

HOW DOES NOTTINGHAM MEASURE UP?

Best Value Performance Plan Summary

Best Value is a Government initiative aimed at ensuring council services are efficient and high quality. This summary gives you the latest information on how Nottingham City Council measures up against the targets for performance that we set ourselves.

Except where we say otherwise, this is based on our performance to the end of February.

We report our progress regularly to our public Council meetings. We will publish more details of our performance in our full annual Best Value Performance Plan which will be produced at the end of June 2004.

The Council's Improved Rating

The Audit Commission carried out its second Comprehensive Performance Assessment (or CPA) of Unitary and Metropolitan authorities in 2003. As in the previous year, every Council was given one of five ratings: excellent, good, fair, weak or poor.

The Audit Commission rated our main services on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the lowest and 4 the highest. The rating of our Benefits service improved from 1 to 3 and our rating for Use of Resources improved from 3 to 4. The assessment of our overall performance improved to 'fair' as a result of the improvements in these two areas.

Our ratings in 2003 are shown below. The darker shaded area shows where we made the improvements.

	1	2	3	4
Education				
Social Care – Children's Services				
Social Care – Adults' Services				
Environment				
Housing				
Libraries & Leisure				
Benefits				
Use of Resources				
Corporate Management				

'Use of Resources' means the way the Council managed its money, buildings and staff. 'Corporate Management' means the way the Council is run overall.

Gearing Up

Making sustained improvements in our services remains a major challenge. We are putting in place a comprehensive change programme, 'Gearing Up', to drive this improvement.

Our new Strategic Plan outlines the Council's vision for a modern, vibrant and inclusive European City. It also identifies three areas of our priorities where we want to make major progress:

- **Developing the City**, enabling Nottingham to 'punch its weight' as one of the UK's core cities and as a regional capital
- **Developing our neighbourhood focus**, building services around the particular needs of our diverse communities
- **Improving our performance** in key areas. These will include areas that will be the focus of our efforts through our 'Respect for Nottingham' initiative such as street cleaning and tackling anti-social behaviour. Other key areas for improvement include educational attainment, our housing repairs and benefits services and levels of debt collection.

The three areas do not fully reflect the breadth of the City Council's objectives but they are areas where we want to make a significant impact through a sustained attempt to work differently.

Education

One of our key aims for 2003/04 was to continue raising standards in primary and secondary schools. The results so far...

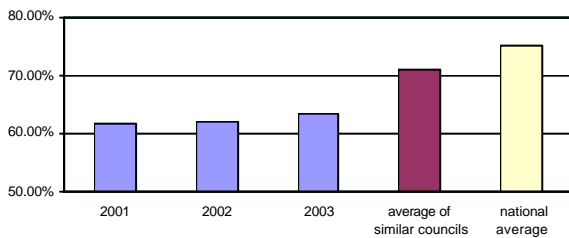
Key Stage 2

We continue to be amongst the most improved LEAs in the country since 1998. Our 2003 results showed a small improvement in literacy, while mathematics results improved by 2%. However, our performance still falls well short of our targets and we are working closely with schools to address this, for example by implementing the National Primary Strategy for numeracy and literacy.

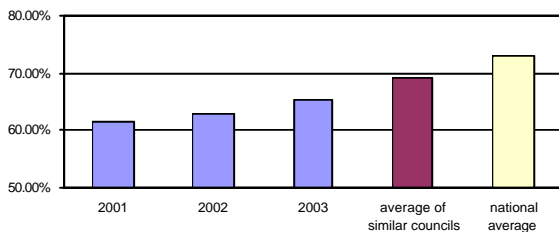
Educational attainment targets

We have negotiated more realistic Key Stage 2 targets with the central government for 2004 onwards.

Key Stage 2 English - Level 4+



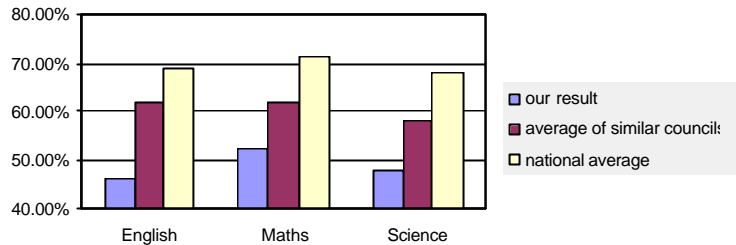
Key Stage 2 Mathematics - Level 4+



Key Stage 3

Results showed good progress in 2003. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 and above improved in English, Mathematics and Science, whilst results nationally have not significantly improved. We have, therefore, begun to close the gap on national attainment, but still face a considerable challenge to meet our LEA targets.

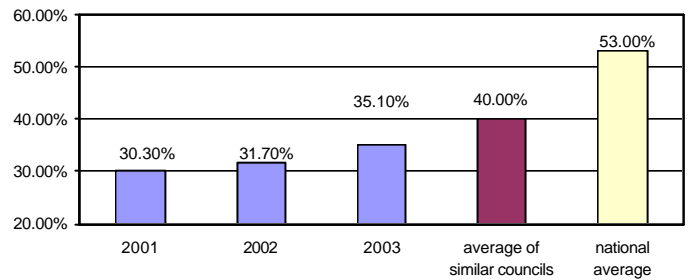
2003 Key Stage 3 results - Level 5+



Key Stage 4 (GCSEs)

Attainment at Key Stage 4 showed an impressive rise in the proportion of pupils gaining 5 + A*-C grades – two and a half times the national rate of progress. This puts us well on the way to reaching the Government's 5+ A*-C floor target of 38% by 2004.

Key Stage 4 Mathematics - 5 A*-C



Action on truancy

We also aim to continue the work of the dedicated truancy sweep team. This year's results were the best ever and Nottingham City is the most improved LEA in the country in reducing truancy. We are the second most improved LEA in the country in improving secondary school attendance, and exceeded our 2003 target. We also came very close to meeting our target for primary school attendance.

Social Services

We are committed to enabling more vulnerable and elderly people to remain living in their own home. The results so far...

Home care

We have enabled more vulnerable and elderly people to remain living in their own homes by providing more intensive home care. 'Intensive' home care means providing more than 6 visits and 10 hours per week of home care. The number of households helped in this way increased this year by 86 from 394 at the beginning of the year to 480 by January 2004. We expect this to rise to around 490 households by the end of March.

The number of people in long-term residential or nursing home care reduced from 1599 last year to 1574. This trend will continue as we find other innovative ways of enabling people to stay safely at home.

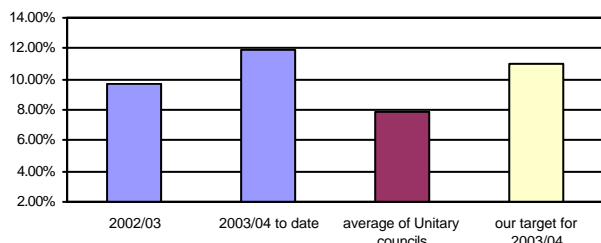
We have recently introduced a new service initiative, 'Direct Payments'. The Department makes payments directly to people who need home care so they can manage their own affairs, with or without assistance. This enables them to have more control over their own lives by increasing the opportunities for independence and enhanced self-esteem.

During this year, the number of people aged 18 or more who benefit from this service has increased from 24 per 100,000 to 31 per 100,000. By the end of this financial year, we expect this to have risen still further to 33 people per 100,000.

Children's care

We are working to ensure that children are securely attached to carers who are capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of childhood.

Rate of adoptions



The rate of adoptions for children who cannot live with their natural parents is higher in Nottingham than in similar councils. This year we have

improved on last year's rate and are now on track to achieve over 12%.

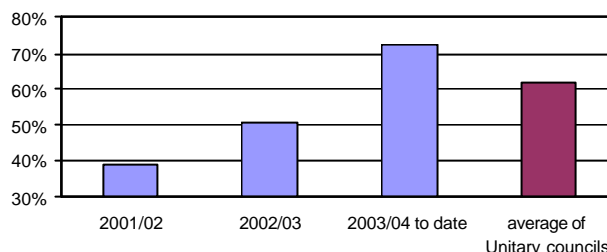
Housing

We are committed to providing Decent Homes in Decent Neighbourhoods. The results so far...

General

We received a Best Value Inspection rating for our Landlord Services of 'fair' (or 1 star) service with 'promising prospects for improvement' in January 2004. The Housing Benefits Service was also judged by the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate to have improved from a rating of 1 out of 4 in the summer of 2002 to 3 out of 4 in November 2003.

Benefits renewal claims processed on time



Housing Benefits

We have reduced the average time taken to process new benefits claims from 120 days last year to 53.4 days this year. The average time taken to process notifications of changes of customer circumstances has also been reduced, from 35 days to 15 days. The ones we receive today are being dealt with in just over 5 days. The percentage of renewal claims processed on time has increased from 50.8% to 72%. Of those we receive now, 83% are being processed on time.

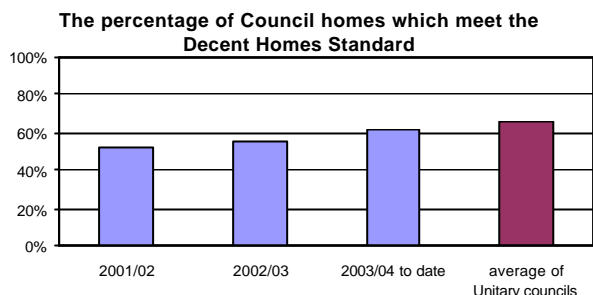
Repairs & Maintenance

We have increased the percentage of responsive repairs (excluding emergency repairs) for which we make and keep an appointment from 49% to 72%.

The percentage of non-urgent repairs completed within our 35 day target time has increased from 17% to 65%. The percentage of customers indicating that they are satisfied with the responsive repairs we have carried out has increased from 71% to 82%.

We have increased the proportion of local authority homes that meet the Government's 'Decent Homes' Standard from 55.8% to 61% (a Decent Home is

one that is safe to live in, is wind and weather tight, is warm and has modern facilities).



Dealing with homelessness

The number of homeless applicants has been reduced by 1,376 from 4,961 to 3,585 through the application of a more robust preventative approach. This includes debt counselling and comprehensive advice and assistance to prevent homelessness. We are making decisions in homelessness cases more quickly, with the percentage made within 33 days up from 58% to 99%.

Housing support for homeless families

We are committed to ending the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation as temporary housing for homeless families and have not used it since January last year. This was 15 months ahead of the Government's target for all councils to stop using it. The average number of clients in other temporary accommodation at any one time has reduced from 380 to 198.

The average length of stay in hostel accommodation for homeless households that include dependant children has been reduced from just over 71 days to 48½ days.

Collection of housing rents

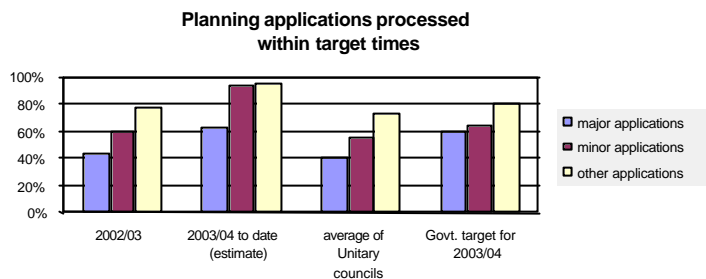
We are making good progress in improving the proportion of rent we collect, and expect the collection rate for this year to be 90%, up from just over 86% last year. This improvement is being achieved through a combination of debt counselling and the use of external specialists to undertake debt collection.

City Development

City Development leads the Council's work to energise, protect and promote Nottingham as a successful, sustainable international city.

Planning applications

We process around two thousand planning applications in a single year. Some of these are high profile schemes or are controversial, often linked to complex, brownfield sites, and many require extensive negotiation and legal agreement. Despite this, our projected performance for 2003/04 against the Government's measures meets or exceeds targets.



During 2003/04 we have implemented a number of improvement measures. Procedures have been streamlined and improved and we have developed a new planning website. The quality of advice and guidance given to developers has improved and more schemes are now negotiated to a finalised stage with our customers before the submission of a formal application. Delegated powers allowing officers to make determinations without reference to committee have also been changed to help further speed up the processing of planning applications.

As a result of these changes our overall performance has increased significantly and we expect to rank amongst the best Unitary authorities for 2003/04.

Bringing private sector homes back into use

We aim to reduce the unsatisfactory environmental impact that empty or derelict houses have on a neighbourhood and community, and in doing so provide much needed and usually affordable homes.

It is estimated that at any one time there are in the region of 2000 private sector properties across the City which are empty long-term. The work we do to encourage owners to bring empty properties back into use is often time consuming. Our performance

dipped during 2003/04 but this will be addressed through a Local Public Service Agreement which includes a demanding target of 317 dwellings for 2005/06. This is almost a three-fold increase on our 2002/03 performance. The Council can now impose full council tax on vacant properties and we will implement this next year.

Neighbourhood Services

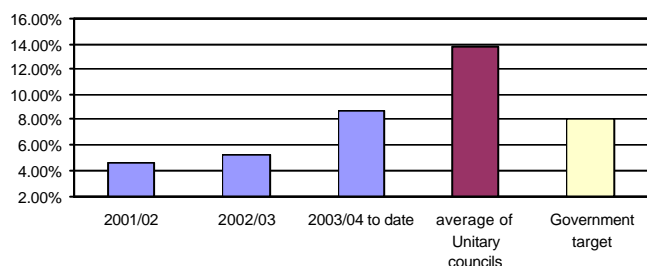
We are committed to providing good quality services which contribute to sustainable neighbourhoods that people feel safe to live in and of which they feel proud to be a part.

Recycling of household waste

We aim to ensure that all households have a kerbside collection of recyclable waste. So far we have:

- increased the percentage of households served by a kerbside collection from 12.4% to 46%
- increased the percentage of household waste being recycled from just over 5% to 8¾%.

Recycling and composting rate



Though this still leaves our performance amongst that of the lowest quarter of Unitary councils, in 2004/05 we plan to extend kerbside collection to all households within the City. The new Household Waste and Recycling Centre at Calverton will also help us to increase the recycling rate.

Cleaning the city streets

We have invested in improving the cleanliness of the city centre and local neighbourhoods. Local street scene teams have been established that provide a single point of contact for residents. Through the 'Respect for Nottingham' initiative we have provided more cleansing staff and an additional graffiti removal team. Forty extra Neighbourhood Wardens have also been recruited who will support enforcement action against litter, flyposting and other activity which spoils the environment.

Roads and footpaths

We are working to improve the quality of the City's network of roads and footpaths. During 2003/04 we completed major road maintenance projects on Ilkeston Road and Carlton Road and delivered a £1m programme of resurfacing residential footways in our local neighbourhoods.

Casualties on our roads remain high when compared to other Unitary councils. However, we are continuing to tackle design, education and enforcement issues to help reduce these figures. In 2004/05 we will implement £2.5m of road safety and traffic management schemes.

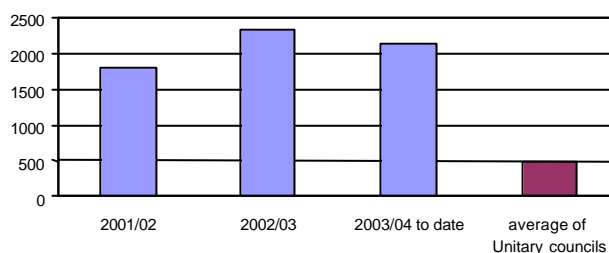
Leisure and Community Services

We are committed to providing better services for the millions of visitors to Nottingham's sporting, cultural and social facilities.

The City's museums

Nottingham City ranks amongst the councils with the highest number of visits to museums. We expect the number of visits in 2003/04 to be 5% more than the target we set, despite the closure of the Costume Museum. We continually seek to improve the museums' service. During 2003 we secured £4.5 million of National Heritage Lottery Funding towards the development of a £6.7 million restoration scheme for Wollaton Hall and Park.

Visits in person to museums and galleries per thousand population



The City's libraries

Although numbers declined last year in line with the national trend, Nottingham's libraries continue to be visited over a million times a year.

We do not expect to be able to meet the demanding target we had set ourselves for 2003/04 of 6 visits in person to the library per 1,000 population. This is because of the introduction of electronic services which allow library users to undertake renewals, reservations and enquiries without visiting the

library, reducing the number of visits made in person. We have had around 107,000 visits to date in 2003/04 at our Nottingham Libraries website.

We have undertaken a number of initiatives to increase the accessibility and range of library services. These include changes to mobile library schedules and opening hours. We have also increased the number of children's activities by extending learning opportunities and starting library-based reading groups.

Corporate Services and the Performance and Strategy Group

We are committed to providing cost effective and improving services, and effectively supporting the operation of the Council.

Accessibility of council services

We aim to make all services electronically accessible by the end of 2005 in keeping with the Government's modernising agenda for local government. We have taken a pragmatic view and concentrated first on areas that improve the running of the Council or have generated significant efficiency savings, for example the Benefits Call Centre.

Currently, just over 75½% of our services are accessible electronically as against our target of 80%. We are careful to ensure that spending on systems to make services accessible does not take priority over actual service delivery. Our current performance is amongst the best in the country and we anticipate that we will maintain this position through further improvements.

Sickness absence levels

The level of sickness absence by our staff impacts directly on the cost and quality of our services. We have therefore focused on reducing this in the past year, which has resulted in a reduction of almost one day per person.

We set an absence target for March 2005 of an average 10.9 days per person per year, and by January this year we had almost reached that target.

Mental ill-health causes between 20% and 25% of sickness absence in the Council. A Corporate Mental Health and Well-Being Adviser has been appointed to help us to reduce the amount of mental health related sickness absence.

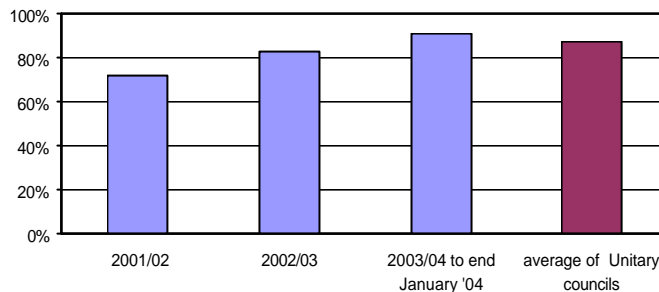
Council Tax collected

We set a target to collect 92% of the Council Tax this year. Our performance this year continues to improve compared to last year and we expect to meet our target.

Payment of Invoices

The Government has set a target for councils to pay 100% of undisputed invoices for commercial goods and services received from external contractors and suppliers within 30 days. Prompt payment is particularly important for local small businesses.

Invoices paid within 30 days



The Council has consistently improved its performance against this target over the last 5 years, and at the end of January we had paid 91% of invoices on time. This places the authority amongst the best performing Unitary councils.

Our approach to Equalities

The Council has continued to increase the representativeness of its workforce over the last year. The proportion of our staff who are from minority ethnic communities compares favourably with that of other, similar councils. We were rated as amongst the best performing quarter of Unitary councils in our latest Comprehensive Performance Assessment. More of our higher-paid staff are now women or from ethnic minorities than at the end of last year.

Nottingham City Council has adopted a new programme 'Action on Diversity' to progress our work on equality and diversity. A new team has been set up to lead this activity. We aim to achieve all 5 levels of the Equality Standard over the next 4-5 years and are making good progress towards achieving our first target of Level 2 by June this year. We are also working to implement the actions in our first Race Equality Scheme by May 2005, and

will involve local black and ethnic minority communities in developing a second Scheme.

Over the last year we have consulted widely with organisations representing members of different communities and disadvantaged groups on the development of our policies. We will continue to consult them and involve them in the scrutiny and monitoring of our progress.

This information is available in other formats on request.

If you have any comments or queries about the information in this summary or generally about the performance of the Council, please contact us by:

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Nottingham City Council is required to produce the Best Value Performance Plan Summary to meet with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1999: Part 1 Best Value and Performance Improvement.