



Achievements/Successes

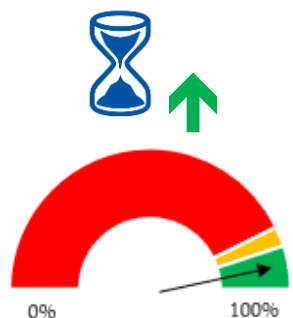
Areas of Focus/Potential Concern

Timeliness of Subject Access Request Responses

Timeliness of Freedom of Information (FOI) & Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) Responses

Local Government and Social Care (LGSCO) Ombudsman Decisions Upheld

ICT Priority 1 Incidents (an organisation-wide issue causing an outage or preventing a large volume of staff from working).



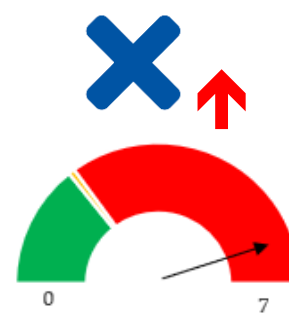
95%

The vast majority of Subject Access Requests were released within timescales within the quarter. This is an increase from 71% last quarter and is above the ICOs recommended target of 90%. Contributing factors to this improvement were increased management oversight, appropriate use of extensions and a continued reduction in the backlog of requests (4 at the end of Quarter 1).



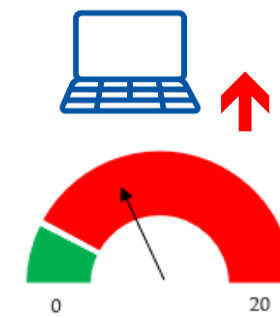
94%

94% of FOI/EIR requests were released within timescales within the quarter. This is better than the ICOs recommended target of 90%. Increased management oversight and monitoring at an earlier stage, as well as a reduction in long standing overdue requests have contributed to this good performance.



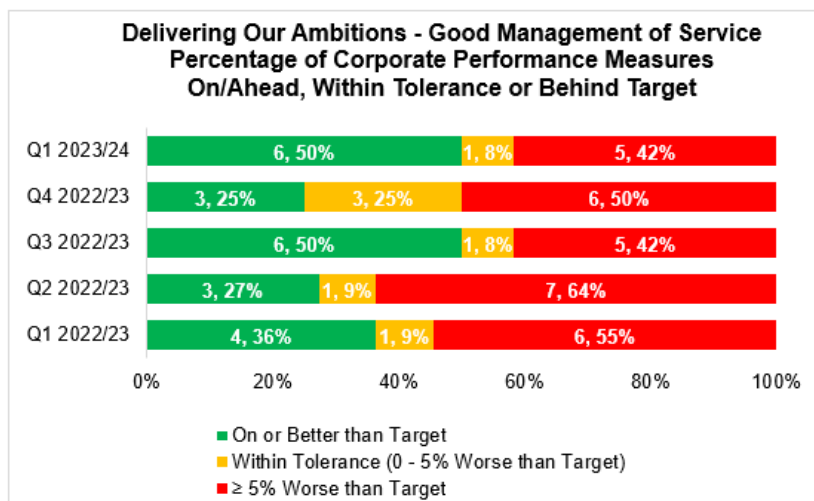
6

Six decisions were upheld by the LGSCO within the quarter; performance continues to be worse than target. Four decisions were related to SEND services and the assessment or provision of services to children with an Education, Health and Care Plan. This remains a concern but reflects the trend both locally and nationally. The remaining two decisions related to either communication or care planning within Adult Social Care. All cases upheld by the ombudsman are reviewed by the Directorate Senior Leadership Team to ensure that lessons are learned, and changes applied where necessary.



6

There were six Priority 1 (P1) incidents in Quarter 1. Despite the ongoing improvement activity, performance is worse than target (3). All incidents related to third party services. Significant change activities have been undertaken to modernise and stabilise critical infrastructure, and both the network infrastructure and remote access solution are due to be refreshed/replaced as part of the Transformation Programme. In the meantime, the risk relating to ensuring ICT is fit for purpose remains High (15).



1. Three-fifths of measures were performing within tolerance of or better than target in Quarter 1 (58%). This is an improvement from last quarter (50%). Changes in performance against target relate to a reduction in sickness (from worse than target to better than target over the last two quarters) and in the improvement of timeliness of completing Subject Access Requests (from worse than to better than target) and Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulation requests (from within tolerance to better than target).

Workforce

2. Overall sickness absence (1.65 days lost per FTE) is at the lowest level recorded since Q1 2021/22 (1.60 days lost per FTE) and is better than target for Quarter 1 2023/24 (1.80 per FTE). Performance across GCC showed a reduction when compared the same period last year (1.65 days lost per FTE, compared with 1.93 days). Organisation-wide sickness has evidenced a downward trajectory from Q3 2022/23 (2.20) and is performing positively against industry averages; however, performance is in-line with expectations and seasonal trends. Long-term sickness and absence due to stress were marginally lower than the same time last year (1.17 days lost compared with 1.22 and 0.61 compared with 0.66 respectively).

Over a rolling year basis, GCC staff have lost 8.33 working days per FTE to sickness. While performance remains on a downward trajectory, sickness levels remain worse than comparators over a 12-month period (7.38 days lost per FtE, Public Services People Managers Association (PPMA) 2020/21).

Concerns regarding high sickness levels within certain areas remain, however, HRs Business Partners are actively consulting and supporting directorates. Within Corporate Resources, sickness absence was at the lowest recorded level in more than two years and was better than target (0.99 days lost per FTE against a target of 1.38). In addition, Corporate Resources continues to have a lower level of overall sickness than other directorates and long-term sickness is better than target with 0.53 days lost per FtE against a target of 0.61 days.

Measure	Days Lost to Sickness per FtE	Days Lost to Long Term Sickness per FtE	Days Lost to Stress per FtE
GCC	1.65	1.17	0.61
Community Safety	2.64	2.05	0.48
Adults & PWC	2.63	1.67	0.91
Childrens	1.38	0.95	0.57
EE&I	1.22	0.74	0.57
Corporate Resources	0.99	0.53	0.33

3. As of 2023/24, Personal Development Review (PDR) completion is reported on a rolling year basis. Three-quarters of staff have had a PDR discussion with their manager within the last 12 months (75.7%, against a target of 85%). The PDR process is intended to provide a clear link between the work of individuals to their business plans and the Council Strategy. It also supports the review of learning and development needed to ensure that GCC's workforce has the current skills and knowledge required to deliver its objectives.

Measure	Staff Appraisals Completed (Rolling Year)
GCC	75.7%
Adults & PWC	88.3%
EE&I	87.5%
Corporate Resources	87.3%
Childrens	68.0%
Community Safety	35.1%

The majority of staff within Corporate Resources had a PDR with their manager within the last 12 months (87.3%), and 38.7% have received their 2023/24 appraisal within the quarter.

4. Overall staff turnover continued to reduce for the third consecutive quarter (13.9% to 12.2%), although this remains above pre-pandemic levels (10.2% in Q4 2019/20). The downward trend could signify the impact of recruitment and reward initiatives. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of applications across most grades. Therefore, the risk pertaining to the difficulty recruiting and retaining staff has **reduced to Moderate (12) from High (20)**.

However, challenges relating to recruitment, the job market and the cost-of-living crisis persist. National and regional labour markets continue to be highly competitive and wage settlement trends show that the public sector is still being considerably outstretched by the private sector. Positions at Grades 2 and 3 are particularly difficult to source, due to competition from the retail sector. Competition for qualified staff is particularly fierce and the Council continues to make a range of market related additional pay awards. Reliance on consultancy and agency staff remains high in some areas.

Within Corporate Resources, staff turnover has marginally increased to 14.2% (up 0.5% points from last quarter) returning to its Quarter 1 2022/23 level. Corporate Resources had the highest turnover compared with other Directorates and higher than GCCs overall (12.2%).

Measure	Staff Turnover
GCC	12.2%
Corporate Resources	14.2%
Adults & PWC	13.3%
Community Safety	11.8%
Childrens	11.5%
EE&I	9.9%

ICT

5. There were six Priority 1 (P1) incidents in Quarter 1 (Note: this is an organisation-wide issue, an issue causing an outage or one preventing a large volume of GCC staff from working). Despite the ongoing improvement activity, performance is worse than target (3). All incidents related to third party services. Significant change activities have been undertaken to modernise and stabilise critical infrastructure, focused on a journey towards cloud technologies and both the network infrastructure and remote access solution are due to be refreshed/replaced as part of the agreed Transformation Programme. In the meantime, the risk relating to failure to ensure technology managed by ICT (including communications abilities) is fit for purpose **remains High (15)**.

6. Seven security (hardware) breaches occurred within Quarter 1. All incidents relate to missing devices (mobile phones). The risk rating relating to failure to protect the council's key information and data from Cyber Attack **remains High (15)**. A programme of cyber improvements continues to be delivered with all high-risk vulnerabilities remediated. Technological controls and measures against cyber-attack are in place, such as ensuring devices are fully patched and reviewing backup service.

The laptop replacement programme has focussed on replacing hardware with identified security vulnerabilities and the future replacement programme will focus on outdated hardware to support both security and modernity.

Strategic Finance

7. The final finance settlement was in-line with expectations, allowing the Council to set a balanced budget for 2023/24. However, General Reserves have decreased by £6.213 million to £16.839 million, due to funding commitments within the 2022/23 budget and to support the 2022/23 pay award. GCC adopts a risk-based approach to general reserves, and in February 2023 Council agreed that a further £4 million could be taken to balance the 2023/24 budget.
8. Uncertainty around future budgets beyond March 2025 remains, however, the risk has decreased from **High (20) to High (16)**. The Government's Funding Policy Statement issued in December, outlined the funding principles that would apply for the next two financial years at a national level. There is still significant uncertainty about funding levels beyond March 2025. Although the Policy Statement did give some high-level funding assumptions for the following year there is no guidance beyond then. The Fair Funding Review and the Business Rates Review may take place in 2025/26 - these two reviews could result in a significant change in funding for individual councils.

Corporate Governance

9. Six decisions were upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) within the quarter; performance continues to be worse than target. Four decisions were related to SEND services and the assessment or provision of services to children with an Education, Health and Care Plan. This remains a concern but reflects the trend both locally and nationally. The remaining 2 decisions related to either communication or care planning within Adult Social Care. All cases upheld by the ombudsman are reviewed by the Directorate Senior Leadership Team to ensure that lessons are learned, and changes applied where necessary.
10. Two RIDDOR incidents (Reporting of Injuries, Disease, and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) were reported during the quarter; performance remains better than target. Of these, one incident occurred within maintained schools and the other within EE&I.
11. In Quarter 1, 94% of FOI/EIR requests were responded to within timescales, better than the ICO recommended target of 90%. This has increased slightly from 88% at the end of 2022/23 and is the highest level of performance achieved. Increased management oversight and monitoring at an earlier stage, as well as a reduction in long standing overdue requests have contributed to this good performance.
12. There has been a reduction the number of Subject Access Requests (SARs) closed in Quarter 1 compared to last quarter (65 down from 93). However, this is in line with the Q1 2022/23 (65). The proportion of SARs closed within timescales within the quarter has increased significantly from 71% last quarter (66/93 requests) to 95% (62/65). This is well above the ICOs recommended target of 90%. Contributing factors to this improvement were increased management oversight, appropriate use of extensions and a continued reduction in the backlog of requests (4 at the end of Quarter 1).