

Scrutiny Report Corporate & Communities 2023/2024 Quarter 1

Contents

Scrutiny Report Corporate & Communities 2023/2024 Quarter 1	1
Registration and Coroner’s	2
Birth registration appointments within 5 working days	2
Death registration appointments within 2 working days	2
Registration of deaths within 5 days.....	3
Communications and Consumer Relations	4
Increasing staff engagement.....	4
HR, ICT and Corporate Information Governance Team	5
Employees - Actual Full-Time Equivalents	5
Sickness Rates (Cumulative).....	5
Days lost through long-term sickness	6
Days lost through short-term sickness.....	6
Staff turnover rate	7
Cost of agency staff as a percentage of the total pay-bill.....	7
Communities	8
Library Visits and Issues	8
Library Issues: e-books, e-audio books, e-magazines, and e-newspapers	10
Museum Visits.....	11
Countryside Standards Achieved	13
Bikeability – Children Trained in Level 2	14
Bikeability – Children Trained in Other Levels	15
Appendix – Link to Power BI Performance Summary	16

Registration and Coroner's

Birth registration appointments within 5 working days

RAG: Green

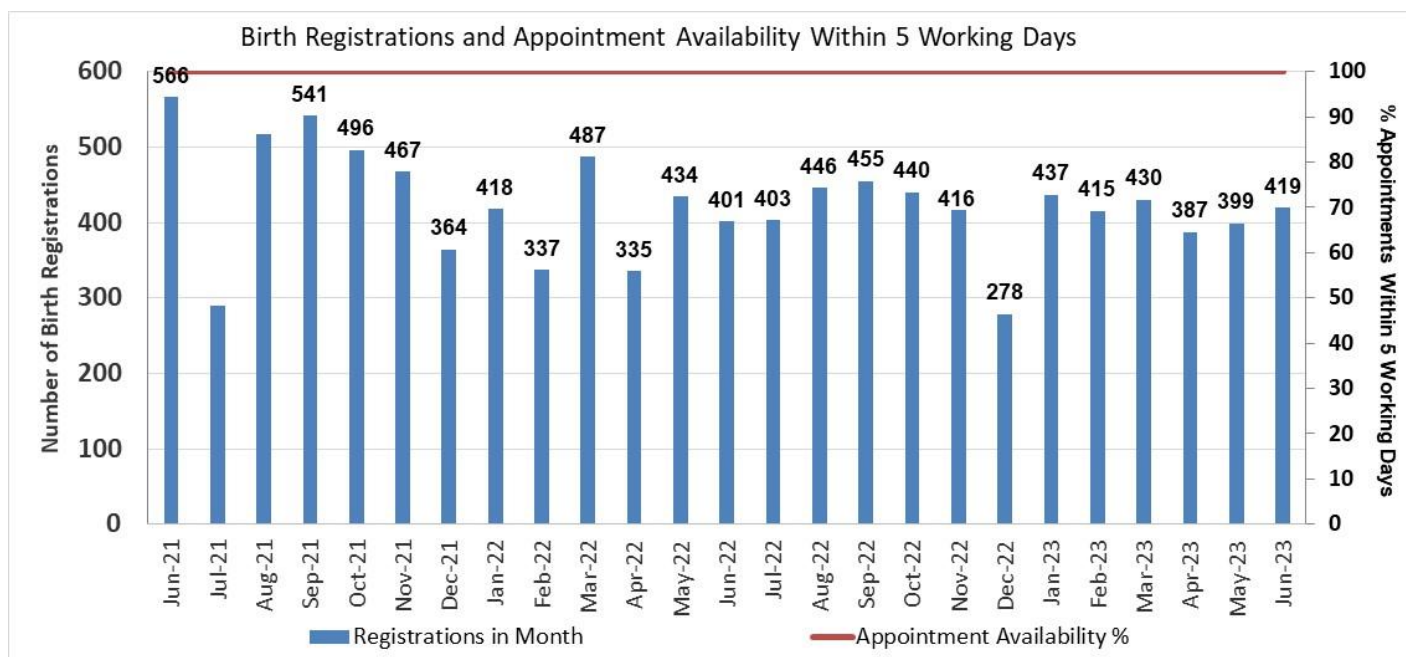
Direction of Travel: No Noticeable Change

Performance Details: Anyone contacting the service from April to June 2023 to register a birth was offered a convenient appointment within 5 working days. Birth registrations in the first quarter of this financial year totalled 1,205, up 35 (3%) compared with the 1,170 registered in the same quarter last year.

Current Activity: Extra calendars were put in place prior to Easter to accommodate more death-registration appointments, thereby ensuring full availability of all appointment types was maintained throughout April. When registering births, the service continues to hand over a free book pack. This constitutes the refreshed Bookstart Scheme, which is run in partnership with Library Service. It is being publicised on the two services' websites and social media streams.

Future Activity: The service will follow all national guidelines in respect of the registration of births. Opening hours will continue to be reviewed to ensure they offer the maximum number of appointments at the times most convenient for residents. The public will be informed of any changes to those and any alterations to opening times at any of the county's offices via the website, social media, and local media. Evening opening will

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



Death registration appointments within 2 working days

RAG: Green

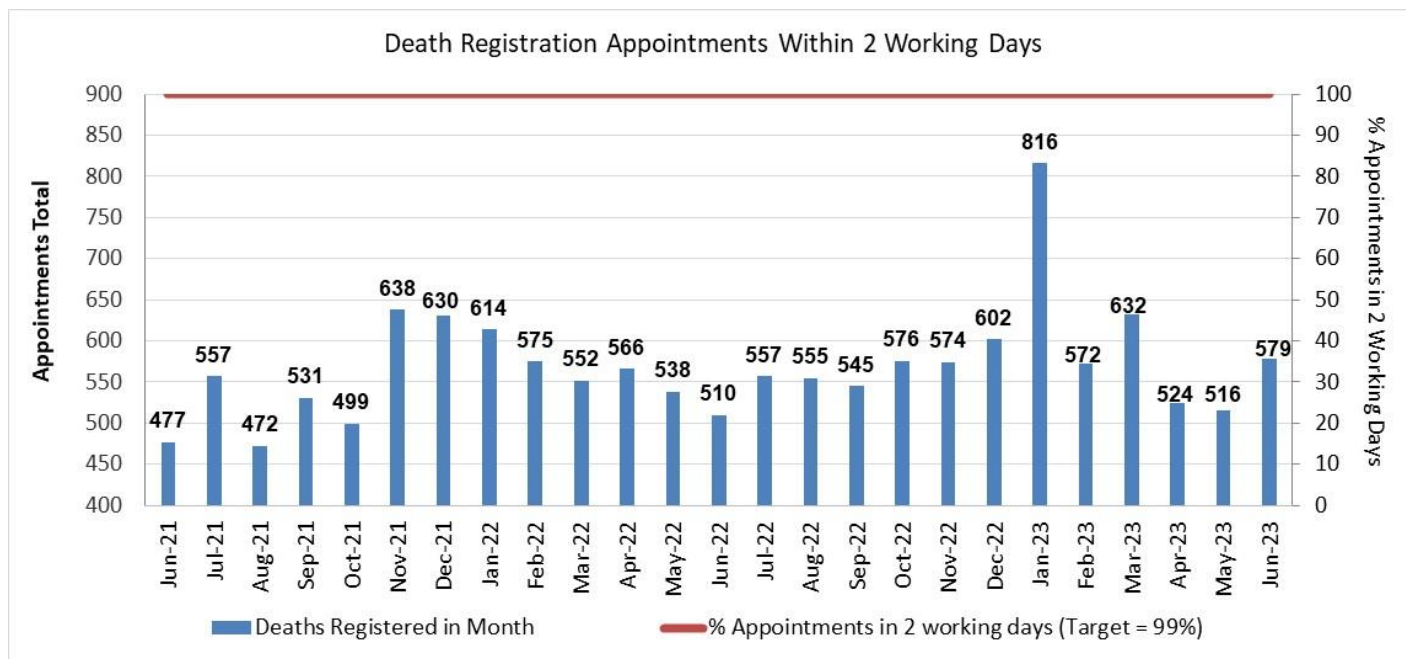
Direction of Travel: No noticeable change

Performance Details: Demand for appointments is not focussed on one office. Despite the additional demands, full availability of appointments was maintained throughout the first quarter of the financial year, as was the case throughout 2022/2023.

Current Activity: More death-registration appointments are being offered as quickly as possible and the processes for registration of deaths have recently been revised. The impact of those changes is being monitored. There continue to be instances of paperwork being received from GPs on or after the fourth day following a death. Current actions to address this are engagement with Practice Managers to try to speed up the processing of paperwork and a reminder to staff to contact informants about deaths of which the service is aware.

Future Activity: Current arrangements will be reviewed and altered if required. The service and local GP surgeries will need to continue to work with the office of the local Medical Examiner (ME), increasing the time needed to sign off the paperwork enabling deaths to be registered. The number of deaths to be registered is likely to drop during the summer.

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



Registration of deaths within 5 days

RAG: Red

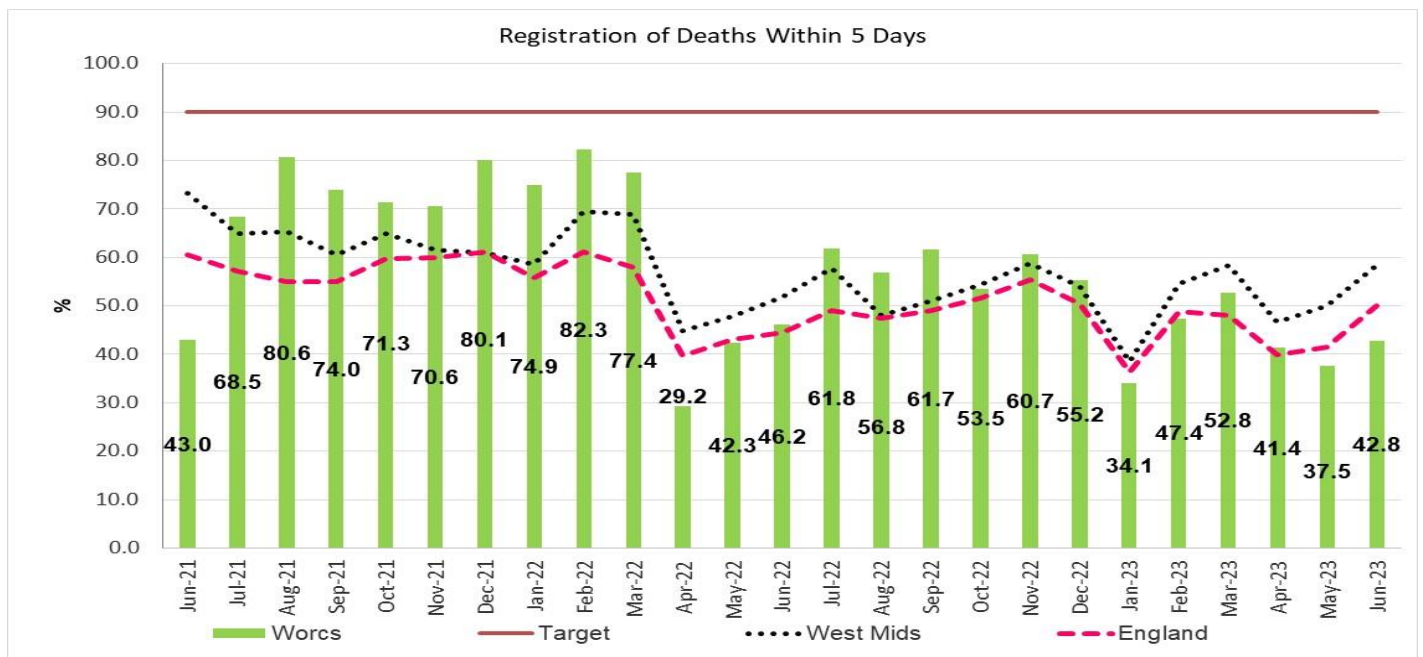
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: In June, 145 (42.8%) of the 362 deaths registered in Worcestershire were within 5 days. The percentage represented an improvement compared with May's 37.5%, but was below June's out-turns for the West Midlands (58.4%) and England as a whole (50.1%). The main influence on performance remains the need for the service and local GP surgeries to work with the office of the local Medical Examiner (ME), increasing the time needed to sign off the paperwork enabling deaths to be registered. Worcestershire is currently one of only two registration authorities in the West Midlands region in which *all* deaths are subject to ME review.

Current Activity: More death-registration appointments are being offered as quickly as possible and the processes for registration of deaths have recently been revised. The impact of those changes is being monitored. There continue to be instances of paperwork being received from GPs on or after the fourth day following a death. Current actions to address this are engagement with Practice Managers to try to speed up the processing of paperwork and a reminder to staff to contact informants about deaths of which the service is aware.

Future Activity: Performance may improve further if the number of deaths to be registered drops during the remaining summer months, a trend that would be in keeping with previous years. Benchmarking against other authorities' figures will continue. An increase in the number of authorities in which the local office of the Medical Examiner examines all deaths is likely to impact on national and regional out-turns.

Graph: Percentage of Deaths Registered in 5 Working Days



Communications and Consumer Relations

Increasing staff engagement

RAG: Green

Direction of Travel: Improving

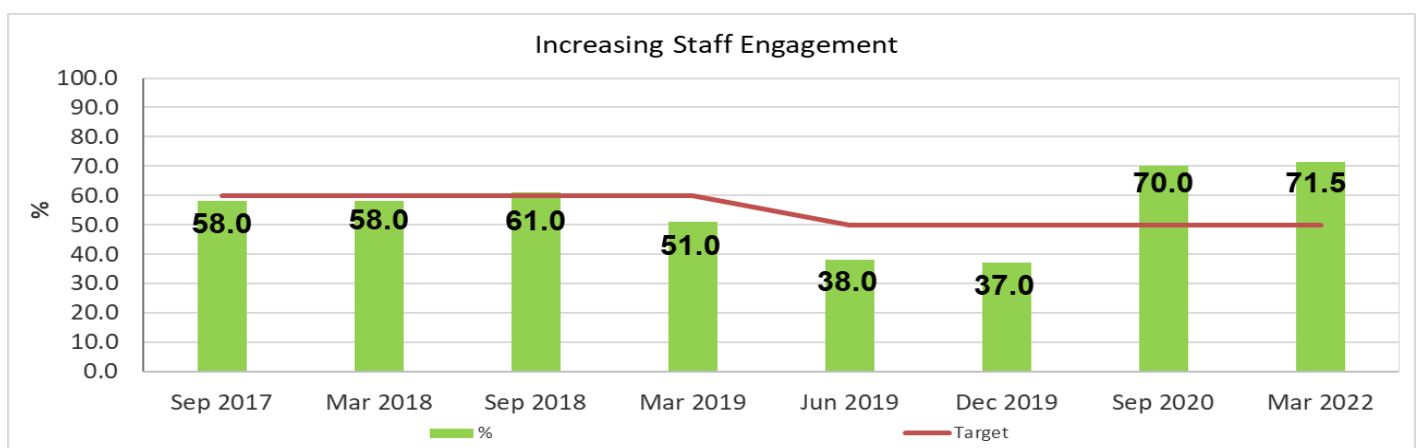
Performance Details: The 2023 staff survey (“Your Voice”) was open from 16th January to 19th February. The latest survey for which full results are confirmed is 2022’s, which ran from 7th February to 7th March inclusive. It had a 71.5% response rate, the best to date. The previous-highest response rate was 70% for September 2020’s survey. A shorter survey (Winter Pulse) was carried out over the course of a week in early December 2022. Its focus was on wellbeing, equality, and inclusion. The completion rate (52%) is the highest ever for a WCC Pulse Survey.

There was an extended gap following the September 2020 survey due to the County Council's COVID-19 response.

Current Activity: The results and actions relevant to this year’s survey will be communicated to staff later this year. Workforce updates about actions and commitments relating to 2022’s survey 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 2022 survey, aligned to the Workforce Strategy.

Future Activity: Following completion of the 2023 Survey and confirmation of the results, an action plan will be devised.

Graph: Percentage of Staff That Completed the Staff Survey



HR, ICT and Corporate Information Governance Team

Employees - Actual Full-Time Equivalents

RAG: N/A

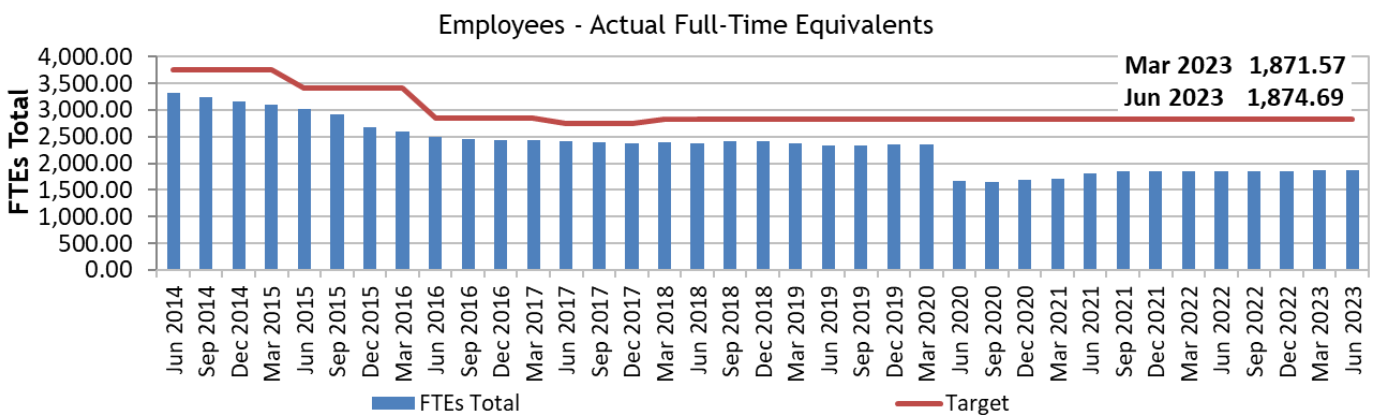
Direction of Travel: N/A

Performance Details: FTEs at the end of the first quarter of 2023/2024 equated to 1,874.69, up 0.2% from 1,871.57 at the end of March and 1.1% higher than at the end of June 2022 (1,854.13). 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 (Cumulative)

RAG: Red

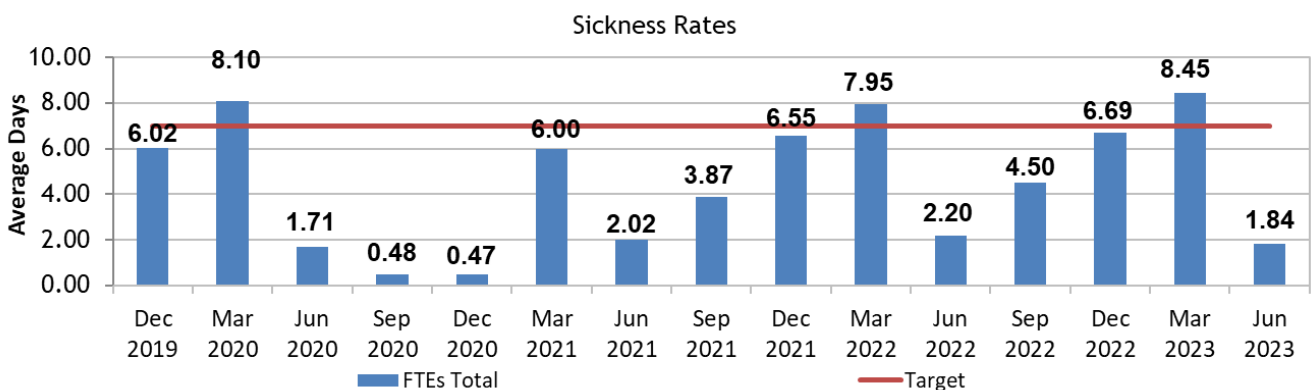
Direction of Travel: Deteriorating

Performance Details: At the end of quarter 1 of 2023/2024, the average days sick per person (FTE) was 1.84, down compared to the same period last year (2.20).

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) Cumulative



Days lost through long-term sickness

RAG: N/A

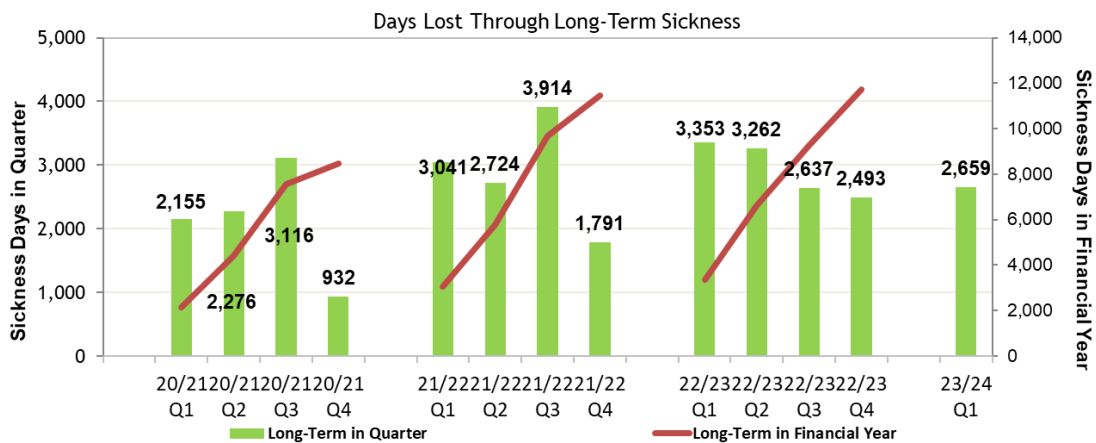
Direction of Travel: N/A

Performance Details: Long-term absences are episodes of 21 or more calendar days. At the beginning of 2023/2024 long-term absences totalled 2,659 days, a decrease of 20.7% compared to total days absent in quarter 1 of 2022/2023 (3,353).

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

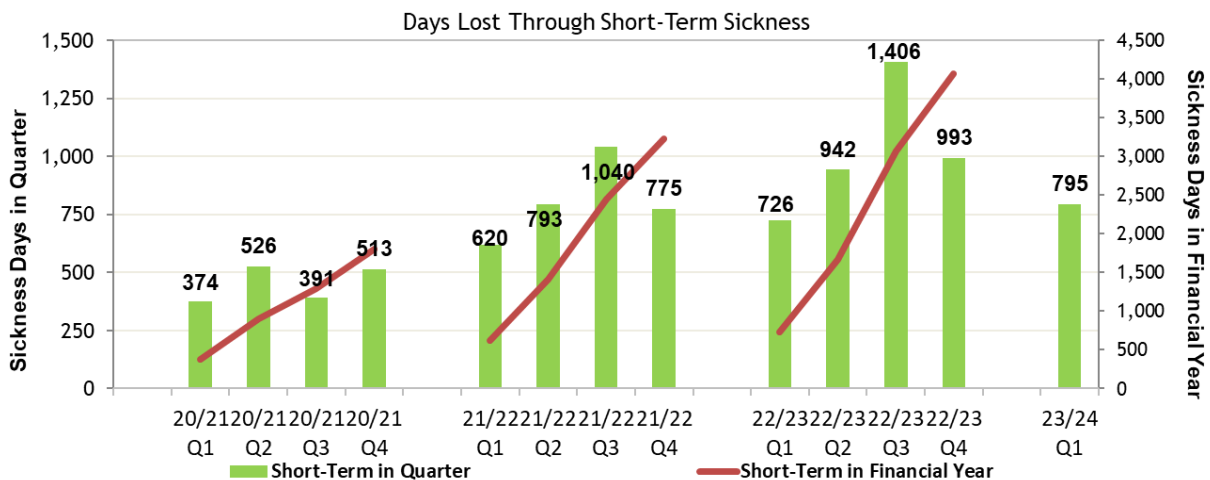
Direction of Travel: N/A

Performance Details: Short-term absences at the start of 2023/2024 totalled 794.5. This represents an increase of 9.4% compared to the same period in 2022/2023, when the total was 726 days.

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

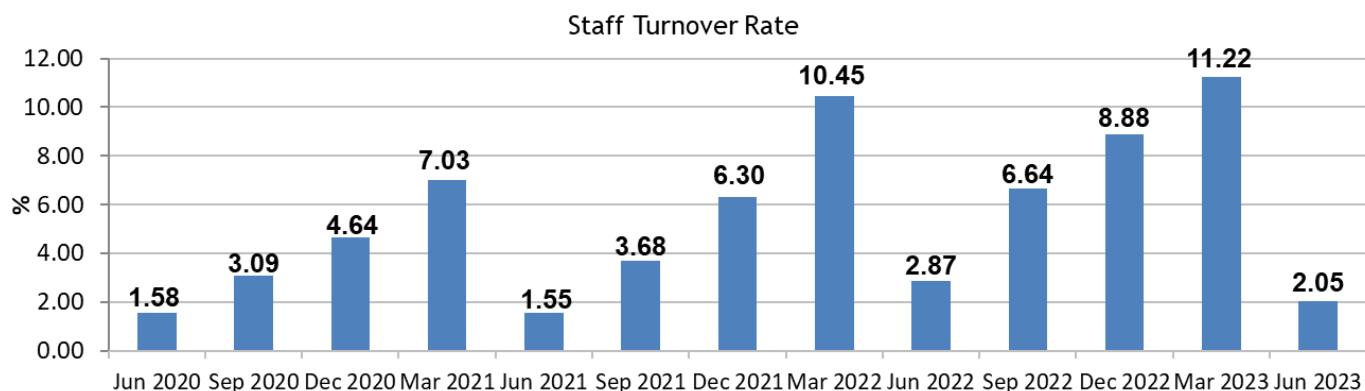
Direction of Travel: N/A

Performance Details: Leavers in the financial year as a percentage of the workforce. Turnover rate for quarter 1 2023/2024 was 2.05. This is a reduction compared to the same period last year, when the figure was 2.87.

Current Activity:

Future Activity:

Graph: Turnover Rate



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

RAG: N/A

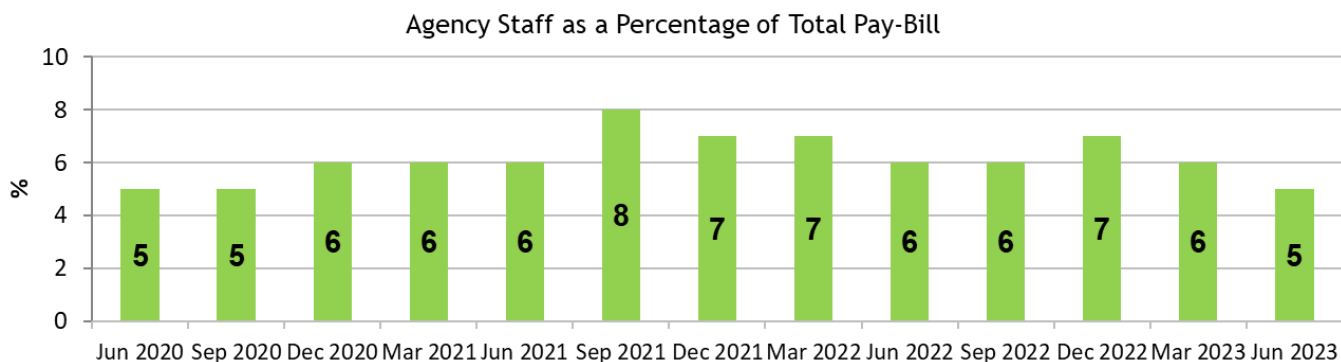
Direction of Travel: No Noticeable change

Performance Details: This relates to agency spend at each quarter-end as a percentage of the total pay bill. Since 1st October 2019, the figure has excluded WCF. The percentage on 30th June was 5%, down from 6% on 31st March. On 30th June last year, the figure was also 6%.

Current Activity:

Future Activity:

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



Communities

Library Visits and Issues

RAG: No Status

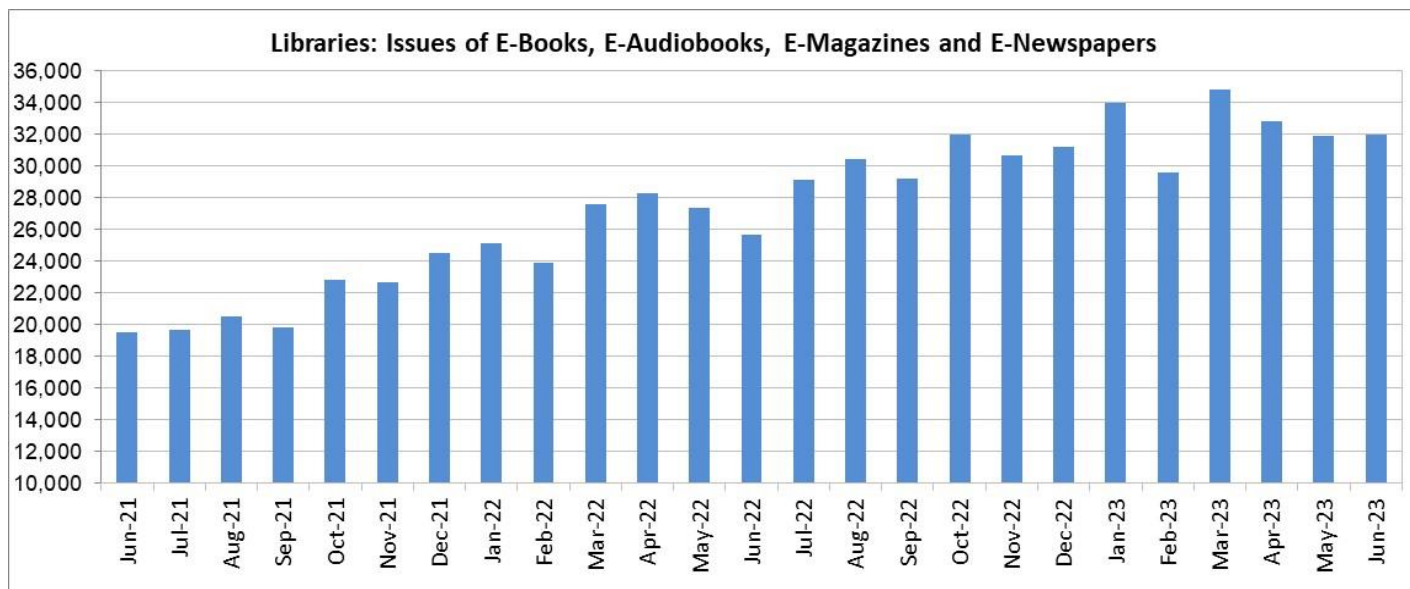
Direction of Travel: Underlying trend for both visits and issues - Improving

Performance Details: Nationally, visits to libraries in June were estimated to be at 65% of their June 2019 level. Visits to Worcestershire's libraries in the first quarter of this financial year totalled 420,455, equating to 63.8% of the total for April to June 2019 (659,537). Of this year's April-to-June total, 3,942 (0.6%) were visits to Droitwich and Stourport during hours when Libraries Unlocked was operative. The latest Libraries Connected national comparator data indicates physical book-borrowing was at 82% of the 2019/2020 level. Worcestershire's book issues total for April to June was 371,571, equivalent to 89.2% of the April-to-June 2019 book-issues total of 416,663.

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. The 2023 Summer Reading Challenge ("Ready, Set, Read") began on 8th July and ran until 16th September. Young volunteers were recruited to assist with events. Monitoring of the usage of Droitwich and Stourport libraries in Libraries Unlocked hours continues, with detailed analysis of visiting patterns and room bookings by community groups.

Future Activity: Actions to increase library usage will include further Libraries Unlocked schemes. Local events and activities will be promoted. The opt-in e-mail service will better inform residents about new library services and future plans, as well as giving a feedback facility. Customer Voice Survey responses will also help inform planning and promotional activities. Reading Agency's survey of Reading Challenge participants will provide qualitative information about the benefits and outcomes experienced by a cross-section of children and families.

Graph: Number of Visits and Issues per Month



Library Visits: Library-by-library totals

Library	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Alvechurch	57,788	5,781	40,703	48,694	9,873
Bewdley	52,404	4,730	39,798	49,727	13,133
Broadway	18,229	1,446	4,277	7,714	1,766
Bromsgrove	165,219	15,014	73,555	112,595	25,911
Catshill	10,403	389	1,901	3,907	1,072
County Mobile	7,121	704	3,464	4,025	642
Droitwich	124,184	16,757	60,859	71,971	19,595
Evesham	275,958	12,760	60,991	101,163	25,722
Hagley	31,304	3,836	19,795	27,075	6,969
Hive	655,789	66,680	251,197	410,125	126,225
Kidderminster	259,564	39,099	119,234	135,555	34,483
Malvern	173,601	23,267	97,052	133,290	32,368
Martley	787	0	77	94	21
Pershore	88,743	10,187	42,437	55,723	13,624
Redditch	269,777	39,008	143,502	144,857	38,412
Rubery	36,500	2,893	19,297	25,814	6,423
St John's	63,565	9,503	26,951	40,364	12,126
Stourport	101,761	8,977	53,226	78,682	21,568
Tenbury	73,058	7,965	40,708	51,082	13,990
Upton	18,092	1,184	6,075	9,748	2,834
Warndon	33,118	2,448	20,682	21,760	4,799
Welland	729	0	38	130	44
Woodrow	11,036	1,834	13,938	18,238	3,802
Wythall	78,715	4,137	35,494	28,753	5,053
Totals	2,607,445	278,599	1,175,251	1,581,086	420,455

Library Issues: Library-by-library totals

Library	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Alvechurch	47,407	11,510	39,006	43,670	9,627
Bewdley	44,509	11,359	36,726	41,339	10,285
Broadway	19,913	4,446	12,511	14,486	3,635
Bromsgrove	123,395	34,081	97,823	113,287	27,786
Catshill	9,789	1,678	6,189	7,985	2,091
County Mobile	22,858	4,431	16,322	17,063	4,005
Droitwich	114,182	33,474	89,599	94,409	23,281
E-Audiobooks	36,334	67,296	77,706	98,854	26,474
E-Books	32,139	72,830	62,950	67,936	17,950
E-Magazines	31,452	49,783	42,422	44,206	11,156
E-Newspapers	0	0	83,089	150,960	41,073
Evesham	121,662	29,086	86,096	97,657	23,078
Hagley	41,293	9,752	33,272	34,837	8,309
Hive	581,646	127,786	370,020	394,161	94,983
Kidderminster	126,283	29,435	88,568	100,777	24,657
Malvern	224,195	57,559	163,369	185,914	43,499
Martley	1,321	110	699	996	280
Pershore	80,568	22,809	63,075	68,633	16,378
Redditch	126,592	33,861	90,553	103,383	24,405
Rubery	30,723	6,407	23,773	25,584	6,866

St John's	59,183	16,657	44,886	47,534	11,908
Stourport	73,624	21,081	50,991	55,818	12,664
Tenbury	36,918	10,796	28,767	32,011	7,839
Upton	16,322	3,408	10,189	12,020	3,333
Warndon	27,305	5,714	18,678	18,740	4,804
Welland	1,849	249	698	1,189	358
Woodrow	12,979	2,023	9,746	11,001	2,078
Worcester Hub	5,780	890	1,477	2,503	598
Wythall	38,482	9,301	29,025	30,725	7,435
Totals	2,088,703	677,812	1,678,225	1,917,678	470,835

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

RAG: No Status

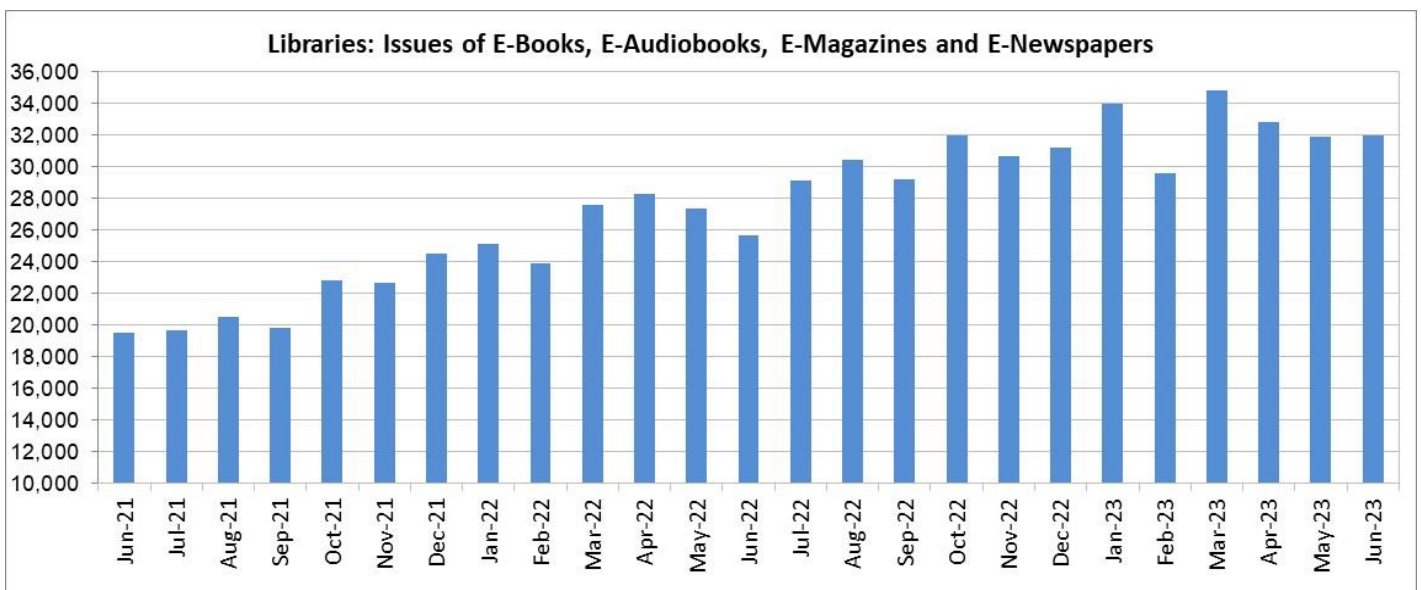
Direction of Travel: No noticeable change

Performance Details: The April-to-June total of 96,653 (an April-to-June record) was 4¼ times the total for the same period four years ago (22,778). Of this year’s April-to-June tally, 41,073 (42.5%) were of e-newspapers, 26,474 (27.4%) were of e-audiobooks, 17,950 (18.6%) were of e-books, and 11,156 (11.5%) were e-magazines issues. In the whole of the 2022/2023 financial year, the lion’s share of the overall e-issues total of 361,956 was e-newspapers’ 150,960 (41.7%). In this year’s April-to-June quarter, 5,722 people borrowed at least one e-item, equivalent to 228.8% of April-to-June’s 2019’s unique borrowers total of 2,501.

Current Activity: Efforts continue to promote and expand 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. 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: Improving

Performance Details: County Museum's overall total for April, May, and June was 6,647. This constituted the museum's highest April-to-June total since 2013's 7,609. Events in the first three months of this financial year included family crafts and trails activities spanning the school Easter holiday period, bank-holiday events (including a 'Coronation Celebration' on the Monday of the long Coronation bank-holiday weekend and Superhero events on the Spring bank holiday Monday). Visits to County Museum in the 2022/2023 financial year totalled 21,927, up 18.5% compared with the total for 2021/2022 (18,506) and 12.4% greater than the 19,501 visits made in 2019/2020.

Current Activity: The museum's information leaflet is available in a variety of 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. Throughout August, families can book places on summer-holiday crafts, activities and trails, which have natural history/environment themes (e.g. dinosaurs, beneath the sea, birds, and bugs). Autumn-term visits to the museum by school groups and outreach visits to schools inside and outside the county's borders are being booked.

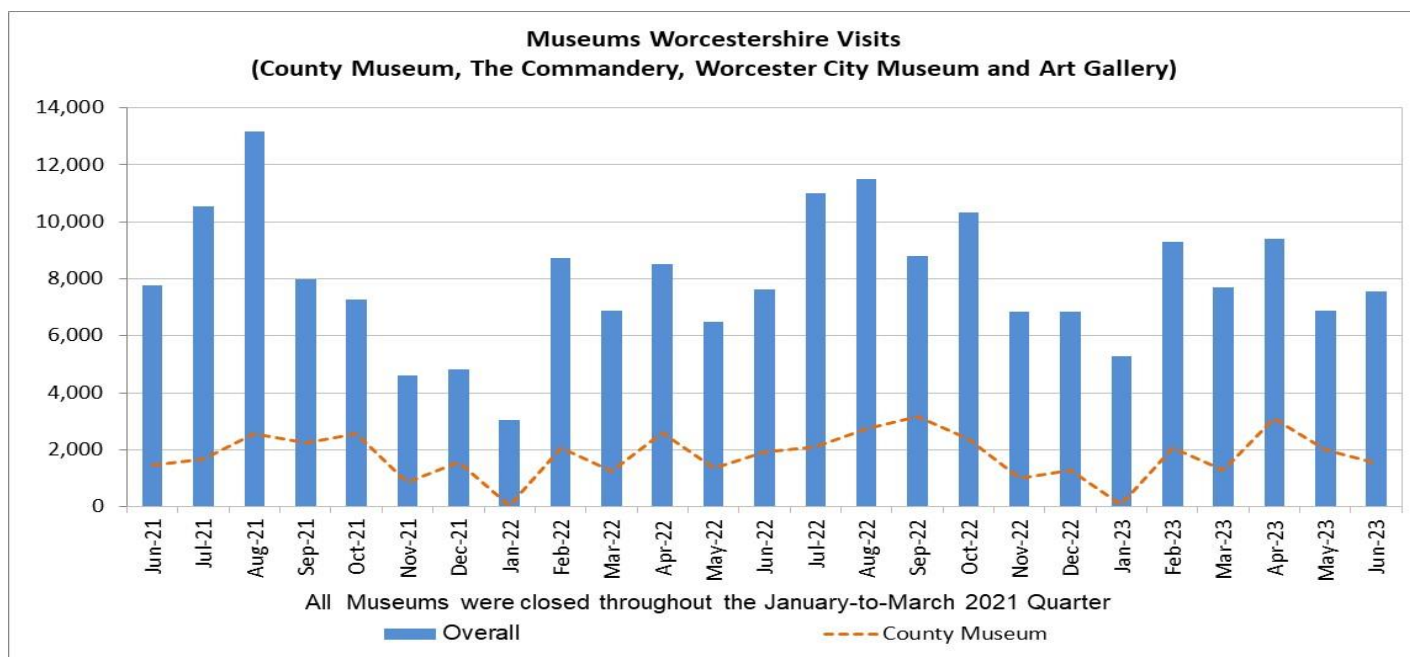
Future Activity: Work will continue with the Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust to further promote the whole site, accredited by the Visit England Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme for the high standard of the museum and visitor experience. Property Services is currently working with Museums Worcestershire to develop options for County Museum and the Collections Centre Store following the end of their leases at Hartlebury in 2026. Options are due to be presented to Joint Museums Committee and then to County Council Cabinet this year.

County Museum Visits: Monthly totals

Month	Visits	Children's Visits
Jan 2018	406	363
Feb 2018	1,362	599
Mar 2018	757	388
Apr 2018	1,855	448
May 2018	2,215	446
Jun 2018	1,320	256
Jul 2018	1,910	364
Aug 2018	2,961	602
Sep 2018	2,247	220
Oct 2018	1,837	397
Nov 2018	1,377	574
Dec 2018	1,348	367
Jan 2019	112	80
Feb 2019	1,630	426
Mar 2019	1,604	236
Apr 2019	2,026	281
May 2019	2,575	416
Jun 2019	1,575	287
Jul 2019	1,589	317
Aug 2019	2,817	451
Sep 2019	2,551	100
Oct 2019	1,581	478
Nov 2019	987	313
Dec 2019	1,484	457
Jan 2020	60	52
Feb 2020	1,778	470
Mar 2020	478	115
Apr 2020	0	0

May 2020	0	0
Jun 2020	1,226	0
Jul 2020	756	106
Aug 2020	1,378	187
Sep 2020	937	22
Oct 2020	930	119
Nov 2020	44	4
Dec 2020	519	119
Jan 2021	0	0
Feb 2021	0	0
Mar 2021	0	0
Apr 2021	1,291	0
May 2021	930	71
Jun 2021	1,466	203
Jul 2021	1,677	241
Aug 2021	2,551	400
Sep 2021	2,247	118
Oct 2021	2,575	522
Nov 2021	869	303
Dec 2021	1,555	295
Jan 2022	26	22
Feb 2022	2,077	435
Mar 2022	1,242	126
Apr 2022	2,595	560
May 2022	1,342	171
Jun 2022	1,913	414
Jul 2022	2,091	355
Aug 2022	2,740	468
Sep 2022	3,151	139
Oct 2022	2,380	548
Nov 2022	996	361
Dec 2022	1,284	348
Jan 2023	83	73
Feb 2023	2,061	529
Mar 2023	1,291	236
Apr 2023	3,110	594
May 2023	2,008	326
Jun 2023	1,529	342

Graph: Monthly visits totals for County Museum, The Commandery, and Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery



Countryside Standards Achieved

RAG: Quarter 1 – Green; 2022/2023 overall - Amber

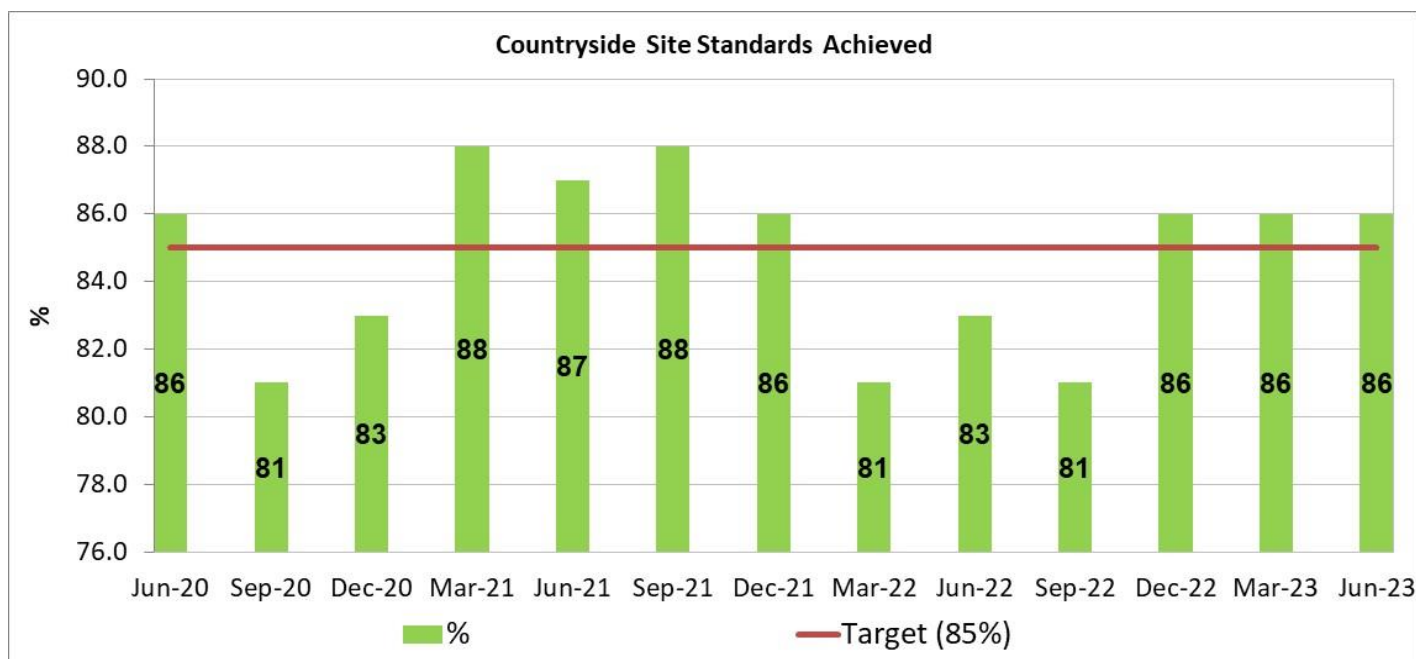
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: The average percentage rating for the Countryside Sites Standards indicator over the whole of the last financial year was an amber-rated 84%. In the last two quarters of the financial year, however, performance rose to an above-target 86%. This level was maintained in the first three months of this financial year. The improvement over the last nine months has been because the Greenspace Team has been restored to full capacity, facilitating the carrying out of extensive programmes of work to replace worn-out picnic benches and address other maintenance issues.

Current Activity: Although a lot of site furniture such as permanent picnic benches and signage has been (or is) coming to the end of its life, the regular programme of inspections, groundworks, and repairs ensures signs and notices, buildings, site furniture, and trails are repaired and well-maintained. Weathering and normal or above-average levels of usage are the main reasons for infrastructure deterioration.

Future Activity: The service will continue to promote each site's natural attractions and facilities and any events, activities or group meetings 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. Site usage will increase as the days lengthen and the weather improves.

Graph: Countryside Site Standards Achieved



Bikeability – Children Trained in Level 2

RAG: No status.

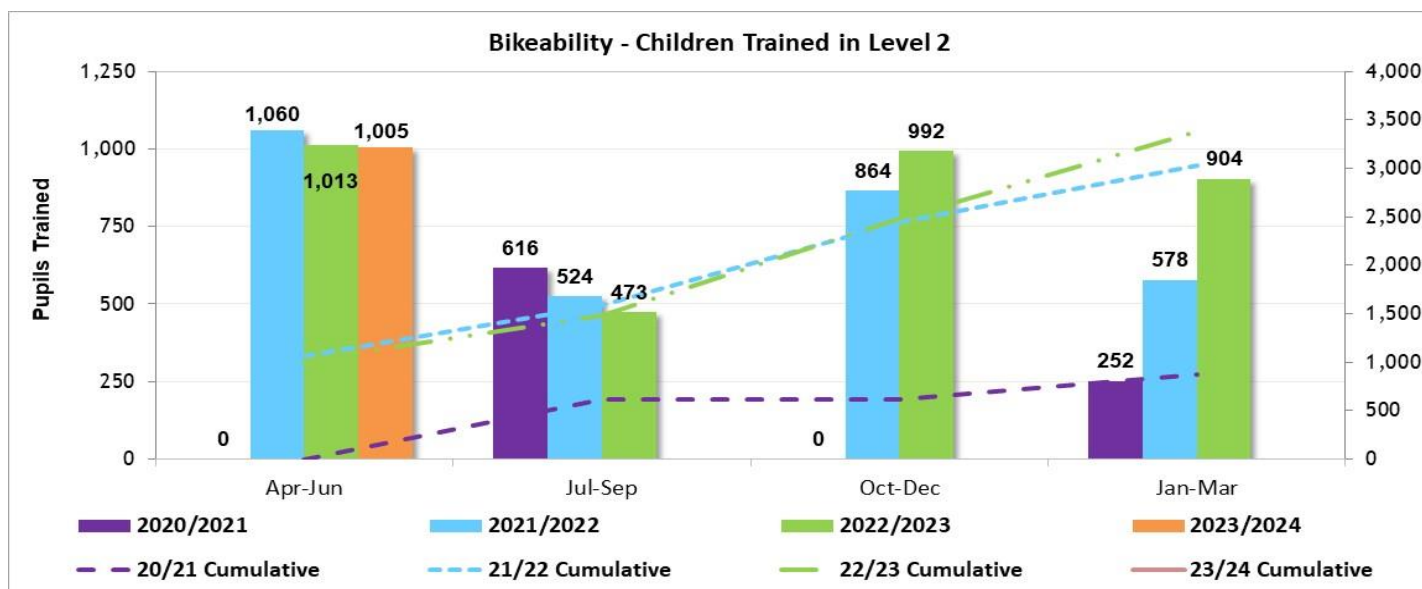
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: The number of pupils receiving Bikeability training in the first three months of this financial year was 1,995. Of that total, 1,005 (50.4%) received on-the-road training at Level 2. The first quarter of the financial year is normally the time when more requests for training are received from schools. Requests received and the total of children trained have been steadily increasing since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented pupils from receiving in-person training. During that time, schools were provided with on-line learning resources.

Current Activity: Bookings from schools for the 2023/2024 academic year are being taken. There are two schedules of charges, one for maintained schools, another for independent ones. Free training is available to those schools with the highest proportion of children receiving free school meals. In addition, this year the Bikeability Team is running five free summer-holiday sessions, one on 29th July, the other four during August. Each session starts from County Hall. People of all abilities will be welcome, as long as they have a bike and a helmet. Pre-booking has been recommended.

Future Activity: The July-to-September total will be lower than that for the preceding three months due to the school summer holidays. It is also possible that some sessions booked for July may be lost due to industrial action by teaching unions.

Graph: Children Trained in Bikeability Level 2



Bikeability – Children Trained in Other Levels

RAG: No status.

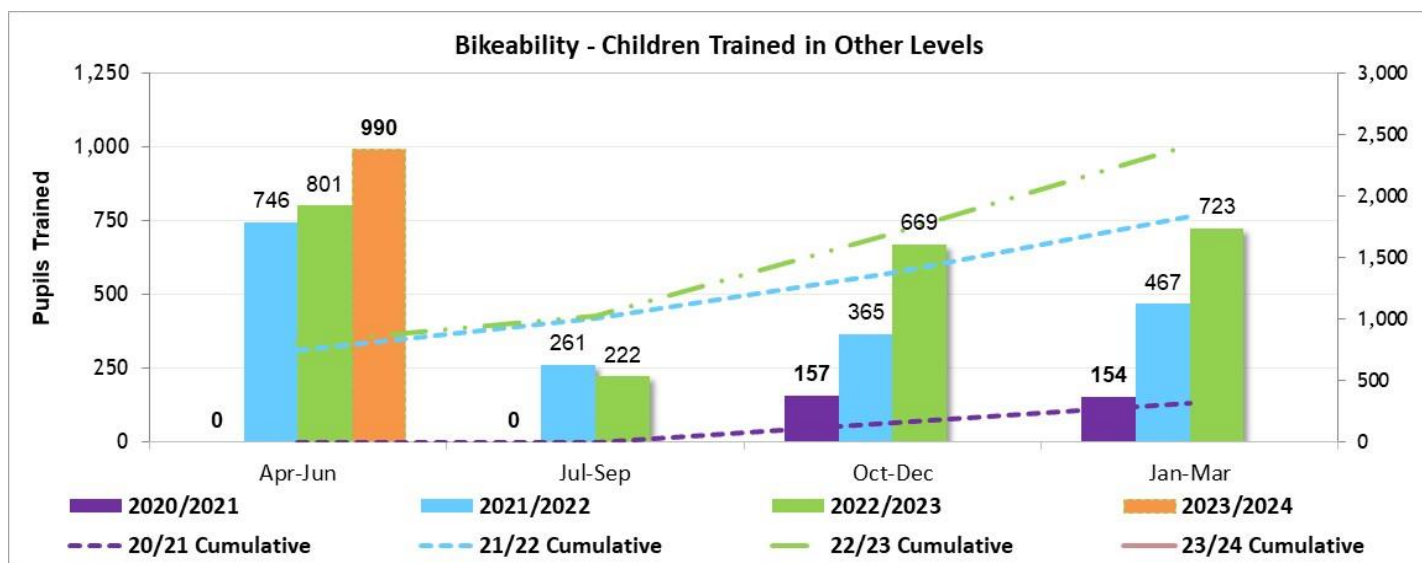
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: The number of pupils receiving Bikeability training in the first three months of this financial year was 1,995, of which 990 received training at Level 1. This was 189 (23.6%) more than the 801 receiving the same level of training in the same period last year, and 244 (32.7%) more than the 746 trained between April and June 2022 two years ago.

Current Activity: The first quarter of 2023/2024 continues the improvement seen in previous quarters relative to 2020/2021 when the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown periods caused in-person training to be paused. Previously-vacant positions are now filled and new staff members have received required training.

Future Activity: The July-to-September total will be lower than that for the preceding three months due to the school summer holidays. It is also possible that some sessions booked for July may be lost due to industrial action by teaching unions.

Graph: Children Trained in Bikeability Levels Other than Level 2



Appendix – Link to Power BI Performance Summary

The information contained in this performance summary is available as a PowerBI report. It is available [here on the Worcestershire County Council website](#).