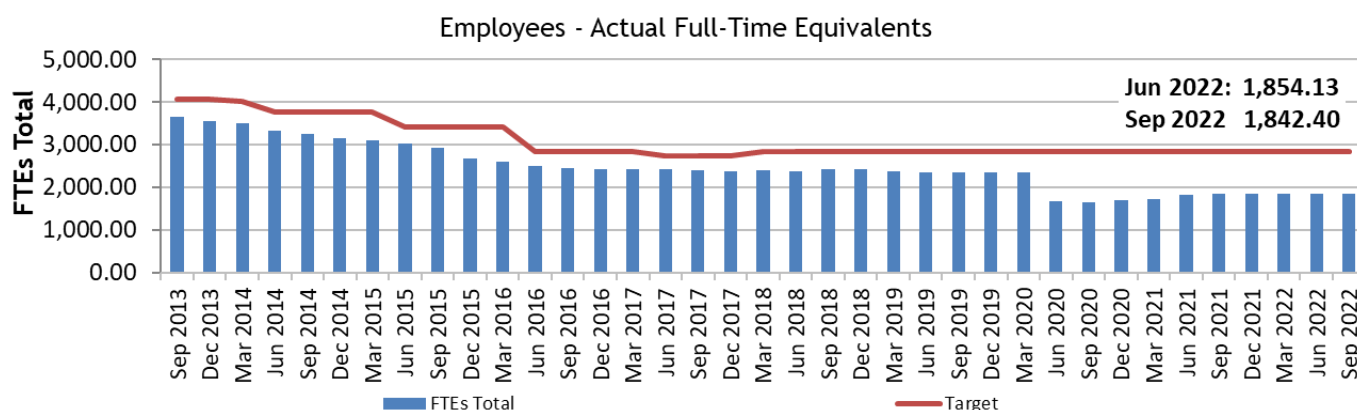
Direction of Travel: N/A

**Performance Details:** FTEs at the end of the second quarter of 2022/2023 equated to 1,842.40, down 0.6% from 1,854.13 at the end of June and 0.3% lower than at the end of March 2022 (1,848.4). Changes in headcount from quarter to quarter reflect some of the initiatives active at any one time (e.g. TUPE in/out, recruitment drives).

**Current Activity:** Confirmed data for each quarter is normally available towards the end of the first month of the following quarter.

**Future Activity:**

**Graph: Number of Employees- Actual Full-Time Equivalents by Quarter**



## Sickness Rates

RAG: Red

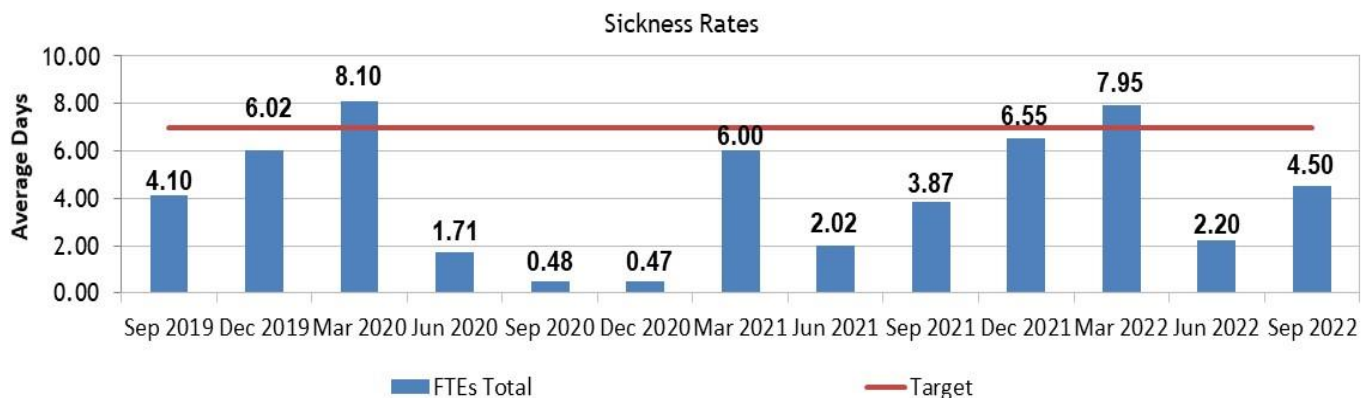
Direction of Travel: Deteriorating

**Performance Details:** At the end of quarter 2 of 2022/2023, the average days sick per person (FTE) was 4.50, up from 3.87 at the same stage of 2021/2022. The average for the whole of 2021/2022 was 7.95 (the target is 7 or less). The equivalent figure at the end of 2020/2021 was 6.00; at the end of 2019/2020 it was 8.10.

**Current Activity:** Monitoring and management of sickness absence continues. Confirmed data for each quarter is normally available towards the end of the first month of the following quarter.

**Future Activity:**

**Graph: Average Days Sick per FTE (Full Time Equivalents)**



Days lost through long-term sickness

**RAG:** N/A

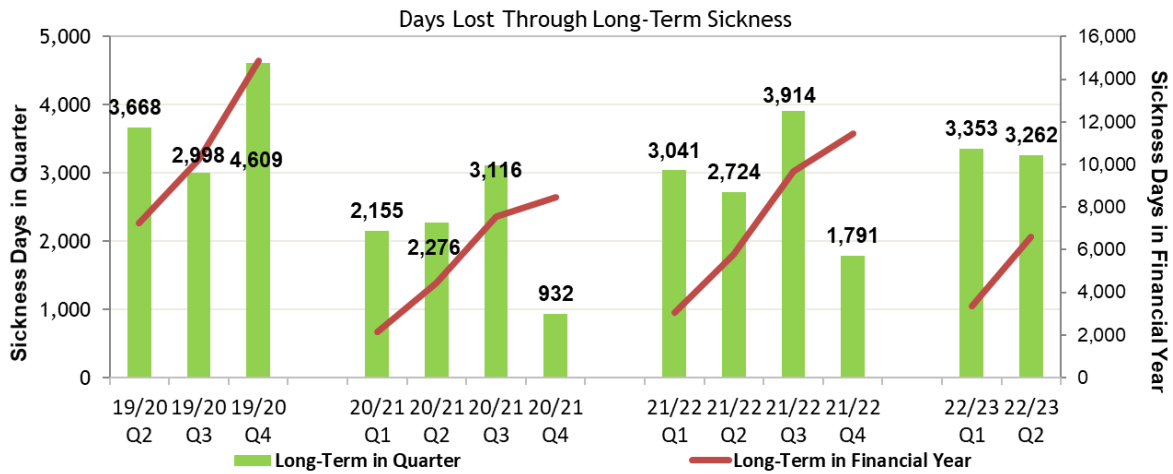
**Direction of Travel:** N/A

**Performance Details:** Long-term absences are episodes of 21 or more calendar days. 2022/2023's quarter 2 long-term absences totalled 3,262, the highest total at the end of quarter 2 since 2019/2020, when the total at the end of September was 3,667.54. The total at the end of September this year was up 16.5% up compared with the figure for the second quarter of 2021/2022 (2,723.50).

**Current Activity:** Monitoring and management of sickness absence continues. Confirmed data for each quarter is normally available towards the end of the first month of the following quarter.

**Future Activity:**

**Graph: Total Days Lost Through Long-Term Sickness**





Days lost through short-term sickness

RAG: N/A

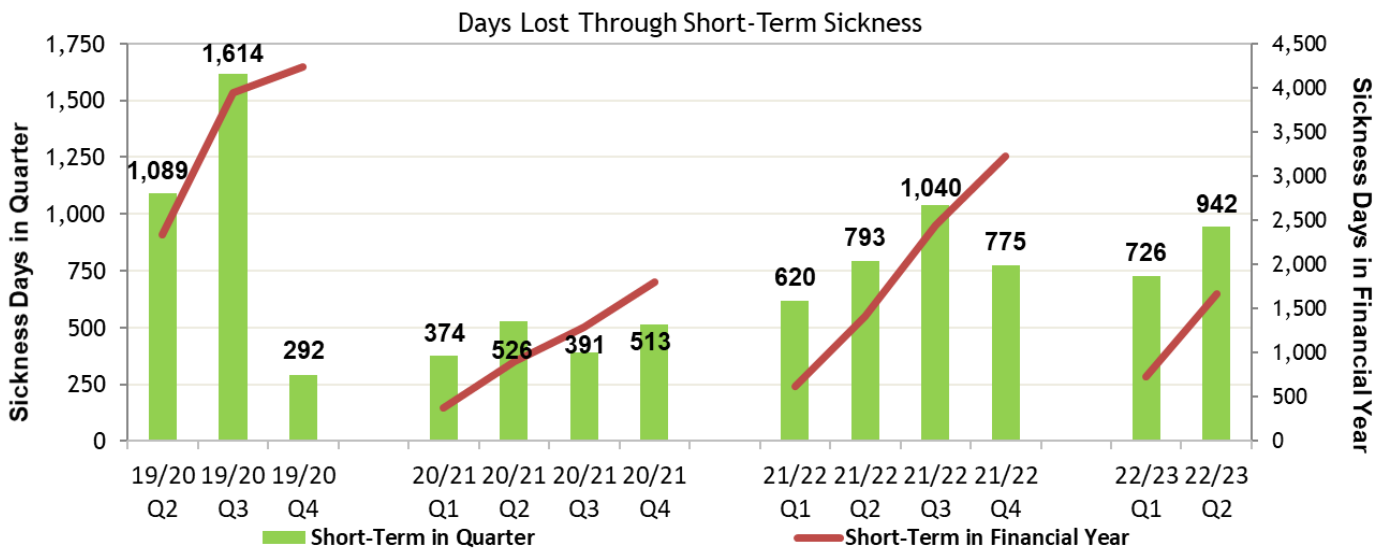
Direction of Travel: N/A

**Performance Details:** Short-term absences in the second quarter of the current financial year totalled 942. As with the long-term sickness figure, this is the highest quarter 2 total for three years, the figure at the end of September 2019 being 1,088.65. The total at the end of September this year was 15.9 % higher than the figure for June to September last year, which was 792.50.

**Current Activity:** Monitoring and management of sickness absence continues. Confirmed data for each quarter is normally available towards the end of the first month of the following quarter.

**Future Activity:**

**Graph: Total Days Lost Through Short-Term Sickness**



Staff turnover rate

**RAG:** N/A

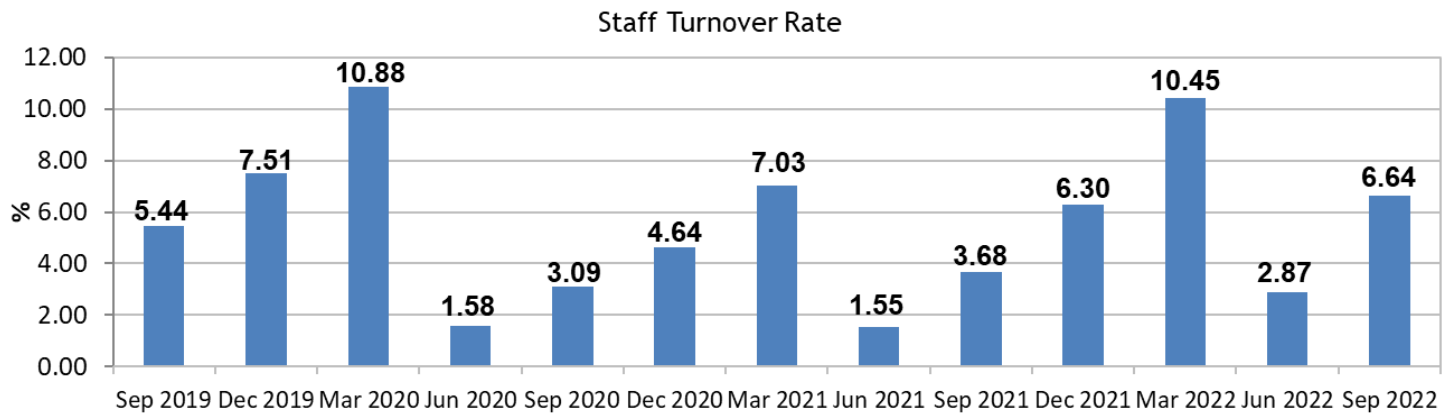
**Direction of Travel:** N/A

**Performance Details:** Leavers in the financial year as a percentage of the workforce. 2021/2022's final figure of 10.45% was above 2020/2021's 7.03%, but below 2019/2020's 10.88% and 2018/2019's 10.97%. The quarter 2 2022/2023 out-turn of 6.64% is higher than the 2017-2021 average for April to September, which was 4.2%.

**Current Activity:**

**Future Activity:**

**Graph: Turnover Rate**



Cost of agency staff as a percentage of the total pay-bill

**RAG:** N/A

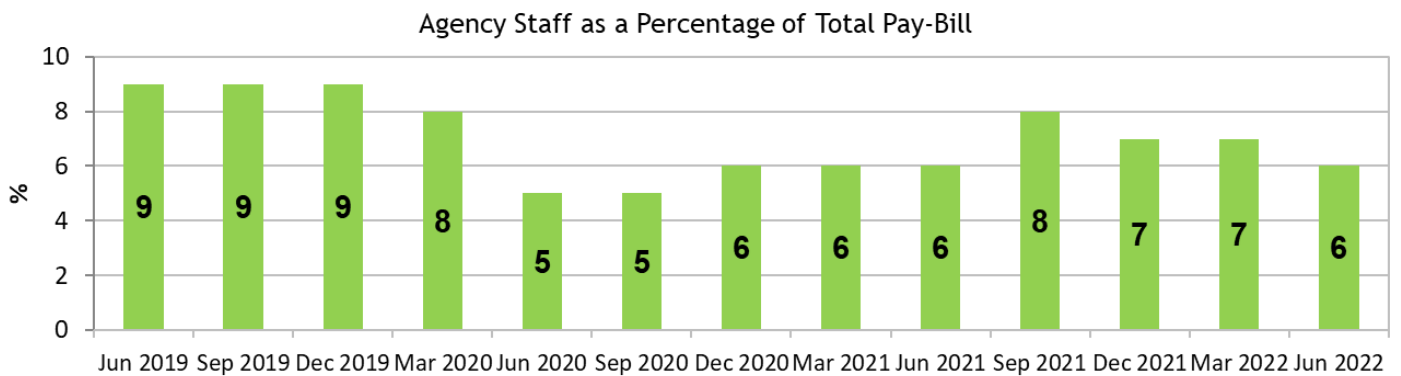
**Direction of Travel:** No Noticeable change

**Performance Details:** Agency spend at each quarter-end as a percentage of the total pay bill. Since 1st October 2019, the figure has excluded WCF. 2022/2023's percentage on 30th June was 6%, down from 7% on 31st March. On 30th September last year, the figure was 8%

**Current Activity:**

**Future Activity:**

**Graph: Agency Staff as a Percentage of Total Pay-Bill**



## Communities

Library Visits Library Issues

**RAG:** No Status

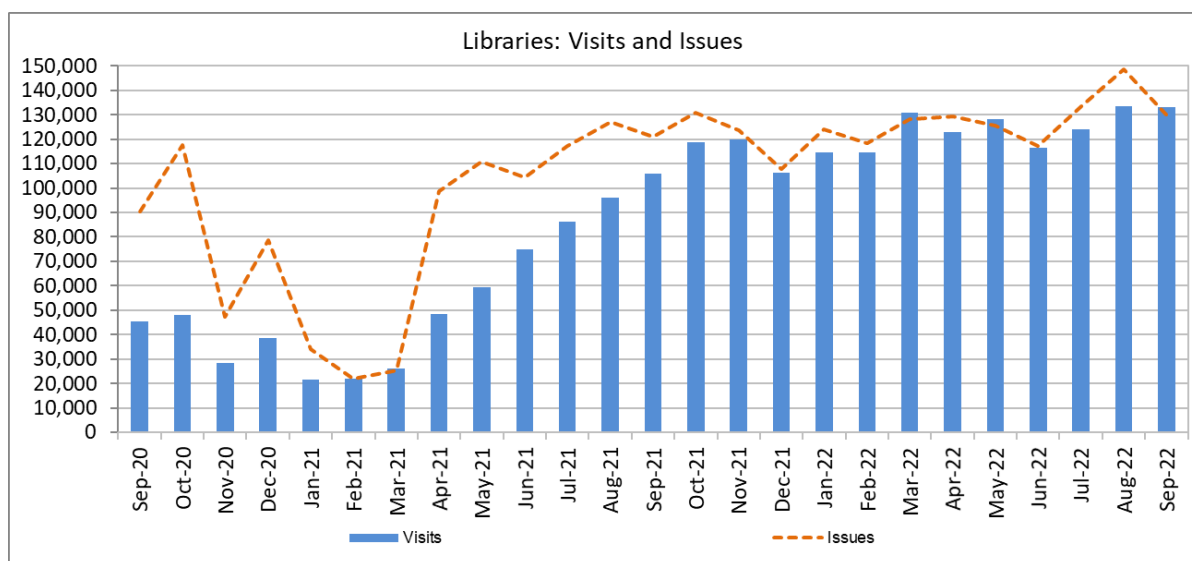
**Direction of Travel:** Visits – Improving Issues- Improving

**Performance Details:** Visits in the first six months of this financial year totalled 757,756, up 60.9% compared with the April-to-September 2021 total of 470,992. The total for April to September 2022 equates to 55.7% of the total for the same period in 2019 (1,360,304). The latest Libraries Connected national comparator data indicates physical borrowing is at 78% of the 2019/2020 level. Locally, September's 130,149 issues of books equated to 82% of September 2019's figure of 159,517.

**Current Activity:** Libraries continue to provide the full range of on-site services. These include meetings of social-connecting groups, children's activities, adult learning courses, digital support, and employability sessions. Libraries are home to Worcestershire Business & Intellectual Property Centre, giving free advice, information, and resources to businesses. Monitoring of the Libraries Unlocked schemes at Droitwich and Stourport continues. This includes not just visits and issues, but use of the buildings by community groups

**Future Activity:** Actions to increase library usage will include the Libraries Unlocked schemes. Local events and activities will be promoted. The opt-in e-mail service will keep members better informed about new library services and future plans, as well as providing a feedback facility. Customer Voice Survey responses will also help inform planning and promotional activities.

**Graph: Number of Visits and Issues per Month**



Library Issues: e-books, e-audio books, e-magazines, and e-newspapers

**RAG:** No Status

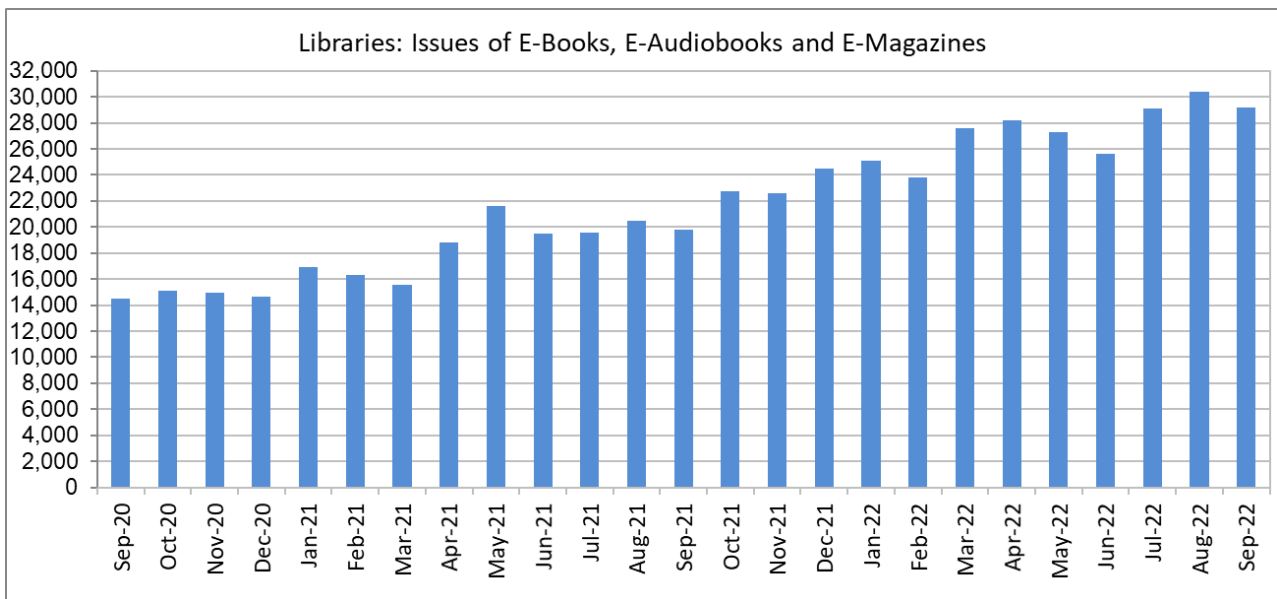
**Direction of Travel:** No Noticeable Change

**Performance Details:** August's e-issues total of 30,376 was the first calendar-month figure to exceed 30,000. E-issues in the first half of the current financial year (169,814) were up 41.8% compared with April-to-September 2021's 119,739. The largest share of the total for the last six months was e-newspapers' 38.7% (e-audiobooks' share was 28.1%, e-books' was 20.6%, and e-magazines' 12.7%). The e-issues total for 2021/2022 was 266,167, up 76,258 (40.2%) compared with 2020/2021's 189,909.

**Current Activity:** Efforts continue to promote the e-library. These include setting up Borrowbox displays in libraries and highlighting on the Library Service website the Digital Library Hub, which provides a one-stop shop for e-services. Work is ongoing with the e-book and e-audiobook supplier to expand the range of titles and the number of available copies of already-held titles. Nationally, Libraries Connected is in discussions with publishers about libraries being given access to e-versions of the most-recent published titles.

**Future Activity:** Monitoring of e-issues and the number of active users (including new users) will continue as a means of tracking the appeal to residents of the e-collections and the effectiveness of promotional campaigns, as well as providing evidence to support any review discussions with the service providers (BorrowBox for e-books, Overdrive for e-magazines, Press Reader for e-papers).

**Graph: Number of Issues of E-Books, E-Audiobooks and E-Magazines per month**



## Museum Visits

**RAG:** No Status

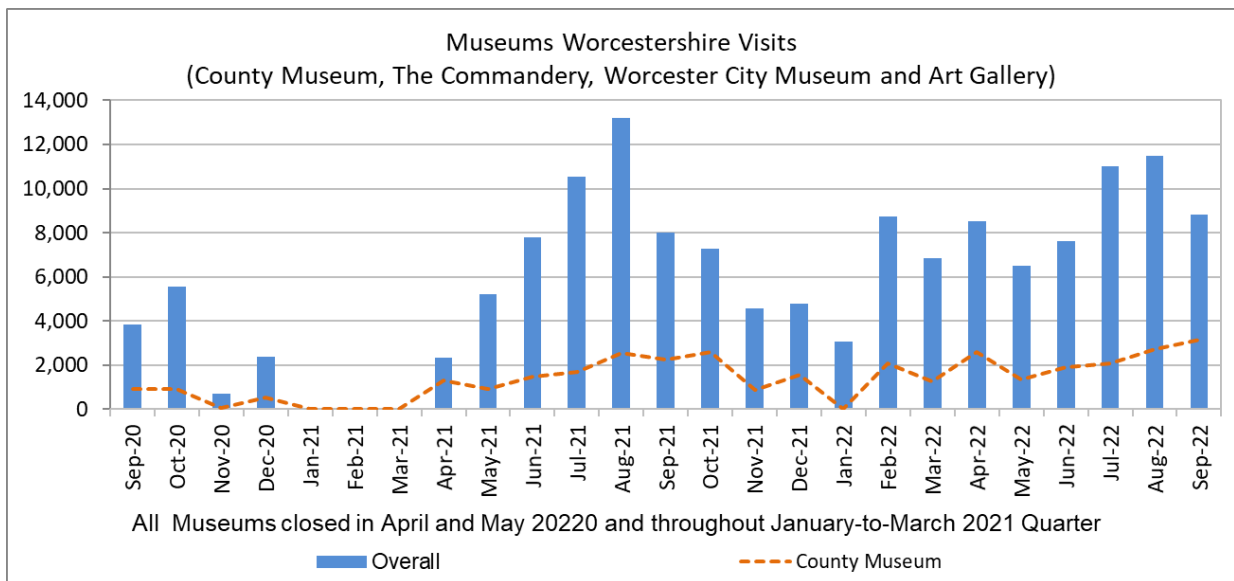
**Direction of Travel:** Increasing

**Performance Details:** County Museum’s visits total for September (3,151) is its highest calendar-month figure since August 2015, when the figure was three higher. Visits from 1st April to 30th September inclusive totalled 13,832, an increase of 36.1% compared with the total for the same period last year (10,162) and 5.3% higher than the total for April to September 2019 (13,133). Admissions receipts for April to September were £72,500, of which Museums Worcestershire's share was £32,806 (45.2%).

**Current Activity:** Autumn and winter events will include half-term and Halloween activity days and the traditional Christmas at the Castle weekend in December. The County Museum's information leaflet is available in several formats, including on-line. It details the partnership with Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust, providing details of all the buildings on the site, the grounds themselves, and the activities and live events the County Museum and the Trust are staging between them. Site accessibility information, ticket prices, and how to book group visits also feature.

**Future Activity:** Work will continue with the Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust to further promote the whole site, accredited by the Visit England Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme for the high standard of the museum and visitor experience. The Trust will stage outdoor events. County Museum staff will continue to run events and undertake outreach visits to schools in the county and outside it.

**Graph: Combined monthly totals for County Museum, The Commandery, and Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery by month**



## Countryside Standards Achieved

**RAG:** Amber

**Direction of Travel:** Deteriorating

**Performance Details:** The Countryside Sites Standards PI at the end of the July-to-September quarter was 81%, a deterioration of two percentage points from 83% at the end of June. The decline in the percentage is primarily because two full-time members of staff left during the summer. The loss of almost a quarter of the team's overall staffing hours meant that non-health-and-safety maintenance issues such as replacing broken picnic benches were not progressed as was hoped.

**Current Activity:** Two new members of staff have been recruited and are now in post. Hopefully, this will help to ensure an improvement in the score by the end of the next quarter. A lot of site furniture such as permanent picnic benches and signage is coming to the end of its life, the impact on furniture of weathering and normal levels of usage having been accelerated by increased usage during the COVID-19 pandemic. The regular programme of inspections, groundworks, and repairs should ensure signs and notices, buildings, site furniture, and trails are repaired and well-maintained.

**Future Activity:** Sites' usage will decrease during the winter months, but the service will continue to promote each site's natural attractions, facilities, and any events and activities being staged. The schedule of regular inspections will identify any issues arising from increased usage, but any issues or concerns raised by visitors will be monitored and addressed as necessary.

**Graph: Countryside Site Standards Achieved**

