



## REPORT TO EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE – 30 MAY 2019

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK THEMATIC REPORT 2018 – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

#### 1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Consider the content of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework Thematic Report 2018 – Children and Young People; and
- 1.2 Consider what the content means in the local context, in terms of improving children and young people's outcomes in Aberdeenshire, and provide comments to the Service.

#### 2 Background / Discussion

- 2.1 Over the last eight years, all 32 Scottish councils have been working with the Improvement Service (IS) to develop a common approach to benchmarking, which is grounded in reporting standard information on the services councils provide to local communities across Scotland - the Scottish Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF).

LGBF has published its first [thematic report](#)<sup>1</sup> relating to Children and Young People's services, which draws on key framework indicators captured between 2010/11 and 2016/17. This report explores what the data reveals about local government priorities and how the system is performing, along with what this means in terms of improving children and young people's outcomes and ensuring they have success in later life, particularly in relation to improvement for the most vulnerable.

This national overview report also highlights the role that council services take – such as sports, libraries, early years provision, housing, economic development, and school absence and exclusion rates – in improving outcomes based on the variation observed in the benchmarking data and is intended to complement local context Public Performance Reporting. Given the contribution of wider council services captured in the LGBF national thematic report, a copy will also be circulated to all members by information bulletin.

#### 2.2 Expenditure on Children and Young People's Services

- 2.2.1 The report highlights that, although education spending as a whole has been relatively protected, and child protection and social care spending have grown substantially, there has still been variation between councils across the period 2010/11 to 2016/17 in spending patterns, reflecting different population trends, different challenges and different priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/benchmarking/tr-cyp18.pdf>

2.2.2 For early learning and childcare (ELC) provision for children, the cost per publicly funded ELC place increased across Scotland by 15.5% over the seven year period the report covers. This reflects the commitment<sup>2</sup> to increase the amount of ELC hours for each eligible child. In 2016/17, the average cost per place across Scotland was £4246, compared with £3927<sup>3</sup> in Aberdeenshire.

2.2.3 For primary and secondary schooling, the pattern of spend across Scotland has seen a reduction in real costs per pupil since 2010/11, representing a 9.9% reduction per primary pupil and 3.1% reduction per secondary pupil, with average rates in 2016/17 of £4788 and £6805 respectively, although this differs for Aberdeenshire:

	2010/11	2016/17	Difference
Primary	£5424	£5261	-3.0%
Secondary	£7415	£7133	-3.8%

2.2.4 However there has been a 29.6% increase in the pattern of spend on looked after children across Scotland since 2010/11, increasing from £483 in 2010/11 to £626 in 2016/17, with increased spend for those looked after in either a community or residential<sup>4</sup> setting. This differs for Aberdeenshire, which saw a reduction in spend in the latter:

	Setting	2010/11	2016/17	Difference
Aberdeenshire	Community	£235	£307	+30.6%
Scotland	Community	£225	£313	+3.9%
Aberdeenshire	Residential	£2943	£2535	-13.9%
Scotland	Residential	£3091	£3404	+10.1%

## 2.3 Performance of Children's Services

2.3.1 Care Inspectorate quality evaluations reflect the number of publicly funded early years providers which were graded good or better for all quality themes, as a percentage of all publicly funded early years provision which was inspected. Although the proportion graded good or better across Scotland has increased between 2010/11 and 2016/17, there has been a small decrease in performance in this area over the past two years, which is also reflected in the Aberdeenshire figures, which has seen a small decrease from 86.2% in 2015/16 to 84.3% in 2016/17.

2.3.2 School attendance rates in Aberdeenshire are above those for Scotland, with both the attendance rate of all children and young people and the attendance rate of those which are looked after by Aberdeenshire Council<sup>5</sup> showing improvements over the seven year period:

	Att. Rate	2012/13 <sup>6</sup>	2016/17	Difference
Aberdeenshire	All	94.5%	94.9%	+0.4%

<sup>2</sup> Outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Source of all LGBF Aberdeenshire figures: <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/explore-the-data.html> (downloading the data file).

<sup>4</sup> Residential [definition](#): "all accommodation based services for children/young people except respite care residential placements.". Community definition: "respite and non-respite fostering and family placements."

<sup>5</sup> Figures for LAC attendance and exclusions relate to Care Experienced Young People looked after (at home or away and accommodated) by Aberdeenshire Council, but may not necessarily attend an Aberdeenshire school.

<sup>6</sup> Data on attendance and exclusions is published nationally every two years.

Scotland	All	93.6%	93.3%	-0.3%
Aberdeenshire	LAC	87.6%	95.0%	+7.4%
Scotland	LAC	88.5%	91.0%	+2.5%

2.3.3 Exclusion rates in schools – representing the number of half-days of temporary exclusions and the number of pupils removed from register per 1000 pupils – has reduced across Scotland for all children and young people and also those who are looked after. However, although there has been a substantial fall in exclusion rate of those looked after by Aberdeenshire Council – on par with the national reduction – the rate itself remains above the national rate:

	Exc. Rate	2012/13	2016/17	Difference
Aberdeenshire	All	23.0	23.8	+3.5%
Scotland	All	32.8	26.8	-18.3%
Aberdeenshire	LAC	341.2	136.7	-59.9%
Scotland	LAC	184.5	79.9	-56.7%

2.3.4 The number of sickness absence days for teaching staff has reduced both nationally and for Aberdeenshire between 2010/11 and 2016/17, although Aberdeenshire (5.66 days) remains below the national level of 6.06 days for 2016/17.

## 2.4 Looked After Children – Balance of Care

2.4.1 When considering figures relating to Care Experienced Young People, it is worth taking into account that this cohort is relatively small. Therefore, any changes in this number can have a notable impact on the results (e.g. attendance, exclusion, attainment rates) year-to-year. For example, on 31/07/2017, there were 395 children and young people looked after by Aberdeenshire Council, including 76 under age five, and 42 over the minimum school leaving age<sup>7</sup>.

2.4.2 Since 2010/11, the number of children looked after in Scotland has reduced by 8.2%, from 16231 to 14897. Those looked after in the community account for around 90% of all looked after children in Scotland, although, over the seven year period, there has been a slight shift away from community provision towards residential provision. In Aberdeenshire, community provision is slightly lower at 86.1% in 2016/17.

2.4.3 Placement stability is a key priority in corporate parenting for promoting attachment and the development of secure relationships for children and young people who are care experienced. Consideration in how performance in this area is measured is outlined in this report, as the second placement in a year may be the permanence placement which, with the current measure<sup>8</sup>, creates interpretation difficulties.

In Aberdeenshire, the percentage of looked after children and young people with more than one placement in the last year (August to July) increased slightly between 2010/11 to 2016/17, from 21.4% to 21.8%, which is line with the national pattern.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Scot Gov Children's Social Work Statistics Additional Tables 2017/18 (Table 3.1 and 3.2).

<sup>8</sup> The number of children looked after away from home with more than one placement within a year, as a percentage of all LAC.

2.4.4 There has also been an increase in the Child Protection (CP) re-registration rates in Aberdeenshire between 2012/13<sup>9</sup> and 2016/17 (up 1.3%). However, nationally the rate has remained relatively constant. This rate is considered to provide an insight on local decision-making processes, the operation of risk thresholds, and the implementation of safeguarding processes, but the small number of CP re-registrations may also introduce some volatility in the data for this measure. Therefore, the report also outlines an alternative measure focussing on de-registrations.

## 2.5 Key Trends in Children and Young People’s Outcomes

2.5.1 Although the report aims to highlight potential relationships between council services and outcomes, the content is advised to not be interpreted in isolation but rather used as a starting point for discussion and to help inform decision-making dependent on local strategic priorities.

Overall, Aberdeenshire compares favourably to the national changes in outcomes over time:

Key Outcome	Overall Assessment	
Babies with a Healthy Birthweight (%)	Above national	
Development Milestones Concerns (%)	Below national	
Primary 1 Body Mass Index (%)	In line with national	
Children Living in Poverty (%)	Below national	
Average Total Tariff	In line with national	
Pupils Entering Positive Destinations (%)	Above national	

2.5.2 It is highlighted that school improvement, school leadership, teacher professionalism, assessing children’s progress, parental engagement and performance information are all factors which have been found to contribute to the quality of our education system in Scotland, with evidence of the impact that libraries and museum programmes have on educational achievement.

In addition, children attending a pre-school setting with a higher grade on the Care Inspectorate theme of care and support grade, were consistently and significantly associated with a positive change in vocabulary development.

However, with reference to the contribution council services play in increasing positive destinations, it is also highlighted that research demonstrates parents’ role in the choices their children make around education, employment and training, and the importance of parents and carers being aware of, and having access to, information and support available.

2.6 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report. They are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

<sup>9</sup> Data for this measure is available only from 2012/13 onwards.

### 3 Scheme of Governance

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of: Section E.1.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance, as it relates to policy issues and resource matters for Children's Social Work Services and Education; Section E.3.4, as it refers to overseeing the functions of the Council under the Education (Scotland) Acts, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, and all other relevant legislation and regulations; and Section E.6.1, as it relates to the review of the effectiveness of Council policy implementation and Council service delivery in respect of functions within its remit.

### 4 Implications and Risk

- 4.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because the LGBF Thematic Report 2018 – Children and Young People report is an Information Service report. This report reflects the national performance on key policy areas and does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.
- 4.2 There are no direct staffing or financial implications arising from this report, but trends are used to inform improvement activity and future budget planning.
- 4.3 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level ([Corporate Risk Register](#)):
- *ACORP001 Budget pressures*
  - *ACORP002 Changes in government policy, legislation and regulation*
  - *ACORP006 Reputation management*

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level ([Directorate Risk Register](#)):

- *ECSR002 Failure to consistently apply best practice recommendations across all schools*
- *ECSR002 Inability to source appropriate data to measure and monitor the defined attainment gap*
- *ECSR002 Increase estate development to match extended early year provision*
- *ECSR002/ECSSR004 Reduced funding*

These risks will be monitored and mitigated against through the ongoing work with the Improvement Service to benchmark on the key policy areas outlined in the LGBF Thematic Report, strengthening the link between performance information and outcomes.

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Date:

