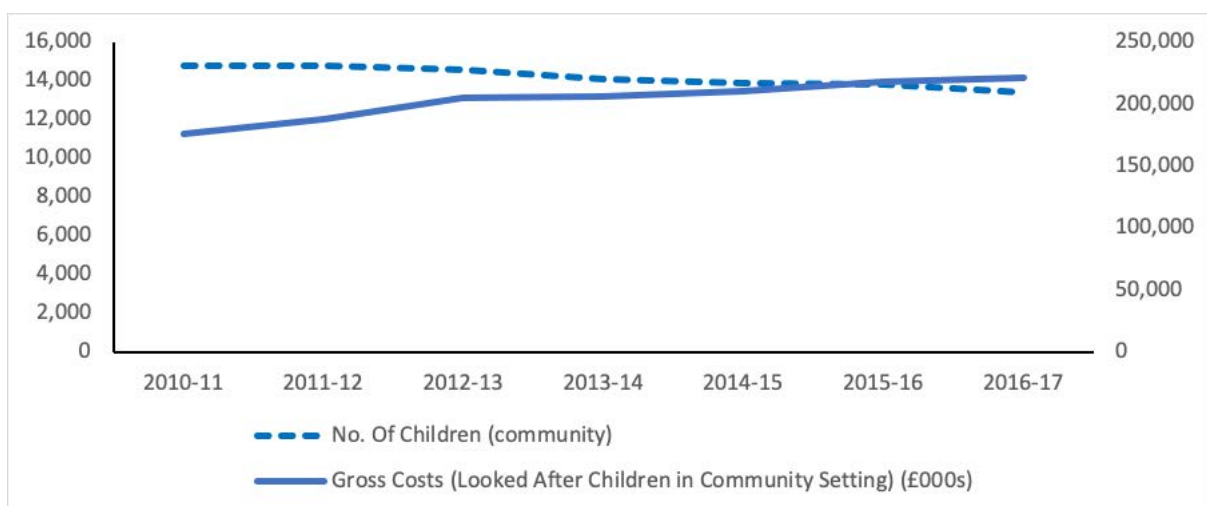
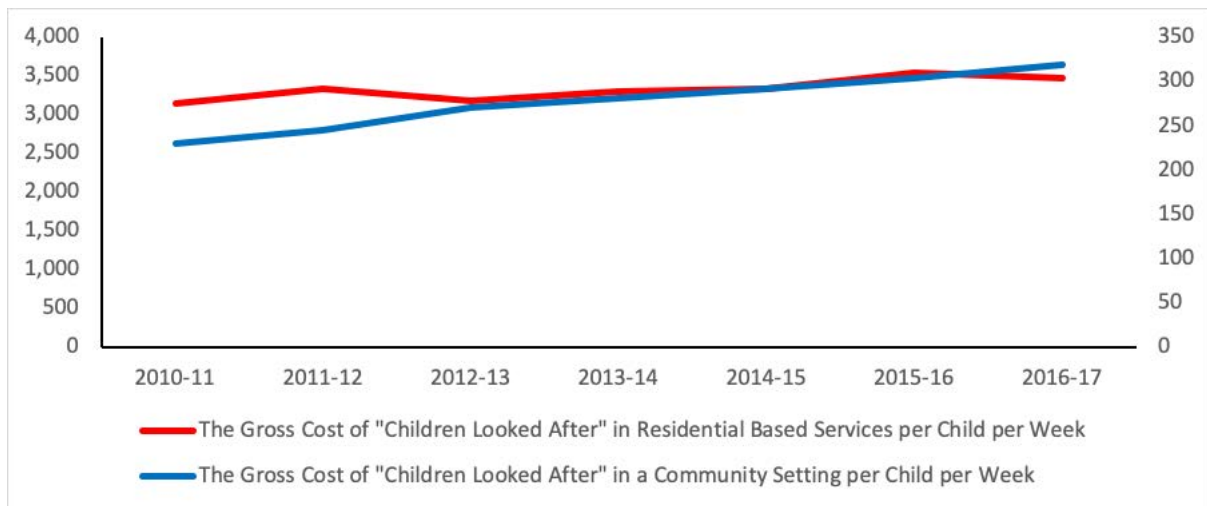


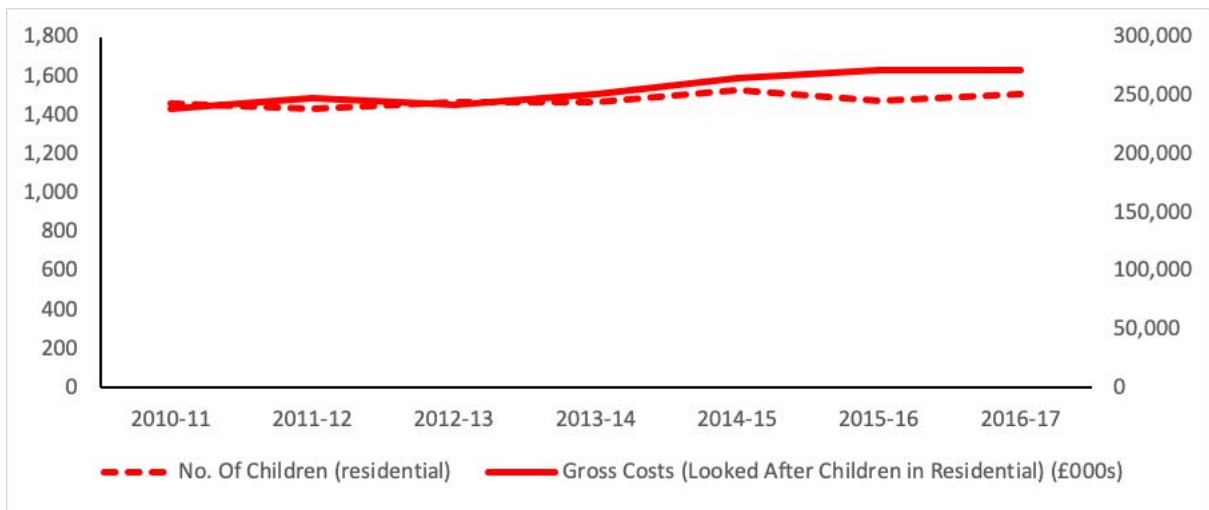
# Looked After Children Briefing 2018

Councils' corporate parenting role in relation to children who are looked after is a critical one. As a group, care leavers have some of the poorest outcomes in society and better information on the effectiveness of service delivery for care leavers and the outcomes experienced is essential in order to drive improvement.

The LGBF includes measures on the cost of looking after children in the community and in residential settings, and the balance of care between those looked after in the community and in residential settings.

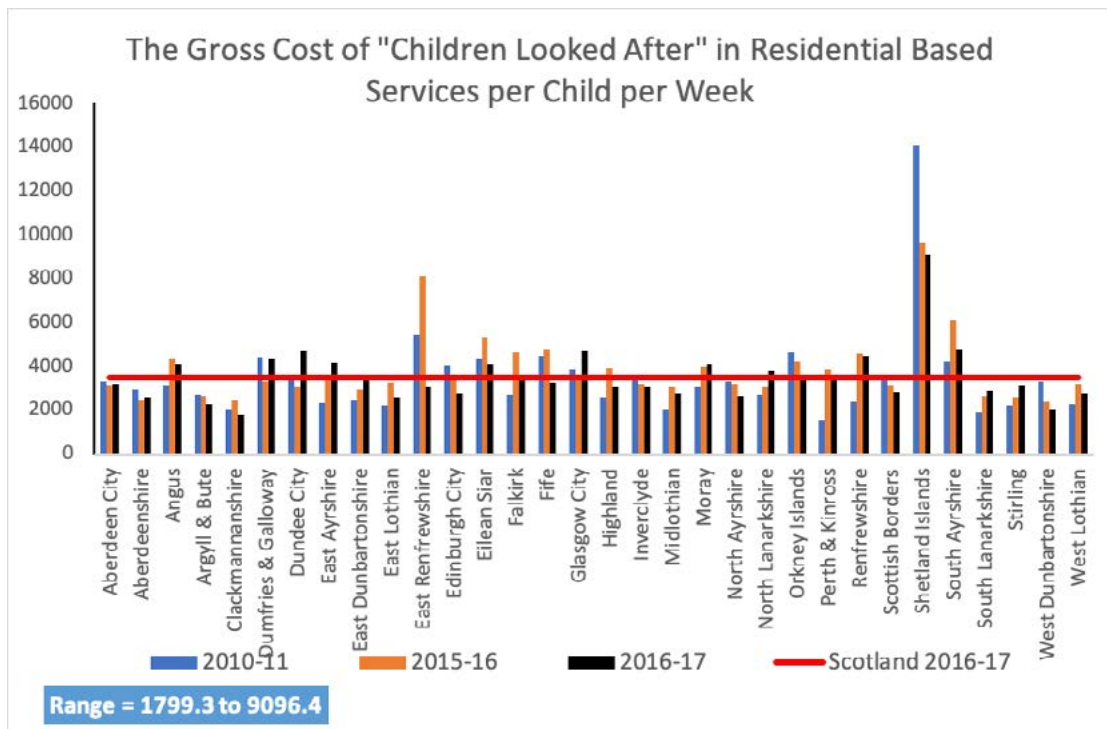
At a national level, the cost per child looked after in community settings has increased since 2010/11. This reflects increasing gross expenditure, while the total number of children being looked after in the community has reduced. In residential settings, the national trend indicates cost per child has reduced, reflecting the slight increase in number of children looked after in residential care.

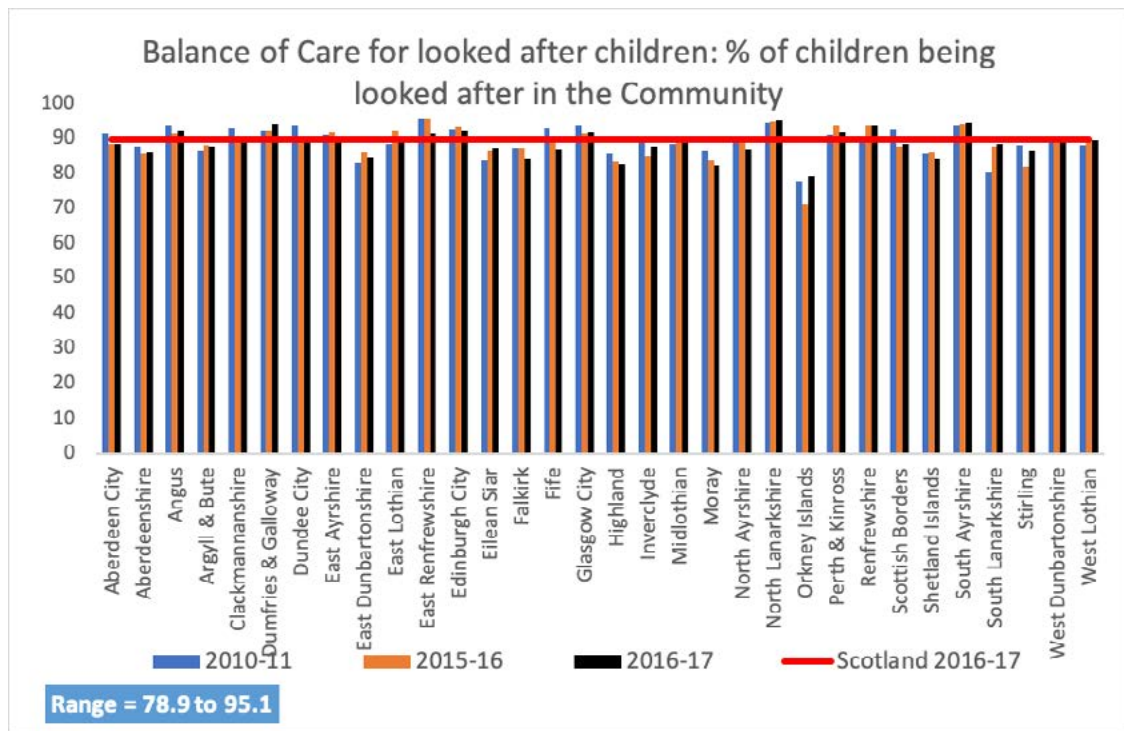
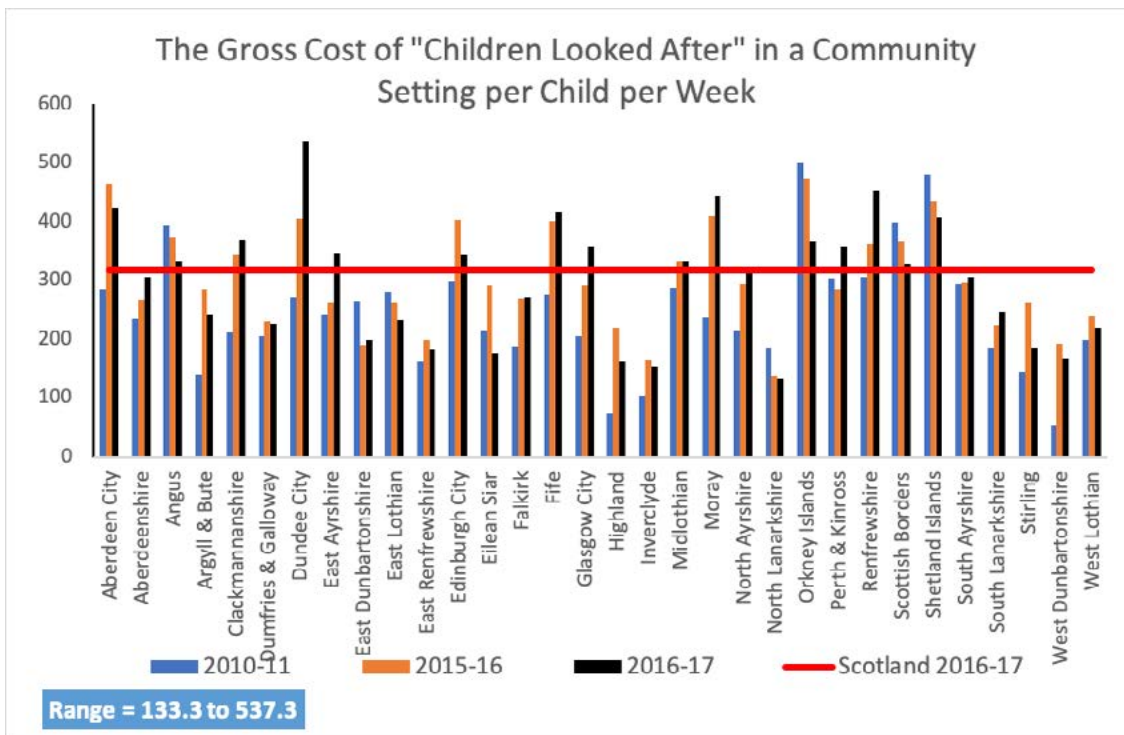




This increase in costs should be considered against the balance achieved between residential and community based care. The proportion (%) of all children who are in the care of their local authority who are being looked after in a community rather than a residential setting has remained around 90-91% since 2010/11, falling to 89.9% in 2016/17. This has decreased slightly in the past 12 months due the slight increase in the number of children in residential care in this period (1,477 to 1,509).

### Variation

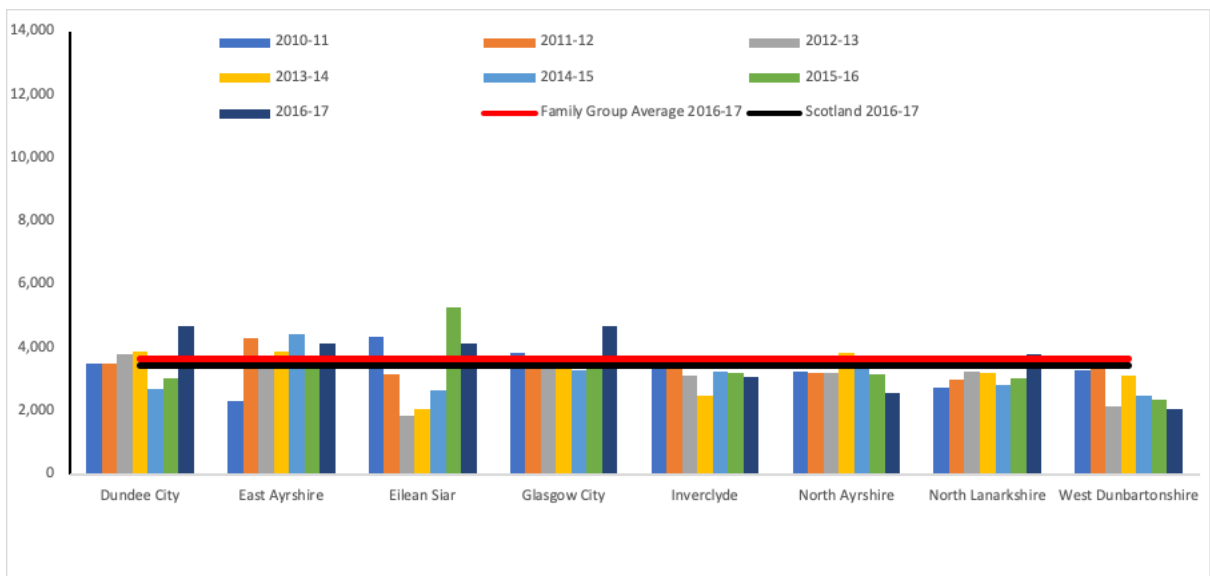




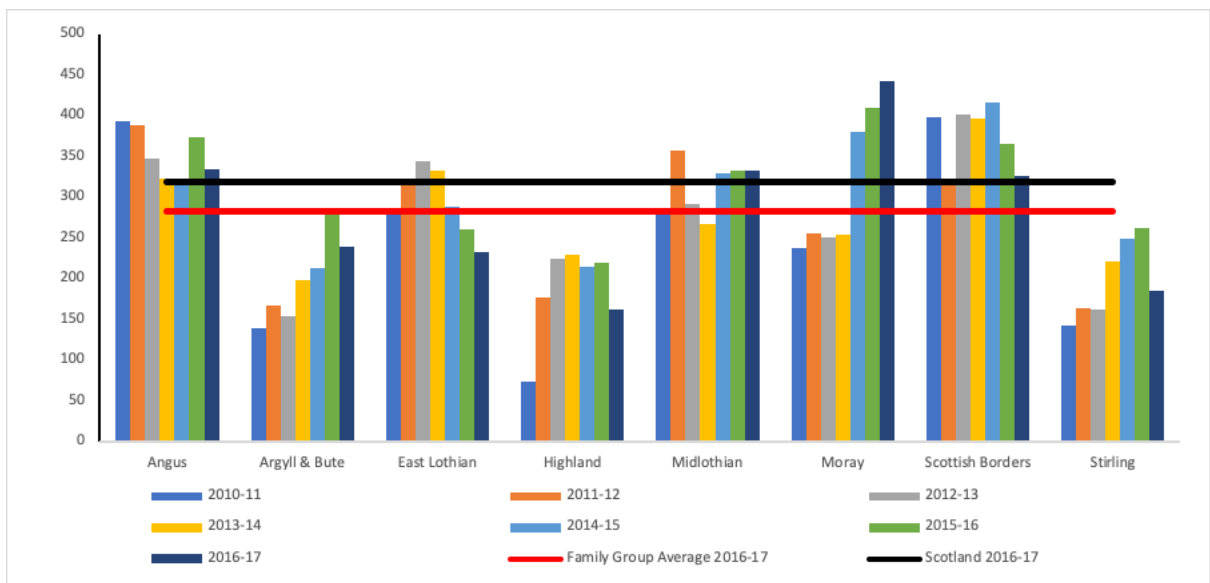
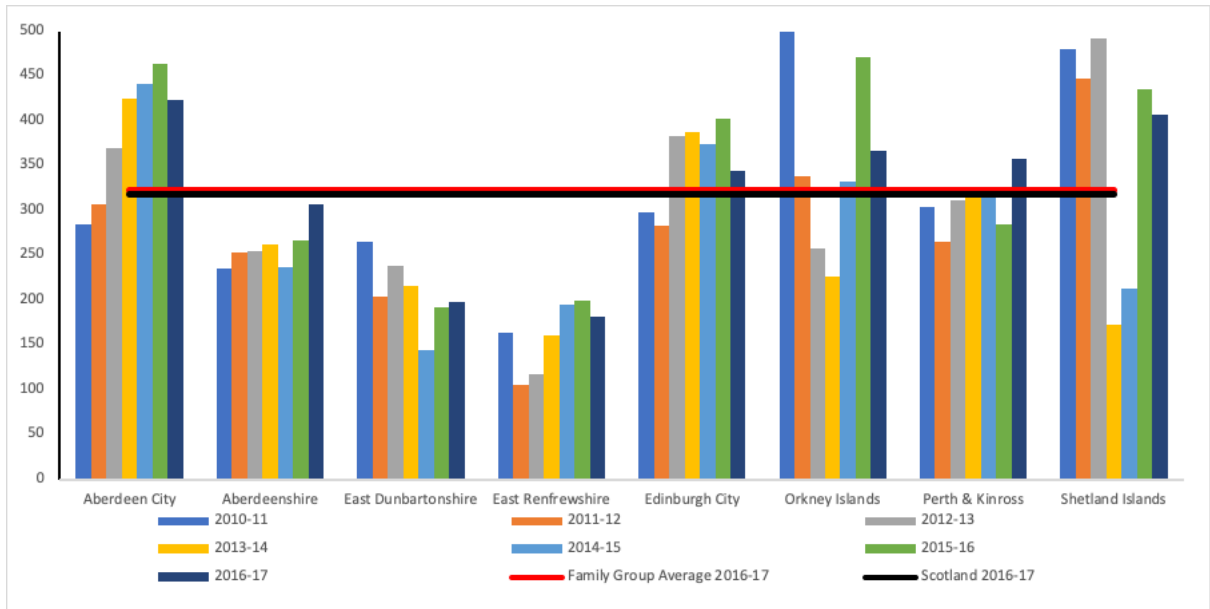
Both costs per place and the overall balance of care vary between councils. Costs range from £1800 - £9096 (per week) per child looked after in a residential setting (£1800 - £4722 excluding outliers), and £133 to £537 weekly in a community setting. The balance of care ranges from 78% to 95%.

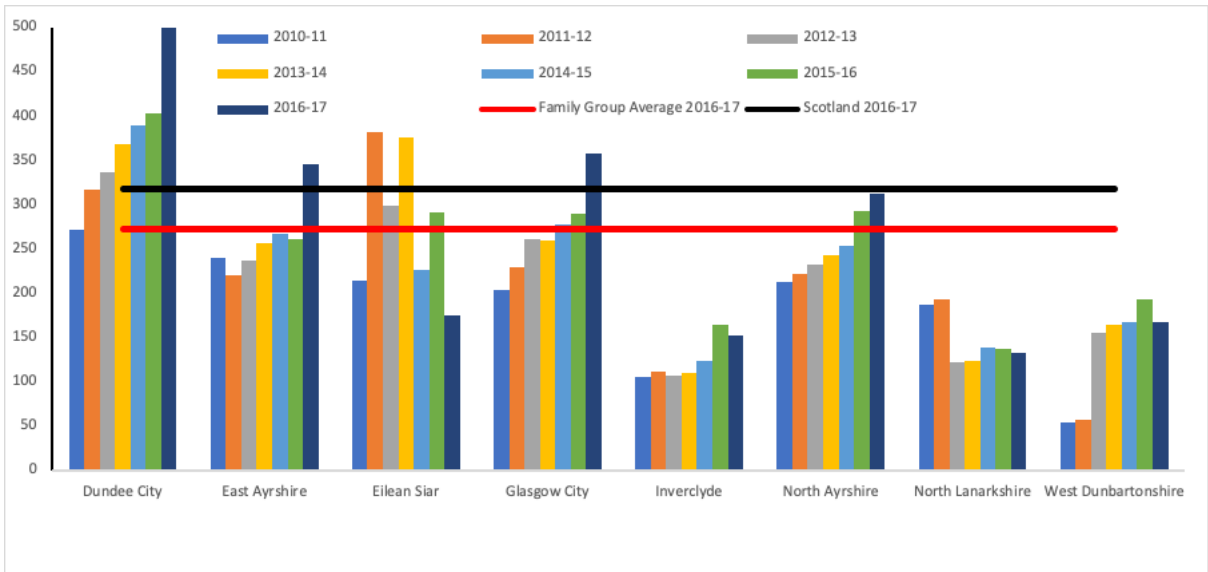
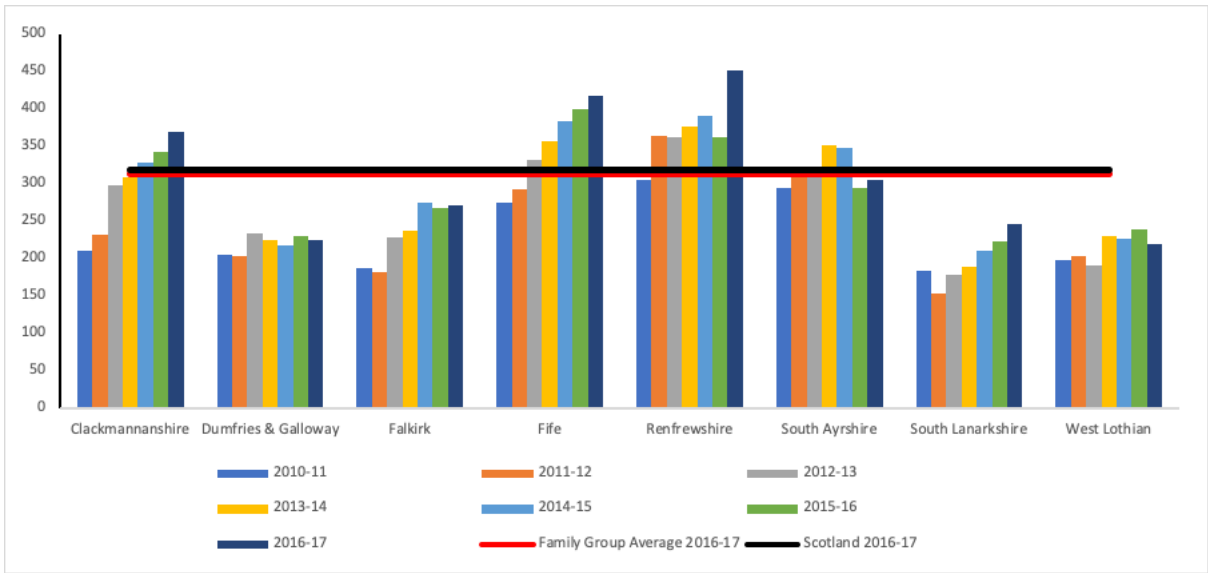
Variation is presented below by Family Group (grouped by level of deprivation). Family Groups with higher levels of deprivation tend to have slightly lower costs per child, particularly in a community setting, and a higher balance of children cared for in the community.



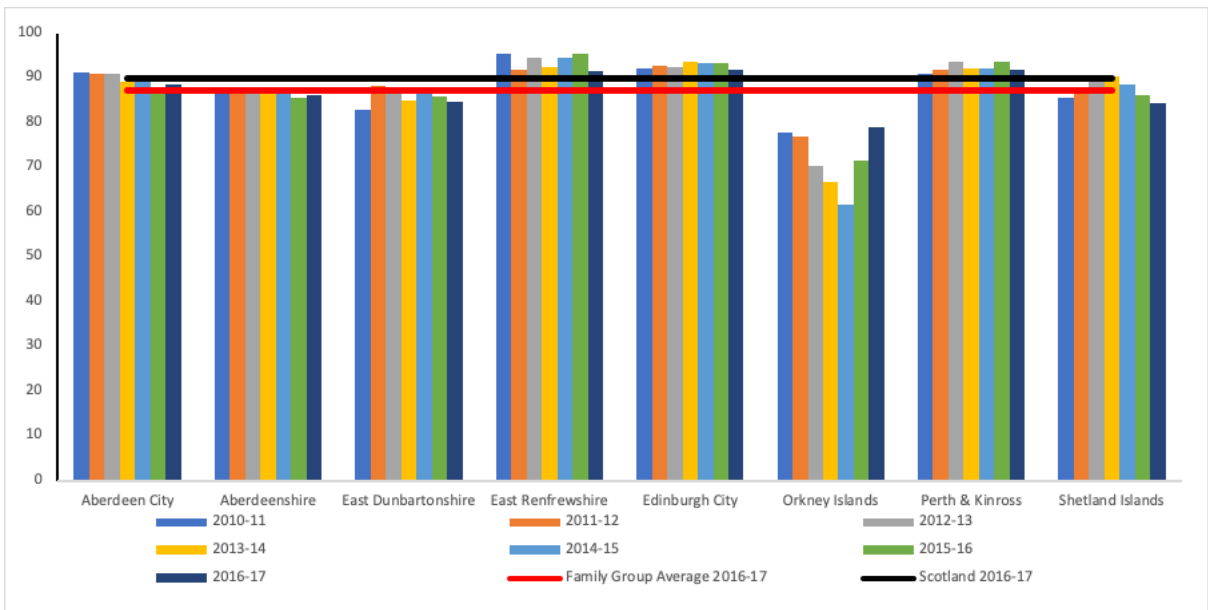


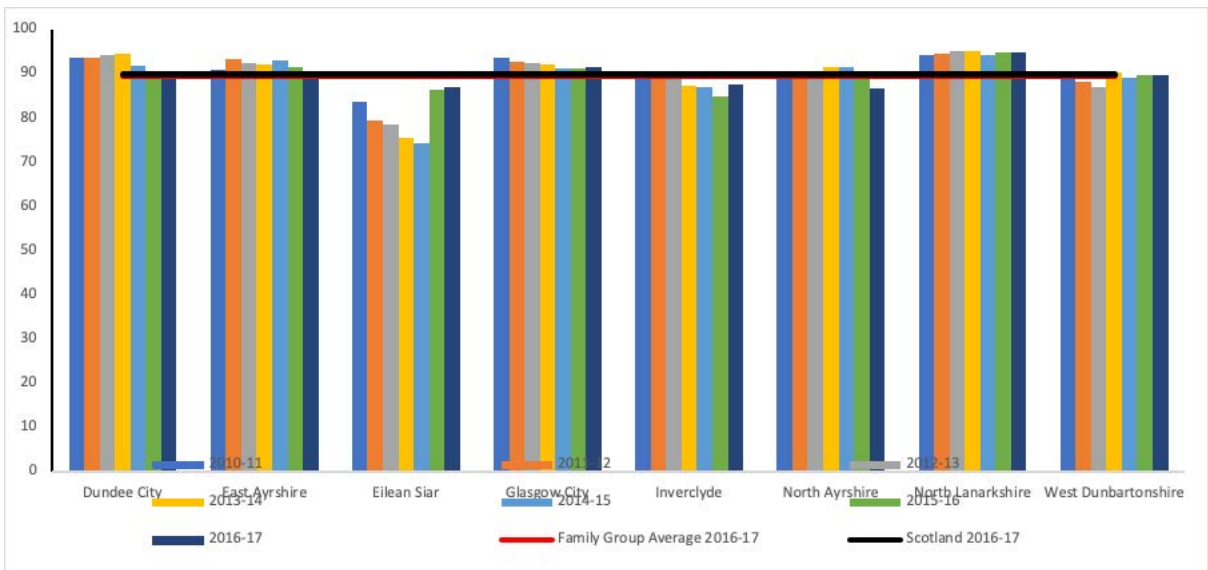
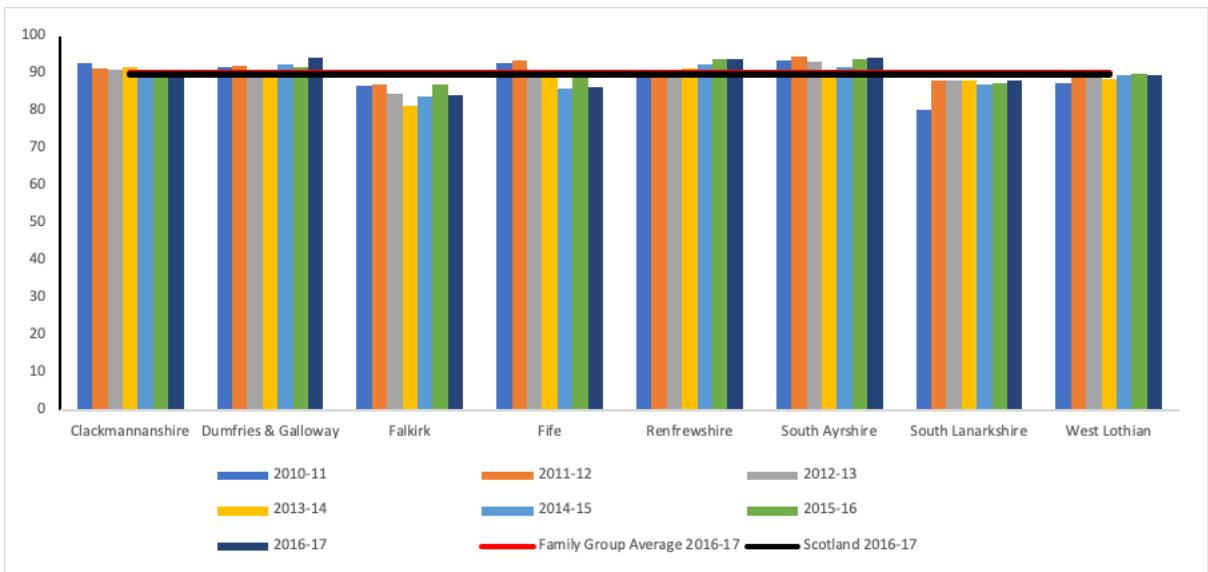
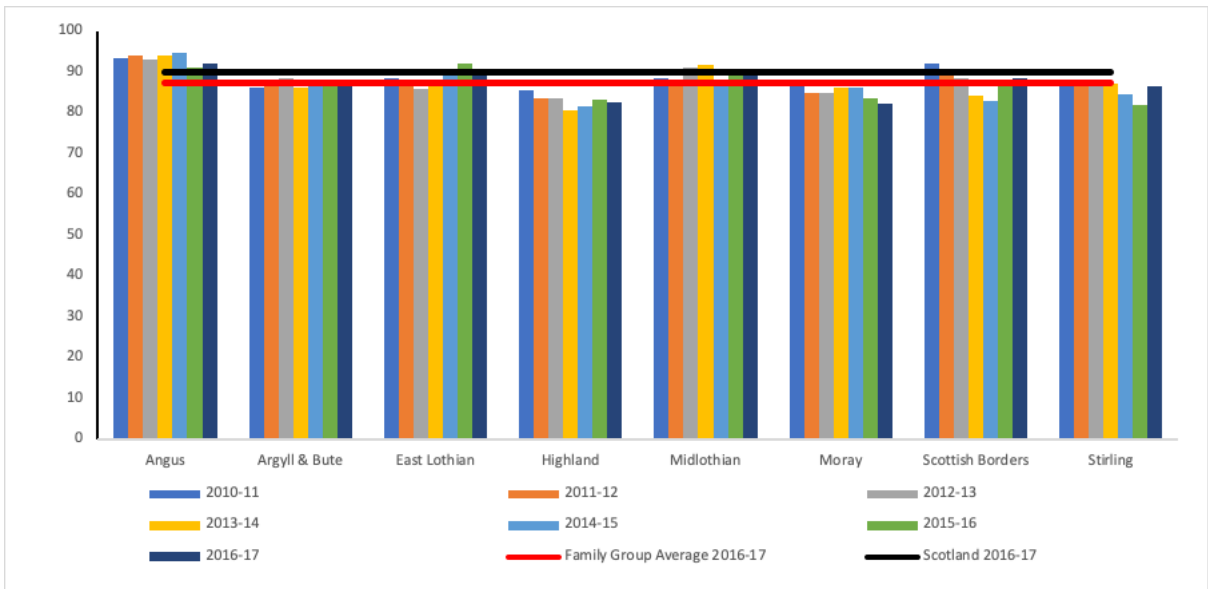
### Cost per child in a community setting – variation by Family Group





### Balance of Care - % of all LAC who are looked after in a community setting





Work within Family Groups has identified the following factors as important in understanding the local variation between authorities in expenditure for looked after children:

- Capacity in relation to local fostering provision
- Commissioning approaches and reliance on external placements
- Strategic priority and investment in early intervention programmes, such as Family Group Decision making, intensive wrap around and community support
- Voluntary/informal provision for children at the edges of care

## Sharing Practice—2018 Benchmarking Event

Looked after Children services across Local Government face a number of common challenges. These include significant capacity issues in relation to fostering provision, demonstrating tangible progress through use of data and evidence, lack of clarity around how to define 'edges of care', and how best to identify and provide support to individuals who fall into this category.

As we proceed, we need to be **clear and explicit about what we are trying to 'prevent'** from happening to children. (Coming into care is not, in itself, a bad outcome.) We need to think about what we are measuring, and how that drives priorities and practice within organisations. The focus must be on **responding early and effectively to the adversities which children and families may experience**. Through that, we can prevent situations escalating. But this also **about 'making things happen' for children**; about making support available, identifying and nurturing potential, providing relationships.

### Edges of Care – the challenges:

- A label without a definition: who is the population on the 'edge of care'?
- Children and families are falling through the gaps; do we have the services and skills to properly meet their needs? How do we stretch between the targeted provision at the top to the universal at the bottom to avoid gaps?

### Use of data and evidence:

- How do we measure performance and progress in this context? What are our data and metrics? And if children and families were asked, what performance indicators would they set us?
- There is available data about the performance of universal services; but the further down the triangle we go, the sparser the data.

## Reducing use of expensive external residential placements

**Falkirk** are developing multi-agency approaches to inclusion and outreach support that allow more children to remain in Falkirk. This 'Closer to Home' strategy aims to bring looked after children/young people back to Falkirk, rather than staying outwith the Local Authority area; thereby reducing the use of expensive external placements. Political and Senior Management buy-in is key to the success of this strategy.

**East Lothian** have successfully reduced their use of external placements by tightening up their internal panel and there has been considerable scrutiny on external placements.

**Highland** have implemented a 'spend to save' strategy; although there has been no reduction in overspend, a potential increase in overspend has been avoided. The budget for LAC has been protected thus far, but no longer, so creative use of resources was needed. Looked at 'No Wrong Door' model in North Yorkshire – where residential provision was closed, and community hubs with robust fostering service were introduced instead. Highland adapted this practice and are in the process of creating a new model of temporary residential provision and multi-agency assessment 'hubs' for young people brought into care accommodation. These hubs will bring together professional teams from education, CAMHS, and speech and language services. When young people enter this accommodation, they will be supported to make plans to support them and avoid future



emergency situations. The investment programme of new buildings has been funded by anticipated savings from reduction in number of out of authority placements – totalling £13 million from authority spend. Highland recognise there is a risk of doing something different, but this has to be balanced against risk of doing nothing different.

### Shifting away from residential to greater community provision

**Falkirk** are placing a greater emphasis on relationship-based approaches, and how to safely manage risks. They are currently exploring ways to create more time for staff to spend with children, young people and their families. Falkirk currently don't have a wraparound service in place, and this has opened up opportunity for discussion around how decisions are made outwith 'normal' working hours. They are keen to explore different ways of working

**East Dunbartonshire** are focused on improving their balance of care, and are interested in learning from approaches adopted by **East Renfrewshire** (who are in Family Group, and have consistently high balance of care).

**Falkirk** have a greater focus on Self Directed Support for children and young people; following successful introduction into adult services. The aim is to release more responsibility to families, and to do things differently, which may mean the need for a culture shift. A key part of this focus includes establishing the views of children/young people and their families; Viewpoint was used to collect examples of what children/young people say regarding their own care. There is also an outcomes framework for those in receipt of statutory measures, with consideration being given to how to measure the non-statutory work.

**East Lothian** have achieved an improvement in balance of care with children/young people in relation to disability, and are aspiring to wider reach including Looked after Children provision. Questions around how best to build into child planning process, and the different focus required for LAC. A focus on changing relationships with families has been identified as key to this process.

**Dundee** are moving towards a more people-focused approach, and moving away from buying in outside provision as this is not the most sustainable option.

### Continuing Care

The provision of Continuing Care has presented challenges in terms of capacity. Young people remaining in care services longer can lead to less capacity for individuals entering care for the first time. Several councils identified the need for investment in the journey to ensure positive outcomes are maintained.

**East Lothian** successfully provide continuing care to 99% of the eligible aftercare cohort; 70-80 young people. The challenge lies in meeting the demand, and having appropriate resources to provide the support and the accommodation required.

**Argyll and Bute:** The council highlighted that they are in a more difficult and complex situation than other council in Scotland, due to geographical challenges. They put emphasis on longer-term care and the transition to adulthood. Their Youth Service provides different services not only on weekdays but on the weekends as well and in out of working hours. The Service helps all young people from ages 11 to 25 to develop different skills, provide experiences and help make friends. Young people leaving care are part of a targeted group of 19-25 year olds facing disadvantage. They work closely with different sectors, such as the voluntary sector and schools.

## Early Intervention

**Edinburgh** invested very heavily in Family Group Decision Making, which has supported a reduction in numbers in foster and kinship care. Celcis and the University of Edinburgh are carrying out research into wellbeing and will have learning regarding the impact of FGDM.

To achieve early intervention **Dundee** are working towards building a more holistic picture of each particular child in need through partnership working; working with psychologists, head teachers and health professionals to better understand the varying needs of the child. The third sector (particularly Barnardo's) are also involved in this approach.

## Effective use of data and evidence

**Falkirk's** Realigning Children's Services programme provides a wellbeing survey which collects results from children/young people and their families. Repeated use of this survey will help show impact over time.

**Scottish Government** are disseminating Looked after Children information better, and are undertaking further analysis to understand the links between datasets – system and outcomes. There is an opportunity for consultation of shared dataset on vulnerable children and young people.

**North Ayrshire** provides data about children in need to schools (e.g. number of LAC in different schools). How the schools use this data for further improvement varies among schools. In order to evaluate and identify relevant data, the Council are looking to implement a more joined-up approach.

**Perth and Kinross** are focusing on the importance of better interpreting the data and understanding the links across different services. The overall number of children in care decreased in the area, but a higher percentage of LAC were in residential care.

**Falkirk** have identified the need for more qualitative data rather than quantitative. Data visualisation would be helpful too. This would lead to making interpretation quicker and easier, and would support reaching the right conclusions.

## Other

**Edinburgh** are aiming to launch as a Child Friendly City, in conjunction with their City Vision 2050. Looking to Leeds Child Friendly City as an example. Leeds have simplified their aims in order to focus and measure progress. One key aim is: 'to safely and appropriately reduce the number of children looked after', which is monitored on a weekly basis.

**Midlothian** have reframed the role of their staff working with looked after children. The grading of staff has changed and staff are now referred to as children's services practitioners. These roles include evening and weekend working as part of the shift pattern.