



# 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%

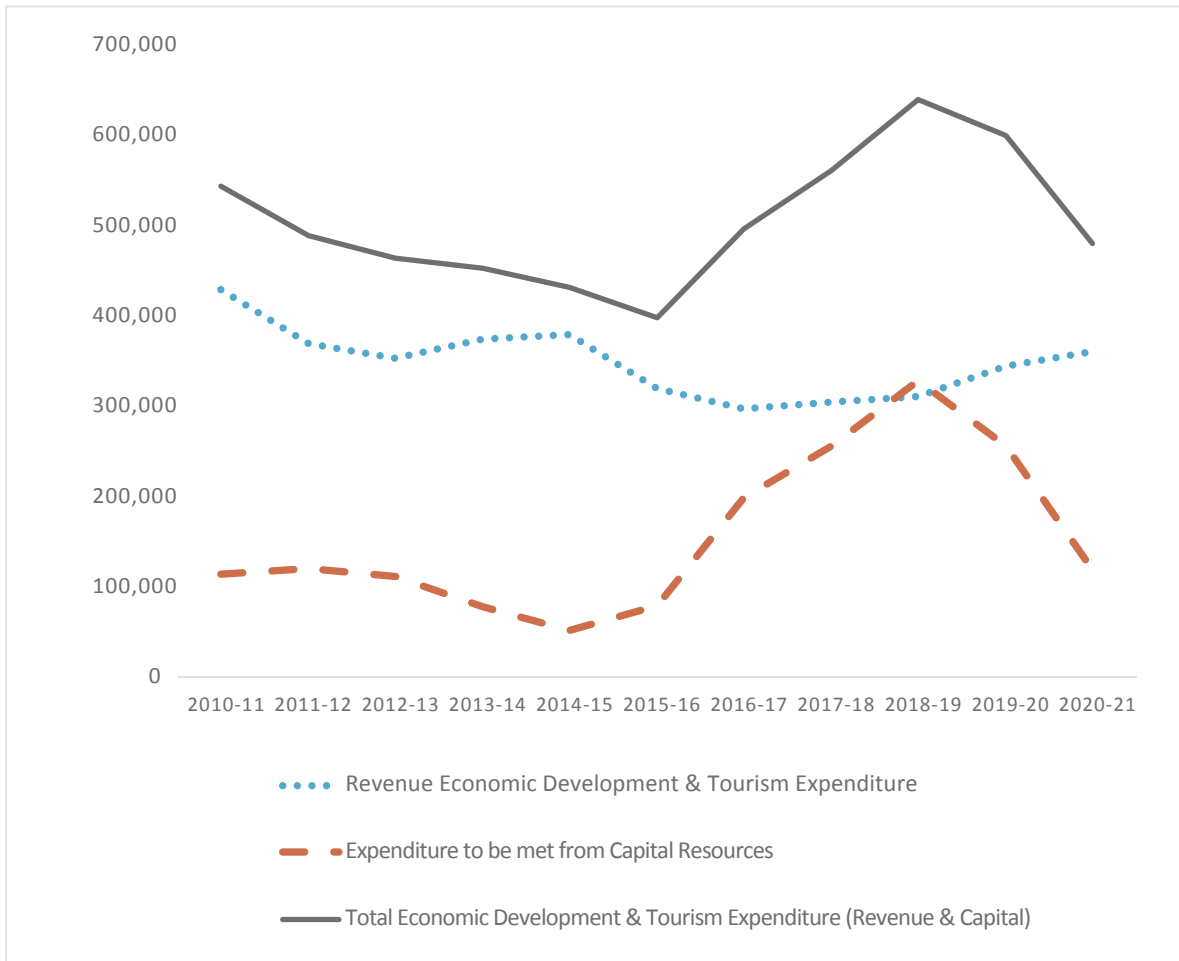
There has been a 15.6% decrease in economic development and tourism investment between 2010/11 and 2020/21 from £103,972 to £87,793 per 1,000. This reflects a real terms reduction in expenditure of 11.6%, against a population growth of 4.7%. In 2020/21, investment per 1,000 has reduced by 20%, the largest reduction recorded since the benchmarking framework begin. 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.<sup>46</sup> 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’<sup>47</sup> could affect council investment returns in this area, including the outputs/outcomes returned for our investment.

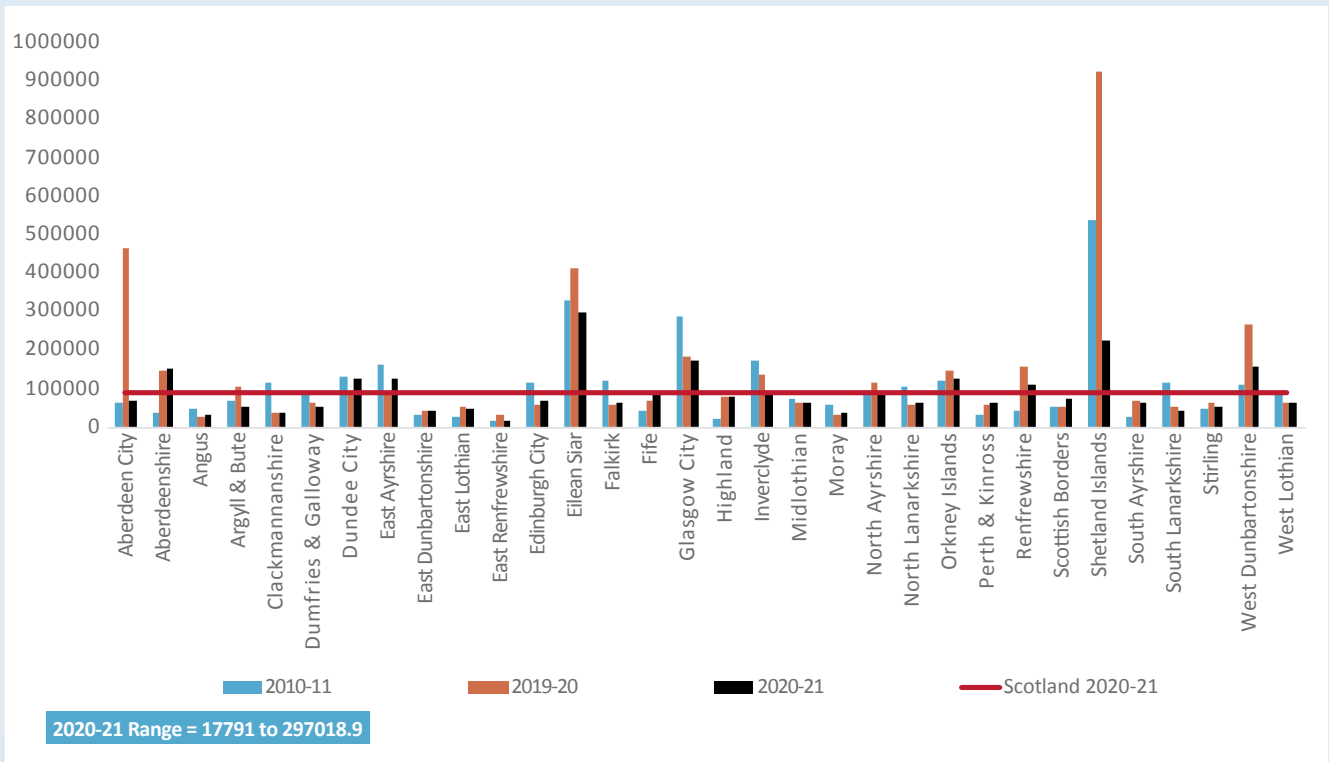
The graph below shows the significant variation between councils in economic development and tourism investment per 1,000. In 2020/21 investment ranged from £17,791 to £297,019 per 1,000. Variation has narrowed significantly in 2020/21 as a result of reductions in capital expenditure. There is no significant 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

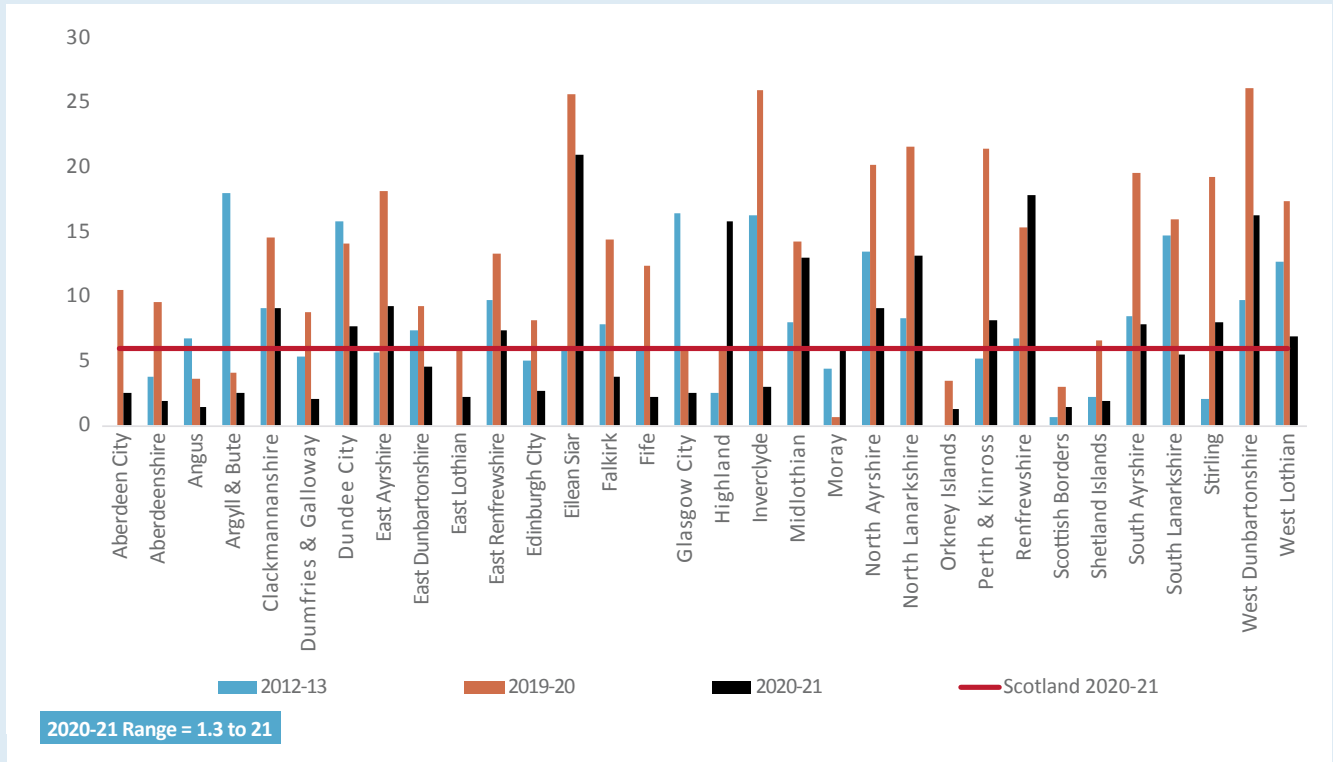
The COVID-19 pandemic risks widening further the divide in labour market outcomes for the most vulnerable groups who face numerous employment obstacles, such as limited work experience, care obligations, low skills or health limitations. This client group require more intensive support and may take longer 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

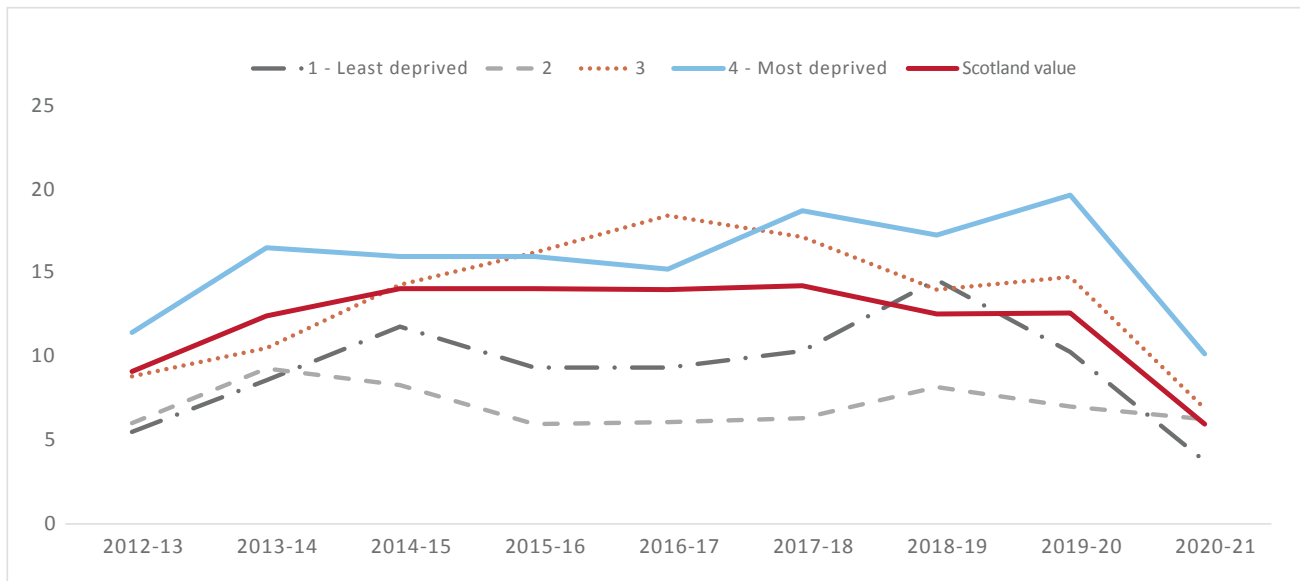
In 2020/21: Scotland: -6.7pp. councils: 3 increased and 29 decreased (range: -23pp to +9.9pp).

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 councils 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%).

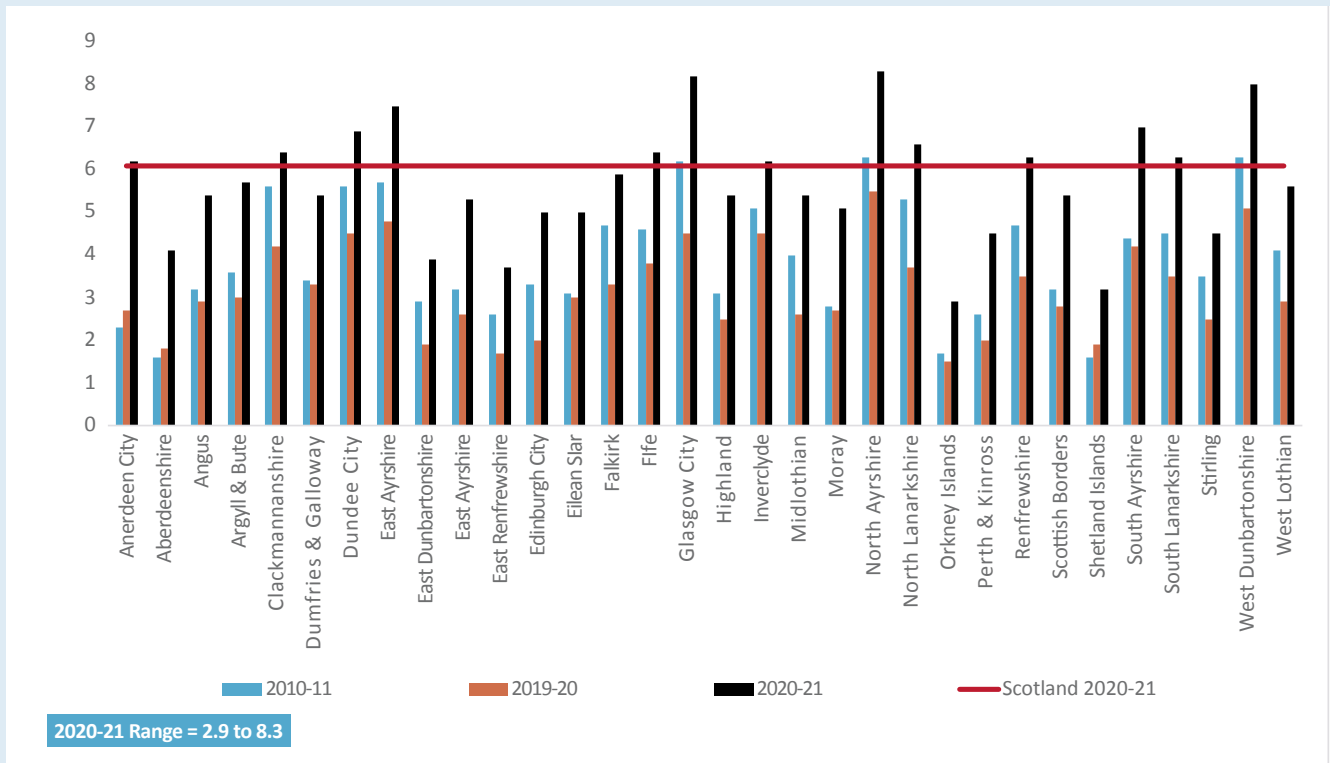
**Table 51: Claimant count as a percentage of working age population**

	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%).

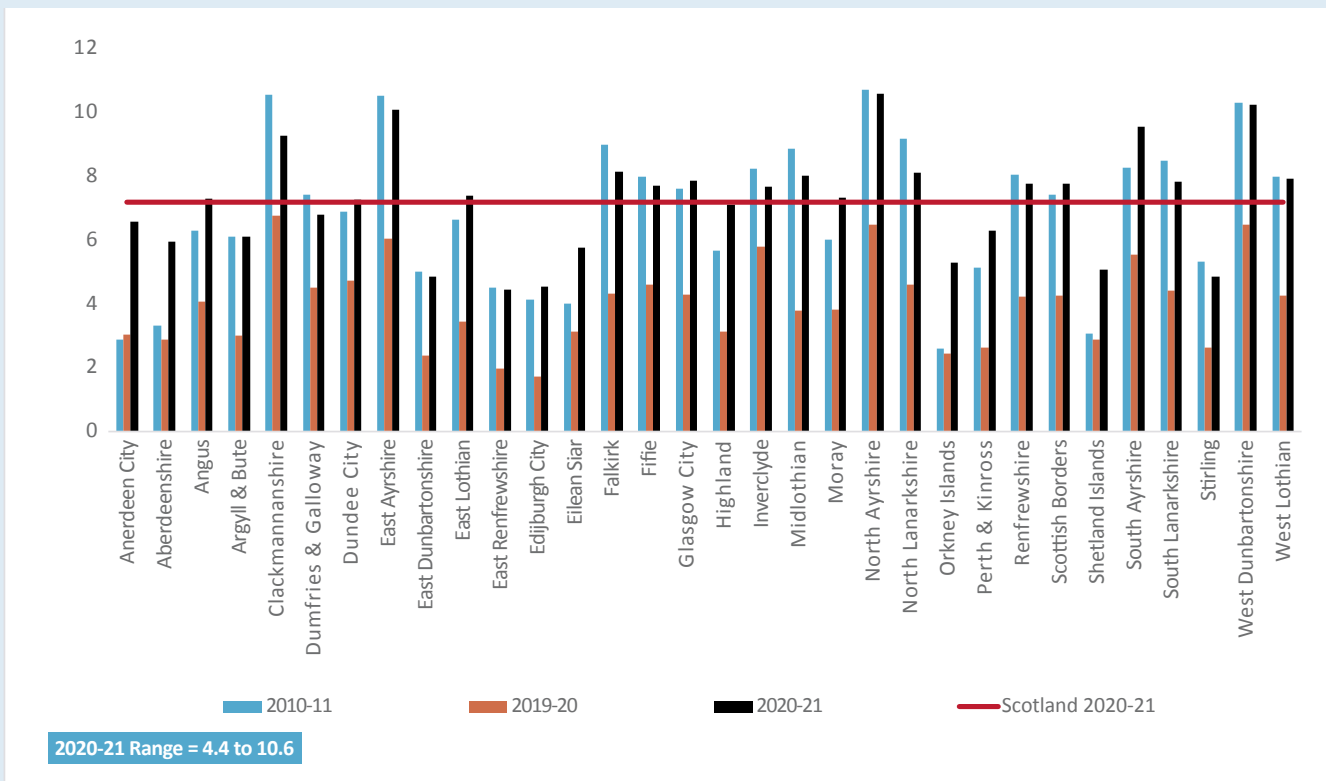
Change Over Time

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).

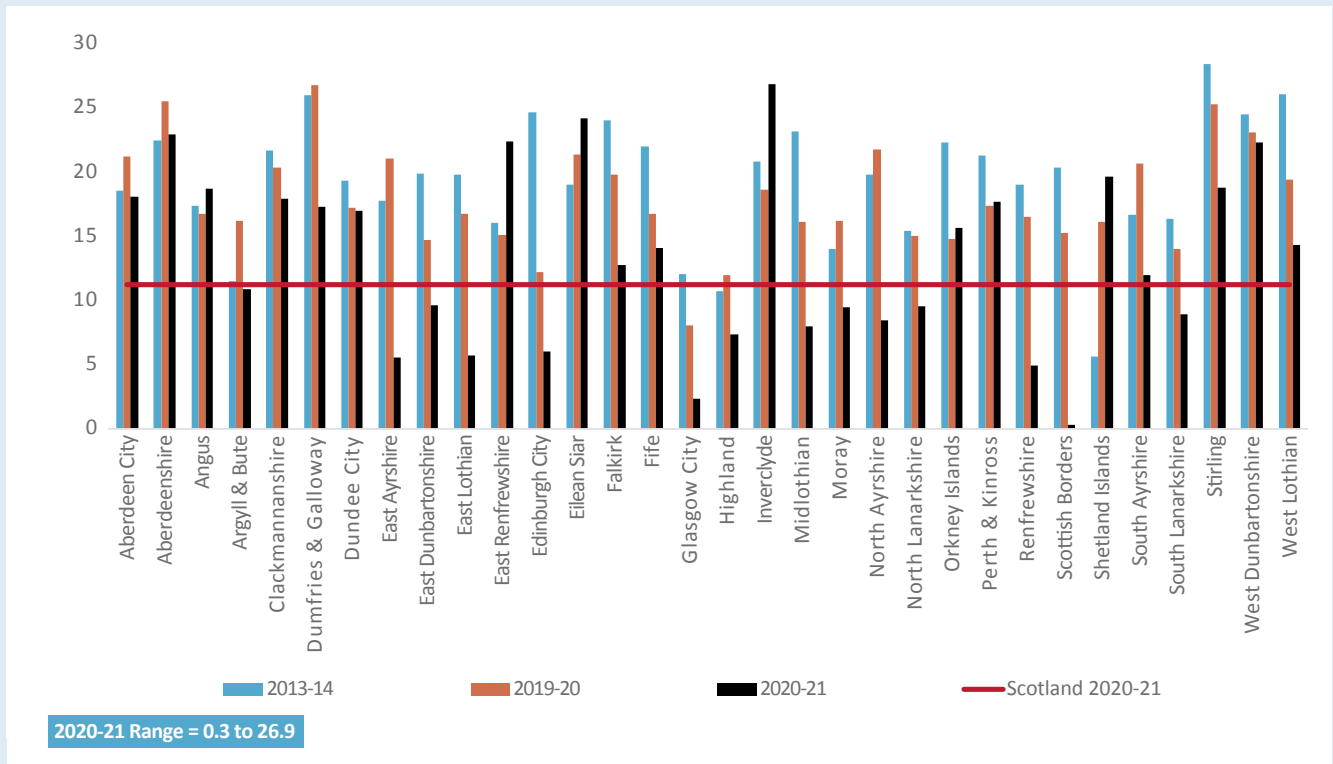
**Table 52: Number of Business Gateway start-ups per 10,000 population**

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.

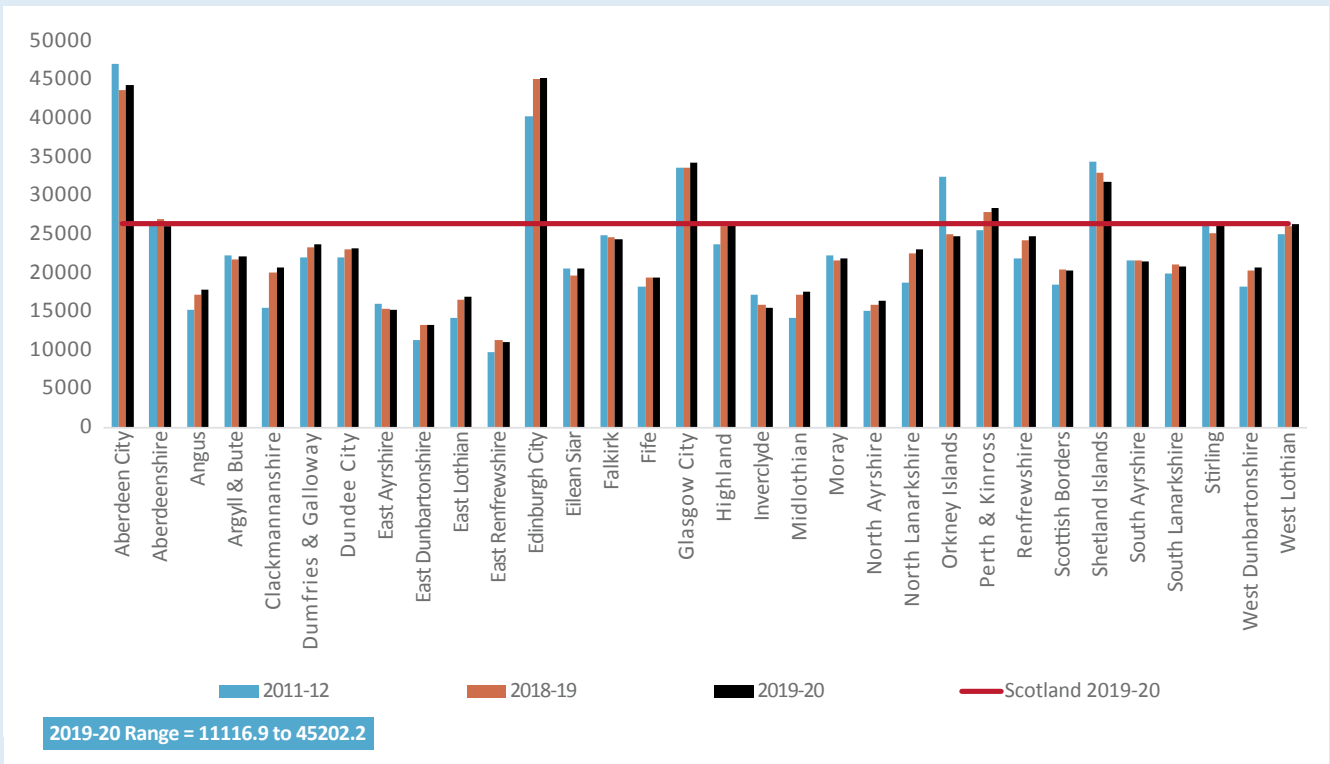
Data is not yet available for 2020/21. Data covering the period prior to COVID-19 shows a 6.9% increase in GVA between 2011/12 and 2019/20. This increasing trend is not evident in all council areas, with third of council areas seeing GVA decline over the period. There is significant variation in GVA 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

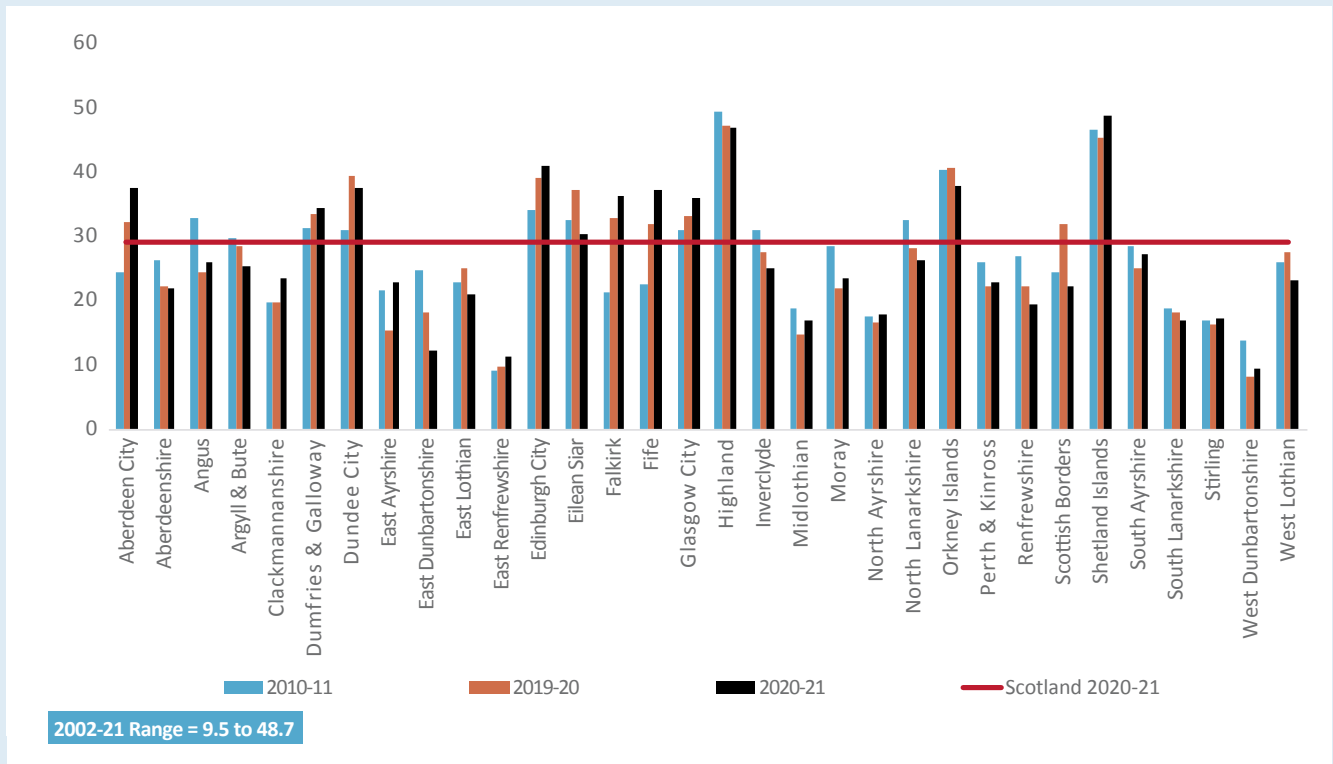
Procurement spend on local enterprises has increased from 27.2% in 2010/11 to 29.1% in 2020/21. Given the longer-term pressures on council budgets this is a positive outcome as it suggests that the drive to reduce costs has not resulted in local enterprises being displaced by national suppliers of goods 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).

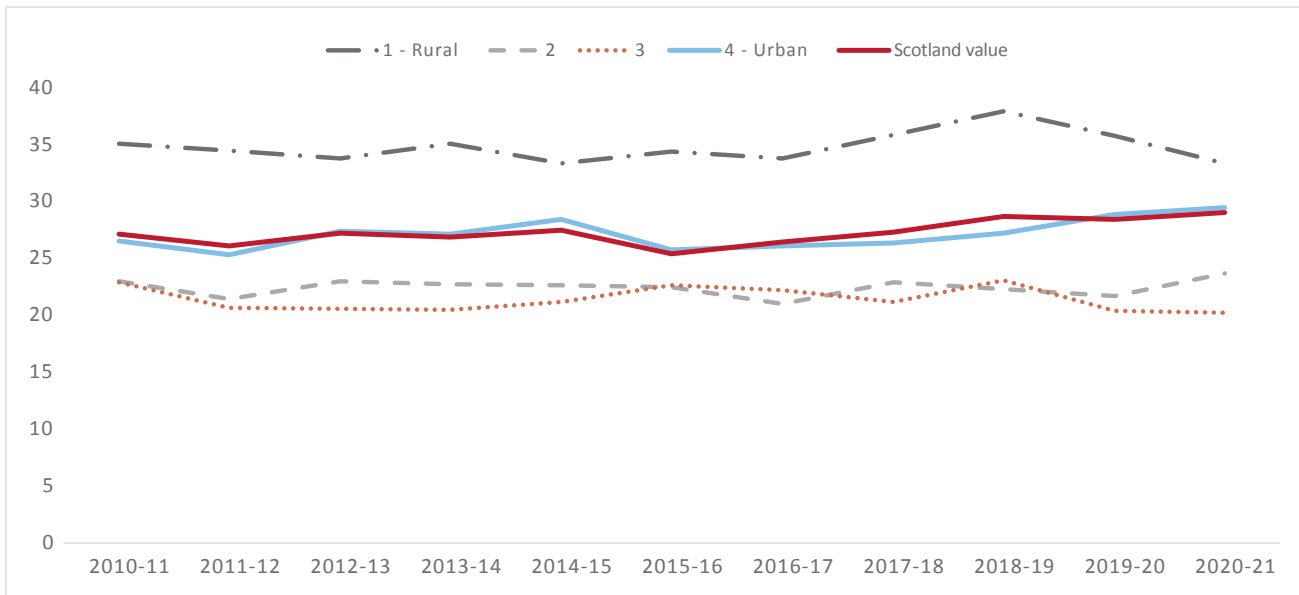
Change Over Time

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 - (£)

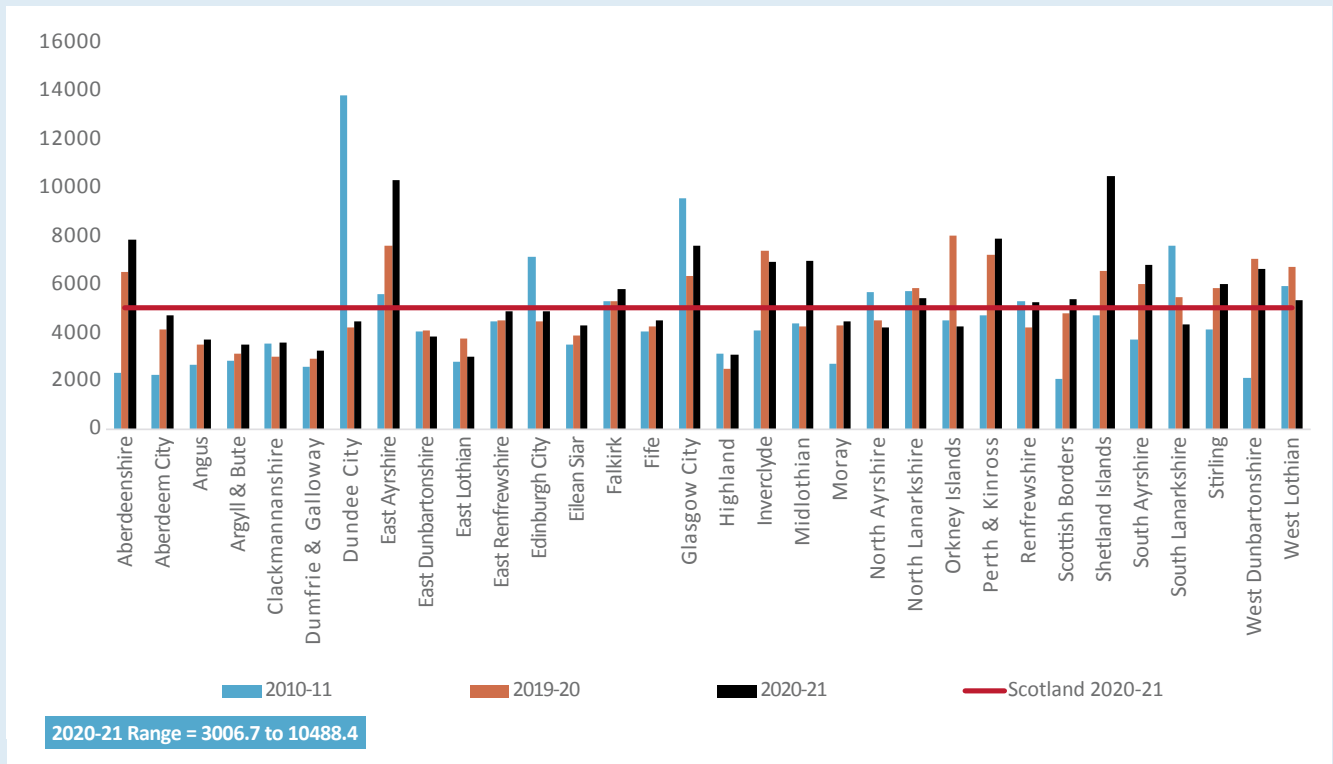
2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	% Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
4,446	4,569	5,992	4,021	3,945	4,643	4,339	4,505	4,861	4,736	5,044	6.5%	13.4%

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).

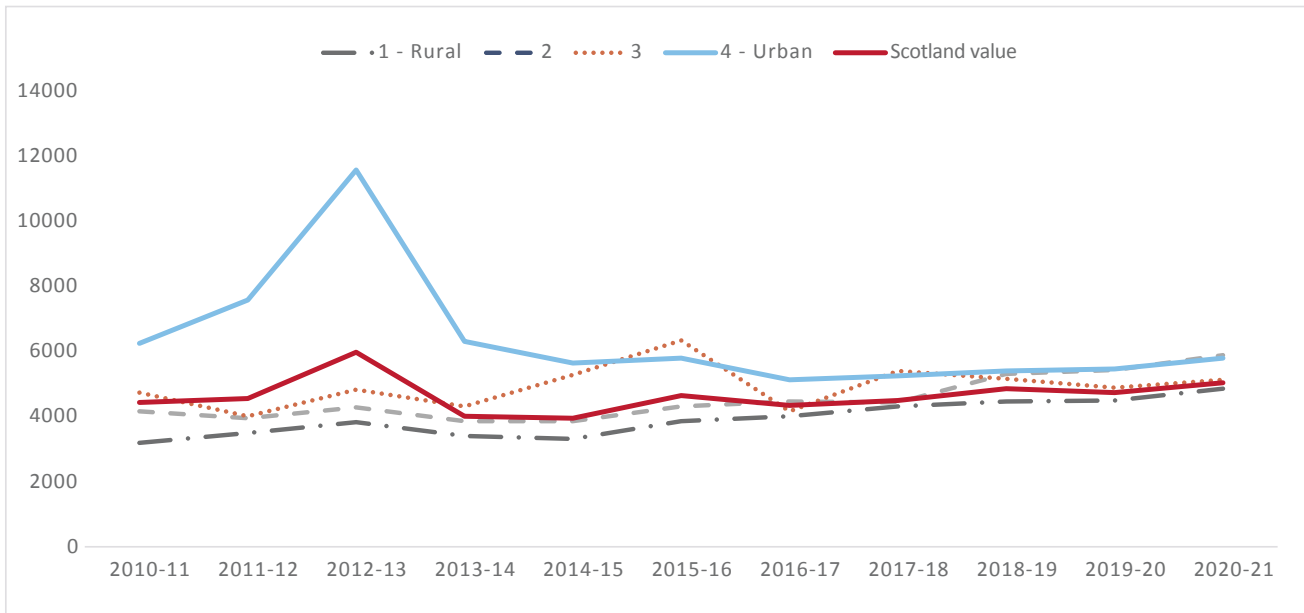
#### Change Over Time

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).<sup>48</sup>

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.

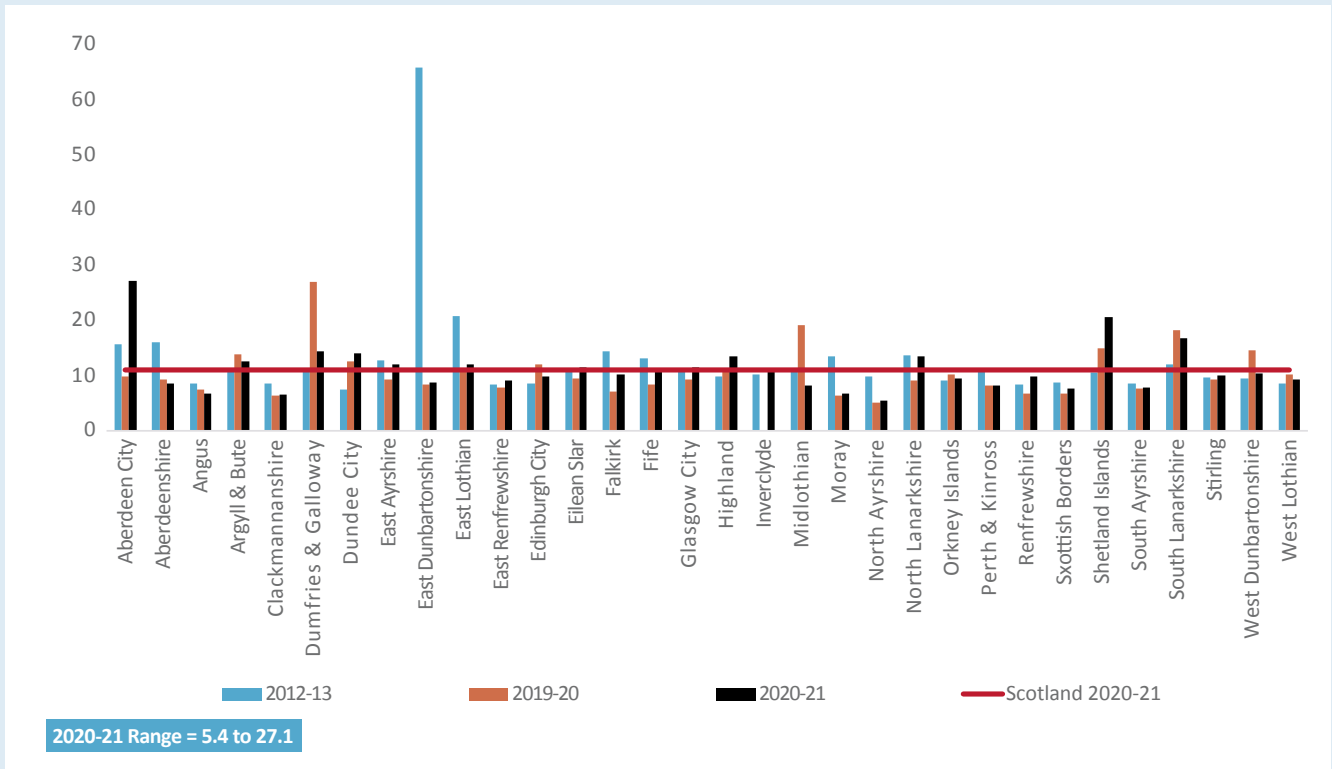
48 <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2021/07/planning-performance-statistics-2020-21-annual/documents/annual-planning-performance-statistics-2020-21-annual-planning-performance-statistics-2020-21/govscot%3Adocument/annual-planning-performance-statistics-2020-21.pdf>





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.

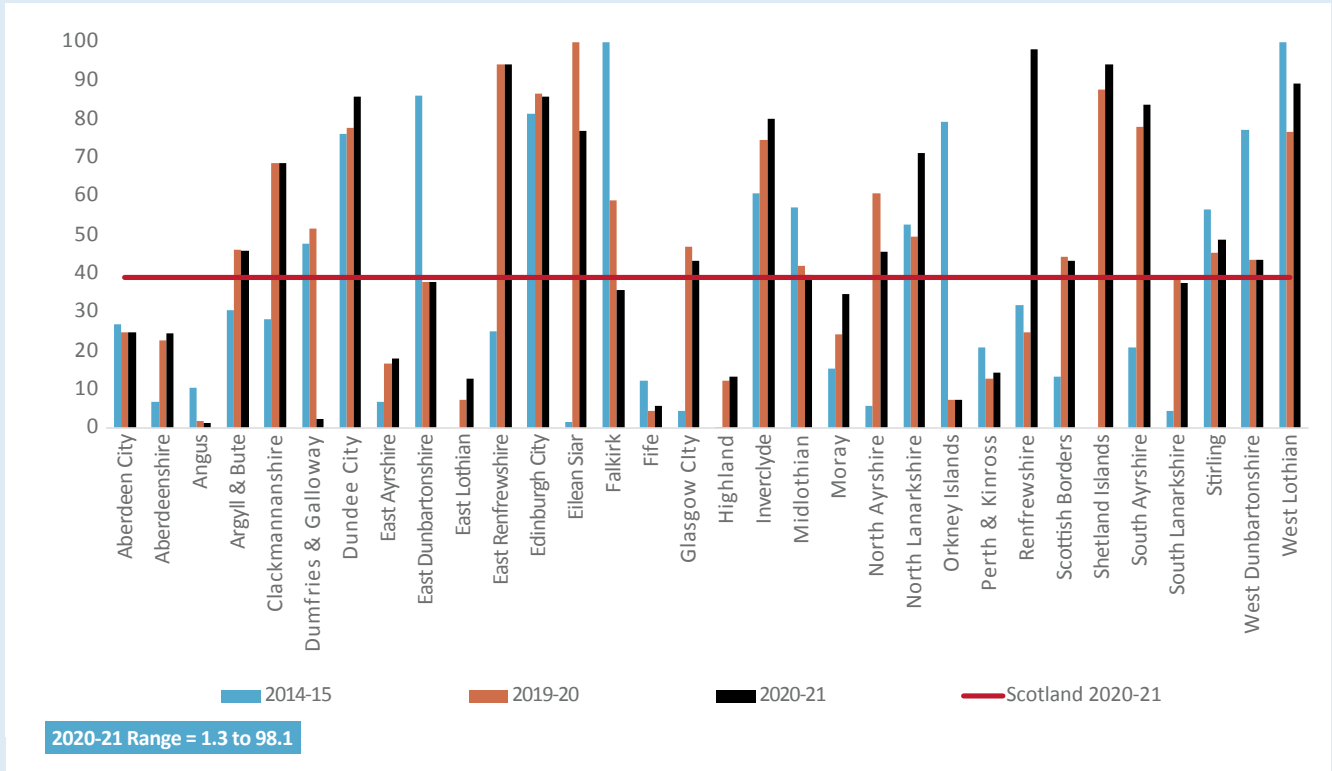
**Table 57: Immediately available employment land as a percentage of total land allocated for employment purposes in the local development plan**

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**



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

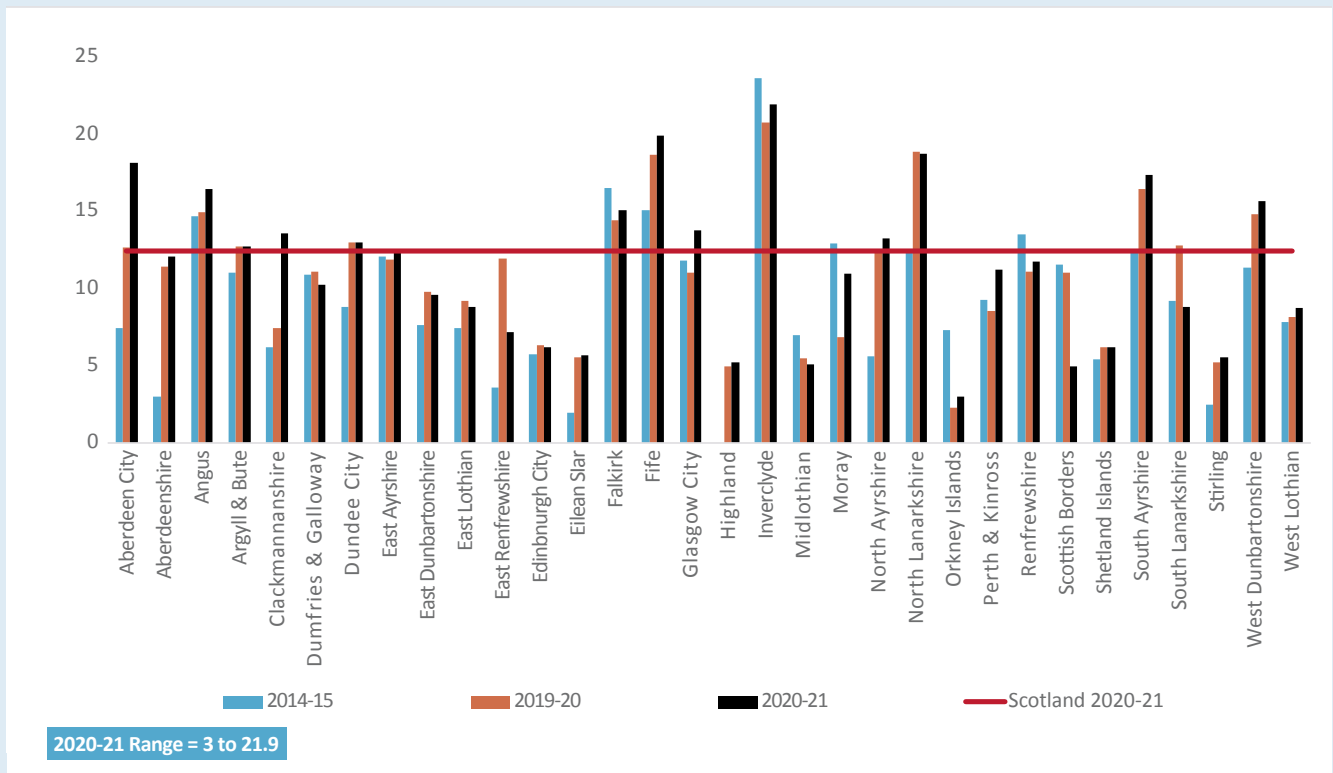
The Scotland figure for town vacancy rates has remained relatively constant since 2014/15, however has risen to its highest level in 2020/21, when an average of 12.4% of town centre properties were vacant across Scotland. However, almost a third of authorities report a reduction in their vacancy rate 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 (%)



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%).

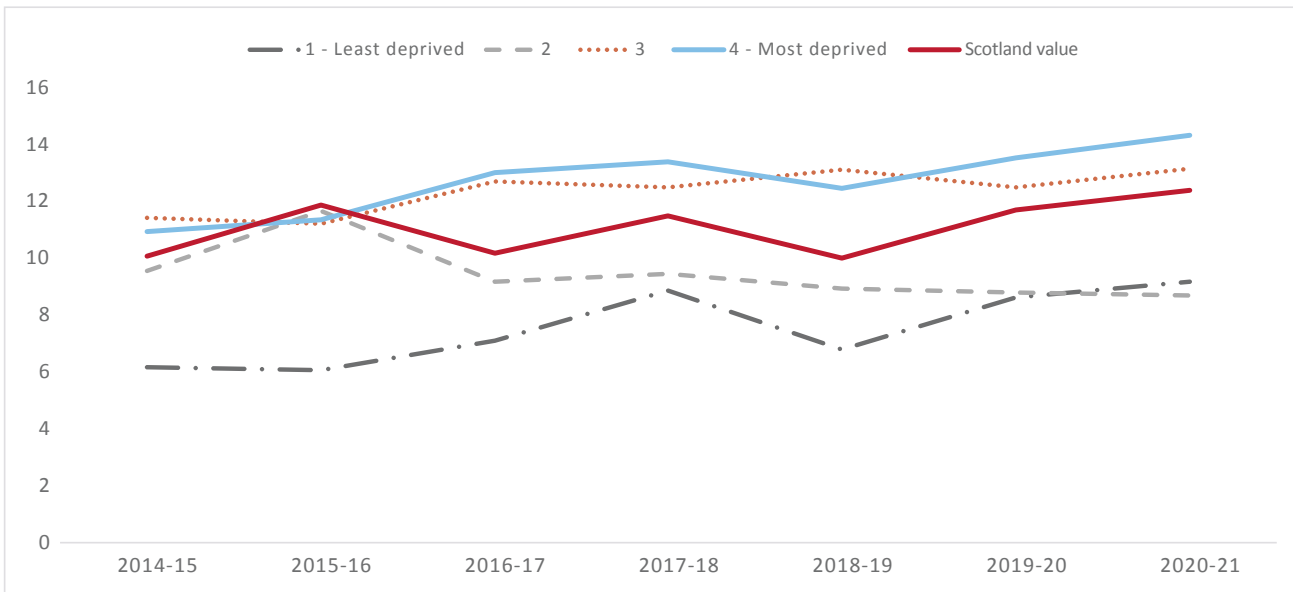
#### Change Over Time

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.

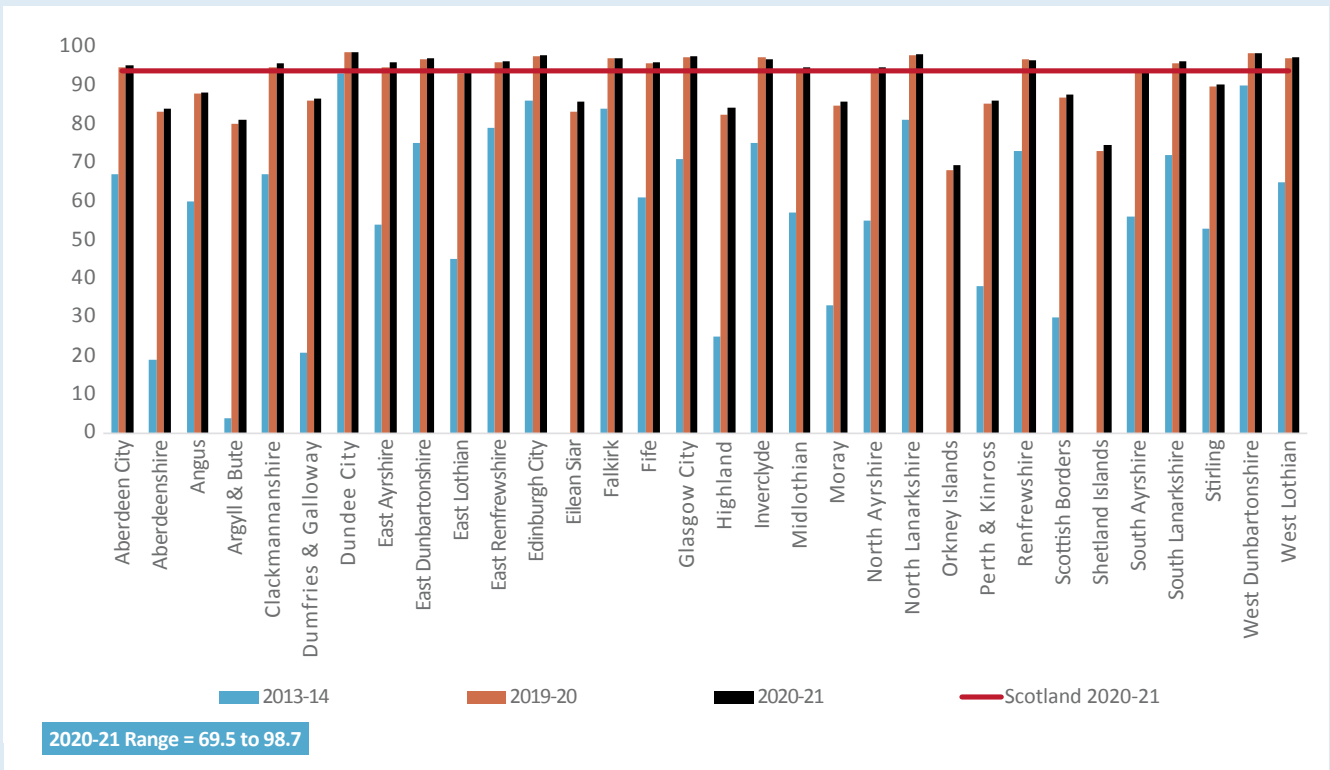
The rate of improvement (0.5pp) has slowed in comparison with previous years as the indicator reaches a ceiling. Digital connectivity is an increasingly important consideration in terms of economic competitiveness and inclusion, as has been so clearly illustrated throughout the COVID pandemic. The trend 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%).

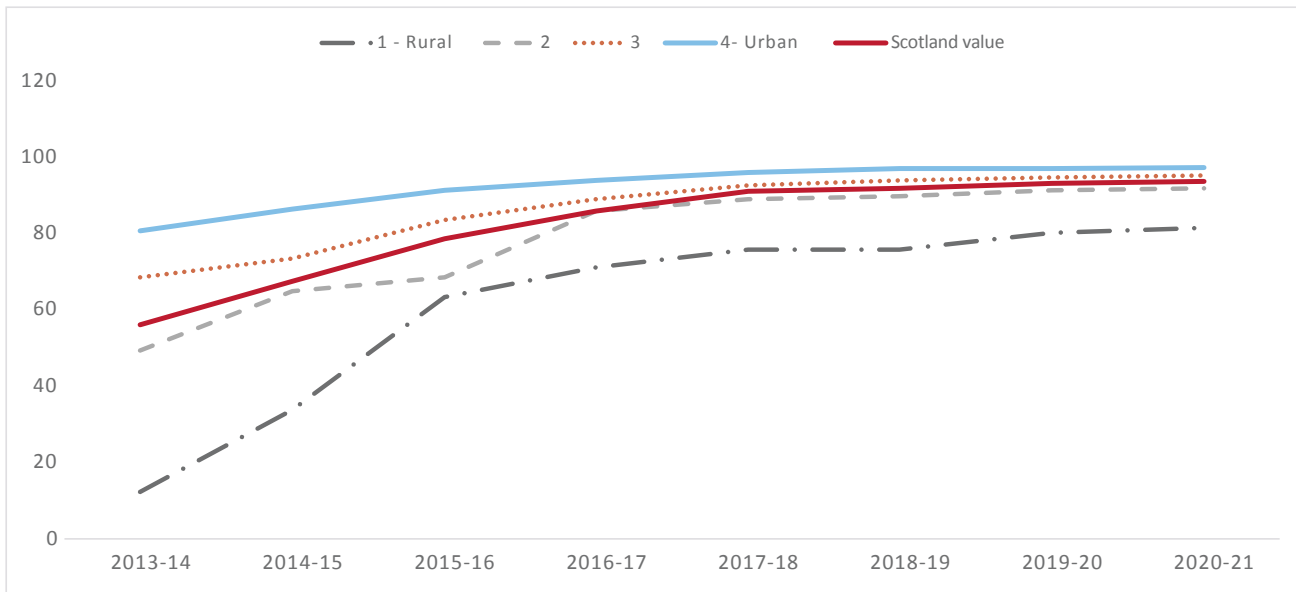
Change Over Time

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

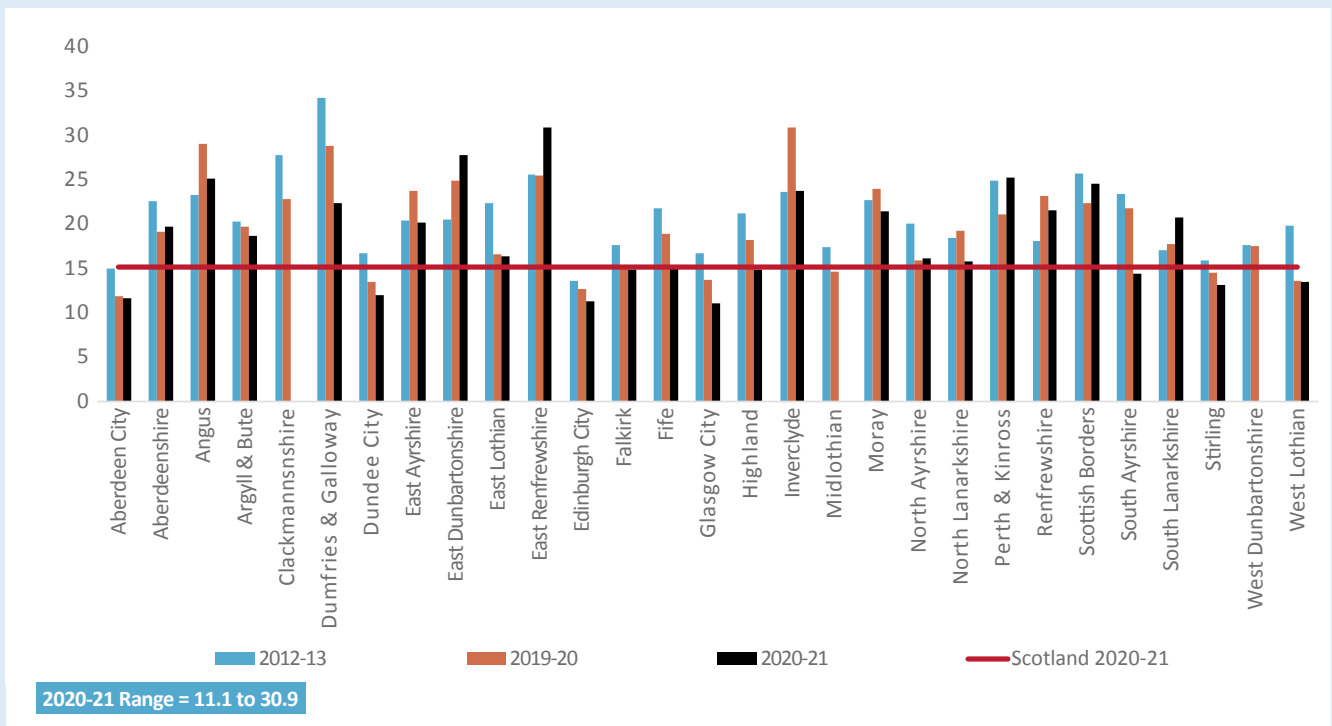
The proportion of people earning less than the real living wage has reduced from 18.8% to 15.2% since 2012/13, with significant improvement occurring in 2019/20 and 2020/21. This improving picture is not universal however, with the proportion earning less than the living wage increasing in a just under 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

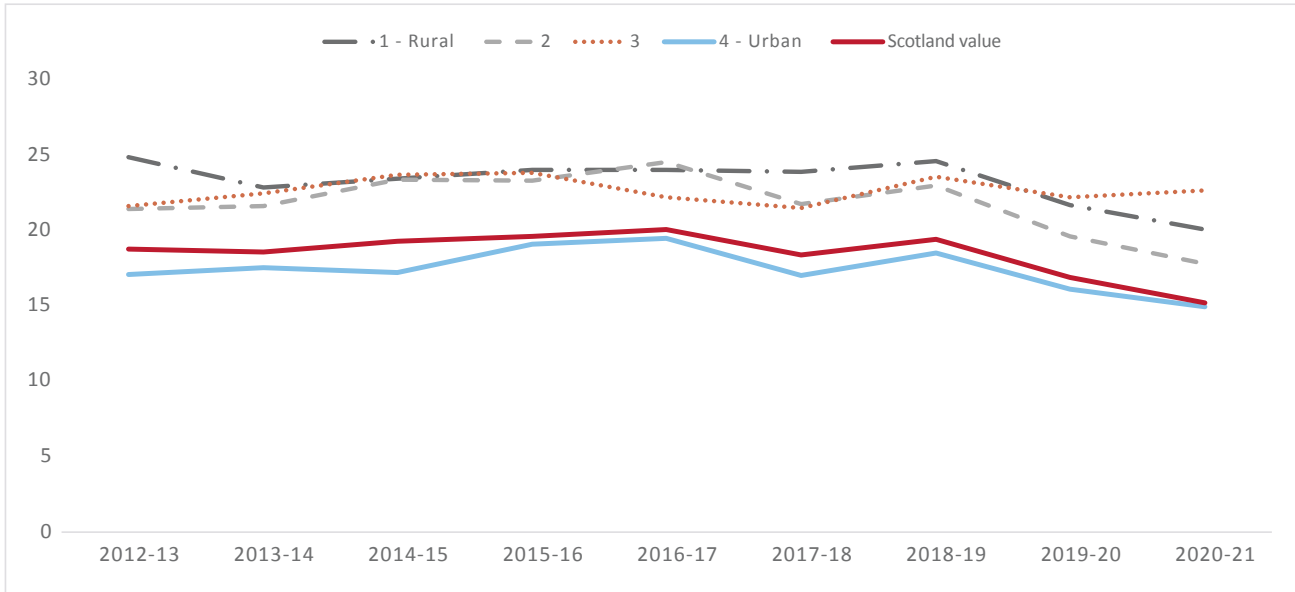


Fig 155: Proportion of people earning less than the real living wage by family group - deprivation

