

Scrutiny Report Corporate & Communities 2023/2024 Quarter 3

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Registration and Coroner's

Birth registration appointments within 5 working days

RAG: Green

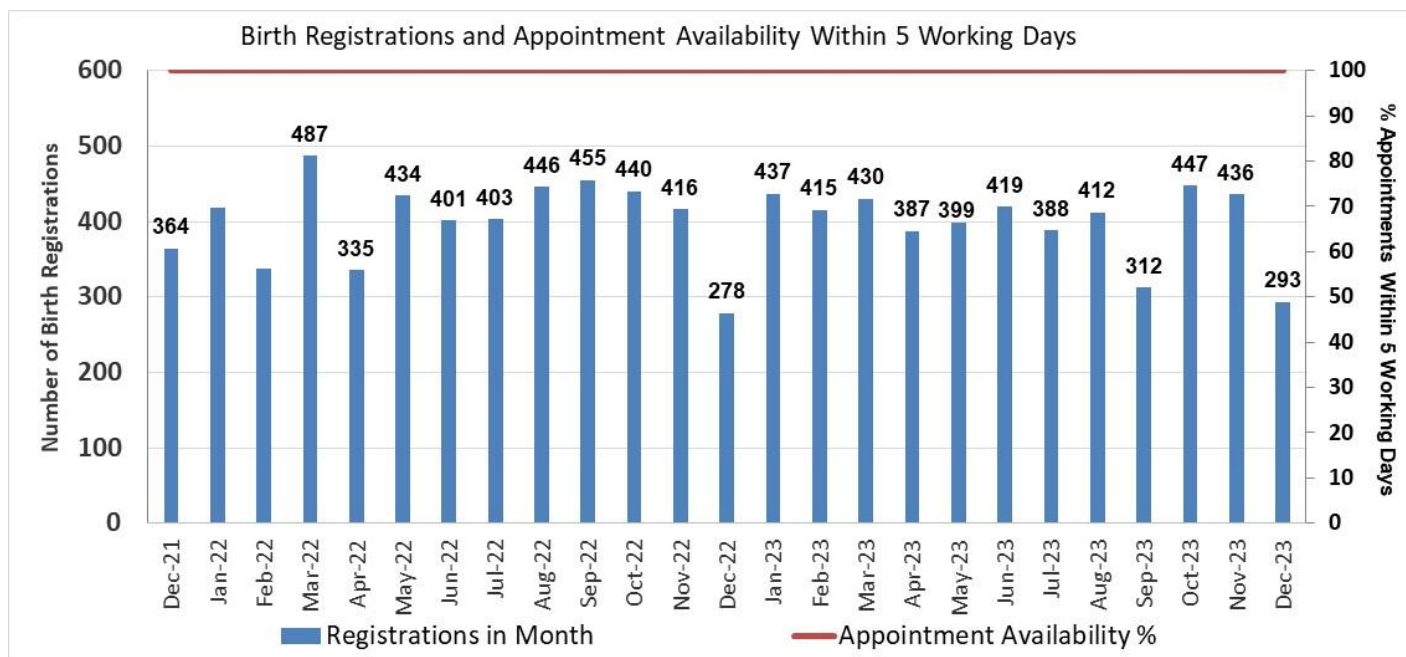
Direction of Travel: No Noticeable Change

Performance Details: Anyone contacting the service from April to December 2023 to register a birth was offered a convenient appointment within 5 working days. Birth registrations in the April-to-December period totalled 3,493, down 115 (3.2%) compared with the 3,608 registered in the same period of 2022. In the October-to-December quarter, the total registered was 1,176. That figure was 42 (3.7%) more than were registered in the same three months in 2022 (1,134).

Current Activity: In partnership with the Library Service, a free Bookstart Scheme pack is handed to those registering a birth. Bookstart 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) Worcester Register Office at County Hall remains open for all appointments. A map showing the temporary entrance can be downloaded and there is clear signage to the office.

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. Access arrangements for the Worcester Register Office will be reviewed when access arrangements for County Hall as a whole make such a review necessary.

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



Death registration appointments within 2 working days

RAG: Green

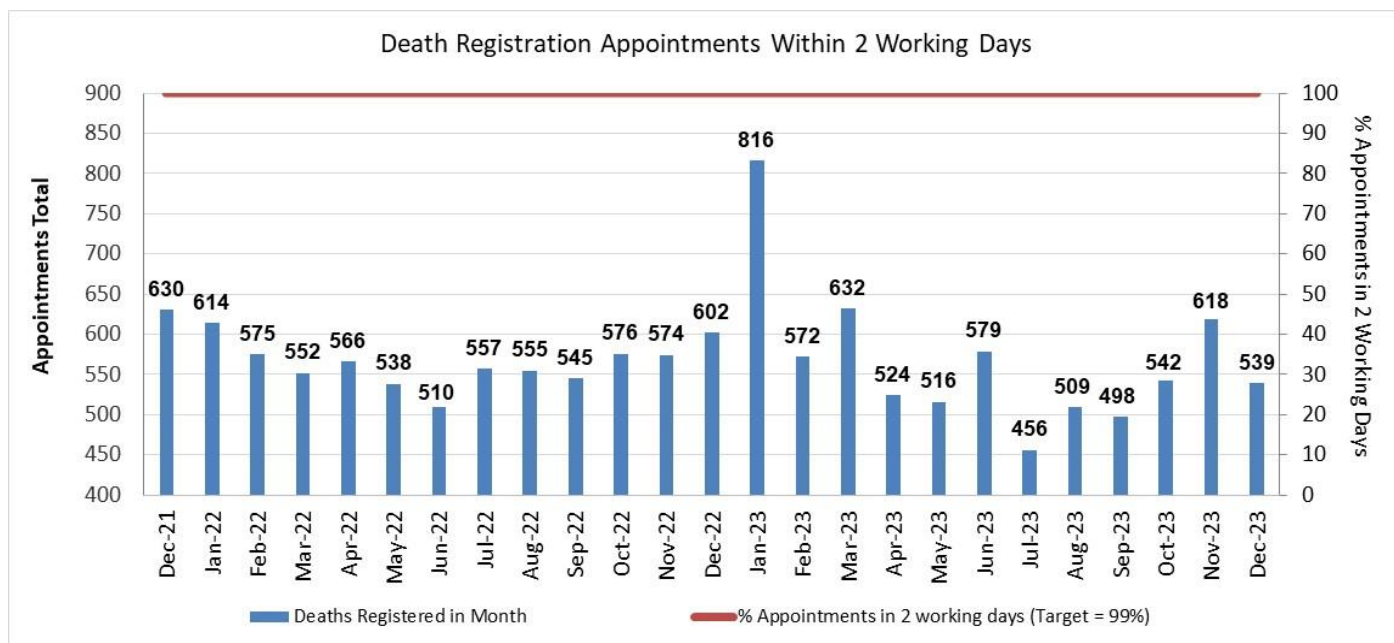
Direction of Travel: No noticeable change

Performance Details: Demand for appointments is not focussed on one office. Despite the additional demands, full availability of appointments was maintained throughout the April-to-December period, as was the case throughout the 2022/2023 financial year. 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: Death Registration Appointments and Percentage of Availability of Appointments



Registration of deaths within 5 days

RAG: Red

Direction of Travel: Improving

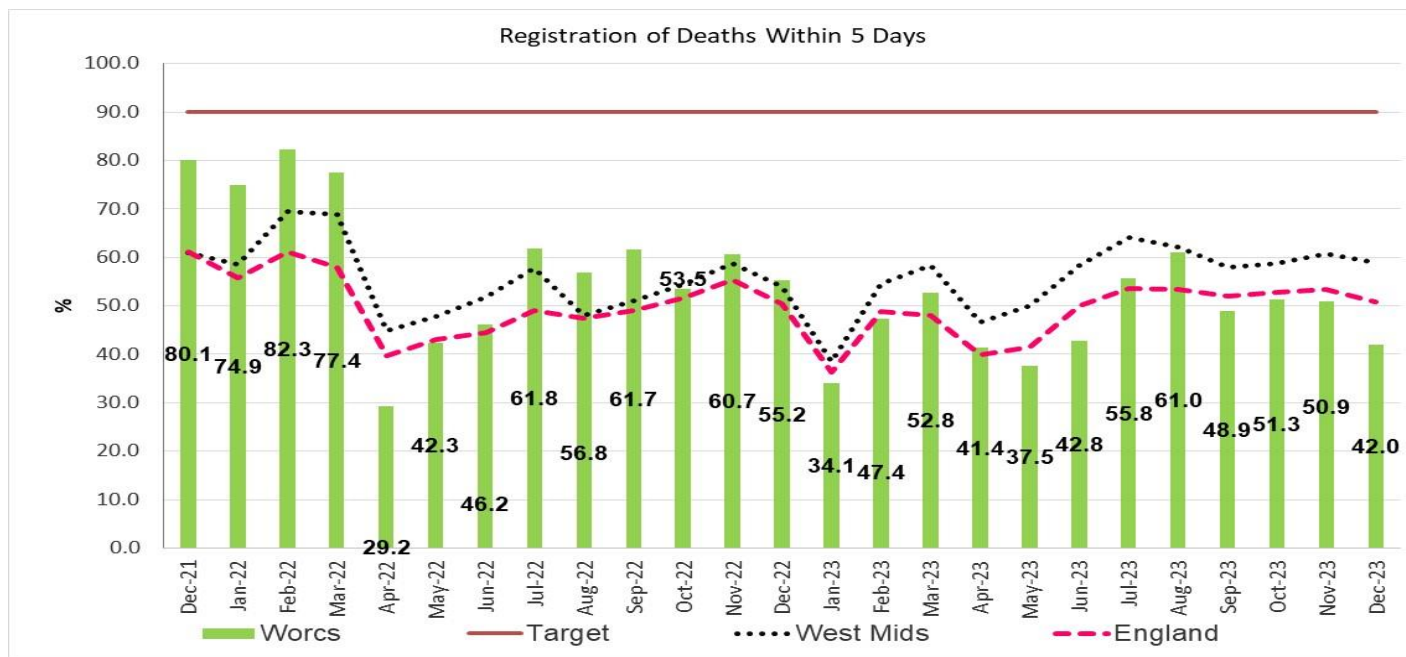
Performance Details: In the October-to December quarter, 510 (48.2%) of the 1,058 deaths registered in Worcestershire were within 5 days (July-to-September percentage 55.3%; April-to-June 40.8%). The equivalent October-to-December percentage for the West Midlands region was 59.1%; for the whole of England it was 52.4%. 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. Worcester Register Office at County Hall remains open for all appointments. A map showing the temporary entrance can be downloaded and there is clear signage to the office.

Future Activity: Given that only one other authority in the West Midlands region currently has all deaths subjected to ME review, a better 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. More fundamentally, early in the 2024/2025 financial year there will be changes to the performance-monitoring framework, which will lead to improved monthly percentages. Access arrangements for the Worcester Register Office will be reviewed when those for the whole of County Hall make such a review necessary.

Graph: Deaths Registered in 5 Working Days



Communications and Consumer Relations

Increasing Staff Engagement

RAG: Green

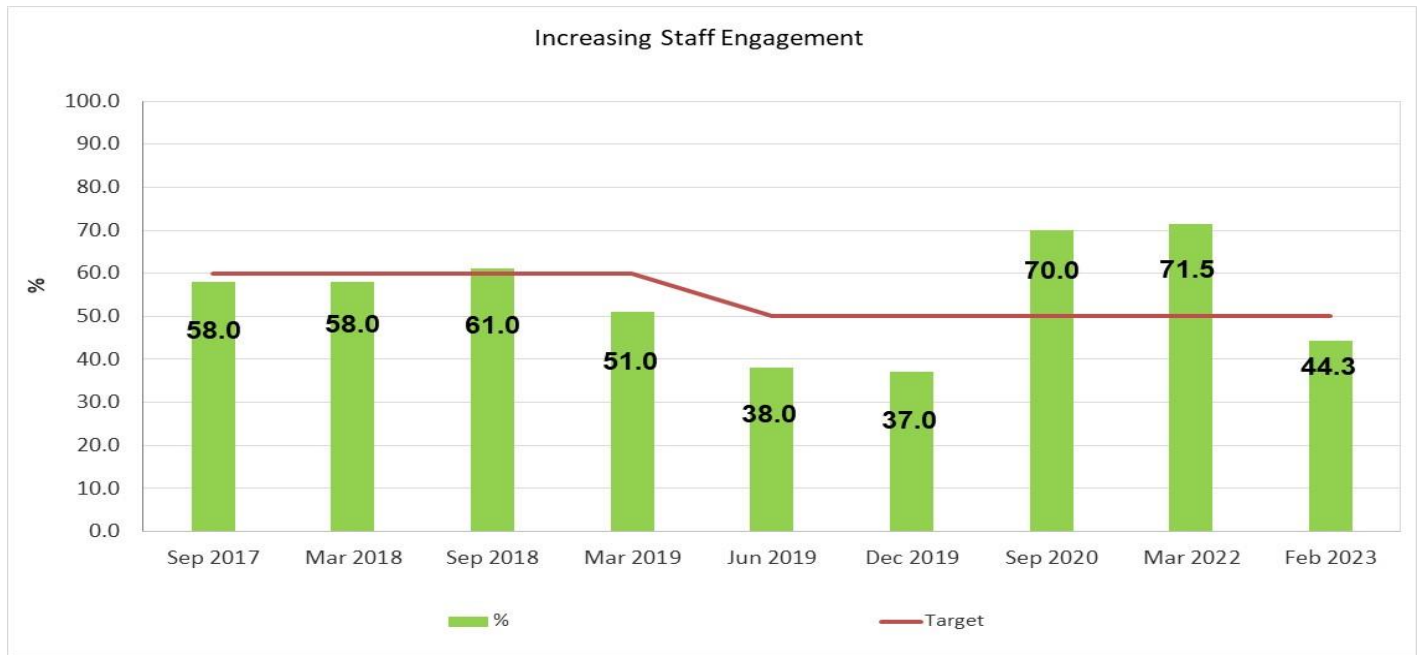
Direction of Travel: Improving

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: Staff Completing the Staff Survey



HR, ICT and Corporate Information Governance Team

Employees - Actual Full-Time Equivalents

RAG: N/A

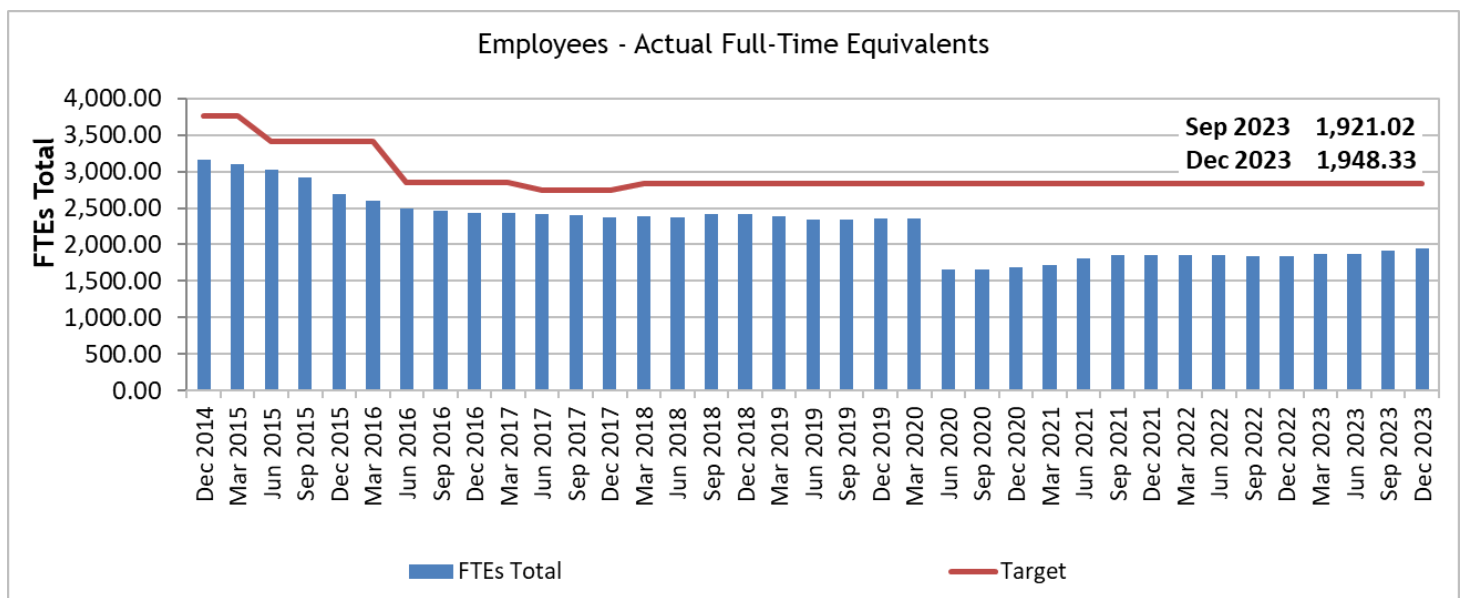
Direction of Travel: N/A

Performance Details: The FTE figure at the end of the third quarter of 2023/2024 was 1,948.33, an increase of 1.4% from 1,921.02 at the end of September and 5.4% higher than at the end of December 2022 (1,843.60). 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: Employees - Actual Full-Time Equivalents by Quarter



Sickness Rates (Cumulative)

RAG: N/A

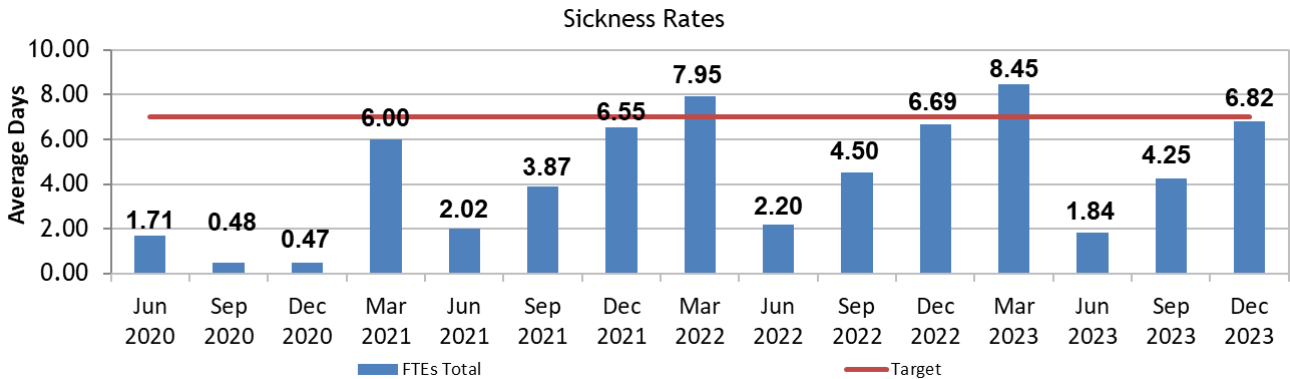
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: At the end of the third quarter of the 2023/2024 financial year, the average days sick per person (Full-Time Equivalent) was 6.82, an increase compared to the same period of the last financial year (6.69).

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 third quarter of 2023/2024, long-term absences totalled 3,787 days, an increase of 43.6% compared to total days absent in quarter 3 of 2022/2023 (2,637).

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: Days Lost Through Long-Term Sickness



Days Lost Through Short-Term Sickness

RAG: N/A

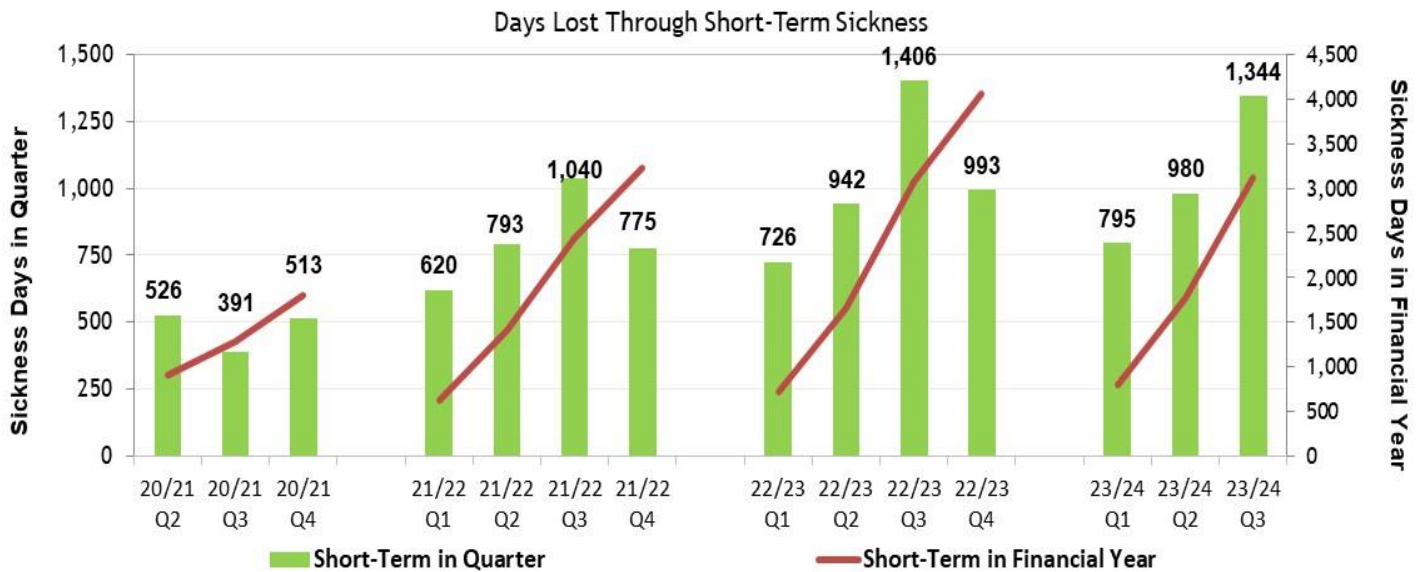
Direction of Travel: N/A

Performance Details: Short-term absences in the third quarter of 2023/2024 totalled 1,344. This represents a decrease of 6.6% compared to the same period in 2022/2023, when the total was 1,406 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: Days Lost Through Short-Term Sickness



Staff Turnover Rate

RAG: N/A

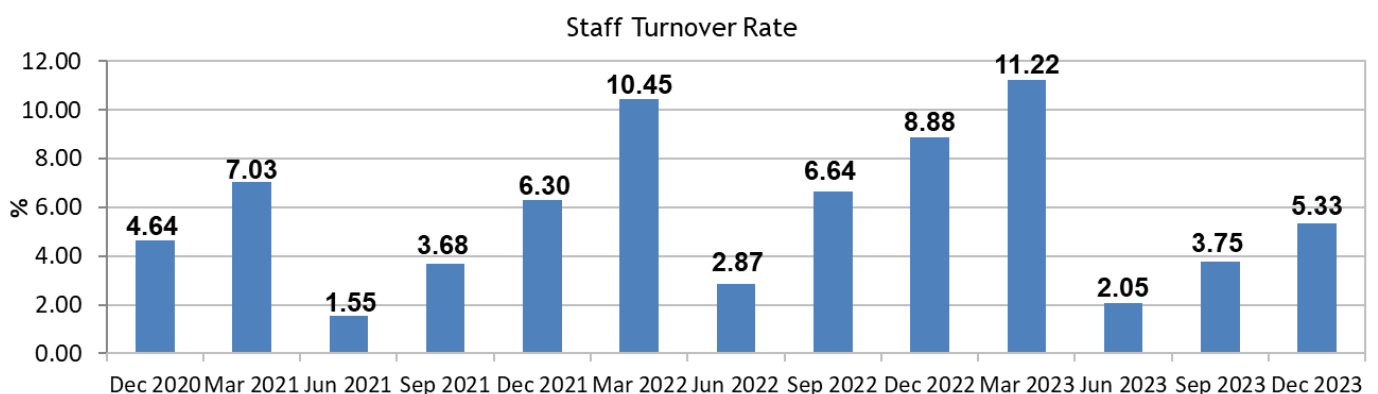
Direction of Travel: N/A

Performance Details: This measure relates to leavers in the financial year as a percentage of the workforce. The turnover rate for quarter 3 of this financial year was 5.33. This is a reduction compared to the same period of the last financial year when the figure was 8.88.

Current Activity:

Future Activity:

Graph: Turnover Rate



Cost of Agency Staff as a Percentage of the Total Pay Bill

RAG: N/A

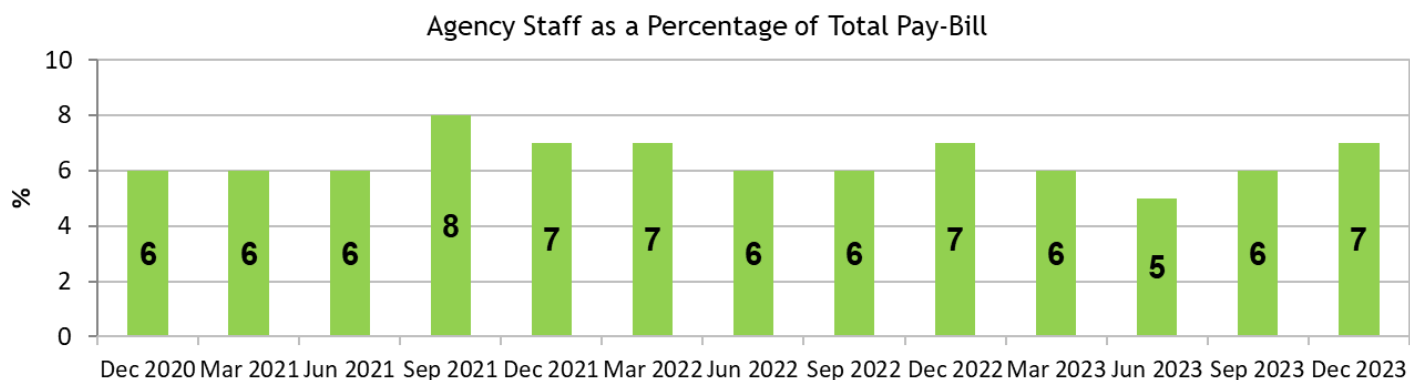
Direction of Travel: No Noticeable change

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 at the end of December 2023 was 7%, up from 6% in September. In December 2022 the figure was also 7%.

Current Activity:

Future Activity:

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



Communities

Library Visits and Issues

RAG: No Status

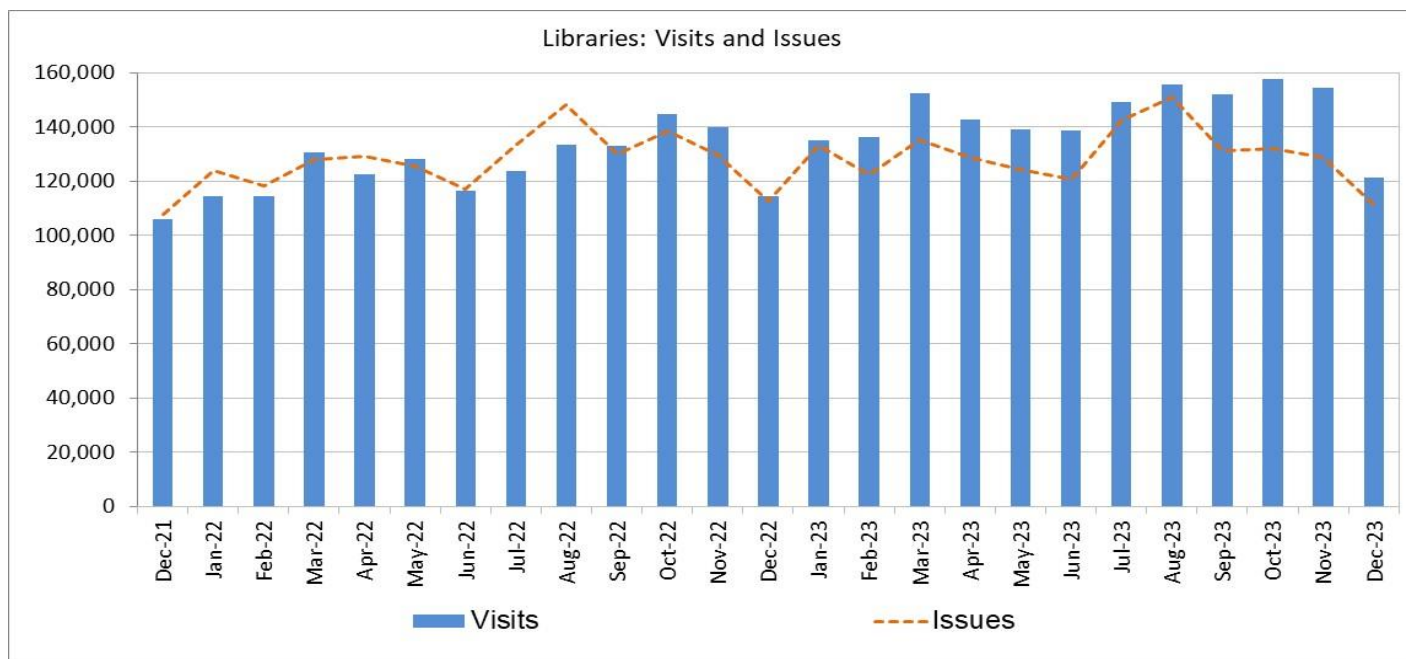
Direction of Travel: Underlying trend for both visits and issues – No noticeable change

Performance Details: The visits total for April to December 2023 was 1,311,219, equivalent to 64.4% of the April-to-December 2019 total of 2,036,002. At the end of the previous quarter, the equivalent percentage was 64.5%. Nationally, it is estimated visits to libraries are at about 70% of their pre-COVID-19 level. The latest such estimate for issues is 84%. Across Worcestershire, however, libraries' issues of all items (1st April to 31st December) totalled 1,474,645, equivalent to 91.7% of April to December 2019's 1,608,755. The equivalent percentage for April to September was 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 and outreach 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, and visits to schools and at-home readers. Half-term and Easter-holiday activities are scheduled for all libraries and Study Happy sessions continue to be run 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: Libraries Unlocked is expected to be operational at seven further libraries in early 2024, assuming positive outcomes in all due processes. Library services, groups, and events 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.

Graph: 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	36,813
Bewdley	52,404	4,730	39,798	49,727	41,721
Broadway	18,229	1,446	4,277	7,714	5,749
Bromsgrove	165,219	15,014	73,555	112,595	83,291
Catshill	10,403	389	1,901	3,907	3,649
County Mobile	7,121	704	3,464	4,025	2,265
Droitwich	124,184	16,757	60,859	71,971	60,385
Evesham	275,958	12,760	60,991	101,163	84,345
Hagley	31,304	3,836	19,795	27,075	22,656
Hive	655,789	66,680	251,197	410,125	364,519
Kidderminster	259,564	39,099	119,234	135,555	107,286
Malvern	173,601	23,267	97,052	133,290	105,387
Martley	787	0	77	94	62
Pershore	88,743	10,187	42,437	55,723	45,965
Redditch	269,777	39,008	143,502	144,857	118,233
Rubery	36,500	2,893	19,297	25,814	21,080
St John's	63,565	9,503	26,951	40,364	38,103
Stourport	101,761	8,977	53,226	78,682	72,336
Tenbury	73,058	7,965	40,708	51,082	43,041
Upton	18,092	1,184	6,075	9,748	9,353
Warndon	33,118	2,448	20,682	21,760	14,816
Welland	729	0	38	130	123
Woodrow	11,036	1,834	13,938	18,238	14,310
Wythall	78,715	4,137	35,494	28,753	15,731
Totals	2,607,445	278,599	1,175,251	1,581,086	1,311,219

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

Library	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Alvechurch	47,407	11,510	39,006	43,670	32,115
Bewdley	44,509	11,359	36,726	41,339	31,909
Broadway	19,913	4,446	12,511	14,486	11,574
Bromsgrove	123,395	34,081	97,823	113,287	87,854
Catshill	9,789	1,678	6,189	7,985	7,174
County Mobile	22,858	4,431	16,322	17,063	11,575
Droitwich	114,182	33,474	89,599	94,409	73,063
E-Audiobooks	36,334	67,296	77,706	98,854	83,023
E-Books	32,139	72,830	62,950	67,936	55,092
E-Magazines	31,452	49,783	42,422	44,206	31,843
E-Newspapers	0	0	83,089	150,960	132,727
Evesham	121,662	29,086	86,096	97,657	74,563
Hagley	41,293	9,752	33,272	34,837	26,747
Hive	581,646	127,786	370,020	394,161	292,980
Kidderminster	126,283	29,435	88,568	100,777	77,471
Malvern	224,195	57,559	163,369	185,914	136,935
Martley	1,321	110	699	996	796
Pershore	80,568	22,809	63,075	68,633	53,205
Redditch	126,592	33,861	90,553	103,383	76,495
Rubery	30,723	6,407	23,773	25,584	21,082
St John's	59,183	16,657	44,886	47,534	36,000
Stourport	73,624	21,081	50,991	55,818	38,576
Tenbury	36,918	10,796	28,767	32,011	24,854
Upton	16,322	3,408	10,189	12,020	10,536
Warndon	27,305	5,714	18,678	18,740	14,345
Welland	1,849	249	698	1,189	1,197
Woodrow	12,979	2,023	9,746	11,001	6,705
Worcester Hub	5,780	890	1,477	2,503	1,638
Wythall	38,482	9,301	29,025	30,725	22,571
Totals	2,088,703	677,812	1,678,225	1,917,678	1,474,645

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

RAG: No Status

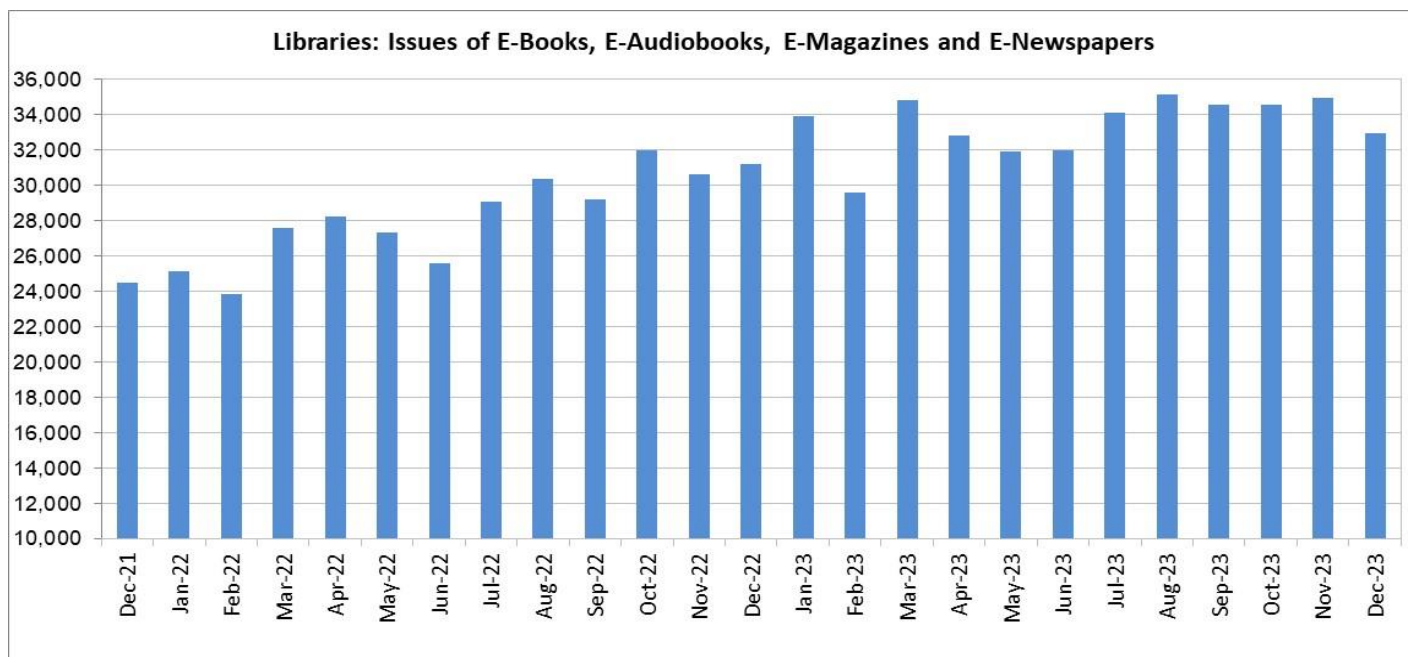
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: After three quarters of the current financial year, the e-issues total (302,685) equated to 83.6% of the full-year total for the 2022/2023 financial year, which was 361,956. The final total for 2022/2023 will be surpassed during the January-to-March quarter, 2023/2024's total thereby becoming the highest ever for a financial year. Of the April-to-December 2023 total, 132,727 (43.8%) were of e-newspapers and 83,023 (27.4%) were of e-audiobooks. On New Year's Eve, the number of different people who had borrowed at least one e-item in 2023/2024 was 8,583. The highest financial-year e-borrowers total (2022/2023's 8,620) will be surpassed in January.

Current Activity: Efforts continue to promote and expand the e-library. These include 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 remains in discussions with publishers about libraries being given access to e-versions of the most-recent published titles and to more e-copies of consistently popular 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: Issues of E-Books, E-Audiobooks and E-Magazines per month



Museum Visits

RAG: No Status

Direction of Travel: Improving.

Performance Details: The visits total for County Museum in the October-to-December quarter was 5,736, which represented an increase of 1,076 (23.1%) compared with the total for equivalent period in 2022 (4,660). The April-to-December total of 19,934 was 1,448 (7.8%) greater than the total of 18,492 received in the same period of 2022. Based on 2022/2023's visits patterns, the projected total for 2023/2024 is 23,600, which would be 1,673 (7.6%) higher than 2022/2023's 21,927. Of the visits made in the current financial year, 3,867 (19.4%) were by children. The April-to-December total in 2022 was 3,364, equivalent to 18.2% of the overall visits tally.

Current Activity: As is in previous years, County Museum will be closed to the public throughout January to enable buildings and collections maintenance to be undertaken. Shortly after re-opening on 1st February, the museum will begin a programme of events and activities celebrating Chinese New Year. The Easter holiday period will see family activities staged. 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.

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. It has been agreed by County Council Cabinet that County Museum will remain at Hartlebury following the end of the current lease in 2026. It will undergo an extensive refurbishment (estimated cost between £800,000 and £1 million). The County Council will be applying to the Heritage Lottery fund, aiming for £4 million of external funding to help realise the vision for the site.

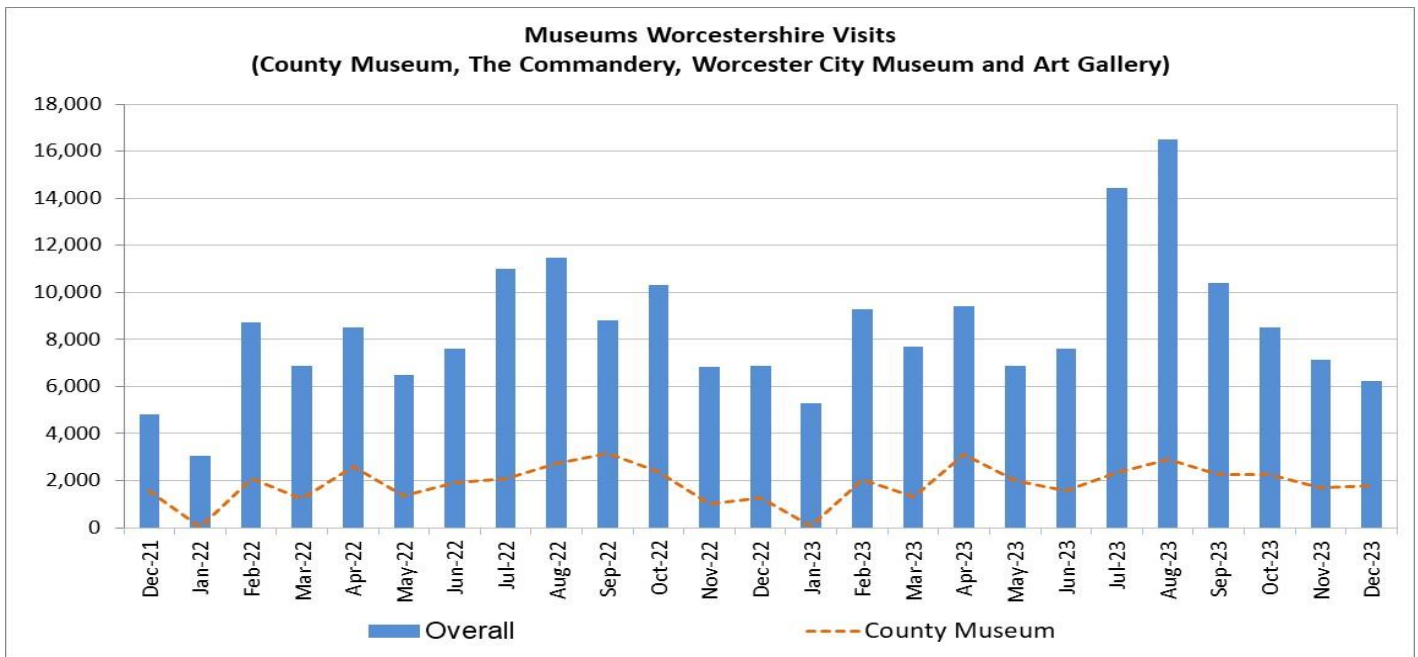
County Museum Visits: Monthly totals

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	1,577	342
Jul 2023	2,332	253
Aug 2023	2,903	375
Sep 2023	2,268	86
Oct 2023	2,274	701
Nov 2023	1,682	722
Dec 2023	1,780	468

Graph: Monthly Visits Totals for County Museum, The Commandery, and Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery



Countryside Standards Achieved

RAG: Quarter 3 – Green; 2023/2024 overall - Green

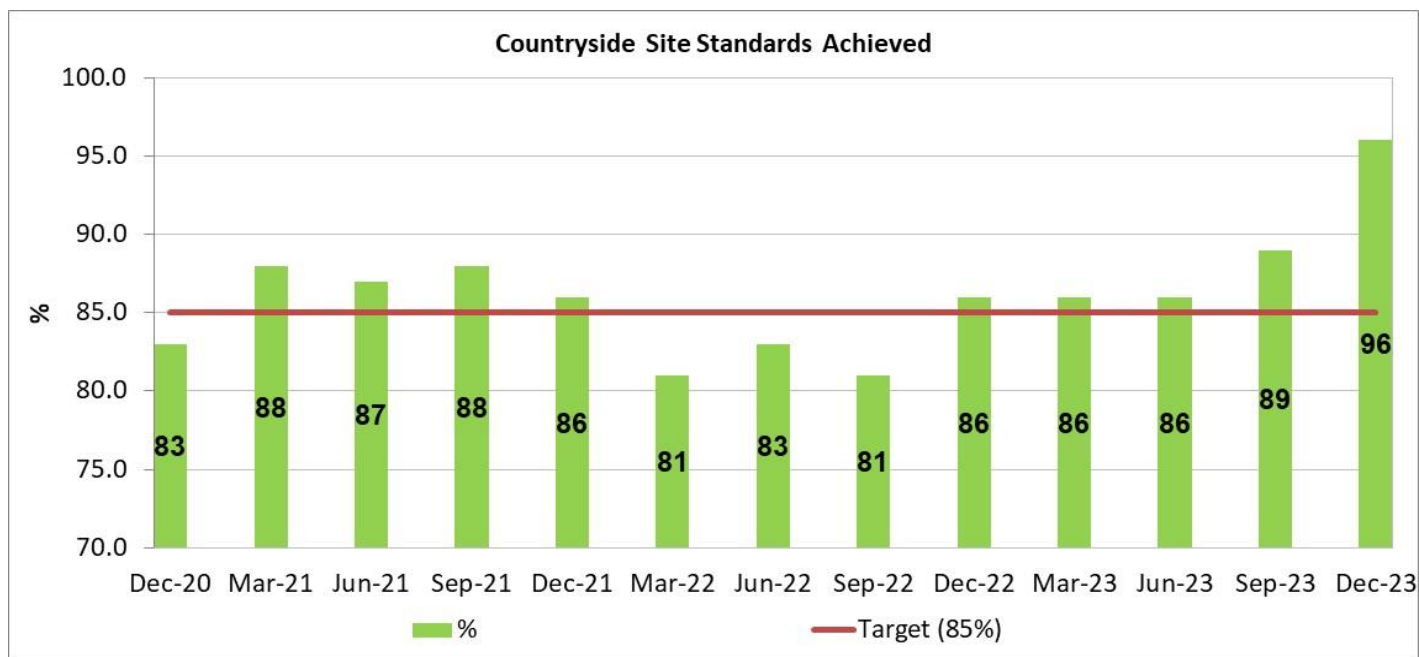
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: The average percentage for the Countryside Sites Standards indicator for 2023/2024 on 31st December was 90%. The target is 85%. The average for the whole of 2022/2023 was an amber-rated 84%. In the third quarter of 2023/2024, the percentage was 96%, the highest recorded quarter-end percentage and the first to exceed 90% since the end of 2016. The sustained improvement since late-2022 is due mainly to the Greenspace Team being at 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 and (as in early-January of this year) inspection programmes.

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 during the spring and summer months.

Graph: Countryside Site Standards Achieved



Bikeability – Children Trained in Level 2

RAG: No status.

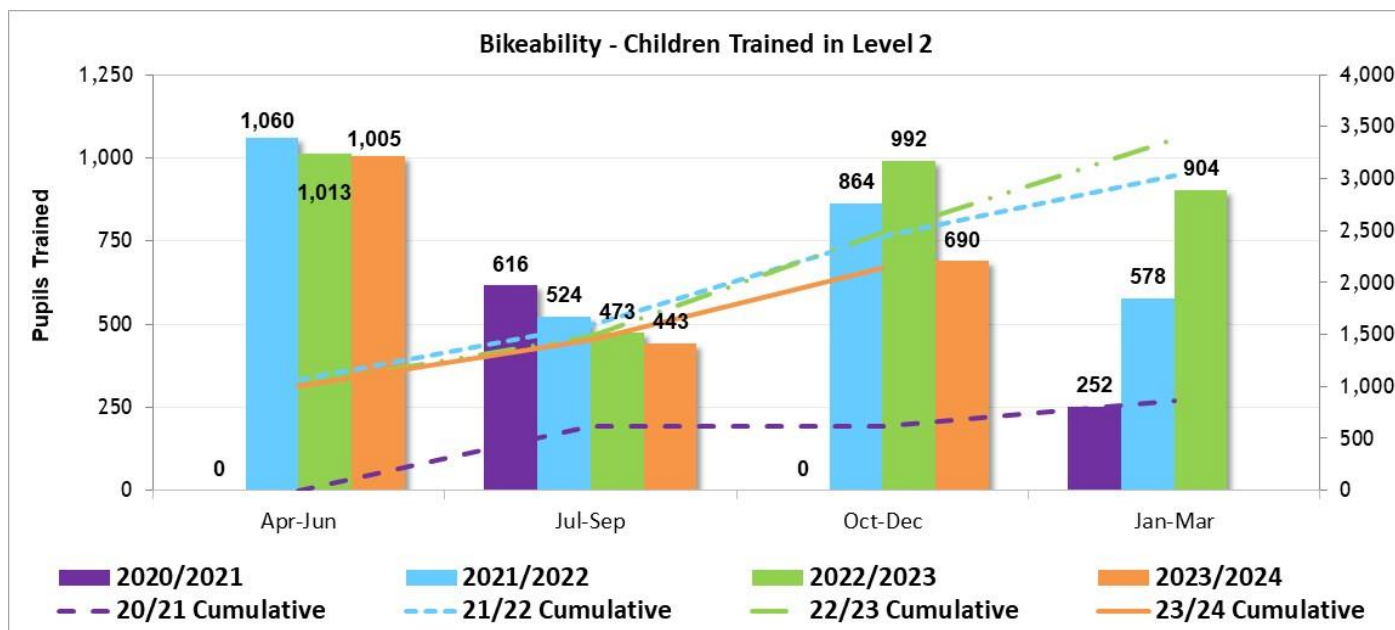
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: The number of pupils receiving Bikeability training in the April-to-December 2023 period was 4,423, an increase of 253 (6.1%) compared with the total of 4,170 in the same period in 2022. Of the 2023 total, 2,138 (48.3%) received on-the-road training at Level 2, with 690 receiving their Level 2 tuition in the October-to-December quarter. The first quarter of each financial year normally generates the most requests for training from schools, with the July-to-September quarter understandably seeing less pupils trained because of the summer holidays.

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. In instances where an instructor has to cover a colleague's absence, priority is given to delivery of Bikeability sessions over and above delivery of other road-safety education.

Future Activity: The January-to-March total has in previous years been slightly lower than the preceding quarter's. That is likely to be the case again this year, given the earlier end to maintained schools' term (22nd March) and assuming that adverse weather is likely to cause some bookings to be cancelled.

Graph: Children Trained in Bikeability Level 2



Bikeability – Children Trained in Other Levels (Balance, Learn to Ride, and Level 1)

RAG: No status.

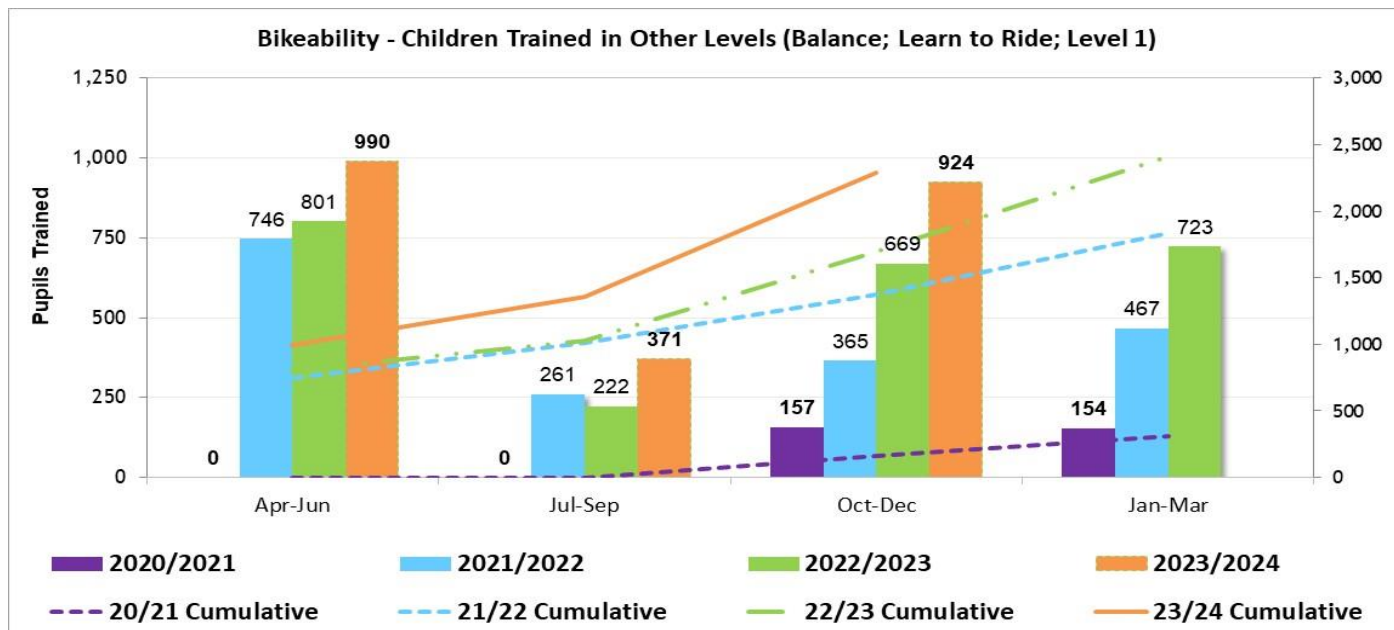
Direction of Travel: Improving

Performance Details: The number of pupils receiving Bikeability training from 1st April to 31st December 2023 was 4,423. Of that total, 2,285 (51.7%) received training in the Balance, Learn to Ride or Level 1 categories. These provide an introduction to cycling and basic bike control for children aged eight or in school year four. The April-to-December 2023 tally of children trained in one of the three categories was 593 (35%) more than the 1,692 who received training in those categories in the April-to-December period of 2022 and 913 (66.5%) greater than the total of 1,372 for the equivalent period in 2021.

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. When instructors have to cover staff absences, priority is given to delivery of Bikeability sessions over and above delivery of other road-safety education.

Future Activity: The January-to-March total has in previous years been slightly lower than the preceding quarter's. That is likely to be the case again this year, given the earlier end to maintained schools' term (22nd March) and assuming that adverse weather may lead to the cancellation of some booked 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](#).