

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 meeting in June 2025 and key business plan developments.

IS Board Update

Finance, Operations and HR Update

The Board noted that the management accounts for quarter 4 show actual income received year to date of £12,006,151 which includes investment income of £178,696.

Report from the IS Audit Committee

The Board noted that Jamie Robertson, East Dunbartonshire Council was nominated by Directors of Finance to join the Audit Committee as Chair. Jamie will replace David Robertson, Scottish Borders Council, whose six-year term ended in March 2025.

The Board also noted that the IS Chief Executive will write to Council Chief Executives to advise them of the robustness of the business continuity and disaster recovery processes in place at the IS.

The Board agreed that the unrestricted bank and investment income received in 2024-25 be transferred to the IS core budget to support operational purposes in 2025-26 and noted that a report on how this will be spent will be presented at the August Audit Committee meeting.

Strategic Performance Dashboard

The Board noted the quarter 4 strategic performance dashboard which highlighted an increase in IS employees to 100 and that another local authority went live on parentsportal.scot bringing the total to 21.

Risk Register

The Board noted the corporate risk register and agreed to remove the risk relating to the National Care Service as any risks to the IS are now minimal. The Board also approved a new risk relating to the Solace/IS transformation programme funding due to the potential reputational risk to the IS, although it was noted that all decisions on the programme and how the funding is spent are taken by the Chief Executive Working Group.

Board Governance Improvement Plan

The Board noted the progress being made with the delivery of the Board Governance Improvement Plan. Anne MacColl, an external consultant, presented findings of a Board Skills Analysis and the Board asked for a further report presenting ideas on addressing the skills gaps identified, particularly in the area of technology and AI. The Board agreed to revisit the board self-assessment and peer to peer assessment in June 2026 to give new Board Members time to settle into their role and the way of working of the Board.

Chief Executive Performance Appraisal

The Board agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair would facilitate the IS Chief Executive's Performance Appraisal in August and Board Members were asked to share feedback on the Chief Executive's performance over the last 12 months.

Relationship Management survey

The Board noted a presentation on the findings from a recent relationship management survey which highlighted positive feedback and areas for improvement in relation to engaging more widely with council colleagues and improving the visibility of IS products and programmes.

Data and Intelligence Strategy update

The Board noted progress made on delivering priorities in our Data and Intelligence Strategy and the establishment of an internal Data and Intelligence Network.

Solace Review

The Board noted an update on the Solace Review of partner organisations.

Digital Identity Scotland

The Board received a Digital Identity Scotland update and agreed that officers should meet with Solace and Scottish Government colleagues to address duplication concerns in relation to myaccount and ScotAccount.

National Visitor Levy Platform

The Board noted the ongoing development progress being made and acknowledged the formal agreement between the IS and City of Edinburgh Council to develop and finance a national visitor levy platform. The Board agreed to seek professional advice from external accountancy advisors to ensure the payment system of the platform is optimal and future-proof.

Board Exit Questionnaire

The Board noted a new board exit questionnaire.

Renfrewshire Council Best Value Audit

The Board noted really positive coverage about a Culture Self-Assessment Checklist the IS team worked on with Renfrewshire Council colleagues, which is being commended by the Accounts Commission for adoption by others. Two other councils have requested further information on this.

Key Business Plan Updates

Transformation, Performance and Improvement

Organisational Development (OD) Network

The OD Network events take place every 6-8 weeks, bringing colleagues together for sessions on a variety of topics. Our June event was a Key Topic Session - Assessing Organisational Culture, and we were joined by Pauline Moss from Renfrewshire Council who shared their experience of working with the IS to develop and use the [culture self-assessment tool](#). It was a great session, attended by 45 colleagues from 28 councils. For those colleagues that were not able to make it, a recording is available on the KHub site. The next session will take place on 25th August 2025.

Local Government Connect Network

The Local Government Connect Network is designed to bring together professionals in the early stages of their local government career and promote collaboration across all 32 Scottish local authorities and local government partner organisations. We have a number of events in the diary over 2025, including regular drop-in sessions for both mentees and mentors to encourage networking and sharing of practice across the sector. Our first drop-in sessions were held in May and were well received by both mentors and mentees. The open forum style allowed people to share positive news stories, advice and learning from their experience with other members of the network promoting further collaboration.

Mentorship sessions are also ongoing with mentees and mentors meeting on a regular basis to support the mentee with any challenges and agree practical actions towards achieving their goals.

Early Learning and Childcare

ELC Insights Dashboard Launched

The first iteration of the ELC Insights Dashboard (developed through the Outcomes and Measurement Framework project) has now launched. This marks a significant milestone in our collaborative work with local authorities and the Scottish Government to improve how data is used in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) service planning and delivery.

The dashboard enables local authorities to access interactive data on key service dimensions, including quality, flexibility, accessibility, and uptake. It aims to support local self-evaluation, strengthen delivery assurance, and improve transparency. A supporting narrative report accompanies the tool, offering practical illustrations of how the data can be applied to inform service planning and policy development.

This is the first phase of an ongoing co-design process. Future developments will build on feedback from councils and reflect local and national priorities.

Workforce Data Project

We are currently in the first phase of this Workforce Data Project, which focuses on gathering and consolidating existing data from multiple sources. This includes information from the Scottish Social Services Council, the Care Inspectorate, My Job Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council as well as data from the IS' own ELC data return. The next phase will explore how this data can better support long-term, strategic workforce planning.

At present, much of the relevant data is scattered or embedded within lengthy reports, making it difficult to access and use. To address this, we plan to integrate workforce data into the newly published ELC Insights Dashboard. The aim is to provide a single access point for local authorities to view current workforce data, identify trends and forecasts, and pinpoint areas where action may be needed. This will help move the sector from data collection to actionable insight.

We are still in the early stages of developing this next phase, but we aim to work closely with local authority colleagues in shaping the dashboard. We are considering short, sprint-style sessions to explore local workforce planning challenges and how this tool can best support their needs.

Collaboration with ADES Early Years on Workforce

We continue to work closely with the ADES Early Years Workforce & Quality Subgroup, building on the 'Asks' identified during a workshop we facilitated with the network in late 2024. One key output is a pilot peer-to-peer mentoring programme, currently being developed in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council for their ELC division.

We are also supporting the subgroup in the development of a charter to embed shared values across the ELC profession. There is strong momentum behind efforts to ensure the workforce feels valued and respected, and the group is taking positive steps in that direction.

Another priority area identified was the need for a stronger national focus on continuous professional learning (CPL) in ELC. In response, we have recently shared a series of case studies highlighting good practice:

- [East Dunbartonshire: Approach to ELC Professional Development \(PDF\)](#)
- [South Lanarkshire: Professional Learning in ELC \(PDF\)](#)

We are also working with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Social Services Council to inform the newly published continuous professional learning portal, helping shape the information and tools shared with the sector.

Real Living Wage Case Study

We supported the Scottish Government in gathering information on how local authorities are currently monitoring payment of the Real Living Wage by funded providers. As part of this, we developed a case study to share good practice:

- [Ensuring Fair Pay: Local Authority Approaches to the Real Living Wage \(PDF\)](#)

ELC Parent Survey Offer

We are also finalising a national parent survey offer to support local authorities with their statutory consultation duties around ELC.

We have developed a survey template using Microsoft Forms, along with a detailed offer document outlining three levels of flexible support to councils:

- Option 1: A ready-made survey template for local authorities to edit and issue themselves.
- Option 2: Tailored support to adapt the template to suit local needs before distribution.
- Option 3: Full delivery support, including drafting, and analysing the results on behalf of the local authority.

Protecting People

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Needs Assessment Tool

We are supporting the Scottish Government and COSLA to develop a Needs Assessment Tool that can be used to develop a robust picture of the specific needs of women, children and young people experiencing VAWG in different local authority areas across Scotland. Following a range of engagement activities that took place with local and national stakeholders between April and June 2025 to co-design the aims and content of the Needs Assessment Tool, the Draft Tool will be tested with a small number of local authority areas between September 2025 and March 2026.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Substance Use

We are coordinating a series of engagement activities between April and August 2025 exploring the prevalence of, and relationship between VAWG and substance use. The project aims to support Scotland's Equally Safe Strategy and the Equally Safe Delivery Plan, particularly by exploring how collaborative, inter-agency working approach between VAWG Partnerships and Alcohol and Drugs partnerships, alongside other partners, can ensure that an integrated approach to service planning, design and delivery is adopted to mitigate the risk of harm to women, children and young people. The project will also make links to the strategic aims of the National Mission on Drug Deaths (Plan 2022-2026), Rights Respect and Recovery, and the National Trauma Transformation Programme.

Adopting a Public Protection Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

In partnership with the Scottish Government, COSLA and Public Health Scotland, we have published the [learning report](#) from a national event exploring opportunities to work together to strengthen links across public protection, in order to better support outcomes for women, children and young people who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, VAWG. Around 100 people with a role to play in supporting a public protection approach to be taken to improving outcomes for victims and survivors of VAWG attended the event, including national and local leads with responsibilities for child protection, adult support and protection, alcohol and drugs, VAWG, suicide prevention and MAPPA. The learning report aims to support conversations at a local and national level on how to collectively design and implement a plan for strengthening links between VAWG and other areas of public protection.

National Planning Improvement (NPI)

The National Planning Improvement Framework pilot is almost complete with 29 Improvement Action Plans completed by planning authorities, endorsed by the National Planning Improvement Champion, [published on the IS website](#) and sent to the Minister for Public Finance. Year 2 of the process will begin in July when authorities start updating on the progress made with their identified improvement actions and the outcomes they have achieved through a survey developed for them. Once the surveys have been completed the NPI team will then meet with authorities to provide a 'critical friend' input. The new improvement action plans will then be shared with Chief Executives and the Minister for Public Finance.

We have been working closely with the Scottish Government to help deliver the new National Planning Hub. This builds on the earlier Hydrogen and Housing Hubs and is tasked to provide direct support to planning authorities to accelerate decision making and development delivery. It offers a flexible approach to providing additional surge capacity and expertise, brokerage support, professional capacity, and efficiency and practice, focusing on housing, renewable energy, and supporting local development plans where evidence shows there are challenges.

A series of [good practice case studies](#) generated by the NPIF process have been published with others in development. A [think piece paper](#) has been published reflecting on the NPIF peer collaborative review workshops. The first [National Customer and Stakeholder survey](#) has been produced, providing a national overview of satisfaction levels with planning authorities across Scotland for the first time.

Local Employability Partnership Maturity Assessment - Final Report

The [final report](#) from the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) Maturity Self-assessment was shared with local government Employability Leads and key employability stakeholders recently.

With almost 300 completed responses from across 32 LEPs, 850 individual comments and a range of suggestions on areas for improvement, the final report highlighted the excellent progress made by many in ensuring that priorities, funding decisions and evaluation of local employability provision were being led by the LEP.

Many of the themes that emerged in the report were no surprise to key stakeholders and chimed with the improvement actions in the Employability Strategic Plan. Areas for improvement highlighted for development by Scottish and Local Government Officers over the next year include:

- A review of the existing LEP framework to include roles and responsibilities of key partners
- Strengthen employer engagement at both local and national level
- More sharing of best practice on relevant topics across the wider network
- Streamline data packs to support better planning and evidence impact
- Support establishment and further development of lived experience panels
- Work with national partners to develop a national employability communication plan
- Further build knowledge and understanding of the No One Left Behind policy and ambition

Scottish Climate Intelligence Service

The Scottish Climate Intelligence Service (SCIS) continues to grow and develop with 3 new members joining the team. We delivered a webinar for Elected Members in June to demonstrate how SCIS can support Elected Members in their roles and also held a User Group to ask for feedback and share progress with Local Authority officers. A session focused on island local authorities and communities was well attended and we continue to attend sessions with officers, Elected Members and partner organisations at local and regional level. The team are now rolling out targeted support plans to shape our activity to the needs and priorities of each local authority and developing resources on connections with other priorities and the co benefits of climate action. To find out more, you can follow the [LinkedIn page](#).

We have updated our [Climate Change Briefing](#), now live on the IS website, and are developing new resources on child poverty and climate change, and climate action, just transition and community wealth building (CWB). To build internal capacity, a Climate Emergency Training session is planned for IS staff, aiming to enhance climate literacy and connect climate change with our various service areas. Our external engagement includes a Just Transition event planned in August, designed to bring together local authority climate change officers, economic development leads, CWB practitioners, and partners to foster understanding and explore collaboration. We are also continuing to work with Public Health Scotland to establish a Population Health and Climate Partnership Group, aiming to address climate change impacts on public health and support equity-centred climate policy and practice in Scotland.

Economic Outcomes

Significant work has been undertaken to update the SLAED Indicators Framework in line with recent changes in how councils are delivering economic development services. The updates include capturing changes to funding sources and programmes of delivery, particularly in relation to employability. This involved working closely with the relevant SLAED subgroups to ensure the framework is reflective of delivery on the ground.

Related to this refresh, work has been initiated internally to develop an interactive dashboard for publication of the SLAED Indicators data. This will improve accessibility and reduce the need for lengthy annual reports. The dashboard will streamline the process, making it more responsive and enabling better engagement with stakeholders.

Support was provided to write a collective SLAED response to the Scottish Government's Community Wealth Building Bill consultation, ensuring the knowledge and experience of local economic development officers informs the future legislation and guidance.

We provided support to SLAED members to participate in a workshop run by COSLA focused on population balance issues. Members offered valuable perspectives on how current policy and legislation either blocks or enables local authorities to respond to population challenges, and contributed to shaping key asks of Scottish or UK Government for inclusion in the Population Position Paper.

We will attend an in-person session with the SLAED Executive in Dundee on 29th July to begin refreshing SLAED's three-year Strategic Plan. This refresh will shift the focus from Covid-19 recovery to broader challenges around business support, funding, employability etc, particularly in the context of ongoing cost of living challenges.

On 28th August we will support SLAED colleagues to engage in an IS 'Just Transition' event to examine how the climate change and economic development agendas can be more closely aligned, and how council officers can collaborate on shared challenges.

Community Wealth Building (CWB)

Key discussion points from the in-person 'Exploring Community Wealth Building and Public Services' event were distilled into a [summary report](#) for the wider network. This identified key next steps including targeted outreach to less engaged local authorities, creation of case studies, and a Q&A resource to clarify common misconceptions about CWB.

We are working with councils in the network to develop a series of case studies that illustrate how CWB is being implemented in practice, and these will be published on the IS website.

Work is ongoing to maintain and update the national mapping of CWB activity to ensure it accurately reflects the evolving landscape across Scotland.

Planning is being undertaken for upcoming CWB Practitioners Network sessions which will explore CWB in relation to key challenges such as responding to depopulation, and the net zero agenda.

In collaboration with colleagues at SCIS, we are researching the overlap between local authority Climate Action Plans and CWB strategies to identify opportunities for greater alignment and integration.

An [Elected Members Briefing](#) has been finalised to support understanding of the implications of the CWB Bill. To broaden engagement, this resource will also be made available as an animation.

We are in the process of developing an offer of support for local authorities that are in the earlier stages of their CWB implementation journey, helping them gain momentum and access relevant resources to develop their approach in advance of legislation being introduced.

Shaping Places Masterclass Series

We have now delivered five Masterclasses aimed at deepening understanding of place-based working in Scotland and implementing the Shaping Places for Wellbeing approach.

Each Masterclass has focused on a different theme, from introducing place-based approaches and the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes, to using qualitative and quantitative data and place-based tools to inform decision-making.

The most recent session, Masterclass 5: Applying a Place-Based Approach, featured practical examples from Clyde Gateway and Aberdeenshire Council. The speakers offered insight into how place-based work can be implemented and scaled, particularly in relation to child poverty and strategic planning.

The four previous Masterclass webinar videos and accompanying materials are available to view on the Improvement Service [website](#). The Masterclass 5 recording and resources will also be published here in early July. These sessions are designed for a wide range of audiences and are freely available to support shared learning.

Community Planning

The [first in person event](#) of 2025 for the Scottish Community Planning Network was held on Monday 2nd June and saw 65 colleagues from across Scotland come together both in person at COSLA Conference Centre and online via MS Teams. As the event focussed on Safer Communities, the invite was extended to relevant CPP partners- specifically from Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). Along with Police Scotland and the SFRS, the network heard excellent presentations from the Scottish Police Authority, Scottish Ambulance Service and Scottish Community Safety Network.

Digital Public Services

[mygovscot myaccount](#)

The platform now has over an incredible 2.7 million account holders which means that over 54% of the eligible Scottish population have now signed up for a mygovscot myaccount. We predict that we will hit 3 million account holders in early 2026. This is testament to the growth of myaccount and the trust that people have in the platform.

The platform also comes equipped with a suite of security features including passkeys which was added in 2024. Passkeys ensure the mygovscot myaccount user experience is familiar and consistent. A simple verification of their fingerprint or face, or a device PIN - the same action that consumers take multiple times each day to unlock their mobile phones, tablets or other devices - now provides easy and secure access to mygovscot myaccount.

[parentsportal.scot](#)

parentsportal.scot is now live in 23 local authorities with Midlothian Council and North Ayrshire Council having recently gone live with the platform. We also have another 2 local authorities that have confirmed they would like to onboard and we are currently supporting them through the onboarding process. Other Local Authorities have also expressed their interest, and we hope to begin the onboarding process with them soon.

The service is now available in 1,715 schools, with over 269K registered parental subscribers securely linked to over 316K approved pupils, with over 68K National Entitlement Cards (to children aged between 5-10) issued via the parentsportal.scot platform.

Security is at the heart of all the products we design, and we recently implemented 2FA via email for all parentsportal.scot admin users. This means that once the user enters their email and password, a 2FA code will be sent to their work email, which needs to be entered onscreen to access the admin portal. Given the number of cybersecurity issues reported in the news recently, it is imperative we make access to the platform as secure as possible.

[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 1.3 million applications for all National Entitlement card types have been facilitated through getyournec.scot since its launch in July 2020. Over 152,000 applications have been facilitated in 2025 alone.

Data and Intelligence

Digital Planning

The Spatial Information Service attended the Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) conference and hosted workshops focussing on 20-minute neighbourhood analysis. The workshops offered guidance on utilising geospatial tools to understand mobility and access to services. The team also presented on the benefits of bringing increased digitisation and standardisation to Scotland's planning system at the HOPS AGM. This focused on efficient methods of working, increased real-time reporting and simplified workflows.

One Scotland Gazetteer

From May through to September, the Gazetteer Team is visiting each local authority in Scotland to highlight best practice in relation to the critical address and street information that underpins data management in service delivery across the public sector.

A national 'Find an adopted road' service has been launched on the osg.scot website. Users can quickly search or navigate the map to find out if their street is adopted, and therefore, maintained by the local authority. The service is publicly available and updated daily following a successful Street Gazetteer upload to the One Scotland Gazetteer from every Scottish road's authority.

Over the last two months, 13 local authorities have migrated their Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform to using the Improvement Service's One Scotland Gazetteer addressing API. This provides near live access to address and location information for managing transactions and correspondence. The Councils benefit from a far more robust update mechanism through synchronisation with the ever-changing authoritative data in the OSG webservice, as well as greatly reducing the burden on colleagues by negating the need to process data sources.

Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)

The LGBF Board has agreed the following priorities to drive forward the ongoing development of the LGBF across the next 3 years. These priorities were recently endorsed by the Solace branch, helping to ensure that the LGBF continues to provide a useful sector-led improvement resource.

1. Supporting a maturing in local government's approach to sector led improvement, and a significant shift towards self-improving councils.

Building on the launch of the [Scottish Local Government Assurance and Improvement Framework \(SLGAIF\)](#), and the ongoing [Peer Collaborative Improvement Pilots](#), the LGBF Board is working closely with the [Local Government Transformation Programme](#) and Crerar Workstream to develop clear recommendations and standards of approach for Peer Collaborative Improvement, with the LGBF positioned as the cornerstone for this evolving approach. These recommendations will support continuous improvement in the Peer Collaborative Improvement approach and provide necessary assurance to audit/inspection bodies while striking a balance between impact and feasibility for local authorities. Once developed, these recommendations and standards will underpin the development and implementation of a sector wide approach to peer collaborative improvement.

2. A proportionate and focussed approach to the development of the LGBF suite of indicators to ensure ongoing relevance.

We are working closely with professional associations to strengthen the LGBF Framework in key areas, including Housing and Homelessness, Adult Social Care, Local Government Workforce, Economic Development, Culture and Leisure, and Additional Support for Learning. This work is making extensive use of the [Online Data Return Register](#) to understand the data which is already reported by Councils, mapping this to strategic areas of interest to encourage greater use of data which already exists. Recommendations in relation to new indicators will be shared in due course.

3. Building momentum in the use of the LGBF to transform and improve council services.

The IS Research programme is supporting the LGBF Board to undertake a range of further analyses and research using the LGBF to support greater use of the LGBF data to transform and improve council services. The LGBF Board have agreed that in the short-term, this work will focus on demographic change demand modelling and local government workforce.

A calendar of LGBF Peer Learning Events has been published for the year ahead, and we are collaborating with professional associations to plan and deliver practice sharing events across service areas including Housing, Waste, Climate, Workforce, Finance and Culture and Leisure. In addition, following the recent launch of our [LGBF guide for Elected Members](#), we have delivered a number of LGBF sessions with elected members in recent months to support their use of the LGBF.

We are currently user-testing significant developments to the [Local Government Benchmarking Framework Dashboard](#) which will support councils to extract richer insight from the LGBF dataset to support their use locally to drive improvement. These new developments have been endorsed by the LGBF Board and will allow users to customise their dashboard by selecting their choice of indicators, comparators and time periods, and will also allow users to develop a quicker understanding of which policy/service areas they are doing well in (or could improve), and which councils are the highest performing/fastest improving by service area or policy theme.

4. Leading improvements in the wider data reporting and scrutiny landscapes.

A business case for the build and implementation of the Local Government Data Platform (LGDP) will be produced in 2026. This will follow on from Phase 2 of the LGDP programme and the delivery of a technical prototype and the establishment of a new governance mechanism for current and future data reporting. We will continue to position the LGBF at the heart of this transformation in the data reporting and management landscape, as a key vehicle for the delivery of the local government platform and core to efforts to streamline the data reporting and scrutiny landscape, support greater automation and technical integration of data systems, and deliver richer and more timely insights from available data and intelligence.

Peer Collaborative Improvement

We are continuing to pilot our new Peer Collaborative Improvement approach to test and refine our model, and are nearing the end of Pilot 2 on Housing Voids. Aberdeenshire Council are the host authority for this pilot, and peer authorities include South Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross,

and Highland Councils. Peer Collaborative Improvement is a key element of the LGBF Board's commitment to develop and deliver a more assertive approach to sector-led performance improvement, with LGBF positioned as a key cornerstone, and has received support from the IS Board, Solace and COSLA Leaders. As such, peer collaborative improvement forms a central strand of the Scottish Local Government Assurance and Improvement Framework (SLGAIF) which has been developed by the IS and COSLA to provide robust evidence of the expansive landscape of governance, reporting, performance improvement, audit and scrutiny which currently relates to local government.

Local Government Data Platform

We are in Phase 2 of this ambitious data transformation project, and a delivery plan for this phase has been approved by the LG Data Platform Oversight Group. The Oversight Group is co-chaired by Kenneth Lawrie, Solace and Jane O'Donnell, COSLA, and involves the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, IS, Public Health Scotland and Scottish Government. Phase 2 of this project focusses on the necessary arrangements to deliver 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.

The key deliverables in Phase 2 are:

1. Improved governance and reductions in the reporting landscape through the development and operationalisation of a new governance mechanism.
2. Prototyping the technology required to deliver the Local Government Data Platform and identifying existing solutions and components that a LG Data Platform may have to integrate with.
3. Improved data standards to enhance the quality and re-use of data provided via the establishment of a Local Government Data Standards Board to work across Scottish local government and the wider public sector to identify and curate existing data standards and support the development of new standards.
4. Creation of an Online Data Return Register (ODRR) to improve awareness and use of existing data, identify linkages, and highlight areas of duplication and potential rationalisation.

Completion of these deliverables will help inform the development of the final business case to Solace and COSLA Leaders in due course. Regular progress reports are being considered by the Oversight Group who meet quarterly, and an update on progress was shared with Solace and Leaders in April and May 2025. A final Phase 2 report on key findings and next steps will be brought back to Solace and COSLA Leaders late 2025/early 2026.

Community Planning & Community Planning Improvement Board (CPIB)

The CPIB continues to provide leadership and improvement support for community planning in Scotland, and to generate valuable evidence-based solutions to the significant challenges facing communities and local partnerships. Across the next period, the CPIB will consider the vision, strategy and set of actions needed nationally, to provide further support to CPPs as they take local action to tackle deep-rooted inequalities and improve wellbeing. Public service reform will be central to this, and the CPIB will explore the opportunities for community planning partners and Community Planning as a way of working to help accelerate the reform that we need to see to deliver on the preventative shift as outlined by Christie. Greg Colgan, as Chair of the CPIB,

continues to ensure CPIB members, which include senior representatives from all statutory community planning partners, the third sector, COSLA and Scottish Government, are able to feed into and inform the Public Service Reform work strand in the Solace/IS Transformation programme which he leads.

The recent May CPIB meeting focussed on a number of key community planning developments including the recent CPP National Self-Assessment findings, the CPIB Guidance for Fair Funding of the Voluntary Sector, the CPIB Prevention Guidance, the Whole Family Support Community Planning Workstream, and the recent review of the Community Empowerment Act. As part of the standing item on public service reform, Police Scotland provided their perspective on the reform agenda and the role for community planning. In June, the CPIB Chair and CPIB members attended a visit to the Scottish Prevention Hub to learn more about the work the Hub is doing to increase a practical focus on prevention, and to provide an opportunity for CPIB to learn more about what the Hub offer is for Community Planning Partners.

Further updates, newsletters and Board papers are 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. The next newsletter will be published Summer 2025 and will include a focus on data sharing, the learning from the recent National Community Planning self-assessment programme and reinforcing the CPIB Guidance on Fair Funding of the Voluntary Sector.

Research

Work has continued on our Child Poverty Accelerator Fund Project with West Lothian Council. We are working to develop the dashboard, which will display areas with potential unmet need for council services, with a functioning prototype now available. This has been shared with other project stakeholders. We are also working to access a range of additional datasets within the council, which will allow more detailed analysis of areas with lower than expected uptake. We have been exploring how CACI Acorn and Paycheck data can be integrated into this project through the COSLA national agreement for access to these datasets. Finally, related to this project, we worked with ONS Local to develop a dataset that allows councils in Scotland to [compare their drivers of child poverty with local authorities across the UK](#).

We are working to develop a new briefing on population change following on from our previous publication [Navigating Population Change](#). This briefing will focus on the implications on jobs and skills of population change and we are working with COSLA to support their work in this area. In addition, we have begun discussions with a view to updating our [sub-council area population projections](#) later this year and are engaging with councils to understand the outputs that would be of most use.

In June we worked with the Local Area Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA) to host an online event focusing on enhancing evidence use in Scottish local policymaking. The event had over 100 attendees from across local government and academia, with a focus on sharing barriers and enablers to using evidence. We hope to deliver more frequent events encouraging connections between researchers, data providers, and policy experts through the LARIA network. We had four excellent speakers whose presentations can be found using the following links: [speaker1](#), [speaker2](#), [speaker3](#), [speaker4](#).

Evaluation

Evaluations we carried out were used as exemplars in the Scottish Government's recently published report on '[Learning from 25 years of Preventative Interventions in Scotland](#)', as part of its Public Service Reform Strategy.

The report includes 15 case studies setting out "good quality evidence of impact", one of these relates to '[Access to Welfare Advice in Schools](#)'. This draws on an evaluation conducted by the IS into the impact of providing welfare rights and employment advice along with family support services in schools in Edinburgh. Reference is also made to other related reports that have been produced by the IS, including an evaluation of the Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships 'test and learn' programme.

A report on how Scottish Local Authorities have used the [Place Based Investment Programme – Direct Grants to Local Authorities 2023-24](#) has been published.

We carried out an evaluation of the funding provided to local authorities across Scotland by the Scottish Government in 2023-24 as part of the programme. Over £21 million was invested in 211 projects to improve local places. The programme is also used as a catalyst to secure additional funding and helped secure investments of £150 million from other sources.

The evaluation found that the funding:

- supported 80 local community organisations to plan and deliver their own projects.
- contributed to mitigating climate change by increasing energy efficiency and reducing the need to travel.
- addressed inequality by improving access to local community facilities and reducing health inequalities.
- contributed to improving local economies by providing and sustaining local jobs and increasing training opportunities.

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.

You can find the latest Improvement Service news, insight blogs, events and information on our products and services on our website, www.improvementservice.org.uk. You can also keep up to date with all our news by subscribing to our [monthly newsletter](#).

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