



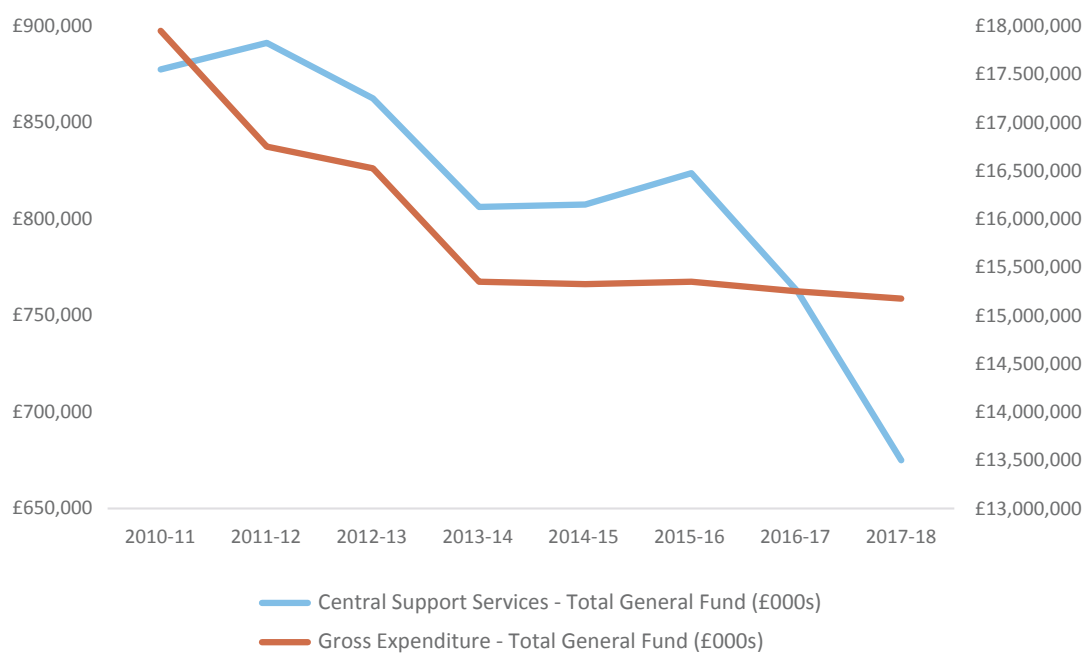
Corporate Services

Support services

Corporate support services within councils cover a wide range of functions including finance, human resources, corporate management, payroll legal services and a number of other corporate functions.

For standardisation purposes, support services are represented as a % of total gross revenue expenditure in the benchmarking framework. The figure has remained around 5% across the 8-year period. In 2017/18 the Scottish average was 4.5% compared to 4.9% in 2010/11, although there has been fluctuation across the period. The reduction between 2010/11 and 2017/18 reflects a 23% reduction in support costs in parallel with a 15.4% reduction in Total General Fund. This both reflects councils' commitment to protect front-line services over 'back office' functions and the maturation of councils' digital strategies. It is also possible an element of this significant reduction is due to improved reporting following refined guidance in relation to the treatment of support costs within the financial return.

Support services expenditure and total gross expenditure (£)

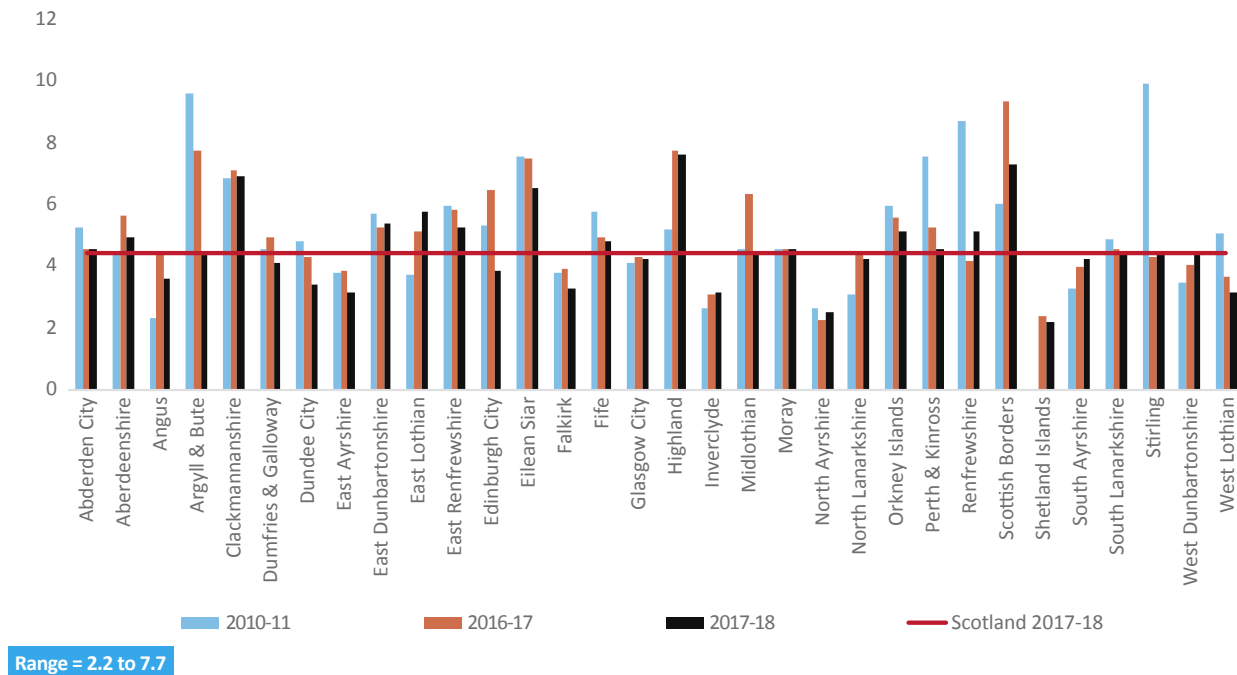


Source: Council supplied expenditure figures

There is significant but narrowing variation between councils in Support Service expenditure. The proportion ranged from 2.2% to 7.7% in 2017/18 with notable differences between urban, rural and semi-rural councils, although these were not statistically significant.



Support services as a percentage of total gross expenditure



Source: Council supplied expenditure figures

Note: Missing values reflect no data returned for that year

Work within Family Groups has identified the following factors as important in understanding the variation between authorities in support services:

- *Workforce composition and structure – workforce exit; staff terms & conditions; role redefinition*
- *Asset Management and rationalisation*
- *Service redesign – service integration; centralisation; self-service; outsourcing*
- *Digital Strategy*

Gender equality

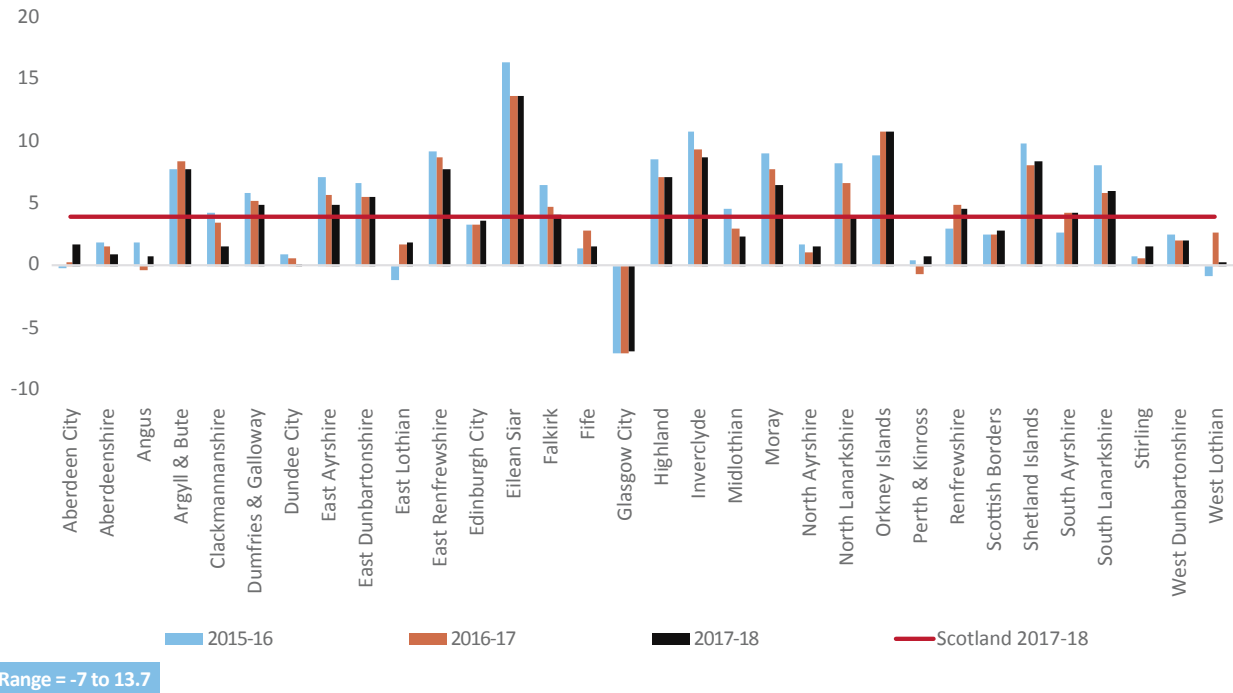
The percentage of women in the top 5% of earners in councils is a significant measure of the attempts by councils to ensure equal opportunity between genders. From 2010/11 to 2017/18 this has increased from 46.3% to 54.6%. The range across councils is from 27% to 65%, with rural councils reporting lower rates.

While this is an important measure reflecting the progress which has been made in relation to gender equality in senior positions within local government, there is a need to capture the progress being made across the wider workforce. As such, our measure of the gender pay gap represents the difference between men's and women's earnings within local authorities and is a key measure under the Public-Sector Equality Duty. This measure takes the average (mean) hourly rate of pay (excluding overtime) for female employees and divides this by average (mean) hourly rate for male employees. This is used to calculate the percentage difference between pay for men and pay for women. Negative values indicate that women are paid more than men. Both part-time and full-time employees are included. This is only the third year of publication, and this measure will be subject to review and on-going development across the coming period.



In 2017/18 the Gender Pay Gap was 3.9%, reducing from 4.5% in 2015/16. The gap ranges from -7.0% to 13.7%, (0.2% to 13.7% excluding Glasgow as an outlier) with rural areas reporting wider gaps on average. Those staff employed via arms-length organisations are not included within the calculation which will influence the variability observed and may be important in understanding the figures observed for Glasgow.

The gender pay gap (%)



Source: Council supplied figures

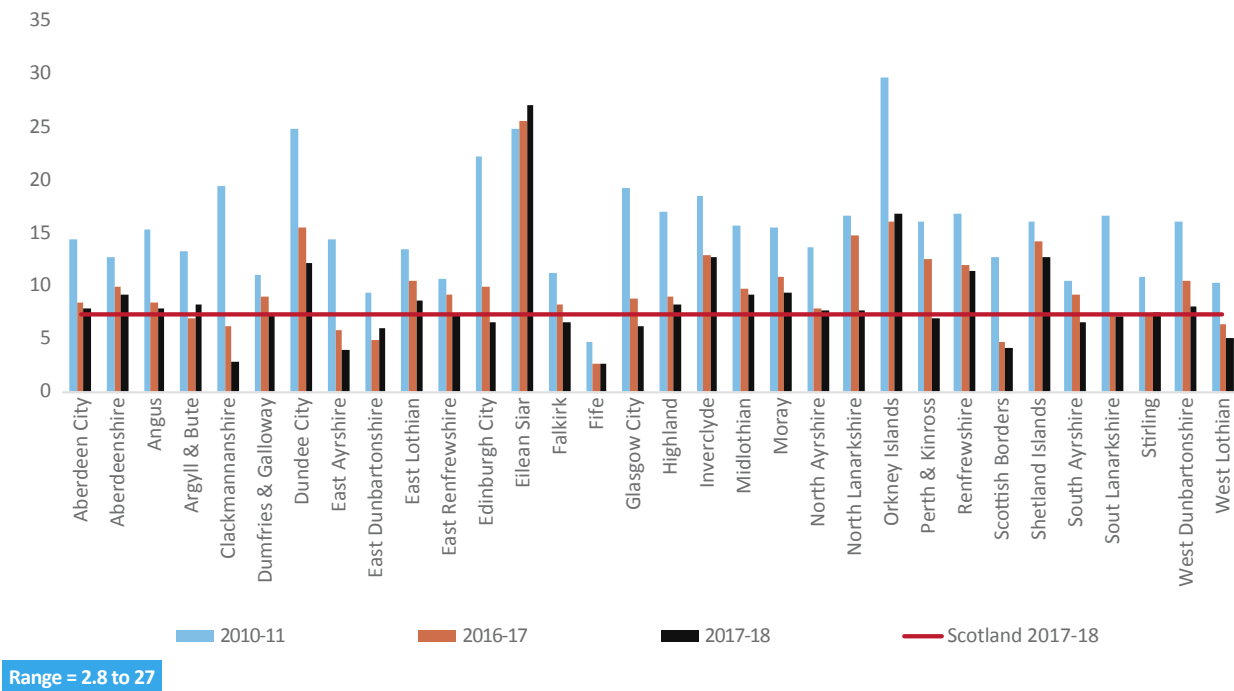
Council tax

The cost of collecting council tax is measured on a per property basis to standardise the measure across councils. Over the eight-year period from 2010/11 to 2017/18 this has reduced by 52.4%, from £15.46 to £7.35. There has been a year on year reduction in costs, which has accelerated in recent years, reducing by 19.5% in the past 12 months.

The range however varies significantly from £2.78 to £27.02, with smaller sized and island councils tending to report higher costs. A key factor driving the reduction in costs is the continued digital transformation and shift to embrace new technology and automation.



The cost per dwelling of collecting council tax (£)

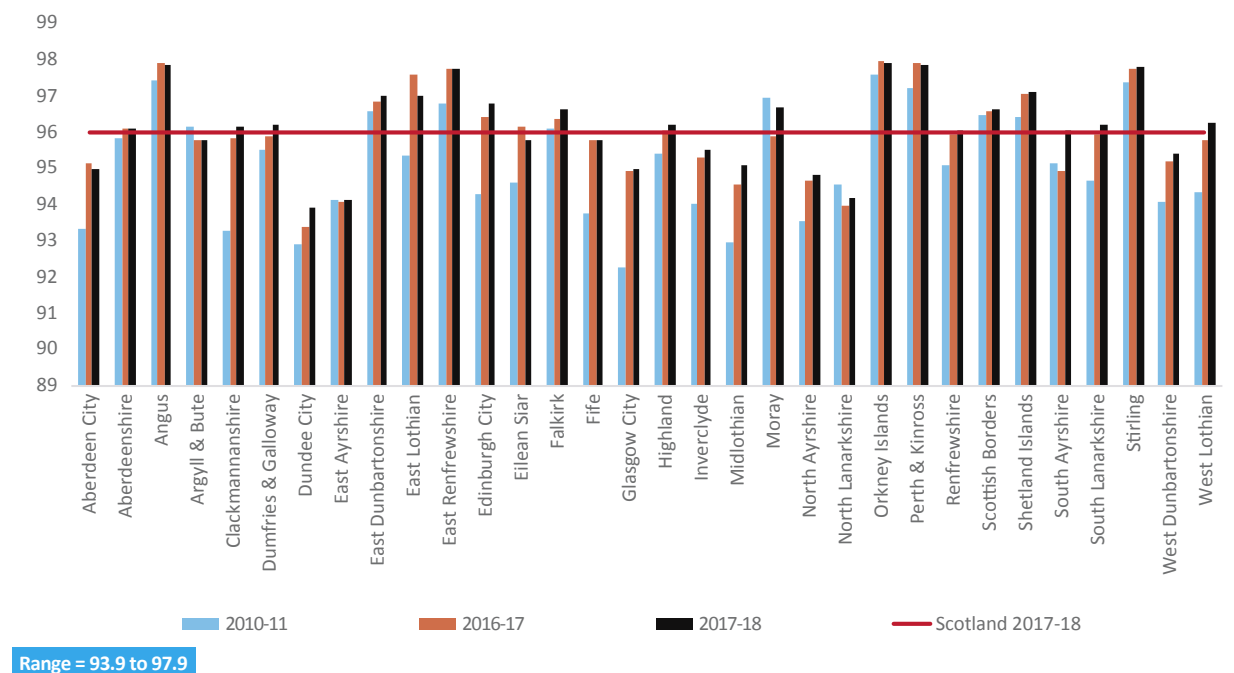


Source: Council supplied figures

At the same time as the reduction in unit costs, the overall rate of in-year collection for council tax has remained high and shown steady improvement from 94.7% in 2010/11 to 96.0% in 2017/18. This has been achieved despite the challenges created by a difficult economic climate and significant welfare reform.

The variation across councils is narrowing over time, with rates in 2017/18 ranging from 93.9% to 97.9%. Council tax collection rate shows a significant pattern in relation to level of deprivation, with those councils with higher levels of deprivation reporting significantly lower rates paid on time. The roll-out of Universal Credit is likely to further exacerbate this over the coming period.

Percentage of income due from council tax received by the end of the year



Source: Council supplied figures



Work within Family Groups has identified the following factors as important in understanding the variation between authorities in council tax performance:

- *Channel shift to greater automation and self-service (both customer facing and back office)*
- *Structural variations in relation to council owned or transferred housing stock and the impact of discount/exemption/council Tax Reduction(CTR) take-up on collection*
- *Procedural variations such as:*
 - *Local set ups – Revenues and Benefits, shared service etc*
 - *Impact of annual/regular billing regimes on subsequent collection and recovery*
 - *Types/variety of accessible payment options, particularly the level of Direct Debit payment*
 - *Follow-up and recovery timetables*
 - *Payment arrangement guidelines*
 - *Impact of ‘water only’ debt and success of DWP collections (including Water Direct)*
 - *Working with others – RSL’s, Educational Establishments, Advice Sector*
- *Recovery and Enforcement approaches, e.g.:*
 - *Corporate debt strategies (refunds/offsets etc)*
 - *In-house recovery activity*
 - *Pre and post warrant intervention*
 - *Use of available diligence and enforcement actions*
 - *Relations with/management of Third Party Collectors (Sheriff Officers etc.)*
- *Asset management and rationalisation in relation to office premises*

Sickness absence rates

The management of sickness absence is a major priority for councils in their efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of their workforce and to manage their costs. The unprecedented pace of change and transformation across local government places further emphasis on the importance of developing effective strategies to manage absence. Although local context will differ, authorities are adopting similar policies and good practice procedures and are generally focussing on employee wellbeing as well as health, in particular supporting good mental health.

Absence levels overall are at their highest since 2010/11, increasing by 6%; however during the same period Full Time equivalent staff numbers have reduced by 10.3%.³³ The data reveals a different pattern for teaching staff and non-teaching staff.

Although there have been fluctuations, Sickness Absence days for teaching staff have reduced by 10.2%, from 6.6 days to 5.9 days since 2010/11, and from 6.1 to 5.9 days in the past 12 months (a 2.1% reduction). The data reveals an overall reduction in days lost for teaching staff against a backdrop of unchanged teacher numbers. The number of absence days ranges from 4.2 to 9.1, with rural and smaller authorities tending to report slightly higher levels. 15 out of 32 councils showed an increase in Teachers absence between 2016/17 and 2017/18

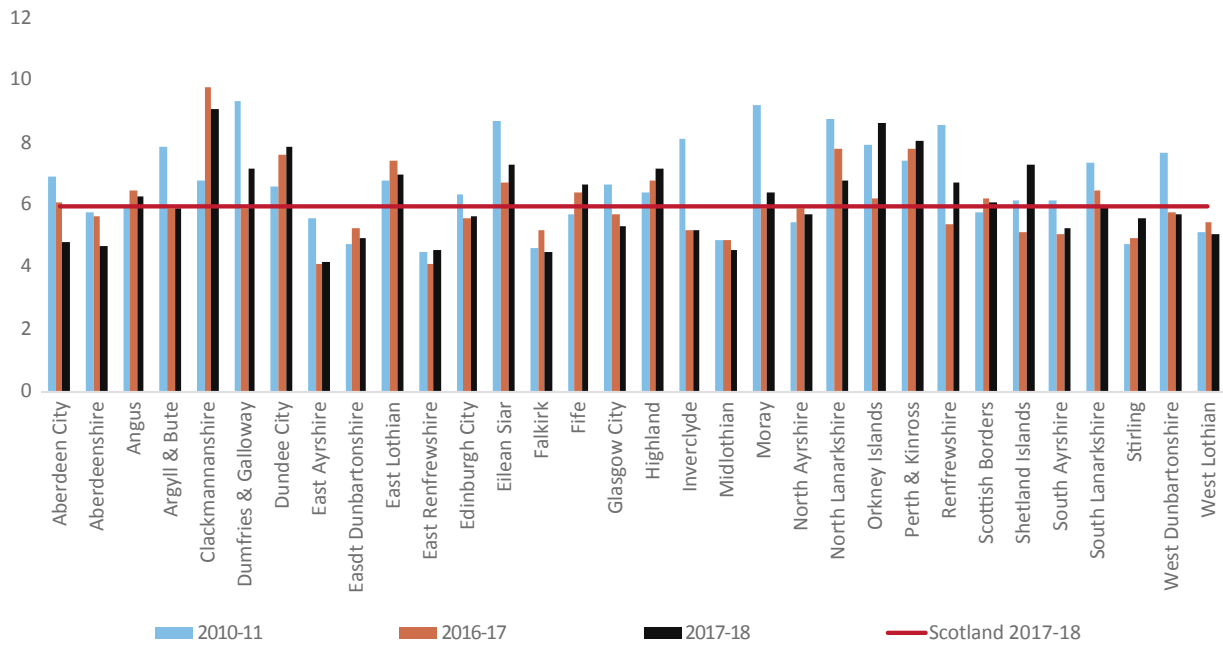
Sickness absence days for non-teaching staff are higher than those for teachers, and have increased by 5.7% since 2010/11, from 10.8 days to 11.4 days. Although there have again been fluctuations during this period, the 4.5% increase in the past 12 months has taken levels to their highest point since the base year. In contrast to teaching staff, while overall days lost for non-teaching staff also fell, this was in parallel with a 10% reduction in overall staff numbers since 2010/11. The number of days lost range from 8.4 to 16.8 with no systematic relationship to size, rurality or

³³ FTE calculations used within council supplied figures for LGBF differ slightly from the PSE guidelines (<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Labour-Market/PublicSectorEmployment/PSEGuidance>)



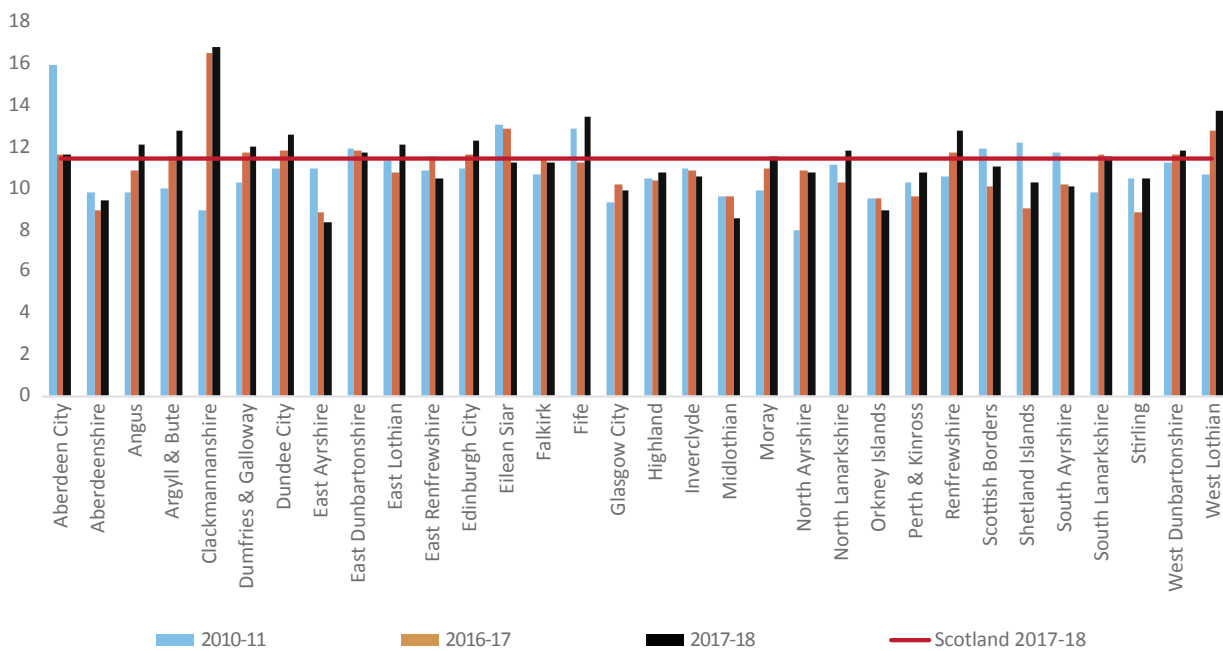
deprivation. 20 out of the 32 authorities showed an increase in absence between 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Sickness absence days per teacher



Range = 4.2 to 9.1

Sickness absence days per employee (non teacher)



Range = 8.4 to 16.8

Source: Council supplied figures



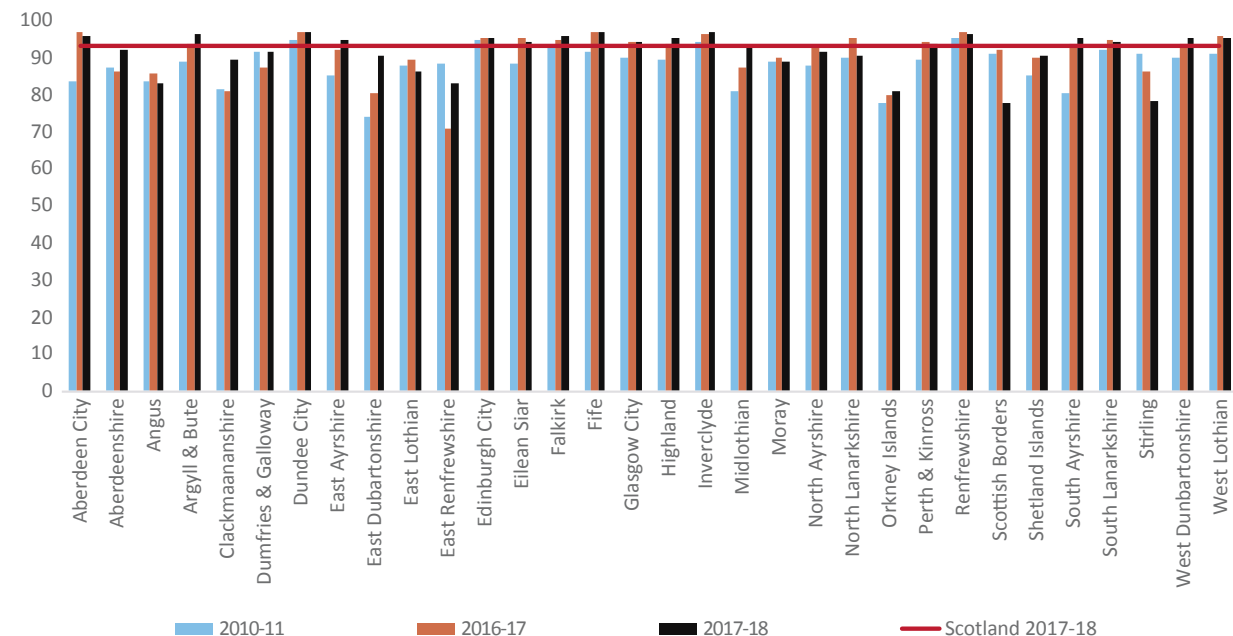
Work within Family Groups has identified the following factors as important in understanding the variation between authorities in sickness absence levels:

- Workforce composition and age profile
- Priority given to performance management and business intelligence to support early intervention
- Strategic priority given to Health and Wellbeing initiatives
- Level of staff engagement and involvement
- Differences in Absence Management policy and procedures, including the point at which disciplinary intervention is triggered
- Level of flexible working practices
- Level and type of occupational health and counselling
- Level of resource dedicated to maximising attendance and managing absence

Invoices paid

Councils are major purchasers of goods and services both within their local economies and across the Scottish economy as a whole. The percentage of invoices paid within 30 days has steadily increased from 89.5% to 93.2% over the eight-year period, with levels of variation remaining largely unchanged. In 2017/18, the range across councils was 78.0% to 97.1%.

Percentage of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days



Range = 78 to 97.1

Source: Council supplied figures

Corporate assets

There has been improvement in the condition of councils' corporate assets over the period. The



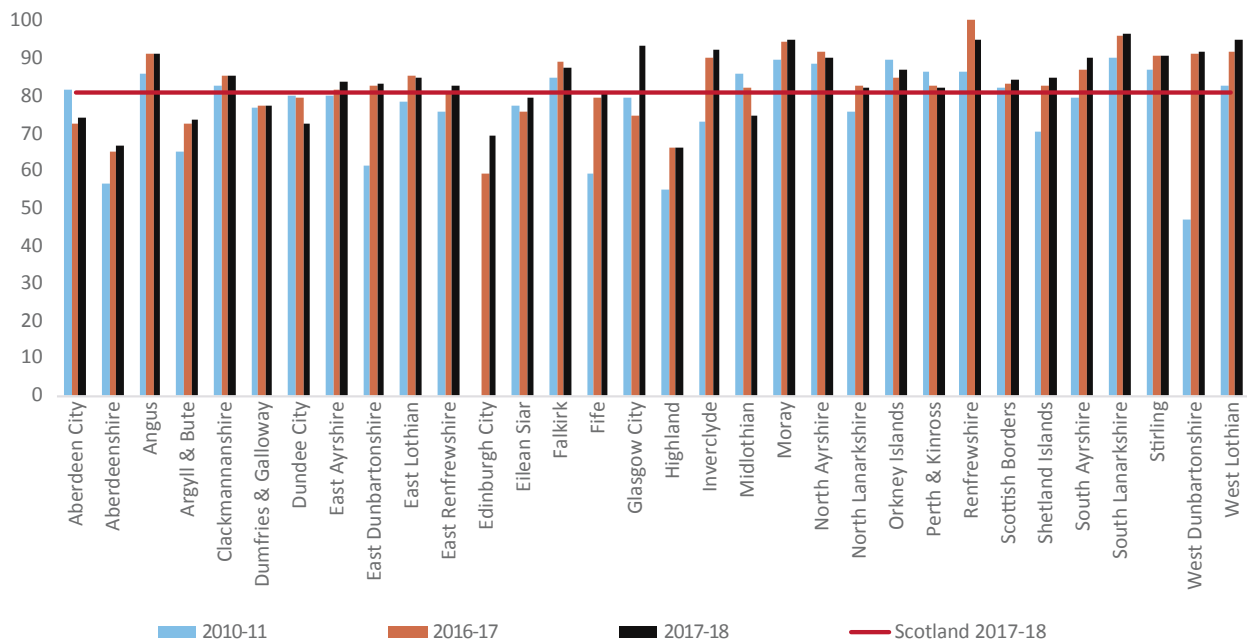
percentage of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use has improved from 73.7% to 81.0% and the proportion of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition has improved from 81.3% to 86.3%.

There is significant but narrowing variation across councils in both measures, ranging from 66% to 96% for buildings suitable for use, and 52% to 100% for condition of floor area. Rural councils have significantly lower levels of buildings suitable for their current use, although there is no similar relationship in terms of the condition of internal floor area.

Work within Family Groups has identified the following factors as important in understanding the variation between authorities in relation to corporate assets:

- Review programme for school estate
- Investment in improvement works
- Lifecycle – key elements at end/past their useful economic life e.g. roofs/heating systems
- Capital programmes – investment in schools/energy efficiency programmes
- Asset transfer and the Community Empowerment agenda

Proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use (%)

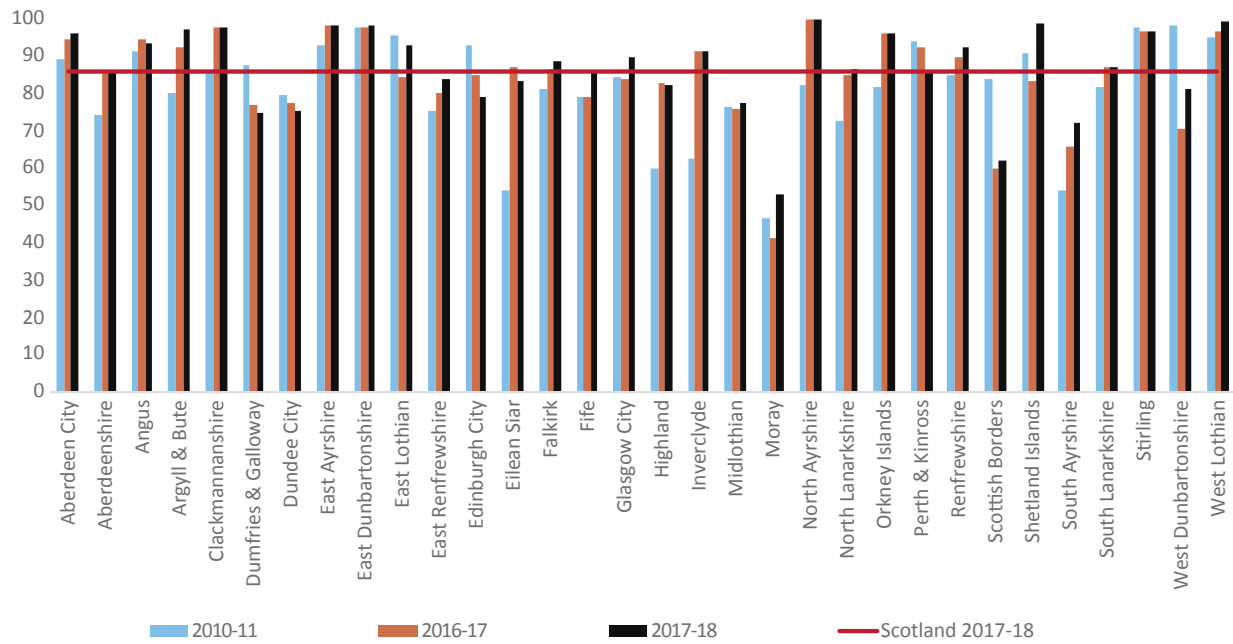


Range = 66.1 to 96.5

Source: Council supplied figures



Proportion of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition (%)



Range = 52.6 to 99.7

Source: Council supplied figures