

Mid Ulster District Council

Performance Update

**Exception Overview – Context &
Improvement Measures**

Q1 to Q3 -2025 / 2026

Performance Measures 2025 to 2026 - Statutory & Corporate Performance Indicators

Statutory Indicators – Set for Us

Under the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023*, that is the statutory performance indicators and standards have been set as part of the performance improvement arrangements for district councils (i.e. set for us). Performance measures have been specified for the functions of: Economic development, Planning and Waste management.

The aim of the performance measures* is to promote the improvement of service delivery. The information is currently collated by the Department for the Economy, Department for Infrastructure and DAERA (Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs) respectively and published on their websites. Once released to Council, this information is published for citizens and other stakeholders to assess Council's performance in these areas. Until validated by the Departments aforementioned, data will remain as management information.

Corporate Plan Performance Indicators – Set by Us

The new Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028 has now been published. The current plan has a series of broad ranging performance measures*. These measures, moving forward, will be reported through Policy & Resource committee by the Assistant Director of OD, Strategy and Performance. The Freedom Information measure, which previously would have appeared in this report, will now also be reported through Corporate Plan Performance Updates.

- *All measures are treated as management information (i.e. may be subject to change) until such times as data is validated (usually in lag terms that appears in the following financial year)*

Benchmarking With Other Councils

Work is continuing within the Local Government Performance Improvement Working Group on the development of an overarching regional benchmark framework for Northern Ireland Councils. Council currently benchmarks the statutory performance indicators and standards as well as the average Days Lost p.a. (shows the percentage of total time available that has been lost due to any type of absence during a certain time period). Prompt payments are also benchmarked (they speed up cash flow from the public sector to its suppliers, particularly SME's). Benchmark data appears where the information is available in this report and is contained in Council's Annual Performance Assessment Report. Data quality is a central part of the Council's operational business and performance management. Performance measures information is used every day across the Council to help inform management decisions, plan services, benchmark performance and cost, and inform target setting.

***This introduced modified performance metrics and replaced the former Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (NI) 2015. The key change was the Economic Development standard which reflects changing business environments.*

Rag Status, Target Direction and Performance Trend – Colours, Symbols and Descriptors.

Table One – RAG Status and Descriptors

Status – Evaluated As	Explanation
GREEN	Met or exceeded target
AMBER	Missed target narrowly
RED	Missed Target Significantly
PURPLE	Information not available

Table Two – Target Direction

Target Direction	Descriptor
More Is Better	A bigger value for this measure is best
Less Is Better	A smaller value for this measure is best

Table Three - Performance Trend

Direction of Travel		
The direction of travel shows if performance has improved, declined, or been maintained relative to previous quarter.		
Performance Improved	Performance Remained Same	Performance Declined
↑	↔	↓

STATUTORY INDICATOR & STANDARD Ref. No. ED1: - MORE IS BETTER

. *New is 153 jobs promoted -NI Executive ratification into legislation), this will replace the current 210 jobs standard.

ED1: TIME SERIES GRAPH - The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity from April 2016 to December 2025										Quarter	**Standard	Achieved	Trend	Status using*153																																																																																		
<p>No. of Jobs Promoted through Business Start-Up Activity April 2016 to December 2025</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Data for No. of Jobs Promoted through Business Start-Up Activity</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Jobs Promoted</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Q1 16.17</td><td>70</td></tr> <tr><td>Q2 16.17</td><td>70</td></tr> <tr><td>Q3 16.17</td><td>70</td></tr> <tr><td>Yr End 16.17</td><td>256</td></tr> <tr><td>Q1 17.18</td><td>65</td></tr> <tr><td>Q2 17.18</td><td>65</td></tr> <tr><td>Q3 17.18</td><td>65</td></tr> <tr><td>Yr End 17.18</td><td>223</td></tr> <tr><td>Q1 18.19</td><td>40</td></tr> <tr><td>Q2 18.19</td><td>40</td></tr> <tr><td>Q3 18.19</td><td>40</td></tr> <tr><td>Yr End 18.19</td><td>204</td></tr> <tr><td>Q1 19.20</td><td>50</td></tr> <tr><td>Q2 19.20</td><td>50</td></tr> <tr><td>Q3 19.20</td><td>50</td></tr> <tr><td>Yr End 19.20</td><td>185</td></tr> <tr><td>Q1 20.21</td><td>25</td></tr> <tr><td>Q2 20.21</td><td>25</td></tr> <tr><td>Q3 20.21</td><td>25</td></tr> <tr><td>Yr End 20.21</td><td>126</td></tr> <tr><td>Q1 21.22</td><td>40</td></tr> <tr><td>Q2 21.22</td><td>40</td></tr> <tr><td>Q3 21.22</td><td>40</td></tr> <tr><td>Yr End 21.22</td><td>163</td></tr> <tr><td>Q1 22.23</td><td>50</td></tr> <tr><td>Q2 22.23</td><td>50</td></tr> <tr><td>Q3 22.23</td><td>50</td></tr> <tr><td>Yr End 22.23</td><td>169</td></tr> <tr><td>Q1 23.24</td><td>40</td></tr> <tr><td>Q2 23.24</td><td>40</td></tr> <tr><td>Q3 23.24</td><td>40</td></tr> <tr><td>Yr End 23.24</td><td>169</td></tr> <tr><td>Q1 24.25</td><td>90.4</td></tr> <tr><td>Q2 24.25</td><td>90.4</td></tr> <tr><td>Q3 24.25</td><td>90.4</td></tr> <tr><td>Yr End 24.25</td><td>256</td></tr> <tr><td>Q1 25.26</td><td>86</td></tr> <tr><td>Q2 25.26</td><td>86</td></tr> <tr><td>Q3 25.26</td><td>86</td></tr> <tr><td>Yr End 25.26</td><td>86</td></tr> </tbody> </table>										Quarter	Jobs Promoted	Q1 16.17	70	Q2 16.17	70	Q3 16.17	70	Yr End 16.17	256	Q1 17.18	65	Q2 17.18	65	Q3 17.18	65	Yr End 17.18	223	Q1 18.19	40	Q2 18.19	40	Q3 18.19	40	Yr End 18.19	204	Q1 19.20	50	Q2 19.20	50	Q3 19.20	50	Yr End 19.20	185	Q1 20.21	25	Q2 20.21	25	Q3 20.21	25	Yr End 20.21	126	Q1 21.22	40	Q2 21.22	40	Q3 21.22	40	Yr End 21.22	163	Q1 22.23	50	Q2 22.23	50	Q3 22.23	50	Yr End 22.23	169	Q1 23.24	40	Q2 23.24	40	Q3 23.24	40	Yr End 23.24	169	Q1 24.25	90.4	Q2 24.25	90.4	Q3 24.25	90.4	Yr End 24.25	256	Q1 25.26	86	Q2 25.26	86	Q3 25.26	86	Yr End 25.26	86	Q3 2025/26	*153 jobs	46	↓	Yellow
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<p>ANALYSIS: MORE IS BETTER. Belfast City Council (BCC lead council) reported activity by the Contractor (ENI) indicates mentoring activity has been near target Quarters One, two and three (est 200 Plans-120 Jobs). Due to a lag in submissions by ENI, BCC has yet to verify claim Nov& Dec so figures for the Quarter end Dec 25 will not be available until Feb2026. The Contract Management Team (BCC) liaise regularly with the Contractor (ENI) to review performance. It is important to note that the mid-year figures for the current year 2025/26 show a marked uplift in the number of clients engaging, along with an increase in Plans completed for 2025/26. By 30 September 2025, 124 Business Plans had been completed (subject to verification), equating to 74 jobs which is almost 50% of the annual target of 153.</p> <p>Due to the lag time from the completion of Plans and the submission of ENI Claims to BCC, confirmed data and verification is not available for up to 3-4 months. Figures provided are from ENI 'Activity Reports', subject to BCC verification. BCC has initiated a plan for 'catch up' i.e. in addition to retrospective claims they are accepting current claims from ENI to expedite these. Therefore, the data in this report should be treated as management information, (estimates only) i.e. may be subject to change post verification. At 75% stage of related activity, that is in Quarter three – estimated data shows 78% of target is achieved (i.e. Management information may be subject to change).</p>																																																																																																
Comparator (annual)	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025																																																																																							
NI Councils Average	208	159	164	157	129	169	161	100	127																																																																																							
<p>Lead Officer: Fiona Mc Keown Assistant Director Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes. Purpose of Performance Indicator (PI): The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity (Business start-up means the delivery of completed client led business plans under the Department of the Economy Regional Start Initiative or its successor Programme</p>																																																																																																

ED1: - The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity

ANALYSIS

Comparison with others and last year's same reporting period:

Estimated Q3 activity (to 31/12/25) is higher than Q3 in 2024.25 and generally on target (subject to verification from BCC) to meet the Statutory Jobs target. At 75% stage 78% of target is achieved. Mid Ulster is one of six Councils which did not meet its Statutory Target in 2024/25, and the figures should be noted in the following context: -The new 'Go Succeed' Service was still in the early stages of mobilisation from November 2023, which involved a new process of uploading /reporting data. The 'Jobs' figure is calculated from a formula agreed with the Department and is based on the number of Business Plans completed and approved, multiplied by 0.6 (formula informed by previous evaluations of start-up provision). The new Service has adopted a 'client-centred' approach which seeks to meet the broader needs of entrepreneurs, some of whom may not require a Business Plan and have received mentoring support only to progress their idea.

Context and Improvement Activity

Belfast City Council (BCC) have been engaging with DfE on an ongoing basis to change the approach from reporting Statutory Performance Targets, to better align with the new Service provision, as DfE have acknowledged that this indicator (i.e. 'Plans') is no longer an accurate reflection of the support required by new start clients as it only reflects one output. -

BCC meets the Contractor (ENI) quarterly to review performance and identify issues, and BCC also facilitates local Council Quarterly meetings with the Local Enterprise Partners who present updates and outline their work in progress.

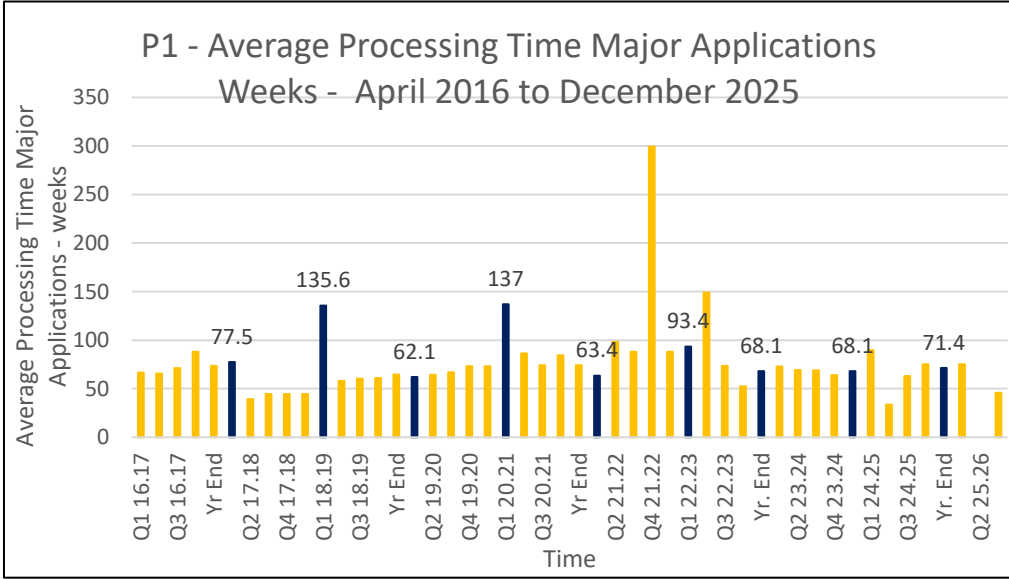
Council's Strategic Programmes Service Manager and Business and Investment Officer met with Managers and Advisors from the local delivery partners (Cookstown Enterprise Centre, Workspace Enterprises and Marketing NI Ltd) in relation to the 2024/25 figures on 9 September 2025 to review performance and also on 15 September 2025 regarding the CRM system for recording start-up mentoring activity and Business Plans delivered. A further follow-up meeting is planned to take place in early January 2026. Moving forward into Q4 and beyond Council Economic Development Team have scheduled meetings with the three delivery partners, ref. monitoring and managing performance and any issues arising regarding improvement activities.

Lead Officer: Fiona Mc Keown Assistant Director Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes. Purpose of Performance Indicator (PI): The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity (Business start-up means the delivery of completed client led business plans under the Department of the Economy Regional Start Initiative or its successor Programme).

STATUTORY INDICATOR & STANDARD Ref. No. P1: - LESS IS BETTER

P1: TIME SERIES GRAPH - Major planning applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawn within an average of 30 weeks April 2016 to December 2025

Quarter	Standard	Achieved	Trend	Status
Q3 2025/26	30 weeks	45.9 weeks	↑	
Q2 2025/26	30 weeks	No majors issued	↓	
Q1 2025/26	30 weeks	75.2 weeks	↔	
Q4 2024/25	30 weeks	75.2 weeks	↓	



ANALYSIS: LESS IS BETTER.
 Unvalidated statistics show four *Major applications issued. One new major application was received this quarter meaning we have reduced total major cases by three

What in effect does this mean?
 There have been an improvement over previous two reporting periods for this year. Twenty – nine Major applications now in the system to determine

Comparator (annual)	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
NI Council Average	69 weeks	50 weeks	59 weeks	52.8 weeks	61.4 weeks	49.8 weeks	57.8 weeks	46.5 weeks	39.6 weeks

** Major Developments have important economic, social, and environmental implications. Most major applications are multiple housing, commercial, and government and civic types of development*

Lead Officers: Karen Doyle & Melvin Bowman – Planning Service Leads. Purpose of PI: Planning Department deals with MAJOR Planning applications faster - [An application in the category of major development within the meaning of Planning (Development Management Regulations (NI) 2015(a)].

P1: Major planning applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawn within an average of 30 weeks

ANALYSIS

Comparison with others and last year's same reporting period and other councils:

A total of 23 major planning applications were received in Northern Ireland during Q2 2025/26, down from the number received in the previous quarter (25) and the same period a year earlier. The average processing time for major applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first six months of 2025/26 (September end) was 34.0 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 30-week target but represents a decrease of nearly seven weeks from the average processing time reported for the same period a year earlier (40.9 weeks). The processing time within Mid Uster Council has improved from 62.9 weeks in quarter three in 2024 to 2025 to 45.9 weeks in quarter three 2025 to 2026.

Context and Improvement Activity

There are currently 29 Major applications in the system to determine. Overall numbers have reduced by 3 over the quarter as a result of issuing 3 cases and receiving 1 case. At Year to date for end of Q2 the Council has received 5 new Major applications, the joint second highest across all 11 Councils.

It should be noted that external delays by Consultees remains the single biggest reason as to why major applications processing times are failing to meet target, to the extent that, the Heads of Planning have written to NIEA on the 30th of July 2025, seeking a meeting and stating Councils are experiencing very significant delays with NED providing a consultation response to many applications, resulting in extended processing times against statutory KPIs for Local and Major planning applications. This is evidenced from the Statutory Consultations Quarterly Performance Report issued by DfI showing a steady decline in performance over the reported business year (Q1-Q3) and significantly impacting on major planning applications where only a staggering 37% of responses were received on time during Q1-Q2 of 2024/25.

Validation checklist - members have agreed at a workshop in Jan 2026 to proceed with a validation checklist which when implemented formally will improve the quality of and better front load applications when received. A 4-week consultation period with the agents is due to begin in coming weeks.

Members have agreed to delegate authority to officers to issue refusals of planning permission where information requests are not being met - this reduces unnecessary delay and allows a swift issuing of these where information has not been forthcoming. On the 15th of January 2026, a meeting held with NIW, and party leads on industrial development Cookstown and overall lack of waster/ water capacity for all development in MUDC with an aim to better understand constraints and seek solutions. In January 2026 - NIW have provided more details to planning relating to water connection constraints on industrial lands outside Cookstown to help better inform and predict likely future issues with connections for industrial proposals there.

Lead Officers: Karen Doyle & Melvin Bowman – Planning Service Leads. Purpose of PI: Planning Department deals with MAJOR Planning applications faster - [An application in the category of major development within the meaning of Planning (Development Management Regulations (NI) 2015(a)].

STATUTORY INDICATOR & STANDARD Ref. No. P2: - LESS IS BETTER

P2: TIME SERIES GRAPH - Average processing time of Local Planning Applications from date valid to decision or withdrawn within an average of 15 weeks from April 2016 to December 2025											Quarter	Standard	Achieved	Trend	Status																				
<p>P2 - Average Processing Time Local Applications in Weeks April 2016 to December 2025</p> <p>Average processing time Local planning applications - weeks</p> <p>Time</p>											Q3 2025/26	15 weeks	21.4 weeks	↓																					
											Q2 2025/26	15 weeks	20.4 weeks	↓																					
											Q1 2025/26	15 weeks	19.2 weeks	↓																					
											Q4 2024/25	15 weeks	17.2 weeks	↑																					
<p>ANALYSIS: LESS IS BETTER.</p> <p>Although performance continued to slow in October it did improve in both November and December. In Q3, 259 applications were received, and 256 decisions were issued. Year To Date (YTD) performance currently sits at 21.4 weeks. In Q3 39% (i.e. 29) of the 75 applications that were presented for the first time before the Planning Committee were deferred. In Q3 40% (i.e. 10) of the 25 deferred applications that were presented before the Planning Committee were deferred for at least a second time. At the end of Q3 we were carrying a total of 235 deferred planning applications. Official figures published at the end of Q3 (but excluding Q3) show MUDC to have received the 3rd highest number of local applications but yet we have issued the 2nd highest number of decisions for local applications and continue to issue the highest rate of approvals of all Local Authorities.</p>											<p>What does this mean: It is clear the statutory target will not be met for 25/26 on local planning applications. Pleasingly though we continue to issue more decisions than applications received for YTD which is key to improving performance. It is a challenge to continue to carry an increasing number of deferred applications, and should this number continue to increase it will hamper performance on delegated planning applications.</p>																								
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<p>Lead Officers: – Karen Doyle & Melvin Bowman Planning Service Leads. Purpose of PI. Planning Department deal with LOCAL Planning applications faster - Local applications means an application in the category of local development within the meaning of the (Development Management) Regulations (NI) 2015, and any other applications for approval or consent under the Planning Act (NI) 2011 (or any orders or regulations made under the Act).</p>																																			

STATUTORY INDICATOR & STANDARD Ref. No. P2: - LESS IS BETTER

P2: - Average processing time of Local Planning Applications from date valid to decision or withdrawn within an average of 15 weeks

ANALYSIS

Comparison with others and last year's same reporting period:

Average processing times has continued to slow in comparison to last year from 16.4 wks. to 21.4 wks. Contrary to comparable period last year we have issued more decisions than applications received which is encouraging. The official published figures from DFI in December 2025 (which again excludes Q3) we can see that for the same reporting period we received the second highest number of planning applications (now 3rd highest), we were 3rd highest in the number of applications decided (now 2nd highest) and we continue to issue the highest rate of approvals of all Local Authorities and this remains unchanged.

Context and Improvement Activity

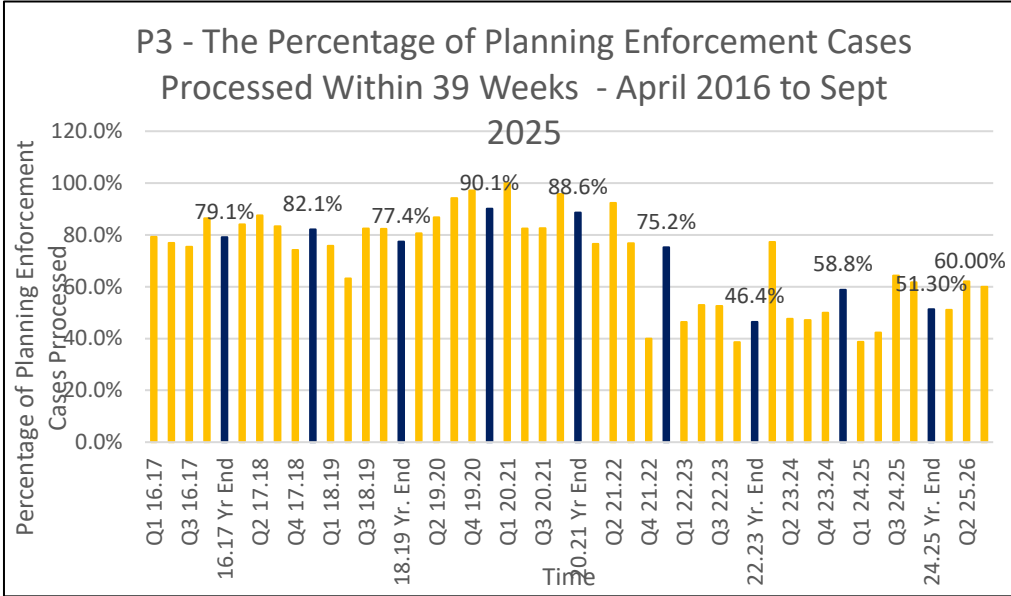
The Scheme of Delegation is under review and DfI have been informed that refusals can be issued under the Scheme in December. An information session is being arranged in November to inform agents of the amended Scheme and to advise on the introduction of Validation Checklists in February 2026. Members were agreed that a specific workshop on the Validation Checklist should be arranged with Service Leads in January 2025. An officer was appointed on a temporary promotion in November 2025 to address the considerable deferred application list. The substantive post has not been backfilled so this may have consequences for the remaining case officers to process the local applications in a timely fashion. However, their appointment will allow both the Principal Planning Officers for Magherafelt and Dungannon to work closely with their teams and focus on processing the local applications as expeditiously as possible.

Lead Officers: – Karen Doyle & Melvin Bowman Planning Service Leads. Purpose of PI. Planning Department deal with LOCAL Planning applications faster - Local applications means an application in the category of local development within the meaning of the (Development Management) Regulations (NI) 2015, and any other applications for approval or consent under the Planning Act (NI) 2011 (or any orders or regulations made under the Act).

STATUTORY INDICATOR & STANDARD Ref. No. P3: - MORE IS BETTER

P3: TIME SERIES GRAPH – Percentage of Planning Enforcement Cases Processed within 39 weeks from April 2016 to December 2025

Quarter	Standard	Achieved	Trend	Status
Q3 2025/26	70%	60.2%	↓	
Q2 2025/26	70%	62.0%	↑	
Q1 2025/26	70%	51.1 %	↓	
Q4 2024/25	70%	61.7 %	↑	



ANALYSIS: MORE IS BETTER.

The percentage of cases closed this quarter (unvalidated) is 60.2%, therefore short of 70% target, with a slight decrease from 64.3% last year (same Q3

What does this mean:

Whilst we closed 128 cases - Year To Date (YTD) that working through a high number of planning appeals and hearing, and serving a high number of notices at the end of 2025 has had an effect.

Comparator (annual)	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
NI Council Average	80.7 %	77 %	81 %	81.4 %	69.9 %	70.4 %	74.2 %	76.4 %	70.7 %

Lead Officers: Karen Doyle & Melvin Bowman Planning Service Leads. Purpose of PI: Planning Department bring more enforcement cases to target conclusion within 39 weeks. Enforcement cases are investigations into alleged breaches of planning control under Part 5 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 (or under any orders or regulations made under the Act.

P3 - Percentage of Planning Enforcement Cases Processed within 39 weeks

ANALYSIS

Comparison with others and last year's same reporting period:

The number of enforcement cases opened in Northern Ireland during the second quarter of 2025/26 was 846; down by 8.6% over the quarter (926) and up by 35.6% when compared to the same period a year earlier (624). The number of cases closed during Q2 2025/26 was 570; down by 7.8% from the previous quarter (618) and down by 14.8% from the same period a year earlier (669). Across councils 75.1% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first six months of 2025/26, meeting the 70% target. This represents an increase from the rate recorded for the same period in 2024/25 (68.4%). Individually, six of the 11 councils were meeting the 70% target after the first six months of 2025/26.

Context and Improvement Activity

The closure of 128 cases is a strong performance, at end Quarter Two we were 7th amongst all Councils in relation to cases closed, 91 at that time. A high number of Notices were issued this quarter to address impending immunity risks as well as the team successfully defending enforcement appeals. There is an ongoing focus on monthly group meetings to increase closures towards target.

Lead Officers: Karen Doyle & Melvin Bowman Planning Service Leads. Purpose of PI: Planning Department bring more enforcement cases to target conclusion within 39 weeks. Enforcement cases are investigations into alleged breaches of planning control under Part 5 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 (or under any orders or regulations made under the Act).

STATUTORY INDICATOR & STANDARD Ref. No. CORP 03: - LESS IS BETTER

CORP 03: TIME SERIES GRAPH - Lost time Rate (LTR) Absence of 5% or less from April 2016 to December 2025									Quarter	Standard	Achieved	Trend	Status
									Q3 2025/26	=>5%	7.62%	↑	Red
									Q2 2025/26	=>5%	7.04%	↓	Red
									Q1 2025/26	=>5%	5.71%	↑	Yellow
									Q4 2025/26	=>5%	7.46%	↓	Red
<p>ANALYSIS: LESS IS BETTER</p> <p>The current percentage loss rate for Q3 is 7.62% which totals 3,474.50 days lost, this has increased slightly compared to Q2 - 7.04%. However, it has increased significantly compared to Q3 24/25 - 6.79%.</p> <p>What does this mean:</p> <p>The top three reasons of sickness for this period are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Musculoskeletal Problems - 22.42% - 779days lost Stress, depression and fatigue syndrome – 17.04% - 592days lost Chest and respiratory – 12.10% - 420.5days lost <p>Musculo-skeletal is currently the highest cause of sickness absence (Q3) with 22.42% this has reduced slightly from 23.98% in Q2.</p> <p>Stress and depression related absences remains consistent, and we continue to provide the relevant support services when required.</p> <p>The most notable change in absence is the increase in “Chest and Respiratory” this accounted for 420.5 days and 54 incidents in Quarter Three.</p>													
Comparator (annual)	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24					
NI Council Average	Not Available (NA)	NA	NA	6.46%	4.79%	NA	NA	NA					
<p>Lead Officer: M Canavan Strategic Director OD, Strategy & Performance - Purpose of PI: Lost Time Rate (LTR) shows the % of total time available that has been lost due to sickness absence during a certain time period. The indicator is based on full time equivalent (FTE) employees, useful as a general measure of the significance of sickness absence levels</p>													

CORP 03: Lost time Rate (LTR) Absence of 5% or less

ANALYSIS

Comparison with others and last year's same reporting period:

For the same period in Q3 in 2024/25 Chest and respiratory only accounted for 276.5 days and 9.12%. This increase seems to be due to a spike in "severe chest infections" this could be considered seasonal. The Local Govt. Audit report published 11/12/2025, stated that absence figures for 2024/25 of all 11 councils was still not available (benchmark data is in days lost as opposed to %LTR). LGA did state that in 2023.24 the average number of days absence per councils staff member across all 11 Councils was 17.1 days, the lowest was Fermanagh and Omagh with 12.3 days, MUDC was second lowest with 13.2 days and Newry, Mourne and Down had the highest with 23.9 days. In 2024/25 MUDC had risen to 15.3 days and to date 12.17 days by Q3 end.

Context and Improvement Activity

The HR Team will continue to work closely with the managers to monitor absence levels and provide help and support to both managers and staff. As outlined in our commentary, Chest & respiratory accounted towards Q3 sickness absence statistics; Based on Public Health Agency health reports as of late 2025/early 2026, there was a significant surge in respiratory illnesses across NI during the 2025/2026 winter season. Official figures described the situation as an "epidemic" in early December 2025, with confirmed flu cases among adults and children more than trebling in a two-week period. The Council continues to promote to its Staff that they can recoup up to £20.00 towards the cost of the flu vaccine given by a community pharmacy.

Musculo-skeletal related sickness absence also continues to contribute to a high percentage of our sickness absence. Musculoskeletal (MSK) disorders are identified through research data as a leading cause of workplace sickness absence, with prevalence and associated time off work increasing significantly with age (i.e. the annual risk of long-term sickness absence). Data indicates that the annual risk of long-term sickness absence due to MSK disorders rises from 3.7% in women under 30 to 11.3% in those 50 and older, with similar trends in men. Occupational absence) e.g., heavy manual work is identified as a key risk factor and driver of MSK disorders, and within MUDC we have a significant workforce required to fulfil heavy manual work, with statistics that evidence the average age of our Environment Directorate workforce (approx. 330 employees) to be 52years of age. Preventive and management strategies include workforce adjustments, which we actively promote, through seeking suitable alternative employment, a period of amended or lighter duties, reduced hours etc.

The third constant high contributor towards the Council's sickness absence figures is stress and depression related absences. The Council has invested in an increased range of support services available to employees, to promote early interventions. Such support services are also available via the Council's website: <https://www.midulstercouncil.org/resident/health-wellbeing/mental-health-support-services>. Human Resources Team, in conjunction with Communications Dept have developed a Health and Wellbeing Strategy which will include a yearly calendar of Health and Wellbeing Events which we aim to launch in February 2026. As part of this strategy and launch we will be looking for more health and wellbeing group members and representation across the various Council departments to help deliver both on the strategy and the various events/initiatives organised. In the absence of a Strategy, the Health & Wellbeing team have initiated and delivered on a range of events, which have all been well received and supported by our staff. During October to December 2025, these included: Mental Health Awareness Sessions for operational staff, Information sessions on Recognising Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control, Cancer Focus Health Checks, Financial Wellbeing sessions, Women's Health Event, Staff Christmas and Breakfast Events.

Lead Officer: M Canavan Strategic Director OD, Strategy & Performance - Purpose of PI: Lost Time Rate (LTR) shows the % of total time available that has been lost due to sickness absence during a certain time period. The indicator is based on full time equivalent (FTE) employees, useful as a general measure of the significance of sickness absence levels