

Conclusions and Next Steps

The core purpose of the LGBF is to support councils to target their resources to areas of greatest impact and to ask important questions of key council services. The framework provides councils with insight into their own performance and provides a strengthened evidence base to help drive improvement, 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, however, 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 differences and the approaches which may deliver improvements.

The Local Government Benchmarking board recently endorsed a 3-year Strategic Plan to support the continuous improvement and evolution of the LGBF. This plan, which has been welcomed by the Accounts Commission, sets out the following priorities to strengthen the LGBF across the next period:

1. To ensure the framework has relevance, credibility and timeousness

Engagement with professional associations and data owners will be prioritised to encourage more timely availability of data, and to strengthen measures around children and young people, health and social care, and economic development. This will require the participation and contribution of our relevant partners, e.g. integration joint boards. Continuing to ensure that the LGBF is relevant and robust will support councils to demonstrate the rationale behind strategic decisions to reshape and improve services, and report the performance of these services to the public.

2. To better align the LGBF and outcomes

This approach aims to:

- support more strategic use and public reporting of LGBF in line with a focus on outcomes
- strengthen narrative around the contribution different council services play in improving outcomes and reducing inequality of outcomes
- provide a useful relevance test for current framework measures
- support the development and implementation of LOIPs/Locality plans
- offer a route for partners to help align performance information to wider partnership outcomes

A new online interactive tool³¹ links the LGBF with outcomes data presented in the Community Planning Outcomes Profile³² (a resource which provides trend data on outcomes, both at a local authority level, and at a locality level). This will help to strengthen the narrative around the contribution council services play in improving outcomes, and support more strategic use of the LGBF in decision making and greater visibility within Public Performance Reporting.

The introduction of thematic reporting in 2018/19 will provide a ‘drill down’ into key policy areas to re-emphasise the ‘can opener’ nature of the LGBF information and strengthen the link between performance information and outcomes. This will encourage a more diagnostic use of the data, particularly within family groups. These developments will link with the Outcomes, Evidence and Performance Board (OEPB)³³ and support their work to improve the availability of performance evidence that can illuminate improvement in outcomes.

31 www.is-scratchpad.org.uk/cpop-lgbf.html

32 <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/community-planning-outcomes-profile.html>

33 www.improvementservice.org.uk/oepb

3. To demonstrate how the framework is being used to inform decision making, drive improvement, and strengthen public accountability.

The aim is to re-emphasise the ‘can opener’ nature of the information within the framework, and encourage and support councils to be more thorough in using the data diagnostically, particularly within family groups. Greater visibility of the LGBF in Public Performance Reporting is also needed, with the developments above supporting improvements in this area.

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.