

Council Leader Newsletter



The Improvement Service is the 'go to' organisation for Local Government improvement in Scotland.

The purpose of this newsletter is to update Council Leaders on key decisions made by the IS Board at its meetings in September 2023 and key business plan developments.

IS Board Update

Finance, Operations and HR Update

The Board noted that for the first quarter to 30th June 2023, the total funding secured for the year is £12,730,300, excluding investment income of £19,803.

Statutory Financial Statements

The Board approved the Financial Statements, noting that they will be submitted to Companies House before the deadline of 31st December 2023, following the Annual General Meeting (AGM) which will take place on the 1st December. Further information on the AGM will be shared with Council Chief Executives nearer the time and proxy voting will be an option. The Board reviewed the Audit Completion Memo noting that, once again, a clean audit report was received.

IS Sustainability

The Board agreed that a paper on sustainability and income generation be presented to the Solace branch in March 2024 and then COSLA Leaders in April 2024.

Communications Strategy

The Board approved the [Communications Strategy](#) noting that the updated strategy reflects the priorities set out in the refreshed [Strategic Framework](#) and covers both external and internal communications.

Data and Intelligence Strategy

The Board approved the Data and Intelligence [strategy](#) and [prospectus](#) and will review progress made with the delivery of the strategy in September 2024.

Peer Collaborative Improvement

The Board approved draft Peer Collaborative Improvement Guidance, noting that this work will be resourced through existing IS staff resource. The Board noted that a paper on Peer Collaborative Improvement will be shared with the Local Government Benchmarking Framework Board in October and, if approved, a paper will then be submitted to the Solace Branch meeting in October, prior to any peer collaborative improvement work taking place. The Board agreed that it would be helpful to take a paper to COSLA Leaders to get their endorsement of the proposed Peer Collaborative Improvement approach, following a discussion with Solace.

Strategic Alliance - IS & Accounts Commission

The Board noted the progress of the Strategic Alliance between the Accounts Commission and IS, restating its commitment to the Strategic Alliance and agreeing the signatories on the Strategic Alliance should be updated to the current Chair of the IS Board and, once in post, the new Chair of the Accounts Commission. The Board also agreed to retain and further develop the joint priorities agreed as a basis for the Alliance, noting that progress will be reviewed in 12 months' time. The Board noted that a progress report will be considered by the Accounts Commission at its meeting on 12th October 2023.

Climate Intelligence Service

The Board agreed to move to implementation and delivery of the CIS and for the recruitment of the Capacity Building Manager to proceed, noting that the Scottish Government provided a letter of comfort for funding through to 2024/25 to support the recruitment of this post.

Prospectus

Our [Prospectus for Scottish Councils](#) and [Prospectus for Local Government Partners](#) have been updated in line with the [Business Plan 2023/24](#) and refreshed [Strategic Framework](#).

Key Business Plan Updates

Transformation, Performance and Improvement

Governance and Political Leadership

Joint events with Accounts Commission

Along with the Accounts Commission, we have held two joint online events for elected members since June on the Commission's Local Government Overview Report 2023 and their Role and Working Relationships: are you getting it right?' publication from their How Council's Work series.

Following the success of these events and excellent engagement and discussion with members, the IS and the Commission are looking to arrange further online events for elected members on topics from the 'How Council's Work' series, as well as an event looking at Best Value.

We will be advertising these events in the coming weeks.

Upcoming Publications

A briefing note is being prepared for elected members on 'Civil Contingencies & Emergency Preparedness'. This will be sent to elected members via our mailing list, and to relevant officer contacts. ['The Introduction to the Planning System for Elected Members'](#) guidance has recently been updated with changes arising from NPF4. The guidance is a joint publication with Heads of Planning Scotland.

Celebrating 50 Years of Community Councils

We have been promoting an ongoing celebration of community councils in this 50th anniversary year and have developed a [communications toolkit](#) that local authorities and community councils can use to celebrate the anniversary that includes suggested content including social media posts.

We are keen to hear how local authorities are planning to mark the anniversary, for example by hosting face to face, online or hybrid events to celebrate your community councils or maybe an awards ceremony for long-serving community councillors. Whatever your plans are to recognise 50 years of community councils we would be keen hear them and discuss how we can offer support. To discuss your ideas please contact scottishccs@improvementservice.org.uk.

[A new set of guidance documents for Community Councils](#) have been published by the IS, Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC), COSLA and the Scottish Government.

The documents, which include a Model Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils and Good Practice Guidance for how Community Councils should operate, were launched by Tom Arthur MSP, Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance, and COSLA's Community Wellbeing Spokesperson, Cllr Maureen Chalmers, during a visit to Cambuslang to see projects implemented by the local Community Council.

Community councillors and local authority Community Council Liaison Officers (CCLOs) were also involved in reviewing the existing Model Scheme and guidance document at a series of meetings in 2021 and 2022. These documents needed to be updated to take into account technological

changes in the way Community Councils are meeting, conducting their finances and engaging with their communities.

The Good Practice Guidance is designed to be a living document, with scope for additions and edits to be made in response to changes in circumstances.

Local Government Transformation Programme

Volunteers

The Improvement Service is currently looking for volunteers from local government and the wider public sector to join an ambitious transformation programme, aimed at achieving radical public sector reform.

These volunteers will have key roles to play in three workstreams within the programme: leading a whole-system dialogue on public service reform; participating in transformation projects over the next 12-18 months; and ensuring that there is capacity in local government to lead and deliver this transformation work. Volunteers can also sign up for the Leadership Practitioner Forum, a new network for aspiring Chief Executives, Directors and Heads of Service, that will bring colleagues together to explore topics and challenges associated with the workstreams and contribute to the work.

The think piece has identified six anchors as key areas for transformation, and each anchor has a chief executive sponsor from a Scottish council. These anchors have been paired into three groups based on the inter-connectedness of their aims:

- Enable a functioning, trusted local and central government relationship and Unlocking Community Action
- A focus on people through a public sector plc that tackles inequality at the root in order to improve everyone's life chances and Lead council and cross sector partnerships with a focus on outcomes
- Design for People's Needs and Create digital, design and technology enabled transformation

Change Management Support

The Change Management Team continue to provide all councils with support for operational and transformational change. As well as running our successful change managers network events bi monthly (link to [further information and outputs from the network](#)), we also provide direct support to councils where required. This quarter we have provided a range of direct support to councils which has included supporting two councils as they aim to work more collaboratively, which included designing, presenting and facilitating a workshop to over 70 staff. We have designed and delivered a workshop to a council as they consider their approach to digital transformation and we have provided training to Councillors in another council on how to scrutinise a business case, again this was developing content and delivering a training workshop. Furthermore, we have provided support to councils to share research and practice between councils.

Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF)

The Learning into Action Network (LiA Network) has been developed as part of the Element 2 Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) offer and is being co-designed and co-delivered with stakeholders and to enable collaboration, facilitate peer support, share learning and approaches

from across the country, and support solution-focused discussions around the barriers to whole system change. The key aim of the network is to provide a space to share experience and learning about reshaping whole family support and to promote effective joined up working across Children Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) in the shift to an early intervention and preventative approach.

There has been great uptake of and participation in the Network events so far, with representation from 21 of the 30 CSPPs consistently attending the Network 'Link & Learn' sessions. During these sessions, connections have developed across local areas whereby CSPPs have shared knowledge, experiences and practice which has been highlighted in survey feedback as being very beneficial.

In addition, as a result of feedback received from recent events, a 'Monthly Mingle' programme has been established to provide a comfortable, informal 'drop in' space specifically for CSPPs to come together each month and discuss emerging themes and continue to share knowledge and strengthen connections.

We have also established a [LiA Network group on the Knowledge Hub](#), whereby members can access a streamlined bank of resources, learning materials, policy updates, briefings and other useful information to support ongoing development as Element 2 progresses.

Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme

Local Project Action new webpages

[The Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme](#) is supporting seven local project towns across Scotland: Alloa, Ayr, Clydebank, Dalkeith, Dunoon, Fraserburgh and Rutherglen. We have just [launched new webpages](#) which highlight the work taking place in each area. Each Project Town page provides context about the town itself and useful information related to the programme including an Impact Story, which details the action-based work taking place within each area. Find out more about each Project Town and read their Impact Stories at <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/products-and-services/consultancy-and-support/shaping-places-for-wellbeing-programme/local-project-work>

Pippa's Podcasts (Argyll and Bute Council)

Our Programme Lead, Irene Beautyman, sat down with Pippa Milne, Chief Executive of Argyll and Bute Council in a [new podcast](#) to discuss the impact of the programme and Argyll and Bute's overall development of place governance.

Listen to the podcast in full at <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/argyll-and-bute-council/pippas-podcasts/shaping-places-wellbeing-programme>

'How To' Guides

A crucial part of the Programme involves evaluating our approach and sharing our learning throughout the key stages of the programme. This enables replication of system changes across Scotland. For the key stages in the programme, we've developed a set of [How To Guides](#) which share our learning for those who wish to replicate this within their own place-based work.

[Our Data Informed Approach How To Guide](#) shares our experience on capturing local quantitative data, and our [Place and Wellbeing Assessment Guide](#) aims to support new ways for decision-makers to consider their impact on place and people.

Find out more about the How To Guides at <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/products-and-services/consultancy-and-support/shaping-places-for-wellbeing-programme/programme-how-to-guides>

Employability Partnership - No One Left Behind

We continue to support local authorities to further develop their Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs) in readiness for the next phase of [No One Left Behind \(NOLB\)](#). From April 2024, local government, through their LEPs, will have a responsibility to ensure that they can offer a minimum of 12 months employability support to those with a disability, long-term health condition or at risk of becoming long-term unemployed, to help them to progress into and sustain fair work.

Whilst work is underway through joint Scottish and Local Government working groups to develop the critical path and strategic plan, a readiness assessment was carried out through the SLAED People (Employability) Group to understand the level of preparedness of each local authority and LEP.

The overall picture was a positive one, with the majority of LEPs confirming an appropriate level of readiness, working with partners, undertaking mapping of services, analysing local data and developing procurement and recruitment plans to allow delivery of next phase.

[The NOLB Data Toolkit](#), developed for the SLAED People Group by Glasgow City Region's Intelligence Hub, was updated in September 2023 and gives a useful insight into a variety of poverty indicators, locally, regionally and nationally and can be used to support delivery planning. Whilst final plans are dependent on information from Scottish Government on indicative funding levels and grant conditions, we continue to support Local Authority Employability Leads and LEP partners through a series of capacity building and best practice workshops and will continue to support the building of knowledge and relationships with wider stakeholders.

Economic Outcomes

We continue to support SLAED to raise its profile and develop its collective voice for local authority economic development across Scotland. This has recently included assisting the network to compile and submit a response to the Scottish Parliament's consultation on a Visitor Levy, raising some key issues for consideration, including variation in the challenges faced by different geographies across Scotland. A Ten-Year Trend Infographic was produced to mark a decade since the SLAED Indicators Framework was introduced, highlighting cumulative impacts and points of interest across the period. We are also continuing to collaborate with wider stakeholders, including Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland, around developing ways to measure approaches to a wellbeing economy.

Climate Change

We continue to work closely with the Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN), SOLACE and COSLA and develop relationships with Scottish Government to deliver national and targeted local support. This includes the design and delivery of the Local Authority Forum (our meeting on 11th September focused on adaptation and the development of the statutory guidance), feeding into SSN annual planning, supporting the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES) officer group and helping to create and promote resources on the [SSN website](#) including the [Leaders' Climate Emergency Checklist](#). Alongside Edinburgh Climate Change Institute, we are delivery partners in the Climate Intelligence Service, a programme co-funded by Scottish Government and local government to deliver capacity and training around area based emissions. Please see [this video](#) for an introduction and next steps including user group workshops in October/November.

Child Poverty

An in-person meeting of the Child Poverty Peer Support Network was held at Verity House on Thursday 5th October. The meeting was an opportunity to share innovative approaches and included presentations on place-based, family centred working in Glasgow, Dundee and Shetland. It also provided a chance to feed into the development of a framework to guide future place-based working on child poverty and was an opportunity for leads to get together after many years of meeting online to take stock, build relationships and consider how the network can continue to tackle poverty in Scotland.

Supporting Eligible Two-Year-Olds in Care Experienced Families Learning Event

The Supporting Eligible Two-Year-Olds in Care Experienced Families learning event, jointly hosted by The Village and Improvement Service, brought together Early Learning and Childcare leads, along with other key stakeholders to explore possible ways of improving the two-year-offer for Care Experienced families. Following the event, we developed a resource pack with simple and practical materials and methods to enable the development of creative solutions to support future approaches.

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)

During summer 2023, we undertook a targeted and intensive round of engagement with local authorities to baseline our understanding of what was high on the priority list for local ELC teams and where support from the Improvement Service would be best placed. ELC lead officers from all 32 local authorities participated in the structured conversations between May and July; the outcomes of which were collected in thematic subject areas – **Finance, Targeted Offers, Quality, Workforce, Future Expansions**, and **Funded Providers and Childminders**, before being analysed to identify recurring themes, comments and opinions. The findings of this exercise have been fed back to Scottish Government and CoSLA, and a joint feedback session will be held for local authority ELC teams at a later date.

We are supporting a council in scenario planning their service design to inform elected members on the decisions that will need to be made to balance the statutory delivery of their ELC service with their challenging financial position. This modelling and scenario planning covers all aspects of service design, from capacity modelling and workforce planning to partnership working and meals provision.

The team are also supporting 2 other councils to enhance collaboration and partnership working between the local ELC delivery team and partner providers through a series of facilitated workshops.

Our work with Scottish Government to develop an Outcomes Measurement Framework for funded ELC, and analysing data on the quality of ELC across the country is also ongoing.

Public Service Reform

We continue to work closely with a small number of councils, facilitating workshops and developing programme plans, to develop and deliver locality-based work that focuses on building person-centred locality-based support for those in poverty. This is the next stage of planned activity in delivering reform by sharing learnings and best practice of person-centred approaches, working across silos, and reducing barriers.

Protecting People

Care experience and trauma-informed practice companion document - The latest in our series of Trauma Companion Documents has [now been published](#). With the right support at the right time, we know that each and every child who experiences trauma can recover and thrive. This document is for everyone who supports children and young people with experience of trauma. It has particular advice and guidance for those supporting children and young people with care experience - who may both need and benefit from trauma-informed practice.

Trauma Case Studies – A new set of trauma case studies have been published on the [IS website](#). The case studies focus on staff wellbeing initiatives that have taken place across Midlothian and the Shetland Islands. These include:

- [Midlothian Staff Wellbeing – Addressing Fundamental Need](#)
- [Staff Wellbeing Development Lead Role – Midlothian HSCP](#)
- [Education Workforce Vicarious Trauma and Proactive Self-Care Workshops – Shetland Islands Council](#)

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that starts on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day. To add value to the programme of 16 Days activities currently being planned by local authorities across the country, the Improvement Service has published an updated toolkit of resources, which support this year's chosen theme of "Imagine a world without Gender-Based Violence." The toolkit includes an updated set of infographics and animations on key statistics/ messages relating to gender-based violence and gender inequality, a template communication schedule to support social media activities during the campaign and a suite of logos and virtual meetings backgrounds that can be used in engagement events. The [full toolkit](#) is available for access.

Organisational Development Local Authority Network

We hosted several events for our network in the last quarter, our most recent session in August 'Coaching Collaboration Programme' was led by colleagues from Angus, Perth & Kinross and South Lanarkshire Councils who shared their story and learning with members. Other events included a joint session for the OD and Change Managers Network led by colleagues in Angus Council who talked about their Transformation Programme, and another joint event where Audit Scotland delivered a presentation on the Account Commission's Local Government Overview Report 2023. We ran a workshop for network members 'Utilising Behavioural Insights' which introduced colleagues to the topic and considered how behavioural insights can be used to drive behaviour in their organisation. More than 70 colleagues from 31 councils participated in these events. Details of other future events can be found on the [IS website](#).

Digital Public Services

mygovscot myaccount

The number of organisations using mygovscot myaccount continues to grow. Forty organisations are live with mygovscot myaccount and all 32 councils across Scotland use mygovscot myaccount to enable their citizens to access online services. Out of the 32 local authorities, 27 have myaccount integrated to at least one back-office system, and many councils have multiple integrations.

mygovscot myaccount is also used by Social Security Scotland, Young Scot, NHS My Diabetes My Way and NHS Lothian to access hospital bookings. There are also other public sector organisations currently going through the testing/onboarding process for mygovscot myaccount.

mygovscot myaccount now boasts over 2,251,781 accounts (as of 31 August 2023). Authentication requests for 2023 also continue to grow; with authentications requests almost at 11 million. This demonstrates that the service is being used frequently by account holders to access multiple services.

Right to Work powered by mygovscot myaccount

We have been working with myjobscotland and Aberdeenshire Council on a Proof of Concept to enable online Right to Work checks powered by mygovscot myaccount. This will be live within the coming weeks, with the Improvement Service using it first, then followed by Aberdeenshire Council.

Using a UK or Irish Passport, or Yoti app, an applicant will receive an email asking them to sign into the Right To Work Identity Verification Service. Their identity will be verified using the Yoti Identity Service. Council agents can download proof of the right to work checks and attach it to the candidate's HR file.

getyournec.scot

All 32 Local Authorities consume the service to facilitate online applications for National Entitlement Cards for over 60s concessionary travel, disabled concessionary travel, Young Scot card and Young Persons' Free Bus Travel. Over 861,828 applications for all National Entitlement card types have been facilitated through getyournec.scot. Over 229,898 applications have been facilitated in 2023 alone.

parentsportal.scot

16 Local Authorities are live with the platform and continue to promote the service to its parents. A further 2 Local Authorities are in the process of onboarding. The service is now available in 1,306 schools, with 166,195 registered parental subscribers securely linked to 207,555 pupils, with over 36K NEC Cards (to children aged between 5-10) issued via the parentsportal.scot platform.

parentsportal.scot has recently undergone extensive development work; the platform now boasts a fresh new look and feel due to the new user interface for parents at the front-end in the form of a new web version, as well as a new admin portal for school agents at the back-end. Within this, new features were introduced which has helped enhance the customer experience and simplified the customer journey.

We also launched the parentsportal.scot app in June 2023, and we continue to encourage parents and carers to download this at every opportunity. We also updated our marketing toolkit to support schools and councils in the promotion of the new app, and parentsportal.scot in general.

Data Hub

23 Councils and 8 other public sector organisations (Public Health Scotland, Lothian Valuation Joint Board, Scottish Fire and Rescue, NHSNHS, Scottish Water, Scottish Government ADR Team, Scottish Government Heatmap Team, and Scottish Government GIS Team) have all signed up to use the Data Hub platform.

dcn.scot

All 32 Councils continue to use dcn.scot, Scotland's National Dog Control Database. Launched in February 2022, the service is also used by Police Scotland.

Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme (Under 22s)

Approximately 667,884 young people are in possession of a National Entitlement Card to use for free bus travel to access new opportunities while also helping to meet environmental targets.

Datapipeline.scot

Datapipeline.scot launched in May 2023. It enables the secure transfer of data about early learning and childcare eligibility between the Scottish Government and local authorities.

All 3-and 4-year-olds in Scotland are eligible for 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare (ELC), along with some 2-year-olds who meet eligibility criteria targeting children facing the most disadvantage. In most cases, this is because their parents receive a qualifying benefit.

For further information on Datapipeline.scot and how this works visit the [IS website](https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/datapipeline).

Data and Intelligence

One Scotland Gazetteer

As part of the Improvement Service's commitment to local authority engagement, the Gazetteer Team have been meeting with local authority data managers over the summer month. The sessions have explored topics relating to data quality and how the information can be used to improve and inform other areas of the Council. Themes discussed during these meetings include business continuity in light of staff changes as well as ensuring that local authorities continue to capitalise on the return on investment through more expansive use of Gazetteer data as well as providing expertise on how best to harness the valuable data asset that is generated in-house.

The sessions, covering all 32 authorities, provide an invaluable insight for IS and help ensure that support is tailored accordingly. In previous years, this has facilitated the resourcing of software training for local authority data custodians and IS is seeking similar expressions of interest in the ongoing sessions.

Spatial Hub became an open data platform for local government information

This summer saw the Improvement Service launch open access to the Spatial Hub, a local government data resource covering the whole of Scotland. This is the first time in the UK that such

a significant geospatial resource has been made available as open data: open for anyone to access, use and share as they see fit.

The Spatial Hub collects a wide range of data directly from local authorities and other partner organisations, which is then compiled and published in Scotland-wide datasets for others to use. Until now, Spatial Hub datasets were only available to public sector organisations and academics, but with support from the Scottish Government, the Improvement Service is now able to make this information available to everyone.

The availability of these Spatial Hub datasets saves organisations time and money, as they no longer need to source this data from individual local authorities, while also helping to standardise and maintain the quality of the data used across a wide variety of sectors. In addition to the significant benefits to those parties who can now access the data free of charge, local authorities benefit through a considerable saving of resource in developing their own data sharing solutions. They also benefit through increased standardisation of much of the data and from expert guidance relating to best practice for data management.

Support for Digital Planning

IS continues to support Scottish Government's Digital Transformation of Planning Programme, and in particular, the activities relating to the data which shall underpin the systems and applications for the years ahead. IS plays a key role in the data assimilation, quality assurance and data publication for the programme, and the team has been working closely with key third party agencies to collate and quality control planning constraint information.

Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)

Our new [online LGBF dashboard](#) has allowed us to release LGBF data on a more frequent basis to provide Councils with access to more timely data. This year, during our transition to the new dashboard, LGBF data releases take place quarterly, and from April 2024, it is intended that data releases will be provided on a monthly basis. The LGBF Board are currently reviewing their approach to national overview reporting to align with this timelier release of LGBF data. We are continuing to engage with Councils to explore how the LGBF Dashboard can be used and adapted to support local approaches to performance reporting, including public performance reporting.

In recognition of the local and national policy importance given to Climate Change, and the limited coverage currently within the LGBF, the LGBF Board have agreed to expand the suite of Climate measures within the LGBF to include more tightly scoped and directly controllable measures of emissions which will help to directly track progress of Councils. It has been agreed to add to the existing area-wide emissions indicators, and to include measures on Electricity, Transport and Natural Gas Emissions later this year, and to engage in further development work with SSN to improve the underpinning data quality of the Corporate and Waste Emissions indicators to allow future inclusion.

As part of the LGBF Board's commitment to develop and deliver a more assertive approach to sector-led improvement, they are currently considering proposals to link the LGBF to the introduction of a Peer Collaborative Improvement approach. The IS Board have endorsed the introduction of a Peer Collaborative Improvement approach as a key element of its improvement architecture and a priority within the new IS Strategic Framework 2023-27.

In addition to using the LGBF as a cornerstone of this approach, it is proposed that the IS Public info@improvementservice.org.uk | www.improvementservice.org.uk |  follow us: @improvserv

Services Improvement Framework (PSIF) will also act as a key driver throughout the programme. Peer Collaborative improvement presents a significant opportunity for local government to implement a sector-led approach to improvement, within the context of the Verity House Agreement and future local government accountability and assurance arrangements. It may also influence the wider scrutiny landscape, in relation to supporting discussions with Scottish Government and audit and inspection bodies to enable local government to realise the full benefits of Crerar. Following consideration by the LGBF Board in October, the LGBF Board Chair will take a paper to Solace to seek agreement of the wider sector to pursuing this approach. Once agreed, the intention would be to test the approach with one or two service areas within local authorities. These would be identified, working with the LGBF Board to use LGBF data to explore one or two deep dive areas, which are also aligned to the Verity House Agreement priorities.

Local Government Data Platform

A report outlining the findings and recommendations from Phase 1 of the Local Government Data Platform project were shared with and endorsed by Solace and COSLA Leaders before the Summer. This phase aimed to better understand the current reporting landscape and the key findings point to the significant and increasing volume of current reporting, the lack of focus on outcome improvement, and the lack of oversight or awareness of what data is being collected and how it is being used. There was strong endorsement for the recommendation that Local Government and Scottish Government should use the New Deal for Local Government and underpinning partnership agreement to ensure a focus on reporting which is essential to evidence improvement in outcomes in partnership, ensuring that we take account of existing data reporting and consider streamlining and reducing where possible. We are continuing to work with the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, COSLA and Solace to progress Phase 2 of this project which will focus on simplification and streamlining of the reporting landscape, as well as delivering improved co-ordination of the data collection that continues to be necessary for assurance purposes, reducing the effort for manual data collection and improving the re-use of data collected. An Oversight Group, co-chaired by Solace and COSLA, and involving the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, IS, Public Health Scotland and Scottish Government will provide oversight for this phase, and a report on the findings and next steps will be brought back to Solace and COSLA Leaders in 2024.

Community Planning & Community Planning Improvement Board (CPIB)

We are continuing to support the [CPIB](#) in their work to illustrate how excellent outcomes are being achieved locally when partners come together and respond innovatively, and to surface with Scottish Government Ministers those barriers which are getting in the way of delivering person led services.

The CPIB has focussed on three main areas over the past year in line with the CPIB Strategic Plan, which were: Climate Change; Financial Security for Low Income Households; and Wellbeing of Children and Young People. Across each of these areas, the CPIB has continued to build a wide and varied evidence-based understanding of the important work community planning partnerships are carrying out to improve outcomes through good practice, and of the barriers limiting progress. In May 2023, the CPIB developed an action plan to take forward the recommendations emerging from this work which includes the following priorities:

1. To support implementation of new and existing local models relating to Third Sector funding
2. To work with Scotland Excel to bring greater co-ordination in procurement in relation to Climate Action
3. To support co-ordination and streamlining of Climate funding at a local level

4. To encourage greater focus of City Deal money on Climate Change
5. To promote good practice & learning on local progress in data sharing in relation to poverty, including Child Poverty
6. To develop national principles on data sharing and risk levels.
7. To encourage partners to recognise, resource and sustain the places (inc. 3rd Sector) where nurturing relationships happen to improve wellbeing outcomes for children and young people.
8. To encourage CPPs to put in place mechanisms for collective prioritisation and decision-making in relation to allocating funding in relation to wellbeing for children and young people.

In addition to the above local actions to be taken forward by the CPIB, there are a number of national actions which are essential to the progress of this work. The Chair of the CPIB has sought support from the Deputy First Minister, the COSLA President and the Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth to discuss these in more detail and to come up with a plan for how we can continue to work together to take these forward.

This action plan will be shared widely with CPP partners, and will also be available on the CPIB website, where colleagues can access further detail on the evidence gathered by the CPIB and on the engagement taking place with local and national partners.

Research

The [Community Planning Outcomes Profile](#) has been updated by the team with new data for 2021/22 and new data visualisations. The CPOP is a tool to help you assess if the lives of people in your community are improving. It provides a core set of measures on important life outcomes including early years, older people, safer/stronger communities and health and wellbeing, and shows how they change over time.

The team are also collecting data for the Instrumental Music Survey and Common Advice Performance Management Reporting Framework, both of which will be published towards the end of the year.

In the coming quarter we are also planning to carry out a survey with all local authorities to understand what dedicated and supporting research, evaluation, and data analysis capacity exists within local government in Scotland. This survey will be a joint project between the IS, Carnegie and LARIA. The survey will be sent to all local authorities and follow up workshops and sessions to explore issues identified will be held before a final report is prepared.

Evaluation

An interim report on the Place Based Investment Programme - Direct Grants has been submitted to Scottish Government. The report contains evidence that the Programme has played a critical role both in attracting additional funding and aligning with other Place Based funds. In relation to climate change mitigation and improving economic outcomes through job creation there is evidence of the positive impact created by the funding. It also includes case studies from Dumfries & Galloway, Dundee City, East Ayrshire, City of Edinburgh and Shetland Islands Councils.

The Scottish Government have extended funding for a further six months to the majority of local authorities/ HSCPs participating in the Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships 'Test and Learn Programme'.

Given increasing levels of council tax debt and the impact this has on both council budgets and vulnerable individuals an evaluation is being undertaken of the use being made of a guide produced by the Improvement Service, IRRV Scotland and advice providers- [Collaborative Council Tax Collection](#).

Further information

If you have any questions on this information update or would like further information, please contact Sarah Gadsden, Chief Executive at sarah.gadsden@improvementservice.org.uk or 07901 513186. We hope you find the update helpful and would welcome your feedback.