

2013 Scottish Local Government Benchmarking Overview Report

Introduction

Background and Purpose

1. This is the first overview report for the Scottish Local Government Benchmarking Framework. Scotland's councils have worked together to report standard information on the services they provide to local communities across Scotland. This information covers how much councils spend on particular services and, where possible, service performance. The key point is that all the information provided is in a standard and therefore comparable form.
2. This has taken a considerable amount of time and effort as councils do not have common structures or service configurations: each council has the structure and service arrangements it thinks most appropriate and cost effective in local circumstances. Equally, all councils already report their spending and performance locally but within locally developed and agreed frameworks. To ensure comparability across councils, it has been necessary to develop standard service definitions, and standard classifications for spending and performance. This remains a work in progress but the information now available is standard and comparable to a high degree of accuracy. (See appendix 1 for a full listing of the service categories and indicators within the framework).
3. The core purpose of the exercise is benchmarking: making comparisons on spending and performance between similar councils so that councils can identify strengths and weaknesses, learn from councils who seem to be doing better and improve their local performance. That definition of purpose makes three core points:
 - (i) It is important to compare like with like.
 - (ii) The focus is on variations in spending and performance that Councils can directly control.
 - (iii) The aim is improvement and more cost effective services across Scotland.
4. The first point is obvious but critical. For example, if the focus is on spending per pupil in primary education, rural and island councils have to maintain a large number of very small schools because they provide for small but highly diffuse populations. This is expensive. Urban councils have fewer but larger schools because they serve large, highly concentrated populations. Comparing cost per pupil between Glasgow and Orkney is, therefore, not comparing like with like.

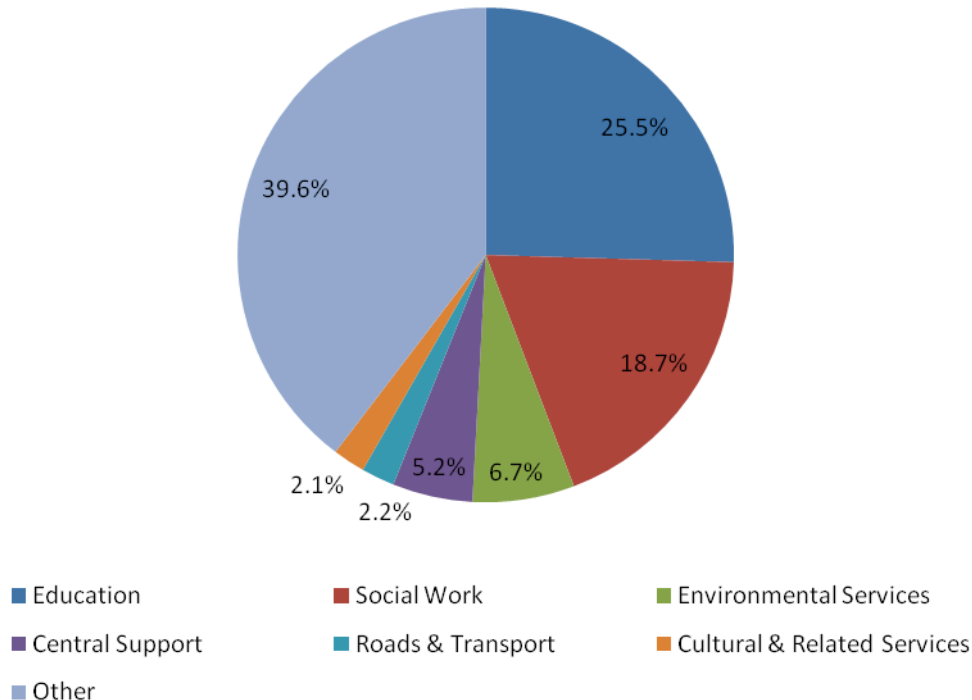
5. Equally, some councils have more pupils from a background of severe deprivation and disadvantage than others and Scottish and International analysis shows that these pupils tend to achieve less well at school. This relationship holds even where disadvantaged pupils attend the same school as more affluent pupils who are achieving highly. Comparing pupil achievement between councils with high levels of deprivation and councils with low levels of deprivation needs to take account of the difference between them.
6. This links to the second point: focusing on variation in spending and performance that councils can and should control. One way of doing this is to group councils in terms of factors they cannot directly control (e.g. population sparsity or multiple deprivation) and making comparisons within these groups rather than between them. For example, grouping the island councils together to compare costs per pupil in education takes account of the uncontrollable factor, and means that differences are more likely to be caused by factors councils can and should control. The same applies to pupil achievement in areas of high deprivation.
7. Grouping this way is, in essence, a way of ensuring the “comparing like with like” principle. Groups can be created around a wide range of uncontrollable factors: size of Council, population distribution, population demographics, levels of deprivation, etc. The aim is to maximise the chances of shared learning and improvement by making the most relevant comparisons of cost and performance. Different groups would be relevant for different service areas as the factors affecting cost and performance are different.
8. These proper concerns with “comparing like with like” need linked to the third point: improving the cost effectiveness and impact of local services by comparing with and learning from others. The core idea here is learning from “best in class”. Grouping councils can help to define the relevant “class” for making comparisons but it is important that they are not used so restrictively as to exclude useful learning and improvement. For example, if we group councils into four groups based on levels of multiple deprivation, then comparisons can be made within these groups. However, for educational achievement, some councils with low overall levels of multiple deprivation are achieving very good results with pupils from very deprived backgrounds. Although not statistically comparable with the circumstances of councils with overall high levels of multiple deprivation, there may be important improvement points to be captured by pursuing the comparison.
9. The point of comparing like with like is that this is more likely to lead to useful learning and improvement. However, that should not be a straitjacket or an excuse: if comparing between groups as well as within them is useful, it should be done. Where comparing across the whole of Scotland is useful, it should be done. The benchmarking framework reported here lends itself to any type of comparison councils, or citizens, wish to make. What it does not support is a crude “league table” approach: it would be as misleading to assess the performance of Councils with high levels of deprivation without taking account of that as it would be to explore the performance of Island councils without noting they are island groups with very distinctive population distribution.

10. One final point is important. Variations between councils will quite properly reflect the different priorities different councils have arrived at with and for the communities they serve. Council are elected democratic authorities that may quite legitimately have different priorities. Using standard measures of cost and performance in no sense implies councils should be standard: they should reflect the different needs and interests of the different communities they serve.
11. The purpose, therefore, is to create a framework that supports evidence based comparisons and, through that, shared learning and improvement. The indicators in the benchmarking framework are very high level indicators and focus questions of why variations in cost and performance are occurring between similar Councils. They do not supply answers. That happens when councils engage with each other to “drill down” and explore why these variations are happening. That provides the platform for learning and improvement. The framework is being made public to allow all interested parties to contribute to that process.

Benchmarking Framework

12. The framework is based on seven service groupings which cover the major services provided to the public, and the support services necessary to do that. Table 1 gives the service categories and the distribution of council spending between them for each of the two years covered by this report. The data covered by this report represents about 60% of the total spending of local government. The ‘other’ category in the diagram below represents those services not included within the benchmarking framework at this stage.

Proportion of Gross Revenue Expenditure by Service 2011-12



13. As can be seen, services to children (education, child protection and child care) and social work and social care to adults account for 44% of all local government spend. Despite some perceptions, the cost of corporate administration and the costs of democracy together account for around 5% of total spending.
14. To develop precise indicators of cost and performance for comparison between councils, these broad service categories are often divided into more specific sub-categories. For example, children's services divide into: preschool education; primary education; secondary education and child care and protection. A full list of service categories and indicators is attached (**See Appendix 1**).
15. For each category, standard indicators of spend and, where possible, performance have been developed. Spending has been standardised by expressing it as spending per standard unit (e.g. spending per pupil; spending per kilometre or road maintained; spending per residence for waste collection, etc.). These indicators have been standardised by application of rigorous protocols and provide a reliable basis for comparison between councils. Indicators of performance have proven to be more difficult.

16. For some services, well accepted measures of performance exist (e.g. pupil attainment at standard grade or higher level for secondary education). For others, no standard measures of performance are currently available (e.g. children's educational attainment at the end of primary school). For others again, performance is defined against policy requirements (e.g. percentage of older people with intensive needs receiving care at home). Finally, in some cases, community satisfaction with the service is used as the performance measure in the absence of other measures.
17. This reinforces the point that the benchmarking framework is a "work in progress". Developing standard measures of performance is expensive and time consuming, particularly if a new evidence base is necessary and, at this stage, the framework has sought to use what was available. In some cases, that is satisfactory: in others, further development is necessary. To minimise cost and duplication of effort, development work will be shared with inspectorates and regulatory bodies, who also require councils to collect prescribed information, to agree a core framework of performance measures that should be collected on an annual basis.

The Purpose of this Report

18. All of the information generated by the benchmarking framework has been placed in a dedicated website. It contains "dashboards" for each council showing movement on indicators across the two years covered, and a comparison with the Scottish average for all indicators. It contains all Scotland data for every listed indicator, and the development programme for strengthening the framework across the next year.
19. This report is an overview report and does not seek to replicate the depth and detail of the website. The focus is on:
 - (i) Trends across Scotland for the service groupings and key indicators covered by the framework for 2010/11 and 2011/12.
 - (ii) Factors shaping these trends across Scotland including physical geography, population distribution, size of Council and the impact of deprivation.
 - (iii) Identifying areas where variation is not related to extraneous factors and that councils can explore in more detail as part of their improvement and development.

Overall Pattern for all Indicators across Scotland

20. Only two years of standardised data are currently available within the benchmarking framework, and that is insufficient to establish trends in a meaningful way. However, Table 2 below summarises the average year on year variation for each indicator across Scotland. Details for individual councils can be accessed in the "Councils" section of the website.

Change between 2010-11 and 2011-12 Scotland Level

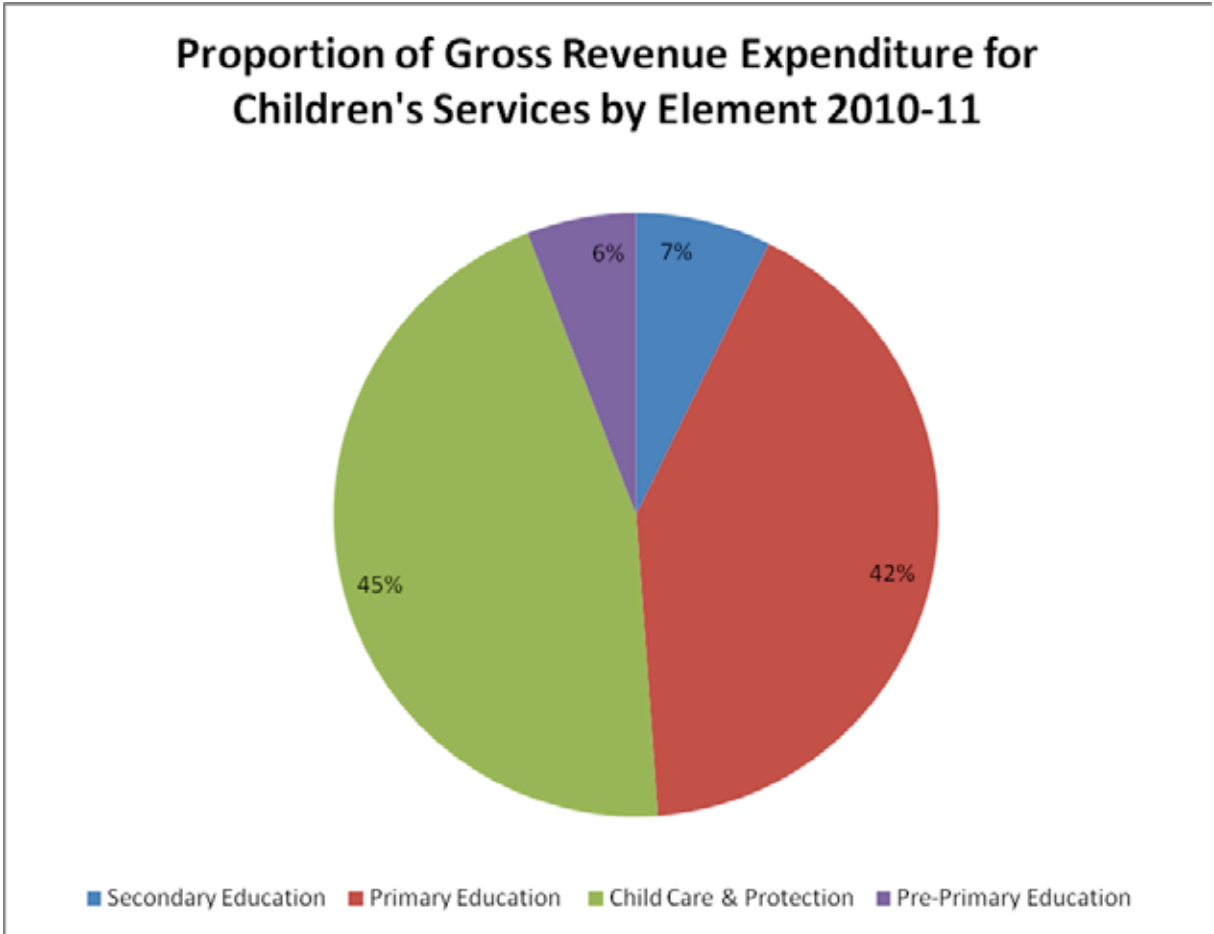
Data	Indicator Description	Scotland Level				
		2010-11	2011-12	change in value	% change in value	
Children's Services	CHN1	Cost per Primary school Pupil	4,868	4,792	-76	-1.6
	CHN2	Cost per Secondary School Pupil	6,433	6,321	-112	-1.7
	CHN3	Cost per Pre-School Education Place	3,360	3,091	-269	-8.0
	CHN 4	Percentage of Secondary Pupils in S4 achieving 5 or more Awards at Level 5	36	37	1	2.8
	CHN5	Percentage of Secondary Pupils in S6 achieving 5 or more Awards at Level 6	23	25	2	8.7
	CHN6	Percentage of Pupils Living in the 20% most Deprived Areas Gaining 5+ Awards at Level 5	16	18	2	12.5
	CHN7	Percentage of Pupils Living in the 20% most Deprived Areas Gaining 5+ Awards at Level 6	8	9	1	12.5
	CHN8a	The Gross Cost of "Children Looked After" in Residential Based Services per Child per Week	3,012	N/A		
	CHN8b	The Gross Cost of "Children Looked After" in a Community Setting per Child per Week	190.3	N/A		
	CHN9	Balance of Care for 'Looked After Children': % of Children being Looked After in the Community	90.9	N/A		
	CHN10	Percentage of Adults Satisfied with Local Schools	83.1	N/A		
CHN11	Proportion of Pupils Entering Positive Destinations	88.9	89.9	1.0	1.1	
Corporate Services	CORP 1	Support Services as a % of Total Gross Expenditure	4.6	4.8	0.20	4.3
	CORP 2	Cost of Democratic Core per 1,000 population	33,475	31,469	-2,006	-6.0
	CORP3a	The Percentage of the Highest Paid 2% Employees Who are Women	39.5	41.2	1.7	4.3
	CORP3b	The Percentage of the Highest Paid 5% Employees Who are Women	46.3	48.5	2.2	4.8
	CORP4	The Cost per Dwelling of Collecting Council Tax	13.8	13.2	-0.7	-4.8
	CORP5a	The number of complaints of domestic noise received during the year settled without the need for	900	864	-36	-4.0
	CORP5b1	The number of complaints of domestic noise received during the year requiring attendance on site and not dealt with under Part V of the Antisocial Behaviour (Scotland)	143	134	-8	-5.8
	CORP5b2	(Domestic Noise) Average time (hours) between time of complaint and attendance on site, for those requiring attendance on site	46.2	30.5	-15.7	-34.0
	CORP5b3	(Domestic Noise) Average time (hours) between time of complaint and attendance on site, for those dealt with under the ASB Act 2004	0.58	0.59	0.00	0.7
	CORP6	Sickness Absence Days per Employee	9.8	9.3	-0.5	-5.1
	CORP7	Percentage of Income due from Council Tax Received by the End of the Year	94.7	95.1	0.4	0.4
CORP8	Percentage of Invoices Sampled that were Paid Within 30 days	89.5	90.2	0.7	0.8	
Social Work Services	SW1	Home Care Costs per Hour for people Aged 65 or over	20.54	19.77	-0.77	-3.7
	SW2	Self Directed Support Spend on People Aged 18 or Over as a % of Total Social Work Spend on Adults	1.6	3.1	1.5	96.8
	SW3	Percentage of people aged 65 or Over with Intensive Needs Receiving Care at Home	33.1	33.3	0.2	0.6
	SW4	Percentage of Adults satisfied with social care or social work services	62.1	N/A		
Culture & Leisure Services	C&L1	Gross cost per attendance at Sports facilities	4.66	4.18	-0.48	-10.3
	C&L2	Cost Per Library Visit	3.61	3.43	-0.17	-4.8
	C&L3	Cost of Museums per Visit	4.85	3.81	-1.04	-21.5
	C&L4	Cost of Parks& Open Spaces per 1,000 Population	36,448	34,237	-2,211	-6.1
	C&L5a	Percentage of Adults Satisfied with Libraries	83.5	N/A		
	C&L5b	Percentage of Adults Satisfied with Parks and Open Spaces	83.1	N/A		
	C&L5c	Percentage of Adults Satisfied with Museums and Galleries	75.5	N/A		
C&L5d	Percentage of Adults Satisfied with Leisure Facilities	74.6	N/A			
Environmental Services	ENV1	Gross Cost of Waste Collection per Premise	84.34	81.06	-3.28	-3.9
	ENV2	Gross Cost per Waste Disposal per Premise	100.64	105.40	4.76	4.7
	ENV3a	Net Cost of Street Cleaning per 1,000 Population	19,852	19,380	-472	-2.4
	ENV3b	Street Cleanliness Index	74	75	1	1.4
	ENV4a	Cost of Maintenance per Kilometre of Roads	7,291	6,211	-1,080	-14.8
	ENV4b	Percentage of A Class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment	30.2	30.5	0.3	1.0
	ENV4c	Percentage of B Class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment	35.9	36.3	0.4	1.1
	ENV4d	Percentage of C Class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment	35.2	36.0	0.8	2.3
	ENV5	Cost of trading standards and environmental health per 1,000 population	24,335	23,117	-1,219	-5.0
	ENV6	Percentage of total waste arising that is recycled	no comparison between years possible due to indicator definition change			
ENV7a	Percentage of adults satisfied with refuse collection	80.9	N/A			
ENV7b	Percentage of adults satisfied with street cleaning	73.3	N/A			
Housing Services	HSN1	Current tenants' arrears as a percentage of net rent due	5.9	6.1	0.2	3.4
	HSN2	Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids	1.3	1.3	0.0	0.0
	HSN3	Percentage of council dwellings meeting Scottish Housing Standards	53.6	66.1	12.5	23.3
	HSN4	Percentage of repairs completed within target times	93.3	93.6	0.3	0.3
	HSN5	Percentage of council dwellings that are energy efficient	74.9	81.2	6.3	8.4
CORP ASSET 1	Proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use	73.7	74.8	1.1	1.5	
CORP ASSET 2	Proportion of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition	81.3	82.7	1.4	1.7	

21. As can be seen, the average year on year movement on cost indicators is almost uniformly down, and the average year on year movement on performance indicators is uniformly up. For example, the gross cost per pupil in schools is less on average in 2011/12 than it was in 2010/11, and the average performance of pupils in S4 and S5 improved across the two years. However, this broad trend across indicators should not be overstated. In a number of service areas, there is no good standard measure of performance so the possible impact of cost reduction on service quality and impact is not captured at present. More generally, standard measures of service experience and satisfaction with services are still weak within the framework. Note that the table understates the reduction in real cost here as all figures are expressed in cash terms and take no account of inflation across the two years.

Major Service Areas: Trends and Variations

Children's Services

22. The major elements of children's services, and the percentage of total children's services spend on each one, are given in the chart below.



23. As can be seen, primary and secondary school provision are the major spend areas, over 87% of children's services total spend, with pre-school education and child care and protection accounting for around 13% of total spending on children. Each element is looked at in turn below.

Preschool Provision for Children

24. For preschool educational provision for children ("nursery school"), spending has been standardised as total spend per preschool place (**See Indicator CHN 3**). As can be seen, there is very substantial variation between councils (from £2,105 per place to £4,769 per place) and between the two years reported. There is no systematic connection with the different scale, population distribution. Councils with higher levels of deprivation do tend to spend more than those with lower levels of deprivation. The majority of the variation seems more likely to reflect specific decisions about the nature and quality of the service provided.
25. Factors such as the age, experience and grade of staff deployed, and the cost of facilities, may be part of an explanation as these are major cost components. The number of hours/ sessions per week offered to children, and the age from which they are offered is also likely to be an important cost factor. A problem at present is that there is no standard measure of the impact of preschool education on children's development in place that would allow costs to be linked to results. This is a development priority for the forthcoming year.

Primary and Secondary School Spending

26. The pattern of spend on primary and secondary schooling is standardised as "total spend per pupil". The data shows a very distinctive pattern across Scotland, with the Island councils spending significantly more than others (**See Indicators CHN 1 and CHN 2**). For example, including the Islands, the range per pupil in 2011/12 is from £4,121 to £8,765 for primary schools and from £5,346 - £12,826 for secondary schools. Excluding the Islands, the range per pupil for primary comes down to £4,121 to £5,820, and for secondary it comes down to £5,278 to £7,678. The distinctive physical geography and population distribution of the Islands councils results in a distinctive spending pattern.
27. That said there are still substantial variations between the Islands councils themselves, and between the mainland councils, particularly for secondary education. Variations have been examined in terms of scale of council, population distribution and levels of deprivation, but none explain the variation that exists. This suggests the variation is most likely to be associated with inheritance and policy choices at local level.
28. Around 60% of the cost per pupil are teaching staff costs, and a further 20% are operating costs of which the biggest element is the provision of school facilities themselves. This makes it likely that variation between councils is highly influenced by the age and salary costs of the teaching workforce, and the

number and cost of the school buildings they provide. As a substantial proportion of the school estate has been renewed in the last 15 years using PPP/PFI vehicles, annual contract costs are likely to be a significant factor. Note also that the current moratorium on school closures and policy commitment to reducing pupil/teacher ratios make it unlikely that costs could be rapidly reduced.

29. At present, it is impossible to explore variation in spending against variation in pupil performance in primary schools because there are no standard assessments of all children in P7. Primary schools provide information to secondary schools on pupil aptitude and achievement, but this is not in a standardised and comparable form. However, the continued participation by children in S4 and S5 in public examinations allows exploration of performance at secondary level and this is likely to reflect the impact of earlier education at Primary level.

Secondary School Performance

30. Performance at secondary level is measured by three indicators within the benchmarking framework: percentage of pupils achieving 5+ SQA level 5 qualifications (Standard Grade A – C equivalent); percentage of pupils gaining 5+ SQA level 6 qualifications (Higher A – C level) and the post school destinations of pupils. On the level 5 and 6 qualifications indicators, very substantial variations can be identified (**See Indicators [CHN 4](#) and [CHN 5](#)**). The range is from 26% to 67% for 5+ at level 5 and from 16% to 53% for 5+ at level 6. It should be noted that 5+ awards at SQA level 6 is a demanding criterion.
31. A clear relationship exists between multiple deprivation and educational attainment within and between councils. Within councils, the average performance of pupils from the 20% most deprived areas is well below the average for other pupils (**See Indicators [CHN 6](#) and [CHN 7](#)**). Between councils, achievement on SQA levels 5 and 6 varies systematically with the overall level of deprivation in the council area.
32. Two points that need further exploration can be seen in these tables. First, councils with very low levels of overall deprivation are often achieving exceptional results with pupils from deprived areas. However, when the overall level of deprivation is factored in, a clear link exists between higher levels of deprivation and lower educational achievement. Second, if councils are grouped into four groups based on their overall levels of deprivation, clear differences emerge within groups as well as between them. These findings suggest substantial opportunities for shared learning and improvement.
33. An improving trend can be seen in the SQA level 5 and level 6 data across the two years. The total percentage gaining 5 awards at level 5 and level 6 increases, and the percentage for children from deprived areas achieving that level of award also increases. This trend can be tracked back across the last 10 years, with the performance of children from the most deprived backgrounds

having improved by 17% across the period since 2002. The “equality gap” between the most and least disadvantaged pupils has narrowed by much less because all pupils have improved their performance across the period.

34. The data for “positive destinations” after school (participation in FE, HE, training/apprenticeships, or employment) are much more even and very positive. The average for positive destinations is 90% across councils, with a range from 85.4% to 95.5% in 2011/12. No strong statistical link exists with deprivation, urban/rural context, or scale of authority. This raises questions about the utility of a single aggregate measure of positive destinations (**See Indicator [CHN11](#)**).
35. If “positive destinations” is broken down into its component parts, more interesting trends can be identified. The balance of participation in colleges and universities more or less reverses between councils with higher levels of deprivation and councils with lower levels of deprivation (**See Indicator [CHN 11](#)**). There is a clear link between deprivation and lower participation in higher education across Scotland. (The participation rate is still high: Glasgow, with the highest level of deprivation in Scotland, still has over 30% of all its pupils going to University). The percentage of pupils moving directly into unemployment is higher for councils with higher levels of deprivation although the relationship is not statistically significant.
36. The final point to note is that measuring performance at council level provides only a very high level indicator. Pupils are educated in particular schools, and different pupils in the same schools come from different backgrounds. Glasgow’s 30% university participants may disproportionately come from a limited number of schools, and the participation rate from some of those schools may be above 50% or 60%. The pupils in these schools may disproportionately come from the less deprived areas in the city, and may be very similar to their peers in more affluent council areas. The high level indicators here pose questions: they do not answer them.

Looked After Children

37. As well as providing education services to all children, councils have a duty to provide care, protection and supervision to children who need it. The data reported here relates to children who are under formal arrangements for care, protection and supervision, typically decided by a Children’s Hearing, or a court in exceptional circumstances. This may be because of family breakdown or risk, the child’s behaviour or particular identified needs of the child.
38. There are three indicators in the benchmarking framework for “looked after children”: the weekly cost per “looked after” child in a community setting; the weekly cost per child in a residential setting; and the percentage of all “looked after” children in a community setting.

Cost of “looked after” Children’s Service

39. The average gross weekly cost per child of community and residential placements shows very wide variation (**See Indicators [CHN8a](#) and [CHN8b](#)**).

The range is from £48 to £446 for community placements, and between £1,401 and £12,615 for residential placements. No clear relationship could be found between cost variation and urban/rural context; scale of council or deprivation. The key factors explaining variation may be: the specific decisions of Children's Hearings; the complexity of the needs and circumstances of the particular children being looked after; local availability of placements; and the policy choices and service models adopted by councils. The decline in cost per placement across the two years should also be seen in that way: it is not necessarily improved efficiency.

The Balance of Care

40. The overwhelming majority of children are looked after in community settings: 91% on average across Scotland (**See Indicator CHN 9**). The range is relatively narrow: from 78% to 96% looked after in the community. There is a clustering of rural and Island councils at the bottom of the range, possibly indicating the greater difficulty of organising community provision for high need cases in those contexts. Clearly the role of the Children's Hearing is also important in understanding this pattern as they decide the provision necessary for particular children.

Social Work

Home Care Services

41. Council spend on Home Care Services has been standardised around home care costs per hour for each council. The average spend per hour in 2011/12 was £19.77 per hour with the range in spending per hour going from £8.00 per hour to £30.00 (**See Indicator SW 1**).
42. The variation in cost per hour was explored against levels of deprivation, population distribution (urban/rural) and size of council, but no systematic relationships were identified. The large urban councils exhibit higher costs as do the smaller rural and islands councils. Factors influencing variation in cost per hour may include the adoption of "living wage" policies by some councils, the degree to which services are directly delivered by councils themselves or outsourced to private or voluntary providers, and the need to pay for unproductive travel time and costs in remote rural and island councils.

Self Directed Support Spend

43. Self directed support is a national initiative to give users of care the opportunity to control and direct their own care. This indicator measures the percentage of total care spend for adults directed by the user, rather than the council. The range is from 0.4% to 18%, with an average of 3.1% (**See Indicator SW 2**). Variation is not systematically related to population distribution, deprivation or size of council. Factors influencing variation are likely to include the demand amongst clients for self directed support, the arrangements within councils for

self directed support, and some councils waiting until new legislative change is implemented.

44. This is an evolving initiative, and is subject to legislative change, but the proportion of spend allocated to self directed support more than doubled on average between 2010/11 and 2011/12.

Adults 65+ with Intensive Needs Receiving Care at Home

45. Enabling older people with intensive care needs to be cared for at home, rather than in an institutional setting, is a national policy priority. This indicator measures the percentage of all older people assessed as having intensive care needs who are cared for at home. The range across Scotland is substantial (12.2% - 51.3%): the average is 33.3% (**See Indicator SW 3**). There is no statistically significant relationship with population distribution, deprivation or size of council. There is no substantial year on year shift on this indicator across the two years.
46. Factors that may explain variation between councils include the complexity of the needs of clients within the intensive need category; variation in the availability of institutional care between councils, and variation in care management criteria between councils. Note that this indicator is not a measure of cost: it may be more expensive to provide intensive care at home than in an institutional setting.

Culture and Leisure

47. Councils provide sports facilities, libraries, museums, parks and open spaces for communities across Scotland. For sports facilities (swimming pools, indoor and outdoor sports facilities) the gross cost per visit ranged from £1.41 to £10.23, with an average of £4.18 (**See Indicator C & L 1**). Although there is no statistically significant relationship with population distribution across Scotland, rural and island council spending is on average higher than that of urban and suburban councils. This reflects the higher cost of providing good quality facilities to small, diffuse populations with low population catchments. There is a reduction in the cost per visit across the two years.
48. This indicator takes no account of the income generated by sports facilities and the net costs, taking account of income, would be significantly lower than the gross cost. Unfortunately, no standard way of calculating net cost could be achieved in the timescale for preparing this data. This is a priority for development next year.
49. For library services, again the indicator measures the cost per visit to a library. In 2011/12, this ranged from £1.41 to £7.29, with an average of £3.43 (**See Indicator C & L2**). Again there is a rural effect with costs in rural and islands councils on average being higher than for non-rural councils. This reflects the

fixed costs of providing a reasonable service in the rural context for a smaller number of potential users.

50. For museums, cost per visit ranged from 24p to £24.35, with an average of £3.81 (**See Indicator C & L 3**). In 2011/12, and the trend across for Scotland for the two years, was for costs to reduce by 21.5%. This indicator is highly leveraged by numbers of visitors, and very high costs per visit reflect low visitor flows. It measures visitor attractiveness: not efficiency of provision.
51. For parks and open spaces, the indicator measures cost per 1,000 of the population. Note this is a measure of spend, not a measure of unit cost. There is very substantial variation between councils, from £4,640 to £58,725, with an average of £34,237 but this reflects inheritance, and the relative need for parks and open spaces in urban and rural Scotland (**See Indicator C & L 4**). Semi-rural/suburban councils have the highest spend, lacking the economies of scale of concentrated parkland in urban areas, but having higher need for parks than rural authorities. There is no measure available for use of park and open spaces.

Environmental Services

52. Environmental services contain two major areas of spend: domestic and commercial waste collection and disposal, and the maintenance of the local roads network. These are examined in turn below.
53. For waste collection, the indicator measures the gross cost of collection per premise and exhibits substantial variation: from £50 to £185 per premise in 2011/12, with an average of £81 (**See Indicator ENV 1**). There is a clear link with population distribution: urban councils with concentrated populations have a lower cost per premise than rural and island councils dealing with more diffuse populations. There is still substantial variation within the urban and the rural groupings that should be explored. The degree to which multiple collections from each premise are necessary to support sorting and separation of waste at source may be a factor.
54. For waste disposal, the indicator measures gross cost of waste disposal per premise and again there is substantial variation: from £52 to £279 per premise, with an average of £105 (**See Indicator ENV 2**). There is a much less pronounced rural effect, partly levered by very high costs in two island councils, but it is not statistically significant. A major factor here may be method of disposal: recycling costs more but generates income which is not taken account of by this indicator, and is environmentally far more substantive than landfill or incineration. For collection the average cost per premise reduced across the two years but for disposal there was a slight increase.
55. For roads maintenance, the key indicator adopted was total maintenance cost per kilometre of road maintained. The range for this indicator was from £2,351 to £18,018 per kilometre, with an average of £6,211 in 2011/12 (**See Indicator ENV 3a**). There is a very strong urban/rural difference, with the average for urban councils being around three times more than the median for rural

councils. As there is no significant variation in the underlying structural condition of rural and urban roads, the key factor is likely to be the impact of very much higher traffic volumes in the urban context. That said there is still substantial variation within both the urban and rural categories, as well as between them, and this needs detailed exploration.

Support Services

56. Councils provide a wide range of direct services to the public and these are supported by a range of internal services: Finance; IT; Legal; Procurement; Administrative and Policy services. Councils are also democratically elected local governments and resources are committed to maintaining the democratic decision making and scrutiny processes of the council, and to supporting elected councillors. The key indicator here is support services as a percentage of total gross expenditure. "Support services" includes all the cost of corporate and democratic support, and all support for front line services, i.e. all the "overhead" costs of the council.
57. In 2011/12, support services as a percentage of total expenditure ranged from 2.7% to 7.8%, with an average of 4.8%. This average is up by 0.2% on 2010/10 in cash terms, but down by 1.80% in real terms (**see Indicator [CORP 1](#)**). The variation was explored in terms of size of council as small councils with lower overall expenditure are likely to have a higher percentage of total expenditure denoted to corporate and democratic support. No strong relationship was found with the urban/rural nature of councils, but there is some relationship with size especially for smaller councils. These variations need explored in terms of organisation and practice. This indicator is a departure from previous measurement practice, and the possibility of recording error is being pursued.

Conclusions

58. The trends reviewed above do show that some variation in cost and performance is due to external factors that councils cannot directly control: population distribution and deprivation being the most important. However, two points should be emphasised:
 - (i) If councils are grouped and differentiated by these external factors, there is still substantial variation within groups, as well as between them. That variation is not explained by external factors.
 - (ii) In no case does an external factor explain more than 50% of the variation between councils on any indicator. Local policy choice, organisation and practice remain very important.
59. The purpose of the framework is to support councils in identifying where they vary from other similar councils, and where they might learn from other councils. For that to be the case, the indicators have to be relevant and useful in highlighting opportunities for improvement. The benchmarking framework itself needs improved to make sure that it is as useful as it could be. This initial iteration of the framework was built on using information already available,

rather than developing a new evidence base. This has strengths, but it has also resulted in three limitations that need addressing.

60. First, there are still major areas of provision where spending cannot be linked to performance. The most evident are primary education; provision for looked after children; adult social care; and waste collection and disposal. A focus on costs alone, unrelated to outcomes, is unhelpful and may encourage cost reduction rather than cost effectiveness. The development programme for next year will address these issues.
61. Second, where costs are addressed, the framework measures gross cost even where an offsetting income stream is generated. This is misleading with respect to sports and leisure services, social care, recycling within waste disposal, etc. Accepting there are complexities in establishing net costs and offsetting income, the framework is less useful if that is not achieved. Again, this will be improved in the next iteration.
62. Finally, customer/user satisfaction data is included in the framework at present, derived from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS). The sample for this survey is designed to be representative of Scotland as a whole, and is not representative at the level of any particular council (the sample for Scotland for one year is 10,000 and therefore the sample size for the average council would only be 300). The SHS results presented here use two years worth of data for each value because of the small sample size. Individual councils undertake service user and residents surveys but do not use a standard survey instrument. The development plan of next year will include working with councils to develop a standard survey template for measuring satisfaction.

Appendix 1 Full List of Indicators and Service Categories

Children's Services

CHN 1	Cost per Primary School Pupil
CHN 2	Cost per Secondary School Pupil
CHN 3	Cost per Pre-School Education Registration
CHN 4	Percentage of Secondary School Pupils in S4 Achieving 5 or More Awards at Level 5
CHN 5	Percentage of Secondary School Pupils in S6 Achieving 5 or More Awards at Level 6
CHN 6	Percentage of Pupils in S4 Living in the 20% Most Deprived Areas Achieving 5 or More Awards at Level 5
CHN 7	Percentage of Pupils in S6 Living in the 20% Most Deprived Areas Achieving 5 or More Awards at Level 6
CHN 8a	The Gross Cost of "Children Looked After" in Residential Based Services per Child per Week
CHN 8b	The Gross Cost of "Children Looked After" in a Community Setting per Child per Week
CHN 9	Balance of Care for looked after children: % of children being looked after in the Community
CHN10	Percentage of Adults Satisfied with Local Schools
CHN11	Proportion of Pupils Entering Positive Destinations

Corporate Services

CORP 1	Support services as a Percentage of Total Gross expenditure
CORP 2	Cost of Democratic Core per 1,000 population
CORP 3a	The percentage of the highest paid 2 % of employees who are women
CORP 3b	The percentage of the highest paid 5 % of employees who are women
CORP 4	The cost per dwelling of collecting Council Tax
CORP 5a	The number of complaints of domestic noise received during the year settled without the need for attendance on site
CORP 5b1	The number of complaints of domestic noise received during the year requiring attendance on site and not dealt with under part V of the Antisocial Behavior (ASB) Act
CORP 5b2	Average time (hours) between time of complaint and attendance on site, for those requiring attendance on site
CORP 5c3	Average time (hours) between time of complaint and attendance on site, for those dealt with under the ASB Act
CORP 6	Sickness Absence Days per Employee
CORP 7	Cost of collecting council tax per dwelling
CORP8	Percentage of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days

Social Work Services

- SW1 Older Persons (Over65) Home Care Costs per Hour
- SW2 Self Directed Support spend on adults 18+ as% of total social work spend on adults 18+
- SW3 Percentage of people 65+ with intensive needs receiving care at home
- SW4 Percentage of Adults satisfied with social care or social work services

Culture & Leisure Services

- C&L1 Gross cost per attendance at Sports facilities
- C&L2 Cost Per Library Visit
- C&L3 Cost of Parks& Open Spaces per 1,000 Populations
- C&L5a Percentage of adults satisfied with libraries
- C&L5b Percentage of adults satisfied with parks and open spaces
- C&L5c Percentage of adults satisfied with museums and galleries
- C&L5d Percentage of adults satisfied with leisure facilities

Environmental Services

- ENV 1 Gross cost of Waste collection per premise
- ENV2 Gross cost per Waste disposal per premise
- ENV 3a Net cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population
- ENV 3b Street Cleanliness Index
- ENV 4a Cost of maintenance per kilometer of roads
- ENV 4b Percentage of A class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment
- ENV 4c Percentage of B class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment
- ENV 4d Percentage of C class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment
- ENV 5 Cost of trading standards and environmental health per 1,000 population
- ENV 6 The Percentage of total waste arising that is recycled
- ENV 7a Percentage of adults satisfied with refuse collection
- ENV 7b Percentage of adults satisfied with street cleaning

Housing Services

- HSN 1 Current tenants' arrears as a percentage of net rent due
- HSN2 Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids
- HSN 3 Percentage of dwellings meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standards
- HSN 4 Percentage of repairs completed within target times
- HSN 5 Percentage of council dwellings that are energy efficient

Corporate Assets

- CORP
- ASSET 1 Proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use
- CORP
- ASSET 2 Proportion of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition