

Conclusion and Next Steps

The core purpose of the LGBF is to support councils to deliver better outcomes for communities. The framework offers greater insight into their own performance and a strengthened evidence base to support councils to drive improvement, support performance management, promote collaboration and learning, and strengthen public accountability.

This last year has seen councils across Scotland improve the quality and performance of key services while continuing to manage pressures to reduce costs. This report highlights the significant variation in both cost and performance which exists between councils. It is these variations which provide the opportunities for learning. They provide 'can openers' which support collaboration and sharing between councils to better understand the factors underpinning the differences and the approaches which may be delivering the desired benefits.

There is a continuous improvement programme to refine the benchmarking framework to ensure the measures included remain relevant and focus attention on the areas which matter most to local government. We will work with all councils and relevant partners to prioritise the following actions to strengthen the LGBF across the next period:

- I. Develop a wider suite of children's and young people's measures which reflect a more holistic picture of children's services and which will help inform and support improvements in the educational outcomes and life chances of all children and young people. Representing the first stage of this development, additional education measures have been included this year. Further measures will be introduced over future years to improve the scope and balance of information available on children's services.
- II. Strengthen the link with outcomes to support the wider Community Planning reform agenda, while still ensuring councils have access to the operational information necessary to demonstrate accountability in how resources are used within services.
- III. Provide a focus on non-prioritised and non-protected service areas to capture innovation in response to budget constraints, and to monitor changes in expenditure and performance over time. The growth of collaborative, joint arrangements will be monitored and the structure of LGBF itself modified over time to accommodate that.
- IV. Develop a wider range of measures that allow demand, spend, capacity and impact across the social care system to be monitored over time. We will work with Health and Social Care Partnerships in the period ahead to establish market capacity measures and measures of assessed demand.

The collective efforts of all 32 councils in Scotland have been important in taking this benchmarking project to its current stage of development and their on-going support will be critical to its further success.