

Local
Government
Benchmarking
Framework

National Benchmarking Overview Report 2021-22



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Preface

This is the eleventh annual report for the Scottish Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF). The LGBF represents a joint commitment by Solace (Scotland) and COSLA to develop better measurement and comparable data to target resources and drive improvement. Benchmarking enables greater understanding of why councils vary in terms of what they deliver and achieve for their communities. Over the past 11 years, this approach has been successful in supporting all 32 Scottish councils to work and learn together.

This report reflects a period when communities and council services were still managing the significant ongoing impact of Covid, while new challenges were emerging in the shape of soaring inflationary pressures and a 'cost of living crisis'. This report reveals the extraordinary effort and achievements delivered across local government during this exceptional period. Councils have adapted quickly to meet new demands, create new services at pace, maintain essential services and implement new ways of working. Critical to this has been the strengthened partnerships with communities as well as the third and private sectors, helping to protect those who are vulnerable, and maintaining community wellbeing.

Communities continue to be affected by these events in different ways and councils' responses have exemplified the importance of local solutions to local needs and issues. Lack of uniformity is an inevitable function of local democracy reflecting the different needs and priorities of local communities. Each council has developed the structure and service arrangements it believes are the most appropriate and cost-effective to support its local community.

All councils do, however, report their performance locally within locally developed and agreed public reporting frameworks, which draw upon LGBF information. This information is available to all citizens and users of council services so that they can hold councils to account for what is achieved on their behalf and ask questions of Local Government to promote improvement.

To help communities and councils draw meaningful comparisons from the LGBF data, authorities are arranged in 'family groups', enabling comparisons to be made between councils that are similar in terms of the type of population that they serve (e.g. relative deprivation and affluence) and the type of area in which they serve them (e.g. urban, semi-rural, rural). The point of comparing like with like is that this is more likely to lead to useful learning and improvement.

Given the combined pressures facing Local Government as we emerge from the pandemic and respond to the current 'cost of living crisis', it will be more


important than ever for councils to work together to evaluate and learn from their responses to inform the future design, delivery and shape of services. The longitudinal evidence base provided by the LGBF will be key in helping authorities explore and understand the impact of different ways of working and models of delivery, and to help ensure we do not lose the learning and innovation which has emerged during these exceptional times.

The driving force behind this work is, and will always be, to improve the lives of people in communities across Scotland. We believe that effective public services contribute to both individual and community quality of life and the LGBF is an increasingly important element of the local intelligence necessary to achieve this vision. With financial pressures, growing demand on services, and now the profound effects of Covid and the 'cost of living crisis', there has never been a greater requirement for working with and learning from each other.



Cleland Sneddon

Chair of Solace (Scotland)



Councillor Shona Morrison

Chair, Improvement Service
COSLA President

About this Report

1. This report provides a high-level analysis of the performance of councils both during 2021/22 and over the longer-term. It also sets out the challenges facing Councils in the context of current funding pressures, growing demand, ongoing Covid impacts, and 'cost of living crisis'.
2. Our primary source of information for this report is the LGBF dataset, which provides longitudinal data on how councils allocate resources, the performance of key council services and levels of public satisfaction with the major services provided and commissioned by councils. The rich data supports evidence-based comparisons between similar councils (family-groups) and over time, providing an essential tool for policy makers and the public. The full detail of the LGBF data is available in the [LGBF Dashboard](#) which provides access to data and analysis at an indicator level, service level, family group level and council level, along with narrative to support meaningful interpretation. Supplementary reports providing more detailed analysis across key policy and service areas will appear over time. An overview of the trends across all LGBF indicators is presented in Annex 1.
3. The LGBF provides high-level 'can openers' which are designed to focus questions locally on why variations in cost and performance are occurring between similar councils to identify opportunities for learning. It does not offer a crude "league table" assessment. Local context and local decision making are essential in making sense of and making best use of the LGBF. '[Good practice principles](#)' set out how the LGBF is used locally to support strategic and budget planning, improvement, scrutiny and public performance reporting. Further information, briefing notes and case studies are available in the '[How Councils Are using the LGBF](#)' publication, and on the [LGBF website](#).
4. The benchmarking data in this report should not be considered in isolation. An [online interactive tool](#) links the LGBF with outcomes data presented in the Community Planning Outcomes Profile (a resource which provides trend data on outcomes, both at a local authority level, and at a locality level). The LGBF indicators have also been mapped to the National Performance Framework outcomes and public health priorities to support councils to demonstrate the important role they play in driving progress in these key areas.
5. We refer to 'real-terms' changes in this report. This means that we are showing financial information from past and future years at 2021/22 prices, adjusted for inflation so that they are comparable. To make that comparison we use gross domestic product (GDP) deflators to adjust for inflation, which

are published quarterly by HM Treasury. GDP deflators are the standard approach adopted by both the UK and Scottish governments when analysing public expenditure. As a result of the way that GDP is calculated, Covid-19 resulted in volatility across 2020/21 and 2021/22. To compensate for this, and to provide meaningful comparisons between years, we have used an average GDP growth rate across 2020/21 and 2021/22 in our calculations to separate inflation (changes in prices) from changes in outputs and those largely attributable to Covid-19 spending.

Key Messages

1. The 2021/22 LGBF report introduces data from a period when communities and Council services were still managing the significant ongoing impact of Covid, while new challenges were emerging in the shape of soaring inflationary pressures and a cost of living crisis, the effects of which could cause a new economic and public health emergency. The unique role and capability of councils is demonstrated in the way in which councils have stepped up in the face of recent challenges, drawing on their knowledge of local communities, services and networks to provide essential supports.
2. During this time, funding levels have not kept pace with increased demand and growing need. While total revenue funding for Councils increased in real terms by 5.3% in 2021/22 (excluding non-recurring Covid funding), the proportion of funding which is ringfenced and directed or provided with the expectation it will be spent on specific services has grown from 18.2% to 23.0%. This has resulted in a 1.2% real-terms reduction in revenue funding available to Councils in 2021/22 to pursue local priorities.
3. Councils are continuing to have to make savings and are facing increasingly difficult choices with their spending priorities. Expenditure within social care and education continues to be sustained and enhanced, increasing since 2010/11 by 25% and 19% respectively, while relative reductions continue in non-statutory services in order to provide balance to statutory and ringfenced commitments elsewhere. Since 2010/11, this has included: 24% reduction in culture and leisure spending; 28% reduction in planning spending; 25% reduction in corporate support service spending; 16% reduction in roads spending; 27% reduction in trading standards and environmental health spending; and 13% reduction in environmental services spending. In 2020/21 and 2021/22, while education and social care continued to grow in line with national policy commitments, there were adjustments to long term spending patterns in other areas to reflect the active prioritisation of services Councils were having to make during the Covid pandemic.
4. The financial outlook for Local Government is more challenging than ever before, given current funding pressures, growing demand, the ongoing impacts of Covid, inflation, and the cost of living crisis. Given the increased volatility in the financial context, Councils are absorbing a higher level of risk to bridge the funding gap. Transformation plans are being re-evaluated as new priorities emerge and policy decisions are clarified, for example, the outcome of the National Care Service consultation.

5. Workforce pressures have been exacerbated by Covid. Staff absence levels (excluding teachers) reached 12.2 days in 2021/22, the highest ever reported. NHS backlogs, treatment delays, and increasing mental health issues are all significant factors in this increase. More than half of all Councils are experiencing skills shortages caused by or exacerbated by the combined impact of Covid and Brexit, with Councils now facing recruitment challenges in areas not previously impacted. Staff retention and high levels of staff turnover, including at senior levels, is a growing issue for Councils and is being driven by Covid-related early retirement, and pay competition from other sectors.
6. The cost of living crisis is making it more difficult for low-income households to make ends meet and is exacerbating the financial hardship already caused by the Covid pandemic. The scale of this is evidenced in the growth in demand for Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grants (up 25% since 2019/20), Community Care Grants (up 15% since 2019/20), Discretionary Housing Payments (up 19% since 2019/20), and increasing levels of rent arrears (up 1.4pp since 2019/20). Councils are putting cost of living support at the heart of their strategic commitments to tackle inequality and poverty and have moved quickly to provide support to communities. A range of measures are being deployed aligned to local need, including bolstering existing provisions, sustaining or supplementing Covid funds, making best use of Council facilities, extending grants to voluntary organisations, debt recovery, and housing support.
7. Even prior to Covid, social care was an area where Councils and their partners faced significantly growing demands due to an ageing population and the increasing complexity of needs experienced by older and disabled people. These demands have been exacerbated by the pandemic, while at the same time the current crisis in relation to workforce recruitment and retention is adding further to the pressures facing the sector. Although Councils have continued to protect social care spend against mounting budget pressures, the rate of increase has not kept pace with increasing demand and cost pressures.
8. Councils and their partners have been able to ensure the continuation of social care service delivery despite these extraordinary challenges, delivering more hours of care at home than ever before (24.8m, up 1.5% in 2021/22), continuing to shift the balance of care towards greater home-based support (61.9%, up 0.2pp in 2021/22), and maintaining care home provision during a period of unprecedented difficulty and extreme uncertainty (27,948 residents, down 1.5% in 2021/22). There are, however, clear indications of system pressure and growing concern about levels of unmet need within communities, which have been exacerbated by the impact of Covid. Capacity issues mean fewer people than ever before are receiving personal care at home (down 2.8% in 2021/22), delayed discharges are rising sharply once

again (up 57% in 2021/22), and satisfaction has declined amongst both those receiving care and the carers who are supporting them (falling by between 2pp and 5pp in 2021/22).

9. A sustained commitment to the 'whole system' of population health is required, including investment in the vital preventative and early intervention services Councils provide. Integration and closer partnership working have been essential during this exceptional period, and it is critical that the creation of a National Care Service, and its formation in the years ahead, does not undermine what has been achieved to date nor impact upon the ongoing pace of change required to support our citizens for the challenges ahead.
10. Covid, and in particular infection control measures such as lockdowns and the closure of schools and early years facilities, have had a profound and ongoing impact on children, particularly amongst those from deprived backgrounds. Throughout this period our schools and early learning and childcare services have continued to deliver high-quality education and learning experiences to our learners and have worked in new and innovative ways to maintain connections and support wellbeing.
11. While data in 2020/21 revealed a decline in primary phase attainment levels, school attendance levels, and positive destinations for school leavers, more recent data from 2021/22 indicates encouraging signs of recovery, albeit some outcomes remain below pre-Covid levels. Meanwhile developmental concerns for pre-school children have been elevated during this period, with no clear sign of recovery. With the pandemic and the cost of living crisis accelerating the increase in mental health issues in children, and support needs in relation to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, Councils are strengthening their focus on nurture and wellbeing for children and young people. This includes support delivered out-with school settings, such as family support, whole family wellbeing, and effective partnership working on mental health support. This will be key to improving outcomes including better attendance and closing the attainment gap.
12. Overall, Local Government performance during Covid represents a mixed picture. Councils have sustained and strengthened improvement trends in a number of policy critical areas including positive destinations, gender pay gap, procurement, housing energy efficiency, corporate asset condition, carbon emissions, balance of social care and Self Directed Support, living wage, and roll out of superfast broadband. There has, however, been a decline in other areas, often caused by or exacerbated by Covid. This includes areas which were previously improving such as housing quality and repairs, and also areas where there were already signs of strain pre-pandemic, such as rent arrears, income lost due to voids, street cleanliness levels, pupil attendance rates, and satisfaction with care services. In areas such as culture and leisure

visitor numbers, recycling rates, Council Tax collection rates, and business start-up rates, there has been some recovery from the initial Covid impact, but performance levels remain below pre-Covid levels in 2021/22.

13. While it is encouraging that performance improvement has been maintained and strengthened in many essential services, the fact that there has been a decline in other areas, caused by or exacerbated by Covid and the cost of living crisis, is a concern. It is likely that some of these effects will be felt for a long time to come, and along with the demand and budgetary pressures facing Councils currently, it is possible that efforts in the short-term in some service areas could be focussed more on prioritising and maintaining performance, rather than service improvement. Improvements to date therefore cannot be assumed to continue and maintaining levels of performance in the current environment will be a notable achievement in itself.
14. While both Covid and the cost of living crisis are having an unprecedented impact on services across all Councils, local areas are experiencing their impacts differently. Responses to Covid and the cost of living crisis have exemplified the importance of 'local' with local solutions and responses to local needs and issues, varying both between and within authorities. LGBF performance data from 2021/22 reveals substantial variation in terms of the direction of change, and the depth and severity of their impact. It is this variation that will provide the essential platform to help Councils evaluate their approach during the pandemic and current cost of living crisis, and to inform their future priorities.

LGBF Report 2021/22



Introduction

This year's report introduces data from 2021/22, a period when communities and council services were still managing the significant ongoing impact of Covid, while new challenges were emerging in the shape of soaring inflationary pressures and a 'cost of living crisis', the effects of which could cause a new economic and public health emergency.

The combined impact of these events will be profound both for the services delivered by local government and the lives of the communities they serve. The evidence in this year's LGBF highlights both the challenges faced, and the extraordinary effort and achievements delivered across local government during this exceptional period. Councils have stepped up in the face of recent challenges, drawing on their knowledge of local communities, services and networks to provide essential supports, demonstrating the unique role and capability of councils in this regard. Critical to this during this period has been the renewed and strengthened partnership working with local communities as well as with third and private sector partners, which has been and continues to be at the heart of local responses. Going forward, the continuity provided by the LGBF will be invaluable in understanding the impact of these crises on communities and on local government services. The framework will be critical in assisting the sector to take learning from the Covid pandemic to inform and shape our response to the cost of living crisis.

The focal points in this section are:

1. Local government financial and workforce pressures
2. Poverty, financial hardship and the 'Cost of Living' crisis
3. Health and social care pressures
4. Education for children and young people
5. Performance of local government services

Local Government Financial and Workforce Pressures

As local government sought to transition from Covid response to recovery a series of economic events and funding decisions exacerbated the financial and workforce crisis for local government. Rather than recovering this is causing jeopardy within the sustainability of local services. Economic events aligned to Covid, Brexit and the war in Ukraine have driven inflationary pressures within those goods and services required to sustain local government operations. This is at a time where funding levels have not kept pace with increased demand and growing need. Consequently, this has reduced local flexibility within core budgets with any increases in funding materially directed towards national priorities and ringfenced accordingly. Alongside growing workforce recruitment and retention issues, councils are having to make increasingly difficult choices about spending priorities.

Scottish Government Funding for Councils

Total revenue funding for councils has increased in real terms by 5.3% in 2021/22, and by 1.6% since 2013/14 (excluding non-recurring Covid funding). However, during this period there has been greater national direction and less local discretion and choice over how these funds can be used by councils to deliver on what their communities say is most important.

Since 2013/14, there has been a stark increase in the financial resource that is formally ringfenced, with the Specific Revenue Grant increasing from £98.9 million to £775.9 million in 2021/22. This ringfenced funding must be used to fund identified policies such as Early Learning and Childcare Expansion, Pupil Equity Fund, and Criminal Justice Social work. Audit Scotland calculate that funding which is ringfenced and directed or provided with the expectation it will be spent on specific services has grown by £710 million between 2020/21 and 2021/22, from 18.2% to 23.0% of total revenue funding.¹ This represents a 1.2% real terms reduction in revenue funding available to councils in 2021/22 to pursue local priorities. Furthermore, and where inflationary uplifts are not included in ongoing ringfenced allocations, there is a risk that the cost of delivering these obligations exceeds allocations based on historic demand and cost estimates which also represents a further reduction to core council budgets.

Given that the element available for councils to respond flexibly to local priorities has reduced, local public services are now finding themselves unable to deliver the services most important for their communities, requiring them to make difficult decisions about service reductions.

¹ https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2023/nr_230112_local_government_finance.pdf

Against the above funding context, between 13/14 and 21/22 councils have faced increased pressure on service delivery due to:

- A 2% increase in the overall population, and an 8% increase in the 65+ population
- A 5% increase in the number of households
- Pay pressures due to inflation and expansion of real living wage
- Workforce recruitment and retention issues
- Increasingly complex care needs, such as addictions, dementia, and mental health
- New policy areas – e.g. free personal care and Carer’s Act, music tuition, period products
- Uncertainty about future plans including the creation of the National Care Service

Local Government Expenditure

Local government revenue expenditure increased by 2.5% in real terms in 2021/22, and by 6.1% since 2013/14. Expenditure has accelerated since 2019/20 reflecting Covid funding and additional ringfenced or specific grant funding to deliver new national policy commitments.

For the second year in a row, councils report an increase in earmarked reserves, increasing from 23.6% in 2020/21 to 24.4% in 2021/22. This compares to pre-Covid levels of 17%. In 2020/21, councils received £1.3bn from Scottish Government in Covid related funding. With the shift to recovery, funds have either been used or earmarked to support ongoing delivery with no specific, non-ringfenced, allocations anticipated. This means that councils are now required to implement new ways of working within a reduced real terms financial settlement. Similarly, a significant proportion of the additional £0.5bn Covid funding for 2021/22 was for specific projects and is earmarked for future delivery. Given such funding was announced so late in each of these financial years, there was limited provision for council’s to include this within their budget processes and therefore this had a disproportionate impact on usable reserves. While councils have used reserves to contribute towards meeting budget gaps arising from service demand and budget pressures, the fact that reserves remain at such high levels is an indication of councils’ expectation of ongoing hardship, as well as their immediate need to retain capacity to support the future delivery pressures which are now likely to manifest given the expected shortfall in funding.

Capital expenditure by councils increased by £0.7bn in 2021/22, although it

remained lower than the pre-Covid level observed in 2019/20. The growth in 2021/22 was financed through an increase in local government borrowing, which increased from 14% of total capital expenditure to 30% of total expenditure in 2021/22 (an increase of £592m). Capital funding from government grants reduced by 8% during this period, from £1.2bn to £1.1bn. However, the cost of borrowing for councils has reduced across the past 8 years, with the proportion of council revenue expenditure being used to service debt falling from 8.4% to 5.9%. The implementation of the 2016 Loans Fund regulations has had a material impact here, allowing for the re-profiling of principal repayments over a longer period thus reducing the annual loan charges. councils will continue to manage this borrowing through their Treasury Management and Capital Strategies to apply the 2016 regulations and other fiscal flexibilities to ensure debt charges remain prudent and affordable. Effective Treasury Management Strategies may also include the use of internal resources (such as reserves) to delay the need to borrow, managing such action against expectations of future interest rates. There was also the provision to take a loans fund holiday which most councils have, or intend, to take.

The financial outlook for local government is more challenging than ever before given current funding pressures, growing demand, the ongoing impacts of Covid, inflation, and the cost of living crisis. The financial gap for councils, where anticipated income is less than planned expenditure, is calculated to be £0.4billion (3%) in 2021/22, broadly consistent with the gap identified in 2020/21 and 2019/20 (£0.5bn).² Historically this gap has driven the need to transform and modernise services to be more efficient and effective to suit future demands, or to reduce or ration service provision. To implement such options is challenging as we emerge from a pandemic where cost is still unknown and demand is unpredictable. This comes at a time when councils are also having to deal with the cost of living crisis and inflationary pressures. Transformation plans were, in many cases paused and now require re-evaluation with the risk that they are no longer fit for purpose post-Covid. Such evaluation and reflection are required as new priorities emerge and policy decisions are clarified, for example, the outcome of the National Care Service consultation. Given the increased volatility in the financial context, councils are absorbing a higher level of risk to bridge the funding gap in terms of increased savings now required, the use of reserves, economic volatility and sustaining services with workforce pressures and use of agency staff.

Protected & Non Protected Spend

In light of the most difficult financial situation faced in years, councils are continuing to have to make savings and are facing increasingly difficult choices with their spending priorities. The long-term trends show that there has been a

² https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2023/nr_230112_local_government_finance.pdf

relative shift of expenditure towards national priorities, with increased savings being targeted on those areas which are not protected by Scottish Government policies.

Through legislation and Scottish Government policy, expenditure within social care and education continues to be sustained and enhanced, growing since 2010/11 by 25% and 19% respectively. This is often aligned to ringfenced funding. As these areas account for over 70% of the benchmarked expenditure within the LGBF, this has a disproportionate effect on other council services that are not subject to the same legislative or policy requirements. This means that non-protected or non-statutory services are required to bear a disproportionate share of current and future savings. Since 2010/11, in real terms, this has included: 24% reduction in culture and leisure spending; 28% reduction in planning spending; 25% reduction in corporate support service spending; 16% reduction in roads spending; 27% reduction in trading standards and environmental health spending; and 13% reduction in environmental services spending.

Over the longer term, the spending pattern is clear. Relative reductions continue in non-statutory services such as culture and leisure, roads, planning, tourism, trading standards and environmental health in order to provide balance to statutory and ringfenced commitments elsewhere. Councils are left with little flexibility and have no option but to prioritise statutory services and those areas where Scottish Government have allocated additional monies for specific purposes. By prioritising these services, other services bear a larger share of the savings. This creates further pressure on the investment required to facilitate transformation.

Critically, many of the areas that are not protected will be pivotal both to our recovery from the pandemic and in our response to the cost of living crisis. This includes for example, services which are central to health and wellbeing priorities such as libraries, sports, museums, parks and open spaces.

Table 1: Real change in Revenue Expenditure since 2010/11 (£000s)

	Scotland 2010-11	Scotland 2019-20	Scotland 2020-21	Scotland 2021-22	Change from 2020/21 to 2021/22	% change from 2010/11 to 2021/22
Education	£4,916,809	£5,362,304	£5,614,514	£5,833,764	3.9%	18.6%
Looked After Children	£456,946	£551,061	£544,710	£547,635	0.5%	19.8%
Adult Social Care	£3,147,208	£3,646,109	£3,867,400	£3,931,976	1.7%	24.9%
Culture & Leisure	£630,232	£472,585	£462,491	£481,396	4.1%	-23.6%
Environmental Services	£851,454	£749,710	£744,835	£742,348	-0.3%	-12.8%
Roads	£712,362	£552,449	£517,080	£597,749	15.6%	-16.1%
Planning	£151,889	£114,228	£111,192	£108,673	-2.3%	-28.5%
Economic Development & Tourism	£422,874	£343,412	£371,794	£463,771	24.7%	9.7%
Central Support Services	£965,999	£700,352	£705,717	£728,627	3.2%	-24.6%

Note: Table 1 includes expenditure covered by the LGBF measures. While the LGBF measures reflect the significant areas of Local Government expenditure, there are some minor areas of spend excluded, which accounts for differences with Scottish Government published expenditure data. All trends represent gross expenditure.

During 2020/21 and 2021/22, local government spending patterns reflected the active prioritisation of services councils were having to make during the Covid pandemic. While education and social care continued to grow in line with national policy commitments, other areas saw fluctuation in their long-term spending trend.

Education and Social Care represent the largest element of local government budgets, and continued to grow in 2021/22, increasing in real terms by 4% and 2% respectively. Education trends mirror political manifesto commitments for pupil equity and student attainment funding, and the expansion of early years entitlement. The growth in social care expenditure in 2021/22 at least in part reflects additional funding provided by the Scottish Government to support the commitment to pay the Scottish Living Wage to care workers.

While some service areas continued to see their spend reduce during 2020/21 and 2021/22, including planning, waste services and trading standards, other areas reported an increase in spend, counter to their long-term pre-Covid trend. Expenditure on roads, economic development, environmental health and culture and leisure increased in 2021/22, following a sharp reduction in spend in 2020/21. The increased expenditure in 2021/22 reflects a resumption in activity, which was deferred during Covid, including in relation to significant capital programmes which were paused due to the restrictions in place during the pandemic.

Spend on support services grew in both 2020/21 and 2021/22 counter to the long-term reducing pre-Covid trend and is currently 4% higher than pre-Covid levels. This reflects the critical role corporate support services played during the pandemic, including as an agent of Scottish Government in administering over a hundred different grant schemes, in co-ordinating the emergency response and support for local communities, and in facilitating the wholesale roll-out of homeworking for the council workforce.

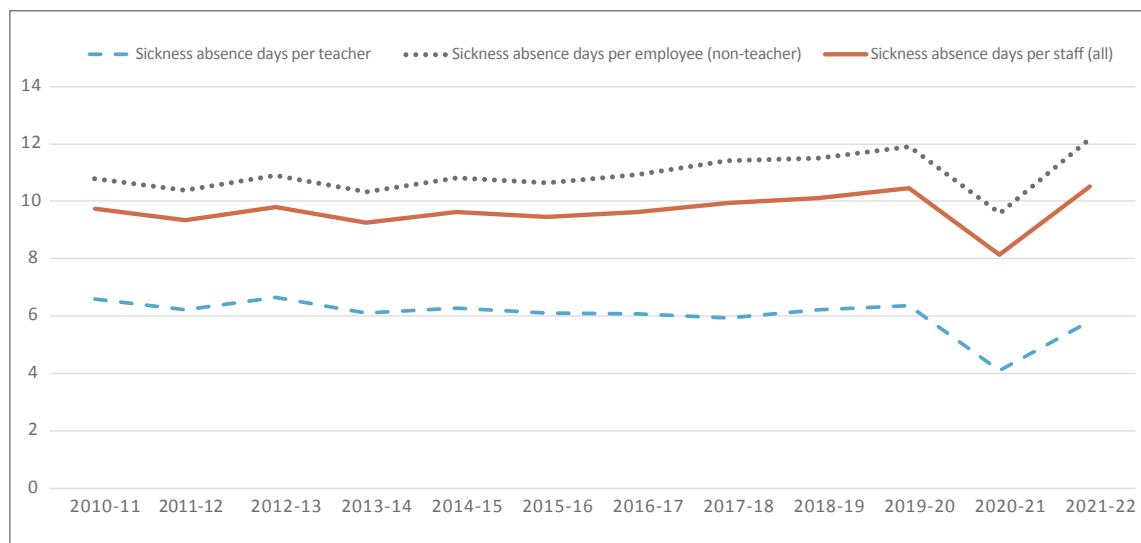
Workforce Pressures

Despite these significant financial challenges, there was a huge effort made by the local government workforce during the pandemic to maintain services and support communities. While there were pressures within the workforce pre-pandemic, these have been exacerbated by Covid, with councils currently facing constraints on three related fronts: rising absence, recruitment issues, and high staff turnover.

Staff absence levels in 2021/22 were the highest ever reported. Staff absence levels (excluding teachers) reached 12.2 days in 2021/22, compared to 10.8 days in 2010/11, and 11.9 days pre-Covid (**note Covid absences are recorded separately and don't contribute to the trends). This is continuing a pre-pandemic trend of rising absence levels, with the drop in 20/21 against the trend. Teacher absence levels also increased in 2021/22, however they remain lower than pre-pandemic levels. The sharp increase in absence in 2021/22 has been driven by NHS backlogs for treatment, longer recovery times due to treatment delays and inactivity, and increased spread of infections as people mix more post pandemic. Learning from their response during Covid, councils continue to review policy and practice to respond to the significant changes in health provision, including NHS delays, which are anticipated to have a significant impact on workforce absence levels for the foreseeable future, with absence levels expected to increase further in 2022/23.

Councils also report an increase in mental health issues, with stress continuing to be the number one factor driving absence across Scotland. Supporting and developing wellbeing initiatives remains a focus for councils. In many areas staff are exhausted given their extraordinary efforts during the pandemic. This has been exacerbated in the most recent year due to capacity issues caused by high absence levels and unfilled vacancies, alongside a cost of living crisis which is creating additional financial pressures, budget cuts, threat of job losses and industrial action.

Figure 1: Local Government Sickness Absence Trends



Councils are also facing persistent recruitment challenges. According to a 2021 local government survey, more than half of all councils were experiencing skills shortages which were caused by or exacerbated by the combined impact of Covid and Brexit, with councils now facing recruitment challenges in areas not previously impacted.³ The areas hardest hit include education, social care and social work, facilities management, HGV drivers, and environmental health, including both senior posts as well as front-line services. This reflects the growing demand for certain skills as a result of Covid and Brexit, increasing digitalisation of services and the tightening of the labour market with all sectors competing for the same skill sets, many of which were already scarce pre-Covid and pre-Brexit. A clear illustration of this can be observed in the current crisis in social care. With a relatively low unemployment rate, the social care sector is competing both with the NHS for staff, and also with other sectors who can offer jobs with higher pay and have less stress and responsibility.

Staff retention and high levels of staff turnover, including at senior levels, is a growing issue for councils. With retirement levels reflecting the ageing workforce in local government, the pandemic has also been a 'watershed' for early retirement, where some staff who had not previously given any indication of their desire to retire decided it was time to do so. Adding to this, pay competition from other sectors has seen senior and specialist staff leaving local government for better paid positions. Budgetary pressures and recruitment challenges mean that roles are not always replaced.

Insufficient resource and uncertainty around the National Care Service continue to create challenges for councils as they develop Workforce Plans to respond to these pressures. Councils have now moved to a three-year planning cycle

³ Society Personnel and Development Scotland (SPDS) Workforce Planning Survey, autumn 2021

to reflect the scale of the challenge faced, with more than half of all authorities having either updated or being in the process of updating their workforce plans post-pandemic. Councils continue to collaborate with each other, the Improvement Service and the Society of Personnel and Development Scotland (SPDS) to share practice and to make improvements.

Future Challenges

There is little doubt Covid has exacerbated the financial and workforce pressures facing councils; it is too early, however, to say with any real confidence what the extent and nature of the true and longer-term impact will be. It is anticipated that financial uncertainty will continue on a number of fronts, and as we look longer term there are a number of other factors which create further uncertainty about the challenges councils will face.

- Uncertainty in relation to current pay award negotiations. The full impact of ongoing pay increases and pay disputes on services, budgets and staff relations are undetermined, but whatever the outcome, they will undoubtedly create additional pressure on the already limited capacity available for the future innovation and redesign of services.
- Depopulation and demographic change. The impact of this is far-reaching across all councils, as population plays a key role in determining funding levels. It also creates ongoing shifts in service demand in particular areas such as education, social care and housing, and it creates a clear need to manage transition from current service delivery arrangements to new models that are built around the needs of the future population.
- Impact of rising cost pressures on capital programmes. The ongoing impacts of Covid, shortages in construction materials, and inflationary pressures will impact on capital projects. The resulting rise in costs will present risks to current and future capital programmes, undermining councils' ability to deliver local priorities and commission work such as new schools and flood defence work, thus affecting Net Zero targets and transformation plans which are essential for improved outcomes for local communities.
- Welfare reform will continue to pose a challenge into the longer term. In light of the current cost of living crisis, welfare rights services will become ever more important in helping tenants maximise benefits so that they can continue to pay rent and tax. It will be important to closely monitor data on rent arrears, council tax payments and demand for Crisis Grants in the period ahead to understand the impacts on the financial security for low-income households.
- The continuing integration of health and social care brings significant challenges in the context of increasing demand and insufficient funding,

alongside uncertainty in relation to ongoing deliberations on the implementation of a National Care Service (NCS).

- Adapting to the impacts of climate change and delivering a just transition to Net Zero will be a growing area of focus and activity. Local government has a crucial role to play in delivering a sustainable low carbon future and is tasked with a growing number of legislative and policy requirements which need funding and resources.

The continued uncertainty of the pandemic and the subsequent economic and cost of living crisis alongside limited funding flexibility, lack of certainty over long term funding and significant public service reform, provide a challenging context for effective planning and decision making on recovery and the required transformational change councils need to plan to provide an efficient, effective short, medium and longer-term response.

Poverty, Financial Hardship and the Cost of Living Crisis

Communities are experiencing increasing poverty and financial hardship, at a time when councils have reducing capacity to support them. As highlighted in LGBF data last year, the impact of the Covid pandemic on our communities has been borne unequally, with growing levels of poverty and financial hardship driving inequalities within our communities. As we emerge from the pandemic, with escalating inflation, rapidly increasing energy costs, increasing food and other consumer goods prices, the cost of living crisis is exacerbating an already perilous situation.

The cost of living is predicted to continue to increase during 2022/23, affecting many individuals and families, making it more difficult for low-income households to make ends meet. It is not surprising, though still worth highlighting, that as with Covid the cost of living crisis will not be felt equally across society. Whilst low-income households are most at risk, those with older adults, single-parent families, people with disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds are likely to fare worse. Low-income households spend a higher proportion than average on energy, food and transport, and therefore are disproportionately affected by inflation with less flexibility in their budgets to cope with price rises. In Scotland in 2017-20, households with the lowest 15% of income spent 61.5% of that income on housing, fuel and food; those in the remainder spent 20.5% of their income on these costs.

Low-income households are also more likely to be entering the cost of living crisis in a position of existing financial hardship and therefore more likely to be financially vulnerable. Among the 20% of households in Scotland with the lowest incomes, 50% did not have sufficient savings going into the crisis to keep them above the poverty line for one month should they lose their income, compared with 30% of households overall.⁴

Data in this year's LGBF reveals both the ongoing consequences of the Covid pandemic, and the emerging impacts of the cost of living crisis on the levels of financial hardship facing communities.

Scottish Welfare Fund

Demand on the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) has grown significantly in recent years with demand continuing to increase. The SWF includes two types of grants: Crisis Grants, which aim to help people on a low income who are in crisis because of a disaster or an emergency and Community Care Grants

⁴ <https://data.gov.scot/wealth/>

(CCG), which aim to enable people to live independently. The most common reasons for applications to the SWF are families facing exceptional pressure. Such circumstances cover events where benefits or other income is exhausted, the occurrence of unexpected expenses, and 'other' reasons which are likely to include applications relating to Covid and the cost of living crisis. Awards are commonly made to provide immediate financial assistance to households to buy food, floor coverings, bed and bedding, and kitchen appliances, as well as covering unanticipated spend such as essential heating expenses and other living expenses.

After a period of relative stability, the growth in SWF spend accelerated sharply between 2019/20 and 2021/22 reflecting the combined pressures from Covid and the cost of living crisis. SWF spend increased from £38m to £54m between 2019/20 to 2020/21, an increase of 43.8%. This includes a 9.4% increase in the last 12 months. During this time, there has also been a change in the balance of spend between CCG and Crisis Grant funding, with a relative shift towards Crisis Grant funding.

Table 2: Scottish Welfare Fund Expenditure

	13/14	19/20	20/21	21/22	Change since 13/14	Change in 2021/22
SWF Spend	£28.7m	£37.6m	£49.5m	£54.1m	88.5%	9.4%
CCG Applications	58,020	77,900	84,880	89,530	54.3%	5%
CCG Awards	35,875	42,280	48,065	48,665	36%	1%
Crisis Applications	114,525	222,065	271,610	268,275	134%	-1%
Crisis Awards	81,995	140,370	188,375	176,135	115%	-6%
SWF Applications	172,545	299,965	356,490	357,805	107%	0.4%
SWF Awards	117,870	182,650	236,440	224,800	91%	-4.9%
% SWF Budget Spent	87.0%	107.8%	83.2%	115.2%	28.2pp	32.0pp

There has been a sharp increase in the volume of SWF grants applied for and awarded in recent years, particularly in relation to Crisis Grants. The number of Crisis Grants awarded increased from 140,370 to 176,135 between 2019/20 and 2021/22, an increase of 25%. More recent data from September 2022 indicates that current application rates for Crisis Grants are now over 10% higher than they were during the peak of the Covid pandemic.

This sharp growth in applications for Crisis Grants has impacted on the speed with which grants are allocated, with the percentage of grants processed within the target time of one day falling from 95.3% in 2019/20 to 93.3% in 2021/22 (range: 65% - 100%). It is worth noting that during the pandemic, councils were also responsible for processing large numbers of applications for Self-isolation Support Grants, which has impacted on their capacity to deal with SWF applications alongside other, new priorities.

Table 3: Processing of Scottish Welfare Fund Grants

	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	Change since Base Year	Change in Most Recent Year
SWF Crisis Grants – Decisions within 1 Day	95.5%	95.3%	93.8%	93.3%	-2.3pp	-0.5pp
SWF Community Care Grants – Decisions within 15 Days	89.5%	82.3%	84.5%	85.8%	-3.8pp	1.3pp

In 2021/22, councils spent over 115% of the available SWF budget allocated to them (range: 29% - 198%). In comparison, at the end of 2020/21, 83% of the available budget had been spent, although the budget available for the Scottish Welfare Fund in 2020/21 was £12.5 million higher than in 2021/22 (£59.5 million compared to £47 million). Local Authorities are able to top up the SWF budget with their own funds, and the overspend in 2021/22 reflects other funds that councils have brought forward to deal with poverty and growing levels of financial hardship within their communities. The variation in local data reveals the different approaches being adopted to respond to local pressures on spend, with some authorities capping their provision and prioritising awards to the most compelling cases to manage budget overspends. This will be particularly pertinent in relation to the cost of living crisis which is seeing demand spike both for more compelling cases as well as less urgent levels of need.

Discretionary Housing Payments

Further evidence of the financial hardship being experienced by local communities can be seen in the growing level of spend on Discretionary Housing Payments. These payments are administered by councils to households who require financial assistance towards their housing costs and are an important tool to prevent homelessness and help struggling households to sustain tenancies. Since 2017, when responsibility for DHP transferred to Scottish Government, there has been an increase of 33.2% in the DHP spend, including a 3.1% increase in 2021/22.

Table 4: Discretionary Housing Payment Expenditure

	17/18	19/20	20/21	21/22	Change since 17/18	Change 20/21-21/22
DHP Spend	£59,224,705	£66,000,612	£76,466,492	£78,866,396	33.2%	3.1%
% DHP budget spent	101.2%	104.5%	97.2%	96.0%	-5.3pp	-1.2pp

In 2021/22, the majority of DHP funding was spent mitigating the removal of the Spare Room Subsidy (£65.6 million, 83.2%), with a smaller proportion used to support claimants affected by the introduction of the benefit cap (£3.0 million, 3.8%) and reductions in Local Housing Allowance (£3.2 million, 4.0%). A further

£7.0 million (8.8%) was spent on core (non-welfare reform) awards and around £120,000 (0.1%) on awards that covered a combination of purposes.

Local authorities spent a much smaller proportion of their funding on the Benefit Cap than the allocated funding for this purpose (£3.0 million, 37%). Conversely, Local Authorities spent more than four times (464%, £7.0 million) the estimated allowance for core funding (£1.5 million).

In recent years, there has been a reduction in the overall proportion of allocated DHP budget which has been spent, falling from 104.5% in 2019/20, to 96% in 2021/22. The budget available for DHP was however significantly higher in 2020/21 and 2021/22, by £15 million and £19 million respectively. While there is considerable variation across local authorities in the percentage of initial funding allocation which was spent, two thirds of councils have reported a reduction in 2021/22. It is likely that the increased fund size, the timing of the provision of the additional allocation, and Covid related delays in processing DHP will be influencing this trend.

As set out in its Programme for Government, The Scottish Government used the Emergency Budget Review in 2022 to provide Local Authorities with additional DHP funding of £2.5 million to mitigate the UK Government Benefit Cap as fully as possible, and to provide Local Authorities with more flexibility to take account of energy bills in their prioritisation of households for DHPs.

Rent Arrears and Council Tax Collection

Rent arrears have continued to rise, reaching an all-time high of 8.7% of rent due in 2021/22, compared to pre-Covid levels of 7.3%. While some of the rise observed in 2020/21 may be due to the temporary ban on enforcing eviction orders, introduced as part of the Covid response, it also reflects payment difficulties for some tenants due to significant loss of income during Covid. The continued increase in arrears in 2021/22 provides further evidence of the pressure that the cost of living crisis is placing on household budgets.

LGBF data shows that in the last two years, the level of rent arrears has risen faster in those council areas with lower overall levels of deprivation (increasing by 2.9pp compared with 1.1pp in those council areas with the highest deprivation levels). The statutory five-week wait for Universal Credit may also be a contributory issue in relation to rent arrears, and this has been exacerbated by Covid with unprecedented levels of new Universal Credit applications during 2020/21.

Table 5: Rent Arrears and Council Tax Collection Rates

	10/11	19/20	20/21	21/22	Change since Base Year	Change in Most Recent Year
Rent Arrears	5.6%	7.3%	8.2%	8.7%	3.1pp	0.5pp
Council Tax Collection Rate	94.7%	95.8%	94.8%	95.7%	1.0pp	1.0pp

Perhaps more encouragingly, council tax collection rates have almost recovered to pre-Covid levels. Rates have recovered for all but one authority, after all 32 authorities saw their council tax collection rates reduce in 2020/21. During 2020/21, councils paused collection follow-up activities in recognition of the financial challenges facing communities. Councils serving the most deprived areas continue to report lower collection rates in 2021/22 (94.7% compared to 96.1% in the least deprived communities). The method of payment is important in understanding the pattern of variation, with higher collection rates in areas with higher levels of Direct Debit payment compared to those more deprived communities with higher levels of cash payments. This longer-term trend has been exacerbated by Covid and highlights the need for digital inclusion to be at the heart of efforts to tackle poverty. It will be critical to closely monitor collection rates in the years ahead to understand the potential impacts of the cost of living crisis on the ability of households to pay council tax, and the extent to which the Cost of Living Award and other initiatives will be able to mitigate against this.

Child Poverty

Although 2021/22 data on child poverty is not yet available, the most recent data shows that child poverty rates reduced in 2020/21, falling from 24.3% to 20.9%.⁵ This is, however, likely to be a temporary improvement related to the additional support provided to low-income families during the Covid pandemic via the £20 uplift to Universal Credit. This has since been removed. It is encouraging evidence that a policy that put more money in the pockets of low-income households had a positive impact on the rates of child poverty. However, it is anticipated that the removal of this uplift will reverse the beneficial impact, and that data for the year 2021/22 will see a rise in child poverty levels. Even with the Scottish Government's cost of living support package announced in May 2022, the temporary nature of some of the measures will address only the recent inflation in energy bills and rising prices and will not respond to the real terms cuts families have experienced for years.

⁵ Note: The HBAI figures for 2020/21 are less reliable than earlier years due to sampling issues related to the pandemic. This should be kept in mind when interpreting Child Poverty data from 2020/21.

Table 6: Child Poverty Rates

	14/15	18/19	19/20	20/21	Change since 14/15	Change 19/20-20/21
Child Poverty	21.6%	23.2%	24.3%	20.9%	-0.7pp	-3.4pp

How Councils are Responding to the Cost of Living Crisis

Councils are putting cost of living support at the heart of their strategic commitments to tackle inequality and poverty. This seeks to mitigate the impact of the reality of current, and sustained, pressures being faced by families, businesses and communities they serve. Councils have moved quickly to provide support to communities and help ease the impact of the cost of living crisis. The speed and reach of this response was supported by joint working, including with third sector partners in the distribution of Crisis Grants as well as funding third sector partners directly to increase their support activity. The role of Community Planning Partnerships has also been pivotal, with councils working closely with cross-sector partners to understand and develop place-based plans to tackle inequalities.

Strategic frameworks have been drawn up by councils to deliver a package of measures aligned to local need and these continue to be kept under review to ensure the efficacy of ongoing support and follow the following themes:

- **Bolstering existing provisions** – Covering overspends in areas such as the Scottish Welfare Funds and Crisis Grants. Maintaining awards without prioritising spend. Allocating additional funding backed by reserves.
- **Sustaining or Supplementing Covid Funds** – With new governance processes in place, councils are considering whether these funds could be used to continue funding in areas such as Child Bridging Payments or top up ongoing provision, for example where food vouchers have been provided. This may also include support for local businesses through local grants.
- **Making Best Use of Council Facilities** - Working with Leisure Trusts, Health & Social Care Partnership and volunteer groups to develop Warm Hubs over winter months. This could be aligned to extending provisions within leisure facilities, libraries or other community facilities for free, or extended use (which would have been heated anyway) and reduced meal prices.
- **Extending Grants to Voluntary Organisations** - Providing additional support to third sector networks such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and volunteer groups to enable them to extend provisions locally and signpost clients to better access financial and other support.

- **Debt Recovery** – There may be additional considerations around the extent to which the council actively pursues debt. There have been national conversations about school meal debt and whether this could be written off. This may extend to recovery within council tax or within commercial properties.
- **Housing Support** – Where councils have a housing stock there may be considerations regarding rent uplifts, energy vouchers, debt recovery and promoting links to existing council programmes on tenant support.

In this landscape of a sustained period of change, it is clear that further analysis will be needed over the coming months to more fully understand the emerging consequences of the cost of living crisis.

Health and Social Care Pressures

The scale of the challenge of providing high-quality health and social care and keeping people who need social care safe during the pandemic was immense. Even prior to Covid, social care was an area where councils and their partners faced significantly growing demands due to an ageing population and the increasing complexity of needs experienced by older and disabled people. These demands have been exacerbated by the pandemic, while at the same time the current crisis in relation to workforce recruitment and retention is adding further to the pressures facing the sector. Long-term and chronic underfunding has led to a system in crisis; a system that is coping only through the exceptional efforts and commitment from those working in the sector, and closer partnership working between councils, health boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs), the third sector and private providers.

Councils and their partners have been able to ensure the continuation of service delivery despite these extraordinary challenges, delivering more hours of care at home than ever before, continuing to shift the balance of care towards greater home based support, and maintaining care home provision during a period of unprecedented difficulty and extreme uncertainty. There are however clear indications of system pressure and growing concern about levels of unmet need within communities. Capacity issues mean fewer people than ever before are receiving personal care at home, delayed discharges are rising sharply once again, and satisfaction has declined amongst both those receiving care and the carers who are supporting them.

This is a period of significant change and reform in the social care landscape, and it will be essential that the LGBF evolves to reflect the challenges and opportunities ahead. We will continue to work with Social Work Scotland and Chief Officers of the Integration Authorities to ensure developments in the LGBF reflect key priorities and are informed by the current reform of adult social care, including proposals for the establishment of a National Care Service.

Expenditure and Workforce Pressures

Although councils have continued to protect social care spend against mounting budget pressures, the rate of increase has not kept pace with increasing demand and cost pressures. Expenditure on adult social care has increased by 25% in real terms since 2010/11, but by only 1.7% in 2021/22. It is worth noting that the most recent increase reflects additional national funding to support the commitment

to paying the Scottish Living Wage to care workers in line with Scottish Government's commitment to Fair Work.⁶

Within overall social care spend, expenditure on care at home provision for older people has continued to increase significantly faster than the growth in care home provision for older people (33% compared to 11% since 2010/11) reflecting the earlier commitment and policy directives to shift the balance of care to greater home-based support.⁷

There is significant variation beneath the national expenditure trends, reflective of local need, demographics and pressures, and illustrating the importance of a flexible approach to focus on what is important locally.

Workforce pressures including increased workloads and skills shortages in social care existed pre-Covid, but the demands in the roles both during and post-pandemic, and the continuing increase in the ageing population has caused the situation to worsen. Research carried out by Social Work Scotland describes a staff group that are under pressure from workloads that are increasing in both number and complexity, and live with moral distress caused by not being able to practice in a way that aligns with their value base.⁸ Given these growing challenges, there needs to be a national approach to workforce planning, and review of remuneration and what will make these roles more attractive.

Provision

Data reveals a mixed picture in relation to provision, reflecting national pressures and local variability in relation to both need and capacity. This section will consider each in more detail.

6 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-work-action-plan-becoming-leading-fair-work-nation-2025/>

7 Note: Care Home expenditure represents gross expenditure net of client receipts

8 <https://socialworkscotland.org/reports/settingthebar/#more-10082>

Table 7: LGBF Social Care Trends

Adult Social Care	2010-11	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Change 20/21 to 21/22	Change base year to 2021/22
Number of Care at Home hours delivered per year 65+	21.6m	24.5m	24.4m	24.8m	1.5%	14.8%
Number of clients receiving personal care at home 65+	46,954	47,458	46,666	45,379	-2.8%	-3.4%
% of people aged 65+ with long-term care needs who received personal care at home	58.9%	60.7%	61.7%	61.9%	0.2pp	2.95pp
Number of long-stay residents 65+ supported in Care Homes	31,050	30,125	28,368	27,948	-1.5%	-10.0%
Number of readmissions to an acute hospital within 28 days of discharge	90,012	113,738	91,733	98,390	7.3%	9.3%
Number of hospital discharges	1,003,688	1,086,460	764,261	897,713	17.5%	-10.6%
Number of bed days people spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged 75+	391,389	360,463	227,524	357,719	57.2%	-8.6%

Note: Some of these average figures will differ from the published Scottish Government national statistics, *Free Personal and Nursing Care* publication, which reports solely on Quarter 4 statistics (released 28 Feb 2023)

Care at Home

The level of care at home provision for over 65s is at the highest level in over ten years, with hours provided growing to over 24.8 million hours in 2021/22 after shrinking slightly in 2020/21. The balance of care continues to shift in line with policy objectives, with a 1.5% growth in care at home hours provided in 2020/21 and a relative decline in residential places of 1.5%. Over the longer term, care at home provision has expanded by 14.8% since 2010/11 while residential provision has reduced by 10% in the same period. The percentage of older people with long-term needs who are now receiving personal care at home has increased from 58.9% in 2010/11 to 61.9% in 2021/22. This includes a small increase of 0.2pp in 2021/22. Just as importantly, the number of people receiving personal care at home has decreased over time while the hours of care they receive on average has increased, i.e. in shifting the balance of care, a greater resource has become targeted on a smaller number of people with higher needs. The reducing number

of personal care at home service users, alongside the size of the package delivered, reflects the resource Councils have available to meet demand and the agreed eligibility criteria now in place to ensure the fair allocation of care.

These trends may indicate a growing level of unmet need within the system. Workforce shortage and availability, caused in part by budget pressures, are significant issues for councils. Local government is facing competition from both the NHS and the private sector in the recruitment of home care workers, and the higher pay scales and wages available in these sectors are having an adverse impact on the ability of local government to recruit and retain staff. The situation is worsening, and it is anticipated the sector will face greater pressures in 2022/23.

At the same time, there is a significant upshift in demand with a greater level of illness being presented post-pandemic. With low workforce availability and significant resilience issues, the growing level of unmet need is leading to more carer and informal family support being relied upon, and illness and risk being held in community and primary care settings.

While the national trend is clear, it is important to note there is significant local variation beneath this trend, reflecting differences in local need and workforce pressures.

Care Homes

Care homes and their residents have been acutely affected by Covid. Residents of care homes for older people experienced a particularly high rate of Covid-related deaths. In addition, public health measures to restrict visitors created particular challenges for care home residents, their families and the staff that look after them.

During 2021/22, the number of long-stay residents (65+) supported in care homes has continued to decrease, falling by 1.5% to 27,948. While this is part of a longer-term trend to shift the balance of provision towards greater home-based support, the recent figures will in part reflect the closure of care homes for significant periods during 2021/22 due to infection control measures. The national reducing trend is relatively consistent across Local Authorities, with only three councils reporting an increase in resident numbers compared with pre-Covid.

Looking forward, the current focus on the provision of interim beds for people in hospital who are fit for discharge but are waiting on a care package may see a shift in future figures in care home settings, however, it is anticipated that that long stay resident figures will be largely unaffected by this policy. .

Readmissions

After spiking during 2020/21, the rate of re-admissions within 28 days has fallen back in 2021/22. The peak during Covid reflects the reduction in hospital discharges largely due to cancelled or delayed elective activity during the pandemic. Rates in 2021/22, however, remain higher than the pre-Covid figures and are in line with the longer-term increasing trend consistent across all Local Authority areas. Since 2010/11, the rate of readmissions within 28 days has increased by 22% overall, with the scale of growth varying significantly between councils (ranging from a 1% increase to a 72% increase).

Demographic trends are important here. Increasing complexity of need and frailty in an ageing population brings an increase in multiple and complicated morbidities for which readmission is a natural part of the care journey. Further exploration would be helpful to understand the extent to which decision making in the hospital discharge process alongside capacity issues in relation to follow-up support are also playing a role in driving both the national trend and local variation within it.

Delayed Discharge

After falling sharply in 2020/21, delayed discharges for the over 75s increased by 57% in 2021/22, returning close to pre-Covid levels. The 37% reduction in delayed discharges in 2020/21 reflected overall significant reductions in non-Covid related hospital admissions during this period, along with concerted efforts to move patients out of hospital to free up hospital capacity and create a better outcome for individuals at risk of hospital acquired infections.

The increase in 2021/22 reflects that people are going back into hospital after the lifting of initial Covid restrictions, often with greater level of frailty and illness. Delays in hospital treatment along with reduced activity levels during Covid have led to reduced confidence, reduced mobility, and more complex illness and conditions.

This has been an area of significant and sustained focus for authorities, recognising that waiting unnecessarily in hospital is a poor outcome for the individual and is particularly bad for the health and independence of older patients. While there have been improvements in previous years, the fact that levels remain stubbornly high points to the need for a genuine whole systems approach to resolve this issue, rather than addressing parts of the system. Not doing so creates a situation where rather than addressing risk in the system, it is simply moved downstream. For delayed discharges, viewing acute settings as the priority for intervention within the system (i.e. freeing up bed spaces) neglects the complex infrastructure that may be required in the community setting, which can involve community health, primary care, social care, social work and care home

provision, for an individual to live safely in the community. In order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of individuals and their families, and prevent unnecessary admission or readmission to hospital, a whole system approach to service design and delivery, which takes account of, and maps across, the wide range of data available from councils and HSCPs is imperative.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction levels among both those being cared for at home and among carers has declined in 2021/22, continuing a longer-term trend. Biennial data from the Health and Care Experience Survey reveals reduced satisfaction with services in relation to the impact on quality of life, living independently, choice and control, and support for carers. The sharpest reductions were observed in relation to *'choice and control'* and *'support for carers'*, both of which have fallen by approximately 5pp since 2019/20. The reduction in relation to carers is particularly concerning, as satisfaction levels for this group are historically low. While the majority of authorities saw a reduction in satisfaction across all measures, this was not universal. In relation to *improving quality of life and living independently*, for example, a third of authorities reported improvements in satisfaction levels in the most recent year.

Table 8: LGBF Social Care Satisfaction Trends

Adult Social Care Satisfaction Measures	2013-14	2017-18	2019-20	2021-22	Change 2019/20 to 2021/22	Change base year to 2021/22
% agree that their services and support had an impact in improving or maintaining their quality of life	85.0%	80.0%	80.0%	78.1%	-1.9pp	-6.9pp
% agree that they are supported to live as independently as possible	82.8%	81.1%	80.8%	78.8%	-2.0pp	-4.0pp
% agree that they had a say in how their help, care or support was provided	83.1%	75.6%	75.4%	70.6%	-4.8pp	-12.5pp
% of carers who feel supported to continue in their caring role	43.0%	36.6%	34.3%	29.7%	-4.6pp	-13.3pp

(Source: Health and Care Experience Survey - Biennial)

Although there is a longer-term downward trend, the scale of the reduction in satisfaction in some areas in 2021/22 will most likely reflect experiences during Covid where services were run differently. During this time services were stopped or scaled back, respite changed, and family members were unable to visit. People's experiences fundamentally changed during this period, and it would be surprising if this did not have an impact on satisfaction rates.

In understanding the longer-term trend, it is important to recognise that service expectations have been raised amongst our communities, at a time when our ability to deliver is under greater pressure than ever, and at a time when demand is accelerating faster than ever. This can be seen particularly in expectations in relation to choice, control and support for carers which have been introduced via legislation on Self-Directed Support and via the Carers Act at a time when councils' capacity to deliver on this has declined.

Quality of Adult Care Provision

While quality gradings for adult care services reduced sharply to an all-time low in the most recent year, falling from pre-Covid figure of 81.8% to 75.8% in 2021/22, Covid related methodological changes are likely to account for much of this movement. The Care Inspectorate's approach to inspection under Covid changed significantly, with an increased inspection focus on higher risk services and on infection control. It is not possible therefore to draw any firm conclusions from the current data. It will be important to closely monitor data once routine inspection activity is resumed in order to understand the full impact of the pandemic on the quality of adult care services.

Future Pressures

The social care sector is currently facing exceptional challenges, including long-standing structural issues such as chronic underfunding, workforce issues, system fragmentation and supply chain limitations. Covid also appears to have made some longstanding problems worse, such as unmet need for care, and the burden on unpaid carers.

There are a number of 'whole-system' issues which need to be addressed:

- Over the longer-term period, the funding and level of provision in social care has not grown to sufficient levels to meet demand and drive the desired shift to early intervention advocated for by Christie. While there has been progress in shifting the balance of care towards greater home-based support, in doing so a greater resource has become targeted on a smaller number of people with higher needs.
- Councils and service providers face growing difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff due to low pay, anti-social hours, increasing workloads and difficult working conditions. These issues have been whole system, with public and private providers affected equally. This has led to wider issues and concerns in relation to resilience, especially at peak periods such as winter. Pressures often lead to a redistribution of resource rather than an ability to accelerate and increase overall provision and capacity with employees moving between organisations. While there is a commitment to ensuring

adult social care workers receive at least the real living wage, latest figures show gaps in skills across the care sector and almost half of services have vacancies, up from a third in 2020.⁹ In addition to addressing pay and workloads, a stronger focus is needed to ensure staff feel valued. A recent Social Work Scotland report¹⁰ identified the following themes as important in addressing the current challenges faced by the workforce:

- Promoting a better understanding of social work
 - Changing the way we talk about social work
 - Challenging unreasonable expectations
 - Creating a positive working environment
 - Better preparation and support for the role
- Most care and support is provided by unpaid carers and our social care system would struggle to function without the care they provide. There are an estimated 700,000 unpaid carers in Scotland compared to around 125,000 workers in care at home, housing support and care homes. Against a context of increasing demand and greater level of illness, alongside low workforce availability and resilience, this is leading to growing levels of unmet need, with more carer and family support being relied upon. There is significant concern over the increasing pressures facing unpaid carers and the challenges for the social care sector in delivering much-needed support, as evidenced in carer satisfaction levels presented in this report.
 - A sustained and real commitment to the “whole system” of population health is required, including investment in the vital preventative and early intervention services councils provide which are critical to addressing the social determinants of health. Viewing acute settings as the priority for intervention within the system simply moves the risk downstream and neglects the complex infrastructure that may be required in the community setting for an individual to live safely. Investment is required in community health, primary care, social care, social work and care home provision to ensure the safety and wellbeing of individuals and their families in the community and prevent unnecessary admission and readmission to hospital.
 - It is clear that integration and closer partnership working were essential during this exceptional period, with the strongest partnerships best able to deal with the multiple challenges presented. Councils, Health Boards, HSCPs, the third sector and private partners all played a key role. Whilst there is no doubt that change is incoming across adult social care provision, it is critical

⁹ <https://data.sssc.uk.com/data-publications/30-vacancy-reports/305-the-2021-staff-vacancies-in-care-services-report>

¹⁰ <https://socialworkscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Setting-the-Bar-2-full-report.pdf>

that the creation of a National Care Service, and its formation in the years ahead, does not undermine what has been achieved to date nor impact upon the ongoing pace of change required to support our citizens for the challenges ahead.

Education for Children and Young People

Covid and in particular infection control measures such as lockdowns and the closure of schools and early years facilities, have had a profound and ongoing impact on children in Scotland. Children and families from low-income households are amongst those who have been most negatively affected, many of whom were already struggling before the pandemic. The significant changes during this period have affected family environment, physical and social development, wellbeing, learning experiences, opportunities for play and leisure, and access to services; these are all issues that have a particularly pronounced impact on families living in poverty.

Throughout this period our schools and early learning and childcare services have continued to deliver high-quality education and learning experiences to our learners and have worked in new and innovative ways to maintain connections and support wellbeing. LGBF data reveals how councils have responded to these challenges, and the impact on service performance and outcomes. Data from 2020/21 evidences the negative impact the first year of Covid had on the development of pre-school children, primary phase attainment levels, school attendance levels, and positive destinations for school leavers (*2020 data). Where more recent data is available, it is clear there has been a degree of recovery across each of these areas during 2021/22, albeit the scale of this recovery varies, with some outcomes still below pre-Covid levels.

Important context for the interpretation of these trends lies in the increasing rates of mental health issues in children and young people which were growing pre-Covid and have accelerated in the last two years. There has also been a growth in support needs in relation to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties during Covid, and a particularly stark increase in speech, language and communication concerns, both of which will be important in the education trends we may see downstream. The cost of living crisis is likely to add pressures on families that will further increase the incidence of these issues and is likely to have an impact on outcomes over the coming years. In light of this, achieving recovery to pre-Covid levels will be a significant challenge, even before seeking further improvement in closing the attainment gap. Effective support for these families often needs to happen out with schools (e.g. involving family support, whole family wellbeing, and effective partnership working on mental health support) and will be key to improving outcomes, including better attendance and closing the attainment gap.

Developmental Milestones and Early Years Provision

There was an increase in the percentage of young children with recorded developmental concerns during 2020/21, a trend particularly evident for children in the most deprived areas. In the most recent data available, the percentage of children with no developmental concerns at their 27-30 month review decreased from 85.7% to 85.1% in 2020/21, the first such decline since recording began. While just under half of authorities continued to report improvements during this time, the scale of any improvements recorded were minimal and therefore in the context of larger improvements seen in prior years, this still represents a plateau in performance.

There are persistent inequalities in the proportion of children who are found to have a developmental concern. In 2020/21, more than one in five children (23%) from deprived areas had at least one developmental concern compared to less than one in ten for the least deprived areas (9%). Developmental concerns increased faster for the most deprived children during the first year of Covid, increasing by 1.1pp compared to 0.4pp for the least deprived.

The pandemic led to changes in how reviews were delivered in 2020/21, with reviews adapted to be undertaken over the telephone or using video conferencing, where possible. Although adaptations to the delivery of child health reviews were necessary due to Covid, coverage has been largely maintained for each review (with the exception in the 4-5 year review). It is therefore possible that factors relating to assessment, and to genuine changes in the occurrence of developmental problems are contributing to the observed increase in concerns. It is also worth noting that data from 2020/21 is unlikely to fully reflect any impact of the pandemic period on children's development as it covers reviews for children who became eligible from April 2020, at which point only a short period of 'lockdown' restrictions would have been experienced.

When published later this year, the 2021/22 data on the developmental milestones of young children will provide useful insight into the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's development. More recent preliminary data on the [Wider Impact Dashboard](#) indicates that developmental concerns have been elevated during this period with no clear sign of recovery. Furthermore, while the coverage of the 4-5-year-old review has improved in recent years, the data is not yet sufficiently robust to permit comparisons over time or across all Local Authority areas. We will continue to closely monitor this important data as it improves.

Table 9: Developmental Milestones and Quality Ratings for Early Years Provision

	14/15	19/20	20/21	21/22	Change since 14/15	Change in most recent year
Percentage of Children Meeting Developmental Milestones (27-30 month review)	80.8%	85.7%	85.1%	--	4.3pp	-0.6pp
Quality of Early Years Provision ¹¹	93.5%	90.2%	90.9%	89.4%	4.1pp	-1.5pp

During 2021/22, the quality of early years provision has declined, particularly for councils serving the most deprived communities. The percentage of funded early years provision rated good or better by the Care Inspectorate fell from 90.9% to 89.4%, and from 89.5% to 86.6% in councils serving the most deprived communities.

There are a number of factors to consider here.

1. In 2020/21, the number of inspections was greatly reduced due to Covid. As a result, the majority of services retained their grades from previous inspection. This should be considered when interpreting data from this period.
2. The reduction in 2021/22 is likely to reflect flexibilities introduced by Scottish Government during Covid in relation to aspects of the National Standard. This allowed councils to continue to fund ELC settings which did not meet the National Standard of achieving Care Inspectorate grades of good or better, in recognition of the challenges posed by the pandemic.
3. The growing blend of Local Authority and partner provision is important. The early years expansion has seen a rapid growth in the use of partner provision. In September 2022, 31% of all children who will receive expanded hours will be in partner provision, up from 27% in August 2020.¹² Given Local Authority run services continue to receive higher quality ratings compared to other sectors (93.8% compared to 79.6% in private sector, and 89.6% in Voluntary/ Not for profit¹³), this will be an important consideration as the expansion to 1140 hours is embedded.
4. The 1140 duty brings significant challenges around workforce expansion. It takes time to build the workforce necessary to expand and double the volume

¹¹ This is based on data provided directly by the Care Inspectorate, and may not match what is published in 'Early Learning and Childcare Statistics', where estimates and imputations are used to account for non-submissions

¹² https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/39641/IS-ELC-Progress-Report-November-2022.pdf

¹³ <https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/6815/Early%20Learning%20and%20Childcare%20Statistics%202021%20Final%2014092022.pdf>

of early years provision, whilst simultaneously maintaining and improving the quality. Both councils and their partners are currently facing significant shortages in the availability of qualified staff and are seeing the average experience level of the workforce lowered.

Although the national data indicates a longer-term decline in quality since 2014/15, the trend is not universal. A fifth of councils have seen the quality of their early years provision improve since 2014/15, and a third have experienced improvements since the pre-Covid year of 2019/20. The variability observed will depend in part on the importance locally of the issues outlined above, particularly in relation to the blend of provision and scale of workforce challenges.

Improving the quality of early years provision is a cornerstone of the early years expansion programme, and it will be important for local government to feed into and inform the ongoing evaluation of the Early Learning and Childcare Expansion programme which is due for publication in late 2025.¹⁴ There will also be useful learning from the future Audit Scotland follow up review into Early Learning and Childcare (due in 2023/24¹⁵).

Primary School Pupil Attainment

Primary school data shows attainment levels improved in both numeracy and literacy in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21 but have not yet returned to where they were before the pandemic. A similar trend is evident in the poverty related attainment gap, which narrowed in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21 but still remains larger than pre-pandemic.

The improvement in achievement is true for almost all councils in 2021/22, with a small number of authorities recovering to above pre-Covid levels. There is however greater variability in progress to narrow the gap in achievement between SIMD Quintiles 1 and 5, with between a third and a quarter seeing their gap widen in the most recent year.

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/early-learning-childcare-expansion-programme-evaluation-strategy/>

¹⁵ <https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/our-work/our-work-programme>

Table 10: Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL)

	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	Change since Base Year	Change in Most Recent Year
% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Literacy	72.3%	--	66.9%	70.5%	-1.8pp	3.7pp
% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Numeracy	79.1%	--	74.7%	77.9%	-1.1pp	3.3pp
Literacy inequality gap	20.7pp	--	24.7pp	21.3pp	0.7pp	-3.4pp
Numeracy inequality gap	16.8pp	--	21.4pp	17.8pp	1.0pp	-3.7pp

Note: Due to the COVID pandemic and the closure of schools, the Scottish Government suspended the collection of the literacy and numeracy attainment data in 2020 to avoid adding further pressures on schools during this challenging period and citing potential comparability issues with previous years. 2019/20 data is therefore not available. Data prior to 2018/19 is not presented due to its experimental status.

Covid and the resulting lockdowns have had a significant impact on learning for children and this is reflected in the current data. The closure of schools in March 2020 and January 2021 is likely to have had a negative effect on some pupils' progress and attainment with socio-economically deprived children amongst those who may have been most negatively affected. While it is clear that there is a continuing effect on achievement levels, given that the disruption and high levels of teacher and pupil absence were ongoing during 2021/22, it is encouraging that there is some recovery in achievement levels, and this reflects the efforts being made within councils to bring attainment levels back to where they were previously.

Pupil Attendance

Pupil attendance rates have declined during the pandemic, particularly within council areas with higher levels of deprivation. Attendance rates declined from 93.1% in 2018/19 to 92% in 2020/21,¹⁶ with levels in the most deprived council areas falling from 92.2% to 91.2%. While the drop in attendance rates is almost universal, four authorities did report an increase during 2020/21, three of which have historically high attendance rates.

Data is published biennially, with the latest published figures relating to 2020/21. More recent management information indicates, however, that while there has been some recovery during 2021/22, attendance levels remain below pre-Covid levels. The extent to which this longer-term impact on attendance reflects an increase in long-term school absence and avoidance due to increased emotional

¹⁶ The rates reported in this attendance measure is methodologically consistent to attendance rates from previous years as it is not affected by the known underreporting of absence from home-learning. Therefore this measure is comparable to previous years (bearing in mind the impact of COVID).

and mental health issues during the pandemic, and exacerbated by the cost of living crisis, will be an area for examination. It may also be important to understand any longer-term effect the Covid related disruption is having on our long-standing conventions and expectations in relation to school attendance.

Senior Phase Attainment

While it is difficult to interpret the trends in the senior phase due to the different assessment methods during Covid, 2021/22 data reveals a continued general increase in Senior Phase Attainment levels (with exception of SCQF Level 6), particularly for pupils in the most deprived areas.¹⁷ There was an increase of 2pp in the percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at SCQF Level 5, increasing from 67% to 69%, and a 3pp increase for those pupils from the most deprived areas. Similarly, Average Tariff Scores increased by 0.9% overall, and by 2% for pupils from the most deprived quintile. The national trend disguises variability at local level, with attainment for the most deprived reducing in over a third of councils in 2021/22.

Table 11: Senior Phase Attainment

	11/12	19/20	20/21	21/22	Change since 2011/12	Change in 2021/22
% of Pupils Gaining 5+ Awards at SCQF Level 5	51.0%	65.0%	67.0%	69.0%	18.0pp	2.0pp
% of Pupils from Deprived Areas Gaining 5+ Awards at SCQF Level 5 (SIMD Quintile 1)	29.0%	47.0%	49.0%	52.0%	23.0pp	3.0pp
% of Pupils Gaining 5+ Awards at SCQF Level 6	26.0%	38.0%	41.0%	40.0%	14.0pp	-1.0pp
% of Pupils from Deprived Areas Gaining 5+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 (SIMD Quintile 1)	10.0%	21.0%	23.0%	23.0%	13.0pp	0.0pp
Overall Average Total Tariff	769.7	930.0	972.4	980.7	27.4%	0.9%
Average Total Tariff SIMD Quintile 1	478.0	649.0	688.0	702.0	46.9%	2.0%
Average Total Tariff SIMD Quintile 5	1101.0	1241.0	1320.0	1316.0	19.5%	-0.3%

Source: Attainment of SCQF Levels and breakdown of average total tariff by SIMD quintile provided by the Scottish Government. Overall average total tariff calculated from this by the Improvement service.

¹⁷ As the school leaver data is not yet available for 2021/22, the basis for the data included for these measures is different from published data available on the Learning Analysis School Summary Dashboard, which is based on school leavers. To allow 2022 data to be included, the Scottish Government has provided pupil's attainment by S6 based on the S4 cohort. All years included in the report are based on this calculated measure of pupil attainment by S6 based on the S4 cohort.

The time period covered by these statistics reflects four distinct approaches to assessment and certification of SQA attainment. This includes a longstanding use of exams and externally assessed coursework pre-Covid, the use of teacher estimates as a basis for awards in 2020, an Alternative Certification Model in 2021, and the return of formal exams in 2022 with measures put in place to mitigate the ongoing effects of Covid. The significantly different circumstances and awarding processes of 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 do not allow for meaningful comparison or for conclusions to be drawn on changes in education performance. Any changes between the attainment levels of the 2021/22 cohort, 2020/21 cohort, the 2019/20 cohort and those of previous years should not be seen as an indication that performance has improved or worsened, without further evidence.

It is important to note that while 2021/22 is the first time that exams have taken place since 2019, this year does not mark a return to normal. Learners have faced further disruption from Covid and a year of uncertainty, on the back of the two previous years of disruption from the pandemic. Councils, along with SQA and other partners across the education system, put in place a wide-ranging package of support in 2021/22 to help mitigate the impact on learners and to support children through this ongoing period of recovery and give them the best chance of performing to the best of their abilities.

Councils continue to demonstrate a significant commitment to meeting the policy goals of the National Improvement Framework, including improving attainment in the senior phase and closing the poverty related attainment gap. Each council has set locally identified stretch aims, to frame its aspirations for learners and to set an over-arching strategic ambition for improvement during the ongoing recovery from Covid. These stretch aims will also inform the Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress, as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.¹⁸

Positive Destinations

The destination of pupils after leaving school is an important outcome measure of how well schools prepare young people for life beyond school. Positive destinations can be either higher or further education, employment, training, voluntary work or personal skills development. Positive destinations have recovered to above pre-Covid levels after the initial Covid related decline in 2020. The proportion of young people in positive destinations (within 3 months of leaving school) fell across all SIMD groups in 2020, however the reduction was larger amongst school leavers from the most deprived areas. This resulted in the gap between those living in the least and most deprived areas progressing to positive destinations increasing from 5.4pp in 2019 to 6.3pp in 2020. During 2020, the proportion of school leavers entering employment decreased to a record low, and

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-duty-assessment-scottish-attainment-challenge-2022-2023-2025-2026/>

while the proportion of school leavers entering higher education increased for all SIMD groups, it increased by less for those from the most deprived areas. This reflects the direct impacts of Covid on the availability of some opportunities, and also the influence of the pandemic on pupils' decisions on when to leave school (for example, delaying leaving from 2019/20 to 2020/21).

While it is encouraging that for school leavers in 2021 and 2022 positive destination rates have recovered to above pre-pandemic levels, including for the most deprived SIMD groups, it will be important to monitor what the medium to longer-term impact will be on leaver destinations, particularly for the most deprived young people. It is likely that the pandemic will have continued to affect the choices made by, and opportunities available to, some school leavers.

Table 12: Positive Destinations

	11/12	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	Change since Base Year	Change in Most Recent Year
Positive Destinations	90.3%	95.0%	93.3%	95.5%	95.7%	5.4pp	0.2pp
Positive destinations for most deprived school leavers	84.1%	92.4%	90.0%	92.8%	93.4%	9.3pp	0.6pp

Note: This data provides information on the initial destinations of school leavers, relating to outcomes approximately three months after the end of the school year

Future Priorities

There is a strong focus on improving the wellbeing of children and young people, alongside the continued commitment to improved attainment. It will be important for the LGBF to align more closely with National Improvement Framework (NIF) measures to ensure we address these challenges collectively as a system, reducing complexity and bringing greater coherence in how data is used to drive improvement. This includes a need to ensure we have measures more broadly across the four capacities set out within the Curriculum for Excellence, with a greater focus on confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors, as well as successful learners.

Performance of Local Government Services

Prior to Covid, LGBF data revealed that council service performance had largely improved or been maintained remarkably well over the long-term period despite growing pressure on budgets. In the years immediately prior to the pandemic however, there was growing evidence that performance was beginning to show signs of strain.

The delivery and operating landscape for councils altered significantly during 2020/21 and 2021/22 as a result of Covid. Councils were at the fore front of delivering the emergency response to their local communities which required a huge remobilisation and redeployment of resources at pace. The Covid emergency response and business critical activities were prioritised during this period, which had an impact on resourcing and service levels in those less business critical areas. Covid restrictions required the closure or cessation of key council services and/or the implementation of significant service adaptations to meet physical distancing requirements. This period also saw significant service redesign with greater reliance on virtual delivery, with face-to-face support prioritised for the most vulnerable, e.g. social work services. The wholesale shift to homeworking which happened at pace at the onset of the pandemic also had implications both for service delivery, and for the workforce.

In addition, a number of wider factors, including those arising from the cost of living crisis, continue to affect both the level of demand for local government services, and also the context in which they are delivered. These include: growing pressure on council budgets and workforce; increased financial hardship for families; increasing levels of vulnerability, including mental health and wellbeing; a shut-down then slow-down in economic activity; delays, cancellations and backlogs across wider public services (e.g. NHS and justice); and volatility and uncertainty in the supplier/contractor landscape. The above factors provide vital context for the interpretation of data from this period, in particular when drawing comparisons with historic or future data.

In light of these challenges, the impact on the performance of council services has been significant and is ongoing. While the full effects of the pandemic, combined with the cost of living crisis, are likely to take a number of years to emerge in their entirety, analysis of data from 2021/22 provides some helpful early indications of how service performance has been affected, both in terms of initial impact and recovery, and also the implications for longer term trends.

Over the longer term, from 2010/11 to 2021/22, councils have delivered improvements in over 70% of LGBF performance indicators. In the two

years immediately prior to Covid however, and during the Covid years, the improvement rate has slowed, with 50% of indicators improving annually. Both Covid and the cost of living crisis have clearly had an impact on these trends, with the number of indicators where performance is worsening at an all-time high in 2020/21 and 2021/22 (38% compared to 30% pre-Covid).

Throughout the pandemic, the long-term improvement trends have been sustained and strengthened in a number of policy critical areas, such as participation in education, training or employment for 16-19 year olds, local procurement, housing energy efficiency, carbon emissions within Local Authority scope, corporate asset condition, balance of social care and Self-Directed Support, living wage, and roll out of superfast broadband. In other areas, such as positive destinations and the gender pay gap, while there was a temporary Covid-related decline, the long-term improvement trend has since recovered in 2021/22.

There are however areas where the long-term improvement trend has been negatively impacted by the Covid pandemic and has not yet recovered. For example, in housing services, both housing quality and repair times have been adversely affected. After a period of sustained improvement from 2013/14 to 2019/20, there has been a sharp decline in housing quality compliance and repair times in 2021/22. In housing quality, it should be noted that key enhancements have been added to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) in the latest period which, alongside the legacy of pandemic restrictions in accessing homes, have caused a large decrease in compliance figures, rather than a general deterioration in the quality of local authority social housing. Both housing repairs and housing quality were affected by Covid related access issues and subsequent delays in carrying out key safety, inspection and maintenance services, and the more recent focus on addressing the backlogs which have been on hold during 2020/21 due to the restrictions in place. While Councils are working hard to return performance in these areas to previous levels, this will take time due to the impact of service backlogs.

In those service areas where there were already signs of strain prior to the pandemic, this picture has largely continued, and in some cases has worsened. For example, the declining pre-Covid trends in rent arrears, income lost due to voids, street cleanliness levels, pupil attendance rates, and satisfaction with care services have accelerated during the pandemic. In areas such as Culture and Leisure visitor numbers, recycling rates, council tax collection rates, and business start-up rates, while there has been some recovery from the initial Covid impact, performance levels remain below pre-Covid levels. As improvement in each of these areas had been slowing or declining prior to the pandemic, it will be important to closely monitor trends in the period ahead to understand the longer-term impact.

Finally, there are several important areas where our ability to assess the initial impact of Covid on performance improvement remains limited. These include senior phase attainment, satisfaction with Council services (SHS data), and quality ratings for early years and adult social care, all of which saw their assessment, survey or inspection methodologies alter during Covid. Additionally, 2021/22 data is not yet available for a number of key policy areas in relation to children and young people, including care experienced children, developmental milestones, and child poverty rates.

Overall, performance both during and emerging from the pandemic represents a mixed picture. While it is encouraging that performance improvement has been maintained and strengthened in many essential services, the fact that there has been a decline in other areas, caused by or exacerbated by Covid and the cost of living crisis, is a concern. It is likely that some of these effects will be felt for a long time to come, and along with the demand and budgetary pressures facing councils currently, it is possible that efforts in the short term in some service areas could be focussed more on prioritising and maintaining performance, rather than service improvement. Improvements to date therefore cannot be assumed to continue and maintaining levels of performance in the current environment will be a notable achievement in itself.

Given councils' growing focus on adapting to the impacts of climate change and delivering a just transition to Net Zero, the LGBF will in the period ahead work to develop a strengthened suite of measures to help local government to monitor and drive progress in this critical area. Within the current suite, evidence of progress can be observed in the reduction in carbon emissions and the improvements in energy efficiency within the housing stock. The Board will improve the LGBF's coverage in this area, both in terms of the drivers for carbon emissions in relation to transport, heat and buildings, and also to provide a focus on nature and the bio-diversity crisis. This work will also drill into and consider how to adapt current LGBF measures on recycling, waste management and roads to support our efforts to understand and build a coherent narrative in relation to progress and challenges within the wider environmental agenda.

Local Variation

While both Covid and the cost of living crisis are having an unprecedented impact on services across all councils, local areas are experiencing their impacts differently. Responses to Covid and the cost of living crisis have exemplified the importance of 'local' with local solutions and responses to local needs and issues, varying both between and within authorities. LGBF performance data from 2021/22 reveals substantial variation in terms of the direction of the changes, and the depth and severity of impacts. It is this variation that will provide the essential platform to help councils evaluate their approach during the pandemic and to inform their future priorities.

A range of interconnected factors will be important in shaping the variability observed in the data from this period, including:

- Different local restrictions during Covid (localised lockdowns/tiered system of restrictions)
- Existing local capacity (infrastructure, e.g. digital; workforce; and partnership context)
- Local responses (innovation; redesign; and redeployment)
- Local pattern of demand and need (reflecting demographic and socio-economic profile of local communities)
- Local priorities and strategic direction pre-Covid
- Local economy

This lack of uniformity is an inevitable function of local democracy reflecting the different needs and priorities of local communities. The variation within the LGBF data provides vital intelligence to help assess the impact of different ways of working and models of delivery during the pandemic, and now in response to the cost of living crisis. This has been, and continues to be, a period of historic change, and it is essential we do not lose the learning and innovation from this time. Given the pressures facing local government as we emerge from the pandemic, it will be critical to take time to evaluate and learn from our response during Covid to inform the future design, delivery and shape of services.

Conclusion

This year's report provides an evidence-based picture of the ongoing impact of Covid alongside new challenges arising from the current cost of living crisis on local government services and the communities they serve. The evidence reveals the extraordinary effort and achievements delivered across local government during this exceptional period. Councils have adapted quickly to meet new demands, maintain essential services and implement new ways of working, and have strengthened partnerships with communities as well as the third and private sectors, helping to protect those who are vulnerable, and maintaining community wellbeing.

2021/22 LGBF data also indicates that the shock delivered by these combined events is likely to substantially disrupt performance and efficiency improvements gained in previous years. It is likely that some of these effects will be felt for a long time to come, and along with the demand and budgetary pressures facing councils currently, it is possible that efforts in the short-term in some service areas could be focussed more on prioritising and maintaining performance, rather than service improvement.

The evidence base provided by the LGBF will be key in helping local authorities explore and understand the impact of different ways of working and models of delivery, and to help ensure we do not lose the learning and innovation which has emerged during these exceptional times, as these will be essential in our response to the cost of living crisis. With the financial pressures, growing demand on services, and the combined effects of Covid and the cost of living crisis, there has never been a greater requirement for working with and learning from each other. LGBF data reveals substantial local variation in terms of the depth and severity of impact during this period. It is this variation that will provide the essential platform to help councils evaluate their approach and to inform their future priorities.

In the period ahead, we will work with partners to develop the benchmarking approach, including a stronger focus on sector-wide performance, delivering improvements in the timeliness of reported data, and adopting a proportionate and focussed approach to the development of the LGBF suite of indicators, to reflect those areas of greatest importance for local government, such as the cost of living crisis and climate change.

Appendix

Overview Table for all LGBF Data 2021-22

Full data and metadata is available via [LGBF Dashboard](#)

Indicator Description	Scotland												%value change 20/21 to 21/22	% change Pre COVID to most recent year
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		
Cost per primary school pupil	£5,958	£5,793	£5,634	£5,487	£5,341	£5,384	£5,373	£5,483	£5,645	£5,920	£6,071	£6,325	4.2%	6.8%
Cost per secondary school pupil	£7,868	£7,636	£7,617	£7,573	£7,551	£7,652	£7,619	£7,571	£7,732	£7,955	£7,858	£7,898	0.5%	-0.7%
Cost per pre-school education registration	£4,121	£3,742	£3,686	£3,492	£3,799	£4,391	£4,696	£4,869	£5,410	£7,115	£9,517	£10,283	8.0%	44.5%
% of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 5		51	53	55	57	59	60	62	63	65	67	69	2.0	4.0
% of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 6		26	27	29	31	33	34	34	35	38	41	40	-1.0	2.0
% of pupils from deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 5 (SIMD)		29	32	34	37	40	41	42	45	47	49	52	3.0	5.0
% of pupils from deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 6 (SIMD)		10	11	14	14	15	16	17	19	21	23	23	0.0	2.0
The gross cost of "children looked after" in residential based services per child per week	£3,464	£3,659	£3,487	£3,612	£3,647	£3,893	£3,786	£3,848	£4,130	£4,122	£4,495	dna	9.1%	9.1%
The gross cost of "children looked after" in a community setting per child per week	£252.35	£268.57	£297.32	£307.49	£320.18	£333.28	£353.57	£365.33	£369.89	£371.79	£392.23	dna	5.5%	5.5%
Balance of care for looked after children: % of children being looked after in the community	91.0	91.2	90.9	90.6	90.1	90.4	89.9	89.6	89.8	90.1	90.3	dna	0.2	0.5
% of adults satisfied with local schools	83.1		83.0	81.0	79.0	74.0	73.0	70.0	72.5	73.0	78.0	dna	5.0	5.0
Proportion of pupils entering positive destinations		90.3	91.9	92.6	93.2	93.5	93.9	94.6	95.0	93.3	95.5	95.7	0.2	0.7
Overall average total tariff		770	798	827	860	877	888	894	895	930	972	981	0.9%	5.5%
Average total tariff SIMD quintile 1		478	510	551	581	603	625	620	628	649	688	702	2.0%	8.2%
Average total tariff SIMD quintile 2		618	644	685	716	741	751	752	743	759	817	827	1.2%	9.0%
Average total tariff SIMD quintile 3		759	788	816	851	864	882	899	875	906	975	965	-1.0%	6.5%
Average total tariff SIMD quintile 4		909	929	962	984	998	1002	1019	1015	1030	1108	1113	0.5%	8.1%
Average total tariff SIMD quintile 5		1101	1134	1149	1185	1197	1210	1224	1195	1241	1320	1316	-0.3%	6.0%

Indicator Description	Scotland													%/value change 20/21 to 21/22	% change Pre COVID to most recent year
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22			
Children's Services	% of children meeting developmental milestones (27-30 months)				80.8	80.8	81.6	82.4	84.6	85.5	85.7	85.1	dna	-0.6	-0.6
	% Funded early years provision rated good/better	87.1	90.6	91.3	92.6	93.5	91.9	91.7	91.0	90.6	90.2	90.9	89.4	-1.5	-0.8
	School attendance rates	93.1		93.6		93.7		93.3		93.0		92.0	dna	-1.0	-1.0
	School attendance rates (looked after children)	86.3		88.7		89.0		88.2		86.8		87.9	dna	1.1	1.1
	School exclusion rates	40.0		32.8		27.2		26.8		21.6		11.9	dna	-45%	-45%
	School exclusion rates (looked after children)	340.8		280.3		246.8		210.1		152.2		77.8	dna	-49%	-49%
	Participation rates for 16-19 year olds						90.4	91.1	91.8	91.6	92.1	92.2	92.4	0.2	0.2
	Child protection re-registrations within 18 months			6.5	6.8	6.7	6.2	6.5	6.0	7.2	6.9	7.0	dna	0.1	-0.2
	% of looked after children with more than 1 placement in the last year	21.1	21.4	21.2	21.9	21.4	20.7	21.2	20.1	19.5	16.7	16.8	dna	0.1	-2.7
	% of children living in poverty (after housing costs)					21.6	22.8	23.4	24.2	23.2	24.3	20.9	dna	-3.4	-3.4
	% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Literacy									72.3		66.9	70.5	3.7	-1.8
	% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Numeracy									79.1		74.7	77.9	3.3	-1.1
	Literacy Attainment Gap (P1,4,7 Combined) - percentage point gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils									20.7		24.7	21.3	-3.4	0.7
	Numeracy Attainment Gap (P1,4,7 Combined) - percentage point gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils									16.8		21.4	17.8	-3.7	1.0

Indicator Description		Scotland												%/value change 20/21 to 21/22	% change Pre COVID to most recent year
		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		
Corporate Services	Support services as a % of total gross expenditure	5.4	5.7	5.6	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.0	4.4	4.3	4.0	4.0	4.1	0.0	0.1
	% of the highest paid 5% of employees who are women	46.3	48.5	48.7	50.7	51.7	51.9	52.9	54.6	55.5	56.7	58.1	59.0	0.9	2.2
	The gender pay gap						4.5	4.2	3.9	4.2	3.4	3.7	3.5	-0.1	0.1
	The cost per dwelling of collecting council tax	£17.02	£16.01	£15.82	£14.11	£12.60	£11.82	£10.03	£8.08	£7.46	£6.96	£6.82	£6.59	-3.3%	-5.3%
	Sickness absence days per teacher	6.6	6.2	6.6	6.1	6.3	6.1	6.1	5.9	6.2	6.3	4.1	5.8	41.8%	-8.2%
	Sickness absence days per employee (non-teacher)	10.8	10.4	10.9	10.3	10.8	10.6	10.9	11.4	11.5	11.9	9.6	12.2	27.2%	2.4%
	% of income due from council tax received by the end of the year	94.7	95.1	95.2	95.2	95.5	95.7	95.8	96.0	96.0	95.8	94.8	95.7	1.0	0.0
	% of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days	89.5	90.2	90.5	91.9	92.5	92.8	93.1	93.2	92.7	91.7	91.8	92.2	0.4	-0.5
	% of SWF Crisis Grant decisions within 1 day									95.5	95.3	93.8	93.3	-0.5	-2.0
	% of SWF CCG decisions within 15 days									89.5	82.3	84.5	85.8	1.3	3.5
	Proportion of SWF budget spent				87.0	95.1	94.3	97.8	95.3	99.9	107.8	83.2	115.2	32.0	7.3
Proportion of DHP Funding spent								101.2	102.6	104.5	97.2	96.0	-1.2	-8.5	
Adult Social Care	Older persons (over 65) home care costs per hour	£24.82	£24.01	£24.36	£23.56	£23.28	£24.22	£25.31	£26.13	£26.63	£26.77	£28.35	£28.71	1.3%	7.3%
	Direct payment & personalised budget spend as a % of total social work spend on adults 18+	1.6	2.9	6.0	6.4	6.9	6.7	6.4	6.8	7.2	7.7	8.1	8.2	0.0	0.5
	% of people 65+ with long-term needs receiving care at home	58.9	59.2	59.8	59.8	60.0	60.7	60.1	61.7	61.0	60.7	61.7	61.9	0.2	1.2
	% of adults supported at home who agree that their services and support had an impact in improving or maintaining their quality of life				85.0		84.0		80.0		80.0		78.1	-1.9	-1.9

Indicator Description		Scotland												%/value change 20/21 to 21/22	% change Pre COVID to most recent year
		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		
Adult Social Care	Percentage of adults supported at home who agree that they are supported to live as independently as possible				82.8		82.7		81.1		80.8		78.8	-2.0	-2.0
	Percentage of adults supported at home who agree that they had a say in how their help, care or support was provided				83.1		78.8		75.6		75.4		70.6	-4.8	-4.8
	Percentage of carers who feel supported to continue in their caring role				43.0		40.0		36.6		34.3		29.7	-4.6	-4.6
	Older persons (over 65's) residential care costs per week per resident	£527.35	£533.99	£512.15	£496.16	£506.62	£514.51	£525.11	£530.59	£562.09	£568.28	£654.34	£648.76	-0.9%	23.0%
	Rate of readmission to hospital within 28 days per 1,000 discharges	89.7	92.5	93.5	95.3	97.2	98.1	101.0	102.7	103.0	104.7	120.0	109.6	-8.7%	4.7%
	Proportion of care services graded 'good' (4) or better in Care Inspectorate inspections		80.9	80.2	80.2	81.2	82.9	83.8	85.4	82.2	81.8	82.5	75.8	-6.7	-6.0
	Number of days people spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged, per 1,000 population (75+)				921.8	1043.7	914.7	839.8	761.7	792.7	773.8	484.3	747.9	54.4%	-25.9
Culture and Leisure	Cost per attendance at sports facilities	£4.37	£3.92	£3.73	£3.71	£3.41	£3.34	£3.24	£2.99	£2.82	£2.89	£41.36	£6.43	-84.4%	123.0%
	Cost per library visit	£4.20	£3.96	£3.75	£2.99	£2.82	£2.80	£2.22	£2.28	£2.21	£2.10	£2.95	£2.90	-1.7%	38.4%
	Cost of museums per visit	£5.18	£4.22	£4.26	£3.89	£3.83	£3.48	£3.71	£3.84	£3.74	£3.45	£10.46	£4.75	-54.6%	37.8%
	Cost of parks & open spaces per 1,000 population	£31,955	£29,478	£28,159	£27,103	£26,920	£24,912	£23,293	£21,776	£21,711	£21,201	£19,614	£20,298	3.5%	-4.3%
	% of adults satisfied with libraries	83.5		83.0	81.0	77.0	74.0	73.0	72.0	72.1	73.0	78.0	dna	5.0	5.0
	% of adults satisfied with parks and open spaces	83.1		86.0	86.0	86.0	85.0	87.0	85.0	82.5	83.0	91.0	dna	8.0	8.0
	% of adults satisfied with museums and galleries	75.5		78.0	76.0	75.0	71.0	70.0	69.0	68.9	70.0	75.0	dna	5.0	5.0
	% of adults satisfied with leisure facilities	74.6		80.0	78.0	76.0	73.0	73.0	72.0	69.3	69.0	77.0	dna	8.0	8.0

Indicator Description	Scotland												%value change 20/21 to 21/22	% change Pre COVID to most recent year
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		
Net cost per waste collection per premises			£70.36	£71.33	£74.57	£73.43	£72.16	£72.51	£72.46	£72.60	£74.25	£70.08	-5.6%	-3.5%
Net cost per waste disposal per premises			£109.83	£107.23	£104.90	£111.37	£110.43	£111.44	£104.98	£104.13	£108.67	£100.23	-7.8%	-3.7%
Net cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population	£24,465	£23,528	£20,866	£18,896	£18,191	£17,653	£16,200	£16,983	£15,999	£16,027	£14,873	£14,848	-0.2%	-7.4%
Cleanliness score (%age acceptable)	95.4	96.1	95.8	96.1	93.9	93.4	93.9	92.2	92.8	92.2	90.1	89.7	-0.4	-2.1
Cost of roads per kilometre	£13,670	£12,449	£11,832	£11,417	£11,326	£11,684	£11,559	£11,095	£10,694	£10,290	£9,625	£11,107	15.4%	7.9%
% of A class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment	30.3	30.5	29.4	28.7	29.0	29.0	29.5	30.2	30.0	30.6	29.8	27.6	-2.2	-3.0
% of B class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment	35.8	36.3	35.0	35.2	36.1	34.8	34.8	35.9	35.7	35.0	34.0	33.6	-0.4	-1.4
% of C class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment	35.0	36.0	34.8	36.6	37.4	34.7	34.6	36.2	36.3	35.1	33.6	33.2	-0.4	-1.9
% of unclassified roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment	41.9	38.3	40.1	39.4	39.3	40.1	39.5	39.0	38.2	37.8	38.3	36.7	-1.6	-1.2
Cost of trading standards and environmental health per 1,000 population	£29,990	£26,600	£25,417	£26,623	£25,616	£25,537	£23,901	£23,508	£22,380	£21,023	£19,498	£20,947	7.4%	-0.4%
Cost of trading standards per 1,000 population			£6,093	£6,521	£6,433	£6,556	£6,143	£6,475	£6,350	£6,497	£6,084	£6,088	0.1%	-6.3%
Cost of environmental health per 1,000 population			£19,324	£20,102	£19,183	£18,981	£17,758	£17,033	£16,030	£14,526	£13,414	£15,019	12.0%	3.4%
% of total household waste arising that is recycled	38.7	40.1	41.1	42.2	42.8	44.2	45.2	45.6	44.7	44.9	42.0	42.7	0.7	-2.2
% of adults satisfied with refuse collection	80.9		83.0	83.0	84.0	82.0	79.0	75.0	74.9	73.0	78.0	dna	5.0	5.0
% of adults satisfied with street cleaning	73.3		75.0	74.0	74.0	73.0	70.0	66.0	62.9	59.0	58.0	dna	-1.0	-1.0

Indicator Description		Scotland												%value change 20/21 to 21/22	% change Pre COVID to most recent year
		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		
Housing Services	Gross rent arrears as a % of rent due for the reporting year				5.6	5.9	6.2	6.5	6.7	7.3	7.3	8.2	8.7	0.5	1.4
	% of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.1	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.4	1.6	0.3	0.6
	% of dwellings meeting SHQS	53.6	66.1	76.6	83.7	90.4	92.5	93.6	93.9	94.3	94.9	90.3	69.7	-20.6	-25.2
	Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs				10.2	9.9	9.4	8.7	7.5	7.8	7.3	7.3	9.2	26.2%	25.3%
	% of council dwellings that are energy efficient						65.2	71.2	75.3	80.9	84.1	86.4	87.8	1.4	3.7
Corp. Asset	Proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use	73.7	74.8	75.9	78.2	79.0	79.6	79.8	80.8	82.1	82.5	82.3	85.3	2.9	2.8
	Proportion of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition	81.3	82.7	82.6	80.9	82.0	81.5	84.5	86.3	87.2	88.6	89.2	90.1	0.9	1.5
Economic Development	% of unemployed people assisted into work from council funded/operated employability programmes			9.1	12.5	14.1	14.1	14.0	14.3	12.6	12.7	6.0	19.6	13.6	6.9
	Cost of planning and building standards per planning application	£4,388	£4,509	£5,914	£3,968	£3,893	£4,583	£4,283	£4,446	£4,797	£4,681	£5,117	£4,337	-15.2%	-7%
	Average time per business and industry planning application			12.8	10.8	10.5	9.9	9.6	9.3	9.1	10.5	11.1	11.7	5.7%	11%
	% of procurement spent on local enterprises	27.2	26.2	27.2	26.9	27.5	25.4	26.5	27.4	28.7	28.5	29.1	29.9	0.8	1.4
	No of Business Gateway start-ups per 10,000 population				19.0	18.9	16.9	16.6	16.8	16.7	16.4	11.2	14.4	28.7%	-12.2%
	Investment in economic development & tourism per 1,000	£102,618	£91,803	£86,218	£83,818	£79,482	£72,980	£90,489	£101,950	£115,933	£109,031	£88,509	£119,388	34.9%	9.5%
	Proportion of people earning less than the real living wage			18.8	18.6	19.3	19.6	20.1	18.4	19.4	16.9	15.2	14.4	-0.8	-2.5
	Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband				56.1	67.5	78.6	85.9	91.1	92.0	93.3	93.8	94.1	0.3	0.8
	Town vacancy rates					10.1	11.9	10.2	11.5	10.0	11.7	12.4	11.4	-1.0	-0.3

Indicator Description		Scotland												%value change 20/21 to 21/22	% change Pre COVID to most recent year
		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		
Economic Development	Immediately available employment land as a % of total land allocated for employment purposes in the local development plan					12.9	27.2	38.4	40.8	37.6	36.2	38.9	27.2	-11.7	-9.0
	Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita		24,851	25,061	25,658	26,237	26,531	26,537	27,115	27,078	27,284	24,721	dna	-9.4%	-9.4%
	Claimant Count as % of Working Age Population	4.2	4.3	4.1	3.2	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.5	3.1	3.3	6.1	3.7	-2.4	0.4
	Claimant Count as % of 16-24 Population	6.8	7.1	6.2	4.6	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.6	3.9	7.2	3.7	-3.5	-0.2
Financial Sustainability	Total useable reserves as a % of council annual budgeted revenue				16.0	16.7	18.0	17.3	17.0	16.6	16.9	23.7	24.4	0.8	7.5
	Uncommitted General Fund Balance as a % of council annual budgeted net revenue				3.7	4.0	4.1	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.5	0.0	-0.1
	Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream - General Fund				8.4	8.4	7.8	8.0	8.0	7.9	7.2	6.2	5.9	-0.4	-1.3
	Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream - Housing Revenue Account				25.9	24.1	24.7	24.4	23.6	22.8	22.6	22.9	22.1	-0.8	-0.4
	Actual outturn as a percentage of budgeted expenditure				99.1	99.0	99.0	99.3	99.3	99.4	99.4	97.4	98.3	0.8	-1.1
Climate Change	CO2 emissions area wide per tonne, per capita	7.9	7.1	7.3	7.1	6.2	6.2	5.8	5.6	5.6	5.4	4.6	dna	-13.7%	-13.7%
	CO2 emissions are wide: emissions within scope of Local Authority per tonne, per capita	7.2	6.5	6.7	6.5	5.7	5.6	5.2	5.0	4.8	4.6	4.1	dna	-11.0%	-11.0%

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