

LGBF Credibility, Relevance and Reliability: 10 Key Messages

The LGBF is a Local Government led improvement approach reflecting a commitment by Solace to develop better measurement/comparable data as a catalyst for improving services and enhancing public accountability.

The purpose of the LGBF is to provide comparative information which offers high-level ‘can openers’ which can be used strategically and diagnostically. The framework provides a robust foundation for benchmarking practice through the application of comprehensive and well-established quality assurance and verification processes to ensure a high level of accuracy and comparability across local authorities.

Credibility

1. The LGBF voluntarily complies with the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice which provides assurances on the trustworthiness, quality and value of LGBF data.
2. The Accounts Commission supports and trusts Local Government in their commitment to embed and develop this improvement approach as evidenced by the reference to LGBF within statutory direction (replacing the previous SPI regime) and the use of LGBF within BVAR.
3. There is significant wider interest in the LGBF data e.g. Parliamentary Committees, First Minister Questions, COSLA campaigns, SPICe Briefings and within the National Media. There is also interest among other public sector partners in learning from Local Government’s journey in developing benchmarking.

Relevance

4. The LGBF Board works closely with council Chief Executives and professional associations to continuously review and improve the framework to ensure the relevance of measures included. Solace, Professional associations and data providers are represented on the LGBF Board to ensure the relevance, appropriateness, and accuracy of indicators used within the framework. Priorities for development are set out in the LGBF Strategic plan and regularly reviewed by the board, Solace and the Accounts Commission. Recent developments include strengthening the suite of measures in relation to Children and Young People, Economic Development and Adult Social Care, Financial Sustainability and Tackling Climate Change.
5. Local Government’s ongoing commitment to this sector-led improvement approach can be evidenced in the significant progress achieved to date in embedding LGBF within strategic decision making, scrutiny, improvement and public performance reporting, and in its commitment to continuous improvement going forward.

Reliability

6. Detailed guidance and metadata for all LGBF indicators have been produced in collaboration with professional associations and data owners to ensure consistent and comparative data is returned. The metadata is freely available and published together with our data on our website. This metadata outlines all the methods used, data sources, and limitations with the data.
7. Councils are responsible for assuring the quality of underpinning data provided for the framework and are required to confirm compliance with the associated guidance upon submission. Family Group Benchmarking events provide opportunities for councils to understand and resolve any methodological differences. The IS also offers bespoke support to councils to drill down into their data to better understand and address any anomalies within their own methodology.
8. In most cases, LGBF indicators are drawn from existing published data sources, all of which are audited and quality assured by the relevant data owners (e.g. Scottish Government; Scottish Housing Regulator). Where indicators rely on sample data (e.g. satisfaction data is provided via Scottish Government national surveys) the data used within the LGBF is accurate at 95% confidence intervals. To further improve the accuracy of estimates, particularly for smaller authorities, the data is rolled into 3-year averages which improves the sample size and narrows confidence intervals.
9. Where the LGBF collects administrative and performance data directly from local authorities, the robust protocols for validating and cleaning the data are significantly enhanced compared to those in place under the previous SPI regime. All data received is compared against previous years and other local authorities to check consistency and all outliers are checked, queried and confirmed with the source and with relevant professional associations.
10. A range of cluster, variation and outlier analysis is carried out across the 10 years of data available in the LGBF to ensure the quality of the data. Analysis of the variance within LGBF data highlights significant improvements in data quality over time, confirms the accuracy and consistency of the current data presented, and does not reveal evidence of significant differences in current counting or recording techniques. In the very small number of cases where inconsistencies may remain, we work with individual councils and professional associations to resolve these.