

Department of Corporate and Community Services

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TO: Councillors P. O’Kane (Chair), C. Merrick (Vice Chair), C. Bamforth, T. Buchanan, D. Devlin, C Gilbert, A. Lafferty, J. McLean, and G. Wallace; Dr F. Angell, Ms D. Graham, Ms M McIntyre and Mr D Morris.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Education Committee will be held on **Thursday, 10 June 2021 at 10.00am.**

The agenda of business is as listed below.

CAROLINE INNES

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DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Please note this is a virtual meeting.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence.**
2. **Declarations of Interest.**
3. **Early Learning and Childcare Annual Report - Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 3 - 16).**
4. **Developing the Young Workforce – Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 17 - 46).**
5. **Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education – Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 47 - 128).**
6. **Implementing Children’s Rights in East Renfrewshire – Progress – Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 129 - 156).**

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE10 June 2021Report by Director of EducationEARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ANNUAL REPORT**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to update members on the approaches taken to develop Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) services. The report outlines the steps taken to improve further the quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability of provision and experiences for young children.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Elected members are asked to note the continued progress of the delivery of 1140 hours ELC and comment on the contents as outlined in this paper.

BACKGROUND

3. The Scottish Government set a transformational agenda for Early Learning and Childcare for 2020 which was published in March 2017. The vision was to almost double the entitlement to free ELC from 600 hours to 1140 hours per year by 2020 for all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds and is underpinned by the key principles of quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability.

4. In September 2017 Education Committee approved East Renfrewshire's expansion plan including the 1140 hours models of delivery for early learning and childcare. The Council has a reputation for providing high quality early learning and childcare, which is flexible, affordable and accessible to all families in their local community. Families have valued such over the years and our expansion plan built upon these principles.

5. The Scottish Government announced on Tuesday 31 March 2020 that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic they had taken the decision to remove the statutory duty on education authorities to make 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) available to each eligible child from August 2020.

6. The Education Department considered the implications of this decision, in particular the delay to our planned infrastructure programme and the impact on our 'grow our own' workforce completing their necessary qualifications and the likelihood that families were planning both their childcare and financial needs on the basis of 1140 hours early learning and childcare being available from August 2020.

7. In June 2020, Education Committee approved the department's proposal to continue to progress with plans to deliver 1140 hours of early learning and childcare for all eligible 2, 3 and 4 year old children from August 2020 albeit in a more limited way given the impact of COVID-19 on plans.

8. In December 2020 the Scottish Government confirmed its commitment to every eligible 2, 3 and 4 year old child receiving 1140 hours of free early learning and childcare, with a new implementation date of August 2021.

REPORT

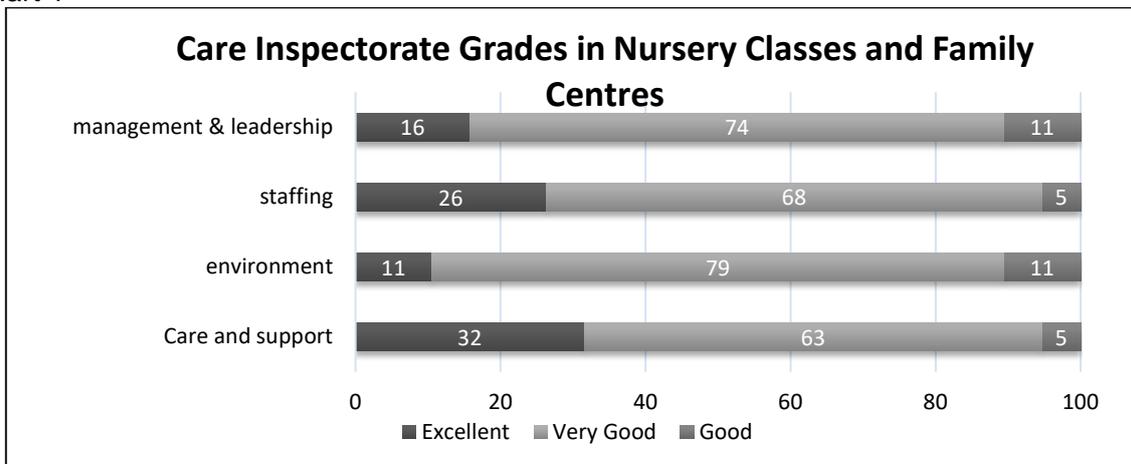
Quality

9. Quality is at the heart of the delivery of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) entitlement. In January 2020 a report on the Quality of the Council's Early Learning and Childcare Services was shared with Members of this committee, noting the high quality of the Council's early learning and childcare service which meets the relevant criteria of the National Standard for delivery of the funded entitlement of 1140 hours of ELC.

10. The Care Inspectorate suspended routine inspection activity from March 2020 and introduced a virtual system for inspection, including self-evaluation from settings to gather intelligence and assess risks for those operating within the pandemic.

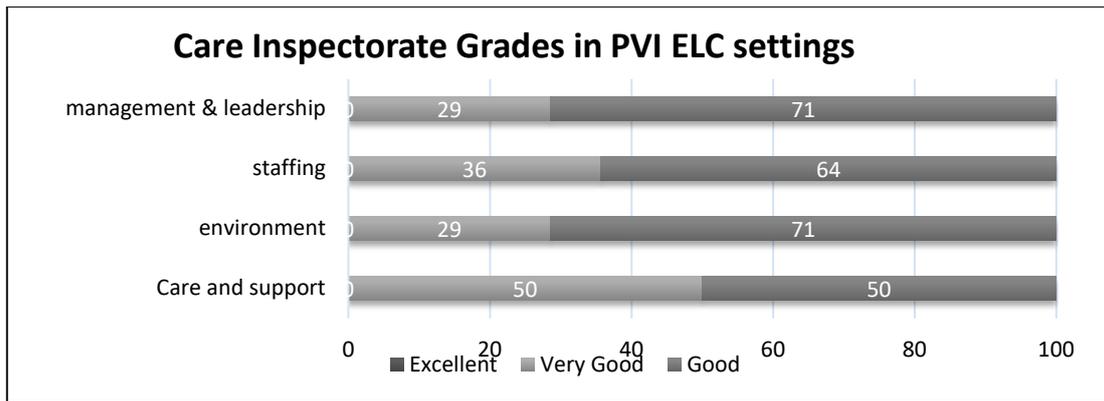
11. In order to deliver funded ELC settings must meet the National Standard which includes achieving grades of good or better across the range of criteria reported on by the Care Inspectorate. The quality of ELC in our local authority settings exceeds the National Standard with most settings achieving grades of very good or better as shown in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1



12. These grades reflect the 19 settings which had been inspected by the Care Inspectorate between 2016 and March 2020. The 3 new settings registered with the Care Inspectorate since August 2019, namely Maidenhill Nursery Class, St Cadoc's Nursery Class and Cross Arthurlie Nursery have not yet been formally inspected. The registration process is rigorous and requires settings to demonstrate how they will meet the National Standard, in addition St Cadoc's and Maidenhill were required to submit self-evaluation evidence in August 2020 to the Care Inspectorate following their first full year of service delivery and received very positive feedback.

Chart 2

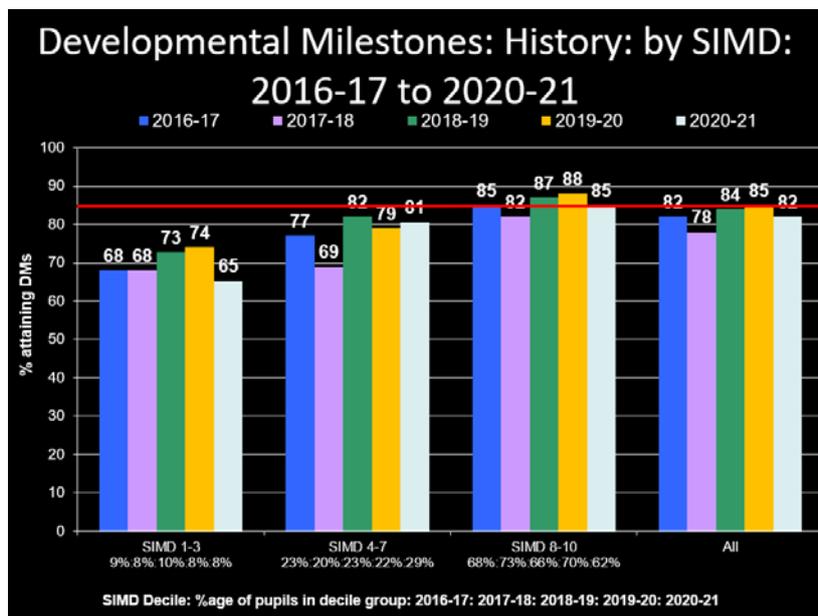


13. All Private and Voluntary settings delivering funded ELC in East Renfrewshire also meet and, in some cases, exceed the National Standard requirement to achieve grades of good or better.

14. Since 2013-14 data has been gathered on the percentage of children achieving the expected levels of development on entry to primary 1. The following developmental components are assessed: Social, Emotional, Attention, Speech, Expressive Language, Receptive Language, Communication, Gross Motor Skills, Fine Motor Skills and Behaviour. Between 2016-17 and 2019-20, there had been a steady increase in the percentage of children achieving their developmental milestones within the least affluent communities, SIMD deciles 1-3. However, most recent data reflects a reversal in the previous reduction in the gap between the achievement of those from the most affluent, SIMD 8-10, and least affluent, SIMD 1-3 residencies, which was 14% in 2019-20 and has risen to 20% in 2020-21.

15. A possible reason for this shift is the period of time children did not attend nursery during the first lockdown and nursery closures (March 2020 and June 2020). Young children learn and develop best in social contexts and the period of closure brought isolation for many. Primary schools are aware of this and there has been targeting of additional resource to support all children and young people with learning loss. In addition the quality of remote learning on offer during the second lockdown was of a very high standard. Chart 3 below details the Developmental Milestones history by SIMD.

16. *Chart 3*



17. This data also reflects the findings of the Public Health Scotland Report which found that COVID-19 and in particular the infection control measures, including lockdown, have had a profound impact on 2–4 year old children in Scotland. At this age it is important that children have opportunities to mix with others. This was severely restricted during lockdown without access to Early Learning and Childcare, and other play and learning experiences. The areas of emotional development, attention, language, communication, and fine motor skills presented the greatest difference between children from the most and least affluent communities.

18. A Baseline Assessment has been in place since 2005-06 to assess children's attainment in literacy and numeracy on entry to primary one. In contrast to the Developmental Milestones, overall performance in literacy and numeracy remained consistent with previous years. However the poverty measured attainment gap, using SIMD as a characteristic, has increased from 9 points in 2019-20 to 13 points in 2020-21 for numeracy and reduced slightly in literacy from 16 points in 2019-20 to 15 points in 2020-21.

19. A digital tool for tracking children's development and attainment throughout their nursery experience was developed by a group of early years professionals in 2017/18. An evaluation of the Tracking Tool in January 2021 showed that practitioners have found it to be an effective tool which supports them in documenting children's progress, planning next steps and identifying children who may require some support. This tool will be key to supporting children at transition to primary 1.

20. All our ELC establishments continue to offer excellent services for families as they continue their journey towards Gold Family Focused accreditation. The Family Centred Approaches framework was reviewed to support a digital approach to accreditation and highlight the work settings had undertaken in engaging children and families remotely. This has resulted in one family centre achieving Gold Family Focused status and a nursery class being re-accredited at Gold. This new online process will enable a further 3 establishments to go for Gold accreditation before the end of term.

Quality of the Early Years Workforce

21. The final round of recruitment panels took place in March 2020 ensuring that we had the necessary workforce in place to implement our 1140 plans from August 2020. We successfully appointed 157 CDOs between 2019 and 2020, including many of our staff who had completed their qualification through our 'Grow Our Own' pathway. Eighty percent of Cohorts 1-3 of the HNC delivered in partnership with West College Scotland secured employment as Child Development Officers. Cohort 4 experienced a delay in completion due to Covid-19, 8 candidates finished their qualification in January 2021 and are now eligible to apply for vacancies as they arise.

22. Through our recruitment exercise we have begun to increase the diversity of our ELC workforce which now includes 13 men who provide important male role models for children in settings which are predominantly staffed by women. We have also increased the proportion of staff from black and minority ethnic backgrounds with 21 now working in our settings.

23. East Renfrewshire Council continues to invest in its current and future workforce to ensure that all our staff are highly skilled and motivated. This investment continues to take various forms including a focus on Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) and professional enquiry.

24. Throughout 2020-21 the group of ELC leaders continued to develop the '0-6 Pedagogy' online hub in response to the changing needs of the sector. This online resource provides staff in local authority and funded provider settings with an increasing range of high-quality learning materials. These materials were particularly well utilised when staff were working remotely. These materials include; online training videos, SWAY presentations, research articles, video clips, photographs and interviews with experienced practitioners. Further resources to support staff wellbeing and delivery of remote learning were added during the recent period of nursery closure. Usage data shows a high level of engagement with the materials in 2020-21 with Outdoor Learning being a particular focus for practitioners in line with the National Coronavirus Guidance to maximise opportunities for outdoor play and experiences to limit transmission of the virus.

25. Senior and Depute Head of Centre forums shifted focus this session to support staff with the challenges of delivering 1140 hours of high quality ELC within the pandemic restrictions. Evaluations show that these forums have been vital in supporting middle leaders as they work with their staff teams to implement the expansion to 1140 hours and develop new ways of working in response to Public Health guidance.

26. East Renfrewshire has continued with its commitment to every 3 and 4 year old child within a local authority nursery having daily access to a teacher. During nursery closure teachers took a lead role in the delivery of remote learning to ensure that children and families had access to a suitable range of play experiences and ideas to enrich learning at home, in addition to co-ordinating learning within the ELC hubs. Teachers from ELC settings also worked closely with their primary colleagues to facilitate transitions for children in new and innovative ways in response to the pandemic restrictions.

27. A peripatetic teacher was funded to support all East Renfrewshire children who attend a funded provider. Enhanced risk assessments and access to testing enabled this support to continue during periods when partner nurseries were open and the use of outdoor spaces and experiences for learning provided further mitigation of risk.

28. The aspiration of a graduate workforce (100% qualified staff) in early years continues to make significant progress in East Renfrewshire. The number of staff working in an early years setting holding, or working towards a degree level qualification has increased to 62, or 24% of the expanded workforce compared to a national average of 19%. The introduction of a PDA Childhood Practice Level 8 award delivered in partnership with Glasgow Kelvin College at Barrhead High School Vocational Wing, has further supported this ambition with 14 practitioners due to complete this in June 2021. This year we were able to support a further 5 practitioners currently undertaking their BA by funding the cost of some of their study modules.

29. Our staff continue to benefit from our involvement in the West Partnership (Glasgow City Region Education Improvement Collaborative). The West Partnership has formed a relationship with Edinburgh University, allowing us to access extremely high quality professional learning linked to current research, policy and theory underpinned by the principles of Friedrich Froebel, one of the earliest pioneers of early childhood education. A further 20 practitioners from our schools and nurseries were due to begin this learning opportunity in April 2020, however this was delayed until September with delivery moving online. All of our ELC settings, and the majority of our primary schools now have trained staff who have embraced this approach to early learning focusing on relationships, connections, wellbeing and outdoor learning.

30. In addition 11 practitioners embarked on Masters level learning in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council undertaking a Post Graduate Certificate in Early Years Leadership. This was implemented online and is due for completion in June 2021. The participants report

that they gained a lot of professional knowledge from this opportunity which has helped them to develop their skills as leaders.

Flexibility

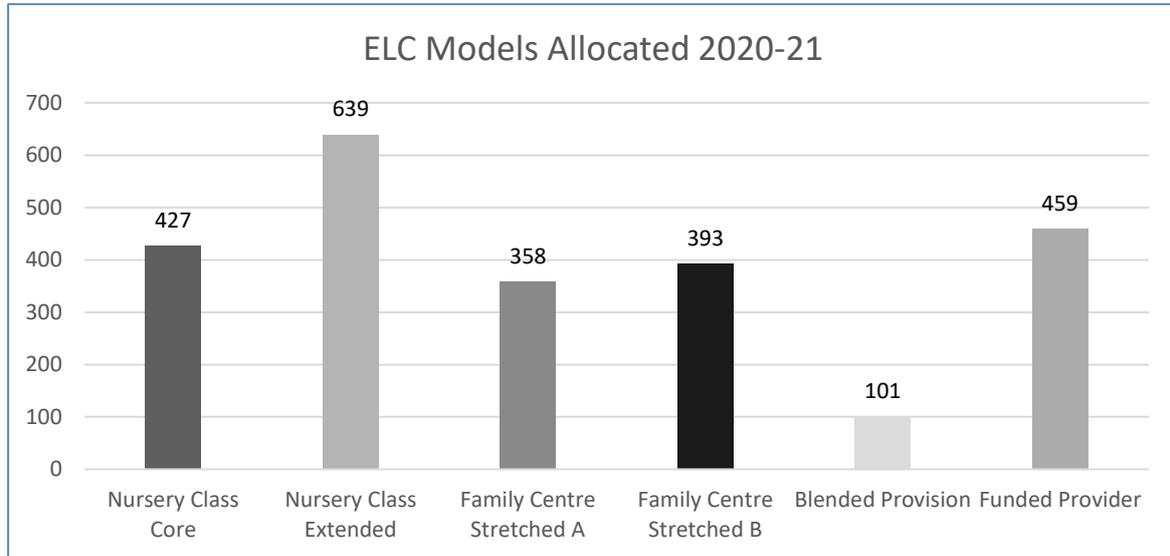
31. Since August 2015 the Education Department has continued to increase incrementally the flexibility on offer to parents to support with childcare, training and work commitments. Elected members will recall that the department was mindful that families would have been depending on the offer of 1140 hours from August 2020 both in terms of childcare needs and reducing family expenses. It was recognised that during this period of unexpected financial stress and concern for many families, it was crucially important to enable them to plan ahead with knowledge of how their early learning and childcare needs would be met and without additional financial concerns.

32. The following models were made available to families from August 2020:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| a. Core Provision | - | 5 sessions of 6 hours per week
(school days over the school year) |
| b. Extended Day Provision | - | 3 sessions of 10 hours per week
(longer days over the school year) |
| c. Stretched Provision A | - | 5 sessions of 4 hours 45 minutes per week
(half days over a longer year) |
| d. Stretched Provision B | - | 2 sessions of 9 ½ hours and 1 session of 4
hours 45 minutes per week
(mix of full and half days over a longer year) |
| e. Blended Provision | - | 15 hours in LA Establishment and 15 hours
with another provider working in partnership
with ERC per week. |
| f. Funded Provider Provision | - | 30 hours per week fully funded provision with a
funded provider working in partnership with ERC,
including private, voluntary and independent
(PVI) sector providers and childminders. |

33. Chart 4 below shows the number of places allocated using the 1140 hours models.

Chart 4



34. All nursery places are allocated using the published priorities with a ballot being held where demand exceeds space available. In session 2020-21 88% of families were allocated their first choice of setting with 72% also receiving their first choice of model.

35. A consultation was carried out with parents in autumn 2020 to seek their views on the provision available and to help shape the department's next steps. Within the consultation parents were asked to rate how well their child's current allocation meets the early learning and childcare needs of their family. Respondents were asked to rate their allocation on a 6 point scale from 1 – Not at all well to 6 – Extremely well. Eighty percent of respondents selected a positive response between 4 and 6 demonstrating a high level of overall satisfaction with the delivery of 1140 hours of ELC.

36. This was further illustrated through the comments where one of the most common themes was of gratitude and appreciation that East Renfrewshire Council was delivering 1140 hours despite the difficulties associated with the pandemic. Respondents were appreciative of the work being carried out in our settings. This theme is exemplified by the following comments:

“Well done on providing the additional hours in these circumstances. It has made a huge difference to my family.”

“I just want to thank the teachers for everything they do. As keyworkers they are dealing with the pandemic head on which must be stressful and uncertain. They come to work with energy, enthusiasm and a smile on their face.”

37. Families reported that the new hours suited their work and family life, relieving financial pressures and reducing the amount of time grandparents were being asked to provide childcare. They recognised the high quality of early learning and childcare that their children received in both local authority and funded provider settings where their children were thriving.

38. Various themes emerged through the consultation including parent's frustration at the lack of capacity for families to purchase additional hours over and above their 1140 hours entitlement. The use of 'bubbles' to minimise the risks associated with Covid-19 following

Scottish Government guidance, combined with the need to provide interim placements for children where nursery buildings were delayed has meant that very few families have been able to purchase additional hours since August 2020. Ensuring compliance with any on-going Public Health guidance the department will re-introduce the facility to purchase additional hours, where space is available, through Parent pay from August 2021.

39. Another prominent theme in the consultation was the popularity of the Core Hours model. Thirty seven percent of all applications for 3 year olds for session 2020/21 requested Core as their first choice of model, this was often paired with a desire to attend a particular nursery class. However families accessing family centres due to their geographical location also indicated that they would prefer Core Hours as they only intended to use ELC during term time and would not make use of the setting during school holiday periods. These families expressed concern that their child would not benefit from their full entitlement to 1140 hours of ELC. This model has been introduced to family centres from August 2021.

40. The Early Years Intervention Group (EYIG) allows the department to respond and support children and families who need our help most, through the allocation of a range of services and resources. In session 2020-21, 163 referrals have been made through the EYIG to date. Twenty-three point five percent received additional free early learning and childcare hours over their entitled 1140 hours, 26% were allocated a nursery place prior to their entitlement, 10.8% were given a placement in the Preschool Assessment and Development Unit (PSADU), 8.4% were referred for further assessment / intervention with Educational Psychology Service, 3.6% were allocated to the Sensory Support Service and 4.2% referred to Family First. 18% of referrals resulted in no resource allocation being made.

41. The Reaching Out Programme which enables staff from the PSADU to work with staff in mainstream ELC settings building their capacity and skills to support children who require additional support to develop social and interaction skills was unable to operate this year, due to the pandemic restrictions.

42. In October 2019, the Scottish Government committed to legislate to ensure that all children who defer their primary 1 start are able to access funded ELC. The Scottish Government have been working closely with COSLA and ADES to agree arrangements for implementation, including resource implications. The Scottish Statutory Instrument was laid in Parliament on 7 December 2020 but for now, there is no change in the law. All children who are still 4 years old at the start of the school year can be deferred and start primary one the following year. Children with a birthday in January or February who defer school entry are automatically entitled to another year of funded ELC.

43. A new online solution was introduced in January 2021 to enable families to apply to defer entry to primary school for session 2021-22. A total of 134 parents applied to defer their child, of these 126 have been granted an additional year of funded early learning and childcare, with 6 parents choosing to withdraw their request. The number of requests for discretionary deferrals increased for the fifth consecutive year rising from 8 for session 2017-18 to 43 for session 2021-22, representing 32% of all deferral requests.

44. East Renfrewshire reviews requests for an additional year of funded ELC on an individual basis, however it is important to note that when the new legislation comes into effect in 2023 that all requests will be granted, consequently this will have a significant impact on capacity and could see as many as 300 new applications for ELC each year in East Renfrewshire.

45. The department received 2 applications from parents wishing to apply for early entry to primary school. These applications are still under review.

ACCESSIBILITY

46. As we continue to develop our digital capacity we have made improvements to the application process for ELC enabling parents to complete and submit their application on line from January 2021. One thousand and thirty seven applications were received electronically and parents were able to accept or decline their place via an online form as part of this new process.

47. The department continues to promote the entitlement of 1140 hours Early Learning and Childcare for all eligible 2 year olds in partnership with our colleagues including Health Visitors, Social Workers and Family First Workers who are fully aware of the eligibility criteria and encourage families to apply for places. Places are allocated through a Local Admissions Panel (LAP).

48. From August 2020 all eligible two year olds were offered 1140 hours of ELC with the majority accessing the Stretched A and B Family Centre models which allow 2 children to take up one place. For this reason the council was able to meet the demand for places for eligible 2 year olds comfortably for the seventh consecutive year, with 120 children allocated through the Local Admissions Panel or EYIG, an increase of 63% on the previous year. As well as providing Early Learning and Childcare for eligible and vulnerable 2 year olds, where there was capacity to do so we were also able to support working families with the offer to purchase nursery places, with Arthurlie, Cart Mill, Glen, Madras and McCready Family Centres providing this opportunity. A further 122 children and families in this age group benefitted from this service, including keyworkers who required the provision during the lockdown period in January 2021.

49. Table 2 below details the capacity for two year olds in each local authority nursery from August 2021. The delivery models determine how these places are used.

Table 2

Establishment	Staffing Capacity
Arthurlie Family Centre (2 year old provision)	30
Cart Mill Family Centre (2 year old provision)	15
Glen Family Centre (0-3 provision)	25
Isobel Mair Family Centre (0-3 provision)*	15
Madras Family Centre (2 year old provision)	15
McCready Family Centre (0-3 provision)	30

** Isobel Mair Family Centre provision is for children with Additional Support Needs.*

50. Detailed in Table 3 is the number of available places for 3 and 4 year olds in each local authority setting from August 2021 as determined by the delivery models. To maximise efficiency staff budgets for each setting are determined according to the number of children who have been allocated a place.

Table 3

Establishment	Available Places
Arthurlie Family Centre	160
Busby Nursery Class**	77
Braidbar Nursery Class	93
Calderwood Lodge Nursery Class	120
Carlibar Family Centre	112
Carolside Nursery Class**	93
Cart Mill Family Centre	88

Crookfur Family Centre**	152
Cross Arthurlie Nursery Class**	77
Eaglesham Nursery Class**	128
Giffnock Nursery Class	40
Glenwood Family Centre**	152
Hazeldene Family Centre	120
Isobel Mair Family Centre*	24
Madras Family Centre	136
Maidenhill Nursery Class	99
Mearns Nursery Class	77
Netherlee Nursery Class	107
Overlee Family Centre	64
St Cadoc's Nursery Class	77
Thornliebank Nursery Class	43
TOTAL	2,040

*Within Isobel Mair Family Centre there is provision for children with Additional Support Needs.

**New/extended settings

51. As detailed in table 4 below, all 14 providers within East Renfrewshire continue to work in partnership to deliver 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare.

Table 4

Provider	Status	2020/21 Successful(✓) Unsuccessful (x)
Belmont Nursery Class	Independent	✓
Broom Nursery	Voluntary	✓
Clarkston Nursery	Voluntary	✓
Elmwood Nursery	Private	✓
Enchanted Forest Nursery	Private	✓
Greenbank Woodland Play	Private	✓
Happy Days Too (Busby)	Private	✓
Happy Days Too (SF)	Private	✓
Innocence Nursery	Private	✓
Kirkhillgait Nursery	Private	✓
Kirktonholme	Private	✓
Orchardpark Nursery (Thornliebank)	Private	✓
Orchardpark Nursery (Newton Mearns)	Private	✓
Railway Cottage	Private	✓

52. In addition to the nurseries listed above, 17 childminders are also in partnership to deliver funded early learning and childcare. At present 11 of these childminders are providing funded placements for children.

53. The main phase of our early year's expansion was dependent on the construction of new facilities that were planned to be available for August 2020. This comprised a new family centre within the grounds of Eastwood Park to replace the existing Glenwood Family Centre building as well as providing more places; two new build larger replacements for Busby and Eaglesham primary school nursery classes; two new build family centres on the sites of Crookfur and Overlee pavilions; and a new extension at Cross Arthurlie Primary School to establish a nursery class. The new Crookfur Family Centre extends and replaces Crookfur Nursery Class and remains under the leadership and management of Crookfur Primary School.

54. Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, building work was delayed, however almost all of the new settings began to welcome children between December 2020 and April 2021, with the exception of Overlee Family Centre which will open in August 2021. Also under construction was the small extension at Carolside Primary School Nursery Class which was completed in December 2020.

55. The department deployed contingency measures to mitigate the impact of the delay to the infrastructure programme. This included reducing choice and flexibility, limiting the purchase of additional hours and making greater use of outdoor space.

56. All children who had applied for Crookfur Family Centre and Cross Arthurlie Nursery Class and the majority of new applicants for Eaglesham Nursery Class were offered interim placements in alternative settings within their own community. The children who were allocated interim placements were carefully supported in the transition to their original choice of setting on completion of building works with staff making good use of digital technology to share pictures and videos of the new settings with children and families.

57. The Statutory Guidance under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, states that it is the responsibility of the local authority that a child resides in to secure an Early Learning and Childcare place, however many parents are now seeking provision for their children in neighbouring authorities to support with working or training arrangements.

58. The Scottish Government planned to introduce a Funding Follows the Child (FfC) policy from August 2020. This was postponed as part of the decision to delay the legislative requirement to deliver 1140 hours in full until August 2021. Interim guidance was issued which encouraged local authorities to continue to work towards the principles of Funding Follows the Child, within available resources. The principles of Funding Follows the Child are that parents can take some or all of their child's entitlement to funded early learning and childcare at a certain provider, they can expect to be able to do so provided that:

- the provider meets the National Standard
- the provider has a space available
- the provider is willing to enter into a contract with the local authority
- the provider is able to offer the funded hours in line with local ELC delivery plans

59. The Funding Follows the Child policy is intended to offer increased parental choice and responsiveness of the local funded ELC offer within a framework which promotes and safeguards high quality experiences for children. However, it means that local authorities can no longer set a specific budget for the number of places they buy from specific funded providers, as doing so would limit choice and flexibility. The department however still has to ensure best value for the Council and as such ensure that places are not funded where there is no physical or financial capacity to support.

58. To support with the implementation of FfC, an admission policy with a set admission window is in place. All applications received within the application window from February to 31 May will be automatically funded. Any late applications would be considered on a case by case basis in accordance with the published priorities and within the physical and financial capacity available.

60. In the same spirit of FfC, parental choice may extend to parents wishing to access their funded entitlement in another local authority. East Renfrewshire Council has committed to a formal protocol with neighbouring authorities to allow us to support families wishing to access their ELC in this way. Again this has to be within the application window and take into consideration the physical and financial capacity of resident local authorities. There was an increased demand for cross boundary funding in 2020-2021, however, we were able to fund

all applications which were received within the application window. In recognition of the circumstances linked to the pandemic and as financial capacity allowed we were able to extend this application window to September 2020. Where late applications could not be funded we fulfilled our duty to provide early learning and childcare by offering available spaces within local authority settings.

61. A group of staff from the education department, and early learning and childcare settings, including funded providers, have begun to plan for the implementation of the Funding Follows the Child policy which will come into full effect from August 2021. This will include working with colleagues in communications department to ensure that parents are fully informed about the choices available to them.

62. The Education Department has successfully implemented almost all of elements of the 1140 Expansion, with the exception of the provision of free meals for all children attending ELC. The Interim Guidance on Funding Follows the Child which was published by the Scottish Government on 30 July 2020 indicated that local authorities should continue to work towards this whilst recognising the impact of Covid19 guidelines. The programme of minor works at existing ELC centres to facilitate the provision of meals to children during their session was delayed due to the pandemic. These will now be taken forward in early 2021 in readiness for full implementation in line with Scottish Government timescales so that every child will receive the offer of a free hot meal, from August 2021, regardless of their attendance pattern.

63. In recognition of the circumstances some of our families live in the department continued to provide free food for children most in need. This offer was advertised in family centres and targeted to, but not exclusively, those who would be entitled to a free school meal if attending school.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

64. The national Funding Follows the Child Policy as detailed in paragraph 58 could potentially have a significant impact on the department's budget. The department will continue to monitor parental choice and demand for places in funded providers to allow us to forecast the potential cost of this policy to East Renfrewshire Council and where necessary highlight this as a budget pressure through the annual budget process.

65. The provision of a free hot lunch was forecast at £3.00 per child, per day, however with inflationary rises, the living wage and the demands of the nutritional guidelines, this cost is likely to increase. The Scottish Government is also allocating some additional funding to provide milk and healthy snack to eligible children in nursery, which is to be introduced in August 2021. We await the details of this funding.

66. Income from the purchase of additional hours will be variable, dependent on available capacity and staffing levels within individual settings after entitled places are allocated. The department will also monitor this to inform the net expenditure of early years.

67. 2021/22 is the last year of the multi-year revenue funding package from the Scottish Government for the expansion of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare. Elected members will recall previous reports highlighting that there is an annual shortfall in East Renfrewshire's funding from 2021/22 (i.e. the first full financial year of delivering 1140 hours). To date the department has utilised the flexibility associated with the multi-year funding to maximise the amounts carried forward each year to plan for the anticipated shortfall; and officers have continued to lobby the Scottish Government and COSLA as part of the national review being undertaken to determine the funding methodology beyond 2022. We await the outcome of this national review on the funding approach from 2022/23 onwards; and any impact locally.

RECOMMENDATION

68. Elected members are asked to note and comment on the contents as outlined in the paper.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
June 2021

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Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE10 June 2021Report by Director of EducationEDUCATION DEPARTMENT REPORT ON DEVELOPING THE YOUNG WORKFORCE**PURPOSE**

1. The purpose of the report is to update elected members on the progress made with Developing the Young Workforce in East Renfrewshire.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Elected members are asked to:
- a. note and comment on the Developing the Young Workforce in East Renfrewshire progress report; and,
 - b. approve the updated draft implementation plan for 2021 – 2022.

BACKGROUND

3. The Wood Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce was set up in January 2013 and its final report, *Education Working for All!*, was published in June 2014. '*Developing the Young Workforce*', *Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy*, was published by the Scottish Government in December 2014 in response to the Wood Commission's findings and recommendations.

4. Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) is a key priority within the Council's Outcome Delivery Plan 2020 - 2023, Education Department Local Improvement Plan and School Improvement Plans.

5. East Renfrewshire Council's Outcome Delivery Plan 2020 - 2023, has a population outcome that all "residents are healthy and active and have the skills for learning, life and work". In the Fairer East Ren Plan 2018-2021, it makes the commitment to ensure "residents have the skills to maximise employment opportunities".

6. Within the local and national context East Renfrewshire progressed DYW through a detailed five year (2015-2020) implementation plan. This plan took full account of national guidance and the Employability Strategy for East Renfrewshire 2016-2019.

7. In June 2017 a summary of the progress 2015-2017 was discussed at Education Committee by elected members. This report sets out the improvements that have been made 2017 – 2020 within East Renfrewshire across schools, colleges and employers to prepare young people for their working lives.

8. Progress and implementation of DYW is overseen by the East Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership (LEP). During 2020 - 2021 the LEP has evaluated the progress that has been made over the final 3 years of the implementation plan to identify strengths in current provision and areas where further improvement is required. A copy of the progress report can be found as appendix 1.

REPORT

9. The DYW progress report (Appendix 1) sets out the improvements that have been made within East Renfrewshire across schools, colleges and employers to prepare young people for their working lives. The report provides evidence of progress, key achievements and next steps under four key themes, namely, schools, colleges, apprenticeships and employers.

10. DYW has provided a catalyst for the ongoing focusing of attention on the development of skills for work, as well as life and learning, for all young people whatever their ambitions. Key highlights include:

- Learners have more opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work through relevant, real-life contexts
- Our very effective practice in utilising national data hub to increase participation in education, training or employment for 16-19 year olds has been recognised by Education Scotland as excellent practice
- National participation for 2020 was 92.1%; ERC participation was 96.7%
- 96.2% of East Renfrewshire school leavers were in a positive destination in 2019-20
- In 2020 the number of pupils in the senior phase who were participating in a wide range of vocational courses from SCQF Levels 1 to 8 rose to 561
- An increase in the proportion of secondary and special school leavers attaining vocational qualifications (latest data published nationally):
 - 2018-19
 - 21.2% (ERC) 17.1% (National) at SCQF Level 5 or better
 - 10.9% (ERC) 4.6% (National) at SCQF Level 6 or better
 - 2019-20
 - 28.3% (ERC) 22.5% (National) at SCQF Level 5 or better
 - 15.8% (ERC) 8.4% (National) at SCQF Level 6 or better
- Colleges have created new vocational opportunities with partners and employer expanding opportunities for senior phase pupils across East Renfrewshire
- Foundation Apprenticeships are embedded into the senior phase offer

11. To reflect the work that has taken place and areas for further improvement the DYW Implementation Plan has been reviewed and updated. The updated plan is reflective of the current context and covers a 1 year period; a copy of the updated draft plan for 2021 -2022 is attached in Appendix 2.

12. The timescale for the ongoing implementation of the plan is school session 2021 – 2022. The LEP will continue to report on the progress it has made to Council through the Community Plan and to Education Committee through the annual standards and quality report. In addition, the LEP will report on the progress made in delivering the activities associated with the Fairer East Ren Plan (Employability Support).

CONSULTATION

13. All partners were engaged in reviewing progress and with the development of the updated Implementation Plan. They have shaped and approved the draft document in Appendix 2.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

14. Resourcing for DYW priorities, including the funding of the DYW Officer post is met from existing departmental and devolved school budgets. In addition Scottish Government grant funding has been available until March 2022 to support the DYW co-ordinator role within schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15. Elected members are asked to:

- a. note and comment on the Developing the Young Workforce in East Renfrewshire progress report; and,
- b. approve the updated draft implementation plan for 2021 - 2022.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
10 June 2021

Convener Contact Details

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Developing the Young Workforce in East Renfrewshire Summary of Progress 2018-2020



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Developing the Young Workforce in East Renfrewshire

Introduction

The Wood Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce was set up in January 2013 and its final report, Education Working for All!, was published in June 2014. 'Developing the Young Workforce', Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy was published by the Scottish Government in December 2014 in response to the Wood Commission's findings and recommendations.

The strategy and implementation plan set out how the Scottish Government would implement the Recommendations of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce to drive the creation of a world class vocational education system to reduce youth unemployment by 40% by 2021.

Education continuously collaborates with Environment, SDS, Work EastRen, the college sector and other partners to address the main recommendations of Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and to revise the implementation plan.

- Foundation Apprenticeships at level 4 and 6 are now embedded in the senior phase offer along with a range of courses and activities which continue to develop the skills, knowledge, competence and confidence required to progress towards and into sustainable work
- Skills Development Scotland expanding and now evaluating Graduate Apprenticeships
- Increased access to development opportunities across the early years sector

- The use of the National datahub facilitating better engagement and collaboration between schools and employers along with tracking and monitoring to support post school young people
- Provision aligned with economic needs and regional planning, with a focus on science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) where appropriate.

The ERC DYW Implementation Plan 2015-2020 was designed to deliver Wood's recommendations and lead to the following key changes:

- More opportunities for young people to undertake learning which connects more directly to employment;
- A broader range of qualifications for young people in the senior phase delivered in partnership with colleges and other providers;
- More partnerships between schools, colleges and employers to inform curriculum design and delivery and provide work related learning;
- Adoption of Foundation Apprenticeships for young people in the senior phase; and
- Greater understanding for young people and parents about the world of work, routes into work, career planning and employment opportunities.

This report sets out the improvements being made within East Renfrewshire across schools, colleges and employers to prepare young people for their working lives. It details the way in which, five years into implementation, we have made an impact on work-based and work-relevant opportunities for our children and young people.

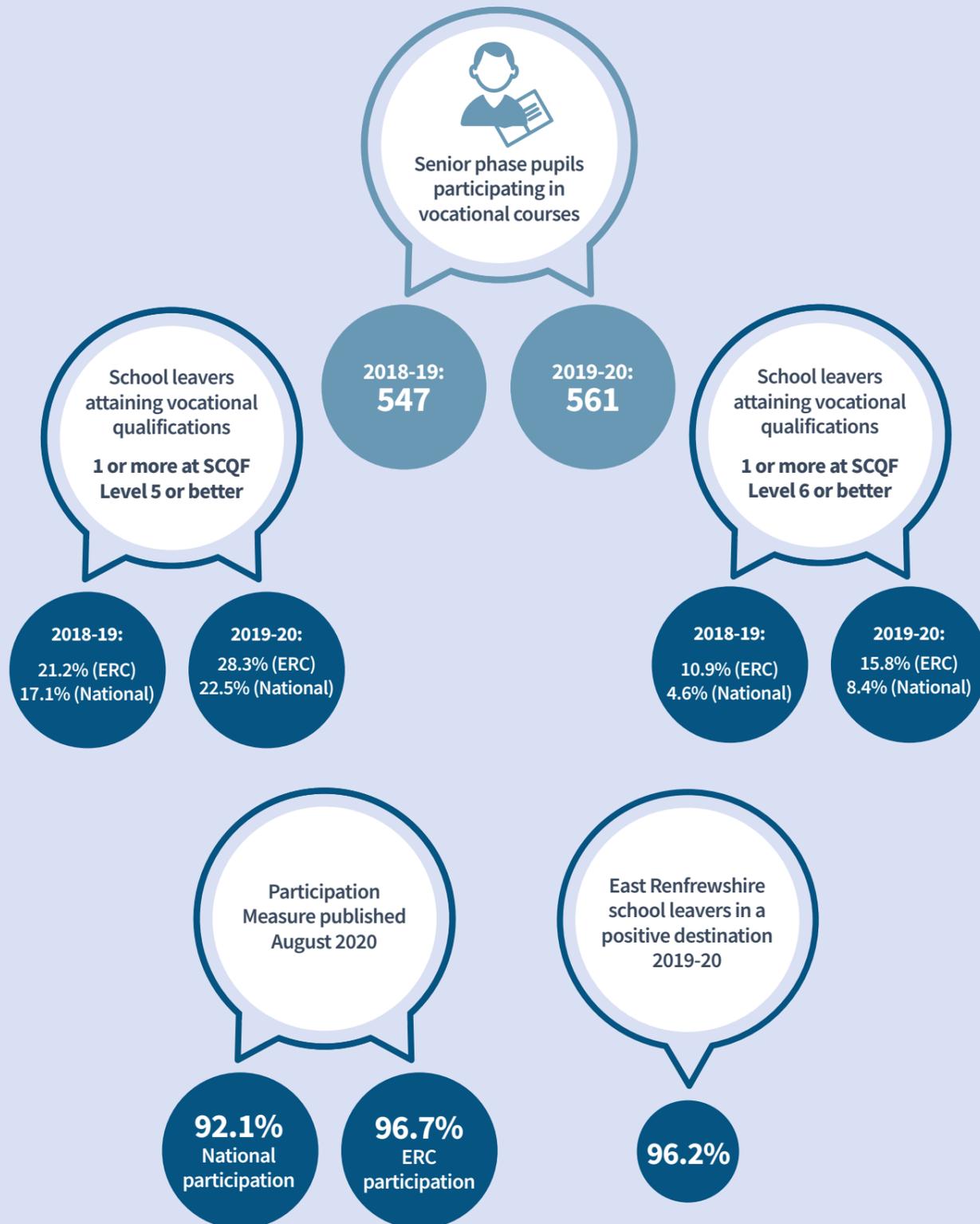


Executive Summary of Progress

Headlines include:

- Learners have more opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work through relevant, real-life contexts
- Our very effective practice in utilising the national data hub to increase participation in education, training or employment for 16-19 year olds has been recognised by Education Scotland as excellent practice
 - National participation for 2020 was 92.1%; ERC participation was 96.7%
 - 96.2% of East Renfrewshire school leavers were in a positive destination in 2019-20
- Senior phase pupils are offered over 60 vocational courses ranging from SCQF Levels 1 to 8. Courses are delivered across many locations including partner colleges and our vocational facilities at Barrhead High School
- The number of pupils participating in the senior phase vocational programme has increased by 35% in the five year period from 2014/15 to 2018/19. In session 2019/20, 561 young people were enrolled in senior phase vocational courses demonstrating a further increase
- ERC performed significantly better than the national average in the latest data provided by the Scottish Government in relation to the percentage of school leavers attaining vocational qualifications at both SCQF Level 5 and Level 6, in 2018/19
- Recruitment for Foundation Apprenticeships
 - 2017/19 - 49 starts
 - 2018/20 - 69 starts
 - 2019/21 - 122 starts
- An expansion in the range of apprenticeship opportunities including increases in:
 - The number of 16-19 year olds indicating Modern Apprenticeships as their intended preferred route post-school
- More partnerships between schools, colleges and employers to inform curriculum design and delivery, providing work related learning
- Local Employability Partnership established May 2016 to oversee progress and implementation of the DYW agenda in East Renfrewshire has resulted in a more collaborative approach addressing barriers to employment
- Our focus on developing employability skills in our young people has resulted in an increase in employers recruiting directly from Education.

Progress in Schools



Progress in Schools

DYW is one of the three key pillars of education policy in Scotland, alongside Getting it Right for Every Child and Curriculum for Excellence.

This is also mirrored in East Renfrewshire with DYW a key priority within the Outcome Delivery Plan, Education Department Local Improvement Plan and School Improvement Plans.

Achieving our ambitions for the young workforce has focused on the following themes:

In partnership with Colleges and Employers providing a wide range of vocational opportunities for young people in the senior phase

The Education Department, schools and colleges have continued to increase vocational opportunities in the senior phase. Senior phase pupils continue to undertake work related vocational qualifications from SCQF Levels 1 to 8. Schools have also developed the senior phase and now offer a number of vocational courses within a school setting via College outreach programmes.

Supporting teachers and practitioners to develop children's and young people's learning about the world of work and employability skills

In partnership with SDS, a programme of training has been delivered to Secondary HTs and to school staff regarding the Career Education Standard, ensuring young people benefit from guidance from school staff who

are knowledgeable about labour market information and career pathways.

Community benefits are helping schools embed meaningful employer engagement into the curriculum and introduce new employer partnerships.

The Skills Development Scotland web service "My World of Work" provides expert information and advice for young people on future careers. It is designed to help teachers, young people and practitioners make informed, confident decisions about their future. The online site is built to complement the service that Skills Development Scotland offer schools which has been extended to provide careers information and advice from P5 onwards. Young people can access information about future opportunities – from job profiles, vacancies and courses, to growth industries.

Gateway Shared Services provide a range of services to our schools to support career education and DYW. Secondary schools have access to Workit software a flexible online system used to manage the work placement programme. In partnership with the Gateway work placement team we manage employer engagement including Health & Safety checks. Recently, in response to Covid-19 an online work-related learning programme Workit Careers was designed for the senior phase, providing young people with access to online work related activities that directly correlate to the Career Education Standard, Work Placement Standard and Building the Curriculum 4.

Progress in Schools

The Planit website supports young people at all stages of their career pathway, providing over 600 comprehensive and up to date job profiles and videos across 22 career areas, information on all Scottish college and university courses and a range of interactive tools including Job Seeking skills and an online modular employability programme.

Schools continue to use the national data hub with Skills Development Scotland providing earlier involvement to include quality careers guidance to pupils. Utilising the national datahub in terms of early intervention for those pupils at risk of being Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) has been recognised by Education Scotland as 'excellent practice'.

Case Studies

ERC Education Department reviews have provided evidence that learners have very good opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work through relevant, real-life contexts.

Staff in Barrhead High School have developed a targeted mentoring programme 'Pathways Mentoring' aimed at pupils who are at risk of being NEET when they leave school. Volunteer mentors guide pupils through a bespoke programme to help them prepare for the world of work, building skills for life and work through volunteer opportunities, interview preparation, CV building. They recently held a "Virtual Careers Week" where young people were involved in a wide range of activities to raise awareness of the different career sectors to inform their career pathway choices.

St Luke's High school have developed a personalised Career Pathway map for pupils in the senior phase. Each pupil regularly reflects on their map where it is used as a working document to support profiling.

In Eastwood High School the My World of Work (MyWOW) Ambassadors won a national award for their creativity and dedication. In addition to training all pupils, they also train parents and have trained all teachers. In response to pupil voice, the Ambassadors devised a skills for work badge for teachers to use in class so pupils are explicitly aware of the link between subject lessons and skills for work. S1-S3 Eastwood High pupils piloted the use of the MyWOW profile which is now being promoted nationally.

To complement the work of SDS at Williamwood High School in meeting the expectations and entitlements set out in the Career Education Standard, the initiative of a Departmental Careers Coach has successfully been introduced. Supported by pupil support and the principal teachers of development, staff representing each curriculum area have taken up the opportunity to: identify parts of departmental curriculum which develop Career Management Skills; be available to students to discuss careers in this area; work with SDS to arrange lesson inserts/class visits if required; engage in CLPL in the Career Education Standard and My World of Work website; research Labour Market Trends and communicate to students; help with flexible work experience placements; arrange external speakers from industry, and liaise with link principal teachers of development and pupils support staff.

Mearns Primary in partnership with The Avenue Shopping Centre has been developing the young work force by delivering a progressive programme of onsite learning experiences. The Avenue has offered pupils the opportunity to explore learning in real life contexts which has greatly improved the motivation and engagement of learners across all levels. Pupils have experienced transferring their skills from the classroom to the workplace.

Our Lady of the Missions Primary has built on their successful nomination for the 2020 Education Award by further integrating developing the young workforce skills into on-line learning. They set up Google Classrooms for the school committees who, through these, have had the continued opportunity to work across classes and stages on projects within the school. The Space Pioneers have been able to pass on their expertise to the next team of Space Pioneers and mentor them through the process of working on a design brief with architects and designers; the Pupil Council created a school survey about remote learning; Thinglink has been utilised by the Librarians to create a virtual story world for World Book Day' parents have shared their expertise and professional experience through Google Meets and Q and A sessions with committees collaborating on projects e.g. Eco Committee and Guardians of the Garden collaborated on a whole school wildlife project to make bird feeders from recycled materials and will be creating 'how to' videos.

Developing the Young Workforce within Busby Primary School and Nursery has pupils actively engaged on a weekly basis focusing on a specific skill set pertinent to lifelong learning. Pupils have the opportunity to design their learning experiences and work in collaborative, enterprising ways with outside companies and agencies supporting the work in school. This has also offered opportunities for staff to develop expertise and core skills. Over the last few years, the programme has twice been the focus for inclusion within Education Scotland literature and conferences. The global pandemic has caused adaptations to the programme, evolving to an online model as part of home learning during lockdown continuing pupils' skills development.

Progress in Schools

Engaging with young people, parents, teachers and practitioners, partners and employers to improve understanding of DYW agenda and provide work relevant learning

Schools have held a wide range of events to engage with pupils, parents, teachers and practitioners, partners and employers to increase understanding of employability, work related learning and vocational pathways. For example, our annual DYW Employers Banquet is a particularly successful event which showcases the skills of our young people, the networking from this event has resulted in increased and more varied work placement and employment opportunities for our young people.

Introducing a more flexible work placement programme which takes account of the Work Placement Standard and is focused on a young person's needs is a high priority for East Renfrewshire. The current offer to S4 pupils in most schools is an out of school experience for a one week block to gain an understanding of a real working environment, usually in the sector they are interested in. A more flexible approach to work placement is now offered along side the S4 model and not necessarily in S4.

This provides a greater understanding for young people and parents about the world of work, routes into work, career planning and employment opportunities.

East Renfrewshire Schools - Key Achievements

- Learners have very good opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work through relevant, real-life contexts
- Effective use of the national data hub to increase participation in education, training or employment for 16-19 year olds
 - The Participation Measure was published in August 2020 capturing information and activity regarding 16 to 19 year olds
- National participation was 92.1%; ERC participation was 96.7%
- 96.2% of East Renfrewshire school leavers were in a positive destination in 2019/20
- In 2020 the number of pupils in the senior phase who were participating in a wide range of vocational courses from SCQF Levels 1 to 8 rose to 561
- An increase in the proportion of secondary and special school leavers attaining vocational qualifications (latest data published nationally):
 - 1 or more at SCQF Level 5 or better
2018/19: 21.2% (ERC) 17.1% (National)
2019/20: 28.3% (ERC) 22.5% (National)
 - 1 or more at SCQF Level 6 or better
2018/19: 10.9% (ERC) 4.6% (National)
2019/20: 15.8% (ERC) 8.4% (National).

From 2021 onwards we will see:

- Ongoing a range of vocational opportunities recognising the changes in the labour market
- Further development of school-employer partnerships
- Expansion of the flexible approach to work placement
- Ongoing support for teachers and practitioners to develop children's and young people's learning about employability, careers and vocational opportunities
- The introduction of a DYW School Coordinator in every secondary school including Isobel Mair School.



Progress in Colleges



New vocational opportunities with new partners and employers expanding the offer for senior phase pupils across Scotland



SCQF Level
East Renfrewshire senior phase vocational education ranging from SCQF Level 1 to 8

Developing the Young Workforce and SCQF
FACILITATES SENIOR PHASE LEARNING PATHWAYS

Strengthens and consolidates school college partnerships

84%
of Qualifications at Level 6 are not Highers

Supports the planning of learning to suit the individual young person



Progress in Colleges

College Outcome Agreements (COA) demonstrate that colleges are continuing to develop their curriculum to meet employer and regional skills needs. Outcome Agreements contain DYW plans which outline how regions will prioritise STEM provision, enhance employer engagement and develop pathways from school through college and into employment as part of their wider contribution to DYW. Achieving our ambitions for the young workforce has focused on the following themes:

Our partner colleges have implemented the Gender Action Plan, focusing on addressing sector imbalances

Nationally progress is varied however, overall the story is positive. The biggest improvement is in Building Services, where the proportion of men has fallen from 97.0% to 90.8%.

www.gov.scot/publications/developing-young-workforce-fifth-annual-progress-report-2018-19/

In partnership with schools and employers providing a wide range of opportunities for young people in the senior phase

Our college partners Glasgow Clyde College, City of Glasgow College, Glasgow Kelvin College, South Lanarkshire College and West College Scotland offer senior phase vocational pathways from SCQF level 1 to 8 across all East Renfrewshire schools. A “Vocational Partnership Group” provides strategic oversight of the programme. Colleges are a key partner on the East Renfrewshire Local Employment Partnership (LEP) ensuring alignment of delivery and provision.

Colleges - Key Achievements

- Colleges have created new vocational opportunities with partners and employers expanding opportunities for senior phase pupils across East Renfrewshire
- Foundation Apprenticeships are embedded into the senior phase offer
- Provision is aligned with economic needs and regional planning
- College Outcome Agreements evidence of well-developed partnerships with secondary schools, local authorities and employers

Improving opportunities and experiences for all learners, with a focus on reducing gender imbalance in course take-up

The Scottish Funding Council’s (SFC) Gender Action Plan sets out the framework, timelines and actions required to address gender imbalance within further and higher education.

From 2021 onwards we will see:

- A well-established range of courses and activities which develop the skills, knowledge, competence and confidence required to progress towards and into sustainable work
- Level 4/5 Foundation Apprenticeships blended delivery with schools
- Ongoing implementation of the Gender Action Plan including plans to address regional sector imbalances
- Increased access to development opportunities across the early years sector.

Progress with Apprenticeships



Progress with Apprenticeships

Achieving our ambitions for the young workforce has focused on:

Expansion of apprenticeship opportunities

Our aim is to ensure wider skills development and to drive closer engagement with industry to enhance productivity and economic growth.

In 2019-20, 202 East Renfrewshire pupils identified Modern Apprenticeship as their intended preferred route.

Skills Development Scotland has made it simpler for young people, their parents and employers to find out about apprenticeship opportunities through a dedicated website from www.apprenticeships.scot

Graduate Apprenticeships have provided a route into degree level study (up to Master's level) for individuals who are currently employed, or who want to go straight into work. The apprenticeships combine academic knowledge with skills development to enable participants to become more effective and productive in the workplace.

At the end of 2019, 14 of Scotland's universities and colleges are delivering Higher and Graduate Apprenticeships, in 14 subject areas covering sectors including ICT/Digital, Cyber Security, Data Science, Civil Engineering, Engineering, Construction and Business.

Apprenticeships Key Achievements

- An increased number of 16-19 year olds indicating Modern Apprenticeships as their intended preferred route post-school
- Foundation Apprenticeships
There are now 12 Foundation Apprenticeship frameworks providing more opportunities for learners and with the introduction of the 1 year shorter duration (SDM) model we saw a 149% increase in uptake in the 2019/21 cohort from the previous 2017/19 cohort.

2017/19 - 49
2018/20 - 69
2019/21 - 122

From 2021 onwards we will see:

- Level 5 Foundation Apprenticeships embedded in the senior phase offer to complement and provide progression to the level 4 Foundation Apprenticeships already on offer
- Skills Development Scotland expanding and evaluating Graduate Apprenticeships pathfinders
- Strengthened employer leadership in apprenticeships through the work of the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB).

Progress with Employers



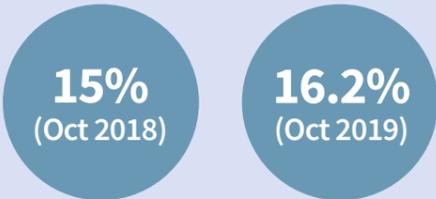
Building strong links with employers through community benefits



Young people in employment 2018/19
Scottish Government destinations publication



Employers recruiting young people directly from education



Development of Youth Employability Charter

Our commitment to addressing youth unemployment



Progress with Employers

Achieving our ambitions for the young workforce has focused on:

Developing stronger partnerships

The DYW West regional group was established in 2016 and has focused on school industry partnerships, work inspiration, work placements, recruitment and equalities. They have been engaging with schools and employers to gain a better understanding of their needs and support the development of school-employer partnerships.

Second year of Foundation Apprenticeships include work placements. Our partners along with SQA and leading bodies responded quickly to the impact of covid 19. Employer engagement was a priority and we saw many employers offering virtual placements and on-line challenges.

East Renfrewshire has been improving opportunities and experiences for young people by delivering routes into employment through effective partnership working. All high schools are entering into partnership agreements with employers to engage with pupils and teachers to increase the recruitment of more young people directly from school.

East Renfrewshire has been working with other city region councils to develop new guidance for the region on good community benefits practice:

- Encouraging contractors to deliver community benefits since the approval of our Sustainable Procurement policy in 2015
- Reviewing our community benefits procedures to ensure they contribute towards current national and local outcomes
- Offering a menu of community benefits options for contractors when delivering community benefits clauses e.g. employers offering a Foundation Apprenticeship for an academic year will receive 15 community benefit points which can rise to 20 points if the apprentice is from a priority group.

To support the first year of employment, local employers have access to the Skills Development Scotland Scottish Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI) funding via Work EastRen.

In the Broad General Education (BGE), learners continue to benefit from a range of DYW activities involving employers and other partners offering pupils the opportunity to apply their skills across all sectors.

Foundation Apprenticeships (a work-based learning opportunity for senior-phase pupils, broadly equivalent to one Higher), continue to increase in numbers.

Progress with Employers

Employers Key Achievements

- Continued to develop our approach to employer engagement ensuring strong links with East Renfrewshire Council community benefits officer and DYW West
- Rollout of the digital matching platform “Marketplace” facilitating better engagement between schools and employers
- Senior phase opportunities aligned with economic needs and regional planning, with a focus on science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM)
- Improved employment opportunities and high quality work placements for care leavers and young people with a disability
- Focus on gender imbalance highlighting current and future employment opportunities
- Development of online work placement opportunities.

From 2021 onwards we will see:

- Increased focus on gender imbalance
- Increased focus on virtual employer engagement
- Increased focus in schools to establish influencing employer partnerships.

Responding to Covid-19

During the period of school closure between March and June 2020, schools, colleges and employers, assisted by a range of partners, worked collaboratively to ensure that young people were supported to complete vocational qualifications and awards. Where courses required work based learning as part of the overall qualification for example, Foundation Apprenticeships, virtual projects and work based challenges were introduced to ensure successful completion and achievement. The learning from the adaptations made will contribute to improving opportunities for our learners as the curriculum develops in response to labour market information and the economy post Covid-19.





Glossary and Further Information

National Data Hub

The data hub holds information on 16 to 24 year olds that can be shared securely between partners, including Local Authorities, Universities, Colleges, the Scottish Funding Council, the Student Awards Agency for Scotland and the Department for Work and Pensions.

The details held in a central area include expected school leaving dates, preferred route or occupation on where young people intend to go after school, whether this is into a job, Modern Apprenticeship, college or university, and information relating to those who are receiving career services and welfare benefits.

Participation Measure

The Participation Measure for 16 to 19 year olds has been developed to provide a more comprehensive and detailed understanding of the activities young people are taking part in. The Participation Measure was first published in August 2016 capturing information and activity regarding 16 to 19 year olds.

The Participation Measure provides detailed information on activity for 16 to 19 year olds rather than just school leavers, who only account for a quarter of the 16 to 19 year old population.

The Participation Measure, developed in partnership with the Scottish Government, helps focus resources and policies to help young people make a successful transition towards employment.

The data gathered will inform policy planning, and allow stakeholders and local authorities to improve service delivery. It will also help provide a more tailored service to our young people.

Positive Pathways Programme

Positive Pathways is a bespoke employability programme, which is part of our No One Left Behind approach aimed at pupils who are at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET) and for post school young people who without additional support might not make a successful transition into or be able to secure work, further education or training.

The young person receives dedicated support from a key worker who will use existing local council, health and voluntary sector services, and introduce specialist services, such as mental health provision or specific skills training when required, to support them to find work or training or to move on to FE.



Foundation Apprenticeships

Foundation Apprenticeships provide a work-based learning opportunity for senior-phase secondary school pupils. Pupils typically begin their Foundation Apprenticeship in S5.

Young people spend time out of school at college or with a local employer, and complete the Foundation Apprenticeship alongside their other subjects like National 5s and Highers.

Foundation Apprenticeships are currently available in 12 subjects including civil engineering, software development and financial services. Foundation Apprenticeships are linked to growth sectors of the Scottish economy, so young people are gaining industry experience which will help them kick-start a successful career in their chosen field. For University application they are generally considered equivalent to a Higher.

Further Information – Key Documents

- ▶ Developing the Young Workforce in East Renfrewshire Implementation Plan 2021–2022
- ▶ Education and SDS area of excellent practice
- ▶ Outcome Delivery Plan 2020–2023
- ▶ East Renfrewshire Employability Strategy 2016–2019
- ▶ For clarification and notes on how Modern Apprenticeship data is collected
- ▶ For more information on our vocational and post school opportunities



1

STRONG SUPPORT and commitment FROM SDS AND ERC EDUCATION STAFF

EXAMPLE OF EXCELLENT PRACTICE ON

SDS Skills Development Scotland

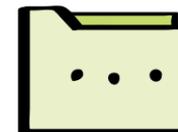
IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE

THE USE OF THE **DATA HUB**

TO TARGET & SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE

3 **Examples of USING THE DATA HUB to target & Support**

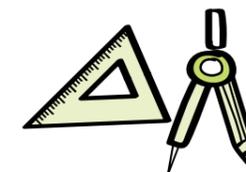
School and career staff have made use of reports to **IDENTIFY**



OPPORTUNITIES



EMPLOYERS & SPEAKERS



TAILORED GROUPWORK



MONTHLY DATA HUB MEETINGS

2

SENIOR STAFF

at the Education Department are strong advocates of the Data Hub in terms of its **use & benefits**

With **DYW Officer Learning Choices Officer pastoral staff and Depute Head.**



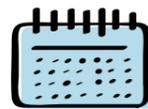
Please Click to play Video or copy link

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZvBvh9_aj4&feature=youtu.be



LEADING TO:

POSITIVE OUTCOMES



ANTICIPATED SCHOOL LEAVING DATE



PREFERRED DESTINATION



PREFERRED OCCUPATION

STRONG EMPHASIS

on how Data Hub information can be used **TO TARGET**

CAREER Information, Advice & Guidance

activity

DEVELOPING Young Workforce

services

YOUNG PEOPLE

GAVE POSITIVE FEEDBACK.

The number of **INDIVIDUALS with an unknown status in the INITIAL SCHOOL LEAVER DATA** right now is

ZERO



The right support in place **TO HELP PREPARE YOUNG PEOPLE** for their post-school destinations.



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DEVELOPING THE YOUNG WORKFORCE IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE

Implementation Plan 2021-2022

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In June 2014, the Wood Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce published its report, Education Working for All! (EWfA!). This report made 39 recommendations to tackle youth unemployment in Scotland (Appendix 1) and set out a vision of an ambitious, motivated, highly skilled and well qualified young workforce in Scotland, with the ultimate goal of reducing Scotland's youth unemployment to match the best in Europe.

In response, the Scottish Government worked with local government and other partners to publish a national seven year implementation plan, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) – Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy (Dec 14) ensuring a greater focus on employability within Scottish education for all young people.

East Renfrewshire Council's Outcome Delivery Plan 2020 - 2023, has a population outcome that all "residents are healthy and active and have the skills for learning, life and work". In the Fairer East Ren Plan 2018-2021, it makes the commitment to ensure "residents have the skills to maximise employment opportunities" by undertaking the following actions:

- provide an individualised 5 stage structured pathway into sustained employment;
- deliver a City Deal Employability programme for Employability Support Allowance Clients;
- provide customised training for employer's needs;
- Increase our marketing and communication activity around employability support and therefore accessibility; and
- Continue to develop the curriculum 3 – 18 to reflect the Developing the Young Workforce focus.

East Renfrewshire is fully committed to Developing our Young Workforce. A full evaluation of our previous *Developing the Young Workforce in East Renfrewshire – Implementation Plan 2018-21* has been undertaken, progress reported and next steps identified. These next steps have formed the priorities for the new iteration of our Implementation Plan.

The *Developing the Young Workforce in East Renfrewshire - Implementation Plan 2021-22* is set out below and includes the revised Key Performance Indicators (Appendix 2) and new DYW School Co-ordinator Key Performance Indicators (Appendix 3). The Education department provides the strategic lead on DYW however to achieve agreed outcomes requires a long term and sustained commitment and effort across all parts of the Council, its partners and employers.

The Covid-19 pandemic is anticipated to have a disproportionate effect on the employment prospects of young people aged 16-24. As a result, the Scottish Government has introduced the Young Person's Guarantee which aims to ensure that all young people can access employment, education, training, or a volunteering opportunity for 12-24 months to help them succeed in following their chosen career pathway. Further, the Kickstart scheme will provide funding to create new job placements for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment. ERC supports the introduction of these schemes and has accessed funding to create additional opportunities for young people through Modern Apprenticeships.

2020/22			
Activity	Department/Agency	Timescale	Outcome
1. Planning of Modern Apprenticeships is improved to align opportunities more closely with key areas of growth. E.g., Early Years using Scottish Youth Guarantee funding.	Education, SDS and Work EastRen	June 2022	Senior phase pupils progress into Modern Apprenticeships.
2. Increase the percentage of employers recruiting young people directly from Education.	Work Eastren Education	June 2022	More employers recruiting young people directly from Education
3. Raise the profile of the apprenticeship family including Graduate Apprenticeships with pupils, staff and parents.	SDS, Education	June 2022	Increased awareness among stakeholders of opportunities within the apprenticeship family.
4. Education for employability and careers is further enhanced within the Broad General Education (3-15 years) and the senior phase.	Education, SDS	May 2022	Cluster working has had an impact on pupil understanding and articulation of skills for learning, life and work.
5. Building on existing foundations, DYW School Co-ordinators will coordinate work-related and work-based learning; collaborate with employers to develop the curriculum offer and progress the development of learner pathways. (See KPIs appendix 3)	Education, DYW West	June 2022	Employers and school partnerships established, employers effectively engaged with Education resulting in a broader range of learner pathways.
6. Schools and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) will continue to use existing ERC and third sector programmes to support transitions post school.	Education, HSCP, Work EastRen and Employers	August 2022	All young people with additional support needs experience high quality work related and work based learning while at school.
7. STEM strategy is implemented across all ERC education establishments.	Education	June 2022	Increased STEM-related career choices within National Data hub for Preferred Route/Occupation.
8. Multi agency planning to support recruitment of young people and care experienced young people.	Economic Development, Work EastRen , HSCP and Education	August 2022	Young people and care experienced young people will leave school with improved positive destinations and career pathways.
9. Effective participation of Family Firm clients on the CPP Employability Pipeline is ensured through traineeships designed specifically for care experienced young people within ERC.	Economic Development, JCP and Work EastRen	August 2022	More Family Firm clients engaged in Stages 1-5 of the CPP Employability Pipeline
10. Continue to analyse data for leaver destinations and vocational qualifications to develop senior phase offer in schools.	Education, Work EastRen and Colleges	August 2022	Increased senior phase pupils attaining SCQF Level 5/6 vocational qualifications and improved progression to career pathways.
11. Introduce the ERC community benefits wish list to support education establishments and the wider community.	Economic Development, Work EastRen and Education	August 2022	Children and young people will benefit from access to resources, learning and employment opportunities from the CB wish list.
12. The number of disabled and BME young people on Modern Apprenticeships is increased.	SDS, Work EastRen and Education	April 2022	More young people from groups who experience inequality progress to positive employment.

Education Working for All! – Recommendations

SCHOOLS

1. Pathways should start in the senior phase which leads to the delivery of industry recognised vocational qualifications alongside academic qualifications. These pathways should be developed and delivered in partnership with colleges and, where necessary, other training providers. Their delivery should be explicitly measured and published alongside other school performance indicators.
2. A focus on preparing all young people for employment should form a core element of the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence with appropriate resource dedicated to achieve this. In particular local authorities, Skills Development Scotland and employer representative organisations should work together to develop a more comprehensive standard for careers guidance which would reflect the involvement of employers and their role and input.
3. A modern standard should be established for the acceptable content and quality of work experience and guidelines should be made available to employers. This should be developed by Education Scotland in partnership with employer bodies and Skills Development Scotland. This should involve input from young people. Work experience should feature in the senior phase benchmarking tool (Insight) and in Education Scotland school inspections.
12. A focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) should sit at the heart of the development of Scotland's young workforce.
13. Support for young people at risk of disengaging from education, and for those who have already done, so should focus on early intervention and wide ranging, sustained support. This should relate to labour market demand and should be focused on helping young people engage on the labour market relevant pathways that we have highlighted.

COLLEGES

4. Colleges' key role in the development of Scotland's young workforce should be recognised and managed through Regional Outcome Agreements.
5. The new regional colleges should have a primary focus on employment outcomes and supporting local economic development. This should be underpinned by meaningful and wide ranging partnerships with industry and should be at the forefront of Regional Outcome Agreements and their measurement.
6. A commitment to supporting the development of Scotland's young workforce through the enhancement of vocational education pathways should feature prominently in the National Performance Framework, Community Plans and College Regional Outcome Agreements.

MODERN APPRENTICESHIPS

7. Modern Apprenticeships should be aligned with the skills required to support economic growth.
8. Development of Modern Apprenticeship access processes and progression pathways should be prioritised.
9. An industry-led quality improvement regime should be introduced to oversee the development and promotion of Modern Apprenticeships.
10. If employers can be encouraged to offer significantly more good quality apprenticeships, the Scottish Government should consider a carefully managed expansion of the annual number of Modern Apprenticeship starts.

EMPLOYERS

14. The Scottish Government should support the creation of regional industry-led Invest in Youth Groups across Scotland to provide leadership and a single point of contact and support to facilitate engagement between employers and education.
15. Businesses across Scotland should be encouraged and supported to enter into 3-5 year partnerships with secondary schools. Every secondary school in Scotland and its feeder primaries should be supported by at least one business in a long-term partnership.
16. Scotland's leading industry sector groups and companies should be encouraged to work with the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL) to develop a programme to provide emerging school staff leaders with a wide ranging understanding of industry and careers.
17. Employers and national industry sector groups should form partnerships with regional colleges to ensure course content is industry relevant and full advantage is taken of work based learning and employment opportunities.
18. In the development of future industry Skills Investment Plans and Regional Skills Assessments, and in the updating of existing plans, there should be a specific focus on youth employment and the development of vocational pathways starting in the senior phase.
19. A nationally defined Invest in Youth Accolade should be developed to recognise industry's engagement in the development and employment of Scotland's young workforce.
20. A small business Modern Apprenticeship recruitment incentive package should be developed to equip and support smaller and micro businesses to recruit and train more young people.
21. Voluntary levy schemes to recruit and train young people in skills shortage areas should be encouraged. Groups of employers should be supported to work in collaboration, with the Scottish Government providing co-funding.
22. Procurement and supply chain policies in both the public and private sectors should be applied to encourage more employers to support the development of Scotland's young workforce.
23. Public sector employers should be encouraged by the Scottish Government and local authorities to be exemplars in a national Invest In Youth Policy and this should be explicitly reflected in their published corporate plans.
24. Growth businesses and Inward Investment companies in receipt of public funding should be encouraged and supported to employ young people.

25. Financial recruitment incentives should be re-examined and carefully targeted to achieve the most benefit in providing sustainable employment for young people.

EQUALITY

26. Scotland should embed equality education across Curriculum for Excellence.

27. Promotion and communication of career options should actively target equalities groups to promote diverse participation across gender, black & minority ethnic groups, young people with disabilities and care leavers. The promotion of Modern Apprenticeship opportunities should be to the fore of this activity.

28. Senior phase vocational pathways should be designed to encourage more gender balance across occupations.

29. The Scottish Funding Council and colleges should develop an action plan to address gender disparities within college education. This should be underpinned by realistic but stretching improvement targets. The Scottish Funding Council should report on this annually.

30. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) should develop an action plan to address gender disparities within Modern Apprenticeships. This should be underpinned by realistic but stretching improvement targets. SDS should report on this annually.

31. A targeted campaign to promote the full range of Modern Apprenticeships to young people and parents from the BME community should be developed and launched to present the benefits of work based learning as a respected career option and alternative to university.

32. Skills Development Scotland should set a realistic but stretching improvement target to increase the number of young people from black & minority ethnic groups starting Modern Apprenticeships. Progress against this should be reported on annually.

33. Career advice and work experience for young disabled people who are still at school should be prioritised and tailored to help them realise their potential and focus positively on what they can do to achieve their career aspirations.

34. Funding levels to colleges and Modern Apprenticeships training providers should be reviewed and adjusted to reflect the cost of providing additional support to young disabled people, and age restrictions should be relaxed for those whose transition may take longer.

35. Within Modern Apprenticeships, Skills Development Scotland should set a realistic but stretching improvement target to increase the number of young disabled people. Progress against this should be reported on annually.

36. Employers who want to employ a young disabled person should be encouraged and supported to do so.

37. Educational and employment transition planning for young people in care should start early with sustained support from public and third sector bodies and employers available throughout their journey toward and into employment as is deemed necessary.

38. Across vocational education and training, age restrictions should be relaxed for those care leavers whose transition takes longer.

39. In partnership with the third sector, the Scottish Government should consider developing a programme which offers supported employment opportunities lasting up to a year for care leavers.

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DYW Key Performance Indicators

KPI 1 – DYW Regional Groups and School Coordinator - Employer Engagement and Local Partnerships

DYW Regional Groups, including School Coordinators, to increase employer engagement opportunities, and the number of employers actively engaged in supporting and preparing young people for the world of work. In addition, by working with all those engaged in careers, employment and DYW in the school, devise a local partnership agreement and local working arrangement that embodies “No Wrong Door” to ensure that young people have seamless access to individual support, advice, guidance and engagement with employers.

KPI 2 (regional groups only)

DYW Regional Groups to support employers with the completion of the Young Person’s Guarantee 5 Asks of Employers proforma.

KPI 3 – DYW Regional Groups – Apprenticeships and other Government Initiatives (regional groups only)

In collaboration with Skills Development Scotland (and other learning providers) increase the number of employers offering job and apprenticeship opportunities to young people.

KPI 4 – DYW Regional Groups and School Coordinators - Equalities

By working collaboratively with specialist partners, increase work-based learning and employer engagement opportunities for those who would benefit most. Working with school staff, SDS advisors, CLD and other specialist services / partners to identify and support young people who would most benefit from increased work-based learning opportunities and employer engagement.

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DYW School Coordinator Key Performance Indicators

KPI 1 – Local Partnerships

By working with all those engaged in careers, employment and DYW in the school, devise a local partnership agreement that embodies “No Wrong Door” to ensure that young people have seamless access to individual support, advice, guidance and engagement with employers.

KPI 2 – Employer Partnerships

Work alongside the DYW Regional Group to develop all levels of education-employer partnerships with regional and national employers, including Small and Medium Sized Enterprises. Establish and support at least one Influencing Partnership for each secondary school.

KPI 3 – Targeting work based learning and employer engagement opportunities at those who would benefit the most

Working with school staff, SDS advisors, CLD and other services to identify young people who would most benefit from increased work based learning and employer engagement. Working with this data and that of local LMI, devise and enact an employer engagement plan that fits the needs of these young people.

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE10 June 2021Report by Director of EducationIMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH SCHOOL EDUCATION:
ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT POSITION IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to apprise elected members of the assessment against the recommendations made in the 'Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education' Accounts Commission report prepared by Audit Scotland.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that members of the Education Committee note and comment on the assessment of current practice within East Renfrewshire to improve outcomes for young people and actions being taken by the Education Department to drive further improvement.

BACKGROUND

3. In March 2021 Audit Scotland published the 'Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education' report on behalf of the Accounts Commission, following their audit work to look at how effectively the Scottish Government, councils and their partners were improving outcomes for young people through school education. This is attached as *Appendix 1*.

4. Audit Scotland commenced its work in 2019 considering its review of improving outcomes in the context of primary and secondary schools. This work was paused in March 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic and was restarted in October 2020 to look at the impact of Covid-19 on school education and the response taken by the Scottish Government, councils and their partners. The Audit Scotland report recognises that this is a fast-changing situation and only covers actions taken by the Scottish Government, councils and their partners up until early January 2021.

5. There is strong evidence in East Renfrewshire of Education's relentless focus to deliver excellence and equity for all its learners and the impact of this resulting in improved outcomes. This is intrinsic in executing the department's vision of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*.

6. Reports at Education Committee highlight key areas that the department consider fundamental in its intent to continually improve outcomes for children and young people through their school education, and importantly to succeed in learning, life and work. Recent reports include Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) at the April 2021 committee, The Quality of Remote Learning at the March 2021 committee and the department's Standards and Quality Report (2019 - 2020) and Local Improvement Plan (2021 - 2024) at the committee in January 2021.

REPORT

7. The key messages in the 'Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education' report are:

- 'School education is not just about exam results. It also aims to improve children's and young people's health and wellbeing and support wider outcomes such as vocational qualifications. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected children and young people in many ways, including their learning, wellbeing and economic circumstances. Pupils living in the most challenging circumstances have been most affected by school closures.
- Those involved in planning, delivering and supporting school education were working well together prior to the pandemic. This strong foundation helped them to collaborate to deliver a rapid response to Covid-19 in exceptionally challenging circumstances. The pandemic has reinforced the importance of school education and other sectors working together to tackle issues which affect young people's life chances and outcomes, such as child poverty and health and wellbeing.
- Both national education policy and the curriculum reflect the importance for pupils of different pathways and opportunities, and outcomes beyond exam results. There has been an increase in the types of opportunities, awards and qualifications available to children and young people and an increase in the number awarded. However, better data is needed to understand if other outcomes, like wellbeing and confidence, are improving.
- There is wide variation in education performance across councils, with evidence of worsening performance on some indicators in some councils. At the national level, exam performance and other attainment measures have improved. But the rate of improvement up until 2018–19 has been inconsistent across different measures. Measuring progress has been hampered by the cancellation of exams and other data gaps caused by Covid-19. This could create risks around accountability.
- The poverty-related attainment gap remains wide and inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19. Progress on closing the gap has been limited and falls short of the Scottish Government's aims. Improvement needs to happen more quickly and there needs to be greater consistency across the country. The government and councils recognise that addressing inequalities must be at the heart of the response to Covid-19, longer-term recovery and improving education.
- Council spending on primary and secondary school education across Scotland increased by 5.1 per cent in real terms between 2013/14 and 2018/19, from £4.1 billion to £4.3 billion. Most of the real-terms increase in spend can be attributed to the Attainment Scotland Fund, which the Scottish Government set up in 2015/16 to close the poverty-related attainment gap. When this is excluded, real-terms spending increased by 0.7 per cent during the period, to just over £4.1 billion. The Scottish Government had put over £200 million of extra money into Covid-19 mitigation measures and education recovery by early January 2021.'

8. The report focuses on attainment before the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and compares performance across council areas, including the gaps between pupils residing in the least and most advantaged areas in examining the poverty related attainment gap.

9. In the broad general education, the report examines the Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) in literacy and numeracy across the primary and secondary sector. In the senior phase of secondary, the report examines four key indicators: percentage of

school leavers achieving one award or more at Level 5 or better; those achieving five awards or more at Level 5 or better; those achieving Level 4 literacy and numeracy; and the percentage of 16 to 19-year-olds participating in education employment or training. The data used in the report is from a baseline of 2013/14 to 2018/19, except for ACEL attainment where the baseline is from 2016/17, the first year such data at authority level was published by the Scottish Government.

10. In arriving at their conclusions of performance across Scotland, Audit Scotland made a number of recommendations for the Scottish Government, councils and Education Scotland to work together to take forward, where appropriate, within the context of a collaborative system. There are specific recommendations for partners and joint recommendations. These are included in the report in *Appendix 1*.

11. The Audit Scotland analysis shows that East Renfrewshire performs well and from a very high base as evidenced in *Appendix 1*. However the department is not complacent and *Appendix 2* provides the Education Department's assessment of its current position against the recommendations councils are to take forward; and demonstrates current strength and intent to further improve.

12. As noted the thrust of the key messages and recommendations in the Audit Scotland publication are considered to present no difficulty for the department or the Council. Education Committee will recall recent papers and presentations concerning the response to Covid-19 and know of the regular reports on performance and standards at authority level and in our schools. Whilst shunning complacency, East Renfrewshire has operated and led developments in a number of these areas over the years or already has taken action to address more recent recommendations heightened as a consequence of Covid-19.

13. Fundamental to East Renfrewshire's ambition that all children and young people flourish in education and beyond is the effective use of performance information and the interventions and supports necessary to raise the bar in terms of attainment and achievement for all children and young people. In doing so extra focus is placed on closing gaps for any and all groups of learners. The department's vision, *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences* is delivered through effective leadership and staff development, involving and engaging learners and their families, collaborating with partners, and providing the best conditions to excel. These underpin the Audit Scotland recommendations that councils are asked to take forward within a collaborative system.

14. The content of this paper will also be discussed by members of East Renfrewshire's Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 24 June 2021.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

15. There are no direct financial or efficiency implications related to this report.

CONCLUSION

16. East Renfrewshire Education's values-based vision, its culture of continuous improvement, and evidence of positive outcomes and impacts to date, show that the authority is well placed to address the recommendations presented in the Audit Scotland report, 'Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education'.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. It is recommended that members of the Education Committee note and comment on the assessment of current practice within East Renfrewshire to improve outcomes for young people and actions being taken by the Education Department to drive further improvement.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
10 June 2021

Convener Contact Details

Councillor P O'Kane, Convener for Education and Equalities

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Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

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APPENDICES

1. 'Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education' Accounts Commission report prepared by Audit Scotland, March 2021
2. Education Department response: 'Assessment of Current Position in ERC'

Improving outcomes for young people through school education



ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

AUDITOR GENERAL 

Prepared by Audit Scotland
March 2021



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Audit team

The core audit team consisted of: Tricia Meldrum, Beverley Oakman, Zoe McGuire and Martin Allan, with support from colleagues and under the direction of Antony Clark.

Links

 PDF download

 Web link



Exhibit data

When viewing this report online, you can access background data by clicking on the graph icon. The data file will open in a new window.

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Key messages

- 1** School education is not just about exam results. It also aims to improve children's and young people's health and wellbeing and support wider outcomes such as vocational qualifications. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected children and young people in many ways, including their learning, wellbeing and economic circumstances. Pupils living in the most challenging circumstances have been most affected by school closures.
- 2** Those involved in planning, delivering and supporting school education were working well together prior to the pandemic. This strong foundation helped them to collaborate to deliver a rapid response to Covid-19 in exceptionally challenging circumstances. The pandemic has reinforced the importance of school education and other sectors working together to tackle issues which affect young people's life chances and outcomes, such as child poverty and health and wellbeing.
- 3** Both national education policy and the curriculum reflect the importance for pupils of different pathways and opportunities, and outcomes beyond exam results. There has been an increase in the types of opportunities, awards and qualifications available to children and young people and an increase in the number awarded. However, better data is needed to understand if other outcomes, like wellbeing and confidence, are improving.
- 4** There is wide variation in education performance across councils, with evidence of worsening performance on some indicators in some councils. At the national level, exam performance and other attainment measures have improved. But the rate of improvement up until 2018–19 has been inconsistent across different measures.

Measuring progress has been hampered by the cancellation of exams and other data gaps caused by Covid-19. This could create risks around accountability.

- 5** The poverty-related attainment gap remains wide and inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19. Progress on closing the gap has been limited and falls short of the Scottish Government's aims. Improvement needs to happen more quickly and there needs to be greater consistency across the country. The government and councils recognise that addressing inequalities must be at the heart of the response to Covid-19, longer-term recovery and improving education.
 - 6** Council spending on primary and secondary school education across Scotland increased by 5.1 per cent in real terms between 2013/14 and 2018/19, from £4.1 billion to £4.3 billion. Most of the real-terms increase in spend can be attributed to the Attainment Scotland Fund, which the Scottish Government set up in 2015/16 to close the poverty-related attainment gap. When this is excluded, real-terms spending increased by 0.7 per cent during the period, to just over £4.1 billion. The Scottish Government had put over £200 million of extra money into Covid-19 mitigation measures and education recovery by early January 2021.
-

Recommendations

The Scottish Government, councils and Education Scotland should work together to take forward the recommendations, where appropriate, within the context of a collaborative system and with lead responsibility as set out below.

The Scottish Government should:

- continue to lead the development of priorities for education recovery and improvement, building on the actions set out in the National Improvement Framework (NIF) for 2021, the Equity Audit and the forthcoming OECD review, being clear about anticipated outcomes and milestones
- work with stakeholders to develop and publish consistent and robust national data that reflects the ambitions of the national curriculum, national policy priorities such as health and wellbeing and confidence, and key priorities for Covid-19 recovery and improvement
- update the NIF to reflect data on these agreed outcomes and consider how to ensure that there is greater prominence on these broader outcome measures in public reporting and messaging, for example by inclusion in the NIF key indicators
- work with stakeholders to agree an approach to dealing with the challenges created by data disruption in 2020 and 2021 which will affect monitoring of progress in achieving policy ambitions relating to outcomes and the attainment gap
- ensure that future methods for targeting support to address inequalities reflect broader demographic issues, which are not well reflected in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), and updated data on the economic impact of Covid-19 on communities.

Education Scotland should work with schools, councils and RICs to:

- understand the factors that cause variation in performance across schools and councils
- achieve greater consistency in applying the NIF drivers through a targeted response that reflects local priorities for improvement, with a focus on reducing inequalities
- ensure the successful innovation and learning from the Covid-19 response, such as the opportunities from using digital learning, informs future planning for improved outcomes for children and young people.

Councils should:

- work with schools, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, other policy teams and partners, for example in the third sector, to reduce variability in outcomes by more consistent application of the drivers of improvement set out in the NIF, by:
 - using data to understand trends in outcome measures over time and across different demographic groups

- using evidence-based quality-improvement approaches
- sharing learning and applying good practice across schools and councils
- helping schools to build up their data analytical, evaluation and quality-improvement skills so they can make evidence-based decisions
- monitor the short- and longer-term impacts of Covid-19 (including the impact of remote learning) on local children's and young people's learning and wellbeing and take action when required to mitigate the effects and improve outcomes
- more effectively and consistently involve young people and parents in planning to improve outcomes and to inform the local response to Covid-19
- ensure third-sector organisations working with or representing children and young people are effectively involved in local planning to improve longer-term outcomes, and to deliver the local education response to Covid-19.

The Scottish Government, Education Scotland and councils should:

- continue to ensure a coordinated policy response within and across government (for example with health and children and families services) when planning to improve longer-term outcomes for children and young people and delivering the education recovery response to the equality impacts of Covid-19
- use the Equity Audit and other evidence to monitor the short- and longer-term impact of Covid-19 on children's and young people's learning and wellbeing, and to inform the development of local and national priorities and targeting of mitigating actions
- further promote the importance of the different pathways, qualifications and awards available to young people with parents, carers, politicians, and the media, to support wider public understanding of the importance of broader outcomes.

About this audit

1. In 2019, Audit Scotland carried out audit work to look at how effectively the Scottish Government, councils and their partners were improving outcomes for young people through school education. This work was paused in March 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was restarted in October 2020 to look at the impact of Covid-19 on school education and the response taken by the Scottish Government, councils and their partners. This report draws together the key findings from these two pieces of work. We recognise that this is a fast-changing situation and this report only covers actions taken by the Scottish Government, councils and their partners up until early January 2021. We also recognise that the global Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on education systems, children and young people and families across the world. The objectives of the initial and follow-up work are set out in the audit scopes on our [website](#)  and methodologies are outlined in [Appendix 1. Methodology \(page 52\)](#). This audit considered mainstream primary and secondary school education and is part of a body of audit work in this area ([Exhibit 1, page 7](#)).

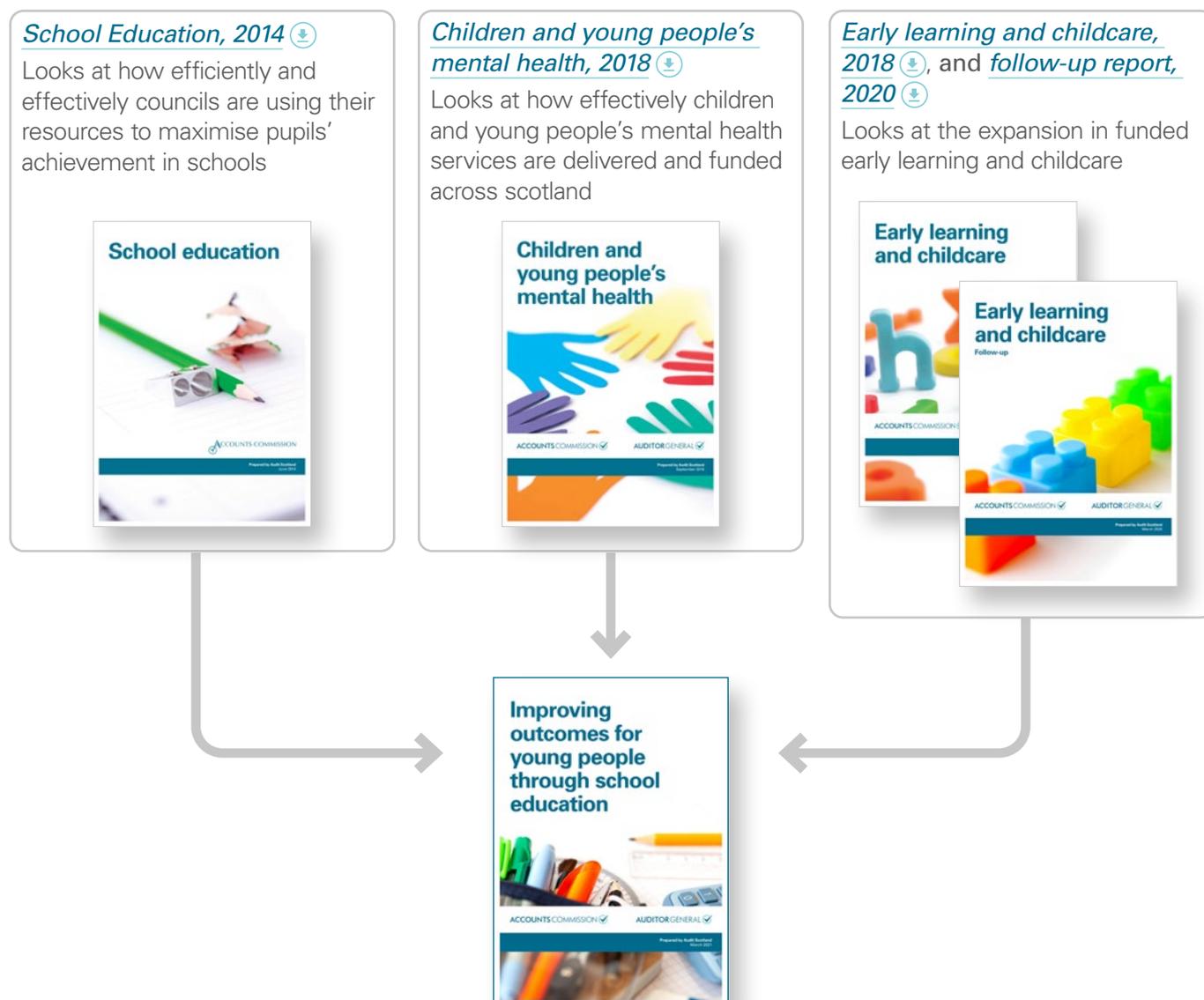
2. We would like to thank members of the audit advisory group listed in [Appendix 2. Advisory group \(page 55\)](#), and also members of the Inform 100 youth panel who worked with us throughout the audit.

Exhibit 1

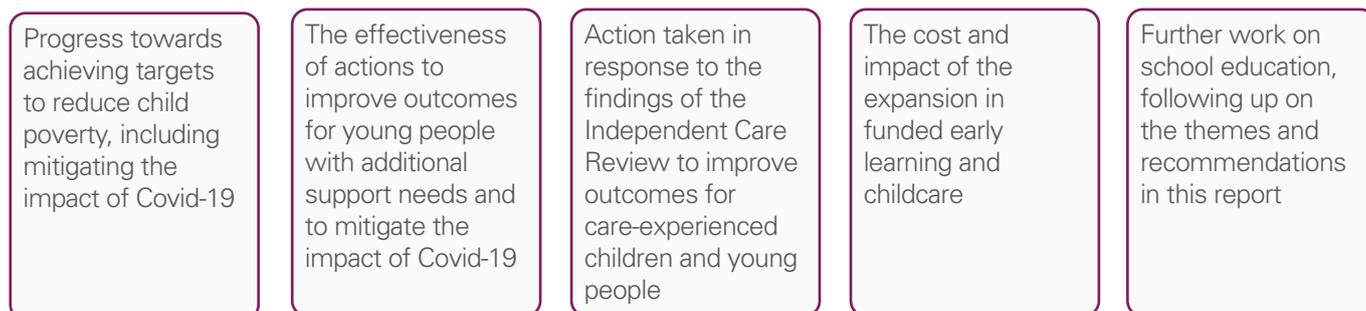
Related audit work on outcomes for children and young people

This report is part of a wider programme of audit work.

Previous reports



Potential areas for future audit work



Background

3. School education is fundamental to ensuring positive long-term outcomes for young people and it impacts on Scotland's economy and society. It performs a key role in contributing to the 11 long-term outcomes set out in the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework (NPF).¹ The Scottish Government is responsible for developing national policy and strategic direction. Its vision for education in Scotland is:

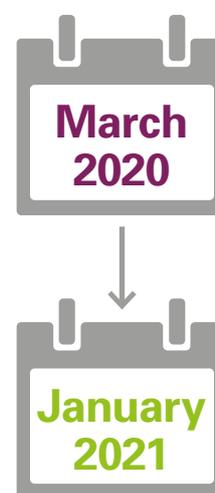
- excellence through raising attainment: ensuring that every child achieves the highest standards in literacy and numeracy, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to shape their future as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors
- achieving equity: ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed, with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.²

4. The Scottish Government, in its strategic response to Covid-19, has designated keeping schools open a key priority.³ In March 2020, the Scottish Government took the decision to close all schools as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Councils provided hubs for the children of keyworkers and vulnerable children, but most learning was carried out remotely. Schools reopened after the summer holidays in August 2020 and closed again after the Christmas holidays (see the [school education Covid-19 timeline](#)  on our website).

5. Scotland's 32 councils are responsible for local education policy, providing school education for every school-age child and improving outcomes.⁴ They also have a statutory duty to reduce inequalities in outcomes for those pupils from a disadvantaged background.⁵ Children normally spend seven years in primary school (P1–P7) and at least four years in secondary school (S1–S4). Pupils can then leave school at 16 or stay on for one or two more years (S5 and S6). In September 2020, there were 2,362 council-run primary and secondary schools teaching 694,911 pupils.⁶ In 2018/19, councils spent a total of around £4.3 billion providing primary and secondary school education, 28 per cent of their total revenue spending.⁷

6. Education Scotland is the executive agency of the Scottish Government tasked with supporting quality and improvement in Scottish education. It carries out inspections and reviews of schools, colleges, councils and their partners, and works with teachers and other educators, schools, councils and Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) to help them improve. Since Covid-19 emerged, Education Scotland has paused inspections and focused more on providing national and local support for schools, teachers, pupils and parents, for example with moving to remote learning.

7. In their Joint Agreement published in 2018, the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) set out that *'improving the education and life chances of our children and young people is the defining mission of our Scottish education system. Our shared ambition is to close the unacceptable gap in attainment between our least and most disadvantaged children and to raise attainment for all'*. The Scottish Government has committed over £800 million to raise attainment and improve outcomes over the lifetime of this Parliament (2016 to 2021) through the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC). A further £128 million has been allocated for 2021/22.⁸ This is part of an ongoing programme of education reform.



[School education Covid-19 timeline](#) 

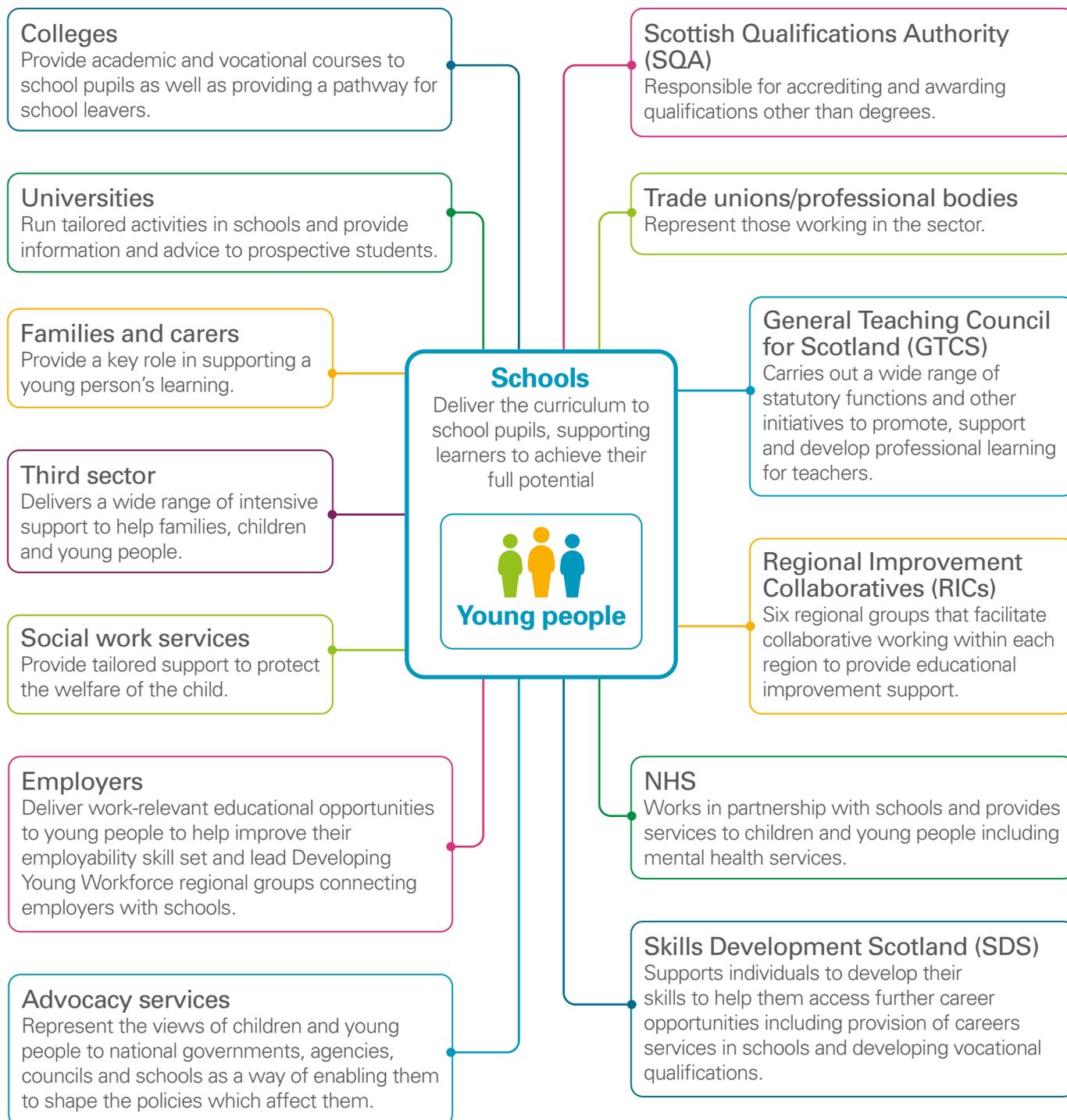
8. Other stakeholders play an important role in improving outcomes for young people through school education, working in partnership with the Scottish Government, Education Scotland, councils and schools ([Exhibit 2, page 10](#)).

9. Since lockdown started in March 2020, those working in education and their partners (the education sector) have worked hard in exceptional circumstances to help meet the needs of children and young people and their families. Leaders, teachers and others have had to make difficult decisions very quickly and with no previous experience to draw on. This has been, and continues to be, a very challenging period for children and young people, their families and people working in education. We recognise those challenges and the scale of the work and effort that everyone has put in. We also recognise that it is too early to draw conclusions on the impact of some of the decisions taken.

Exhibit 2

Role of other stakeholders in improving outcomes from school education

Many stakeholders work with schools to improve outcomes for young people through their school education.



Outcomes

- 1** School education in Scotland is not just about exam results. It also aims to improve children's and young people's health and wellbeing and support wider outcomes such as life skills, apprenticeships and employment. The National Improvement Framework (NIF), which sets out the key priorities for education, is embedded across the education system and is recognised as central to driving improvement.
- 2** National policy and the national curriculum reflect the importance of health and wellbeing, different pathways and opportunities, and other broader outcomes. There has been an increase in the types of opportunities, awards and qualifications available to children and young people and an increase in the number awarded.
- 3** There is wide variation in performance across councils, including examples of worsening performance in some councils on some indicators. Up to 2018/19, most attainment measures, including performance in exams, had been improving at a national level, but the rate of improvement has been inconsistent across the different measures. The rate of improvement was much greater in the 2020 qualifications awarded to learners, based on teacher judgements rather than examinations.
- 4** Many young people have reported that their mental health has been affected by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. There has been a welcome focus on supporting and monitoring wellbeing during the pandemic and this needs to continue. Prior to the pandemic, there was a lot of focus on improving and tracking

attainment through the NIF key measures and less consistent and robust national data on some wider outcomes, such as health and wellbeing.

- 5 Measurement of progress in achieving outcomes and the national priorities will be hampered by temporary gaps in data collection and disruption to data due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, such as that caused by the changes in assessing qualifications in 2020 and 2021 as a result of the cancellation of exams. This creates risks relating to accountability.
-

School education contributes to a whole range of outcomes for children and young people

10. Improving outcomes from school education is a key tenet of Scottish Government policy, reflecting the importance of education to achieving wider social and economic outcomes for individuals, communities and the nation.

11. There is consensus across those involved in education in central and local government in Scotland and their partners that outcomes through school education are about more than examination results and include confidence, wellbeing, general life skills and work skills. There is also agreement that outcomes should be centred around the individual young person.

12. The National Improvement Framework (NIF) is the key plan that sets out the priorities for education. It is recognised and embedded across the education system as central to driving improvement. The NIF sets out four priorities:

- improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy
- closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people
- improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing
- improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people.⁹

13. The Scottish Government first published the NIF in 2016 and it has been updated annually since then. Schools, councils and the Scottish Government use it as the primary tool for driving improvement. It is used to support the development of local policies and plans to improve outcomes, and it plays a part in Education Scotland's approach to supporting RICs, councils and schools to improve.

14. School education is delivered in the context of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), Scotland's national curriculum. This aims to put the young person at the centre of learning and help them gain the knowledge, skills and attributes for life in the 21st century by providing them with four capacities:

- successful learners
- confident individuals
- responsible citizens
- effective contributors.¹⁰

15. The updated NIF, published in December 2020, revised the definition of excellence through raising attainment to better align with these four capacities and reflect broader outcomes.¹¹ In February 2020, the Scottish Government announced a review of CfE would be undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and findings are due to be reported in June 2021.

16. Young people themselves agree that outcomes are broader than exam performance. A survey of 1,731 secondary school pupils across Scotland found that the top three most important things they wanted to get out of their time at

school were: qualifications to get into college/university (51 per cent), skills to help get a job (47 per cent) and life skills (40 per cent).¹² Self-confidence was also rated as important, by 34 per cent increasing to 40 per cent among females. Our focus groups with primary and secondary pupils found that outcomes such as 'learning wider life skills', 'being happy and confident' and 'getting a good job', were also important.

17. Discussions with parent organisations and focus groups found that parents and carers also want pupils to achieve what they need at school to excel in life. This includes both academic achievement and being confident and happy individuals.

Commentary on education performance mainly focuses on attainment

18. Central and local government share an understanding of the policy approach that is focused on achieving broader outcomes with the young person at the centre of the system. However, many commentators and other interested parties tend to place greater emphasis on traditional outcome measures. Media messaging around exam performance is seen as unhelpful and dispiriting by pupils, teachers and councils as this represents only part of the picture. Focusing on exam performance is important but needs to be balanced by an understanding of wider outcomes and recognition of their value. An emphasis on measures of attainment in exams, while important, fails to recognise and promote the broader aims of CfE and value the wider achievements of young people.

The Scottish Government reports on a wide range of outcomes although the key measures focus more on attainment

19. The NIF brings together a range of information and data on the education system. It includes 11 key measures, seven of which relate to national qualifications and achievement of CfE levels in literacy and numeracy. These measures were agreed following external consultation and included in the NIF in 2018.¹³

20. There is less consistent and robust national data in the NIF on wider outcomes, such as wellbeing, that have been identified as key priorities. This makes it difficult to assess whether the Scottish Government is achieving the four key NIF priorities. The NIF includes some survey data and the Scottish Government is planning to introduce a new health and wellbeing census to provide better information. This has been planned since the NIF 2019 but was delayed because of the impact of Covid-19.¹⁴ The NIF also includes data on wider outcomes such as attainment of vocational qualifications. However, this is less comprehensive than the more traditional attainment measures and has less prominence as they are not key measures.

21. This imbalance towards more traditional attainment in the NIF key measures, with less prominence on measures of wider outcomes, may not help the understanding of wider outcomes highlighted earlier ([paragraph 18](#)).

22. The Scottish Government also publishes a wide range of data and commentary on progress against the actions set out for the key drivers to support improved outcomes detailed in the NIF. We discuss these drivers in [Working together to improve outcomes \(page 34\)](#). The NIF states that progress against these drivers is expected to help lead to improved outcomes.¹⁵

Secondary school pupils' top-rated outcomes from education include qualifications, skills for work, life skills and self-confidence

Improvement in attainment in relation to exam performance and CfE was inconsistent before the pandemic, with large variation across councils

23. Improving attainment for all is central to the Scottish Government's education policy and this vision is shared by councils and other partners. Performance in exams and against CfE levels are important in improving attainment. However, there has been inconsistent improvement across a range of these indicators in recent years, and the poverty-related attainment gap is still wide. We discuss the gap further in [Inequalities \(page 25\)](#).

At a national level there has been improvement in performance across most indicators of exam performance in the senior phase (S4 to S6) and across CfE levels but there is wide variation across councils

24. Up to 2018/19, most measures of performance in exams and against CfE levels had been improving at a national level, but the rate of improvement has been inconsistent across indicators since 2013/14. We looked at a range of indicators reported nationally on the numbers of S4 to S6 pupils who leave school with awards for Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 4 to 7 ([Exhibit A](#)  on our website).

25. Based on these indicators, the largest improvements are in the proportion of school leavers achieving three or more awards at level six (Higher) which increased from 45.3 per cent in 2013/14 to 50.9 per cent in 2018/19, and the proportion achieving five or more awards at level 5 (National 5) which increased from 58.8 per cent to 64.3 per cent over the same period. The rate of improvement is less than four percentage points against most of the indicators we looked at.¹⁶ A–C pass rates for awards at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher increased in 2019/20, however these were based on teacher judgement and cannot be compared with previous years.¹⁷ We discuss this further in [paragraphs 30–31](#). The Scottish Government's national aim is to improve outcomes for all, but it has not set out by how much or by when.

More young people are also achieving other types of awards, in line with the aims of the national curriculum

26. The NIF states that the four capacities of CfE ([paragraph 14](#)) 'were designed to produce a more rounded education with broader achievements being recognised alongside academic attainment'. This highlights the importance of different pathways and opportunities being available to children and young people to best meet their needs. The percentage of school leavers achieving vocational qualifications has increased over this period, particularly at SCQF level 5 (equivalent to National 5). This has increased from 7.3 per cent of pupils leaving school with one or more passes at this level in 2013/14 to 17.1 per cent in 2018/19.¹⁸ In 2020, 26,970 skills-based awards at level 5 were also awarded including skills for work, personal development awards, national certificates, and national progression awards, up from 16,314 in 2014.¹⁹ We discuss these different pathways and opportunities further in [paragraphs 45–49](#).

27. In 2019, we asked councils about the types of wider achievement awards offered in their schools. Of the 28 councils who responded, the number and type of awards varied from council to council, but almost all offer the Duke of Edinburgh's award. This award is not reflected in the Scottish Qualification Authority's (SQA) awards data as it is not accredited. More than 60 per cent of councils who responded also offer the John Muir Award, Saltire Award and Youth Scotland Awards.²⁰ In addition to the most popular awards, a wide variety of others are offered.²¹ These contribute to the wider experiences of young people.

There is large variation in trends in outcomes across councils

28. We have focused on four outcome indicators for more detailed analysis of the senior phase ([Exhibit 3, page 17](#)). These indicators are relevant for most young people and are generally indicative of trends in exam performance and CfE levels in councils across Scotland. Nine councils with the highest proportions of pupils living in the most deprived areas, based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) are classified as attainment challenge councils and receive additional funding from the Scottish Government through the Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF) which supports the Scottish Attainment Challenge.²² All councils also receive some additional ASF funding for individual schools or pupils.

29. The level of improvement across councils varies significantly, with performance declining against some indicators in some councils. Performance on all four indicators improved in 13 of the 32 councils and on three out of the four indicators in a further 12. For the indicator measuring the percentage of school leavers achieving one or more awards at level 5 or above, performance declined in 13 councils, four of which were attainment challenge councils. Falkirk was the most improved council in two of the four indicators. A range of factors can contribute to a council's performance and rate of improvement, and the NIF sets out key drivers for improvement. We discuss these further in [Working together to improve outcomes \(page 34\)](#). Councils face different pressures and challenges, for example due to their geography, levels of deprivation, staffing levels, funding levels and local priorities. These factors need to be considered when comparing performance across councils.

Performance in senior phase awards improved in 2020, based on teacher judgement, but cannot be compared with outcomes before Covid-19

30. Measurement of progress in achieving outcomes and the national priorities will be hampered by temporary gaps in data collection and disruption to data due to Covid-19. When the exams were cancelled in 2020 because of the pandemic, the Deputy First Minister asked the SQA to develop an alternative certification model. This certification model was based on teacher judgement. The results were initially moderated by the SQA using a statistical algorithm that standardised teacher estimates based on the centre's recent attainment. However, the Scottish Government overturned that approach due to concerns about unfairness. Final results were based on teacher judgements although a small number of students who had results moderated upwards were allowed to keep a higher grade. The results in 2021 will also be based on teacher judgement and a quality assurance process, but no statistically based moderation process will be applied.²³

31. The SQA published revised attainment rate statistics on 31 August 2020. Attainment rates for graded national qualifications in 2020 were much higher than in previous years. Compared with 2019:

- the National 5 attainment rate (A–C) increased by 10.8 percentage points from 78.2 per cent to 89.0 per cent
- the Higher attainment rate (A–C) increased by 14.5 percentage points from 74.8 per cent to 89.3 per cent
- the Advanced Higher attainment rate (A–C) increased by 13.7 percentage points from 79.4 per cent to 93.1 per cent.



The level of improvement across councils varies significantly

Exhibit 3

National and local performance against a range of indicators in latest year available and change over time

All indicators show improvement at a national level, although there are large variations in local performance.

Council	Percentage of school leavers achieving 1 award or more at SCQF level 5 or better		Percentage of school leavers achieving 5 awards or more at SCQF level 5 or better	
	2018/19	% change since 2013/14	2018/19	% change since 2013/14
Aberdeen City	83.5	 3.5	57.9	 5.9
Aberdeenshire	86.8	 4.0	64.8	 7.2
Angus	82.5	 -1.3	61.7	 0.9
Argyll and Bute	88.1	 2.6	67.5	 8.3
Dumfries and Galloway	86.3	 1.1	62.4	 4.8
East Dunbartonshire	96.2	 1.8	85.8	 7.2
East Lothian	82.9	 -0.8	63.3	 4.0
East Renfrewshire	96.3	0.4	88.6	 6.1
Edinburgh City	83.7	 -0.5	64.1	 3.3
Falkirk	86.5	 2.4	67.9	 10.5
Fife	81.5	 -0.5	60.0	 3.5
Highland	85.1	 -0.3	62.5	 3.1
Midlothian	82.5	 2.8	58.4	 3.5
Moray	85.3	 -3.7	61.6	 0.7
Orkney Islands	91.7	 2.2	66.8	 -3.7
Perth and Kinross	85.4	 -0.7	64.1	 1.9
Scottish Borders	84.9	 1.8	63.9	 0.7
Shetland Islands	Not available		72.9	 8.5
South Ayrshire	88.0	 0.4	70.6	 9.4
South Lanarkshire	84.3	 2.6	64.9	 8.5
Stirling	86.0	 -1.6	72.3	 9.1
West Lothian	86.1	 0.9	72.1	 8.2
Western Isles	88.9	 -2.5	65.9	0.0

Cont.

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Council	Percentage of school leavers achieving 1 award or more at SCQF level 5 or better		Percentage of school leavers achieving 5 awards or more at SCQF level 5 or better	
	2018/19	% change since 2013/14	2018/19	% change since 2013/14
Attainment challenge councils:				
Clackmannanshire	78.8	 -1.2	55.8	 5.4
Dundee City	78.8	 -1.3	55.6	 5.4
East Ayrshire	80.0	 -2.9	62.0	 3.2
Glasgow City	83.2	 2.7	57.8	 8.1
Inverclyde	89.5	 2.5	67.1	 8.5
North Ayrshire	83.3	 3.2	60.7	 7.6
North Lanarkshire	84.4	 -0.9	62.4	 5.7
Renfrewshire	88.2	 0.6	66.3	 2.8
West Dunbartonshire	85.6	 1.4	58.2	 1.6
Scotland	85.1	 0.7	64.3	 5.5

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Council	Percentage of 16–19 year olds participating in education, employment or training		Percentage of school leavers achieving literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 4	
	2019/20	% change since 2015/16	2018/19	% change since 2015/16
Aberdeen City	89.9	1.0	85.9	-2.0
Aberdeenshire	92.3	-0.9	90.7	-2.0
Angus	91.4	-0.2	89.0	-1.6
Argyll and Bute	94.1	-0.1	89.3	1.4
Dumfries and Galloway	91.9	1.3	89.3	1.9
East Dunbartonshire	96.1	0.5	97.3	1.7
East Lothian	94.5	3.9	88.9	0.8
East Renfrewshire	96.7	0.3	95.8	0.3
Edinburgh City	92.4	2.5	89.1	1.1
Falkirk	91.9	2.1	93.8	7.7
Fife	91.7	3.4	90.1	2.0
Highland	93.6	0.2	87.8	1.3
Midlothian	93.4	4.7	89.5	1.7
Moray	93.5	2.5	84.8	-2.1
Orkney Islands	94.7	0.6	89.1	-3.9
Perth and Kinross	94.8	2.0	89.4	4.9
Scottish Borders	94.5	3.1	89.9	1.0
Shetland Islands	96.8	-0.6	91.7	-2.1
South Ayrshire	91.4	0.5	91.4	-0.2
South Lanarkshire	92.7	2.3	88.2	1.0
Stirling	94.4	2.3	93.2	0.7
West Lothian	92.4	2.7	90.1	1.0
Western Isles	95.5	-0.3	88.1	-0.6

Cont.

Council	Percentage of 16–19 year olds participating in education, employment or training		Percentage of school leavers achieving literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 4	
	2019/20	% change since 2015/16	2018/19	% change since 2015/16
Attainment challenge councils:				
Clackmannanshire	89.3	1.1	83.9	1.1
Dundee City	90.0	2.3	85.8	-0.2
East Ayrshire	90.0	0.7	89.2	3.8
Glasgow City	89.5	2.7	85.8	2.7
Inverclyde	92.9	1.7	92.4	1.2
North Ayrshire	90.6	0.7	88.2	0.7
North Lanarkshire	90.7	1.4	87.1	0.6
Renfrewshire	92.4	1.7	92.1	1.0
West Dunbartonshire	90.2	1.8	88.9	4.5
Scotland	92.1	1.7	89.3	1.2

Notes: The percentage of school leavers achieving one or more award at level 5 is not available for Shetland due to small numbers. In senior phase there were changes to how achievement of literacy and numeracy was recognised which is why 2015/16 is the baseline. The participation measure was first published in 2015/16 and 2019/20 data was published in August 2020.

Sources: 1 award or more at level 5 or better – Summary statistics for attainment and initial leaver destinations, Scottish Government; School leavers with 5 or more awards at level 5 and level 4 literacy and numeracy – Insight Database, Scottish Government (We have used two separate sources for qualifications data due to data availability – these are not directly comparable. See methodology section for further details); Annual Participation measure – Skills Development Scotland.



32. The increase in pass rates means more young people were eligible for places at university. The Scottish Government gave a commitment that there would be 'provision for enough places in universities and colleges to ensure that no one is crowded out of a place they would otherwise have been awarded' and announced plans to fund additional student places.²⁴ The Rapid Review of National Qualifications also noted it had been reported that entrance grades for some courses had been inflated for 2021 as a consequence of more young people applying for courses.²⁵

Data collection on national performance for primary and early secondary pupils was cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic. This will affect performance tracking over time.

33. In our previous school education report in 2014, we reported that performance measurement of primary school pupils was limited to the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN). The SSLN was discontinued in 2017 and the Scottish Government developed new measures. These new measures of pupil performance at primary and early secondary school, based on teacher judgement, have been available since 2016/17. These show some improvements between 2016/17 and 2018/19, with variation across councils.²⁶ However, data was not collected in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, meaning there is no national data on trends in academic performance for these pupils.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had negative impacts on children and young people that could affect them across a range of outcomes

34. The public health response to the Covid-19 pandemic meant that schools in Scotland were closed from 23 March 2020 until after the school holidays in August. This had an impact on children's and young people's learning, experiences and wellbeing, and could affect their outcomes in the longer term. The Children's Commissioner has also highlighted concerns about the impact on children's and young people's human rights.²⁷ After schools reopened, pupils continued to be affected by public health measures. Some were required to self-isolate and spend time away from school because they or a close contact had tested positive for Covid-19. Schools closed again in January 2021 for a period of remote teaching and learning. We discuss the support that schools, councils, Scottish Government and their partners provided to children and young people and their families in [Working together to improve outcomes \(page 34\)](#).

35. This disruption to learning is likely to have an impact on the range of outcomes that young people should achieve through school education. Negative impacts identified by the Scottish Government include loss of learning and loss of school experiences such as interacting with their peers.²⁸ The pandemic has also impacted on the opportunities for young people to participate in some activities that contribute to those broader life skills and wider outcomes, such as work placements and Duke of Edinburgh's Awards.

36. The cancellation of senior phase examinations in 2020 meant a period of significant challenge and uncertainty for young people. They reported confusion and anxiety over conflicting messages about how their grades would be calculated.²⁹ Some young people who initially achieved university places through clearing reported that they could not go back to their original course choices when grades were improved using teacher judgement.³⁰

37. This audit does not look specifically at outcomes for children and young people who need additional support for learning (ASL) or care-experienced children and young people. However, available research shows that Covid-19 has had additional detrimental impacts on these children and young people. For example, some parents and carers of children who need ASL have found it particularly challenging to support their learning at home, and care-experienced children and young people are more likely to face challenges with distance learning.³¹ A survey of over 1,000 children who were care experienced or on the edges of the care system by the mentoring charity MCR pathways found that 67 per cent reported feeling low, more anxious and stressed and 68 per cent did no schoolwork during the initial lockdown.³²

38. Covid-19 has affected children and young people in wider ways. Increased isolation, the impact of the economic downturn on their family/carer's financial situation, having family or friends experiencing illness or bereavement, increased stress in the home or domestic situation and increased risk of other adverse childhood experiences have all taken a toll.

Covid-19 has had a detrimental effect on children's and young people's mental health and wellbeing

39. Many young people have reported that their mental health and wellbeing has been affected by the impacts of the pandemic. A series of surveys carried out by the Children's Parliament found that the proportion of children who were able to cope and bounce back from adversity had declined over time. The proportion of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement 'Even if I am having

a difficult time, I feel I will be okay' fell from 72 per cent in April, to 70 per cent in May and 67 per cent in June.³³ The most recent survey showed no change over time for 12–14-year-old boys in those who agreed with the statement, but a fall from 62 per cent to 54 per cent in girls of the same age.³⁴

40. Some children and young people had a better experience. Findings from the Scottish Government's equity audit show that some children found it easier to learn remotely, especially if they had a good digital set-up and good parental engagement.³⁵

Schools, councils and the Scottish Government have increased their focus on improving children's and young people's health and wellbeing following the impact of Covid-19

41. The Audit Scotland review of children's and young people's mental health found that support for mental health and wellbeing within schools varies.³⁶ The NIF recognises the importance of health and wellbeing to pupils' ability to learn. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, schools and councils were already putting a lot of work into improving children's and young people's health and wellbeing. We found many examples of how councils and schools are doing this, both as part of their core activity and through specific projects and posts funded by the Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF). The ASF includes Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) that has gone directly to schools and a number of PEF projects in schools aim to improve children's and young people's health and wellbeing. We discuss the ASF further in the next chapter.

42. Those working in education are focusing on children's and young people's wellbeing as a key priority as the sector continues to deal with and recover from the impact of Covid-19. For example, the RICs have prioritised health and wellbeing in their recovery plans. The Scottish Government acknowledges that the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, as well as that of parents and carers, has been negatively affected by the pandemic.³⁷

43. The *Coronavirus (Covid-19): mental health – transition and recovery plan*, part of which is designed to specifically support children, young people and their carers, sets out a series of actions. These include ensuring all schools have access to a counselling service by the end of October 2020, providing a framework to support a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing in the context of Covid-19, and developing a national policy to support children's and young people's mental health and wellbeing for all sectors of the children and families workforce by Autumn 2021.³⁸ Funding of £15 million has been distributed amongst all councils to support the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and their parents and carers.³⁹

44. There has been a focus on supporting other aspects of wellbeing during the pandemic. For example, through the provision of free school meals for eligible children during lockdown, and in the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays.

There are more opportunities for young people to achieve wider outcomes, but there are challenges and Covid-19 has added to these

45. A number of other opportunities are available to pupils at schools through partnerships with colleges and employers, reflecting the ambitions in CfE. These include pupils achieving Foundation Apprenticeships and pupils studying



The proportion of children who were able to cope and bounce back from adversity declined over time, notably among 12–14-year-old girls

for qualifications through courses at colleges. These alternative pathways are becoming more common for young people.

46. Foundation Apprenticeships are a work-based learning opportunity for secondary school pupils in the senior phase, usually lasting for two years. Students typically start their Foundation Apprenticeship in S5, working out of school in college or with a local employer. They can do this while studying for other qualifications at school.

47. The first cohort of Foundation Apprenticeships started in 2016. The number of people starting a Foundation Apprenticeship has increased almost tenfold, from 346 in the 2016 cohort to 3,445 in 2019.⁴⁰ However, drop-out rates are high.⁴¹

48. The Scottish Government has said that it wants to achieve the change in the system necessary to embed Foundation Apprenticeships in the senior phase curriculum. Education Scotland will be reviewing the Foundation Apprenticeships programme with the aim of improving their delivery.⁴²

49. College as an alternative pathway for young people is becoming more common. The number of school pupils under 16 years of age attending college almost doubled between 2014/15 and 2019/20 (from 18,450 in 2014/15 to 35,801 in 2019/20). Pupils aged under 16 now make up 15 per cent of the student population compared with eight per cent in 2014/15.⁴³

50. Barriers to the provision of these different pathways include aligning school and college timetables, and transport difficulties, particularly in more rural areas. Aspects of the way colleges are funded can also create challenges. In most cases, courses undertaken by school pupils at college, such as Highers, are funded through core rather than additional funding. It is for colleges to work with their partners to assess demand from school and post-school learners and decide how best to allocate places and funding. Foundation Apprenticeships undertaken by school pupils are funded as additional activity, paid as pupils hit agreed milestones. This can be problematic when the drop-out rate is high.

51. The focus by some commentators on exam qualifications being the perceived best outcome for young people, and the greater focus on academic attainment in key performance measures, can also mean that some young people do not get the same encouragement and support to pursue these alternative pathways. These issues have implications for ensuring that young people are pursuing a path that is best for them, which may not be an academic one, and for achieving the Scottish Government's skills ambitions.

52. There are risks that the economic downturn resulting from Covid-19 will affect the opportunities available to young people. Employers may not be able to offer the same apprenticeship and work placement opportunities, and colleges are facing financial pressures.⁴⁴ In addition, the economic situation is likely to reduce the number of jobs and other opportunities available to young people.^{45 46} The Scottish Government is aiming to mitigate this through the introduction of the Young Person's Guarantee in September 2020. This guarantees that by September 2022 everyone in Scotland between the ages of 16 and 24 will have the opportunity, based on their own personal circumstances and ambitions, to go to university or college, or participate in an apprenticeship programme, training, work experience or a formal volunteering programme.⁴⁷

The number of school pupils under 16 years of age attending college almost doubled between 2014/15 and 2019/20

The Scottish Government, councils and their partners need to build on the work already undertaken to agree clear priorities for education recovery and improved outcomes after Covid-19

53. As we have previously highlighted, it is always important that national and local policy sets out what outcomes it intends to achieve for people, and that data and evidence are available to measure progress and take further action if needed.⁴⁸ It is now more important than ever that schools, councils and the Scottish Government are clear about:

- the priorities for education recovery from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and how to improve outcomes beyond what was being achieved before
- what that means in terms of the anticipated outcomes for children and young people
- how these outcomes will be measured, reported and acted on.

54. They need to build on the actions set out in the NIF 2021, the policy alignment that is already in place across the education sector, the joint working, and the learning from how education has responded to the Covid-19 pandemic.

55. The impact of Covid-19 has increased the focus on wider outcomes, particularly health and wellbeing. As the country recovers from the impact of Covid-19 and agrees its priorities for improvement there are opportunities for the Scottish Government and local government to do more to ensure that wider outcomes receive the same attention and prominence as exam performance as they work to address the negative impacts on children and young people.

Inequalities

- 1** Nationally the poverty-related attainment gap between pupils living in the most and least deprived areas has narrowed across most NIF outcome indicators, but it remains wide. The gap is wider at higher levels of qualifications. The reduction in the poverty-related attainment gap is because the performance of pupils in the most deprived areas has improved more than the performance of those from the least deprived areas. Reducing the poverty-related attainment gap is a complex challenge and will take time but improvement needs to happen more quickly.
- 2** Measurement of progress to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap will be affected by temporary disruption to data, for example caused by changes to the assessment process as a result of exam cancellations.
- 3** The effects of Covid-19, including the economic impacts and the public health measures which have been put in place, are likely to increase levels of inequality experienced by children and young people. During the pandemic there has been variation in the learning experience of children and young people, and there is a risk that this will exacerbate the poverty-related attainment gap.
- 4** The impact of Covid-19 on outcomes for children and young people is influenced by their circumstances including their experience of poverty and deprivation. Pupils living in very challenging circumstances have been most affected by the impact of school closures. These pupils were particularly affected by access to digital resources. The Scottish Government and its partners have taken action to address the digital gap, but it has taken time to implement these measures.

- 5 The Scottish Government, councils and their partners recognise that addressing inequalities must be at the core of plans for education recovery and beyond.
 - 6 Future efforts to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap, including the targeting of funds, should take account of the impact of Covid-19 on the scale and spread of poverty, and address the limitations of the current approach to targeting based on SIMD.
-

The gap in attainment between pupils in the most and least deprived communities has reduced in recent years but remains wide

56. The Scottish Government defines the poverty-related attainment gap as the difference in attainment between pupils living in the most deprived and least deprived areas, with level of deprivation being based on SIMD quintiles. An individual's SIMD status is based on where they live, with those who live in the 20 per cent of areas with the highest deprivation recorded as being in the most deprived quintile.

57. Nationally, the poverty-related attainment gap has narrowed slightly across most indicators in recent years, mainly because the performance of those from the most deprived SIMD quintile has improved at a faster rate. For example, the gap in school leavers achieving five or more awards at level 5 narrowed by 5.4 percentage points between 2013/14 and 2018/19 ([Exhibit B](#) on our website). Leavers from the most deprived quintile improved by 8.4 percentage points and leavers from the least deprived quintile improved by 3.0 percentage points.⁴⁹ Across all the indicators we looked at relating to the senior phase there is a gap between pupils from the least deprived and most deprived areas ([Exhibit C](#) on our website). This gap is wider at higher levels of award:

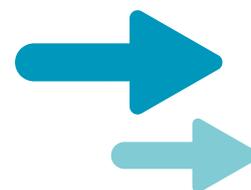
- In 2018/19, 94.0 per cent of pupils from the least deprived areas achieved five or more awards at level 4, compared to 76.1 per cent of pupils from the most deprived areas – a gap of 18.0 percentage points.
- In 2018/19, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more awards at level 5 was 82.7 per cent for pupils from the least deprived areas, compared to 46.5 per cent for school leavers from the most deprived areas – a gap of 36.2 percentage points.

58. Deprivation alone does not account for all variation in council performance ([Exhibit 4, page 28](#)). For school leavers from the most deprived areas who achieved five or more awards at level 5 in 2018/19, performance across councils ranged from 26.5 per cent to 71.5 per cent. In the case of school leavers from the least deprived areas, performance ranged from 72.7 per cent to 93.6 per cent.

59. Between 2014/15 and 2018/19 the poverty-related attainment gap in the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more awards at level 5 narrowed in most councils, although it increased in ten ([Exhibit D](#) on our website).

60. The poverty-related attainment gap, in terms of expected levels of literacy and numeracy, is also evident at primary school level and early secondary school level, and is reducing only slightly– ([Exhibit E](#) on our website).

61. Exam awards in 2020 showed a narrowing of the attainment gap, but awards were based on teacher judgements and are not directly comparable with those of previous years.

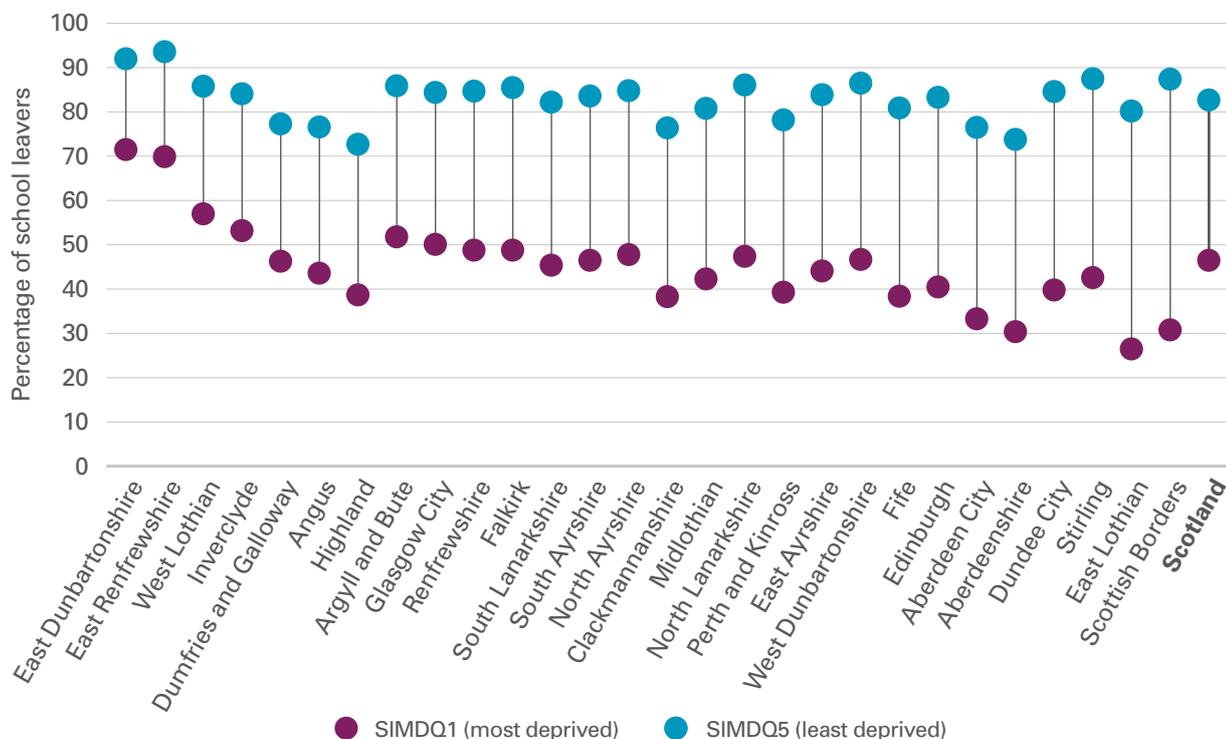


Nationally, the poverty-related attainment gap has narrowed slightly, mainly because the performance of those from the most deprived SIMD quintile has improved at a faster rate

Exhibit 4

Gap between most deprived and least deprived pupils in percentage of school leavers achieving five or more awards at level 5 2018/19

The gap between SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) and SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived) is evident at a local level, with some councils reporting much bigger gaps than others.



Source: Insight. Due to small numbers this analysis does not include Moray, Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland.

62. Based on the alternative assessment model for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher awards in 2020, the increase in pass rates was greater for pupils from the most deprived areas than for pupils from the least deprived areas:

- At National 5 the attainment gap measured by pass rate decreased from 17.1 percentage points to 7.8 percentage points.
- At Higher it decreased from 16.4 percentage points to 6.4 percentage points.
- At Advanced Higher it decreased from 13.6 percentage points to 2.7 percentage points.⁵⁰

Reducing the poverty-related attainment gap is a complex challenge and will take time but improvement needs to happen more quickly

63. The Scottish Government committed to reducing the poverty-related attainment gap over the lifetime of this parliament (2016–2021). There is broad recognition among Scottish Government, Education Scotland, councils and schools that the complexity of contributory factors means that it will take time to significantly reduce the poverty-related attainment gap. The 2018 NIF Plan identified stretch aims for the NIF indicators, for each SIMD quintile. The latest

NIF Plan states that none of the measures are currently narrowing to the extent shown by the stretch aims.⁵¹ The Scottish Government has explicitly said that stretch aims are not targets, but challenging ambitions. Improvement will need to happen more quickly if substantial inroads are to be made in reducing the gap, particularly in view of the unequal effects of Covid-19.

The Scottish Attainment Challenge and Attainment Scotland Fund are important elements of the drive to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap

64. The Scottish Government launched the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) in 2015, supported by the Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF). This funding is intended to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap over the course of this parliament, with further funding announced for 2021/22. £488 million of the ASF funding was for the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) between 2017/18 and 2020/21, with this money going directly to schools based on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals.⁵²

65. Nine councils with the highest levels of deprivation based on SIMD received £212 million funding through the ASF, and a further £36 million was allocated to schools with high levels of deprivation across all council areas. The remainder was allocated to national programmes (£39 million) and specific targeting for care-experienced children and young people (£29 million). After the initial closure of schools in March 2020, the Scottish Government issued guidance to councils that use of the ASF could be more flexible, citing examples where funding had been already used to provide digital devices, books and other learning material, transport for children to attend school hubs and supporting home-school link workers to maintain contact with children.⁵³

Councils and schools are using the Attainment Scotland Fund in different ways in response to local needs. There is more scope for sustained improvement where the approach is one that aims to develop and embed practice

66. Most ASF funding is being spent on staffing; programmes focused on transitions between different stages of education, such as from primary to secondary; literacy and numeracy; teaching methods; quality of teaching and leadership; and wellbeing and nutrition.

67. In some cases, councils and schools are funding specific activities, for example programmes to offset the impact of poverty by reducing the cost of the school day to families (such as paying for equipment and trips) so that all learners have the same opportunities. Schools and councils have also employed or contracted additional specialist support such as family link workers and speech and language therapists. Councils told us it would be difficult to pay for this extra support without the additional funding.

68. Other uses of the fund have the potential to be more sustainable in the longer term, such as those where funding has been used to improve teaching expertise and practice and this can be embedded within the school or local education system. In 2017 and 2018, Education Scotland carried out inspections of all nine attainment challenge councils to assess their progress.⁵⁴ They highlighted sustainability as a concern, particularly given the temporary nature of ASF funding. The inspections also noted the need to integrate ASF-funded activity with core services to add value.



£736 million from the ASF has been allocated to schools and councils since 2015

Headteachers believe the Attainment Scotland Fund is making a difference for pupils. However, it is too early to see evidence of its long-term impact on outcomes, and performance data on attainment does not indicate improvement across all indicators and all councils

69. It is hard to identify the long-term impact of SAC and the ASF on outcomes at this stage as it will take time for changes to filter through. Performance data suggests that the impact of the funding on attainment is limited so far. However, case studies, school reports and evidence from the third interim evaluation of the ASF, published in October 2020, indicate that it is making a difference for pupils. A survey of headteachers in the latest evaluation found:

- 91 per cent of headteachers reported they have seen an improvement in closing the poverty-related attainment gap as a result of the ASF approaches, an increase of 13 percentage points since 2017
- 98 per cent of headteachers expected to see improvement in closing the gap in the following five years
- headteachers most likely to report an improvement in closing the gap were those that had seen a change in culture or ethos and where there was improved understanding of the barriers faced by pupils and families
- headteachers who felt confident using evidence to inform their approach were also most likely to report an improvement in closing the gap.⁵⁵

70. Schools and councils are getting better at identifying needs, reviewing what works, and determining the impact on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. They are being supported in this by RICs and Education Scotland. There is scope to achieve greater consistency and impact across the system through evaluation and transfer of learning.

71. The 2017 and 2018 Education Scotland inspections of the challenge councils found that there was progress across all councils, with excellent progress in Glasgow City and Renfrewshire.⁵⁶ In the majority of attainment challenge councils, data is being used effectively to inform all aspects of the work of the SAC and senior officers make good use of data to support and challenge their schools.

72. Given the level of resource that has been targeted through the ASF and the slow rate of improvement in attainment, if the ASF continues in some form beyond the current funding period the Scottish Government needs to be clearer about the anticipated pace of change, identify and measure against appropriate milestones, and consider the lessons about what works in determining how funding is directed.

The way that ASF funding has been targeted does not fully capture pupils living in poverty. The economic consequences of Covid-19 require a fresh assessment of the criteria for targeting poverty-related funds

73. There is a perception among some non-attainment challenge councils that the provision of higher levels of ASF funding to the nine attainment challenge councils is having a negative effect on those in the middle who may have a lot of pupils experiencing challenges related to deprivation, but do not receive additional money from this part of the programme.

98 per cent of headteachers expected to see improvement in closing the poverty-related attainment gap in the following five years

74. The methodology behind how the Scottish Government targeted SAC does not fully reflect broader demographic issues, for example adequately taking account of rural poverty and the costs of delivering education in remote communities. Nor does it reflect isolated deprivation in more affluent areas, or councils with high numbers of pupils in deprived areas but proportionately less, compared with some attainment challenge councils with smaller populations.

75. Covid-19 has had, and will continue to have, a detrimental impact on unemployment, the labour market and poverty. It may also lead to a corresponding change in the distribution of people living in poverty. These factors will have implications for how support is targeted, including how pupils are identified and supported quickly. It also raises questions about the scale and duration of targeted funding that will be necessary. The Scottish Government is considering this as it develops the next version of the SAC.

The effects of Covid-19 are likely to increase levels of inequality experienced by children and young people

76. The impact of Covid-19 on outcomes for children and young people is influenced by their circumstances including their experience of poverty and deprivation both before the onset of the pandemic and since.

77. Economic impacts and public health measures are likely to increase inequality as more people become unemployed or experience reduced income, with a resulting rise in child poverty.⁵⁷ In a survey of teachers, there were significant differences in the answers to questions from teachers working in the most and least deprived areas; 57 per cent of teachers working in the most deprived areas expected more students to be malnourished as a result of school closures due to Covid-19, compared to three per cent of those working in the least deprived areas.⁵⁸ A survey of young people of colour carried out during lockdown reported that 45 per cent of respondents felt they had fewer opportunities than their white counterparts before the pandemic and that this has been exacerbated. Two-thirds of respondents thought that compared with their white counterparts their education was at greater risk as a consequence of Covid-19.⁵⁹

At different stages of the pandemic there has been variation in the learning experience of children and young people which is likely to increase the poverty-related attainment gap

78. During the first lockdown (March – June 2020), young people from disadvantaged backgrounds experienced difficulties in learning due to factors such as lack of access to IT and suitable workspaces, and caring responsibilities.

79. The level of support available from families also influenced the take-up of home learning. Access to devices and broadband was a significant inhibitor, as was parental knowledge and understanding of the various platforms used by schools. The Children's Commissioner stated that families reported many problems in relation to digital access including lack of devices, only having phones to access the internet, and not having access to Wi-Fi.⁶⁰ Among teachers, 57 per cent thought that having poor or no internet was a barrier to home learning and 64 per cent said that having no access to technology was a barrier to home learning.⁶¹

80. Two-thirds of teachers (and 78.3 per cent of heads and deputies) said that their students' challenging home circumstances including illness, financial problems, limited access to food and domestic abuse were a barrier to home learning.⁶² In the same survey, 61 per cent of teachers thought that low student participation

Two-thirds of teachers said that their students' challenging home circumstances were a barrier to home learning

was a barrier to delivering home learning.⁶³ Most teachers said their highest attaining students were engaging with online learning better than their lowest attaining students. Teachers also thought that their lowest attaining students' learning would suffer more from the lack of contact with other students compared to their highest attaining students.⁶⁴ During lockdown, books and materials were delivered to vulnerable families and some schools were not only delivering schoolwork to children's homes, but also food and clothing.

81. Between schools returning in August 2020 and closing again in January 2021, young people from more disadvantaged areas have had a higher percentage of Covid-19-related absences than those from areas with less disadvantage. When schools initially reopened the distribution of Covid-19-related absences was more even, differing between areas by at most 0.2 per cent. In the months since, there have been times when the most disadvantaged areas have had more than double the percentage of absences due to Covid-19-related reasons than the least disadvantaged areas. In mid-November, for example, the absence rate in the least disadvantaged areas was around 3.2 per cent compared with 6.6 per cent in the most disadvantaged areas.⁶⁵ The variation in absence rates could affect the poverty-related attainment gap and was part of the rationale for the decision to halt the diet of exams in 2021, in the interests of equity and fairness.⁶⁶

82. Digital exclusion has been identified by the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland as a significant risk in exacerbating existing inequalities.⁶⁷ The Scottish Government has invested £25 million in reducing the number of children and young people digitally excluded.⁶⁸ However, there are still people and communities that do not have access to an affordable or reliable internet connection. Good internet connectivity is a challenge for some councils, particularly in rural areas.⁶⁹

83. The Scottish Government and its partners have taken action to reduce digital exclusion, and we recognise the challenges and scale of the endeavour, however, the response has taken some time to fully implement. At December 2020 over 58,000 devices had been provided to learners, against an original target of 70,000, and 10,000 internet connections had been provided.

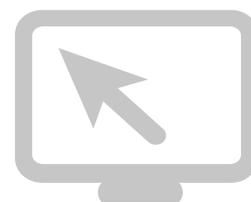
84. During the first lockdown and subsequently while self-isolating, pupils' experiences of remote learning and teaching have been variable, with different approaches and levels of provision across the country, councils and schools.

85. Due to the timing of the audit work, we have not looked at remote learning in the second lockdown.

The education sector recognises that addressing inequalities has to be at the core of the longer-term plans for education recovery, improvement and achievement of outcomes

86. The latest version of the NIF continues to stress the importance of achieving equity with a particular focus on closing the attainment gap as a key priority for the Scottish Government. The NIF outlines actions the Scottish Government has taken to reduce the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the attainment gap including funding extra teaching and support staff, and providing free school meals during the school holidays and digital support for disadvantaged pupils.

[Spending on education \(page 42\)](#) looks at this extra funding in more detail.



At December 2020 over 58,000 devices and 10,000 internet connections had been provided

87. The Scottish Government, councils and their partners need to fully understand the impact of Covid-19 on all young people and gather the relevant data if they are to support the development of appropriate responses. The Scottish Government published an equity audit in early 2021.⁷⁰ The audit aimed to understand the impact on children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The report identified five key areas to focus on for accelerating recovery:

- health and wellbeing support
- digital infrastructure and connectivity
- support to parents and families
- teaching provision and quality of learning
- support for teachers and wider workforce.

88. The Scottish Government plans to use the evidence from the equity audit, alongside the most recent published NIF, the report from the International Council of Education Advisors, and the five-year impact report on the SAC (yet to be published) to continue to support learning and reduce inequality, including in its development of plans to replace the SAC which ends in 2021.⁷¹

Working together to improve outcomes

- 1** Before the Covid-19 pandemic, schools, councils and Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) were already working together constructively and with the Scottish Government and Education Scotland around a shared vision of improving education outcomes.
- 2** This strong foundation helped in the delivery of a rapid and nationally coordinated response to the pandemic, in exceptionally challenging circumstances. The Covid-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG) is a particularly good example of effective joint working during this time. Collaboration between councils in their response to the pandemic was strong, particularly through Directors of Education in their involvement with the CERG and the Association of Directors of Education (ADES), their professional network.
- 3** The RICs are still developing and have the potential to be key drivers of improvement provided that they have broad local engagement and that they add value to what is already happening in councils and schools.
- 4** Empowering pupils, parents and teachers is an important part of the recent education reforms. Those involved in education recognised that the initial response to the pandemic needed to be centrally controlled and consistent, while still allowing schools and councils to decide how best to support local pupils. Teachers, schools, pupils and parents working together will be key to a successful recovery.

- 5 At the start of the pandemic there was a shift to remote learning, and support for this was provided nationally. There was, however, significant local variation in the delivery and take-up of remote learning during the first lockdown.
 - 6 The approach to parental and pupil engagement varies to take account of local circumstances and the level of priority it is given by schools and councils. There is scope for the Scottish Government and councils to be more proactive in communicating with children and young people about how their views have been taken into account in the decision-making process.
-

The education sector was working well together before Covid-19 with an agreed approach on delivering education reform

89. Before the pandemic, schools, councils and RICs were already working constructively with each other and with the Scottish Government and Education Scotland around a shared vision of improving education outcomes. This alignment was reflected in how the NIF priorities and drivers for improvement are used in education planning ([paragraphs 12 and 95](#)).

90. The Joint Agreement between the Scottish Government and COSLA reached in 2018 set out a mutually agreed approach to delivering education reforms and a shared commitment to empower schools by moving more decision-making and responsibility to local level.⁷² It also recognises the part played by 'strong leadership, collaborative working and clarity of purpose at all layers of the system and the notion of the empowered school within a collaborative community'.

91. Since the publication of the Joint Agreement, the Scottish Government, Education Scotland, COSLA, ADES and a range of stakeholders have worked together to develop draft guidance on how to move towards a more empowered system of more local decision-making in collaboration.⁷³

92. The education reforms have introduced change into the Scottish system by creating RICs and promoting local empowerment. The bodies involved in planning, delivering and improving school education are making progress in implementing the reforms though it is too early to judge their impact on outcomes.

93. The RICs are still developing and have the potential to be key drivers of improvement provided that they have broad local engagement with councils, schools and other partners, such as third sector organisations and employers, and that they add value to what is already happening to improve education outcomes. Early concerns that RICs could encroach upon the role of councils in delivering education outcomes have diminished and stakeholders are clear that local accountability for improving outcomes remains with councils.

94. The School Empowerment Group, which includes representation from across the sector, published a draft evaluation strategy setting out how school empowerment will be evaluated, but this does not focus on outcomes or set out its relationship with the NIF indicators. The aims of the strategy are concerned with assessing stakeholder engagement and understanding how well the empowerment agenda is embedded across the system, and what is and is not working well in moving towards empowerment.

Councils, schools and others are working together using the six drivers in the National Improvement Framework to improve outcomes

95. Schools, councils, RICs and Education Scotland are carrying out quality improvement through multiple channels. They are working to improve outcomes by taking action and making progress nationally and locally in relation to the six drivers of improvement set out in the NIF:

- teacher professionalism
- parental engagement
- leadership in schools

- continuous improvement in education
- assessing children's progress to ensure actions are improving outcomes
- using performance information to understand what contributes to a successful education system and how it is improving.

96. The strong link between the quality of teaching and outcomes for young people is reflected in the NIF drivers and actions to improve teacher professionalism and leadership. The NIF drivers also reflect the importance of schools and councils making good use of data to drive forward improvement planning. Since the Accounts Commission report in 2014, more data is available to allow schools and councils to look at where improvement is needed. We saw examples of detailed analysis of this data by schools and councils leading to them targeting interventions and approaches at specific pupils or groups of pupils.

97. The Scottish Government, Education Scotland, teaching unions, headteacher associations, councils and parents and carers groups, have developed draft guidance on Empowering Teachers and Practitioners. Our discussions with teacher organisations and teacher and head-teacher focus groups in 2019 found that teachers already felt empowered to utilise their professional skills to make the best decisions for the pupils they are teaching.

98. Councils and schools are increasingly using an evidence-based approach to support improvement. For example, schools and councils have stopped or amended programmes or initiatives funded by the Attainment Scotland Fund where they are showing insufficient impact on outcomes.

Joint working has strengthened throughout the pandemic with the Covid-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG) working well

99. The strong foundation of good joint working helped education stakeholders to work well together to deliver a rapid and nationally coordinated response to the pandemic in exceptionally challenging circumstances. All parts of the system had to work together and at pace to put in place remote learning for pupils when the schools closed and to safeguard children and young people. The scale of the challenge should not be under-estimated, and we commend the sector for its response.

100. Stakeholders recognised that the initial response to the pandemic needed to be centrally controlled and consistent. As a result, there was less of a focus on local empowerment although schools, councils and teachers still took decisions locally about how to support pupils. Guidance that was issued by the Scottish Government was often developed in partnership with directors of education and other local representatives involved in the CERG and its workstreams.

101. The CERG is a particularly good example of effective joint working during the pandemic. Jointly chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and the COSLA Children and Young People spokesperson, the group provides leadership and advice to ministers and council leaders in order to develop the strategic response to recovery.⁷⁴ The group's membership includes representatives of the Scottish Government, COSLA, parent bodies, councils, professional bodies and trades unions. Its ten workstreams address a wide range of immediate, practical and operational issues, and longer-term impacts of the pandemic. Examples include workforce support, supporting learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and curriculum and assessment. The group met frequently from



Councils and schools are increasingly using an evidence-based approach to support improvement

April 2020, advising leaders at a fast pace in a rapidly changing environment and producing national guidance for schools, teachers, parents and pupils.

102. A sub-group of the Scottish Government Covid-19 Advisory Group was also created for education and children's issues. This provided advice and guidance to policy teams and ministers, particularly around the safe reopening of schools.

103. The CERG was not part of the process for all decisions. For example, the Scottish Government's final decision to reopen schools after the summer holidays in August 2020 was not discussed with the CERG in advance and represented a significant change in plan with little notice.

Improving outcomes for children and young people through school education requires the contribution of wider stakeholders

104. Wider stakeholders also have a role to play in improving outcomes for children and young people through school education (**Exhibit 2, page 10**). Health, social work and the third sector provide vital services for children and young people to support them in their education for example through youth support workers or mental health services.

105. At a strategic level in addition to the CERG, a COVID-19 Children and Families Collective Leadership Group was established in May 2020 and is chaired by the Scottish Government's Chief Social Work Adviser and SOLACE Children and Families Lead.⁷⁵ The group involves partners from health, social work and the third sector and considers the needs of vulnerable children and families and the support that is required. There is scope to build on this cross-sector working in the future.

Collaboration between councils in their response to the pandemic was strong

106. There was a key role for councils' Directors of Education in responding to the pandemic. Collaboration through the Directors of Education was strong, both through their role on the CERG and as a professional network through the Association of Directors of Education (ADES). This group moved to meeting every week from previously meeting every six months, aiding governance and collaboration.

107. All RICs developed recovery plans which reprioritised workstreams, with particular prominence given to health and wellbeing, practitioner networks, professional development and the use of digital technology. The West Partnership, for example, developed the West OS, an online library of recorded learning episodes which is part of the resources now available to all schools and learners across Scotland.

There was significant local variation in delivery and take-up of remote learning and teaching

108. When schools closed in March 2020, schools, teachers and councils moved quickly to providing remote learning. Education Scotland supported this shift nationally, making resources available online through GLOW, the national digital platform for remote learning. Councils and schools were also able to use and provide other online resources. The provision varied across schools, teachers and subjects, with pupils using a range of different digital tools. There was also wide variation in the extent to which pupils had access to face-to-face teaching from a teacher. The Children's Commissioner and parents' groups, have raised concerns

about the variation in the resources to support remote learning and teaching during the initial school closures, for example inconsistent use of GLOW, the ability of teachers to engage online and access to devices.^{76 77}

109. Working in partnership, Education Scotland, councils and RICs have developed more comprehensive and coordinated national resources and support. This National e-Learning Offer is for practitioners planning and preparing remote or blended e-learning opportunities for children and young people. Part of this is delivered through e-Sgoil (initially developed by Western Isles Council) to provide live, interactive lessons for pupils in senior phase and broad general education, along with study support in a range of qualifications. The National e-Learning Offer also uses recorded content led by the West Partnership, and materials identified by teacher networks and organised by Education Scotland that senior pupils can use themselves to support their learning in a range of national qualifications.

110. The shift to digital learning was a huge change for pupils, parents and teachers. Pupils faced a number of challenges, including access to the digital technology and connectivity they needed to use resources and having the space, time and mental capacity to engage with remote learning at a very difficult and unsettling time. Research by the EIS teaching union in May 2020 found that 61 per cent of teachers thought that low student participation was a barrier to delivering home learning, which highlights the challenge of keeping students engaged in their learning when working remotely.⁷⁸ We comment further in [Inequalities \(page 25\)](#) on the unequal impact of these difficulties on some pupils.

111. In June 2020, councils prepared plans for blended learning for the 2020/21 school year with the expectation that pupils would be in school part of the time and have remote learning the rest of the time because of the public health measures that were necessary. However, these moved to contingency plans when the decision was taken by the Scottish Government to open schools fully in August 2020. Since then, evidence submitted by Education Scotland to the Scottish Government in November 2020 showed that 30 out of 31 responding councils had implemented contingency plans for remote learning since schools returned in August 2020.⁷⁹ The extent to which these plans were used was low in almost all councils and where they were used, it was to support pupils who were unable to attend school because of the effects of the pandemic. Most councils reported a medium or high level of confidence that learners could continue to engage with and be supported by their teachers during periods of remote learning.

112. Education Scotland is providing support for teachers in delivering digitally, including providing online events on digital skills. The CERG Workforce Support workstream developed a range of materials to support staff, including online training and professional development. It has also shared learning and best practice, for example through the weekly *Scotland Learns Practitioner* newsletter, and helped provide peer support for teachers through initiatives such as 'Big Blethers', informal online gatherings for teachers across the country.

113. The Covid-19 response has highlighted the potential benefits of digital learning alongside in-person teaching. Some children, for example those who need ASL and those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), struggle to cope with school full time. Some of these children found the remote learning during lockdown a relief from some of the stress and sensory overload of school. These children may benefit from a blended learning model in the future.⁸⁰ The Scottish Government, Education Scotland and councils intend to look further at the potential of the national remote learning offer beyond the pandemic.



Partnership working has led to more coordinated national resources and support for practitioners in planning and preparing remote or blended e-learning

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on school teachers

114. There have been concerns among teachers about their safety, for example about the effectiveness of risk mitigations put in place in schools, although many expressed support for schools remaining open. For many teachers this has put a strain on their wellbeing and mental health.⁸¹

115. Through the CERG Workforce Support workstream a package of measures was put in place to support school staff in dealing with additional pressures from the pandemic including:

- mental health support for staff
- coaching and mentoring for teachers
- increased support for post-probation teachers.

116. From September to December 2020, teacher absence for Covid-19 related reasons fluctuated between just over 1,500 teacher absences (approximately 2.8 per cent of all teachers) to over 2,600 (around 5 per cent).⁸²

117. Teacher surveys have shown a mixed view of how well they have been engaged and empowered during the pandemic.⁸³ Among teachers, 67.5 per cent thought their school had given them the freedom to tailor learning to their students and this rose to 86.7 per cent among heads and deputies. However, only a third of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that they felt well informed about Covid-19 measures and their impact on education.⁸⁴

Councils and schools have an increasing focus on engagement with parents and pupils to drive forward improvement but the extent to which this engagement is meaningful varies. There are opportunities to build on the examples of increased parental engagement that emerged during lockdown

118. An empowered system demands increased levels of engagement with young people and parents to improve outcomes. The Scottish Government published a national action plan on parental involvement in August 2018.⁸⁵ To determine whether the action plan is having its intended impact, the Scottish Government carried out a census of parents in 2019.⁸⁶ The results showed some evidence of positive engagement between schools and parents, with room for improvement in involving parents in decision making earlier.⁸⁷

119. At council and school level the approach to parental engagement varies depending on local needs and circumstances. Challenges exist, for example some parents are highly engaged and others less so, for various reasons. Some schools are trying to support the involvement of less engaged parents, through interventions such as providing food, childcare for younger siblings, translators, or practical activities during meetings. There is also a recognition by schools, councils and parent bodies that parent councils need to be more representative of the whole student parent population.

120. During lockdown, most children were learning at home. As a result, many parents were more involved in, and developed a better understanding of, their child's learning. The increased use of digital technology has also given parents who have the access and skills, an increased understanding of their child's learning, as well as the opportunity to engage digitally with parent forums.

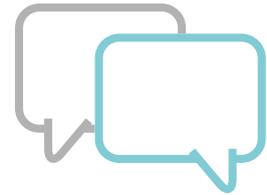
For example, some parents and carers welcomed the opportunity to engage digitally with school and council parent groups from their homes, without having to travel or organise childcare.⁸⁸ This is a positive development that can be built on.

Pupil engagement is happening but inconsistently and not always in line with best practice

121. Pupil engagement structures are in place at school and council levels. For example, in Shetland, the council uses its MSYPs (Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament) to gather opinion as they sit on the Education and Families Committee. The extent to which council and school engagement structures are meaningful and result in pupils influencing improvement is variable. Most schools have a pupil council but students in our focus groups told us that this does not always mean that their voices are being heard. A recent survey of black, asian and minority ethnic (BAME) secondary school pupils in Scotland also found a need for those involved in decision-making in school education to further listen to and value their voices.⁸⁹

122. In the Ipsos MORI Young People in Scotland survey in 2019, 37 per cent of all respondents said that their school was good at talking to them about what they wanted to get from their time at school (34 per cent of females and 41 per cent of males). A fifth said that their school was bad at this. The remaining respondents said it was neither good nor bad, they didn't know, or they preferred not to say.

123. The recent pandemic has led to a welcome increase in children and young people being asked for their opinions, particularly through third sector organisations and at a school level. In some cases, young people's views have influenced decisions, for example in response to the method of grading awards in the absence of exams. However, the Children's Commissioner has highlighted the need for the Scottish Government to routinely assess the impact of decisions on children and on children's rights.⁹⁰ The CERG now has a youth panel but this was only established in October 2020, six months after the main group. The SQA has also now set up a learner panel to work with children and young people. There is scope for the Scottish Government and councils to be more proactive in communicating with children and young people about how their views have then been taken into account in the decision-making process.



37 per cent of young people surveyed said that their school was good at talking to them about what they want to get from their time at school

Spending on education

- 1** Council spending on primary and secondary school education across Scotland increased by 5.1 per cent in real terms between 2013/14 and 2018/19, from £4.1 billion to £4.3 billion. Most of the real-terms increase in spend can be attributed to the Attainment Scotland Fund, which the Scottish Government set up in 2015/16 to close the poverty-related attainment gap. When this is excluded, real-terms spending increased by 0.7 per cent during the period, to just over £4.1 billion.
 - 2** Councils spend just over a quarter of their revenue budgets on education. There is wide variation in councils' spending per pupil but no link between that and attainment levels.
 - 3** The Attainment Scotland Fund represented around four per cent of overall education revenue budgets in 2018/19. The funding is only confirmed until 2021/22 and councils highlighted that they will face significant challenges if they no longer have it.
 - 4** The Scottish Government had put over £200 million extra money into Covid-19 mitigation measures and education recovery by the beginning of January 2021. It is not yet clear how much additional cost will rest with local government.
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Council spending on school education has increased in real terms

124. Most funding for school education comes through councils. Our [Local Government in Scotland: Financial Overview 2019/20](#)  reports on the financial position of councils. Councils' funding and income increased in 2019/20, however reductions over the last seven years are still larger than other areas of the Scottish budget. Councils have limited flexibility over how they use additional funding, and the financial overview provides further detail on this.⁹¹ The remainder of funding for school education comes directly from Scottish Government and Scottish Government agencies.

125. Taking inflation into account, council revenue spending on school education across Scotland increased by 5.1 per cent between 2013/14 and 2018/19, from £4.1 billion to £4.3 billion. This excludes spending on early learning and childcare and spending on special schools and community learning. In 2018/19 councils spent £2.2 billion on primary education and £2.1 billion on secondary education, an increase of nine per cent and one per cent respectively since 2013/14. When the ASF spend is excluded, the increase in real terms over the period becomes 0.7 per cent, to just over £4.1 billion ([Exhibit 5](#)). We set our approach to analysis of financial information in [Appendix 1. Methodology \(page 52\)](#).

126. Spending has increased in some areas and decreased in others. Teaching staff is the largest area of education spending for councils and this increased by 4.2 per cent in real terms (ie when adjusted for inflation) from 2013/14 to 2018/19, from £2.3 billion to £2.4 billion. The second largest area of spending is non-teaching staff, such as pupil support assistants and business support staff, which increased by 16.2 per cent in real terms, from £519 million in 2013/14 to £604 million in 2018/19.

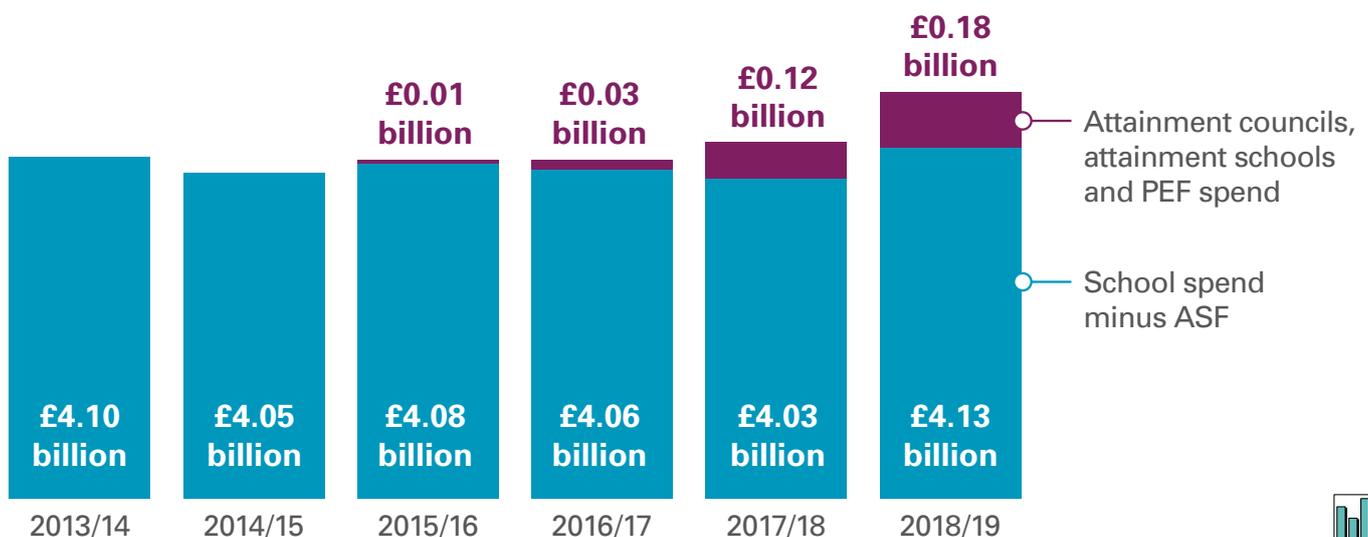


[Local Government in Scotland: Financial Overview 2019/20](#)
January 2021 

Exhibit 5

Spending on school education in real terms 2013/14 – 2018/19

Council spending on school education has increased slightly in real terms when ASF money allocated to councils and schools is excluded.



Source: Local Government Finance (LFR) Statistics, Scottish Government. School spending is for primary and secondary schools and excludes special schools.



127. Some of the increase in education spending can be attributed to Scottish Government policy, for example spending on school meals has increased by 12.1 per cent in real terms to £190 million. In 2015, the Scottish Government began funding free school meals for all children in primary 1 to primary 3.

128. Spending has fallen in areas such as school hostels, school transport and additional support for learning (ASL) in mainstream schools. Over the same period spending on ASL has increased in special schools, and in the overall education budget ASL spending in real terms has increased by 8.2 per cent.

Education accounts for around a quarter of council revenue spending and was one of the few services where council spending was increasing prior to the pandemic

129. Council spending on school education accounts for around a quarter of council revenue expenditure. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic it was one of the few services where spending was increasing.⁹² Spending on total education services has increased by seven per cent in real terms since 2013/14, reflecting Scottish Government policies such as the increase in funded early learning and childcare. There are elements in the local government settlement from the Scottish Government for school education where councils have little flexibility. These include increases in teacher pay, teacher numbers and the Teacher Induction Scheme which guarantees a one year post to eligible teaching graduates.

130. Over the same period the percentage of general fund expenditure that was spent on school education (excluding early learning and childcare, special schools and community learning) increased slightly from 26.4 to 27.7 per cent. The percentage varies across councils depending on local needs and decisions. Across attainment challenge councils it varies from 20.2 per cent in Glasgow City to 33.8 per cent in North Lanarkshire, and in non-attainment challenge councils it varies from 18.8 per cent in Shetland to 40.1 per cent in East Renfrewshire.

131. Spending increased in all attainment challenge councils over this period, ranging from 2.0 per cent in West Dunbartonshire to 18.4 per cent in Glasgow City, whereas spending fell in real terms in seven out of 23 non-attainment challenge councils. There are many factors outwith the ASF which affect the change in overall spending. For example, Midlothian and Edinburgh had the largest increases in pupil numbers over the period and were among the councils with the largest increases in overall spending.

The Attainment Scotland Fund is a small percentage of total education spending

132. The SAC is a major policy initiative accompanied by ASF funding. But it is important to recognise that this represents a small percentage of total council spending on education. In 2018/19, ASF spending was £179.5 million, which was around four per cent of total council education spending in that year.

133. The proportion of school education spending that came from the ASF in 2018/19 also varied across councils, from 0.7 per cent in Orkney and Shetland to 9.9 per cent in Dundee City.

Spending on school education fell in real terms in most attainment challenge councils when ASF money is excluded

134. We noted earlier that total national education spending including ASF increased by 0.7 per cent in real terms between 2013/14 and 2018/19, but this

increase is not reflected in all councils. Spending in all attainment challenge councils except Glasgow fell over this period if ASF money is excluded. In contrast, spending still increased in 13 of the 23 non-attainment challenge councils.

The Scottish Government also funds central agencies

135. The Scottish Government also funds Education Scotland to work with councils, schools and RICs and to provide national services. Education Scotland's core budget fell in real terms from £25.3 million in 2013/14 to £20.4 million in 2018/19.^{93 94} The budget for 2020/21 increased to £25.6 million (in 2018/19 prices) to account for additional posts in the organisation and is set to increase again to £28.2 million in 2021/22.⁹⁵ Other funding is distributed through agencies; for example, Skills Development Scotland funds foundation apprenticeships and the Scottish Funding Council funds college provision for school students.

There is variation in spending per pupil across Scotland, and this is not related to the variation in attainment

136. The national average spend per primary school pupil in 2018/19 was £5,259, a real-terms increase of 2.8 per cent since 2013/14.⁹⁶ Real-terms expenditure on primary schools increased by 9.0 per cent over the period and the number of pupils increased by 6.1 per cent. The national average spend per secondary school pupil in 2018/19 was £7,157. This is a real-terms increase of 1.4 per cent since 2013/14. Real-terms expenditure on secondary schools increased by 0.3 per cent over the period and secondary pupil numbers fell by 1 per cent.⁹⁷

137. The three island councils had the highest spending per primary school pupil in 2018/19, ranging from £8,041 per pupil in Shetland to £9,153 per pupil in the Western Isles. There is wide variation across mainland councils, with spending per primary pupil ranging from £4,655 in Falkirk to £6,490 in Argyll and Bute.

138. Our analysis has not found a link between spending per pupil and educational attainment. For example, councils with higher spending per primary pupil do not always have higher proportions of pupils achieving expected CfE levels in numeracy or literacy. Similarly, councils with higher spending per secondary pupil do not always have higher attainment at senior level, and some with lower spending per pupil have higher rates of attainment. Many factors impact on the average spend per pupil such as teacher demographics, local choices over non-ring-fenced elements of the education staffing budget, public-private partnership/public finance initiative (PPP/PFI) contract costs and arrangements, service design and management structure. Access to ASF money also has an impact.⁹⁸

Teacher numbers were increasing prior to Covid-19 and there has been an injection of staff to support Covid-19 recovery

139. As outlined in [paragraph 126](#), teaching staff is the largest area of education spending for councils. There were 49,728 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in primary and secondary schools in Scotland as at September 2020, up from 46,361 in 2014 (7.3 per cent increase) and 48,550 in 2019 (2.4 per cent increase).⁹⁹ Around 50,000 teachers are based in schools with around 3,000 others centrally employed or based in special schools. Between 2014 and 2020:

- primary school teachers in schools increased by 2,691 FTE, from 22,960 to 25,651 (up 11.7 per cent); the pupil: teacher ratio decreased from 16.8 to 15.4

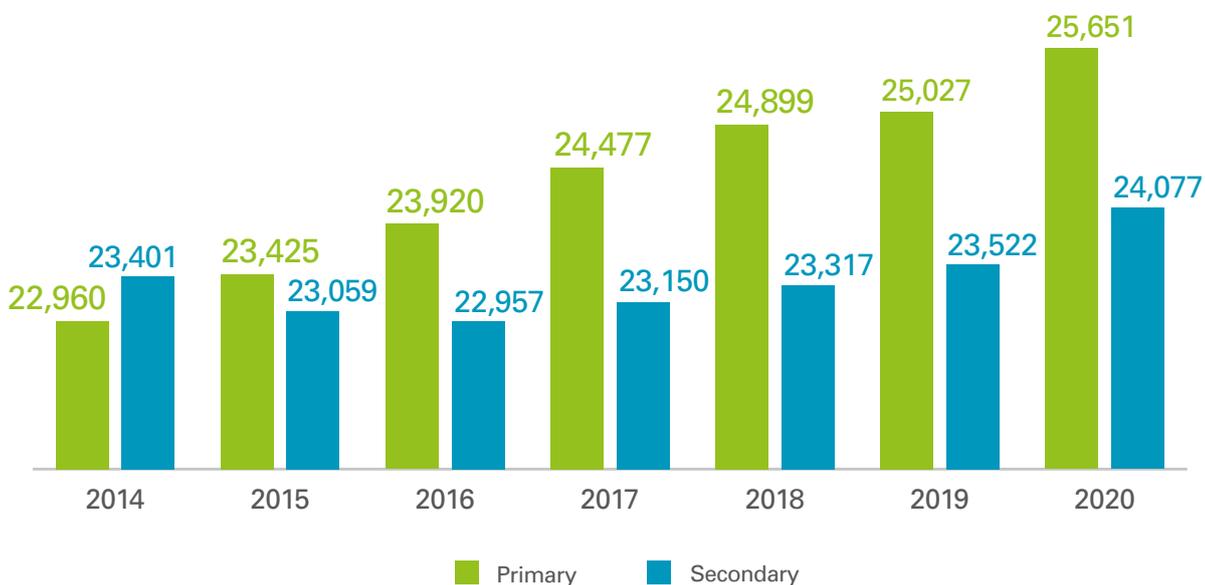
- secondary school teachers in schools increased by 676 FTE, from 23,401 to 24,077 (up 2.9 per cent). Pupil numbers increased in 2019 and 2020, reversing the previous declining trend and the pupil: teacher ratio increased slightly from 12.2 to 12.5.¹⁰⁰

140. The year-on-year increase in 2020 is larger than in previous years because the Scottish Government provided additional funding for staffing as part of the Covid-19 response (paragraph 144). Exhibit 6 shows how teacher numbers have changed year on year.

Exhibit 6

Number of primary and secondary school teachers (FTE) 2014–2020

There was a larger increase in teachers in 2020 following Scottish Government funding for the Covid-19 response.



Source: Summary statistics for schools in Scotland, Scottish Government. Figures taken at census in September each year.

The number of support staff has also increased

141. Changes to support staff definitions mean data is only available going back to 2017. The number of support staff increased between 2017 and 2019, particularly pupil support assistants, behaviour support staff and home-school link workers.

142. Some of the increase may be attributable to the availability of ASF funding. Our data returns indicate that, other than teachers, the most common additional staff recruited using ASF funding were pupil support assistants. The 29 councils that submitted a return together employed at least 55 pupil support assistants and at least 30 home-school link workers in 2018/19 using ASF money.

143. There is some evidence that home-school link workers are having an impact on outcomes. Education Scotland’s review of attainment challenge councils found that home school link workers had a positive impact on attendance, exclusions and engagement in schools.¹⁰¹

By the start of January 2021, the Scottish Government had put over £200 million of extra money into Covid-19 mitigation measures and education recovery

144. Since the pandemic started the Scottish Government has provided or committed additional money to support education. This includes:

- £80 million to recruit 1,400 teachers and 200 support staff (£75 million for teachers and £5 million for support staff) over a period of two years with some flexibility to prioritise teachers or support staff depending on local need
- £50 million for costs associated with health protection measures, enhanced cleaning and other logistics, £20 million of which had been allocated to councils by January 2021
- £25 million to provide digital devices and internet connection to schools
- £1.5 million capital funding for school transport
- an additional £45 million of funding for councils announced in early January 2021 which may be used for the purposes of recruiting additional staff, additional digital devices and providing additional family support.

145. At December 2020:

- councils had recruited 1,423 teachers and 247 support staff
- £24 million of the £25 million for digital inclusion had been allocated to councils. Of the original target of 70,000 devices, over 58,000 had been provided to learners, along with 10,000 connections.

146. The £80 million for staff is to be provided over a period of two years with £53.3 million in 2020/21 and £26.7 million in 2021/22. The Scottish Government has indicated that it expects councils to be able to retain these posts in future by funding them through other teachers retiring and leaving the profession. COSLA has highlighted potential risks with this approach if teachers do not leave at the rate expected.

It is not yet clear how much of the additional costs of mitigation measures and recovery will rest with local government

147. The Scottish Government announced £50 million funding for councils for logistics associated with re-opening schools. By January 2021, £20 million of this has been allocated by local government leaders (through COSLA) using a formula with 90 per cent based on education-related Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) and 10 per cent based on rurality in councils, to reflect the additional cost pressures. The remaining £30 million will be distributed following a cost collection exercise carried out by COSLA, designed in consultation with the Covid-19 Education Recovery Group.

148. The exercise collected actual expenditure data from councils from the beginning of the 2020/21 financial year (1 April) to the end of October 2020, with projected costs for the rest of the year. COSLA is still undertaking quality assurance work on the data returned, however it highlights significant pressure in the following areas:

100

- Staffing: the cost of extra staffing has been significant for councils, in some cases exceeding the grant provided by the Scottish Government, although COSLA acknowledged the funding announcement in January 2021 may help mitigate this.
- Digital devices and connectivity.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): councils have had to invest significantly in face coverings and other PPE for staff and pupils to minimise transmission of the virus.
- Cleaning: cleaning has been increased and upscaled significantly to comply with public health guidelines.
- Heating and ventilation: schools have had to increase the amount of time doors and windows are left open for ventilation. In the autumn and winter months this has led to additional heating costs to maintain indoor temperatures.
- Additional equipment to avoid pupils sharing: in catering there are more single uses of products and service delivery costs.

149. Councils have indicated that they do not expect the £50 million for logistics to be sufficient to meet the additional costs of Covid-19 mitigation measures, and this will be a pressure on education budgets.

Endnotes

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- 2 *National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan: 2021*, Scottish Government, 2020
- 3 *Coronavirus (COVID-19): Scotland's Strategic Framework*, Scottish Government, October 2020
- 4 Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000, Scottish Parliament
- 5 Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 amended by Education (Scotland) Act 2016, Scottish Parliament
- 6 Schools in Scotland – summary statistics 2020, Scottish Government, December 2020
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- 10 [Curriculum for Excellence](#) 
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- 12 Young People in Scotland Survey 2019, Ipsos MORI
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- 14 *National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan 2021*, Scottish Government, December 2020
- 15 *National Improvement Framework 2017*, Scottish Government, December 2016
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- 17 Exam pass rates are not exactly the same as the indicators we have used to measure school leaver attainment. Leaver attainment for 2019/20 had not been published when we carried out our audit work and we are using exam qualification attainment rates as a proxy measure.
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- 21 These include the ASDAN awards (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network), REHIS (the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland), Play Leaders, Open University Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS) and the Prince's Trust Awards.
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- 25 *Rapid Review of National Qualifications Experience 2020*, University of Stirling, September 2020
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- 35 *Equity Audit – deepening our understanding of the impact COVID-19 and school building closures had on children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and setting clear areas of focus for accelerating recovery*, Scottish Government, January 2021
- 36 [Children's and young people's mental health](#) , Audit Scotland, September 2018
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- 52 The national criteria for free school meals are largely based on the receipt of benefits. PEF funding is allocated on this basis. Other elements of ASF are allocated based on the percentage of pupils in each school who live in the 20 per cent most deprived data zones in Scotland, or the percentage of the total school population who live in the 20 per cent most deprived data zones, based on SIMD. SIMD is the Scottish Government's primary measure of deprivation in relation to educational attainment and performance.
- 53 *Coronavirus (Covid-19): supporting pupils, parents and teachers – learning during term 4*, Scottish Government, April 2020
- 54 *How well are the Scottish Attainment Challenge authorities improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap? Summary report*, Education Scotland, June 2019
- 55 *Attainment Scotland Fund evaluation: headteacher survey report 2019*, Scottish Government, October 2020
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- 57 *Coronavirus: Considering the Implications for Child Poverty – Supporting local authorities and health boards to consider what steps they can take to respond effectively*, Improvement Service, April 2020
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- 61 *Teaching during the Covid-19 shutdown, Member Survey Results*, Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), May 2020
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Appendix 1. Methodology

Our objectives

- We carried out audit work in two phases. The first phase of work took place prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. It aimed to establish how effectively the Scottish Government, councils and their partners are improving outcomes for young people through school education.
- The second phase of work took place in late 2020 and examined how the Covid-19 lockdown, recovery and ongoing public health measures are impacting on outcomes for young people through school education. It also considered the effectiveness of the mitigation measures put in place by the Scottish Government, councils and their partners.
- Our audit questions are set out in the [scopes](#)  for the first phase and second phase of the work.

Our methodology

- We conducted interviews and focus groups with a range of stakeholders during both phases of the audit work. These included the Scottish Government, COSLA, Improvement Service, ADES, RIC Leads, Skills Development Scotland, Colleges Scotland, Universities Scotland, Education Scotland, Scottish Qualifications Authority, teaching unions and professional bodies, national parent groups, youth representation bodies and third sector organisations. We also interviewed the Scottish Funding Council and SOLACE as part of the first phase of work.
- In the first phase we carried out detailed fieldwork in four council areas (Dundee City, Fife, Renfrewshire and Shetland) to gain a wider understanding of school education at a local level. The areas were chosen based on criteria which included a spread in attainment performance, a mix of rural and urban areas and a mix of attainment challenge and non-attainment challenge councils.
- Within each of the four council areas we conducted interviews and focus groups with elected members (on relevant scrutiny committees), Directors of Education, Heads of Service, central education department staff including finance, resources and quality improvement, representatives from local colleges and other partner organisations eg third sector providers, Education Scotland staff eg Attainment Advisers, pupils, parent/carers, head teachers, teachers, trade unions representatives and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) representatives, including employers and Skills Development Scotland in some areas.
- We reviewed documents in each of the four councils including education plans, school improvement plans, PEF plans, committee documents, evaluation reports and annual service reports.

- As part of the first phase of the audit we sought the views of young people in a number of ways:
 - We worked with Audit Scotland’s Inform 100 panel, a panel of young advisers aged 12–25, to help shape the scope of the audit, design questions for the survey and focus groups of young people. The young advisers also helped facilitate two focus groups with youth groups.
 - We added two questions to the Ipsos MORI Young People in Scotland Survey 2019 to help gain the views of young people in schools. These were *What are the top 3 most important things from the following list, if any, you hope to get out of your time at school?* and *How good or bad is your school at talking to you about what you want to get from your time at school?* It is a survey of secondary school pupils across Scotland with 1,731 respondents.
 - We carried out focus groups with primary and secondary school pupils in each fieldwork council area, along with focus groups with two youth groups in two of the areas.
- In both phases of the audit we reviewed national documents including key Scottish Government and stakeholder documents including plans, reviews, inspection reports, evaluations and minutes of key groups. In the second phase we reviewed a range of reports from national bodies on the response to Covid-19.
- We reviewed research reports from a range of organisations, and evidence sessions and papers of the Scottish Parliament’s Education and Skills Committee.
- In the first phase of the audit we reviewed returns from a data request issued to all 32 councils asking for information on council education structures, finance information, staffing information and wider achievements and qualifications.

Data analysis

We carried out detailed data analysis in the first phase of the audit work, and we updated this where appropriate when we carried out further work in late 2020.

Attainment

- Performance in primary school and early secondary is measured using Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL). The first set of data was published in 2015/16 but we have used 2016/17 as the baseline year due to consistency issues with the data prior to 2016/17.
- We used two sources of data to analyse senior phase attainment up to 2018/19: The *Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations* publication and the Insight benchmarking tool. Data for some indicators is only available at a detailed level (eg council and SIMD quintile) via Insight. We were given access to Insight so we could carry out our own analysis for the audit. The two sources both use SQA data however there are some differences in the coverage including:
 - Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations includes all leavers in a given school year. Insight excludes people who

leave school before senior phase (S4–S6) and leavers from special schools

- in Insight a 'D' grade at level 5 is counted as a level 5 award whereas in the attainment and leaver destinations publication it would count as level 4 (and so on for other levels of award)
- Insight includes awards from non-SQA providers such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Youth Scotland.
- We used SQA data on attainment rates for graded national qualifications for pupils in 2020. These are not exactly the same as the indicators we have used to measure school leaver attainment. Leaver attainment for 2019/20 had not been published when we carried out the audit work and we used qualification attainment rates as a proxy measure.
- We used data on the percentage of 16–19 year olds participating in Education, Employment or Training that is published and managed by Skills Development Scotland.

Indicators in exhibit 3

Due to the number of ways of looking at the data we decided to look at four indicators in closer detail. The indicators and reasons for choosing them are below:

- 1 or more award at level 5 (NIF indicator) – This is one of the 11 key measures in the NIF. It affects most pupils.
- Participation (NIF indicator) – This looks at outcomes beyond performance in exams and affects all pupils.
- Literacy and numeracy at level 4 (Insight) – This is a key area of focus for the Scottish Attainment Challenge.
- Five or more awards at level 5 (Insight) – This is a measure of those who have achieved a higher level of attainment in exams.

Financial data

- We analysed financial data from the Local Financial Returns (LFRs) which are used to produce the Local Government Finance Statistics published by the Scottish Government. Financial data relates to primary and secondary schools and excludes Early Learning and Childcare, special schools and community learning unless stated. This data was only available up to 2018/19 when we carried out the audit work. Where we have calculated figures in real terms, we have used 2018/19 as the baseline year.
- Real terms figures were calculated using [GDP deflators at market prices and money GDP at September 2019](#) 
- We analysed additional information on Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund allocations and spending, and RIC funding using some data published by the Scottish Government and some requested directly from councils.
- We used data from Scottish Government announcements on funding, and information provided to us by the Scottish Government and COSLA.

Workforce data

- We analysed data on teacher numbers and other staff which has been published by the Scottish Government. We also used data from Scottish Government announcements.

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Appendix 2. Advisory group

Audit Scotland would like to thank members of the advisory group for their input and advice throughout the audit.

Member	Organisation
Sam Anson	Scottish Government
David Belsey	The Educational Institute of Scotland
Jackie Brock	Children in Scotland
Craig Clement (left in December 2020)	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland
Greg Dempster	Association of Headteachers and Deputes in Scotland
Eddie Follan	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Gayle Gorman	Education Scotland
Gary Greenhorn (joined in January 2021)	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland
Carrie Lindsay	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland
Graeme Logan	Scottish Government
Maureen McKenna (not involved in the updated work)	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland
Janie McManus (joined in October 2020)	Education Scotland
Eileen Prior	Connect
Jim Thewliss	School Leaders Scotland
Maria Walker (left in October 2020)	Education Scotland

Note: Members sat in an advisory capacity only. The content and conclusions of this report are the sole responsibility of Audit Scotland.

We would also like to thank the members of the Inform 100 youth panel who worked with us throughout the audit.

Improving outcomes for young people through school education

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<p>Work with schools, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, other policy teams and partners, for example in the third sector, to reduce variability in outcomes by more consistent application of the drivers of improvement set out in the NIF, by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using data to understand trends in outcome measures over time and across different demographic groups; • using evidence-based quality-improvement approaches • sharing learning and applying good practice across schools and councils • helping schools to build up their data analytical, evaluation and quality improvement skills so they can make evidence-based decisions 				✓		<p>East Renfrewshire Council's Education Department's vision of <i>Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving, Through Excellent Experiences</i>, signals the department's ambition of raising the academic, wider achievement including vocational outcomes for all children and young people. The Education Department recognises the importance of education in raising the bar for all, whilst placing extra focus on closing attainment gaps for any and all groups of learners, especially for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds; education is a route from poverty.</p> <p>The Education Department considers the use of performance and management information as vital to achieving its objectives and is at the heart of the improvement planning cycle. Such information enables the department to target available resources, support and challenge, most effectively.</p> <p>The department has always used the analysis of management information and benchmarking, in a considered and contextual way as part of its drive for continuous improvement. By making effective use of national data analysis tools and datasets, benchmarking allows the department to consider its current performance and to evaluate if the ambition of raising attainment is being realised for all children and young people, by focusing its attention on particular key groups which are of specific interest.</p> <p>Key groups of interest where attainment gaps exist include gender, ethnicity, free school meal entitlement, looked after status, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and the lowest performing 20% of learners. The department focusses on such individual groups of learners, however these groups are not mutually exclusive and where an initiative focuses on</p>

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						<p>a particular group, this will have wider success for learners from differing backgrounds and circumstances. Comparison at all levels is used to highlight and question differences to stimulate improvement ultimately for each and every individual learner. Other data such as attendance rates, temporary exclusions, and levels of engagement from questionnaires etc. are likewise analysed and used to inform areas where there is scope to further improve and address in particular any issues of equity.</p> <p>Following key assessment periods or the publication of attainment data, the department undertakes extensive and rigorous analysis of the authority's and education establishment's performance, benchmarking internally, regionally and nationally. The open and transparent reporting of outcomes allows the department to celebrate successes widely and to support opportunities for sharing and collaboration between establishments, whilst also identifying areas where further improvement is required.</p> <p>Specifically, the National Improvement Framework (NIF) identifies raising attainment in literacy and numeracy as key area of focus. East Renfrewshire has a similar focus on literacy and numeracy and tracks the attainment of groups of learners from P1 baseline assessment, local and national standardised assessments in the Broad General Education (BGE) through to senior phase National Qualifications. This allows the department to track the progress of identified groups of learners from the earliest point, to support establishments in identifying critical groups of learners in their own context and supports on-going evaluation of the impact of interventions.</p> <p>Whilst the Audit Scotland review and their resulting report</p>

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						<p>considers primary and secondary schools, locally there is a strong focus on monitoring and support of learners in our early years facilities, where literacy, numeracy and wellbeing are at the fore to provide the best foundations for children and their progress through school education and future success.</p> <p>The Education Department supports the sharing of best practice and quality improvement approaches in East Renfrewshire across establishments and more widely, regionally and nationally. Each cluster of early years establishments and schools work collaboratively to identify aspects of improvement which are specific to their communities and to plan for collective change and improvement through the creation and implementation of a cluster improvement plan which the department monitors progress towards identified outcomes. This collective approach supports the sharing of best practice, success and otherwise, which are specific to the needs of the local community.</p> <p>The Education Department's annual quality assurance programme includes Thematic Reviews, Cluster Transition Reviews, Validated Self Evaluation and Collaborative Improvement Visits. Whilst these approaches to scrutiny, quality assurance and support are directed and led by the department's Quality Improvement Team, senior leaders from other establishments also play a central role in the process. This supports improvement, the dissemination of best practice, professional learning and develops relationships across establishments with the shared ambition for all learners to fulfill their potential. Staff from the department, ELC (Early Learning and Childcare) facilities and schools establishments support Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in its role of</p>

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						<p>quality assurance of educational establishments across the country. This activity helps disseminate effective practice seen elsewhere and nationally within East Renfrewshire.</p> <p>The department is represented on lead national groups such as the ADES: Performance and Improvement Network, Curriculum and Qualifications, and Education Resources Network. Membership of such groups allows the officers to be informed and to help guide national policy developments, and to share and consider practice and approaches from other local authorities.</p> <p>Officers from the department, school middle and senior leaders contribute to and lead national and West Partnership (Regional Improvement Collaborative, RIC) curricular working groups to develop collegiately and to share widely best practice and innovation. For example, this has led to meaningful cross-authority working directly between schools in the West Partnership, sharing best practice in staff professional development.</p> <p>Following the introduction of the School Improvement Partnership Programme (SIPP) between Crookfur and Thornliebank primary schools, which was highly evaluated by the Robert Owen Centre at Glasgow University, the SIPP programme was extended to include all early years and primary establishments. The programme, supported by officers and psychologists from the department, challenged establishments to identify gaps in educational outcomes for groups of their learners. Establishments with a similar focus collaborated to identify evidence based research which suggested approaches to address the gap in learning for these particular groups of learners and then collectively decide upon</p>

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						<p>appropriate interventions. Establishments used baseline data to identify targeted groups of learners and gathered data on an ongoing basis to measure the success of the programme. The SIP programme aligned with professional development opportunities for practitioners in professional inquiry, has resulted in the development of three school based research hubs, with a planned fourth to be developed in 2021-22. A total of 237 staff across East Renfrewshire have now attained masters level qualifications with a further 65 currently undertaking masters level study. The skills which these staff have developed in professional inquiry will support the recovery from the impact of Covid-19.</p> <p>The Education Department provides significant challenge and support through the analysis of education outcomes by EMIS (Education Management Information Service). EMIS also delivers highly evaluated professional development for staff in the effective interrogation of attainment data, benchmarking, tracking and monitoring. Professional development has been provided by education staff in the use of the department's school tracking database, national benchmarking and improvement tools for the broad general education and senior phase and the national standardised assessments. These professional development opportunities support staff in the use of the analytical toolset to identify areas for improvement e.g. groups of learners in numeracy, and to benchmark nationally and track and monitor pupil progress and the effectiveness of intervention strategies.</p> <p>Recently an ELC Tracking tool has been created and implemented. It is intended that this facility which records key developmental stages of children in early years establishments, will further support analysis of children's</p>

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						progress and identification of key groups of learners who are not progressing as well as others thereby supporting early interventions. The system is also intended to be accessible to funded partners in the private, independent and voluntary sectors; and so will assist further with transitions from early years settings to primary school.
Monitor the short- and longer-term impacts of Covid-19 (including the impact of remote learning) on local children's and young people's learning and wellbeing and take action when required to mitigate the effects and improve outcomes			✓			<p>During the initial school closure period between March and August 2020, the Education Department provided support and guidance to settings which highlighted the importance of ongoing engagement with learners and their families and maintaining a focus of wellbeing. Seven learning hubs were established for vulnerable children and children of key workers; all other children and young people were supported by teachers and support staff to engage with and participate in digital and remote learning opportunities to ensure continuing education provision. Senior and pastoral care staff in all settings maintained regular contact with children and families as required, whether they were learning at home or in a hub and provided additional support to address any wellbeing or learning needs. Case studies of good practice in remote learning have been published on Education Scotland's website for Carlibar, Carolside and Hillview primary schools.</p> <p>In May 2020 East Renfrewshire Education Department conducted a self-evaluation exercise on the engagement and participation of pupils with their home learning. A report on 'Digital Learning and Engaging and Supporting Vulnerable Families' was produced and shared with key stakeholders. Identified good practice was shared and feedback received used to plan Career Long Professional Learning.</p> <p>In January 2021, education officers engaged with schools to</p>

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						<p>support staff in undertaking an evaluation of how effective remote learning had been during the previous lockdown and to consider approaches for the lockdown which was in place at that time. The department provided an audit tool to support this process and to allow central collation of the results, which resulted in the production of an overview of remote learning provided by all establishments, in order to share best practice and next steps.</p> <p>The department's review of remote learning during Covid-19 identified cross department and cross-sector working focusing on the mental and physical wellbeing of children and young people. The review highlighted excellent relationships between departmental and school staff, with key partners such as Educational Psychology, Social Work and Health. Cross sector working ensured that targeted interventions continued to address learning loss and support the mental and physical well-being of children and young people. For example Reading Recovery, regular check ins with pupils and families, access for pupils, families and staff to the Council's Healthier Minds service, small differentiated online group sessions and one to one lessons, the use of Bilingual Support Workers to support children and families with remote learning, remote assemblies praise cards sent home and celebration of achievements. The Education Department ensured that children entitled to a free school meal continued to receive this at home and ensured physical school places for the most vulnerable and key worker children during and beyond school term time.</p> <p>The Education Department coordinated the creation and curation of recorded lessons by teaching staff, which were hosted and shared widely across the Council; these complemented the nationally available recorded lessons which</p>

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						<p>the department supported schools in the use of. Recorded and in many cases live lessons and drop-ins, became embedded in every day teaching and learning, reducing the impact of remote learning for all learners.</p> <p>The Education Department will continue to support and challenge education establishments by interrogating attainment data across all sectors at key points in the academic year. This analysis will take cognisance of the lockdown periods and will identify groups of learners who have possibly been affected most by the lockdown measures, and will look at longitudinal impact and outcomes. This analysis will support establishments in identifying individual children and implementing strategies to tackle learning loss immediately. Establishments will then track and monitor the success of these outcomes on an ongoing regular basis.</p> <p>A report on the Quality of Remote Learning was considered at Education Committee in March 2021.</p> <p>Following the decision nationally to cancel the 2021 examination diet, schools in East Renfrewshire are working closely with the Education Department, pupils and parents to implement the Alternative Certification Model (ACM). The strong practice in moderation and assessment, high quality remote learning offer, rigorous tracking and effective collaboration within and across the authority means that schools are well placed to ensure a shared understanding of standards and expectations and that pupils achievements are fairly recognised. The Education Department has undertaken an equalities impact assessment for the new policy and procedures to ensure all candidates are treated fairly, equitably and without bias. In addition, the Quality Improvement Team</p>

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						<p>will support schools to analyse provisional estimates and carry out any internal checks, particularly for key equity groups.</p> <p>In collaboration with other local authorities and the Scottish Government, Education Department officers will work towards introducing the national health and wellbeing survey. This survey will be undertaken by children from P5 to S6, and will focus on mental and physical health and wellbeing issues. Data at establishment level will assist the department in aligning support and resources appropriately to establishments and local communities and will support head teachers to implement appropriate strategies to tackle physical and mental wellbeing issues specific to their establishment's context.</p> <p>In recent weeks the Director of Education has been consulting staff in all educational establishment and the department and its services on a draft framework and timeline designed to support the Education Department to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic: <i>Building Back Better and Fairer</i>. The aim is to ensure not just a return to pre-covid positions, but to use the pandemic as an 'opportunity to become a truly extraordinary educational system in the future'.</p> <p>The framework, aligned with the department's Local Improvement Plan (LIP), will drive the department and establishments towards its vision <i>Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving, Through Excellent Experiences</i>, by identifying areas of particular focus for the remainder of school year 2020-21 and session 2021-22, with the LIP setting out the wider areas for improvement over its three year period (2021-22 to 2023-24). The priorities of the National Improvement Framework (NIF) are embedded within the department's LIP.</p>

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						<p>Within the <i>Building Back Better and Fairer</i> framework there will be a heightened focus on the inequalities of outcomes which may be exacerbated by Covid-19; the learning in terms of changes made in response to the pandemic that could be further capitalised on; and how best to support such going forward to deliver excellence and equity. The department is also in the process of developing a Social Justice plan linked to recovery and renewal and building back better.</p> <p>Once finalised, it is intended that the framework and activity going forward under local improvement planning, will be used to support the department to monitor and evaluate progress in response to the impact of Covid-19 and ensure more generally that East Renfrewshire sustains its drive for continuous improvement and help further its vision all learners, staff and services.</p> <p>This approach, the outcomes and impacts will be reported through future Education Committee meetings.</p>
More effectively and consistently involve young people and parents in planning to improve outcomes and to inform the local response to Covid-19				✓		<p>The Education Department, as part of its annual cycle of quality improvement, undertakes digital surveys of parents/carers across early years, primary and secondary sectors periodically. Pupils across the same primary and secondary establishments also complete a pupil version of the survey which focusses on their experiences of education.</p> <p>East Renfrewshire Council was a volunteer local authority to take part in the national Parental Involvement and Engagement (PIE) survey, first introduced as a pilot in 2018. This survey allows school level analysis to take place, but also supports benchmarking between local authorities across Scotland which can lead to the sharing of best practice. Plans were in place for East Renfrewshire to be 1 of 5 local</p>

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						<p>authorities across Scotland to take part in the survey in 2021, however the survey was postponed as a consequence of Covid-19 restrictions. The department will continue to undertake the PIE survey in coming years.</p> <p>The responses from these surveys allow the Education Department to consider improvement actions as part of its Local Improvement Plan and to measure the impact of these on an ongoing basis. Moreover the data shared with schools allows link officers to offer support and challenge to establishments to consider how they will address any noticeable concerns. Education establishments also undertake their own surveys to seek views of their communities and act on the results to inform improvement.</p> <p>In developing the <i>Building Back Better Framework</i>, referenced above, the Education Department consulted pupils, parents and staff to identify what worked well over the periods of remote and blended learning and what areas could have been improved. The responses from stakeholders are at the centre of the framework's development including establishing key priorities and activities required to support education establishments and services recover from the specific challenges brought about by the pandemic and address ongoing improvement under local improvement planning.</p> <p>During the pandemic all schools continuously sought pupil feedback on their learning and wellbeing, with almost all teachers using this information to help with planning for volume/pace and challenge of lessons. Parent Council meetings continued throughout remote learning in all schools, enabling effective dialogue with parents regarding remote learning offers and areas for improvement. Moreover ELC</p>

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						<p>settings and schools formally sought parental feedback through focus groups, questionnaires, online forms and commendably adapted their policies (such as remote learning) and approaches in response.</p> <p>The Quality of Remote Learning reported to Education Committee in March 2021 highlights the work on interactions with pupils and consultation with parents/carers about their engagement and wellbeing during remote learning.</p> <p>Customer Service Excellence assessment of the Education Department was discussed at Education Committee in April 2021. This assessment included reviewing the actual service delivered in establishments by examining a 'customer journey'; this was focused on approaches to providing continuity of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic across schools and services and involved learners, staff and partners. The department was awarded 31 areas of 'Compliance Plus', up from ten in 2015, and 26 in 2019. One of the areas highly commended included an ethos of consultation being integral to continuous improvement, including during changes made at pace in response the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The Education Department is committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights, in line with the UNCRC. Children and young people have opportunities to express their opinion in matters that affect them so that they can become active participants in a democratic society. From our annual Education Department questionnaires, most pupils (79% of 8048 surveyed 2017-19) agreed that their school listens to their views and takes them into account.</p> <p>All our settings take a 'You Say, We Do' approach to seek the views of learners on the quality of: learning and teaching;</p>

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						relationships within the setting community; health and wellbeing; success and achievements. There are regular opportunities for pupil representatives to meet with the Director of Education and share their views on issues relating to matters such as the curriculum, learning and teaching, and pastoral care. This provided valuable insight and informed improvements during the periods of school closure. Stakeholder engagement is an important aspect of East Renfrewshire's evaluation and improvement cycle.
Ensure third-sector organisations working with or representing children and young people are effectively involved in local planning to improve longer term outcomes, and to deliver the local education response to Covid-19.			✓			Throughout the pandemic officers of the Education Department and schools engaged with the third-sector and other organisations in order to ensure children and young people were actively considered in planning for immediate and longer term outcomes. Working closely with Educational Psychology team, vulnerable groups of children and young people were identified and closely monitored by staff with regards to their engagement in remote learning and their wellbeing. This resulted in those most vulnerable being identified and encouraged to physically attend school, or early years setting. The Education Psychology team supported children and young people and parents/carers with advice on mental health and wellbeing during lockdown via specialist resources on its website and also through online sessions delivered by the psychologists. The Healthier Minds service was set up and established this session, offering bespoke wellbeing support to pupils, families and staff. East Renfrewshire Council Leisure (ERCL) trust facilitated hubs within schools during the lockdown periods, providing physical activity and wellbeing activities to support the physical

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						<p>and mental health of the most vulnerable. Over the holiday periods/school breaks, the department collaborated with ERCL to develop Covid-19 Holiday Camps which combined educational experiences as well as physical activity for the most vulnerable and key workers.</p> <p>Officers of the department have worked closely with education establishments, Skills Development Scotland, higher and further educational establishments, Work East Ren and other third sector organisations to ensure that all children and young people who intend to leave school, are able to access a positive post school leaving destination. The co-ordination and support of these organisations ensured that almost all children and young people entered in to higher/further education, employment, modern apprenticeships, volunteering or some form of professional training. This ultimately resulted in the proportion of young people entering positive destinations being significantly higher than the national value, and higher than other similar comparator local authorities.</p> <p>Colleagues in the Health and Social Care Partnership continue to work with the department as part of the inclusive holistic approach to meeting pupils' needs. Most recently their work to extend the existing school counselling service and create a wellbeing hub with a range of professionals to support mental health and wellbeing will be important in helping to address concerns and build resilience in learners.</p> <p>The third sector and other organisations work in partnership to deliver the curriculum offer including vocational options with college support, provide experiences and opportunities for learners as part of realising the department's vision for all learners.</p>

Note:

** Although evaluated as in place and working well, the Department is not complacent and seeks continuous improvement in all aspects.

Assessment of Current Position in ERC: 'Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education' (Audit Scotland Report)						
Audit Recommendations Councils should:	Assessment Per Format of Previous Audit Scotland Report					ERC Assessment Comment
	No action needed	No But action in hand	Yes in place but needs improving	** Yes in place & working well	Not applicable	
<p><u>The Scottish Government, Education Scotland and councils should:</u> Continue to ensure a coordinated policy response within and across government (for example with health and children and families services) when planning to improve longer-term outcomes for children and young people and delivering the education recovery response to the equality impacts of Covid-19</p>						As noted earlier the Education Department has already created a recovery framework, <i>Building Back Better and Fairer</i> , which identifies the key priorities which are required to be established to support schools and services as they seek to recover. The framework is designed to complement the activities set out in the Local Improvement Plan, identifying particular areas of focus for the next 15 months, with the LIP setting out the wider areas for improvement over a three year period. This approach will be fully aligned with Scottish Government and Education Scotland guidance and the priorities and vision set out in the National Improvement Framework.
<p><u>The Scottish Government, Education Scotland and councils should:</u> Use the Equity Audit and other evidence to monitor the short- and longer term impact of Covid-19 on children's and young people's learning and wellbeing, and to inform the development of local and national priorities and targeting of mitigating actions</p>						<p>The Education Department has considered the findings of the Equity Audit from Education Scotland. As noted earlier to provide greater insight to the impact of Covid-19 locally within East Renfrewshire, the department conducted its own audit across all education establishments reflecting on the mitigations which establishments employed to reduce the impact of Covid-19.</p> <p>The East Renfrewshire audit identified key strengths in remote learning across East Renfrewshire, in Engagement and Wellbeing, Learning & Teaching, Assessment, Self-Evaluation for Self Improvement and Digital Capacity. The report also highlighted areas for improvement at school, cluster and department level.</p>

Note:

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Assessment of Current Position in ERC: 'Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education' (Audit Scotland Report)						
Audit Recommendations Councils should:	Assessment Per Format of Previous Audit Scotland Report					ERC Assessment Comment
	No action needed	No But action in hand	Yes in place but needs improving	** Yes in place & working well	Not applicable	
						The Equity Audit and East Renfrewshire audit supported the department in its development of its <i>Building Back Better Framework</i> . The framework will support and challenge establishments to focus on key areas of recovery, with specific focus on identified groups of learners, and will measure progress made towards building back better and fairer using a variety of qualitative and quantitative measures.
<u>The Scottish Government, Education Scotland and councils should:</u> Further promote the importance of the different pathways, qualifications and awards available to young people with parents, carers, politicians, and the media, to support wider public understanding of the importance of broader outcomes.						<p>The Education Department recognises not only the need to provide young people with alternative pathways and opportunities for wider achievement, but also the importance of celebrating such wider, non-traditional qualifications, in order to ensure parity of esteem. Such wider achievements improve the skills for life, learning and work of our young people, increase their confidence and likelihood of successful transition to the world of work.</p> <p>The vocational programme available to S4-S6 pupils, has 500 places available to any of 60 courses which are delivered locally within schools or remotely at higher education establishments and which will result in a National Qualification award or Foundation Apprenticeship. The Education Department altered the construction of the secondary school timetable in order to ensure that vocational courses were treated like all other subjects. Consequently young people can opt to study a vocational course alongside other academic studies, and attendance in these school based subjects will not be affected by undertaking a vocational course. Young people record their desire to undertake a vocational subject as they would a traditional school based subject. These approaches ensure that young people, parents/carers and school staff, see vocational studies as just important as any other and help to</p>

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	No action needed	No But action in hand	Yes in place but needs improving	** Yes in place & working well	Not applicable	
						<p>provide parity of esteem.</p> <p>Valuing wider learning opportunities and qualifications, the development of the new Eastwood and Barrhead high schools, included the development of industry standard facilities to support locally delivery of vocational skills, including industry standard catering facilities and a vocational wing which supports the development of professional skills in IT and labour occupations such as plumbing.</p> <p>The impact of the wider achievement opportunities and vocational programme is evident from national analysis with East Renfrewshire recording the highest percentage of school leavers attaining at least 1 vocational qualification and being recorded as the highest performing mainland local authority, as measured by the percentage of 16-19 year olds participating in learning, training or work.</p> <p>The successes and outcomes of all children and young people are celebrated widely with Education Committee, staff groups and parent council chairs. Reporting takes different forms, for example through our annual self-evaluation report (Standards & Quality), presentations and specific reports. Reports to committee, in particular the annual Standards and Quality Report and progress by the Education Department with the Outcome Delivery Plan, include various performance measures such as Information of wider achievement including Duke of Edinburgh Awards, ASDAN Awards/Personal Effectiveness, Sports Leadership and Skills for Learning, Life and Work Qualifications. Young people's achievements are recognised through a wide range of awards and awarding bodies, including the ASDAN Award, John Muir Award, Saltire Award, Caritas Award, and the Modernising Volunteering</p>

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						<p>Award. The Conveners' Awards for outstanding achievement is an annual awards ceremony event to recognise particular young people or groups.</p> <p>Following the publication of the Additional Support for Learning Review by Angela Morgan, the Education Department is undertaking its own local review and considering the recommendations of the national review. East Renfrewshire's review will consider how we celebrate achievements and successes for all children and young people and will make recommendations of how we support the implementation of a National Measurement Framework which more widely recognises the success of all children and young people.</p>

10 June 2021

Note:

** Although evaluated as in place and working well, the Department is not complacent and seeks continuous improvement in all aspects.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE10 June 2021Report by Director of EducationPROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN EAST
RENFREWSHIRE**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. This report examines how children's rights are currently respected and ensured within East Renfrewshire. It highlights key actions taking place to further embed children's rights across the council and identifies the next steps which should be taken in light of the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill as introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 1 September 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Elected Members are asked to:
 - a. note current practice within East Renfrewshire underpinning and ensuring children's rights;
 - b. note and comment on the East Renfrewshire Children's Rights Report;
 - c. note the authority's key actions going forward to respect and ensure children's rights;
 - d. request that the Director of Education bring a further report to Education Committee setting out the potential implications and actions for the Council in the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law.

BACKGROUND

3. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989 and it was ratified by the UK Government in 1991. It is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world. It sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children, everywhere, are entitled to. The rights in the UNCRC are guaranteed to every child, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status.

4. The UNCRC consists of 54 articles. Articles 1 to 42 contain the substantive rights and obligations which States Parties must uphold and give effect to. These include the right to life, survival and development; the right to protection from violence, abuse or neglect; the right to an education that enables children to fulfil their potential; the right to be raised by, or have a relationship with, their parents and the right to express their opinions and be listened to. Articles 43 to 52 concern procedural arrangements for the signature, ratification and amendment of the UNCRC and the establishment of the CRC (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child) and the reporting process for States Parties.

5. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to report on the steps they have taken to secure better or further the effect of the UNCRC requirements. This requirement has been incorporated into the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill.

6. In East Renfrewshire, our Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People Partnership is committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Children and Young People's Plan for 2020-2023 places children's rights at the heart of its vision and a rights based approach is embedded throughout.

REPORT

7. The East Renfrewshire Children's Rights Report (Appendix 1) outlines the steps we have taken in East Renfrewshire, through our partnership working, to promote, support and uphold children's rights. It goes on to define clearly what is entailed by children's rights, summarising the nature and role of the UNCRC and how its 54 articles are arranged into clusters and themes.

8. The work of East Renfrewshire to respect and ensure the rights of children and their families over the last three years has focused on a number of clusters which are outlined below in paragraphs 9 to 18.

9. General Measures of Implementation (Articles 4, 41, 42, 44(6)) East Renfrewshire Council, our Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and Culture and Leisure Trust (ERCL) take full account of all national legislation, standards, plans, policies and strategies. We respect children's right to family life and to grow up loved, safe and respected so that they can reach their full potential. For those children who need additional support, we work with children and their families to assess their circumstances and make decisions with families.

10. General Principles, Civil Rights and Freedoms (Articles 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17) In our settings, pupil voice makes a positive contribution to the ethos and life of the school or centre and our annual Education Department questionnaires, highlight that most pupils agree that their school listens to their views and takes them into account.

11. Violence Against Children (Article 37a) Children and young people who experience domestic abuse have their basic right to a safe and stable home environment denied. The experience can have a profound and lasting impact on the emotional and social wellbeing of those affected. The East Renfrewshire Violence Against Women (VAW) Partnership is committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights, with a key focus on the prevention of inhumane treatment of children.

12. Family Environment & Alternative Care (Articles 5, 10, 11, 18(1 and 2), 19, 20, 21, 25, 27(4) 39) Our partnership with Children 1st Family Group Decision Making service supports families to create a safety network within their community and protects the rights of children to have their voices heard on decisions which impact their lives. It strengthens communities by enabling families to utilise their wider network to help keep their children safe and at home.

13. Through our Carers Act Implementation Group, we fund a Young Carer development worker post which has been successful in: raising awareness of the carer experience; increasing the number of identified young carers who are being supported by the East

Renfrewshire Carer Centre and in schools; increasing the number of children and young people with a Young Carer Statement and a Young Carer Grant.

14. Basic Health & Welfare (Articles 6, 18(3), 23, 24, 26 and 27(1-3)) East Renfrewshire's Community Planning Partnership (CPP) is committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights. The CPP recognises the right to social security for every child and supports families to achieve this right by increasing awareness of and take-up of benefits. Children have the right to live in conditions where they can flourish and we support parents and carers by providing assistance and support around nutrition, clothing and housing.

15. Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities (Articles 28, 29 and 31) Education policies promote equality and diversity and tackle discrimination and prejudice. Participation is a right; our schools and early learning and childcare settings promote empowerment. The promotion and protection of rights permeate every aspect of school life. Every pupil has at least one key adult they can speak to if they are worried about something or need advice. In our questionnaires, almost all children and young people (90%) agreed that they have someone they can speak to if they are upset or worried. The Community Learning and Development team supports the promotion and protection of children's rights. Youth Work involves working with young people in the community and in school around issues that matter to them.

16. Opportunities for children to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities are provided by East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust. They work with schools and other services to give free access to vulnerable children and young people in school holiday programmes, leisure centres, visual and performing arts programmes, and other activities.

17. Special Protection Measures (Articles 22, 38 and 39; 37 (a-d) 39 and 40; 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36; 30) East Renfrewshire's Intensive Services Children and Families Team respect children's right to family life and to grow up loved, safe and respected so that they can reach their potential. Our Child Protection guidance highlights the importance of seeking children's views as part of any child protection process. Our Signs of Safety approach is improving support for families by developing their own safety networks so that children can live with their parents safely.

18. The Champions Board aims to raise the profile and awareness of the needs of young people with care experience and to create a model of partnership working and co-production between young people and adult decision makers. Our Champions Board has been described as sector leading in its approach. Young people work alongside the Chief Executive, Elected Members and other senior council officers to raise issues that are barriers to their development.

19. The East Renfrewshire Children's Rights Report is available in a child-friendly version which is available to all families.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill

20. Through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill, Scotland is the first country in the UK to directly incorporate the UNCRC into domestic law. It was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 1 September 2020 and was passed unanimously on 16 March 2021. The new law is due to come into force 6 months after Royal Assent.

21. The UK Government has referred the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill to the Supreme Court.

22. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill aims to ensure that children's rights are protected, respected and fulfilled in Scotland to the maximum extent of the Scottish Parliament's powers. It seeks to ensure that there is a proactive culture of everyday accountability for children's rights across public services in Scotland. Public authorities will be required to take proactive steps to ensure compliance with children's rights in their decision-making and service delivery. Rights-holders will be able to challenge public authorities in the courts for breaches of their rights. This will mean that the structures within which decisions are made in Scotland must enable children and young people to be heard and take an active role in their own lives and communities.

23. Children and young people face additional barriers to realising their rights and accessing justice. In recognition of this some specific measures are provided for which remove barriers and build in greater accountability and transparency in relation to the proactive realisation of children's rights in practice. These provisions include giving power to the Children and Young People's Commissioner in Scotland to raise claims in the public interest and provision requiring the Scottish Ministers to make a Children's Rights Scheme.

24. The Bill says that:

- Public authorities must not act in a way that's incompatible with the UNCRC requirements.
- Courts will have powers to decide if legislation is compatible with the UNCRC requirements.
- Scottish Government can change laws to make sure they are compatible with the UNCRC requirements
- The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland and Scottish Human Rights Commission will have powers to take legal action to protect children's rights.
- Scottish Government must publish a Children's Rights Scheme to show how it is meeting UNCRC requirements and explain their future plans to progress children's rights.
- Scottish Government must review how the Children's Rights Scheme is working each year.
- Other authorities listed in the Bill must report every three years on what they are doing to meet the UNCRC requirements.

NEXT STEPS

25. An implementation group has been set up to work in partnership in order to assess, review and develop East Renfrewshire Council's readiness for the implementation of the UNCRC Bill. The group will audit and review current practice and create an action plan which incorporates best practice in order to ensure the council fulfils its duties related to children's rights. This action plan will be the subject of a future report to the Education Committee and Cabinet.

CONSULTATION

26. Ensuring children and young people are at the forefront of all developments is central to children's rights being embedded in public services. Approaches such as Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), How Good is OUR School and children and young people participation models provide opportunities for children and young people to be involved in decision making. To further enhance this, children and young people will be represented on the UNCRC Implementation Group in order to ensure their views are central to decision making for the introduction. The work of the Implementation group will ensure opportunities are taken to

consult with children and young people, parents and carers and other stakeholders through focus groups, questionnaires and drop in sessions.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

27. There are no financial or efficiency implications related to this report.

CONCLUSION

28. This is the first report relating to Children's Rights published by East Renfrewshire Council. It clearly confirms there is already a strong focus on children's rights. East Renfrewshire Council should build upon this good practice in order to prepare for commencement of the UNCRC Bill and therefore it is of vital importance that we consider potential implications of incorporation for the Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

29. Elected Members are asked to:

- a. note current practice within East Renfrewshire underpinning and ensuring children's rights;
- b. note and comment on the East Renfrewshire Children's Rights Report;
- c. note the authority's key actions going forward to respect and ensure children's rights;
- d. request that the Director of Education bring a further report to Education Committee setting out the potential implications and actions for the Council in the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
10 June 2021

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Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

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Appendix 1
East Renfrewshire Children's Rights Report

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Children's Rights in East Renfrewshire



December 2020

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Introduction

The [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) requires Ministers to consider and report on steps that can give further effect to the UNCRC - and to promote public awareness and understanding of children's rights, including amongst children.

In December 2018 the Scottish Government published an [Action Plan](#), setting out the activities to be undertaken until 2021 to progress Children's Human Rights. This Action Plan was developed with children and young people and key stakeholders and acknowledges the need for strategic actions that can deliver genuine transformational change in how children's rights are understood and experienced. A [progress report](#) on the first year of the Action Plan was published on 20 November 2019.

These actions included commitments to incorporate the UNCRC into domestic law; develop and deliver, through co-production, a programme to raise awareness and understanding of children's rights; develop a strategic approach to children and young people's participation; and to evaluate the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment.

This report outlines the steps we have taken in East Renfrewshire to promote, support and uphold children's rights. Using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) clusters is an internationally recognised approach to the implementation, monitoring and reporting of children's rights. The report is structured in that way, and broadly attempts to answer these questions:

- What do we provide in relation to this cluster of UNCRC articles?
- How are we progressing in this area of activity?
- What evidence do we have of outcomes for children and young people?
- How is our evidence informed by the views and experiences of children and young people?
- What next steps or actions do we need to take?

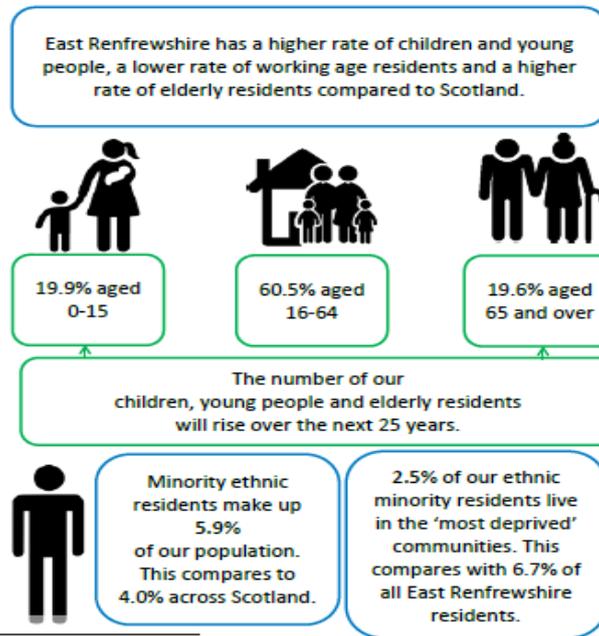
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East Renfrewshire

East Renfrewshire is committed to ensuring that children and young people are at the heart of decisions which affect them and effectively participate in wider civic society. This is important at both national and local level, including the Scottish Government, local authorities, community planning partnerships, health boards, schools, community councils and other places where decisions are made that will affect children and young people.

We are committed to ensuring the rights of and improving outcomes for all of our children and young people. We also understand our additional responsibility to protect the rights of particular groups of children and young people who experience barriers to success and achievement or whose rights are threatened by abuse or poverty.

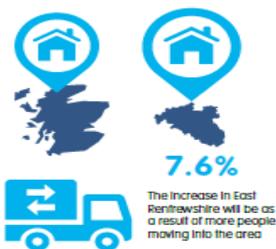
Some key facts:



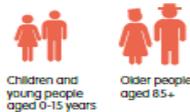
EAST RENFREWSHIRE'S POPULATION – WHAT TO EXPECT



The number of people living in East Renfrewshire is projected to increase by 7.6% by the year 2025 (this is higher than previous projection of 5.7% and higher than the Scottish rate of growth of 3.2%)



The two age groups that will grow the most



East Renfrewshire currently has the highest average household size in Scotland, but this is projected to shrink as more people live alone



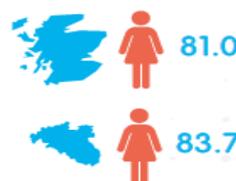
More houses are needed for three reasons

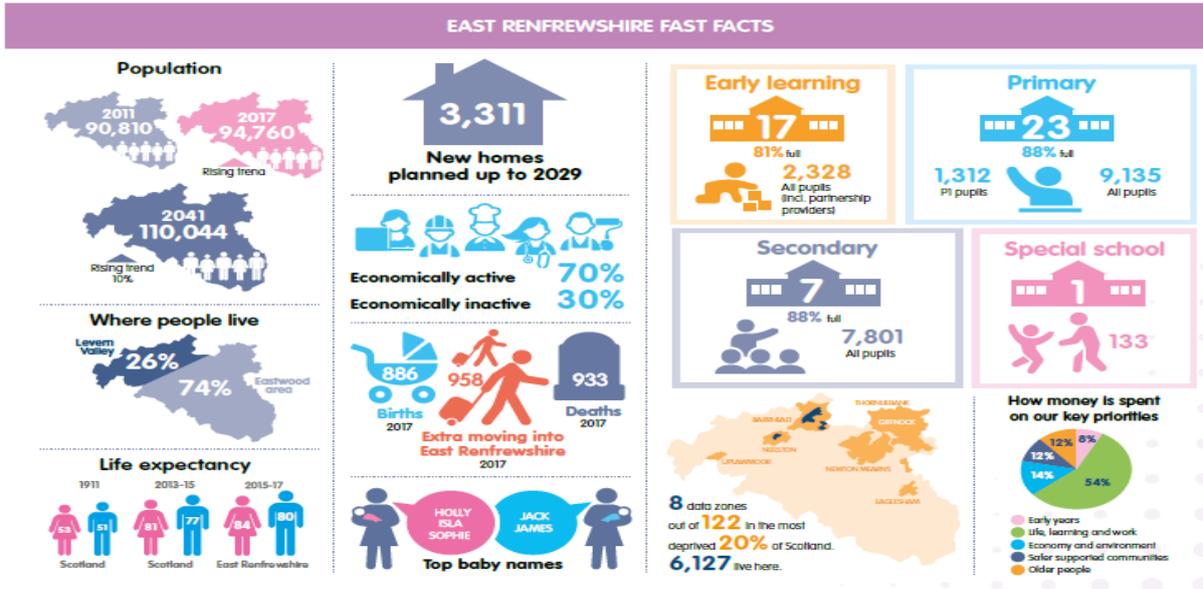


Demand will increase for services



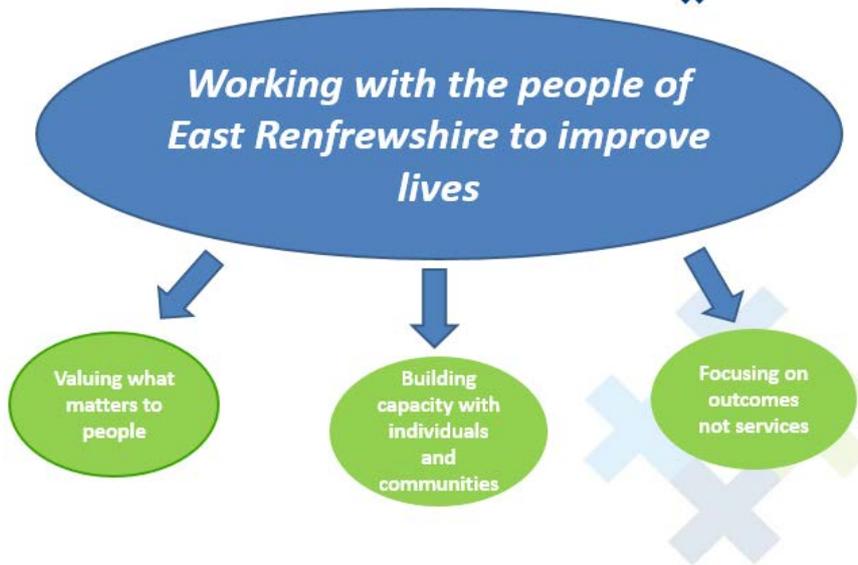
East Renfrewshire now has the highest female life expectancy at birth in Scotland, and the second highest male life expectancy





East Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership was established in 2015. It manages a wider range of services than are required by the relevant legislation. Along with adult community health and social work and care services, we provide health and social work services for children and families and criminal justice social work. Our integrated health and social care management and staff teams have developed strong relationships with many different partner organisations. Our HSCP focuses on outcomes for the people of East Renfrewshire that improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities.

Our Vision



Our HSCP vision statement, “Working together with the people of East Renfrewshire to improve lives”, was developed in partnership with members of the community. This vision sets our overarching direction through our Strategic Plan. At the heart of this are the values and behaviours of our staff and the pivotal role individuals, families, carers, communities and wider partners play in supporting the citizens of East Renfrewshire.

General Measures of Implementation: Articles: 4, 41, 42, 44(6)

East Renfrewshire Council, and our Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and Culture and Leisure Trust (ERCL) take full account of all national legislation, standards, plans, policies and strategies including those listed at the end of this report. All our departments and teams are committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We ensure that our visions and values promote the rights of the child and that these are reflected in all our public documents and statements.

We respect children's right to family life and to grow up loved, safe and respected so that they can reach their full potential. For those children who need additional support, we work with children and their families to assess their circumstances and make decisions with families. We seek children's views on a wide range of issues using appropriate and inclusive tools. We routinely consult with children when new policies are being developed and reviewed.

**General Principles, Civil Rights and Freedoms:
Articles 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17**

We respect children and young people's rights to develop to their full potential in early learning and childcare settings, school, home and community. Our **Education Department** is committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights, in line with the UNCRC. Children and young people should have opportunities to express their opinion in matters that affect them so that they can become active participants in a democratic society.

In our settings, pupil voice makes a positive contribution to the ethos and life of the school or centre and can also lead to improved home and community life. We use a range of measures to seek children and young people's views about matters that affect them. From our annual Education Department questionnaires, most pupils (79% of 8048 surveyed 2017-19) agreed that their school listens to their views and takes them into account. Pupil voice is part of a system that values and respects the views of all members of the school community. In the same questionnaires, almost all pupils (90%) agree that "staff treat me fairly and with respect". Our settings take inclusive approaches to participation, having moved from pupil "council" to "parliament" models where all pupils have chances to participate in decision making. Most pupils (89%) agree they have opportunities to take part in school committees and groups. This develops confidence, values and skills for learning, life and work such as co-operation, negotiation and communication. Our settings track, recognise and celebrate the successes and achievements of all learners. Most pupils (84%) agree that their school recognises and celebrates their personal achievements.

Whole setting approaches ensure that rights underpin the curriculum and are embedded in learning and teaching. We are developing learner participation across school life; pupils benefit from a range of positive outcomes and most (77%) believe they are given the opportunity to influence what and how they learn. Parents also have increasing opportunities to engage with establishments and to participate in their children's learning. We are committed to promoting equalities and reducing the impact of child poverty, and learner participation has been highlighted as a feature of high achieving schools serving disadvantaged communities.

All our settings take a "You Say, We Do" approach to seek the views of learners on the quality of: learning and teaching; relationships within the setting community; health and wellbeing; success and achievements. Pupils have been trained to observe lessons and provide feedback on the quality of learning and teaching. There are regular opportunities for pupil representatives to meet with the Director of Education and share their views on issues relating to matters such as the curriculum, learning and teaching, and pastoral care.

Woodfarm High School – A Rights Based Approach to Learning

Pupils experience a rights-based approach to learning in Woodfarm High School and learn about rights in all contexts of the curriculum. Extra-curricular opportunities, such as the Amnesty International Group and Fair Trade Group, develop global citizenship skills and take active roles in protecting rights.

The Pupil Parliament enables pupils to lead activity that improves the school community and learning environment. Article 12 forms the basis of the Pupil Parliament vision, and rights are displayed prominently across the school. Parliamentary committees are linked to staff committees, giving them a formal place in school structures. The Parliament is representative, with increasing participation of boys and pupils from more deprived backgrounds and a proportionate representation of ethnicity. In a survey, all pupils agreed that the parliament has a positive impact, and 84% believed that staff encouraged pupils to take lead roles in committees.



The diversity of the school community is celebrated through a range of events and groups. The *Equal Generation* group provides a safe space for LGBTQ+ pupils and allies, and promotes inclusion and equality through whole school celebrations such as LGBT History Month. The *Making Sense Of...* programme allows pupils to explore cultural and religious diversity through pupil-led experiences, supported by a range of community partners. *Making Sense of Respect* featured a showcase of cultural diversity, with pupils sharing traditional clothing, craft, art, music and dance.



The Pupil Parliament Achievements Committee has introduced strategies to promote and celebrate pupil and staff achievement. The *Shout About Success* campaign gathered views and gained funding to hold a *Woodfarm Winners Festival*. Woodfarm TV is produced by pupils and shares achievements on a whole school level in a unique way.

The *Learning Ambassador* programme allows pupils to participate in self-evaluation activity. Pupils are trained, using *How Good Is OUR School?*, and conduct lesson observations and focus groups using their observation checklist. Feedback is shared with staff and pupils, and informs school improvement planning. Ambassadors presented a seminar at the 2019 Scottish Learning Festival in recognition of their sector leading work. One ambassador noted “I’ve learned observation, listening and teamwork skills which will help me for life” and another said “this has helped me to grow as an individual, I am a lot more confident, more mature and able to look at things analytically”. The PSHE curriculum has also been audited by pupils and learning and teaching in this subject area was redesigned to reflect pupil voice.

Teachers are supported to reflect on learner feedback through enquiry, as pupils observe their lessons. This promotes a culture in which staff and students learn together. Pupil voice is also at the heart of the *Teacher Leadership Academy*. Learners meet with teachers to provide feedback on their initiatives to ensure their work impacts on learning experiences.

Woodfarm High School is a Rights Respecting Gold School. UNICEF commented “pupils are exceptionally knowledgeable about rights and confident in linking them to learning and to their everyday lives ... pupil voice is excellent in both the range of opportunities available and in the impact. There is a genuine sense that pupils play a significant role in strategic decision-making.” The school’s rights based approach was recently identified as sector leading by the Equality & Human Rights Commission and evidence is to be included in a forthcoming national report.

Violence Against Children: Article 37(a)

Children and young people who experience domestic abuse have their basic right to a safe and stable home environment denied. The experience can have a profound and lasting impact on the emotional and social wellbeing of those affected. The **East Renfrewshire Violence Against Women (VAW) Partnership** is committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights, with a key focus on the prevention of inhumane treatment of children. A comprehensive programme of activities responds quickly to domestic abuse and gives a pathway of support to women and children. East Renfrewshire now hold monthly Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and all high risk victims and children have action plans which aim to reduce risks through multi-agency support.

Gender based violence training is embedded in the East Renfrewshire Public Protection training calendar; our workforce is now more able to identify violence against children and young people and respond effectively. Two qualified trainers lead our Safe and Together programme, resulting in better safety planning for children and adults. A recent campaign highlighted child sexual exploitation, sharing information with key groups in the community who are now more able to recognise young people at risk of being sexually exploited and report concerns. The implementation of Safe & Together and MARAC by East Renfrewshire has been recognised as a key example of good practice in the recent Scottish Government and COSLA Equally Safe Year Three Update Report.

Rape Crisis Scotland deliver sexual violence prevention programmes in most of our secondary schools and a range of resources, including video and zines, have been co-produced with young people affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence. Through participation, young people inform our response to gender based violence. Positive gender roles are promoted and young people develop an understanding of safe, healthy and positive relationships from an early age. They are more able to recognise and challenge violent and abusive behaviour. Young people affected by gender based violence access therapeutic support through our social work Children and Families Team, Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland.

The **Women's Aid** Children and Young People Support Service aims to alleviate the negative impact of domestic abuse on children and young people allowing them to live safer and happier lives. We achieve this through therapeutic and emotional support, safety planning, advocacy, family focused support, group activities and play opportunities. The service is based on listening to children and young people and taking their views seriously with a strong focus on participation.

Women's Aid Video Project

A small group of young people came together to produce a short film capturing their experiences of domestic abuse and their thoughts and feelings. They were keen to assist others in the same situation and wanted to share how they coped and what had helped them.

The young people took charge of the production and direction; shared ideas about what the important messages would be; developed a script; and appointed various roles such as actors, narrator and director. The young people decided to act out domestic abuse situations that reflected their own experiences and this was unexpectedly powerful and cathartic for them. Young people gave their thoughts on who to speak to and what helped them, for example Cedar group work, Women's Aid support and supportive teaching staff. The project was a very positive experience for all the young people involved – they reported feeling more confident, empowered and listened to. They were delighted that their video would be shared widely via social media and at WASLER AGM. <https://youtu.be/ks4IC-KYnpQ>



Family Environment & Alternative Care:
Articles 5, 10, 11, 18(1 and 2), 19, 20, 21, 25, 27(4), 39

In our HSCP, we always work with families to ensure children can live with their parents where possible. We support families to create a safety network within the community so that they can live with minimal support and intervention from professionals. Our partnership with the **Children 1st Family Group Decision Making** service enhances this work by protecting the rights of children to have their voices heard on decisions which impact their lives. We prioritise families without statutory involvement as a preventative early intervention that gives families the power to make decisions. Family Group Decision Making strengthens communities by enabling families to utilise their wider network to help keep their children safe and at home.

Where children cannot live safely with their parents, we always explore other family members who may be able to care for them so they can maintain their family identity. We recognise the important role played by kinship carers in providing secure, stable and nurturing homes for children who cannot be cared for by their birth parents. Kinship carers are assessed and approved by a **Kinship Panel** and receive ongoing support from social workers to carry out their role. We have improved timescales for securing permanent placements for children as we understand the importance of a stable, secure home.

Children and parents are involved in meetings where the Child's Plan is co-produced, and children's views are at the heart of all decision making. We respect and uphold children and families' right to confidentiality and we provide information for children about our systems and processes in formats which they can access.

The right to a healthy family life is recognised and supported by the **Children 1st's Family Wellbeing Service**. Supporting the whole family, this service helps families recognise and develop the resilience and positive relationships that keep children safe and happy. Children, young people and their families design their own work plans and provide ongoing feedback of their experience within the service.

Through our Carers Act Implementation Group, we fund a Young Carer development worker post which has been successful in: raising awareness of the carer experience; increasing the number of identified young carers who are being supported by the **East Renfrewshire Carer Centre** and in schools; increasing the number of children and young people with a Young Carer Statement and a Young Carer Grant.

Basic Health & Welfare : Articles 6, 18(3), 23, 24, 26 and 27(1-3).

The **School Nursing Team** works closely with the **Youth Intensive Support Service** and **Children and Families Social Work Team**, providing targeted support and interventions to predominantly care experienced young people and vulnerable families. The School Nursing Service takes a multi-agency approach to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people. Therapeutic relationships are central to the ethos of School Nursing. We assess emotional health and wellbeing based on a strength based approach, always ensuring that a child's voice and their rights are respected and heard.

School Nursing Team – Isla's Story

Our school nursing team aligned with the Youth Intensive Support Team in July 2019. This followed consultation with care experienced Champions Board members, who identified the need for relationship building with health to give easier access to a range of health services that met their needs. Through a focus on partnership working, relationship building and early intervention we aimed to get better at understanding the needs of our young people. We have

built our skills in supporting children and young people with their emotional health and wellbeing and developed a suite of mental health interventions including Lets Introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM).

Isla (not her real name) was quickly identified as needing support with emotional health by her pastoral care teacher and her social worker. She was self-harming, not engaging with school and involved in risk taking behaviour. This predominantly stemmed from family issues and being a carer for her mum. We worked in partnership with Isla and her family, key school staff and social work to plan support. The rights of the young person were at the heart of the plan.

Isla was placed in foster care after a point of crisis in her life, giving her the space and time in a safe and nurturing environment to make some positive choices of her own. At this time Isla clearly voiced that she did not want to return to her mother's care. She wanted to be a normal teenager doing normal things and not be a carer for her mother. The school nurse helped Isla to develop positive coping skills to manage her anxiety. We were able to act as an advocate by supporting Isla to express her views where she felt she wasn't able to. She engaged with the LIAM programme and felt she benefited greatly from it.

Isla continued to express that she did not want to return to her mum and this view was respected at all times. Contact with mum did resume when Isla was ready, she became re-engaged with education and flourished in her foster placement. Isla benefited greatly from being heard and respected, which ultimately improved her outcomes.

This is an example of partnership working in East Renfrewshire where we honour every child's rights to be safe and respected so that they can reach their full potential.

Children and young people accessing the services of the **Speech and Language Therapy** (SLT) team often face greater barriers than others in securing their rights. Communication skills are an essential part of our development and impact on every part of our lives. We need speech, language and communication skills to develop and manage our emotional lives, and to form healthy relationships.

The SLT team works with education settings to promote positive communication environments, and our staff promote positive engagement for children and young people. We support children and young people to gather informed consent around their treatment and make decisions about appropriate treatment, ensuring the most vulnerable children have a voice. This is the foundation for other services to promote equality and tackle discrimination and prejudice.

Experiences in early years have a profound impact on an individual's future experience of health and wellbeing. Health professionals give children and young people the opportunity to express views in matters that affect their lives. The **Health Visiting Team** focus on relationship building with families and listening to the voice of the child to ensure that all needs are being assessed and met.

East Renfrewshire's **Community Planning Partnership** (CPP) is committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights. The CPP recognises the right to social security for every child and supports families to achieve this right by increasing awareness of and take-up of benefits.

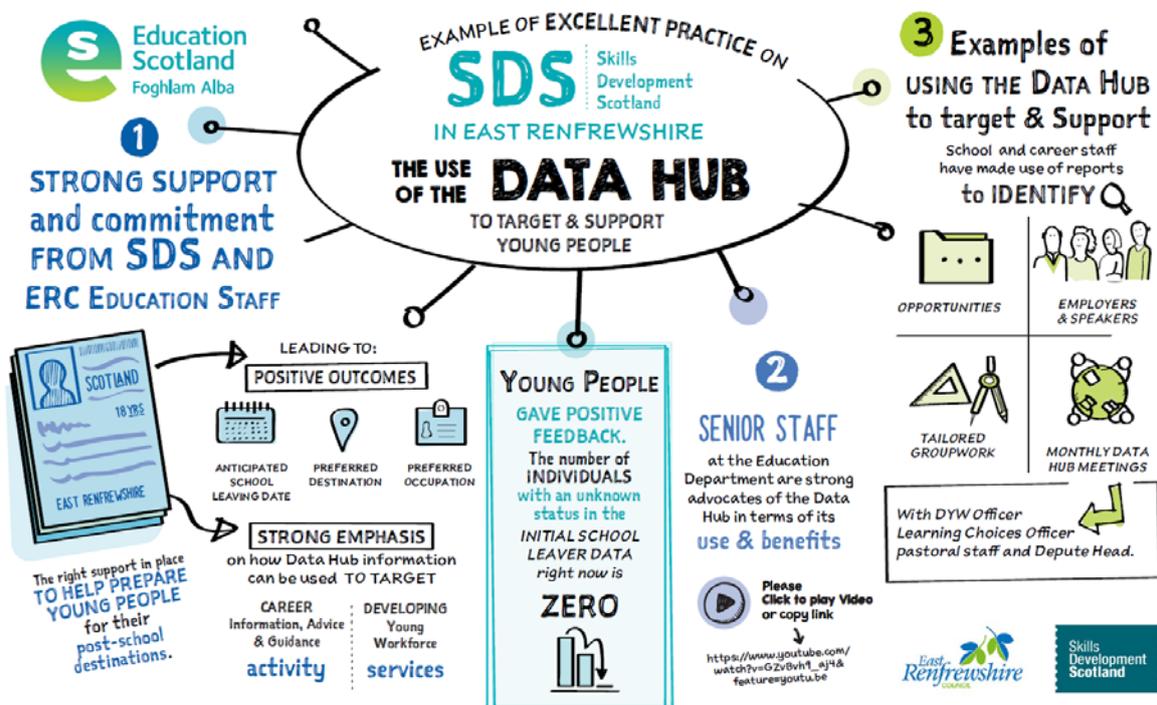
We provide information and advice to vulnerable families on maximising household income, welfare rights and housing options. We have set up a direct referral process between the Health Visiting Team and the **Money Advice and Rights Team**, where a dedicated worker has been employed to focus on Children and Early Years. A Health Visitor is now able to make a direct referral with the family, ensuring appropriate support is provided faster. **Dental**

Health Support Workers support families with children under 5 years old, through *Childsmile* home visits for families living in the poorest communities and first time parents. We promote financial wellbeing services at immunisation clinics in Eastwood and Barrhead Health Centres, engaging families who might otherwise be unknown to us.

The CPP acknowledges the right of children to live in conditions where they can flourish, and supports parents and carers by providing assistance and support around nutrition, clothing and housing. We have established a *Food Share* initiative with no referral process, and we distribute food bank vouchers to families experiencing food poverty. We support a local community *Back to School Bank* to provide free school uniform items. We provide financial advice and support to a *Young Mums Network* group. We promote nursery places for all vulnerable 2 year olds and have introduced 1140 hours of early learning and childcare for all eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds from August 2020.

Education settings play a crucial role in securing the best possible outcomes for children and young people who are living in poverty. All settings have introduced initiatives to reduce the **Cost of the School Day** and remove financial barriers to children experiencing all aspects of the curriculum. The Money Advice and Rights Team support financial inclusion work in local primary schools for children, parents and staff.

All our secondary schools work with the University of Glasgow to widen access to higher education, delivering programmes which allow senior pupils to gain adjusted course entry offers. We have also made innovative use of the National Data Hub to develop our *No One Left Behind* strategy; this has led to increasing levels of positive leaver destinations with the latest figures (18-19) reporting initial leaver destinations of 97.5% and follow up destinations of 96.7%, with an annual participation measure of 96.7%. Further information about how our use of the data hub impacts on young people can be found below.



Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities: Articles 28, 29 and 31.

Ensuring a positive education experience for all children is central to their wellbeing and future life chances, but some children face greater threats to their rights and more barriers than others. **Education** policies promote equality and diversity and tackle discrimination and prejudice. Participation is a right; our schools and early learning and childcare settings promote empowerment. The promotion and protection of rights permeate every aspect of school life.

Education settings have a crucial role in securing the best possible outcomes for children and young people who have additional support needs. Staff work with a range of partners to support children and young people, and their families, who are facing barriers to participating fully in the life of the school community, or who's right to be well cared for is being threatened by abuse or poverty. We provide a nurturing environment and ethos where positive relationships flourish and experiences across the curriculum ensure the highest possible levels of success and achievement. Pastoral care teams promote the interest of identified children and young people in line with the guidelines provided through the East Renfrewshire GIRFEC framework. Children's views are always central to assessment and planning. Every pupil has at least one key adult they can speak to if they are worried about something or need advice. In our questionnaires, almost all children and young people (90%) agreed that they have someone they can speak to if they are upset or worried. Pastoral care teams assess wellbeing concerns by asking key questions and, working with families and key partners, they take action to coordinate any support required. They are supported through regular ASN and Child Protection Coordinator meetings and GIRFEC and Corporate Parenting Forums which are led by the education department.

The **Community Learning and Development** team is fully committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights. Youth Work involves working with young people in the community and in school around issues that matter to them. The goal of youth work is to ensure all young people have skills for life, learning and work and in East Renfrewshire we address a wide range of issues including health, education, employment, citizenship, anti-social behaviour and crime. We target programmes and support to those young people with additional support needs and in the most vulnerable groups, who are most in need of our services. Youth workers play a crucial role in providing a positive link between work within schools and the activities that young people are involved with in the community.

Young people are supported to direct their own learning and feel confident in influencing decision making and programme content, so that services address their needs, goals, interests and aspirations. With our support, young people often support and mentor others, volunteer in their communities and commit time to projects. We support our *Youth Voice* groups and MSYPs to engage with young people across East Renfrewshire and represent their views both locally and nationally. Our delivery is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all young people, based on openness, dialogue, willingness to change and commitment to equality. We believe all young people deserve equal respect, dignity and opportunity.

We track participation in all programmes. We recognise and celebrate the successes and achievements of all young people specific to their own abilities, needs and aspirations. This ranges from celebrating participation in a youth club to recognising the attainment of a Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Sexuality and Gender Acceptance (SAGA)



SAGA (Sexuality And Gender Acceptance) is the first community-based, youth led LGBTi Youth Group in East Renfrewshire. Young people have worked alongside youth workers to establish a supportive, safe and accepting environment for LGBTi young people to meet, share experiences, develop new skills and take action. The group has been running for four years with 124 young people engaging in this time. The group have been involved in many activities and awareness raising events both locally and nationally.

The group noted that youth work staff would benefit from developing their skills, knowledge and confidence to effectively support LGBTi young people. The group created and delivered a workshop to 15 youth workers to develop their practice. The workshop was bespoke and informative, allowing staff to learn different terms and definitions that are widely used in the LGBTi community. The young people were clear that no question was wrong, allowing staff to explore myths, facts and discuss opinions.

The group worked in partnership with secondary schools to review language that was acceptable and unacceptable when working in groups or lessons with people who identify with the LGBTi community. They also worked with East Renfrewshire Council to organise a coffee morning for their local community. This event raised awareness of LGBTi young people, celebrated LGBT History month and showcased the impact of the youth group's volunteering in their local community. The event was attended by over 70 members of the community and also raised funds for LGBT Youth Scotland.

Members of the group raise the LGBT Pride flag every year as part of the council's Pride celebrations. The group also presented at these events, speaking about provision in the area and the opportunities their group provides. They attend local and national LGBTi events that celebrate and promote their community while networking with other groups from across Scotland.

The group have been active in a range of initiatives throughout lockdown. They worked with local councillors and other organisations to plan and host a virtual Pride march. They created a *Coming Out* guide for parents and carers to provide information, tips and guidance on how to support a child when they choose to identify within the LGBTi community. They are also developing a peer support hotline where members of the community can receive advice, information and support.



In 2019, the group were awarded the Ray McHugh Humanitarian award for their outstanding work in promoting and supporting the rights of LGBTi young people.

The **East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust** is fully committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights. Opportunities for children to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities are provided across our communities. The Trust is the main provider of cultural and artistic activities in East Renfrewshire and works with local community based groups to promote access to activities in Visual and Performing Arts, Digital Learning, Sport and Physical Activity. They work with schools and other services to give free access to vulnerable children and young people in school holiday programmes, leisure centres, visual and performing arts programmes, and other activities. Recently the Trust launched the *For Your Entertainment (FYE)* scheme, in partnership with HSCP, which encourages care experienced children and young people and other vulnerable groups to access free activities.

The Trust's education and training programme includes an extensive primary school Play Leadership programme and a comprehensive Sports Leadership Academy programme for senior phase pupils with links to national qualifications and work opportunities within the Trust.

The **Inclusive Support Service** believes that children and young people should always have opportunities to express their opinion in matters that affect their lives. We model behaviours that young people should expect and our engagement with young people supports the development of self-respect, self-determination and confidence. Children are supported to make genuine choices and exercise their rights in matters that affect their daily lives.

Children's wishes and opinions are core to the team's ethos. We engage with children and young people on all aspects of their daily life such as food, drink, activities and personal care needs. Where there is a difference in expectations of a child and their parent we work in partnership to ensure the best outcomes for the child. The structure of our holiday programmes, clubs and individual supports allow children and young people to exercise their rights to play, rest and receive appropriate support. We have adapted the UNCRC articles so that in practical situations we reinforce the understanding of individual rights. Communicating can be challenging in itself for some of our young people. While supporting skills development in this area, we reinforce through our actions that their contribution is of value. We provide consultation sessions where young people provide feedback using a variety of communication tools such as talking mats, visual aids, AAC devices and voting boxes. This feedback, using a 'You say ... We do' approach, influences service change.

Inclusive Support Team – Dominic's Story

Dominic is a young man brought up in a home where his rights have been supported and advocated for from birth. This is particularly important given the potential impact his learning disability could have on accessing rights. Dominic's evolving capacities have been nurtured both by home and school. He attends Isobel Mair School where he develops friendships, plays and learns and makes meaningful choices throughout his day. Being non-verbal, Dominic uses an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device to communicate

Choice for many young people was affected by the lockdown measures during COVID-19. For Dominic, accustomed to being included and allowed to make choices in preparation for events, the move to lockdown was traumatic. Not only was he denied physical access to school, but some of the rights and freedoms he had previously enjoyed at home were curtailed. Coming from a place where provisions were made to ensure his voice was heard, Dominic became frustrated and vocal. He would repeatedly prepare his school bag and place it at the front door and point to school on his communication aid. Dominic's parents noted his positive reactions to familiar faces and the delivery of support activity boxes. Dominic's mother commented on "how much he needs the support that he is provided outside the family in order for him to choose to play and be included in the community".



The Inclusive Support Team and Isobel Mair School, along with partners from Children's Services, worked with the family to support Dominic's return to school, initially on a part-time basis. This helped Dominic realise that the familiar life of the school community was still available to him. His mother noted that "my child knows that, when he attends school and the after-school supported activities, the teachers and inclusive support staff know what his needs are and can respond to them; when he needs the toilet, when he wants to play, when he wants not to play. When his needs are not responded to appropriately, he gets distressed".

For Dominic, his right to express his views have been promoted and supported, leading to positive benefits for him and his family.

Special Protection Measures:**Articles 22, 38 and 39: 37 (a-d) 39 and 40: 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36: 30**

East Renfrewshire's **Intensive Services Children and Families Team** are committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights and their full participation in matters affecting their lives. We understand that some children, young people and families need additional support to overcome problems and circumstances that are affecting their lives.

We respect children's right to family life and to grow up loved, safe and respected so that they can reach their potential. For those children who need additional support, we work with children and families to assess their circumstances, and we make decisions with families. Our Child Protection guidance highlights the importance of seeking children's views as part of any child protection process, and we fully implement this aspect of guidance. We work with our partners to ensure that any concerns about children are shared and investigated quickly and fully to ensure their safety. We are piloting a Holistic Trauma Approach to Joint Investigative Interviews based on the European Promise quality standards. This model will ensure that interventions consistently improve experiences for children and their families. Our *Signs of Safety* approach is improving support for families by developing their own safety networks so that children can live with their parents safely. This means that families have ownership of their plans and take responsibility to ensure children are safe.

Signs of Safety

We started to use the *Signs of Safety* approach with a family at a stage where they had been involved in social work for a number of years. The children had periods of being on the child protection register and at the point of this intervention were in foster placements. They had experienced domestic abuse and the older children had made allegations about mum's partner. The children and mum had experienced substantial trauma as a result of the abusive relationship and past experiences. There was a risk that living with mum again was not going to be possible for any of the children.

The Signs of Safety approach embeds rights based practice as the children's voice is central to



previous partner. This was a pivotal period of change for both the children and mum but also for the plan.

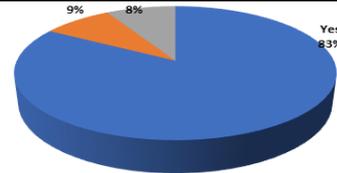
Using these tools allowed the children's views, both fears and hopes, to be shared with all those who were helping to keep them safe. Using the children's voices to build a plan within a family network ensured the children's safety and protection in the longer term. The children were returned to and have remained in their Mum's care where they appear to be thriving. All children are attending nursery and school and are enjoying relationships with family members and friends.

planning, therefore upholding children's right to be heard and also their right to family life whenever possible. Using the *Three Houses* tool allowed us to explore the children's views. This was important for the primary school age child who had struggled the most with their relationship with their mum. The anonymised three houses (*on the left*) was the first time they had been able to confidently articulate that they wanted to live with Mum forever, but that people from their past couldn't be part of their lives. The child turned the page over and drew the small angry face (*on the bottom right corner*) again to emphasise how scared they were of their mum's

All Child's Assessments and Plans explicitly take children's views into account. We use a range of age appropriate tools to gather the views of children and our social workers develop positive relationships with children and their families, allowing them to seek views and reflect these in decision making. We also commission advocacy services from **Partners in Advocacy** and **Who Cares? Scotland** who support children and young people to articulate their views.

Children 1st were commissioned to undertake and report on a survey of families who have been subject to child protection processes. Findings showed that children and families feel increasingly engaged in the process. This graphic, taken from the report, is evidence that children feel engaged in these processes.

I was able to express my views and they were listened too.



The **Youth Intensive Support Service** supports children and young people who are at risk of accommodation, placement breakdown and hospitalisation due to poor mental health. The team also support young people who are looked after, in continuing care or aftercare. Our ethos is to support young people and to ensure their rights are upheld and promoted. We have established a *Champions Board* in partnership with care experienced young people, corporate parents and the Life Changes Trust. The Champions Board is based on relationships and participation and places young people at the centre of decision making forums that affect them. Our Champions Board has been described as sector leading in its approach. Young people work alongside the Chief Executive, Elected Members and other senior council officers to raise issues that are barriers to their development. They have helped to shape the provision of the school nursing service, made changes to Housing policy and gained free access to culture and leisure services. The Champions Board are now regularly consulted with by their Corporate Parents to help shape Policy and Practice. They have also influenced the establishment of care experienced traineeships through our innovative *Family Firm* model.

We have also introduced a *Mini Champs* group based on the Champions Board model, where younger care experienced children between the ages of 7 and 13 meet regularly to participate in activities and share their views. There is a trauma-informed focus on care identity, increased understanding of care and reduction of social isolation. The Mini Champs meet fortnightly and engage in a range of activities negotiated by the children. The group organised a very successful event in the National Portrait Gallery where they created an art show focusing on identity.

The **Intensive Family Support Service** works with families to strengthen the safety and wellbeing of children. We provide intensive parenting support to reduce risk to children and to strengthen relationships and understanding within families. Along with the Youth Intensive and Family Support Services, we focus on strength based approaches. We aim to be transparent and honest in our engagement and interactions with our children, young people and families. As a statutory social work service we also recognise that there can be a perceived power imbalance in our interventions and discussions. This places more responsibility on all our staff to be aware of and uphold children's rights.

Champions Board

The Champions Board aims to raise the profile and awareness of the needs of young people with care experience and to create a model of partnership working and co-production between young people and adult decision makers. A key element to this is relationship building between young people and adult Champions and they have attended a number of team building events together such as pizza making, bowling, outwards bounds weekends and solving a murder mystery on the streets of Glasgow!



The Champions Board website showcases the work of the Champions Board and provides information on a range of services along with links to external support and advice. This website was co-produced by young people who helped design art work and decide on content. The website launch in October 2019 was attended by young people and adult Champions and included a performance from young people involved in a guitar group, as well as a vocal performance from one of our young Champions.

The Champions Board worked together around the theme of mental health. They identified barriers to accessing existing services and the difficulties they can have engaging with adults. The young people produced a drama performance called *Journeys* and performed this to their Corporate Parents. The young people used this to highlight their need for time, patience, understanding and above all relationships with those supporting them.

The Champions Board were respected and listened to by adult decision makers. An outcome of this was the School Nursing Service becoming based within the Youth Intensive Support Service where they have been able to build relationships, gain trust and get to know care experienced young people. This has helped to remove barriers to accessing mental health support and has created a flexible service shaped around the needs of young people.

The young people are growing in confidence, expressing their needs and contributing to co-production of services with their Corporate Parents. One care experienced young person commented that “the Champions Board has given me a voice to impact important things that affect my life within East Renfrewshire. It has given me a sense of community and relationships with adults that are responsible for change”.

The Mini Champs group use various forms of participation to engage and share views, one of which was an exhibition in partnership with National Galleries of Scotland, called *Character Building*, looking at what makes us the people we are and how others view us. The exhibition opened at the National Portrait Gallery where families, carers and corporate parents attended with the group.



Richie Cumming, Outreach Officer at National Galleries of Scotland, commented: *“It was a real privilege working with the Mini Champs. The powerful portraits they produced were bold and vital, providing gallery visitors and staff an insight into these young people’s strength of character. Their insightful comments on historical artworks during their visits to the gallery and the conversations generated throughout the project, highlight the importance of communal, creative and cultural experiences we have all been missing out on this year.”*

How are we doing?

These are some of the positive outcomes of the work that has taken place over the last three years to promote and uphold Children's Right, which have been identified by members the Children's Services Participation Group through discussion with children, young people and key partners during the compilation of this report.

- Children and young people feel valued and respected within their educational setting and wider community.
- Children and young people show high levels of engagement, empowerment, and commitment to education.
- Children and young people experience high levels of achievement and attainment.
- The attainment gap between learners from more and less deprived backgrounds is closing.
- Young people are securing more positive school leaver destinations.
- Children and young people are increasingly able to access relevant, effective and integrated services.
- Children and young people are developing an understanding of safe, healthy and positive relationships from an early age.
- Children and young people are able to recognise and challenge violent and abusive behaviour.
- There is more refuge accommodation for women and children affected by domestic abuse.
- Our workforce is more able to identify violence against children and young people and respond effectively.
- Children and young people are experiencing better kinship care placements.
- The right to a permanent secure home is being secured quicker and the experiences of children in these placements is improving.
- An increasing number of young carers are being supported by the East Renfrewshire Carer Centre, in partnership with our schools, and are taking up the Young Carer Statement and Young Carer Grant.
- Children and young people with complex support needs are more involved in making decisions over their futures and what their services look like.
- Children and young people with additional support needs, and their families, are being assessed in a more person centred way.
- Families in East Renfrewshire are being supported to maximise their income.
- Children and young people are active participants in the co-creation of wellbeing and safety plans.
- Children and young people are participating in a wide range of youth work programmes with opportunities to achieve accreditation.
- Families are supported to develop their own safety networks so that children can live with their parents safely.
- Children and their parents' views are sought and any plans are developed in partnership with them. They have ownership of their plans and take responsibility for developing their own safety networks to ensure children are safe.
- We have a better understanding of families' experiences of how we work with them and a baseline from which to measure our ongoing performance and improvement.

How do we know?

Supporting data and evidence which was used to inform this report included:

- Education Department local authority questionnaires – summary of pupil responses.
- School Leaver Destination data.
- Unicef Rights Respecting Schools Awards summary of educational establishment activity.
- HSCP Child Protection data.
- HSCP Signs of Safety evaluation data.
- Children 1st annual reports.
- East Renfrewshire Equally Safe National Performance Framework.
- Chief Officers Public Protection Report
- VAW Partnership Reporting.
- Report on views of young people of using SDS.
- CLD achievement data.

The following national and local policies, strategies and action plans inform the approaches that we take to improve how we promote and uphold children's rights.

National:

[Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#)

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[Children's Hearings \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#)

[National Parenting Strategy 2012](#)

[Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)

[National Child Protection Guidance 2014 \(Scotland\)](#)

[National Youth Work Strategy \(2014\)](#)

[Getting it Right for Looked After Children and Young People Strategy 2015](#)

[Fairer Scotland Action Plan 2016](#)

[Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm Act 2016](#)

[Equally Safe: National Strategy 2016](#)

[The Kinship Care Assistance \(Scotland\) Order 2016](#)

[Carers Scotland Act 2016](#)

[Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy 2017](#)

[Child Poverty Scotland Act 2017](#)

[Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)

[National Performance Framework 2018](#)

[National CLD Plan \(2018\)](#)

[No One Left Behind: Next Steps for Employability Support 2018](#)

[Health and Social Care Standards \(2018\)](#)

[Child Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessments \(CRWIA\) Guidance 2019](#)

[Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2019](#)

[Independent Care Review \(2020\)](#)

[Developing a Culture Strategy for Scotland 2020](#)

[Support for Learning: All our Children and All their Potential \(2020\)](#)

Local:

East Renfrewshire's Children and Young People's Plan 2020-23

Signs of Safety Implementation Plan 2018-22

Fairer East Ren Plan 2018-20

Local Improvement Plan 2019-22

Fairer East Ren Plan 2018-20

East Renfrewshire Violence Against Women Delivery Plan 2020

Promoting Education Opportunities and Improving Outcomes of Care Experienced Children and Young People in East Renfrewshire (Education Corporate Parenting Policy)

Healthier Minds Framework

What will we do next?

We are committed to children's rights being at the heart of all policies and procedures that affect their lives. Through compiling this report and examining the evidence that informed it, we are now clearer about what we need to do next and how the views of children and young people will be at the heart of our journey.

We have ensured that a rights based approach is embedded in our East Renfrewshire Children's Plan 2020-23. As a workforce we will improve how we communicate and seek children's views in ways which meet their needs. We will engage with children & young people to monitor our progress over the next three years and in particular:

- We will set up a UNCRC Implementation Group, which will include representation of young people, to oversee implementation of all relevant aspects of the UNCRC Bill.
- The Education Department will discuss progress with our Primary and Secondary Pupil Councils.
- The Education Department will conduct annual questionnaires with our pupils, parents / carers and staff. These questionnaires will ask for views on rights and participation.
- HSCP will continue to engage with children and young people who use our services in a manner which enhances the ability of all to communicate their views. We will monitor implementation through caseload management and review.
- The Community Learning and Development team will consult with MSYPs and the Youth Voice forum.
- We will work with children and young people to ensure that information is shared with them in an accessible way, through our Children's Services Participation Subgroup.
- We will seek the views of children and young people subject to legal measures through a new system for formally gathering their views.
- We will continue to promote advocacy services for children and young people and act on feedback provided through these services.
- We will continue to increase participation levels in our Champions Board and Mini Champs and we will consult regularly with members.
- We will introduce a Champions Board for our children and young people with complex support needs.
- We will embed the involvement of disabled children and young people in development by utilising existing services such as Inclusive Support to involve all children and young people.
- We will utilise a wide range of technologies to gather the views of children and young people with complex additional support needs.

A SUMMARY OF THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD



ARTICLE 1 (definition of the child)

Everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the Convention.

ARTICLE 2 (non-discrimination)

The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.

ARTICLE 3 (best interests of the child)

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

ARTICLE 4 (implementation of the Convention)

Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights by creating systems and passing laws that promote and protect children's rights.

ARTICLE 5 (parental guidance and a child's evolving capacities)

Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers to provide guidance and direction to their child as they grow up, so that they fully enjoy their rights. This must be done in a way that recognises the child's increasing capacity to make their own choices.

ARTICLE 6 (life, survival and development)

Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

ARTICLE 7 (birth registration, name, nationality, care)

Every child has the right to be registered at birth, to have a name and nationality, and, as far as possible, to know and be cared for by their parents.

ARTICLE 8 (protection and preservation of identity)

Every child has the right to an identity. Governments must respect and protect that right, and prevent the child's name, nationality or family relationships from being changed unlawfully.

ARTICLE 9 (separation from parents)

Children must not be separated from their parents against their will unless it is in their best interests (for example, if a parent is hurting or neglecting a child). Children whose parents have separated have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this could cause them harm.

ARTICLE 10 (family reunification)

Governments must respond quickly and sympathetically if a child or their parents apply to live together in the same country. If a child's parents live apart in different countries, the child has the right to visit and keep in contact with both of them.

ARTICLE 11 (abduction and non-return of children)

Governments must do everything they can to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally by their parents or other relatives, or being prevented from returning home.

ARTICLE 12 (respect for the views of the child)

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

ARTICLE 13 (freedom of expression)

Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

ARTICLE 14 (freedom of thought, belief and religion)

Every child has the right to think and believe what they choose and also to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide their child as they grow up.

ARTICLE 15 (freedom of association)

Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

ARTICLE 16 (right to privacy)

Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child's private, family and home life, including protecting children from unlawful attacks that harm their reputation.

ARTICLE 17 (access to information from the media)

Every child has the right to reliable information from a variety of sources, and governments should encourage the media to provide information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.

ARTICLE 18 (parental responsibilities and state assistance)

Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support parents by creating support services for children and giving parents the help they need to raise their children.

ARTICLE 19 (protection from violence, abuse and neglect)

Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

ARTICLE 20 (children unable to live with their family)

If a child cannot be looked after by their immediate family, the government must give them special protection and assistance. This includes making sure the child is provided with alternative care that is continuous and respects the child's culture, language and religion.

ARTICLE 21 (adoption)

Governments must oversee the process of adoption to make sure it is safe, lawful and that it prioritises children's best interests. Children should only be adopted outside of their country if they cannot be placed with a family in their own country.

ARTICLE 22 (refugee children)

If a child is seeking refuge or has refugee status, governments must provide them with appropriate protection and assistance to help them enjoy all the rights in the Convention. Governments must help refugee children who are separated from their parents to be reunited with them.

ARTICLE 23 (children with a disability)

A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to support disabled children and their families.

ARTICLE 24 (health and health services)

Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

ARTICLE 25 (review of treatment in care)

If a child has been placed away from home for the purpose of care or protection (for example, with a foster family or in hospital), they have the right to a regular review of their treatment, the way they are cared for and their wider circumstances.

ARTICLE 26 (social security)

Every child has the right to benefit from social security, including financial support and other benefits, to families in need of assistance.

ARTICLE 27 (adequate standard of living)

Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this.

ARTICLE 28 (right to education)

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

ARTICLE 29 (goals of education)

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

ARTICLE 30 (children from minority or indigenous groups)

Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.

ARTICLE 31 (leisure, play and culture)

Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

ARTICLE 32 (child labour)

Governments must protect children from economic exploitation and work that is dangerous or might harm their health, development or education. Governments must set a minimum age for children to work and ensure that work conditions are safe and appropriate.

ARTICLE 33 (drug abuse)

Governments must protect children from the illegal use of drugs and from being involved in the production or distribution of drugs.

ARTICLE 34 (sexual exploitation)

Governments must protect children from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.

ARTICLE 35 (abduction, sale and trafficking)

Governments must protect children from being abducted, sold or moved illegally to a different place in or outside their country for the purpose of exploitation.

ARTICLE 36 (other forms of exploitation)

Governments must protect children from all other forms of exploitation, for example the exploitation of children for political activities, by the media or for medical research.

ARTICLE 37 (inhumane treatment and detention)

Children must not be tortured, sentenced to the death penalty or suffer other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment. Children should be arrested, detained or imprisoned only as a last resort and for the shortest time possible. They must be treated with respect and care, and be able to keep in contact with their family. Children must not be put in prison with adults.

ARTICLE 38 (war and armed conflicts)

Governments must not allow children under the age of 15 to take part in war or join the armed forces. Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war and armed conflicts.

ARTICLE 39 (recovery from trauma and reintegration)

Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.

ARTICLE 40 (juvenile justice)

A child accused or guilty of breaking the law must be treated with dignity and respect. They have the right to legal assistance and a fair trial that takes account of their age. Governments must set a minimum age for children to be tried in a criminal court and manage a justice system that enables children who have been in conflict with the law to reintegrate into society.

ARTICLE 41 (respect for higher national standards)

If a country has laws and standards that go further than the present Convention, then the country must keep those laws.

ARTICLE 42 (knowledge of rights)

Governments must actively work to make sure children and adults know about the Convention.

The Convention has 54 articles in total. Articles 43-54 are about how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights, including:

ARTICLE 45
Unicef can provide expert advice and assistance on children's rights.

OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS

There are three agreements, called Optional Protocols, that strengthen the Convention and add further unique rights for children. They are optional because governments that ratify the Convention can decide whether or not to sign up to these Optional Protocols. They are: the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict; and the Optional Protocol on a complaints mechanism for children (called Communications Procedure).

For more information go to unicef.org/uk/crc/op