

Use of the LGBF

Using LGBF data to support performance conversations and benchmarking

City of Edinburgh Council

Background

City of Edinburgh Council has worked to improve how it uses the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) to support performance discussions and reporting. While the data was available and valued by senior leaders, it was not being used consistently across services and was not always easy to access or apply in practice, limiting its impact on day to day decision making.

There was also a need to strengthen how performance is understood in context. This included improving how benchmarking is used, making comparisons more meaningful for a city authority, and helping services move from reviewing data to using it more actively in performance conversations.

Key activities

Developing an accessible Power BI dashboard

The Council created a Power BI dashboard linked directly to the LGBF dataset, allowing data to update automatically. It has been rolled out to managers and service teams. This makes data easier to access and ensures that users can work with up-to-date information when reviewing performance.

Using tailored comparisons for context

Alongside national comparisons, the Council developed a “city comparator” approach, comparing performance with other cities such as Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen. This provides a more meaningful context for interpretation and helps services understand performance relative to similar authorities.

Using LGBF data to prompt service discussions

The data is used in discussions with directorates and senior management teams, focusing on areas of change, strong performance or concern. This supports more focused conversations about what is driving performance and where further analysis or action may be needed.

Using a risk-based approach to analysis

Rather than reviewing every indicator in detail, the Council focuses on indicators that show sustained poor performance, strong performance or notable change. This keeps the approach manageable and helps target attention where it adds most value.

Combining benchmarking with narrative reporting

LGBF data is supported by narrative explanations in committee reports and business bulletins, with services providing context for trends and changes. This helps ensure that performance is understood and supports more informed scrutiny and discussion.

Linking data to strategic priorities and improvement

LGBF indicators are used to track performance against key priorities, such as processing times for crisis grants. This supports targeted improvement activity and allows progress to be tracked over time.

Benefits and impact

More accessible and engaging public performance reporting

Moving away from traditional written reports to a more interactive, visual format has made performance information easier to access and engage with. Users can move through different areas of performance in a structured way, rather than working through long documents. This supports wider use of performance information, particularly for audiences who may be less familiar with the data.

Clearer understanding of what performance data shows and why it matters

Combining benchmarking data with narrative and explanation helps users understand not just the results, but the context behind them. By setting out local priorities, key developments and planned actions alongside the data, the Council provides a clearer explanation of what is driving performance and how it is changing over time.

More balanced and complete picture of performance

Presenting LGBF data alongside narrative and local indicators supports a more rounded view of performance. Rather than focusing on isolated indicators, the approach allows users to see how different areas of performance relate to each other, including both strengths and areas for improvement. This creates a more credible and transparent account of how the Council is performing.

Stronger connection between performance information and local priorities

Organising the report around themes linked to local priorities helps users understand how benchmarking information relates to what the Council is trying to achieve. This makes it easier to interpret the data in context and supports a more joined-up understanding of progress across different service areas.

Improved consistency in how performance is presented

Using a clear, structured format across the report makes it easier for users to navigate and interpret information. Consistent presentation reduces the need to reinterpret data in different formats and supports a more straightforward comparison across different areas of performance.

More effective use of benchmarking to support insight

Presenting LGBF indicators as part of a wider narrative supports a shift from simply reporting data to using it to provide insight. Users are able to explore how performance compares with others, while also understanding the local context that shapes those results. This makes benchmarking more meaningful and supports more informed interpretation.

Increased transparency in public reporting

Making performance information more accessible and easier to understand supports greater transparency. Users can see how services are performing, how this compares over time and how it relates to priorities and planned actions. This helps build confidence in how performance is reported and explained.

Stronger foundation for ongoing development and engagement

The move to a digital, interactive format creates a platform that can be developed further over time. There is scope to expand content, improve functionality and strengthen engagement as users become more familiar with the format. This positions the Council to continue improving how it communicates and uses performance information.

Learning and reflections

Accessibility increases engagement

Making data easier to access has helped increase its use. The introduction of the dashboard means services can engage with the data more regularly and use it as part of ongoing discussions.

Context is essential in benchmarking

The Council has found that comparison works best when it reflects local context. Using city-level comparisons alongside national data provides a more meaningful understanding of performance.

Data works best as a starting point

LGBF data is most useful when used to prompt questions rather than provide answers. Using indicators to highlight areas of interest supports deeper analysis and better understanding of what is driving performance.

Narrative improves understanding

Providing context alongside data is key, particularly when reporting to elected members. Narrative helps explain changes, highlight pressures and show what actions are being taken, supporting more informed conversations.

Proportionate use builds confidence

Taking a focused approach, rather than analysing every indicator in detail, has helped build confidence in using the data. This avoids overwhelming users and encourages more practical use of the information.

Embedding takes time

The Council continues to develop how LGBF data is used across services. While progress has been made, there is ongoing work to strengthen how benchmarking is linked with wider performance reporting and decision making.

Contact for Enquiries

Kevin Kelly

kevin.kelly@edinburgh.gov.uk