

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 December 2024 and key business plan developments.

IS Board Update

Finance, Operations and HR Update

The Board noted that the management accounts for quarter 3 show actual income received year to date of £11,263,667 which includes additional grant funding of £810,143 secured for this financial year. The Board also noted our positive staff survey results, with a staff satisfaction rate of 86%.

Report from the IS Audit Committee

The Board approved the new Risk Appetite Statement and refreshed corporate risk register recommended by the Audit Committee. The Board noted the work being progressed to develop an overarching Risk Strategy/ Framework for the IS which will be considered at the February 2025 Audit Committee meeting.

The Board noted the review of reserves undertaken by the Audit Committee in relation to restricted reserves, unrestricted reserves and bank interest, and noted that this, along with a revised Reserves Policy will be presented at the February Audit Committee meeting for final consideration and agreement and presented to the Board for approval in March 2025.

Light touch governance review - improvement plan

The Board agreed a governance improvement plan following a recent light touch governance review. A revised Directors Consent Form was approved. Changes to the Articles of Association were agreed and the Board noted that these will need to be proposed as a special resolution at the 2025 Annual General Meeting for approval. The Board also agreed that their next IS Board self-assessment will take place in autumn 2025, to give new Board members sufficient time to settle into their role.

The Board agreed a Solace nominated company Director (Lesley Brown) to join the IS Remuneration, Appointment and Appeals Committee. Finally, the Board agreed to develop a new section on the website - 'About the IS Board', which will include a range of information, for example, board member profiles, terms of reference of the Board and its Committees, previously agreed guidance on the roles and responsibilities of IS Chair and Chief Executive, etc.

Strategic performance dashboards

The Board noted the quarter 2 strategic performance dashboard.

Communication Plan progress report

The Board noted the Communications Plan Update and the progress made in enhancing our communications activity and noted that the next iteration of the Plan will be submitted to the Board for approval in March 2025.

Strategic Alliance - IS and Accounts Commission

The Board noted the constructive joint work undertaken during 2023/24 with the Accounts Commission and agreed to accept the Accounts Commission's proposal to reframe the Strategic Alliance as a Joint Working Agreement between the IS and Audit Scotland (working on behalf of the Accounts Commission). The Board also agreed to invite Jo Armstrong, Chair of the Accounts Commission, to a future Board meeting.

Digital Identity Scotland

The Board received an update on work being undertaken by a sub-group of the Digital Identity Expert Group to undertake a componentry analysis of myaccount and agreed to formally raise their concerns with civil servants about duplication of work and spend on myaccount and ScotAccount.

Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Reporting Platforms

The Board agreed that the IS should respond to an upcoming Invitation to tender from Scottish Government, regarding the procurement of a digital platform to manage the annual public bodies' climate change duties (data reporting).

A nationally enabled approach to improvement which local partnerships can engage with

The Board noted a paper produced by Solace on 'A nationally enabled approach to improvement which local partnerships can engage with'.

Human Rights Implementation

The Board noted that Scottish Government colleagues approached the IS to explore whether we would be able to provide support to local government on human rights implementation. The Board noted their interest in this area and agreed that officers should continue to explore the opportunity with Scottish Government colleagues.

Peer Collaborative Improvement Update

The Board noted progress made on the Peer Collaborative Improvement programme and the successful pilot involving Falkirk, Midlothian, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde councils.

Events

Elected Members Webinar: Code of Conduct - Compliance with Quasi-judicial Matters

Thursday 30 January, 11.00am-12.30am, MS Teams

Join the Standards Commission for Scotland for a new Elected Members webinar on the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

Children's Rights Conversations: Homelessness in Scotland

Wednesday 5 February, 10.00am-11.30am, MS teams

Following up on our previous Children's Rights Conversation webinars, the Improvement Service is pleased to host an event focused on Children's Rights and Homelessness.

SPRINGBOARD: Assembly for creative climate action

Wednesday 5 March, 10.15am - 5.00pm

You can now sign up for SPRINGBOARD, an assembly for creative climate action, which is being hosted by Culture for Climate Scotland in March.

Key Business Plan Updates

Transformation, Performance and Improvement

Democratic Governance

Elected Members Webinar: Code of Conduct - Compliance with Quasi-judicial Matters

Thursday 30 January 2025, 11am -12:30pm, MS Teams

The webinar will cover Section 7 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct and the rules with which councillors must comply when involved in any quasi-judicial or regulatory matters (such as planning and licensing applications). The webinar will help members to understand their responsibilities:

- when they are a member of a committee tasked with making a decision and
- when they are dealing with, or assisting, potential and actual applicants, objectors and members of the public

Members can [sign up](#).

Past webinar - Identifying and Managing Conflicts of Interest

We held a webinar on Thursday 16th January with the Standards Commission on the Councillors Code of Conduct, exploring how members can identify and manage conflicts of interest. A recording of the webinar presentations will be uploaded to our website in the near future.

Future topics

We are in discussions with the Standards Commission about a webinar on the Code of Conduct and member-officer working relationships, in particular the difference between the Strategic and Operational role.

Organisational Development (OD) Network

We host virtual events for our OD Network members every six weeks, bringing colleagues together for sessions on a variety of topics. Our recent events brought members of both the OD and Change Manager Networks together. In October we welcomed colleagues from Audit Scotland who provided an overview of the Local Government Overview Report, and in December colleagues from the Digital Office and IS led a session on Digital Transformation. The events were attended by colleagues from 28 councils.

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 held our first event in August 2024 to introduce members and mentors to the network, and this was also an opportunity to shape how the network develops. We have established the committee that will oversee the running of the network. Our second session was held in November 2024 and focused on the mentoring relationship. We held separate sessions for mentors and mentees. The session provided guidance and support to both mentors and mentees as they embark on their mentoring relationship. Mentors and mentees pairings have now also been introduced and mentoring sessions are underway. Details of our next event will be issued shortly.

Early Learning and Childcare

The first dedicated Early Learning and Childcare newsletter was launched in November; designed to keep Local Authority ELC teams informed about the latest activities and resources from the IS Early Learning and Childcare team, these will be issued quarterly.

In October, some of the ELC team attended the first Craighalbert Centre open day. The visit was an inspiring experience and was an opportunity not only to hear about the centre's commitment to supporting children with complex needs to thrive and reach their full potential, but also to see this first-hand. Subsequent meetings and discussions have taken place between the ELC team, Craighalbert Centre and officials from the Scottish Government to discuss ongoing support from the IS around additional support needs in Early Years.

Towards the end of the year, we facilitated a series of Provider Reference Groups with ELC providers from the Private and Third sector. The Provider Reference Groups were designed to inform the important work underway to improve the processes for setting sustainable rates for funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) providers in Scotland. In particular, they sought to offer a better understanding of costs faced by childcare settings in providing sustainable funded ELC, and to contribute to the setting of future sustainable rates in line with the supporting guidance. Deep dive sessions with 3 of the local authorities taking part in the two-year-old Improvement Project are taking place in January. Work is also progressing well on the development of the Outcomes Measurement Framework ahead of the initial launch in April 2025.

Protecting People

Implementing Safe & Together in Scotland: Creating Domestic Abuse-Informed Workforces, Services and Systems

In December 2024, we published the [Implementing Safe & Together in Scotland: Year 3 Learning Report](#), which marks the third in a series of reports highlighting key learning from the work that 12 local authorities/ partnerships across Scotland are progressing to embed the Safe & Together Model across their local areas and organisations. The report shares evidence on the impact that implementing the Safe & Together Model locally is having on creating domestic abuse-informed workforces, services and systems that produce better outcomes for children and families experiencing domestic abuse, as well as identifying barriers and enablers partners have identified in creating system change.

A Roadmap for Creating Trauma-Informed and Responsive Change: National Webinar

In October 2023, the National Trauma Transformation Programme published the Roadmap for Creating Trauma-Informed and Responsive Change. This resource has been designed to help services and organisations in Scotland identify and reflect on progress, strengths and opportunities for embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach across policy and practice. The IS, in partnership with the Scottish Government, COSLA, NHS Education for Scotland and Resilience Learning Partnership, hosted an online webinar on the 21st January to:

- Provide an introduction to the Roadmap: how and why it was developed, the tools/ guidance it includes, and an overview of how it can support your team/ service/ organisation with embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach; and
- Share learning from the Scottish context around how a range of services/ organisations are using the Roadmap to support them in their journey towards embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach.

New resources to support cross-policy working

We have developed two new resources to support a cross-policy, person-centred approach to improving outcomes for people and communities across Scotland affected by poverty, inequality, trauma and adversity. These resources include:

- An [infographic](#) providing an overview of a small number of key national policy agendas, approaches and communities, all designed to support a cross-policy, person-centred approach to improving outcomes for people and communities across Scotland affected by poverty, inequality, trauma and adversity. This infographic is designed to support with joining the dots across these cross-cutting agendas, through highlighting the commonalities across these agendas/ strategies' visions, key principles, priorities and intended long-term outcomes.
- A [briefing paper](#) highlighting in more detail the links across key policy agendas. It explores opportunities for re-framing these multiple policy ambitions not as competing, but as multiple opportunities to work together across departmental, service and organisational boundaries around the common goal of improving outcomes for people and communities affected by poverty, inequality, trauma and adversity.

Shaping Places for Wellbeing

Shaping Places for Wellbeing began in 2021 as a Programme delivering local project action and supporting organisations to take a place-based approach to increasing wellbeing and reducing info@improvementservice.org.uk | www.improvementservice.org.uk |  follow us: @improvserv

inequalities. Working with seven Project Towns over three years, the Programme aimed to improve Scotland's wellbeing by reducing the significant inequality in the health of its people while addressing the health of our planet, what we call a 'triple win'. It worked to change our collective approaches to the places where we live, work, and play, enabling partnership-based, wide-ranging action at a local level.

The Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme concluded at the end of December 2024, after a successful 3-year period. For full details of how the Programme, jointly delivered by the IS and Public Health Scotland, was developed, read the [Programme Summary](#) and to learn about the overall impacts, read the [Impact Report](#). The Programme Lead, Irene Beautyman, has written a final [Programme Blog](#), in which she gives her reflections on the work and how it will continue.

For anyone looking to take a Shaping Places for Wellbeing place-based approach, a wide range of resources is available to view on the [website](#). You can also follow the [LinkedIn - Planning and Place-Based Approaches page](#) to keep up to date with the Planning and Place-Based Programmes within the IS, and X [@place4wellbeing](#) to recap on the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme's journey. Work on taking place-based approaches will be continuing through the [Planning for Place Programme](#).

National Planning Improvement Hub

The National Planning Improvement Hub is now implementing a work programme to support planning services to deal with proposals for hydrogen projects. This will include a Planning for Hydrogen Insights paper; a grant programme to support planning authorities to access specialist expertise, upskill or build capacity to help them deal with planning applications for hydrogen projects; an explainer programme that will provide impartial information to communities and councillors on key issues in planning for hydrogen; learning events to improve understanding; and resources such as a hydrogen planning process and responsibilities map, and, a hydrogen planning risks, impacts and mitigations and planning conditions checklist. You can see more on the [National Planning Improvement Hub website page](#).

Work continues piloting the National Planning Improvement Framework. 10 authorities have now completed the process, a further 10 started cohort 2 of the pilot in September, with the remaining 14 authorities in cohort 3 starting in December.

The first National Planning Improvement Annual Report was published in November (see the [Annual Report](#)) setting out progress made in the last year, emerging themes and issues identified by planning authorities, recommendations for organisations and tasks we will undertake. The first national annual customer and stakeholder survey was undertaken in November. The results of this will be published in February. This will allow us to map the national picture and, in the future, trends. Information at local level will be provided to each planning authority.

Economic Outcomes

We have recruited a new Community Wealth Building Officer, who is mapping Community Wealth Building (CWB) activity across Scotland's Local Authorities and is supporting the CWB Practitioners Network. We are also working closely with EDAS to align our work on CWB and will feed into the update of the CWB Guidance they developed that features on their [CWB Centre of Excellence site](#). We will also have a focus on the Inclusive Ownership pillar to support the implementation of

the Inclusive Business models review, to increase the numbers of co-operatives, employee-owned businesses, and social enterprises in Scotland.

Local Employability Partnership Maturity Self-Assessment Survey

The Local Employability Partnership (LEP) Maturity Self-Assessment was carried out over the autumn with almost 300 completed submissions from across all partners in the 32 local authority areas. Work is now underway to provide every LEP with an individual report which includes all responses and comments submitted by their members, along with a table identifying strengths and challenges identified within their LEP.

The information gathered will help create a series of recommendations for consideration by LEP members and inclusion in their Continuous Improvement Plans, as well as supporting the development of a series of national capacity building workshops.

Some of the key themes that have emerged so far include: perception of uneven levels of participation across some stakeholders, underrepresentation of private sector and/or employers in some areas, a call for greater transparency in decision making, a requirement for more lived experience voice in service design, better data from all partners and a real interest in learning from other areas.

Initial discussions have taken place with Professor Colin Lindsay from the University of Strathclyde to develop a 'What good looks like' standard for LEPs, based on the feedback gathered through the survey. This will be progressed during spring 2025.

Scottish Climate Intelligence Service

Our work on the Scottish Climate Intelligence Service (SCIS) is developing at pace. Since September 2024, the SCIS team has run 8 training workshops and hosted 10 drop-in sessions for 105 officers across all 32 local authorities, helping local authorities to understand and develop their [ClimateView dashboards](#). A Sharepoint site has also been established with resources and recordings. This work empowers local authorities to develop more detailed actions to reduce their area-wide emissions and feedback has been positive from officers engaging with the service. The team presented at the COSLA Economy and Environment Board's meeting on 13th December, providing an in-depth update on progress. 2025 will build on work so far to surface existing interventions and plans and populate the dashboard. To find out more, you can follow the [LinkedIn page](#).

Public Service Reform

In December 2024, the IS Public Service Reform team facilitated the inaugural Fairer Future Partnership Learning Event, the first in what is intended to be a rolling programme of events to support the collective efforts of the Fairer Future Partnership (FFP) local authorities.

The focus of this first session was to establish a forum in which Scottish Government could outline how individual FFPs can as a collected programme test approaches, how each FFP could understand more about the specifics of the programmes in other local authorities, and to allow existing pathfinders to share experiences of embarking on their projects.

The team are continuing to support the Glasgow Community Planning Partnership with the development of a streamlined Performance Management Framework and have recently concluded the second sprint, with a refined framework recently being presented to the critical friend group. The final sprint is scheduled to begin later in January. Work is also ongoing to support North Lanarkshire Council to develop a streamlined Performance Management Framework for the Family Wellbeing Partnership.

Community Planning

The Scottish Community Planning Network (SCPN) looks forward to a busy 2025. Alongside the regular quarterly national events, spotlight sessions will be launched this year as well as a SCPN planning group. This group is made up of network members who will support the planning of events and development of network resources going forward to strengthen the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) voice within these.

The spotlight sessions will be themed sessions on particular topics specific to Community Planning and allow more targeted presentations and discussions to be had. A focus of these spotlight sessions will be to hear from a range of different CPP's directly and use the knowledge shared to create useful resources for network members.

The National CPP self-assessment report is also due to be published early this year and will be an interesting read to get a sense of Community Planning across Scotland in a way that's not been possible before, as well as acting as a great source of evidence to identify best practice and develop case studies from.

Digital Public Services

mygovscot myaccount

mygovscot myaccount usage has continued an upward trajectory with year on year and month on month increases which looks set to continue throughout 2025. The platform hit the huge milestone of 2.5 million account holders in 2024 which has now increased to 2.6 million as platform usage continues to grow. Currently, over 50% of the eligible Scottish population has now signed up for mygovscot myaccount. Last year marked ten years of mygovscot myaccount and the platform continues to go from strength to strength as more features and functionality are added.

The platform also comes equipped with a suite of security features including passkeys which was added in 2024. Passkeys will 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 - will now provide easy and secure access to mygovscot myaccount.

We're also excited to announce an improved registration experience for mygovscot myaccount users. The updated process now includes an email verification step at the very beginning of registration, enhancing both security and usability. When users enter their email address during registration, they will receive an email with a verification link. Users click the link to confirm their email address and continue setting up their account.

Introducing the new Young Scot Membership App

Our Product Development Team has been working closely with Young Scot to deliver the brand-new Young Scot Membership app, now in its final stages of testing. This app is set to transform how Young Scot cardholders access discounts, rewards, and activities, all in one convenient location. When the app launches, cardholders will be able to:

- **Access Exclusive Benefits:** By linking a valid Young Scot National Entitlement Card (NEC) to the app, cardholders can activate a Digital Card. This card allows them to access discounts with participating retailers using a simple “show and go” method.
- **Prepare for Future Age Verification:** There are plans to achieve PASS accreditation, which would allow the Digital Card to serve as proof of age.

The app also features a quick and easy card replacement process. If a card has been lost, stolen, or damaged and no details have changed, users can request a replacement card directly through the app in just five clicks. This removes the need to call their council or reapply online via getyournec.scot, saving time and effort.

parentsportal.scot

[parentsportal](https://parentsportal.scot) is now live in 20 local authorities and it continues to grow from strength to strength. We are pleased to report that another 2 local authorities are currently going through the onboarding process and we are speaking to several other local authorities who have also expressed their interest in onboarding the platform.

The service is now available in 1,490 schools, with over 247K registered parental subscribers securely linked to over 286K approved pupils, with over 60K NEC Cards (to children aged between 5-10) issued via the parentsportal.scot platform.

Data and Intelligence

Digital Planning

We are supporting Aberdeenshire, Dumfries and Galloway, and East Ayrshire Councils by creating and hosting interactive dashboards and webmaps that show their housing land supply, a key element of planning policy and the Local Development Plan. Additionally, to support the National Planning Framework 20-minute neighbourhoods' policy, we are producing a technical guidance document on the spatial analysis required to calculate access to key public services.

We are also offering free in-person GIS training for planners, that is scheduled for the end of March. The goal of this is to help planners maximise the use of the invaluable location data available.

Geospatial Information Offer

We have recently launched our [bespoke offering relating to geospatial information](#), which formalises the support available from the IS to local government and the wider public sector in relation to harnessing the benefit from location data. This draws on our experienced and skilled Spatial Information Service, which has extensive knowledge of geospatial data management within local government and the wider public sector. We are offering a range of support services, including data hosting and publication, data management, webmapping, data licensing guidance, reviewing the application of geospatial data within your Council, analytics and insight, dataset cleansing and geocoding and geographic information user training. Some of these services are provided at no cost, whilst others will incur a charge on a cost recovery basis.

Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)

The annual LGBF National Overview report will be published in March 2025. The LGBF Dashboard publishes data releases on a monthly basis, to provide Councils with access to more timely 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 the development of bespoke dashboards and a basket of priority LGBF indicators aligned to local council plans, for example.

The LGBF Board are continuing to evolve the suite of LGBF measures to reflect policy priorities which are of critical importance to local government, including climate change and financial sustainability. We are working with the Directors of Finance to explore which areas of financial sustainability require a stronger focus within the LGBF, and whether there would, for example, be value in including additional measures which focus on areas such as the use of reserves to balance budgets, and the percentage of savings achieved. We are also working with the Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) to further 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 the progress of Councils. We have already added measures on Electricity, Transport and Natural Gas Emissions and are undertaking development work with SSN to improve the underpinning data quality of the Corporate and Waste Emissions indicators to allow future inclusion.

The LGBF Board also worked closely with Solace and the Directors of Finance Section to inform the drafting of the new Statutory Performance Indicator Direction which was published by the Accounts Commission in December. The LGBF Board welcomes the Commission's continued support for the LGBF in the new Direction, and the strengthening of the Commission's expectation that

councils should maximise their use of the LGBF, alongside other locally appropriate measures of performance. The explicit focus on carrying out self-assessments and making use of opportunities to learn from others (such as peer collaborative improvement) is also welcomed.

Peer Collaborative Improvement

Following a positive evaluation of the first pilot of our new Peer Collaborative Improvement approach (involving colleagues from Falkirk, Inverclyde, East Renfrewshire and Midlothian councils), we have been working with the LGBF Board and local authorities to prepare Pilot 2. Housing Voids has been identified as the focus for this new pilot, with Aberdeenshire Council agreeing to act as the host authority and welcoming the opportunity to share in learning from peer authorities. Over the coming months, we will reach out to other authorities and to COSLA to establish a peer review team to help us further test this new approach. 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.

Scottish Local Government Assurance and improvement Framework (SLGAIF)

The IS and COSLA have been working together to set out the significant local government improvement and assurance 'architecture' that exists in Scotland, both internal and external. The Scottish Local Government Assurance and Improvement Framework (SLGAIF) will be published early 2025, and provides robust evidence of the expansive landscape of governance, reporting, performance improvement, audit and scrutiny which currently relates to local government in an attempt to enhance understanding with key stakeholders. The SLGAIF sets out the 'as-is' state and provides greater understanding and clarity for both Scottish and Local Government around existing accountability and assurance, revealing how crowded the landscape is, and helping to direct focus on how it can be refined, reduced and/or rationalised for a more effective focus on outcomes, and to build trust and common understanding across the two spheres of government. The framework will also support local government as we look to mature our approach to sector led improvement, and work towards achieve our desired 'to-be' state, for example, more emphasis on peer led improvement and self-evaluation thereby releasing our capacity to focus on local accountability rather than servicing national accountability.

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 Louise Long, 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 are:

1. Improved governance and reductions in the reporting landscape.
2. Improved data standards to enhance the quality and re-use of data provided.
3. Improved orchestration of data returns using scheduled workflows to create improved co-ordination.
4. Greater automation of data collection and distribution, by running a proof-of-concept with selected returns to establish capacity to support further automation.
5. Improved access and re-use of data, via the development of a business intelligence tool which provides data exploration, visualization and sharing features.

Following the progress delivered to date, the Oversight Group have agreed to move to a prototyping phase in January 2025 to build and test the technology required to deliver the LG Data Platform. This will help inform the development of the final business case to Solace and COSLA Leaders in due course.

Community Planning & Community Planning Improvement Board (CPIB)

The latest [CPIB Newsletter](#) provides an update on the CPIB's work 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. This newsletter has been circulated to the Chairs of all CPP Boards across Scotland as well as Community Planning partner organisations. The next Newsletter will be published early 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.

Across the next 12 months, 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.

As a starting point, and building on work undertaken to date, the CPIB Action Plan outlines the commitment of CPIB members to work together to deliver practical action to drive forward change at a local level. The plan 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.

There are, however, key areas where national action is essential and the Chair of the CPIB (Greg Colgan, Chief Executive, Dundee City Council) continues to engage with national politicians and policy makers to take these forward. These asks include:

1. To address the fragmentation of the climate funding landscape by consolidating and aligning national budgets and funding streams.
2. To secure sustainable funding for the third sector, recognising their instrumental role in the development and delivery of early intervention offers and relationship-based alternatives to statutory service delivery, including in key areas such as whole family wellbeing approaches.
3. To give greater emphasis to the provision of flexible and multi-year funding to enable available resources to be better used in ways that reflect priorities for communities.
4. To reduce reporting requirements, including in relation to Child Poverty Action Reports.

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.

Research

Our research team's work with West Lothian Council to use data to identify areas of unmet need and low benefit uptake won the award for Best Use of Data at the 2024 [Local Area Research and Intelligence Association Research Impact Awards](#). The work brings together council-held and publicly available data to identify these areas and help direct interventions. This project was the basis of a successful bid to the Child Poverty Accelerator Fund, which will build on its success to date. This will allow us to include a greater range of data sources, develop an interactive dashboard, and explore how this approach can be replicated in other council areas.

In December, the results of the Business Baseline survey, carried out by the IS Research Team on behalf of Business Gateway and partners, were published. The report shows high levels of confidence amongst Scotland's business community but highlights major challenges. The full report is available through the [Business Gateway website](#).

The team has been awarded a new contract to continue to deliver the National Customer Survey for Building Standards for the next five years. The survey is shared with all building standards customers, with a dashboard allowing local authorities to access the live data and track performance.

Evaluation

We will be publishing our third evaluation report on the impact of the Place Based Investment Programme - Direct Grants in February and are planning on holding a webinar to launch the findings on 26 February at 11:00. The report will contain evidence of the impact created by the funding and includes case studies from Glasgow City, Aberdeenshire and West Lothian Councils.

We are publishing two further evaluation reports on the Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships 'Test and Learn Programme' funded by Scottish Government. One of the reports considers the effectiveness of adopting this approach to service delivery in rural areas and the other shares the views of those who have 'lived experience' of using the service.

Evaluation support is currently being provided to Aberdeen, Dundee, Fife, Glasgow City and North Lanarkshire Councils over a range of areas.

We are promoting our commercial [Evaluation Offer](#) at [The Gathering 2025](#) in Edinburgh on the 4th and 5th of February.

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](#).