

## Use of the LGBF

# Making performance data work harder: reframing the use of the LGBF

## South Lanarkshire Council

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### Background

South Lanarkshire Council reviewed how it was using Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) data, recognising that its approach was too focused on large annual reports covering all indicators. While comprehensive, this often led to high-level discussions centred on rankings rather than deeper understanding.

There was a clear need to make better use of the data in practice. Indicators were not always linked clearly to council priorities and were often presented without enough context to support meaningful discussion. The aim was to move towards a more focused, practical approach that supports stronger performance conversations and decision making.

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### Key activities

#### Identifying a strategic subset of indicators

A smaller set of indicators was selected from the full LGBF dataset. These were chosen to align directly with the council's key outcomes and priorities, providing a clearer focus for discussion. This reflects the principle that councils should apply the LGBF proportionately, rather than treating all indicators as equally important.

#### Mapping indicators to the council plan

The selected indicators were explicitly linked to the council's strategic outcomes. This ensured that LGBF data was considered alongside other performance information rather than in isolation.

#### Embedding LGBF within existing reporting cycles

The subset of indicators was integrated into regular reporting on the council plan, particularly at year-end. This created natural opportunities to revisit performance data in context.

#### Introducing a dashboard for improved access

A [dashboard](#) was developed to present the data in a more accessible and user-friendly way. This sat alongside existing reporting but offered a more intuitive way to explore the data.

#### Providing narrative and context

Reporting was reviewed to strengthen context and commentary, with clearer explanations, including caveats, background information, and service-level narrative to support interpretation.

## Engaging stakeholders throughout the process

The development of the approach involved discussions with elected members, senior leadership, and services. This helped build shared understanding and ownership.

## Benefits and impact

### More meaningful performance conversations

A key benefit has been a clear shift away from simplistic comparisons and rankings. Discussions are now more focused on understanding what indicators are showing and why performance looks the way it does. There is less emphasis on “league table” positions and more on context, drivers of performance, and what the data means for decision making. This has created a more balanced and informed approach to performance scrutiny.

### Stronger focus on what matters locally

The introduction of a strategic subset of indicators has made it easier for elected members and senior officers to concentrate on the areas that matter most to the council. Instead of navigating a large volume of data, users can focus on a smaller number of relevant measures linked directly to priorities. This has helped reduce information overload and made discussions more targeted and productive.

### Clearer link between performance data and council priorities

By aligning LGBF indicators with the council plan, performance data is now considered alongside strategic objectives. This allows elected members to assess progress in a more joined-up way. Rather than treating LGBF as a separate and discrete reporting exercise, it becomes part of the wider performance picture, supporting a more coherent understanding of how the council is performing.

### Better understanding through context and narrative

The addition of stronger narrative has improved how data is interpreted.

Users are no longer expected to read figures in isolation. Instead, they are supported with explanations about local context, policy choices, and external factors that influence performance. This helps avoid misinterpretation and supports more informed discussion, particularly where indicators may initially appear to show weaker performance despite deliberate investment or policy decisions.

### Greater accessibility and visibility

The introduction of the dashboard has made LGBF data significantly easier to access and use.

- Information is presented in a clear, visual format
- Users can quickly find relevant indicators
- Data is no longer confined to long reports
- Indicators are presented through the lens of the council’s strategic outcomes

Internally, this has made it easier for officers and services to engage with the data. Externally, it provides a more accessible way for the public to understand council performance.

### Improved engagement across the organisation

The process of developing the new approach created valuable opportunities for engagement. Officers, senior managers and elected members were actively involved in agreeing how LGBF reporting could be overhauled and the framework itself used more flexibly. This helped build a stronger shared understanding and reinforced the purpose of the framework. The conversation shifted from “reporting indicators” to “how we use this information”, which has helped foster a more constructive and forward-looking approach.

### A more mature and embedded use of LGBF

Over time, the LGBF has become more embedded within the council’s overall performance landscape. Taken as a whole, the framework is recognised as a credible and useful source of insight that supports a range of activity, including strategic planning and service discussions. Rather than a once-a-year exercise, it contributes to ongoing understanding of performance and trends.

### Platform for further improvement

The approach has also created a foundation for future development.

There is now a clear direction towards bringing LGBF together with other sources of performance and contextual data. This would provide an even more complete picture of performance and support more informed analysis.

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## Learning and reflections

### Focus supports better engagement

A smaller, well-chosen subset of indicators can drive more meaningful discussion than a comprehensive but overwhelming dataset. Linking indicators to local concerns makes the framework relatable and encourages conversations about performance that matters.

### Context is essential

Performance data cannot be understood in isolation. Narrative and explanation are critical to support interpretation.

### Accessibility drives use

Making data easier to find and navigate increases the likelihood that it will be used in practice. The approach reflects a shift towards using the LGBF in a more proportionate, integrated and context-aware way.

The council continues to develop its approach and sees this as an evolving area of work.

Future plans include:

- Reviewing and refreshing the selected indicators alongside the next council plan
- Expanding the use of dashboards and improving functionality
- Further integrating LGBF data with other local performance and contextual information

Overall, the work has positioned the council strongly to make continued improvements in how it uses performance data to support insight, decision making, and transparency.

### Contact for enquiries

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