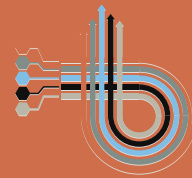




National Benchmarking Overview Report 2020-21



Government
Benchmarking
Framework



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Preface

This is the tenth 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 ten years, this approach has been successful in supporting all 32 Scottish councils to work and learn together.

COVID-19 has altered the landscape and fundamentally affected Local Government services and the lives of the communities it serves. Councils have been at the forefront of the initial and ongoing response; creating new services at pace, working in partnership with communities as well as the third and private sectors, helping to protect those who are vulnerable, and maintaining community wellbeing.

Communities were affected by the pandemic in different ways and councils' responses to COVID-19 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 pressures facing Local Government as we emerge from the pandemic, it will be more important than ever for councils to work together to evaluate and learn from their response to inform the future design, delivery and shape of services. The 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 the financial pressures, growing demand on services, and now the profound effects of COVID-19, there has never been a greater requirement for working with and learning from each other.

Andrew Kerr

Chair of Solace (Scotland)

Councillor Alison Evison

Chair, Improvement Service
COSLA President



Executive Summary



The Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) provides evidence of trends in 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 and over time, providing an essential tool for policy makers and the public.

This year's report introduces data from 2020/21 and provides an evidence-based picture of the impact of the first year of COVID-19 on Local Government services and the lives of the communities it serves. The continuity provided by the LGBF will provide vital intelligence to assist the sector to learn lessons from its response and to strengthen and redesign services around future policy priorities to support recovery and renewal. It will also be critical in helping to track progress against the National Performance Framework (NPF) and in continuing to monitor the role Local Government plays in improving the outcomes in the NPF.

The evidence in this year's LGBF highlights the extraordinary effort and achievements delivered across Local Government during this exceptional period. The workforce has adapted quickly to meet new demands, maintain essential services and implement new ways of working. It will be vital to retain and build on the positive and innovative service and structural redesign which has emerged in response to the pandemic.

However, the evidence also highlights that the impacts of the pandemic on our communities have been, and are likely to continue to be, borne unequally. LGBF data from 2020/21 reveals growing levels of poverty, financial hardship and inequalities. This is evidenced, for example, in the widening attainment gap in literacy and numeracy for primary pupils, and in positive destinations; increasing rent arrears and reducing Council Tax payments; and increasing levels of benefit claimants, particularly in 18-25 year olds.

In 2020/21, councils faced exceptional conditions as a result of COVID-19 which led to significant additional costs, loss of income and undelivered savings. As a result, Scottish Government made additional funding available to councils directly to help mitigate the financial impacts of COVID-19, with funding for the year totalling £1.5 billion, with a significant proportion of this announced late in the financial year.

Total revenue funding for councils in 2020/21 increased by 13% in real terms. However, when non-recurring COVID-19 funding is excluded, the increase in funding is 1.1%. Scottish Government funding has reduced in real terms over the last ten years, falling by 4.2% since 2013/14 and 6.0% since 2010/11 (excluding non-recurring COVID-19 funding).¹

Prior to COVID-19, funding for councils had not been increasing at a sufficient pace to keep up with demands, including: growing demographic pressures (>2% per annum); increasing costs, including the impact of living wage and pay settlements; additional impacts on demand from increasing levels of poverty; and higher public expectations. Councils have also faced increasing national policy and legislative demands, with a growing proportion of funding which has been ring fenced for these initiatives. This reduces the flexibility councils have for deciding how they plan and prioritise the use of funding to respond to local needs and the impact of new policy commitments. The continuation of single year settlements has also limited the ability to undertake, and the effectiveness of, medium to longer term financial planning.

In 2020/21, Local Government revenue expenditure increased by 3.2% in real terms.² Since 2013/14, despite reductions in funding from Scottish Government during this period, Local Government has largely sustained real-terms expenditure levels, however there has been a relative shift of expenditure towards national priorities. Through legislation and Scottish Government policy, expenditure within social care and education continues to be sustained and enhanced. As these areas account for over 70% of the benchmarked expenditure within the LGBF, this therefore has a disproportionate effect on other council services that are

¹ Source: SPICE. As a result of the exceptional impact of COVID on inflation in 2020/21, this real-terms analysis uses an average measure of inflation over the period to try and remove the distortion caused by using just one of the particularly volatile years in the comparison.

² Real terms Local Government expenditure here is based on the SPICE average measure of inflation to allow comparison with Scottish Government funding trends.



not subject to the same legislative or policy requirements. This means they are increasingly in scope to bear a disproportionate share of current and future savings. Since 2010/11, in real terms this has included: 27% reduction in culture and leisure spending; 26% reduction in planning spending; 27% in corporate support service spending; 13% reduction in economic development revenue spending; 25% reduction in roads spending; 34% reduction in trading standards and environmental health spending; and 13% reduction in environmental services spending.

It remains exceptionally challenging to forecast into the future with so many external influences having a material bearing on the economy. The continued uncertainty of the pandemic, limited funding flexibility, real terms reductions in funding at a time of relatively high inflation, 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 longer-term response.

The significant upheaval resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new complexity in relation to the 2020/21 LGBF dataset which will be important when interpreting the data and making comparison with previous years; and with other councils. These include the significantly altered delivery and operating landscapes during this period; data timeliness issues; methodological breaks and data gaps; and the impact of COVID-19 related inflation on expenditure patterns.³

The national trends across each of the key service areas for 2020/21 are presented below and show the scale of the impact of the pandemic on council services. While the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on all councils, local areas experienced the impacts of this pandemic differently. Responses to COVID-19 have exemplified the importance of 'local', with local solutions and responses to local needs and issues, varying both between and within authorities. LGBF performance and expenditure data from 2020/21 reveal substantial variation in both the direction and scale 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 recovery priorities.

Children's services

1. In 2020/21, education spend has increased in real terms by 0.6% (range: -6.1% to +7.9%). This is driven by a 19.6% increase in pre-school expenditure (range: -2.5% to +84.9%), which relates to the continued roll out of the 1140 hours expansion programme. In the same period, primary and secondary expenditure has fallen by 2.3% (range: -9.7% to +6.7%) and 2.0% (range: -8.7% to +6.7%) respectively, counter to the increasing trend observed in previous years. This counter trend is driven by COVID-19 related inflation experienced during 2020/21, which was significantly higher than in previous years.
2. The percentage of funded early years provision graded 'good or better' has improved slightly in 2020/21, from 90.2% to 90.9% (range: -6.7pp to +6.9pp). This is counter to the declining trend observed in previous years and may reflect the significant change to the Care Inspectorate's approach to inspection under COVID-19, and the recent increase in registration cancellations in services with grades 'less than good'.
3. Pupil attendance rates fell by 1pp to 92% in 2020/21 (range: -1.6pp to +1.1pp), with a larger reduction for those councils serving the most deprived communities. Prior to this, attendance rates had remained at or above 93% since 2010/11, although had been showing a slight decline in recent years.
4. Numeracy and literacy attainment levels for primary pupils decreased in 2020/21, from 79.1% to 74.7% and from 72.3% to 66.9% respectively. This decreasing pattern was true for almost all councils,

³ All cost and spend information throughout this report is adjusted for inflation and presented in real terms to allow meaningful comparison over time. Unless otherwise stated, real terms adjustments use GDP deflators as provided by HMT to provide consistency with our previous approach



although differed in scale. The gap between pupils from the most and least disadvantaged areas has widened from 21pp to 25pp in literacy and from 17pp to 21pp in numeracy between 2018/19 and 2021/21.

5. Senior phase attainment levels across both breadth and depth measures are higher in 2020/21 than in previous years, and at their highest levels since 2011/12. The assessment approaches were different in 2020 and 2021, due to the cancellation of exams and external assessment of coursework in 2020, and the use of the Alternative Certification Model in 2021. These results are therefore not directly comparable with previous and future years, and any change in attainment levels during this time should not be seen as an indication that performance has improved or worsened without further evidence.
6. The average tariff in 2020/21 is 972. Councils range from 771 to 1482, with higher tariff rates reported in councils with lower levels of deprivation. In 2020/21, 67% of pupils achieved 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 and 41% at level 6. Rates are lower for pupils from the most deprived communities (49% and 23% respectively). During the COVID-19 pandemic, levels of attainment have continued to increase, and at a faster rate for some levels and some groups than observed previously. However, it is not possible to fully determine the extent to which the coronavirus pandemic and, more specifically, the certification methods used in 2020 and 2021 have affected the attainment levels of the 2019/20 and 2020/21 pupil cohorts.
7. Positive destinations for school leavers fell from 95.1% to 93.3% in 2020 (range: -5pp to +4pp), with a sharper reduction for young people in the most deprived SIMD group. The percentage of leavers in employment fell to a record low in 2020, reflecting the impact of COVID-19 on school leavers' choices and opportunities, and while uptake of higher education increased for all SIMD groups, it did so at a faster rate for the least deprived. In 2021 however, destinations recovered to pre-pandemic levels, increasing from 93.3% to 95.6% (range: -0.6pp to +5.1pp). This reflects an increase in the proportion of leavers entering employment in 2021, which returned to 22.6%, on par with pre-pandemic levels. While this pattern is true for all SIMD groups, the increase was largest for pupils in the most deprived areas, resulting in a narrowing of the deprivation gap to its smallest size since 2011/12. The participation rate increased in 2020/21, which was due to an increase in young adults remaining in or re-entering education (particularly school).
8. Expenditure on children who are looked after reduced by 5.2% in 2020/21 (range: -29% to +28%). This trend is counter to previous years and is influenced in part by the exceptional COVID-19 related inflation experienced during this period, but also is evidence of the recent shift away from the use of more expensive external placements in a number of authorities.
9. 2020/21 data is not yet available for some measures and will be included in the LGBF when it becomes available later in 2022. This includes data on child poverty; child protection and services for children who are looked after; developmental milestones; school exclusions; and public satisfaction with schools.

Adult social care

1. Council expenditure on social care increased in real terms by 1.6% in 2020/21 (range: -6.3% to +12.3%), a continuation of the longer-term trend. Spending on care at home for older people rose by 1.3% (range: -21% to +42%) while spending on residential care fell by 7.9% (range: -31% to +29%) during this year.
2. Care at home provision was largely maintained during 2020/21, with hours delivered reducing by 0.1%. While there was an initial reduction in hours provided during the first lockdown period, this was followed by an increase over the rest of the year to the highest levels observed in a number of years.



Patterns in care at home provision reflect the interplay between several factors occurring during the period, including pressures on frontline services and staff; the increase in care and support provided informally by families (which may have been made possible through furlough); and access to care and support via care homes/hospitals. While these elements will have impacted across all local authority areas, the degree and timing may differ (range in care at home hours provided in 2020/21: -16% to +19%).

3. In 2020/21, the number of residents in care homes reduced from 31,050 to 30,125, a 5.8% decrease. Care homes and their residents have been acutely affected by COVID-19. Residents of care homes for older people experienced a particularly high rate of COVID-19 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. A number of other COVID-19 related factors also impacted on care home provision during this time. This includes the transfer of patients from hospitals into care homes; the closure of care homes to new residents; many of those at home remaining at home (with family often providing care and support on an informal basis); and finally staffing absence and recruitment issues. While these elements may be important across all local authority areas, there will be differences in timing and degree.
4. Reflecting these trends in home care and residential care, the overall proportion of those in need of personal care who were cared for at home increased by 1 percentage point in 2020/21, to 62% (range: -5.9pp to +5.1pp). This is a continuation of the longer-term trend which has seen efforts focussed on shifting the balance of care between acute and institutional settings to home or a homely setting.
5. The level of delayed discharges reduced by 37% in 2020/21 (range: -71% to +89%). This reflects significant reductions in non-COVID-19 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 acquiring infection in hospital.
6. The rate of readmissions within 28 days increased by 14.7% in 2020/21 (range: -8% to +46%). Importantly, the actual number of readmissions within 28 days fell by almost 20% (range: -40% to +26%) however the rate of readmissions increased due to a 30% reduction in the denominator, the total number of discharges, which reduced largely due to cancelled or delayed elective activity during the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. In 2020/21, the proportion of total social work spend allocated via Direct Payments and Personalised Managed Budgets rose from 7.8% to 8.2%. Supported people in urban authorities remain more likely to opt for personalised managed budgets.
8. The percentage of adult care services graded 'good' or better in Care Inspectorate inspections increased from 81.8% to 82.5%, counter to the previous declining trend. The recent upward trend may reflect the significant change to the Care Inspectorate's approach to inspection under COVID-19, and the recent increase in registration cancellations in services with grades 'less than good'. Quality gradings remain significantly lower in the most deprived council areas.

Culture and leisure services

1. COVID-19 restrictions have seen visitor numbers significantly impacted across culture and leisure services, reducing by 91.3% for sports and leisure facilities, 68.4% for museums and galleries, and 33.8% for libraries. The growth in virtual visits for libraries and museums, has offset the reduction in physical visits to some extent.
2. Overall gross revenue expenditure on culture and leisure services has fallen by 6% in 2020/21, a continuation of the longer-term trend. This reflects significant reductions in net expenditure for libraries



and museums, by 10% and 8% respectively. In contrast, expenditure on sports and leisure increased by 20.9% during 2020/21 as councils moved to compensate ALEOs/Trusts for loss of income as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. As this compensation for loss of income from COVID-19 cannot be sustained over the medium term, this is an area which will require close monitoring.

3. These trends have seen unit costs for visits to culture and leisure facilities increase by over 1000% for sports, 35% for libraries, and by 191% for museums.

Environmental services

1. Overall spend on environmental services reduced by 4.5% in 2020/21, continuing the longer term trend. This includes expenditure reductions in waste disposal (-1.5%; range: -45% to +39%) and collection (-3.6%; range: -28% to +18%), street cleaning (-7%; range: -37% to +46%) and trading standards and environmental health (-12%; range: -31% to +9%). Unit costs reduced in each of these areas as a result of reduced spend.
2. Recycling rates dropped in 2020/21 by 2.9 percentage points to 42.8% (range: -17pp to +14pp). This is counter to the previous trend and is the lowest rate since 2013/14. This reflects a small increase in residential waste in most areas due to lockdowns keeping families at home and increased homeworking; a drop in recycling due to contamination/capacity issues for households; and the temporary closure of household waste recycling centres due to COVID-19.
3. In 2020/21, 90.1% of streets were assessed as 'clean', a decrease of 1.1 percentage points in the past 12 months (range: -11.1pp to +7.4pp). While this recent reduction is in line with the trend in previous years, it may have been exacerbated by the pause in litter picking, alongside the closure of recycling centres and the reported increase in fly tipping during the most recent year. Urban and more deprived council areas report significantly lower scores compared to rural and more affluent areas (87% in urban compared to 93% in rural; 89% in more deprived areas compared to 95% in more affluent areas).
4. Expenditure on roads reduced by 6.6% in 2020/21 to £9,667 per kilometer (range: -48% to +188%). This continues the long-term reducing trend in expenditure. Costs remain significantly higher for urban authorities. Meanwhile, there were small improvements in the condition of A, B and C class roads, which largely reflect a change to the methodology during 2020/21. While not yet evident in the data, the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on roads services has resulted in a reduction in planned work and a reliance on reactive repairs of defects to keep road networks safe, and this will inevitably lead to a backlog of repair work.

Corporate services

1. Expenditure on corporate support services reduced in real terms by 3% in 2020/21 (range: -44% to +15%) continuing the longer-term trend. As a percentage of gross revenue expenditure this represents 4.1%, a slight increase of 0.1pp since 2019/20 (range: -2.2pp to +9.9pp). Rural authorities tend to have higher costs, however, have experienced larger reductions in recent years.
2. Council tax collection rates reduced by 1pp in 2020/21, counter to the previous increasing trend, while the cost of council tax collection continued to fall (-5% in 2020/21). All 32 authorities saw their council tax collection rates reduce in 2020/21, while two thirds saw their costs reduce. During this time, councils purposefully stepped down collection follow-up activities in recognition of the financial challenges facing communities. Councils serving the most deprived communities reported a sharper reduction in collection rates in 2020/21 (-1.2pp compared to -0.9pp in the least deprived communities). The method of payment is important in understanding the pattern of variation, with areas with higher levels of Direct Debit payment less impacted than those more deprived communities with higher levels



of cash payments.

3. Staff absence (non-COVID-19 related) reduced sharply in 2020/21, reducing by 35% for teachers and by 18% for non-teaching staff. Beneath the high-level data, the picture that emerges during this period is one of lower short-term absence (presumably driven by the increased flexibility delivered through home working) but increasing incidence of long-term absence (including mental ill health and stress). It is important to note that during this time, Councils were also having to manage significant levels of COVID-19 related absence.
4. In 2020/21, the gender pay gap widened slightly, by 0.3pp (range: -1.3pp to +3.8pp), counter to the previous narrowing trend. Redeployment strategies, and the sharp growth in the number of cleansing and care staff employed in response to COVID-19 may be important factors in relation to this recent movement.
5. The percentage of invoices paid within 30 days increased by 0.1pp to 91.8% in 2020/21 (range: -16.7% to +20.5%). This is counter to the small dip in performance observed the previous 2 years and may reflect the reduced number of invoices received and paid during 2020/21 as a result of COVID-19.
6. For corporate assets, while the condition of internal floor area continued to improve in 2020/21, the percentage of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use declined very slightly, by 0.2pp. This will be an area to monitor closely to understand what implications the introduction of hybrid working may have for the asset base as we emerge from the pandemic.

Housing

1. The level of rent arrears rose sharply in 2020/21, increasing from 7.3% to 8.2% (range: -0.9pp to +3.4pp). While this may in part be due to the temporary ban on enforcing eviction orders, introduced as part of the COVID-19 response, it also reflects that some people faced a significant loss of income during COVID-19. This may have worsened existing arrears problems, and also potentially resulted in more people finding themselves having problems paying their rent for the first time. Rent arrears rose faster in those councils with lower over-all levels of deprivation (increasing by 2.2pp compared with 0.8pp in those council areas with the highest deprivation levels).
2. Rent lost due to voids increased by 0.3pp to 1.4% in 2020/21 (range: -0.1pp to +2.1pp), the highest recorded level. Meanwhile, the average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs reduced by 0.7% to 7.3 days (range: -45% to 150%) in line with the longer-term trend. While the percentage of energy efficient council dwellings continued to increase, from 84.1% to 86.4% in 2020/21 (range: -5.8pp to +14.3pp), there was a 4.5pp reduction in the percentage of council dwellings which meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS), falling from 94.9% to 90.3% (range: -35.5pp to +3.8pp). The mixed picture evident in housing quality in 2020/21 reflects the impact of the pandemic on landlords ability to deliver core services such as repairing homes, letting empty homes, and the curtailment of planned investment programmes, including those to build new homes and to achieve the SHQS and the Energy Efficiency Standard in Social Housing.

Economic development and planning

1. Economic development and tourism expenditure have reduced by 20% in 2020/21 (range: -86% to + 52%), decreasing from £600 million to £480 million. This represents a 4.7% increase in revenue expenditure (range: -47% to +85%), and a 53% reduction in capital expenditure (range: -833% to + 1191%).
2. In terms of employment services, the percentage of unemployed people supported into work fell from 12.7% to 6.0% in 2020/21, while claimant count rose from 3.3% to 6.1%. Claimant count rose faster



among young people, increasing from 3.9% to 7.2%. 70% of employee job losses between March 2020 and May 2021 in the UK were among under 25s. Much of this disproportionate impact on young people is driven by the fact that under-25s are more likely to work in sectors such as hospitality and retail and leisure which were particularly severely impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.

3. In planning services, there has been a 5.1% reduction in terms of efficiency in processing business and industry planning applications in 2020/21, increasing from 10.5 weeks to 11.1 weeks (range: -57% to +117%). In parallel, there has been a 5.2% reduction in planning expenditure and an 11% reduction in the number of planning applications, resulting in cost per application rising by 6.5% (range: -46% to +63%). Planning application processing was impacted by the move to home working, restrictions on travel and site access, reduced availability of agents and consultees, and staffing and resourcing issues due to the impact of COVID-19.
4. In terms of infrastructure for business, the Business Gateway start-up rate reduced significantly from 16.4 to 11.2 (range: -98% to +49%). This is an acceleration of the previous trend, and reflects increased levels of uncertainty in the economy, labour shortages and disrupted supply chains, and redeployment of council staff to distribute COVID-19 support grants and advice for established businesses.
5. Procurement spend on local enterprises has continued the upward trend in 2020/21, increasing from 28.7% to 29.1% in 2020/21 (range: -9.9pp to +7.4pp). As local authorities spend almost 50% of their total budget annually on procurement, it will provide a key economic lever in local recovery efforts. As councils face increasing costs and shortages in staff and supply chains in the coming period, it will be important to monitor this area closely.
6. Town vacancy rates increased from 11.7% to 12.4% in 2020/21 (range: -6.1pp to +6.1pp), the highest rate since LGBF reporting began. Rates had been relatively stable since 2014/15, but it is expected that business closures due to the impact of COVID-19 will drive town vacancy rates upwards in the medium term. Vacancy rates remain significantly higher in council areas serving more deprived communities.
7. Access to superfast broadband has continued to grow in 2020/21, increasing from 93.3% to 93.8% (range: -0.5pp to +2.6pp). The rate of improvement (0.5pp) has slowed in comparison with previous years as the indicator reaches a ceiling. Digital connectivity is an increasingly important consideration in terms of economic competitiveness and inclusion, as has been so clearly illustrated throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Rural authorities continue to experience significantly lower rates of access than urban authorities, 81.7% compared to 97.5% respectively.
8. The percentage of people in work earning less than the real living wage reduced in 2020/21 from 16.9% to 15.2% (range: -7.4pp to +5.4pp). This is a continuation of the longer-term trend. However, those councils serving communities with lower overall levels of deprivation, reported an average increase in the proportion of people earning less than the living wage, compared to reducing rates in councils serving more deprived communities (1.9pp increase compared to a 2.8pp decrease). This will be affected by the pattern of furlough during COVID-19, and also the trend which saw lower-paid people at greater risk of losing their jobs, with overall average earnings for those remaining in work increasing as a result of fewer lower paid people in the workforce.

Financial sustainability

1. During 2020/21, overall levels of General Fund Reserves increased markedly, from 16.9% to 23.6% (range: +1.2pp to +15.6pp). This is due to the timing and nature of additional COVID-19 funding which has contributed to a significant carry forward of reserves. It is important to note that most of the funding carried forward is committed for COVID-19 recovery over the medium term, therefore limiting the flexibility with which councils can use these balances.



2. Uncommitted General Fund Balance as a percentage of council annual budgeted net revenue has remained stable at 3.5%, within the approved rate for such balances of 2% to 4%.
3. The proportion of council revenue income being used to service debt has continued to fall, reducing from 7.2% to 6.2% in 2020/21 (range: -3.7pp to +0.7pp). This may reflect the significant reduction in capital investment during 2020/21.
4. Actual outturn as a percentage of budgeted expenditure has reduced from 99.4% to 97.4% in 2020/21 (range: -9.7pp to +6.7pp). This is counter to the previous trend which had shown slight but steady improvement across the period and is now the lowest percentage since LGBF reporting began. This again reflects the timing and nature of additional COVID-19 funding and the significant carry forward of reserves.

Introduction and Key Messages

COVID - 19

Town centre closed
to all traffic except
local buses, loading
& disabled badge
holders.



Left turn only
New Street



This year's report introduces data from 2020/21 and reflects the impact of the first year of COVID-19. The pandemic has altered the landscape and fundamentally affected Local Government services and the lives of the communities it serves. 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. The workforce has adapted quickly to meet new demands, maintain essential services and implement new ways of working. Critical to this, 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 COVID-19 on communities and on Local Government services. The framework will be critical in assisting the sector to learn lessons from its response and to strengthen and redesign services to support recovery and renewal.

The focal points in this section are:

1. Impacts on local communities
2. Local Government financial context
3. Health and social care pressures
4. Local variation
5. The complexity in this year's data

1. Impacts on local communities

The impacts of the pandemic on our communities have been, and are likely to continue to be, borne unequally. Early evidence of this can be seen clearly in LGBF data from 2020/21, with growing levels of poverty, financial hardship and inequalities evident across several areas. It is worth noting that national data for the 2020/21 period is not yet available for some critical areas such as child poverty, developmental milestones, and child protection.

Children and education

COVID-19 and the resulting lockdowns have had a significant impact on learning for children, and it is likely that the closure of schools in March 2020 and January 2021 has 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 difficult to interpret the trends in the senior phase due to the different assessment methods during COVID-19, clear evidence of impact is emerging in relation to primary achievement levels, school attendance rates, and positive destinations.

In terms of achievement for primary pupils, there is a widening of the attainment gap for both literacy and numeracy levels. The gap between pupils from the most and least disadvantaged areas has widened from 21pp to 25pp in literacy and from 17pp to 21pp in numeracy between 2018/19 and 2021/21.

Further evidence of the disproportionate impact on children and young people from more deprived communities can be seen in school attendance rates. During 2020/21, although attendance rates fell in almost all council areas, rates showed a bigger decline in those councils serving the most deprived communities (a 1.0pp reduction from 92.2% to 91.2% compared to a 0.1pp reduction from 94.1% to 94.0% in the least deprived communities).

A similar trend can also be seen in the destinations of school leavers during 2020. While positive destinations reduced for all SIMD groups in 2020, they fell by more amongst leavers from the most deprived areas, increasing the deprivation gap, from 5.4pp to 6.3pp. During 2020, the proportion entering employment decreased to a record low, and 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. While it is encouraging that for school leavers in 2021, positive destination rates have recovered to 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.

Financial hardship

Signs of growing financial hardship for families are evident in levels of council tax payments and rent arrears. All 32 authorities saw their council tax collection rates reduce in 2020/21. During this time, councils purposefully stepped down collection follow-up activities in recognition of the financial challenges facing communities. Councils serving the most deprived councils reported a sharper reduction in collection rates in 2020/21 (-1.2pp compared to -0.9pp in the least deprived communities). The method of payment is important in understanding the pattern of variation, with areas with higher levels of Direct Debit payment less impacted than those more deprived communities with higher levels of cash payments. This longer-term trend has been exacerbated by COVID-19 and highlights the need for digital exclusion to be at the heart of efforts to tackle poverty.

The level of rent arrears rose sharply in 2020/21, from 7.3% to 8.2%. While this may in part be due to the temporary ban on enforcing eviction orders, introduced as part of the COVID-19 response, it also reflects that some people faced a significant loss of income during COVID. This may have worsened existing arrears problems, and also potentially resulted in more people finding themselves having problems paying their rent for the first time. LGBF data shows faster rising levels of rent arrears for those councils with lower overall levels of deprivation (increasing by 2.2pp compared with 0.8pp in those council areas with the highest deprivation levels). The statutory five-week wait for Universal Credit continues to be a significant contributory issue in relation to rent arrears, and this has been exacerbated by COVID-19 with unprecedented levels of new Universal Credit applications during 2020/21.

Unemployment and low pay

The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in significant disruption in economic activity and the labour market, adversely impacting household incomes as many workers have been made redundant, furloughed or have had a reduction in their working hours or wages. This has resulted in unprecedented levels of financial distress and hardship particularly for those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. LGBF data shows the percentage of unemployed people supported into work fell from 12.7% to 6.0% in 2020/21, while Claimant Count rose from 3.3% to 6.1%. Claimant count rose faster among young people, increasing from 3.9% to 7.2%. 70% of employee job losses between March 2020 and May 2021 in the UK were among under 25s. Much of this disproportionate impact on young people is driven by the fact that under-25s are more likely to work in sectors such as hospitality and retail and leisure which were particularly severely impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.

Meanwhile, although the overall percentage of people in work earning less than the real living wage reduced in 2020/21 from 16.9% to 15.2%, the true picture is more complex. LGBF data shows that those councils serving communities with lower overall levels of deprivation, reported an average increase in the proportion of people earning less than the living wage, compared to reducing rates in councils serving more deprived communities (a 1.9pp increase compared to a 2.8pp decrease). This will be affected by the pattern of furlough during COVID-19, and also the trend which saw lower-paid people at greater risk of losing their jobs, with overall average earnings for those remaining in work increasing as a result of fewer lower paid people in the workforce.

2. Local Government financial context

COVID-19 has required a fiscal response from both UK and Scottish governments which is without precedent in modern times. Major sums of funding have been made available to support and protect businesses, jobs, the economy, households and frontline services across the public sector. It is not yet clear what the medium to longer term impact of this will be on the national and local economies and on funding levels available to support public services.

In 2020/21, councils faced exceptional conditions as a result of COVID-19 which led to significant additional costs, loss of income and undelivered savings. As a result, Scottish Government made additional funding available to councils directly to help mitigate the financial impacts of COVID-19, with funding for the year totalling £1.5 billion, with a significant proportion of this announced late in the financial year.

Councils took on additional responsibilities during 2020/21, including the administration of COVID-19 support grants to local businesses and individuals on behalf of the Scottish Government. This placed a significant additional burden on a wide range of council staff, with grants of over £1.4 billion awarded during the year.

Scottish Government funding for councils

Total revenue funding for councils in 2020/21 increased by 13% in real terms. However, when non-recurring COVID-19 funding is excluded, the increase in funding is 1.1%. The increase does not however capture the consequences of the costs of new policy burdens which for 2020/21 were £590 million in the Local Government budget,⁴ and thus actually represents a real terms reduction in core funding. Scottish Government funding has reduced in real terms over the last ten years, with real terms funding falling by 4.2% since 2013/14 and by 6.0% since 2010/11 (excluding non-recurring COVID-19 funding).⁵

Prior to COVID-19, funding for councils had not been increasing at a sufficient pace to keep up with the demands facing councils, including: growing demographic pressures (>2% per annum); increasing costs, including the impact of living wage and pay settlements; additional impacts on demand from increasing levels of poverty; and higher public expectations. Councils have also faced increasing national policy and legislative demands, with a growing proportion of funding which has been ring fenced for these initiatives. This reduces the flexibility councils have for deciding how they plan and prioritise the use of funding to respond to local needs and the impact of new policy commitments. The continuation of single year settlements has also limited the ability to undertake, and the effectiveness of, medium to longer term financial planning. This was one of the requirements of the 2017 review by the Scottish Government on budget setting.

Local Government expenditure

In 2020/21, Local Government revenue expenditure increased by 3.2% in real terms.⁶ Understanding how and why spend has changed this year is complex due to factors such as the nature and timing of additional COVID-19 funding, non-recurring fiscal flexibilities, additional expenditure to deliver new policy commitments, such as ELC 1140 hours, and the impact of COVID-19 on mainstream budgets. The latter saw additional expenditure across a range of areas: higher costs from social distancing guidelines and price volatility; loss of income; rapid and wholesale shift to home-working models; service redesign; staff redeployment; and increased partnership working.

4 <https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/2020/2/14/Local-Government-Finance--Budget-2020-21-and-provisional-allocations-to-local-authorities/SB%2020-16.pdf>

5 Source: SPICE. As a result of the exceptional impact of COVID on inflation in 2020/21, SPICE real-terms analysis uses an average measure of inflation over the period to try and remove the distortion caused by using just one of the particularly volatile years in the comparison.

6 Real terms Local Government expenditure in this section is based on the SPICE average measure of inflation to allow comparison with Scottish Government funding trends.

It is important to note that while most authorities reported an increase in earmarked reserves in 2020/21, this is due to the timing and nature of additional COVID-19 funding announced late in the financial year and which has contributed to a significant carry forward of reserves. However, this funding is carried forward as committed for COVID-19 recovery over the medium term, therefore limiting the flexibility with which councils can use these balances. Councils have no assurance or notification of future COVID-19 funding so it is difficult to plan for its use where current reserves may be required for councils throughout the next period.

Over the longer term, despite reductions in funding from Scottish Government, Local Government has largely sustained real-terms expenditure levels since 2013/14. Total General Fund expenditure by councils has grown in real terms by 2.7% since 2013/14 while funding from Scottish Government has reduced by 4.2% during this period (excluding non-recurring COVID-19 funding).

Scottish Government funding accounts for approximately 70% of councils' total income, with the remaining 30% being constituted by income from council tax, the planned use of reserves, income carried forward and through fees and charges. The reduction in Scottish Government funding places significant emphasis on council tax and fees and charges as the main levers generally available to councils to assist in achieving financial balance. There is a gearing effect within this funding ratio, which means that in order to offset a reduction in Scottish Government funding, a disproportionate increase in council tax, charges or use of reserves is required at a local level. It is important to recognise that council tax has not been a lever generally available given the cap in place since 2008 until now.

The resulting financial gap occurs where anticipated income is less than planned expenditure. Historically this gap has driven the need to transform services to be more efficient and effective to suit future demands, or to reduce or ration service provision. To implement such options is challenging in a pandemic where priorities have naturally shifted, and resources moved to accommodate these changes. Transformation requires to be re-evaluated, with significant aspects now on hold until new priorities become formalised and policy decisions are clarified, for example, the outcome of the National Care Service consultation. More risky options may have to be used in the immediate future to bridge that gap including the use of council's finite reserves, utilising fiscal flexibilities, deferring debt repayments and reducing services.

Protected and unprotected spend

While Local Government has largely sustained real-terms expenditure levels since 2013/14, there has been a relative shift of expenditure towards national priorities. While the picture of spend in 2020/21 is complex, nonetheless it is clear that the previous trend in relation to protected and unprotected spend across Local Government services has continued. Through legislation and Scottish Government policy, expenditure within social care and education continues to be sustained and enhanced. This is often aligned to ringfenced funding. As these areas account for over 70% of the benchmarked expenditure within the LGBF, this therefore has a disproportionate effect on other council services that are not subject to the same legislative or policy requirements. This means they are increasingly in scope to bear a disproportionate share of current and future savings. Since 2010/11, in real terms this has included: 27% reduction in culture and leisure spending; 26% reduction in planning spending; 27% in corporate support service spending; 13% reduction in economic development revenue spending; 25% reduction in roads spending; 34% reduction in trading standards and environmental health spending; and 13% reduction in environmental services spending.

The overall pattern is clear and unsurprising. councils are left with little flexibility 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. While there is clear evidence of a shift towards prevention with the emphasis on early years, the reductions witnessed across some service areas may have significant implications for other equally important priorities, not least our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these services are central to health and wellbeing priorities (culture and leisure services; planning services) and inclusive growth (economic development). And some are critical to Scotland's post Brexit offer (the quality of infrastructure, the integrity and responsiveness of the regulatory system).

Table 1 gives the breakdown of spending by service since 2010.

Table 1: Real Change in Revenue Expenditure Since 2010/11 (£000s)

	Scotland 2010/11	Scotland 2019/20	Scotland 2020/21	% Change from 2019/20 to 2020/21	% Change from 2010/11 to 2020/21
Education	£4,802,311	£5,200,755	£5,453,389	4.9%	13.6%
Looked After Children	£466,305	£536,828	£530,292	-1.2%	18.8%
Adult Social Care	£3,073,919	£3,540,172	£3,749,473	5.9%	22.0%
Culture and Leisure	£615,556	£458,844	£449,748	-2.0%	-26.9%
Environmental Services	£831,627	£725,282	£722,202	-0.4%	-13.2%
Roads	£695,773	£533,409	£519,338	-2.6%	-25.4%
Planning	£148,352	£110,910	£109,599	-1.2%	-26.1%
Economic Development and Tourism	£413,026	£330,334	£360,682	9.2%	-12.7%
Central Support Services	£943,503	£683,118	£690,895	1.1%	-26.8%

Note: Real terms expenditure trends in this table apply the average measure of inflation as set out by SPICE. In the remainder of the report, GDP deflators as provided by HMT are used to provide consistency with our previous approach.

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, except Residential Social Care which are based on net expenditure.

Future financial position

There is little doubt COVID-19 has exacerbated the financial 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 in relation to future funding, pay, inflation, COVID-19 and the implications resulting from the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

It remains exceptionally challenging to forecast into the future with so many external influences having a material bearing on the economy. It is not currently clear what the medium to longer term impact of the COVID-19 outbreak will have on the economy and on funding levels available to support public services.

As we look longer term there are a series of other factors which create further uncertainty about the challenges councils will face.

- 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.
- Welfare reform will continue to pose a challenge into the longer term. Welfare Rights services will become ever more important in helping tenants maximise benefits in order that they can pay rent and tax. It will be important to closely monitor data on rent arrears and council tax payments in the period ahead to understand the impacts on the financial security for low-income households.
- The continuance of health and social care integration brings significant challenges in the a context of increasing demand and insufficient funding, alongside uncertainty in relation to ongoing deliberations on the implementation of a National Care Service (NCS).
- There remains uncertainty in relation to the longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our way of life and the potential impact this may have on the delivery of public services. For example, the extent to which people's recreation habits will return to pre-pandemic levels is not yet clear, nor is the impact this may have on leisure trusts' future income levels and town centre footfall and economic development.
- 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, limited funding flexibility, real terms reductions in funding at a time of relatively high inflation, 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 longer-term response.

3. Health and social care pressures

The scale of the challenge of keeping people who need social care safe and in providing high-quality health and social care during the pandemic was immense. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, social care is 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. Despite the extraordinary challenges during this period, the exceptional efforts of the workforce during a very difficult time ensured the continuation of service delivery and the protection of people from vulnerable situations.

Social care services were successful in maintaining the level of care at home provision during 2020/21, with over 24 million hours of care delivered despite the extremely challenging context. There was a slight reduction in the number of people receiving personal care at home, but the overall proportion of those in need of personal care who were cared for at home increased by 1 percentage point to 62%. These trends likely reflect the interplay between several factors occurring simultaneously. These include pressures on frontline services and staff; the increase in care and support provided informally by families (which may have been made possible through furlough or a necessity if care at home services were not offered during the pandemic or not accepted if clients were isolating); and access to care and support via care homes/hospitals. While these elements will have impacted across all local authority areas, the degree and timing may differ.

During 2020/21, long stay residents (65+) supported in care homes reduced by 6% from 31,050 to 30,125. Care homes and their residents have been acutely affected by COVID-19. Residents of care homes for older people experienced a particularly high rate of COVID-19 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. A number of other COVID-19 related factors also impacted on care home provision during this time. This includes the transfer of patients from hospitals into care homes; the closure of care homes to new residents; many of those at home remaining at home (with family often providing care and support on an informal basis); and finally staffing absence and recruitment issues. While these elements may be important across all local authority areas, there will be differences in timing and degree.

The level of delayed discharges reduced by 37% in 2020/21, reflecting overall significant reductions in non-COVID-19 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 acquiring infection in hospital. Meanwhile, the number of readmissions within 28 days fell by almost 20% in 2020/21. Again, this reflects the significant reduction in total discharges during this period, largely due to cancelled or delayed elective activity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2 shows key trends in the delivery of social care during 2020/21.

Table 2: LGBF Social Care Trends

Adult Social Care	2010-11	2019-20	2020-21	Change from 2019/20 to 2020/21	Change from base year to 2020/21
Care at Home Hrs per Year	21,602,216	24,457,442	24,422,666	0%	13%
Number of clients receiving personal care at home, aged 65+	46,954	47,458	46,666	-2%	-1%
% of people aged 65 and over with long-term care needs who received personal care at home	59%	61%	62%	1pp	3pp
Number of long-stay residents aged 65+ supported in Care Homes	31,050	30,125	28,368	-6%	-9%
Number of readmissions to an acute hospital within 28 days of discharge	90,012	113,738	91,733	-19%	2%
Number of hospital discharges	1,003,688	1,086,460	764,261	-30%	-24%
Number of bed days people spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged	391,389	360,463	227,524	-37%	-42%

The wider response during COVID-19 by councils, in partnership with communities and the third sector, has played a vital role in the resilience of social care during this period. This includes the essential support provided to those individuals shielding and also the efforts to keep schools/education hubs open to enable essential workers to keep working.

There were exceptional challenges for the social care sector during this period, not least the tremendous pressure the workforce has faced in terms of managing anxieties, uncertainties, absence levels and significant recruitment issues. 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 and its multiple concurrent challenges, with pressures often leading to a redistribution of resource rather than an ability to accelerate and wholly increase overall provision and capacity with employees moving between organisations.

What is clear is that integration and closer partnership working were essential during this period, with the strongest partnerships best able to deal with the multiple challenges presented. Councils, Health Boards, third sector and wider private partners all played a key role. Whilst there is no doubt that change is incoming across adult social care provision, 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.

It will take time for the true and longer-term impacts to become clear and to understand what this means for the future shape of provision. There are concerns that long-standing structural issues such as chronic underfunding, workforce issues, system fragmentation and supply chain limitations have exacerbated the crisis in social care and hindered the response to the pandemic. COVID-19 also appears to have made some longstanding problems worse, such as unmet need for care, and the burden on unpaid carers. As we work to recover from the significant shock to the system that COVID-19 has delivered, it will be essential to learn from this period and address those longer-term challenges which remain.

There are a number of issues here:

Firstly, over the longer-term period, the funding and level of provision in social care has not grown to sufficient levels to meet demand and support the desired shift to early intervention advocated for by Christie. While the percentage of people with long-term needs who are now receiving personal care at home has increased from 58.9% in 2010/11 to 61.7% in 2020/21, the number of people receiving care at home has decreased over time and 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 care at home service users, alongside the size of the package delivered, reflects the agreed eligibility criteria now in place to ensure the fair allocation of care.

Secondly, councils and service providers also face growing difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff due to low pay, anti-social hours, and difficult working conditions. 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 over a third of services with vacancies.⁷

Thirdly, most care and support is provided by unpaid carers. 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. There is significant concern over the increasing pressures facing unpaid carers and a recognition that our social care system would struggle to function without the care they provide.

4. Local variation

While the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact for all communities and all councils, local areas experienced the impacts of this pandemic differently. Responses to COVID-19 have exemplified the importance of 'local' with local solutions and responses to local needs and issues, varying both between and within authorities. LGBF performance and expenditure data from 2020/21 reveal 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 recovery priorities.

There are very few areas of the framework where the trend was universal for all 32 authorities in 2020/21, and even where there is a universal trend, there is significant variation in the scale of movement. Beyond these measures, there lies even greater variation between authorities across other areas of the framework. The full extent of this variation is set out in the report.

⁷ https://data.sssc.uk.com/images/StaffVacancies/Staff_vacancies_in_care_services_2019.pdf

Table 3 shows the small number of measures which followed a universal trend for all 32 councils in 2020/21, and the variation within this trend.

Table 3: LGBF Indicators showing universal trend for all 32 councils in 2020/21

Indicator	Change in 2020/21	
	Scotland	Council Range
Sickness Absence Days per Teacher	-34.6%	[-69.3% to -13.5%]
% of income due from Council Tax received by the end of the year	-1.0pp	[-2.2pp to -0.1pp]
Number of hospital discharges	-29.7%	[-38.4% to -13.1%]
Number of sports attendances	-91.3%	[-98.5% to -69.7%]
Number of non-emergency housing repairs completed	-32.9%	[-81.2% to -1.4%]
Cost per Pre-School Education Registration	27.8%	[1.4% - 101.1%]
Claimant Count as a % of Working Age Population	2.8pp	[1.3pp - 3.7pp]
Claimant Count as a % of 16-24 Population	3.3pp	[1.9pp - 4.2pp]
Total useable reserves as a % of council annual budgeted revenue	6.7pp	[1.2pp - 66.5pp]

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

- Different local restrictions (localised lockdowns/tiered system of restrictions)
- Existing local capacity (infrastructure; workforce; and partnership context)
- Local responses (innovation; redesign; and redeployment)
- Local pattern of demand and need during COVID-19 (reflecting demographic and socio-economic profile of local communities)
- Local priorities and strategic direction pre-COVID-19
- Local economy (reliance on sectors disproportionately impacted during the pandemic, e.g. hospitality, tourism and high street retail)

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 COVID-19 pandemic. This has been 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-19 to inform the future design, delivery and shape of services.

5. The complexity in this year's data

The significant upheaval resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced a number of complexities in relation to the 2020/21 LGBF dataset which will be important when interpreting the data and making comparisons with previous years; and with other councils. There are four main areas which are important to emphasise here:

- i. Altered delivery and operating landscapes
- ii. Data timeliness
- iii. Methodological issues and data gaps
- iv. Impact of inflation

i) Altered delivery and operating landscape

The delivery and operating landscape for councils altered significantly during 2020/21 as a result of COVID-19. Councils were at the fore front of delivering the emergency response to their local communities which required huge remobilisation and redeployment of resource at pace. The COVID-19 emergency response and business critical activities were prioritised during this period, impacting on resourcing and service levels in those less business critical areas. COVID-19 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 have affected both the level of demand for Local Government services, and also the context in which they are delivered. These include: 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); volatility and uncertainty in the supplier/contractor landscape; and finally public perceptions and behaviour around risk and safety.

The above factors provide vital context for the interpretation of data from this period and in particular when drawing comparisons with historic or future data.

ii) Data Timeliness

This report covers the period up to and including 2020/21 and does not therefore reflect the challenges and pressures facing Local Government currently, nor the longer-term impacts of COVID-19. Data from year one of the pandemic will be vital however in supporting councils to understand what the initial impact of the pandemic has been on services and local communities, and critically to evaluate local responses during the period to inform decisions around how we rebuild and renew. The comparative dataset will provide that essential platform for councils to work together to explore variations in the data, and to share practice and learning around what worked well and what didn't to inform future policy making and prioritisation.

The full impact of COVID-19 on council services and communities will take time to emerge in the data. An illustration of this can be found in council sickness absence figures. 2020/21 data indicates a sharp reduction in (non COVID-19 related) staff absence rates, reducing by 35% for teachers and by 18% for non-teaching staff. Digging beneath the high-level data, the picture that emerges during this period is one of lower short-term absence (presumably driven by the increased flexibility delivered through home working) but increasing

incidence of long-term absence (including mental ill health and stress). How this plays out over the longer term remains to be seen in the data. There is some indication in more recent data that the true impact upon the workforce is becoming more evident, and that after a sustained period of managing high levels of COVID-related absence, increased workloads and workforce shortages, signs of fatigue, stress and burnout are beginning to show. In addition, the consequences of delayed medical interventions and COVID-related mental health trauma are also a key risk and there are likely to be absences associated with such circumstances for a period to come.

iii) Methodological issues and data gaps

COVID-19 and the measures put in place in response have resulted in important methodological changes for some national datasets, which has impacted on the LGBF. This includes, for example, the different approaches to certification for senior phase attainment, including the cancellation of exams and external assessment of coursework in 2020, and the use of the Alternative Certification Model in 2021. This creates an unavoidable break in the time-series for some measures which is highlighted in the report and caution should be applied when drawing comparisons with previous and future data trends.

Of concern this year is the omission of public perception data from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS). In 2020, changes were required to be introduced to the standard SHS methodology as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, and this has delayed publication of SHS data. The SHS data is an important element of the LGBF, helping to provide a more rounded view of council performance and providing the only available comparable data on community satisfaction with council services. Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on public perceptions and expectations of council services will be vital in informing councils' approach to recovery in the coming period.

iv) Adjusting for the impact of inflation

In the LGBF, expenditure and unit costs are always presented in 'real terms', i.e. it takes account of how inflation affects spending. The LGBF uses Gross Domestic Product (GDP) deflators to adjust for inflation, which are published quarterly by HM Treasury (HMT). GDP deflators are the standard approach adopted by both the UK and Scottish Governments when analysing public expenditure.

Due to the way GDP is calculated, the increased public spending related to COVID-19 means that (in the short term) annual GDP growth rates, and therefore GDP deflators, are forecast to be volatile. To ensure consistency with our previous approach, this year's LGBF report continues to apply GDP deflators, except where noted in the text. Due to the volatility described, it will be important to consider the impact the applied rate of inflation may be having on the true scale of movement over time when interpreting this year's data.



The LGBF Approach



The core purpose of the exercise is benchmarking. That is making comparisons on spending, performance and customer satisfaction between similar councils so that all councils can identify their strengths and weaknesses and learn from those who are achieving the best performance to improve local service delivery throughout Scotland. All councils continue to participate in these collective efforts towards self-improvement.

Our approach means that there are four core points to bear in mind:

1. It is important when looking at councils to compare like with like.
2. The focus presented in this report is on variations in spending and performance that councils can directly control.
3. The aim is to help councils improve and become more cost effective in delivering local services and through that support people in improving their life outcomes.
4. The framework 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.

The benchmarking framework reported here lends itself to any type of comparison councils or citizens wish to make. What it does not support is a crude "league table" assessment: it would be as misleading to assess the performance of councils with high levels of deprivation without taking account of that as it would be to explore the performance of island councils without noting they are island groups with a very distinctive population distribution.

The purpose is to create a framework that supports evidence-based comparisons and, through that, shared learning and improvement. The indicators in the LGBF are very high-level indicators and are designed to focus questions on why variations in cost and performance are occurring between similar councils. They do not supply the answers. That happens as councils engage with each other to 'drill down' and explore why these variations are happening. That provides the platform for learning and improvement.

To support councils to develop their use of the LGBF in transforming and improving council services, the LGBF Board has set out a series of high level 'good practice principles' which provide a clear picture of how the LGBF could be used locally to support strategic and budget planning, improvement, scrutiny and public performance reporting (Appendix 1).

Councils continue to work together to 'drill-down' into the benchmarking data across service areas. This process has been organised around 'family groups' of councils so that we are comparing 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. Examples of best practice emerging from this collaboration are being shared across all local authorities and are being used to inform local improvement activity within self- evaluation, service review and service planning processes. Further information, briefing notes and case studies are available in the '[How Councils Are using the LGBF](#)' publication, and on the [LGBF website](#).⁸

The benchmarking data should not be considered in isolation. To support this, there is a growing focus to better align the benchmarking data with outcomes. An [online interactive tool](#)⁹ links the LGBF with outcomes data presented in the [Community Planning Outcomes Profile](#)¹⁰ (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

⁸ <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking>

⁹ <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/outcomes-tool>

¹⁰ <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/products-and-services/performance-management-and-benchmarking/community-planning-outcomes-profile>

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. Figure 1 shows how LGBF measures map to the outcomes in the NPF. The longitudinal data in the LGBF spanning pre and post-COVID will be essential in tracking and monitoring the role Local Government continues to play in addressing key outcomes such as child poverty, climate change, inclusive growth and the health and wellbeing of citizens.

Fig 1: LGBF measures and the National Performance Framework



There is a continued commitment to make benchmarking information available to all citizens and users of council services. To further this end an online benchmarking public reporting tool has been designed called 'My Local Council'¹¹ and is incorporated within councils own local approaches to public performance reporting. All of the information generated by the LGBF is presented in this online benchmarking tool which contains "dashboards" for each council showing movement on indicators over time, and a comparison with the Scottish and family group average for all indicators.

LGBF framework indicators

The framework is based on nine overall service groupings which cover the major public-facing services provided to local communities and the support services necessary to do that. This includes children's services (education and childcare), adult social care, environmental services, culture and leisure, housing, corporate support services, economic development and planning, financial sustainability and tackling climate change.

11 <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/explore-the-data>



To develop precise indicators of cost and performance for comparison between councils, these broad service categories are divided into more specific sub-categories. For example, children's services divide into: pre-school education; primary education; secondary education; and child care and protection. For each category, standard indicators of spend and performance have been applied.

A full list of service categories and indicators is attached (Appendix 2) and full technical specifications for all 101 indicators, including source details are available on the Local Government benchmarking website.

This framework is iterative, and councils continue to collaborate to strengthen indicators and address framework gaps. A Directors' of Finance subgroup leads a programme of work to improve consistency in the recording of Local Financial Returns. We welcome public views in relation to how to improve this benchmarking framework and particularly if there are other measures which might usefully be included. You can provide feedback and suggestions by visiting our website (www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking).

LGBF data reliability

The LGBF has voluntarily adopted the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice to highlight the statistical rigour and reliability of framework data. Voluntary adoption of the code demonstrates our commitment to trustworthiness, quality and value and makes clear how our approaches and methods ensure the highest standards for production of data and analysis are met. This will provide important assurances to help ensure stakeholders within Local Government and the public have trust in our data.

Further details on the credibility, relevance and quality of the LGBF data is included in Appendix 3).

The sources used to populate the measures include statistical returns to the Scottish Government, Scottish Qualifications Authority, the Scottish Housing Regulator, and SEPA, among others. Where data is not currently collected/published by another body or where it is published too late to allow inclusion within the benchmarking framework, councils provide data directly to the Improvement Service. The Scottish Household Surveys and the Health and Care Experience Surveys are used to provide customer satisfaction measures.

The purpose of this report

This report is an overview report and does not seek to replicate the local context or interpretation provided by each council via their Public Performance Reporting or the depth and detail of the 'My Local Council' tool.¹²

The focus of this report is on three important areas:

1. Trends across Scotland for the key framework indicators covering the period 2010/11 to 2020/21 inclusive. For consistency all data is presented as financial years though some data may be for calendar years or academic years. For each unit cost indicator, we have presented the change over the period in real terms, that is taking account of the impact of inflation over time.
2. The level of variation across councils and factors shaping these trends including physical geography, population distribution, size of council and the impact of deprivation.¹³ Graphs are presented showing the level of variation across councils for each area benchmarking measure. To improve interpretation, these graphs include only the base year and two most recent years.

¹² <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/explore-the-data>

¹³ Correlation analysis and Mann-Whitney/Wilcoxon Two-Sample Tests were carried out to establish where statistically significant relationships exist between framework indicators and levels of deprivation, rurality, population distribution and size of council.



3. Identification of areas where unexplained variation exists, providing opportunities where councils may wish to target improvements and/or efficiencies.

Before examining each section in turn, Table 2 below presents an overview of the trends across all LGBF indicators.

Table 4: Overview Table for all LGBF Data 2020-21

	Indicator Description	Scotland												
		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	%/value change 19/20 to 20/21	%/value change base* to 20/21
Children's Services	Cost per primary school pupil	£6,036	£5,869	£5,708	£5,559	£5,411	£5,455	£5,444	£5,556	£5,720	£5,972	£5,897	-1.3%	-2.3%
	Cost per secondary school pupil	£7,971	£7,737	£7,718	£7,673	£7,650	£7,753	£7,719	£7,671	£7,833	£8,040	£7,629	-5.1%	-4.3%
	Cost per pre-school education registration	£4,175	£3,792	£3,734	£3,538	£3,849	£4,448	£4,758	£4,934	£5,481	£7,239	£9,255	27.8%	121.7%
	% of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 5		51	53	55	57	59	60	62	63	65	67	2	16
	% of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 6		26	27	29	31	33	34	34	35	38	41	3	15
	% of pupils from deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 5 (SIMD)		29	32	34	37	40	41	42	45	47	49	2	20
	% of pupils from deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 6 (SIMD)		10	11	14	14	15	16	17	19	21	23	2	13
	The gross cost of "children looked after" in residential based services per child per week	£3,509	£3,708	£3,533	£3,660	£3,695	£3,944	£3,836	£3,899	£4,184	£4,110	dna	-1.8%	17.1%
	The gross cost of "children looked after" in a community setting per child per week	£256	£272	£312	£311	£324	£338	£358	£370	£375	£373	dna	-0.5%	45.9%
	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	dna	0.2	-0.9
	% of adults satisfied with local schools	83.1		83.0	81.0	79.0	74.0	73.0	70.0	72.5	73.0	dna	0.5	-10.1
	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	2.2	5.2
	Overall average total tariff		770	798	827	860	877	888	894	895	930	972	4.6%	26.3%
	Average total tariff SIMD quintile 1		478	510	551	581	603	625	620	628	649	688	6.0%	43.9%
	Average total tariff SIMD quintile 2		618	644	685	716	741	751	752	743	759	817	7.6%	32.2%
	Average total tariff SIMD quintile 3		759	788	816	851	864	882	899	875	906	975	7.6%	28.5%
	Average total tariff SIMD quintile 4		909	929	962	984	998	1002	1019	1015	1030	1108	7.6%	21.9%
Average total tariff SIMD quintile 5		1101	1134	1149	1185	1197	1210	1224	1195	1241	1320	6.4%	19.9%	



	Indicator Description	Scotland												
		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	%/value change 19/20 to 20/21	%/value change base* to 20/21
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	dna	0.2	4.9
	% 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	0.7	3.8
	School attendance rates	93.1		93.6		93.7		93.3		93.0		92.0	-1.0	-1.1
	School attendance rates (looked after children)	86.3		88.7		89.0		88.2		86.8		dna	-1.4	0.5
	School exclusion rates	40.0		32.8		27.2		26.8		21.6		dna	-19.4%	-45.9%
	School exclusion rates (looked after children)	340.8		280.3		246.8		210.1		152.2		dna	-27.6%	-55.3%
	Participation rates for 16-19 year olds						90.4	91.1	91.8	91.6	92.1	92.2	0.0	1.8
	Child protection re-registrations within 18 months			6.5	6.8	6.7	6.2	6.5	6.0	7.2	6.9	dna	-0.3	0.4
	% 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	dna	-2.8	-4.4
	% of children living in poverty (after housing costs)					21.6	22.8	23.4	24.2	23.2	24.3	dna	1.1	2.7
	% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Literacy									72.3	dna	66.9	-5.4	-5.4
	% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Numeracy									79.1	dna	74.7	-4.4	-4.4
	Literacy Attainment Gap (P1,4,7 Combined) - percentage point gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils									20.7	dna	24.7	4.0	4.0
	Numeracy Attainment Gap (P1,4,7 Combined) - percentage point gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils									16.8	dna	21.4	4.6	4.6



	Indicator Description	Scotland													% /value change 19/20 to 20/21	% /value change base* to 20/21
		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21				
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	0.1	-1.4		
	% 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	58.3	1.6	12.0		
	The gender pay gap						4.5	4.2	3.9	4.2	3.4	3.7	0.3	-0.8		
	The cost per dwelling of collecting council tax	£17.25	£16.22	£16.03	£14.29	£12.76	£11.98	10.16	£8.19	£7.56	£7.02	£6.64	-5.3%	-61.5%		
	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	4.2	-34.6%	-37.1%		
	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	9.7	-18.4%	-10.1%		
	% 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	-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	0.0	2.2		
Adult Social Care	Older persons (over 65) home care costs per hour	£25.15	£24.32	£24.68	£23.87	£23.59	£24.54	£25.64	£26.47	£26.98	£27.25	£27.65	1.5%	10.0%		
	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	7.8	8.2	0.4	6.6		
	% 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	1.0	2.8		
	% 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		0.1	-5.0		
	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		-0.4	-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		-0.2	-7.7		



	Indicator Description	Scotland												
		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	%/value change 19/20 to 20/21	%/value change base* to 20/21
Adult Social Care	Percentage of carers who feel supported to continue in their caring role				43.0		40.0		36.6		34.3		-2.3	-8.7
	Older persons (over 65's) residential care costs per week per resident	£485	£490	£446	£427	£432	£422	£422	£415	£423	£449	£439	-2.2%	-9.5%
	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	14.7%	33.8%
	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	0.7	1.6
	Number of days people spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged, per 1,000 population (75+)				922	1044	915	840	762	793	774	484	-37.4%	-47.5%
Culture and Leisure	Cost per attendance at sports facilities	£4.43	£3.97	£3.78	£3.76	£3.45	£3.38	£3.29	£3.03	£2.85	£2.92	£40.36	1282.2%	810.6%
	Cost per library visit	£4.25	£4.01	£3.80	£3.03	£2.86	£2.83	£2.25	£2.31	£2.24	£2.12	£2.88	35.5%	-32.4%
	Cost of museums per visit	£5.25	£4.27	£4.32	£3.94	£3.88	£3.53	£3.75	£3.89	£3.79	£3.49	£10.14	190.8%	93.4%
	Cost of parks & open spaces per 1,000 population	£32,377	£29,866	£28,530	£27,460	£27,275	£25,240	£23,600	£22,063	£21,998	£21,453	£19,112	-10.9%	-41.0%
	% Of adults satisfied with libraries	83.5		83.0	81.0	77.0	74.0	73.0	72.0	72.1	73.0	dna	0.9	-10.5
	% 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	dna	0.5	-0.1
	% 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	dna	1.1	-5.5
	% Of adults satisfied with leisure facilities	74.6		80.0	78.0	76.0	73.0	73.0	72.0	69.3	69.0	dna	-0.3	-5.6
Environmental	Net cost per waste collection per premises			£71.28	£72.28	£75.55	£74.39	£73.11	£73.47	£73.41	£73.41	£72.35	-1.5%	1.5%
	Net cost per waste disposal per premises			£111.28	£108.64	£106.29	£112.84	£111.88	£112.91	£106.36	£105.76	£104.50	-1.2%	-6.1%
	Net cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population	£24,787	£23,838	£21,141	£19,145	£18,431	£17,886	£16,413	£17,207	£16,210	£15,980	£14,845	-71%	-40.1%
	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	-2.1	-5.3



	Indicator Description	Scotland												
		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	%/value change 19/20 to 20/21	%/value change base* to 20/21
Environmental Services	Net cost per waste collection per premises			£71.28	£72.28	£75.55	£74.39	£73.11	£73.47	£73.41	£73.41	£72.35	-1.5%	1.5%
	Net cost per waste disposal per premises			£111.28	£108.64	£106.29	£112.84	£111.88	£112.91	£106.36	£105.76	£104.50	-1.2%	-6.1%
	Net cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population	£24,787	£23,838	£21,141	£19,145	£18,431	£17,886	£16,413	£17,207	£16,210	£15,980	£14,845	-7.1%	-40.1%
	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	-2.1	-5.3
	Cost of roads per kilometre	£13,850	£12,613	£11,988	£11,568	£11,476	£11,838	£11,711	£11,241	£10,835	£10,355	£9,667	-6.6%	-30.2%
	% 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	-0.77	-0.50
	% 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	-0.96	-1.80
	% 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	-1.54	-1.40
	% 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	0.47	-3.60
	Cost of trading standards and environmental health per 1,000 population	£30,386	£26,950	£25,752	£26,974	£25,954	£25,874	£24,216	£23,818	£22,675	£21,043	£18,463	-12.3%	-39.2%
	Cost of trading standards per 1,000 population			£6,173	£6,607	£6,518	£6,643	£6,224	£6,560	£6,434	£6,349	£5,857	-7.7%	-5.1%
	Cost of environmental health per 1,000 population			£19,579	£20,367	£19,436	£19,231	£17,992	£17,258	£16,242	£14,695	£12,606	-14.2%	-35.6%
	% 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	-2.9	3.3
	% of adults satisfied with refuse collection	80.9		83.0	83.0	84.0	82.0	79.0	75.0	74.9	73.0	dna	-1.9	-7.9
	% of adults satisfied with street cleaning	73.3		75.0	74.0	74.0	73.0	70.0	66.0	62.9	59.0	dna	-3.9	-14.3



	Indicator Description	Scotland												
		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	%/value change 19/20 to 20/21	%/value change base* to 20/21
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	0.9	2.6
	% 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	0.3	0.1
	% 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	-4.6	36.7
	Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs				10.2	9.9	9.4	8.7	7.5	7.8	7.3	7.3	-0.7%	-28.4%
	% of council dwellings that are energy efficient						65.2	71.2	75.3	80.9	84.1	86.4	2.3	21.2
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	-0.2	8.6
	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	0.6	7.9
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	-6.7	-3.2
	Cost of planning and building standards per planning application	£4,446	£4,569	£5,992	£4,021	£3,945	£4,643	£4,339	£4,505	£4,861	£4,736	£5,044	6.5%	13.4%
	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	5.1%	-13.6%
	% 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	0.6	1.9
	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	-31.8%	-41.2%
	Investment in economic development & tourism per 1,000	£103,972	£93,014	£87,355	£84,923	£80,530	£73,942	£91,682	£103,294	£117,461	£109,753	£87,793	-20.0%	-15.6%
	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	-1.7	-3.6
	Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband				56.1	67.5	78.6	85.9	91.1	92.0	93.3	93.8	0.5	37.7



	Indicator Description	Scotland												
		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	%/value change 19/20 to 20/21	%/value change base* to 20/21
Economic Development	Town vacancy rates					10.1	11.9	10.2	11.5	10.0	11.7	12.4	0.7	2.3
	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	2.7	26.0
	Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita		24,725	24,775	25,430	26,024	25,934	25,839	26,192	26,180	26,420	dna	0.9%	6.9%
	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	2.8	1.9
	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	3.3	0.3
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	23.6	6.7	7.6
	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	-0.1	-0.2
	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	-0.9	-2.2
	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	0.3	-3.0
	Actual outturn as a percentage of budgeted expenditure				99.1	99.0	99.0	99.3	99.3	99.4	99.4	97.4	-1.9	-1.6
Climate Change	CO2 emissions area wide per tonne, per capita	8.2	7.4	7.7	7.4	6.6	6.5	6.1	5.9	5.9	5.7	dna	-3.7%	-30.5%
	CO2 emissions are wide: emissions within scope of Local Authority per tonne, per capita	7.2	6.4	6.7	6.4	5.7	5.5	5.2	4.9	4.8	4.6	dna	-4.4%	-35.5%

A photograph of a classroom scene. A male teacher with a beard, wearing a dark sweater, is leaning over a desk, holding a tablet and interacting with a young boy. The boy is looking up at the teacher with a smile. Other students are seated at desks in the background, some looking at their work. The classroom has light blue walls, a window with dark curtains, and various educational materials like a colorful abacus and posters on the wall.

Children's Services

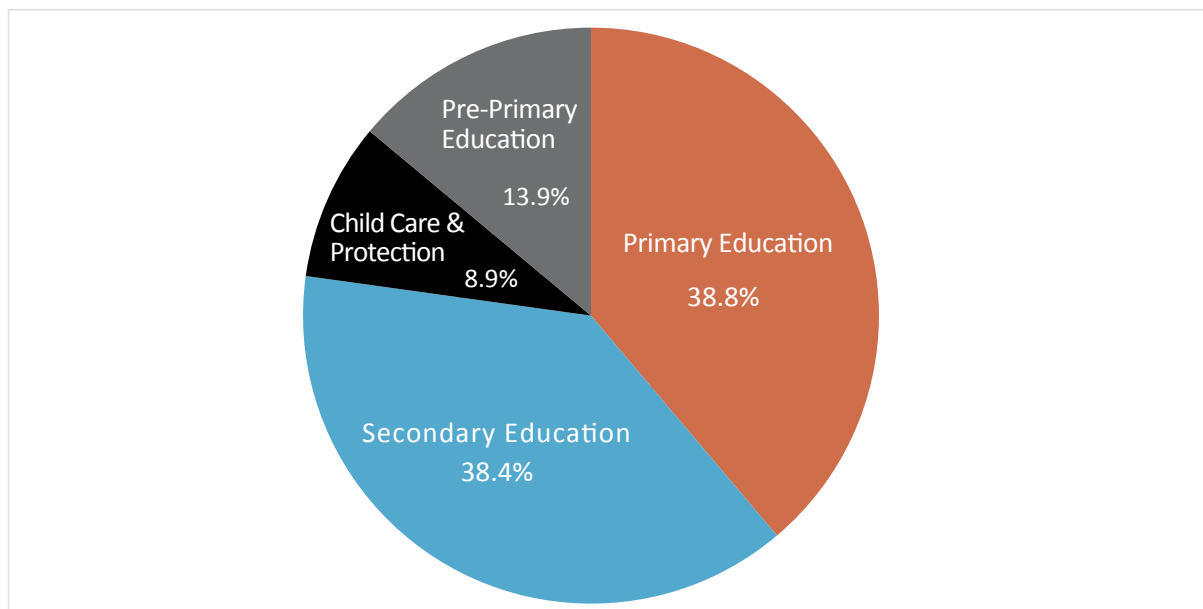


This section highlights both the long-term trends in children's services and the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as evidenced by the 2020/21 dataset.

Expenditure on children's services has been sustained and expanded between 2010/11 and 2020/21. Over the long-term, real-term spending has increased by 9.5% on education (range: -16.9% to +30.4%), and by 14.5% on services for looked after children (range: -42% to +98%). In 2020/21, real spending on education continued to increase, by 0.6%, while expenditure on services for looked after children reduced by 5.2%.

The graph below shows the proportion of total spend on each of the major elements of children's services in 2020/21. As can be seen, primary and secondary school provision are the major spend areas, with pre-school education and childcare and protection¹⁴ accounting for a very much lower percentage of total spending on children. The proportion spent on pre-primary has grown over recent years (by over 2% in 2020/21) in line with the policy agenda to expand early years provision.

Fig 2: Proportion of gross revenue expenditure for children's services by element 2020-21



Source: council supplied expenditure figures

During the longer-term, there has been significant improvement in performance and outcomes across key aspects of children's services, including for the most vulnerable. This includes progress in the proportion of younger children meeting developmental milestones; expansion in early years provision accompanied by an overall improvement in quality; higher levels of educational attainment, including for the most deprived; greater placement stability and significant success in reducing school exclusions for children who are looked after; and continued improvement in participation rates for 16-19 year olds.

The impact of COVID-19 on children and young people, particularly on the most vulnerable, is an area of significant concern. While the full impact of the pandemic on children will only become clear over a longer period of time, early evidence in this year's LGBF highlights concerns in relation to educational outcomes, positive destinations and participation rates particularly for the most deprived. 2020/21 LGBF data for some key areas is not yet available e.g. looked after children; developmental milestones and child poverty. Given the well documented concerns in relation to mental and emotional health and wellbeing for some of our most vulnerable children as a result of the pandemic, the above LGBF data will be a critical piece of the evidence necessary to understand the impact and inform recovery, and will be incorporated when it is published later in 2022.

¹⁴ Expenditure on Looked After Children Placements (Community and Residential)



Pre-school provision

For pre-school educational provision for children ("nursery school"), spending has been standardised as total spend per publicly funded early learning and childcare (ELC) registration.

In 2020/21, the Scottish average for the cost per ELC registration was £9,255. This represents an increase of 27.8% in the most recent year and an increase of 122% since 2010/11. This reflects the expansion of the ELC offer and a substantial increase in the number of hours offered for each place provided. All 32 authorities report increasing expenditure, although the scale of this varies significantly.

The increase in costs has been driven both by a significant growth in gross expenditure, alongside a decrease in the total number of ELC registrations across the period. Both the growth in expenditure and the reduction in placements has accelerated in recent years. In 2020/21, gross expenditure increased by 19.6% on average and the number of placements reduced by 6.5%. This pattern is true for the majority of councils, although is not universal.

Table 5: Cost per pre-school registration

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
£4,175	£3,792	£3,734	£3,538	£3,849	£4,448	£4,758	£4,934	£5,481	£7,239	£9,255	27.8%	121.7%

From August 2014, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 required local authorities to increase the amount of early learning and childcare from 475 hours a year to 600 hours for each eligible child. By August 2021, the Act introduces a further commitment to the near doubling of entitlement to funded early learning and childcare to 1140 hours a year for all three and four-year olds and eligible two-year olds. This additional commitment is supported by additional funding from Scottish Government.

In the years leading up to the introduction of the 1140 duty, local authorities phased in expanded entitlement. The impact of the new entitlements has been to increase the unit cost per pre-school place due to the increased hours associated with each funded place. The additional staffing costs in delivering the new entitlements, and the commitment by councils to offer the extended hours in a way that allows parents some choice and flexibility over what pattern of hours they can get, will influence costs here. The establishment of an hourly sustainable rate paid to funded providers will also be a factor in understanding cost patterns.

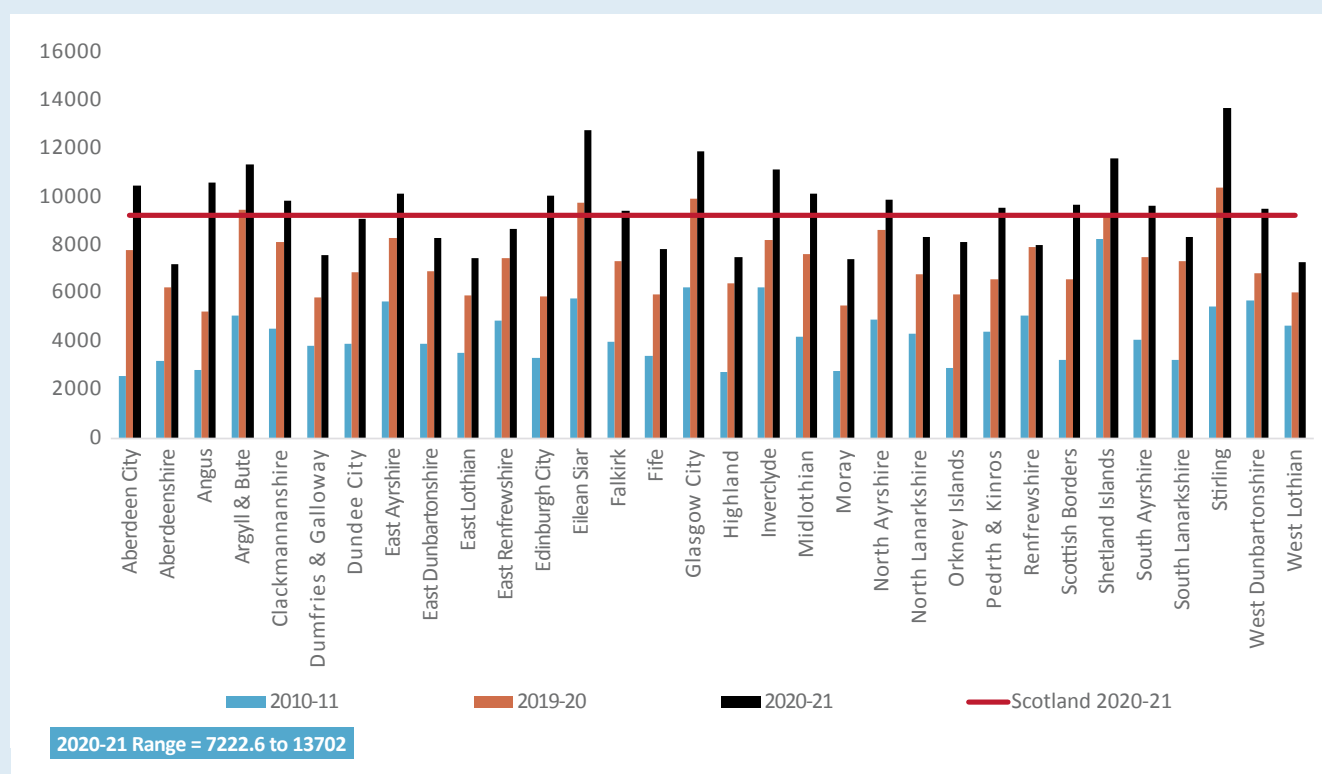
In 2020/21, the average cost per registration was £9,255 with substantial and widening variation between councils, ranging from £7,222 to £13,702 per registration. Average costs tend to be higher in the most deprived councils than in the least deprived councils (£10,015 compared to £9,100). However, there is no statistically significant relationship with deprivation due to variation within the family group.

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

- *Workforce composition – age, experience, grade and qualification level of staff*
- *Balance between council and partner provision*
- *Level of integration of pre-school and primary school provision*
- *Demographic variation and local capacity to respond*
- *Balance between LA and partner provision*



Fig 3: Cost per pre-school registration (£)



Source: Early Learning and Childcare Census, Scottish Government; council supplied expenditure figures



Local Variation – Cost per pre-school registration

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £9,255; council range: £7,222–£13,702. Widened variation in the most recent year. Higher costs in the most deprived councils compared to the least deprived councils (£10,015 compared to £9,100, not statistically significant).

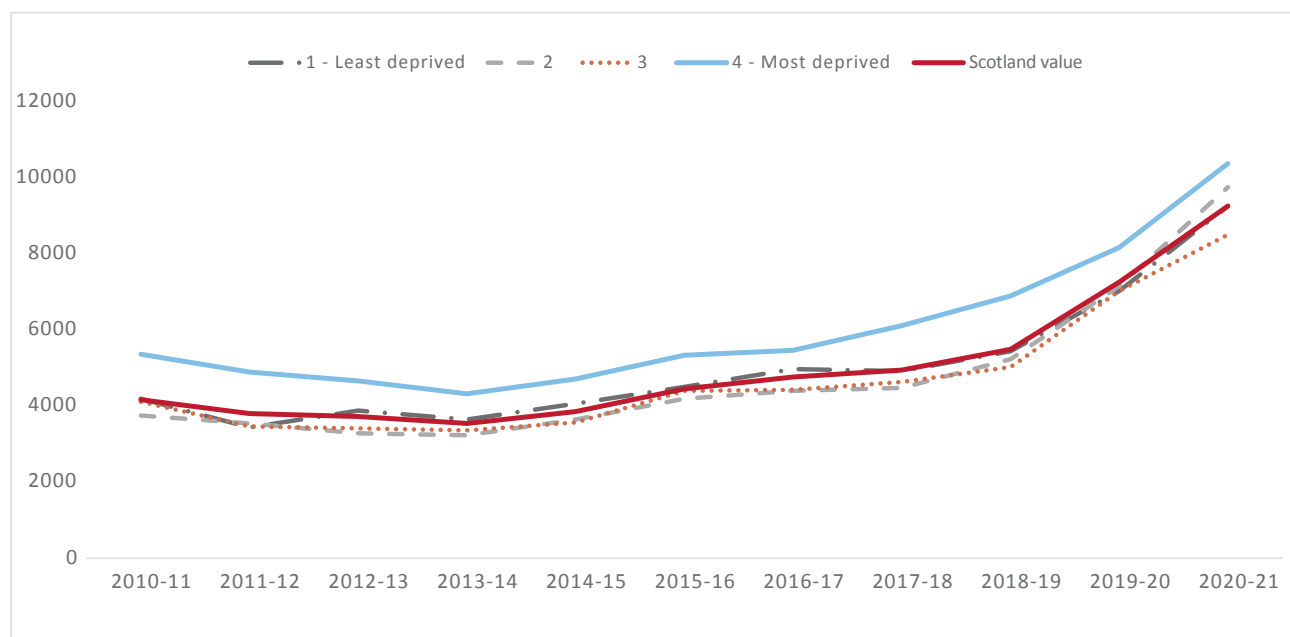
Change over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +27.8%. All 32 councils increased (range: +1.4% to +101%)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +122%. All 32 councils increased (range: +40.5% to +307.4%)



Fig 4: Cost per pre-school education registration (£) by family group - deprivation



Pre-school performance

Care Inspectorate quality evaluations for early years services and Health Visitor assessments at 27-30 months are used to provide consistent measures for assessing performance within the pre-school sector, and for understanding children's development as they progress through the pre-school setting.

Percentage of publicly funded early years provision which is graded good/better

Care Inspectorate quality evaluations reflect the number of publicly funded early years providers which were graded good or better for all quality themes. This is presented as a percentage of all publicly funded early years provision which was inspected. In the 2020/21 inspection year, the number of inspections was greatly reduced due to COVID-19. As a result, the majority of services retained their grades from previous inspection. This should be considered when interpreting data from this period.

Table 6: Percentage of publicly funded early years provision which is graded good/better¹⁵

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
87.1	90.6	91.3	92.6	93.5	91.9	91.7	91.0	90.6	90.2	90.9	0.7	3.8

Over the 11-year period, the proportion of publicly funded services graded good or better for all quality themes has increased from 87.1% to 90.9%. Prior to COVID-19, quality gradings had shown small year on year reductions between 2015/16 and 2019/20. In 2020/21 however, quality gradings showed a small increase counter to recent trends, from 90.2% to 90.9%.

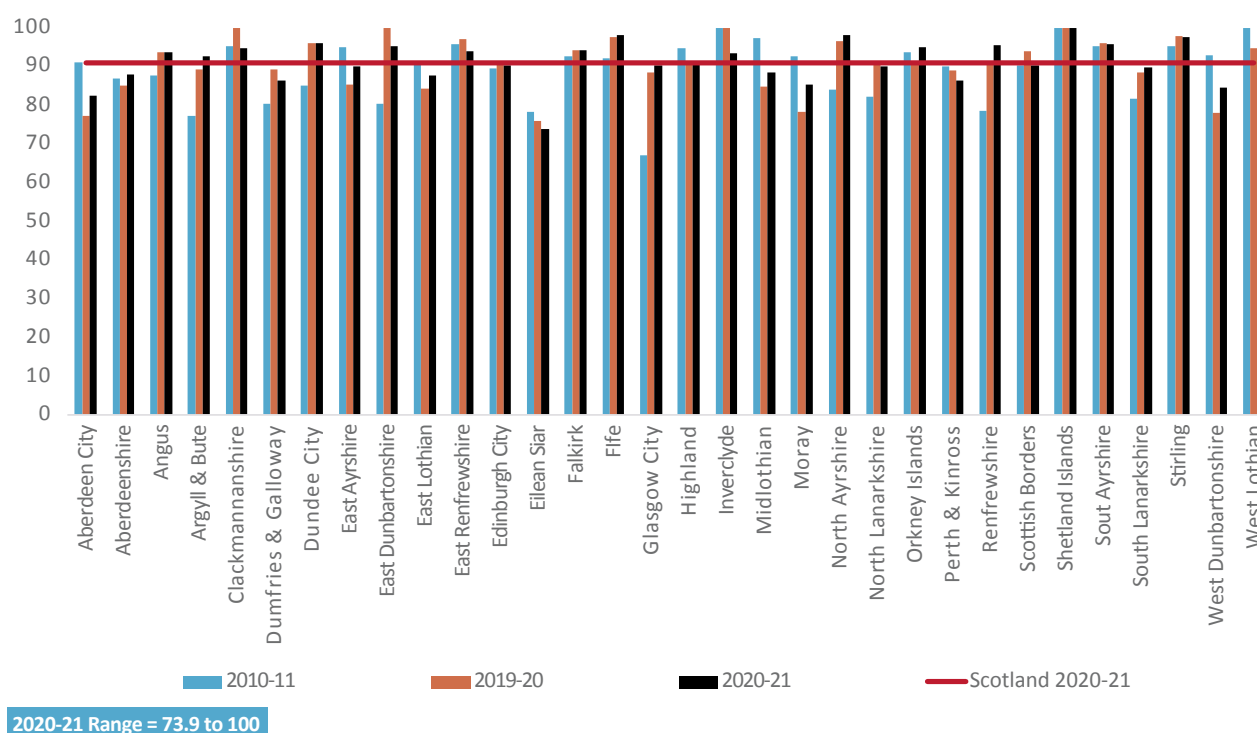
The increase in overall gradings observed in 2020/21 may also reflect the recent increase in registration

¹⁵ Data is a snapshot as at 31 December each year.

cancellations in services with grades 'less than good'. This reflects guidance that requires existing funded providers to meet the National Standard from the full statutory roll-out of the entitlement to 1140 hours in August, and the removal of funded provider status for those providers who are unable to demonstrate that they meet the criteria.

There is considerable variation across councils in both current quality ratings and in movement across the period which can be observed in the graph below.

Fig 5: Percentage of publicly funded early years provision which is graded good/better



Source: Figures supplied by the Care Inspectorate



Local Variation – Percentage of publicly funded early years provision which is graded good/better

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 90.9%; council range: 74% - 100%. Narrowed variation in most recent year and not systematically related to deprivation, rurality or authority size.

Change over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +0.7pp; councils: 16 increased and 15 decreased (range: -6.7pp to +6.9pp)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +3.8pp; councils: 18 increased and 13 decreased (range: -8.8pp to +23.2pp)



The balance between Local Authority and partner provision may be an important factor for further exploration. The early years expansion has seen a rapid growth in the use of partner provision. In 2021, 30% of all children who will receive expanded hours will be in partner provision, up from 27% in 2020 and 20% in 2019.¹⁶ Given Local Authority run services continue to receive higher quality ratings compared to other sectors, what impact this has on the overall trend may merit further exploration.

Improving the quality of early years provision is a cornerstone of the Early Years expansion programme and while the current focus of investment is to deliver on the expanded entitlement commitment, the ambition is that quality improvements will follow.

Further exploration is needed to fully understand the trends observed, including what role the following factors may play:

- The decreasing number of registered day-care of children services
- Variation in return rates of annual returns, inspection methodology and inspection frequency
- Variations in the question wording in the annual return in line with changes to government policy (the biggest change in the question was between 2014 and 2015).
- Number of cancellations and new registrations of services
- Workforce expansion associated with 1140 duty, lowering the average experience level of the workforce.

Percentage of children meeting developmental milestones

Children's development as they progress through the pre-school setting is reflected as the percentage of children meeting developmental milestones, i.e. with no concerns across any domain, at their 27-30 month review. This includes those with no concerns recorded but some domains incomplete/missing. Latest data available for this measure covers children becoming eligible in 2019/20, of whom only a minority received their review during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore this does not yet reflect the full impact of COVID-19.

During 27-30 month reviews, the health professional (normally a health visitor) assesses children's developmental status and records the outcome (e.g. no concern, concern newly suspected as a result of the review, or concern or disorder already known prior to the review) against each of eight developmental domains (social, emotional/behavioural, speech language and communication, gross motor, fine motor, vision, hearing and problem solving). This is a key outcome measure adopted by the Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC), formerly the Early Years Collaborative (EYC).

The percentage of children with no concerns increased from 80.8% to 85.7% between 2013/14 and 2019/20 revealing improvement in this important outcome area. While the average trend indicates positive progress across the period, there is variation between councils, ranging from an improvement of 11 percentage points to a 3-percentage point decline. While almost all authorities have reported improvements since 2013/14, half have shown a decline in the most recent 12 months reported.

It is important to note that changes in methodology and assessment practice in 2016/17 may affect comparability with previous years. The introduction of a new domain in the 27-30 month review has led to an increase in the number of incomplete returns. In addition, across the same period, there has also been a change in practice with Health Visitor assessments moving from clinic-based assessments towards greater focus on home-based assessments.

¹⁶ Improvement Service Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Reports - 2018-2021



Table 7: Percentage of children meeting developmental milestones

2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2018-19 to 2019-20	Value Change 2013-14 to 2019-20
80.8	80.8	81.6	82.4	84.6	85.5	85.7	dna	0.2	4.9

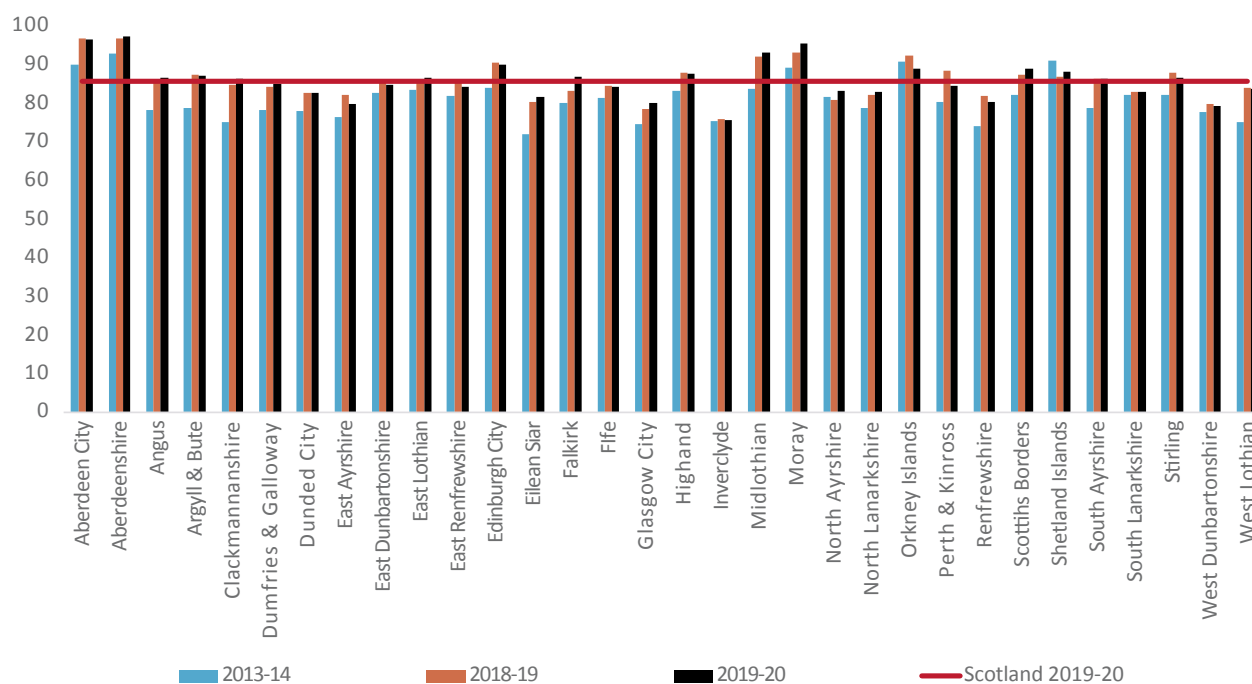
There is significant variation across councils, with figures in 2019/20 ranging from 75.6% to 97.3%. The percentage of children meeting developmental milestones is significantly lower in councils with higher levels of deprivation, 80.9%, compared to 88.5% for councils with the lowest levels of deprivation.

In 2019/20 more than one in five children (22%) from deprived areas had at least one developmental concern compared to one in eleven for the least deprived areas (8%). Looked after children are more than twice as likely to have at least one developmental concern (34%) compared to those not looked after (14%) reflecting the broader vulnerability, and generally poor health, of this group of children.¹⁷

¹⁷ <https://beta.isdscotland.org/find-publications-and-data/population-health/child-health/27-30-month-review-statistics/>



Fig 6: Percentage of children meeting developmental milestones



Source: PHS, Child Health 27-30 Month Review Statistics



Local Variation – Percentage of children meeting developmental milestones

2019/20 Value

Scotland: 85.7%; council range: 75.6% - 97.3%. Values are significantly lower in councils with higher levels of deprivation, 80.9% compared to 88.5% for councils with lower levels of deprivation

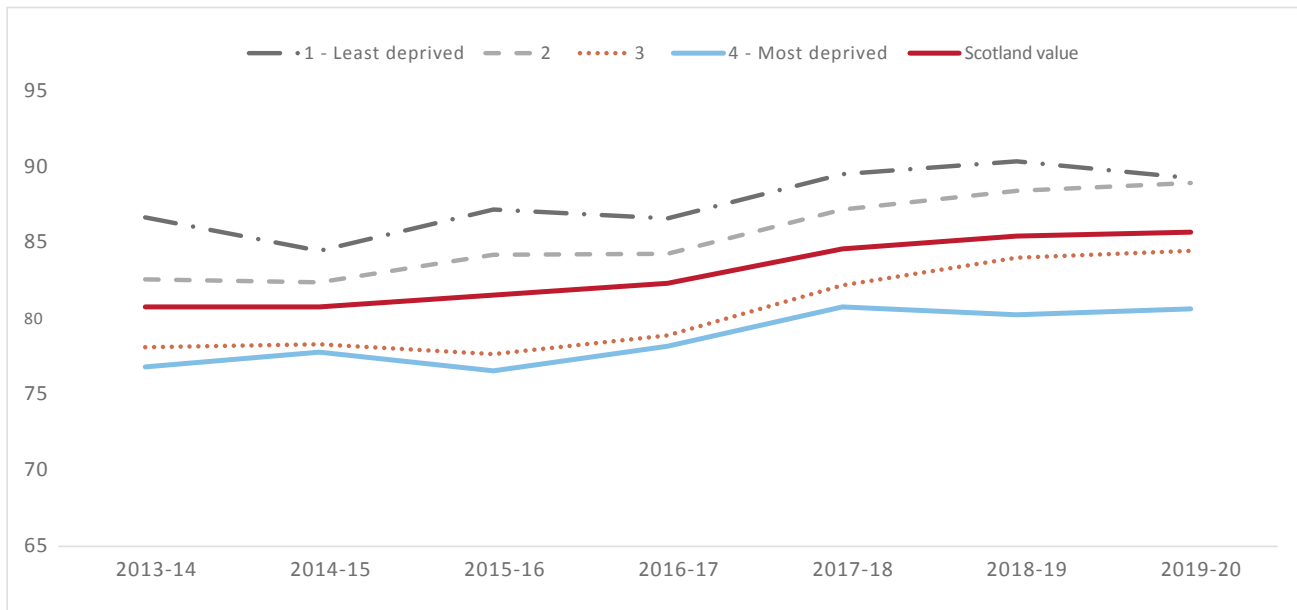
Change over Time

In 2019/20: Scotland: +0.2pp; councils: 16 increased and 16 decreased (range: -4.0pp to +3.6pp)

Since 2013/14: Scotland: +4.9pp; councils: 30 increased and 2 decreased (range: -2.7pp to +11.2pp)



Fig 7: Percentage of children meeting developmental milestones by family group - deprivation



Primary and secondary school spending

In both primary and secondary education, real terms expenditure fell during 2020/21, by 2.3% and 2.0% respectively. Prior to this, expenditure for both primary and secondary education had shown an increasing trend in the years leading up to COVID-19, cancelling out significant reductions observed between 2010/11 and 2014/15.

The reduction in real terms expenditure observed in 2020/21 is driven by COVID-19 related inflation experienced during 2020/21, which was significantly higher than in previous years. Adjusting for this exceptional inflation rate, the previous trend of increased expenditure continues for both primary and secondary education (increasing by 1.5% and 1.9% respectively).

The growth in education spend in recent years largely reflects the teachers' pay award and additional monies received from central government via the Attainment Scotland Fund.

After a decade in which public sector pay has been frozen or rises capped at 1%, the 3% pay award for teachers in 2018/19, 7% in 2019/20 and 3% in 2020/21 following the relaxation of its public sector pay policy has a significant impact on costs. Around 60% of primary and secondary school spending is teaching staff costs. Given the current agreement between the Scottish Government and local authorities that teacher numbers will be maintained in line with pupil numbers, this represents a relatively fixed cost to councils.

The Attainment Scotland Fund has seen additional monies provided to Local Authorities and schools to support improvements in equity in education. In 2020/21, this reflected around £195 million in additional funding, including Pupil Equity Funding of £127 million, around £43 million for the Challenge Authorities and an additional £11.5 from the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund.¹⁸

Family Group analysis shows that pre-COVID-19, expenditure has increased fastest for those authorities with the highest levels of deprivation. In the two years prior to COVID-19, primary costs increased by 9% for the most deprived councils on average, compared to 6% for the least deprived councils. Similarly, secondary costs increased by 4% and 1% respectively. The distribution of additional monies will have played an important role here. The previous trend for the most deprived group is not evident in the current data due to the impact that the exceptional rate inflation has had on overall expenditure patterns.

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/pupil-attainment/>



Figure 8: Cost per primary pupil by family group – deprivation

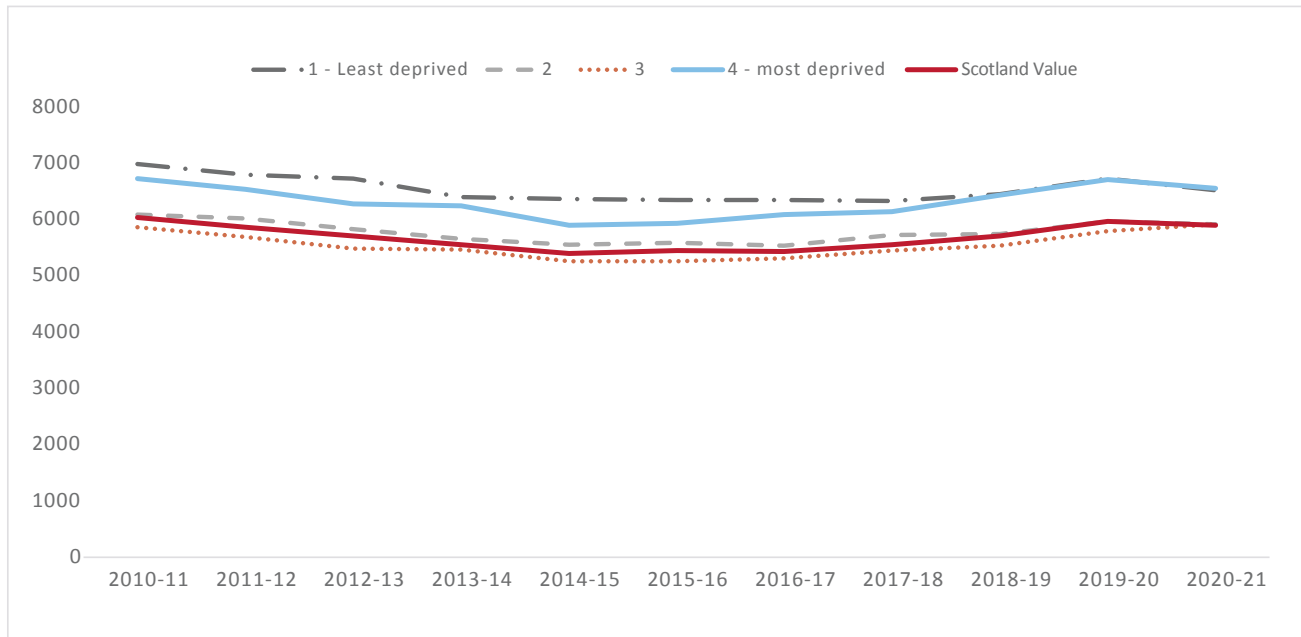
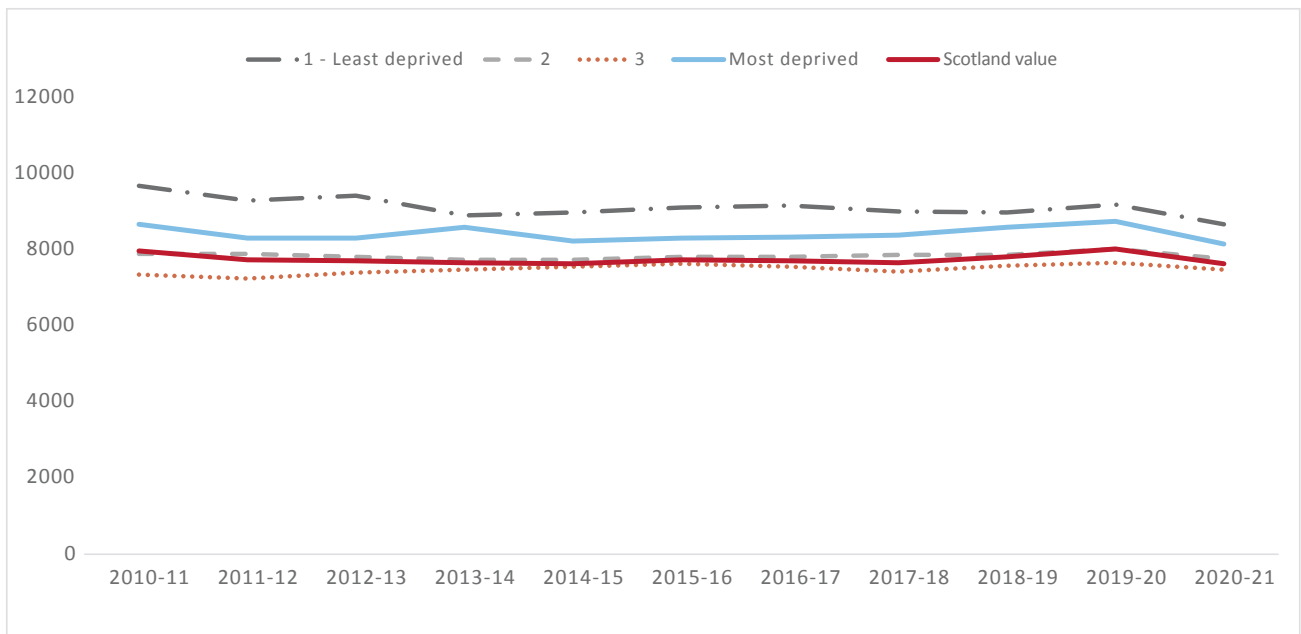


Figure 9: Cost per secondary pupil by family group - deprivation





Cost per primary pupil

The pattern of spend on primary and secondary schooling is standardised as “total cost per pupil”. The real terms reduction in expenditure in the most recent year has seen real cost per primary pupil decrease between 2019/20 and 2020/21, counter to the increasing trend in recent years.

In 2020/21, the average cost per primary pupil fell by £75 in real terms from £5,972 to £5,897, a decrease of 1.3% from the previous year. This reflects a 2.3% decrease in real gross expenditure and a 1.1% reduction in pupil numbers.

Since 2010/11, there has been a real terms reduction of £140 per primary pupil, representing a 2.3% reduction. While real gross expenditure has increased by 5.5% across the period, there has been an 8.0% increase in pupil numbers during this time.

Table 8: Cost per primary pupil

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
£6,036	£5,869	£5,708	£5,559	£5,411	£5,455	£5,444	£5,556	£5,720	£5,972	£5,897	-1.3%	-2.3%

Cost per secondary pupil

The real terms reduction in expenditure in the most recent year has seen cost per secondary pupil decrease, counter to the increasing trend in recent years.

In 2020/21, the average cost per secondary school pupil fell by £411 from £8,040 to £7,629, a fall of 5.1% from the previous year. This reflects a 2.0% decrease in expenditure, and a 3.2% growth in pupil numbers.

Since 2010/11, there was a real terms cost decrease of £342 per secondary pupil, representing a 4.3% reduction in unit costs. There has been a 0.2% growth in pupil numbers across this period and a 4.1% reduction in gross expenditure.

Table 9: Cost per secondary pupil

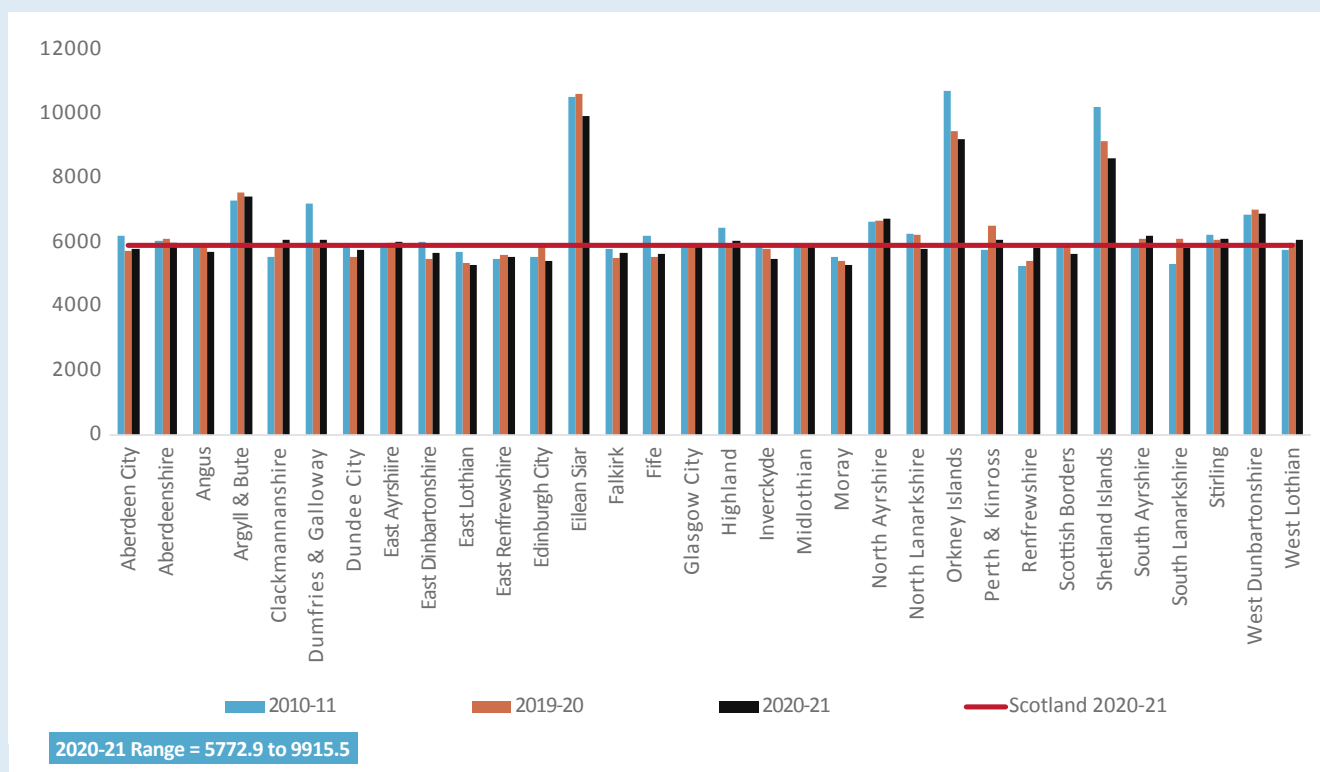
2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
£7,971	£7,737	£7,718	£7,673	£7,650	£7,753	£7,719	£7,671	£7,833	£8,040	£7,629	-5.1%	-4.3%

There is still considerable although narrowing variation across councils, particularly for secondary education. Cost data continues to show a very distinctive pattern across Scotland, with the island councils spending significantly more than others. In primary education, costs range from £5,273 to £9,915 (£5,273 to £7,423 excluding islands) while in secondary the range is £6,789 to £11,953 (£6,789 to £10,441 excluding islands).

While average costs reduced in the most recent year for both primary and secondary pupils, this trend is not universal. While almost all councils reported a reduction in secondary costs, only half of councils reported a reduction in primary. The long-term trends reveal even greater variability among councils.



Fig 10: Cost per primary school pupil (£)



Source: Pupil Census, Scottish Government; council supplied expenditure figures



Local Variation – Cost per primary school pupil

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £5,897; council range: £5,273 - £9,915 (£5,273 - £7,423 excluding islands). There is a distinctive pattern across Scotland, with the island councils spending significantly more than others

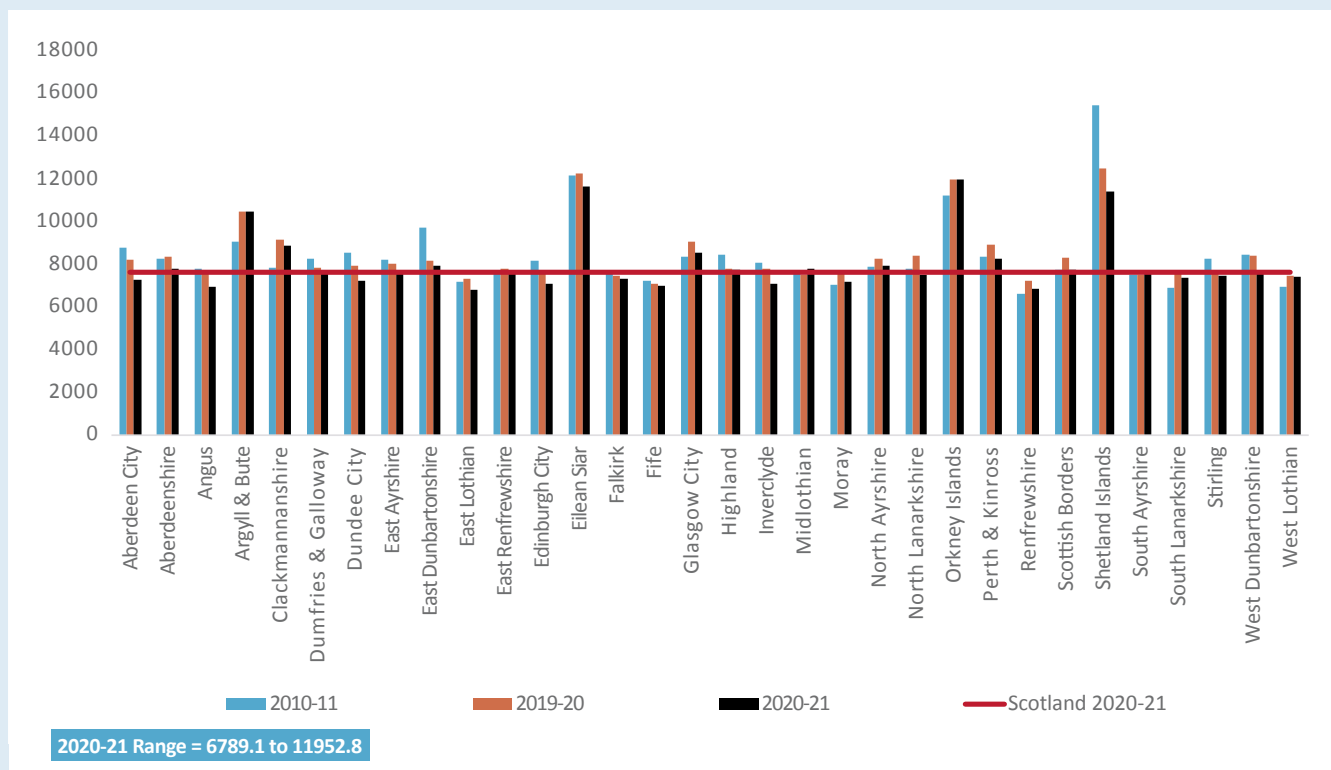
Change over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -1.3%; councils: 16 increased and 16 decreased (range: -8.4% to +7.5%)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -2.3%; councils: 13 increased and 19 decreased (range: -15.5% to +10.3%).



Fig 11: Cost per secondary school pupil (£)



Source: Pupil Census, Scottish Government; council supplied expenditure figures



Local Variation – Cost per secondary school pupil

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £7,629; council range £6,789 - £11,952 (£6,789 - £10,441 excluding islands). There is a distinctive pattern across Scotland, with the island councils spending significantly more than others

Change over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -5.1%; councils: 2 increased and 30 decreased (range: -11.4% to +3.4%)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -4.3%; councils: 11 increased and 21 decreased (range: -26.2% to +15.4%)



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

- *Teacher demographics*
- *Local choices and priorities in relation to non-ringfenced elements of staffing budget such as support staff, teaching assistants, support for children with additional support needs, development teams*
- *PPP/PFI contract costs and arrangements*
- *Service design and growth of campus/hub school models*
- *Management structure and balance of senior roles*
- *Access to additional monies such as The Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity funding*
- *Demographic variability – depending on existing class sizes and teacher numbers locally, changes in pupil numbers will have a varying impact on expenditure patterns for councils.*

Primary and secondary school performance

Primary school performance

The National Improvement Framework¹⁹ has introduced a consistent method for assessing children's development throughout the Broad General Education, P1-S3, in line with the Curriculum for Excellence which replaced the previous 5-14 Curriculum. In particular, the ability to focus on the impact of deprivation on attainment addresses an important gap in understanding the educational journey of children across all stages of the curriculum.

Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) data captures the proportion of children in stages P1, P4, P7 and S3 of school who have achieved the "expected" level of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (i.e. those who have achieved the level expected for most children by the end of that stage of schooling). Since the introduction of CfE each local authority has worked with its schools to develop a framework for monitoring the progression of individual children through the curriculum. Each school reports annually on the proportion of children in stages P1, P4, P7 and S3 of school who have achieved the "expected" level of CfE.

In 2018/19, the LGBF introduced the following measures to help support local improvements in learning for pupils within the Broad General Education (stages P1 through to S3 of schooling):

- Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE level in literacy
- Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE level in numeracy
- Literacy attainment gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils (P1,4,7 combined)
- Numeracy attainment gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils (P1,4,7 combined)

Due to the COVID-19 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. Data for 2018/19 and 2020/21 is included below.

2020/21 data reveals a decline in literacy and numeracy achievement in the most recent year, and a widening of the attainment gap. COVID-19 and the resulting lockdowns have had a significant impact on learning for

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/2021-national-improvement-framework-improvement-plan/>



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.²⁰

It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic has also had an impact on the data submitted this year, in relation to the opportunities to gather evidence on which to make judgements, and on the nature and quantity of the moderation exercises conducted. While there is overall confidence in the data quality provided, there remains commitment to prioritise further improvements in future data collections to strengthen consistency.

Table 10: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils achieving expected CfE levels in literacy

	2018 -19	2020 -21	Value Change
All Children %	72.3	66.9	-5.4
Most disadvantaged (bottom 20% SIMD) %	63.1	56.0	-7.1
Least disadvantaged (top 20% SIMD) %	83.7	80.7	-3.0
Gap (percentage points)	20.7	24.7	4.0

Table 11: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils achieving expected CfE levels in numeracy

	2018 -19	2020 -21	Value Change
All Children %	79.1	74.7	-4.4
Most disadvantaged (bottom 20% SIMD) %	71.7	65.0	-6.6
Least disadvantaged (top 20% SIMD) %	88.5	86.5	-2.0
Gap (percentage points)	16.8	21.4	4.6

Source: Scottish Government, *Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Levels*

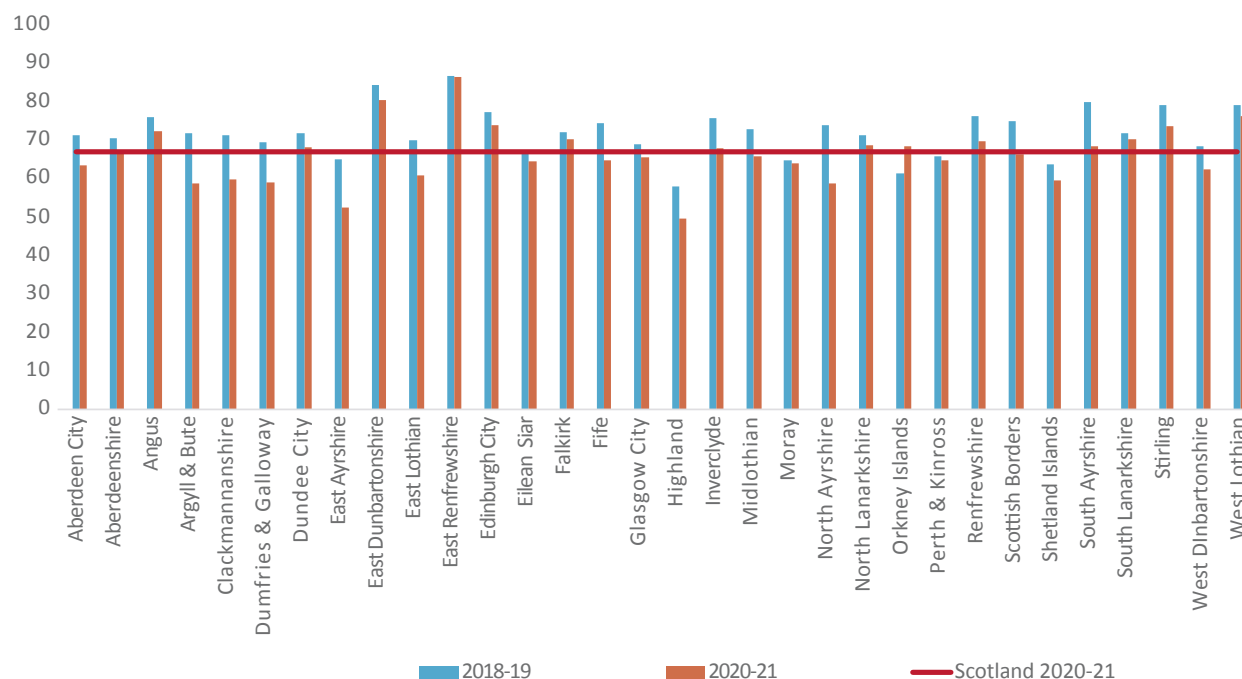
The percentage of children achieving expected CFE levels in literacy and numeracy decreased between 2018/19 and 2020/21. The percentage of children achieving expected numeracy levels decreased from 79.1% in 2018/19 to 74.7% in 2020/21, while the percentage of children achieving expected literacy levels decreased from 72.3% to 66.9%. This decreasing pattern was true for almost all councils, although the scale of decrease differed.

Numeracy and literacy levels decreased for pupils in both the most and the least deprived areas, with pupils in the most deprived areas experiencing a bigger drop in attainment. This had the effect of widening the attainment gap between the most and least deprived pupils during this time. In numeracy, the attainment gap grew from 16.8 percentage points to 21.4 percentage points, while in literacy it grew from 20.7 percentage points to 24.7 percentage points. While this widening gap is true for most authorities, a fifth of councils saw their attainment gap narrow during this period.

²⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equity-audit-deepening-understanding-impact-covid-19-school-building-closures-children-socio-economically-disadvantaged-backgrounds-setting-clear-areas-focus-accelerating-recovery/pages/2/>



Fig 12: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE level in literacy



Source: Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), Scottish Government



Local Variation – ACEL in literacy

2020/21 Value

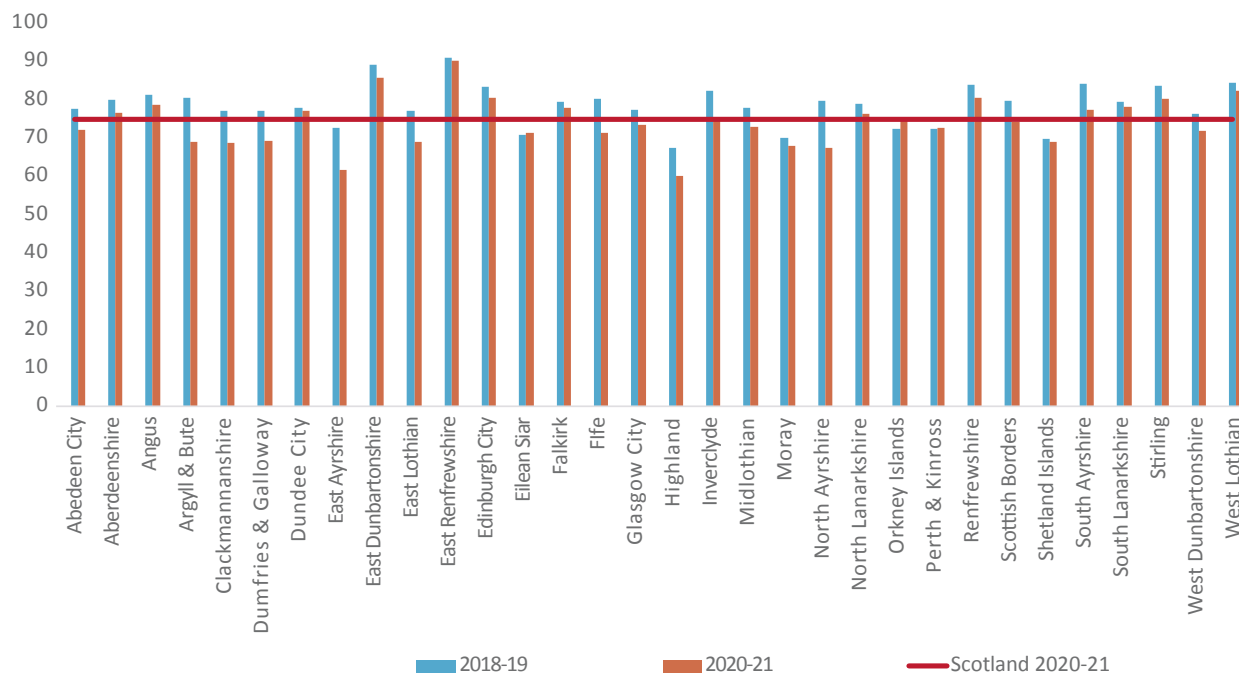
Scotland: 66.9%; council range: 49% - 86%, with variation widening in the recent year. Councils with lower levels of deprivation tend to achieve higher literacy levels (70% compared to 63% for the most deprived, not statistically significant)

Change over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -5.4pp; councils: 31 decreased and 1 increased. (range: -15.2pp to +7.1pp)



Fig 13: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE level in numeracy



Source: Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), Scottish Government



Local Variation – ACEL in numeracy

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 74.7%; council range: 60% - 90%, with variation widening in the recent year. Councils with lower levels of deprivation tend to achieve higher numeracy levels (78% compared to 72% for the most deprived, not statistically significant).

Change over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -4.4pp; councils: 29 decreased and 3 increased. (range: -12.1pp to +2.9pp)



Fig 14: Literacy attainment gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils (P1,4,7 combined)

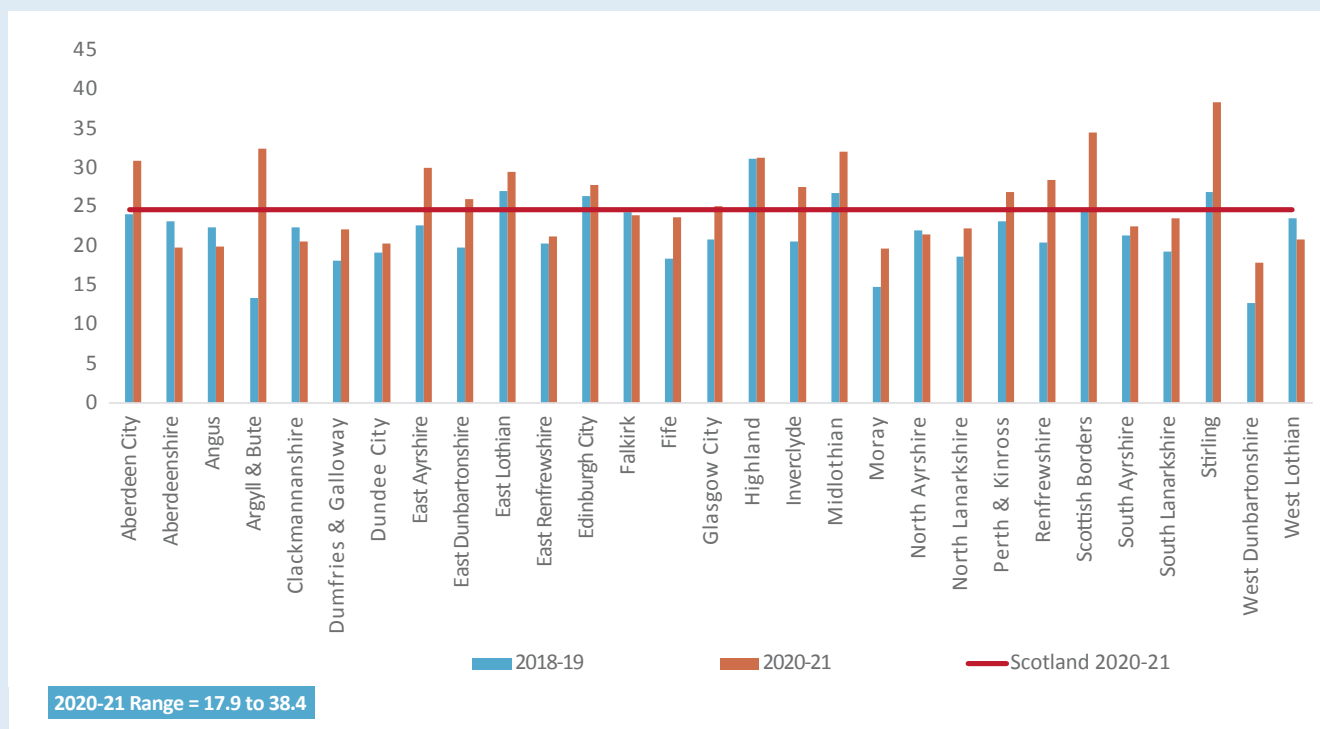
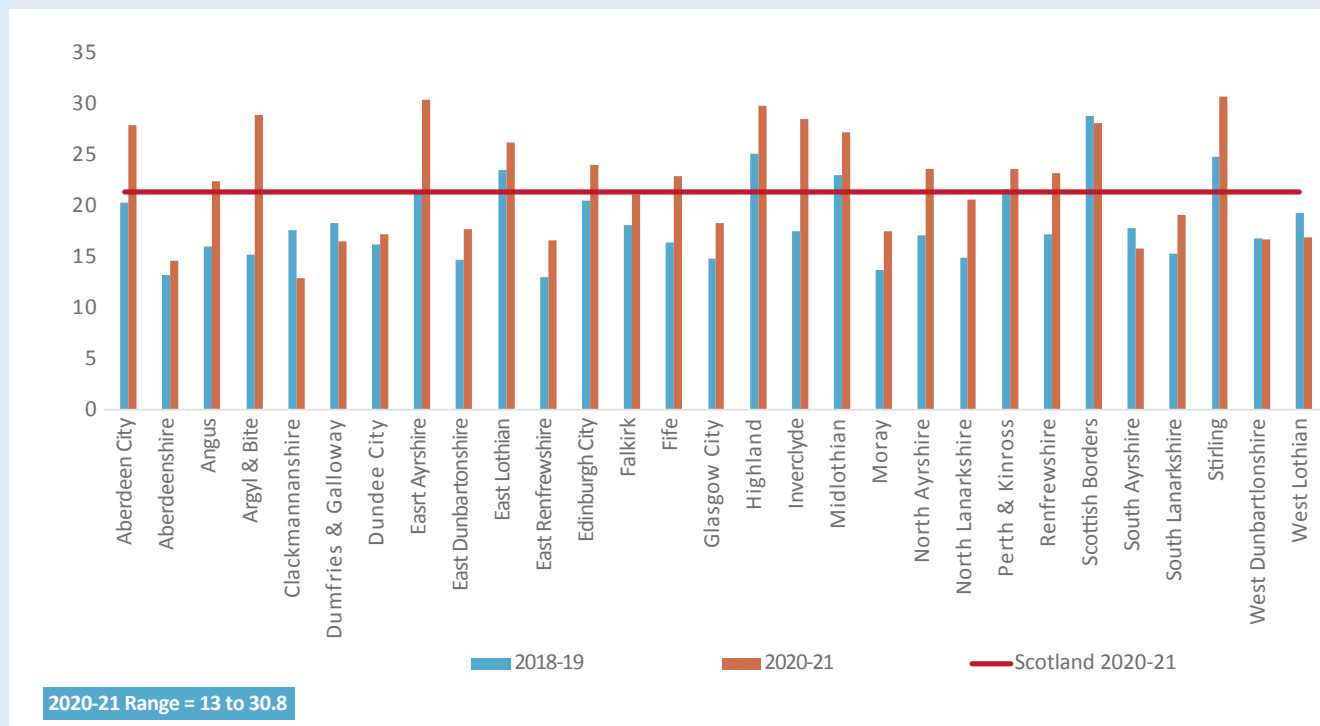


Fig 15: Numeracy attainment gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils (P1,4,7 Combined)



Source: Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), Scottish Government

Note: Eilean Siar, Orkney and Shetland are excluded as they have no pupils in the most deprived areas



Local Variation – ACEL literacy and numeracy attainment gap

2020/21 Value

Literacy: Scotland: 24.7pp; council range: 18pp - 38pp

Numeracy: Scotland: 21.4pp; council range; 13pp - 31pp.

Variation between councils has widened in the recent year, and there is no systematic relationship with deprivation, rurality or council size.

Change over Time

Literacy: Scotland: +4.0pp; councils: 23 increased and 6 decreased. (range: -3pp to +19pp)

Numeracy: Scotland: +4.6pp; councils: 23 increased and 6 decreased. (range: -5pp to +14pp).

School attendance rates

Good school attendance is key to ensuring that every child gets off to the best start in life and has access to support and learning that responds to individual needs and potential. The role of school attendance in the protection of children is key. Local authorities record information on pupils' attendance and absence from school and the reasons for this. This information is used to monitor pupil engagement and to ensure pupils' safety and wellbeing by following up on pupils who do not attend school.

Attendance is standardised within this framework as "school attendance rates", the number of half- days attended for a local authority as a percentage of the total number of possible attendances.²¹

COVID-19 has had an impact on pupil attendance statistics. The attendance rate that these statistics focus on is the 'schools open' rate – i.e. it only looks at the attendance rate during the period that schools were open to all pupils. Home-learning when the school was open but an individual pupil could not attend due to their personal circumstances (including COVID-19 related reasons) is included in this measure. The rates reported in this 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-19).

During 2020/21, attendance rates fell by 1pp from 93% to 92%. Prior to this, attendance rates had remained at or above 93% since 2010/11, although had been showing slight decline in recent years. In 2020/21, the level of variation in attendance rates between councils increased, with council values ranging from 90% to 96%. The variation between councils is systematically related to deprivation, with attendance rates higher in those councils with lower levels of deprivation (94% compared to 91%). During 2020/21, attendance rates reduced for the majority of councils, however four authorities reported an increase counter to the national trend. Those councils serving the most deprived communities experienced the largest reduction in attendance in this year.

Data is published only every two years

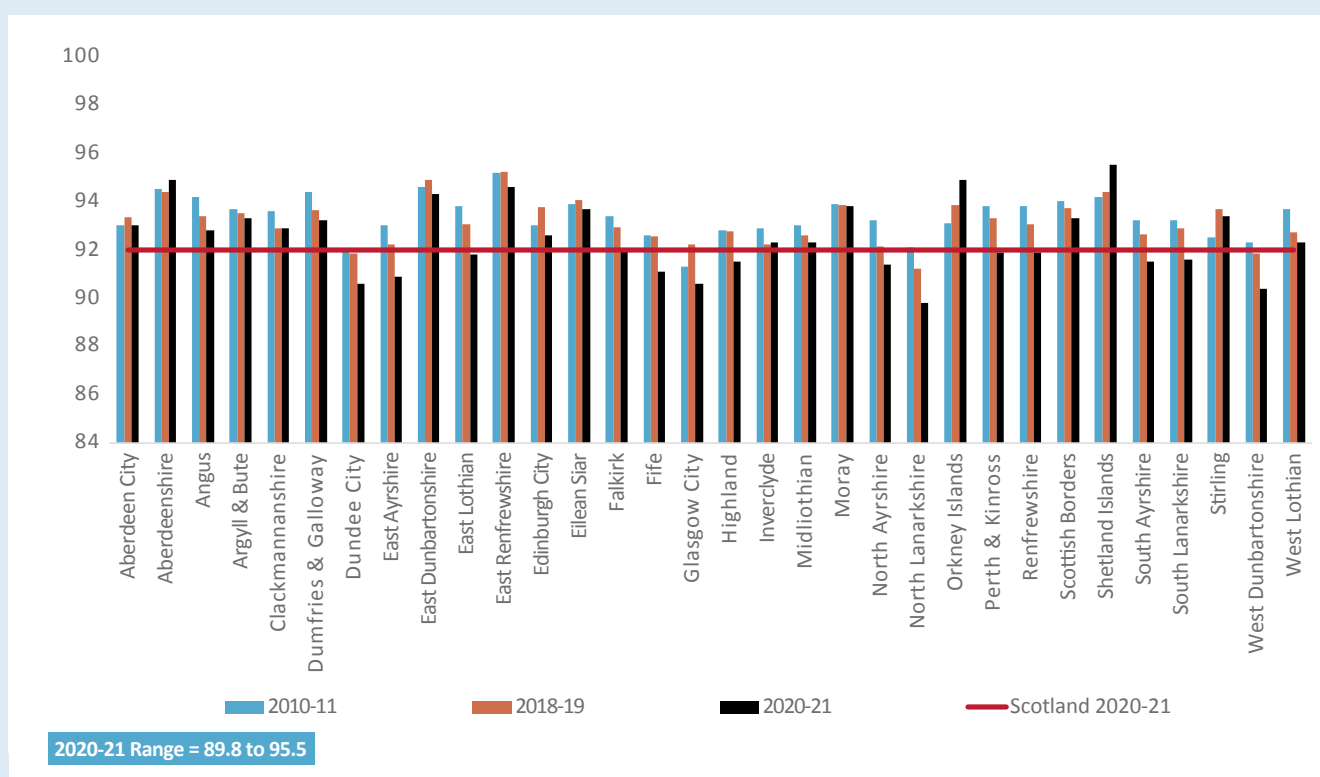
²¹ The national average is the average number of half-days attended for local authority and mainstream grant-aided schools in Scotland.



Table 12: School attendance rates for all pupils and for children who are looked after

	2010-11	2012-13	2014-15	2016-17	2018-19	2020-21	Value Change 2018-19 to 2020-21	Value Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
School Attendance Rates	93.1	93.6	93.7	93.3	93.0	92.0	-1.0	-1.1
School Attendance Rates (LAC)	86.3	88.7	89.0	88.2	86.8	dna	-1.4	0.5

Fig 16: School attendance rates (%)



Source: Scottish Government attendance and absence figures



Local Variation – School attendance rates

2020/21 Value

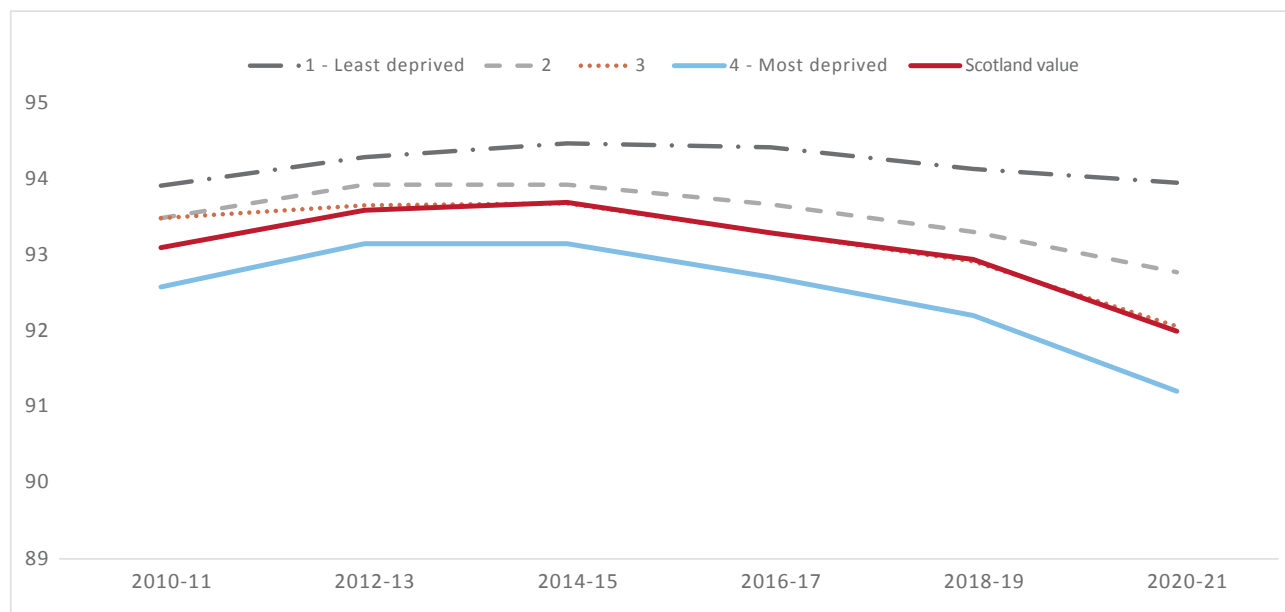
Scotland: 92%; council range: 90% - 96%, with variation widening in the most recent year. Attendance rates are significantly higher in councils with lower levels of deprivation (94% compared to 91% for the most deprived).

Change over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -1.0pp; councils: 28 decreased and 4 increased. (range: -1.6pp to +1.1pp). Councils serving the most deprived communities reported larger reductions (-1.1pp compared to -0.2pp)



Fig 17: School attendance rates (%) by family group - deprivation



2020/21 data for attendance rates of looked after children is not yet available and will be included when it is published later in 2022.

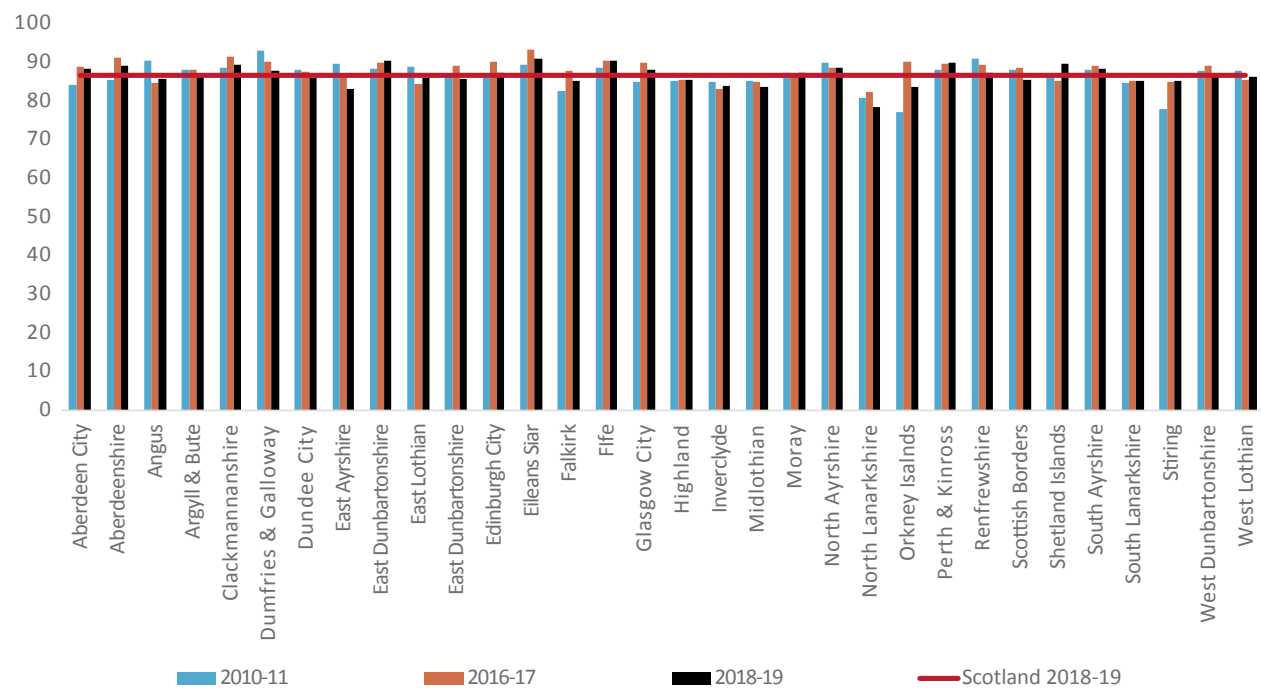
Historic data trends show that school attendance of looked after children is lower than attendance for all pupils and has remained between 86% and 88% between 2010/11 and 2018/19. Attendance is lowest for those looked after at home and with a greater number of placements. Looked after children have a lower attendance rate than all pupils in all school sectors but the differences are significant in secondary school (81.1% compared to 90.7% for all pupils in secondary school in 2018/19).

There is greater variation across councils in attendance rates for looked after children than for other pupils, ranging from 79% to 91% in 2018/19. Within this variation, there are no systematic effects of deprivation, rurality or size of council. The small number of looked after children in some authorities may introduce volatility in the data for this measure which may explain some of the variation.

As with overall attendance rates, data is published only every two years.



Fig 18: School attendance rates (looked after children) (%)



Source: Scottish Government attendance and absence figures

School exclusion rates

Councils strive to keep all learners fully included, engaged and involved in their education, wherever this takes place, and to improve outcomes for those learners at risk of exclusion. While the power exists to exclude children and young people from school, there have been significant, concerted efforts by schools and local authorities to implement a range of approaches and solutions to positively engage young people in their education and improve relationships and behaviour. This is based upon a shared approach of agencies working together and responding to the needs of learners early and effectively, in line with the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). Exclusion is considered only when to allow the child or young person to continue attendance at school would be seriously detrimental to order and discipline in the school or the educational wellbeing of the learners there.

Exclusion is standardised within the framework as “school exclusion rates”, the number of cases of temporary exclusions and number of pupils removed from the register (previously known as ‘permanent’ exclusions) per 1000 pupils. 2020/21 data for exclusion rates is not yet available and will be included when it is published later in 2022.

Historic data trends show that between 2010/11 and 2018/19, exclusion rates have reduced year on year, falling from 40.0 to 21.6 across the period.



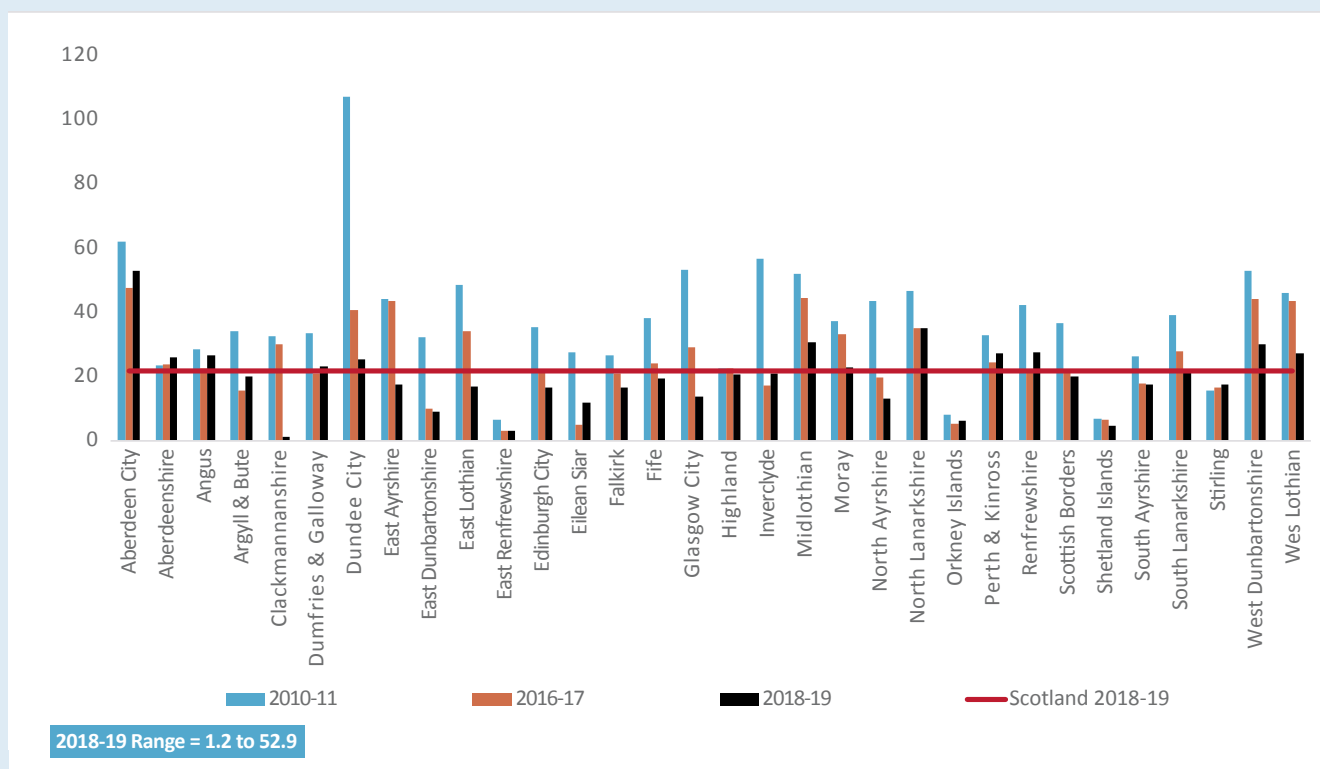
Table 13: School exclusion rates (per 1,000 pupils) for all pupils and for children who are looked after

	2010-11	2012-13	2014-15	2016-17	2018-19	% Change 2016-17 to 2018-19	% Change 2010-11 to 2018-19
School Exclusion Rates	40.0	32.8	27.2	26.8	21.6	-19.4%	-45.9%
School Exclusion Rates (LAC)	340.8	280.3	246.8	210.1	152.2	-27.6%	-55.3%

There was significant but narrowing variation across councils in 2018/19, with rates per 1000 pupils ranging from 1.2 to 52.9. Average exclusion rates tend to be higher in the most deprived councils compared to the least deprived councils (21.0 compared to 18.2). However, there is no statistically significant relationship with deprivation due to variation within the family group. Analysis demonstrates a significant narrowing of the gap between most and least deprived councils. Since 2010/11, the exclusion rate has decreased by 61% for the most deprived councils on average, compared to a 30% decrease for the least deprived councils.

As with attendance rates, figures for exclusion are published every two years.

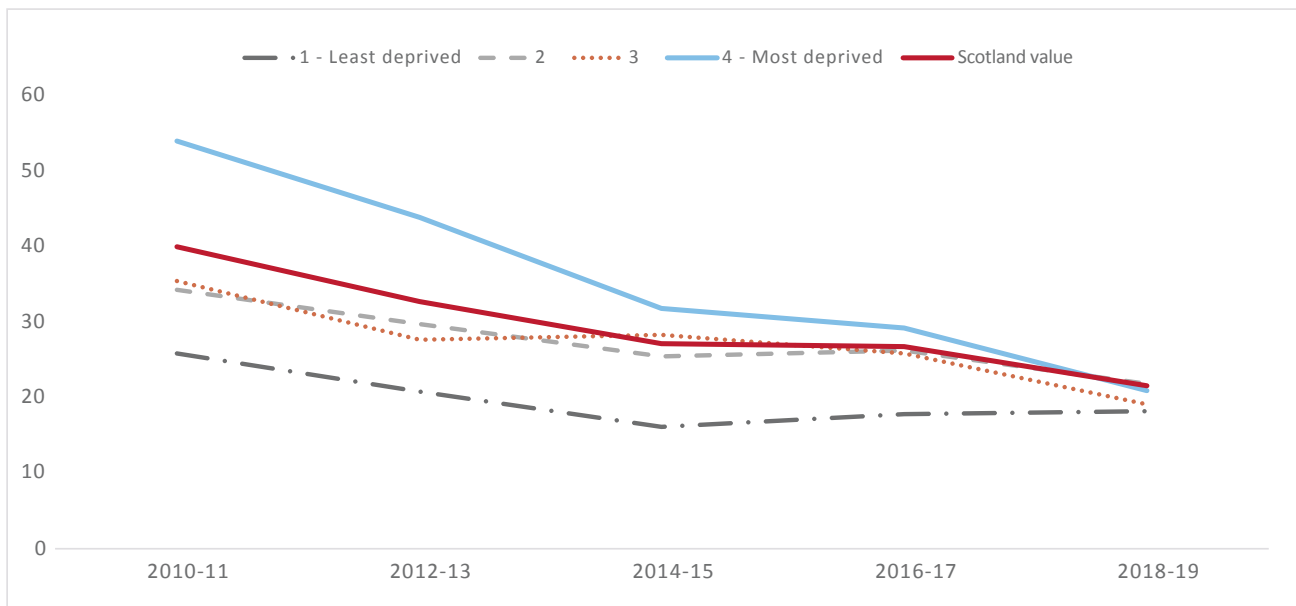
Fig 19: School exclusion rates (per 1,000 pupils)



Source: Summary Statistics For Schools In Scotland, Scottish Government



Fig 20: School exclusion rates (per 1,000 pupils) by family group - deprivation



2020/21 data for exclusion rates for children who are looked after is not yet available and will be included when it is published later in 2022.

Historic data shows that exclusion rates for children who are looked after are significantly higher than for all pupils, although they are reducing at a faster rate, so the gap is narrowing steadily. The exclusion rate for children looked after has more than halved since 2010/11. Between 2010/11 and 2018/19, exclusion rates for children who are looked after reduced from 340.8 to 152.2. This represents an improvement rate of 55%, compared to an improvement rate of 46% for all pupils across the same period.

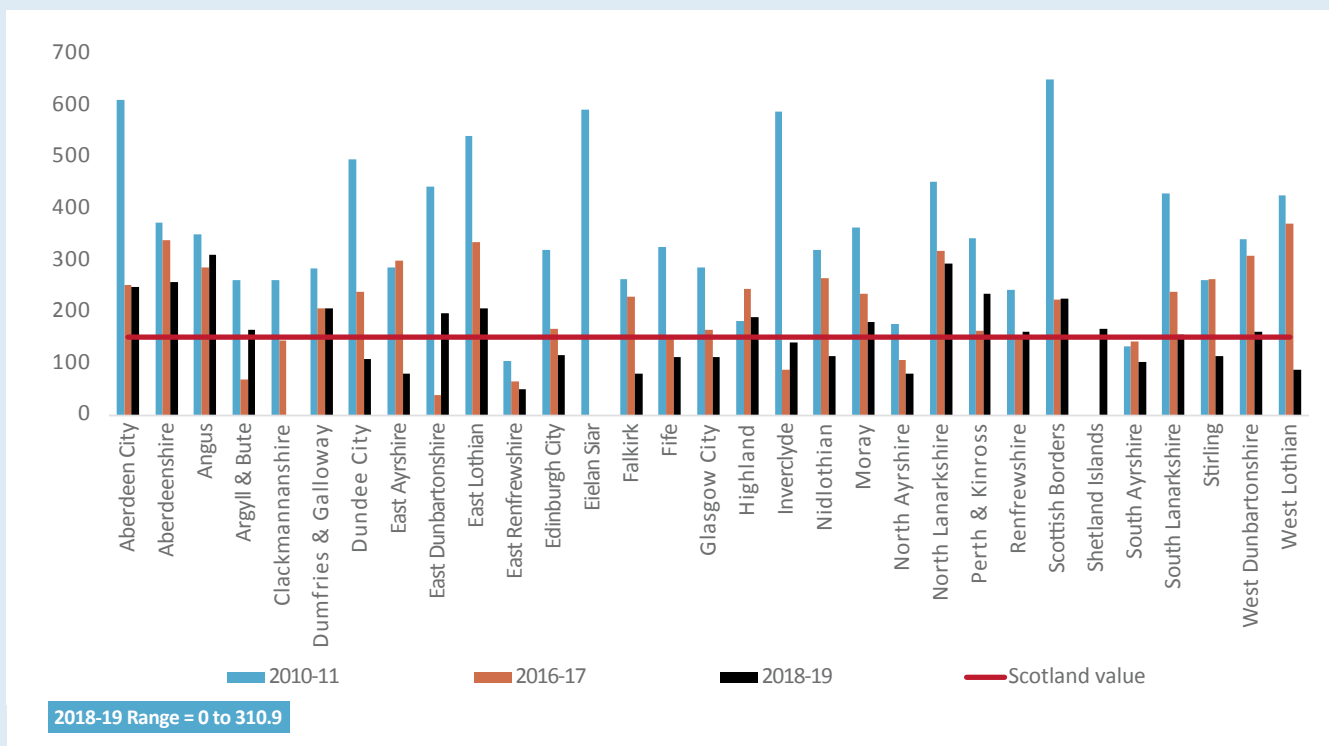
Those children in residential accommodation tend to have higher rates of exclusions than those looked after in the community. Children looked after at home have a noticeably higher exclusion rate than others looked after in the community, i.e. in foster care and with friends or relatives. There is a tendency for looked after children with a greater number of placements to have a higher rate of exclusions and children looked after for part of the year with more than one placement to have a notably high rate of exclusions.

There is greater variation across councils in exclusion rates for looked after children than for all pupils, ranging from 0 to 311 in 2018/19. This variation between councils has narrowed significantly over time. There are no systematic effects in relation to council level of deprivation, rurality or size on exclusion rates. The small number of looked after children in some authorities may introduce volatility in the data for this measure which may explain some of the variation.

As with overall exclusion rates, figures for exclusion are published every two years.



Fig 21: School exclusion rates (per 1,000 looked after pupils)



Source: Summary Statistics For Schools In Scotland, Scottish Government

Secondary school performance

The introduction of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) has helped to ensure that all young people receive a curriculum that is better focussed on their individual needs. This is reflected in the long-term trends seen for the attainment of school leavers, with a sustained improvement in overall levels of attainment and a significant closing of the attainment gap over recent years.

The LGBF Board is committed to developing a suite of performance measures which accurately reflect the senior phase (S4-S6) landscape and reflect wider educational achievement. The transitional suite presented here marks an important step in this development, however further measures will be introduced as suitable data becomes available over future years, to improve the scope and balance of information available on children's services.

Performance at secondary level is currently measured within the LGBF by:

- Average tariff score (by SIMD quintile)
- Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ SCQF level 5 qualifications or higher (described as '5+ at Level 5' for the purpose of this report)
- Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ SCQF level 6 qualifications or higher (described as '5+ at Level 6' for the purpose of this report)
- Percentage of school leavers entering positive destinations



- Participation rate measuring participation in learning (including school), training or work for all 16-19 year olds in Scotland.

Attainment data for 2019/20 and 2020/21 reflects achievement during the COVID-19 period. The cancellation of exams and external assessment of coursework in 2020, and the use of the Alternative Certification Model in 2021, will have affected the attainment of many 2020/21 school leavers. It is also likely that the pandemic will have continued to affect the destination choices made by, and opportunities available to, some school leavers in 2020/21.

The impacts of these different approaches to certification upon school leaver attainment means that care should be taken when making comparisons over time. The attainment data provides an accurate reflection of the attainment with which school leavers in Scotland left school; for this reason attainment data for 2020/21, 2019/20 and previous years are presented together.

Average tariff

Average tariff is a summative measure of educational attainment which offers a broad measure of achievement to consider alongside breadth and depth measures. The tariff score is a summary measure calculated from all academic achievement of pupils during the senior phase (S4- S6) across a range of awards included in the benchmarking tool Insight. The tariff reflects the number of awards that a pupil achieves, the SCQF level at which each award is assessed, and the grade of the award achieved (for any of these awards which are graded). The measure here reflects cumulative attainment either to the point of leaving or to the end of S6.

Under Curriculum for Excellence, different curricular structures exist across Scotland and therefore the type of attainment offered will differ, which impacts the average total tariff presented in this report. This includes variations in the number of subjects typically studied by pupils, reflecting differing approaches to developing employability skills and the core qualification sets needed to enable a range of post school destinations.

As the school leaver data is not yet available for 2020/21, 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 2021 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.²²

As noted above, for 2019/20 and 2020/21 data, the absence of external assessment information led to grades awarded being based on teacher estimates. These results are therefore not directly comparable with previous and future years.

In 2020/21, the overall average tariff²³ obtained was 972, with scores ranging from 771 to 1482 across authorities. There remains significant variation in achievement between SIMD quintile groups, with higher average tariff scores for pupils from the least deprived quintiles. The average tariff for pupils from the least deprived SIMD Quintile 5 was 1320, compared to 688 for pupils from the most deprived SIMD Quintile 1.

Since 2011/12, average total tariff has increased by 26.3% from 770 to 972. While this increasing trend is evident for all SIMD groups, pupils from the most deprived groups have shown the largest increase across the period, although tariff scores remain significantly lower than those achieved by pupils from less deprived groups. Since 2011/12, average tariffs have increased by 43.9% and 32.2% for the two most deprived groups compared to 21.9% and 19.9% for the least deprived groups.

²² The difference in percentages between the leaver cohort and the S6 based on S4 whole school cohort can be significant, especially for Local Authorities that have smaller cohort numbers.

²³ Overall average total tariff is calculated by the Improvement Service



Average tariffs in 2019/20 and 2020/21 have increased at a faster rate than observed in the years prior to COVID-19 when the rate of increase had slowed and had shown a small decline for all groups, except for the most deprived SIMD group. This faster rate of increase in 2019/20 and 2020/21 is observed for all SIMD groups, with no clear pattern of deprivation evident.

Table 14: Average total tariff by SIMD quintile, 2011-12 to 2020/21

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2011-12 to 2020-21	Range 2020-21
Overall Average Tariff	770	798	827	860	877	888	894	895	930	972	4.6%	26.3%	771-1482
Average Tariff SIMD Q1	478	510	551	581	603	625	620	628	649	688	6.0%	43.9%	435-1069
Average Tariff SIMD Q2	618	644	685	716	741	751	752	743	759	817	7.6%	32.2%	616-1355
Average Tariff SIMD Q3	759	788	816	851	864	882	899	875	906	975	7.6%	28.5%	758-1337
Average Tariff SIMD Q4	909	929	962	984	998	1002	1019	1015	1030	1108	7.6%	21.9%	452-1517
Average Tariff SIMD Q5	1101	1134	1149	1185	1197	1210	1224	1195	1241	1320	6.4%	19.9%	965-1626

Note: A dashed line break has been placed between 2018/19 and 2019/20 to reflect the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 and 2021 on 2019/20 and 2020/21 school leaver attainment.

Since 2011/12, there has been significant and widening variation between authorities across all 5 tariff measures. This variation has widened further in 2019/20 and 2020/21, particularly for the least deprived SIMD groups. While almost all councils have seen average tariffs increase both since 2011/12 and in the most recent two years, a small minority have seen rates decrease. The differing curricular models between authorities will be an important factor in understanding some of this variation. Further detail of the variation within councils is presented in the graphs below.



Fig 22: Overall average total tariff

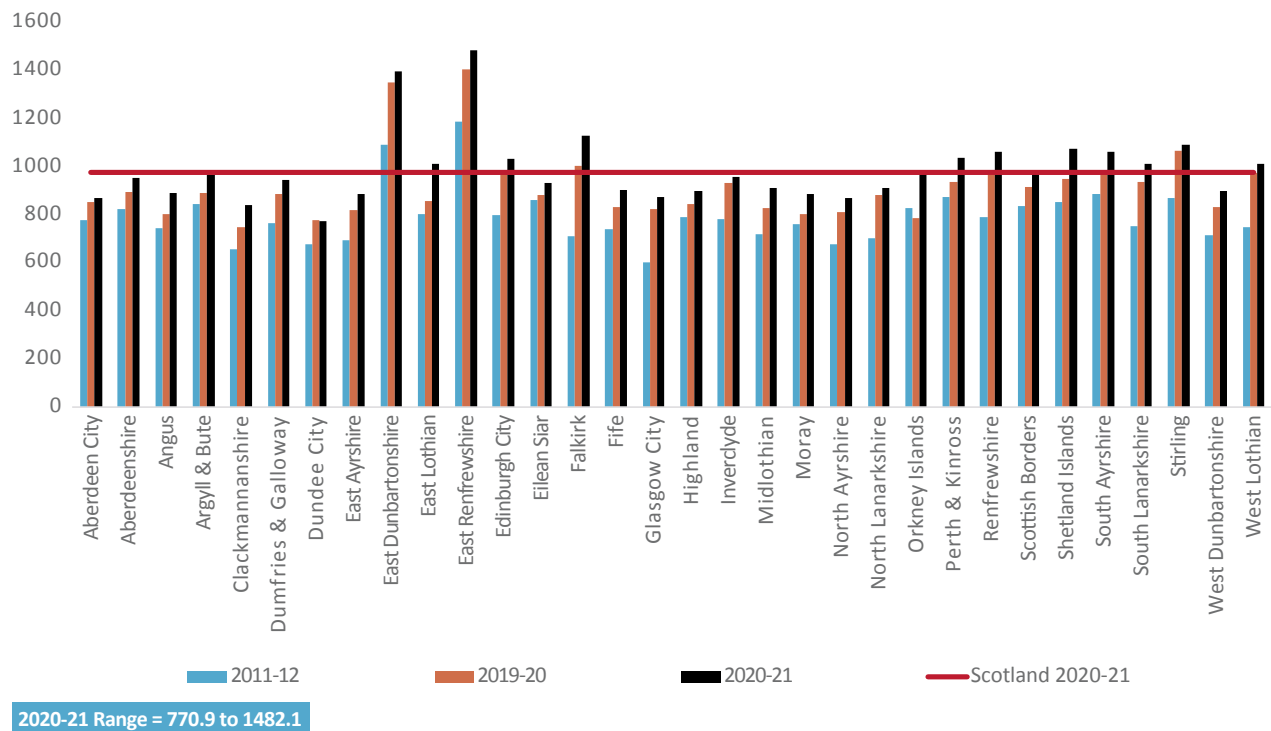


Fig 23: Average total tariff SIMD quintile 1

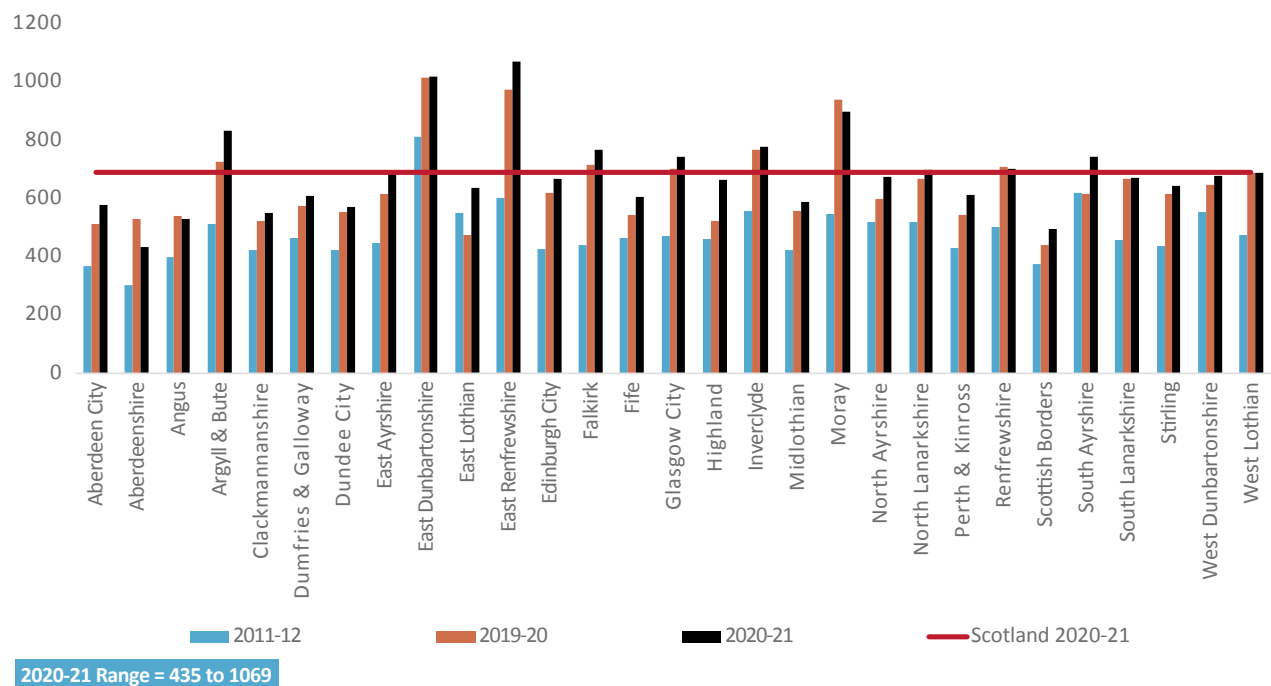




Fig 24: Average total tariff SIMD quintile 2

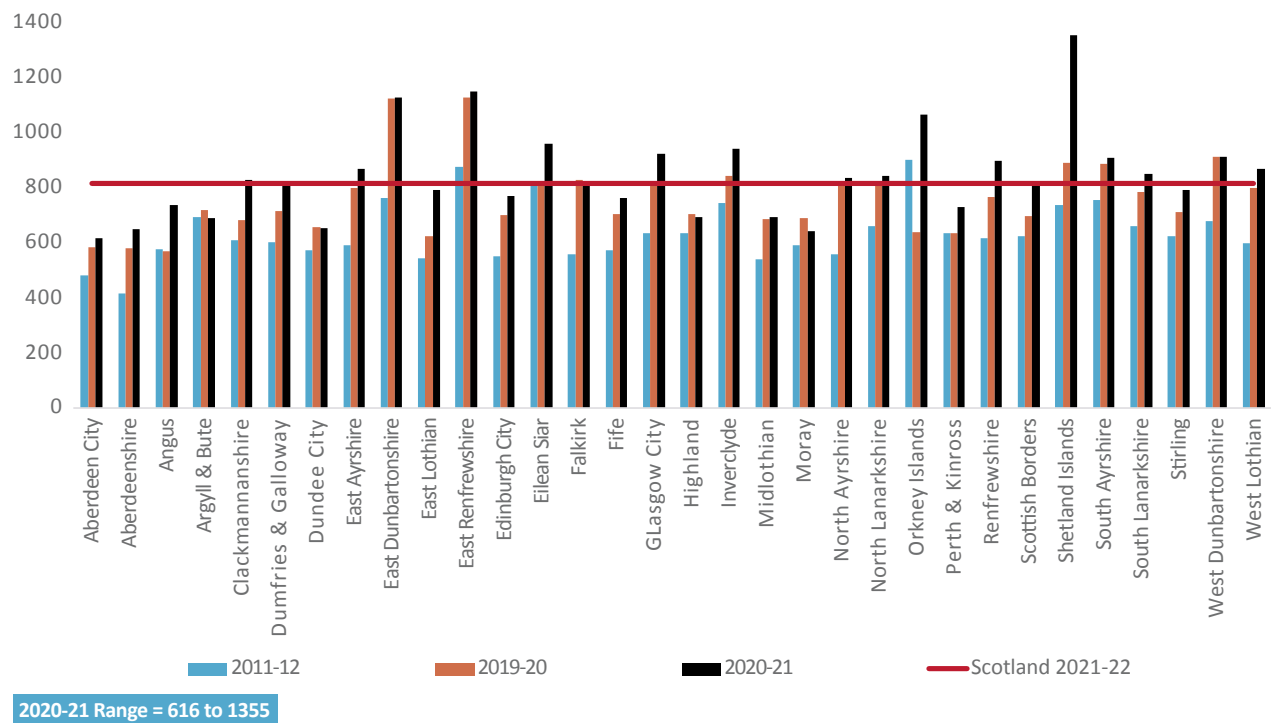


Fig 25: Average total tariff SIMD quintile 3

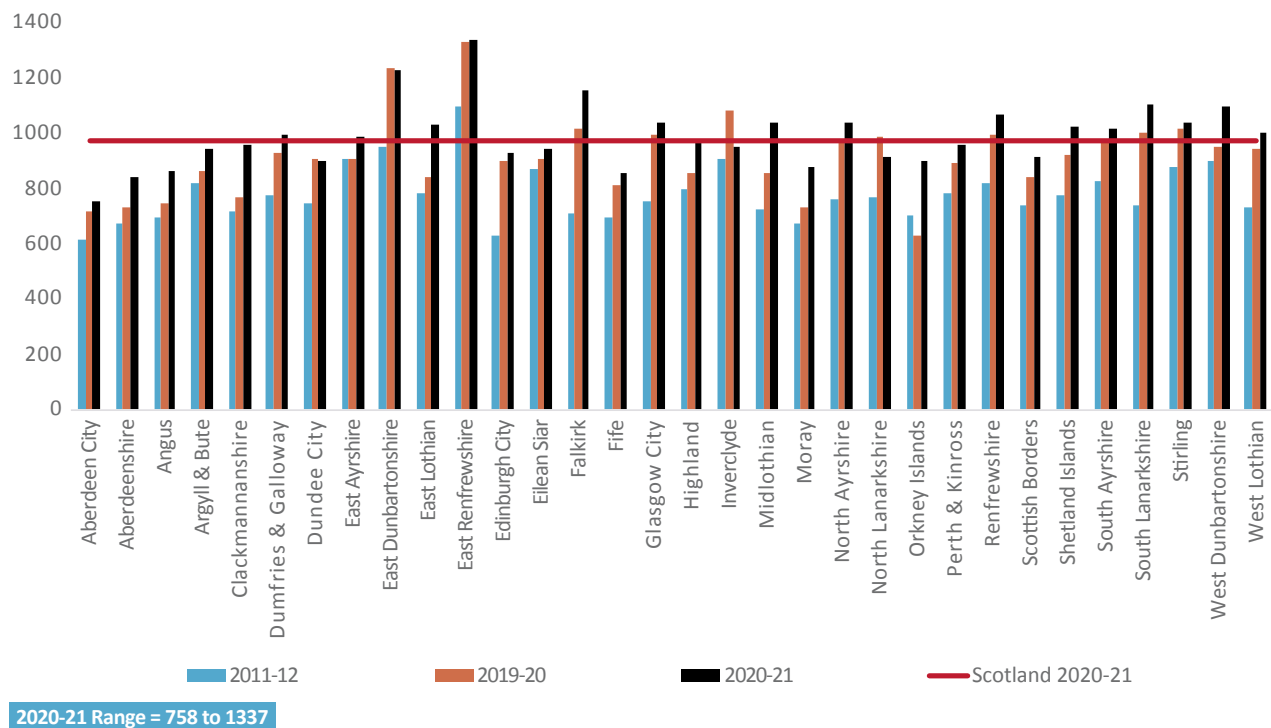


Fig 26: Average total tariff SIMD quintile 4

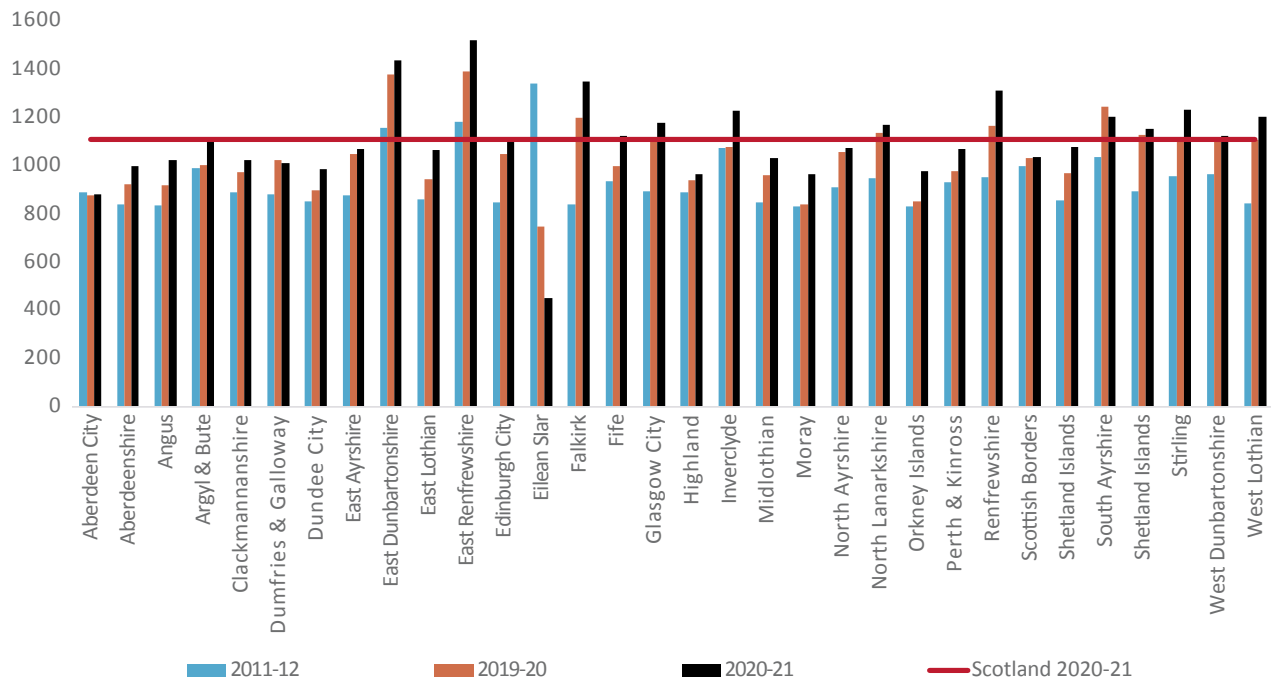
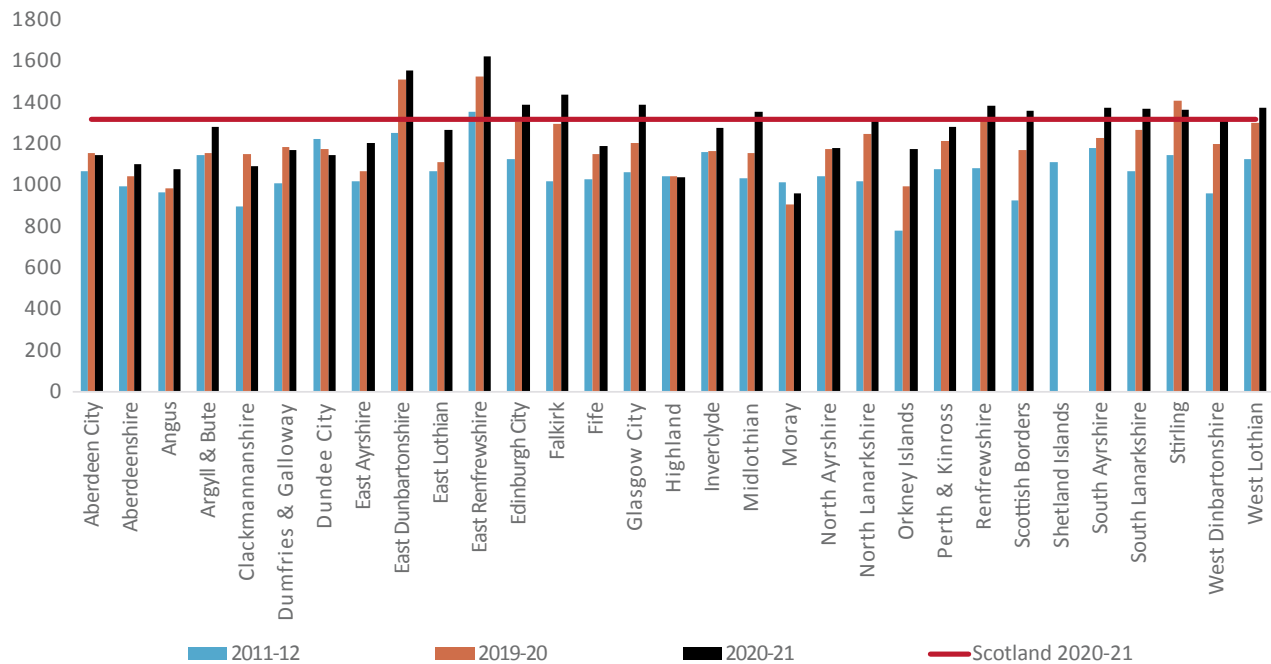


Fig 27: Average total tariff SIMD quintile 5



Source: Breakdown of average total tariff by SIMD quintile provided by the Scottish Government and overall average total tariff calculated from this by the Improvement service.

Note: Missing values represent councils which have no pupils in this SIMD quintile



Local Variation – Average total tariff

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 972; council range: 771 - 1482 with variation widening in the most recent year. Higher tariff rates are reported in councils with lower levels of deprivation (1033 compared to 890 for the most deprived).

Change over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +4.6%; councils: 31 increased and 1 decreased (range: -0.6% to +24.7%)

Since 2011/12: Scotland: +26.3%; councils: 32 increased (range: +8.1% to 59.1%)

Local Variation – Average total tariff SIMD1

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 688; council range: 435 – 1069 with variation widening in the most recent year. No systematic relationship with deprivation.

Change over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +6.0%; councils: 24 increased and 4 decreased (range: -18.1% to +33.6%)

Since 2011/12: Scotland: +43.9%; councils: 29 increased and 0 decreased range: +15.4% to +77.9%)

Local Variation – Average total tariff SIMD5

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 1320; council range: 965 – 1626 with variation widening in the most recent year. No systematic relationship with deprivation.

Change over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +6.4%; councils: 24 increased and 6 decreased (range: -4.9% to +18.3)

Since 2011/12: Scotland: +19.9%; councils: 27 increased and 3 decreased (range: -6.3% to +51.2%)

Performance at SCQF level 5 and level 6 or higher

Performance at level 5 and level 6 or higher provide a breadth and depth measure of achievement for pupils at higher levels of attainment, for all pupils and for those from more deprived areas. It should be noted that 5+ awards at SCQF level 5 and level 6 or higher are demanding academic criteria and on their own provide a rather narrow picture of attainment. They are concentrated heavily on high attainers – those who would typically progress to higher education – and do not adequately reflect the outcomes and life chances of all school pupils.

These measures reflect the cumulative attainment at SCQF level 5 and level 6 or higher, either to the point of leaving or to the end of S6. However, as with average tariff scores, as the school leaver data is not yet available for 2020/21, 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 2021 data to be included, the Scottish Government has provided pupils' 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.

As noted above, the different approaches to certification in 2020 and 2021 mean these results are therefore not directly comparable with previous and future years.

Table 15: Percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 and level 6 or higher, 2011-12 to 2020-21

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2011-12 to 2020-21	Range 2020-21
% Gaining 5+ Awards at Level 5	51	53	55	57	59	60	62	63	65	67	2.0	16.0	58-90
% Gaining 5+ Awards at Level 6	26	27	29	31	33	34	34	35	38	41	3.0	15.0	29-70
% Pupils from Deprived Areas Gaining 5+ Awards at Level 5 (SIMD)	29	32	34	37	40	41	42	45	47	49	2.0	20.0	36-79
% Pupils from Deprived Areas Gaining 5+ Awards at Level 6 (SIMD)	10	11	14	14	15	16	17	19	21	23	2.0	13.0	13-43

Note: A dashed line break has been placed between 2018/19 and 2019/20 to reflect the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 and 2021 on 2019/20 and 2020/21 school leaver attainment.

In 2020/21, 67% of pupils achieved 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5, including 49% of pupils from deprived areas. 41% achieved 5 or more awards at SCQF level 6, including 23% of pupils from deprived areas.

Since 2011/12, there is a clear increasing trend in SCQF level 5 and level 6 attainment. The total percentage of young people gaining 5+ awards at level 5 and level 6 has increased, for all pupils, and for those in the most deprived communities. In 2019/20 and 2020/21, attainment rates continued to increase. Attainment at Level 6 increased at a slightly faster rate than observed prior to COVID.

In 2020/21, 67% of pupils achieved five or more awards at level 5 or higher, an increase of 16 percentage points from 2011/12. Similarly, there has been a 15-point increase in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more awards at level 6 or higher during this time, from 26% to 41%. Since 2011/12, all 32 councils have seen an increase in attainment at these levels, and all councils but one have seen levels continue to increase in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

While achievement levels remain lower for children from the most deprived areas, levels have increased at a



faster rate within these groups. The percentage of children from the most deprived communities achieving 5+ awards at level 5 and level 6 in 2020/21 was 49% and 23% respectively, an increase of 20 percentage points and 13 percentage points from 2011/12.

While all councils (except 1) have seen an increase in achievement levels for children from the most deprived communities since 2011/12, a small minority of councils have seen levels fall in 2019/20 and 2020/21

Achievement varied significantly between authorities. The council range for 5+ awards at level 5 was 58%-90%, and for pupils from deprived areas it was 36%-79%. At level 6, the range was 29%-70%, and 13%-43% respectively. Over time, the level of variation has widened at level 6 and within achievement levels for the most deprived. The differing curricular models between authorities will be an important factor in understanding some of this variation. Further detail of the variation within councils is presented in the graphs below.

Achievement varies systematically with the overall level of deprivation in the council area: this accounts for approximately 40% - 45% of the variation in outcome between councils. For example, if councils are grouped according to their levels of deprivation in 2020/21, the average at level 5 for the most deprived councils is 64% compared to 71% for the least deprived councils. However, there are some councils with very low levels of overall deprivation who are achieving exceptional results with pupils from deprived areas. There are also councils with relatively high levels of overall deprivation achieving higher than average results.

Figure 28: Percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more awards at Level 5 by family group - deprivation

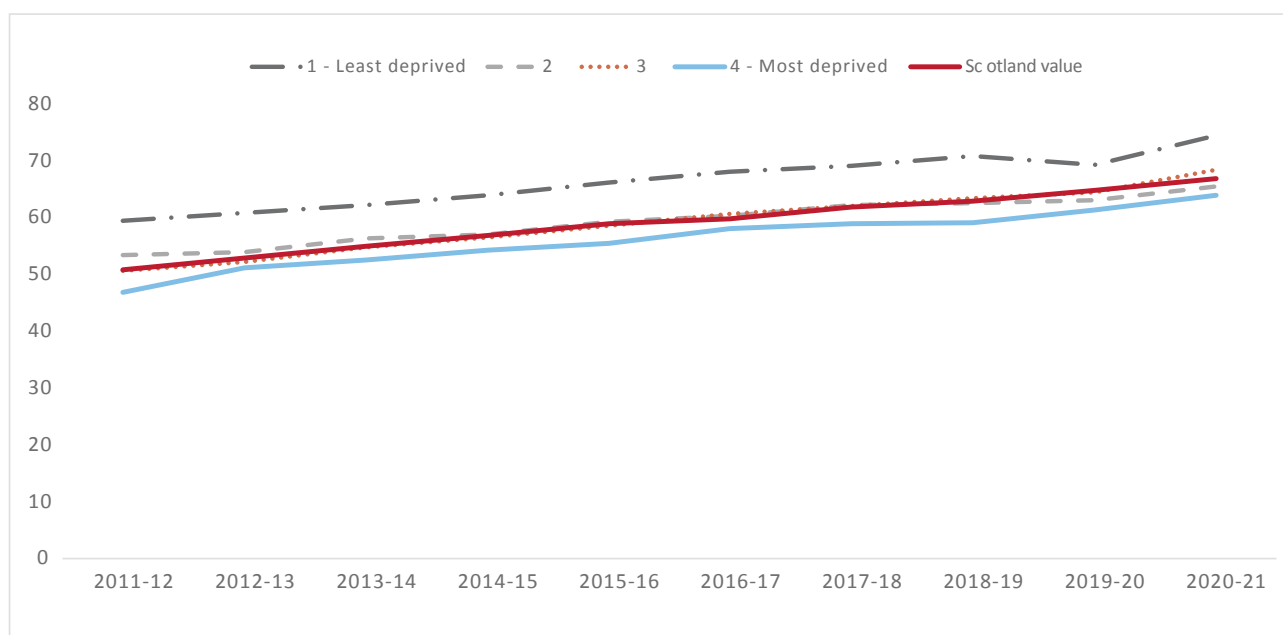




Figure 29: Percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more awards at Level 6 by family group - deprivation

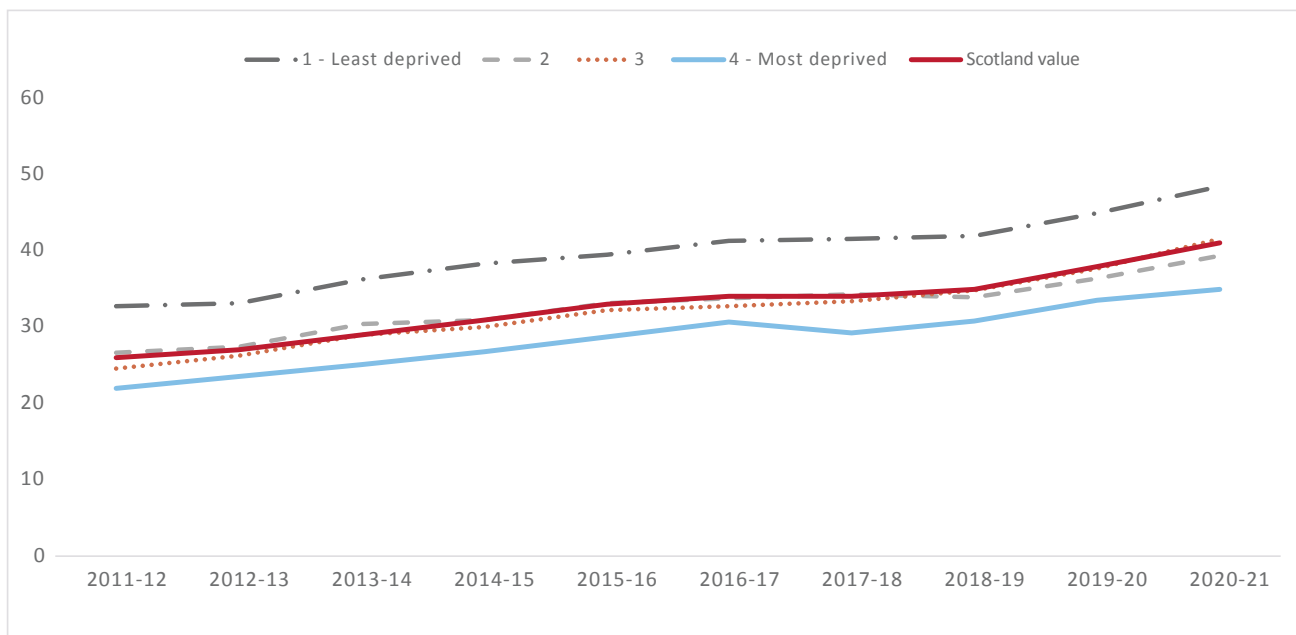


Fig 30: Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 5

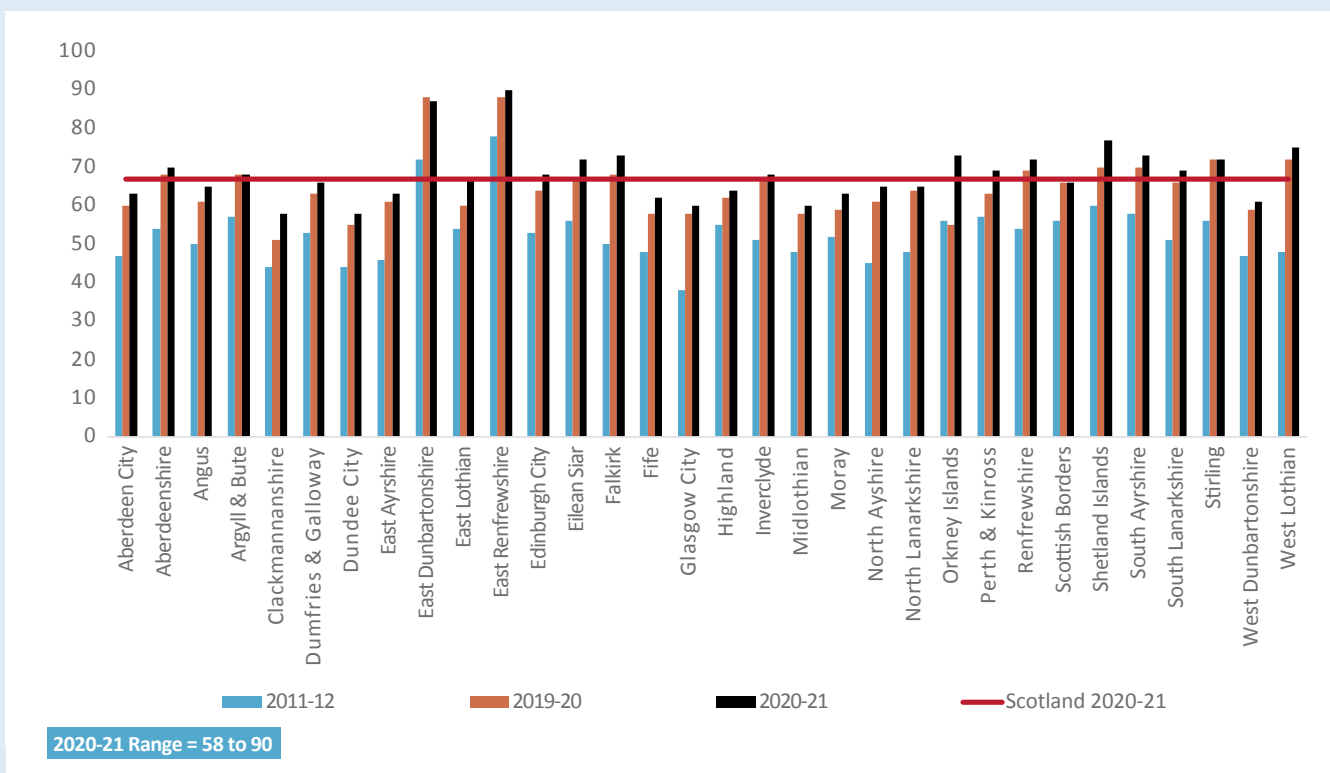




Fig 31: Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 6

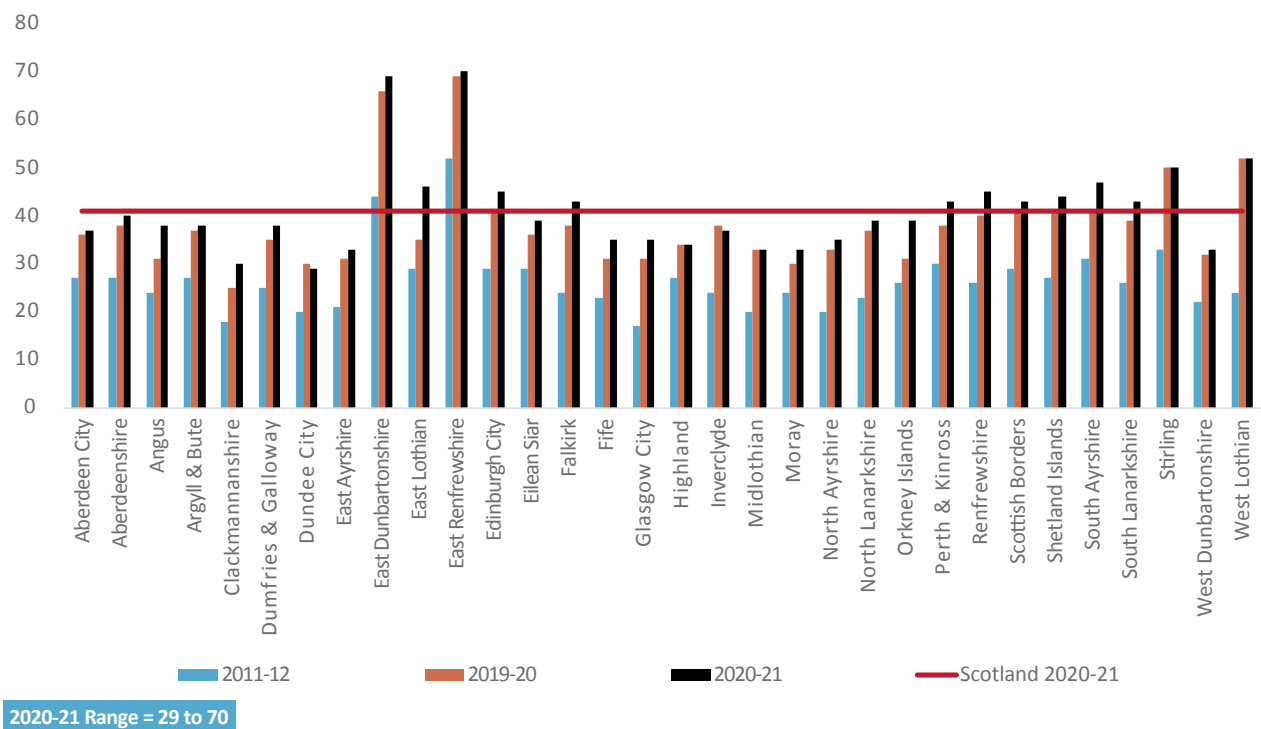


Fig 32: Percentage of pupils from deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 5 (SIMD)

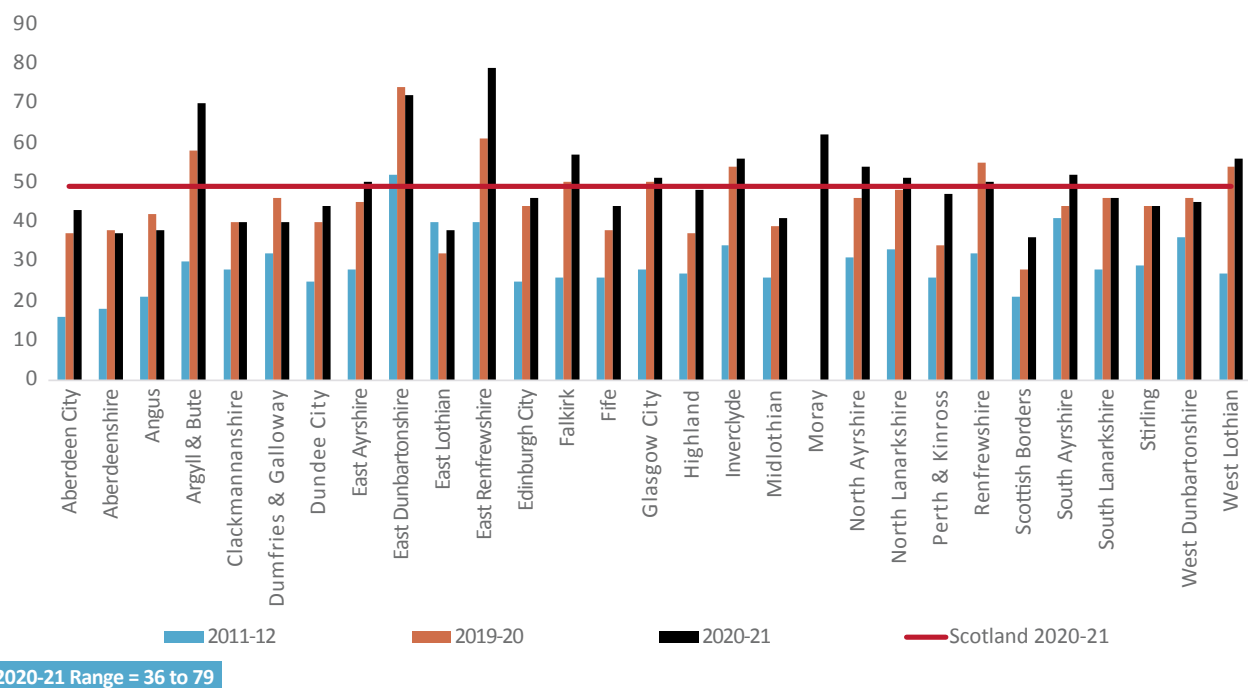
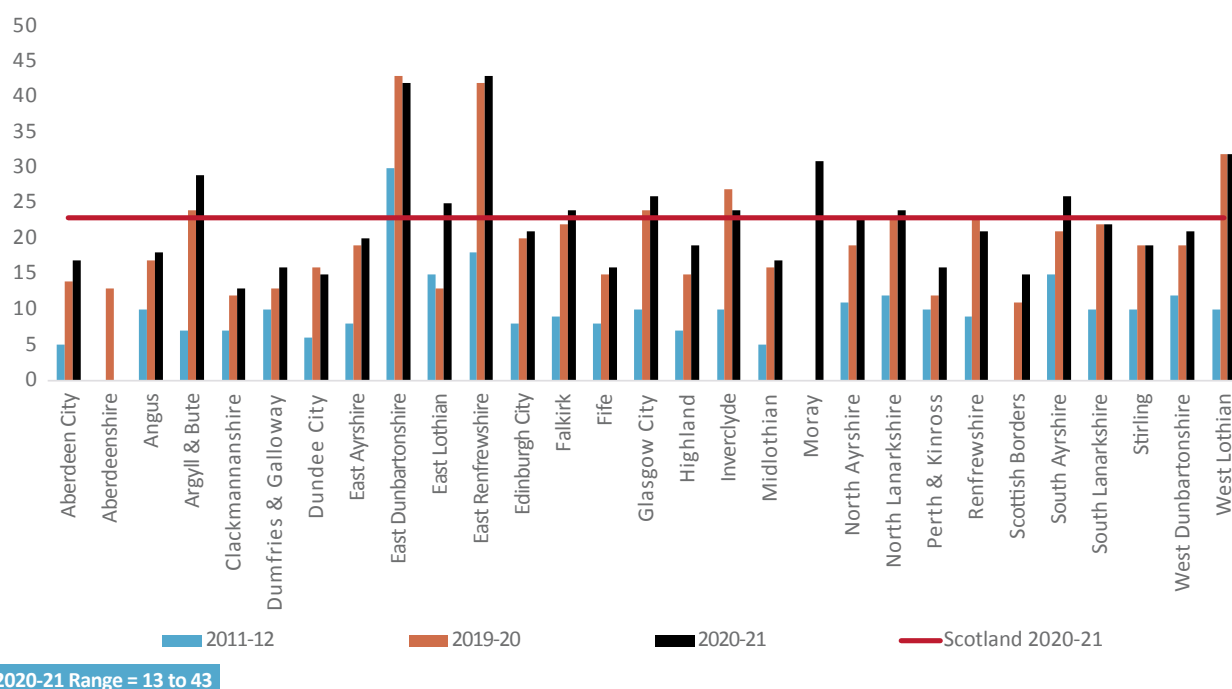




Fig 33: Percentage of pupils from deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 6 (SIMD)



Source: Figures supplied by Scottish Government.

Note: Missing values represent councils which have no pupils in the 20% most deprived communities



Local Variation – Attainment at SCQF levels 5 & 6

2020/21 Value

SCQF at Level 5; Scotland: 67%; council range: 58% - 90%

SCQF at Level 6; Scotland: 41%; council range: 29% - 70%

SCQF at Level 5 SIMD; Scotland: 49%; council range: 36% - 79%

SCQF at Level 6 SIMD; Scotland: 23%; council range: 13% - 43%

Achievement of Level 5 and Level 6 are significantly higher in the least deprived councils. 75% compared to 64% at Level 5, and 48% compared to 35% for Level 6.

Change over Time in 2020/21

SCQF at Level 5: Scotland: +2pp; councils: 28 increased, 1 decreased (range: -1pp to +18pp)

SCQF at Level 6: Scotland: +3pp; councils: 26 increased, 2 decreased (range: -1pp to +11pp)

SCQF at Level 5 SIMD: Scotland: +2pp; councils: 20 increased, 6 decreased (range: -6pp to +18pp)

SCQF at Level 6 SIMD: Scotland: +2pp; councils: 20 increased, 4 decreased (range: -3pp to +12pp)



Local Variation – Attainment at SCQF levels 5 & 6

Change over Time since 2011/12

SCQF at Level 5: Scotland: +16pp; councils: 32 councils increased (range: +9pp to +27pp)

SCQF at Level 6: Scotland: +15pp; councils: 32 increased (range: +7pp to +29pp)

SCQF at Level 5 SIMD: Scotland: +20pp; councils: 28 increased, 1 decreased (range: -2pp to +40pp)

SCQF at Level 6 SIMD: Scotland: +13pp; councils: 28 increased, 0 decreased (+3pp to +31pp)

Note: Where totals do not add to 32, this reflects either no movement, or data not available.

Average total tariff points and attainment at levels 5 and 6 provide two summary measures of the overall attainment of a cohort of school leavers. A range of other measures are available of the key qualification sets that enable access to a wider range of post-school opportunities and life chances for school leavers. These have been the focus for improvement across local authorities in recent years and show a picture of sustained improvement in attainment across the period and significant progress in closing the attainment gap.

One example is the achievement of an award at SCQF level 6. This provides a route from school onwards to higher education, either through an HNC (in the case of 1 award at SCQF level 6), or directly on to a degree course (in the case of multiple awards at SCQF level 6). Between 2011/12 and 2019/20, an increasing proportion of school leavers have achieved this level of attainment, ensuring that they access to a wider range of post-school opportunities. It is particularly striking that overall improvement has in large part been due to a significant closing in the attainment gap, with a far greater improvement for those living in SIMD quintile 1, although attainment has improved across all social contexts.

Achievement increased more sharply in 2019/20 than in previous years and follows on from a slight decline in 2018/19. It is important to note that the absence of external assessment information led to grades awarded in 2020 being based on teacher estimates. These results are therefore not directly comparable with previous years and the change observed here should not be seen as an indication that performance has improved without further evidence. Data from 2020/21 is not yet available and will also be impacted by comparability issues.

Table 16: Improvement in the proportion of school leavers achieving 1 or more awards at SCQF level 6

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	Rate of Improvement
Quintile 1	34.9	38.5	41.2	42.7	43.0	44.4	43.5	46.6	33.7%
Quintile 2	45.0	49.1	50.6	52.2	52.4	52.8	50.8	54.7	21.4%
Quintile 3	55.8	57.2	60.3	62.2	62.0	62.5	60.2	65.7	17.6%
Quintile 4	65.7	66.9	69.2	71.1	70.5	70.5	70.0	71.7	9.1%
Quintile 5	77.3	79.1	80.3	81.2	80.6	81.8	79.3	82.7	7.0%
Gap between Quintiles 1 and 5	42.4	40.6	39.1	38.5	37.6	37.4	35.8	36.1	
National - Overall	55.8	58.1	60.2	61.7	61.2	62.2	60.5	63.9	14.6%

Source: Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, Scottish Government

Note: A dashed line break has been placed between 2018/19 and 2019/20 to reflect the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 and 2021 on 2019/20 and 2020/21 school leaver attainment.2.



There has also been an increasing focus over recent years in schools on offering a wider range of vocational awards, to better meet the needs of all learners. This change reflects the intention and ethos of CfE: to ensure that the needs of all learners are met through flexibility in the curriculum offered, and the use of a wider range of achievement to recognise learners' success. These changes are evident in the sustained increase in learners leaving school over recent years with vocational awards at SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6. As above, the results for 2019/20 are not directly comparable with previous years due to change in assessment method in 2020 and should be interpreted with care. Data from 2020/21 is not yet available and will also be impacted by comparability issues.

Table 17: Proportion of school leavers achieving vocational qualifications at SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6

	2013 -14	2014 -15	2015 -16	2016 -17	2017 -18	2018 -19	2019 -20
1+ SCQF Level 4 or better	16.1	16.8	17.7	19.6	21.3	23.3	28.8
1+ SCQF Level 5 or better	7.3	9.0	10.7	12.8	14.8	17.1	22.5
1+ SCQF Level 6 or better	1.0	1.3	1.9	2.5	3.8	4.6	8.4

Source: Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, Scottish Government

Note: A dashed line break has been placed between 2018/19 and 2019/20 to reflect the impact of the change to the assessment approach in 2020 and 2021 on 2019/20 and 2020/21 school leaver attainment.

Looking across the range of senior phase measures provided here, levels of attainment are at their highest levels since 2011/12. During the COVID-19 pandemic, levels of attainment have continued to increase in 2019/20 and 2020/21, and at a faster rate for some levels and some groups than observed previously. However, it is not possible to fully determine the extent to which the coronavirus pandemic and, more specifically, the certification methods used in 2020 and 2021 have affected the attainment levels of the 2019/20 and 2020/21 pupil cohorts.

It is likely the closure of schools in March 2020 and January 2021, and the ongoing self-isolation restrictions in the 2021 session will 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. This disruption is likely to continue to impact on attainment for some time to come and scrutiny of available data will be essential in determining the impact on the poverty-related attainment gap in particular, and in planning for recovery in the medium and long term. How we evolve the work being driven forward with local authorities and schools under the Scottish Attainment Challenge will be instrumental here.

Positive destinations and participation rate

A key element in improving senior phase outcomes relates to increasing levels of positive destinations for pupils upon leaving school and delivering progress in participation rates for 16-19 year olds. While there has been improvement in both of these vital areas over the longer term, the impact of COVID-19 is evident in data emerging in the most recent year.



Table 19: Positive destinations and participation rate (%)

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change from Base Year
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	2.2	5.2
Participation Rates for 16-19 Year Olds	-	-	-	-	90.4	91.1	91.8	91.6	92.1	92.2	0.0	1.8

Initial positive destinations

The two most recent years of positive destinations data covering both 2019/20 and 2020/21 will reflect the impact of COVID-19 on choices made by, and opportunities available to, pupils upon leaving school during the pandemic.²⁴

Positive destinations include participation in further education (FE), higher education (HE), training/apprenticeships, employment, volunteering or Activity Agreements.

2019/20 data covers the impact of the pandemic on leavers during 2020, the first year of the pandemic. During 2020, the proportion of young people entering initial "positive destinations" after school fell, particularly for young people in the most deprived SIMD. After increasing from 90.3 in 2011/12 to 95.0% in 2018/19, the proportion of young people entering positive destinations fell to 93.3 in 2019/20. The reduction was experienced in the majority of council areas, with only a small minority reporting increasing rates counter to trend.

While the rate of positive destinations fell for both the most and least deprived SIMD areas, it fell by more amongst leavers from the most deprived areas than amongst those from the least deprived areas. This has led to an increase in the deprivation gap, from 5.4 percentage points in 2018/19 to 6.3 percentage points in 2019/20.

The reduction in positive destinations during 2019/20 was largely driven by a fall in employment. The proportion of all school leavers entering Higher Education increased between 2018/19 and 2019/20, while the proportion entering employment decreased to a record low. The proportion entering Higher Education increased amongst all SIMD groups but by least among those from the most deprived areas. Leavers from each SIMD group saw a decrease in the proportion entering employment with there being no clear pattern by deprivation.

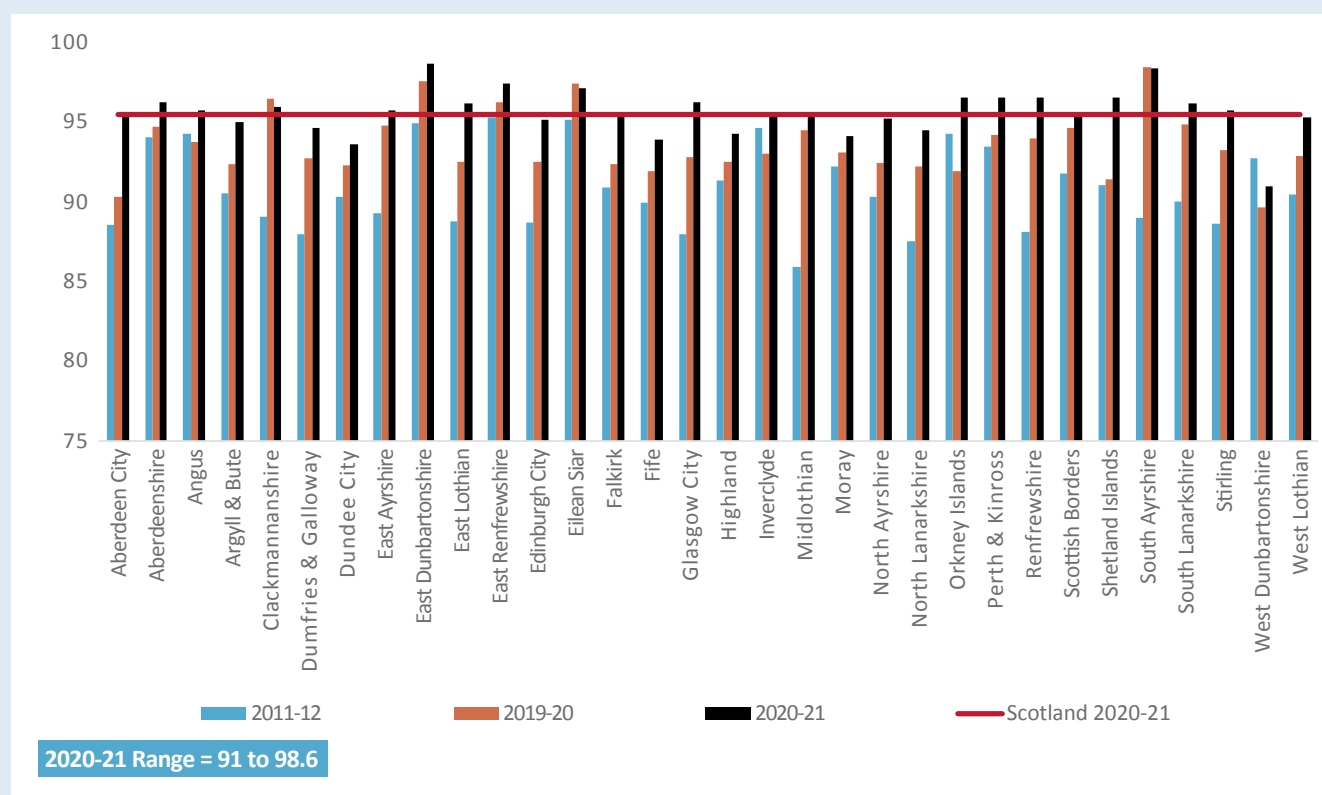
In 2021, destinations recovered to pre-pandemic levels, increasing from 93.3% to 95.5%. While this pattern is true for all SIMD groups, the rate has increased more for pupils from the most deprived areas. This has led to a narrowing of the deprivation gap from 6.3pp in 2019/20, to 4.8pp in 2020/21, the smallest gap since 2011/12.

The increase in positive destinations in 2020/21 reflects an increase in the proportion of leavers entering employment, which returned to 22.6%, on par with pre-pandemic levels. While this pattern is true for all SIMD groups, the rate has increased more for pupils from the most deprived areas. The proportion of pupils entering Higher Education increased for all SIMD groups in 2020/21, reaching a record high of 45.1%, while the proportion entering further education fell in the most recent year to a record low of 23.3%.

²⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-attainment-initial-leaver-destinations-no-3-2021-edition/>



Fig 34: Proportion of pupils entering positive destinations



Source: Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, Scottish Government



Local Variation – Positive destinations

2019/20 Value

Scotland: 93.3%; council range: 89.7% - 98.4% with variation widening in this year. Historically, rates were higher for councils with lower levels of deprivation however the difference between most and least deprived councils markedly reduced in 2019/20.

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 95.5%; council range: 91% - 98.6% with variation narrowing in this year. Once again, rates are significantly higher for councils with the lowest levels of deprivation (96.5% compared to 94.8%).

Range in Movement

In 2019/20: Scotland: -1.7pp; councils: 5 increased and 27 decreased. (range: -4.7pp to +4.4pp).

In 2020/21: Scotland: +2.1pp; councils: 29 increased and 3 decreased (range: -0.6pp to +5.1pp).

Since 2011/12: Scotland; +5.2pp; councils: 31 increased and 1 decreased. (range: -1.76pp to +9.52pp)



Participation rate for 16-19 year olds

The participation measure captures participation in learning (including school), training or work for all 16-19 year olds in Scotland. This measure provides a useful opportunity to track the progress of young people beyond the point at which they leave school. It also recognises that all participation is positive and should be regarded as transitional — education and training are important phases in a young person's life that can improve their job options but are not destinations in themselves.

This measure was first published in 2015 by Skills Development Scotland as experimental statistics and shows an improvement in the participation rate from 90.4 to 92.2 between 2015/16 and 2020/21. In the last 12 months, there has been a small 0.1 percentage point improvement in the participation rate, from 92.1 to 92.2. This improving trend in participation however is not universal, with 6 councils reporting a decline since 2015/16 and 15 councils reporting a decline in the past 12 months.

The small increase in the participation rate in 2020/21 was due to an increase in young adults remaining in or re-entering education (School Pupil, Higher Education and Further Education). The greatest increase was among school pupils (increasing by 1.8pp between 2020 and 2021). As with positive destinations, there was a marked reduction in the percentage of young people participating in employment, which fell from 18.3% in 2020 to 15.5% in 2021.

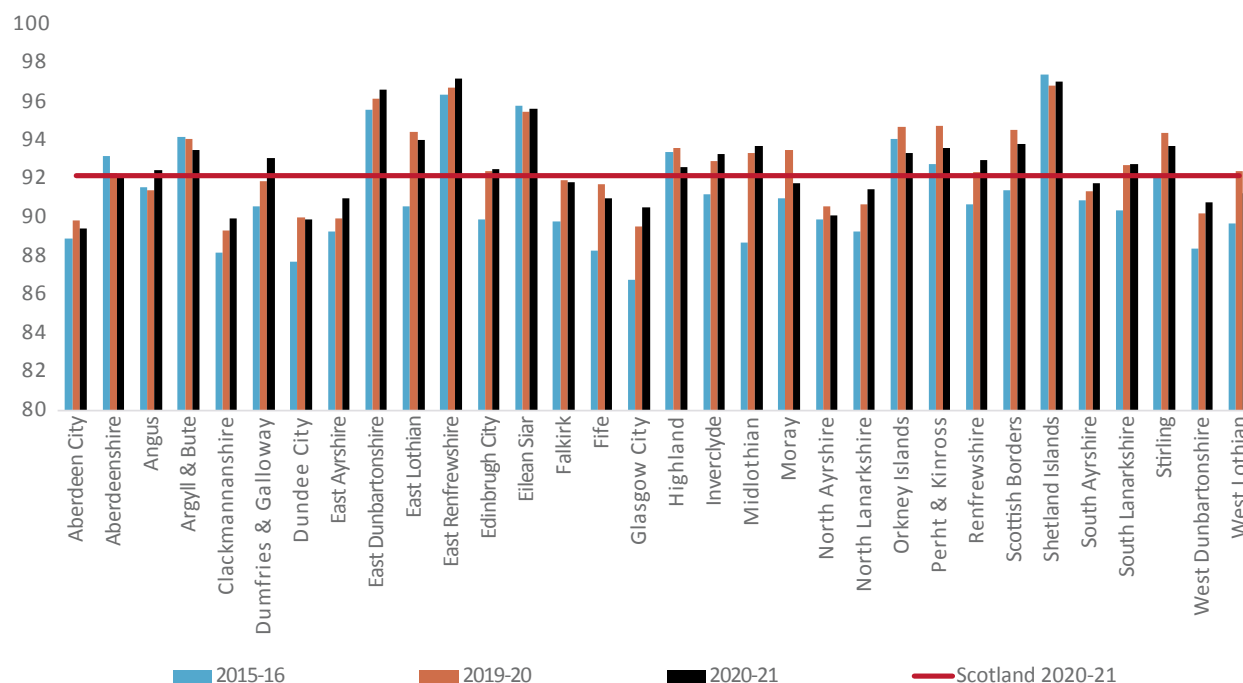
Substantial variation remains in the participation rate across local authorities. In 2020/21, the participation rates for 16-19 year olds ranged from 89.4% to 97.2% across councils, with variation narrowing slightly. There is a systematic relationship between participation rates and deprivation, with those councils with higher levels of deprivation reporting lower participation rates (e.g. 90.9% average for the most deprived councils versus 93.5% average for the least deprived councils). The gap between least deprived and most deprived councils has narrowed over time. This reflects findings by SDS that the participation gap between those who lived in the 20% most deprived areas and those in the 20% least deprived areas continued to narrow. In 2021, the gap was 9.3 pp, compared to 9.9 pp in 2020 and 10.5 pp in 2019).²⁵

The variation in trend for the participation rate between authorities in the past 12 months ranged from an improvement of 1.2 percentage points, to a decline of 1.7 percentage points.

²⁵ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/48147/annual-participation-measure-2021-report.pdf>



Fig 35: Participation rates for 16-19 year olds (%)



2020-21 Range = 89.4 to 97.2

Source: SDS Annual Participation Measure



Local Variation – Participation rate

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 92.2; council range: 89.4% - 97.2% with variation narrowing slightly across the period. Significantly lower participation rates are recorded in those council areas with higher levels of deprivation (e.g. 90.9% compared to 93.5% average for the least deprived councils). The gap between least deprived and most deprived councils has narrowed over time.

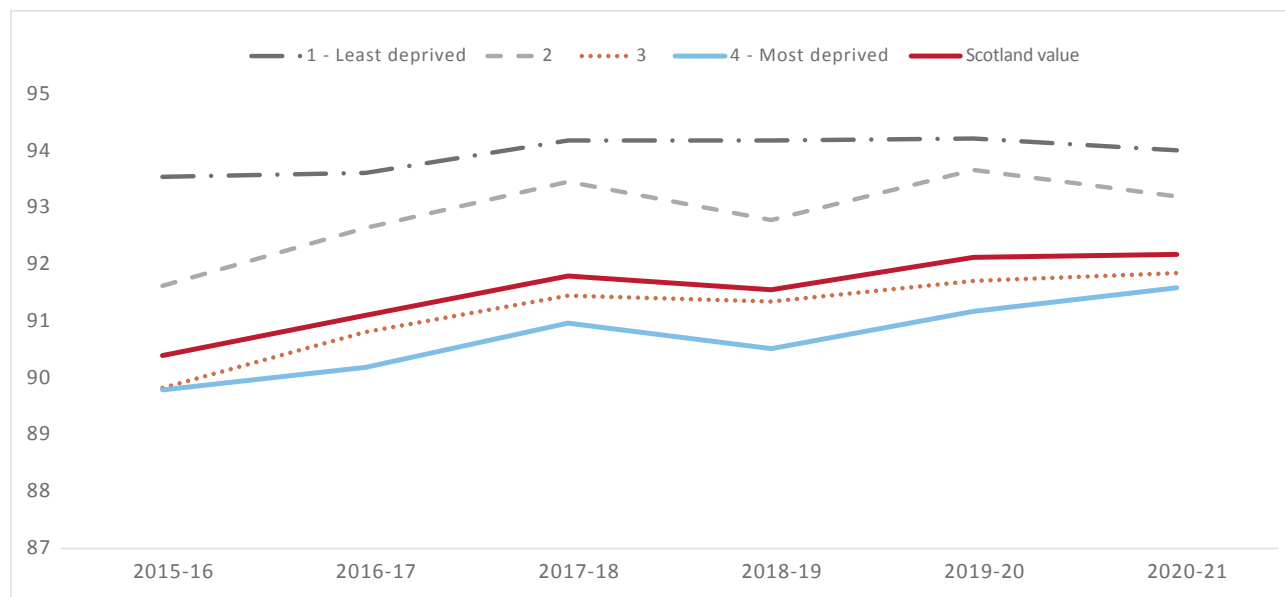
Range in Movement

In 2020/21: Scotland: +0.1pp; councils: 17 increased and 15 decreased. (range: -1.7pp to +1.2pp). Councils serving the most deprived communities reported a larger increase on average during 2020/21, (although not statistically significant).

Since 2015/16: Scotland: +1.8pp; councils: 26 increased and 6 decreased. (range: -1.0pp to +5.0pp).

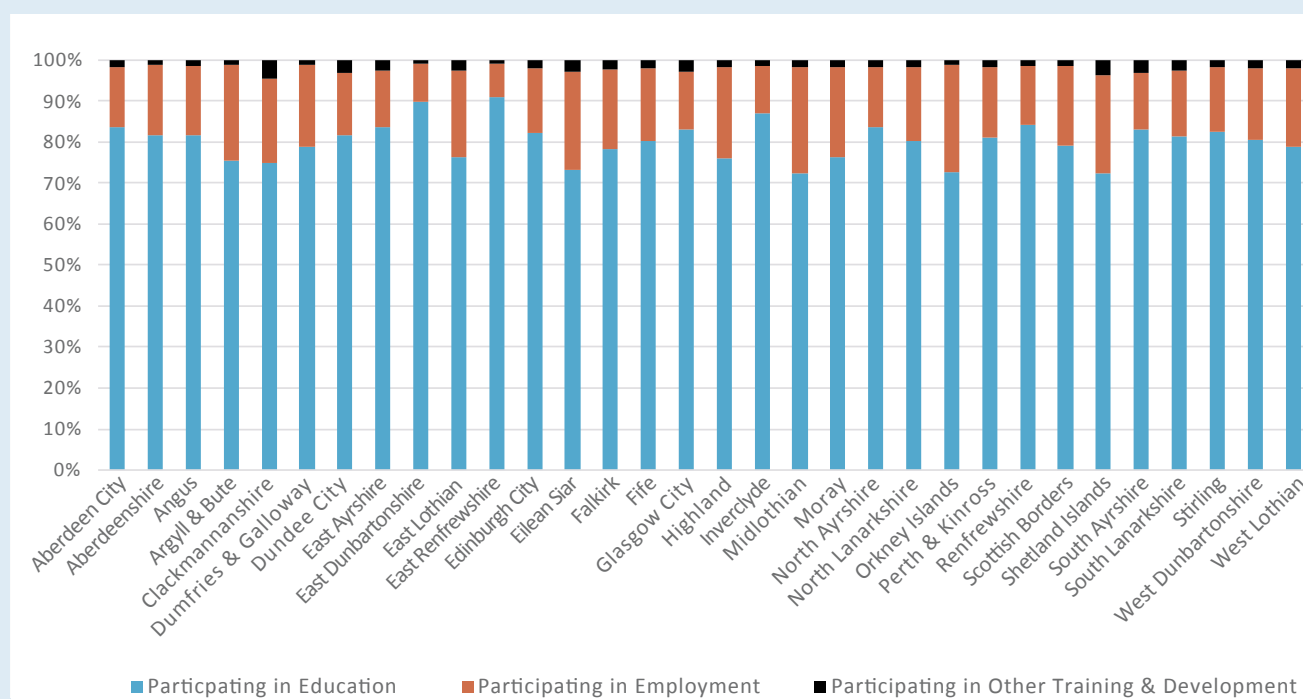


Fig 36: Participation rates for 16-19 year olds (%) by family group - deprivation



There is significant variation across councils in the breakdown of participation status by education, employment and training as can be seen in the graph below.

Fig 37: Participation rates - breakdown of participating status by council 2020-21 (%)



Source: SDS Annual Participation Measure

Education includes: school pupils, higher education & further education.

Employment includes: full time employment, part time employment, self-employment and modern apprenticeships.

Other training & development includes: employability fund, other formal training, personal skills development and voluntary work



The effects of COVID-19 and associated lockdown measures, which have been impacting Scotland and our economy since March 2020, will also have impacted on young adults' participation and destinations following school. The effective closure of the economy is likely to have affected the opportunities available to young adults and the choices they made e.g. a decline in employment opportunities or choosing to remain in education.

As we emerge from COVID-19, the Young Persons Guarantee²⁶ will be an important intervention in tackling the challenges facing young people. The Guarantee, backed by an additional £60 million investment, aims to give all young people in Scotland the chance to succeed despite the economic impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19). Organisations backing the Guarantee make five pledges to help young people at this critical time:

1. prepare young people for the world of work through work experience, volunteering and work-based learning opportunities
2. engage with and provide opportunities to young people who face barriers to work
3. create work-based learning, training and upskilling opportunities for young people
4. create jobs and opportunities for young people through apprenticeships, paid internships and work experience
5. create an inclusive workplace to support learning and enable young people to meet their potential.

Looked after children

This is a critical policy priority for Local Authorities, as they work to transform the wellbeing of infants, children and young people and implement on 'The Promise'²⁷ to care experienced children and young people and respond to new and growing harms emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020/21, social work practices adapted in response to the restrictions in place and in light of growing concerns around the potential risks to vulnerable children. This includes prioritisation of face-to-face contact for vulnerable families and families with new-born babies, and greater use of virtual engagement with other children and families. Such was the concern for some children and young people due to diminished networks of supports and services during lockdowns, there may have been increased inter-agency referral discussions (IRD) for reassurance and on the grounds of caution. As of yet, the increase in initial contact and IRD has not translated into child protection and looked after data reported here in the LGBF, however this will be an area to monitor closely over the coming period. With the exception of expenditure data, the most recent data available in relation to looked after children covers 2019/20. Data for 2020/21 will be included later in 2022 when this is published by Scottish Government.

Expenditure on looked after children

Expenditure on looked after children has grown by 14.5% since 2010/11, but has fallen by 5.2% in 2020/21. The reduction in real terms expenditure observed in 2020/21 is influenced in part by the COVID-19 related inflation experienced during this period, which was significantly higher than in previous years. Adjusting for this exceptional inflation rate, expenditure on looked after children would have reduced by 1.2% in 2020/21. An important factor driving the recent reduction in expenditure is the recent shift away from the use of more expensive external placements by a number of authorities. It is important to note, that the recent reduction in expenditure is not universal, with over a third of councils reporting increased expenditure in 2020/21, counter to the national trend.

²⁶ <https://youngpersonsguarantee.scot/>

²⁷ <https://www.carereview.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-Promise.pdf>



Over the longer term, the increased expenditure in this area has been driven by significant increases in expenditure on fostering/family placements (33%) and in residential schools (20%), which together account for 60% of social work expenditure on children and young people. Since 2010/11, there has been a significantly larger expenditure growth on children living in community settings (20.8%) than on residential settings (10%). In 2020/21, expenditure on both community and residential provision reduced, although this trend is not universal, with around a third of authorities reporting an increase counter to trend.

In parallel, there has been a reduction in the number of children and young people who are looked after, reducing by 10.9% between 2010/11 and 2019/20. The biggest reduction has been in those being looked after at home with parents (-34.9%), with a growth in the number of children looked after in kinship/foster care (+2.5%). Data for 2020/21 is not yet available.

The pattern of spend on looked after children is standardised in the LGBF as “gross cost per looked after child in the community” and “gross cost per looked after child in a residential setting”. The most recent data available is 2019/20.

Table 20: Cost per child looked after in community and residential settings (£)

	2010 -11	2011 -12	2012 -13	2013 -14	2014 -15	2015 -16	2016 -17	2017 -18	2018 -19	2019 -20	Value Change 2018-19 to 2019-20	Value Change 2010-11 to 2019-20
The Gross Cost of “Children Looked After” in Residential Based Services per Child per Week	£3,509	£3,708	£3,533	£3,660	£3,695	£3,944	£3,836	£3,899	£4,184	£4,110	-1.8%	17.1%
The Gross Cost of “Children Looked After” in a Community Setting per Child per Week	£256	£272	£301	£312	£324	£338	£358	£370	£375	£373	-0.5%	45.9%

For those children in a community setting, costs have increased by 45.9% since 2010/11, increasing from £256 in 2010/11 to £373 in 2019/20. This reflects a 21% increase in expenditure, and a 12% reduction in the number of children looked after. In 2019/20, costs decreased by 0.5% from £375 per child to £373. This reflects a 6% reduction in expenditure and a 2% reduction in the number of children. In 2019/20, costs ranged from £194 to £658 across councils, with variation systematically related to the level of deprivation. The least deprived councils spend more per child than more deprived councils (£468 compared to £296), with this gap widening in more recent years.

For those children in a residential setting, costs have increased by 17.1% since 2010/11, increasing from £3,509 in 2010/11 to £4,110 in 2019/20. This reflects a 10% increase in expenditure, and a 2% reduction in the number of children looked after. In 2019/20, costs decreased by 1.8% from £4,184 per child to £4,110. This reflects a 4% reduction in expenditure and a 1% reduction in the number of children. In 2019/20, costs ranged from £2,215 to £13,841 across councils. Although not statistically significant, as with community costs, the least deprived councils tend to spend more per child than less deprived councils (£4,630 compared to £3,908), with this gap widening in more recent years.



Fig 38: The gross cost of “children looked after” in community services per child per week - deprivation

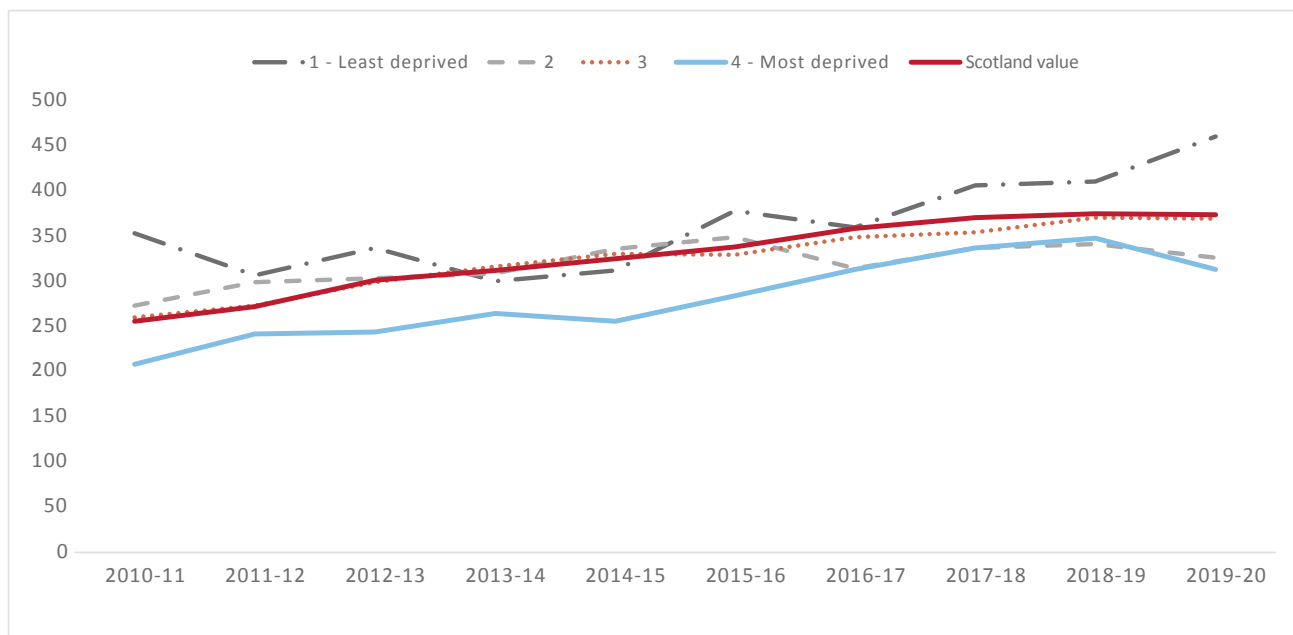


Fig 39: The gross cost of “children looked after” in residential based services per child per week - deprivation

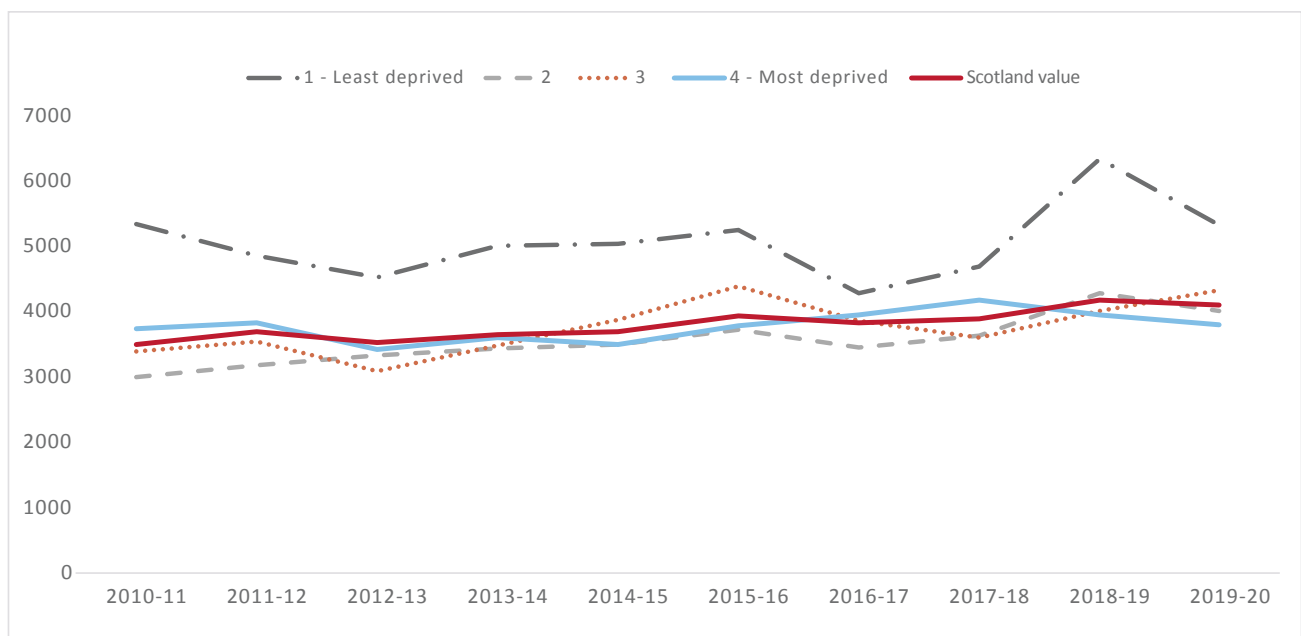




Fig 40: The gross cost of “children looked after” in residential based services per child per week (£)

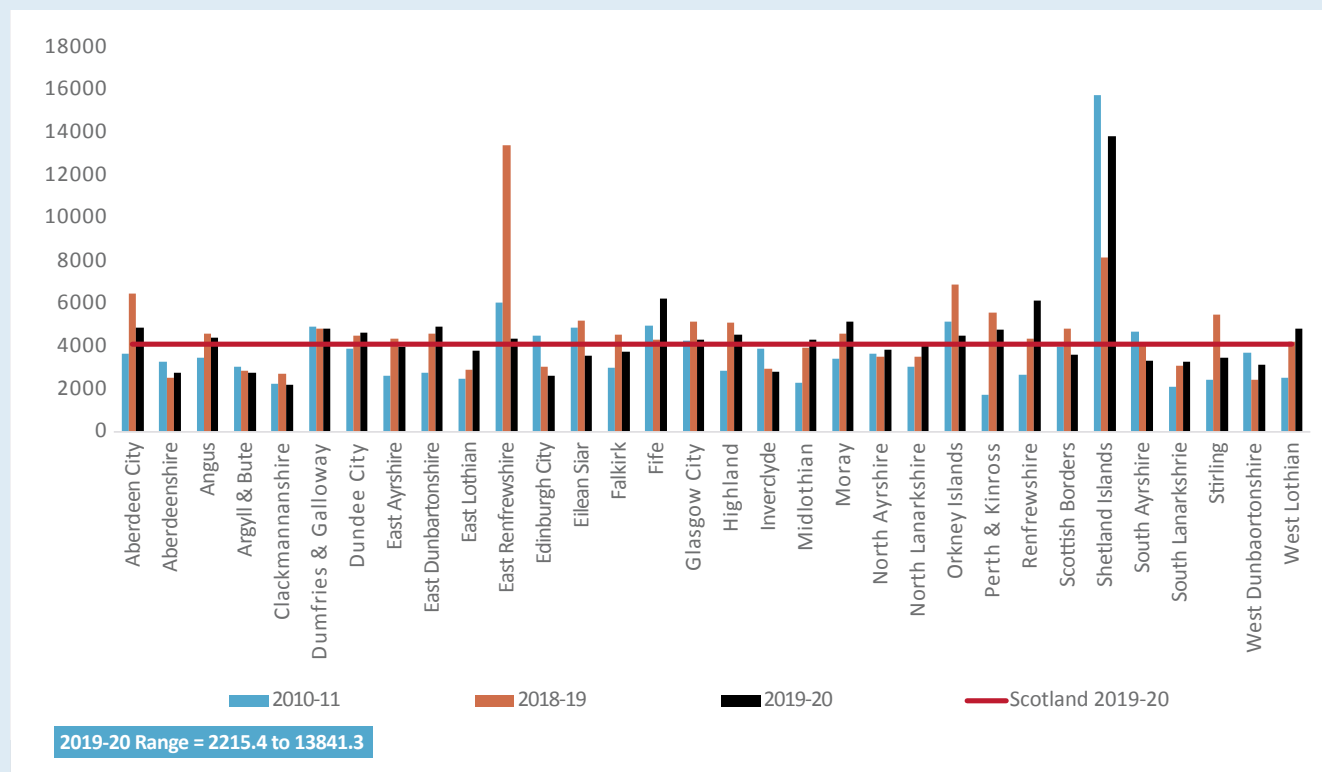
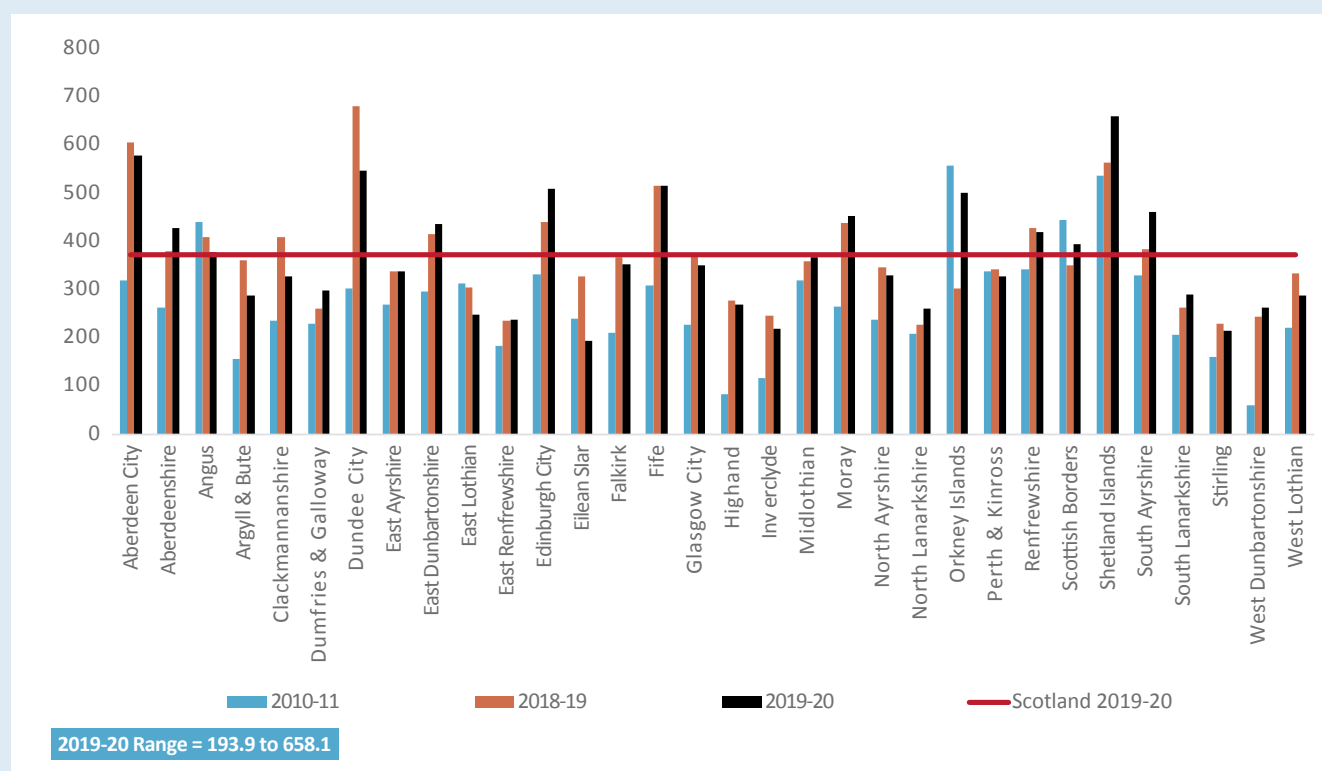


Fig 41: The gross cost of “children looked after” in community services per child per week (£)



Source: Scottish Government; council supplied expenditure figures



Local Variation – Cost per child – looked after in the community

2019/20 Value

Scotland: £373. council range: £194 - £658. The least deprived councils spend significantly more per child than more deprived councils (£468 compared to £296), with this gap widening in recent years

Change Over Time

In 2019/20: Scotland: -0.5%; councils: 17 increased and 15 decreased. (Range: -20% to +20% (excluding outliers)). Councils serving the most deprived communities report larger reductions (not statistically significant).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +45.9%. councils: 26 increased and 6 decreased. (Range: -20% to +87.2% (excluding outliers)). Councils serving more deprived communities report larger increases on average over the period (not statistically significant).

Local Variation – Cost per child – looked after in residential settings

2019/20 Value

Scotland: £4,110. council range: £2,215 - £13,841 (£2,215 to £6,234 excluding outliers). Least deprived councils tend to spend more per child than more deprived councils (£4,630 compared to £3,908), with this gap widening in most recent years

Change Over Time

In 2019/20: Scotland: -1.8%. councils: 17 increased and 15 decreased. (Range: -37% to +45% (excluding outliers)). Councils serving the least deprived communities report larger reductions on average (although not statistically significant).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +17.1%. councils: 19 increased and 13 decreased. (Range: -41% to +90% (excluding outliers)).

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*



Looked after children - balance of care

Table 21: Balance of care for looked after children

	2010 -11	2011 -12	2012 -13	2013 -14	2014 -15	2015 -16	2016 -17	2017 -18	2018 -19	2019 -20	Value Change 2018-19 to 2019-20	Value Change 2010-11 to 2019-20
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	0.2	-0.9

In 2019/20, children who are looked after in the community make up 90.1% of all looked after children, a slight increase from 89.8% in 2018/19. This balance has remained relatively stable at or around 90% since 2010/11.

The total number of children looked after in Scotland has reduced by 11% since 2010/11, from 16,231 to 14,458. This reflects a 12% reduction in the numbers of children looked after in a community setting (particularly those looked after at home with parents), and a 2% reduction in the numbers in a residential setting. For the first time in 8 years, in 2019/20 the overall number of children looked after rose slightly, by 1.4%. This reflects a 1.6% increase in the number looked after in the community, (particularly via Kinship care) and a 0.8% reduction in the number looked after in residential settings.

In 2019/20, the balance of care for looked after children ranged from 77% to 96%, with variation narrowing slightly in the most recent year. While the national average has remained around 90% since 2010/11, there have been significant changes at individual council level, with movement ranging from -8pp to +10pp. Performance in this area varies systematically with deprivation, with those councils with higher levels of deprivation reporting a higher balance of care in community settings (90% compared to 88%).

Fig 42: Balance of care for looked after children by family group - deprivation

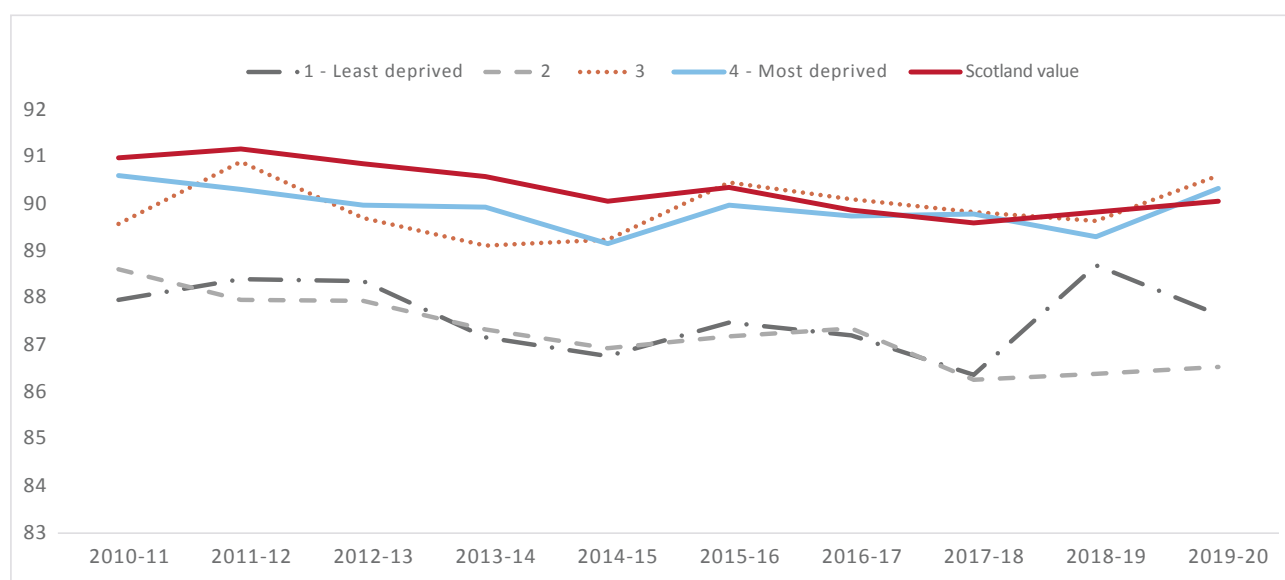
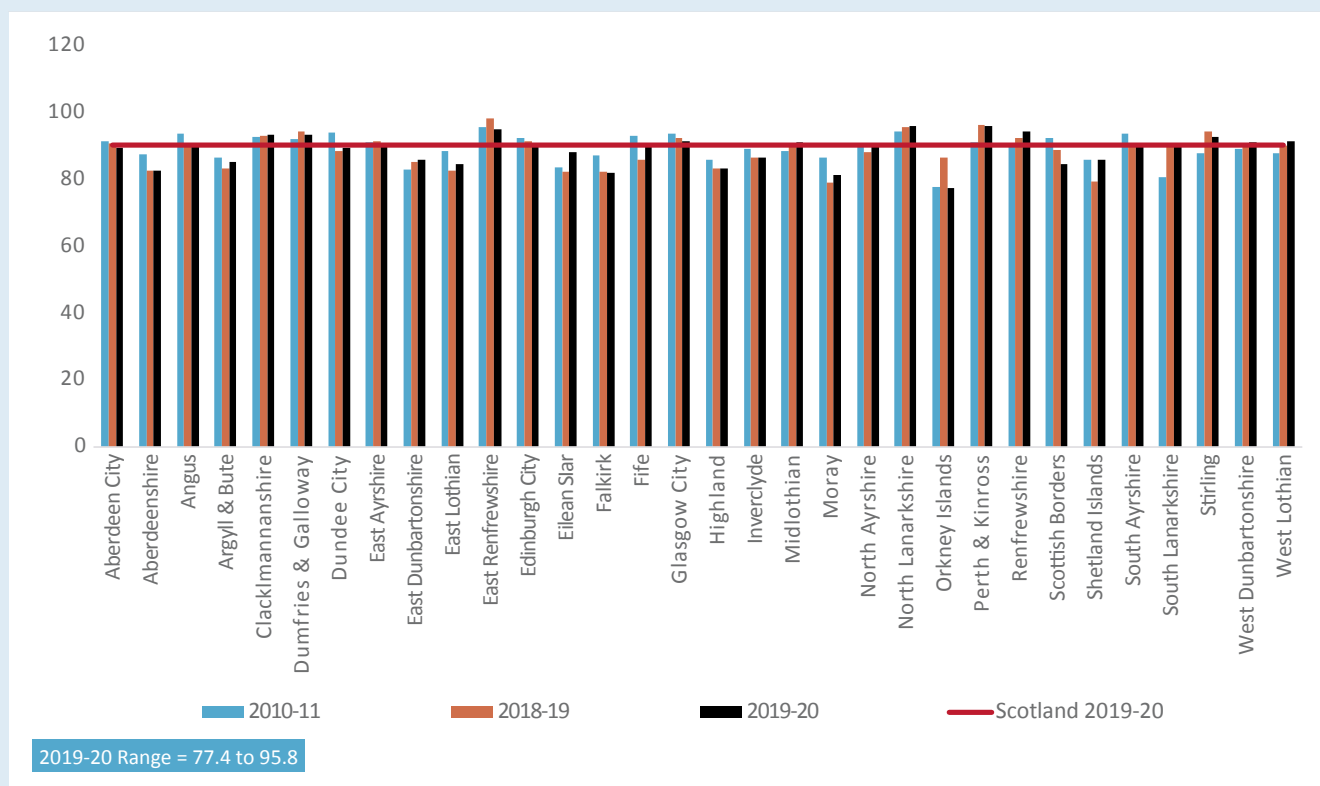




Fig 43: Balance of care for looked after children



Source: Scottish Government



Local Variation – Balance of care looked after children

2019/20 Value

Scotland: 90.1%; council range: 77% - 96%. Councils with higher levels of deprivation report significantly higher balance of care in community settings (90% compared to 88%).

Change Over Time

In 2019/20: Scotland: +0.3pp; councils: 20 increased and 12 decreased. (Range: -9pp to +6pp)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -0.9pp. councils: 13 increased and 19 decreased. (Range: -8pp to +10pp)

Placement stability for looked after children

Placement stability for children who are looked after is central to promoting attachment and the development of secure relationships, and as such is a priority for corporate parents. Performance in this area is standardised as the number of children looked after away from home with more than one placement within a year, as a percentage of all looked after children.



Table 22: Percentage of LAC with more than 1 placement in the last year (Aug-July)

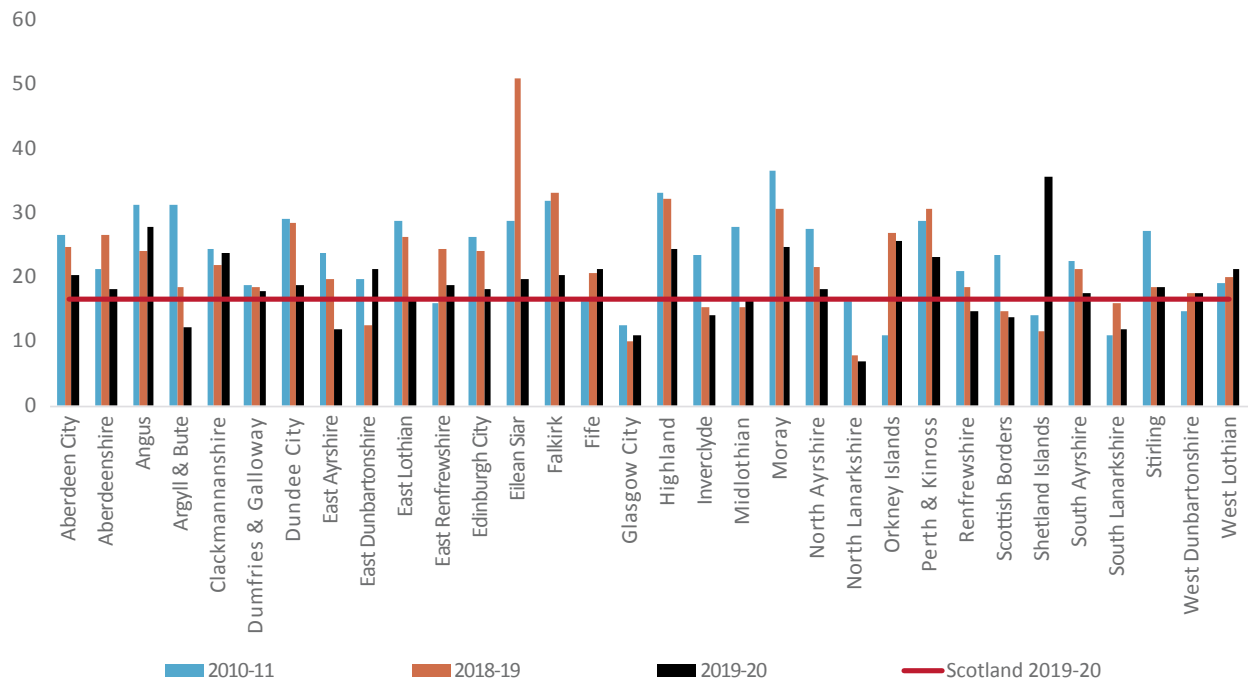
2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2018-19 to 2019-20	Value Change 2010-11 to 2019-20
21.1	21.4	21.2	21.9	21.4	20.7	21.2	20.1	19.5	16.7	dna	-2.8	-4.4

In 2019/20, 16.7% of children looked after away from home had more than one placement within a year. This is a reduction of 4.4pp compared to 2010/11 and reflects a relatively sharp decrease in the most recent year. Data from 2019/20 covers the first 5 months of the COVID-10 period, and picks up the first impacts of the pandemic on children and families, and on social work practices. The extent to which the recent trend in placement stability was affected by COVID-19 is an important area for further examination, and will be a focus when data for 2020/21 becomes available.

There is significant variation between councils, ranging from 7% to 27% (excluding outliers), with a third of councils reporting an increase counter to the national trend. This variation is not systematically related to deprivation, rurality or size of council.



Fig 44: Percentage of looked after children with more than 1 placement in the last year (Aug-July)



Local Variation – Placement stability

2019/20 Value

Scotland: 16.7%; council range: 7% - 36% (7% - 28% excluding outliers). There is no systematic relationship with deprivation, geography or council size.

Change Over Time

In 2019/20: Scotland: -2.8pp; councils: 9 increased and 23 decreased. (Range: -13pp to +8pp, excluding outliers)

Since: 2010/11: Scotland: -4.4pp; councils: 8 increased and 24 decreased. (Range: -19pp to +5pp, excluding outliers)

Child protection re-registrations within 18 months

Child protection re-registration rates provide useful insight on local decision-making processes, the operation of risk thresholds, and the implementation of safeguarding processes. Of all child protection registrations in a year, this measure captures the percentage which have been registered previously within the past 18 months.



Table 23: Child protection re-registrations

2012 -13	2013 -14	2014 -15	2015 -16	2016 -17	2017 -18	2018 -19	2019 -20	Value Change 2018-19 to 2019-20	Value Change 2012-13 to 2019-20
6.5	6.8	6.7	6.2	6.5	6.0	7.2	6.9	-0.3	0.4

Data for this measure is available only from 2012/13 onwards. Since then, the average reregistration rate for Scotland has remained relatively constant at around 6%-7%. In 2019/20, 6.9% of re-registrations were registered previously within the past 18 months, down 0.3pp from 7.2% in 2018/19. Data from 2019/20 covers the first 5 months of the COVID-19 period and picks up the first impacts of the pandemic on children and families, and on social work practices. The extent to which the recent trend was affected by the pandemic is an important area for further examination and will be a focus when data for 2020/21 becomes available.

There is significant variation between councils, with re-registration rates in 2019/20 ranging from 0% to 16% (excluding outliers). And while the Scotland average has remained around 6%-7% since 2012/13, this masks more significant movement at a council level during this time, with movements ranging from -15pp to +18pp (-8pp to +12pp excluding outliers). Variation between councils is not systematically related to deprivation, rurality or council size.

The small number of child protection re-registrations in some authorities may introduce volatility in the data for this measure which may explain some of the variation. A more robust measure going forward may be the average length of time on the Child Protection register given its focus on deregistrations rather than re-registrations and the larger sample this offers.

Child poverty

Despite the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 setting ambitious targets to significantly reduce child poverty in Scotland by 2030 and placing a duty on local authorities and regional health boards in Scotland to produce annual Local Child Poverty Action Reports, rates of child poverty were rising in every local authority area in Scotland even before COVID-19. Projections suggest that the impact of the pandemic has the potential to exacerbate and entrench child poverty further.

A measure on child poverty has been incorporated within the LGBF to highlight Local Government's commitment to this critically important area and help raise awareness of the challenges facing local government and their partners, including in relation to strategic resourcing and prioritisation decisions.

The measure is the % of children living in households with below 60% median income after housing costs. This provides important alignment with the targets set out in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. This measure is also the most commonly used measure across local Child Poverty Action Reports and therefore provides a significant degree of alignment and consistency.

Data for 2020/21 is not yet available, but latest data from 2019/20 shows that the % of children living in poverty (after housing costs) has increased from 21.6% to 24.3% since 2013/14, a 2.7pp increase. This includes a 1pp increase in the most recent year available. This increasing trend is replicated across all 32 authorities.

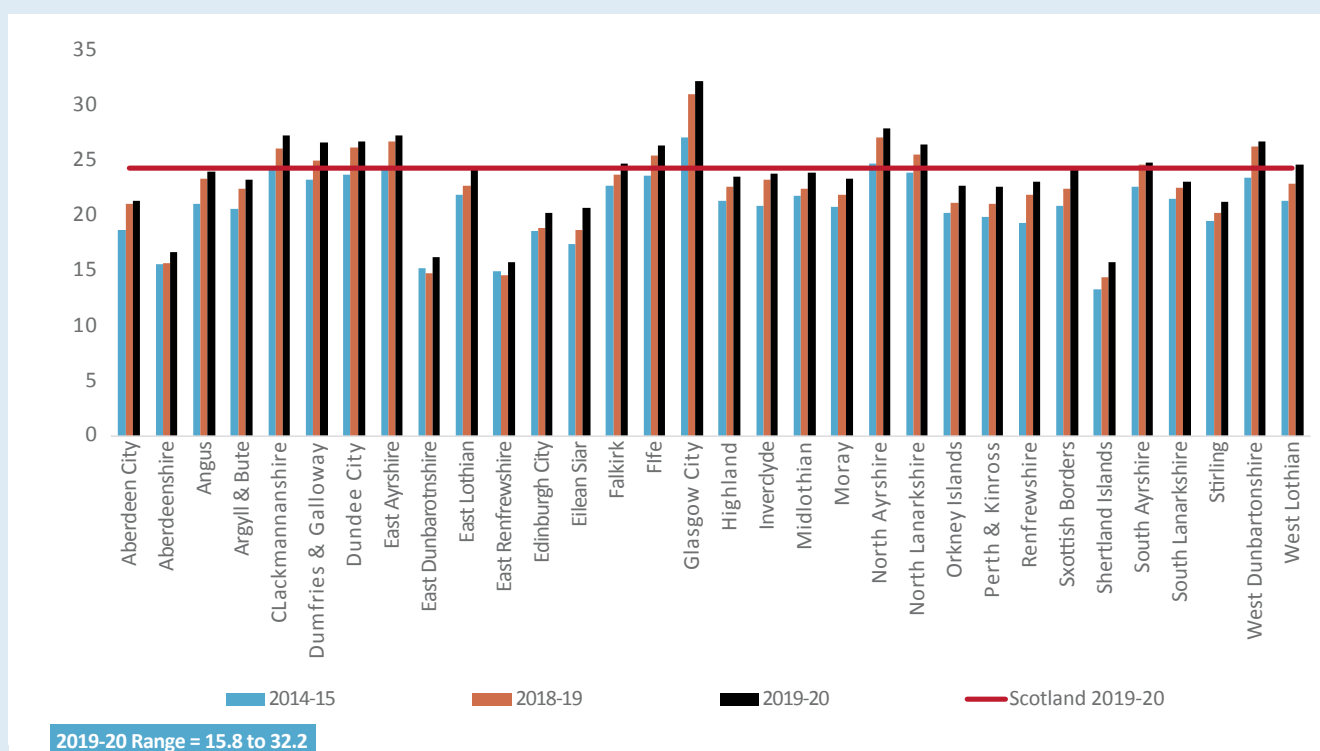


Table 24: % of Children living in households with below 60% median income after housing costs

2014 -15	2015 -16	2016 -17	2017 -18	2018 -19	2019 -20	2020 -21	Value Change 2018-19 to 2019-20	Value Change 2014-15 to 2019-20
21.6	22.8	23.4	24.2	23.2	24.3	dna	1.1	2.7

Although child poverty levels are growing in all council areas, there is significant and widening variation between authorities, with most recent values ranging from 15.8% to 32.2%. Levels vary systematically with deprivation, and those councils with highest levels of deprivation have significantly higher levels of Child poverty, 27% compared to 18%. In the most recent year however, poverty rates have increased at a faster rate in councils with lower levels of deprivation.

Fig 45: % of Children living in households with below 60% median income after housing costs



Source: End Child Poverty: Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs



Local Variation – Child poverty

2019/20 Value

Scotland: 24.3%; council range: 15.8% - 32.2%, with widening variation. Councils with highest levels of deprivation have significantly higher levels of Child poverty, 27% compared to 18%.

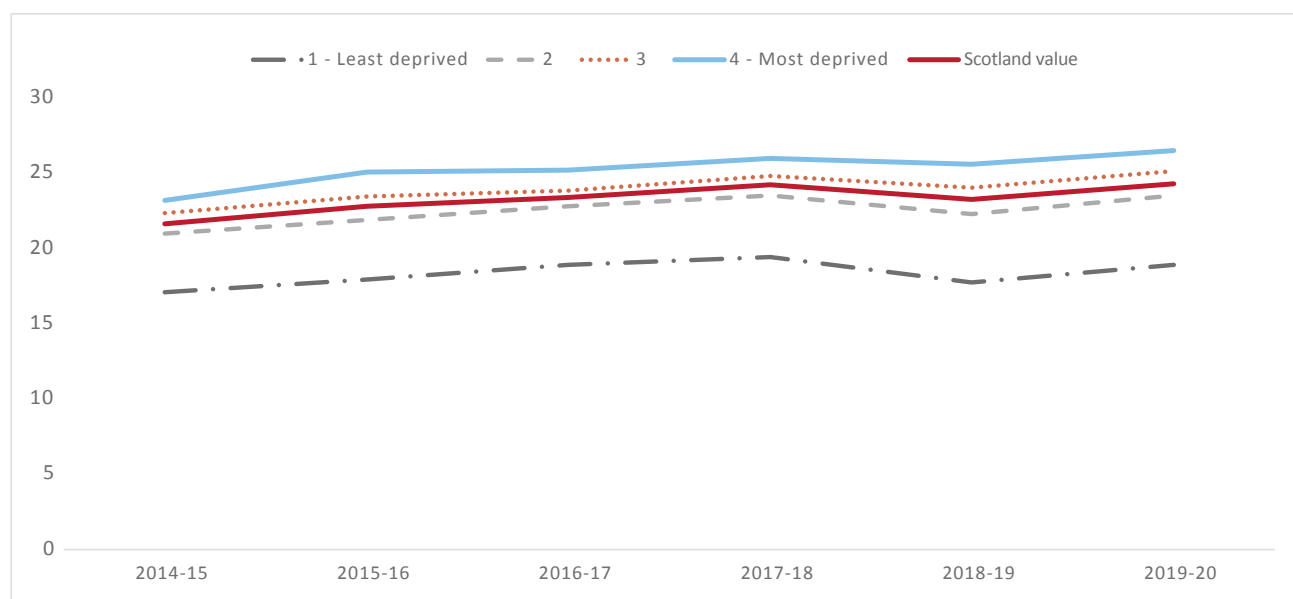
Change Over Time

In 2019/20: Scotland: +1.0pp. councils: 32 increased (range: +0.2pp to +2pp). Rates increased faster for least deprived authorities (statistically significant)

2010/11: Scotland: +2.7pp. councils: 32 increased. (Range: +0.8pp to +5.1pp).



Figure 46: % of Children living in households with below 60% median income after housing costs by family group –deprivation



This high-level measure of child poverty is helpful in evidencing the scale and nature of the problem and in informing priority local actions and resourcing. However, it will also be important to work with key sector stakeholders to identify and agree measures which focus on the drivers and levers which councils can more strongly influence at an earlier stage.

Satisfaction with schools

The publication of Scottish Household Survey satisfaction data at council level has been delayed this year due to COVID-19 related changes which were required to be introduced to the standard survey methodology in 2020. This change in methodology has introduced comparability issues in relation to data from previous years which will need to be addressed in future publications. Satisfaction data for 2020/21 is therefore not currently available for inclusion in the LGBF.

Historic data shows a 10.1 percentage point reduction in adults satisfied with their local schools service between 2010/11 and 2019/20, with satisfaction levels falling from 83.1% to 73.0% during this time. After year on year reductions between 2010/11 and 2017/18, satisfaction rates improved between 2017/18 and 2019/20, from 70% to 73%.

While almost all councils experienced a decline in satisfaction levels since 2010/11, there is significant variation in the scale of this, from a decline of 24 percentage points to an improvement in one council area of 2.5 percentage points. Between 2017/18 and 2019/20, while there has been an improvement in average satisfaction levels, more than half of councils actually report a decline.

Table 25: Percentage of adults satisfied with local schools

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2018-19 to 2019-20	Value Change 2010-11 to 2019-20
83.1	-	83.0	81.0	79.0	74.0	73.0	70.0	72.5	73.0	dna	0.5	-10.1

Source: Scottish Household Survey

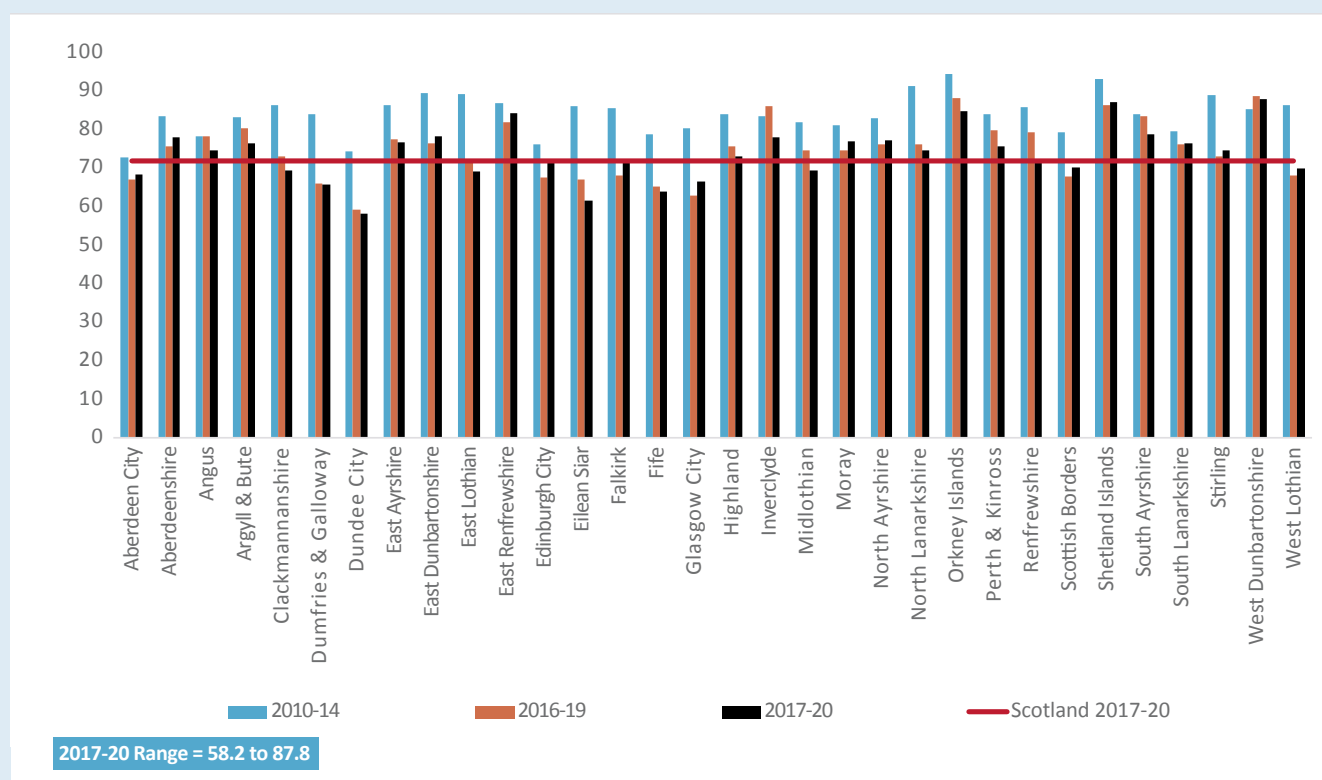


The customer satisfaction data that is included in the LGBF is derived from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS). While this data is proportionate at Scotland level, it is acknowledged there are limitations at local authority level in relation to small sample sizes and low confidence levels. To boost sample sizes, 3-year rolled averages have been used in local authority breakdowns. This ensures the required level of precision at local levels within confidence intervals of 6%. From 2018/19, questions used in the LGBF have also been included in the Scottish Surveys Core Questions (SSCQ) which provides a boosted sample size.

The data used represents satisfaction for the public at large rather than for service users. Smaller sample sizes for service users mean it is not possible to present service user data at a local authority level with any level of confidence. It should be noted that satisfaction rates for service users are consistently higher than those reported by the general population.

There is significant and widening variation in satisfaction levels with local schools across Scotland, with levels ranging from 58% to 88% in 2019/20. In the most deprived councils, levels have fallen by 11 percentage points on average, compared to 6.5 percentage point reduction in the least deprived authorities. However, there is no statistically significant relationship with deprivation due to variation within the family groups.

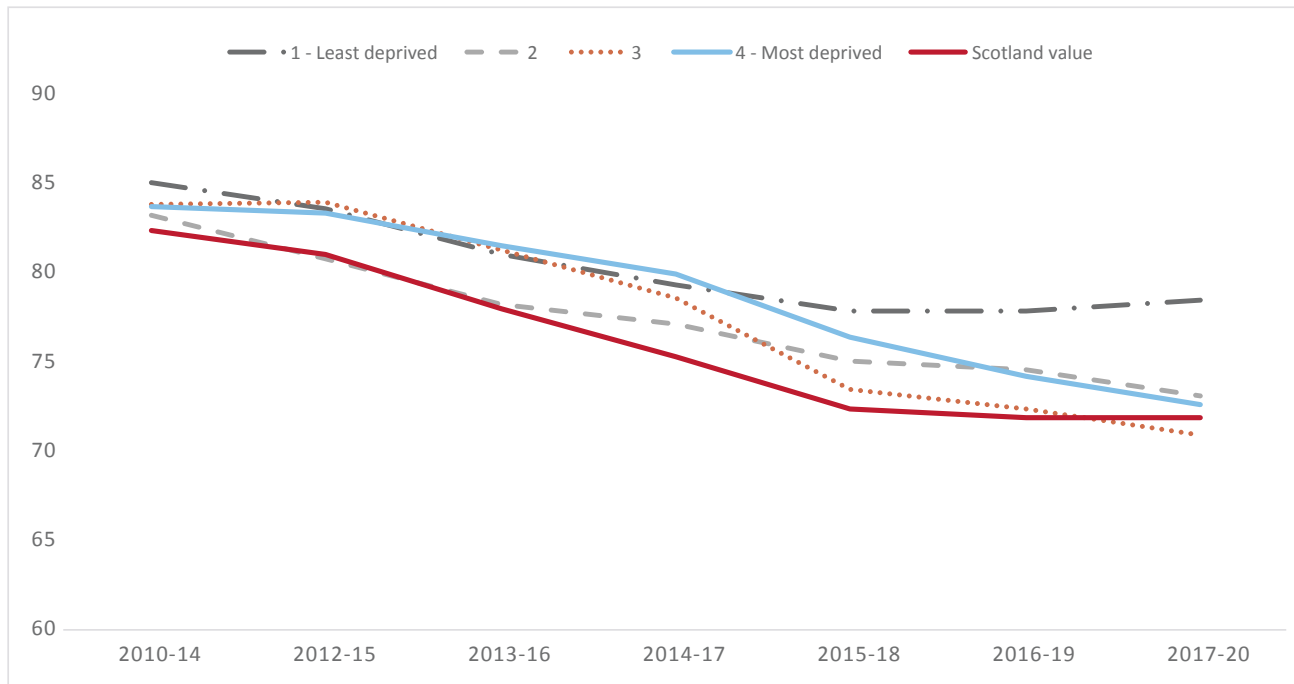
Fig 47: Percentage of adults satisfied with local schools



Source: Scottish Household Survey



Fig 48: Percentage of adults satisfied with local schools by family group - deprivation



A photograph of a young woman with blonde hair, wearing a blue polo shirt, leaning over and smiling at an older woman. The older woman is seated in a black wheelchair, wearing a purple and white floral patterned top. They are in a bright, indoor setting, possibly a care home or community center. An orange semi-transparent banner is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text 'Adult Social Care'.

Adult Social Care



Investment in services to tackle social inclusion and to support independent living for adults and older people is a major priority for councils and accounts for around a quarter of total council spend. Both council- run and council purchased services are included here. Expenditure has increased by 18% in real terms in this area between 2010/11 and 2020/21 (range: -5% to +49%). This includes a 1.6% increase in 2020/21 (range: -6% to +12%). The exceptional rate of inflation during 2020/21 should be noted when interpreting expenditure trends.

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, social care is an area where councils and their partners faced growing demands due to an ageing population and the increasing complexity of needs experienced by older and disabled people. It is forecast that the percentage of the population aged 65 or over will increase by 8.4% by 2025 (and the over 75 population will increase by 14%).²⁸

The impact of COVID-19 within health and social care has been significant and will continue across the coming period. Key areas affected include the fragility of the care home sector, a frontline workforce that has been under tremendous pressure to maintain the same level of care, increased demands on mental health and wellbeing services, pressure on unpaid carers and families who provide much needed support to some of our most vulnerable citizens; and the way that services such as adult day services have had to adapt and change.

In the face of these increasing demands, councils and their partners continue to modernise and transform social care provision to deliver better anticipatory and preventative care, provide a greater emphasis on community-based care, and enable increased choice and control in the way that people receive services. The partnership approach within Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) has been more important than ever as services continue to respond to the pandemic and work together to plan the route for recovery.

To reflect this major reform and to respond to the new challenges facing the sector from the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to work with Social Work Scotland and Chief Officers of the Integration Authorities to agree benchmarking measures which will usefully support Integration Joint Boards fulfil their duties.

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 which will be critical in supporting recovery from COVID-19. We will continue to work with Social Work Scotland and Chief Officers of the Integration Authorities to ensure developments in the LGBF reflect the key priorities, and are informed by the current reform of adult social care,²⁹ including proposals for the establishment of a National Care Service.

Care at home services

COVID-19 has heightened the challenges already faced by the home care sector and the following factors will be important in understanding the trends observed in home care provision during the first year of the pandemic: pressure on frontline services and staff as a result of increasing demand, staff absence, recruitment challenges and requirement for services to adapt and change; the increase in care and support provided informally by families (which may have been made possible through furlough or a necessity if care at home services were not offered during the pandemic or not accepted if clients were isolating); and access to care & support via care homes/hospitals. While these elements will have impacted across all local authority areas, the degree and timing may differ.

Council spend on care at home services has been standardised around care at home costs per hour for each council. This includes expenditure across all providers. Since 2010/11 there has been a real- terms increase of 10.0% in spending per hour on care at home for people over 65 across Scotland. This reflects an overall 24.3% increase in gross expenditure and 13.1% increase in the number of hours delivered during this period, although movement between years has fluctuated.³⁰

28 <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-projections/population-projections-scotland/2020-based>

29 <https://www.gov.scot/policies/social-care/reforming-adult-social-care/>

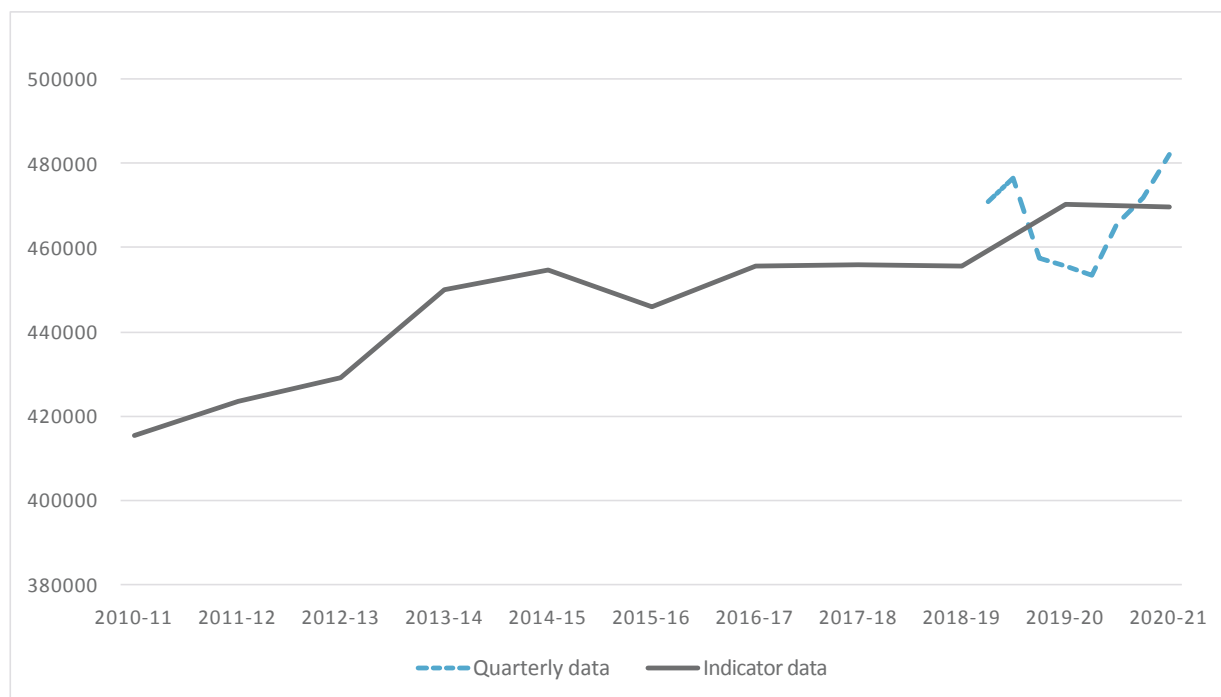
30 These average care at home figures will differ from the soon to be published national statistics in the Free Personal and Nursing Care publication which reports solely on Quarter 4 statistics.



Table 26: Care at home costs per hour for people aged 65 or over

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
£25.15	£24.32	£24.68	£23.87	£23.59	£24.54	£25.64	£26.47	£26.98	£27.25	£27.65	1.5%	10.0%

Figure 49: Hours of care at home for clients aged 65+ - yearly and quarterly data



In 2020/21, spending per hour has increased by 1.5% from £27.25 to £27.65. This reflects a 1.3% increase in expenditure and a 0.1% decrease in hours delivered. While the hours delivered across the year decreased slightly, the quarterly data reveals a more accurate picture. The provision of care at home hours fell initially in the first quarter of 2020/21 during the first lockdown period, however then increased over the rest of the year to the highest rates observed since 2010/11. There was also significant variation across councils in relation to care at home provision in 2020/21, ranging from a 19% growth in hours delivered to a 16% reduction. Similarly, while most authorities saw their care at home spend increase, a third of councils spent less in 2020/21. This variation resulted in a mixed picture in relation to hourly costs, and while the average cost increased by 1.5%, almost half of councils reported reducing costs in 2020/21, counter to the national trend.

The increase in care at home expenditure in recent years will reflect in part the commitment from October 2016 to pay all social care workers the living wage. Going forward, some caution may be required in the interpretation of care hour figures as we move away from recording hours of care into more person-centred care with the ability to select direct payments or more inventive provision of care under self-directed support options. This will be reflected in the current reform of adult social care and we will continue to work with Social Work Scotland and Chief Officers of the Integration Authorities to develop more meaningful measures which accurately capture progress and drive improvement in this area.

As highlighted, there is significant variation across councils in spend per care at home hour, ranging from £14.05 to £74.62. The level of variation observed continues to widen and is greater than any preceding year. Costs are higher and faster growing in more deprived council areas, however the difference between most



and least deprived councils is no longer significant. Between 2010/11 and 2020/21, the average spend per hour for the most deprived councils increased by 37%, from £26.49 to £36.38. By comparison, spend in the least deprived councils increased by 15.3%, from £26.40 to £30.45.

While care at home costs remain higher for rural authorities, perhaps in part due to the longer travelling times involved in the delivery of care, the difference is no longer statistically significant due to variation within the family group. Rural authorities have also seen a faster cost increase over time compared to urban authorities. Average rural costs have increased by 20.4% from £30.98 to £37.29 while average urban costs have increased by 11.8% from £25.54 to £28.56. It is worth noting that island costs remain the highest of all councils.

Figure 50: Home care costs per hour for people aged 65 or over by family group - deprivation

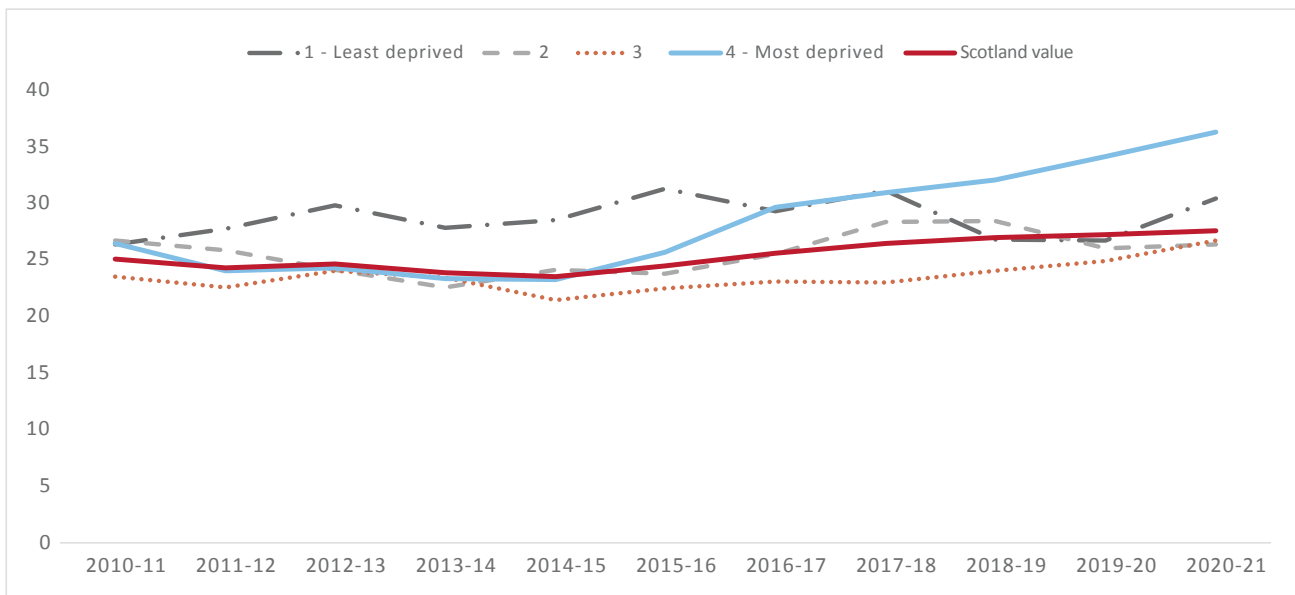


Figure 51: Home care costs per hour for people aged 65 or over by family group - geography

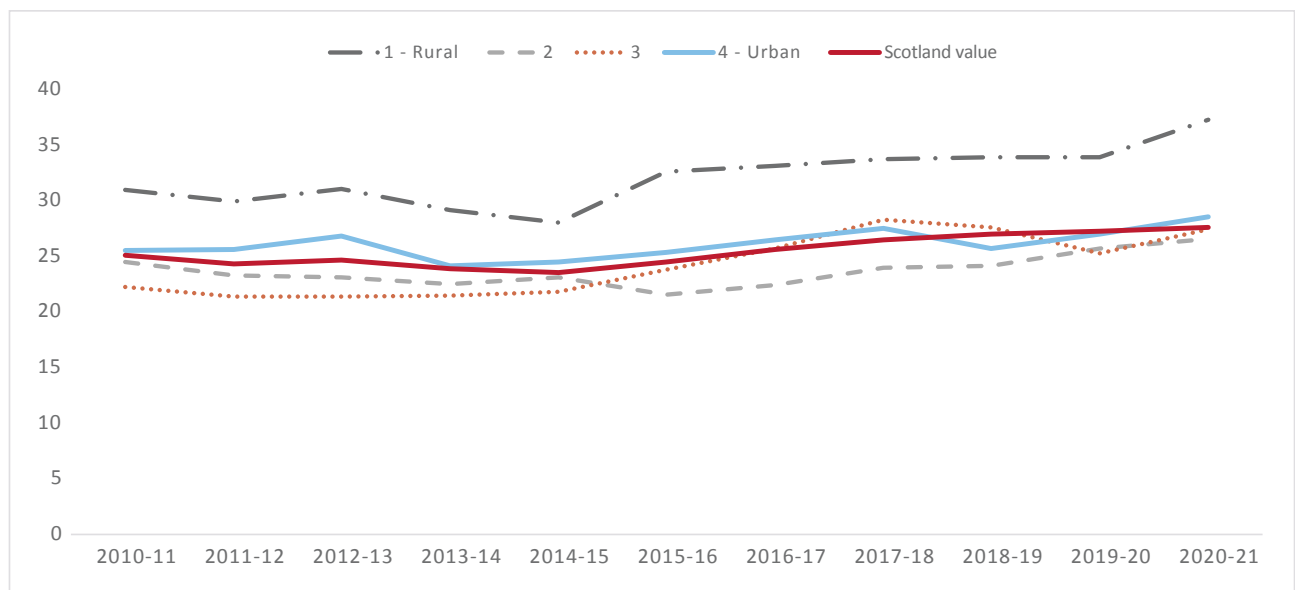
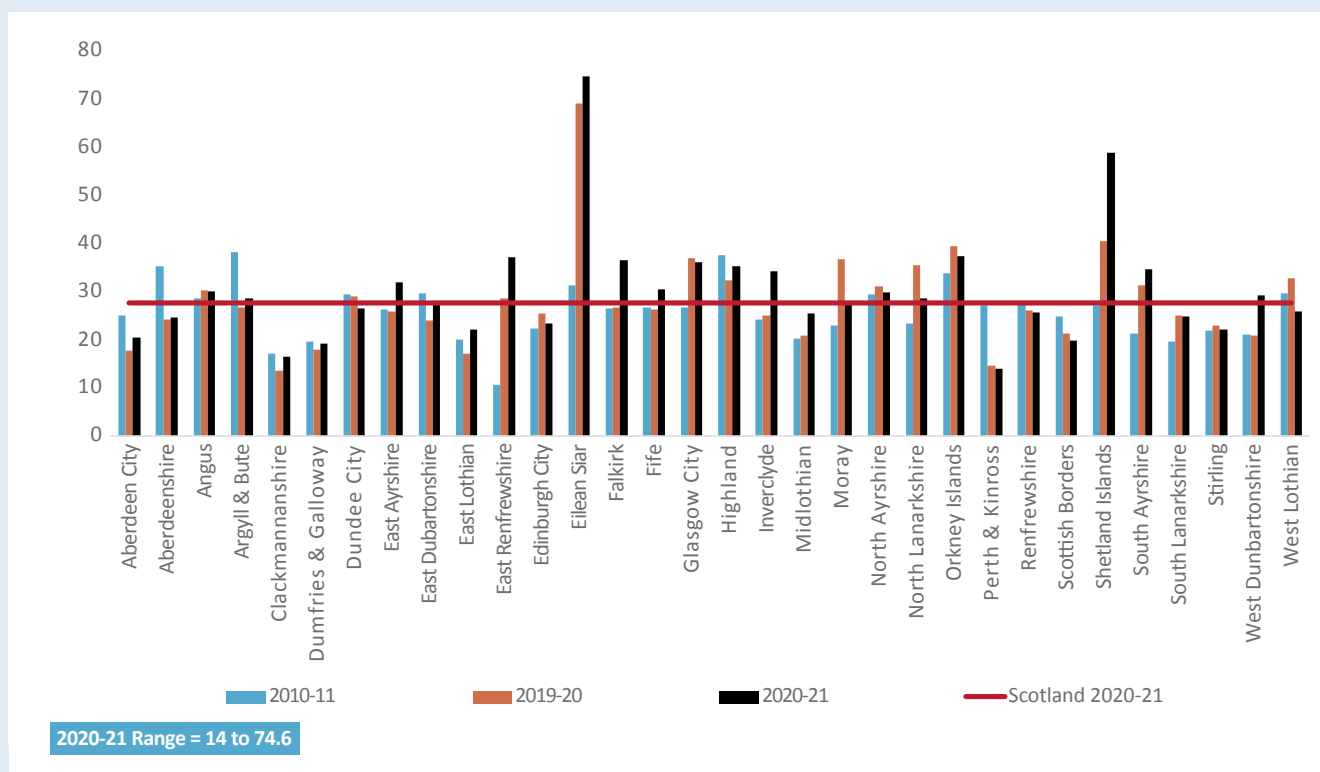




Fig 52: Older persons (over 65) home care costs per hour (£)



Source: Social Care Survey and Quarterly Survey, Scottish Government. Additional data sourced directly from councils to allow adjustment for any COVID-19 impact on provision in March 2019.



Local Variation – Older persons (over 65) care at home costs per hour

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £27.70; council range: £14.05 - £74.62. Widening variation in the most recent year. Higher costs in the most deprived councils compared to least deprived councils (£36.38 compared to £30.45, not statistically significant). Higher costs in rural councils compared to urban councils (£37.29 compared to £28.56, not statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +1.5%. councils: 18 increased and 14 decreased (range: -24.4% to +45.1%)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +10%; councils: 20 increased and 12 decreased (range: -48.2% to +249.8%)

Balance of care

Balance of care is captured by the percentage of adults over 65 with long term care needs receiving care at home. This remains an area of growing importance in an effort to care for more people in their own home rather than institutional setting such as hospitals. The effective design and delivery of home care services is central to independent living, citizenship, participation in society and in supporting a fulfilling life. Services can help prevent those most at risk of unplanned hospital admissions from entering the hospital sector unnecessarily. For those who do enter hospital, it can also help prevent delayed discharges.



COVID-19 has had significant implications for access to care and support via home care, care homes and hospitals during this period. While the full impact of this is yet to be fully understood, it will be important to consider these factors when interpreting the patterns emerging in the balance of care data.

The balance of care has shifted in line with policy objectives between 2010/11 and 2020/21, with a growth in care at home hours provided (13.1%) and a relative decline in residential places (-8.6%). The percentage of people with long-term needs who are now receiving personal care at home has increased from 58.9% in 2010/11 to 61.7% in 2020/21.³¹ This includes an increase of 1pp in 2020/21. As importantly, the number of people receiving care at home has decreased over time and 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 care at home service users, alongside the size of the package delivered reflects the agreed eligibility criteria now in place to ensure the fair allocation of care.

There is variation beneath this national trend however. While the national balance of care continues to improve, the range in movement across councils is -14 percentage points to +13 percentage points since 2010/11, with a third of councils reporting a decrease counter to the national trend. This mixed picture remains true in the most recent year, with a quarter of councils reporting a decrease, counter to the national trend.

Table 27: Percentage of people aged 65 or over with long-term care needs receiving care at home

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
58.9	59.2	59.8	59.8	60.0	60.7	60.1	61.7	61.0	60.7	61.7	1.0	2.8

In 2020/21, there remains significant variation across councils in relation to the balance of care, ranging from 52.4% to 76.1% across Scotland. The level of variation has widened slightly in 2020/21. Smaller councils continue to record a higher balance of care at home than areas with larger populations (71% compared to 59%), although this difference is no longer significant. Those councils serving areas with higher levels of deprivation also tend to report higher rates (67.1% compared to 59.3%) and have seen a faster growth over the 10-year period.

³¹ Current data incorporates a Scottish Government modeled estimate for Hospital Based Complex Clinical Care (HBCCC) patients which is based on compound annual growth calculations. This is due to suspended HBCCC data collection in 2019/20 and 2020/21 due to COVID-19, and the estimate does not account for any impact COVID-19 may have had on patients receiving HBCCC.



Fig 53: Percentage of people aged 65 or over with long-term care needs receiving care at home by family group - deprivation

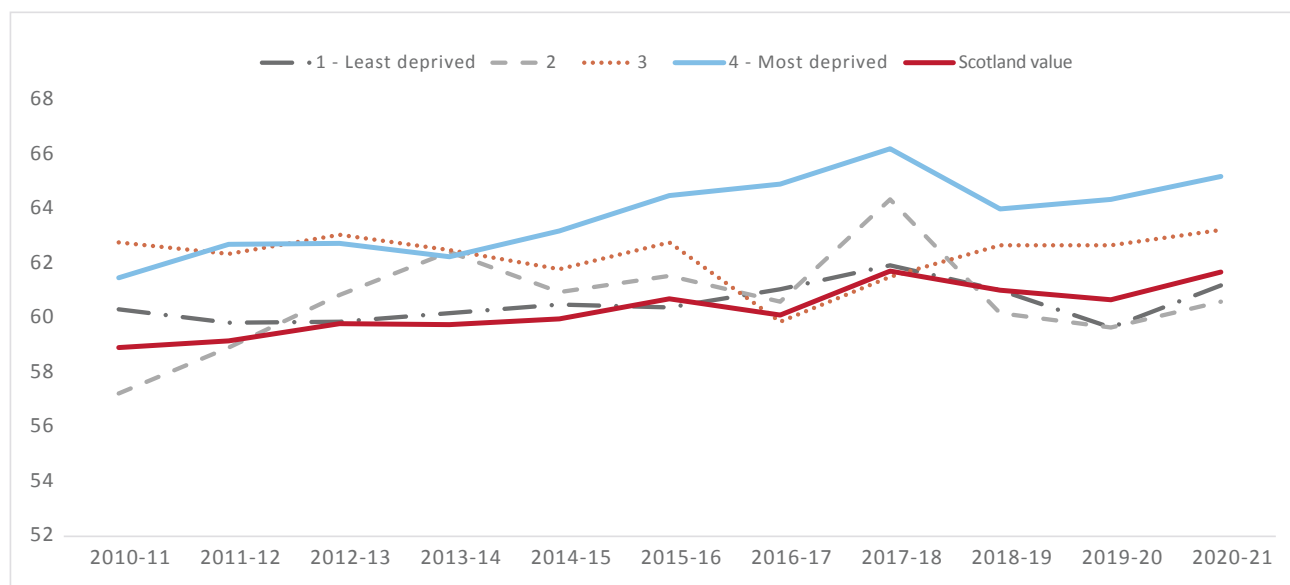
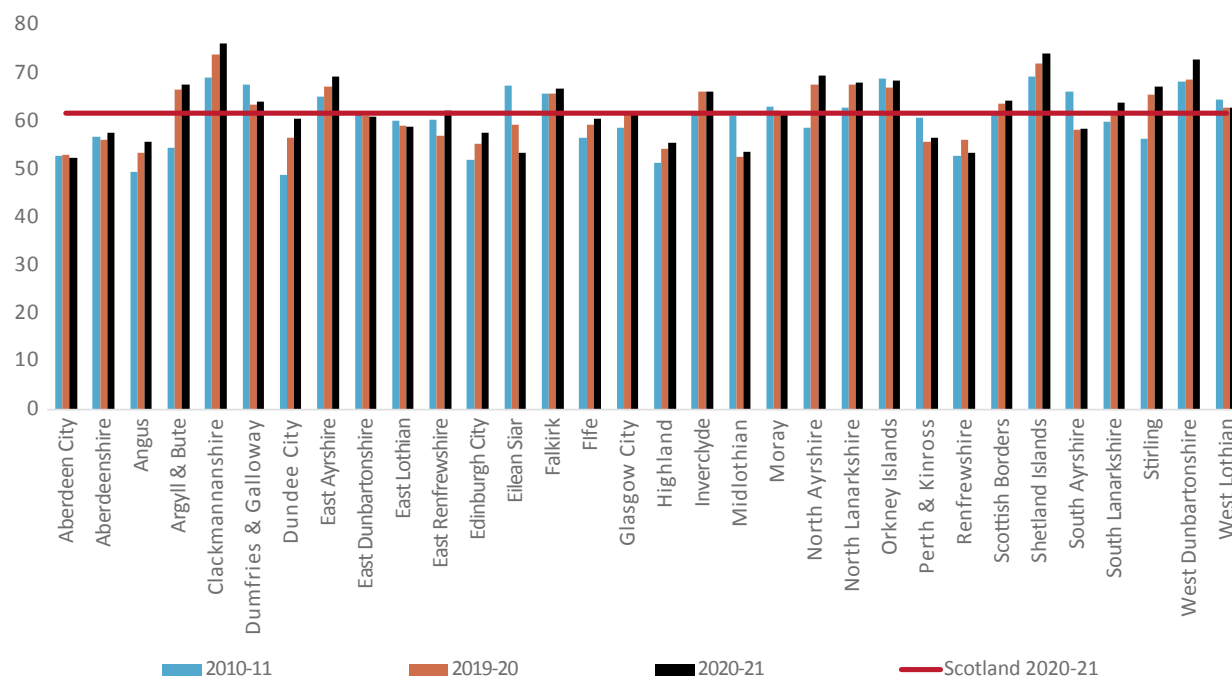


Fig 54: Percentage of people aged 65 or over with long-term care needs who are receiving personal care at home



Source: Social Care Survey and Quarterly Survey, Scottish Government. Additional data sourced directly from councils to allow adjustment for any COVID-19 impact on provision in March 2019.



Local Variation – Percentage of people aged 65 and over with long-term care needs receiving personal care at home

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 61.7%; council range: 52.4% - 76.1%. Widening variation in the most recent year. Higher rates in most deprived councils compared to least deprived councils (67.1% compared to 59.3%, not statistically significant). Higher rates in smaller councils compared to bigger councils (71% compared to 59%, not statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +1 pp. councils: 24 increased and 8 decreased (range: -5.9pp to +5.1pp)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +2.8pp; councils: 21 increased and 11 decreased (range: -13.9 to +13.1pp)



Readmission to hospital

The readmission rate reflects several key elements of an integrated health and care service, including discharge arrangements and co-ordination of follow up care underpinned by good communication between partners.

This measure captures the rate of readmission to hospital within 28 days per 1,000 discharges. The 28-day follow-up is selected as this is the time that the initial support on leaving hospital, including medicines safety, could have a negative impact and result in readmission. A longer period of follow up would be more likely to include admissions that are unrelated to the initial one, whereas a shorter period (e.g. 7 days) is more likely to only pick up immediate issues linked to the hospital care.

The volume and focus of hospital activity have been impacted significantly by measures put in place due to COVID-19. During 2020/21, there has been a significant reduction in total discharges, largely due to cancelled or delayed elective activity during the COVID pandemic. This will be an important factor in interpreting the trends in relation to hospital readmissions.

Since 2010/11, the rate of readmissions to hospital within 28 days (per 1,000 discharges) has increased year on year, from 89.7 to 120.0, a 33.8% increase. 2020/21 saw the sharpest increase to date, with rates rising by 14.7%.

In 2020/21 the actual number of emergency readmissions within 28 days decreased. However, a greater reduction (proportionally) in the number of total discharges (-25%) than in the number of emergency readmissions (-17%) has led to an increase in the rate observed. As highlighted previously, discharges include both elective and non-elective activity and have reduced, largely due to cancelled or delayed elective activity during the COVID pandemic.

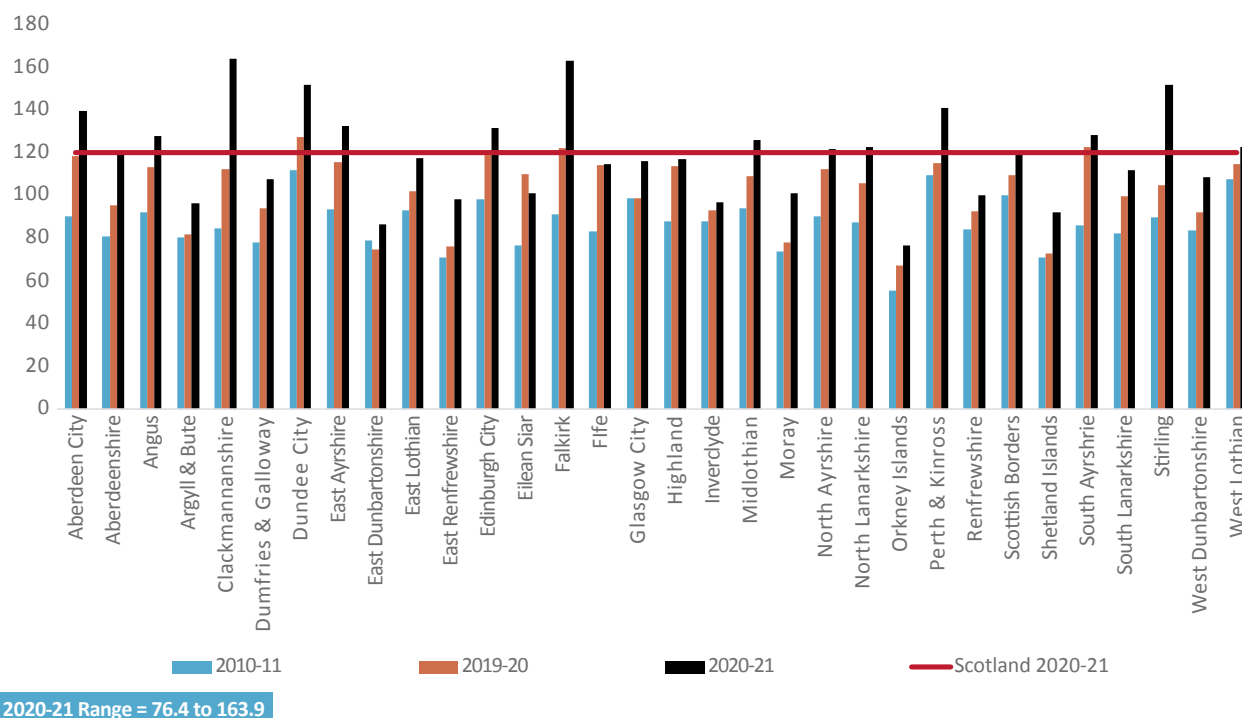
The increasing trend is evident for all 32 councils since 2010/11, although one authority reported a decrease in the most recent year. In 2020/21, rates across authorities ranged from 76.4 to 163.9, with variation widening significantly in this most recent year. Historically, readmission rates were significantly lower in the least deprived authorities compared to the most deprived authorities. While this pattern can still be observed (110 compared to 119), the relationship is no longer significant in the 2020/21 data due to faster increases for the least deprived councils during the most recent year.

Table 28: Rate of readmission to hospital within 28 days per 1,000 discharges

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
89.7	92.5	93.5	95.3	97.2	98.1	101.0	102.7	103.0	104.7	120.0	14.7%	33.8%



Fig 55: Rate of readmission to hospital within 28 days per 1,000 discharges



Source: PHS



Local Variation – Rate of readmission to hospital within 28 days per 1,000 discharges

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 120.0; council range: 76.4 to 163.9. Widening variation in most recent year. Historically, admission rates were significantly lower in the least deprived authorities compared to the most deprived authorities, however this is no longer significant (110 compared to 119) due to faster increases for the least deprived councils during the most recent year.

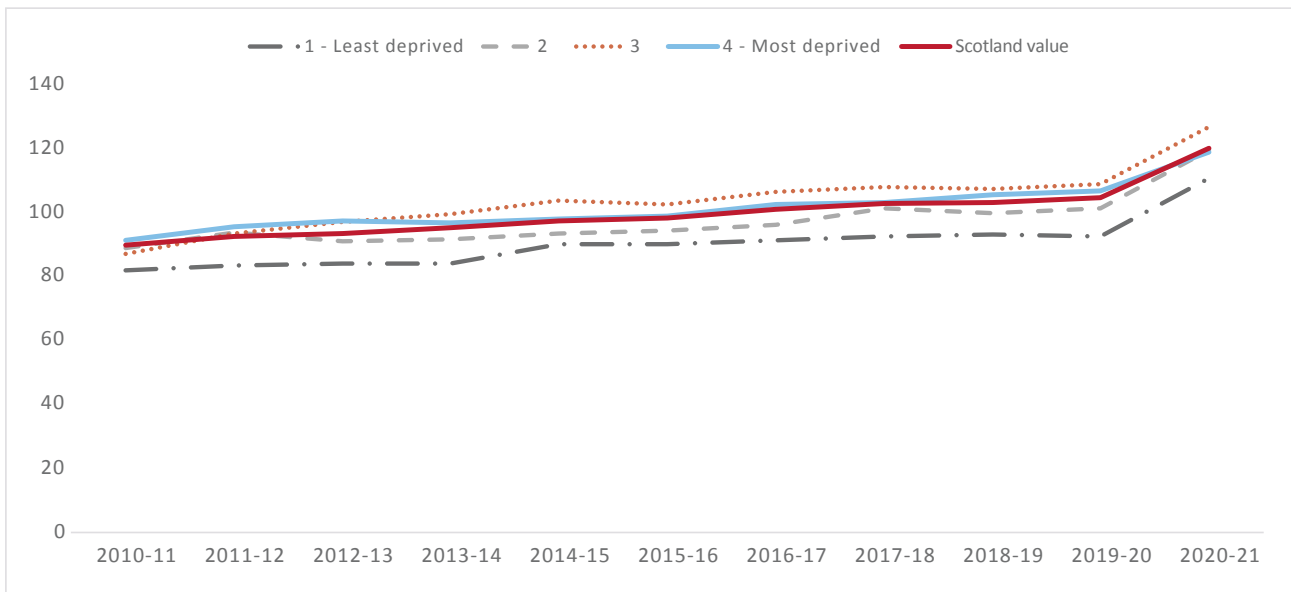
Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +14.7%; councils: 1 increased and 31 decreased (range: -8.4% to +46%)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: 33.8% increase. All 32 councils increased (range: +9% to +94%)



Fig 56: Rate of readmission to hospital within 28 days per 1,000 discharges – family group - deprivation



As we have seen, hospital readmission data from the initial COVID-19 period in 2020/21 has been shaped by the reduction in hospital discharges largely due to cancelled or delayed elective activity during the pandemic. Data from 2021/22 onwards will be vital in understanding the medium to long term impact of COVID-19 on hospital readmission rates, in particular in relation to issues such as increasing complexity of need and frailty in an ageing population, co-ordination, delivery and capacity in relation to follow-up support, and decision making in relation to discharge or readmission.

Delayed discharges

Health and Social Care services strive to ensure that people do not have to wait unnecessarily for more appropriate care to be provided after treatment in hospital. Waiting unnecessarily in hospital is a poor outcome for the individual and is particularly bad for the health and independence of older patients. It is an ineffective use of scarce resource potentially denying an NHS bed for someone else who might need it.

This indicator presents the number of days over 75s spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged. The indicator on its own does not tell us about the outcomes, as people need to be discharged to an appropriate setting that is best for their reablement. Focusing on discharging patients quickly at the expense of this is not desirable, and improvements need to be achieved by better joint working and use of resources.

The level of delayed discharges has been significantly impacted by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is evidenced in data from 2020/21. The overall significant reductions in non-COVID-19 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 acquiring infection in hospital both contributed to the marked fall in delayed discharges observed in 2020/21.

In 2020/21, reduction in delayed transfers from hospital was significantly greater than observed in previous years, with the number of days reducing from 774 to 484, a reduction of 37.4%. While this pattern is true for the majority of council areas, 4 authorities reported an increase during this period counter to the national trend.



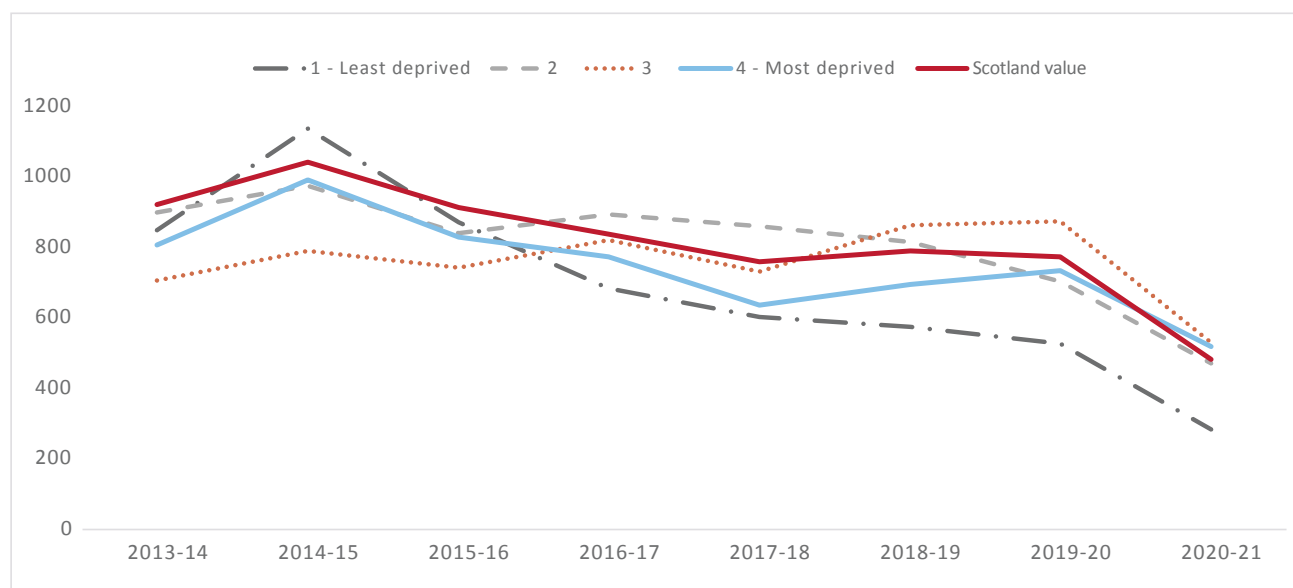
In contrast, prior to COVID-19, between 2016/17 and 2019/20, there was a 7.9% reduction in the number of days over 75s spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged. This reduced from 840 to 774 days per 1,000 population. The reducing trend was not however universal, with significant variation in trend across the country and with over a third of council areas reporting increasing delayed discharges counter to the national trend.

Table 29: Number of days people spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged, per 1,000 population (75+)

2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2013-14 to 2020-21
922	1044	915	840	762	793	774	484	-37.4%	-47.5%

In 2020/21, while there remains significant variation across authorities in terms of the number of days people spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged, with rates per 1000 ranging from 151 to 909, the level of variation has narrowed markedly. Council areas with lower levels of deprivation report fewer numbers of days delayed in hospital than the most deprived councils, and a faster rate of reduction in recent years. The relationship with deprivation however is not significant due to variation within the family group.

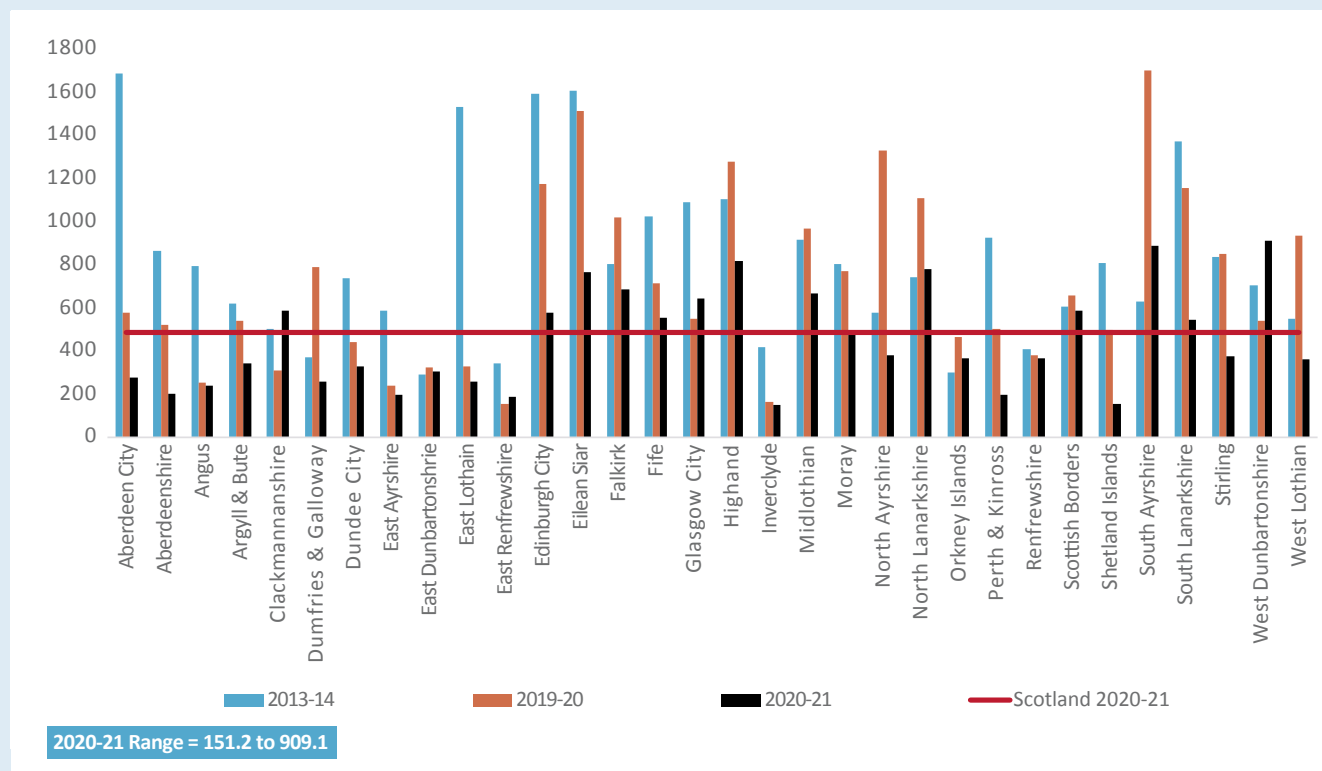
Fig 57: Number of days people spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged, per 1,000 population (75+) by family group - deprivation



This has been an area of significant and sustained focus for authorities and has shown some improvement across the longer period. The impact of COVID-19 has had a significant effect on recent trends which although will require careful interpretation, also undoubtedly proved to be a stimulus to make significant reductions. The response to the outbreak has removed some of the historic barriers as well as providing the enablers and incentive for progress. Following the sharp reduction in rates during 2020/21, increases revealed in more recent data are a matter of concern, and further exploration will be necessary to understand what lessons can be learned from the initial response and what the long-term impact of the pandemic will be on this area.



Fig 58: Number of days people spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged, per 1,000 population (75+)



Source: PHS



Local Variation – Number of days people spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged, per 1,000 population (75+)

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 484; council range: 151 to 909. Narrowing variation in most recent year. Council areas with lower levels of deprivation report fewer days delayed in hospital (284 for least deprived, and 519 for most deprived).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -37.4%; councils: 4 increased and 28 decreased (range: -71.3% to +89.4%). Least deprived councils report larger decrease than most deprived councils (-46% compared to -29%).

Since 2013/14: Scotland: -47.5%; councils: 6 increased and 26 decreased (range: -83% to +40.8%). Least deprived councils report larger decrease than most deprived councils (67% compared to 36%).



Direct Payments and Personalised Managed Budgets

From 1st April 2014, self-directed support introduced a new approach which gives people who require social care support more choice and control over how their support is delivered. Social work services continue to drive forward changes to ensure people's outcomes are being met, rather than a person fitting in to a service.

The Self-Directed Support Act 2013 puts a duty on local authorities to be transparent about the resources available to provide support and offer a choice as to how that support is managed/ delivered/ organised through the following four options:

1. Direct Payment (a cash payment)
2. Personalised Managed Budget (PMB) where the budget is allocated to a provider the person chooses (sometimes called an individual service fund, where the council holds the budget but the person is in charge of how it is spent)
3. The local authority arranges the support
4. A mix of the above.

In May 2020, the Scottish Government introduced COVID-19 SDS Guidance directing local authorities to allow people who receive Self Directed Support Options 1 or 2 to use their direct payments in a more flexible way (e.g. to purchase alternative support if their usual support has been unavailable or if services have been reduced or closed).

The LGBF indicator refers to the percentage of total social work spend allocated via direct payments (DP) or Personalised Managed Budgets (PMB).³² This data will provide important insight into the implementation of Options 1 and 2 during the pandemic, and the progress made to deliver flexibly.

Since 2010/11, the proportion of total social work spend allocated via DP and PMB has grown steadily from 1.6% to 8.2%. All 32 authorities have reported growth during this period. Glasgow and North Lanarkshire account for a significant proportion of this growth, where expenditure via DP and PMB has grown from £5.5 million to £131.3 million. Excluding Glasgow and North Lanarkshire, the spend on direct payments and PMB as a percentage of total social work spend increased from 2.2% to 5.7% across the same period, with direct payments accounting for 67% of this spend (down from 74%).

In 2020/21, the proportion of spend via DP and PMB rose from 7.8% to 8.2% (although reduced from 6.2% to 5.7% excluding Glasgow and North Lanarkshire). The pattern across authorities is not universal, with 16 authorities reporting a small decline in the past year and 16 reporting an increase.

Table 30: Spend on direct payments and personalised managed budgets as a percentage of total social work spend on adults 18+

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
1.6	2.9	6.0	6.4	6.9	6.7	6.4	6.8	7.2	7.8	8.2	0.4	6.6

³² The PMB breakdown was included in councils return to the Improvement service for 13/14 - 20/21, and includes only residual expenditure from the personalised budget where it is unknown what support was purchased, i.e. where the council used a third party to arrange services. It does not include where the budget has been used to purchase known services from either the authority or another provider. Analysis of the data however indicates some variation in relation to what is included currently.



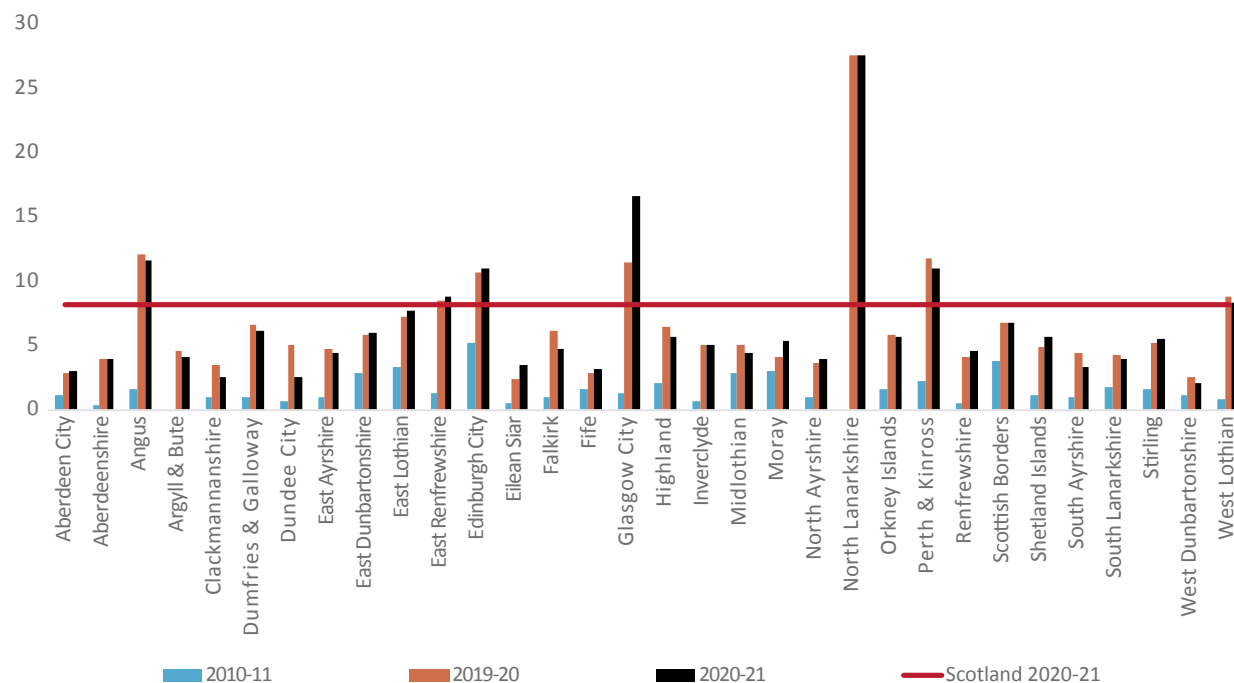
In 2020/21 the range in spend across councils was 2.1% to 27.6% (2.1% to 11.5% excluding outliers). Variation has widened over the past three years.

The data suggests a relationship between deprivation and the uptake of DP and PMB. Those councils with lower levels of deprivation have a higher uptake of direct payments (4.4% compared to 2.2% in the most deprived areas). Councils with higher levels of deprivation have a higher uptake of PMB, (9.7% compared to 1.6% in the least deprived areas). These relationships are however no longer statistically significant, due to variation within the Family Group.

Analysis of the LGBF data reveals rurality is also important in understanding the variation between councils, with supported people in urban authorities more likely to opt for personalised managed budgets (statistically significant). Historically, supported people in rural authorities were more likely to opt for direct payments, however this is no longer true in the most recent data.



Fig 59: Spend on direct payments and personalised managed budgets as a percentage of total social work spend on adults 18+



Source: council supplied expenditure figures

Note: Missing values reflect no data returned for that year



Local Variation – Direct payments and managed personalised budgets spend on adults 18+ as a % of total social work spend on adults 18+

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 8.2%; council range: 2.1% - 27.6% (2.1% - 11.5% excluding outliers). Widened variation in past 3 years. Higher uptake of direct payments in least deprived councils compared to most deprived councils (4.4% compared to 2.2%, no longer statistically significant). Higher uptake of PMB in most deprived councils compared to least deprived councils (9.7% compared to 1.6%, no longer statistically significant).

Supported people in urban councils more likely to opt for PMB (statistically significant). Historically, supported people in rural councils were more likely to opt for direct payments, however this is no longer true in the most recent data.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +0.4pp; councils: 15 increased and 16 decreased (range: -2.4pp to +5.2pp (-2.4pp to +1.2pp excluding outliers))

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +6.6pp. All 32 councils increased (range: +0.9pp to +27.6pp)



Care homes

Care homes and their residents have been acutely affected by COVID-19. Residents of care homes for older people experienced a particularly high rate of COVID-19 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.

A number of other factors influenced care home provision during this time. This includes the transfer of patients from hospitals into care homes; the closure of care homes to new residents; many of those at home remaining at home (with family often providing care and support on an informal basis); and finally staffing absence and recruitment issues. These factors will be vital when considering the emerging data on care home provision. While these elements will be important across all local authority areas, there will be differences in timing and degree.

The cost of care home services is reflected in the framework by a standardised measure using net costs per week per resident for people over the age of 65.

Between 2012/13 and 2020/21, there has been a 1.6% reduction in unit costs from £446 to £439. This has been driven by an 7.8% reduction in net expenditure and a reduction in the number of adults supported in residential care homes of 6.2%. It is important to note that the figures for 2012/13 to 2020/21 have in agreement with the Local Government Directors of Finance excluded a support cost component which was included in 2010/11 and 2011/12, and therefore a direct comparison with costs from earlier years is not possible.

Although the national trend shows a 1.6% reduction in unit costs, the range in movement across councils was -40% to +51%, with 13 authorities reporting increased costs since 2012/13, counter to the national trend.

Gross expenditure levels have remained steady over this period therefore the reduction in net expenditure indicates an increase in the income received by councils rather than a reduction in expenditure. The growth in the number of privately or self-funded clients as a proportion of all long stay residents over this period would support this trend (an increase from 28% to 33% between 2010/11 and 2020/21).³³

In 2020/21, the average cost per week per resident fell by 2.2% from £449 to £439. This reflects a 7.9% decrease in net expenditure and 5.8% decrease in the number of residents. While the average cost reduced in the past 12 months, almost half of councils reported increasing costs counter to the national trend.

Table 31: Care home costs per week for people over 65

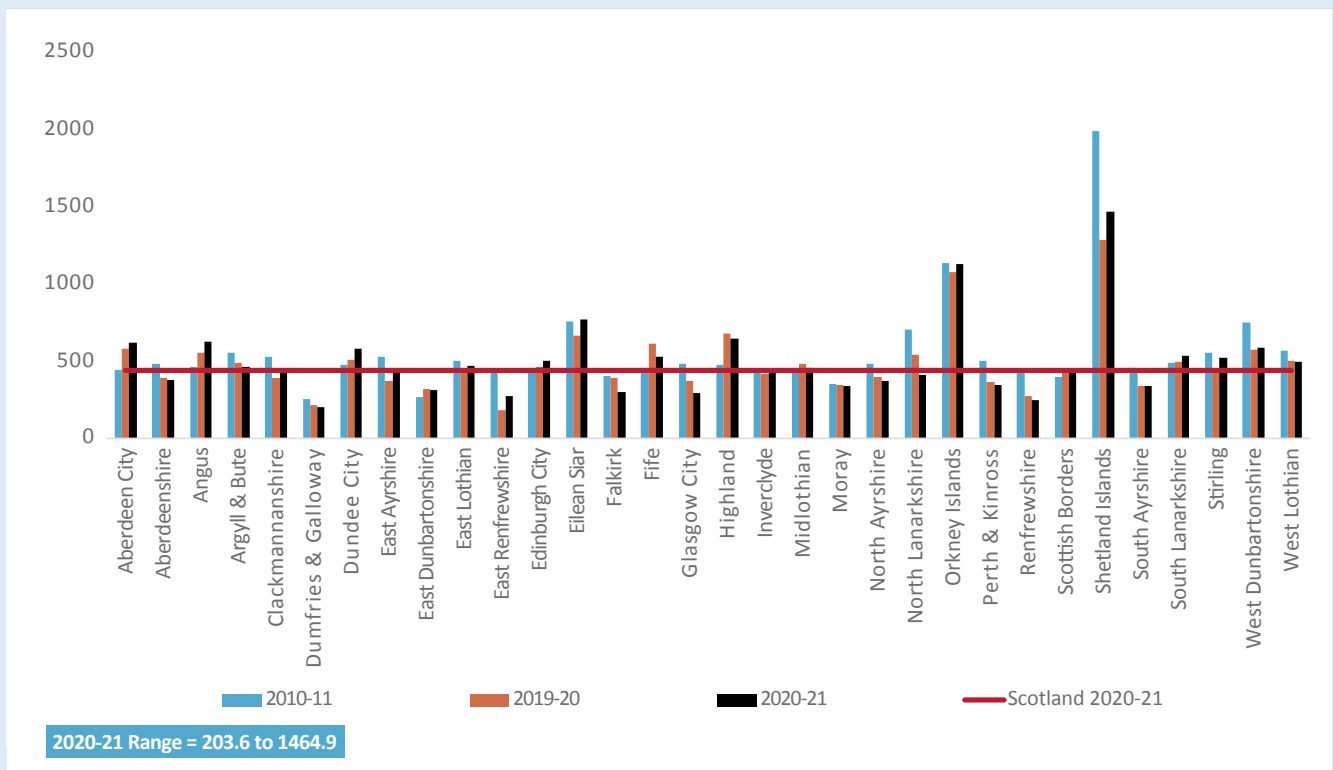
2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
£485	£490	£446	£427	£432	£422	£422	£415	£423	£449	£439	-2.2%	-9.5%

There is a considerable level of variation in care home costs across councils, ranging from £203 to £1,465 in 2020/21. Island authorities on average report significantly higher costs (£1,120 on average compared to Scottish average of £439). When island councils are excluded, costs range from £203 to £643. The level of variation has widened in the most recent year.

³³ <https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/care-home-census-for-adults-in-scotland/care-home-census-for-adults-in-scotland-statistics-for-2011-to-2021-full-release/>



Fig 60: Older persons (over 65s) residential care costs per week per resident (£)



Source: Social Care Survey and Quarterly Survey, with additional data sourced directly from councils to allow adjustment for any COVID-19 impact on provision in March 2019., Scottish Government; council supplied expenditure figures



Local Variation – Older persons (over 65s) residential care costs per week per resident (£)

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £439; council range: £204 - £1465 (£203 to £643 excluding outliers). Variation among councils widened this year and is at its widest since 2011/12. Costs are higher for island councils (£1,120 on average compared to Scottish average of £439).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -2.2%; councils: 15 increased and 17 decreased (range: -24% to +50%)

Since 2012/13: Scotland: -1.6% ; councils: 13 increased and 19 decreased (range: -40% to +51%)

Up to and including 2020/21, the National Care Home Contract (NCHC) for residential care for older people will, to a large extent, have standardised costs. However, it is important to note that the net cost per resident will not equate to the NCHC rate, as care home residents will pay a proportion of their care home fees. The NCHC rate only applies to LA-funded residents who are in private and voluntary run care homes. Residential care costs however include net expenditure on:

- The net cost of any LA-funded residents (paying the NCHC rate)



- The cost of paying free personal care and free nursing care payments to self-funders (there are around 10,000 self-funders receiving Free Personal Care payments; around two-thirds also receive the Free Nursing Care payment)³⁴
- The net cost of running any LA care homes (this will be gross cost less charges to residents). These will not equate to the NCHC rate and not all LAs run their own care homes so this may be something to explore further when examining differences across councils.

Therefore, if we compare net expenditure with all long-stay care home residents (private/ voluntary and local authority) we would expect the average rate to be lower than the NCHC rate.

Based on the above, variation in net costs between councils will be largely influenced by the balance of LA funded/self-funded residents within each area, and the scale of LA care home provision and associated running costs. There may be value in reviewing whether further breakdowns in this measure could provide further insight around the variation between areas.

Satisfaction with care services

The LGBF includes a suite of 'satisfaction' measures to capture progress made in relation to improving personal outcomes, promoting enablement, increasing choice and control, and supporting carers. These measures are taken from the HSC Core Suite of integration Indicators³⁵ with data drawn from the bi-annual Health and Care Experience Survey. The latest data available from this survey covers 2019/20 and therefore does not cover the COVID-19 period.

The Health and Care Experience Survey provides a more locally robust sample than is available from the Scottish Household Survey in relation to social care. The experience survey is part of the GP survey and asks about experience of 'care'. The data cannot be related to a specific element of social care and may reflect users experience across a mixture of health care, social care, and district nursing for example.

Across the suite of measures, there have been year on year reductions in satisfaction across each element. Since 2013/14,

- the percentage of adults supported at home who agree that their services and support had an impact in improving or maintaining their quality of life has fallen from 85% to 80%. The range in movement across councils was -18 percentage points to +8 percentage points, with 5 councils showing improvement counter to the national trend.
- the percentage of adults supported at home who agree that they are supported to live as independently as possible has fallen from 83% down to 81%. The range in movement across councils was -12 percentage points to +19 percentage points, with 12 councils showing improvement counter to the national trend.
- the percentage of adults supported at home who agree that they had a say in how their help, care or support was provided has fallen from 83% down to 75%. The range in movement across councils was -18 percentage points to +12 percentage points, with 3 councils showing improvement counter to the national trend.
- the percentage of carers who feel supported to continue in their caring role has fallen from 43% down to 34%. The range in movement across councils was -15 percentage points to +4 percentage points, with 2 councils showing improvement counter to the national trend.

34 Free Personal and Nursing Care, Scottish Government, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/free-personal-nursing-care-scotland-2017-18/>

35 <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Policy/Adult-Health-SocialCare-Integration/Outcomes/Indicators/Indicators>



Table 32: Satisfaction with care services

	2013 -14	2015 -16	2017 -18	2019 -20	Value Change 2017-18 to 2019-20	Value Change 2013-14 to 2019-20
Percentage 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	0.1	-5.0
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	-0.4	-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	-0.2	-7.7
Percentage of carers who feel supported to continue in their caring role	43.0	40.0	36.6	34.3	-2.3	-8.7

For all these elements, satisfaction levels vary considerably across councils. For those who agree services had a positive impact on quality of life, this ranges from 68% to 88%; for independence, satisfaction ranges from 71% to 98%; for control and choice, the range is 67% - 87%; and for Carers, satisfaction ranges from 29% to 50%. Rural authorities report significantly higher rates for Carers satisfaction (38% compared to 35%), and the least deprived authorities report higher satisfaction rates in relation to control and choice (79% compared to 76%). There are no systematic relationships with deprivation, rurality or council size for satisfaction with impact or independence.

Figure 61 – Percentage of adults supported at home who agree that they had a say in how their help, care or support was provided by family group - deprivation

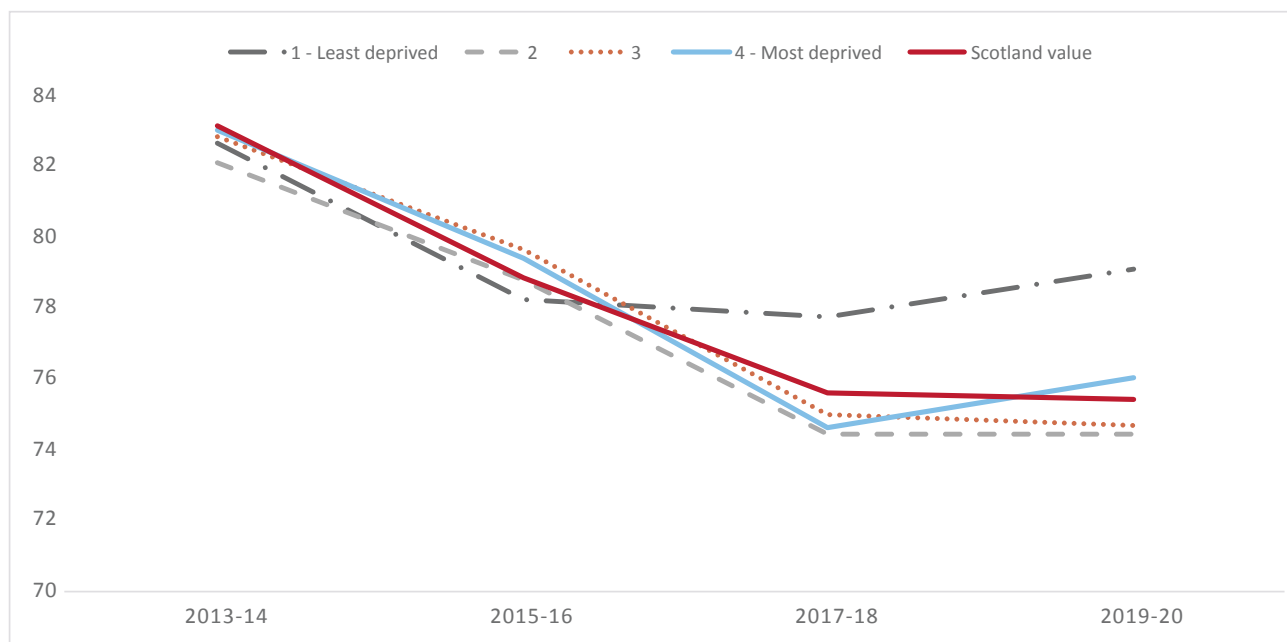




Figure 62 – Percentage of carers who feel supported to continue in their caring role by family group - rurality

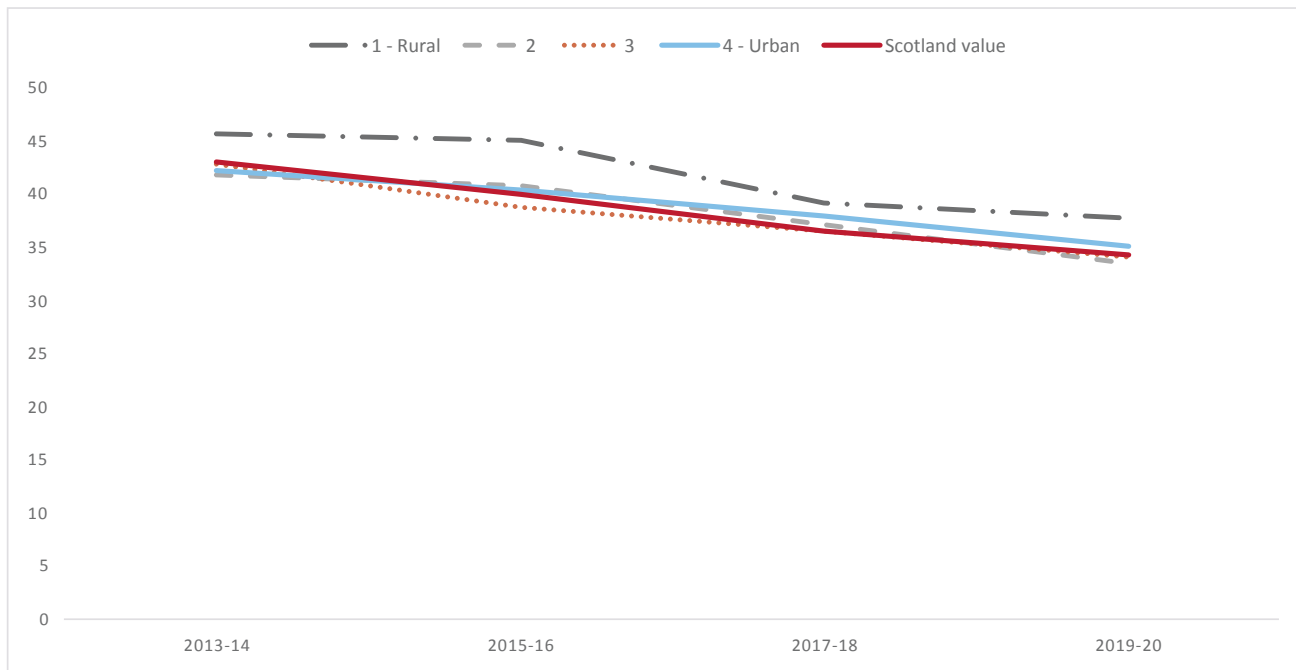




Fig 63: Percentage of adults supported at home who agree that their services and support had an impact in improving or maintaining their quality of life

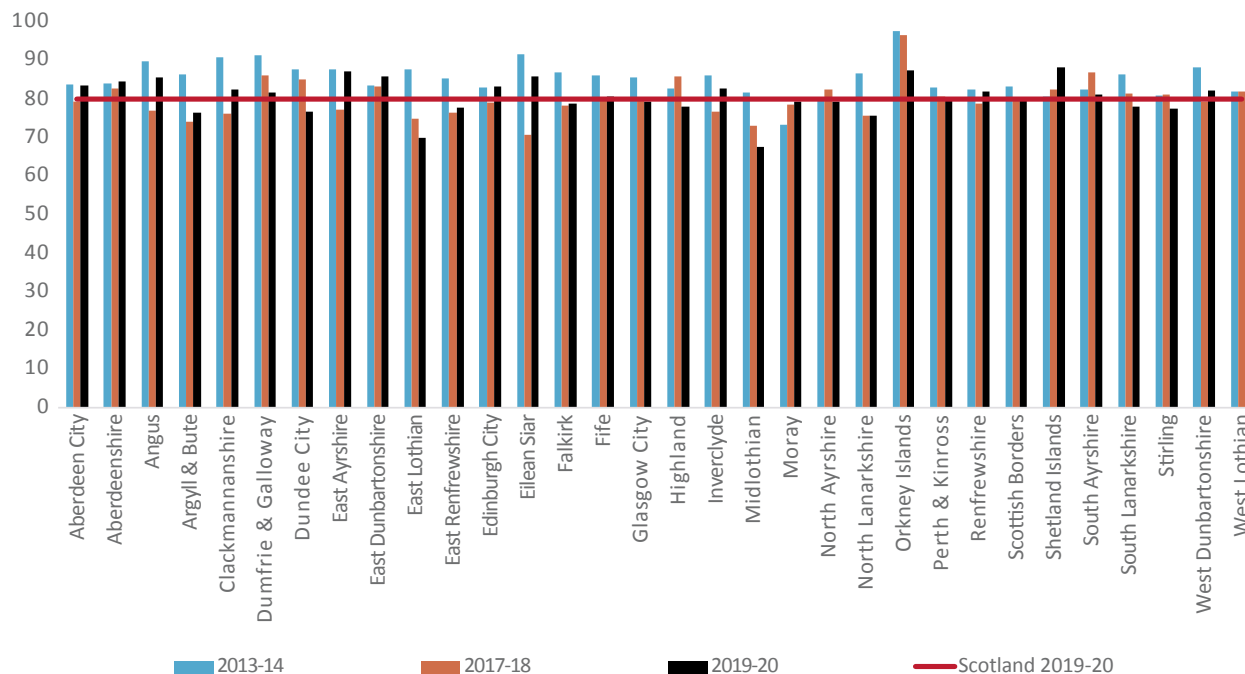
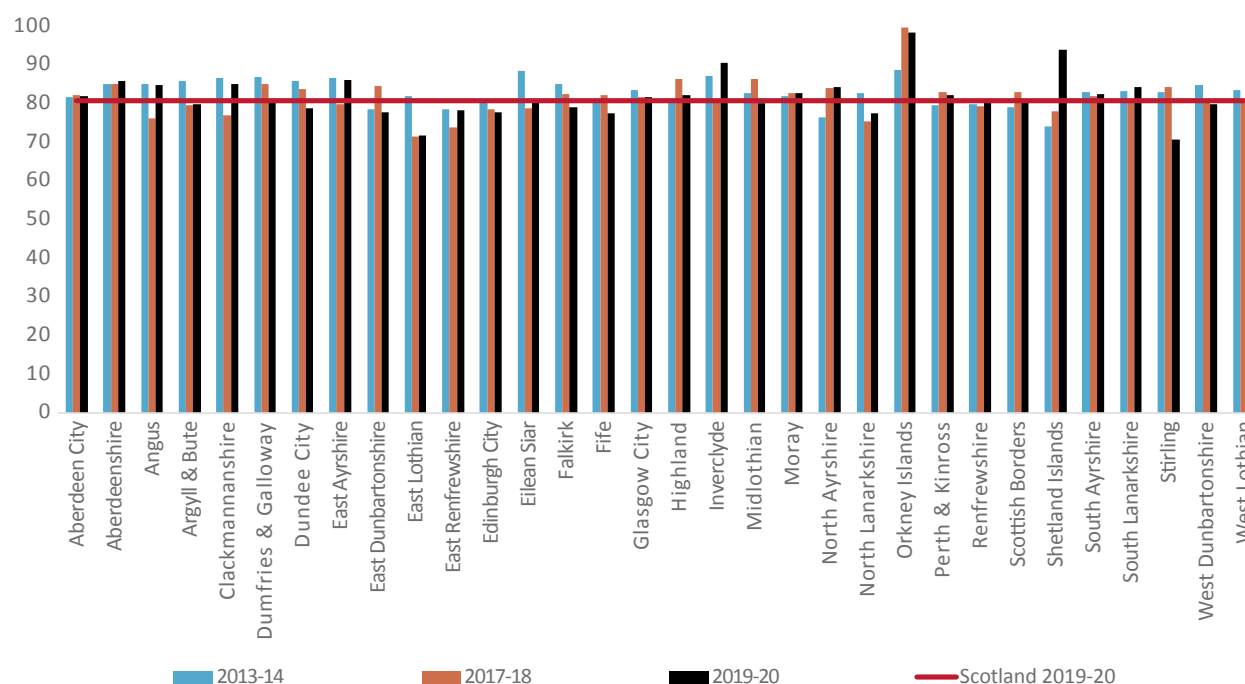


Fig 64: Percentage of adults supported at home who agree that they are supported to live as independently as possible



Source: Health and Care Experience Survey



Fig 65: Percentage of adults supported at home who agree that they had a say in how their help, care or support was provided

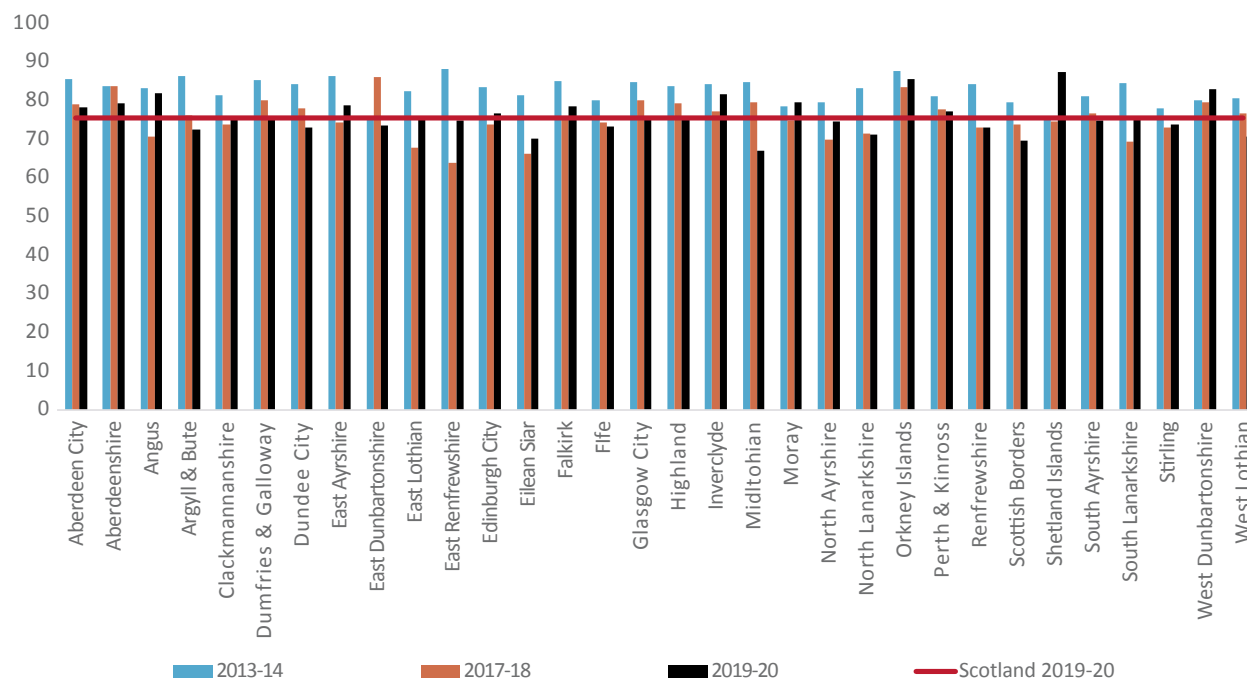
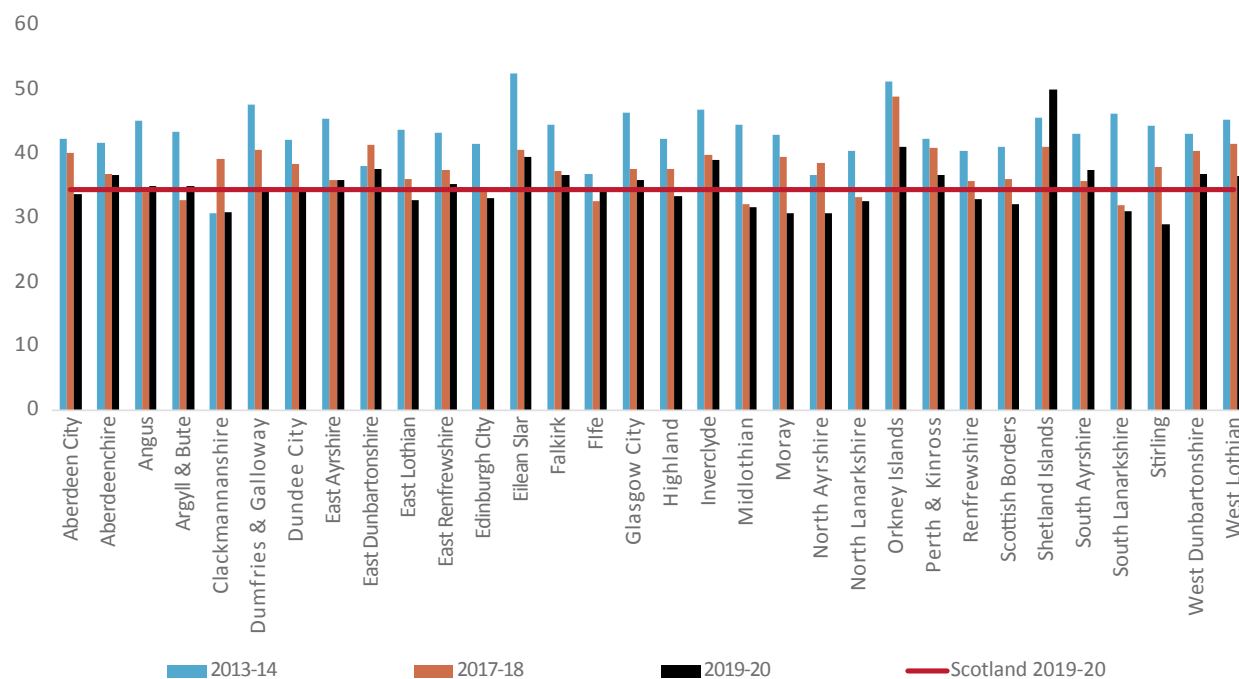


Fig 66: Percentage of carers who feel supported to continue in their caring





Quality ratings of care services

This indicator provides a measure of assurance that adult care services meet a reasonable standard. This includes care provision provided by Local Authority, Health Board, Third Sector and Private Sector and includes the following care services:

- Care Homes for adults and older people
- Housing Support Services
- Support Services including Care at Home and adult Daycare
- Adult placements
- Nurse Agency

The Care Inspectorate grades care services on the following themes:

- Quality of Care and Support
- Quality of Environment (Care Homes only)
- Quality of Staffing
- Quality of Management and Leadership

New Health and Social Care Standards were published by the Scottish Government in June 2017.³⁶ These new standards are relevant across all health and social care provision. They are no longer focused only on regulated care settings, but are for use in social care, early learning and childcare, children's services, social work, health provision, and community justice.

In recent years, the Care Inspectorate changed the way it inspects the quality of care and support to reflect the new Health and Social Care Standards. In July 2018, a new framework for inspections of care homes for older people was introduced, drawing heavily on the new Health and Social Care Standards. Similar frameworks will be developed for other settings in due course. It will be important to consider the impact of these new standards and inspection frameworks when interpreting future data on care quality ratings.

In the 2020/21 inspection year, the number of inspections was greatly reduced due to COVID-19. The majority of services retained their grades from previous inspection. This should be considered when interpreting the data.

There has been an overall improvement in quality ratings since 2011/12, with the % of care services graded 'good' (4) or 'better' (5) increasing from 80.9% to 82.5%. The range in movement is -6.8pp to +19.1pp, with 11 councils declining counter to the national trend.

Until April 2018, the overall performance of care services was improving, with the proportion of good or better services growing and the maximum obtained grade rising. In the two inspection years prior to COVID-19, quality ratings declined. This was driven by a decrease in quality ratings for Care homes for Older People which coincided with the introduction of the new care standards. If removed, the Scotland average rating would have continued to improve for care services overall during these pre-COVID-19 years.

In the most recent year, ratings have increased from 81.8 to 82.5, counter to the trend observed in the previous 2 years. The increase in overall gradings observed in 2020/21 may reflect the significant change to

³⁶ <http://www.newcarestandards.scot>



the Care Inspectorate's approach to inspection under COVID-19, and the recent in registration cancellations in services with grades 'less than good'. The recent upward trend quality ratings is not universal, with a third of councils showing a reduction in gradings during 2020/21 counter to trend.

Table 33: Proportion of care services graded 'good' (4) or better in Care Inspectorate inspections

2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2011-12 to 2020-21
80.9	80.2	80.2	80.5	82.9	83.8	85.4	82.2	81.8	82.5	0.7	1.6

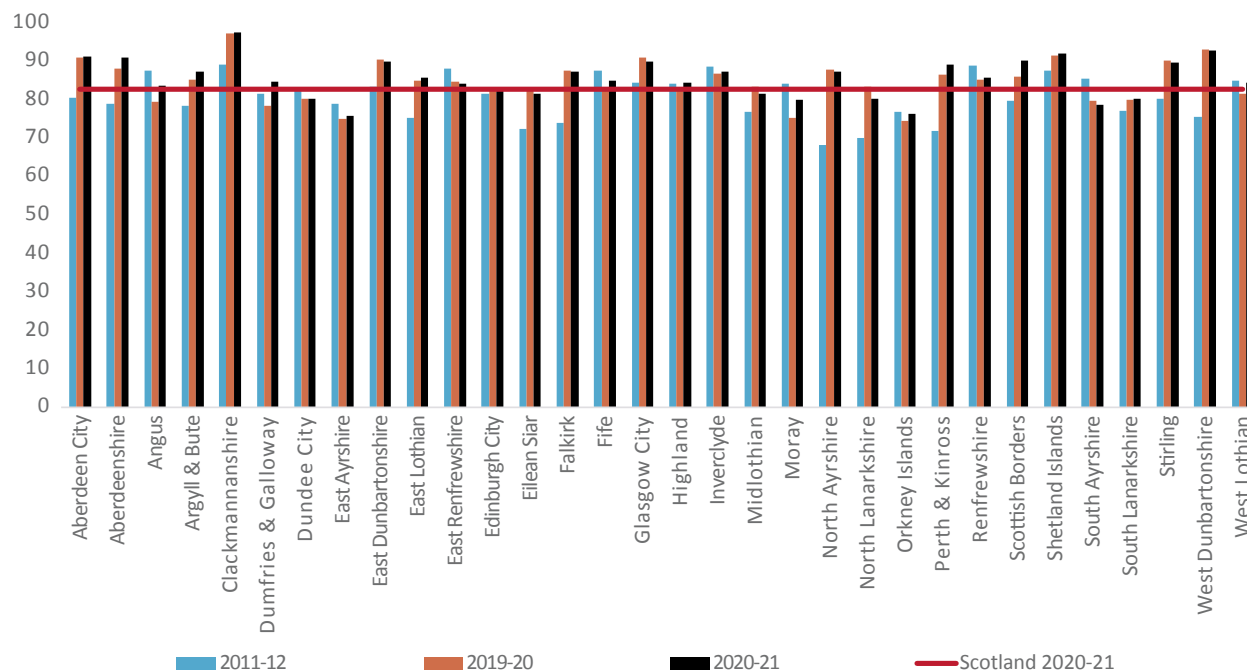
There is significant variation between councils, with ratings in 2020/21 ranging from 75.7% to 97.4%. The level of variation has narrowed in the recent two years. Most deprived councils are more likely to have fewer services graded 'good' or better (84% compared to 89%) in the least deprived council areas.

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

- *Rurality: there is some connection between rurality and the cost of social care provision. Rural authorities have higher residential and home care costs, although this effect is not significant. Rural areas also tend to have higher satisfaction rates in the quality of the service and in relation to its impact on their outcomes, although again, this is not statistically significant. Councils with the largest populations have a significantly lower proportion of people cared for at home.*
- *Demographic variability: the number and proportion of over 75s within local populations will have a significant influence on the cost and balance of social care service provision locally.*
- *Proportion of self-funders locally and impact on residential care expenditure: variations in net expenditure between councils are systematically related to the percentage of self-funders within council areas.*
- *Local service design and workforce structure: local factors such as the service delivery balance between local authority provision and private/voluntary provision locally, along with variability in the resilience and capacity within local workforce and provider markets, will influence both costs and balance of care*



Fig 67: Proportion of care services graded 'good' (4) or better in Care Inspectorate inspections



Source: Care Inspectorate



Local Variation – Proportion of care services graded 'good' (4) or better in Care Inspectorate inspections

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 82.5%; council range: 75.7% - 97.4%. Narrowing variation in most recent year. Values are significantly lower in most deprived councils than least deprived councils (84% compared to 89%).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +0.7pp; councils: 20 increased and 11 decreased (range: -3.2pp to + 6.0pp)

Since 2011/12: Scotland: +1.6pp; councils: 21 increased and 11 decreased (range: -6.8pp to +19.1pp).

A group of children are swimming in a pool, positioned along a white lane line. They are wearing various colored swim caps (blue, purple, pink, silver) and goggles. The water is blue and splashing around them. The children are in a starting position, leaning forward with their arms extended.

Culture and Leisure Services



Culture and leisure services have been exceptionally impacted by COVID-19 and face significant challenges in terms of their survival and ability to contribute to the health and wellbeing of Scotland's communities. While the impacts have been significant for all areas, variation in local COVID-19 restrictions and in local staff redeployment strategies will provide important context in relation to the data observed.

In addition to promoting better health and wellbeing of the population and in reducing demand on other core services, the social and economic benefits of culture and leisure services are well documented. Culture and leisure services also connect well with communities who more traditional and regulated services often struggle to reach. This unique relationship provides real potential to achieve impact for people in the greatest need and will be vital in supporting local and national recovery efforts. Concerted focus will be needed to understand and respond to the medium- and long-term impacts of the pandemic on this critical sector, which have intensified the significant existing funding and cost pressures facing culture and leisure services, including the impact on current income streams.

Prior to COVID-19, culture and leisure services had seen their usage grow significantly across the 10-year period, in part reflecting the expansion of digital provision during this time. In 2020/21, culture and leisure facilities were closed for a significant period of the year, significantly impacting usage numbers.

While there had been substantial capital investment in the cultural and leisure infrastructure in Scotland during the lifespan of the LGBF, given there is little in the way of statutory protection for these services, culture and leisure services had been facing a particularly challenging financial context. Since 2010/11, overall gross revenue expenditure on culture and leisure services has fallen by 29.6% in real terms (range: -69% to +5%). This includes a 6% reduction in 2020/21.

All culture and leisure cost measures in the LGBF are presented as net measures. This provides a better basis to compare like by like between councils, particularly in relation to different service delivery models, e.g. in-house/arm's length provision. It also recognises the increasing need for authorities to income generate across culture and leisure services, and ensures this activity is reflected accordingly.

Sports facilities

The data presented below illustrates the net cost per attendance at sports and recreation facilities. Prior to COVID-19, during the ten-year period from 2010/11 to 2019/20 the average unit cost had reduced year on year from £4.43 to £2.92 in real terms. In percentage terms, this represents a 34% reduction, and was driven by a 25% reduction in expenditure in parallel with a 14% growth in visits. This trend was true for almost all authorities, although 4 authorities reported an increase in unit costs during this time.

Table 34: Cost per attendance at sports facilities

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
£4.43	£4.97	£3.78	£3.76	£3.45	£3.38	£3.29	£3.03	£2.85	£2.92	£40.36	1282.2%	810.6%

Over this pre-COVID-19 period, the significant increase in user numbers while the unit cost of sports attendances has fallen indicates that leisure and recreation services had managed to attract more people into using their facilities while managing significant financial pressures. The significant capital investment programme in sports facilities across Scotland in the noughties is likely to be an important factor in the user growth observed.

In 2020/21, the number of attendances reduced by 91.2%, from 50 million to 4.6 million. During this period, expenditure increased by 20.9% as councils moved to compensate ALEOs/Trusts for loss of income as a

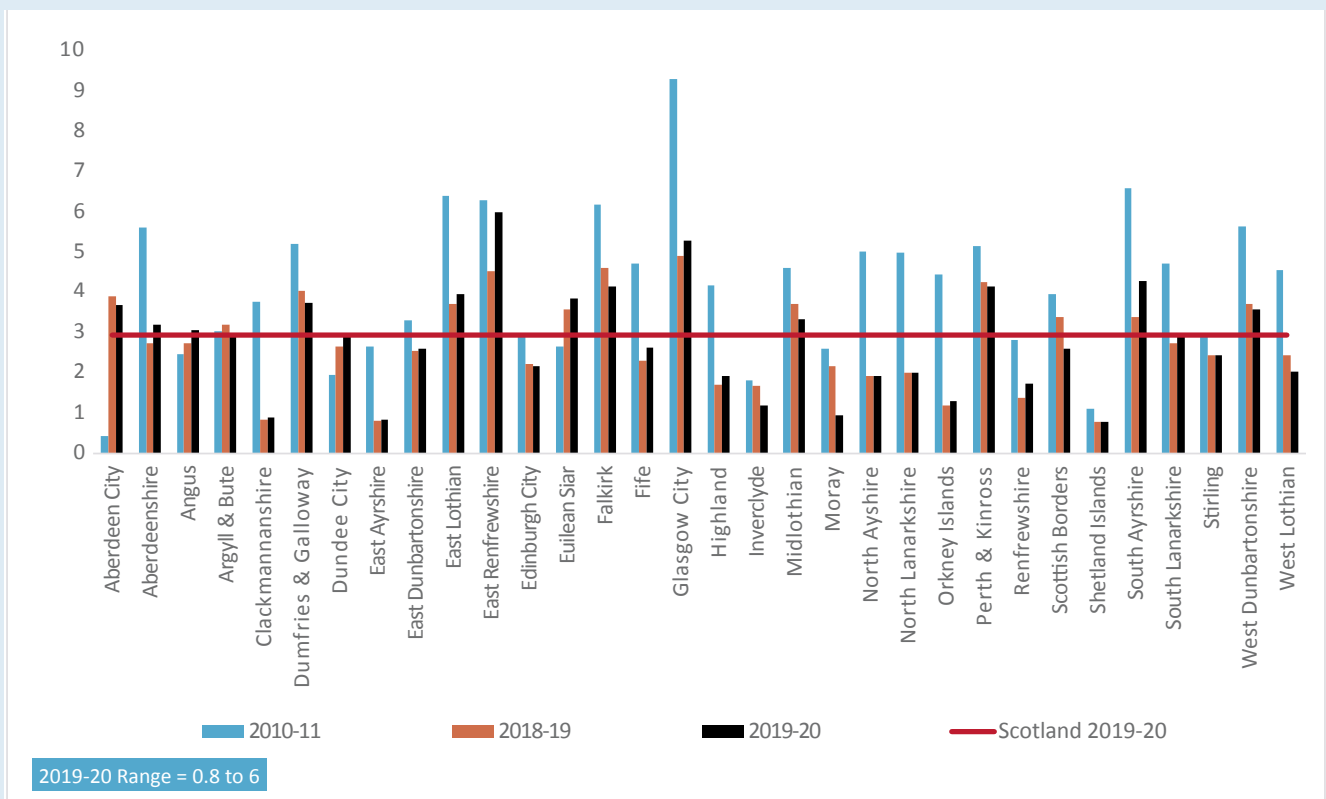


result of COVID-19 restrictions. This has resulted in unit costs increasing from £2.92 to £40.36 (an increase of over 1000%).

While the impact for all authorities on unit costs was significant during 2020/21, there is variation between councils in terms of the scale of this impact. While all authorities saw their visit numbers reduce, this ranged from a reduction of 68% to a reduction of 98%. Meanwhile, while the average expenditure increased during 2020/21, this ranged from a fall of 31.6% to an increase of 143.8%, with one third of councils reducing their expenditure during this time counter to trend. While costs had previously been higher for urban authorities (although not statistically significant due to variation within the family group), this pattern is not evident in data from 2020/21.

It is important to note that some of the variation observed will be influenced by the local lockdown restrictions in place with regulations differing quite significantly across the country at various times during 2020/21 as a result of varying infection rates.

Fig 68: Cost per attendance at sports facilities (£) - pre COVID-19



Source: council supplied expenditure and visitor figures



Local Variation – Cost per attendance at sports facilities

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £40.40; council range: £2.74 - £223.61 (£2.74 - £113.11 excluding outliers). Widened variation in most recent year. Costs had previously been higher for urban authorities (not statistically significant), but this is no longer evident.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +1282.2%. All 32 councils increased (range: +250.5% to +8708%). Attendances: all 32 councils decreased (range: -98% to -68%); Expenditure: 22 councils increased and 10 decreased (range: -31% to +143%).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +810%. All 32 councils increased (range: +61.5% to +7079.4%)



Fig 69: Change in expenditure on sports facilities between 2019/20 and 2020/21 (%)

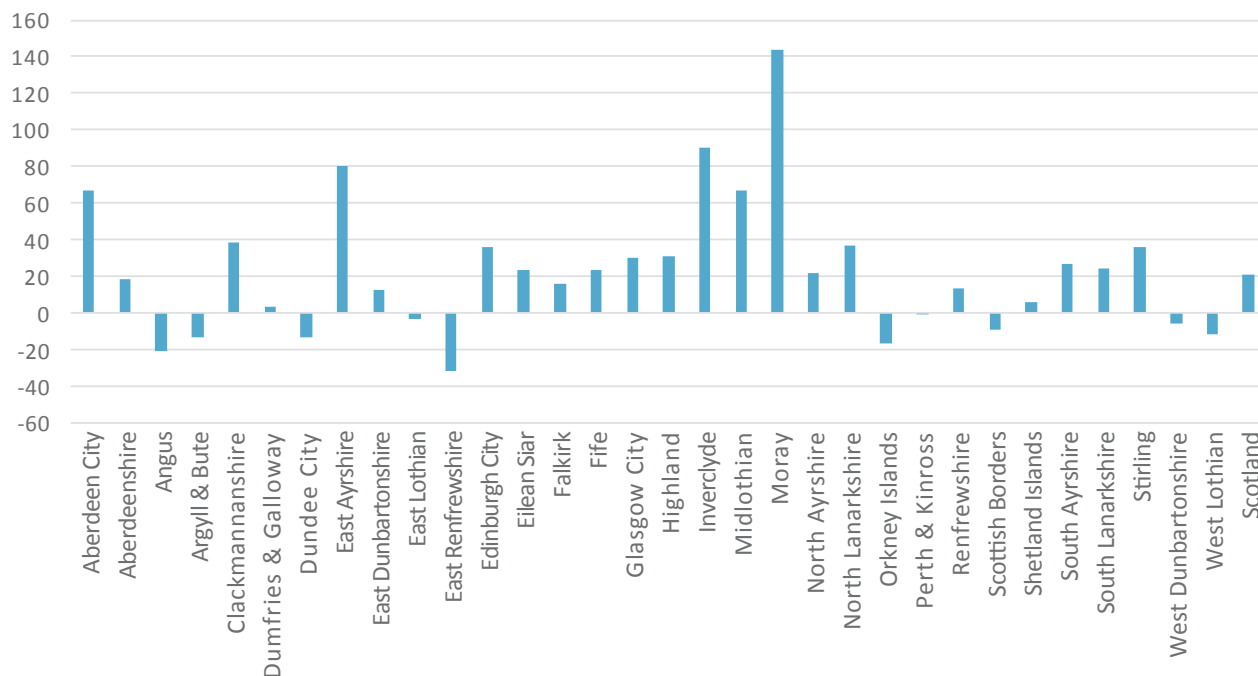
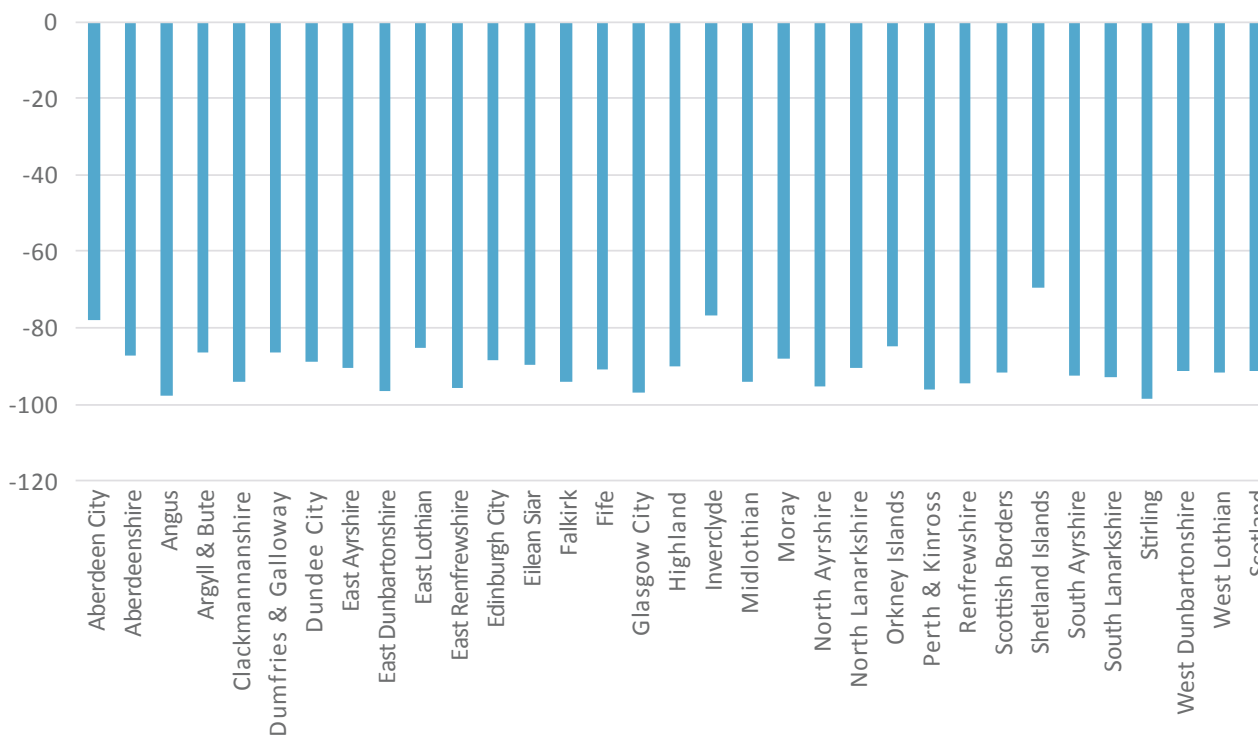


Fig 70: Change in visit numbers at sports facilities between 2019/20 and 2020/21 (%)



Source: council supplied expenditure and visitor figures



Library services

Library costs are represented as the average cost per library visit (both physical and virtual).

Prior to COVID-19, there was a significant 50.1% reduction in unit costs since 2010/11, from £425 to £212. As with sports, this was driven by a 29% reduction in spend across the period, in parallel with a 42% growth in visit numbers. While this trend is true for almost all authorities, three councils reported increasing costs during this time counter to the national trend. Rural authorities saw greater cost reductions on average than urban or semi-rural authorities, -53% compared to -35%.

Table 35: Cost per library visit

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
£4.25	£4.01	£3.80	£3.03	£2.86	£2.83	£2.25	£2.31	£2.24	£2.12	£2.88	35.5%	-32.4%

In 2020/21, library visit numbers fell by 33.8%, while expenditure fell by 10.3%. This had the result of increasing unit costs from £2.12 to £2.88, an increase of 35% in the most recent year, counter to the previous reducing trend.

While the majority of councils reported significant reductions in visit numbers during 2020/21, a small number of councils saw their visit numbers increase due to the growth in virtual visitors. Virtual visits have grown across all authorities in the last few years, increasing by 37% in 2020/21 from 20.3 million to 27.8 million, and by 56% since 2018/19, from 17.8 million to 27.8 million. Rural authorities reported significantly higher rates of virtual visits prior to COVID-19, and additionally saw faster growth in virtual visits during 2020/21. Excluding virtual visits, the number of physical visits to libraries reduced by 92% in 2020/21, which is comparable with Sports/Leisure.

Fig 71: Library visits – breakdown by type

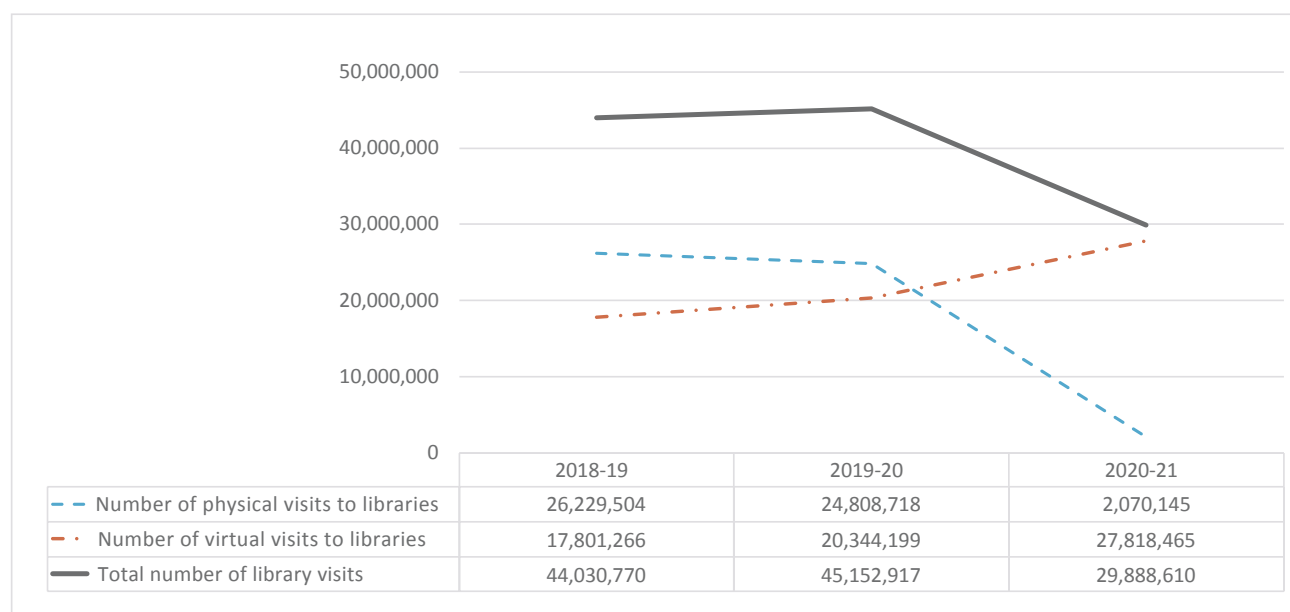
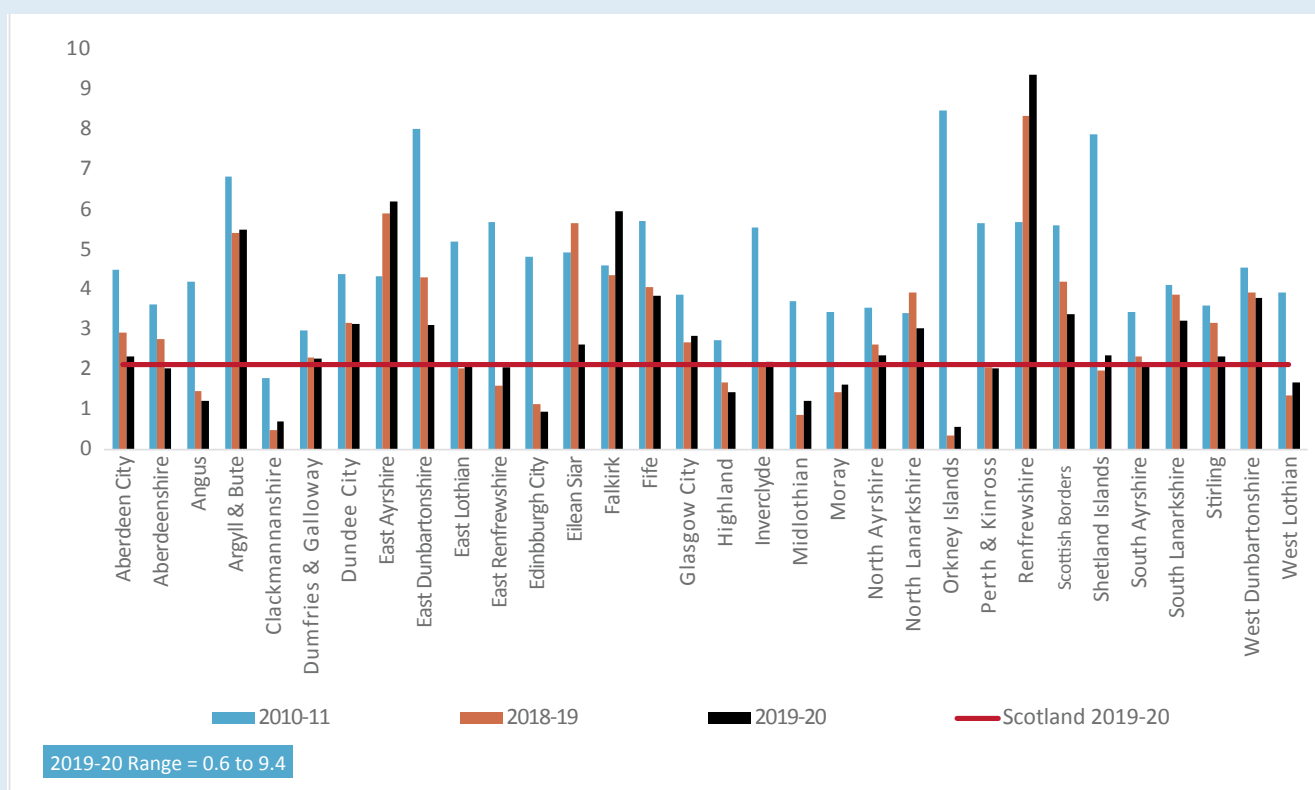


Fig 72: Cost per library visit (£) - pre COVID-19



Source: council supplied expenditure and visitor figures



Local Variation – Cost per library visit

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £2.90; council range: £0.34 - £36.90 (£0.34 - £24.80 excluding outliers). Widening variation in the most recent year. Costs are higher in urban councils compared to rural (£12.88 compared to £7.19, not statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +35.5%; councils: 25 increased and 7 decreased (range: -73.9% to +735.0%); Visits: 5 councils increased and 27 decreased (range: -87% to +261%); Expenditure: 6 councils increased and 26 decreased (range: -49.7% to +50.6%)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -32.4%; councils: 18 increased and 14 decreased (range: -95.9% to +484.8%)



Fig 73: Change in expenditure on libraries between 2019/20 and 2020/21 (%)

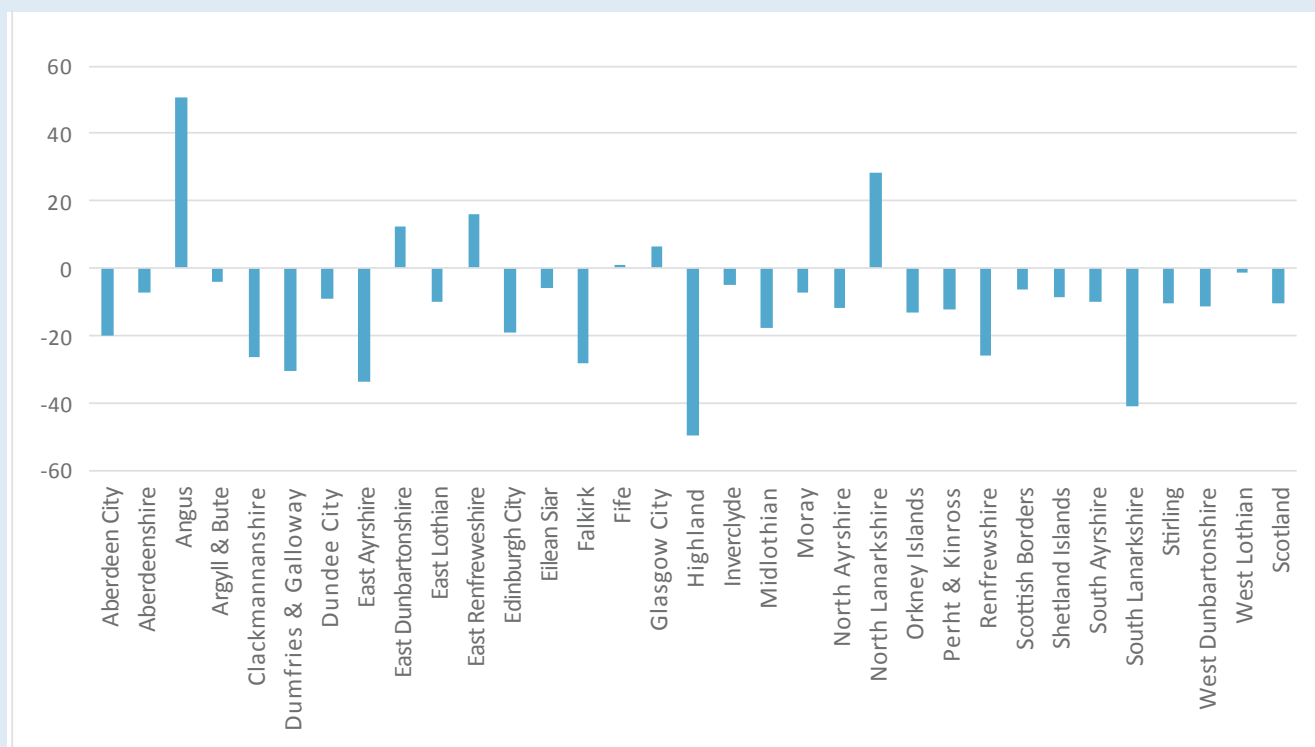
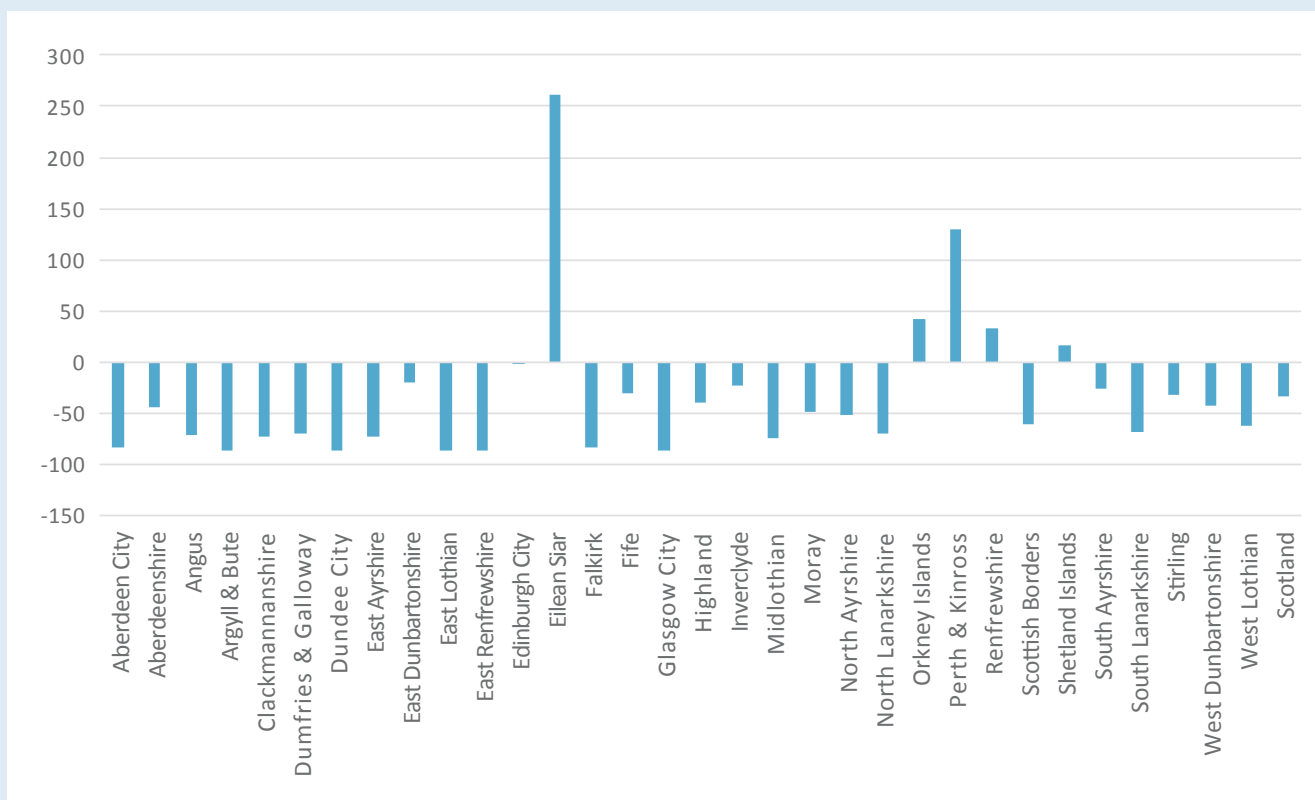


Fig 74: Change in visit numbers at libraries between 2019/20 and 2020/21 (%)



Source: council supplied expenditure and visitor figures



Museum services

With respect to museum services, the pattern is similar to library and sports services both over the longer term, and in terms of the impact observed during 2020/21.

In the ten-year period prior to COVID-19, there was a real terms reduction of 33.5% in cost per visit, from £5.25 to £3.49 between 2010/11 and 2019/20. This represents a 10.0% reduction in net expenditure in parallel with a 35.3% increase in museum visits (from 9.3 million visits to 12.5 million visits). Although the average cost per visit reduced during this period, 9 authorities reported increasing costs per visit counter to the national trend. Council variation reveals no pattern with deprivation, geography or council size.

Table 36: Cost per museums visit

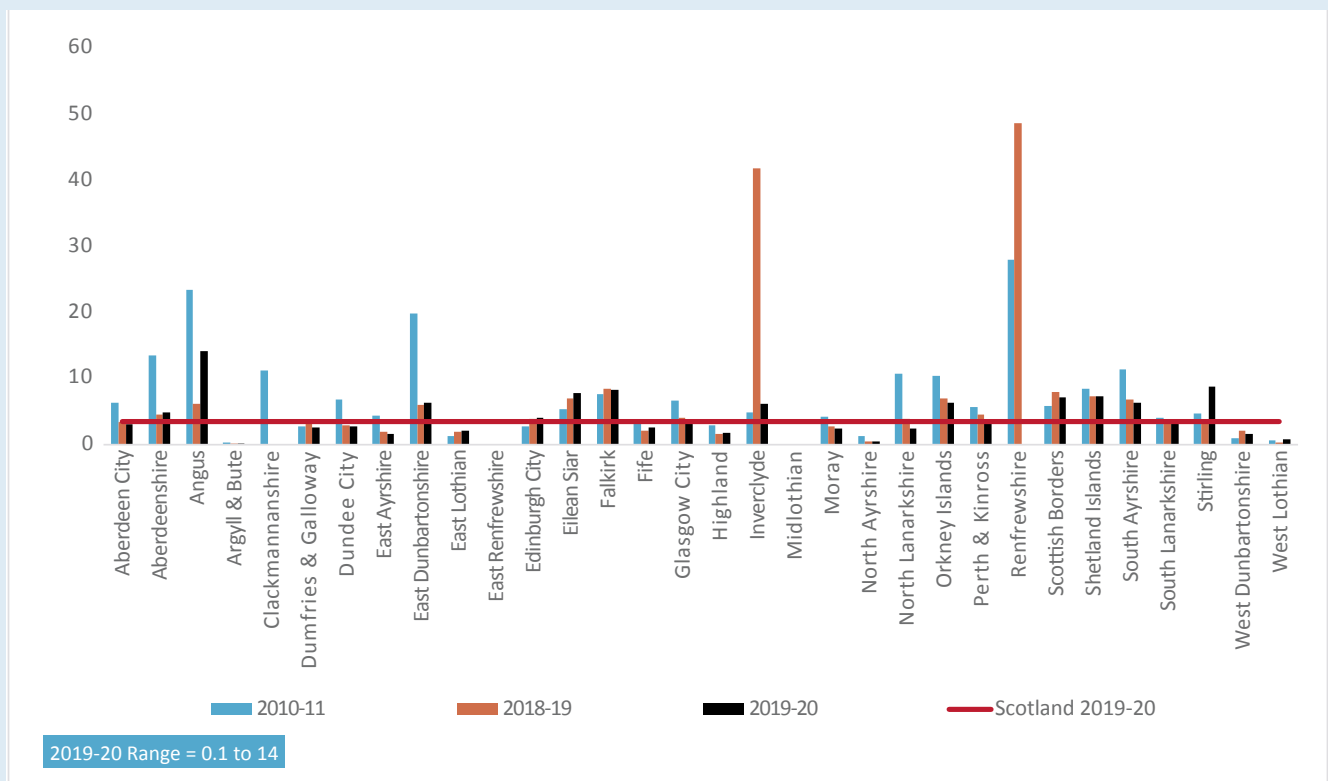
2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2019-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
£5.2	£4.3	£4.3	£3.9	£3.9	£3.5	£3.8	£3.9	£3.8	£3.5	£10.1	190.8%	93.4%

Source: council supplied expenditure and visitor figures

In 2020/21, museum visit numbers decreased by 68%, (from 12.5 million to 4.0 million) while net expenditure decreased by 8.1%. This had the result of increasing the cost per visit from £3.49 to £10.14, counter to the previous reducing trend.

While the majority of councils reported significant reductions in museum visit numbers during 2020/21 as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, a small number of councils saw their visit numbers increase due to the growth in virtual visitors. Similarly, just under a fifth of councils saw their net expenditure increase during 2020/21, counter to the national trend.

Fig 75: Cost of museums per visit - pre COVID-19



Source: council supplied expenditure and visitor figures

Note: Missing values for Clackmannanshire, East Renfrewshire and Midlothian reflect no council provided museum service



Local Variation – Cost of museums per visit

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £10.10; council range: £0.06 - £1242 (£0.06 - £348 excluding outliers). Widening variation in the most recent year, and not systematically related to deprivation, geography or authority size.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +190.8%; councils: 21 councils increased and 6 decreased (range: -80.3% to +8755.8%). Visits: 4 councils increased, 23 decreased (range: -100% to +172%); Expenditure: 6 councils increased, 25 decreased (range: -100% to +67%)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +93.4%; councils: 18 councils increased and 9 decreased (range: -81.6% to + 7645.2%)



Fig 76: Change in expenditure on museums between 2019/20 and 2020/21 (%)

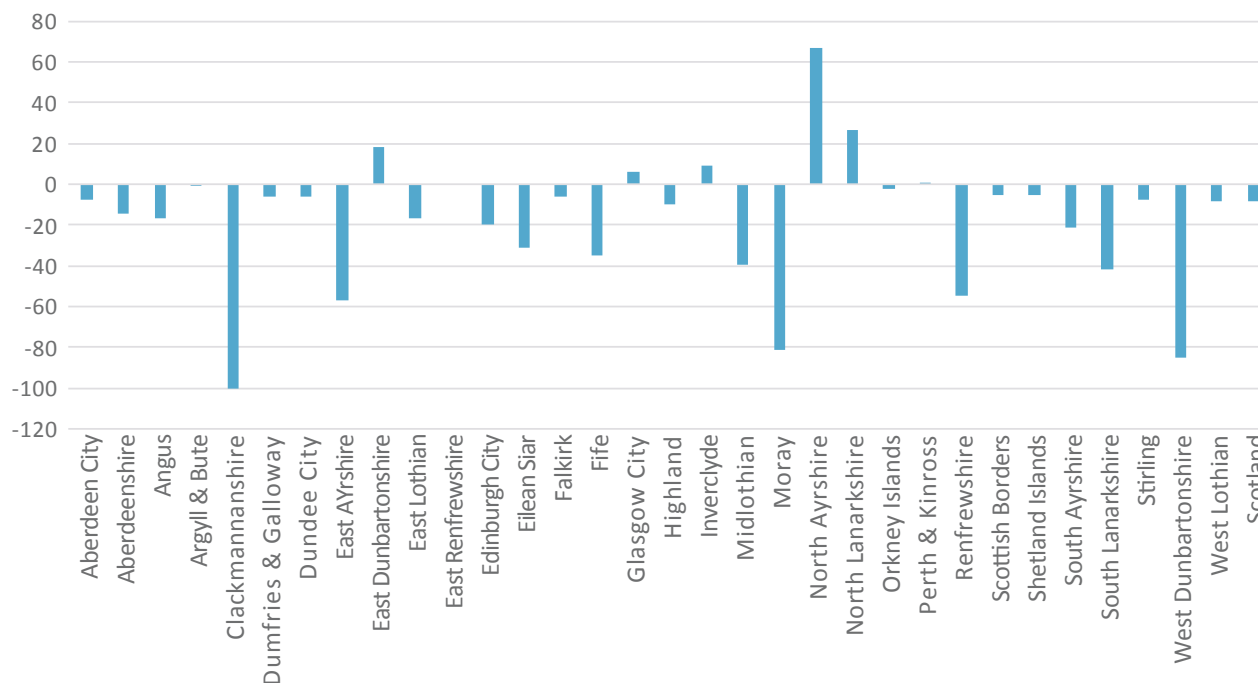
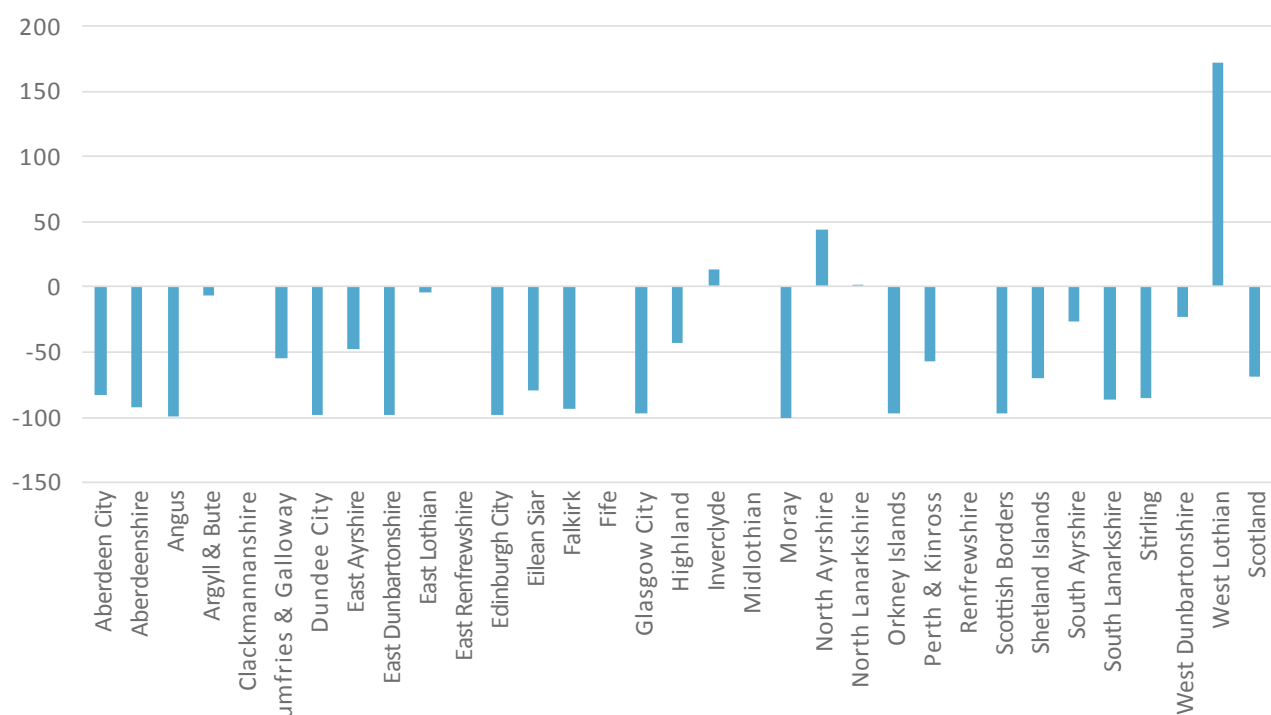


Fig 77: Change in visit numbers at museums between 2019/20 and 2020/21 (%)





Parks and open spaces

Spend on parks and open spaces is reflected as spend per 1,000 population. Over the 11-year period from 2010/11 to 2020/21 spend has reduced in real terms by 41.0%, from £32,377 to £19,112. There has been a year on year reduction across the period, including a 10.9% reduction in 2020/21

While average costs have reduced by 41.0%, the range in movement across councils is -86% to +16%, with three councils reporting increasing costs counter to the national trend.

Table 37: Cost of parks and open spaces per 1,000 population

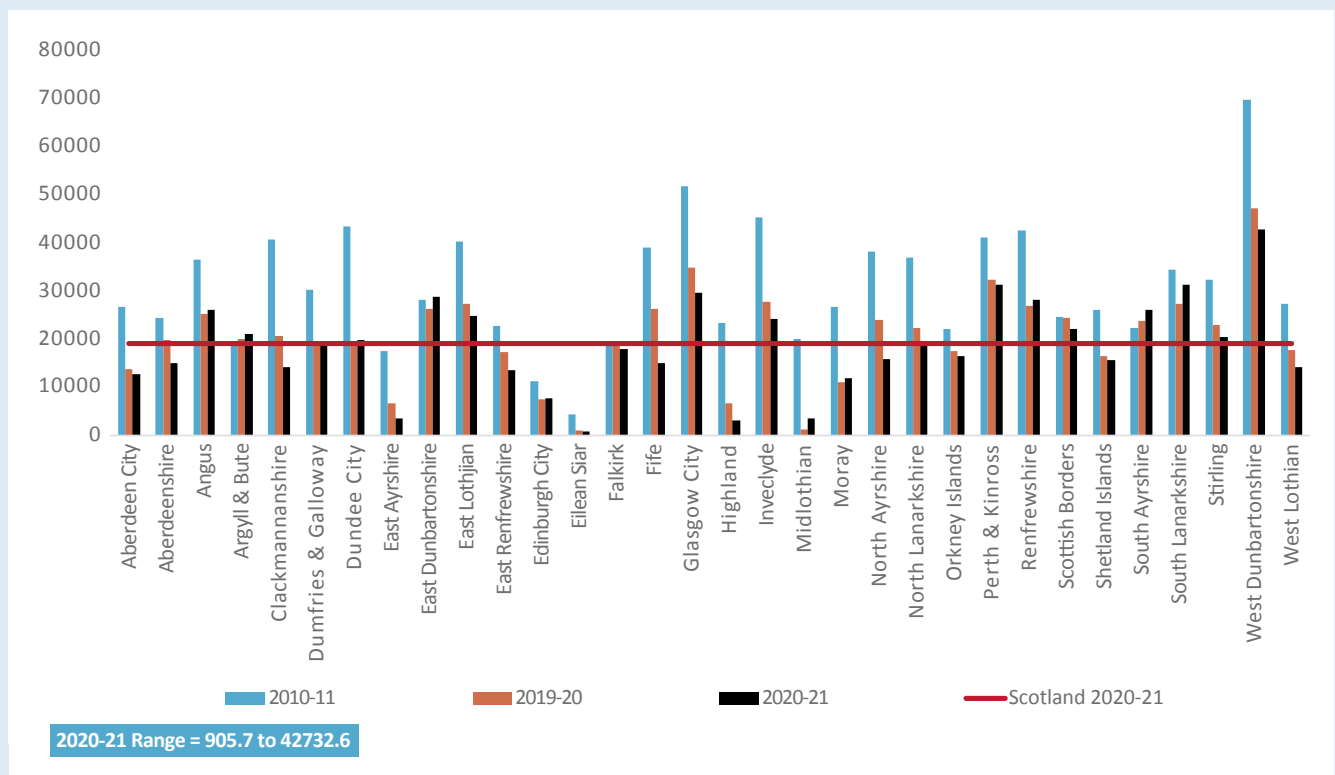
2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
32,377	29,866	28,530	27,460	27,275	25,240	23,600	22,063	21,998	21,453	19,112	-10.9%	-41.0%

In 2020/21 the average cost of parks and open spaces was £19,112, ranging from £906 - £42,733 with variation across councils narrowing since the base year. In previous years, councils with higher levels of deprivation spent significantly more on parks and green spaces. However, due to a sharper reduction in spend in more deprived authorities (including during 2020/21) this is no longer the case. Costs have reduced by 49% in the most deprived councils compared to 30% in the least deprived councils since 2010/11, and by 15% compared to 6% in 2020/21.

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

- *Local political and strategic priority given to the role of culture and leisure in supporting improvement in wider outcomes e.g. health and wellbeing, tackling inequality, economic development, community empowerment*
- *Scale of provision and level of service*
- *Digital channel shift*
- *Service delivery model and balance between in house and arm's length/trust delivery*
- *Service structure and integration with other services*
- *Staffing composition, level and roles*
- *Level of volunteering, community involvement and asset transfer*
- *Income generation capacity*
- *Asset management and co-location/multi-use venues*

Fig 78: Costs of parks and open spaces per 1,000 population (£)



Source: Mid-year population estimates, National Records Scotland (NRS); council supplied expenditure figures



Local Variation – Cost of parks and open spaces per 1,000 population

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £19,112.30; council range: £905.66 - £42,732.64 (outlier); Narrowing variation on previous year. Costs are higher in the most deprived councils compared to least deprived councils (£19,535 compared to £17,651, no longer statistically significant).

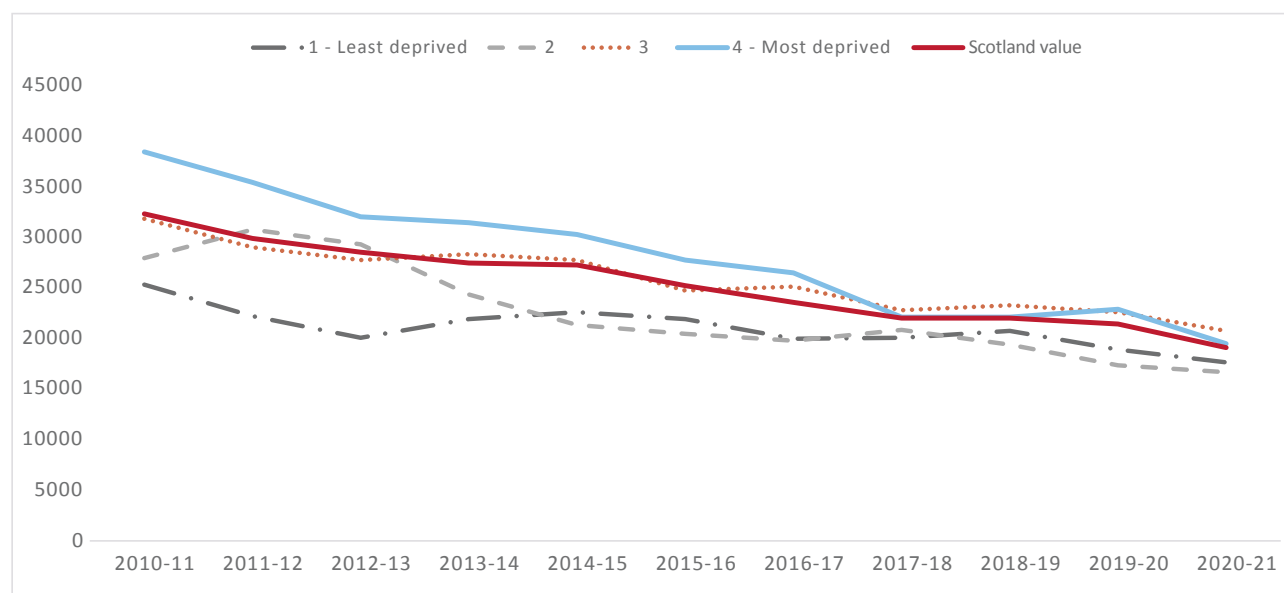
Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -10.9%; councils: 10 increased and 22 decreased (range: -53.2% to +175.1%)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -41%; councils: 3 increased and 29 decreased (range: -86.4% to +16.5%)



Fig 79: Costs of parks and open spaces per 1,000 population (£) by family group - deprivation



Satisfaction with culture and leisure services

The publication of Scottish Household Survey satisfaction data at council level has been delayed this year due to COVID related changes which were required to be introduced to the standard survey methodology in 2020. This change in methodology has introduced comparability issues in relation to data from previous years which will need to be addressed in future publications. Satisfaction data for 2020/21 is therefore not currently available for inclusion in the LGBF.

Historic data shows that satisfaction levels for all areas of culture and leisure remain high at around 70% or above. All areas have, however, experienced declining satisfaction between 2010/11 and 2019/20, except parks and green spaces. While this is a consistent picture across most authorities, a small number of authorities have experienced increasing satisfaction levels during this period. In 2019/20, national satisfaction rates for libraries, museums and parks have all improved, while leisure continues to show a small decline. Significant local variation exists beneath each of these national trends.

Table 38: Percentage of adults satisfied with culture and leisure services

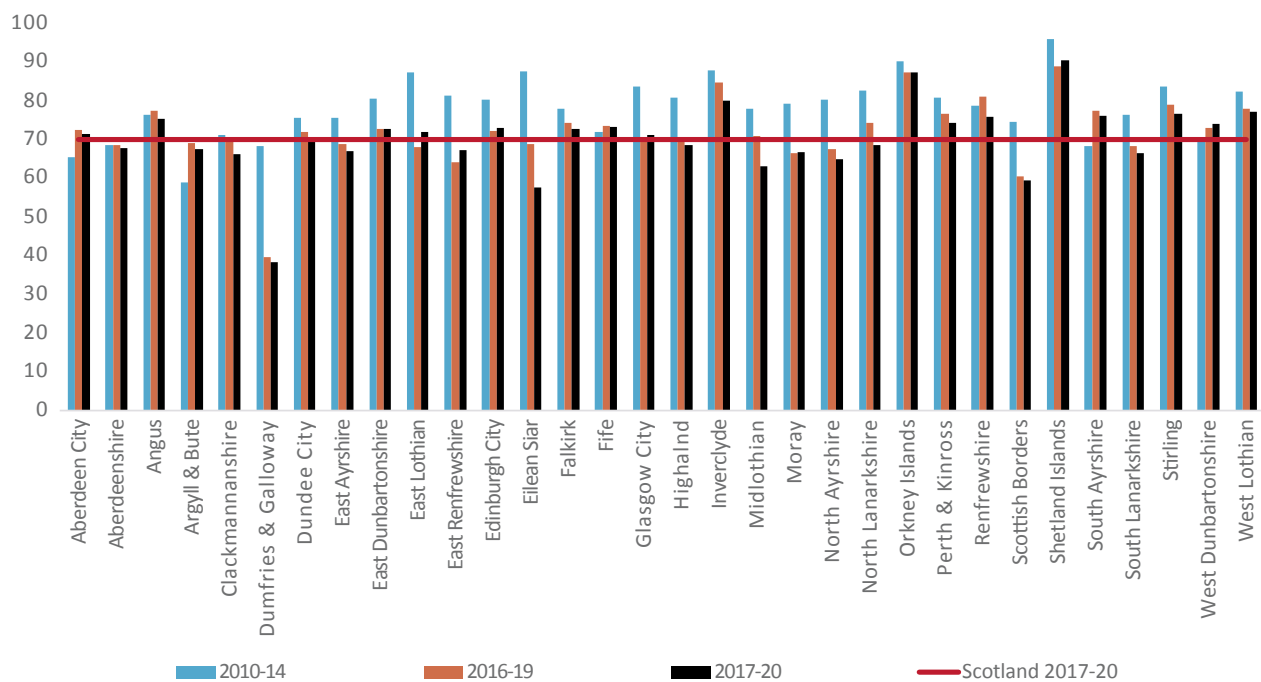
	2010-11	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2018-19 to 2019-20	Value Change 2010-11 to 2019-20
Libraries	83.5	83.0	81.0	77.0	74.0	73.0	72.0	72.1	73.0	dna	0.9	-10.5
Parks and Open Spaces	83.1	86.0	86.0	86.0	85.0	87.0	85.0	82.5	83.0	dna	0.5	-0.1
Museums and Galleries	75.5	78.0	76.0	75.0	71.0	70.0	69.0	68.9	70.0	dna	1.1	-5.5
Leisure Facilities	74.6	80.0	78.0	76.0	73.0	73.0	72.0	69.3	69.0	dna	-0.3	-5.6



As with satisfaction with local schools, to boost sample sizes 3-year rolled averages have been used to ensure the required level of precision at local levels. From 2018/19, questions used in the LGBF have also been included in the Scottish Surveys Core Questions (SSCQ) which provides a boosted sample size. The data used represents satisfaction for the public at large rather than for service users. It should be noted that satisfaction rates for service users are consistently higher than those reported by the general population, but the smaller sample sizes available for service users mean it is not possible to present this data with any level of confidence.

For all culture and leisure services, satisfaction levels vary considerably across councils and this variation has been widening. In leisure, satisfaction rates range from 38% to 90%; in libraries, it is 49% - 92%; for museums, 43% - 90%; and finally, for parks the range is 37% - 91% (71%-91% excluding Eilean Siar as an outlier). There are no systematic effects of deprivation, sparsity or council size on satisfaction levels in relation to culture and leisure services.

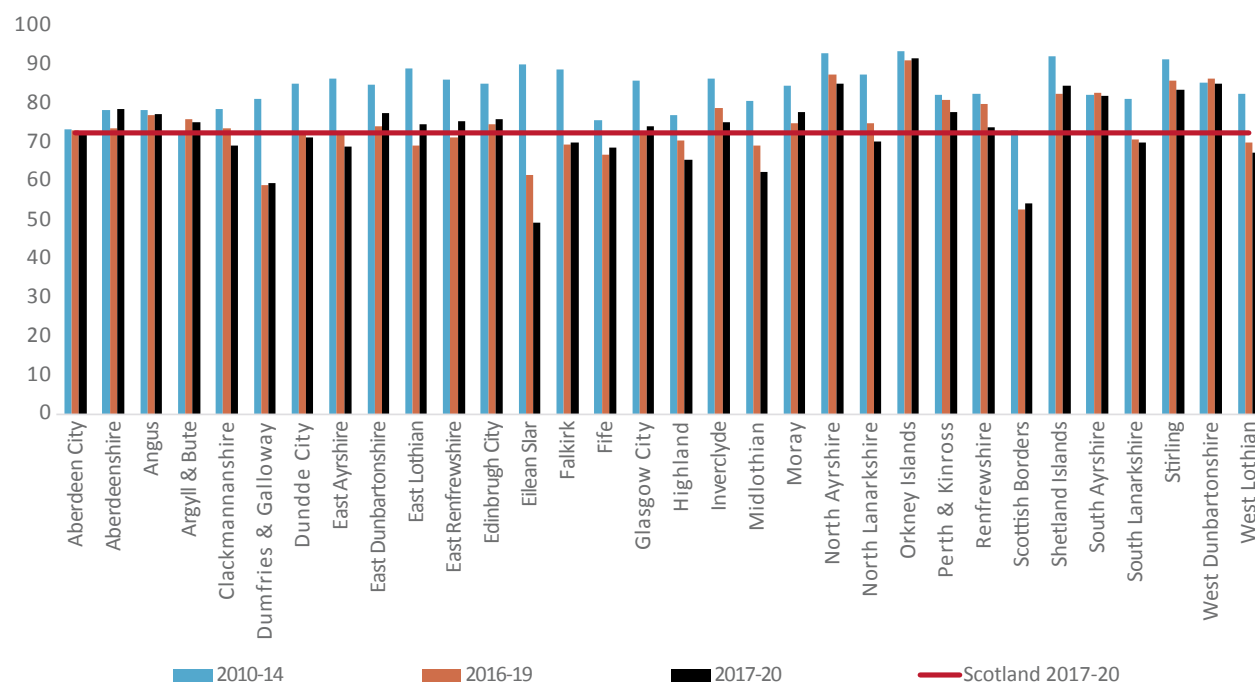
Fig 80: Percentage of adults satisfied with leisure facilities



2017-20 Range = 38.3 to 90.6

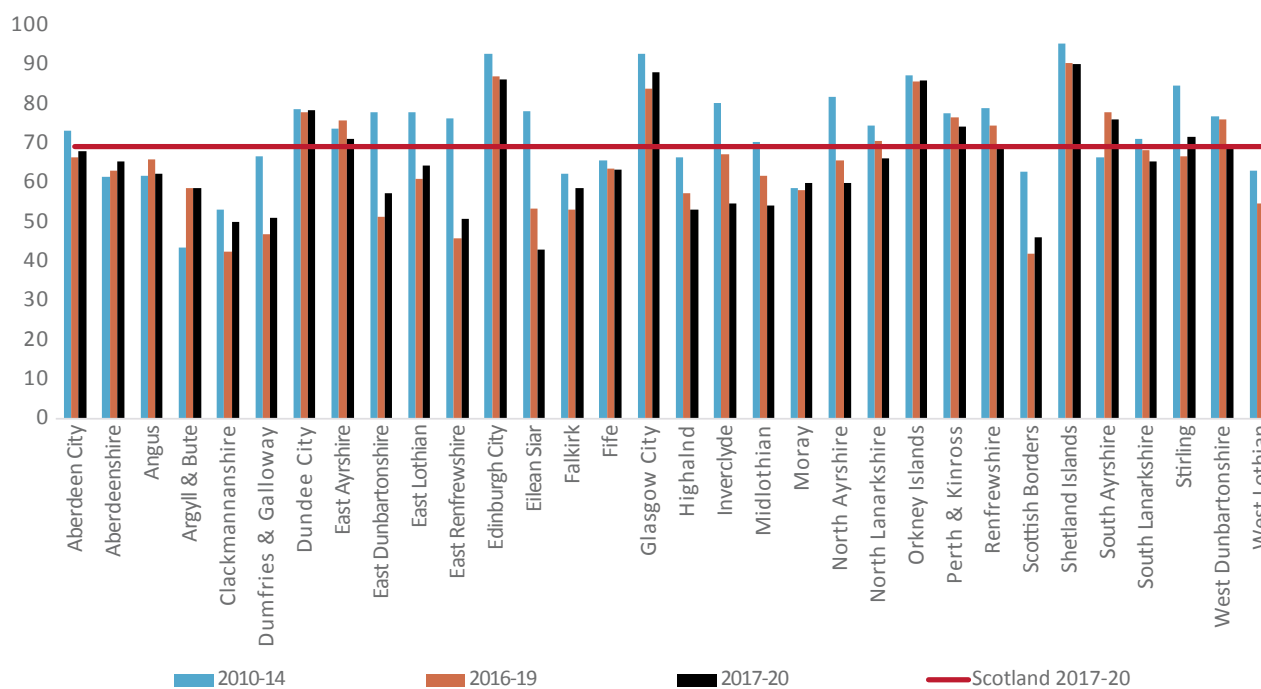


Fig 81: Percentage of adults satisfied with libraries



2017-20 Range = 49.2 to 91.7

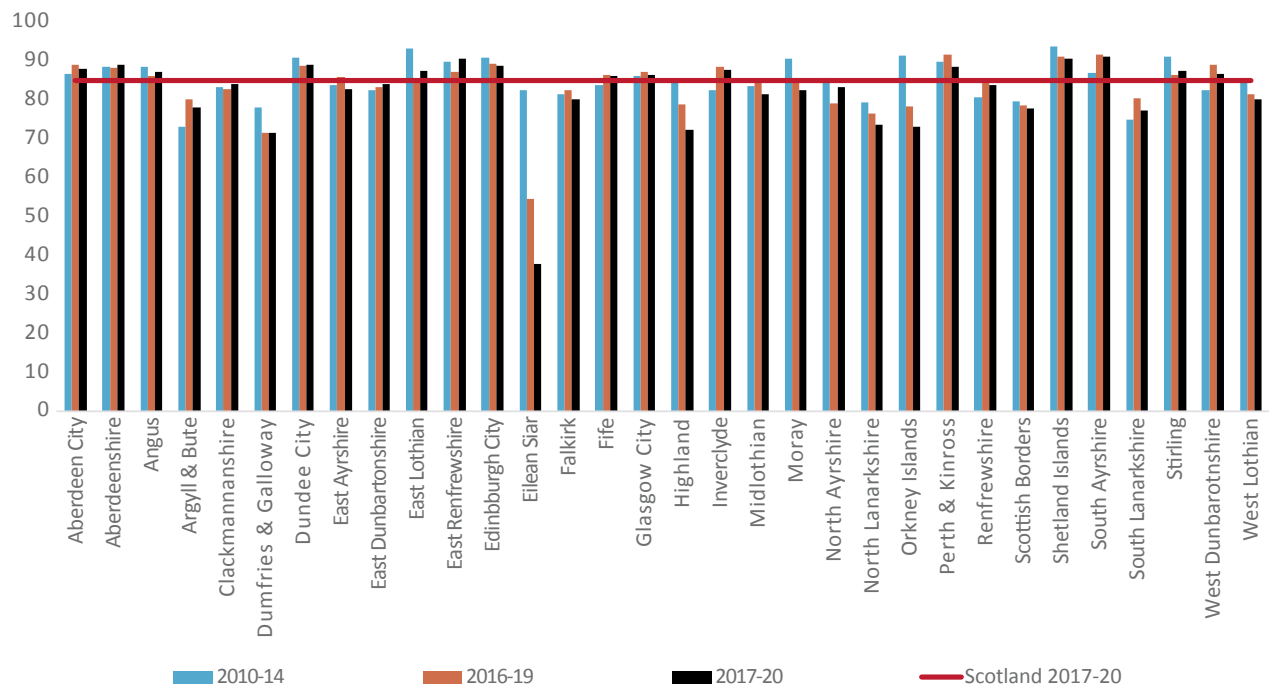
Fig 82: Percentage of adults satisfied with museums and galleries



2017-20 Range = 42.9 to 90.2



Fig 83: Percentage of adults satisfied with parks and open spaces



2017-20 Range = 37.8 to 91

Source: Scottish Household Survey

A full-page photograph showing a worker in an orange and blue uniform operating a mechanical device to empty a large grey wheeled trash bin. The worker's hands are visible, one on a control panel with several buttons and the other near the bin's opening. The machine is made of metal and has yellow safety markings. The bin is on a dark asphalt surface.

Environmental Services



Environmental services are an area of significant spend for local authorities, and include waste management, street cleaning, roads services, trading standards and environmental health. These areas have seen some of the largest budget reductions in recent years, with overall gross spend on environmental services reducing by 16% since 2010/11 (range: -39% to +7%) and expenditure on roads services reducing by 28% (range: -79% to +215%).

Against this reduction in expenditure, councils face growing challenges in maintaining or improving performance levels in relation to recycling, street cleanliness, roads condition and satisfaction. The financial pressures created by the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to exacerbate these challenges. Local authorities reported more waste produced from households than normal, as lockdowns kept families at home, coupled with an increase in fly tipping responses. Additionally, the impact of lockdown on roads services has resulted in a reduction in planned work and a reliance on reactive repairs of defects to keep road networks safe, and this will inevitably lead to a backlog of repair work and a reduction in overall network condition and satisfaction. Considerable demands have been placed on regulatory services (environment health and trading standards) to enforce COVID-19 public health measures and meet the demand for business support. The initial impacts of these COVID related pressures can be observed within the LGBF 2020/21 data outlined below, and it will be vital to monitor these areas closely in the coming period to understand the medium to longer-term impacts.

Waste management

In examining the cost of waste management services across councils we use a measure of the net cost of waste collection and disposal per premise. As this measure was introduced in 2012/13, only nine years of data is presented here.

Net costs are used in recognition of the increased efforts of councils to recycle waste which generates additional costs to the service but also an additional revenue stream as recycled waste is sold by councils into recycling markets. It is worth noting that the price for recycle is volatile and influenced by global economic conditions.

Going forward, it will be important to review the impact that the Deposit Return Scheme will have on data for waste services as this is likely to change the baseline quite considerably. For example, glass bottles will no longer be included in recycling rates, and the lost income from glass may also have an impact on service costs.

In 2020/21, the combined net cost of waste disposal and collection was £177, ranging from £103 to £246. Rural authorities continue to spend more compared to urban authorities, although not significantly so (£191 compared to £179).

The combined waste cost reduced by 3.1% between 2012/13 and 2020/21, falling from £182 to £177 per premise. There is a mixed pattern across councils however, with 17 authorities reporting increased costs during this period counter to the national trend. In 2020/21, net costs reduced by 1%, from £179 to £177 per premise. Again, a very mixed picture is evident among councils, with 16 councils reporting increased combined waste costs in the most recent year counter to the national trend. Urban authorities on average were more likely to see costs increase in the most recent year (+1.4%) compared to a 5% average reduction for rural authorities.

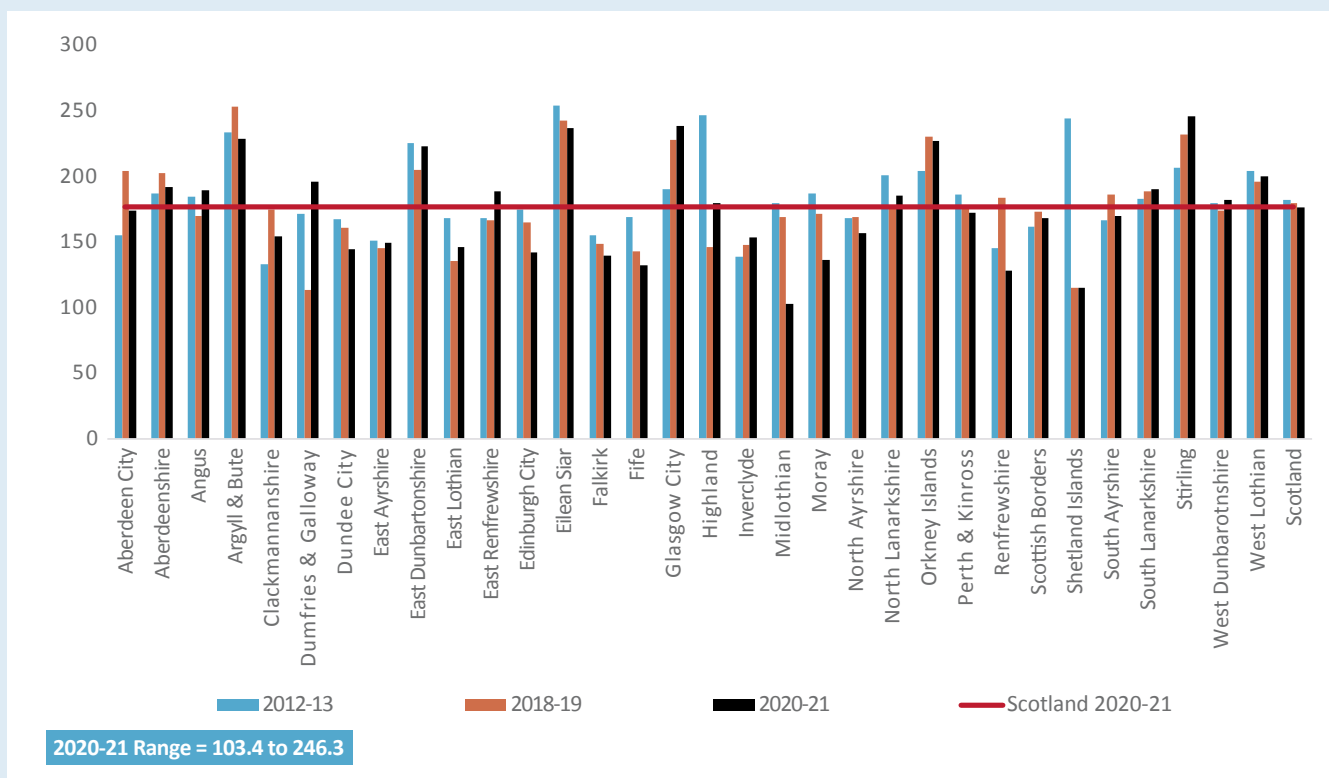
Factors that will be important in interpreting these trends include: the small increase in residential waste in most areas due to lockdowns keeping families at home and increased homeworking; a drop in recycling due to contamination/capacity issues for households and temporary closure of household waste recycling centres due to COVID-19; and additional costs arising from physical distancing service adaptations.



Table 39: Net cost of waste collection and disposal per premise (£)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2012-13 to 2020-21
Collection	£71.28	£72.28	£75.55	£74.39	£73.11	£73.47	£73.41	£73.41	£72.35	-1.5%	1.5%
Disposal	£111.28	£108.64	£106.29	£112.84	£111.88	£112.91	£106.36	£105.76	£104.50	-1.2%	-6.1%
Total	£182.56	£180.92	£181.84	£187.24	£184.99	£186.38	£179.77	£179.18	£176.84	-1.3%	-3.1%

Fig 84: Net cost of waste collection and disposal per premise (£)



Source: council supplied expenditure and number of premises figures



Local Variation – Combined net cost of waste collection and disposal per premise

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £177; council range: £103 - £246. Widened variation in the most recent year. Rural authorities tend to spend more on average (£193 compared to £179, not statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -1.3%; councils: 16 increased and 16 decreased (range -31% to +13%)

Since 2012/13: Scotland: -3.1%; councils: 14 increased and 18 decreased (range -53% to +25%)

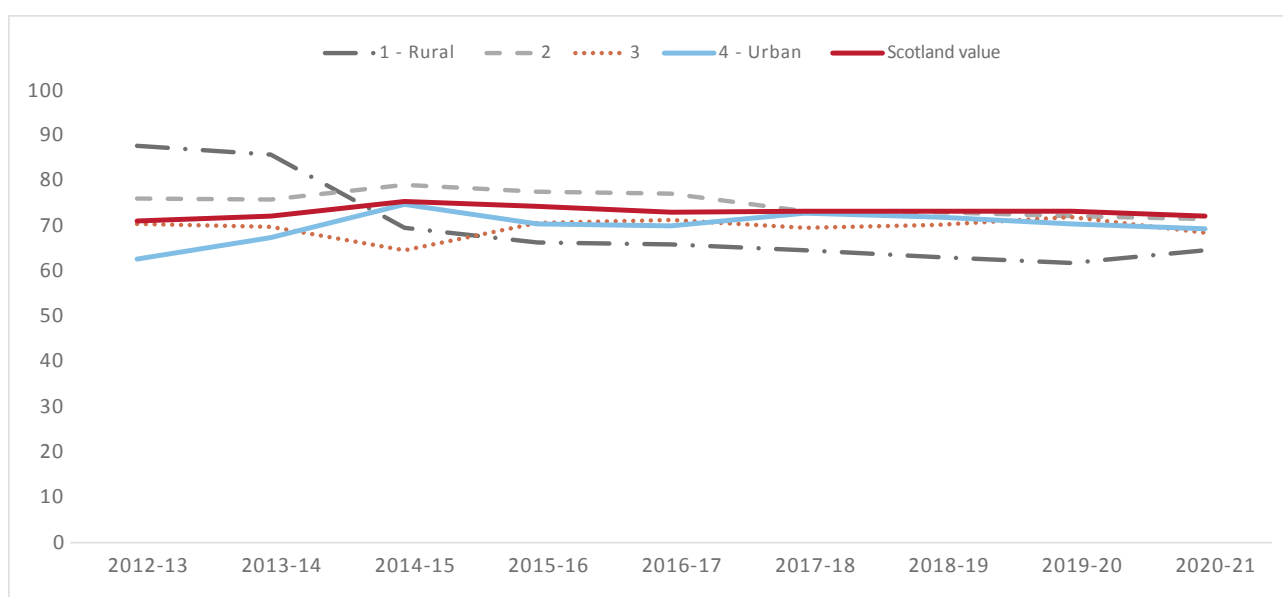


Waste collection

Over the nine-year period from 2012/13 to 2020/21 the Scottish average cost per premise for waste collection increased from £71.28 to £72.35, representing a real terms percentage increase of 1.5%. While the number of premises increased by 6.6% during this period, total spend increased by 7.3%.

While average costs increased by 1.5% across the period, the range in movement is -64% to +29% (excluding outliers), with 17 councils reporting reducing costs counter to the national trend. Rural authorities have on average seen the largest decrease in costs during this period, falling from £88 per premise to £65, a decrease of 26%. Meanwhile urban authorities on average have seen their costs rise by 11% over the same period.

Fig 85: Net cost of waste collection per premise (£) by family group - rurality

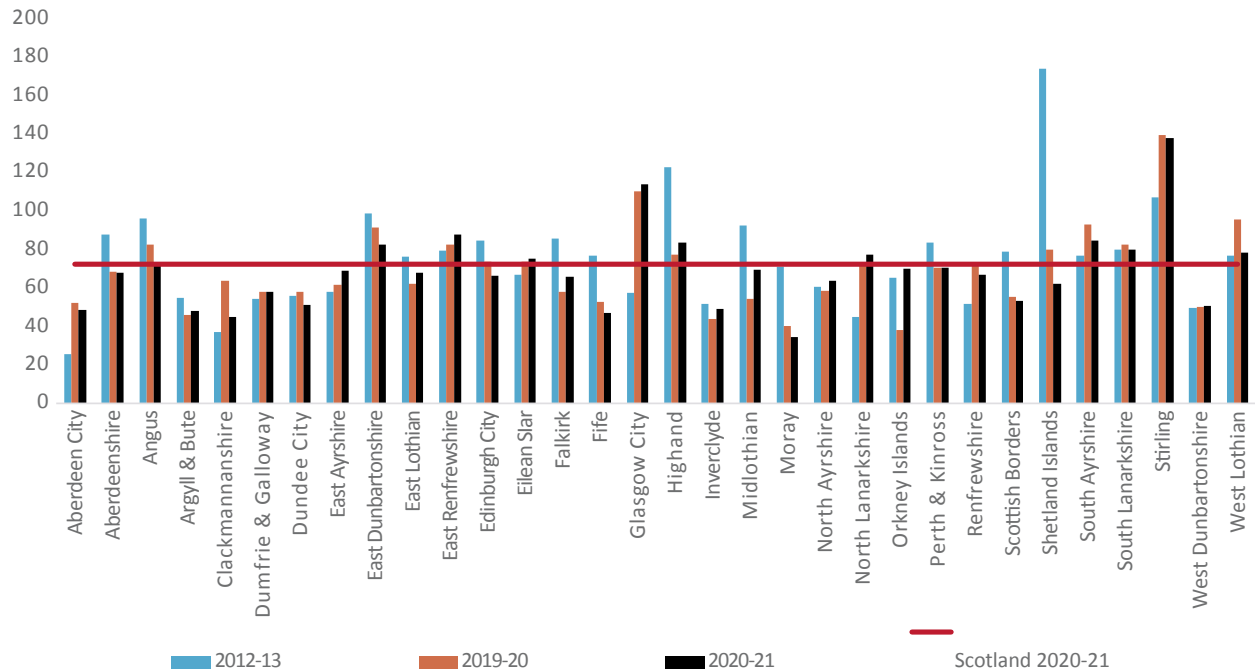


In 2020/21, the net cost of collection reduced by 1.5% to £72.35. There is considerable and widening variation between councils in relation to waste collection costs, ranging from £34.66 to £137.56 (£87.70 excluding outliers). Rural authorities now tend to have lower costs on average following greater reductions since the base year (£65 compared to £69), although the difference is not significant.

The recent cost reduction reflects a 0.7% reduction in net expenditure, and a 0.8% growth in premises served. While the average cost reduced slightly, there was significant variation between councils with movement ranging from a 28.9% reduction in costs to an 83% increase. 15 authorities reported increased costs in 2020/21, counter to the national trend.



Fig 86: Net cost of waste collection per premise (£)



Source: council supplied expenditure and number of premises figures



Local Variation – Net cost of waste collection per premise

2020/21 Value

Scotland value: £72.30; council range: £34.66 - £137.56 (£34.66 - £87.70 excluding outliers). Variation widened in most recent year. Following reductions since the base year, costs are lower in rural authorities compared to more urban authorities (£65 compared to £69, not statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21, Scotland: -1.5%; councils: 15 increased and 17 decreased (range: -28.9% to +83%).

Since 2012/13: Scotland: +1.5%; councils: 15 increased and 17 decreased (range: -64.3% to +97.7%) (-64.3% to +29% excluding outliers)

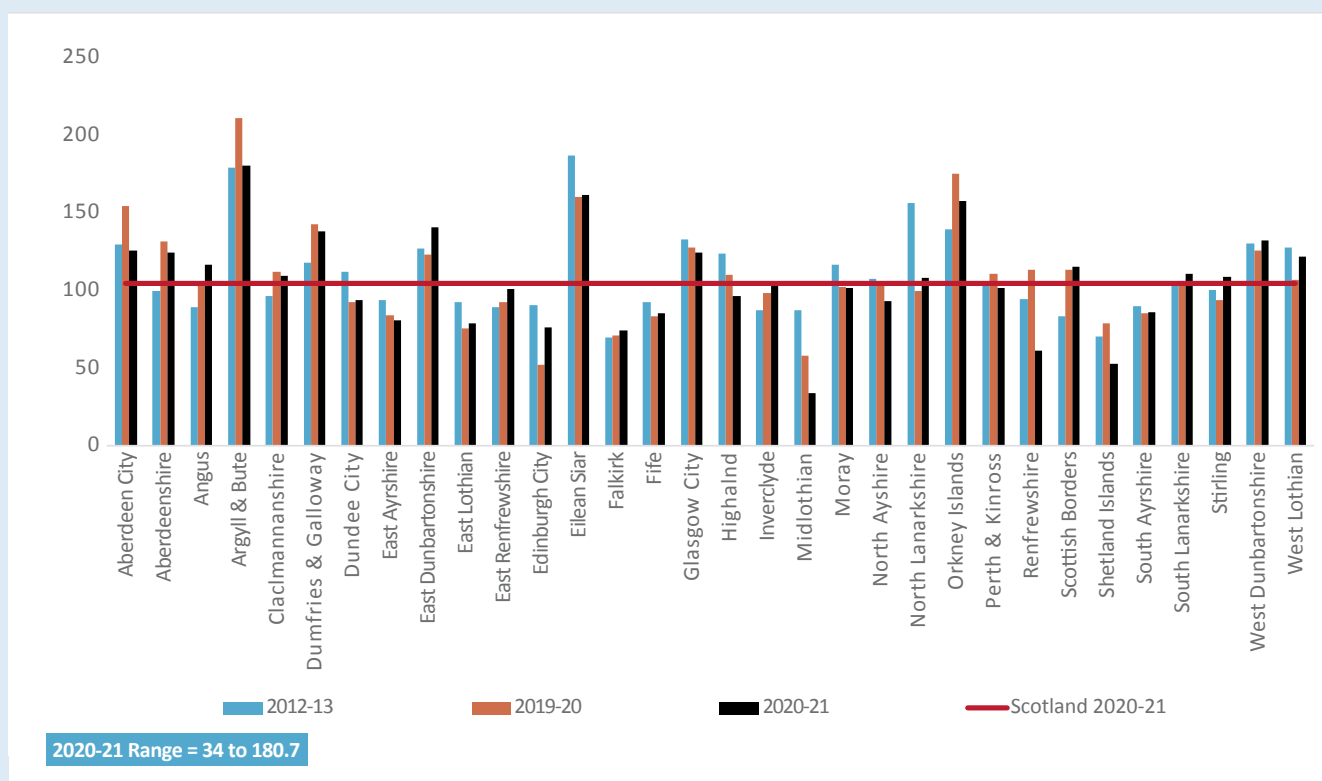
Waste disposal

Over the nine-year period from 2012/13 to 2020/21 the Scottish average net cost of waste disposal has reduced by 6.1%, from £111.28 to £104.50 per premise. This reflects a 0.7% reduction in net expenditure and a 6.6% increase in the number of premises served. The trend has not been consistent across the period, with costs falling in the first two years, before increasing in 2015/16, and then falling back in the past three years. While average costs have reduced by 6.1% since 2012/13, almost half of authorities report increased costs during the period counter to the national trend.



In 2020/21, costs decreased by 1.2%, reflecting a 0.5% reduction in expenditure, and 0.8% growth in premises served. The range in disposal costs across councils was £34.02 to £180.69. Variation has narrowed in the most recent year, with analysis revealing higher costs in rural authorities compared to urban authorities (£128 compared to £109), although this is no longer significant. While average costs reduced by 1.2% in 2020/21, more than half of authorities report an increase in costs during this year.

Fig 87: Net cost of waste disposal per premise (£)



Source: council supplied expenditure and number of premises figures



Local Variation – Net cost of waste collection per premise

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £104.50; council range £34.02 to £180.69 (£53.10 to £161.80 excluding outliers). Narrowing variation in the most recent year. Higher costs in rural authorities compared to more urban authorities (£128 compared to £109, not statistically significant).

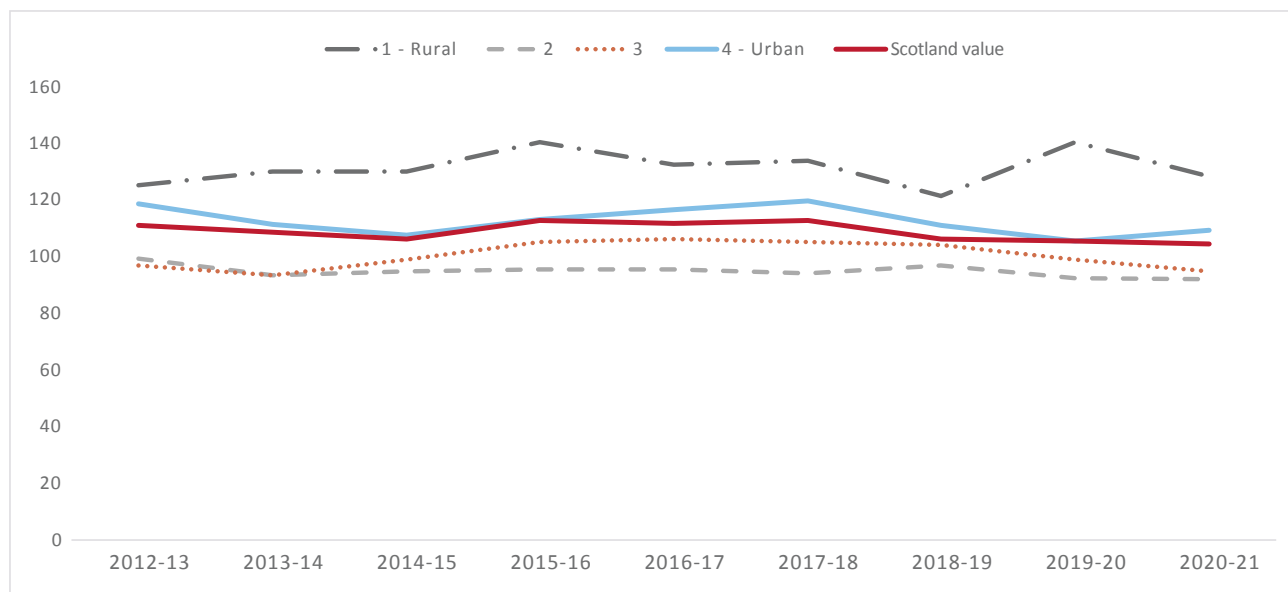
Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -1.2%; councils: 17 councils increased and 15 decreased (range: -45.8% to +46.3%).

Since 2012/13: Scotland -6.1%; councils: 14 increased and 18 decreased (range: -61.1% to +38.2%).



Fig 88: Net cost of waste disposal per premise (£) by family group - rurality



Recycling

Over recent years councils have put greater emphasis on the recycling of waste in compliance with Scotland's Making Things Last strategy (2016) to achieve Scotland's target to recycle 70% of all waste by 2025.³⁷ There has also been raised awareness of environmental factors from both producers and consumers, including a greater focus on reducing unnecessary waste packaging which has resulted in less waste in the system overall.

From 2014/15, the recycling rate is calculated on a different basis from that used in previous years and so is not directly comparable. It is useful to note that for individual authorities, the new SEPA recycling definition may result in a slightly lower recycling rate than the previous definition. Prior to 2014, household waste composted that did not reach the quality standards set by PAS 100/110 was included in the recycling figures.³⁸

Prior to COVID-19, recycling rates had improved across Scotland from 42.8% in 2014/15 to 44.9% in 2019/20. However, in 2020/21, recycling rates dropped 2.9 percentage points to 42%, the lowest rate since LGBF reporting began. Recycling has likely been impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown and other restrictions, with both the amount of waste recycled and the waste recycling rate being the lowest recorded since 2013.

While the average rate of recycling fell by 2.9 percentage points in 2020/21, the range in movement across councils is -16.9 percentage points to +14.1 percentage points, with 6 authorities reporting an increase in their recycling rate in the most recent year counter to the national trend.

³⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-zero-waste-plan/>

³⁸ <https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/532167/2019-household-waste-commentary.pdf>



Table 40: Percentage of household waste that is recycled

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
38.7	40.1	41.1	42.2	42.8	44.2	45.2	45.6	44.7	44.9	42.0	-2.9	3.3

*Note: Figures from 2010/11 – 2013/14 use the old recycling definition, while figures from 2014/15 to 2019/20 are calculated using the new definition.

The level of variation between councils decreased markedly in 2020/21. While rural authorities still record lower recycling rates on average, they were more likely to show continued improvement in 2020/21; increasing by 3pp, compared to reductions of between 6pp and 14pp for more urban and semi-urban groupings. This has narrowed the gap between rural and urban councils, and there is no longer a statistically significant difference in current rates.

Fig 89: Percentage of total household waste that is recycled by family group - rurality

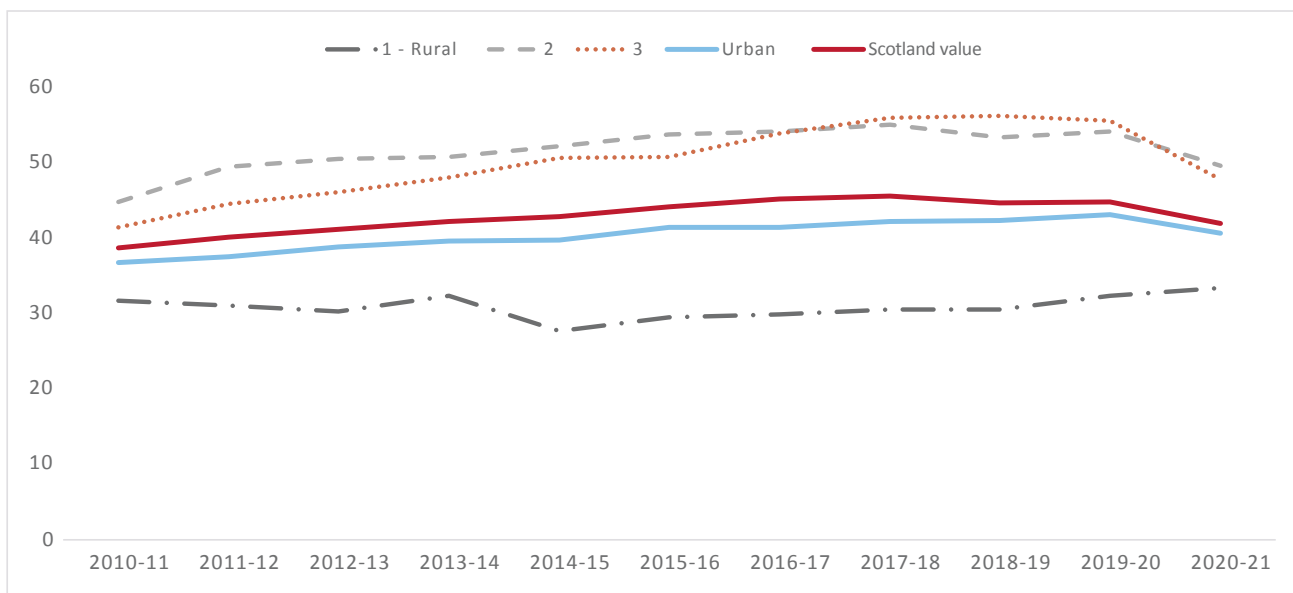
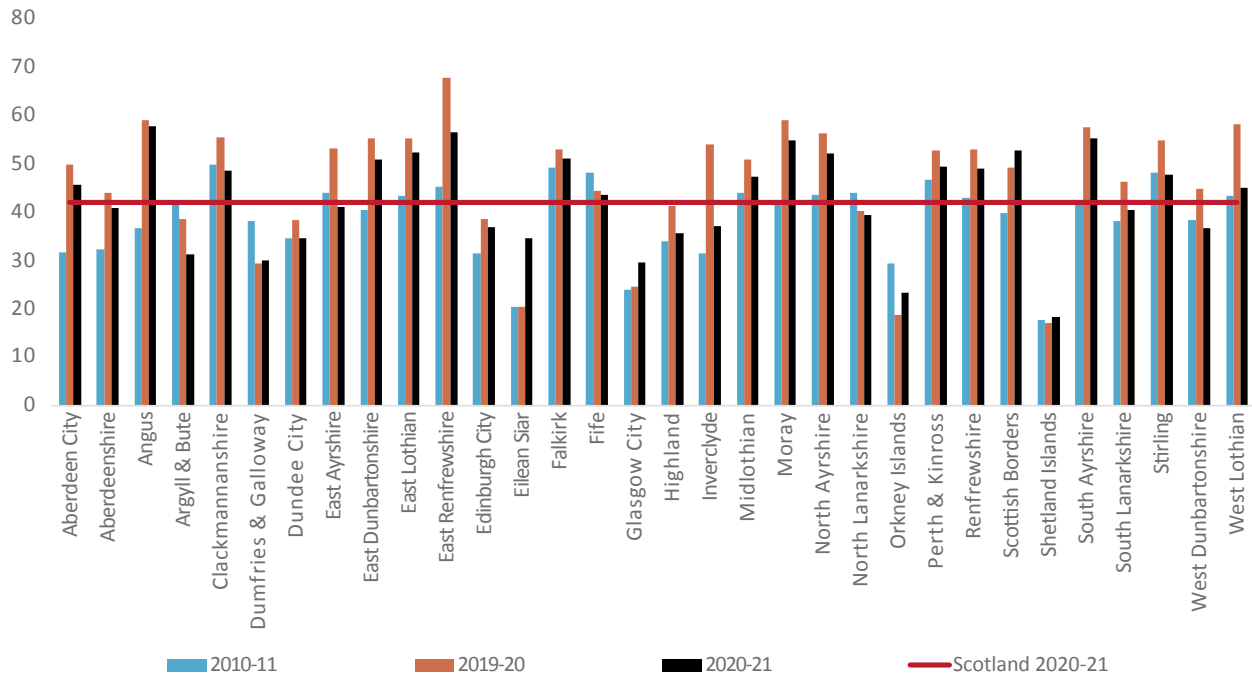




Fig 90: Percentage of total household waste that is recycled



Source: WasteDataFlow, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). Data is calendar year.



Local Variation – The percentage of total household waste arising that is recycled

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 42%; council range 18.4 % - 57.9% (29.6% - 57.9 excluding outliers). Narrowed variation in the most recent year. Rural councils show a lower recycling rate on average compared to urban councils (34.6% compared to 39.4%, not statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -2.9pp; councils: 6 increased and 26 decreased (range: -16.9pp to +14.1pp).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -3.3pp; councils: 23 increased and 9 decreased (range: -10.3pp to +21.2pp).

Percentage of adults satisfied with waste collection

The publication of Scottish Household Survey satisfaction data at council level has been delayed this year due to COVID related changes which were required to be introduced to the standard survey methodology in 2020. This change in methodology has introduced comparability issues in relation to data from previous years which will need to be addressed in future publications. Satisfaction data for 2020/21 is therefore not currently available for inclusion in the LGBF.



Historic data reveals that satisfaction levels with waste collection services in 2019/20 were 8 percentage points lower than they were in 2010/11, falling from 80.9% to 73.0%. While the average satisfaction level has reduced by 8 percentage points since 2010/11, the range in movement is -33pp to +6pp, with eight authorities reporting improved satisfaction levels across this period counter to the national trend.

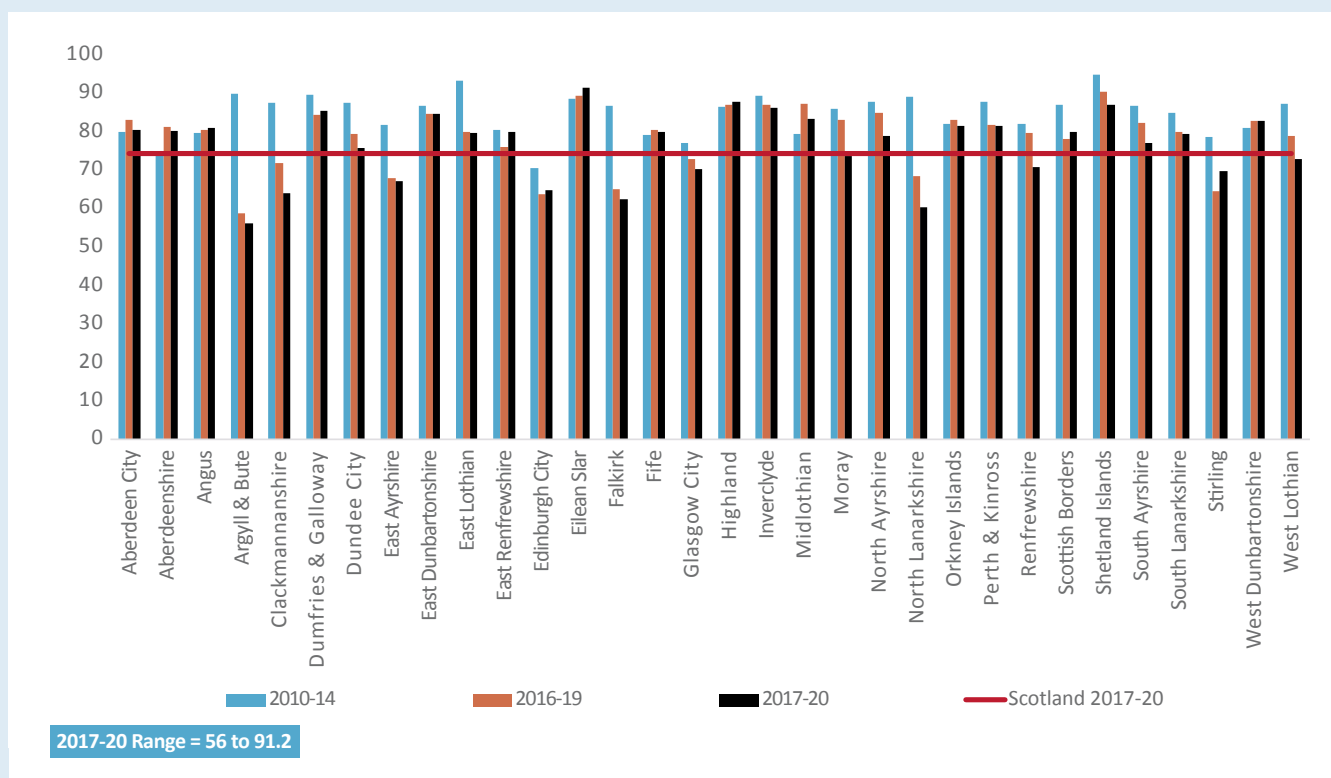
In 2019/20 there was widening variation across councils, with satisfaction rates ranging from 56% to 91% across Scotland. Variation is not systematically related to deprivation, rurality or size of council.

Table 41: Percentage of adults satisfied with refuse collection

2010-11	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2018-19 to 2019-20	Value Change 2010-11 to 2019-20
80.9	83.0	83.0	84.0	82.0	79.0	75.0	74.9	73.0	dna	-1.9	-7.9

As noted previously, the satisfaction data is drawn from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) and while proportionate at Scotland level, there are limitations at local authority level in relation to the very small sample sizes and low confidence levels. To boost sample sizes 3-year rolled averages have been used to ensure the required level of precision at local levels. From 2018/19, questions used in the LGBF have also been included in the Scottish Surveys Core Questions (SSCQ) which provides a boosted sample size.

Fig 91: Percentage of adults satisfied with refuse collection



Source: Scottish Household Survey



Street cleaning

The cleanliness of Scotland's streets remains a priority for councils both in terms of improving the appearance of our streetscapes but also in terms of environmental improvements in the quality of people's lives. The revised Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (Scotland)³⁹ came into force in 2018 and may affect both costs and standards going forward.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on this area. Litter picking services were paused and reduced as a result of restrictions, and as resources were redeployed towards emergency response and critical services. Additional costs arose from physical distancing service adaptations, some of which remain in place currently. The pause in litter picking, alongside the closure of recycling centres and the reported increase in fly tipping will all be important.

Street cleanliness is presented using the Street Cleanliness Score, which is produced by Keep Scotland Beautiful.⁴⁰ This measures the percentage of areas assessed as 'clean' rather than completely litter free sites (considered impractical in areas of high footfall) and allows authorities to tackle litter problem areas to achieve better results.

The Scottish average for the cleanliness score has remained above 90% since the base year, although scores have shown a reducing trend since 2013/14. In 2020/21, 90.1% of streets were assessed as 'clean', a decrease of 1.1 percentage points in the past 12 months. Rates are down by 5.3 percentage points from 95.4% in 2010/11.

The national trend is not however universal. Over the longer term, 4 authorities report improvements in the cleanliness score counter to the national trend. In 2020/21 the picture is even more mixed, with over a third of councils improving counter to trend. Urban and deprived council areas saw the sharpest reduction across the longer period (by between 6pp - 8pp on average, compared to average reductions of 1pp - 2pp for rural/affluent council areas. The urban effect remains pronounced in 2020/21 data, with urban authorities reporting an average 3pp reduction compared to a 1pp reduction in more rural authorities.

Table 42: Percentage of clean streets

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
95.4	96.1	95.8	96.1	93.9	93.4	93.9	92.2	92.8	92.2	90.1	-2.1	-5.3

There is a relatively narrow range of cleanliness scores across Scotland, although the level of variation has widened markedly in the past 12 months. In 2020/21, scores ranged from 81.1% to 100%, with urban and deprived areas reporting significantly lower scores (e.g. 87-89% for urban or deprived areas compared to 93%-95% for rural or affluent areas). This is supported by evidence published by Keep Scotland Beautiful, highlighting a significantly more rapid decline of local environmental quality in the poorest parts of Scotland.⁴¹

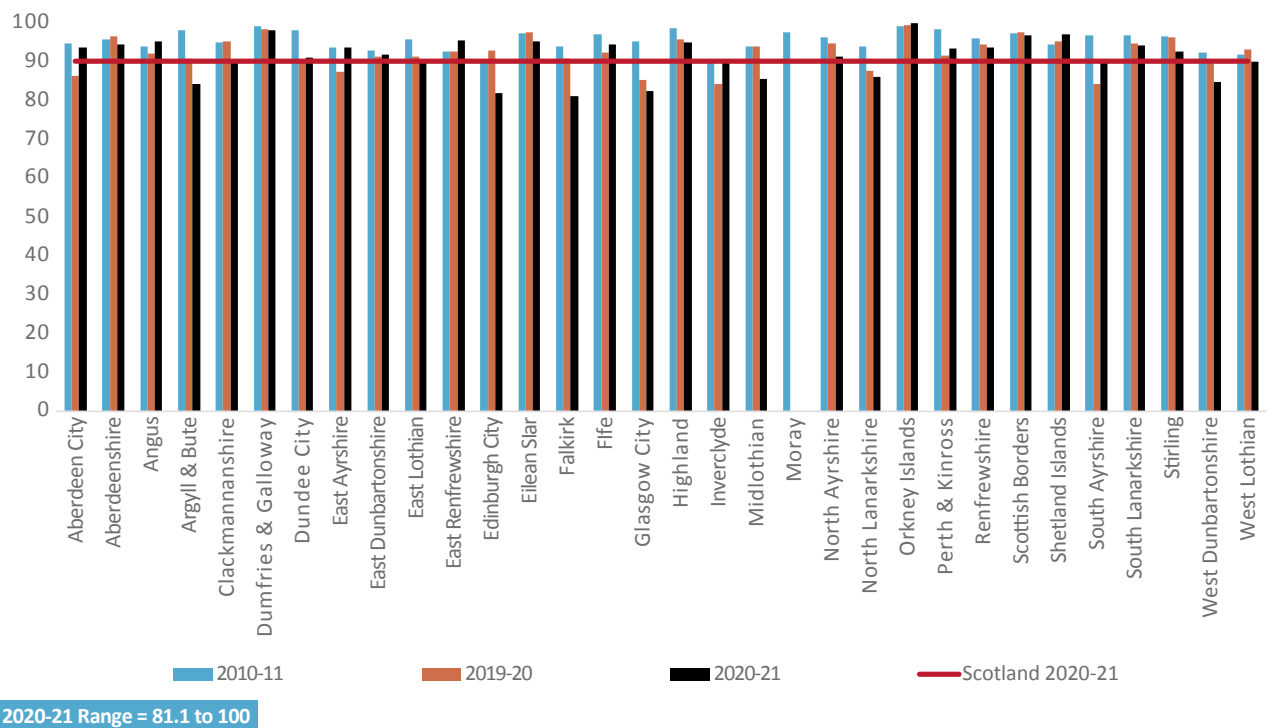
³⁹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/code-practice-litter-refuse-scotland-2018/>

⁴⁰ <http://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/>

⁴¹ <https://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/media/1566897/leq-2020-report-final-041220.pdf>



Fig 92: Cleanliness score (percentage acceptable)



Source: Local Environmental Audit and Management System (LEAMS), Keep Scotland Beautiful Note: Missing values reflect no data returned for that year



Local Variation – Street cleanliness score

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 90.1%; council range: 81% - 100%. Widening variation and is at its widest since the base year. Urban and deprived areas report significantly lower scores compared to rural and more affluent areas. (87% in urban compared to 93% in rural, 89% in deprived areas compared to 95% in more affluent areas)

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -2.1pp; councils: 12 increased and 19 decreased; (range: -11.1pp to +7.4pp). Urban authorities decreased by 3pp, compared to 1pp for more rural authorities, (not statistically significant)

Since 2010/11: Scotland -5.3pp; councils: 4 increased and 27 decreased (range: -13.7pp to +2.9pp). Urban and deprived authorities reduced by between 6pp – 8pp, compared to 1pp-2pp for more rural/affluent authorities, (not statistically significant)



Fig 93: Cleanliness score (percentage acceptable) by family group - rurality

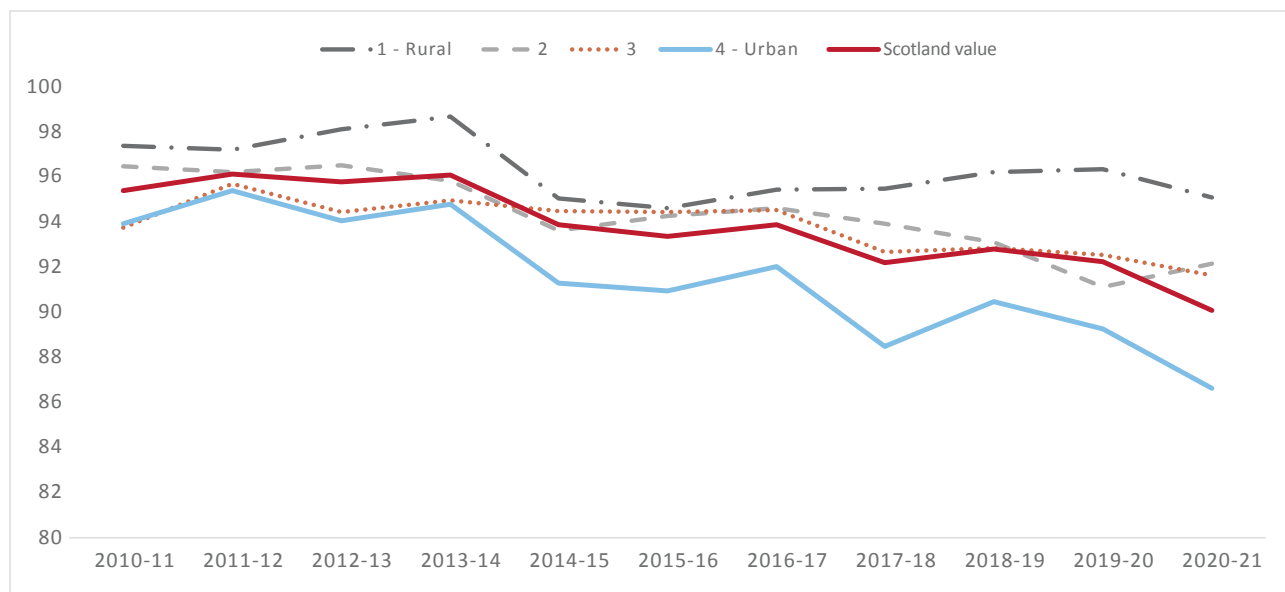
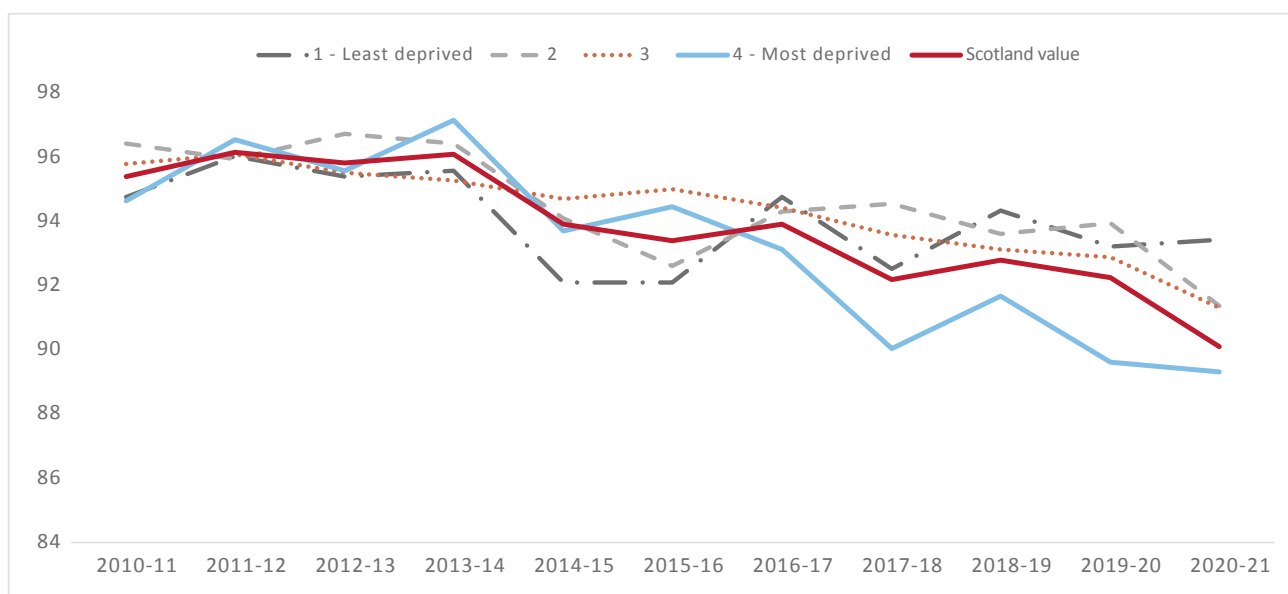


Fig 94: Cleanliness score (percentage acceptable) by family group - deprivation



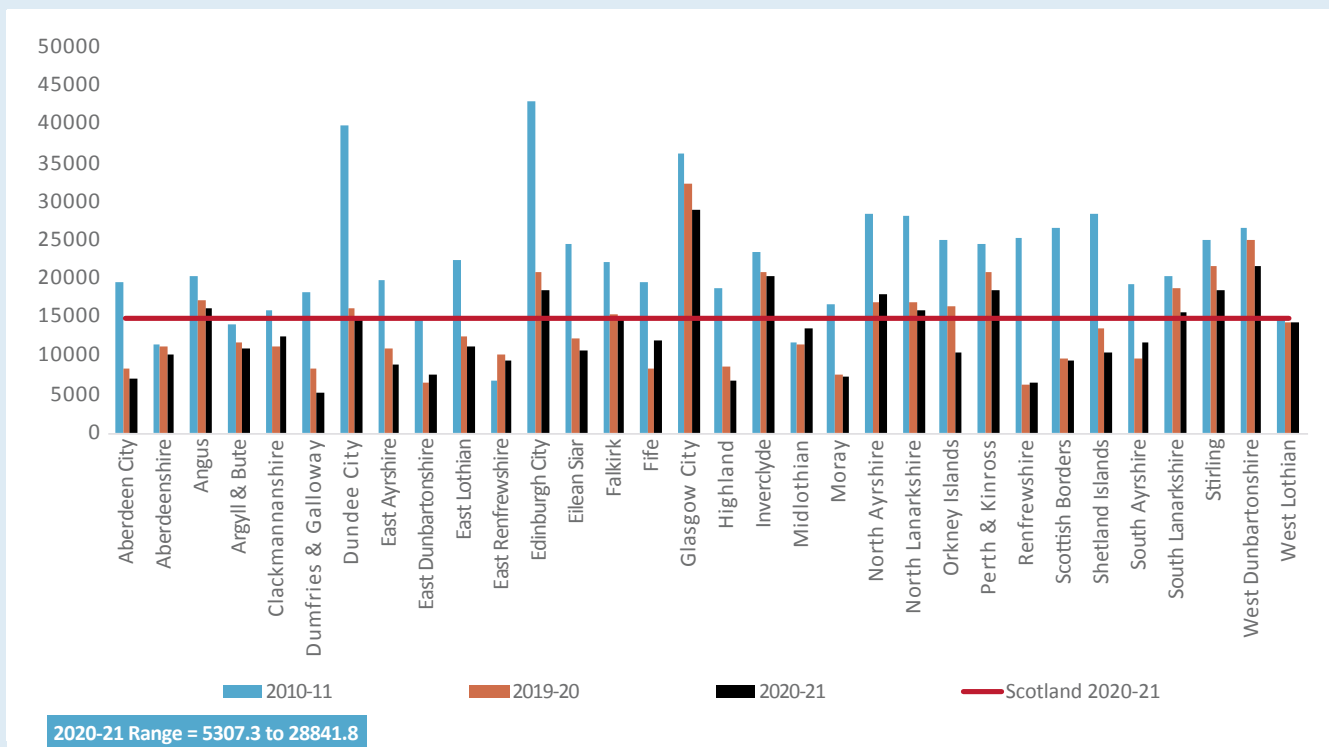
Over the same 11-year period the Scottish average for net cost of street cleaning has reduced by 40.1%, from £24,787 per 1,000 population in 2010/11 to £14,845 in 2020/21. This reflects a year on year reduction in costs, including a 7.1% reduction in the past 12 months. This reducing trend is not true for all councils, however. Two councils report increasing costs since 2010/11, and a quarter of councils report increasing costs and in the most recent year counter to the national trend. Rural authorities on average report sharper reductions in spend in both the long term and in the most recent year.



Table 43: Net cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population (£)

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
24,787	23,838	21,141	19,145	18,431	17,886	16,413	17,207	16,210	15,980	14,845	-7.1%	-40.1%

Fig 95: Net cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population (£)



Source: Mid-year population estimates, National Records Scotland (NRS); council supplied figures



Local Variation – Net cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £14,845; council range: £5307 - £28,842. Narrowing variation in most recent year. Deprived council areas spend more than more affluent councils (£17,386 compared to £11,517, statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -1.2%; councils: 17 increased and 15 decreased (range: -45.8% to +46.3%).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -6.1%; councils: 14 increased and 18 decreased (range: -61.1% to +38.2%).



There is significant but narrowing variation across councils, with street cleaning costs ranging from £5,307 to £28,842 in 2020/21. Urban and deprived authorities tend to report higher costs on average, significantly so for deprived areas. The average difference between rural and urban authorities is £16,149 compared to £9,265; and for most and least deprived authorities it is £17,286 compared to £11,517

Fig 96: Net cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population (£) by family group - deprivation

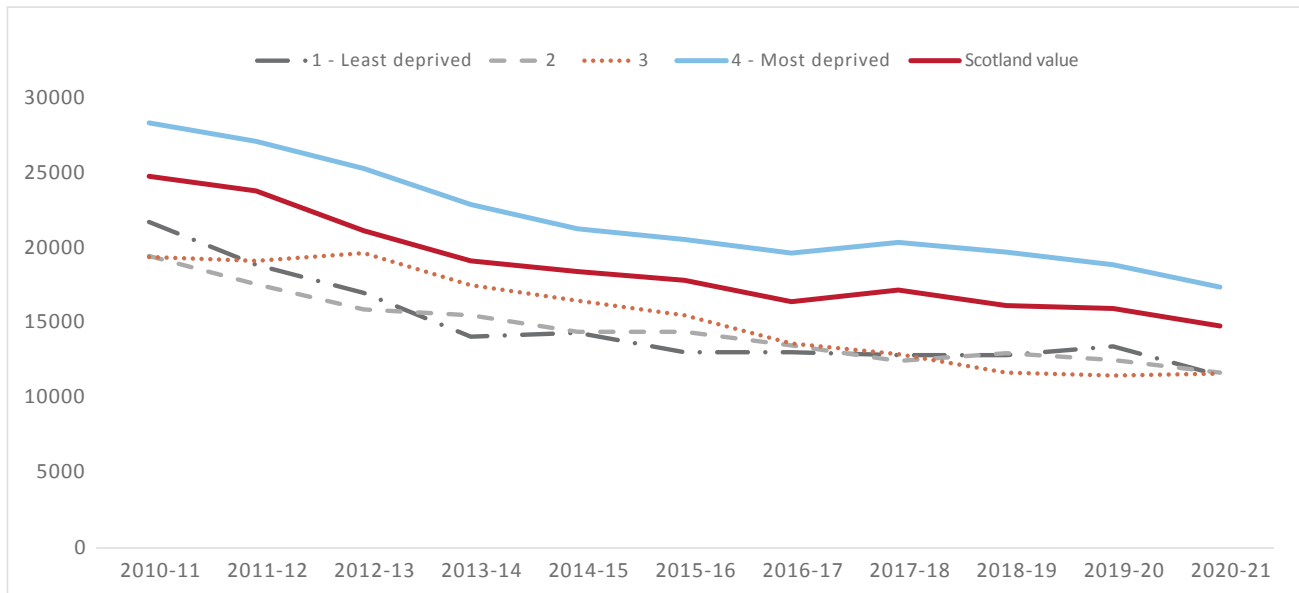
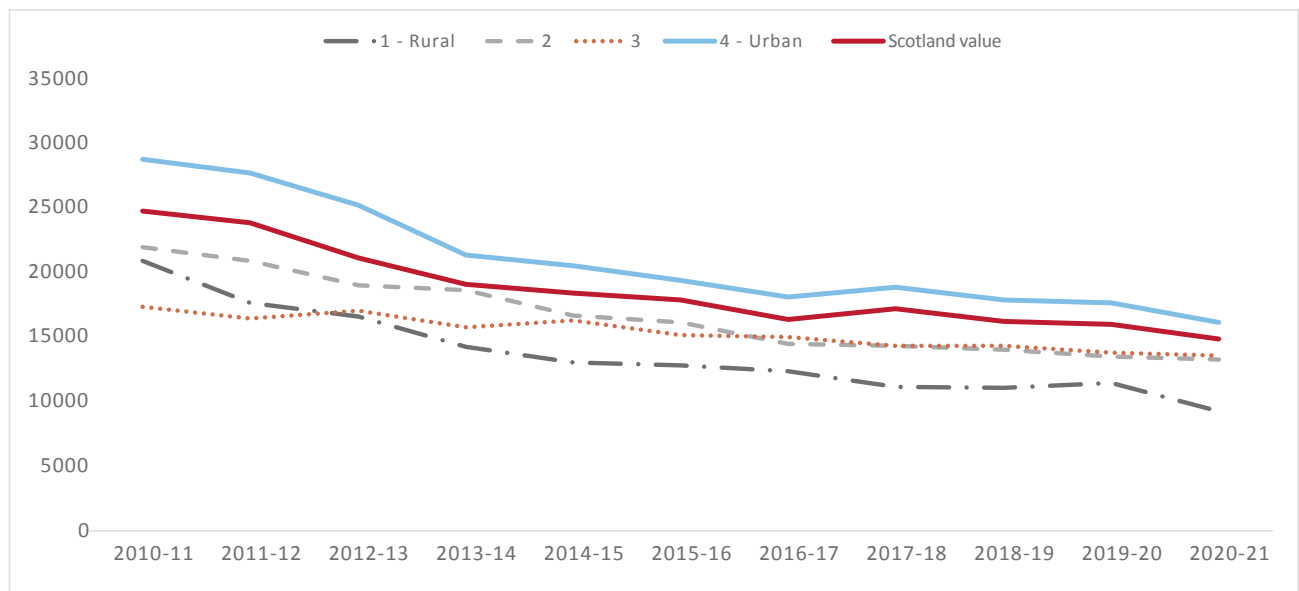


Fig 97: Net cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population (£) by family group - rurality



Percentage of adults satisfied with street cleaning

The publication of Scottish Household Survey satisfaction data at council level has been delayed this year due to COVID related changes which were required to be introduced to the standard survey methodology in 2020. This change in methodology has introduced comparability issues in relation to data from previous



years which will need to be addressed in future publications. Satisfaction data for 2020/21 is therefore not currently available for inclusion in the LGBF.

Historic data reveals that as with other services, satisfaction levels for street collection have experienced a downward trend, reducing from 73.3% to 59.0% between 2010/11 and 2019/20. In the most recent 3 years, the rate of reduction has accelerated with satisfaction levels reducing by eleven percentage points between 2016/17 and 2019/20, including 3.9 percentage points in 2019/20. This declining trend is evident in all authorities except one.

Until 2015-16, it appeared that the substantial efficiencies that have been introduced in delivering this service did not appear to have had a significantly detrimental impact on public satisfaction, indicating the care taken to protect key areas of public concern. The significant recent reductions in satisfaction however indicate a shift in public perceptions in the context of continuing significant reductions in budgets.

Table 44: Percentage of adults satisfied with street cleaning

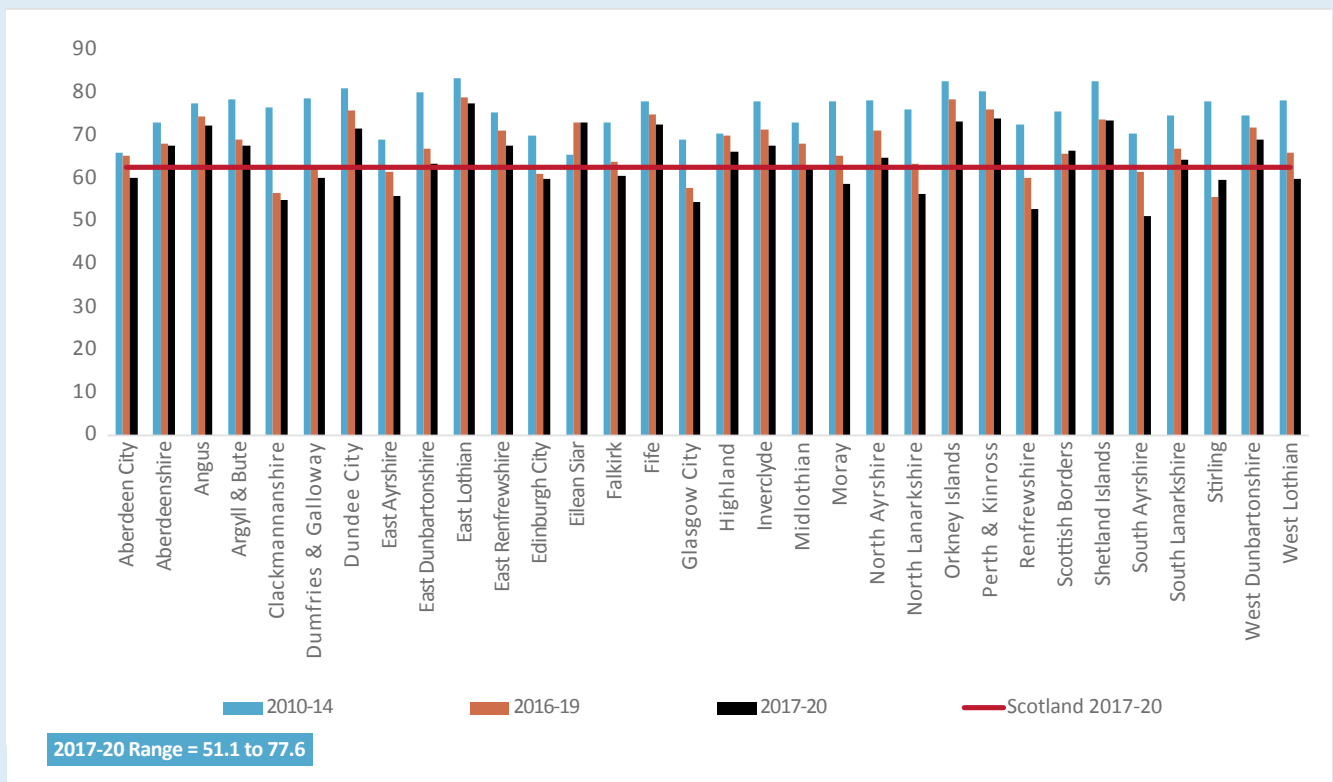
2010-11	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2018-19 to 2019-20	Value Change 2010-11 to 2019-20
73.3	75.0	74.0	74.0	73.0	70.0	66.0	62.9	59.0	dna	-3.9	-14.3

As noted previously, the satisfaction data is drawn from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) and while proportionate at Scotland level, there are limitations at local authority level in relation to the small sample sizes and low confidence levels. To boost sample sizes, 3-year rolled averages have been used to ensure the required level of precision at local levels. From 2018/19, questions used in the LGBF have also been included in the Scottish Surveys Core Questions (SSCQ) which provides a boosted sample size.

There is significant and widening variation in satisfaction levels across Scotland, ranging from 51.1% to 77.6%. Satisfaction levels are significantly higher in the least deprived authorities compared to the most deprived authorities (67% compared to 64%).

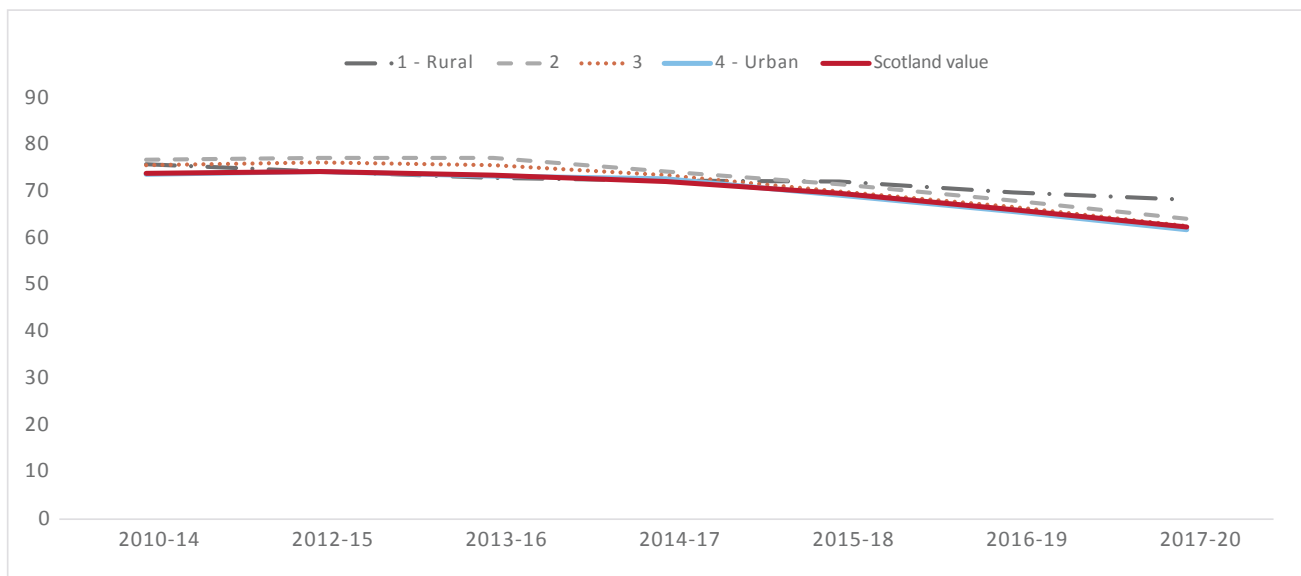


Fig 98: Percentage of adults satisfied with street cleaning



Source: Scottish Household Survey

Fig 99: Percentage of adults satisfied with street cleaning by family group





Roads

The impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on roads services has resulted in a reduction in planned work and a reliance on reactive repairs of defects to keep road networks safe, and this will inevitably lead to a backlog of repair work and a reduction in overall network condition and satisfaction.

Across the period, there have been significant reductions in expenditure on roads (-28%), while the condition has remained largely unchanged. While it is reassuring that conditions have so far remained relatively static, road condition will generally fall in years following budget reductions, following a lack of investment. Continued close monitoring will be essential to assess the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on backlogs and roads conditions combined with these significant recent funding reductions.

Roads costs are represented in this framework using a cost of roads per kilometre measure. This measure includes both revenue and capital expenditure. The condition of the roads network is represented by the percentage of roads in various classes which require maintenance treatment.

For the 11 years for which we have data, the Scottish average cost per kilometre has reduced by 30.2% from £13,850 to £9,667. This includes a cost reduction of 6.6% in 2020/21. There is significant variation beneath the Scotland trend, with five councils reporting an increase in costs since 2010/11, and a quarter reporting an increase in costs in 2020/21. Urban authorities are most likely to have seen their costs increase in the most recent year, with average costs increasing by 19% compared to 24% decrease for the most rural family group.

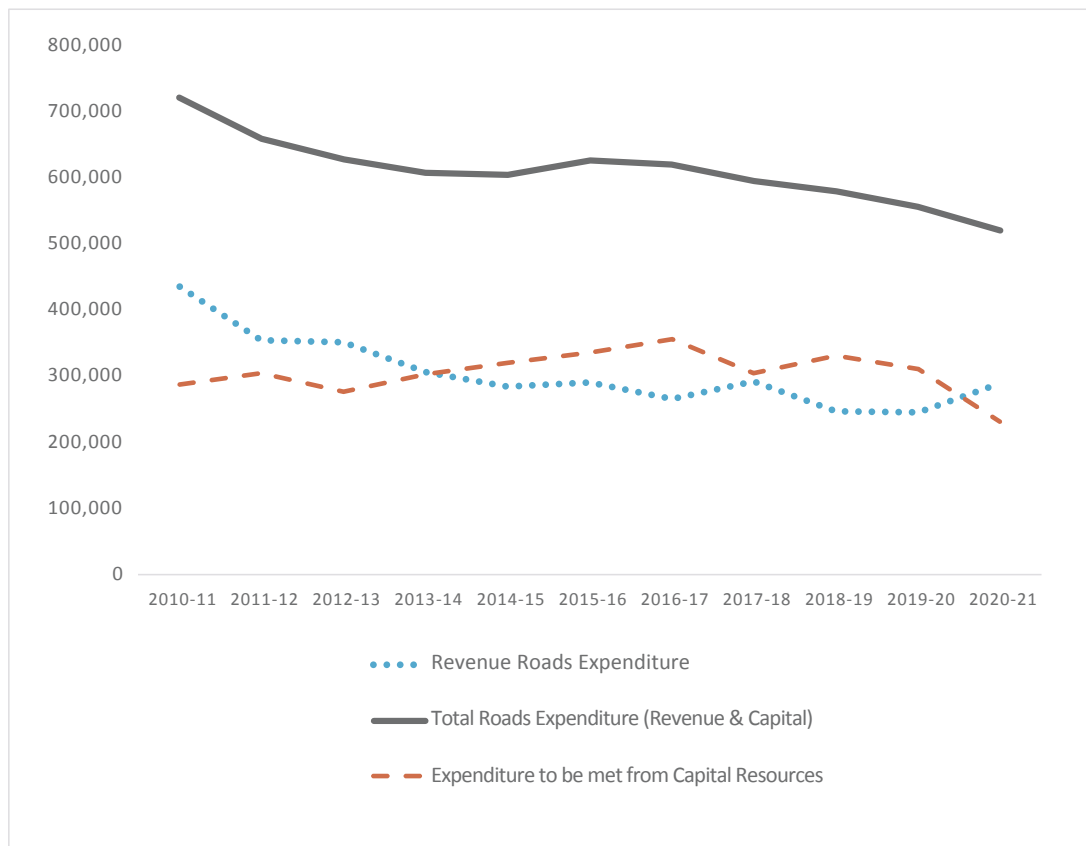
Table 45: Cost of roads per kilometre - (£)

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
13,850	12,613	11,988	11,568	11,476	11,838	11,711	11,241	10,835	10,355	9,667	-6.6%	-30.2%

As the graph below shows, overall revenue expenditure on roads has reduced significantly, by 33.9%, since 2010/11, while capital expenditure has decreased by 19% across the period. In 2020/21, revenue expenditure has grown by 17.6% while capital expenditure has fallen by -25.6%.



Fig 100: Roads expenditure - revenue and capital (£)



The variation in roads costs across Scotland is significant, and has widened substantially in 2020/21. In 2020/21, costs ranged from £3,021 to £30,760 (excluding outliers). Variation across councils is systematically related to rurality, with significantly higher and rising costs in urban areas compared to the most rural areas (£22,841 compared to £4,726).

Fig 101: Cost of roads per kilometre (£) by family group - rurality

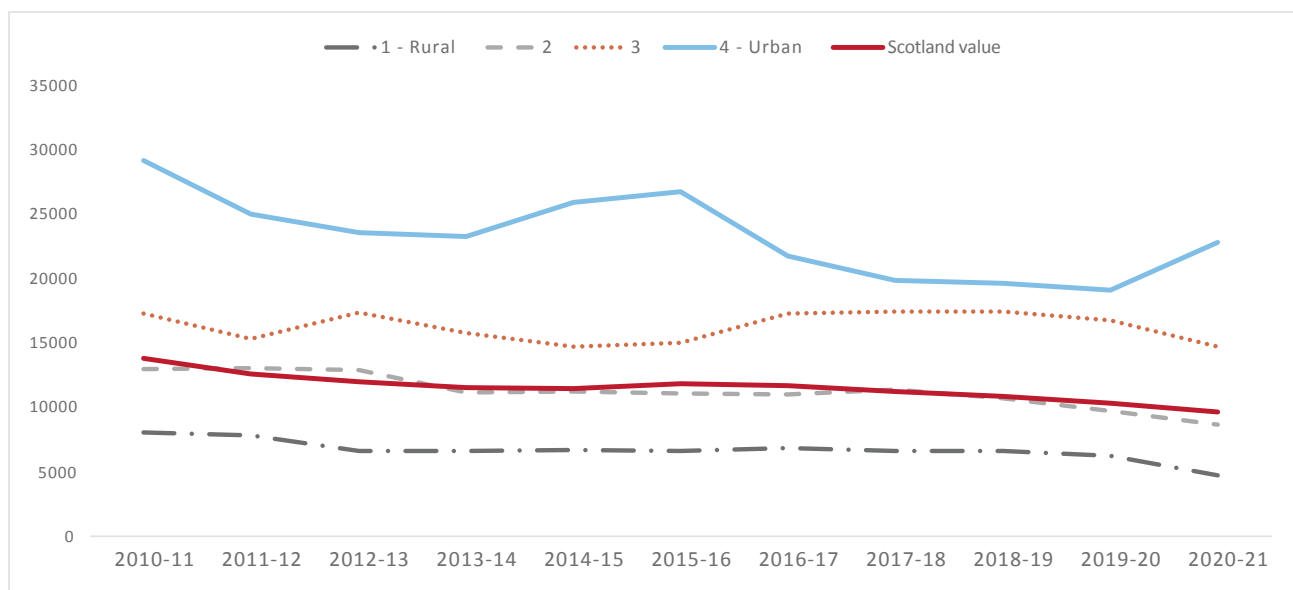
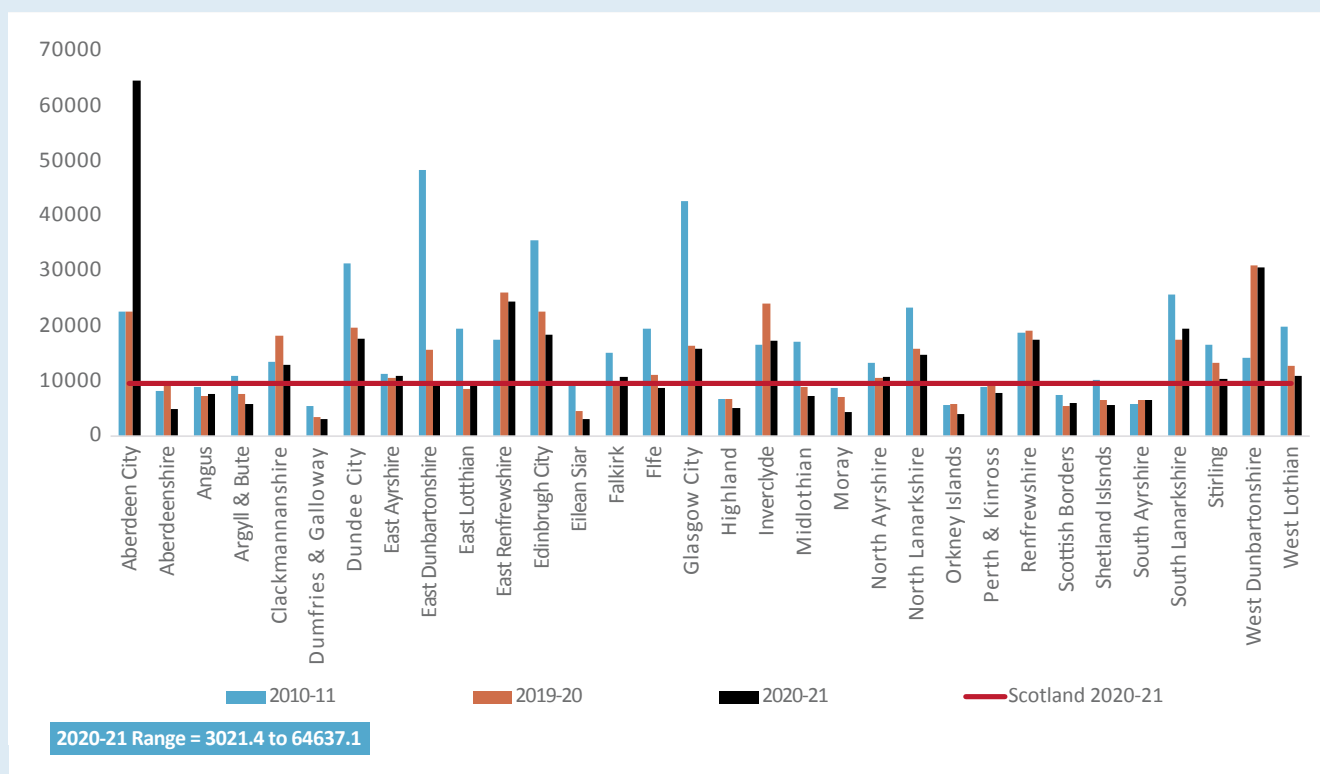




Fig 102: Cost of roads per kilometre (£)



Source: Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) / Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) returns; council supplied expenditure figures. Aberdeen outlying figure reflects additional expenditure on Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route.



Local Variation – Cost of roads per kilometre

2020/21 Value

Scotland value: £9,667; council range: £3,021 - £64,637 (£3,021 - £30,760 excluding outliers). Widening variation in the last year, widest since base year. Cost are significantly higher for urban authorities (£22,841 compared to £4,726).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -6.6%; councils: 8 increased and 24 decreased; range: -48.3% to +186.1% (-48.3% to +15.7% excluding outliers)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -30.2%; councils: 5 increased and 27 decreased; range -79.9% to +186.50. (-79.9% to +38.9% excluding outliers)

In terms of the condition of the road network, the 11-year period covered by this report has seen very little change in the A, B and C class road network overall, with around 30% to 35% of roads continuing to require maintenance. This indicates that despite the significant reductions on spending, the condition of key parts of the roads networks has been maintained.

In 2020/21, there have been small improvements in A, B and C class roads overall. This improving trend is however not universal. Between a quarter and a third of councils report deterioration in roads conditions in the most recent year across A, B and C classes, a trend most apparent for urban authorities.



It is important to note that data from 2020/21 refers to the first year where a change was introduced to the survey methodology, where a new filter was applied to remove invalid spike readings in the texture results. This had the effect of improving road network condition. While reduced traffic volumes and targeting of repair works during the COVID-19 period will also have had an impact, the main “improvement” in reported condition is attributable to the filter that was applied. It is also possible that milder winters (a result of climate change) are resulting in improvements in condition, especially for authorities where more severe winters have impacted in previous years.

While the initial cuts to roads budgets were, in many cases, mitigated by moving maintenance expenditure to capital, everything that can be moved has been moved. It is therefore now cyclic and routine maintenance that is bearing the brunt of the expenditure reductions. While most of this work can be viewed as low level and without any immediate visual effect e.g. gully and ditch cleaning, this however has serious long-term maintenance consequences. The change in weather patterns has exacerbated the drainage issues resulting from these reductions. The extreme rain events the country has been subjected to has had a catastrophic effect on transport infrastructure, not just roads, across all areas of Scotland.

Table 46: Percentage of A, B, C class and Unclassified roads that should be considered for maintenance

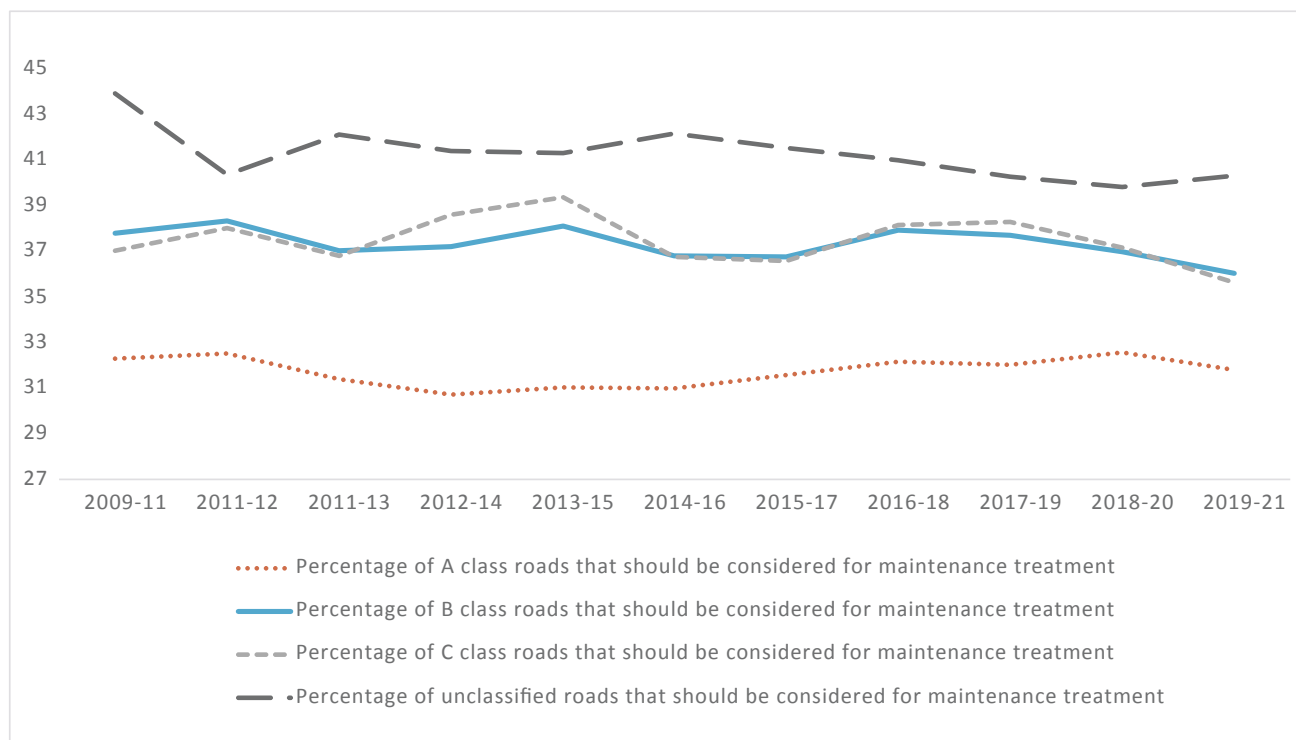
	2009-11	2010-12	2011-13	2012-14	2013-15	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18	2017-19	2018-20	2019-21	Value Change 2018-20 to 2019-21	Value Change 2009-11 to 2019-21
% A Class Roads	30.3	30.5	29.4	28.7	29.0	29.0	29.5	30.2	30.0	30.6	29.8	-0.8	-0.5
% B Class Roads	35.8	36.3	35.0	35.2	36.1	34.8	34.8	35.9	35.7	35.0	34.0	-1.0	-1.8
% C Class Roads	35.0	36.0	34.8	36.6	37.4	34.7	34.6	36.2	36.3	35.1	33.6	-1.5	-1.4
% Unclassified Roads	41.9	38.3	40.1	39.4	39.3	40.1	39.5	39.0	38.2	37.8	38.3	0.5	-3.6

Source: Roads Asset Management Database, Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS)

The variation in condition varies significantly across Scotland for all classes of road, however this has narrowed since the base year. In 2019/21, the range for A class roads is 16% to 40%; B class roads is 18% to 60%; C class roads is 14% to 56%; and for unclassified roads the range is 24% to 59%. The condition of roads in urban areas is better than that in rural areas (25-26% requiring maintenance compared to 30-36% requiring maintenance). This relationship is no longer statistically significant following faster improvements in the rural roads network (and deterioration in the urban network). Overall better roads condition in urban areas may reflect the historic pattern of higher spend in urban areas (although this has reduced to the average), although further exploration would be required to understand what, if any relationship, exists between these two factors.



Fig 103: Percentage of A, B, C class and unclassified roads that should be considered for maintenance

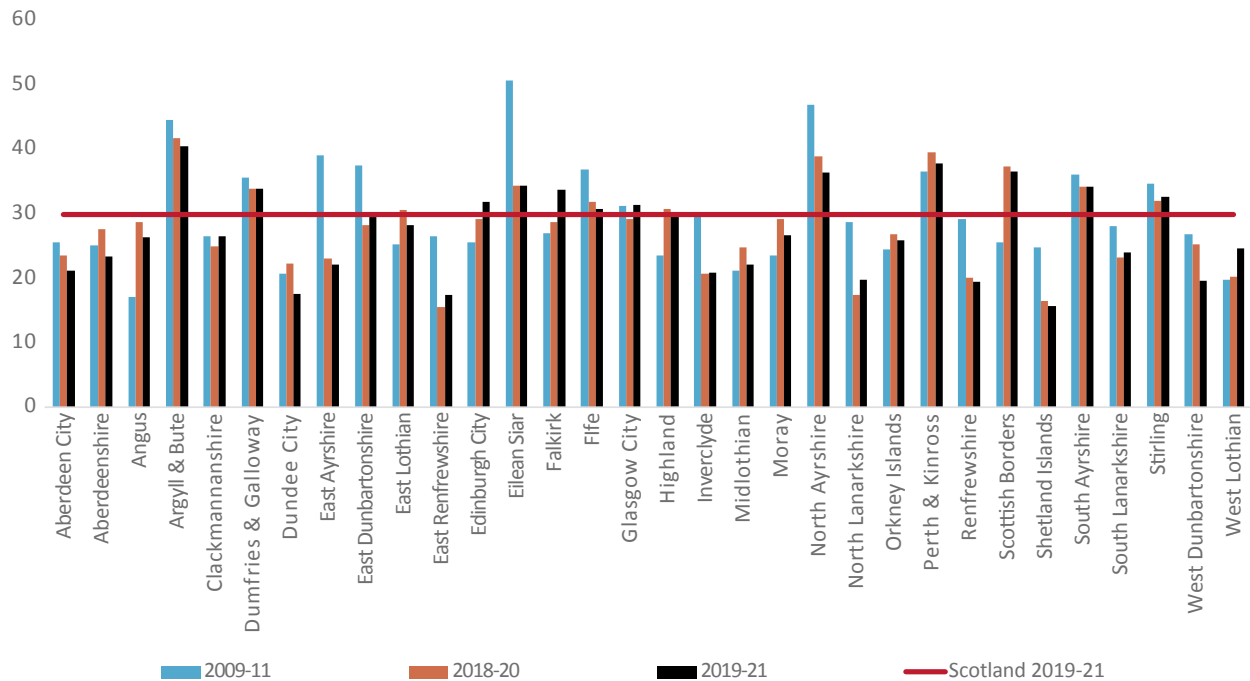


For the recent 2-year period 2019 – 2021, the national picture is one of improvement or maintenance in terms of the overall road condition. This could be reflective of capital investment allowing roads to be maintained to a steady state level. However, almost all authorities have seen a decline in at least one element of their local road network (A, B or C class roads) during this time, thereby reflecting the gradual decline in revenue investment generally over the longer term, restricting cyclical maintenance work such as drainage maintenance which can have a detrimental effect on the life of the road.

Many local roads authorities are adapting to manage declining investment levels, by using alternative road resurfacing techniques and processes that, whilst providing a short-term improvement in condition, aren't as preventative to decline as some of the treatments that may have been chosen in the past. However, the alternative road resurfacing techniques, whilst less expensive initially, don't result in the same lifespan as treatments that may be preferred, thereby requiring further intervention/expenditure at an earlier stage.



Fig 104: Percentage of A class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment



Local Variation – Percentage of A Class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment

2019/21 Value

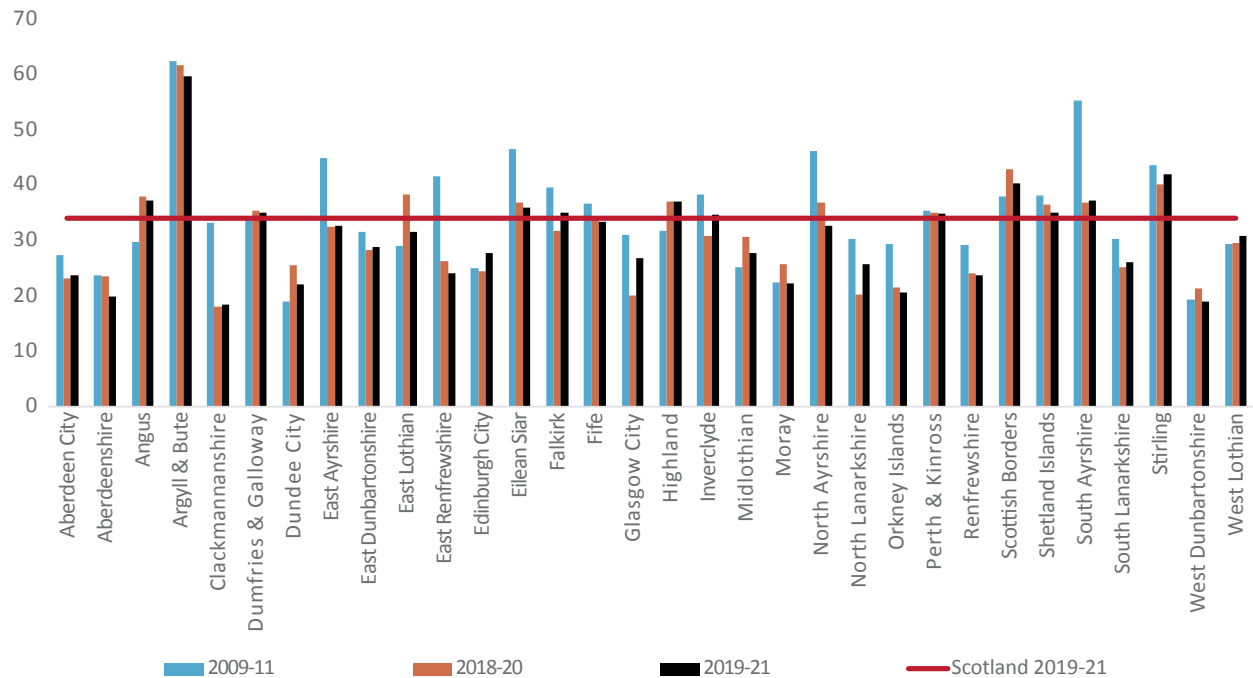
Scotland: 29.8%; council range: 15.7% - 40.3%. Roads condition is better in urban authorities compared to rural authorities (25% compared to 30%, not statistically significant)

Change Over Time

In 2019/21: Scotland -0.8pp; councils: 11 increased and 21 decreased (range: -5.8pp to +4.9pp).

Since 2009/11: Scotland -16.8pp; councils: 9 increased and 23 decreased (range: -16.8pp to +11.0pp).

Fig 105: Percentage of B class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment



Local Variation – Percentage of B Class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment

2019/21 Value

Scotland: 34%; council range: 18.5% - 59.7%. Variation narrowed in the most recent year. Roads condition is better in urban authorities compared to rural authorities (26% compared to 35%, no longer statistically significant)

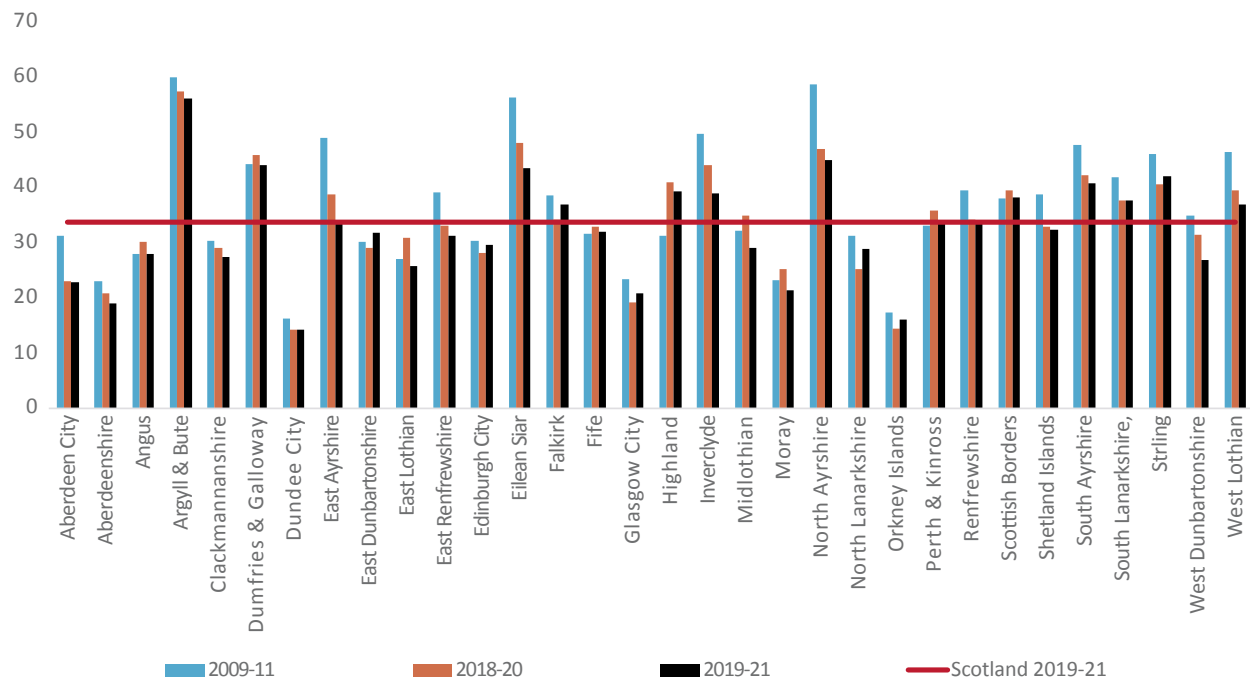
Change Over Time

In 2019/21: Scotland -0.96pp; councils: 14 increased and 18 decreased (range: -6.8pp to +6.8pp).

Since 2009/11: Scotland -1.8pp; councils: 9 increased and councils 23 decreased (range: -18.0pp to +7.5pp).



Fig 106: Percentage of C class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment



2019-21 Range = 14.2 to 56



Local Variation – Percentage of C Class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment

2019/21 Value

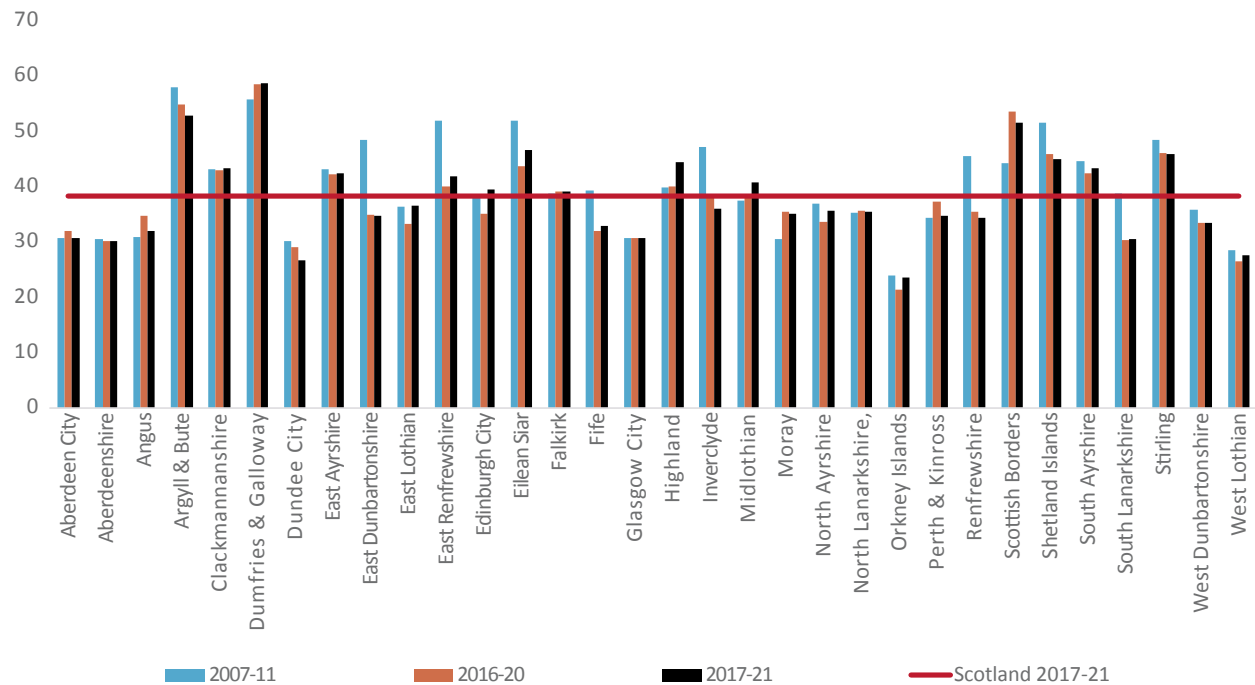
Scotland: 33.6%; council range: 14.2% - 56%. Narrowing variation in the most recent year. Roads condition is better in urban authorities compared to rural authorities (26% compared to 36%, not statistically significant)

Change Over Time

In 2019/21: Scotland -1.54pp; councils: 7 increased and 25 decreased (range: -5.7pp to +3.7pp).

Since 2009/11: Scotland -1.4pp; councils: 5 increased and councils 27 decreased (range: -11.7pp to +9.54pp).

Fig 107: Percentage of unclassified roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment



2017-21 Range = 23.6 to 58.7



Local Variation – Percentage of U Class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment

2017/21 Value

Scotland: 38.3%; council range: 23.6% - 58.7%. Roads condition is better in urban authorities compared to rural authorities (34% compared to 44%, not statistically significant)

Change Over Time

In 2017/21: Scotland -0.5pp; councils: 17 increased and 15 decreased (range: -2.7pp to +4.3pp).

Since 2007/11: Scotland -1.8pp; councils: 13 increased and councils 19 decreased (range: -15.2pp to +7.9pp).



Environmental health and trading standards

Since 2010/11, the aggregated environmental health, trading standards, money advice and Citizens' Advice grant costs have reduced by 39.2% from £30,386 to £18,463. At the same time, demand for these services is increasing in terms of reactive complaints and proactive business support and interventions. There have been considerable demands on environment health to prepare for the impact of EU Exit, and in particular export health certification. Additional demand through COVID enforcement responsibilities and public health protection work has further added to the challenges facing this sector during this period. It will be critical to monitor the position of both trading standards and environmental health services going forward to understand what the impact will be of continuing reduction in funding alongside exceptional pressures on workload within enforcement sectors generated by issues such as the pandemic and EU exit.

In 2012/13, the framework split measures to enable a better understanding of trends. Trading standards costs include trading standards, money advice and citizen's advice and have been standardised within the framework as costs per 1,000 population. Since 2012/13, the cost of these services, while volatile, has reduced by 5.1%, from £6,173 to £5,837. In 2020/21, costs reduced by 7.7%, from £6,349 to £5,857. This pattern is not evident for all councils. 13 authorities reported increased costs since 2012/13, and 4 authorities reported increased costs in 2020/21, counter to the national trend.

The data should not be taken as an indication of local authority trading standards resource alone, which has fallen close to minimum levels as highlighted by Audit Scotland reports in 2002 and 2013.

In 2020/21 costs ranged from £1,891 to £14,386. The graph below reveals higher average costs for rural councils compared to urban councils (£8,835 compared to £6,113). However, there is no statistically significant relationship with rurality due to variation within the family group.

Across this same period, there was a 35.6% reduction in the cost of environmental health services per 1,000 population, from £19,579 in 2012/13 to £12,606 in 2020/21. In the most recent 12 months, the reduction in costs has accelerated, falling by 14.2% from £14,695 to £12,606. While all 32 authorities report a decrease in costs since 2012/13, 7 report an increase in the most recent year counter to the national trend.

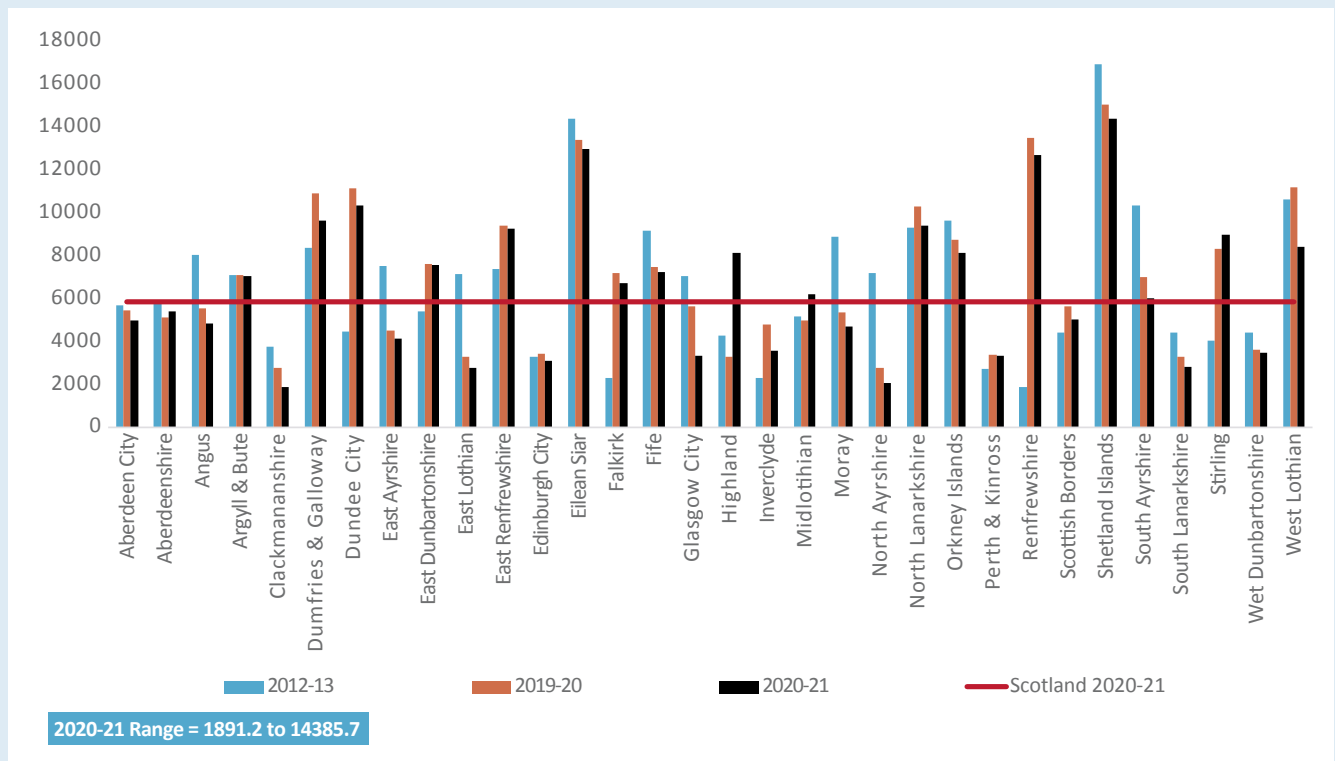
There is significant variation across councils which has widened in the past 12 months, with costs ranging from £6,661 to £37,472. As with Trading Standards, the graph below reveals higher average environmental health costs for rural councils compared to urban councils (£19,218 compared to £14,056). However, there is no statistically significant relationship with rurality due to variation within the family group.

Table 47: Cost of trading standards and environmental health per 1,000 population - (£)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2012-13 to 2020-21
Trading Standards, Money Advice & Citizens Advice	6,173	6,607	6,518	6,643	6,224	6,560	6,434	6,349	5,857	-7.7%	-5.1%
Environmental Health	19,579	20,367	19,436	19,231	17,992	17,258	16,242	14,695	12,606	-14.2%	-35.6%



Fig 108: Cost of trading standards per 1,000 population (£)



Source: Mid-year population estimates, National Records Scotland (NRS); council supplied expenditure figures



Local Variation – Cost of trading standards per 1,000 population

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £5,857; council range: £1,891 - £14,385. Narrowed variation in the latest year. Higher costs in rural councils compared to urban councils (£8,835 compared to £6,113, not statistically significant)

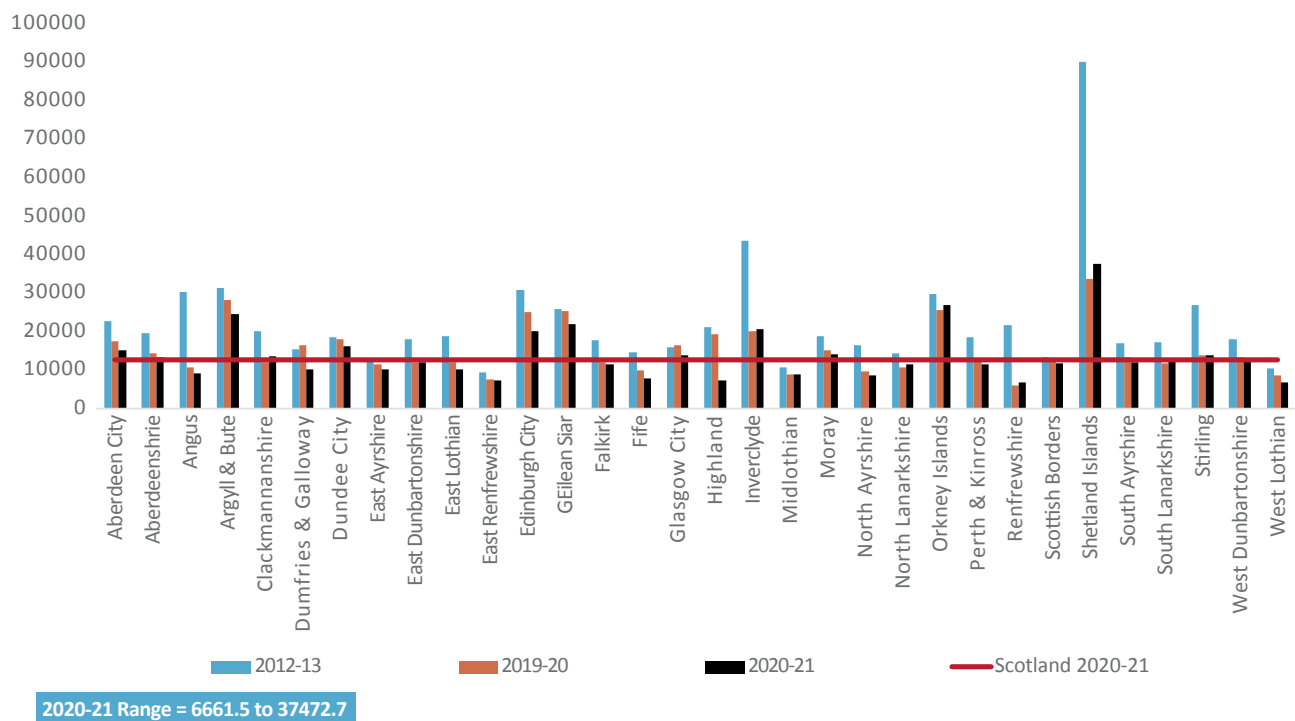
Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland -7.7%. councils: 4 increased and 28 decreased (range: -40.9% to +148.3%).

Since 2012/13: Scotland -5.1%. councils: 13 increased and 19 decreased (range: -71.1% to +572.5%)



Fig 109: Cost of environmental health per 1,000 population (£)



Source: Mid-year population estimates, National Records Scotland (NRS); council supplied expenditure figures



Local Variation – Cost of environmental health per 1,000 population

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £12,606; council range: £6,661 - £37,472. Widening variation in the latest year. Higher costs in rural councils compared to urban councils (£19,218 compared to £14,056, not statistically significant)

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland -14.2%. councils: 7 increased and 25 decreased (range: -61.5% to +13.7%).

Since 2012/13: Scotland -35.6%. All 32 councils decreased (range: -69.9% to -9.5%)



Fig 110: Cost of trading standards per 1,000 population (£) by family group - rurality

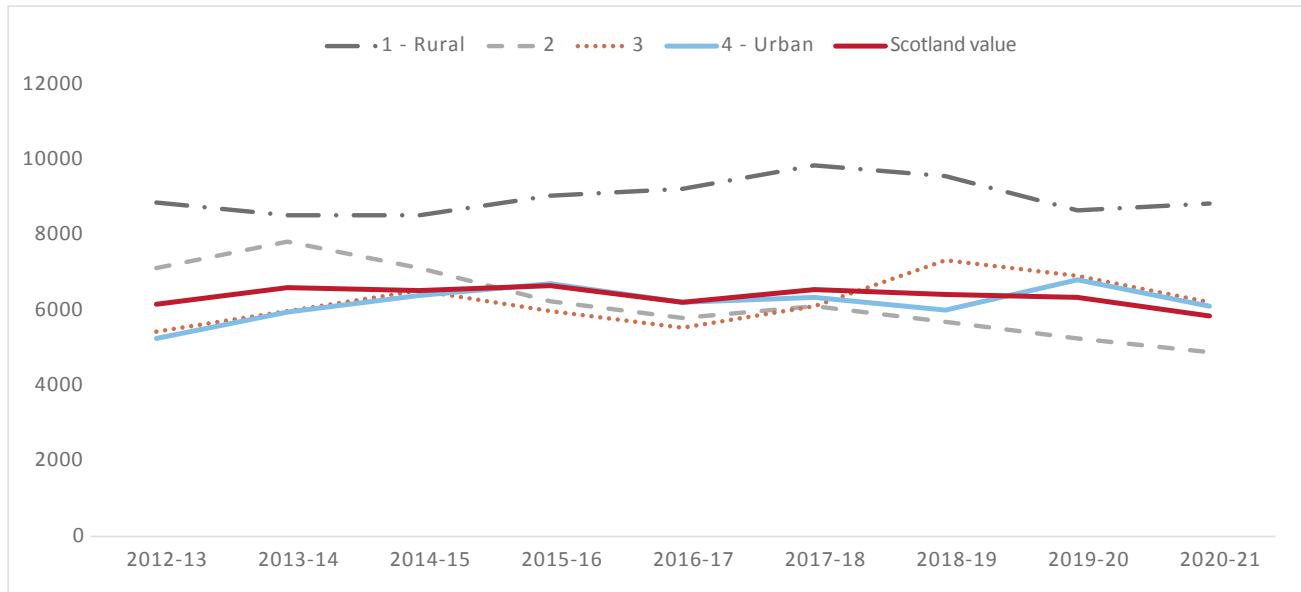
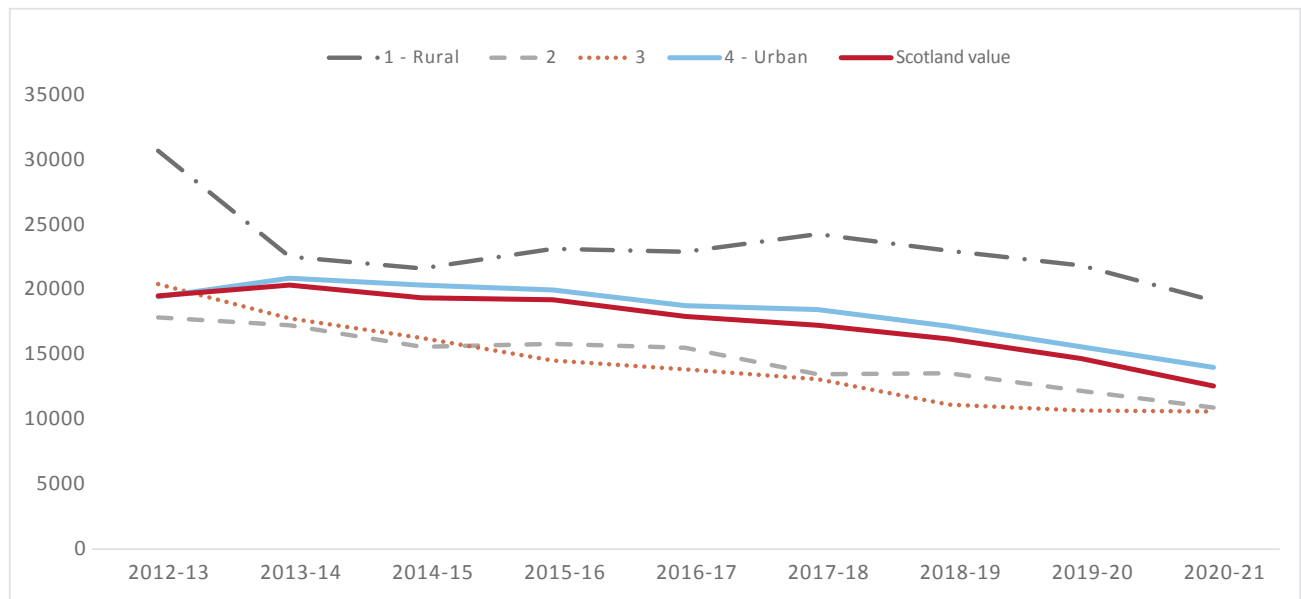


Fig 111: Cost of environmental health per 1,000 population (£) by family group - rurality





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

- *Local political/strategic priority given to the role of environmental services in supporting improvements in wider outcomes and tackling inequalities*
- *Workforce composition and demographic profile*
- *Working practices, e.g. shift patterns*
- *Service integration (e.g. waste management, roads, street cleaning, parks services)*
- *Collection programmes, frequencies and model of service*
- *Asset management approaches – e.g. super depots and leased vehicles*
- *Stage in investment cycle*
- *Whether councils have landfills in their authority area which will require investment up to and beyond their closure dates over the next five years.*
- *Contract and procurement costs*
- *Access to external funding streams*

Corporate Services





To date digital transformation and other efficiency savings have enabled spending on corporate services to reduce without detriment to overall performance. However, the impact of COVID-19 has reinforced the importance of these functions with key skills being required to support council responses to the pandemic. With previous savings often delivered through a combination of measures including head-count reductions there is a risk that some specialism experience is lost, and resources are not sufficient to sustain former performance improvements alongside the required response to and recovery from COVID-19.

Over the last 11 years there has been a significant reduction in the costs of running council's corporate services. Real terms expenditure has reduced by 29% since 2010/11 (range: -66% to +39%), including a 3% reduction in 2020/21 (range: -23% to +15% excluding outliers). This period has largely equated to one of financial austerity typified by real terms reductions in funding for councils and increased use of ringfencing of funding for specific policy initiatives. The impact of this has been that resulting financial gaps and required savings have tended to be more targeted to some services such as those traditional back room and support functions, in order to protect as far as possible front-line service provision.

Against this backdrop, the effort and achievements delivered across Local Government services during this exceptional period have been extraordinary, and corporate services have been fundamental to this. While the workforce has adapted quickly to meet new demands and implement new ways of working, it will be important to understand the impacts on the workforce, and closely monitor evidence around mental health, wellbeing and general fatigue. The data presented here captures the impacts from the first year of COVID-19 on corporate services. Some of the effects however will take longer to play through and it will be vital to closely monitor the data to fully understand the medium to long term impact of COVID on corporate services and the Local Government workforce.

Support services

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

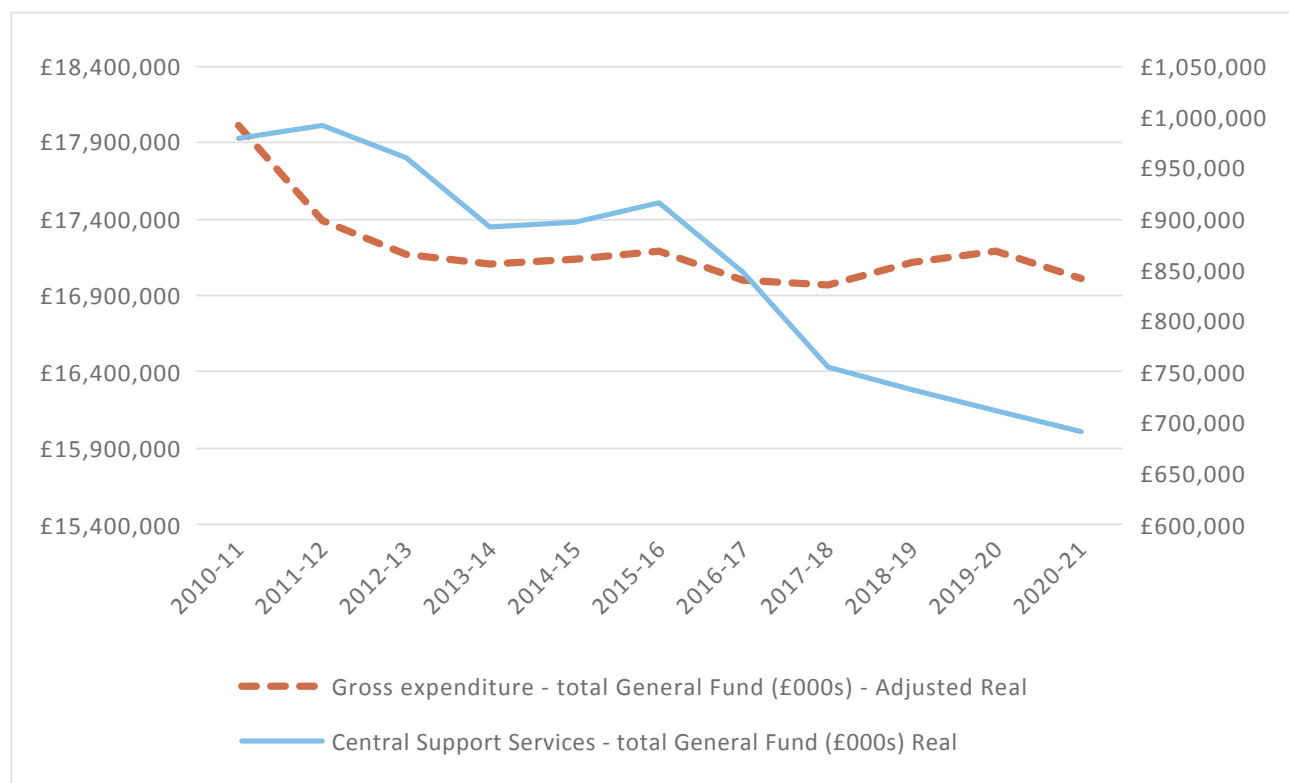
For standardisation purposes, support services are represented as a percentage of total gross revenue expenditure in the benchmarking framework. The figure has remained around 5% across the 11-year period. The total gross revenue expenditure for 2020/21 has been adjusted for significant outliers.

In 2020/21 the Scottish average was 4.1% compared to 5.4% in 2010/11, and representing a slight increase of 0.1pp since 2019/20. The reduction between 2010/11 and 2020/21 reflects a 29.4% decrease in support cost expenditure in parallel with a 5.6% reduction in Total General Fund expenditure. This both reflects councils' commitment to protect front-line services over 'back office' functions and the maturation of councils' digital strategies. It is possible that an element of this significant reduction is due to improved reporting following refined guidance in relation to the treatment of support costs within the financial return.

In 2020/21, there has been a 1.0% reduction in Total General Fund expenditure (adjusting for significant outliers) alongside a 3.0% reduction in spending on support services.

While the majority of councils report a reduction in the proportion of expenditure allocated to support services over both the longer and short term periods, this trend is not universal. Six authorities have seen their proportion increase since 2010/11 counter to the national trend, and over a third saw their proportion increase during 2020/21. Across the 11-year period, rural authorities report the largest percentage point decrease in their support service expenditure (-2.4pp compared to -1.2pp in more urban authorities), although this is not statistically significant due to variation within the family group.

Fig 112: Support services expenditure and total gross expenditure (£)



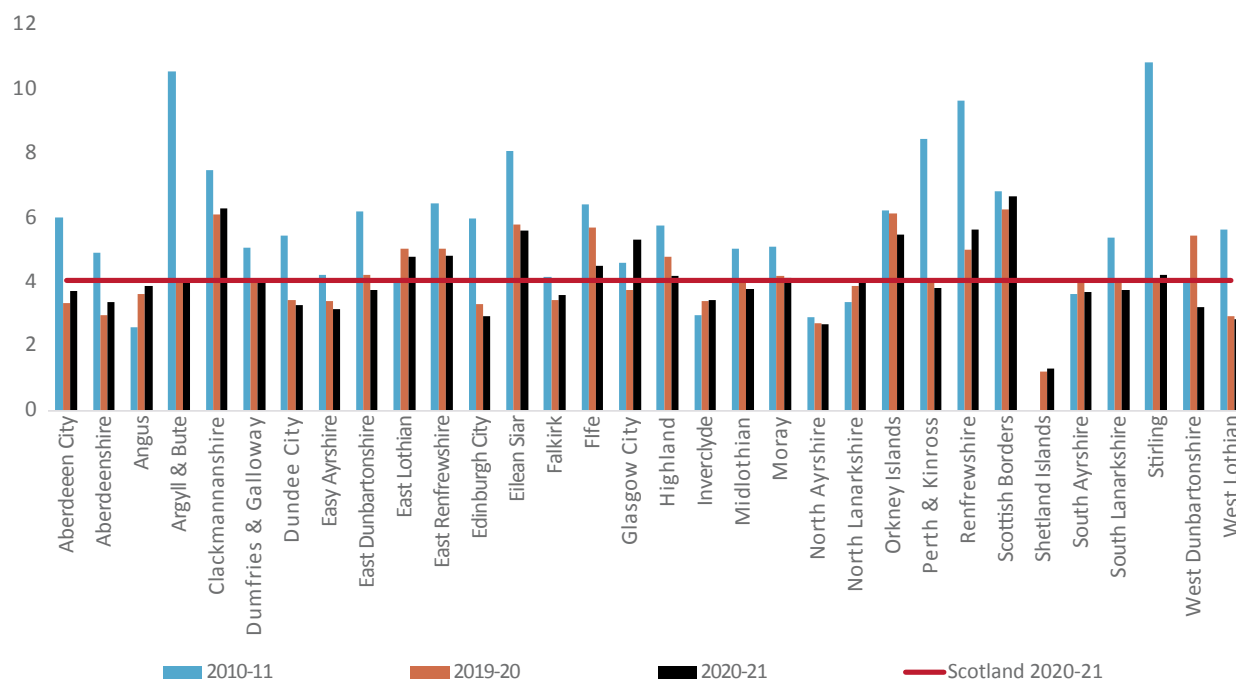
Source: council supplied expenditure figures

There is significant but narrowing variation between councils in support service expenditure. The proportion ranges from 1.3% to 6.7% in 2020/21. Historically rural authorities have reported higher average support service costs however in recent years, this gap has narrowed as a result of larger cost reductions in rural authorities across the 11-year period.

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

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

Fig 113: Support services as a percentage of total gross expenditure



Source: council supplied expenditure figures

Note: Missing values reflect no data returned for that year



Local Variation – Support services as a % of Total Gross expenditure

2020/21 Value

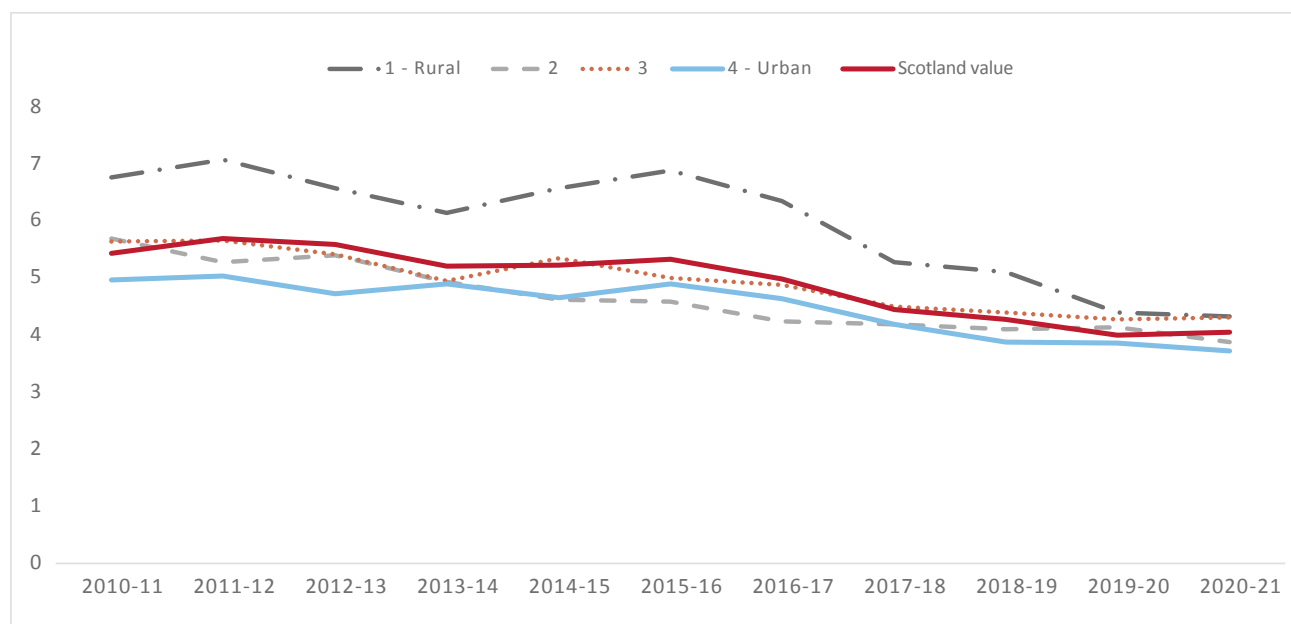
Scotland: 4.1%; council range: 1.3% - 6.7% (2.7% - 5.6% excluding outliers). Narrowing variation in the most recent year. Higher costs in rural councils compared to urban councils (4.3% compared to 3.7%, not statistically significant). Gap is narrowing as a result of larger cost reductions in rural authorities.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -0.1pp; councils: 13 increased and 19 decreased (range: -2.2pp to +9.9pp (-0.7pp to +0.6pp excluding outliers)).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -1.4pp; councils: 6 increased and 26 decreased (range: -6.9pp to +1.3pp).

Fig 114: Support services as a percentage of total gross expenditure by family group - rurality



Gender equality

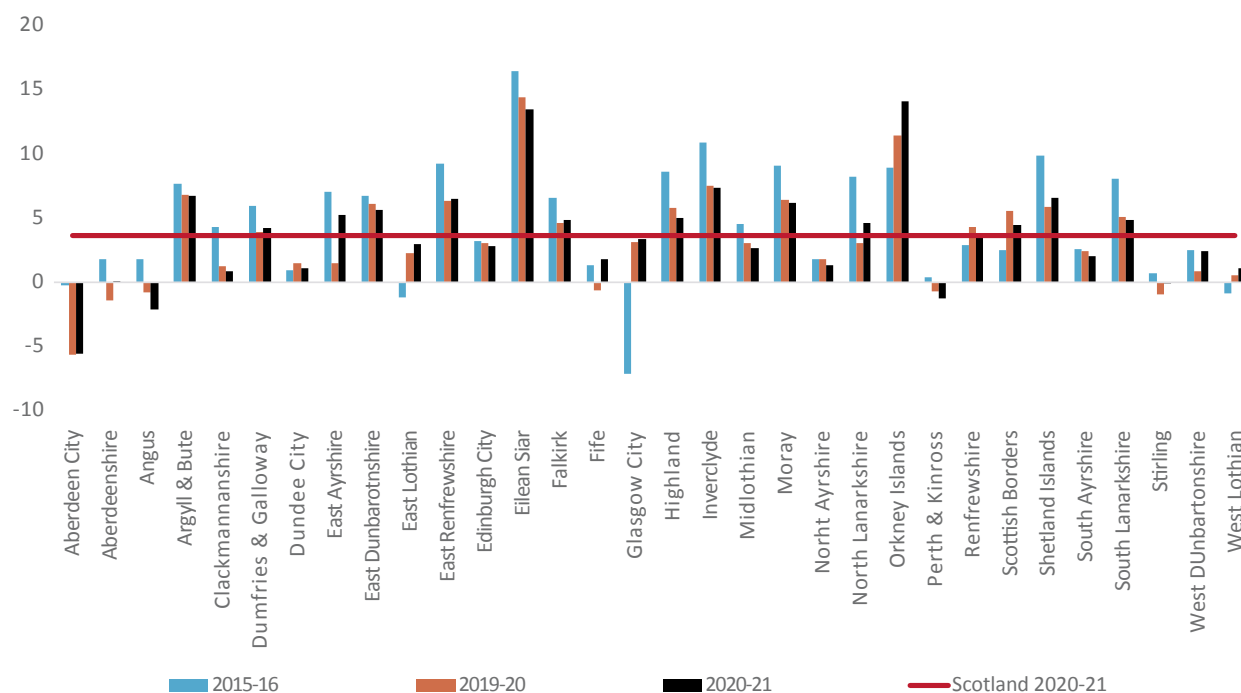
The percentage of women in the top 5% of earners in councils is a significant measure of the attempts by councils to ensure equal opportunity between genders. From 2010/11 to 2020/21 this has increased from 46.3% to 58.3%. The range across councils is from 29% to 70%, with rural councils reporting lower rates.

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

The gender pay gap has narrowed across the past 5 years, falling from 4.5% to 3.7%. In 2020/21 however, there has been a slight widening of the pay gap by 0.3pp. Redeployment strategies, and the sharp growth in the number of cleansing and care staff employed in response to COVID-19 may be important factors in relation to this recent movement.

The gap in 2020/21 ranges from -5.6% to +14.1% and is significantly higher in rural areas compared to urban areas (6.8% compared to 2.4%). Those staff employed via arms-length organisations are not included within the calculation which will influence the variability observed and may be important in understanding the figures observed for some authorities.

Fig 115: The gender pay gap (%)



Source: council supplied figures



Local Variation – The gender pay gap

2020/21 Value

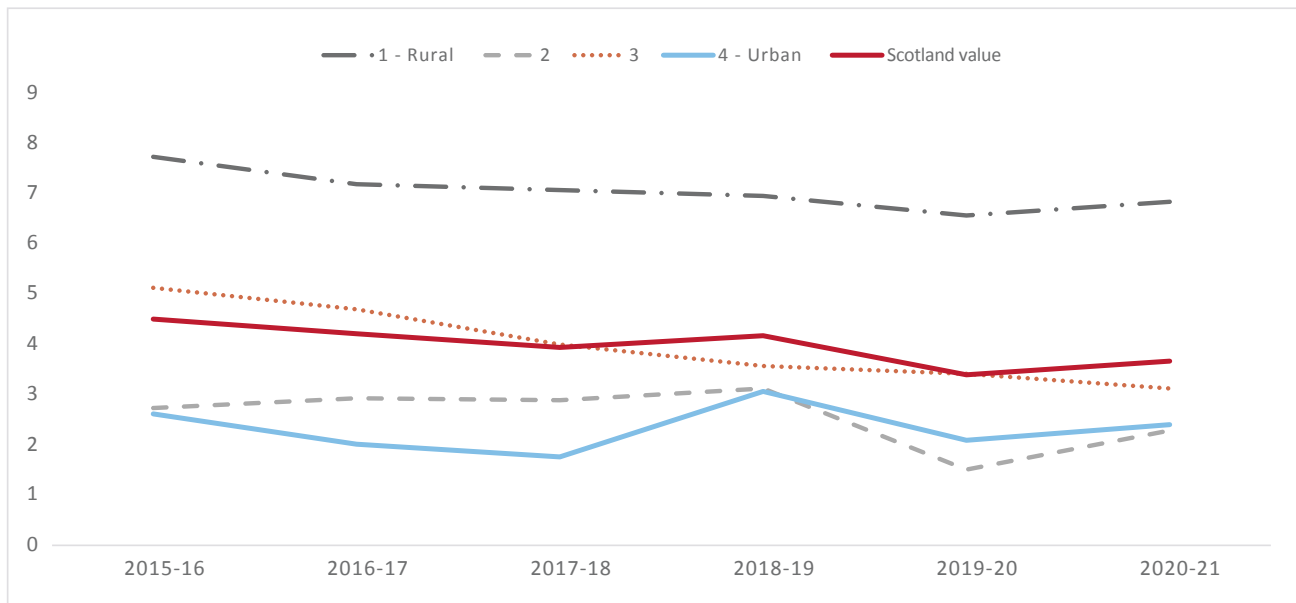
Scotland: 3.7%; council range: -5.6% to 14.1% (-2.1% to 7.4% excluding outliers). Widening variation in the most recent year. Gap is wider in rural councils compared to urban councils (6.8% compared to 2.4%, not statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +0.3pp; councils: 15 increased and 17 decreased (range: -1.3pp to +3.8pp (-1.3pp to +2.4pp excluding outliers)).

Since 2015/16: Scotland: -0.8pp; councils: 8 increased and 24 decreased (range: -5.3pp to +10.5pp (-5.3pp to +5.1pp excluding outliers)).

Fig 116: The gender pay gap (%) by family group - rurality

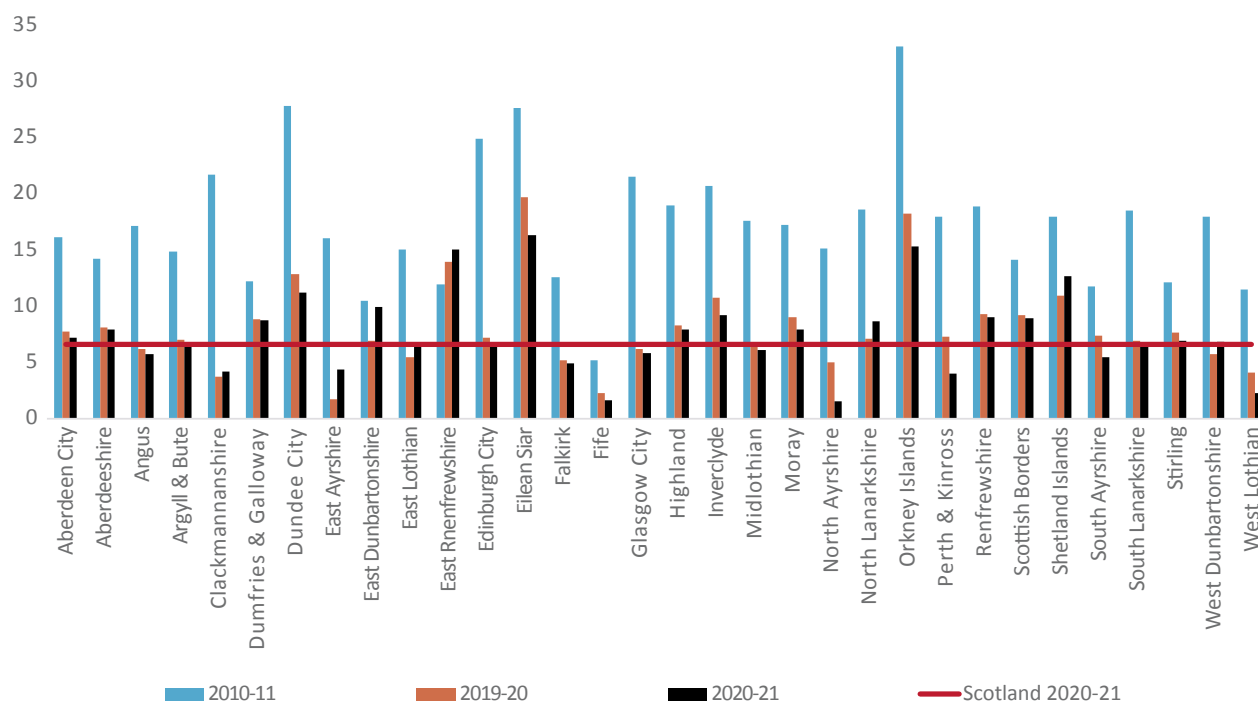


Council tax

The cost of collecting council tax is measured on a per property basis to standardise the measure across councils. Over the 11-year period from 2010/11 to 2020/21 costs have reduced by 61.5%, from £17.25 to £6.64. There has been a year on year reduction in costs, with no slowdown in the rate over recent years. In 2020/21, costs reduced by 5.3%. Almost all councils report significant cost reductions across this period, a key driving factor is the continued digital transformation and shift to embrace new technology and automation. In 2020/21, although the national average reduced by 5.3%, a quarter of councils reported an increase in costs counter to the national trend

Although narrowing, the range across coouncils varies significantly from £1.58 to £16.31, with island and rural councils reporting significantly higher costs and a slower rate of cost reduction since 2010/11. This remains true even with a slight increase in average costs for the most urban council grouping in 2020/21, counter to the previous trend.

Fig 117: The cost per dwelling of collecting council tax (£)



Source: council supplied figures



Local Variation – The cost per dwelling of collecting council tax

2020/21 Value

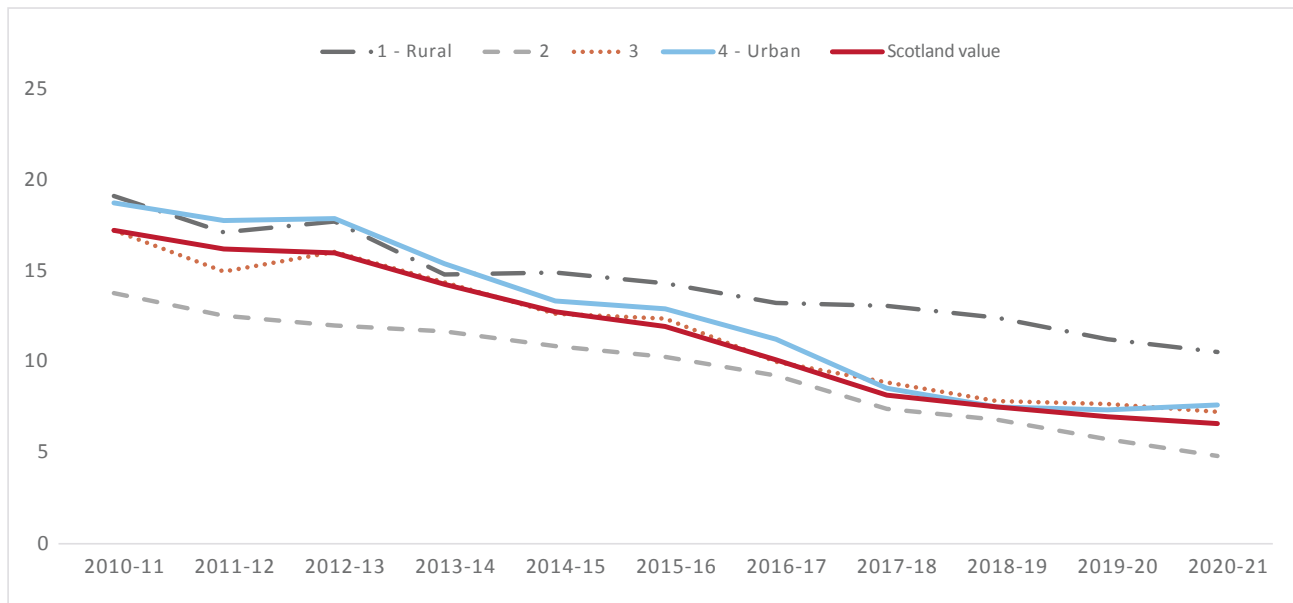
Scotland: £6.64; council range: £1.58 to £16.31. Widening variation in the most recent year. Costs are higher in rural councils compared to urban councils (£10.6 compared to £7.7, not statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -5%; councils: 8 increased and 24 decreased (range: -68% to +157% (-26% to +21%, excluding outliers)).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -62%; councils: 1 increased and 31 decreased (range: -89% to +26% (-89% to -28% excluding outliers)).

Fig 118: The cost per dwelling of collecting council tax (£) by family group - rurality

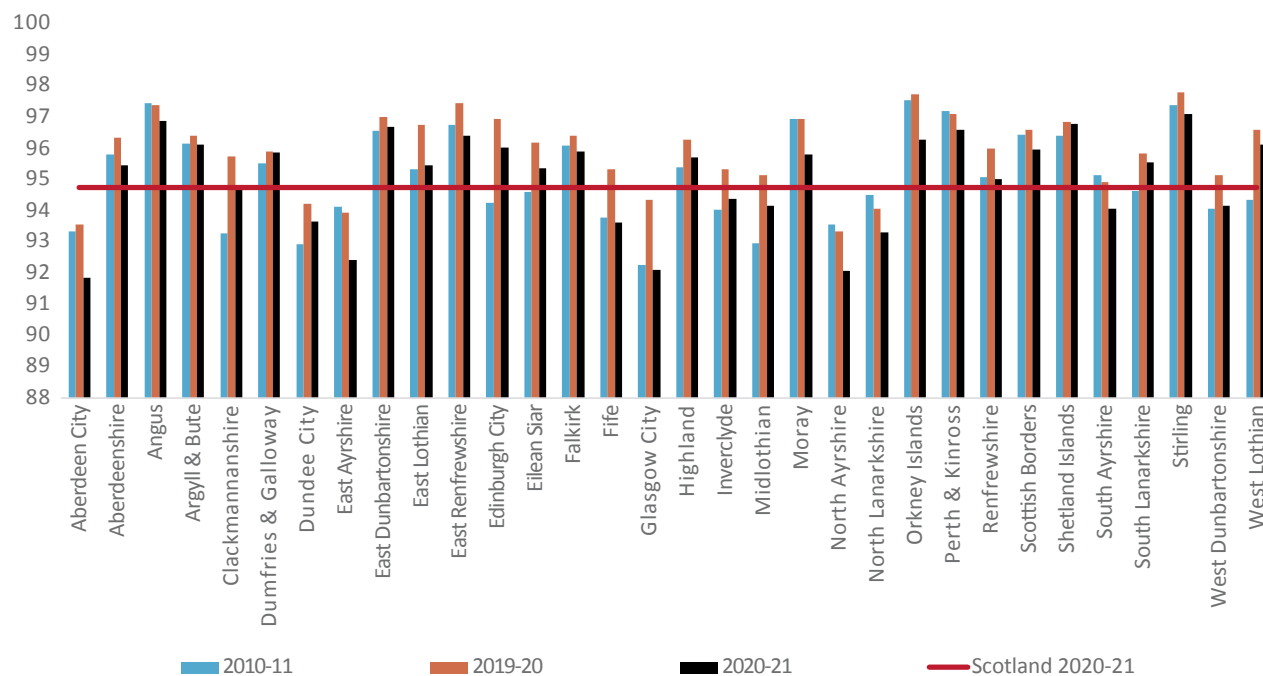


At the same time as the significant reduction in unit costs, the overall rate of in-year collection for council tax has remained high and shown steady improvement from 94.7% in 2010/11 to 95.8% in 2019/20. In 2020/21 however, the collection rate decreased by 1pp, from 95.8% to 94.8%, reflecting a reduction for all 32 authorities.

Prior to COVID-19, council tax collections improved as a direct result of the council tax freeze from 2008/09 to 2016/17, a trend which had continued up until 2018/19 despite the challenges created by a difficult economic climate and significant welfare reform. The reduction in 2020/21 provides evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic is having an impact on average payments, debt repayment time and collection levels. Key factors include the increased levels of financial hardship in communities, a decrease in service follow-up activity, and an increase in bad debt provision to cover reduced income. It will be important to monitor the longer-term trend going forward.

The variation across councils widened in 2020/21 after narrowing in previous years. Rates in 2020/21 range from 91.9% to 97.1% and continue to show a significant pattern in relation to level of deprivation. Those councils with higher levels of deprivation report significantly lower rates paid on time compared to the least deprived councils (93.4% compared to 95.8%). The most deprived councils also report a sharper reduction in collection rates in the most recent year (-1.2pp compared to 0.9pp).

Fig 119: Percentage of income due from council tax received by the end of the year



Source: council supplied figures



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

2020/21 Value

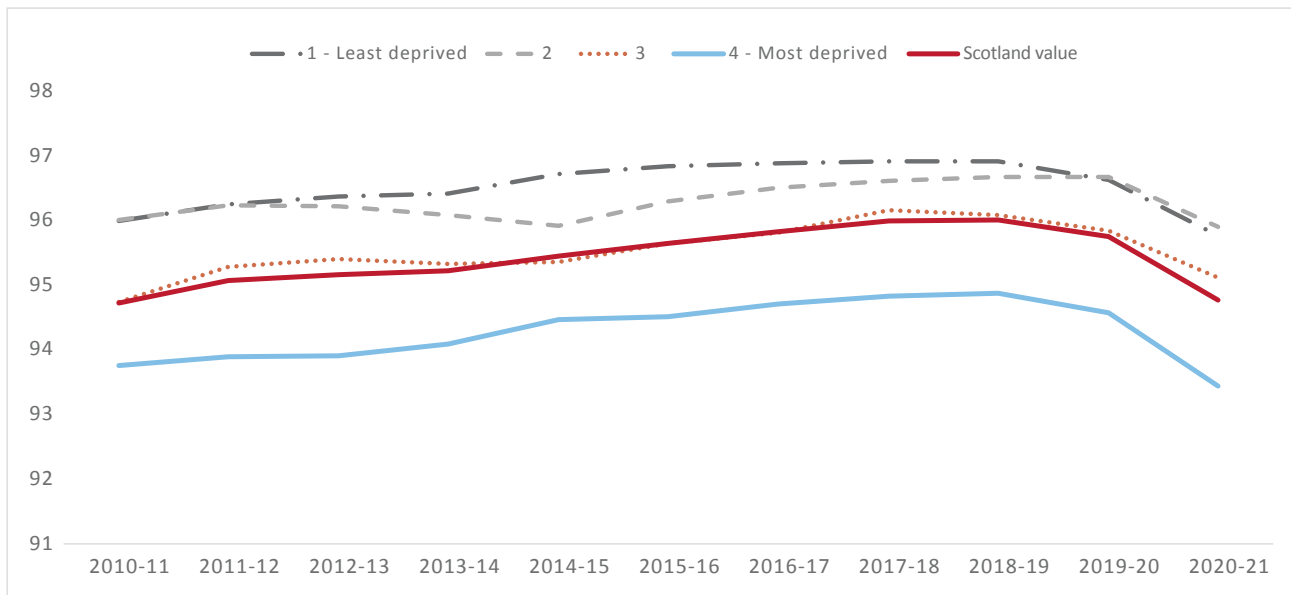
Scotland: 94.8%; council range: 91.9% - 97.1%. Widening variation in the most recent year. Significantly higher proportion of income received in least deprived councils compared to most deprived councils (95.8%, compared to 93.4%).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -1.0pp; councils: all 32 decreased (range: -2.2pp to -0.1pp).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +0.1pp; councils: 14 increased and 18 decreased (range: -1.7pp to +1.8pp).

Fig 120: Percentage of income due from council tax received by the end of the year by family group - deprivation



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

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



Sickness absence rates

The management of sickness absence has been and will continue to be a major priority for councils in their efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of their workforce and to manage their costs. The unprecedented pace of change and transformation across Local Government places further emphasis on the importance of developing effective strategies to manage absence.

Local authorities are adopting a holistic and supportive approach to absence management to engage and retain employees, in recognition that such strategies make good business sense. Although local context will differ, authorities are adopting policies and good practice procedures to promote employee wellbeing and support good mental health. Deployment of a progressive response requires capacity and resources. This creates challenges, particularly at a time when there are huge demands for cashable savings and limited opportunities to invest, even in political priorities.

The COVID-19 'major incident' is expected to skew all absence information in the short term i.e. during the pandemic and lockdowns. In the medium to long term, issues are already emerging as we transition into managing long-COVID absences where debilitating symptoms are still being experienced six months on. In addition, the consequences of delayed medical interventions and COVID-related mental health trauma are also a key risk for the economy, businesses and working lives and there are likely to be absences associated with such circumstances for a period to come.

Whilst the focus has continued to be on keeping people safe, the importance of wellbeing will remain central to our responsibilities as a public sector employer amongst a range of wider issues of public policy. Key to policy development is the shift in expectations amongst the workforce around how they are treated and supported, their access to more flexible ways of working, managing workload and stress and the creation of development and progression opportunities. Through policy change, the emphasis will be on building on all that has been learned through these tough times to reinforce our commitment to fairer work and better working lives.

To provide continuity, the LGBF sickness absence data excludes COVID-19 related absence during 2020/21 to allow analysis of long-term trends. Prior to COVID-19, Local Government absence levels were at their highest since 2010/11, increasing by 7% across the period from 9.8 to 10.4 days.⁴² This reflects a 10% increase for non-teaching staff (from 10.8 days to 11.9 days), and a 4% reduction for teaching staff (from 6.6 days to 6.3 days).

In 2020/21, absence levels (excluding COVID-19 related absence) for both teaching and non-teaching staff reduced significantly, by 34.6% for Teachers, and by 18.4% for non-teachers. This pattern was almost universal, although one council reported an increase in non-teacher absence during this time.

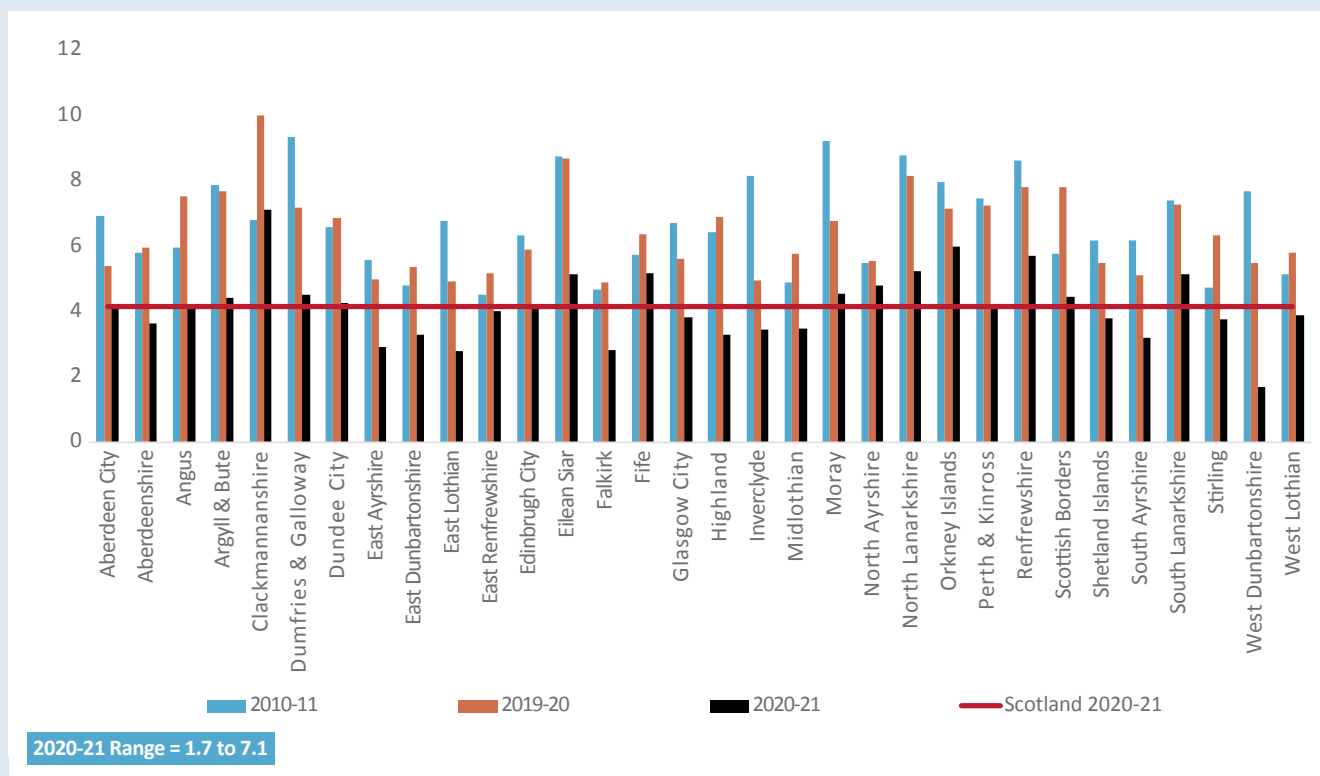
The variation between authorities has remained fairly stable over time, with teacher absence in 2020/21 ranging from 1.7 days to 7.1 days, and non-teacher absence from 6.4 days to 12.3 days. There is no systematic relationship with deprivation or rurality, either in terms of the absolute sickness level, or in the rate of reduction in 2020/21.

Digging beneath the high-level data, the picture that emerges is one of lower short-term absence but increasing incidence of long-term absence. The wholesale shift to home working during COVID has delivered greater flexibility in terms of working hours which will be important in this trend, however also emerging are concerns of increased workload and mental health challenges. Prior to the pandemic, there was growing evidence that mental ill health and stress were emerging as increasing challenges within the public sector workforce. The impact of COVID-19 is likely to have exacerbated this and will be important to monitor across the period ahead.

⁴² FTE calculations used within council supplied figures for LGBF differ slightly from the PSE guidelines (<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Labour-Market/PublicSectorEmployment/PSEGuidance>)

It is important to note that during this time, councils along with other organisations, were also having to manage significant levels of COVID-10 related absence. Staff absence, including COVID-related absence, peaked at almost 12% during the first wave of COVID infections in the spring of 2020, and although it has fluctuated in line with infection levels, absence has remained consistently higher than pre-COVID-19 levels, which sat at under 5%. Of most concern, is the recent trend showing significant increases since October 2021, with rates currently sitting at 7.5%, bringing continuing pressure on the system.

Fig 121: Sickness absence days per teacher



Source: council supplied figures



Local Variation – Sickness absence days per teacher

2020/21 Value

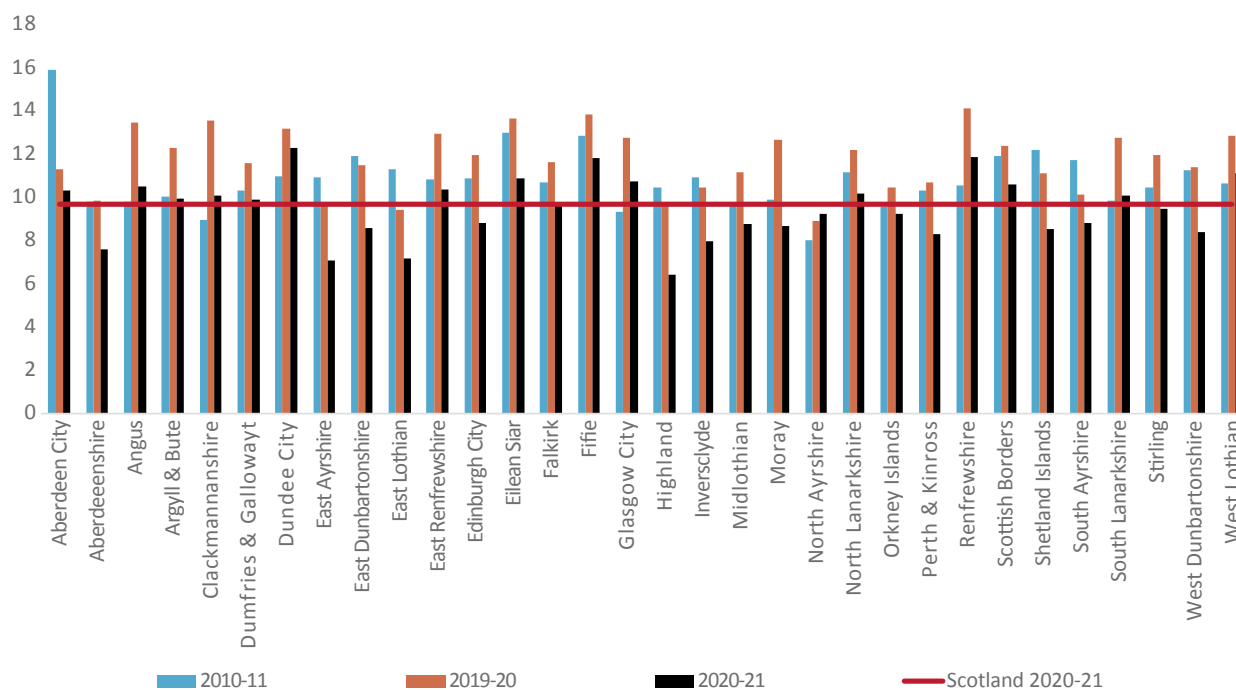
Scotland: 4.2 days; council range: 1.7days - 7.1 days. Narrowing variation in the most recent year. There is no systematic relationship with deprivation, rurality or council size.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -35%; councils: All 32 decreased (range: -69% to -14%).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -37%; councils: 1 increased and 31 decreased (range: -78% to +4.5% (-78% to -10% excluding outliers)).

Fig 122: Sickness absence days per employee (non-teacher)



Source: council supplied figures



Local Variation – Sickness absence days per employee (non-teacher)

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 9.7 days; council range: 6.4 days - 12.3 days. Variation has remained stable in the most recent year.

There is no systematic relationship with deprivation, rurality or council size.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -18%; councils: 1 increased and 31 decreased (range: -34% to +3%).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -10%. councils: 8 increased and 24 decreased (range: -38% to +15%).



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

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

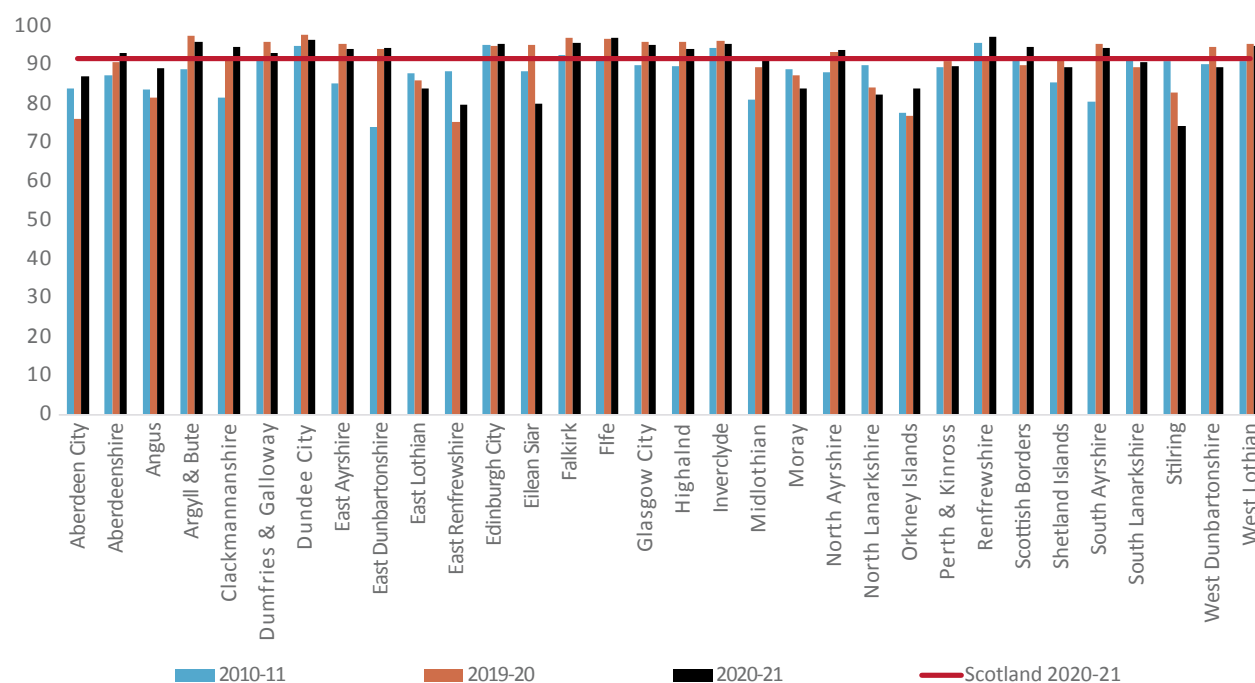
Invoices paid

Councils are major purchasers of goods and services both within their local economies and across the Scottish economy as a whole. Performance is standardised for the LGBF in terms of the percentage of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days. The percentage of invoices paid within 30 days has improved from 89.5% to 91.8 over the 11-year period.

In 2020/21, performance increased by 0.1pp, following a slight dip between 2018/19 and 2019/20. There is however, significant variation among authorities, with over half of councils reporting a reduction in the most recent year. Levels of variation have widened in the most recent years, with councils ranging from 74.2% to 97.2%. There are no systematic relationships with deprivation or rurality.

Less orders were placed during this period due to restrictions and the level of uncertainty, and less works were being completed. Within the service, resource reallocation to the emergency response and the time taken to fully implement home working procedures will be important in interpreting the trends in this years data.

Fig 123: Percentage of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days



2020-21 Range = 74.2 to 97.3

Source: council supplied figures



Local Variation – Percentage of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 91.8%; council range: 74.2% - 97.3%. Narrowing variation in the most recent year. There are no systematic relationships with deprivation, rurality or council size.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +0.1pp. councils: 14 increased and 18 decreased (range: -15.3pp to +11pp).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +2.2pp. councils: 24 increased and 8 decreased (range: -16.7pp to +20.5pp).

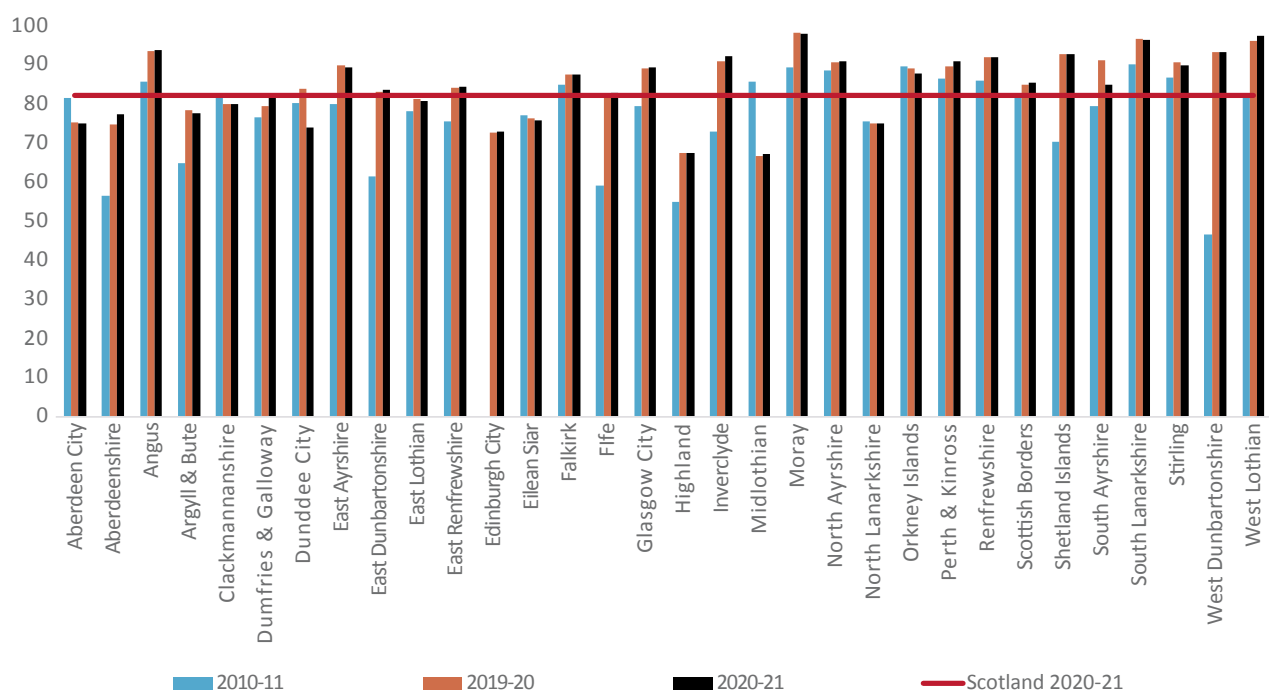
Corporate assets

There has been significant and sustained improvement in the condition of councils' corporate assets over the longer term period. The percentage of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use has improved from 73.7% to 82.3% and the proportion of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition has improved from 81.3% to 89.2%. These trends however are not universal, with over a fifth of councils showing a decline in this area counter to the national trend.

In 2020/21, while the condition of internal floor area continued to improve, the % operational buildings that are suitable for their current use declined very slightly, by 0.2pp. There is significant but narrowing variation across councils in both measures. In 2020/21, this ranges from 67% to 98% for buildings suitable for use, and 54% to 100% for condition of floor area. There is no relationship with rurality, deprivation or size of authority.

Any impact from the pandemic on the corporate asset is not yet clear in the data from 2020/21. This will be an area to monitor closely to see if there are significant movements in the asset base in coming years as authorities consider the implications of moving to hybrid working model as we emerge from the pandemic.

Fig 124: Proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use (%)



Source: council supplied figures



Local Variation – Proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use

2020/21 Value

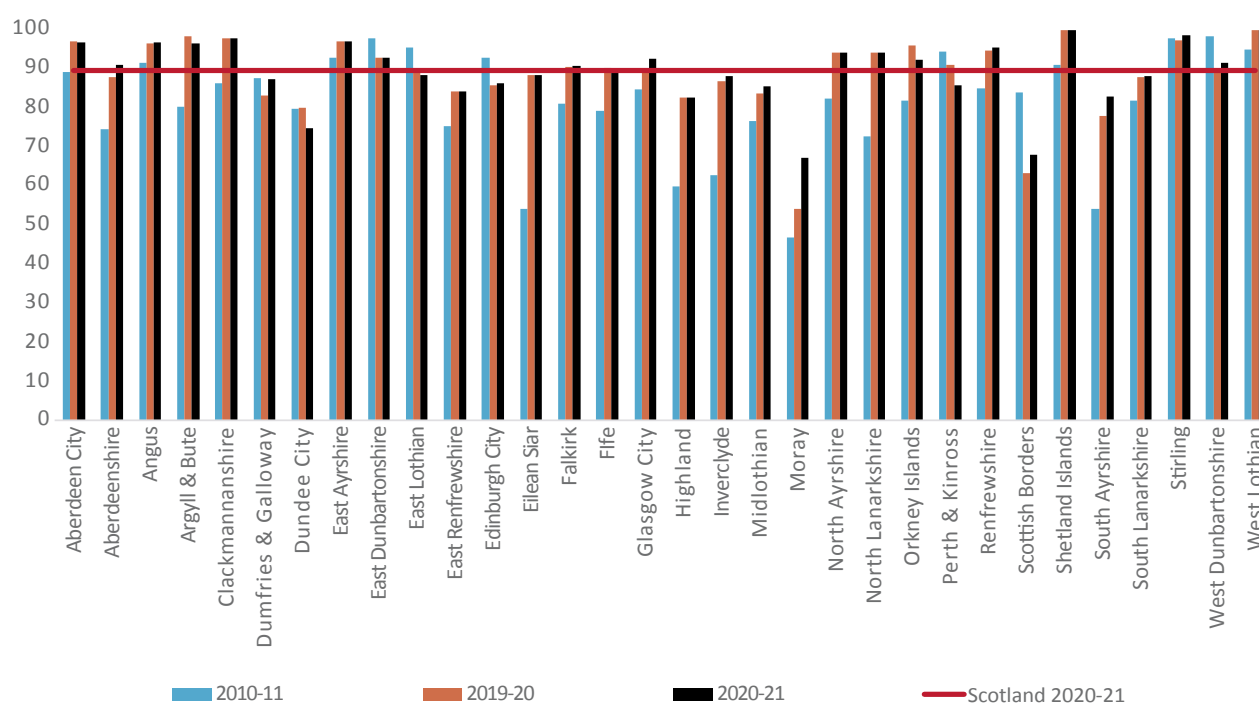
Scotland: 82.3%; council range: 67.3% - 98.1%. Narrowing variation in the most recent year and not systematically related to deprivation, rurality or authority size.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -0.2pp. councils: 14 increased and 18 decreased (range: -9.9pp to +2.5pp).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +8.6pp. councils: 25 increased and 7 decreased (range: -18.5pp to +46.5pp).

Fig 125: Proportion of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition (%)



2020-21 Range = 66.9 to 99.7

Source: council supplied figures



Local Variation – Proportion of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 89.2%; council range: 66.9% to 99.7%. Narrowing variation in the most recent year and not systematically related to deprivation, rurality or authority size.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +0.6pp. councils: 19 increased and 9 decreased (range: -5.4pp to +13pp).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +7.9pp. councils: 24 increased and 8 decreased (range: -15.9pp to +34.2pp).



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

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



Housing Services



The housing information within the benchmarking framework covers housing management, housing conditions and energy efficiency. Across the period, councils continue to manage their housing stock well, delivering sustained improvements in repair times and rent lost due to voids, and overseeing consistent and significant improvements in housing standards and energy efficiency. In contrast however, there has been a long-term growth in tenants rent arrears across the period representing the growing number of households facing financial hardship.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on councils ability to deliver housing services as normal. The pandemic affected landlords ability to deliver core services such as repairing homes, letting empty homes, assisting people experiencing homelessness, and a range of other services. Landlords have had to curtail their planned investment programmes, including those to build new homes and to achieve the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and the Energy Efficiency Standard in Social Housing.

Furthermore, the economic impact of COVID-19 will create direct challenges for the housing sector in relation to rental income. The increase in unemployment, along with fears of universal credit delays may create a significant 'bump' in rent arrears and may lead to long-term arrears for many. Less rent coming in to the council means less money for capital works programmes, which may have long term implications for stock quality.

The 2020/21 data presented in the LGBF this year provides early evidence of the impact of the pandemic on Local Authority housing services and their tenants. Only those councils who have responsibility for the provision of Housing Services are included here. Resources for housing services come from the Housing Revenue Account which is funded by tenants' rents and service charges, rather than from the General fund, which funds the other services covered in the LGBF.

Rent arrears

The average Scottish tenants' arrears as a percentage of rent due has increased from 5.6% in 2013/14 to 8.2% in 2020/21. The rate of arrears stabilised in 2019/20, however increased more sharply in 2020/21, rising from 7.3% to 8.2%. The increase since 2013/14 reflects an increase in gross rent arrears during this time of 50.6%, which is an increase of £34 million from £68 million in 2013/14 to £102 million in 2020/21. In 2013/14, the definition and methodology for this measure changed, therefore it is not possible to provide a direct comparison with previous years.

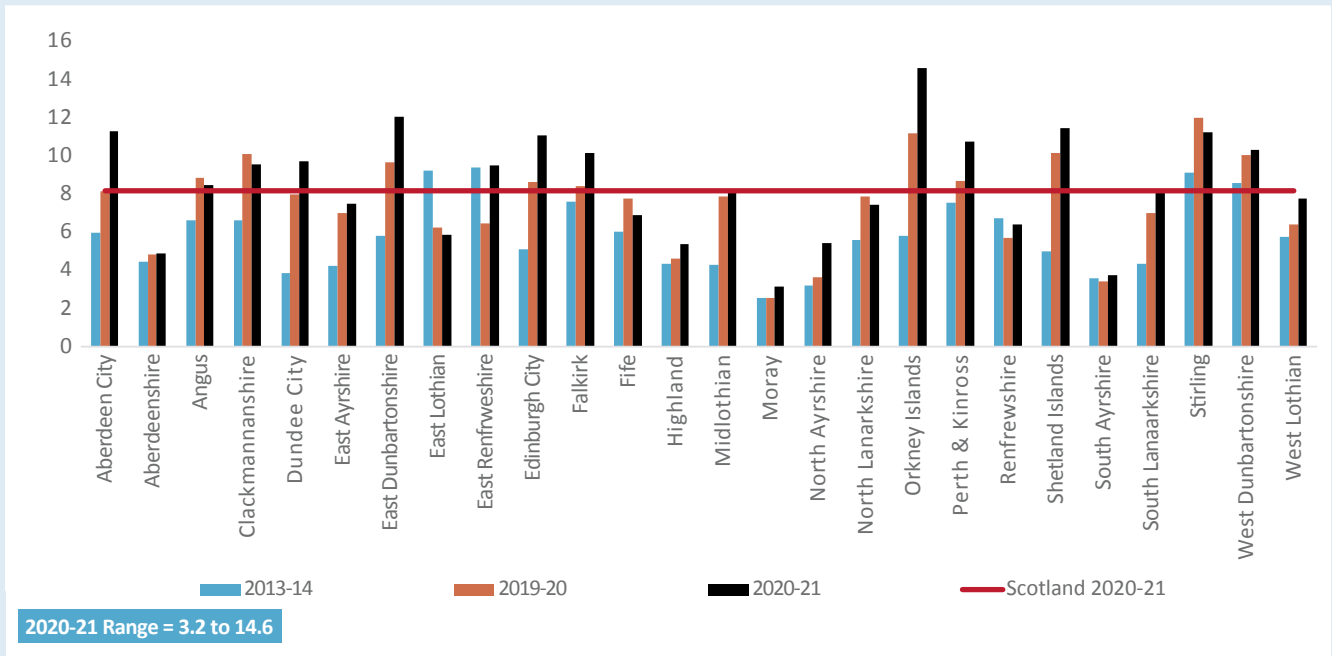
The impact of COVID-19, along with continuing welfare reform and Universal Credit roll out may create further pressure on this trend and it will be important to monitor this. Research indicates that one-in-six (17%) of social renters in the UK in May 2020 were estimated to have fallen into (or further into) rent arrears since the start of the coronavirus outbreak.⁴³ Separate results from the Scottish Household Survey show that an estimated 8% of social rented households in Scotland in 2020 had experienced difficulties in paying their rent in the previous 12 months.⁴⁴ Similarly, where evidence is available from Universal Credit pilot councils, there was a significant increase in rent arrears following the introduction of Universal Credit Full Service. Beyond the immediate impact on some individuals and families, an increase in arrears will result in the loss of rental income for councils and potentially affect the ability to build affordable housing.

While the Scotland trend reveals a sustained increase in arrears, a small number of councils have seen their level of rent arrears fall since 2013/14, including in the most recent year. In 2020/21, the percentage of arrears range from 3.2% to 14.6% across councils, with the level of variation widening markedly in the most recent year. Rent arrears have risen more sharply in the least deprived group of councils in the most recent year (an increase of 2.2pp compared with 0.8pp) and tend to be higher on average compared to the most deprived (10.7% compared to 8.1%). However, there is no statistically significant relationship with deprivation due to variation within the family group.

⁴³ <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/coping-with-housing-costs-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-household-survey-2020-telephone-survey-key-findings/documents/>

Fig 126: Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year



Source: Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

Note: Missing values represent the six councils who do not provide housing services following transfer to Registered Social Landlords



Local Variation – Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year

2020/21 Value

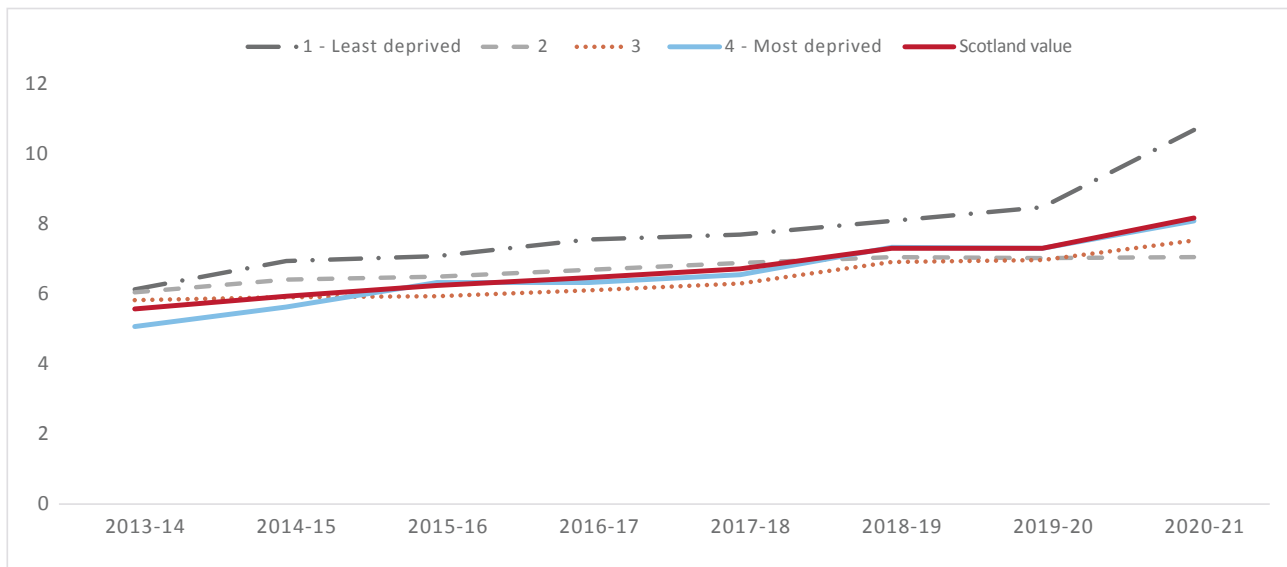
Scotland: 8.2%; council range: 3.2% - 14.6%. Widening variation in the most recent year. Least deprived councils report a higher proportion of rent arrears compared to more deprived councils (10.7% compared to 8.1%, not statistically significant)

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland +0.9pp; councils: 20 increased and 6 decreased (range: -0.9pp to +3.4pp). Rent arrears have risen more sharply in the least deprived group of councils (an increase of 2.2pp compared with 0.8pp, not statistically significant)

Since 2013/14: Scotland +2.6pp; councils: 24 increased and 2 decreased (range: -3.4pp to +8.8pp).

Fig 127: Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year by family group - deprivation

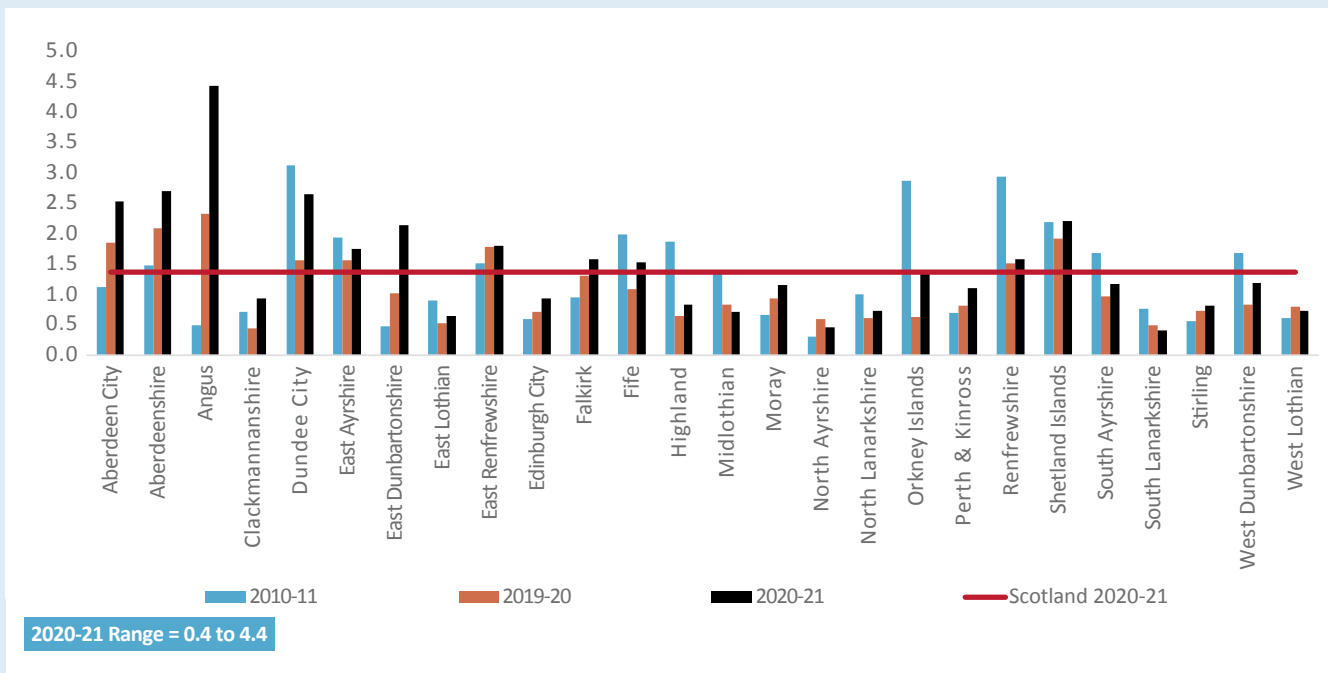


Rent lost due to voids

Prior to COVID-19, rent lost due to voids had reduced from 1.3% in 2010/11 to 1.1% in 2019/20. In 2020/21, this increased to 1.4%, the highest recorded level of rent lost since the start of the benchmarking framework. This recent increase however is not universal, with 4 authorities reporting a reduction in rent lost due to voids in 2020/21.

Again, figures vary across authorities, from 0.4% to 4.4%, with variation widening in the most recent year. In recent years, the rent lost due to voids appears to be higher and increasing faster in the least deprived council areas. In 2020/21, the proportion of rent lost for the least deprived councils was 1.8% compared to 1.4% for the most deprived councils. However, there is no statistically significant relationship with deprivation due to variation within the family group.

Fig 128: Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids



Source: Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

Note: Missing values represent the six councils who do not provide housing services following transfer to Registered Social Landlords



Local Variation – Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids

2020/21 Value

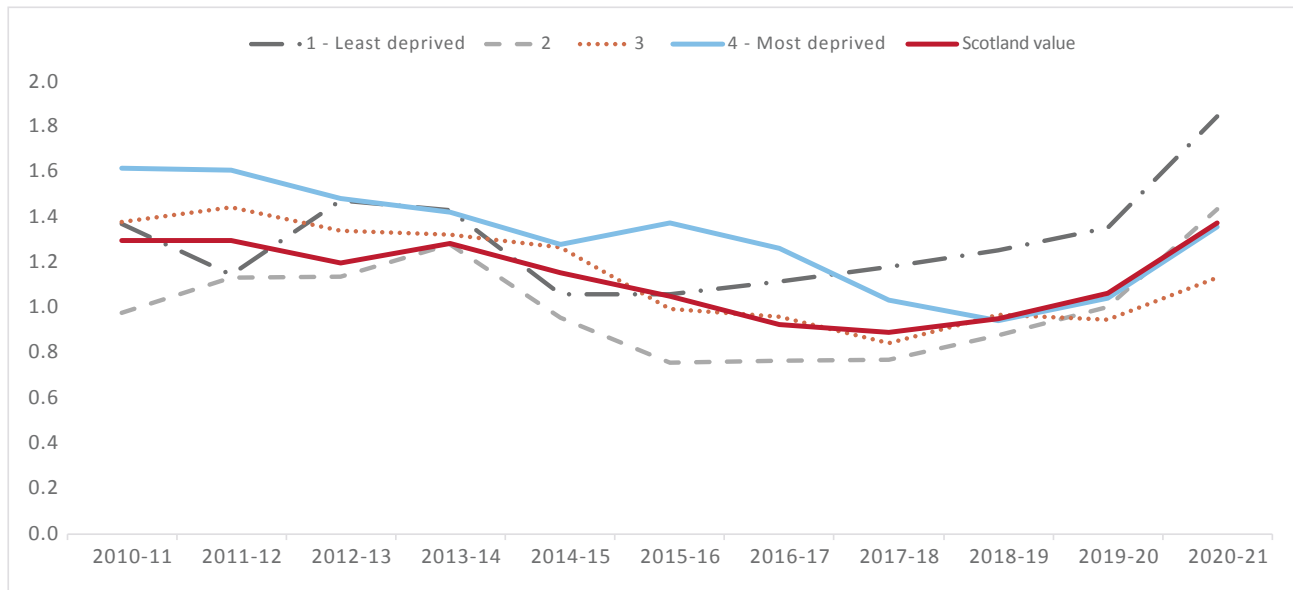
Scotland: 1.4%; council range: 0.4% - 4.4%. Widened variation in the most recent year. Least deprived councils report a higher proportion of rent lost to voids compared to more deprived councils in most recent years (1.8% compared to 1.4%, not statistically significant)

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland +0.3pp; councils: 22 increased and 4 decreased (range: -0.1pp to +2.1pp).

Since 2010/11: Scotland +0.1pp; councils: 14 increased and 12 decreased (range: -1.5pp to +3.9pp). Least deprived councils have increased by 0.5pp compared to 0.3pp in most deprived, not statistically significant

Fig 129: Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids by family group



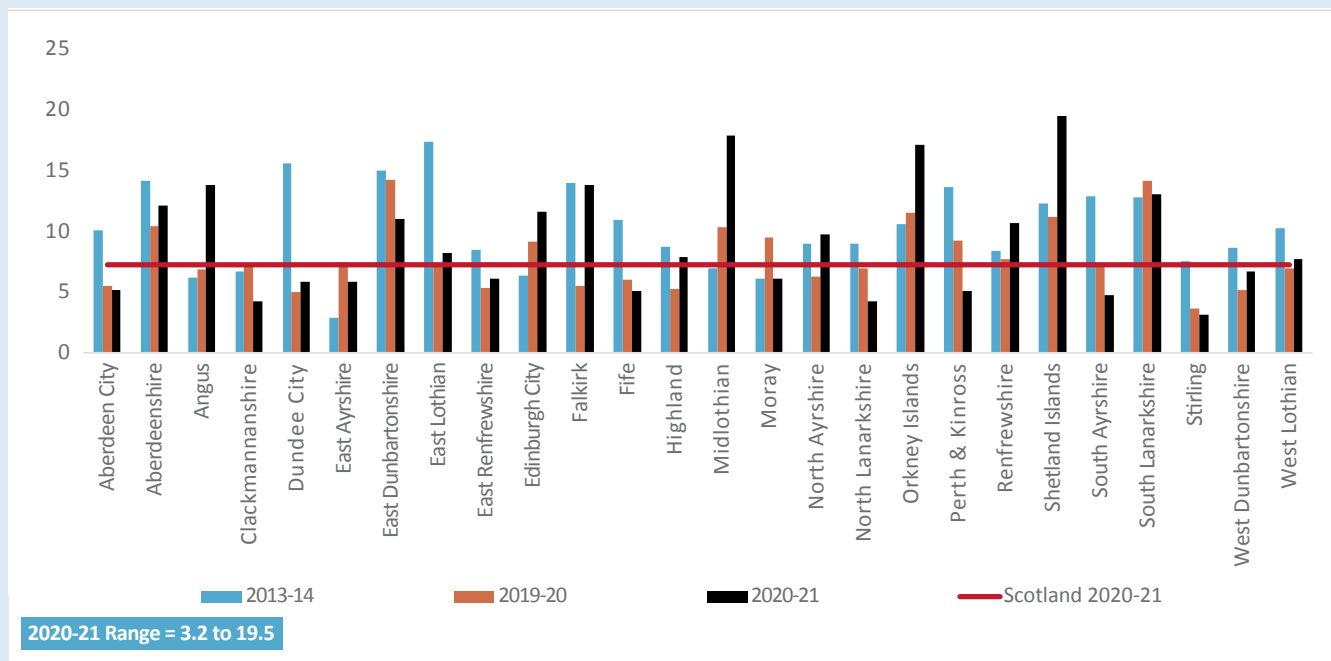
Housing repairs

The average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs has reduced by 28.4% over the period, from 10.2 days in 2013/14 to 7.3 days in 2020/21. During 2020/21, average repair times improved very slightly, reducing by 0.7%. As with rent arrears, the definition and methodology for this measure changed in 2013/14, therefore it is not possible to provide a direct comparison with previous years.

While repair times at a national level have improved, there is significant variation across councils. A third of councils have seen an increase in repair times since 2013/14, and over half have seen repair times increase during 2020/21. In 2020/21, the average repair time ranged from 3.2 days to 19.5 days. Repair times tend to be higher and rising faster in recent years for the least deprived group of councils on average compared to the most deprived (11.0 days compared to 6.5 days). However, there is no statistically significant relationship with deprivation due to variation within the family group.

Overall, these figures suggest the councils continue to manage their stock well in the face of mounting pressures, however future performance should be monitored closely to understand longer term impact of COVID-19.

Fig 130: Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (no. of days)



Source: Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

Note: Missing values represent the six councils who do not provide housing services following transfer to Registered Social Landlords



Local Variation – Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 7.3 days; council range: 3.2 - 19.5 days. Widened variation in the most recent year. Least deprived councils report longer repair times compared to the most deprived councils (11.0 Days compared to 6.5 Days, not statistically significant)

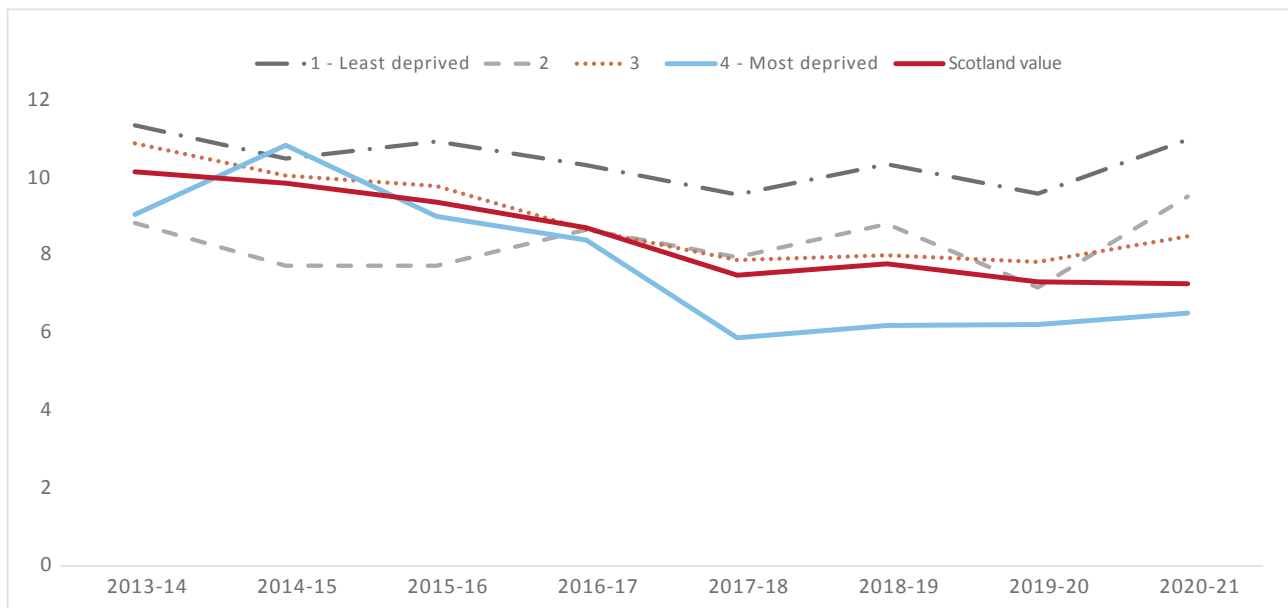
Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -0.7% ; councils: 15 increased and 11 decreased (range: -45% to +150%, -45% to +74% Excluding Outliers). Least deprived councils increased by 14.5% compared to 4.7% for most deprived, not statistically significant.

Since 2013/14: Scotland: -28%; councils: 9 increased and 17 decreased (range: -62% to +157%, -62% to 83% excluding outliers). Least deprived councils reduced by 3.2% compared to 28.1% for the most deprived, not statistically significant.



Fig 131: Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (no. of days) by family group - deprivation



Housing quality

In terms of housing quality, there have been significant improvements over the past 11 years in terms of dwellings meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS) and energy efficiency standards.⁴⁵ 2020/21 however, saw these improving trends either halt or slow for many authorities.

In 2020/21, 90.3% of council dwellings met the SHQS, an increase of 36.7pp from 2010/11, but a reduction of 4.5pp from 2019/20. While almost all councils report an improvement since 2010/11, over half of councils report a decline in 2020/21. Least deprived councils report the sharpest decline, an average fall of 14pp. In 2020/21, variation across councils widened significantly, ranging from 59.9% to 99.1%, with the least deprived councils reporting the lowest levels (80.5% compared to 93.1%). There is however no statistically significant relationship with deprivation due to variation within the family group.

In 2020/21, 86.4% of council dwellings were energy efficient, an increase from 65.2% in 2015/16, and including a 2.3pp increase from 2019/20. Almost all councils report an improving trend, although 4 councils show a reduction in the most recent year. Councils range from 57% to 99%, with higher rates on average for councils with higher levels of deprivation. However, there is no statistically significant relationship with deprivation due to variation within the family group.

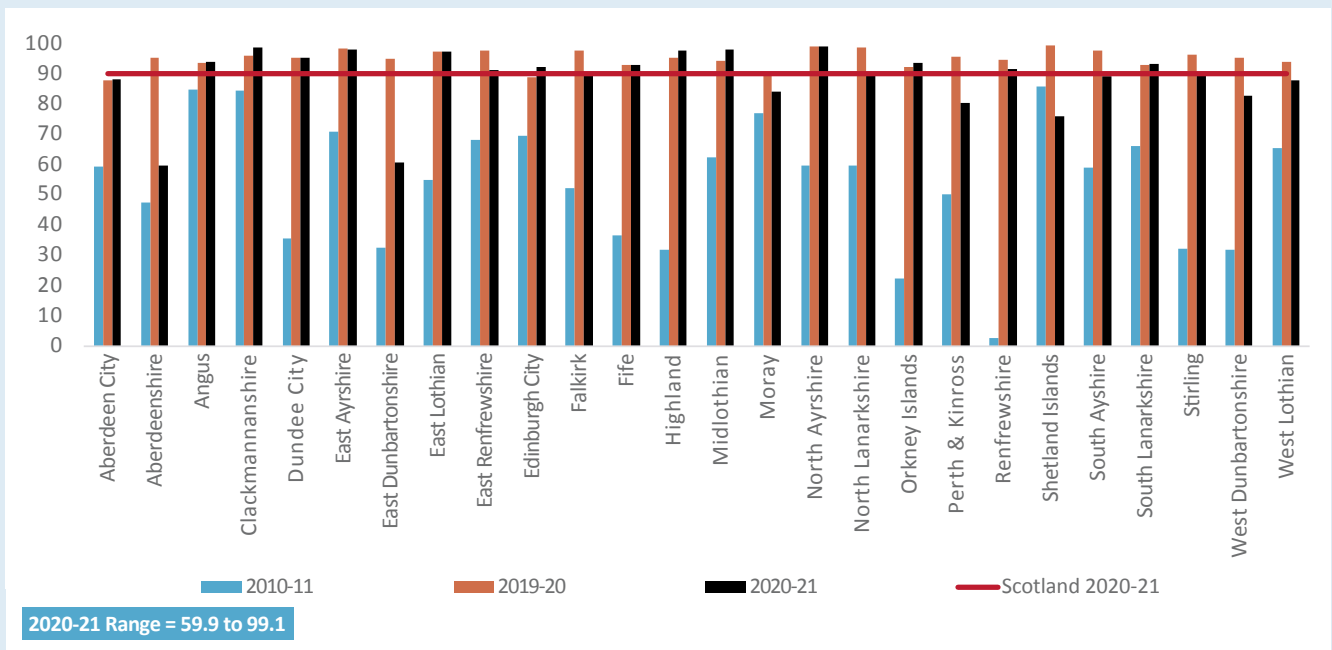
⁴⁵ To reflect new energy efficiency standards, the LGBF indicator has been amended to adopt the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) as a reference, replacing NHER – SAP.



Table 48: Housing quality and energy efficiency (%)

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
% 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	-4.6	36.7
% dwellings that are energy efficient						65.2	71.2	75.3	80.9	84.1	86.4	2.3	21.2

Fig 132: Properties meeting SHQS (%)



Source: Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

Note: Missing values represent the six councils who do not provide housing services following transfer to Registered Social Landlords



Local Variation – Percentage of dwellings meeting SHQS

2020/21 Value

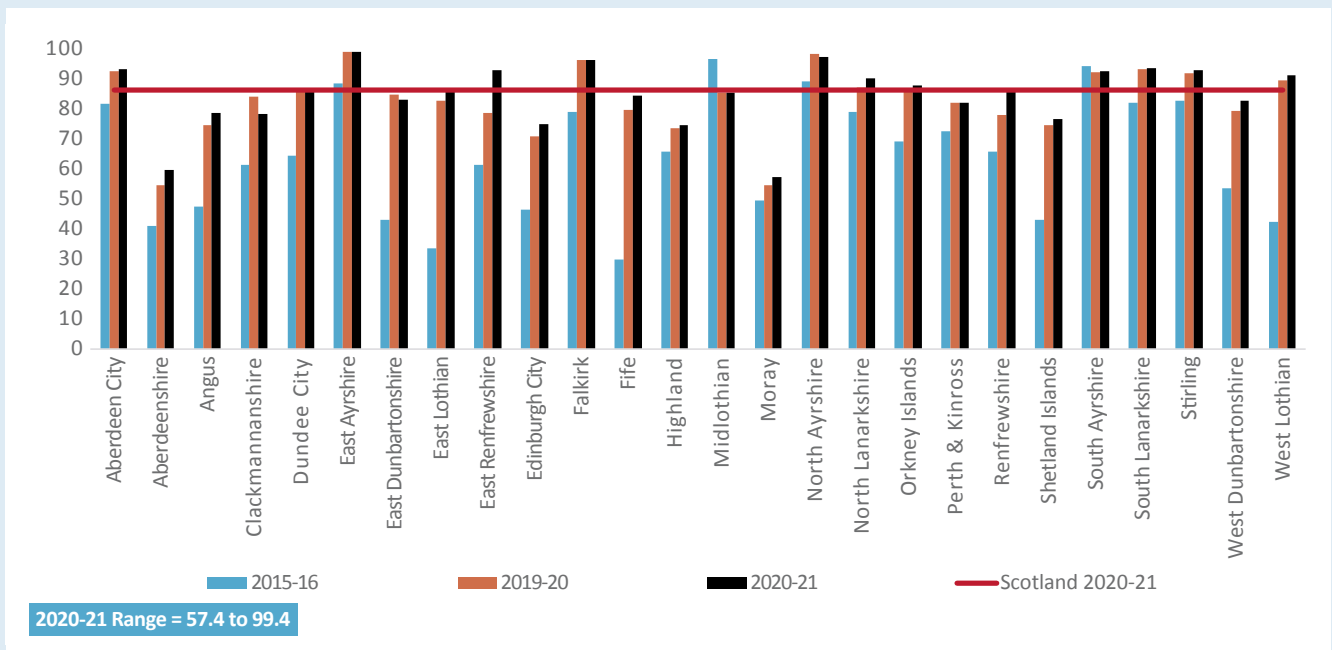
Scotland: 90.3%; council range: 59.9% - 99.1%. Widened variation in the most recent year. Less deprived councils report lower proportion of properties meeting SHQS compared to more deprived councils (80.5% compared to 93.1%, now statistically significant)

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -4.6pp; councils: 11 increased and 15 decreased (range: -35.5pp to +3.8pp). Least deprived councils report the sharpest decline, an average fall of 14pp (compared to -4.4pp)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +36.7pp; councils: 25 increased and 1 decreased (range: -9.6pp to +88.8pp). Least deprived show smaller increase on average (26pp compared to 41pp).

Fig 133: Percentage of council dwellings that are energy efficient



Source: Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

Note: Missing values represent the six councils who do not provide housing services following transfer to Registered Social Landlords



Local Variation – Percentage of council dwellings that are energy efficient

2020/21 Value

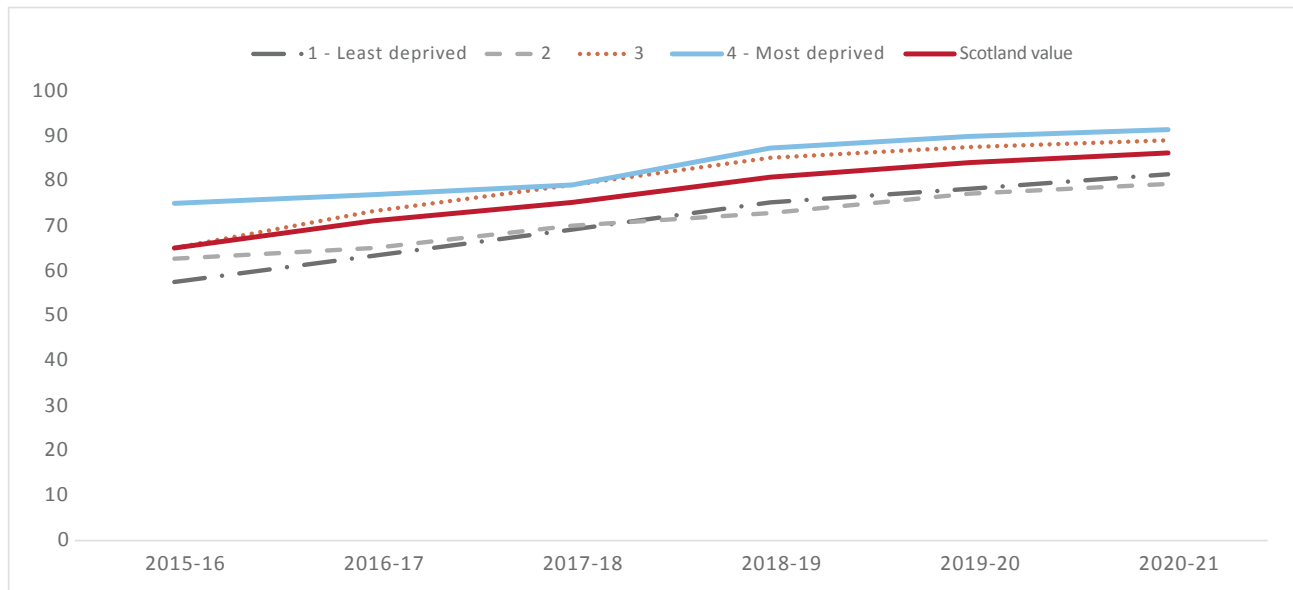
Scotland: 86.4%; council range: 57.4% - 99.4%. Narrowed variation in the most recent year. Most deprived councils report a higher proportion of which are energy efficient compared to more affluent councils (91% compared to 81%, not statistically significant)

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +2.3pp; councils: 22 increased and 4 decreased (range: -5.8pp to +14.3pp).

Since 2015/16: Scotland: +21.2pp; councils: 24 increased and 2 decreased (range: -11.3pp to +54.7pp).

Fig 134: Percentage of council dwellings that are energy efficient by family group - deprivation



It is important to note that the sources used within this publication are not based on the Scottish Government data sources (Housing Revenue Account statistics and Scottish Housing Condition Survey) rather they are based on data collected by the Scottish Housing Regulator. There will be differences between the two sets of data. For example, the data published here reports only on council provision rather than provision by all registered social landlords. Additionally, there are differences in the SHQS methodology between SHR and SHCS. For example, abeyances and exemptions are not taken into account by the SHCS as it is not feasible to collect this kind of information in the survey.



Economic Development and Planning

Investing in economic development and employment opportunities results not just in a positive economic outcome but can typically also lead to improvements across a wider range of social outcomes and reductions. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs) assigned a high level of strategic priority to local economic growth, job creation and tackling unemployment. This focus will become ever greater as Local Government responds to the challenges arising from the pandemic.

During 2020/21, although there are local variations, Economic Development services across Scotland have been working at maximum capacity to deliver COVID grant schemes on behalf of the Scottish Government. Despite high demands and enquiry levels, Local Authorities have successfully awarded millions of pounds to businesses allowing them to stay afloat until such time they can again operate. These awards have been a real lifeline for thousands of businesses and the failure rate would be far higher if it were not for these awards.

As restrictions ease and businesses look to recover to previous levels of activity, Local Authorities will focus recovery efforts on areas which are strategically important and require the most support. Town centres, tourism, and rising unemployment are particular areas of concern. No One Left Behind, the local employability model launched in April 2019, will be critical in shaping local governments response to increasing unemployment and poverty levels in the wake of COVID-19.

Investment in economic development and tourism

As with other service areas, the framework includes an indicator to capture the amount that each council is spending per capita. This will provide important context when considering performance outputs and outcomes. This measure provides a measure of each council's investment in economic development and tourism services, both in terms of capital projects and revenue costs.

Table 49: Investment in economic development and tourism per 1,000 population - (£)

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
103,972	93,014	87,355	84,923	80,530	73,942	91,682	103,294	117,461	109,753	87,793	-20.0%	-15.6%

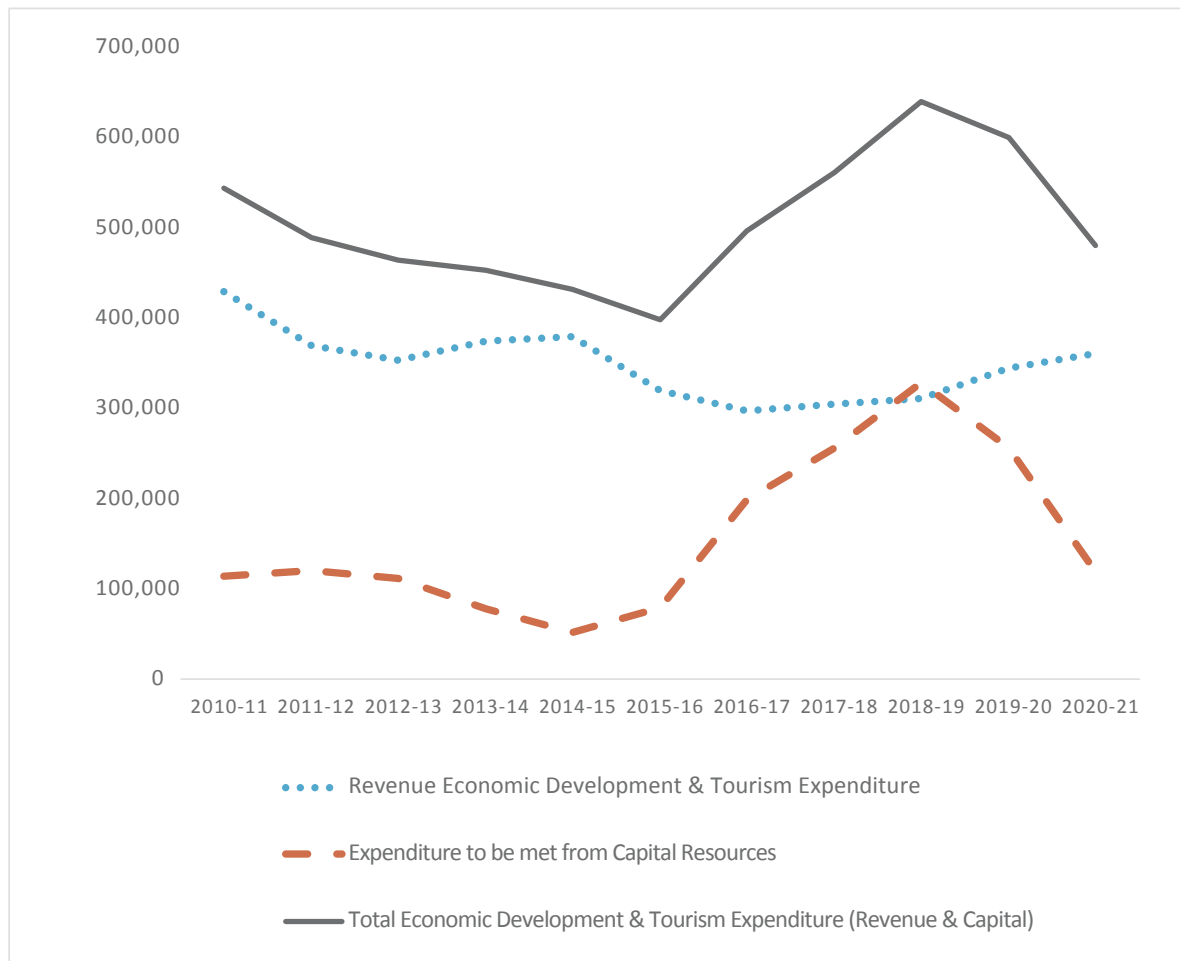
There has been a 15.6% decrease in economic development and tourism investment between 2010/11 and 2020/21 from £103,972 to £87,793 per 1,000. This reflects a real terms reduction in expenditure of 11.6%, against a population growth of 4.7%. In 2020/21, investment per 1,000 has reduced by 20%, the largest reduction recorded since the benchmarking framework began. This trend is not universal, with just under half of all councils reporting an increase in investment in 2020/21, counter to the national trend.

This measure combines the costs of Economic Development and Tourism, with Economic Development accounting for over 90% of expenditure. Closer analysis reveals the scale of reductions within these service areas is markedly different. Across the period, Economic Development expenditure has fallen by 9.1% in real terms, while Tourism has reduced by 45.2%. In 2020/21, Economic Development expenditure fell by 19.6%, while Tourism fell by 27.8%.

There has been significant capital investment in Economic Development and Tourism across this period as part of the current regional growth development programmes, including the Cities deals. Prior to COVID, between 2010/11 and 2019/20, revenue funding had reduced by 19.6%, and capital funding had grown by 122% (from £114 million to £255 million). In 2020/21, the trend altered markedly, with revenue funding growing by 4.7% and capital funding falling by 53.3%. As a result, in 2020/21, capital expenditure as a proportion of total economic expenditure reduced sharply, from 42% to 25% of total economic development expenditure.



Fig 135: Economic development and tourism expenditure - revenue and capital (£)



Source: council supplied expenditure figures

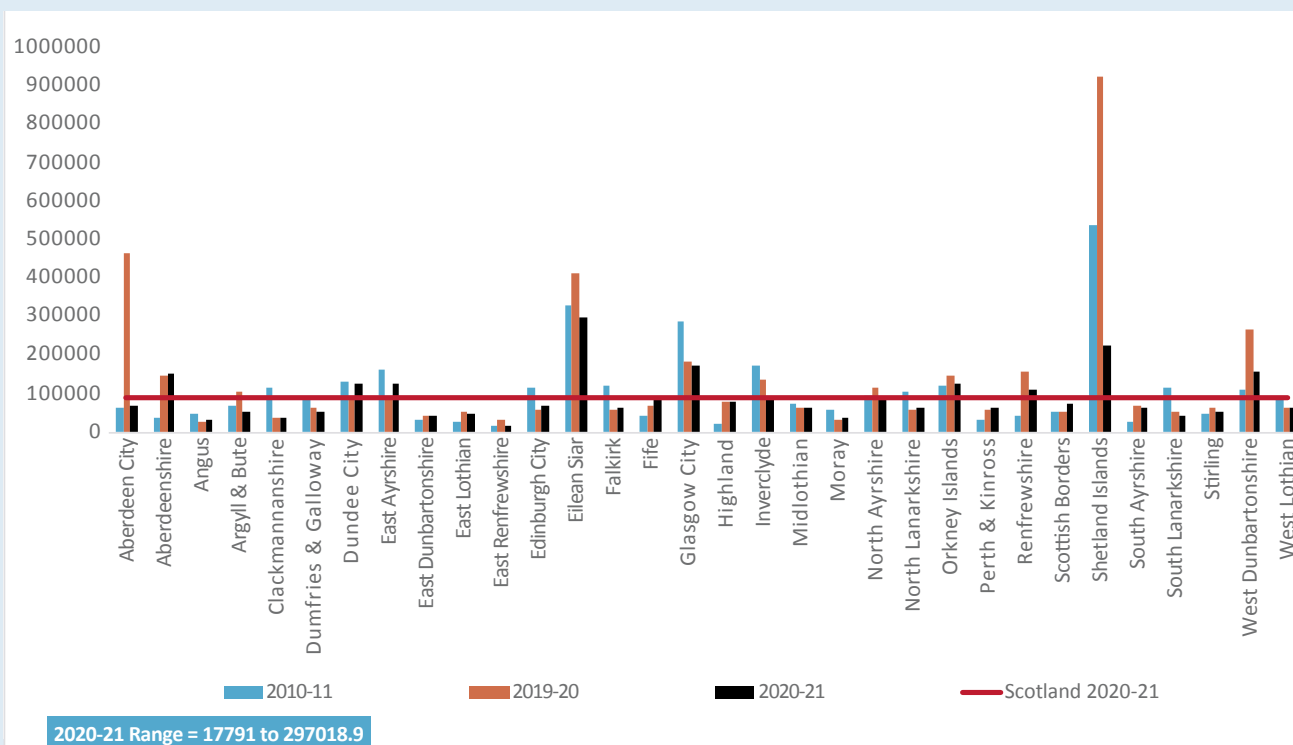
Future post-Brexit uncertainty may impact adversely on Economic development funding. Currently, every £1 of council funding invested in economic development, levers an additional £1.63.⁴⁶ EU funding previously made up a significant element of this. The demise of EU funding for the UK and its replacement by a, yet to be fully defined, 'Shared Prosperity Fund'⁴⁷ could affect council investment returns in this area, including the outputs/outcomes returned for our investment.

The graph below shows the significant variation between councils in economic development and tourism investment per 1,000. In 2020/21 investment ranged from £17,791 to £297,019 per 1,000. Variation has narrowed significantly in 2020/21 as a result of reductions in capital expenditure. There is no significant relationship with rurality, deprivation or size of council.

⁴⁶ <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/products-and-services/consultancy-and-support/economic-outcomes-programme/slaed-indicators-framework>

⁴⁷ <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8527>

Fig 136: Investment in economic development and tourism per 1,000 population (£)



Source: council supplied expenditure figures



Local Variation – Investment in economic development and tourism per 1,000 population

2020/21 Value

Scotland: £87,794; council range: £17,791 - £297,019. Narrowing variation in the most recent year, with no systematic relationship with deprivation, rurality or authority size.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +20%. councils: 14 increased and 18 decreased (range: -86% to +53%).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -16%. councils: 14 increased and 18 decreased (range: -67% to +320%).

Employment

The second measure is the 'percentage of total unemployed people in an area assisted into work from council funded/operated employability programmes'. All councils participate in employment-related support – either via direct provision and/or via funding delivery by third parties. Scottish and Local Government entered into a partnership agreement for employability in December 2018 with funding allocated to all 32 local authorities to deliver all-age employability support through No One Left behind from April 2019.

Employability support is often delivered in partnership and this measure seeks to capture data on



employability services where the council has either directly delivered and/or funded the intervention. The measure is an indication of the proportion of unemployed people in a council area that are participating in employability responses led or supported by the council, and in this sense, assesses the reach and penetration of the intervention. Currently this measure utilises part of the data submitted by councils as part of their annual Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development group (SLAED) return.

In 2020/21, the Scotland average for the percentage of unemployed people assisted into work from council funded/operated employability programmes fell sharply from 12.7% to 6.0% of the total unemployed. This represents a 27.9% reduction in the number of unemployed people assisted into work, alongside a 41.7% increase in the unemployment count. This trend is not universal, with three authorities reporting an increase in the percentage assisted into work in 2020/21.

Table 50: Percentage of unemployed people assisted into work from council funded employability programmes

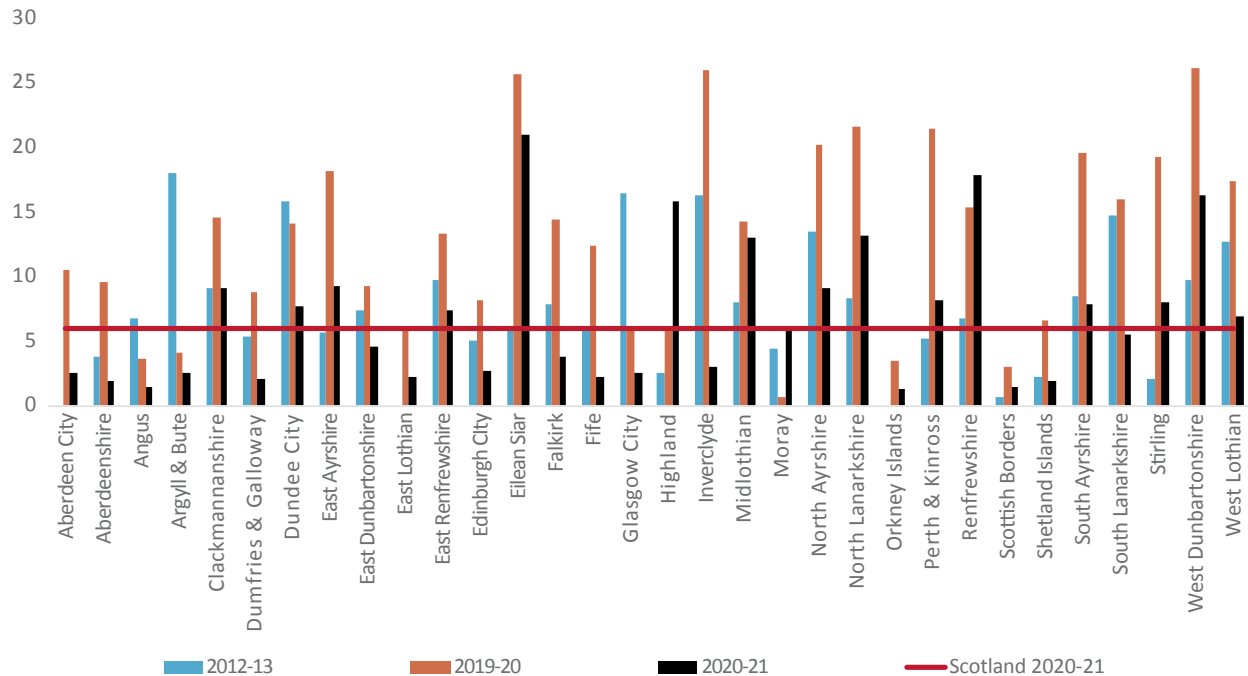
2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2012-13 to 2020-21
9.1	12.5	14.1	14.1	14.0	14.3	12.6	12.7	6.0	-6.7	-3.1

The COVID-19 pandemic risks widening further the divide in labour market outcomes for the most vulnerable groups who face numerous employment obstacles, such as limited work experience, care obligations, low skills or health limitations. This client group require more intensive support and may take longer to re-enter the labour market, and now face increased competition as a result of the sharp increase in newly unemployed arising from the pandemic. An additional challenge is that those sectors which were worst affected by restrictions are those in which people are most likely to enter into employment.

Employment services also noted a drop in engagement with individuals during COVID-19, as many chose to opt out of telephony and/or digital services whilst offices were closed. Many individuals supported by employment services have caring responsibilities and health conditions so are less able to interact with services.

The level of variation between councils narrowed significantly in 2020/21, with councils now ranging from 1.2% to 21%. Rates tend to be higher for the most deprived councils compared to the least deprived (10.2% compared to 3.8%), however this is no longer statistically significant following the sharp decrease observed by most councils in 2020/21.

Fig 137: Percentage of unemployed people assisted into work from council funded employability programmes



Source: Model based estimates for unemployment, Office for National Statistics (ONS); SLAED Indicators Framework

Note: Missing values reflect no SLAED return for that year



Local Variation – Percentage of unemployed people assisted into work from council funded-operated employability programmes

2020/21 Value

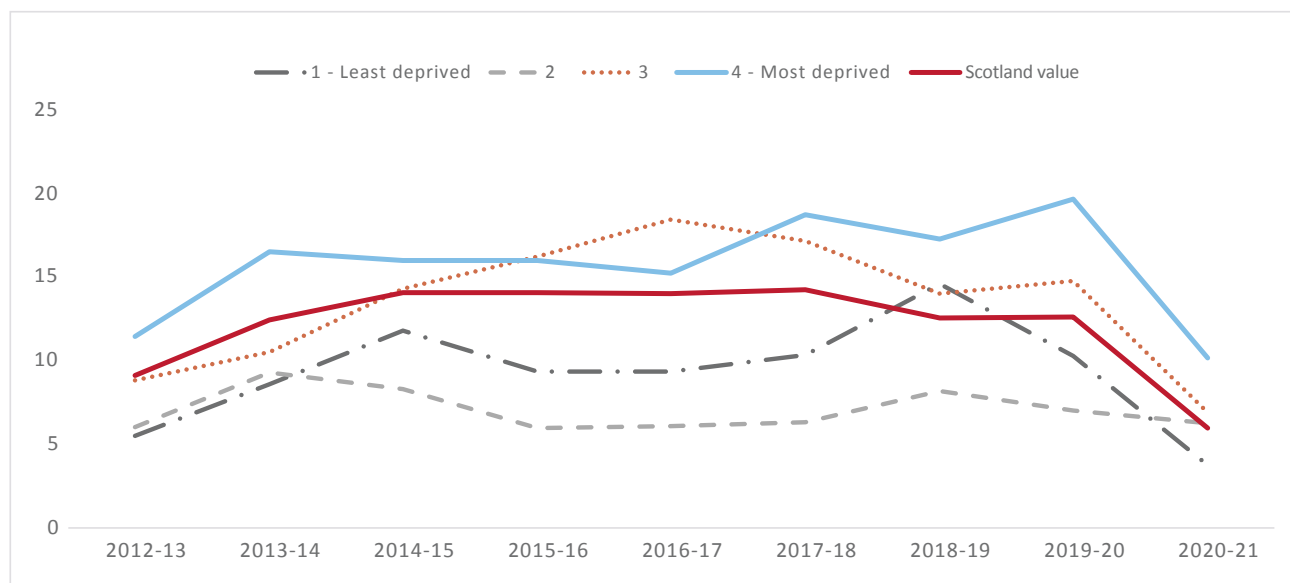
Scotland: 4.1%; council range: 1.3% - 21%. Narrowing variation in the most recent year. Higher proportion in most deprived councils compared to least deprived councils (10.2% compared to 3.8%, no longer statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -6.7pp. councils: 3 increased and 29 decreased (range: -23pp to +9.9pp).

Since 2012/13: Scotland: -3.2pp. councils: 12 increased and 20 decreased (range: -15.5pp to +15pp).

Fig 138: Percentage of unemployed people assisted into work from council funded employability programmes by family group - deprivation



Two new employment measures have been introduced in 2020/21 to represent the importance of this area in understanding the impact of COVID and in supporting recovery. These two measures are Claimant Count and Claimant Count for 16-25 year olds.

In the early stages of pandemic restrictions there was high concern over job losses with many analysts forecasting 12% unemployment rates. Unemployment figures to date have shown the losses to be lower than forecast, peaking at 5%, which many attribute to the UK government furlough scheme. Currently many sectors are experiencing labour shortages and wages are rising sharply. Unemployment rates are higher in the under 25s age group and the coronavirus restrictions have impacted sectors associated with this age group more heavily than other sectors.

As a key policy area, Local Authorities are currently working to deliver a range of employment support programmes many of which are aimed at the under 25s. These measures will help track progress of such schemes and wider employability interventions including No-One Left Behind and Young Persons Guarantee. This will also provide essential context for authorities in relation to patterns of vulnerability in local communities and demand for council services.

Claimant count

Claimant count has been standardised in the framework as a % of working age population and as a % of 16-24 population. In 2020/21, Claimant count as a % of the working age population increased sharply from 3.3% to 6.1%, it's highest level since the start of the benchmarking framework. In the 10 years prior to COVID-19, rates reduced between 2010/11 to 2015/16, but had been increasing prior to the pandemic.

In 2020/21, most of the increase occurred between March and May 2020 in the early days of the pandemic, and since then the claimant count has remained relatively stable. Usually, trends in the number of people claiming unemployment benefits in the UK closely follow trends in unemployment. However, following the start of the pandemic, the claimant count has more than doubled but the rise in unemployment has been much smaller. This suggests that people who do not classify themselves as being unemployed may be claiming unemployment related benefits. This may be because:



- They have a job but were temporarily away from work due to the pandemic.
- They are in employment but are also able to claim unemployment benefits. People in employment can claim unemployment related benefits if their income is below a set threshold, and the job retention scheme and a reduction in working hours means this group has grown.

While all 32 council areas saw an increase in Claimant count in 2020/21, there is significant variation between councils. In 2020/21, the range across councils is 2.9% to 8.3%, with the most deprived council areas seeing significantly higher and faster rising levels (7.1% compared to 4.2%)

Claimant count as a percentage of the 16-24 population follows a similar pattern, although is consistently higher than for working age population. In 2020/21, the percentage increased sharply from 3.9% to 7.2%, the highest level since the start of the benchmarking framework. In the 10 years prior to COVID, rates reduced between 2010/11 to 2016/17, but had been increasing prior to the pandemic.

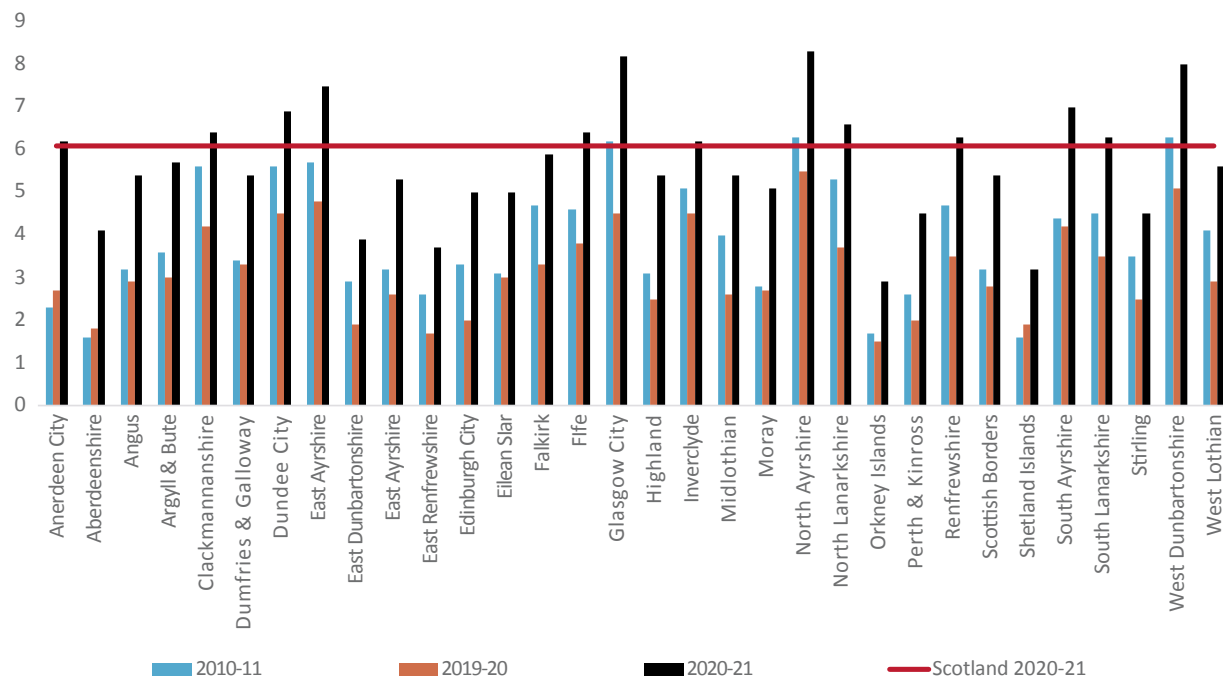
Payroll data shows that 70% of employee job losses between March 2020 and May 2021 in the UK were among under 25s. Much of this disproportionate impact on young people is driven by the fact that under-25s are more likely to work in sectors like hospitality, retail and leisure. Coronavirus is also likely to disrupt career progression for those early in their career. Early career wage growth is driven by workers moving into higher-paying occupations and because of reductions in vacancy postings (during the pandemic) and increases in layoffs, this has become much more difficult.

As with working age population, all 32 council areas saw an increase in claimant count for 16-24 population in 2020/21. There is significant variation between councils, with rates ranging from 4.4% to 10.6%, with the most deprived council areas seeing significantly higher and faster rising levels (8.4% compared to 5.4%).

Table 51: Claimant count as a percentage of working age population

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
Claimant Count as a % 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	2.8	1.9
Claimant Count as a % 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	3.3	0.3

Fig 139: Claimant count as a percentage of working age population



Local Variation – Claimant count as a percentage of working age population

2020/21 Value

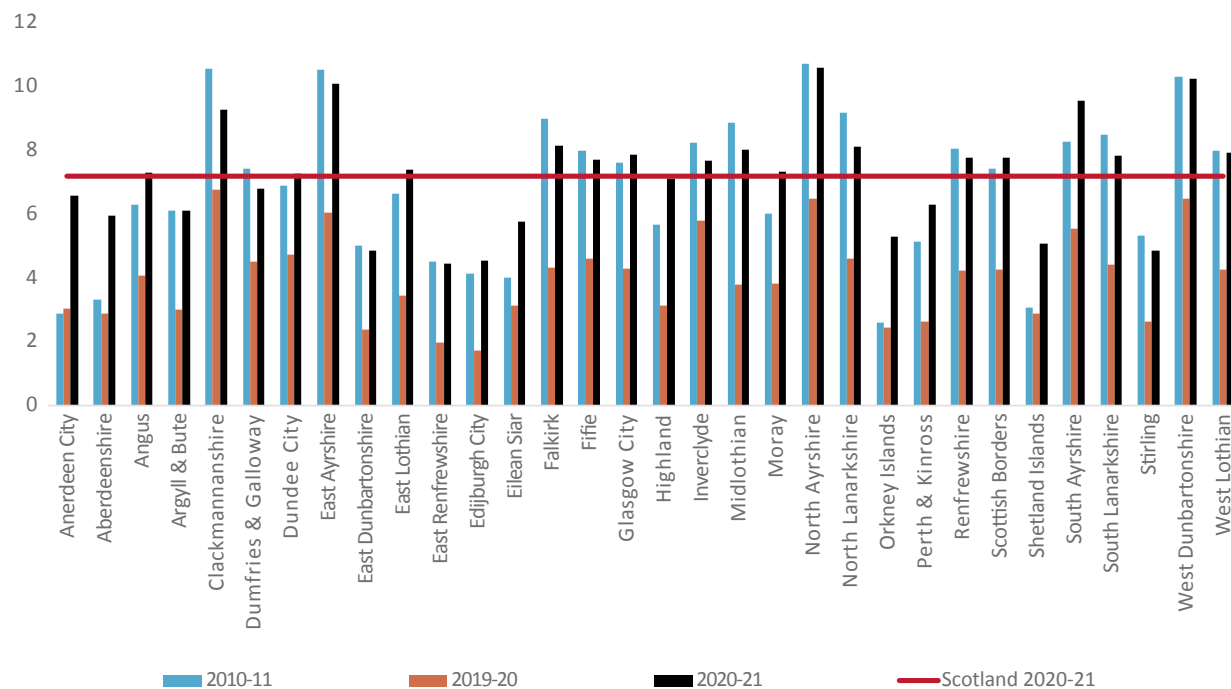
Scotland: 6.1%; council range: 2.9% to 8.3%. Widening variation in the most recent year. Significantly higher proportion in the most deprived councils compared to least deprived councils (7.1% compared to 4.2%).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +2.8pp. councils: all 32 increased (range: 1.3pp to 3.7pp).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +1.9pp. councils: all 32 increased (range: 0.8pp to 3.9pp).

Fig 140: Claimant count as a percentage of 16-24 population



Local Variation – Claimant count as a percentage of 16-24 population

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 7.2%; council range: 4.4% - 10.6%. Widening variation in the most recent year. Significantly higher proportion in the most deprived councils compared to least deprived councils (8.4% compared to 5.4%).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +3.3 pp. councils: all 32 increased (range: 1.9pp to 4.2pp).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +0.3pp. councils: 15 increased and 17 decreased (range: -1.3pp to +3.7pp).

Business support

To capture wider economic development and reflect the significant investment in business development and support (e.g. Business Gateway), the benchmarking framework includes the number of Business Gateway start-ups per 10,000 population. Prior to COVID-19, the start-up rate had slowed from 19.0 in 2013/14 to 16.4 in 2019/20. In 2020/21, start up rates reduced significantly, from 16.4 to 11.2. This trend is not universal, with just under a quarter of councils reporting an increase in 2020/21 counter to trend.

The number of new start-ups has been affected by COVID-19 although not as much as initially expected. In the early part of the year the number of start-ups fell dramatically as large parts of the economy shut down. There remains a lot of uncertainty which has increased the risk of starting a business. More recently



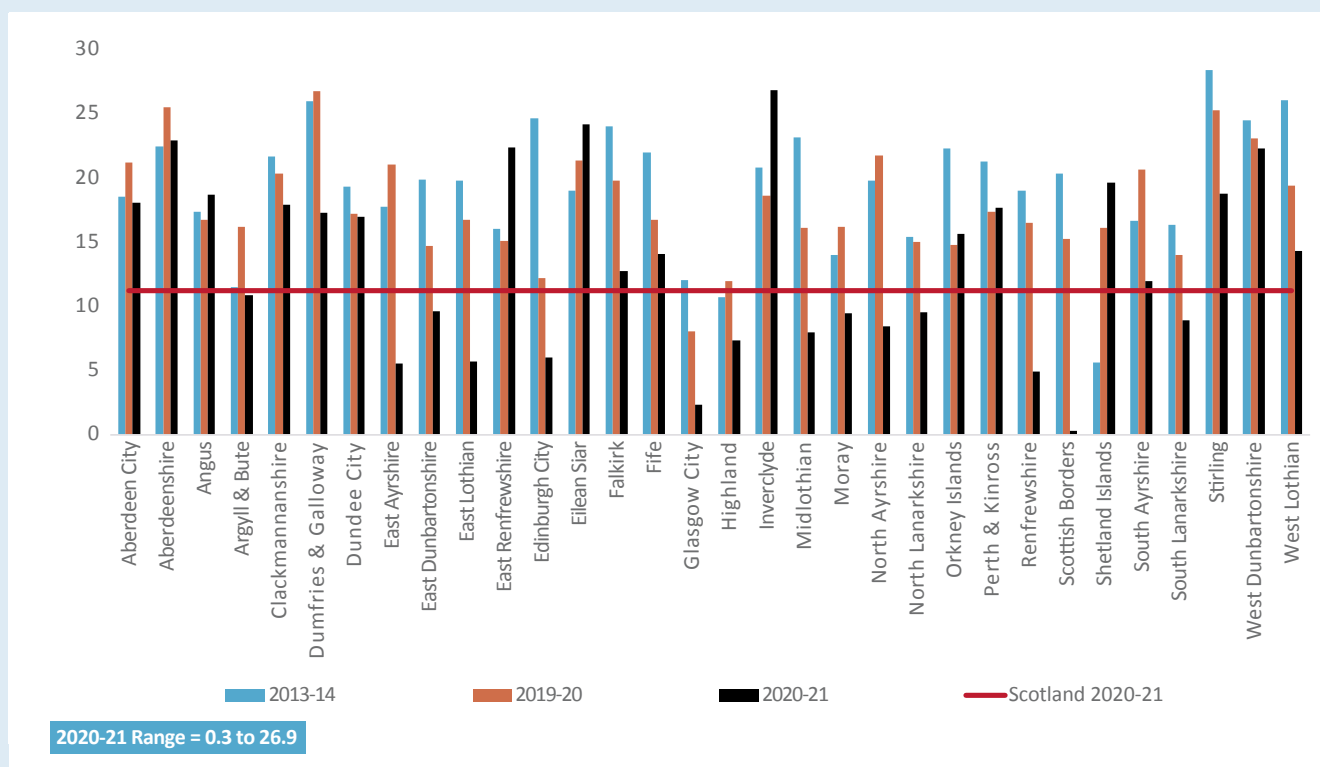
labour shortages and disrupted supply chains have increased barriers for business start-ups. There were however some impacts of the pandemic which resulted in people looking to start new businesses including time to plan during furlough, people looking for more flexibility in their working life and also the correlation between joblessness and start up levels. For councils who deliver this service in-house, work on grants and advice/ support for established businesses during the pandemic will also have affected the time available to engage with new start-ups. There are also longer-term trends around start-ups which will be important in understanding this data. Many councils are moving resource away from start-ups to growth businesses which have a greater impact on the economy (note: there is a significant growth in availability of start-up resources available online).

Table 52: Number of Business Gateway start-ups per 10,000 population

2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2013-14 to 2020-21
19.0	18.9	16.9	16.6	16.8	16.7	16.4	11.2	-31.8%	-41.2%

The graph below shows the significant variation which exists across councils, which has widened significantly in 2020/21. In the most recent year, start-up rates ranged from 5.4 to 27.1 with no systematic relationship with rurality, deprivation or size of council.

Fig 141: Number of Business Gateway start-ups per 10,000 population



Source: SLAED Indicators Framework; Annual Population Survey, ONS



Local Variation – No of Business Gateway start-ups per 10,000 population

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 11.2; council range: 0.4 to 26.9. Widening variation in the most recent year, with no systematic relationship with rurality, deprivation or size of council.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -32%. councils: 7 increased and 25 decreased (range: -98% to +49%).

Since 2013/14: Scotland: -41%. councils: 6 increased and 26 decreased (range: -98% to +251%).

Gross Value Added

As a strong tool in comparing the strength, productivity and resilience of a local economy, Gross Value Added (GVA) has been included within the LGBF to help monitor the economic recovery in the coming years post pandemic. There is a recognition, that while productivity is important, future focus in this area should reflect the Wellbeing economy and community wealth building and work continues in these areas in relation to measurement.

In the meantime, GVA will help us explore and understand the impact of pandemic restrictions, supply side



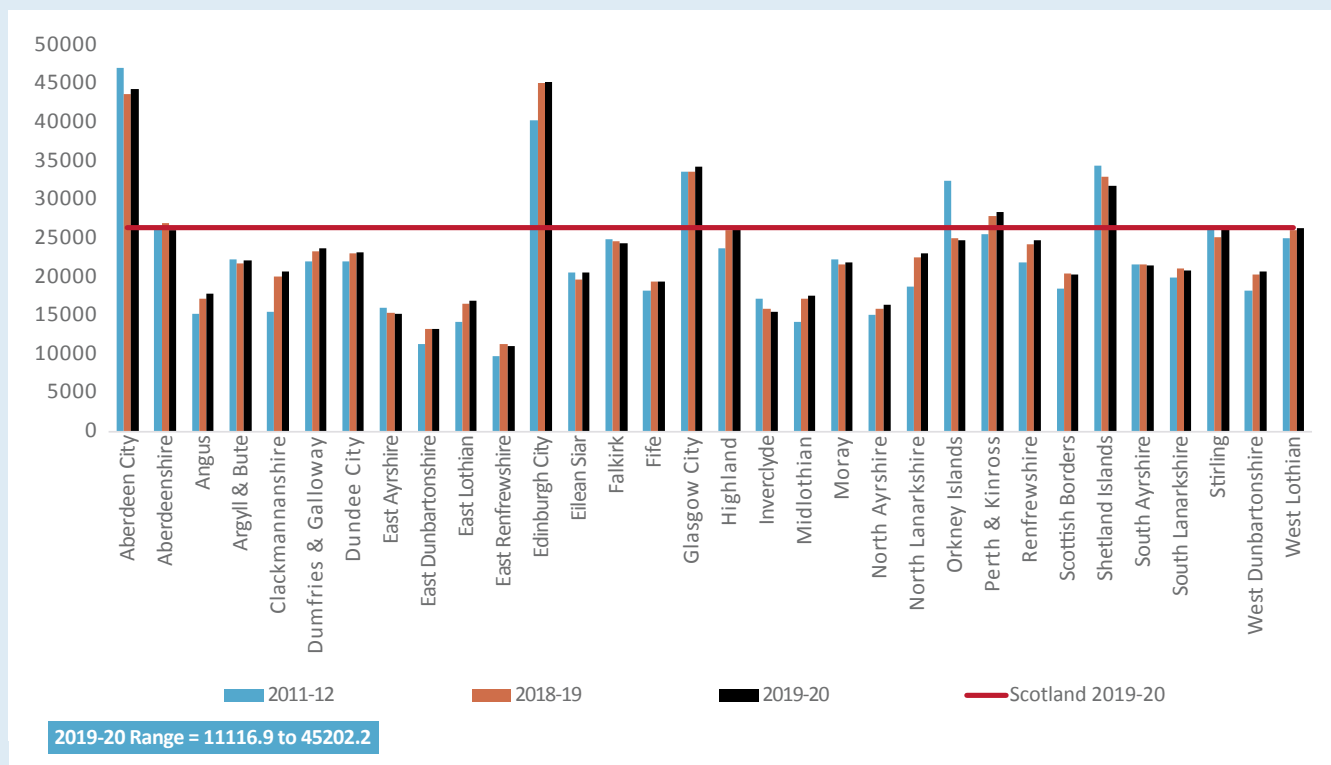
issues and labour availability. Sector variation will mean some local authorities are more impacted than others, for example, those areas reliant on hospitality and tourism sectors initially suffered greatly from pandemic restrictions.

Data is not yet available for 2020/21. Data covering the period prior to COVID-19 shows a 6.9% increase in GVA between 2011/12 and 2019/20. This increasing trend is not evident in all council areas, with third of council areas seeing GVA decline over the period. There is significant variation in GVA across council areas, ranging from £11,117 to £45,202. There is no systematic relationship with deprivation, rurality or council size.

Table 53: Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita

2011 -12	2012 -13	2013 -14	2014 -15	2015 -16	2016 -17	2017 -18	2018 -19	2019 -20	2020 -21	% Change 2018-19 to 2019-20	% Change 2011-12 to 2019-20
24,725	24,775	25,430	26,024	25,934	25,839	26,192	26,180	26,420	dna	0.9%	6.9%

Fig 142: Gross Value Added per capita



Source: SLAED Indicators Framework; Annual Population Survey, ONS



Local Variation – Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita

2019/20 Value

Scotland: £26,420; council range: £11,117 - £45,202. Narrowing variation in the most recent year, with no systematic relationship with deprivation, rurality or council size.

Change Over Time

In 2019/20: Scotland: +0.9%. councils: 21 increased and 11 decreased (range: -3.4% to +5.6%).

Since 2011/12: Scotland: +6.9%. councils: 22 increased and 10 decreased (range: -24% to +34%).



Procurement

Procurement spend in Local Government accounts for a significant proportion of total spend. The proportion of this spend which is targeted at local enterprises is an important indicator of the progress councils are making in delivering on their standing commitment to invest in their local economies and create employment.

Table 54: Proportion of procurement spent on local enterprises

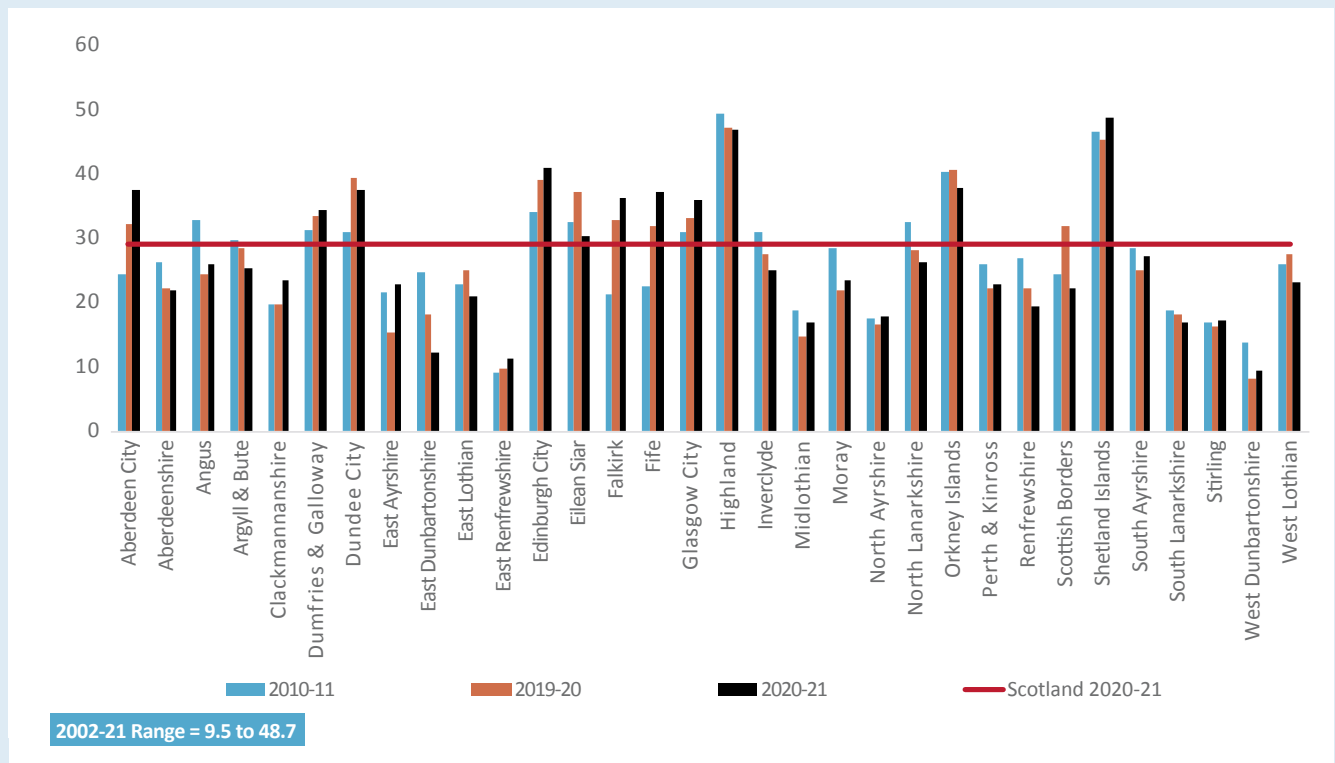
2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
27.2	26.2	27.2	26.9	27.5	25.4	26.5	27.4	28.7	28.5	29.1	0.6	1.9

Procurement spend on local enterprises has increased from 27.2% in 2010/11 to 29.1% in 2020/21. Given the longer-term pressures on council budgets this is a positive outcome as it suggests that the drive to reduce costs has not resulted in local enterprises being displaced by national suppliers of goods and services. This may reflect continuing investment in council local supplier development activity and the council funded national Supplier Development Programme.

Local authorities spend almost 50% of their total budget annually on procurement. In the COVID-19 crisis, it is crucial that this money delivers the maximum benefit for communities, whether for social care, or as one of the key economic levers through which the local economy is to be restarted. As councils face increases in costs and staff and supply shortages, it will be important to closely monitor the impact on this measure.

The current trend in local procurement spend is not universal. Around a half of councils have seen their local procurement spend decrease since 2010/11, and in 2020/21. There is significant variation across councils in relation to procurement spend, ranging from 9.5% to 48.7%. The Islands and rural authorities report higher procurement spend on local enterprises than other authorities, with Island authorities all spending more than 30% locally. Rural authorities on average however have seen a reduction in 2020/21, counter to other authorities.

Fig 143: Percentage of procurement spent on local enterprises



Source: Scottish Government Procurement Hub



Local Variation – Proportion of procurement spend spent on local enterprises

2020/21 Value

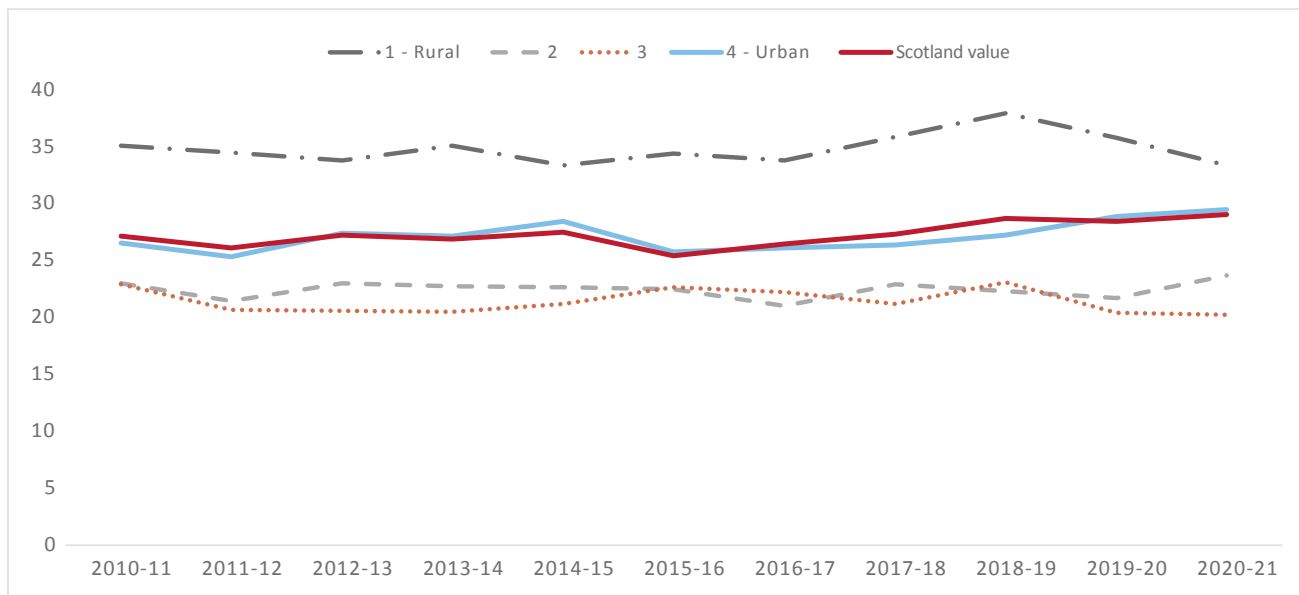
Scotland: 29.1%; council range: 9.5% - 48.7%. Widening variation in the most recent year. Higher proportion in rural (and island) councils compared to urban councils (33.5% compared to 29.5%, not statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +0.6pp. councils: 18 increased and 14 decreased (range: -9.9pp to +7.4pp).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +1.9pp. councils: 13 increased and 19 decreased (range: -12.6pp to +14.9pp).

Fig 144: Percentage of procurement spent on local enterprises by family group - rurality



Planning

Although spend on planning accounts for a relatively small amount of overall spend, this is a strategically important area in terms of the future development and use of land in our towns, cities and countryside. An efficient and well-functioning planning service plays an important role in facilitating sustainable economic growth, delivering high quality development in the right places, and promoting health and wellbeing within sustainable and thriving places.

The number of planning applications determined, and the decision times were impacted on by restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From mid-March 2020 planning application processing was impacted by the move to home working, restrictions on travel and site access, reduced availability of agents and consultees, and staffing and resourcing issues due to the impact of the COVID. This resulted in a notable reduction in the number of applications processed and decided during the first two quarters of 2020/21. This impact continued in the last two quarters of 2020/21.

Two indicators are included here. A measure of spend on planning and business standards which is standardised per planning application and the average time taken to process local business and industry planning applications.

Cost of planning and building standards per application

The cost of planning and building standards services is standardised per planning application. This measure includes costs of both planning and building standards services but does not include the environmental services element.

The cost of planning and building standards per application has increased from £4,446 in 2010/11 to £5,044 in 2020/21, a real terms growth of 13.4%. Although there have been fluctuations across the period, the trend represents a 28.8% reduction in gross expenditure (range: -75% to +120%) and a 37.2% reduction in planning applications since 2010/11.



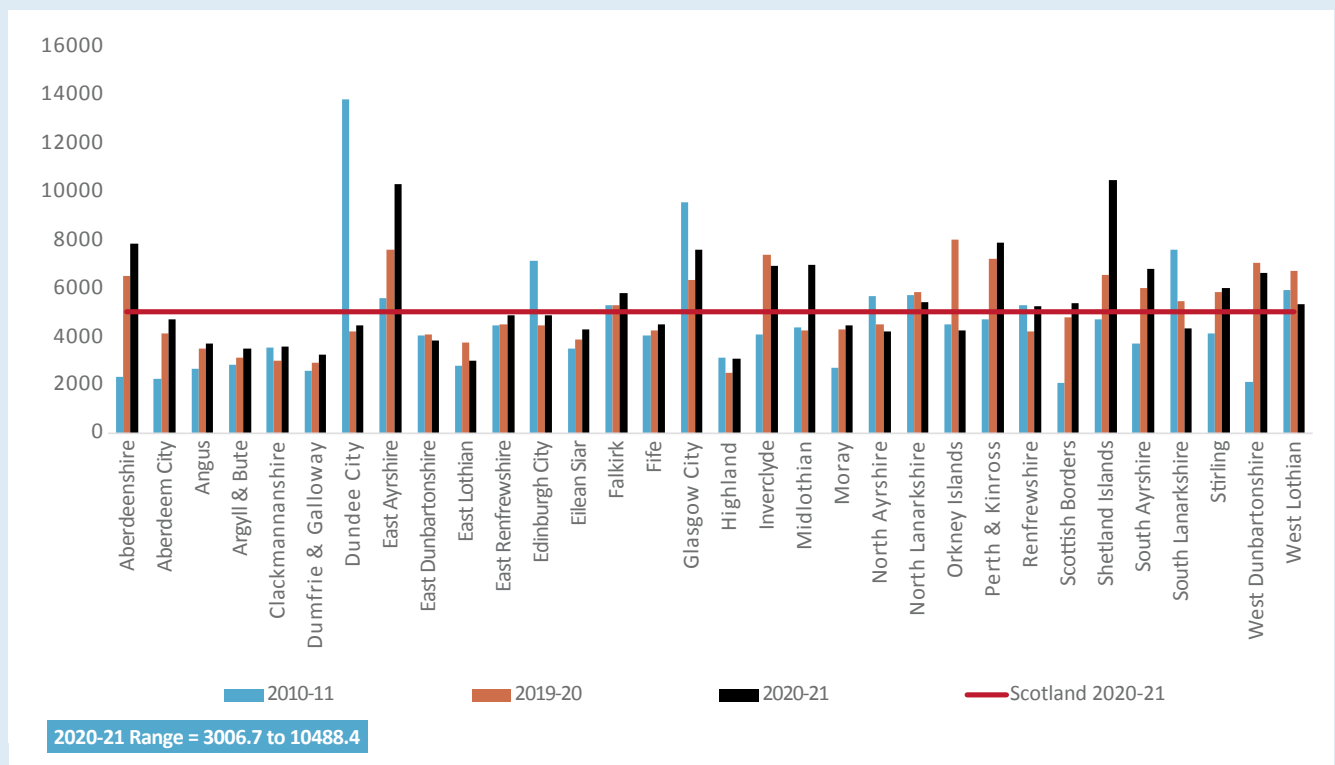
Table 55: Cost of planning and building standards per planning application - (£)

2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
4,446	4,569	5,992	4,021	3,945	4,643	4,339	4,505	4,861	4,736	5,044	6.5%	13.4%

In 2020/21, costs have increased by 6.5%, reflecting a 5.2% reduction in gross expenditure and an 11.0% reduction in planning applications. This trend however is not universal, with just under a third of councils reporting reduced planning costs. During this time, a small number of authorities have seen their planning applications increase and around a third of councils report increasing expenditure on planning.

There is substantial and fluctuating variation in planning costs across Scotland, ranging from £3,007 to £10,488 in 2020/21. While urban authorities previously spent more on average than rural and semi-urban authorities, this difference is no longer statistically significant.

Fig 145: Cost of planning and building standards per planning application (£)



Source: Planning Performance Statistics, Scottish Government; council supplied expenditure figures



Local Variation – Cost per planning application

2020/21 Value

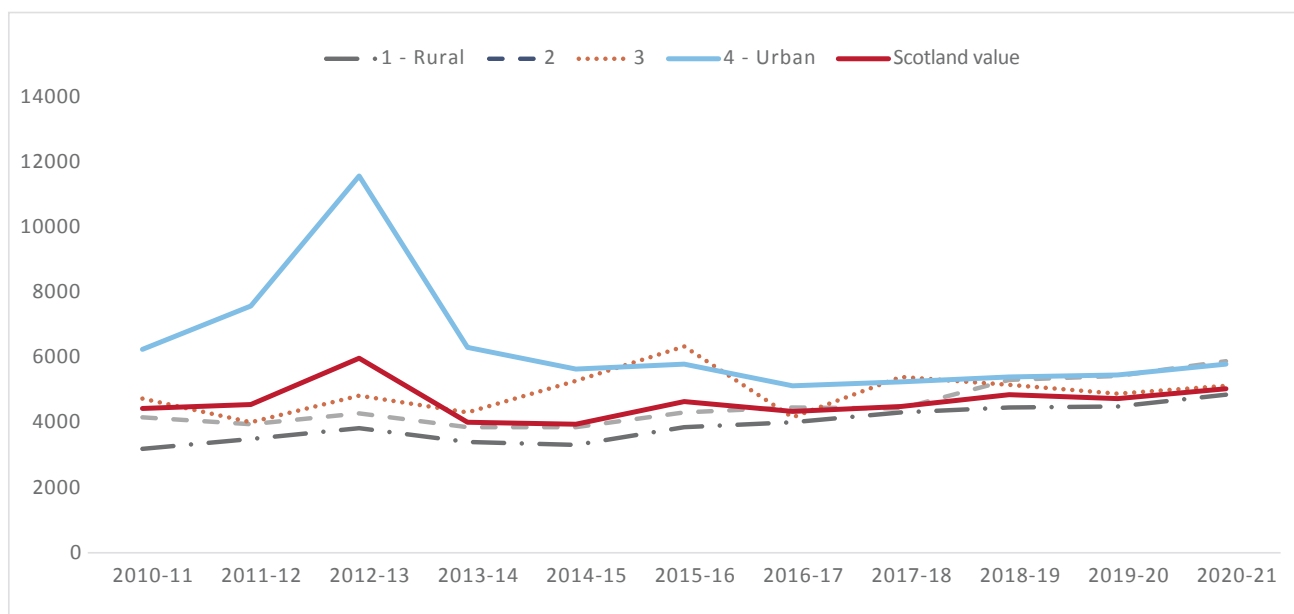
Scotland: £5,043; council range: £3,006 - £10,488. Widening variation in the most recent year. Lower cost in rural councils compared to urban councils (£4,866 compared to £5,808, no longer statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +6.5%. councils: 24 increased and 8 decreased (range: -46% to +63%).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +13.4%. councils: 21 increased and 11 decreased (range: -68% to +237%).

Fig 146: Cost of planning and building standards per planning application (£) by family group - rurality



Average time per business and industry planning application

This measure is standardised as the average time in weeks taken to process local business and industry planning applications. Major applications are not included within this calculation. There has been a 13.6% improvement in terms of efficiency in processing business and industry planning applications, reducing from 13 weeks to 11.1 weeks between 2012/13 and 2020/21. However, processing times have risen in both 2019/20 and again in 2020/21, by 16.0% and 5.1% respectively. This upward trend has not been universal, with around a third of councils reporting reductions in 2020/21. Since 2012/13, there has been a 44% reduction in the number of business and industry planning applications (reducing from 2,531 down to 1,407).⁴⁸

Table 56: Average time per business and industry planning application (weeks)

2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2013-13 to 2020-21
12.8	10.8	10.5	9.9	9.6	9.3	9.1	10.5	11.1	5.7%	-13.3%

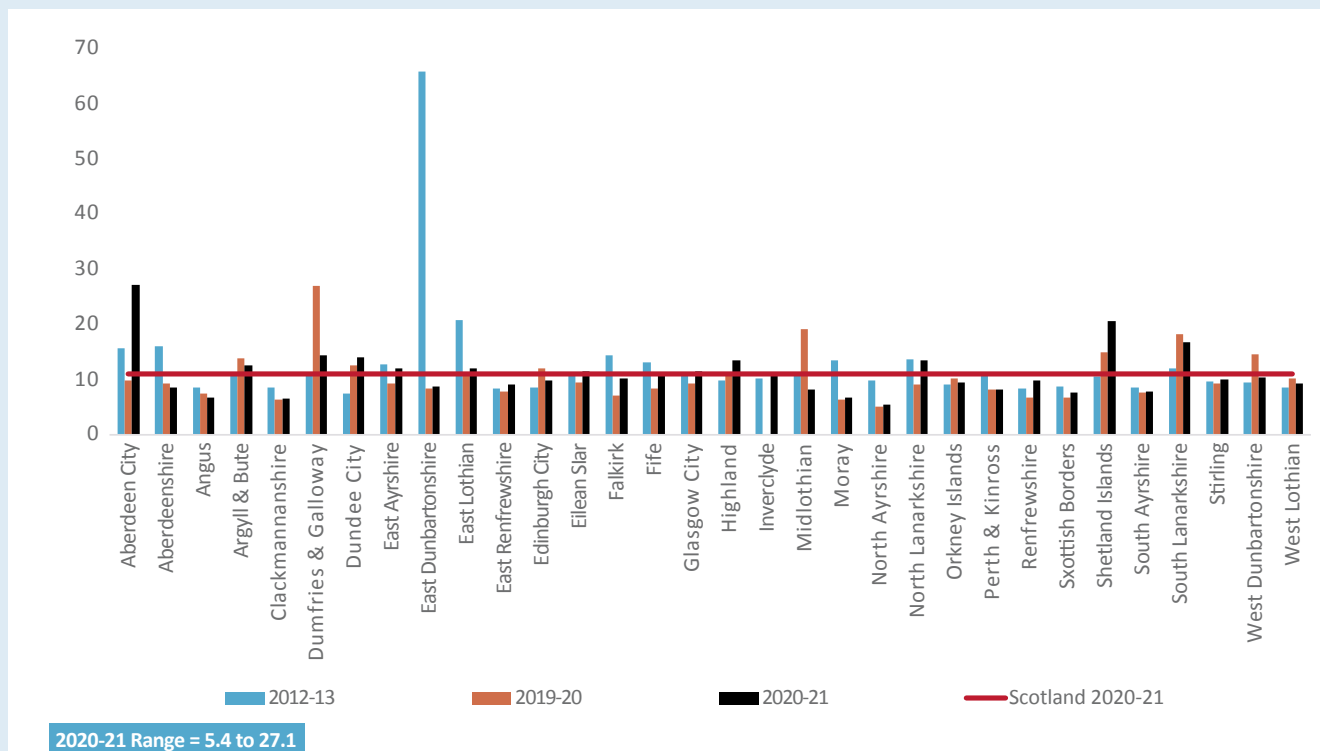
As highlighted earlier, from mid-March 2020 planning application processing was impacted by the move to home working, restrictions on travel and site access, reduced availability of agents and consultees, and staffing and resourcing issues due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in a notable reduction in the number of applications processed and decided during the first two quarters

Furthermore, early evidence indicates that the COVID pandemic has resulted in an increase in householder planning applications and a reduction in business and industry planning applications, at least in the short term. Should the proposed fee increase set out in the Planning Act go through, this may cause a possible surge in planning applications across the coming period.

⁴⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2021/07/planning-performance-statistics-2020-21-annual/documents/annual-planning-performance-statistics-2020-21-annual-planning-performance-statistics-2020-21/govscot%3Adocument/annual-planning-performance-statistics-2020-21.pdf>

There is significant variation between authorities which has widened in 2019/20 and 2020/21, following years of narrowing. In 2020/21, the time taken ranged from 5.4 weeks to 27.1 weeks, with no statistically significant relationships with deprivation, rurality or size of council.

Fig 147: Average time per business and industry planning application (no. of weeks)



Source: Planning Performance Statistics, Scottish Government



Local Variation – Average time per business and industry planning application

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 11.1 weeks; council range: 5.4 - 27.1 weeks. Widening variation in the most recent year and no systematic relationships with deprivation, rurality or authority size.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +5.1%. councils: 21 increased and 11 decreased (range: -57% to +117% (-57% to +48%, excluding outliers)).

Since 2012/13: Scotland: -13.6%. councils: 17 increased and 15 decreased (range: -87% to +97%).

Available employment land

The availability of land for development is a significant factor that affects local economic growth and it falls within councils' local development planning powers to influence this. This is standardised as immediately available land as a % of total land allocated for employment purposes in the local development plan.



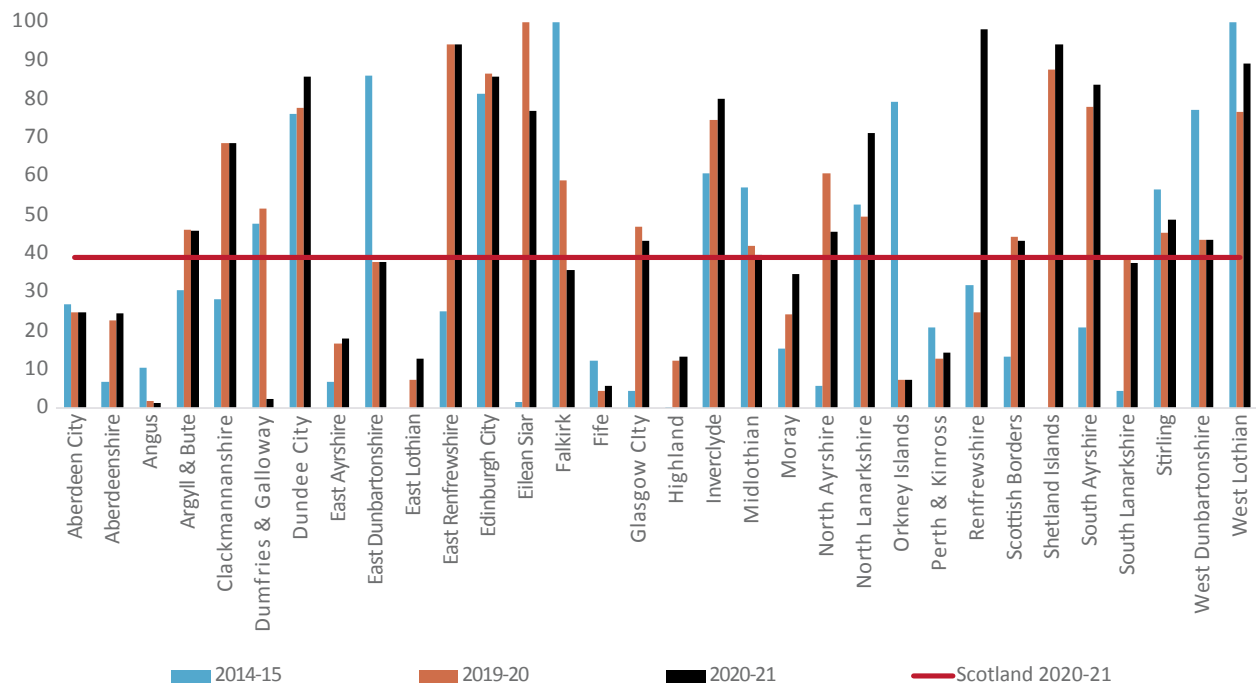
Immediately available land is land which is serviced and marketed as opposed to simply being designated for employment use. This measure utilises data submitted by councils as part of their annual SLAED return.

Table 57: Immediately available employment land as a percentage of total land allocated for employment purposes in the local development plan

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2014-15 to 2020-21
12.9	27.2	38.4	40.8	37.6	36.2	38.9	2.7	26.0

Since 2014/15, there has been significant growth in the Scotland average for availability of employment land, from 12.9% to 38.9% in 2020/21. Average rates have remained fairly steady between 35% and 40% since 2016/17, however there is significant variability between councils. As a newly introduced measure, further work will be undertaken with local authorities to ensure consistency of reporting in relation to this indicator.

Fig 148: Immediately available employment land as a percentage of total land allocated for employment purposes in the local development plan



2020-21 Range = 1.3 to 98.1

Source: SLAED Indicators Framework. Modelled estimates have been used for the following councils for 2019/20 due to missing data values: East Renfrewshire; Inverclyde; North Ayrshire; Highland; Shetland Islands



Local Variation – Immediately available employment land

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 38.9%; council range: 1.3% to 98.1%. Widening variation in the most recent year, no systematic relationships with rurality, deprivation or council size.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +2.7pp. councils: 15 increased and 11 decreased (range: -49.2pp to +73.1pp).

Since 2014/15: Scotland: +26pp. councils: 20 increased and 12 decreased (range: -72pp to +75.2pp).

Town vacancy rates

The vibrancy of town centres is a strategic priority for economic development and planning services. An important measure of the extent to which town centre management/regeneration policies and initiatives are working is the level of vacant units within town centres. Town vacancy rates is a measure of vacant commercial units as a percentage of total units for the local authority's key town centres. Towns should have a population of at least 5,000 people. This indicator does not include edge of town and out of town retail

units. Data for this measure is submitted by councils as part of their annual return under the SLAED Indicators Framework and is available from 2014/15 onwards.

Table 58: Town vacancy rates

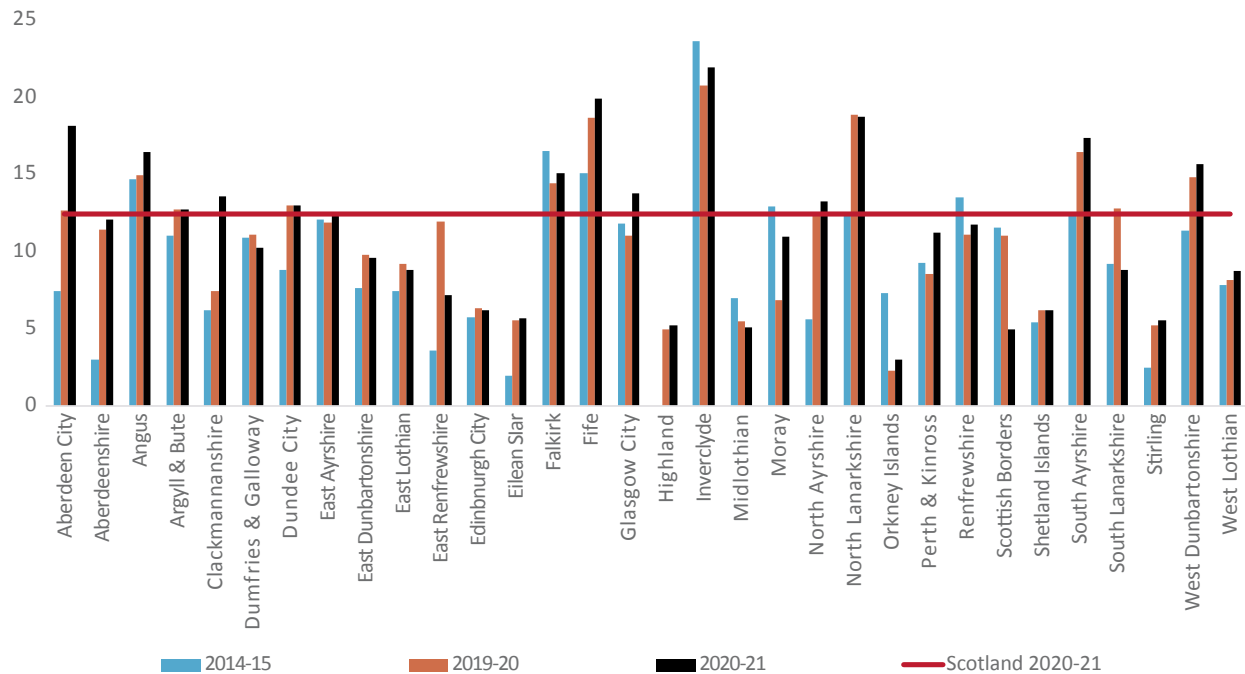
2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2014-15 to 2020-21
10.1	11.9	10.2	11.5	10.0	11.7	12.4	0.7	2.3

The Scotland figure for town vacancy rates has remained relatively constant since 2014/15, however has risen to its highest level in 2020/21, when an average of 12.4% of town centre properties were vacant across Scotland. However, almost a third of authorities report a reduction in their vacancy rate in 2020/21, counter to the national trend.

The relative stability in this measure in previous years is a positive finding given the continuing pressure on retailing sector from online trading and out of town shopping. However data from 2020/21 indicates an increase in vacancy rates, and it is expected that business closures due to the impact of COVID will drive town vacancy rates upwards in the medium term.

The graph below shows the significant variation across councils, with vacancy rates ranging from 3.0% to 21.9% in 2020/21. Vacancy rates are significantly higher in more deprived council areas (14.3% compared to 9.2%).

Fig 149: Town vacancy rates (%)



2020-21 Range = 3 to 21.9

Source: SLAED Indicators Framework . Modelled estimates have been used for the following councils for 2019/20 due to missing data values: Inverclyde; East Renfrewshire; West Dunbartonshire



Local Variation – Town vacancy rates

2020/21 Value

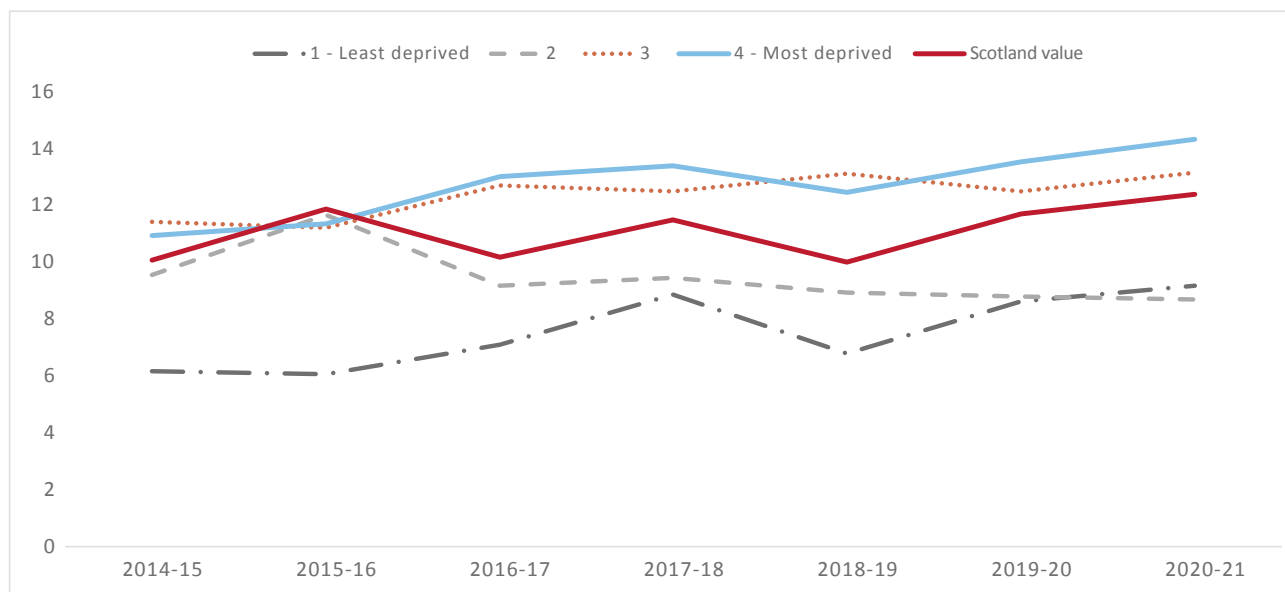
Scotland: 12.4%; council range: 3% - 21.9%. Widening variation in the most recent year. Significantly higher proportion in more deprived council areas (14.3% compared to 9.2%).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +0.7pp. councils: 20 increased and 9 decreased (range: -6.1pp to +6.1pp).

Since 2014/15: Scotland: +2.3pp. councils: 23 increased and 9 decreased (range: -6.6pp to +10.7pp).

Fig 150: Town vacancy rates (%) by family group - deprivation



Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband

Access to good digital infrastructure is a key driver of economic competitiveness and productivity and this measure captures the proportion of all properties within the local authority area receiving superfast broadband. Local authorities have a role alongside telecoms companies in facilitating and enabling the development of effective digital infrastructure and this indicator measures the impact of this work. The data from this measure is taken from the Ofcom Connected Nations Report and is available from 2013/14 onwards.

Table 59: Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband

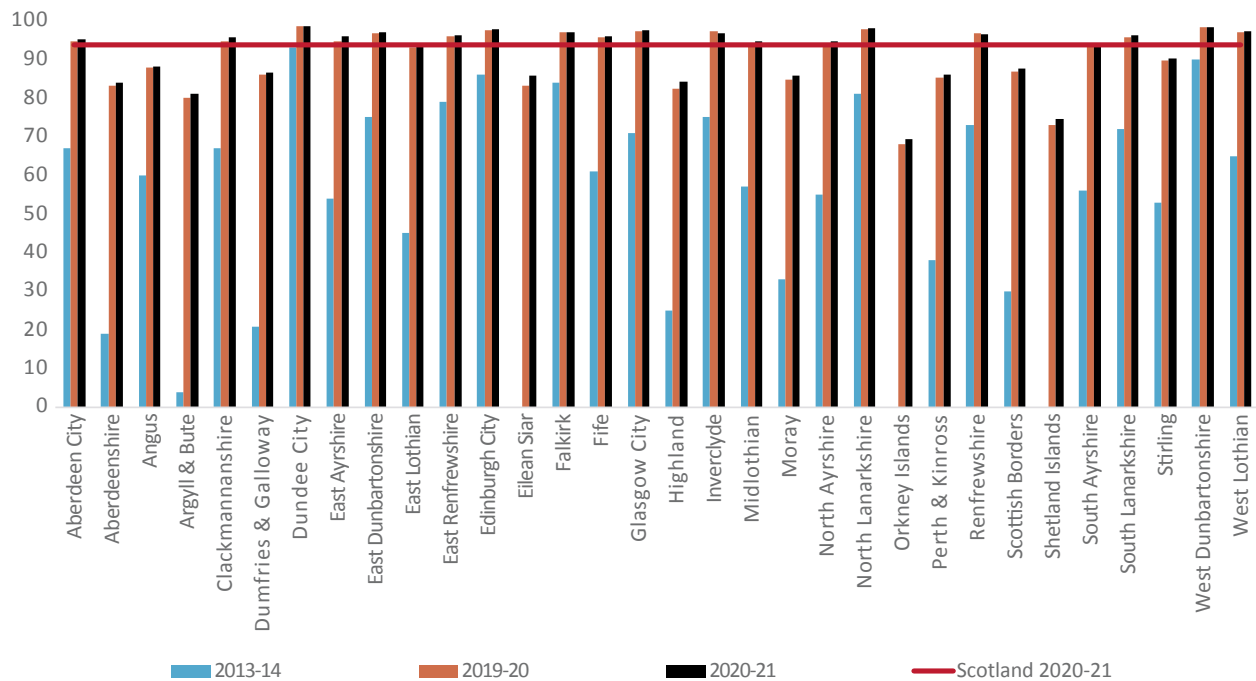
2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2013-14 to 2020-21
56.1	67.5	78.6	85.9	91.1	92.0	93.3	93.8	0.5	37.7

Access to superfast broadband has grown significantly across Scotland, with the Scotland figure increasing from 56.1% to 93.8% between 2013/14 and 2020/21.

The rate of improvement (0.5pp) has slowed in comparison with previous years as the indicator reaches a ceiling. Digital connectivity is an increasingly important consideration in terms of economic competitiveness and inclusion, as has been so clearly illustrated throughout the COVID pandemic. The trend observed in terms of access to superfast broadband, underpinned by programmes like R100, is encouraging. There is no scope for complacency however due to low levels of fibre to the premise across Scotland which will necessitate considerable investment over the next few years to ensure Scotland remains competitive.

The variation between councils has narrowed significantly across the period, although is still substantial with figures ranging from 69.5% to 98.7% in 2020/21. Rural authorities have significantly lower rates of access than urban authorities, 81.7% compared to 97.5% respectively.

Fig 151: Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband (%)



Source: Ofcom Connected Nations Report



Local Variation – Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband (%)

2020/21 Value

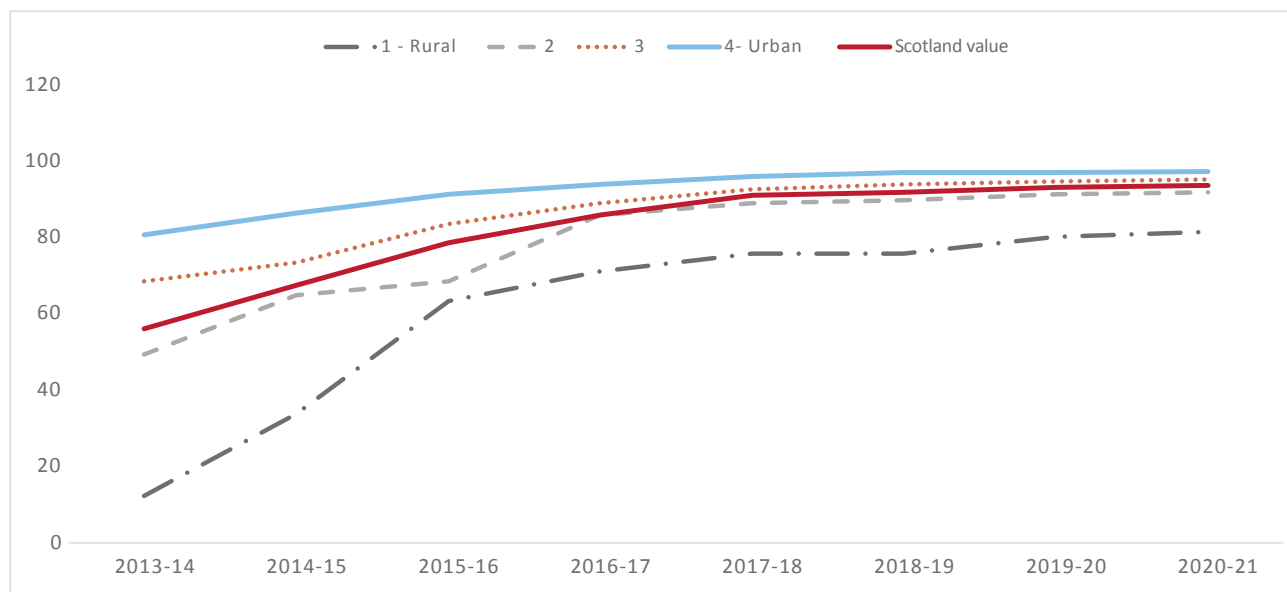
Scotland: 93.8%; council range: 69.5% - 98.7%. Narrowing variation in the most recent year. Urban councils have significantly higher proportion compared to rural councils (97.5% compared to 81.7%).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +0.5pp. councils: 27 increased and 2 decreased (range: -0.5pp to +2.6pp).

Since 2013/14: Scotland: +37.7pp. councils: All 32 increased (range: +5.7pp to +85.7pp).

Fig 152: Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband (%) by family group - rurality



Proportion of people earning less than the real living wage

Inclusive growth is a central part of the government's economic strategy and local authorities are important partners in the drive to reduce income inequality. Economic development services play an important role in this through supporting people to develop the skills to progress in the labour market, by attracting higher value employment opportunities and by encouraging employers to pay the real living wage. A measure of the percentage of employees earning below the real living wage allows for the impact of interventions in addressing low pay to be monitored. Data for this framework measure comes from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), with figures available from 2012/13 onwards.

Table 60: Proportion of people earning less than the real living wage

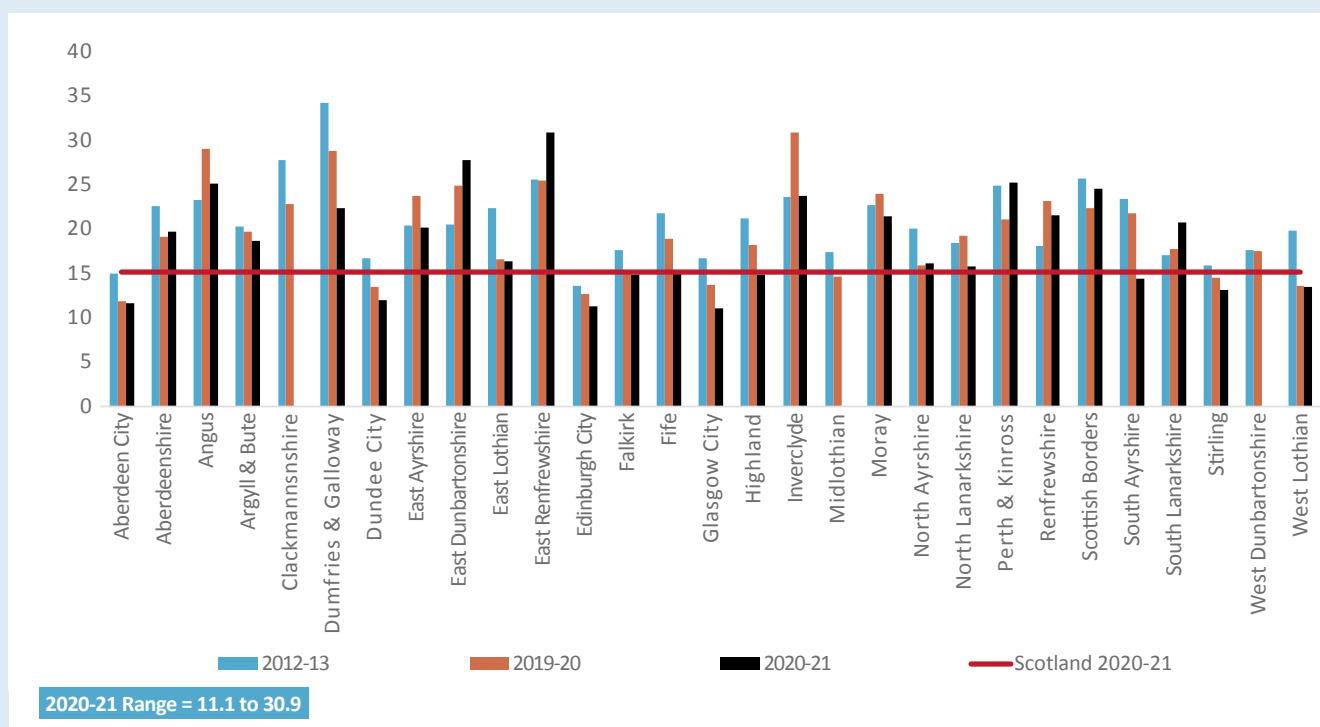
2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2012-13 to 2020-21
18.8	18.6	19.3	19.6	20.1	18.4	19.4	16.9	15.2	-1.7	-3.6

The proportion of people earning less than the real living wage has reduced from 18.8% to 15.2% since 2012/13, with significant improvement occurring in 2019/20 and 2020/21. This improving picture is not universal however, with the proportion earning less than the living wage increasing in a just under a quarter of authorities in 2020/21.

The trends will reflect significant numbers of employees on furlough during COVID-19. Estimates for 2020 and 2021 include furloughed employees and are based on actual payments made to the employee from company payrolls and the hours on which this pay was calculated, which in the case of furloughed employees are their usual hours. Additionally, during the pandemic, we saw lower-paid people at greater risk of losing their jobs. Fewer lower-paid people in the workforce increases the average earnings for those remaining in work.

The graph below shows the significant variation across councils in 2020/21, ranging from 11.1% to 30.9%. This level of variation has widened in the past two years. Urban authorities tend to have a lower proportion of people earning less than the real living wage compared to rural authorities (14.9% compared to 20.1%). However, there is no statistically significant relationship with rurality due to variation within the family group. In 2020/21, there was a statistically significant relationship with deprivation, with the least deprived councils reporting an average increase in the proportion of people earning less than the real living wage, compared to reducing rates in less deprived council groups (1.9pp increase compared to 2.8pp decrease).

Fig 153: Proportion of people earning less than the real living wage



Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2018, ONS. Modelled estimates have been used for the following councils for 2019/20 due to missing data values: Clackmannanshire

Note: Missing values reflect no data returned for 2020/21



Local Variation – Proportion of people earning less than the real living wage

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 15.2%; council range: 11.1% - 30.9%. Widening variation in the most recent year. Lower proportion in urban councils compared to rural councils (14.9% compared to 20.1%, not statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -1.7pp; councils: 7 increased and 22 decreased (range: -7.4pp to +5.4pp). Least deprived councils more likely to report an increase (+1.9pp compared to -2.8 in more deprived councils; statistically significant)

Since 2012/13: Scotland: -3.6pp. councils: 7 increased and 22 decreased (range: -11.9pp to +7.2pp).

Fig 154: Proportion of people earning less than the real living wage by family group - rurality

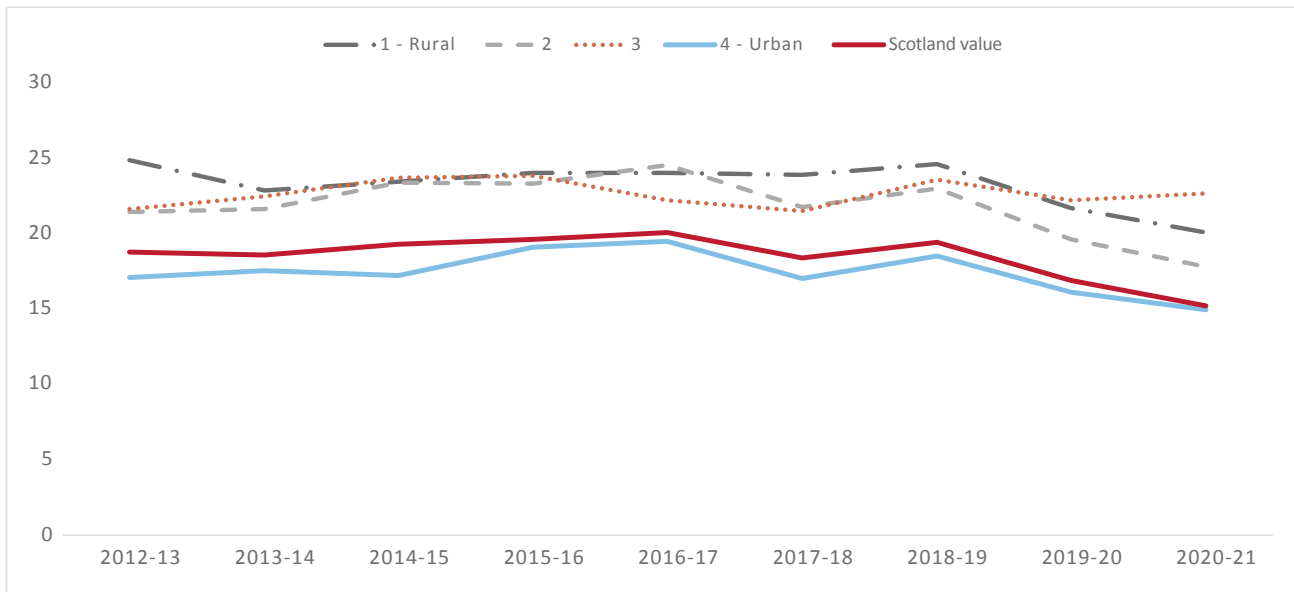
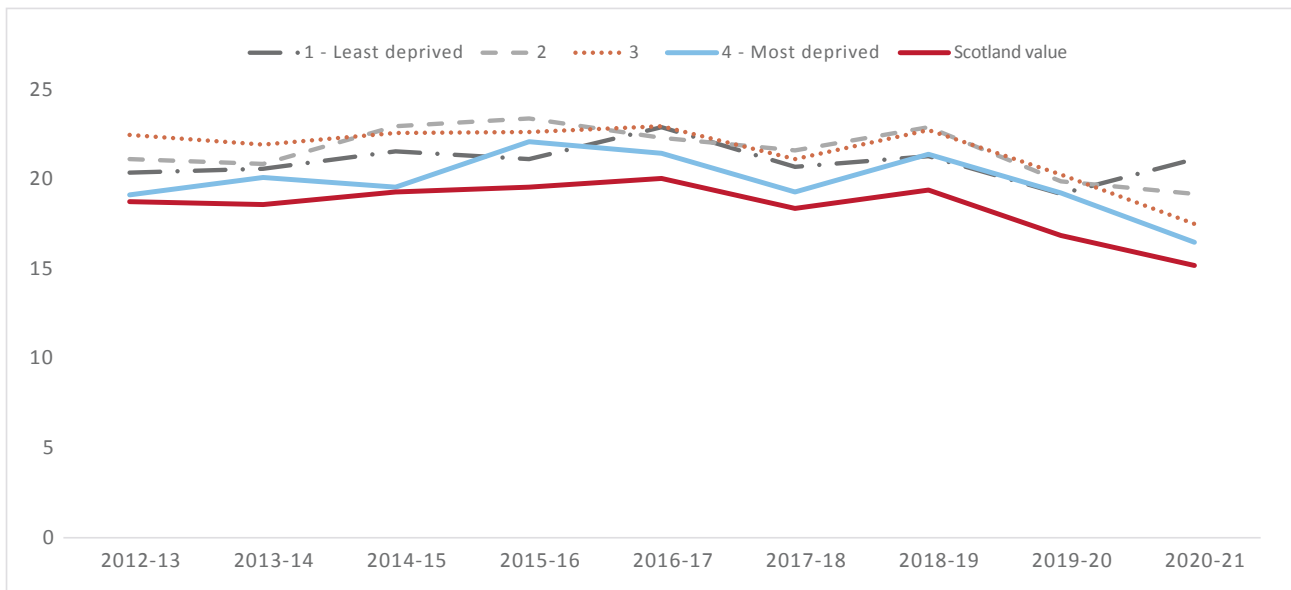


Fig 155: Proportion of people earning less than the real living wage by family group - deprivation





Financial Sustainability

As demand for services is increasing and cost pressures are rising, local authorities are facing higher levels of scrutiny over their decision-making and financial management strategies. Robust scrutiny is a core step towards financial decisions that best serve our organisations and our communities. Central to balancing the budget gap has to be a clear understanding of possible areas of financial risk, and how these can be responded to.

The LGBF includes a common set of financial sustainability measures which are comparable across all Scottish local authorities, to support robust discussions around financial decision making and on the robustness of budgets.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on councils finances within the current year and beyond. The impact and the ability to deal with the pressures varies across councils and the measures that have been developed provide an indication of the financial resilience of each council. Loss of income is a significant challenge and the reliance on this funding source is dependent on the level of budgeted income within each council. The ability to deal with the impact is also dependent on decisions that councils have taken in the past in relation to level of reserves and the changes to service delivery linked to budget savings. This is a complex area and there are different factors to be considered when considering the financial resilience of councils. The inclusion of these measures provides an opportunity to compare the financial sustainability of councils, however caution needs to be exercised in the initial conclusions that are drawn from doing so.

Reserves

This provides an indication of how councils are placed to meet unforeseen events. A low level of unallocated reserves may be a sign that a council could struggle if any unknown financial events were to occur.

During 2020/21, overall levels of General Fund Reserves increased markedly following the receipt of COVID-19 funding immediately before the year-end. Significant caution is required in the interpretation of council's current reserves position as this represents a snapshot in time, with councils having medium to long-term financial plans that impact future reserves held. During 2020/21, councils faced substantial challenges through a combination of loss of income and additional expenditure. In addition, councils had to manage financial projections without any guarantee of additional financial support from either the UK or Scottish Governments.

In managing the above, councils took steps to reprioritise expenditure through operational command and control arrangements. This is one of the reasons why general reserves have increased over the period, and this action, whilst specified to respond to the pandemic, represents prudent financial management. In addition, and over the same period, it was not possible for councils to progress spend in some policy areas adding to a short-term increase in the level of reserves held. The above factors caused a short-term increase in reserves.

Furthermore, financial rules limited the Scottish Government's ability to hold reserves with a significant element of UK treasury funding passported through to all councils very late in the financial year so that it was not "lost". This contributed to a significant increase in reserves held by councils at the end of 2020/21. However, this funding is fully committed and will be spend in 2021/22 with an element carried forward to be spent in 2022/23.

After this period, reserves are not only projected to fall to their pre-pandemic levels, the level of funding and the ability to deliver efficient and effective transformation, may mean that reserves are continued to be applied to underwrite the timing of future delivery, economic recovery, business transformation and balancing budgets as part of a multi-year strategy.

Councils continue to operate in a period of great financial uncertainty, and the impact of the pandemic will

last for many years. Continued loss of income and additional expenditure are major ongoing concerns for councils, and the management of reserves and medium/long-term financial planning will continue to be key to maintaining financial viability.

Table 61: Usable reserves and uncommitted General Fund balance

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2013-14 to 2020-21
Total useable reserves as a % of council annual budgeted revenue	16.0	16.7	18.0	17.3	17.0	16.6	16.9	23.6	6.7	7.6
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	-0.1	-0.2

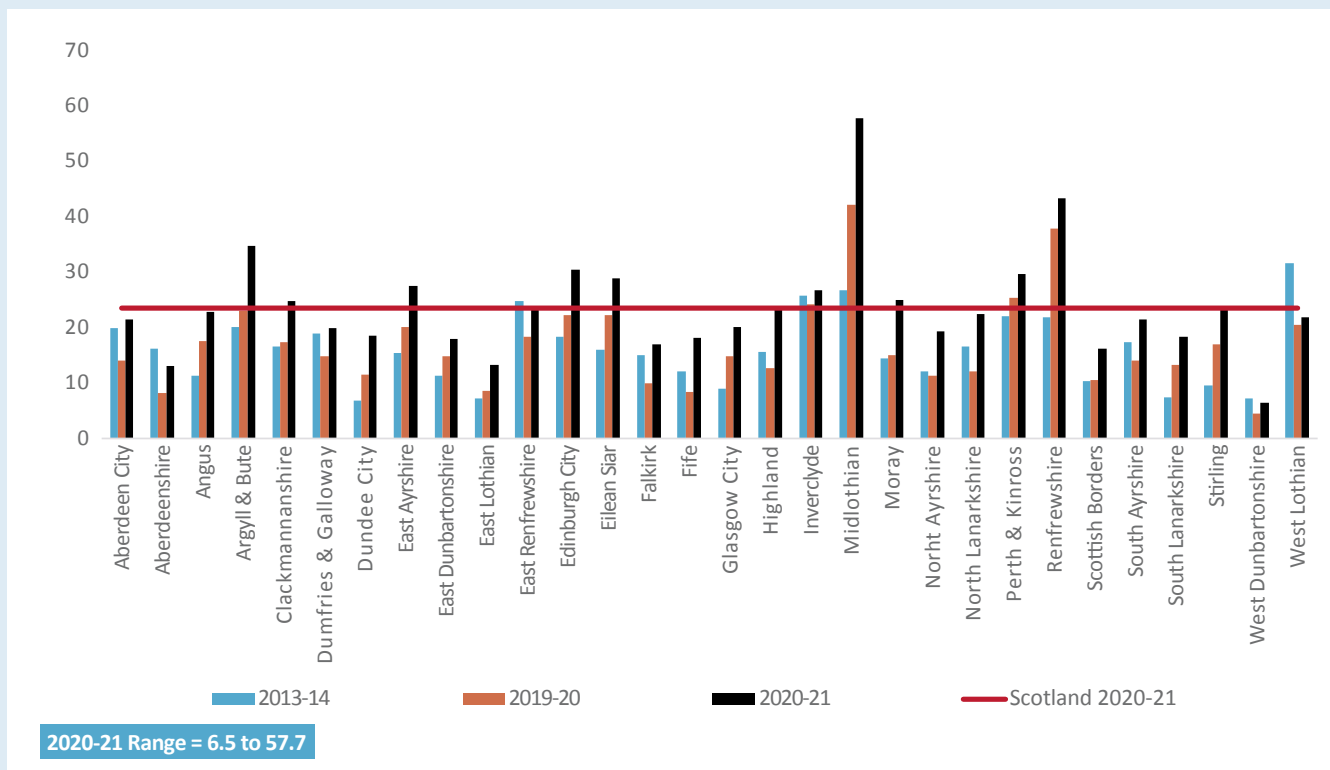
Note: Scotland value for Total usable reserves is adjusted to exclude Orkney and Shetland values due to harbour reserves.

Prior to COVID, the proportion of income councils held in useable reserves had remained between 16%-18% on average. In 2020/21, useable reserves increased to 23.6%. This pattern is true for all 32 authorities, although the scale of the increase varies from 1.2% to 15.6 (excluding outliers).

There is significant variation across authorities in the current proportion of income held in reserves, ranging from 6.5% - 57.7% (excluding Shetland and Orkney as significant outliers). There is no systematic relationship with deprivation, rurality or size of council.

Uncommitted General Fund Balance as a % of council annual budgeted net revenue has remained stable at around 4%. The rate in 2020/21 is 3.5%, within the approved rate for such balances of 2% to 4% as recommended by Audit Scotland. There is variation between councils, with values ranging from 0.5% to 7.7% (excluding Shetland as an outlier). There is no systematic relationship with deprivation, rurality or size of council.

Fig 156: Total usable reserves as a percentage of council annual budgeted revenue



Source: council supplied expenditure figures. Orkney and Shetland values are significant outliers due to harbour reserves and are excluded.



Local Variation – Total useable reserves as a percentage of council annual budgeted revenue

2020/21 Value

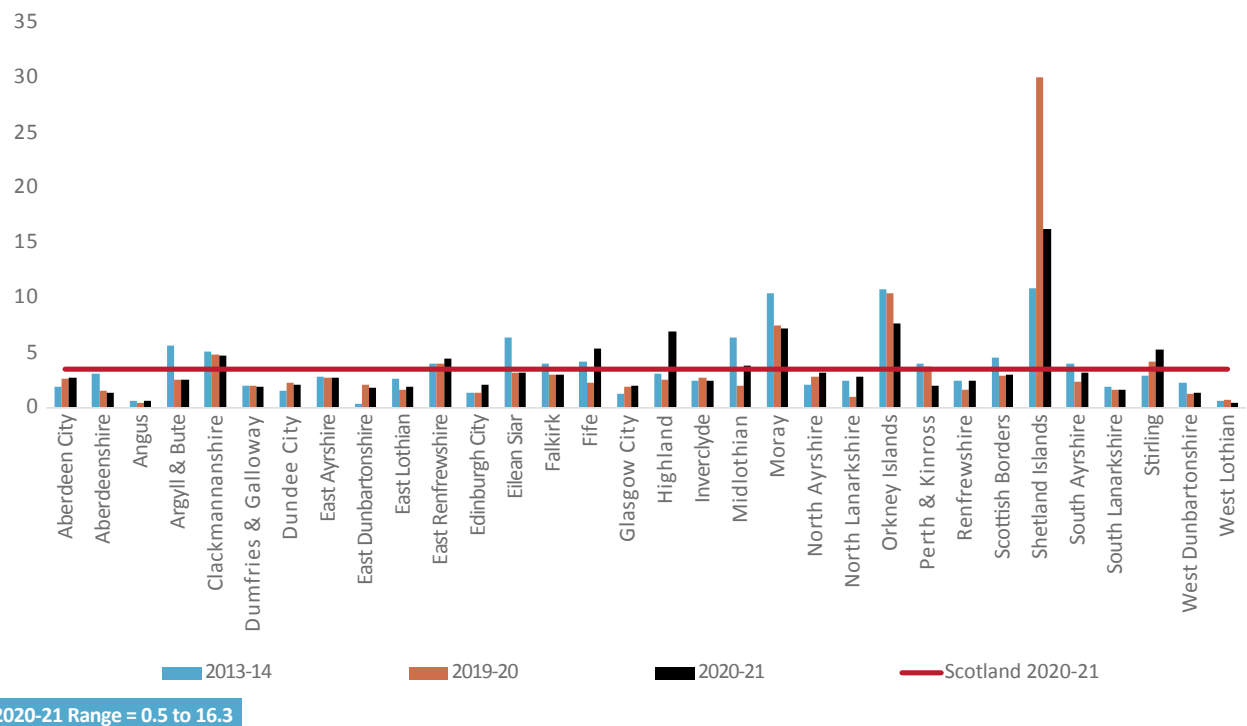
Scotland: 23.6%; council range: 6.5% - 375.2% (57.7% excluding Shetland Islands and Orkney Islands councils as outliers). Widening variation in the most recent year and no systematic relationship with deprivation, rurality or size of council.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +6.7pp. councils: all 32 councils increased (range: +1.2pp to +15.6pp (excluding Islands)).

Since 2013/14: Scotland: +7.6pp. councils: 28 increased and 4 decreased (range: -9.9pp to +31pp (excluding Islands)).

Fig 157: Uncommitted General Fund balance as a percentage of council annual budgeted net revenue



Source: council supplied expenditure figures.



Local Variation – Uncommitted General Fund balance as a percentage of council annual budgeted net revenue

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 3.5% council range: 0.5% - 16.3% (0.5% - 7.2% excluding Shetland Islands and Orkney Islands councils as outliers). Widening variation in the most recent year and no systematic relationship with deprivation, rurality or size of council (excluding Island councils as outliers).

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -0.1pp. councils: 17 increased and 12 decreased (range: -2.7pp to +3.1pp – excluding Islands).

Since 2013/14: Scotland: -0.2pp. councils: 14 increased and 18 decreased (range: -3.2pp to +2.4pp – excluding Islands).

Cost of Borrowing

The LGBF includes two indicators of affordability which highlight the revenue implications of existing and proposed capital expenditure by identifying the proportion of the revenue budget required to meet financing costs, net of investment income. These indicators are two of the Prudential indicators currently published by councils during their budget setting process and are as follows:

- Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream - General Fund
- Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream - Housing Revenue Account

Table 62: Financing costs

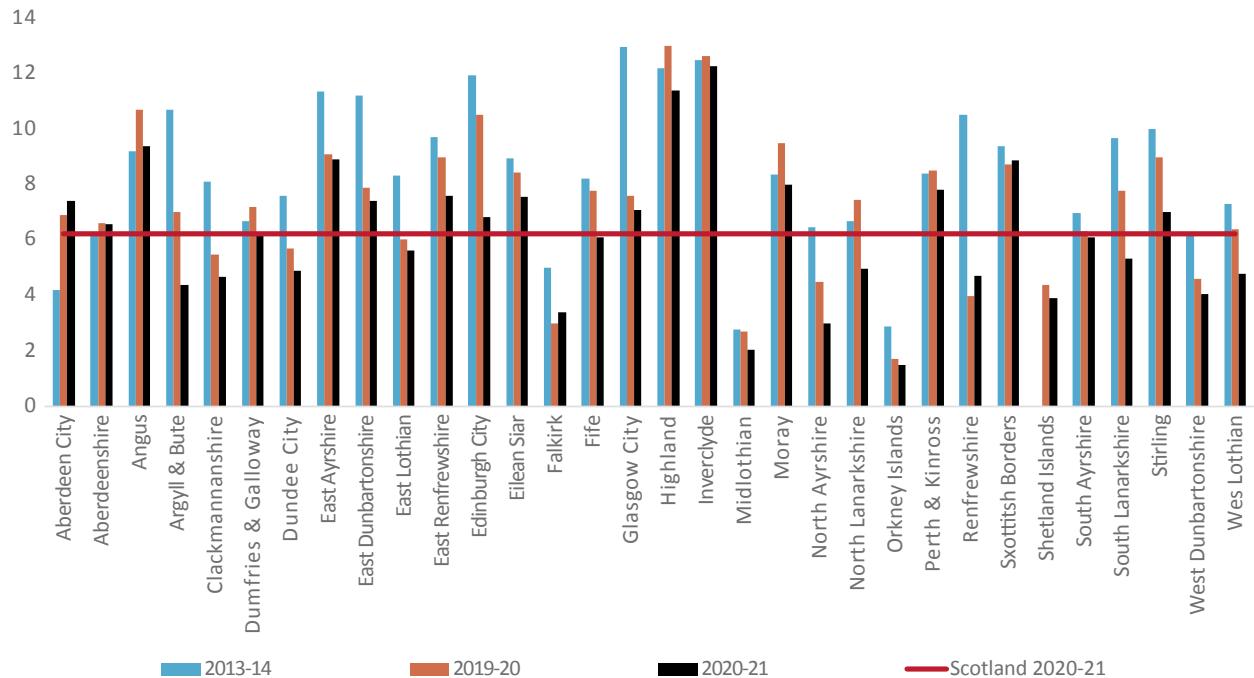
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2013-14 to 2020-21
Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream - General Fund	8.4	8.4	7.8	8.0	8.0	7.9	7.2	6.2	-0.9	-2.2
Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream - Housing Revenue Account	25.9	24.1	24.7	24.4	23.6	22.8	22.6	22.9	0.3	-3.0

The proportion of council revenue income being used to service debt has fallen from 8.4% to 6.2% since 2013/14 (and from 25.9% to 22.9% for HRA). Factors driving this are likely to be implementation of the 2016 Loans Fund regulations which allowed the re-profiling of principal repayments over a longer period of time thus reducing the annual loan charges. Effective borrowing, reduced interest rates and possible reduced capital investment may also be factors.

While the average cost of borrowing has fallen across the period, this trend is not universal. The range in movement across authorities is -6.3 percentage points to +3.2 percentage points, with 4 authorities reporting increasing costs during this period counter to the national trend. There is greater variation in relation to HRA borrowing costs. The range in movement across authorities is -47pp to +15pp, with half of authorities reporting an increase in HRA borrowing costs during the period counter to the national trend.

In 2020/21 financing costs for councils ranged from 1.2% to 12.3% (and 7% to 51% for HRA). There are no systematic relationships with deprivation, rurality or size of authority.

Fig 158: Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream – General Fund



2020-21 Range = 1.5 to 12.3

Source: council supplied expenditure figures.



Local Variation – Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream - General Fund

2020/21 Value

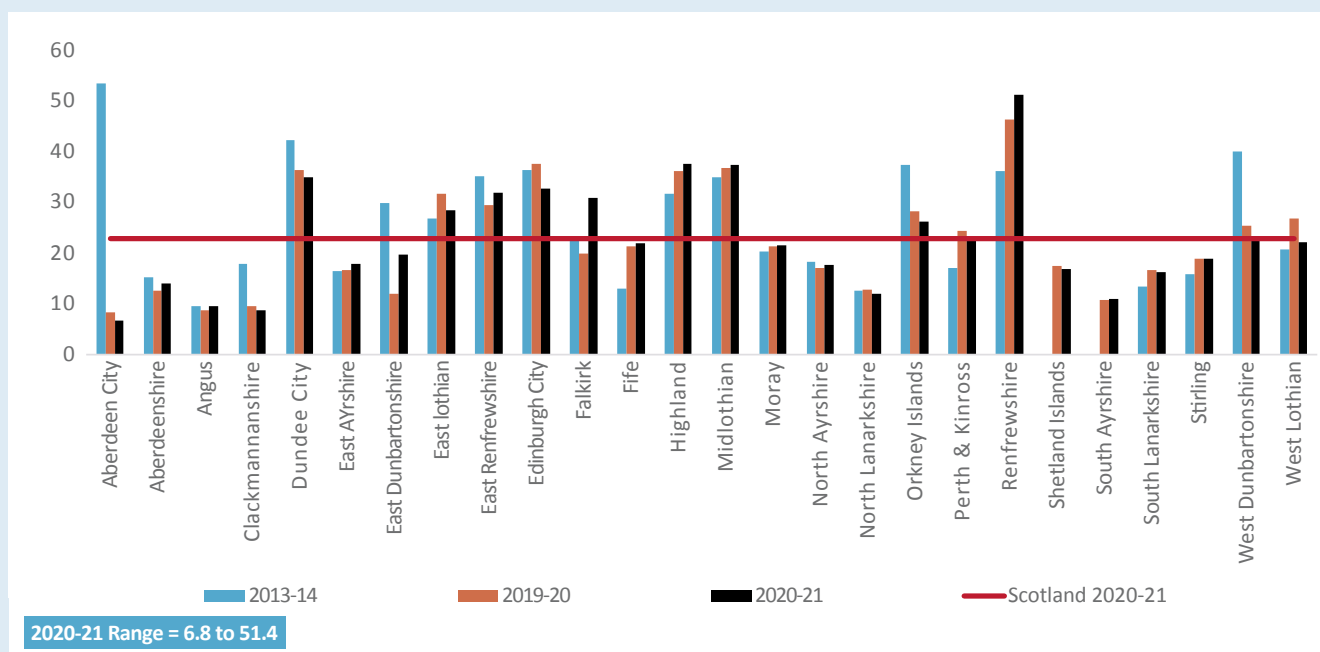
Scotland: 6.2% council range: 1.5% - 12.3%. Narrowing variation in the most recent year and no systematic relationship with deprivation, rurality or size of council.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -0.9pp. councils: 4 increased and 28 decreased (range: -3.7pp to +0.7pp).

Since 2013/14: Scotland: -2.2pp. councils: 4 increased and 28 decreased (range: -6.3pp to +3.2pp)

Fig 159: Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream – Housing Revenue Account



Source: council supplied expenditure figures.

Missing values represent the six councils who do not provide housing services following transfer to Registered Social Landlords



Local Variation – Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream - Housing Revenue Account

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 22.9% council range: 6.8% - 51.4%. Widening variation in the most recent year and no systematic relationship with deprivation, rurality or size of council.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +0.3pp. councils: 13 increased and 12 decreased (range: -4.7pp to +11pp).

Since 2013/14: Scotland: -3pp. councils: 13 increased and 13 decreased (range: -46.8pp to +15pp).

Budget Performance

The need for budgets and forecasts to reflect actual spending becomes increasingly important for councils with decreasing or low levels of usable reserves to draw on. Councils cannot continue to rely on underspends in certain services offsetting overspending elsewhere. Where services have been found to consistently overspend, budgets should be revised to reflect true spending levels and patterns. This requires good financial management to ensure spending is accurately forecast and monitored within the year.

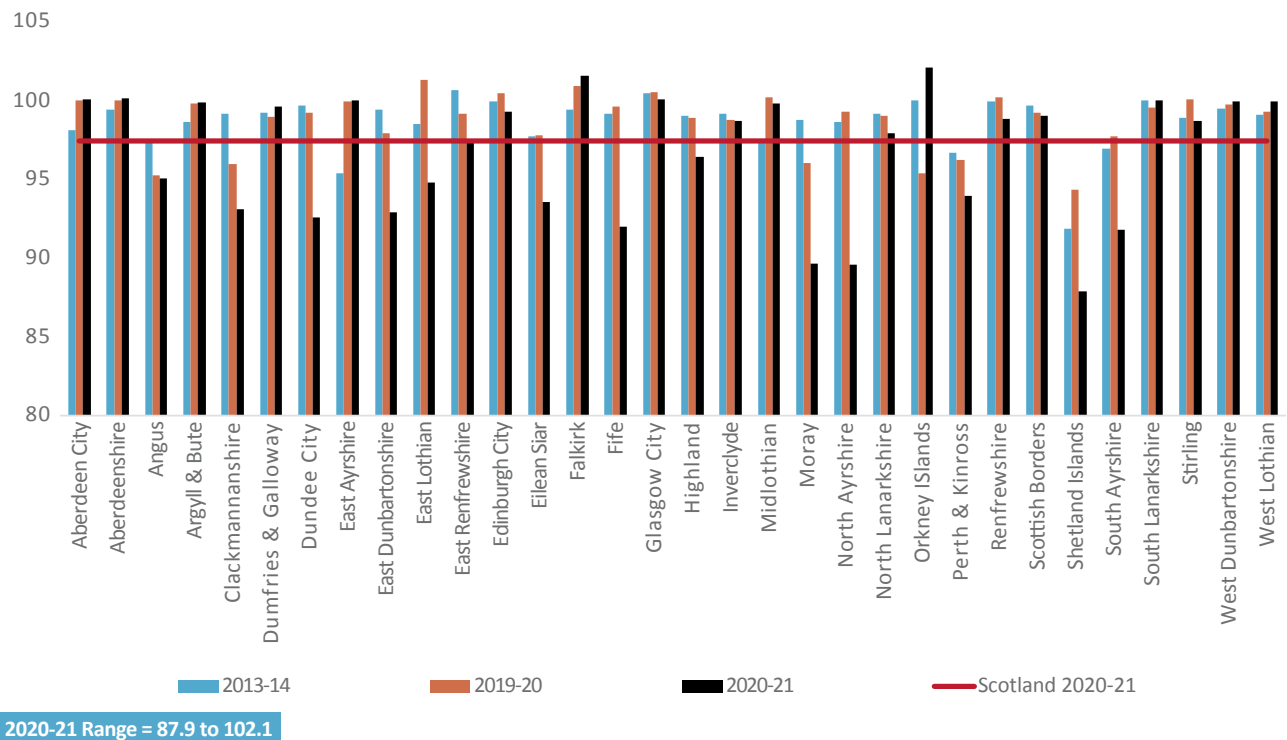
Prior to COVID-19, actual outturn as a percentage of budgeted expenditure remained between 99% and

100%, showing a steady increase from 99.1% to 99.4%. In 2020/21, the average percentage reduced to 97.4%, ranging from 87.9% to 102.1% across authorities.

Table 63: Actual Outturn as a percentage of budgeted expenditure

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2013-14 to 2020-21
Actual outturn as a percentage of budgeted expenditure	99.1	99.0	99.0	99.3	99.3	99.4	99.4	97.4	-1.9	-1.6

Fig 160: Actual outturn as a percentage of budgeted expenditure



Source: council supplied expenditure figures.



Local Variation – Actual outturn as a percentage of budgeted expenditure

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 97.4% council range: 87.9% - 102.1%. Widening variation in the most recent year and no systematic relationship with deprivation, rurality or size of council.

Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -1.9pp. councils: 10 increased and 22 decreased (range: -9.7pp to +6.7pp).

Since 2013/14: Scotland: -1.6pp. councils: 10 increased and 21 decreased (range: -9.2pp to +4.6pp).



Tackling Climate Change



In October 2019, the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill 2019 received Royal Assent, amending the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and setting out targets to reduce Scotland's emissions of all greenhouse gases to net-zero by 2045 at the latest, with interim targets for reductions of at least 56% by 2020, 75% by 2030, and 90% by 2040.

The Public Bodies Duties in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 make it a legislative requirement for public bodies to act on climate change, both mitigation and adaptation, and to do so within the frame of sustainability. The current COVID context has further sharpened our focus on Climate Change, with green recovery and sustainability at the heart of recovery and renewal priorities

Given the significance of this major policy agenda for local government, it is important that the LGBF includes measures which support Local Government in its efforts to contribute to national carbon reduction targets.

This year, the framework introduces two new measures to reflect this focus drawn from UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics. Data for 2020/21 is not yet available, so the analysis below is based on data from 2010/11 to 2019/20.

The two climate measures included in the LGBF are:

1. CO₂ emissions area wide
2. CO₂ emissions area wide: emissions within scope of LA – subset

Within scope emissions form a subset of the area wide measure, excluding certain emissions which it has been considered local authorities are unable to directly influence. Removing these emissions has a significant impact on some Local Authorities. The following emissions included in the full dataset are excluded from 'within scope':

- emissions from sites within the EU ETS (except power stations, whose emissions are indirectly included via the end-user estimates which cover electricity use),
- emissions from motorway traffic
- emissions from diesel railways, and
- emissions from the Land Use, Land Use Change, and Forestry (LULUCF) sector.

Table 64: Carbon Emissions

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2018-19 to 2019-20	Value Change 2010-11 to 2019-20
CO ₂ emissions area wide per tonne, per capita	8.2	7.4	7.7	7.4	6.6	6.5	6.1	5.9	5.9	5.7	dna	-3.7%	-30.5%
CO ₂ emissions area wide: emissions within scope of LA per tonne, per capita	7.2	6.4	6.7	6.4	5.7	5.5	5.2	4.9	4.8	4.6	dna	-4.4%	-35.5%

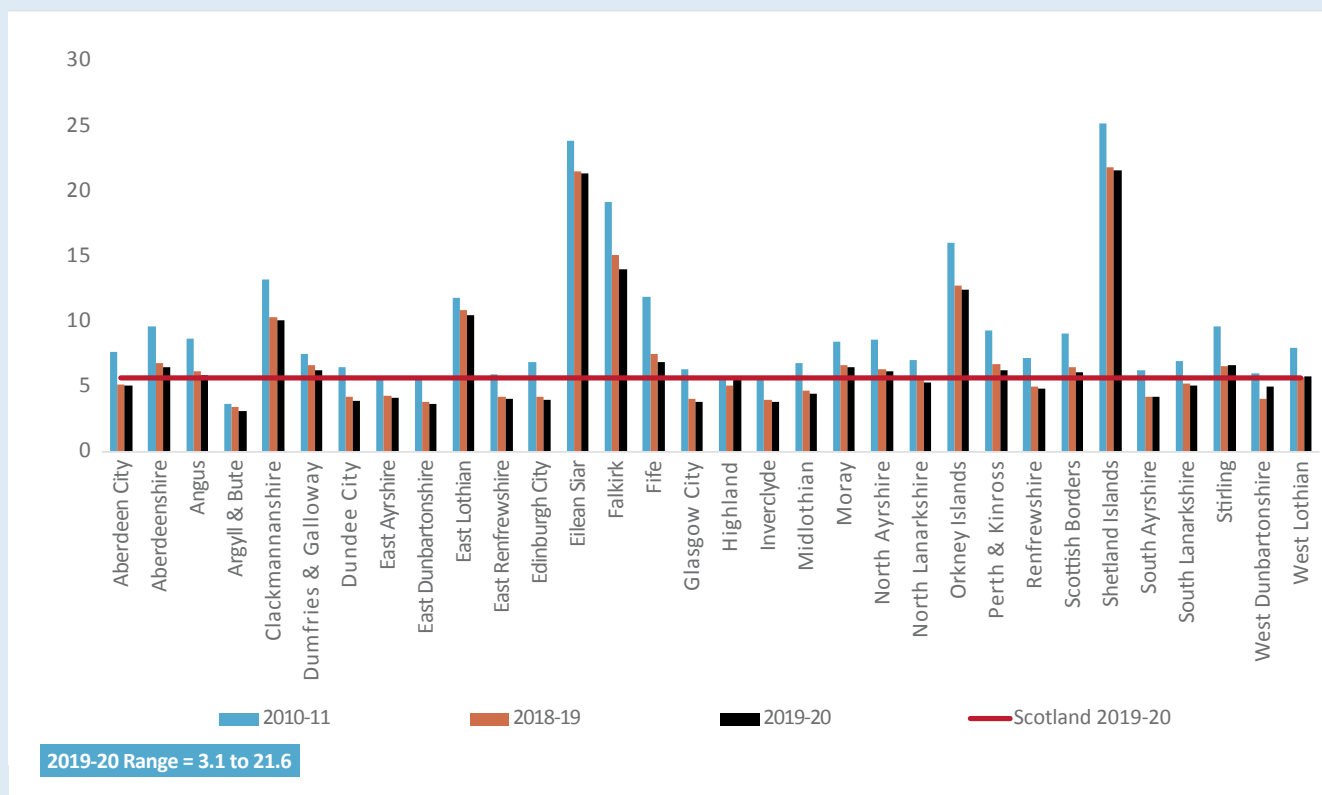


The area wide and within scope CO₂ emissions have reduced by 30% and 36% respectively since 2010/11. Reductions in within scope emissions have been reported in all 32 councils (ranging from -46% to -23%) while reductions in area wide have been recorded in 31 council areas (ranging from -42% to +2%).

In 2019/20, the variation between authorities is significantly wider for area wide emissions (3.1 to 21.6) than for within scope emissions (3.2 to 7.5). While there is no systematic relationship with rurality or deprivation for area wide emissions, factors which may contribute to variation between councils include the level of heavy industry, land use, transport, and population density.

Variation in emissions within scope of Local Authorities does reveal a clear relationship with geography as can be seen in the graph below, with rural authorities reporting significantly higher CO₂ emissions (6.2 compared to 3.9).

Fig 161: CO2 emissions area wide per capita



Source: UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics



Local Variation – CO2 emissions area wide per capita

2019/20 Value

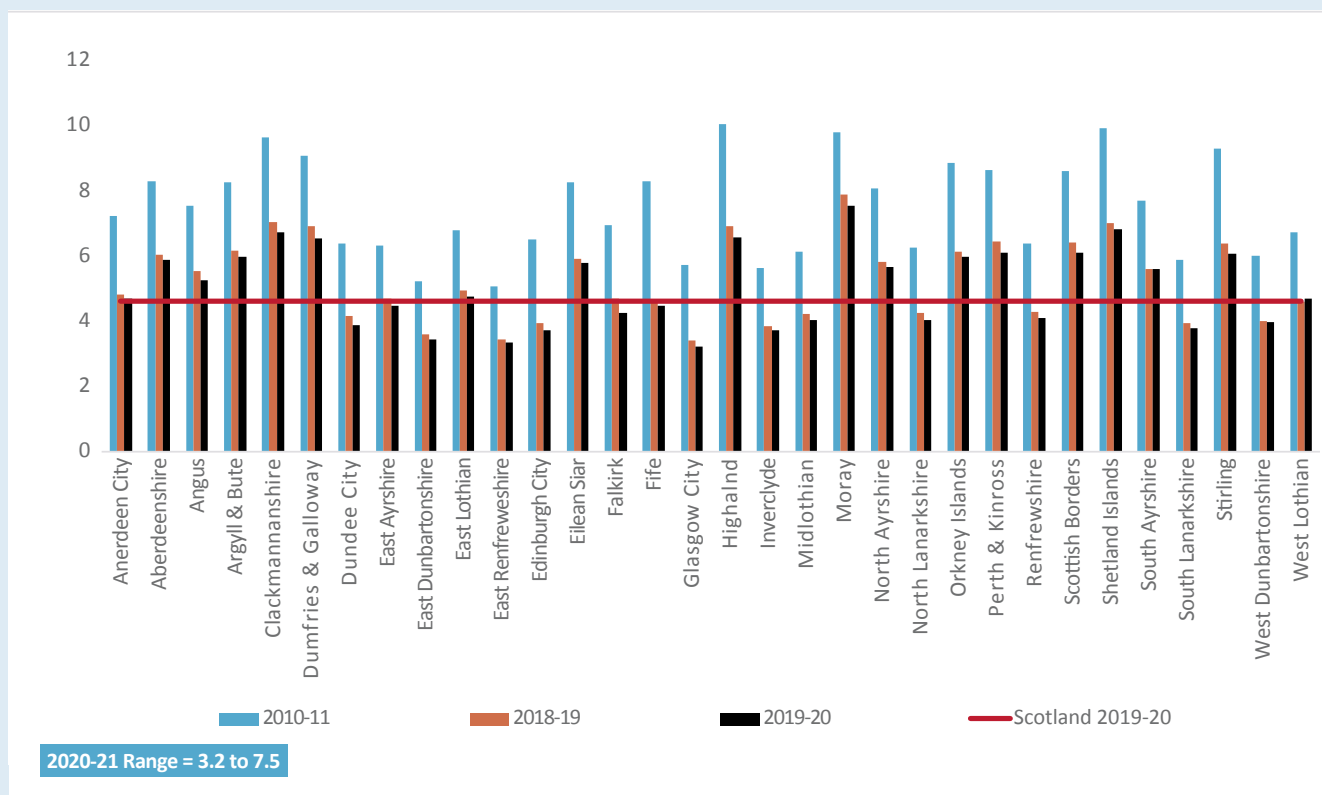
Scotland: 5.7t; council range: 3.1t – 14t (excluding outliers). Narrowing variation in the most recent year. Higher emissions in rural councils compared to urban councils (10.4t compared to 5.6t, not statistically significant).

Change Over Time

In 2018/19: Scotland: -3.7%. councils: 4 increased and 28 decreased (range: -10.2% to +24.5%).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -30.5%. councils: 1 increased and 31 decreased (range: -42% to +1.6%).

Fig 162: CO2 emissions area wide within scope of LA per capita



Source: UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics



Local Variation – CO2 emissions within LA Scope per capita

2019/20 Value

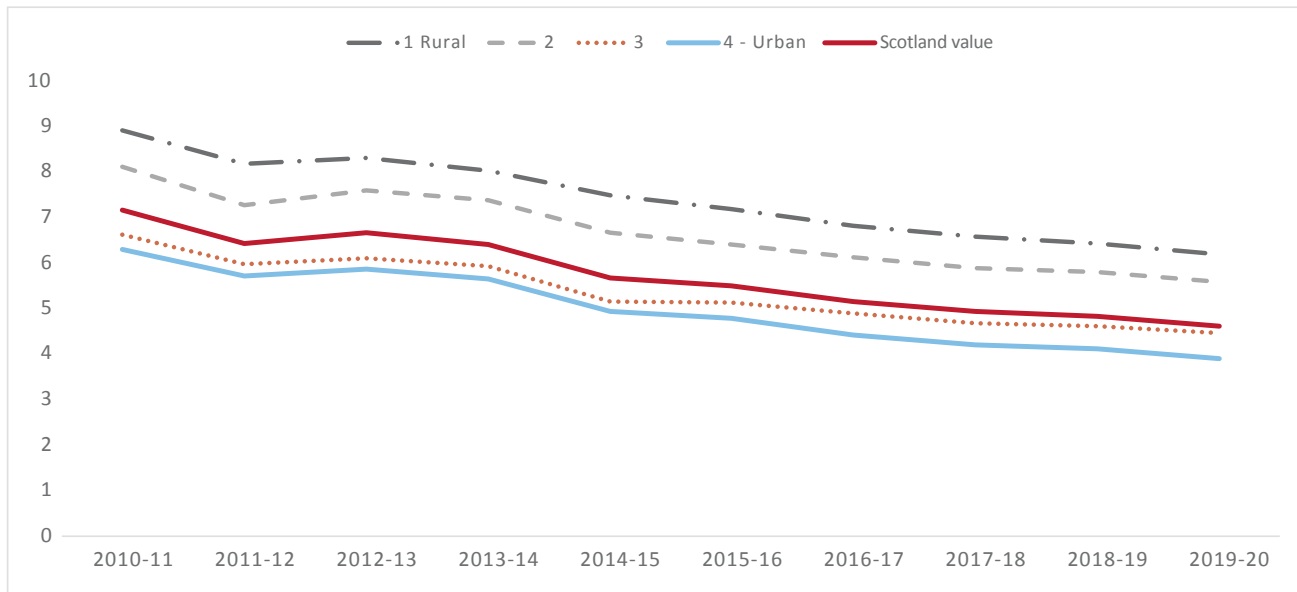
Scotland: 4.6t; council range: 3.2t – 7.5t. Narrowing variation in the most recent year. Significantly higher emissions in rural councils compared to urban councils (6.2t compared to 3.9t).

Change Over Time

In 2018/19: Scotland: -4.4%. councils: 1 increased and 31 decreased (range: -9.3% to +1.9%).

Since 2010/11: Scotland: -35.5%. councils: all 32 councils decreased (range: -45.9% to -23%).

Figure 163: CO2 emissions area wide within scope of LA per capita by family group - geography



Conclusions and Next Steps





This year's report provides an evidence-based picture of the initial impacts of COVID-19 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, adapting quickly to meet new demands, maintain essential services and implement new ways of working. 2020/21 LGBF data also indicates that the shock delivered by COVID-19 is likely to substantially disrupt performance and efficiency improvements gained in previous years, at least in the short term.

The next phase will be even more challenging as councils attempt to recover and renew. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the context we operate within, the design and delivery of Local Government services, and the pattern of need in the communities we serve. Going forward, the continuity provided by the LGBF will be invaluable in understanding the long-term impact of the pandemic on communities and on Local Government services. It will provide vital intelligence to assist the sector to learn lessons from its response and to strengthen and redesign services around future policy priorities to support recovery and renewal. It will also be critical in helping all spheres of government to track progress against the National Performance Framework (NPF) and in informing the reprioritisation that has and will continue to be made in the years to come.

While this report presents national trends across each service area for 2020/21, critically it also highlights the significant variation which sits beneath this. While the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on all councils, local areas experienced the impacts of this pandemic differently. LGBF performance and expenditure data from 2020/21 reveal substantial variation in both the direction and scale of impacts. It is this variation that will provide the essential platform and 'can openers' to help councils evaluate their approach during the pandemic and to inform their recovery priorities. With the acute and far reaching effects of COVID-19, there has never been a greater requirement for working with, and learning from, each other.

The Local Government Benchmarking Board continues to review and evolve the LGBF to reflect the new challenges and issues facing Local Government post-COVID, including innovation and transformation in the use of data and intelligence. The following three strategic priorities have been identified to drive progress and support transformation across the next 3-year period.

1. To continue to strengthen the relevance and credibility of LGBF

We will evolve the LGBF framework to reflect the challenges, risks and opportunities facing Local Government as it responds to the pandemic and aims to build back better. We will work with Solace, Professional Associations and other key stakeholders to protect and promote the longitudinal significance of the framework, and the value provided by existing LGBF measures in capturing the impact of COVID-19 on long-term trends across core council services. We will strengthen the framework in key areas to reflect the changing context and ensure the approach remains fit for purpose. This will include a strengthened focus on key areas such as poverty and inequality, mental health and wellbeing, new ways of working and digital transformation. We will also continue to strengthen links between the LGBF and the National Performance Framework and Public Health priorities to support Local Government in its efforts to demonstrate how it is supporting progress in these areas.

2. To position the LGBF to lead improvements in the wider data reporting and scrutiny landscape

Rapid progress has been achieved both locally and nationally in data sharing, data collaboration and data innovation, facilitated by the increased focus on the role of data and intelligence during the pandemic. We will build on this, and ensure the LGBF is at the heart of progressing system wide improvements in addressing current lags in data availability, streamlining data reporting/scrutiny landscapes, enabling greater automation and technical integration of data systems, and strengthening available insights from data and intelligence. We



will support the development of the Local Government Data Portal, an ambitious transformation programme to deliver improvements in the way Local Government manages and uses data.

3. To continue to build momentum in the use of the LGBF to transform and improve council services

Demonstrating how councils are utilising data and intelligence to transform and improve services will be more important than ever across the coming period. As the framework has matured, councils' use of the LGBF to support collaboration, improvement and strategic decision making has grown and become more sophisticated. We will prioritise support and engagement activities which will build on this progress, and effectively assist councils in their efforts to use data and intelligence, including the LGBF, to transform and improve services as part of recovery and renewal across the next 3 years.



Appendices





Appendix 1

Using the LGBF for Improvement: Good Practice Principles

1. Flexibility

Councils should draw flexibly on the LGBF suite of measures to reflect what matters to them, e.g. local strategic priorities and identified improvement areas. It is recognised that not all measures are of equal importance to each authority, and councils should self-determine which measures add value to their own performance approach.

2. Holistic picture of improvement

Councils should use the long-term and holistic nature of the LGBF to explore progress against wider outcomes and to understand interconnections across policy areas. The value of the rich comparative LGBF dataset is that it provides an overview of Local Government over time, providing cost, productivity, performance and outcome measures across all key service areas. This allows for a wealth of analysis, insight and intelligence to be generated to support decision making, improvement and practice sharing.

3. Embedding in local planning and improvement processes

The LGBF is not an end in itself - it is how it is embedded and used within local strategic, service & budget planning, improvement, change management, scrutiny and reporting activities that matters. Councils should identify those measures of importance and incorporate them within planning, improvement and reporting processes. This will ensure data provided in the LGBF contributes to a more locally relevant understanding of performance and will provide more focussed intelligence to support councils to target improvement activity.

4. Supplementing with other information

Councils should use the LGBF alongside other appropriate local data to provide a richer and more balanced picture against the council's strategic priorities. The LGBF is just one tool in councils' local intelligence 'toolbox', adding value through the comparative element it provides. Its strength comes as it is used alongside other data.

5. Using LGBF data as 'Can-openers'

Councils should use the data diagnostically to ask questions to develop a better understanding of their own service and others, in order to target and drive improvement activity. The indicators in the LGBF are very high-level indicators and are designed to focus questions on why variations in cost and performance are occurring between similar councils. They do not supply the answers. That happens as councils engage with each other to 'drill down' and explore why these variations are happening.

6. Learning from others

Councils should use the LGBF as a platform for sharing practice and learning. Councils 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. The following themes could be used to target this activity:

- Is our current approach and investment delivering the levels of performance we are seeking?
- Are there other councils (within FG/meaningful comparators) achieving levels of performance/improvement/savings we would like to see in key areas?
- Are there other councils (within FG/meaningful comparators) spending similar levels, achieving more? Or spending less, achieving similar levels?
- What is driving their levels of performance/spend? What is different in their set up? e.g. service model/design; systems; policies/practices; partnerships; leadership; workforce profile; staff skill sets; strategic agenda; local political or demographic context; Is there anything we can learn from them?

7. Supporting relationships with citizens & communities

Councils should use the LGBF data creatively to support and strengthen their relationship with citizens and communities. This includes sharing the data in an accessible and engaging way, with supporting narrative and context to help citizens make sense of the information. Most importantly, is that the data is used to develop the conversation and engagement with local communities about priorities and progress.

8. Corporate & Political Leadership

To support a culture of performance improvement, use of the LGBF should seek to empower openness, willingness to interrogate data and ask challenging questions, and actively pursue learning opportunities. Leadership (corporate and political) is key as many drivers of variation are not at service level, but may be political, structural and strategic. It is important that Elected Members and Senior Managers are able to demonstrate ownership of and commitment to this improvement approach, and to promote the potential value the LGBF can offer locally.



Appendix 2

LGBF Indicator List

Indicator Ref	Indicator Description
CHN1	Cost per primary school pupil
CHN2	Cost per secondary school pupil
CHN3	Cost per pre-school education registration
CHN4	% of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 5
CHN5	% of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 6
CHN6	% of pupils from deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 5 (SIMD)
CHN7	% of pupils from deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 6 (SIMD)
CHN8a	The gross cost of "children looked after" in residential based services per child per week
CHN8b	The gross cost of "children looked after" in a community setting per child per week
CHN9	% of children being looked after in the community
CHN10	% of adults satisfied with local schools
CHN11	Proportion of pupils entering positive destinations
CHN12a	Overall average total tariff
CHN12b	Average total tariff SIMD quintile 1
CHN12c	Average total tariff SIMD quintile 2
CHN12d	Average total tariff SIMD quintile 3
CHN12e	Average total tariff SIMD quintile 4
CHN12f	Average total tariff SIMD quintile 5
CHN13a	% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Literacy
CHN13b	% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Numeracy
CHN14a	Literacy Attainment Gap (P1,4,7 Combined) - percentage point gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils
CHN14b	Numeracy Attainment Gap (P1,4,7 Combined) - percentage point gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils
CHN17	% of children meeting developmental milestones
CHN18	% of funded early years provision which is graded good/better
CHN19a	School attendance rate
CHN19b	School attendance rate (looked after children)
CHN20a	School exclusion rates (per 1,000 pupils)
CHN20b	School exclusion rates (per 1,000 'looked after children')
CHN21	Participation rate for 16-19 year olds
CHN22	% of child protection re-registrations within 18 months
CHN23	% LAC with more than 1 placement in the last year (Aug-July)
CHN24	% of children living in poverty (After Housing Costs)



Indicator Ref	Indicator Description
CORP 1	Support services as a % of total gross expenditure
CORP 3b	% of the highest paid 5% employees who are women
CORP 3c	The gender pay gap (%)
CORP 4	The cost per dwelling of collecting council tax
CORP 6a	Sickness absence days per teacher
CORP 6b	Sickness absence days per employee (non-teacher)
CORP 7	% of income due from council tax received by the end of the year
CORP 8	% of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days
SW1	Home care costs per hour for people aged 65 or over
SW2	Direct payments + managed personalised budgets spend on adults 18+ as a % of total social work spend on adults 18+
SW3a	% of people aged 65 and over with long-term care needs receiving personal care at home
SW4b	% of adults supported at home who agree that their services and support had an impact in improving or maintaining their quality of life
SW4c	% of adults supported at home who agree that they are supported to live as independently as possible
SW4d	% of adults supported at home who agree that they had a say in how their help, care or support was provided
SW4e	% of carers who feel supported to continue in their caring role
SW5	Residential costs per week per resident for people aged 65 or over
SW6	Rate of readmission to hospital within 28 days per 1,000 discharges
SW7	Proportion of care services graded 'good' (4) or better in Care Inspectorate inspections
SW8	Number of days people spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged
C&L1	Cost per attendance at sports facilities
C&L2	Cost per library visit
C&L3	Cost of museums per visit
C&L4	Cost of parks & open spaces per 1,000 population
C&L5a	% of adults satisfied with libraries
C&L5b	% of adults satisfied with parks and open spaces
C&L5c	% of adults satisfied with museums and galleries
C&L5d	% of adults satisfied with leisure facilities
ENV1a	Net cost of waste collection per premise
ENV2a	Net cost of waste disposal per premise
ENV3a	Net cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population
ENV3c	Street cleanliness score
ENV4a	Cost of roads per kilometre
ENV4b	% of A class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment
ENV4c	% of B class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment
ENV4d	% of C class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment
ENV4e	% of U class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment



	Indicator Ref	Indicator Description
	ENV5	Cost of trading standards and environmental health per 1,000 population
	ENV5a	Cost of trading standards per 1,000
	ENV5b	Cost of environmental health per 1,000 population
	ENV6	% of total household waste arising that is recycled
	ENV7a	% of adults satisfied with refuse collection
	ENV7b	% of adults satisfied with street cleaning
	HSN1b	Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year
	HSN2	% of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids
	HSN3	% of council dwellings meeting Scottish housing standards
	HSN4b	Average number of days taken to complete non-emergency repairs
	HSN5a	% of council dwellings that are energy efficient
	CORP-ASSET1	% of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use
	CORP-ASSET2	% of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition
	ECON1	% of unemployed people assisted into work from council operated/funded employability programmes
	ECON2	Cost of planning and building standards per planning application
	ECON3	Average time per business and industry planning application (weeks)
	ECON4	% of procurement spend spent on local enterprises
	ECON5	No of Business Gateway start-ups per 10,000 population
	ECON6	Investment in economic development & tourism per 1,000 population
	ECON7	Proportion of people earning less than the living wage
	ECON8	Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband
	ECON9	Town vacancy rates
	ECON10	Immediately available employment land as a % of total land allocated for employment purposes in the local development plan
	ECON11	Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita
	ECON12a	Claimant Count as % of Working Age Population
	ECON12b	Claimant Count as % of 16-24 Population
	FINSUS1	Total useable reserves as a % of council annual budgeted revenue
	FINSUS2	Uncommitted General Fund Balance as a % of council annual budgeted net revenue
	FINSUS3	Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream - General Fund
	FINSUS4	Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream - Housing Revenue Account
	FINSUS5	Actual outturn as a percentage of budgeted expenditure
	CLIM1	CO2 emissions area wide per capita
	CLIM2	CO2 emissions area wide: emissions within scope of Local Authority per capita



Appendix 3

List of Family Groups

To understand why variations in cost and performance are occurring, councils work together to ‘drill-down’ into the benchmarking data across service areas. This process has been organised around ‘family groups’ of councils so that we are comparing 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.

People Services	Children, Social Work & Housing Indicators			
	Family Group 1	Family Group 2	Family Group 3	Family Group 4
	East Renfrewshire	Moray	Falkirk	Eilean Siar
	East Dunbartonshire	Stirling	Dumfries & Galloway	Dundee City
	Aberdeenshire	East Lothian	Fife	East Ayrshire
	Edinburgh, City of	Angus	South Ayrshire	North Ayrshire
	Perth & Kinross	Scottish Borders	West Lothian	North Lanarkshire
	Aberdeen City	Highland	South Lanarkshire	Inverclyde
	Shetland Islands	Argyll & Bute	Renfrewshire	West Dunbartonshire
	Orkney Islands	Midlothian	Clackmannanshire	Glasgow City

Least deprived ← → Most deprived

Other Services	Environmental, Culture & Leisure, Economic Development, Corporate & Property indicators			
	Family Group 1	Family Group 2	Family Group 3	Family Group 4
	Eilean Siar	Perth & Kinross	Angus	North Lanarkshire
	Argyll & Bute	Stirling	Clackmannanshire	Falkirk
	Shetland Islands	Moray	Midlothian	East Dunbartonshire
	Highland	South Ayrshire	South Lanarkshire	Aberdeen City
	Orkney Islands	East Ayrshire	Inverclyde	Edinburgh, City of
	Scottish Borders	East Lothian	Renfrewshire	West Dunbartonshire
	Dumfries & Galloway	North Ayrshire	West Lothian	Dundee City
	Aberdeenshire	Fife	East Renfrewshire	Glasgow City

Rural ← → Urban



Appendix 4

LGBF Credibility, Relevance and Reliability

10 Key Messages

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

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

Credibility

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

Relevance

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



Reliability

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



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