

Use of the LGBF

Using the LGBF as a Foundation for Performance, Improvement and Self-Evaluation

Dumfries and Galloway Council

Background

Dumfries and Galloway Council has embedded the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) within its wider approach to planning, performance management and improvement.

Rather than treating the LGBF as a standalone reporting exercise, the council has integrated relevant indicators into service plans, committee reporting and strategic performance frameworks. This creates a clear link between council priorities, service performance and improvement activity.

Over time, this approach has helped strengthen the use of benchmarking across the organisation, supporting evidence-based decision making by officers and elected members while ensuring performance information is used in a practical and meaningful way.

Key activities

Embedding LGBF indicators within planning and reporting

Relevant LGBF indicators are built into service plans and linked to council priorities through a clear “golden thread” approach. Service plans feed into committee reporting and ultimately support reporting against the Council Plan, ensuring benchmarking information is integrated into routine performance management.

Using benchmarked data to measure strategic impact

The council’s Council Plan Measurement Framework draws on published and externally validated data sources, including a range of LGBF indicators. This allows the council to focus on the impact of its activities and assess progress towards long-term outcomes rather than simply reporting completed actions.

Using LGBF to support service reviews and improvement

Benchmarking information forms a key part of service reviews and improvement activity. Services use LGBF data to understand performance trends, compare themselves with other councils and identify opportunities for improvement. The council values the framework’s consistency and long-term data trends, which provide a reliable evidence base for review activity.

Using LGBF to support self-evaluation

As a pilot authority for the National Self-Evaluation Framework (NSEF), Dumfries and Galloway Council is exploring how existing LGBF evidence can be used to support self-assessment activity. Rather than creating new evidence sources, the council is mapping appropriate LGBF indicators against NSEF criteria and using existing published data to support organisational self-evaluation. This helps reduce duplication and created a joined-up approach with existing performance management and improvement approaches.

Providing regular performance intelligence

Following each LGBF publication, officers prepare performance briefings for managers and elected members. These updates highlight significant changes in performance and provide local context to support discussion, scrutiny and action planning.

Using benchmarking to inform investment decisions

LGBF data is used alongside local performance information to support policy and investment decisions. For example, benchmarking data on road condition and spending levels helped inform discussions around roads investment and supported evidence-based decision making during budget setting processes.

Making use of flexible benchmarking

Services use the LGBF dashboard and benchmarking tools to compare performance with family groups and other relevant peer authorities. This flexibility allows services to select the comparators most relevant to their circumstances and supports learning from councils facing similar challenges.

Benefits and impact

Stronger links between performance and improvement

Embedding LGBF indicators within existing planning and reporting processes has made benchmarking a routine part of service management rather than a separate reporting requirement.

Supporting a more joined-up improvement culture

The council increasingly views LGBF as part of a wider improvement system rather than a standalone benchmarking exercise. Bringing together benchmarking, self-evaluation, service planning and improvement activity helps create a shared evidence base and strengthens understanding of organisational performance.

Improved evidence for decision-making

The use of benchmarked and published data provides elected members and senior leaders with a robust evidence base to assess progress, understand performance trends and identify priority areas for action.

Better understanding of performance

Services use LGBF indicators alongside local operational measures to build a fuller understanding of performance. This helps managers understand not only what the data shows, but also the factors that may be influencing results.

Enhanced scrutiny and engagement

Regular reporting and briefing arrangements have increased awareness and understanding of benchmarking information amongst elected members. This supports more informed scrutiny and encourages discussion around performance trends, improvement activity and service outcomes.

Greater use of benchmarking across services

The availability of dashboards and comparative data has made it easier for services to access benchmarking information, compare performance and engage with peers to understand different approaches and outcomes.

Learning and reflections

Embedding benchmarking within existing processes drives greater value

The council has found that LGBF data has the greatest impact when it is integrated into service planning, performance reporting, improvement activity and decision making rather than treated as a separate reporting requirement.

Context is as important as the data

Benchmarking information is most effective when supported by local knowledge, service intelligence and professional judgement. Understanding the reasons behind performance is just as important as understanding the results themselves.

Long-term trends support continuous improvement

The longevity and consistency of the LGBF provides a valuable source of trend data that can be used to monitor progress, identify emerging issues and support continuous improvement activity.

Benchmarking supports investment and policy decision

The council has increasingly seen a link between benchmarking evidence, service priorities and investment decisions. Performance information helps identify areas where additional focus or resources may be required.

Benchmarking, self-evaluation and improvement work best when connected

The council has found increasing value in using LGBF evidence across multiple improvement activities, including service reviews, organisational development and emerging self-evaluation approaches through NSEF. This helps avoid duplication and creates a stronger evidence base for improvement

National benchmarking and local intelligence work best together

One of the key strengths of the LGBF is that it combines national benchmarking information with local context. This provides a balanced view of performance and helps councils make better-informed decisions about priorities and improvement activity.

Dumfries and Galloway Council continues to develop its use of benchmarking information as part of a wider culture of performance, improvement and evidence-based decision making. By embedding the LGBF throughout planning, reporting and review processes, the council has helped make benchmarking a practical tool for supporting strategic priorities and service improvement.

Contact for enquiries

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