



Corporate Performance Report
Executive Summary
Quarter 1 2024/25



Introduction

This report provides a summary of performance across the county council in quarter 1 of 2024/25. It includes a high-level overview of the council's performance and executive summaries for each directorate. In the main, the key performance indicators which provide a comprehensive overview of progress in delivering the council's priorities are very similar to those reported throughout 2023/24. The changes are described in detail in Appendix D and cover:

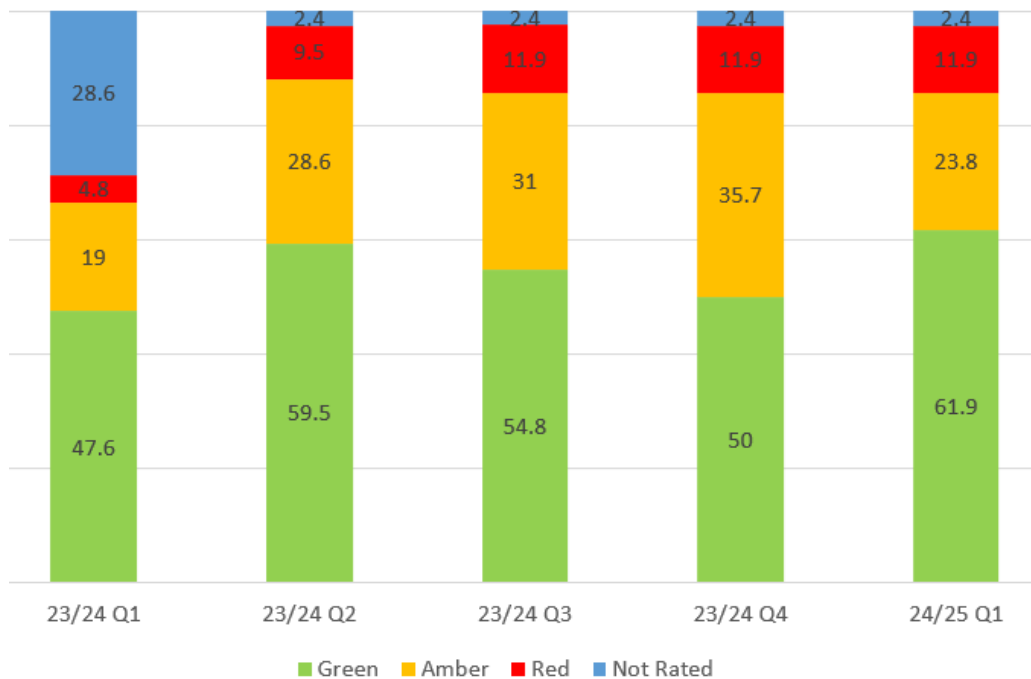
- The addition of a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) on pupil absence levels to replace a KPI on the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils.
- An amendment to the definition of the KPI on care leavers in employment, education or training
- An amendment to the wording of the KPI on waste recycling etc.
- Details on the Economic Impact Index which is being reported for the first time.
- A change in calculation methodology for the KPI on adult social care providers rated by the CQC.
- The redefining of the KPI on sickness absence and the improved reporting methodology for vacancy rates.

The accompanying [online performance dashboard](#) provides further details on all the key performance indicators including targets, trends over time and benchmarking information.

Overview of performance

There are 41 rated key performance indicators (KPIs), with one (number of complaints upheld by the Ombudsman) unrated. The chart below provides an overview of the percentage of KPIs within each rating.

Comparison of the percentage of KPIs with each rating.



There is one unrated KPI, 'The number of complaints upheld by the Ombudsman', where performance continues to be tracked and which will be rated following the introduction of the new Ombudsman Code. The 'Percentage of rated KPIs achieving or exceeding their target'



for quarter 1 is 63.4%, which is an improvement on Q4 2023/24 where 48.8% of rated KPIs were on track.

The Chief Executive and each Executive Director has provided a summary of performance for their areas of responsibility in the following sections.

Angie Ridgwell, Chief Executive

Delivering on our ambitions for, and commitments to, our residents and businesses is a priority for us, and we actively seek to manage our performance recognising that in some cases we do not have full control of all the factors that influence this. It is positive to see that we are on track against the majority of key performance indicators and continue to drive progress. Alongside this positive picture, there are a number of significant challenges experienced by us and many councils across the country. We remain committed to doing what is possible throughout the year to tackle areas of underperformance.

While the dashboard shows an improving picture, there are a number of variances, and these are explained in the Executive Director summaries. Of particular note is the improvement in the numbers of care leavers in education, employment, and training as well as adult social care providers rated good or outstanding by the CQC. These are important measures as we care for and support our vulnerable residents. We also see improvements in our major projects and infrastructure, which benefit all residents, however the condition of the road network is a concern. Like all councils, we are reporting financial pressures and it is also disappointing that our sickness rates have yet to show an improvement. We continue to work with our managers and staff to ensure the health and wellbeing of our employees.

Following the recent general election, with our local government sector colleagues, we remain alert to the strategic ambitions of the new Government and potential changes to the policy suite which dictate much of our service delivery. It is not expected that the fiscal constraints we are working within will be eased. These factors aligned to continuing growth in both demand and complexity as well as inflationary pressures in key markets such as home care, mean that the context within which we operate will remain a challenge. We continue to explore the implications for our Devolution Deal and to pursue this actively in the best interests of the county.

Our partners too are managing pressures which will have a direct impact on us and our residents. All public sector bodies are currently undertaking forensic work to reduce costs and improve productivity. There is a risk that in undertaking this work we simply move costs around the system rather than remove them; we continue to work very closely with our partners to try and mitigate this, but it is time consuming and can cause delays in the system.

It is positive to see some green shoots in our national economic position, However, we remain exposed to geopolitical and economic instabilities, and we will continue to monitor emerging situations seeking to pre-empt them where possible and mitigate where not.

Overall, the positive direction of travel in our performance is welcome and a credit to our staff who work tirelessly and with absolute commitment in the interests of our residents. The year however is expected to be challenging with many unknown factors, both national and international, that will need to be managed.



Louise Taylor, Executive Director of Adult Services

This quarter the Adult Services Directorate has focussed on its preparedness for 'go live' of the new Living Better Lives in Lancashire practice model on 1st July. The launch included the successful implementation of the improved case management system Liquidlogic LAS, the introduction of strength-based practice across all services and the Wellbeing and Early Support function which creates a front-door to community referrals across the north, east and centre of the county. Going forward adult social care will use a 3-step approach to providing information advice, and guidance, short term services for those who need it and a formal Care Act assessment only where necessary.

We have also launched a new on-line directory of services, on-line portals to support people who are able to self-serve and a national on-line system 'AskSara' to enable people to access low level equipment themselves rather than waiting for an assessment.

Overall feedback from staff has been positive. The improved case management system now supports strengths-based practice through more consistent recording of practice, reducing 'hand offs' within the system, consistent application of the financial scheme of delegation and a new suite of performance reports, many of which can be accessed directly by teams to improve the performance culture across the Directorate. The on-line service finder has been particularly well received and early signs indicate our on-line portals are being well used and reducing the time it takes for the Customer Access Service to process requests.

More work needs to be done with customers, stakeholders and partners to explain and highlight the changes and improvements and to promote the various self-serve options that are now available. In terms of our staff, we are providing support through line management structures, training and the network of 'champions' to help them adapt to the new working practices.

There have been some operational teething issues with implementing the Wellbeing and Early Support function, mainly in relation to resource allocation across teams. These issues were anticipated and are being addressed. Concerns remain about the number of people still waiting, in our older people, learning disability and physical disability community teams, for an assessment or review. This is our highest risk and priority with further actions identified and in hand to bring these backlogs down. The Directorate continues to prepare for inspection. The self-assessment is being redrafted and will be refreshed every 3 months based on the helpful feedback from the Local Government Association peer review. Furthermore, the information returns, and evidence library have been refreshed. We are using exemplars from best practice authorities who have recently been inspected and received good ratings.

In this first quarter of 2024/25, we have re-established our performance targets for the year ahead, using the most appropriate local and national comparators. We have set stretch targets in areas where we consistently perform well, for example in relation to safeguarding and the quality of the external care market.

Jacqui Old, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services

Children's Services continues to see strong performance in reducing demand with the number of children coming in to care in line with our ambition. The preventative approaches which have been established in Lancashire means that we expect that performance will remain strong in this area. For those children who do need care, we are striving to ensure that there are



sufficient good quality homes that can meet their needs, including work to address the shortage of foster carers who can provide stable and loving homes, particularly for children with more complex needs.

Published figures for the percentage of parents receiving one of their three preferred school places have confirmed expected improvements reported last quarter, with 99.1% at primary and 99.6% at secondary. Our performance is above both national and regional comparators, despite the pressures on school places that exist in parts of the county. We are also encouraged that performance in the take-up of free funded early years education places remains above target, and we continue to focus on the take-up of places for vulnerable children in some parts of the county where take-up is lower. This will provide more children with an excellent start to their educational journey, ensuring a promising future.

Rates of children missing education remain higher than we would want. Though numbers have lowered slightly from last quarter, as some current Year 11 are now no longer compulsory school aged, they remain high as significantly more cases have been received for children moving into the area, combined with pressures on school places in some parts of Lancashire. Most confirmed children missing from education are within the admissions system with parents engaging with the school registration process. Our work to create additional places in parts of the county where there are the highest pressures is helping to mitigate some of these pressures.

Library use continues to be in line with targets, with over 1.4m visits and downloads of E-books during the quarter. Our libraries and museums have a great programme of events and activities running throughout the summer and continue to innovate in the use of new technologies to promote both paper and digital access to books and magazines.

This quarter, we have introduced a new indicator into the report to Cabinet, focussed on pupil absence. Attendance in school is essential for pupils to learn and reach their potential. Being around teachers and friends provides access to extra-curricular opportunities and pastoral care, contributing to overall well-being alongside a positive impact on academic outcomes. School absence in Lancashire is generally in line with national averages, but with increasing trends for pupils of secondary age and for pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan. We are working with schools to share best practice and to further enhance our offer of support to schools on attendance issues, to help ensure that we further strengthen performance.

To align with national benchmarking, the care leavers in Employment, Education or Training (EET) cohort had been changed to 17/18-year-olds, replacing 18/20-year-olds. At the end of June 2024, 290 (62.9%) care leavers aged 17-18 were EET, an improvement on 58% at the end of March. A range of measures, including clinics to support young people with volunteering, online courses, applications for college, university, and work, are among actions being taken forward to support more young people to realise their potential.

Moving forward, we will continue to provide support and challenge to schools to support improvements in educational attainment, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, and in securing improvements in services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), linked to the development of a refreshed SEND Partnership Plan. The limited capacity within the SEND and educational psychology teams is having a significant effect on the completion of new assessments within statutory timescales. Increases to the workforce over the next quarter and the introduction of more streamlined processes should begin to show improvements in timeliness. However, the shortage of Educational

Psychologists nationally and the difficulty in recruiting to these posts means we do not expect that there will be a rapid improvement in performance.

Phil Green, Executive Director of Growth, Environment, Transport and Health

Performance dashboards for the directorate continue to indicate strong performance overall in Q1 with the majority of indicators at good or excellent.

Work continued in Q1 on Lancashire's devolution deal, reaching an advanced stage. Following the general election, activity in Q2 will continue to focus on agreeing the best approach to delivering devolution in the county with the new government.

In Q1, UK inflation continued to fall and reached the Bank of England 2% target. With the easing of inflationary pressures, the UK interest rate has been subsequently reduced by 0.25% to 5%. The impacts of some global factors have eased inflationary pressures and whilst inflation will undulate, the improving position continues to benefit economic development through investment and real estate confidence. Whilst we are also starting to see some initial improvements in market conditions that directly affect some local government services, particularly waste and recycling, such as the prices for recycled paper and card, income levels remain below forecast.

Continued improvements across our major development and infrastructure programme see strategic development performing above target as blockages are overcome and delivery of major projects continues. This continues to be matched by estate performance and whilst business parks (rental income) and disposals (capital receipts) are on track, we remain vigilant on the emerging office market.

In addition to existing economic indicators included in this report and wider sub-regional indicators supported by multiple stakeholders, the Economic Index is rated for the first time. For Q1 we have exceeded the initial targets and will continue to benchmark and evolve the targets and systems of measurement throughout 2024/25.

As reported in Q4, the unprecedented wet weather continued to have a major impact on the condition of the road network and highway performance into Q1. A recovery action plan was put in place and with the allocation of additional resources, there has been significant progress tackling both the higher number of defects and addressing the considerable backlog of inspections and repairs. At time of writing over 90% of the backlog has now been dealt with and we anticipate defect performance to return to target in Q2. The interventions are also informing preparatory contingency planning for the winter ahead alongside work to ensure the overall highway capital programme and other funding is utilised to prioritise those road conditions deteriorating above targets.

In Public Health, performance on NHS Health Checks recovered above target. Improvements were also achieved in the number of reviews for newborn babies with 95% completed of which 91% were on time. Whilst challenges remain in the treatment of increasing demand for substance and alcohol misuse in Lancashire, the levels of unmet need are improving. A highly competitive market for workforce recruitment continues to be a drag on the pace of further improvement.

Elsewhere in the Directorate, whilst Q1 has seen recycling rates at household centres perform above target, annual forecasts remain below target with the levels of residual waste remaining high in Lancashire. Q1 includes the annual measure for carbon dioxide emissions which



continue to indicate a positive downward trend. Looking ahead to Q2, work on electric vehicle infrastructure continues with further Government funding proposals submitted alongside highway inspections to facilitate the first installations.

Mark Wynn, Executive Director of Resources

Performance at quarter 1 highlights some successes and some challenges for the directorate and the Council going forward.

Delivering sustainable financial management remains a core priority for the organisation. Across the sector, many local authorities are facing unprecedented demand and cost pressures, particularly in relation to adult social care, children's social care and special educational needs. Lancashire is no different and a projected full year pressure of £7.590m has been estimated at quarter 1. Corrective action is being taken in the short term to address this. Substantial transformation is also underway to ensure the needs of residents can be met within available resources over the medium term. Capital expenditure is broadly on track against budget at this point of the year. There is some slippage and programme managers are working to complete schemes against the agreed plan.

The People Service is now fully operational and significant action is underway to tackle workforce vacancies which are reducing and turnover which is on target. Workforce absence remains an issue, and we have new processes in place with comprehensive dashboards informing senior leaders and enabling positive action. People Services are supporting all teams to proactively tackle this challenge and improve the position.

We have established a new Strategy and Innovation function bringing together key services to offer a strong, corporate centre and support our modernisation agenda. It includes customer services, policy, communications, business intelligence, communications and our change service – all working collaboratively to ensure that residents have a better quality of life by enabling the council to be focused, innovative and better connected to its communities.

In relation to delivering an excellent customer experience, it is pleasing to see sustained positive performance from customer access and correspondence times are on track. The number of complaints upheld by the Ombudsman compared to the previous quarter has reduced although there remain significant challenges in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities as is the case across the sector. Further work is underway to support the service and improve this position.

Cyber security in an increasing risk which we remain alert to. It is pleasing to note that our defences are robust.

While there are challenges, positive progress is being made and plans are in place to improve performance over the coming year.

