

**REPORT TO: CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 4 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**REPORT ON: PROGRESS: FOLLOW UP LEAVER DESTINATIONS AND SQA RESULTS 2023**

**REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE**

**REPORT NO: 243-2023**

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This report presents the results of the Scottish Government’s Summary Statistics for Follow-Up Leaver Destinations, No.5: 2023 Edition, published 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023. It also provides an initial high-level summary of pre-appeals Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) 2023 exam results.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that the Children, Families and Communities Committee:

- Notes the contents of the report and,
- Instructs the Executive Director to provide a further update report on the achievement and attainment of our young people in the Senior Phase in academic session 2022/23 following the Insight (national benchmarking tool) update scheduled to take place late September 2023.

## **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 None.

## **4.0 Follow-Up Leaver Destinations**

4.1 The Scottish Government Summary Statistics for Follow-Up Leaver Destinations looks at all school leavers who left publicly funded mainstream school in session 2021/22 and their outcomes approximately nine months after the end of the school year on the first Monday in April 2023. Leavers are classified as being in a positive destination if they are in: higher or further education<sup>1</sup>, employment, training, voluntary work or personal skills development. Other destinations not classed as positive are: unemployed (seeking or not seeking) or unknown.

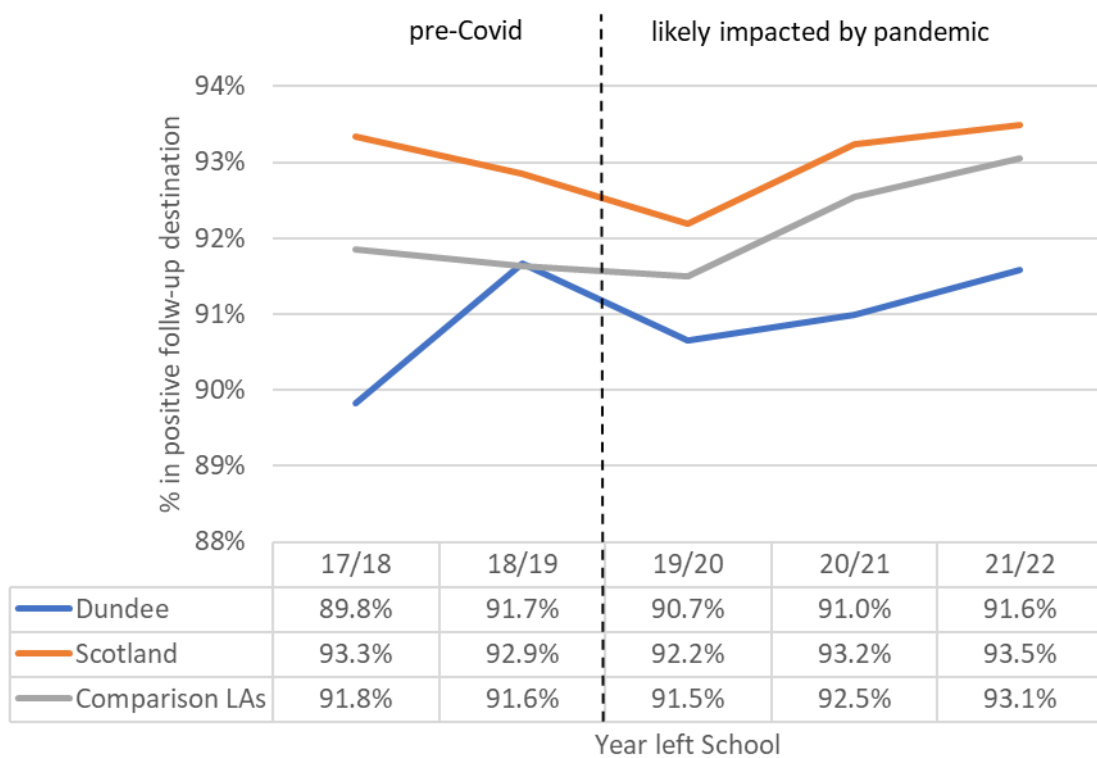
4.2 The publication specifically warns: “The time series presented in this publication includes years where school leaver destinations are likely to have been affected – either directly or indirectly – by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The greatest impact of the pandemic on school leaver destinations is likely to have been seen in 2019/20. However, it is likely that there has been some ongoing impact on the destinations of some 2020/21 and 2021/22 school leavers. The impacts of the pandemic should be kept in mind when comparing statistics on follow-up destinations for 2021/22, 2020/21, and 2019/20 school leavers, and when comparing statistics for these leaver cohorts to previous years.”

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<sup>1</sup> Higher and Further Education are distinguished by the level of qualification studied, with Higher Education being SCQF Level 7 or above. It is not dependant on the institution attended. So, Higher Education does NOT equate to University.

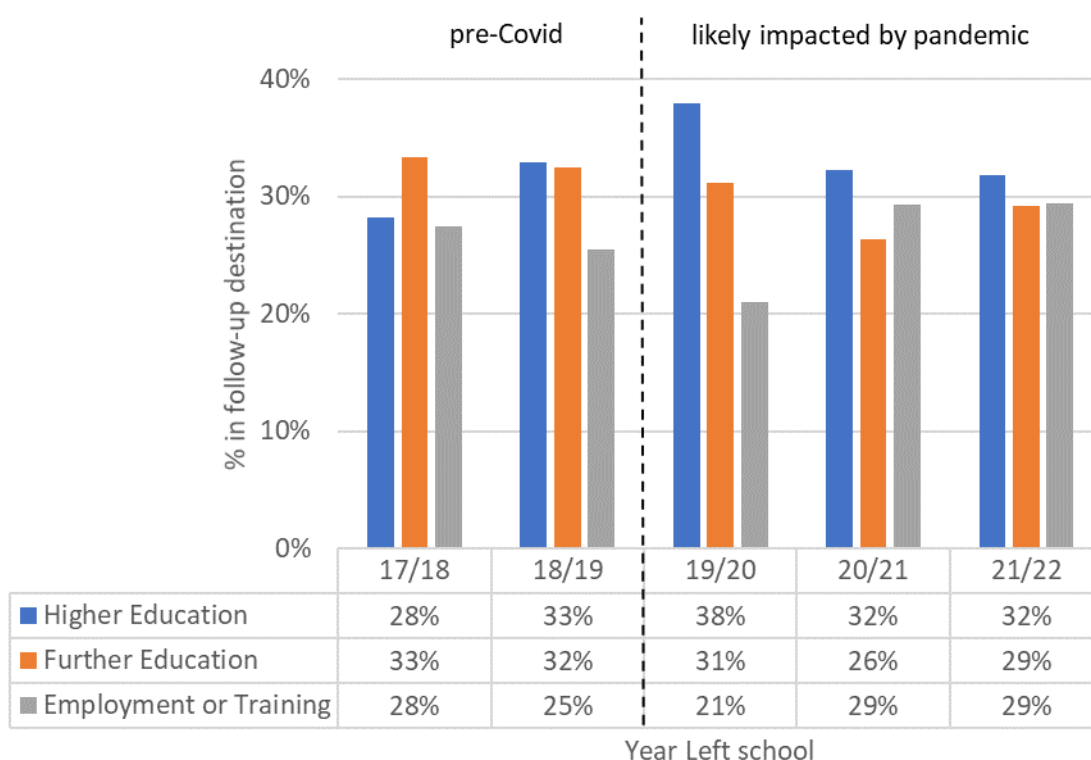
Chart 1: Percentage of school leavers in follow-up positive destinations



4.3 With the caveat in 4.2, Dundee has seen a general increase in the percentage of school leavers in positive follow-up destinations over the last five years. There was a peak in 2018/19 at 91.7% which has nearly been equalled by 2021/22 leavers at 91.6%.

Dundee has been consistently lower than Scotland and generally lower than its comparison authorities. For comparison authorities the Children and Families Service has used the other members of Dundee's Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) family group: East Ayrshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, Na h-Eileanan Siar, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire.

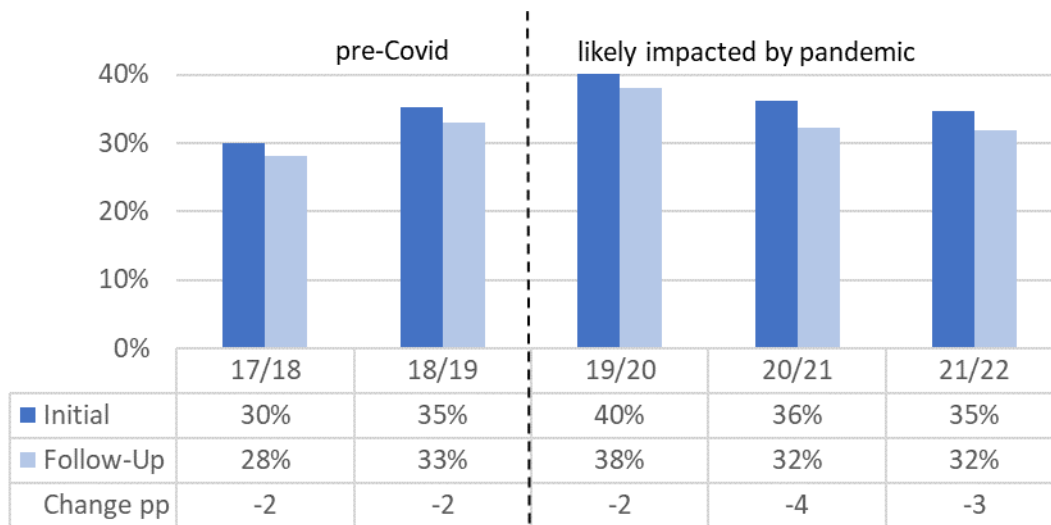
Chart 2: Percentage of Dundee school leavers by follow-up destination type



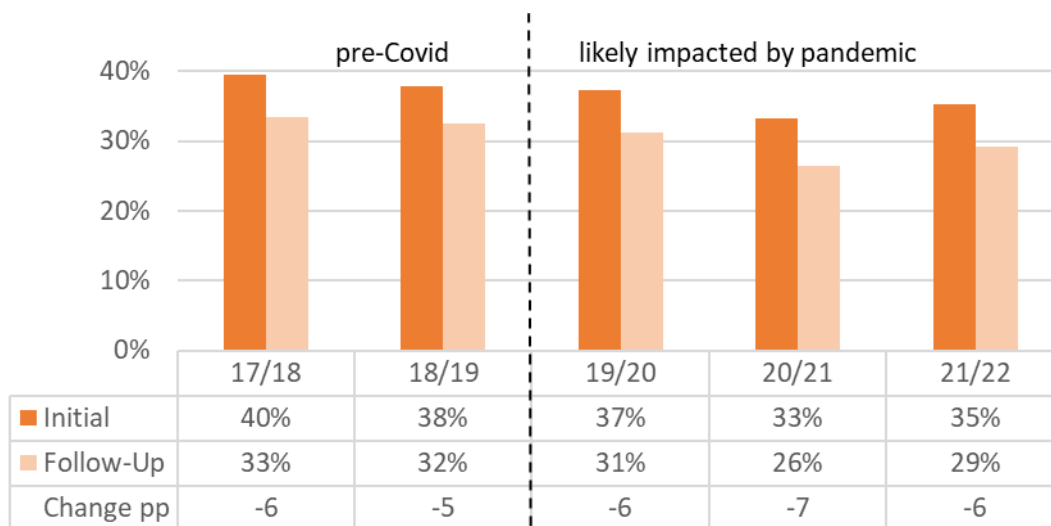
4.4 The vast majority of leavers in positive follow-up destinations are in education, work or training with only 1% or less in voluntary work or personal skills development. 2019/20 saw a peak of 38% of leavers in Higher Education at follow-up; this has now fallen to 32% for the last two years. Leavers at follow-up in Further Education declined to a low point of 26% in 2020/21; this has now recovered slightly to 29%, still lower than 2019/20 and earlier. The percentage of leavers at follow-up in employment or training is now at its highest level, 29%, for the past five years.

4.5 Chart 3, Chart 4 and Chart 5 show the change in percentage in leavers in each destination between the initial Skills Development Scotland snapshot in October of the year they left school, and the follow-up snapshot in April the following year. There has consistently been a drop in the percentage of leavers in Higher Education. This had been stable at two percentage points but for 2020/21 leavers this increased to four percentage points. The drop-off in leavers at Further Education is larger fluctuating around 6 percentage points. The increase in leavers in employment or training reflects this and may indicate where most leavers who move out of higher/further education proceed to.

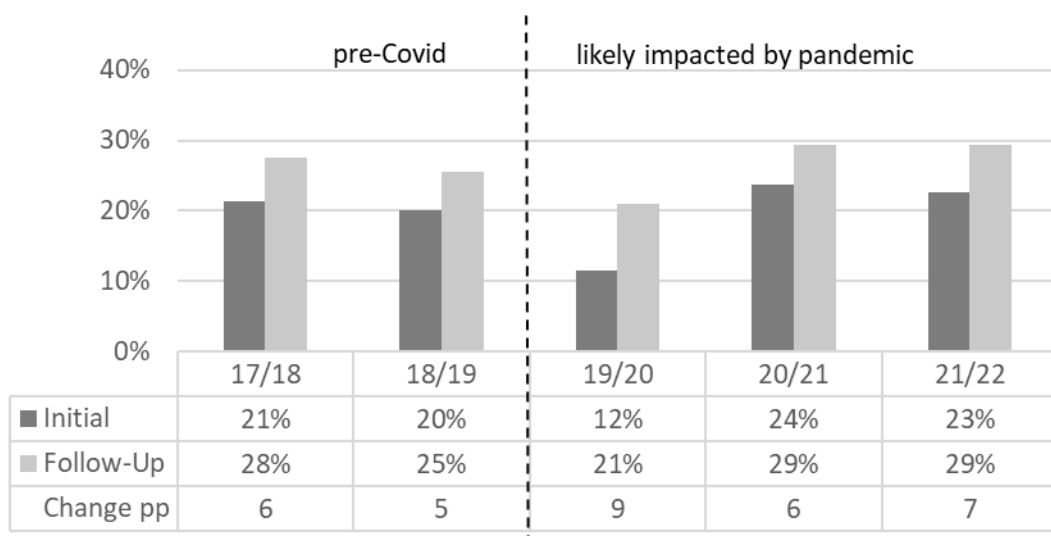
**Chart 3: Change between initial and follow-up destination - Higher Education**



**Chart 4: Change between initial and follow-up destination - Further Education**

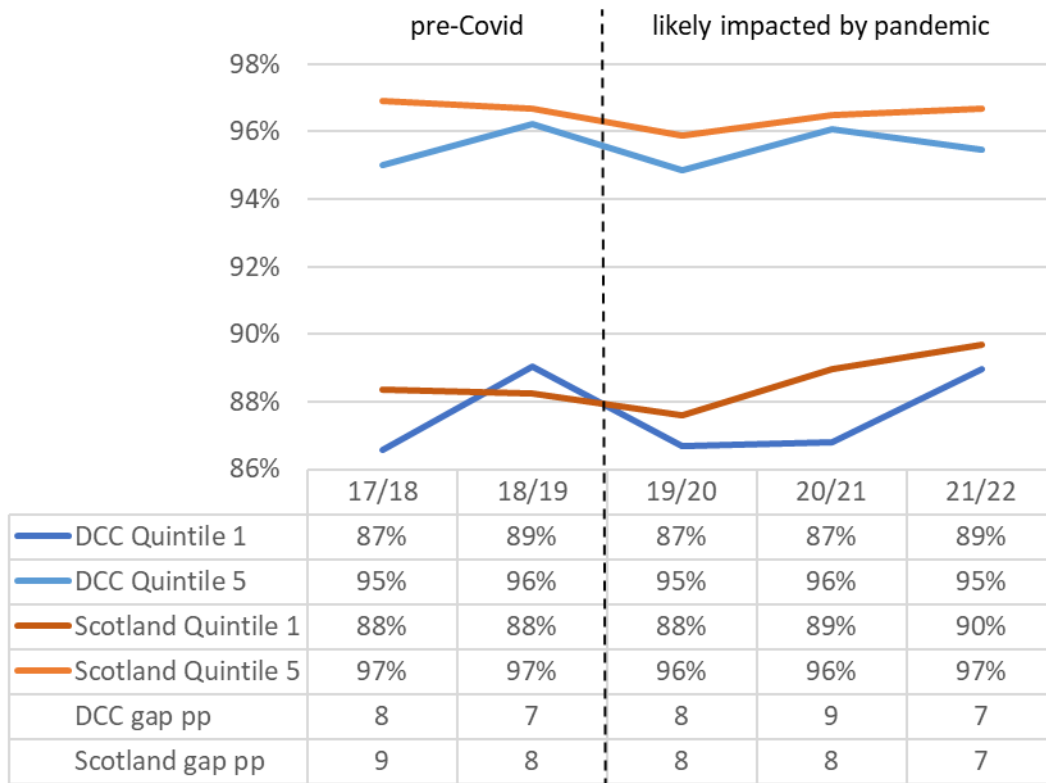


**Chart 5: Change between initial and follow-up destination – Employment or Training**



4.6 School leavers from the least deprived Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) quintile are more likely to be in positive follow-up destinations than those from the most deprived quintile (Chart 6). With the exception of quintile 1, the most deprived, in 2018/19, Dundee has lower levels of leavers in positive follow-up destinations than those seen in Scotland across both quintiles shown. The gap between the two quintiles is similar in both Dundee and Scotland averaging around eight percentage points.

**Chart 6: Percentage of leavers in positive follow-up destinations for most and least deprived SIMD quintiles, Scotland and Dundee**



## **5.0 Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Results 2023**

- 5.1 SQA results for 2023 were published on Tuesday 8 August 2023. SQA announced the results of National Courses at National 2 to National 4, Higher and Advanced Higher, in addition to a wide range of National Progression Awards, National Certificates, Skills for Work and SQA Awards.
- 5.2 The data published on 8 August reflects current information at a particular point in time (26 July) and the figures are subject to change later in the year. This data is therefore considered 'provisional' subject to processes including appeals and late amendments. Final figures are due to be published by the SQA in December.
- 5.3 Overall, in Scotland, results in 2023 are between 2019, the last exam year before the pandemic, and 2022, when a 'generous approach' was applied to awarding for the first year of the return to exams.
- 5.4 The SQA has stated: 'The alternative awarding arrangements in place in 2020 and 2021, the generous approach applied in 2022, and the significantly different circumstances in which exams took place in 2019 and the years before, mean that comparisons of attainment between years should be treated with significant caution and do not allow for any conclusions to be drawn on changes in education performance.'
- 5.5 Key messages, following an initial analysis of the provisional data, notwithstanding the caveat in paragraph 5.4, are noted in paragraphs 5.6 and 5.7.
- 5.6 3,104 pupils from Dundee's schools received the results of their SQA awards on 8 August. These pupils were presented for a total of 14,732 awards in 2023 compared to 13,556 in 2022. Key messages from each year group in the Senior Phase in Dundee include:

### **S4**

- 53% of S4 pupils sat four or more awards at SCQF Level 5 or better, up from 49% last year.
- 76% of S4 pupils gained one or more awards at SCQF Level 5 (National 5) or better (up from 73% last year).
- 105 pupils were awarded six National 5s at Grade A.

### **S5**

- 694 S5 pupils passed one or more SCQF Level 6 (Higher) awards at grades A-C.
- The percentage of S5 pupils with 5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 increased from 11% last year to 13%.
- This year 50 young people in S5 achieved Grade A passes in all their Higher awards.
- 149 young people achieved five SCQF Level 6 awards at grades A to C.

### **S6**

- 256 pupils in our S6 cohort gained at least one Advanced Higher.
- 49 gained at least three Advanced Highers
- Our Advanced Higher Pass rates were higher than the national average
- 11 young people passed the Scottish Baccalaureate (7 with distinction)

- 5.7 Pass rates for National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers have declined across Scotland in 2023 compared to 2022. Key messages related to pass rates for National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers in Dundee include:

### **National 5 Pass Rates**

- Similar to the Scotland average, the pass rate at grades A-C for National 5s in Dundee has declined from 80.4% in 2022 to 79.2% in 2023. However, this pass rate (79.2%) is higher than the pre-pandemic pass rate of 74.9% in 2019. Furthermore, this is the third year that Dundee has shown a better pass rate than Scotland at National 5, which was not the case pre-pandemic. Out of the nine original Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) 'Challenge Authorities' Dundee's pass rate at grade A-C is the second highest.

### **Higher Pass Rates**

- Similar to the Scotland average, the pass rate at grades A-C for Higher declined from 76.8% in 2022 to 74.4% in 2023. However, the pass rate (74.4%) is higher than the pre-pandemic pass rate of 73.1% in 2019. Out of the nine original SAC 'Challenge Authorities' Dundee's pass rate at grade A-C is the third highest.

### **Advanced Higher Pass Rates**

- Unlike the Scotland average, at Advanced Higher, Dundee's pass rate at grades A-C increased from 75.6% in 2022 to 77.2% in 2023. This Advanced Higher A-C pass rate of 77.2% is better than the Scottish average which declined to 75.9%. Out of the nine original SAC 'Challenge Authorities' Dundee's pass rate at grade A-C is the second highest.
- Dundee's Advanced Higher Pass Rate at Grade A also increased from 28% in 2022 to 29.6% in 2023, unlike the Scotland average which declined from 29.6% in 2022 to 28.4% in 2023. Out of the nine original SAC 'Challenge Authorities' Dundee's pass rate at grade A is the highest.

## **6.0 NEXT STEPS**

- 6.1 The 'Youth Participation Rates' task and finish group, sponsored by the Executive Director of City Development, will develop and oversee the implementation of an ambitious improvement plan to progress the agreed priority to improve Dundee's participation measure.
- 6.2 Senior Officers are currently undertaking a thorough analysis of Dundee's SQA results – at local authority, school, and subject levels. This will include looking for patterns, trends and anomalies in schools or subjects and determining the next steps.
- 6.3 The Head of Education, Learning & Inclusion, Education Manager (Schools) and Education Officers will visit Secondary schools to undertake attainment reviews in collaboration with each school's Senior Leadership Team. Education Officers and Head Teachers will also be issued with information to help them carry out their own subject attainment reviews. This analysis will help inform individual school, as well as service, improvement plans.
- 6.4 A full report on the attainment and achievement of our young people in the Senior Phase will be submitted to the Children, Families and Communities Committee later this year following the Insight (national benchmarking tool) update scheduled to take place late September 2023.
- 6.5 The Children and Families Service Improvement Plan 2023-2027 sets out how the service, working with others, plans to further improve outcomes for children, young people, and families. Informed by an analysis of 2022/23 attainment results, the Service will also develop a specific action plan which sets out how it plans to further enhance attainment and achievement in our secondary schools.

## **7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 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.

## **8.0 CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The Council Leadership Team has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1 None.

AUDREY MAY  
Executive Director of Children and Families Service

PAUL FLEMING  
Head of Education, Learning & Inclusion

04 September 2023