

Scrutiny Report Corporate & Communities 2023/2024 Quarter 2

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Registration and Coroner's

Birth registration appointments within 5 working days

RAG: Green

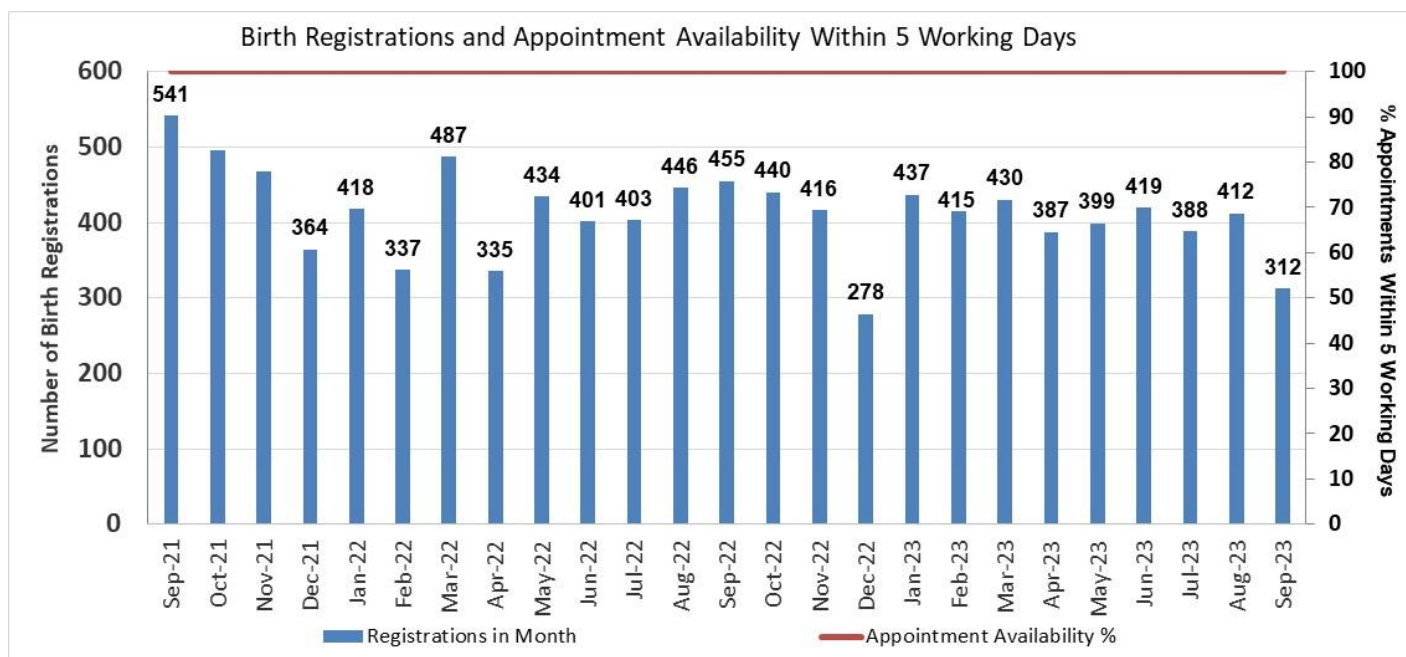
Direction of Travel: No Noticeable Change

Performance Details: Anyone contacting the service from April to September 2023 to register a birth was offered a convenient appointment within 5 working days. Birth registrations in the first half of this financial year totalled 2,317, down 157 (6.3%) compared with the 2,474 registered in the same April-to-September period of 2022. In the July-to-September quarter, the total registered was 1,112. That figure was 192 (14.7%) less than the 1,304 registered in the same three months last year.

Current Activity: 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. Extra calendars have been put in place to accommodate more death-registration appointments, thereby ensuring full availability of all appointment types (including to register births).

Future Activity: The service will follow all national guidelines in respect of the registration of births. Residents will be kept 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.

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

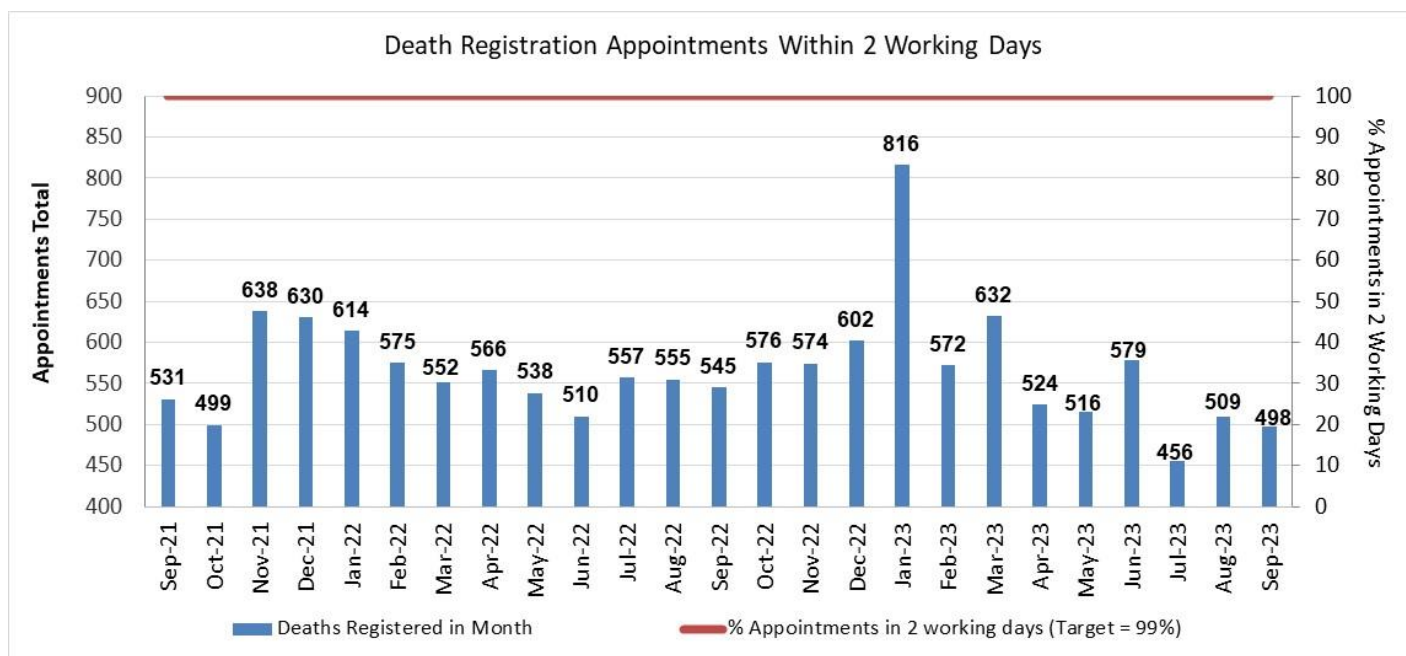
Performance Details: Demand for appointments is not focussed on one office. Despite the additional demands, full availability of appointments was maintained throughout the first half of the financial year, as was the case throughout 2022/2023. There was an issue with the on-line booking system in September. Pending the problem's resolution, a message on the website explained all appointments would be booked manually by staff. The on-line system was quickly restored and feedback from staff is that the system is working better than previously.

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

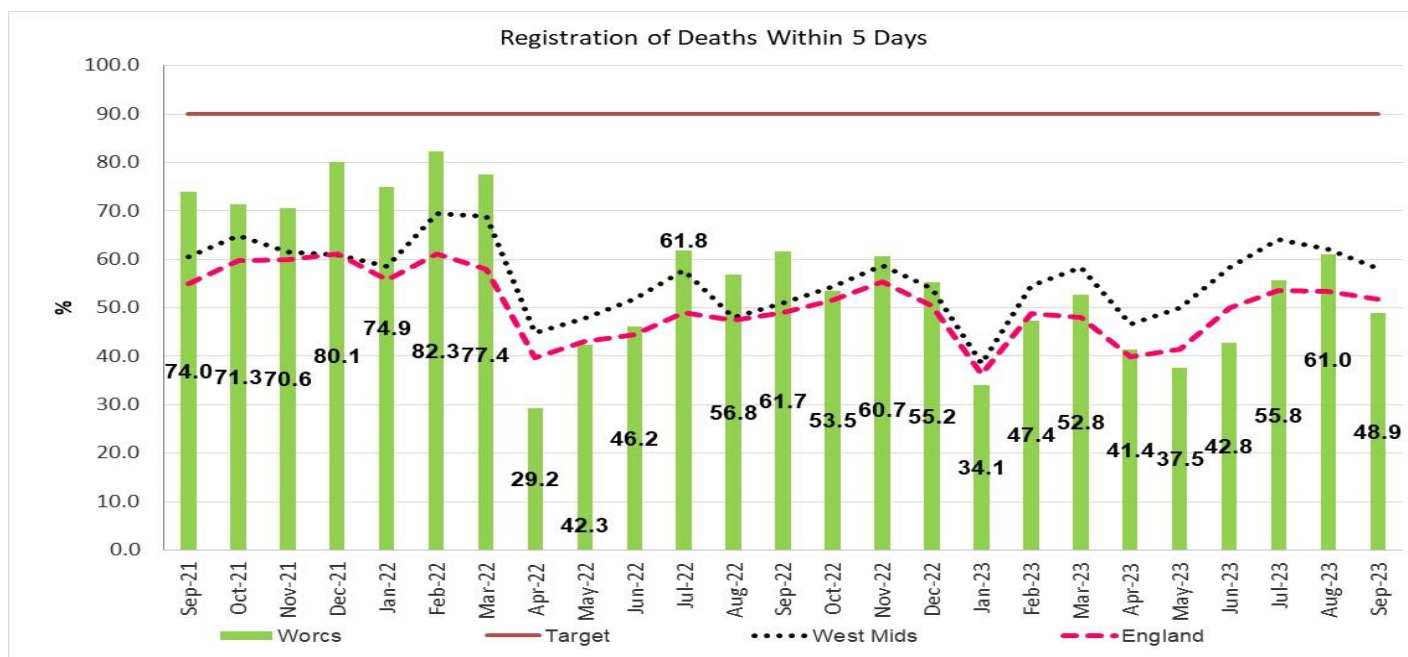
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: In the July-to September quarter, 504 (55.3%) of the 912 deaths registered in Worcestershire were within 5 days (April-to-June percentage: 40.8%). The equivalent July-to-September percentage for the West Midlands region was 61.4%; for the whole of England it was 53%. 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. Of a sample of 276 deaths registered in August and September, paperwork in 112 cases (40.6%) was received four or more days after death, making meeting the target of five days difficult. 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: If, as is to be expected, the number of deaths to be registered increases in the autumn and winter, it may be hard to sustain a month-on-month improvement in this indicator's out-turns. Benchmarking against other authorities' figures will continue. Given that only one other authority in the West Midlands region has all deaths subjected to ME review, a more meaningful comparison is with the all-England percentage. 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

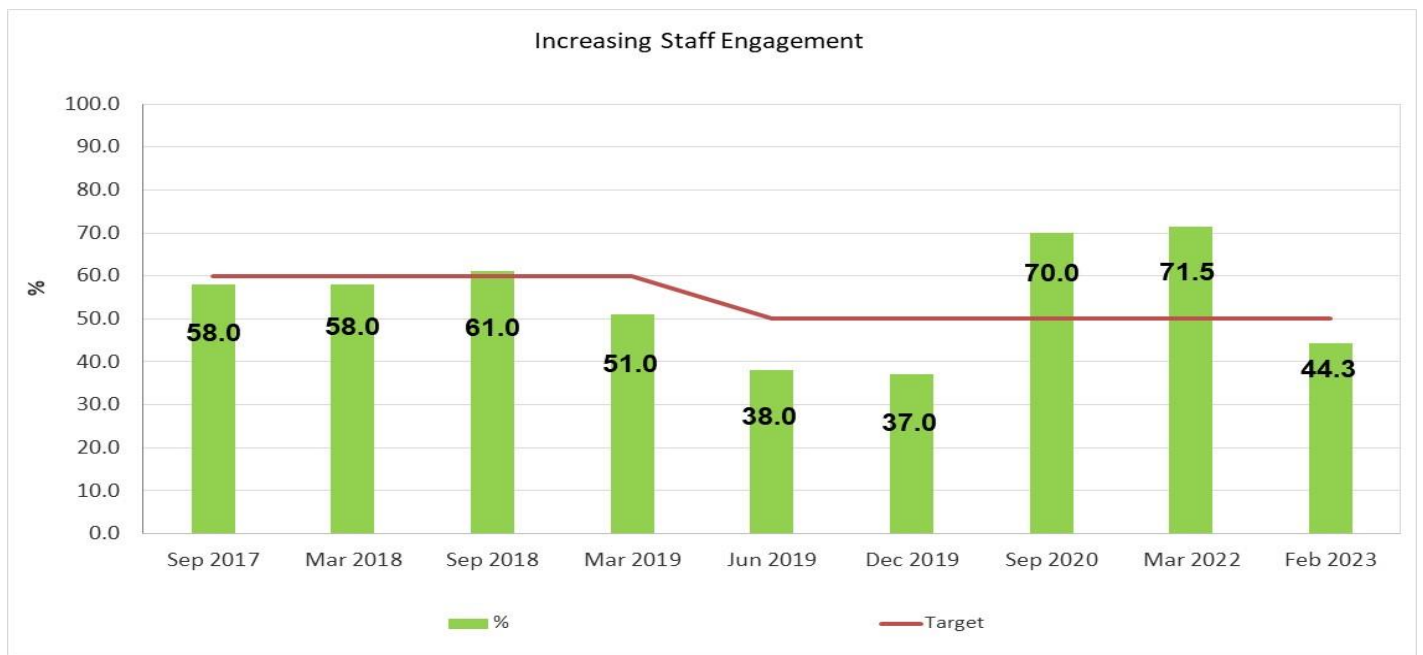
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: The extended gap following the September 2020 survey was due solely to the County Council's COVID-19 response. The 2023 staff survey ("Your Voice") was open from 16th January to 19th February. The response rate of 44.3% was down on the previous year's 71.5% (the highest ever) but well within the tolerance levels for other authorities' surveys. 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.

Current Activity: The headline results and planned actions were shared with staff during the Staff Briefing on 16th October and were published on Our Space the same day. Directorate Leadership Teams are developing actions plans and a Slido survey is to be undertaken to ascertain whether staff would prefer a survey each year or every other year. (Staff are to be asked whether they would prefer shorter Pulse Surveys, designed to provide feedback on specific questions and themes.)

Future Activity: Staff Briefings, updates on Our Space, and HR updates emailed to all staff will provide updates about progress towards meeting the required actions identified from the 2023 survey results. Reviewing and continuing to promote the now-well-established Workforce Strategy in light of the survey results remains a key priority.

Graph: Percentage of Staff That Completed the Staff Survey



HR, ICT and Corporate Information Governance Team

Employees - Actual Full-Time Equivalents

RAG: N/A

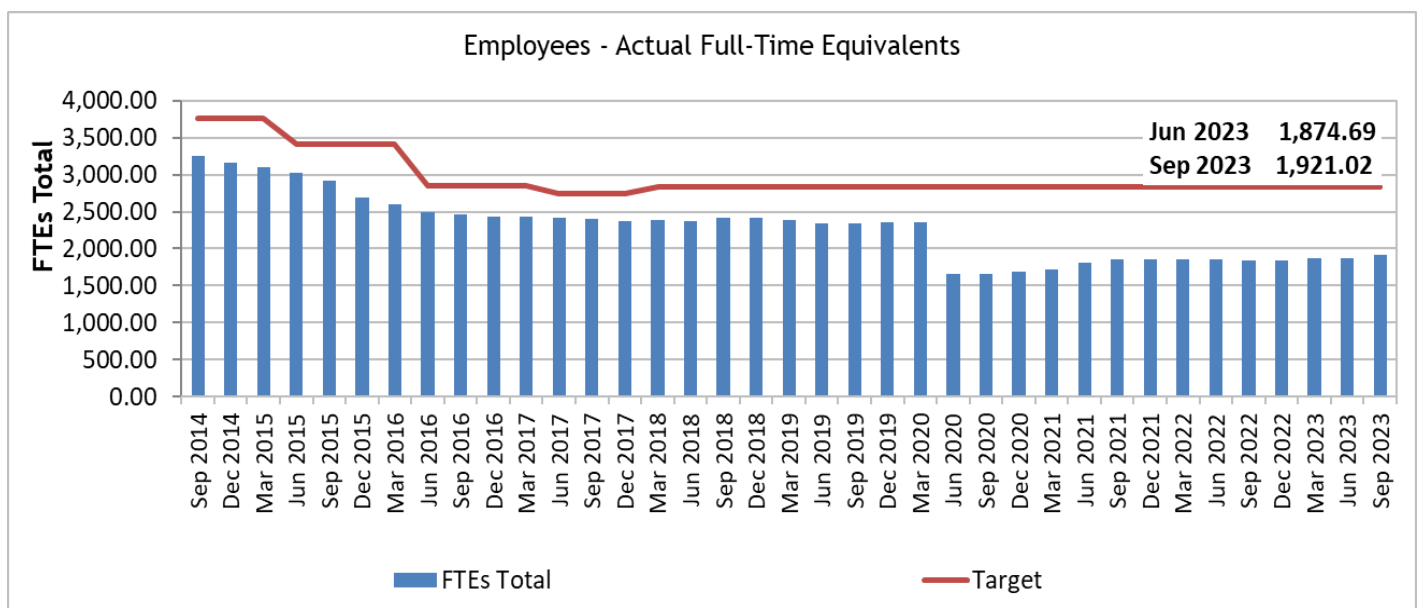
Direction of Travel: N/A

Performance Details: The FTE figure at the end of the second quarter of 2023/2024 was 1,921.02, an increase of 2.4% from 1,874.69 at the end of June and 4.1% higher than at the end of September 2022 (1,842.40). 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: N/A

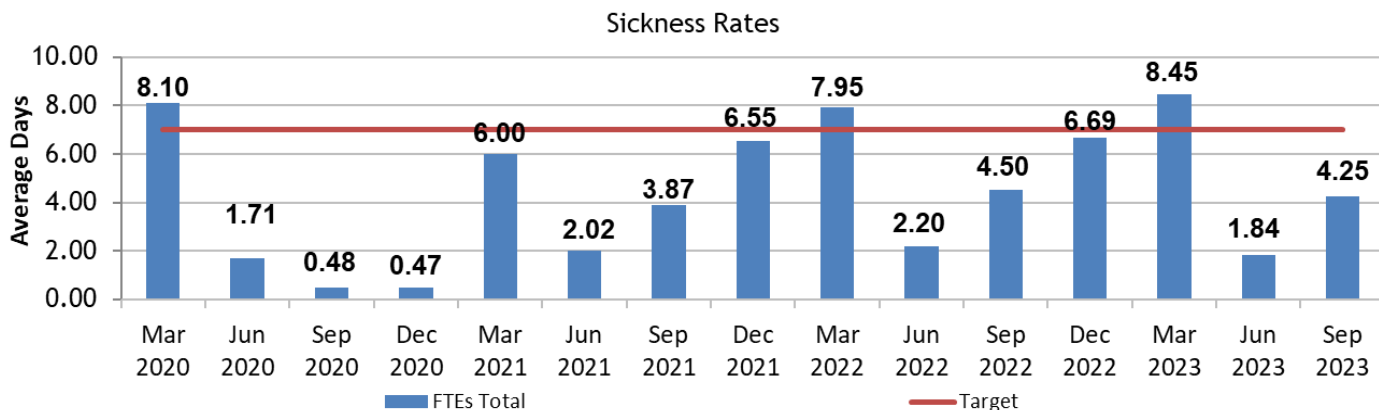
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: At the end of the second quarter of the 2023/2024 financial year, the average days sick per person (Full-Time Equivalent) was 4.25, down compared to the same period last year (4.50).

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: Average Days Sick per FTE (Full Time Equivalents) Cumulative



Days lost through long-term sickness

RAG: N/A

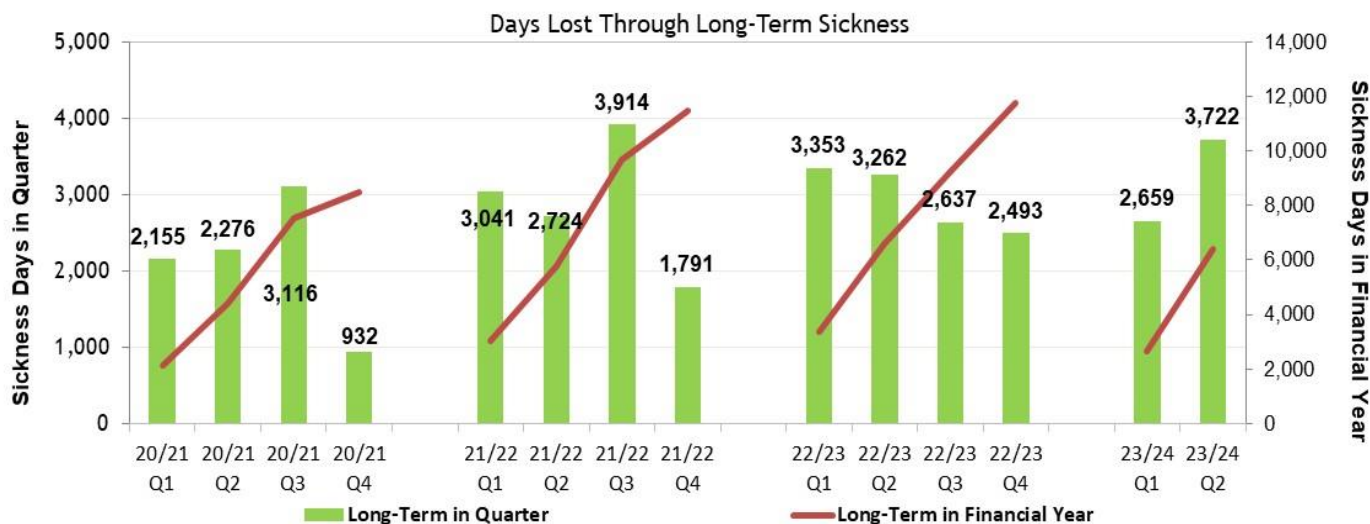
Direction of Travel: N/A

Performance Details: Long-term absences are episodes of 21 or more calendar days. In the second quarter of 2023/2024, long-term absences totalled 3,722 days, an increase of 14.1% compared to total days absent in quarter 2 of 2022/2023 (3,262).

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

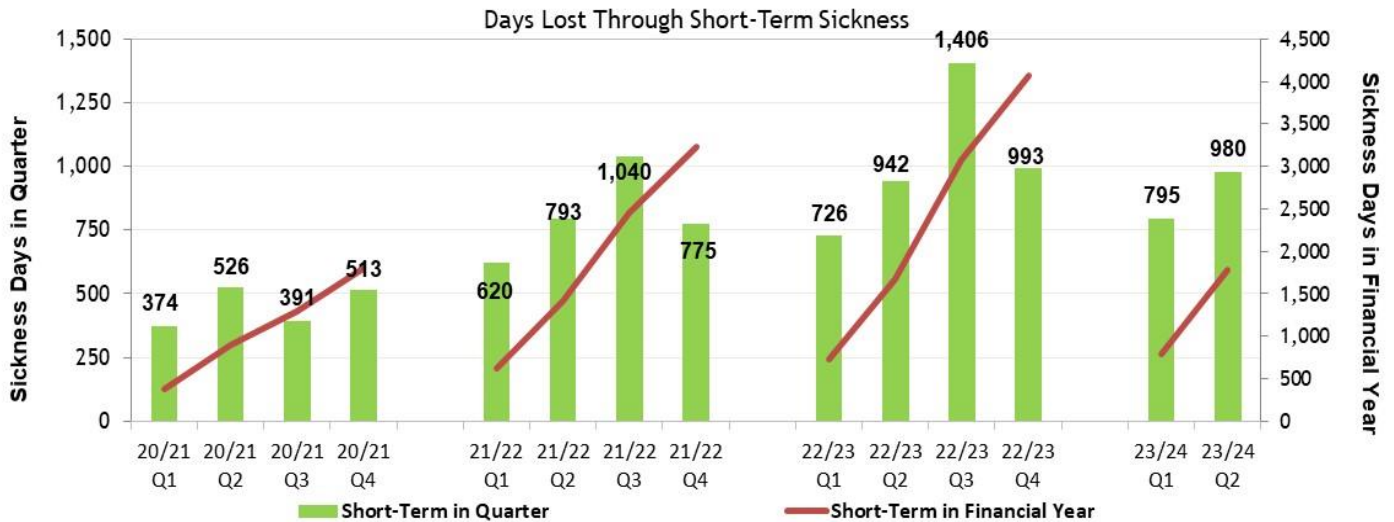
Direction of Travel: N/A

Performance Details: Short-term absences in the second quarter of 2023/2024 totalled 979.50. This represents an increase of 4.0% compared to the same period in 2022/2023, when the total was 942 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

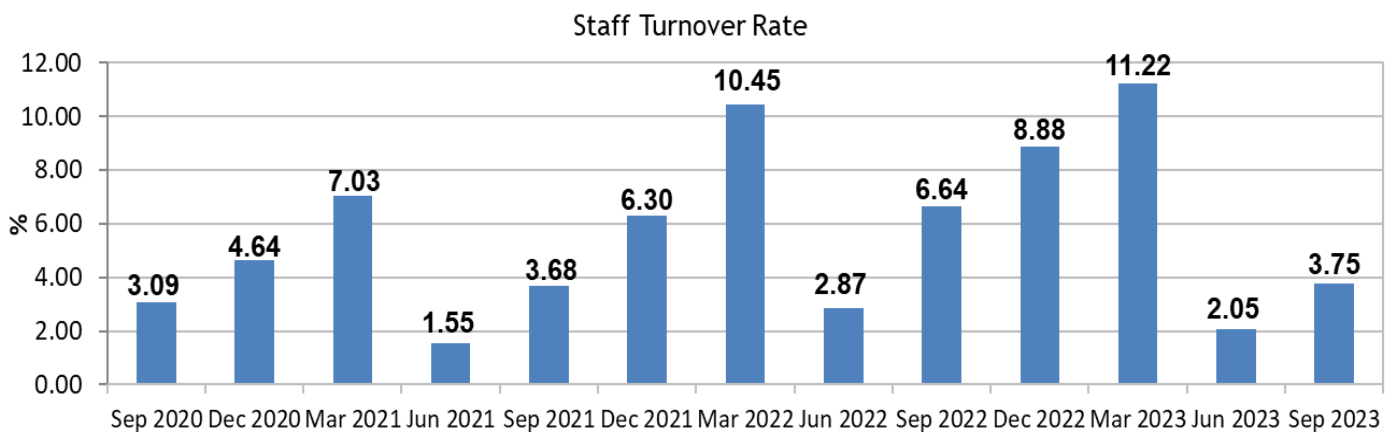
Direction of Travel: N/A

Performance Details: This measure relates to leavers in the financial year as a percentage of the workforce. The turnover rate for quarter 2 of this financial year was 3.75. This is a reduction compared to the same period last year when the figure was 6.64.

Current Activity:

Future Activity:

Graph: Turnover Rate



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

RAG: N/A

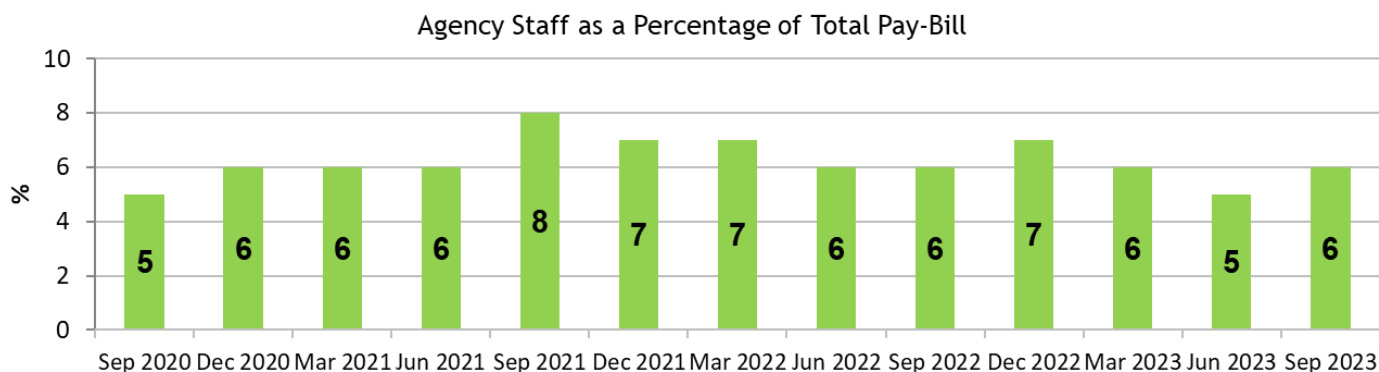
Direction of Travel: No Noticeable change

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 September was 6%, up from 5% on 30th June. On 30th September 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

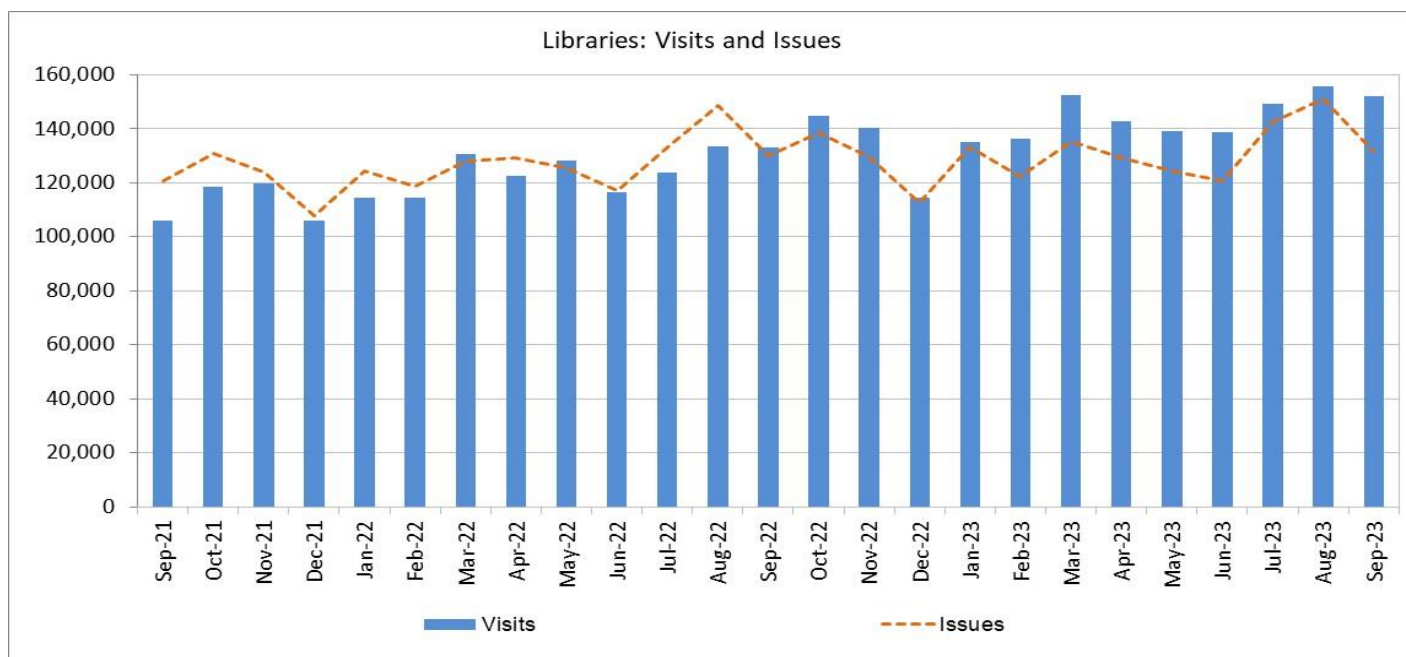
Direction of Travel: Underlying trend for both visits and issues - Improving

Performance Details: The April-to-September visits total of 877,391 equated to 64.5% of the total for the same period in 2019 (1,360,304). For September, the visits total was 151,993, which was 66.3% of September 2019's total. Nationally, it is estimated visits to libraries are at about 70% of their pre-COVID-19 level. The equivalent September estimate in respect of issues was 84%. Locally, however, Worcestershire's September issues total (165,990) equated to 99.1% of the total four years previously. The April-to-September issues total of 999,822 amounted to 91.8% of the total for the same period in 2019 (1,088,929).

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. Half-term and Christmas activities are scheduled for all libraries. Study Happy sessions have resumed at The Hive for University of Worcester and secondary-school children. 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: All services, groups, and events available at libraries will continue to be promoted, the opt-in e-mail service making it easier to tell residents about new services and future plans, as well as giving a feedback facility. Customer Voice Survey responses will also help inform planning and promotional activities, stock management and event planning, and will provide qualitative feedback about the library offer and its health and well-being benefits. Plans to increase library usage will include proposals for further Libraries Unlocked schemes.

Graph: Number of Visits and Issues per Month



Library Visits: Library-by-library financial-year totals (2023/2024 totals are as at the end of September)

Library	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Alvechurch	57,788	5,781	40,703	48,694	22,441
Bewdley	52,404	4,730	39,798	49,727	27,560
Broadway	18,229	1,446	4,277	7,714	3,778
Bromsgrove	165,219	15,014	73,555	112,595	57,128
Catshill	10,403	389	1,901	3,907	2,405
County Mobile	7,121	704	3,464	4,025	1,074
Droitwich	124,184	16,757	60,859	71,971	41,357
Evesham	275,958	12,760	60,991	101,163	56,262
Hagley	31,304	3,836	19,795	27,075	15,509
Hive	655,789	66,680	251,197	410,125	238,779
Kidderminster	259,564	39,099	119,234	135,555	75,860
Malvern	173,601	23,267	97,052	133,290	69,058
Martley	787	0	77	94	35
Pershore	88,743	10,187	42,437	55,723	30,091
Redditch	269,777	39,008	143,502	144,857	82,199
Rubery	36,500	2,893	19,297	25,814	14,112
St John's	63,565	9,503	26,951	40,364	25,656
Stourport	101,761	8,977	53,226	78,682	47,644
Tenbury	73,058	7,965	40,708	51,082	29,311
Upton	18,092	1,184	6,075	9,748	6,161
Warndon	33,118	2,448	20,682	21,760	10,569
Welland	729	0	38	130	71
Woodrow	11,036	1,834	13,938	18,238	9,715
Wythall	78,715	4,137	35,494	28,753	10,395
Totals	2,607,445	278,599	1,175,251	1,581,086	877,170

Library Issues: Library-by-library financial-year totals (2023/2024 totals are as at the end of September)

Library	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Alvechurch	47,407	11,510	39,006	43,670	21,700
Bewdley	44,509	11,359	36,726	41,339	21,839
Broadway	19,913	4,446	12,511	14,486	7,899
Bromsgrove	123,395	34,081	97,823	113,287	61,477
Catshill	9,789	1,678	6,189	7,985	4,694
County Mobile	22,858	4,431	16,322	17,063	8,126
Droitwich	114,182	33,474	89,599	94,409	50,099
E-Audiobooks	36,334	67,296	77,706	98,854	54,520
E-Books	32,139	72,830	62,950	67,936	36,689
E-Magazines	31,452	49,783	42,422	44,206	21,566
E-Newspapers	0	0	83,089	150,960	87,677
Evesham	121,662	29,086	86,096	97,657	51,209
Hagley	41,293	9,752	33,272	34,837	18,375
Hive	581,646	127,786	370,020	394,161	194,903
Kidderminster	126,283	29,435	88,568	100,777	53,826
Malvern	224,195	57,559	163,369	185,914	94,044
Martley	1,321	110	699	996	555
Pershore	80,568	22,809	63,075	68,633	35,781
Redditch	126,592	33,861	90,553	103,383	53,021
Rubery	30,723	6,407	23,773	25,584	14,793
St John's	59,183	16,657	44,886	47,534	24,699
Stourport	73,624	21,081	50,991	55,818	26,274
Tenbury	36,918	10,796	28,767	32,011	16,825
Upton	16,322	3,408	10,189	12,020	7,275
Warndon	27,305	5,714	18,678	18,740	9,955
Welland	1,849	249	698	1,189	830
Woodrow	12,979	2,023	9,746	11,001	4,649
Worcester Hub	5,780	890	1,477	2,503	1,184
Wythall	38,482	9,301	29,025	30,725	15,338
Totals	2,088,703	677,812	1,678,225	1,917,678	999,822

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

RAG: No Status

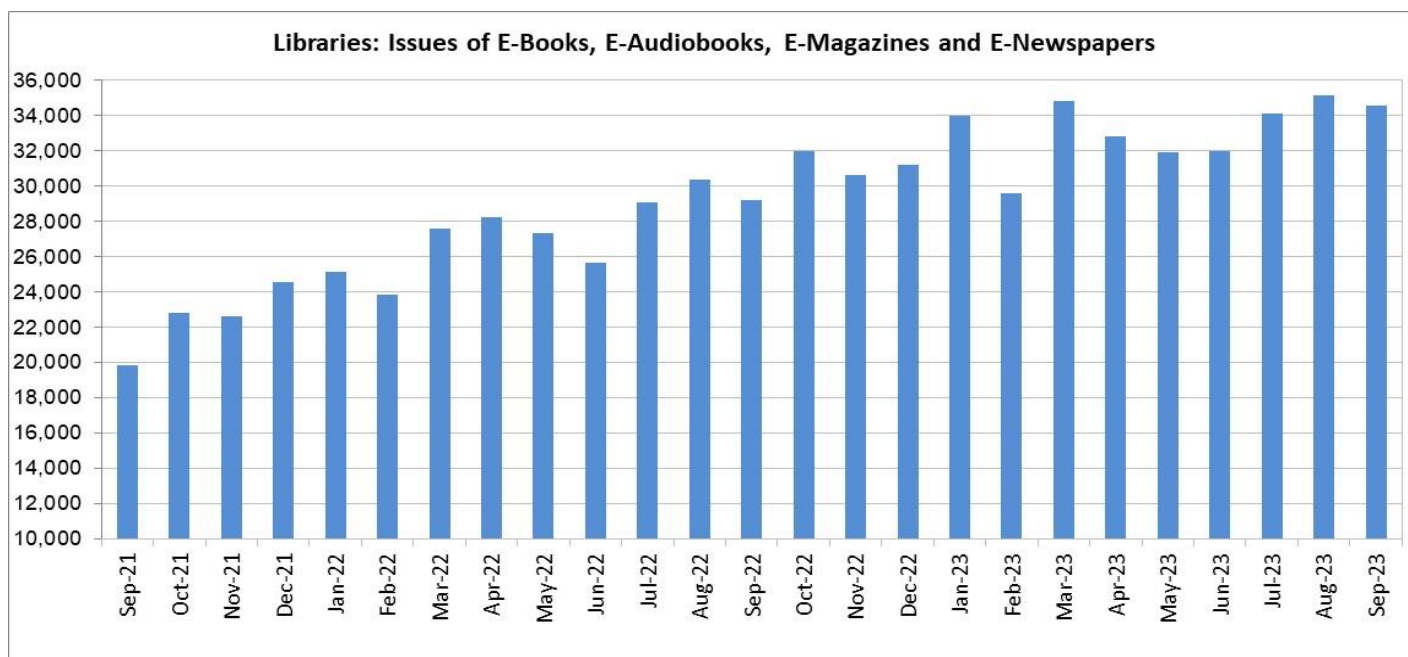
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: The April-to-September e-issues total of 200,452 suggests the 2023/2024 total will exceed 2022/2023's 361,956, the highest-ever financial-year. Of this year's April-to-September total, 87,677 (43.7%) were of e-newspapers, 54,520 (27.2%) were of e-audiobooks, 36,689 (18.3%) were of e-books, and 21,566 (10.8%) were e-magazines issues. In the first half of this financial year, 7,445 different people borrowed at least one e-item. The unique-users total at the same point of the last financial year was 6,554. The eventual total for the year was 8,620.

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: No noticeable change.

Performance Details: Visits to County Museum visits in the July-to-September quarter (7,439) were 6.8% down compared with the total for 2022's equivalent period (7,982), but the April-to-September total of 14,118 was 2.1% above the 13,832 visits received in the same period last year. Visits to County Museum in the 2022/2023 financial year (21,927) were up 18.5% from 18,506 in 2021/2022 (18,506) and 12.4% greater than the 19,501 visits made in 2019/2020. Based on 2022/2023's visits patterns, the projected total for 2023/2024 is 22,380. Of the visits made in the July-to-September quarter, 714 (9.6%) were by children. In the same period last year, 962 visits were by children, 12.1% of the overall tally.

Current Activity: The museum's information leaflet (available in a variety of formats, including on-line) provides details of the partnership with Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust and describes all the buildings on the site, the grounds themselves, and the activities and live events the County Museum and the Trust stage between them. The traditional programme of autumn and winter events and activities is in place. Half-term activities have a Halloween and Bonfire Night theme. The first weekend of December sees the staging of the annual pre-Christmas celebration, two days of seasonal activities that also provide the chance for visitors to buy Christmas gifts from the shop.

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 has worked 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 were presented to Joint Museums Committee at their June meeting, with the preferred option to be passed to County Council Cabinet for consideration later this year.

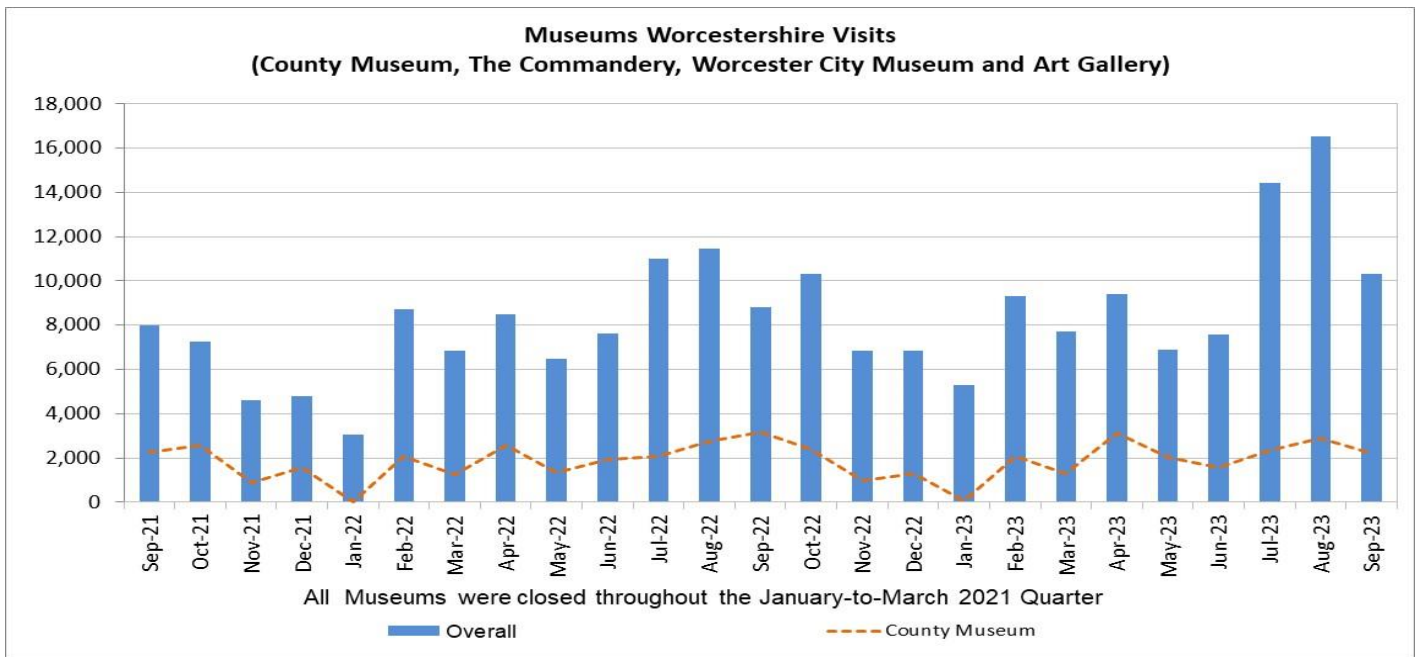
County Museum Visits: Monthly totals

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	1,561	342
Jul 2023	2,332	253
Aug 2023	2,903	375
Sep 2023	2,204	86

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



Countryside Standards Achieved

RAG: Quarter 2 – Green; 2022/2023 overall - Amber

Direction of Travel: Improving

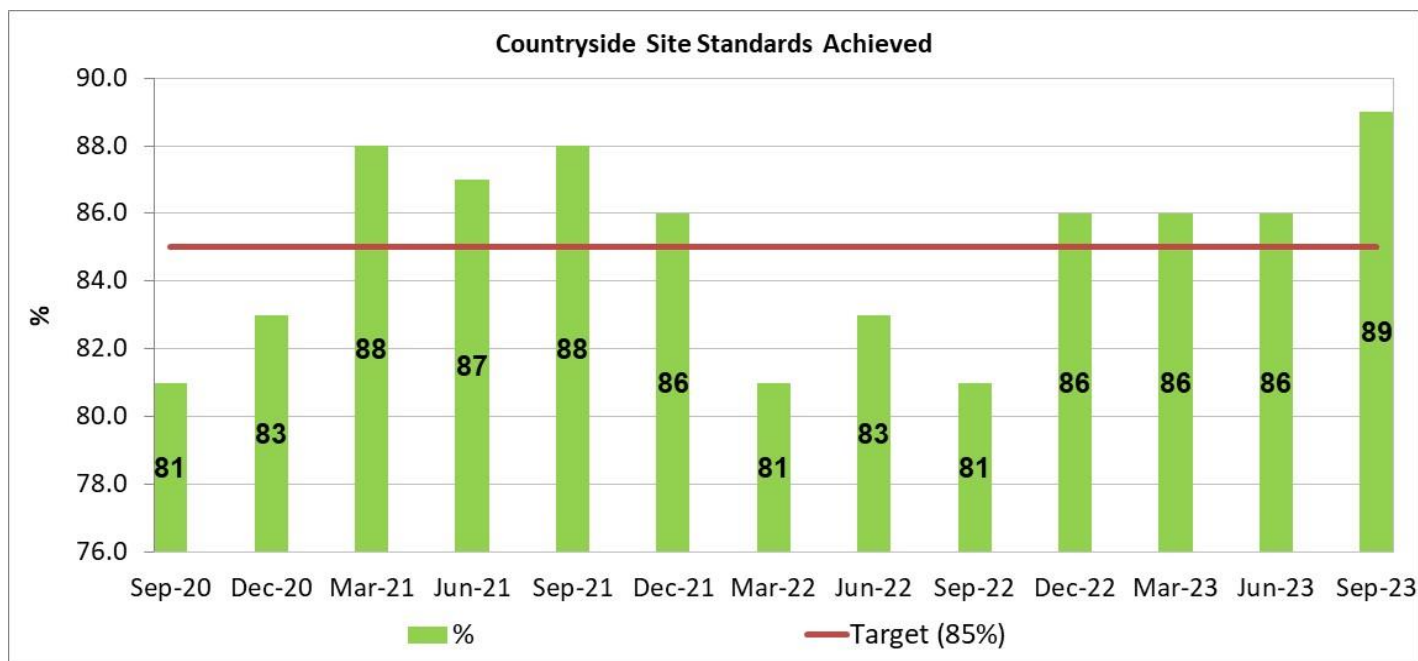
Performance Details: The average percentage for the Countryside Sites Standards indicator in the first half of this financial year was 88%. The target is 85%. The average for the whole of 2022/2023 was an amber-rated 84%. In the last two quarters of 2022/2023 and the first two of 2023/2024, however, performance has been above-target (e.g. July-to-September's out-turn: 89%). This sustained improvement is due mainly to the Greenspace Team being restored to full capacity, facilitating the carrying out of 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. Usage by the public tends to decline in the winter with fewer defect reports being received as a result, but adverse weather can impact on pre-planned and ad hoc maintenance works.

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 decrease during the winter months.

Graph: Countryside Site Standards Achieved



Bikeability – Children Trained in Level 2

RAG: No status.

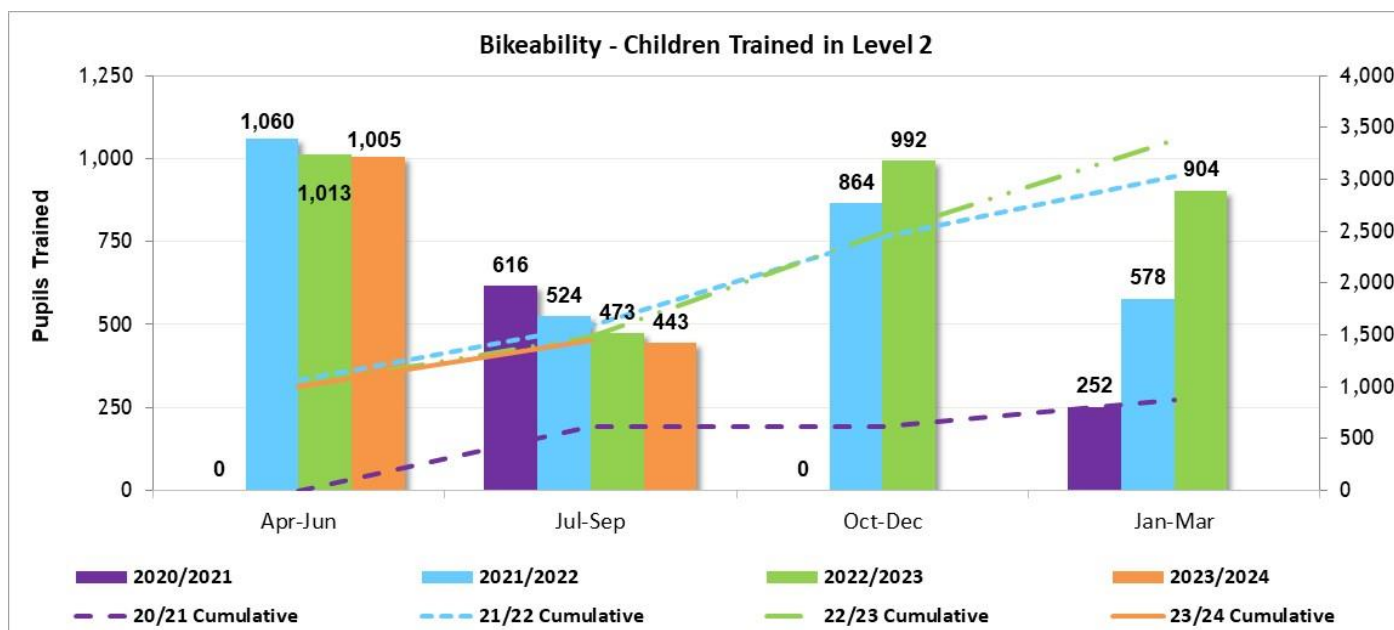
Direction of Travel: Improving

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: Positions vacant for a time in 2022/2023 are now filled and all staff have received the required training. Bookings from schools for the 2023/2024 academic year continue to be 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.

Future Activity: The October-to-December total will be higher than that for the preceding three months. Instructors may also have to cover the long-term sickness absence of a member of the road safety education team, but priority will be given to delivery of Bikeability sessions.

Graph: Children Trained in Bikeability Level 2



Bikeability – Children Trained in Other Levels

RAG: No status.

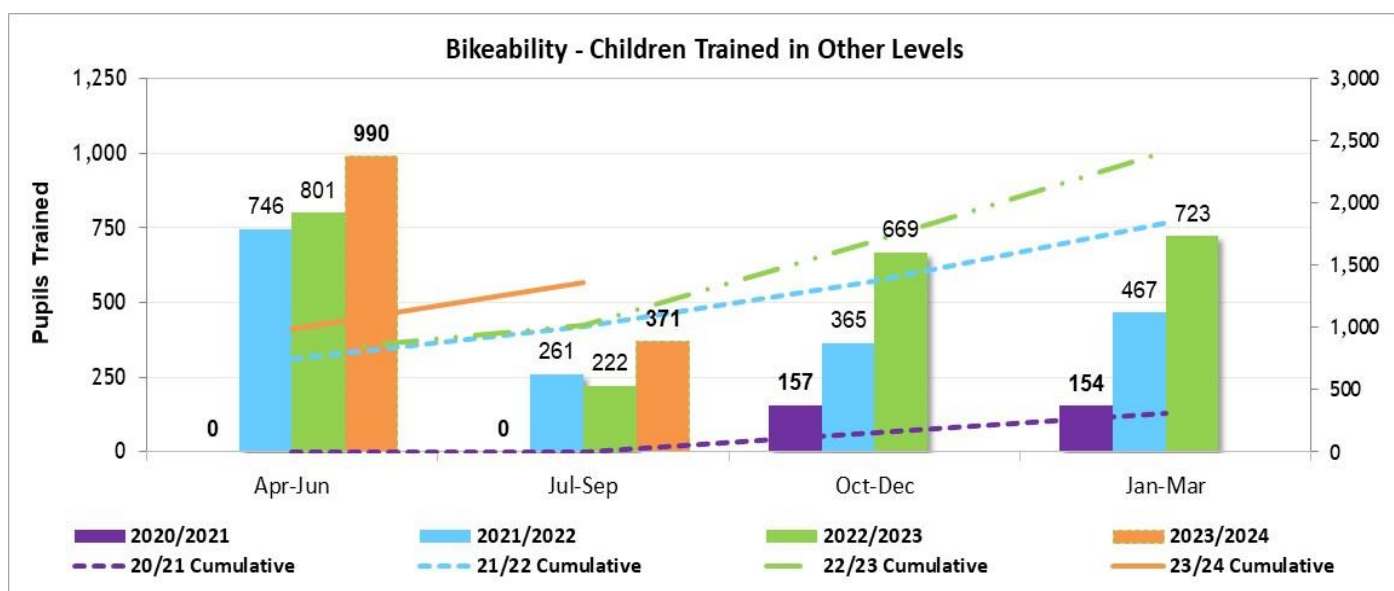
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: The number of pupils receiving Bikeability training in the six months of this financial year was 2,809. Of that total, 1,361 received training at Level 1, which is aimed at providing an introduction to cycling and basic bike control for children aged eight or in school year four. This year's April-to-September total was 338 (33%) more than the 1,023 receiving the same level of training in the same period last year, and 354 (35.2%) more than the 1,007 trained between April and September 2022.

Current Activity: Bookings from schools for the 2023/2024 academic year continue to be 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. Positions vacant for a time in 2022/2023 are now filled and all staff have received the required training.

Future Activity: The October-to-December total will be higher than that for the preceding three months. Instructors may have to cover the long-term sickness absence of a member of the road safety education team, but priority will be given to delivery of Bikeability sessions.

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](#).