

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 25 SEPTEMBER 2024

REPORT ON: LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK - SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT FOR REDUCING CHILD POVERTY AND INEQUALITIES INDICATORS

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

REPORT NO: 216-2024

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report summarises the relevant actions that aim to improve the performance indicators referred to in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) report approved by the City Governance Committee on 10 June 2024 that are below the benchmark and relating to the reducing child poverty and inequalities in incomes, education, and health theme.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended the Committee notes the report.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 At the City Governance Committee on 10 June 2024, the annual Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) report was amended with a recommendation requesting a supplementary report be prepared and presented to Scrutiny Committee, in addition to the LGBF report. The supplementary report was to set out actions that are being taken in relation to indicators within the child poverty and inequalities theme. Article II of the Minute of Meeting of the City Governance Committee of 10 June, (Report No 93-2024 refers).

4.2 Page 6 of the LGBF report appendix, showed that for this theme 9 out of 13 indicators were in the areas for improvement column as not meeting the benchmark of being the same or better than average of the LGBF family group of local authorities with similar levels of deprivation and urban density. For 2 out of the 9 indicators, school attendance and the literacy attainment gap in primary school, we count as being on target as they are 4th in the family group. In the appendix as they were slightly below the group average, we placed them in the area for improvement column. In a group of 8 the average can be skewed by an outlier hence we often use the mid-point rather than the mean average.

4.3 The paragraphs below relate in turn to each of the nine indicators with a summary of the data in the main report and in line with the City Governance Committee's amended recommendation below that a bullet style list of the main improvement plans and/or actions that relate to that topic. Many of the plans are already detailed plans and strategies approved by the Council and have significant partnership, governance, and engagement.

% of children living in poverty (after housing costs) (2021/22)

4.4 The LGBF report showed that for 2021/22 Dundee had 27.1% of children living in poverty compared to 26.7% average for the family group of authorities (a difference of 1%) and this placed Dundee at 27th (down 2 on the year before) out of 32 Scottish Local authority areas in terms of this measure. The data has since been updated for 2022-2023 and shows an increase to 28.2% of Dundee Children in Child Poverty by this measure compared to the Family group at 27.2% but Dundee now ranks 29th out of 32.

4.5 Progress to date and key actions taken are as follows:

- The annual Fairness and Local Child Poverty Action Plan was submitted to the City Governance Committee on 24 June 2024. This outlined how the council and partners will work together to try and improve conditions for some families and communities across Dundee.
- Dundee City Council was the first Local Authority in Scotland to declare a Cost-of-Living Crisis in June 2022, and a series of Cost-of-Living summits was held to agree actions.
- Funding of over £1.5m was spent on a range of measures to mitigate the impact of poverty and the cost-of-living crisis in 2023/24.
- Further funding of £50,000 was allocated for fairness activities in the 2023/24 budget, with the Local Fairness Initiatives and the Fairness Leadership Panel support being prioritised. This was in addition to, £6.73m of payments being made via Holiday Support, Scottish Welfare Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments.
- A range of work on income maximisation initiatives across the city is being implemented to ensure citizens are receiving all benefits and support payments they are entitled to, which has generated around £13.6m in income.
- The Dundee Child Poverty Pathfinder has increased employability opportunities for 188 families in Linlathen affected by a range of inequalities. This provides the support to enable parents to secure incomes to address child poverty that may be experienced by the 256 children living in these households.
- In Stobswell West, greater money and benefit advice is being provided in partnership with the Stobswell Forum at the Connect shop, greater community and intergenerational activities, and efforts to tackle quality in private rented properties in the area.
- The contribution of the Dundee Fairness Leadership Panel (FLP) continues to grow. As well as arranging and hosting the annual Dundee Fairness Conference in November 2023, in the last year the Panel has influenced policies and services relating to employability, public debt and customer services. In 2024/25, members will focus on housing, mental health & Isolation, and support given to third sector staff and volunteers.
- Feedback on the 2022/23 annual report was also received from the Improvement Service and the Dundee Fairness Leadership Panel. Most of their recommendations have been incorporated and commitments made to those that remain outstanding. An easy read 'plan on a page' version of the 2022/23 report was co-produced by officers and members of the panel. This was launched to a positive response at the Fairness Conference in November 2023 and will be repeated in collaboration with FLP members following committee approval.
- The Council continues to work with the Hunter Foundation, BBC Children in Need, Columba 1400, and other partners to implement What Matters to You in 3 locality areas. This initiative involves leadership capacity building alongside enhanced engagement with communities to promote better understand and more flexibly respond to their needs. It has included a particular focus on families providing kinship care
- Education Scotland's Community Learning & Development progress visit recognised that Dundee's asset-based approach to tackling poverty and inequality is practice they will be sharing nationally.
- Whilst a great deal of work requires collaboration with partners, officers within Dundee City Council are carrying out more detailed analysis of data included in the Poverty Profile to assess what other actions within our control we can take during 2024/25 to reduce poverty in the city.

School attendance rates

- 4.6 The LGBF report showed that Dundee's school attendance rate in 2022-2023 was 89% compared to 89.5% for the family group. This is less than a 1% difference and Dundee's performance had improved across Scotland from 29th to 26th. (NB an error in the LGBF report showed this number as 16th instead of 26th).
- 4.7 Progress to date and key actions taken are as follows:
- Work continues with schools to continue to improve attendance. The Council Plan includes a target to increase the attendance rate of children from SIMD Quintile 1 to 93% as part of closing the gap measures. The rate increased from 86% in 2022-23 to 87% in 2023-24.

- Attendance continues to show improvement compared to session 2022/23. Primary attendance for session 23/24 was 91.7%, up from 91.2% and secondary attendance was 85.8%, up from 85.6%.
- A service design review as part of the Transformation Programme of supporting children with school attendance problems made recommendations. These included the need to develop a better process for recording attendance referrals and outcomes and providing enhanced holistic support to targeted pupils and their parents/carers. This includes a focus on pupils in kinship care.
- Every Dundee Learner Matters is the Education strategy to drive improvement to the quality of education for all children and pupils. This strategy is proving to be a success as reported to the Children and Families Committee in October 2023 and this includes each school establishing a school inquiry group to address one of 3 Ps which includes “Presence – ensuring that all children and young people attend regularly and promptly”.

Literacy Attainment Gap (P1,4,7 Combined) - percentage point gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils

4.8 The LGBF report showed that Dundee’s literacy attainment gap (P1,4,7 Combined) in 2022-2023 was 19.9% compared to 19.3% for the family group, a 3% difference and Dundee has always been in the top quartile of all 32 Scottish Local authorities on reducing this gap although we moved down from 7th to 8th position this year.

4.9 Progress to date and key actions taken are as follows:

- The interim data for this indicator for 2023/24 shows this gap has reduced to 17.2%, so this is likely to be better than the benchmark now.
- A report on the improvements in literacy and numeracy attainment in the primary school sector to the Children, Families & Communities Committee - 04/03/2024 (article II refers) highlighted that despite the ongoing impact of the pandemic, 66% of primary 1, 4 & 7 pupils living in the most deprived areas in the city have attained their expected level in literacy, which is the highest percentage on record. The Scottish average is 64%.
- Read Dundee, the Literacy Hub, has been implemented in targeted localities. This initiative, in partnership with the National Literacy Trust, uses a place-based approach to improve the literacy levels and life chances of children and families within targeted localities.
- Dundee has benefited from the Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) in its efforts to close the poverty related attainment gap. Children and Families Service is working closely with Education Scotland’s Attainment Advisor to better understand where and how PEF is making a difference. and to further improve how learning is shared.
- A new Scottish attainment Challenge Strategy Group is being established by Children and Families Service.
- The Children and Families Service has set ‘stretch aims’ for improving outcomes for all pupils while closing the poverty-related attainment gap. These stretch aims – underpinned by Every Dundee Learner Matters (EDLM) strategy – will be used to inform support and challenge visits and to monitor progress, at individual school level.

% of pupils entering positive destinations

4.10 The LGBF report showed that Dundee’s % of pupils entering positive destinations in 2022-2023 was 95.6% compared to 96.2% for the family group, a 1% difference and compared to all Scottish Local authorities Dundee moved up from 30th to 14th position this year. This is due to an overall improvement in Dundee from the year before from 93.9% to the 95.6%.

4.11 Progress to date and key actions taken are as follows:

- The report ‘A Step Change on Positive Destinations for Young Dundonians’ which outlines a Delivery Plan following a review by a multi-agency group was approved by the City Governance Committee 22/04/2024 (article IX refers). This includes a proposal to nominate a senior leader within each Secondary School to lead a multi-agency group and be

responsible for ensuring that all 16–19 -year-old young people in the school's community achieve a positive destination.

- A detailed exploration of the follow up school leavers' destinations is presented to the Children, Families and Communities Committee each year and the latest one was 4 September 2023, (article III refers). Individual schools and the Children and Families Service continue to implement strategies and actions to improve initial leaver destinations along with City Development connect to pathways for 16-19-year-olds.
- Specific attention to care experienced young people is given to ensure they reach positive destinations. This includes sustained support via Continuing Care until age 21 years, an extended range of supported accommodation options, flexible support from Dundee and Angus College and employability support coordinated by the Aftercare Team. Further work will include an exploration of post-school mentoring support and work with prospective employers to develop flexible opportunities for this group. Key workers are currently ensuring further engagement with 65 young people, identified by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) data hub records, who were identified as being school leavers between 2020 and 2023 aged between 15 and over and highlighted as being looked after under the local authority by the time of their 15th birthday.
- The Carers Centre who are a part of the Youth Participation Service Design have developed the Young Carer Action Plan. The Plan contains an action referring to improving transition arrangements for young carers by working closely with Dundee & Angus College as well as University of Dundee and the Abertay University, all of which should help improve sustained destinations for all young carers. In addition, Skills Development Scotland track outcomes for young carers through involvement of the Youth Employability Team.
- A Transition Planning Group has been developed to co-ordinate all the referrals from schools for pupils with additional support needs (ASN). Work is currently being undertaken to assess new opportunities for young people with ASN. This piece of work is at an early stage and people who can assist with this work are currently being identified. The aim of this work is to allow young people with ASN to have more choices.

Attainment Gap measures relating to pupils living in the most deprived areas

- 4.11 There are three measures in the LGBF report that deal with closing the attainment gap in senior phase attainment as an outcome of tackling child poverty and inequalities in incomes, education, and health. All three are reported together as it would be difficult to differentiate actions between the measures. Each measure focuses on the attainment of young people from SIMD Quintile 1 (the 20% most deprived areas), the first 2 relate to levels of qualifications and the tariff score measures an average score for all certificated awards to pupils living in SIMD Quintile 1.

% of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 5

- 4.12 The LGBF report showed that Dundee's % of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 5 in 2022-2023 was 48% compared to 51% for the family group, a 6% difference and although Dundee's figure reduced from 49% the previous year compared to all Scottish Local authorities, Dundee moved up 1 place to 12th position this year. This is a significant improvement from the position in 2012-2013 when Dundee was ranked 21st amongst Scottish Local Authorities with only 30% of pupils in deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 5.

% of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 6

- 4.13 The LGBF report showed that Dundee's % of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 6 in 2022-2023 was 17% compared to 22% for the family group, a 23% difference. Compared to all Scottish Local authorities, Dundee moved down 4 places to 18th position this year. Although Dundee saw a decline from 19% in 2021-2022 to 17% in 2022-23 there has been an overall ten-year improvement since 2012-13 when only 9% of Dundee pupils living in deprived areas gained 5+ awards at level 6.

Average total tariff SIMD quintile 1

4.14 The LGBF report showed that the average tariff score in the 20% most deprived areas in Dundee in 2022-2023 was 568 compared to 669 for the family group, a 15% difference. Compared to all Scottish Local authorities, Dundee moved down 1 place to 20th position this year. In 2012-2013 the average tariff score in Dundee for SIMD Quintile 1 was 469 and Dundee was placed 20th in Scotland's 32 local authorities.

4.15 Progress to date and key actions taken are as follows:

- Data is used in detail across the Children and Families service to target school level improvements. In February 2024, Insight, the senior phase benchmarking tool, was refreshed with national leavers' benchmarking data for session 2022/23. This showed that gaps between leavers in the most and least deprived SIMD quintiles in Dundee have reduced over the last five years. The gap in leavers achieving one or more award at SCQF Level 5 has reduced from 24 to 18 percentage points. A report to the Children, Families and Communities Committee 13 May 2024 (article IV refers) set out some of the key data.
- The Children and Families Service Plan commits to forming a Scottish Attainment Challenge Strategy Group to lead on the effective use of all Attainment Scotland Funds and ensure that monies are used effectively – based on what works in Dundee schools, exploring opportunities to combine monies (e.g., SEF (Strategic Equity Fund) and PEF) for best impact in terms of achieving equity.
- A Collaborative Improvement Programme has been initiated by the Council involving a range of partners including Education Scotland, and Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES) – with a focus on improving outcomes in the Senior Phase in Dundee. The Collaborative Improvement fieldwork phase will help inform a Senior Phase Improvement Plan, which will help drive forward improvements in outcomes in the Senior Phase in Dundee.
- As part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge the Leading Learners Project Senior phase pupils in secondary schools are being supported by coaches trained in study techniques. These skills are taught and practiced on a weekly basis with pupils identified in each school as being at risk of not achieving their full potential. In 2022-23 93 coaches and 8 school leads took part in the project with around 750 pupils being coached, an average of 8 in each group. All schools are focusing on the senior phase for the main project.

% of Scottish Welfare Fund Community Care Grant Decisions within 15 Days

4.16 The LGBF report showed that in Dundee in 2022-2023 73.5% of CCG decisions were within 15 days compared to a family group average of 90.3%, a 19% difference. However, despite that Dundee rose 5 places to 21st of all Scottish councils.

4.17 Progress to date and key actions taken are as follows:

- 2023/24 has shown a considerable improvement in performance with 93.3% of decisions made within 15 days compared to a family group average of 89.3%
- Rolling out of iPads to Council Advice Services in a range of city venues to allow communities better access to the online applications process.
- Encourage, where possible, channel shift towards online applications rather than telephone applications, to free up resources to enable more time to be spent on decision making.
- Checks to ensure the Northgate Scottish Welfare Fund system is not including cases where all necessary information is not included in the application

% of Crisis Grant Decisions within 1 day

- 4.18 The LGBF report showed that in Dundee in 2022-2023 88.8% of Scottish Welfare Fund crisis grants decisions were made within 1 day compared to a family group average of 94.6%, a 6% difference. Dundee fell 2 places to 25th out of 32 Scottish councils.
- 4.19 Progress to date and key actions taken are as follows:
- 2023/24 has shown a considerable improvement in performance with 91% of decisions made within one day compared to the family group average of 90.9%.
 - Rolling out of iPads to Council Advice Services in a range of city venues to allow communities better access to the online applications process.
 - Encouraging, where possible, channel shift towards online applications rather than telephone applications. This will free up resources to enable more time to be spent on decision making.
 - Checks to ensure the Northgate Scottish Welfare Fund system is not including cases where all necessary information is not included in the application.
 - Quality assurance monitoring has also shown some staff are completing cases within one working day but not always timeously resolving them on the Northgate system at the same time leading to inaccurate data in some cases. Staff monitoring and training to continue to improve this.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate senior manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

The Council Leadership Team were consulted in the preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

GREGORY COLGAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

6 SEPTEMBER 2024

ANDREA CALDER
HEAD OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S SERVICES