



# Education Scotland Scottish Attainment Challenge

**National Summary Report  
August - November 2023**

**For Scotland's learners, with Scotland's educators**

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## Section 1

### 1.1 Introduction

National Summary Reports are part of the cycle for reporting on the implementation and delivery of the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC). Attainment advisors, in collaboration with their associated local authority, produce reports triannually. This ensures a continuous narrative where thematic next steps are identified and subsequent progress evaluated. Equity and improving outcomes for those children and young people impacted by poverty are referenced throughout.

This summary is a collation and analysis of all 32 local authority reports. Section 1.2 provides an overview of the progress being made towards the next steps for learning teaching and assessment identified in Triannual Report 3. Illustrations throughout this summary are examples from local authority reports.

The key theme for this reporting period was families and communities and is summarised in Section 2. Improvement and progress being made by local authorities are outlined in three key areas: parental engagement, collaboration and cost of the school day.

### 1.2 Progress towards next steps for this period

All local authorities worked with their attainment advisor and identified their next steps for learning, teaching and assessment. The summary of these next steps can be found in the [Scottish Attainment Challenge Summary Report April to June 2023](#). The key themes were:

- Strategies and frameworks
- Developing capacity
- Quality assurance
- Moderation
- Tracking and monitoring
- Dedicated staff
- Learner participation

All local authorities have demonstrated progress towards achieving their identified next steps.

#### Strategies and frameworks

The majority of local authorities have made progress in either developing, implementing or embedding strategies, policies or frameworks which support

effective learning, teaching and assessment. This reflects a strong drive to improve the consistency and quality of learning experiences. It also highlights the importance that local authorities place on high-quality learning, teaching and assessment as a means of addressing poverty-related attainment gaps.

### Strategies and frameworks

*Frameworks supporting literacy, numeracy and learning, teaching and assessment were published in September 2023. School leaders will work with staff on the implementation of these frameworks during the 2023-24. Professional learning opportunities will be provided by the quality improvement team to senior leaders and school staff to support the effective implementation of the frameworks in schools and settings. Impact will be gathered as part of the school self-evaluation process.*

*Initial progress has been made in designing a learning and teaching standard. Almost all headteachers and central officers attended a session on learning, teaching and assessment, led by HMIE. This informed content of the standard. The recent in-service day on assessment was delivered to all staff. Clearer expectations are now in place. Ongoing professional learning is supporting increased confidence and understanding of excellent learning, teaching and assessment.*

*Significant progress has been made with the strategy which provides a consistent approach to curriculum planning and assessment. This innovative strategy has been developed to promote excellent educational outcomes for all learners. It is based on five key drivers for change: clarity, consistency, collaboration, challenge, and creativity. It includes a robust plan for professional learning throughout the year. All staff from primary and secondary schools have engaged in the programme launch and first two 'sprints'. The 'team around the cluster' is the driving force for this change and initial feedback from professional learning sessions suggests there is already increased consistency and collaboration in the system.*

*The revised learning, teaching and assessment policy aligns with the SAC mission of improving outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty. It is a practical reference tool and provides clear, succinct guidance on key aspects of learning and teaching. Positive progress has been made in embedding the policy. All schools now have improvement plan priorities focused on learning, teaching, and assessment. In addition, the quality assurance processes have ensured that these priorities align closely to the policy.*

The implementation of these strategies, policies and frameworks is often supported by a programme of professional learning and quality assurance processes. It is anticipated that this will support consistency of approach across establishments.

### Developing capacity

There is strong evidence of investment in a range of professional learning. This helps to ensure that leaders and practitioners have increased capacity to deliver consistently high-quality learning, teaching and assessment. These include training programmes and networks which support collaboration and sharing of good practice. The majority of local authorities highlighted how these opportunities help to address their next steps.

## Developing capacity

*The recent headteacher conference was themed around 'Raising Attainment through High-Quality Learning, Teaching and Assessment' and included a range of high profile national and international speakers. An initial cohort of schools have signed up to a refreshed 'Guided Approaches to Pedagogical Enquiry' programme and universal professional learning sessions have commenced. The education officer for learning, teaching and assessment is providing targeted support to a number of schools who have requested support on assessment or identified as requiring support through quality assurance procedures.*

*The new professional learning academy model was successfully launched in August 2023. The model is being piloted across four target schools, three primaries and one secondary. Target schools were selected because of their high levels of poverty. Modelling of effective practice and bespoke training is now being delivered to these schools to support them to raise attainment and tackle the poverty-related attainment gap. This is supported by Strategic Equity Funding. Early feedback indicates that it is having a positive impact on teachers' knowledge and skills.*

*'Conversation Cafes' for headteachers continue to provide a forum for collaboration and sharing practice. Almost all primary headteachers have engaged in these sessions which are designed and led by them. Almost all headteachers outlined the next steps to further develop consistency in the classroom using effective differentiation to meet pupil needs and facilitate peer visits. They have also identified the need to communicate effective feedback through professional discussion with colleagues. This is now the key focus for future discussions which will also include a focus on attendance.*

## Quality assurance

Half of all local authorities have improved aspects of their quality assurance processes. A drive to ensure a greater focus on equity, as part of quality assurance visits, was a common theme. Additionally, further support for self-evaluation of learning, teaching and assessment was evident. This builds on the participation of leaders in the Self-evaluation for Continuous Improvement programme, facilitated by Education Scotland. Better use of data to target support more effectively was also a key driver for improvement.

## Quality assurance

*Heads of establishment trios have been established to support self-evaluation and quality assurance and focus on learning, teaching and assessment. Following the first trio visit, all primary and early years heads of establishments attended a session to identify emerging strengths and areas for development. This work will continue across the year with dedicated time to provide support and challenge and to work collaboratively to improve learning, teaching and assessment. The quality assurance empowered leadership group and central officers will continue to provide proportionate and targeted support.*

*QI 2.3 - learning, teaching and assessment, will continue to be the focus of QI visit two which take place between November and March. The visit will support schools to validate self-evaluation in this area, highlight areas for further support and improve the raising of attainment. The authority has undertaken an analysis of schools' self-evaluation grades to support the service plan outcomes and identify where support is most needed.*

*Alongside universal support to all schools, equity review meetings take place twice a term in 14 identified schools. These meetings focus on collaborative forward planning for the term ahead, based on analysis of data and evidence. This leads to a range of bespoke activities with the equity team, for example: between August-October 2023 the team worked successfully with 129 practitioners across 14 identified schools. This has included ten data dialogue sessions with senior leaders, whole staff teams and focused quintile one discussions with 14 primary one teachers.*

*A relentless focus on self-evaluation has continued. Key messages from the Education Scotland Self-evaluation for Continuous Improvement (SECI) programme have been embedded into a revised school visit programme and new guidance for school leaders. This will increase opportunities for learning from SECI to positively influence self-evaluation processes in schools. The attainment advisor provided feedback on the guidance, and it is now in the final stages of drafting.*

## Moderation

Improvements to moderation processes were highlighted by almost half of local authorities. Work included providing guidance and opportunities for professional dialogue to support consistency of learning, teaching and assessment. Several local authorities have been supported by Education Scotland and some have trained Quality Assurance and Moderation Officers (QAMSOs) to build internal capacity.

### Moderation

*Updated guidance for practitioners on assessment and moderation has been produced and shared. This includes features of highly effective practice, challenge questions and links to resources. The education service worked with the Education Scotland National Improvement Framework officer to provide a professional learning session for senior leaders to consider assessment and moderation approaches. The session also offered colleagues the opportunity to review national messages, share approaches to moderation and assessment and consider the effectiveness of current moderation systems and processes. The impact of this guidance and training will be evaluated throughout the 2023-24 academic year.*

*Work on the assessment and moderation framework is being led by an education officer, a seconded depute headteacher and the coaching and modelling officer. Very good progress is being made. Monthly forum meetings and a Google Classroom are supporting professional learning, sharing of effective practice, peer support and empowerment. All schools are involved and have included a focus on assessment and moderation as a priority in their current improvement plans. Following the introductory conference in May 2023 there have been three learning sessions for school leads to date, each focused on a key element of effective practice in assessment and moderation. Two further learning sessions are already planned for January and April along with a second conference in May. Clear outcomes for this work were identified at the outset. Baseline and post learning questionnaires are being used to track impact on an ongoing basis. Impact to date shows progress in several key areas such as confidence in using the benchmarks and supporting staff with learning intentions and success criteria.*

## Tracking and monitoring

A minority of local authorities highlighted improvements in approaches to tracking and monitoring. The introduction of tracking tools, including data dashboards, have helped staff, at all levels, to access and analyse a range of data. As a result, support is targeted more effectively. Furthermore, the impact of interventions and progress towards stretch aims are more closely monitored.

### Tracking and monitoring

*Principal teachers for equity in each secondary school complete the monthly equity tracker which monitors progress towards stretch aims. This activity highlighted inconsistencies in how schools track individual learners' progress. A tracking tool, to be used consistently by all schools, has been developed. Headteachers welcomed its introduction in August 2023. The quality improvement officer for equity and inclusion will monitor its use and report the impact in the coming year.*

*A performance and reporting board was convened. This included headteachers, deputy headteachers, local area officers, senior leaders and the attainment advisor. The board will assess how effectively data is used across the system. This is now a well-established group and has helped shape the strategy to re-align data sets. As a result, the board is currently working with digital colleagues to support the development of dashboards for schools to access and analyse current attainment and attendance data. This has led to collaborative work with another local authority who have engaged in a similar data project. As a result, both local authorities have been able to share effective practice and explore joint challenges.*

*All officers worked effectively to analyse data. All reported that using data from the dashboard led to a greater understanding of progress through the Curriculum for Excellence Levels for each school. All schools received a data visit from officers or the attainment advisor to discuss progress in attainment. These visits provided a consistent approach to support and challenge. The data gathered from this work, alongside self-evaluation information from schools, has enabled officers to effectively plan for targeted support for schools with the greatest need. All senior leaders are now using dashboards to access current information on attainment, attendance, and exclusions. This has created a consistent approach to analysing data. Furthermore, using the dashboard has enabled headteachers and deputy headteachers to provide relevant information to formulate bespoke stretch aims.*

## Staff specifically aligned to SAC work

New roles have been established in a minority of local authorities. Many of these are funded through Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) and focus on building staff capacity. They include central staff with responsibility for raising attainment and officers to lead on literacy and numeracy. In a few instances QAMSOs are being identified to support improvement.

### Staff specifically aligned to SAC work

*New roles have been advertised and will be filled by January 2024. Remits will focus on learning teaching and assessment as well as leadership of change. The roles will also support achievement of the stretch aims and the work of the trios to improve assessment and moderation.*

*Work has begun to establish a local network of Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officers who will provide bespoke support to establishments where required. Attainment Scotland Funding has allowed the education service to increase capacity, including a member of staff for professional learning and a raising attainment project manager. They have been able to support planning, implementation and evaluation of professional learning targeted at supporting schools to identify and address gaps. As a result, the impact of any professional learning is reviewed and effectively utilised in further planning and support.*

## Learner participation

A few local authorities have made some progress in their work to increase learner participation or engagement. In the best examples, this is having a positive impact on their learning experiences.

### Learner participation

*Innovative approaches to interdisciplinary learning in some primary schools are leading to children being highly involved and engaged in making decisions about their learning. An example of this approach was recognised as highly effective by the local authority and an HMIE thematic inspection. Plans are in place to share this practice more widely with other schools*

*Three secondary schools are using accreditation to support pupil voice groups in the form of Participative Democracy Certification (PDC). The certificate gains participants two credits at SCQF level 5. Youth work staff support this process and coordinate the accreditation.*



## Section 2

### Theme: Families and communities

Families and communities is one of the key drivers for change in delivering the Scottish Attainment Challenge. This section outlines the work and progress of local authorities in parental engagement, collaboration and the cost of the school day.

#### 2.1 Parental engagement

Research outlines that when positive relationships exist with parents, they are more confident in engaging with those supporting their children's learning. Furthermore, that this works best when professionals are sensitive to the socio-economic circumstances, challenges and barriers of families.

##### Strategies/policies/frameworks

Most local authorities have strategic approaches in place to ensure that they support the engagement of all parents and families. In the majority of these, parental engagement permeates a variety of cross-sector plans, policies and frameworks; for example, children's services plans.

##### Strategies/policies/frameworks

*A parental involvement engagement plan 2022-24 is in place. Relationships are at the heart of the plan alongside the key elements of communication, parent voice, supporting parents, community partnerships, sharing learning and volunteering. The 'Communication, Collaboration and Consultation Framework' outlines expectations of a fair, consistent approach between home and school. Integral to the anti-poverty approach, several single and multi-agency projects and partnerships work together to ensure support, opportunities and programmes for families living in the most disadvantaged circumstances.*

*The parental engagement strategy effectively links home, school and community, with parents as a central pillar. It sits within the community planning framework, the community plan 2017-2030 and aligns and shares its vision with the strategy for parents 2019-2024. This connected approach to strategic planning ensures all parents are effectively equipped to help their children to grow up healthy, attaining and achieving by ensuring equity and inclusion for all.*

*There are clear policies in place. For example, Included Engaged and Involved and Learning Together – Parental Engagement, Parental Involvement, Family Learning and Learning at Home have resulted in increased support for families and communities. Support from children and families and family learning staff is ongoing, supporting practitioners in self-evaluation to effect change. All schools continue to strengthen relationships with parents and carers.*

*A clear, comprehensive 'Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy 2023-2026' is in place. The strategy, designed to support partnership with parents, is for use by all educators and partners who work with children and young people across early learning and childcare, primary and secondary sectors.*

*The 'Partnership with Parents Framework' supports the engagement of families to meet the needs of all children and young people. This framework has a strong focus on equity and social justice. This has resulted in a shift in emphasis from 'involving' parents/carers to 'collaborating' with them. Almost all schools have Parent Councils. Parents/carers views are sought during validated self-evaluation and school reviews.*

*The 'Parental and Family Engagement Strategy 3-18' aims to support early learning centres and schools to develop effective practice in relation to:*

- *Learning at home and family learning*
- *Home school partnerships*
- *Parental representation*

*The strategy sets out roles, responsibilities and clear expectations. In relation to learning at home, all establishments are expected to support parents/carers in understanding how and what their children will learn and how they can support this. This includes advice and support on studying and how to prepare for exams. Schools are encouraged to have materials available to support learning at home.*

The publication of Education Scotland's [Strategic Framework for Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home](#) in October 2022, and its official launch in May 2023, appears to have had an impact on local authorities. Half reported that their parental involvement and engagement strategies (PIES) were being developed or under review.

## Consultation

Some local authorities outlined consultation with parents and stakeholders when reviewing and producing their PIES. Others acknowledged that further work is required to involve and engage parents and families when establishing a shared vision.

### Consultation

*A parental involvement and engagement (PIE) strategy for 2023-2026 will be published in November 2023. This has been developed following consultation with stakeholders and evaluation of the previous 2018 strategy. The refreshed strategy will support parents to take an active role in their child's education, resulting positively on children's achievements and in particular those children living in poverty.*

*The parental engagement strategy was formulated through a consultative process involving various stakeholders, including parents. The strategy is focused on enhancing parental involvement in their children's learning, strengthening communication and removing barriers to effective parental engagement. Recent initiatives, including the draft relationship policy and attendance framework, will synchronise and reinforce partnership working between the LA and parents.*

*The strategy has been informed by responses to a questionnaire which gathered the views of parents/carers from across 64 schools, including primary, secondary, and a wide range of urban, rural and remote rural settings. The strategy highlights the importance of parental engagement and family learning as key drivers of the collective effort to close the poverty-related attainment gap. A reference group will be established to monitor and assess its implementation and action plan.*

*This strategy has been developed by a steering group of parents, pupils, teaching and early learning centre staff, taking account of national and local priorities. This has an appropriate focus on equity.*

*Headteachers, Parent Council chairs, wider school and parent forums took part in a consultation prior to the refresh of this strategy. The majority of participants felt that areas identified for improvement reflected their experiences and that the aims and principles were appropriate.*

*Parents/carers were active participants in the development of the strategy and have since gone on to develop a guide for Parent Councils. The guiding aim of the strategy is to 'get it right for every child' with the focus on supporting parents/carers to be active participants in their children's education.*

*The local authority has a highly valued 'Parental Engagement and Involvement Strategy'. This is reviewed regularly by parents/carers, headteachers and stakeholders. The strategy explicitly addresses equity through a focus of reducing barriers for specific groups of parents. Regular meetings are held with parent forums. An Equalities Parent Forum has been created to encourage full involvement of all parent groups, ensuring that equal rights are promoted.*

## Supporting parents with their children's learning

The majority of local authorities cited strong examples of ways in which they and their schools supported families, including opportunities for family learning. Some use Attainment Scotland Funding to enhance the provision on offer. Community Learning and Development services play a vital, strategic role in supporting children and their families.

Where support has been co-constructed with stakeholders and includes parents, children or partners, there is evidence that this leads to impactful outcomes.

### Supporting parents with their children's learning

*The Community Learning and Development Partnership Plan 2021-24 sets out the aims to increase access to family learning programmes. Provision of family learning varies across the six associated school groups and is delivered by a range of partners. Schools provide family learning opportunities where resources are available, often making use of Attainment Scotland Funding (ASF).*

*Structured family learning programmes, co-created with children, young people, their families and partners, are helping to create a better understanding of what works for them and why. This is helping to embed sustainable models and is beginning to ensure the needs of the families are met.*

*The Community Learning and Development Plan 2021-24 sets out strategic aims to improve family learning opportunities. Structured family learning programmes, co-constructed with partners, are leading to meaningful accredited and non-accredited outcomes for parents and carers living in disadvantaged communities. Programmes offer workshops, groups, clubs and events designed to support parents and carers in taking an active part in their child's learning and development; resulting in increased parental engagement and family members learning together.*

*In 2022-23, the majority of Challenge Leaders of Learning (CLOL) delivered numeracy-focused family learning with their school communities targeted primarily at those impacted by poverty. These included information sessions on maths pedagogy – showing parents the strategies used in school, learn with your child sessions over several weeks with targeted families and family events.*

*Coaching and modelling officers work with schools to support staff in devising and creating their family learning programmes. Recently 16 schools participated in a training session delivered by the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) funded coaching and modelling officers. Families reported that the session empowered participants and led to the creation of plans to provide quality family learning experiences.*

*Families have opportunities to learn together at events and sessions organised by individual settings. The parental involvement and engagement census data highlighted that parents feel well informed about their children's learning. Family learning practitioners provide support within early learning and childcare settings, primary schools and wider communities. Community link workers and community learning assistants support young people and families in school and in the community to improve their lifestyle, health, and wellbeing. Support is targeted effectively as it is informed through locality plans, school plans and research data.*

*The framework encourages schools to work in collaboration with parents/carers on effective ways to support their child's learning. It provides responsive feedback mechanisms on their child's progress in learning and aims to develop family learning opportunities appropriate to the needs of the community.*

*Structured family learning programmes, co-constructed with partners, are leading to meaningful accredited and non-accredited outcomes for parents/carers living in the most disadvantaged communities.*

*Recent inspection reports have highlighted very good and excellent family learning programmes in some schools. Some noteworthy examples include the collaborative approach to school improvement planning that involve learners, parents, staff and partners; the focus on a small number of well-considered priorities; and clear explicit reference to outcomes for learners. As a result of clear planning and self-evaluation, senior leaders can demonstrate clear improvements against expected outcomes.*

## Support provided by specific roles or teams

Where central officers have a responsibility for parental engagement, they play an important role in supporting the work of their local authorities. This is often enhanced by educational psychological services.

Almost all local authorities have staff with specific roles to support children, young people and their families. Most use Attainment Scotland Funding to employ, for example, home link workers, family learning teams/workers, community workers etc. This can be at both a strategic level, used across the whole authority, and/or school level. At school level, it is more likely that Pupil Equity Funding is used to create bespoke roles to ensure that the needs of the families in their contexts are met. There is strong evidence that the combined work and support from these roles or teams has had a considerable impact universally and for those who have been targeted.

In recognition of the importance placed nationally and by most local authorities, most of these roles and teams also have a focus on improving attendance.

### Support provided by specific roles or teams

*The family learning team, supported by Attainment Scotland Funding, provides adult learning and family wide activities, informed by parent surveys. 'A Stronger Families' series of online parenting workshops are universally available, covering themes from early years to supporting teenagers. The team also supports specific referrals regarding behaviour, low attendance at school or additional needs support. Each school has access to a family support worker. However, provision is distributed as and where there is most need. An attendance policy sets out guidance for all schools, with family support workers a key element.*

*Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) is used to support 19 family liaison/health and wellbeing officers working across 15 establishments. As noted in school improvement and PEF reporting, the work of these colleagues has had a positive impact on vulnerable pupils and families in terms of attendance and engagement. A newly created network acts as powerful vehicle to further develop approaches to supporting children, young people and their families affected by socio-economic deprivation.*

*A key aspect of the work of engagement officers has been the establishment of a family practitioner network. This supports staff across schools whose roles focus on parental engagement. Often funded through Pupil Equity Funding, these roles include home-school liaison officers and family support workers. The network also includes principal teachers, depute headteachers and headteachers. It provides opportunities to come together, learn from each other and share practice. The initial meeting focused on encouraging learning at home and all attendees reported that the session was useful and provided them with ideas to support their work in engaging families including those most impacted by poverty.*

*Strategic Equity Funding, supplemented by PEF, is used to employ a team of school and family development workers (SFDWs). They focus on families living in poverty, aligned to the schools with the highest levels of deprivation. Support offered varies depending on the needs of the community, school and families and includes:*

- *Family learning sessions*
- *Open events to share learning*
- *Individual support at home*

*Group work and programmes for parents e.g., Solihull SFDWs have established strong relationships with families. They collaborate with schools, community partners and a range of professionals to increase attendance, engagement and confidence. Parents report positively on this support, particularly on having a safe place to talk and to make connections with others.*

*Home-link workers, funded through Attainment Scotland Funding, provide extensive support to targeted groups of children and their families. Almost all the 214 families live in areas of high deprivation. Support includes one-to-one sessions with children and parents/carers and inputs focusing on modelling relationships, structures, consistency and routines.*

*The home-link team coordinated and delivered 53 iLunch sessions across 21 primary schools throughout the summer holidays. These family learning sessions continue to provide families from areas of high deprivation with opportunities to participate in a range of indoor and outdoor learning activities. This helps strengthen relationships with families in areas of high deprivation.*

*Family learning assistants (FLA) adopt a two-pronged approach to bolstering children's learning and development. They provide targeted family learning and concurrently support children within the nurture provision. This approach facilitates increased interaction with the child, aiding assessment and planned intervention. Families perceive FLAs as less intimidating, and as such they are key to engaging parents in the service. Headteachers feel the existence of FLA position has enabled the development of a more positive relationship between parents and school.*

*Individual schools have different roles in place resourced through Pupil Equity Funding to support parental engagement. At present, a specific role has not been identified at a local authority level, but this may develop through from test of change being conducted within one cluster funded via Strategic Equity Funding.*

*The authority has made good use of Strategic Equity Funding, Whole Family Wellbeing Funding and Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding. This supports families and communities to improve the life chances of children and young people most impacted by poverty. Pupil Equity Funding has enabled over forty schools to employ a family support worker and other support staff to liaise directly with families to support learning and re-engagement. This has resulted positively on family and learner engagement and improved attendance.*

*The Family Learning Team works with schools to deliver family learning opportunities which meet the needs of parents/carers and families. The team provides universal and targeted support through programmes and interventions, including support for families affected by poverty. The programmes focus on four key themes: curriculum; transitions; health & wellbeing; and learning opportunities for parents/carers.*

## Support for families to improve attendance

Most local authorities have strategic approaches to improve attendance. There is evidence that these have been refined (or are being refined) to ensure that the engagement of children, young people and their families is prioritised.

As stated previously, there are a range of roles and remits which include a focus on attendance, many funded by PEF. In a minority of authorities, there are strategic roles which focus only on attendance and engagement. In a few of these, SEF is being used. Educational psychology services also play an important role when non-attendance is being addressed, particularly for more vulnerable groups.

Additionally, non-attendance is being addressed through partnership working and/or by particular groups, for example virtual schools. Social media campaigns have been used to good effect in a few local authorities.

## Support for families to improve attendance

*Education and social work partners work together to provide opportunities for learners with lower attendance and engagement. Strategic Equity and Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding are effectively invested to employ four engagement officers (EOs) in two clusters. Early evidence of progress is encouraging. The average attendance for all children receiving this targeted support has improved. The proportion of primary school children looked after at home and*

*attending school more than 80% of the time has increased from 81.2% in 2021-22 to 92.9% in 2022-23.*

*Following pandemic mitigations, attendance has decreased significantly. In order to address this and return to pre-pandemic average levels of attendance, a framework is being devised and led by the principal educational psychologist. Within this framework, Strategic Equity Funding is being directed towards establishing nurture groups involving parents. These will focus on strategies to improve attendance and should contribute to closing the poverty-related attainment gap.*

*An enhanced transition programme is delivered in all seven education groups (clusters). The focus is on improving attendance and engagement of targeted groups of learners. Two hundred and sixty-nine children participated during 2022-23. This resulted in improved transition for some of the most vulnerable learners from primary seven to secondary school. Other initiatives such as a gardening project in one school and a bushcraft programme and outdoor learning activities are supported by local partners. These aim to improve the attendance and engagement of targeted groups of learners. Evidence indicates these are having a positive impact on a growing number of children and their families who are now more confident in the transition from primary to secondary education.*

*A new attendance policy was implemented in January 2022. This supports robust tracking and monitoring of attendance with identified key points for intervention. Schools work with parents and carers to address barriers to attendance. This has resulted in improved attendance rates across the local authority.*

*Effective approaches to quality assurance of PEF at authority level are supporting and challenging schools to work closely with families to improve attendance. Schools have individual attendance stretch aims and some have used PEF for interventions to improve attendance e.g., a family liaison worker.*

*In schools where attendance has improved, there are robust procedures in place to monitor and track attendance patterns. Staff collaborate with learners, families and partners to ensure a clear understanding of the attendance issues within the school. Effective monitoring procedures at all levels in the system, and the use of data, has guaranteed a rigorous focus by all on attendance levels and trends. This has supported schools to be pro-active in their approaches to individuals, their families and identify specific patterns and trends in their settings. The authority is proactive in ensuring practitioner understanding of the direct impact poverty can have on attendance. All schools have attendance stretch targets which support school leaders to focus efforts on promoting and securing improved attendance for pupils. In the primary sector, the attendance gap between those living in Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 has decreased; in the secondary sector it continues to be higher than last session.*

*Attendance at schools is in line with national figures. The LA is committed to improve attendance, particularly in the secondary sector. Attendance is included in many school improvement plans as a key focus this session. The LA recently reviewed its attendance policy which sets out clear structures for supporting families with barriers to school attendance.*

## Support for those living in poverty

Mitigating the adverse effects of poverty is a cross-cutting theme and permeates the strategic plans of all local authorities. All provided a variety of supports to families, and to a greater extent, for those impacted by poverty. This is delivered by a variety of local authority services, such as a financial inclusion team, home link workers, and the debt and income maximisation team. ASF was used to support the creation of these teams

and their work. Third sector organisations and partnerships with other services have enhanced the provision of support to families, this included:

- Accessing benefits
- Employment opportunities
- Financial support
- Parenting programmes
- Child care support, including holiday provision

### Support for those living in poverty

*Support and advice for families experiencing financial difficulties is provided by the financial inclusion team, funded through the ASF. The authority has reported that this approach has ensured that specific families are accessing the support they are entitled to with school referrals realising financial gains of over £1 million.*

*As part of the local child poverty action plan the 'Thrive to Keep Well' programme has been introduced. This 16-week programme supports parents in areas of high economic disadvantage to improve mental health and wellbeing and life circumstances. As a result of these programmes, 83% of participants noted improvements in their mental wellbeing and 89% of those who were parents, identified that their capacity as a parent had improved.*

*There continues to be a strong commitment from the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) team to support families living in poverty. Working in partnership with charities such as the Salvation Army, The Night Before and Hillhouse, the SAC team acquired over 400 Christmas gifts and in recent months secured appliances and vouchers for families in areas of high deprivation. Financial inclusion officers (FIOs) have been appointed in each education group. This team supports families to access a range of benefits including education maintenance allowance and adult disability payments. They also link with the employability team to provide a more specialist service and support for those experiencing fuel debt issues. Between June and September this year, the FIOs have supported 176 families, generating financial gains in excess of £240,000.*

*The debt and income maximisation team works with families to ensure they are in receipt of all available monies. Many schools have supported this work by giving the team space in school during parental events. This contact has resulted in many families accessing additional benefits they are entitled to. The employment training unit has funded an additional full time member of staff to work with schools across the authority. This work has been very successful with one school reporting families accessing an additional £47000 of benefits as a direct result.*

*The 'Local Child Poverty Action Plan' includes a commitment to align local services, interventions, and initiatives to mitigate child poverty. The local authority was also awarded Early Adopter Community Status to introduce a local affordable childcare service for families living in low-income/poverty. This approach places the children and family at the centre of the service provision. Partner agencies work together to create a person-centred approach, ensuring:*

- *Income is maximised either through social security benefits or employment opportunities*
- *Families receive the child care they require*
- *Cost of living challenges are reduced*
- *Pathways to employability are encouraged*

*Parents indicated increases in their household incomes as a result of this support. A few parents have highlighted that they feel ready to take the next step into education, training, or employment.*



*Support has been provided to families living in poverty via the 'Fairer Renfrewshire' group. People with lived experience of poverty influenced policy and practice around addressing different barriers. As a result, there has been a focus on school holiday provision with a particular focus on understanding the experiences, needs and barriers of low-income households. Views and experiences have been incorporated into a programme of universal activities for children and young people with families on low-income, with care experience and those with additional support needs being prioritised.*

*Effective anti-poverty strategies are in place which support the engagement of children and families most impacted by poverty.*

*Positive impact of the strategy so far includes increases in:*

- *Engagement in the family support service*
- *Adults re-entering employment*
- *Families accessing citizens advice*
- *Funds targeted to those families in fuel debt*
- *Targeted summer camps*
- *Financial hardship funds to community projects*
- *Referrals for financial inclusion of mothers and pregnant women from the health visitor and family nurse partnership Scottish Borders*

*The 'Anchor for Families' team, now funded by the Family Wellbeing Fund, work with identified families, most of which are living in poverty. This is on a case-by-case basis, often bridging a gap between the family and school or other services. Some families are being helped to improve their child's attendance and engagement at school. Support is regularly provided on income maximisation.*

## Support for those who have experienced care

As corporate parents, all local authorities have a vital role in ensuring that the needs of those who have experienced care are met. These needs are often identified and outlined in the Corporate Parenting Plan and delivered through the 'call to actions' as defined in The Promise. There is robust evidence that the majority of local authorities provided extensive support not only for children and young people, but also their families. This has had a positive impact on outcomes for all. Where cited, the majority of local authorities have used funding provided for those who have experienced care, effectively.

### Support for those who have experienced care

*The work of the engagement officers is reflected in The Promise Plan 2021-24, which sets out how organisations and practitioners work together to provide support, services and opportunities for children and young people with care experience. Actions are shaped by the views of local children, young people, parents, carers and staff, which are improving levels of engagement.*

*Last session secondary headteachers pooled some of their PEF to appoint a virtual headteacher for secondary. The local authority has also deployed an officer as a virtual headteacher for primary. These staff have a focus on improving outcomes for learners who have experienced care. A key priority within their improvement plan for 2022-23 is to support the whole family to bring about improved outcomes. This will include rigorous tracking, regular contact with families and opportunities to co-design bespoke curriculum offers where appropriate.*

*A corporate parenting plan has been created which outlines priorities to support care-experienced children and young people with attainment, attendance and engagement in learning. Actions include:*

- appointment of a virtual headteacher with a focus on driving improvements in educational progress and attainment*
- dedicated care experience health and wellbeing liaison officers who have helped make positive impacts on attendance, engagement, wellbeing and given support to the whole family*
- designated care experience in-school managers who act as the first point of contact for pupils, families and colleagues*
- introduction of MCR Pathways into three secondaries with highest levels of care-experienced pupils*

*Due to the nature of movement with children and families experiencing care, the authority has created a local solution for young people applying for their Young Scots Card. If the requested paperwork is not available to make an application, the care experience education officer can be contacted to confirm the pupil's details allowing for the application to move forward. This ensures that children and young people experiencing care are not disadvantaged and can access the same benefits from the Young Scots Card as their peers. To further support families with children who have experienced care, the local authority provides free access to leisure facilities. This is providing more equitable opportunities for enjoyment and positive experiences.*

*Positive impact of this support is evident through supported residential trips which has helped improve family relationships. From parent/carer feedback, 100% of respondents say they are happy with the service the virtual school provides and it has helped their child. The virtual school also supports Ukrainian families. The virtual school, in partnership with the early years team, are focused on engaging the 'whole family' and the ten principles of family support. The authority has formed an effective 'Champions Board' with representation from those with lived experience of care. Young people from the board designed and delivered Corporate Parenting training to 870 stakeholders. As a result of feedback from the board, intensive family support services are under review with the voices of families integral to the redesign.*

*Parents and carers who have themselves experienced care are prioritised within local authority systems. They are guaranteed a place within ELC for any two-year-old children. Additionally, places on any parenting programmes provided by the family centre are offered to them.*

*Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) funding has been used to establish a CECYP co-ordinator. This post includes tracking and monitoring attainment and attendance as well as working directly with families to improve outcomes. The co-ordinator is responsive to feedback from families and as a result, provides support by:*

- Attending meetings*
- Advocating for families*
- Facilitating a support group for kinship carers*

*Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding was used to provide two programmes during session 2022-23. These programmes were delivered by Aberlour and SPACE. Aspects of the programmes focused on improving attendance and working with families around parenting skills, such as sleep hygiene and engagement with school staff and routines. Working with Aberlour saw improvements in school attendance for just under half (43%) of all participants in the programme. Similarly, data shows that working with SPACE led to improvements in school attendance for two-thirds (66%) of all participants.*

Support for other groups was outlined and included those with:

- Additional support needs
- Young carers
- Refugees
- English as second language
- Parent Councils

### Support for other groups

*Community Learning Development and Employability plays a vital role in engaging with children, young people and their families:*

- *Enhanced support for young people who have additional support needs to achieve awards, such as Youth Achievement Awards, the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, to attend youth clubs and other opportunities*
- *Facilitating a language café where refugee families meet, practise their language skills and cook together*
- *Provide support for learners where English as a second or foreign language including the option of achieving SQA awards*

*To meet the requirements of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, the authority has developed an app to support the completion of young carers' statements. These statements identify personal outcomes and needs for support. They are followed up by the inclusion and equalities team, in collaboration with schools and other agencies, as appropriate. Awareness sessions and information have been shared with all stakeholders, including children and young people. To improve awareness and support, processes have been implemented within schools to ensure young carers can be recorded on SEEMiS.*

*The education refugee team effectively supports families to ensure positive education outcomes for children. For example, they ensure all families are fully supported through a smooth enrolment process. This involves home visits, completion of documentation, liaising with schools and providing initial transport. Regular contact with the family is maintained over the first few months. As a result, almost all children have successfully enrolled in school. The service also supports parents through English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) sessions. These focus on school communication helping them to prepare for parents' evenings, for example. Sessions are also provided to help parents support with homework. Qualitative feedback from families suggests this support has been invaluable in helping their integration into Scottish society.*

*The recently launched whole family wellbeing hubs are a significant addition to the range of supports available. The three hubs have been set up in locations across the authority. This multi-agency initiative was developed through the community planning partnership. The hubs aim to improve family wellbeing, reduce inequalities between the most and least disadvantaged communities, and reduce the number of families requiring crisis intervention. Universal, targeted and specialist services will be accessible including education outreach workers, educational psychologist, speech and language therapists, neurodevelopment team staff, and family nursing staff. The views of parents/carers and children and young people were gathered and helped shape the support on offer.*

*Actions for establishing Parent Councils were shared at the June 2023 education and learning committee. This will encourage partnership work with parents and ensure that their views are represented and considered regarding school improvement. Parent Councils will have a key role in helping parents get the right information needed to support their child's learning and choices. This will include raising awareness and understanding of the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) to address aspects of closing the poverty-related attainment gap.*

## 2.2 Collaboration

### Family learning

All local authorities engage with other services and partners to varying degrees to support family learning opportunities. Often this is through partnership agreements. Where these agreements exist, they are most commonly with CLD and target families living in poverty. A few local authorities promote partnerships and processes through family engagement policies or frameworks to ensure the widest possible reach. In the best examples, strategies and frameworks have developed in collaboration with parents and representative bodies.

The majority of local authorities have agreements with third sector partners which support family learning. These include Barnardo's, Save the Children, Motivation, Commitment and Resilience Pathways, Mentors in Violence Prevention, and local organisations.

Partnerships with the NHS and allied health professionals support the wellbeing of both parents and children. A reduction in stress, better skills acquisition, a better understanding of children's learning and more willingness to approach schools when there is a problem are among the positive impacts of these partnerships.

A few other collaborations to support family learning were highlighted in a minority of authorities. These included approaches to support refugees and engagement with the Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC). Input from the RIC has been used to build capacity to deliver a particular programme in secondary schools.

#### **Engagement with services and partners to encourage family learning**

*The re-settlement team within 'Vibrant Communities' is beginning to work more closely with schools to support family learning. There are increasing opportunities to share and learn from successful practice in different contexts to build capacity within and across sectors.*

*The 'Worried about Money Leaflet' was created to integrate welfare rights and money advice with employability programmes, foodbanks, medical practices, and community organisations..... stress has been reduced for families with financial concerns which they felt impacted on children's learning and access to wider curriculum activities.*

<i>The framework for inclusion is improving communication and coordination of supports across services to use resources more creatively and effectively and avoid duplication of cost and effort. This is ensuring appropriate progress is made towards achieving positive outcomes for children and young people most disadvantaged whilst reducing the poverty-related attainment gap.</i>
<i>The family involvement programme has been successfully delivered in two secondary schools. Evaluations show all families who participated now feel more comfortable in approaching the school if they had a concern about their child's learning or development.</i>
<i>Several schools have used Pupil Equity Funding to purchase weekly speech and language therapy support. Bespoke interventions, such as oral storytelling, are designed to address the language and communication gap that is evident in a range of assessments. The impact of these interventions is well evidenced with improvements in children's attention, listening and phonological awareness skills.</i>
<i>The adult learning service has recently introduced a newsletter to highlight work on developing approaches to family learning. Examples include a festival of family numeracy, numeracy throughout history, numeracy for all ages and numeracy for families. These free family learning sessions introduced parents/carers to creative ideas for numeracy learning at home. Early feedback indicates that parents/carers enjoyed these fun activities whilst building confidence in using basic numeracy skills.</i>
<i>The 'Equipped for Learning' digital inclusion team for the 1:1 device policy has worked with partners to offer their most inclusive literacy package free to all families. This will enable access to inclusive software for all devices in their homes. The digital inclusion policy supports charging and Wi-Fi connectivity to ensure equal access for all learners at no extra cost.</i>
<i>The Community Learning Development and Employment service has built extensive partnerships with other local authority services and third sector organisations. There is a rich variety of opportunities offered to children, young people, and their families. The Child Poverty Action Group and CLDE work collaboratively to support families including those who have experience of the care system. They work hard to minimise the impact on families.</i>
<i>Evaluation of the (range of family learning) programmes highlighted an increase in the support accessed by families from 88 groups to 419 groups and from 8 to 72 individual support packages. Qualitative feedback from parents and carers is extremely positive.</i>
<i>Clusters work in partnership with community learning and development to deliver 'Raising Children with Confidence.' This enables inclusion of families who display a reluctance to participate in the school system.</i>
<i>Motivation, Commitment and Resilience (MCR) Pathways engage with over 200 young people across secondary schools supporting vulnerable learners. Group work and mentor meetings result in the young people becoming more likely to attain and achieve a positive leaver destination.</i>
<i>A refreshed 'Family Learning Strategy' is being developed in collaboration with other service areas. This strategy aims to establish a consistent understanding of expectations concerning family learning and the respective roles in this endeavour.</i>

## Working with partners to provide additional experiences and opportunities

All local authorities work extensively with partners to provide children and young people with additional experiences and opportunities to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities. Strong partnerships with Active Schools or other local sporting bodies result in a broad range of opportunities. Clubs take place out of

school hours both in schools and in the community. Many also provide community-based sports clubs.

There is evidence that targeted approaches result in improved uptake for the most disadvantaged families. Some schools make use of PEF to remove cost barriers to participation.

Where offered, school holiday programmes include opportunities for sports, outdoor learning, and personal achievements such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award. In the best examples, steps have been taken to target families facing disadvantage and ensure costs are mitigated. Further opportunities for personal achievement include involvement with Bikeability, local football clubs, John Muir Awards and Columba 1400.

There are a few local authorities working in partnerships to actively encourage cultural opportunities for families. Examples of this include:

- Theatre tickets
- Opportunities to participate in music activities
- Literacy development through sharing books, reading resources, and participating in literacy events including Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

#### **Working with partners to provide additional experiences**

*A local theatre provided free tickets to allow refugee families to access creative arts experiences together. This has led to increased engagement in learning.*

*A 'summer of fun' programme has developed which has supported 49,071 children and young people and their families. This is also delivered through the October and Easter holidays.*

*One school has developed a blueprint for schools to establish a learning café. The café shares and extends learning from the classroom with families, using a literacy intervention as the vehicle. The café involves a range of partners, including the welfare rights team, 'Voluntary Action' and 'Vibrant Communities'. Schools are increasingly working in partnership to maximise opportunities and provide additional experiences.*

*Refugee and asylum-seeking young people participated in an outdoor residential with partners. This experience built confidence, community, and increased access to extra-curricular activities.*

*As part of activities supported by the Youth Music Initiative, the authority ensures exposure to musical and cultural experiences for children and young people impacted by poverty or/and living in island or rural locations. Local musicians and artists provide activities that enrich the curricula on offer for learners and ensure that children and young people in small/rural schools have equitable access.*

*All secondaries in the authority have received training from the Regional Improvement Collaborative around eradicating mental health stigma. This is a community-based approach and schools have collaborated with pupils, parents, staff, and partners in the development of their action plans.*

*The sport and leisure team works with all schools to provide extra-curricular sport and physical activity opportunities. This ensures access to lunchtime and after school sports clubs delivered through local coaches, volunteers, and partner sports clubs.*

<i>Community sports clubs also deliver activities during school health weeks and in holiday periods. As a result of these partnerships the number of pupils actively participating has shown a year-on-year increase, including a 6% rise over the last year.</i>
<i>There is a commitment to work in partnership with Active Schools, providing sport or physical activity clubs. The majority of these incur no costs, ensuring that cost-related barriers to participation are minimised.</i>
<i>Additional funding allowed the Scottish Attainment Challenge team to enhance the family learning provision across 26 schools. This funded 12 experiential trips; in total 482 children, young people and parents/carers attended these excursions during the summer holidays. These opportunities have enabled staff to continue to engage with vulnerable learners and their families over the summer period.</i>
<i>The Duke of Edinburgh programme is actively promoted; kit is provided to neutralise monetary differences. Approximately 900 children participated, resulting in improved confidence and resilience.</i>
<i>The outdoor learning service provides support to schools to deliver experiences of learning outdoors. Courses such as 'Bikeability' are planned in a progression of skills. Feedback from learners, staff and parents evidences positive impact on the development of social skills, confidence, and resilience.</i>
<i>The team liaises with the Scottish Book Trust annually to enhance the contents of the 'Read Write Count' and 'Book Bug' bags. This enables the production of bespoke resources for families that are less dependent on adult literacy. These include practical activities, session guides for teachers and family learning leads.</i>
<i>All secondary schools have used Columba 1400 to work with a small number of pupils impacted by poverty.</i>
<i>Outdoor learning, through residential opportunities, is a regular activity in all schools. These are funded and/or subsidised in a variety of ways including: PEF, Parent Councils, renewables, and community councils.</i>
<i>Partnership with the YMCA facilitated employability programmes and was targeted at those learners at risk of leaving with no awards or positive destination.</i>
<i>A recent summer collaboration between Active Schools, a local organisation and CLD ran a holiday programme in one area. Three events took place, free of charge for the local community. Physical activities, arts and crafts and food were all provided. These were well attended and evaluated positively by families. Following this success, a fortnightly programme is now in place within the school.</i>

## Involving parents in decision-making

Most local authorities have mechanisms in place which encourage parental involvement in decision-making, particularly around the use of the ASF. In the best examples these include forums or oversight boards with parent representation. In almost all of these local authorities, schools are expected to involve parents in decision-making around PEF as outlined in national and local guidance. However, this continues to be an area of development for most schools and local authorities.

Participatory budgeting (PB) is used as a vehicle in decision-making about the use of PEF in a minority of authorities. Where PB is being used, evidence suggests it is well received as a means of including stakeholder voices. In a few local authorities there are systems which include parents in decision-making around Strategic Equity Funding and Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding. In all local

authorities, approaches to ensure quality parental involvement should be a focus moving forward.

### **Involving parents in decision-making**

*Established parent forums are involved in community participatory budget setting and decision-making. The opportunity to utilise existing forums and carry out a consultation with school communities specifically around the use of the Attainment Scotland Funding is identified as a next step.*

*Schools are expected to have systems in place to ensure stakeholders are meaningfully involved in planning for Pupil Equity Funding. A few schools actively engage partners and parents in the planning process. Parent Council chairs were invited to discuss approaches to participatory budgeting.*

*At a strategic level, families are included in the planning and evaluation of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. This is clearly evidenced through school Pupil Equity Funding plans, the most recent Care Experienced Funding report and plan and the current Strategic Equity Funding plan.*

*A highly effective participatory budgeting (PB) process is now in its third year of implementation across all schools in receipt of Pupil Equity Funding. Stakeholder consultation is in place prior to the writing of school quality and improvement plans and the impact of PB is reported regularly to the education committee. The voice of parents is on-going via Parent Councils and evidenced through the example of PB and school improvement priority setting.*

*There are clear expectations in local Pupil Equity Funding guidance to consult parent/carers. Examples of effective consultation were shared with headteachers and as a result, there is some evidence of increased consultation with parent/carers in the Pupil Equity Fund planning. However, there is scope for this to be developed further. The authority has some parent/carer representation across local forums with oversight of Strategic Equity Funding and Care Experienced Children & Young People funding.*

*An effective strategy is in place to ensure parents/carers are involved in decision-making processes around the use of Attainment Scotland Funds. It is explicitly referenced in guidance. This has resulted in more effective and meaningful school level planning and involvement of parents/carers in decision-making. There are forums for families of children with additional support needs which enable a safe space to discuss challenges and plan together in a more collaborative way.*

*Within the Pupil Equity Funding guidance, schools are encouraged to consult with parents and carers. Views are mostly sought through Parent Councils and through questionnaires.*

*Almost all schools share improvement plans, including Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) plans, with parent council bodies. There is evidence of parents being involved in a few establishments in the decision-making process around the use of PEF*

*Emphasis is placed on schools engaging with parents/carers in relation to their use of Pupil Equity Funding. Guidance encourages schools to use a participatory budgeting approach.*

*Schools are expected to have effective systems in place to ensure parents and carers, pupils and other key stakeholders are meaningfully involved in planning for equity. A minority of schools actively engage partners and parents in the Pupil Equity Funding planning process. Participatory budgeting (PB) has featured in a few plans. Positive feedback has been received from those involved in PB projects.*

*A recent Pupil Equity Funding impact report demonstrated that around half of the schools were able to share evidence of how they involved parents/carers in planning. However, amongst a representative group of parents/carers, awareness of Pupil Equity Funding and its uses was low. The local authority consulted with a wide range of stakeholders to develop its Strategic Equity Funding plan.*



## 2.3 Cost of the school day

### Policies, strategies, and planning

A commitment to tackling cost of the school day is evident in all local authorities. Often this is articulated within strategies, vision statements or by having clear expectations for establishments. For some authorities, stand alone cost of the school day policies outline guidance for all educational establishments. Often, planned actions and outcomes are explicit within Local Child Poverty Action Plans.

In the strongest examples, plans are developed collaboratively with a range of professionals and take account of the voices of children, young people, parents and carers. Moving forward, consideration should be given as to how those with lived experience of poverty can directly influence plans and policies.

#### Policies, strategies, and planning

*Tackling poverty and inequality is a key priority within the five-year strategic plan. There is a strong commitment by all establishments to adopt cost of the school day actions and reduce poverty-related barriers to education.*

*The 'Poverty Plan 2021-23' incorporates the Local Child Poverty Action Plan and ensures there is a coordinated and strategic approach to tackling child poverty. It is based on a partnership approach between the council, NHS, the authority partnership group and third sector. Examples of interventions include a project where support for family wellbeing, money advice and employability are made available.*

*The 'Beyond Equity – A Social Justice Framework' supports and empowers schools to effectively use resources to deliver activities, interventions and experiences which will improve equity in educational outcomes. Resources included support Pupil Equity Funding, participatory budgeting, and cost of the school day. A revised 'Dressing for Excellence' policy was developed with schools and parents/carers. This has resulted in a strong focus on reducing the cost of uniform and working in partnership with parents to develop sustainable and cost-effective approaches.*

*There is strong commitment to supporting children who face barriers related to socio-economic issues. This is evident in service plans for education and children's services, where equity and child poverty feature. The plan includes a priority to reduce financial barriers on families and mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. This includes actions to develop financial inclusion pathways, increase the uptake of free sanitary products in schools, develop systems for weekend food support and roll out the cost of the school day toolkit*

*There is an expectation, following the directorate conferences focused on child poverty, that all schools will engage with the national Cost of the School Day (COSD) toolkit and have this included in their Pupil Equity Fund plans this session. The Local Child Poverty Action Report includes examples of how schools are tackling this.*

### Professional learning and networks

Evidence indicates that professional learning is important in supporting establishments to understand how to reduce costs. E-learning modules, learning

sessions and opportunities to share effective practice all contribute to increased awareness of financial-related barriers and of ways to mitigate these. In almost half of local authorities specific networks or groups are in place. Often these focus on the promotion of resources, materials, training and effective practice.

Engagement with the national Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) is cited by around a third of local authorities. A growing number of schools have signed up to the national 'Cost of the School Day Voice Network'. Further promotion of CPAG resources and opportunities may be helpful in increasing networking and sharing of practice nationally.

Professional learning and networks
<i>Promotion of effective practice and awareness of professional development opportunities and materials, including Scotland's Equity Toolkit, are effectively shared through a networked approach. As a result, schools are applying the learning to their Pupil Equity Fund plans, which is positively informing their practice.</i>
<i>All schools have participated in awareness raising about the cost of the school day. As a result, schools have implemented a variety of initiatives to ensure reduced costs to families. These include 'help yourself' trollies and pre-loved areas where learners and families can help themselves to clothing, food and other items which help them to fully participate in their learning.</i>
<i>The authority maintains ongoing collaboration with senior leaders, practitioners, authority staff, parents, and partners to update their approaches to cost of the school day. This includes all staff engaging in relevant professional learning, as well as all establishments working together with learners, parents, their local community, and partners to formulate a cost of the school day position statement.</i>
<i>Cost of the school day (COSD) guidance has recently been developed which evidences the outcomes and outputs achieved by two COSD project workers. As a result, all schools accessed training, with a few schools accessing direct support. In turn, schools developed action plans to reduce costs. Good practice has also been shared locally and nationally.</i>
<i>The quality improvement officer (QIO) has established a multiagency professional learning book group with a focus on poverty and inequity. The QIO and Care Experienced Children and Young People coordinator have visited schools to deliver a 'SAC and The Promise Roadshow' to teachers. There is a particular focus on raising awareness of the impact of poverty faced by children, young people and their families.</i>
<i>The local authority recently held a 'Cost of the School Day (COSD) Community of Practice'. As a result, it was agreed that all clusters will have a COSD lead. This aligns with the cluster lead empowerment agenda. Some schools have signed up for the national COSD youth voice network.</i>
<i>During 2022-23 approximately 240 staff undertook poverty awareness and cost of the school day training. This number includes newly qualified teachers who will start their careers with an understanding of why poverty can have such a devastating effect on attainment and positive destinations post-school. A working party of experienced school leaders across the four localities of the authority was created with the task of producing official guidance for schools.</i>
<i>The attainment advisor provides regular information on cost of the school day (COSD) and signposts professional learning opportunities through the excellence and equity monthly update. The authority offers regular in-service inputs on COSD to keep staff aware of good practice.</i>

A variety of creative approaches are being developed by both schools and local authorities. There is some evidence of the voices of children, young people and parents informing these approaches. Increasing provision of food is a common theme. Access to meals and snacks is often provided through breakfast and holiday clubs. Notable examples highlight a direct impact on children and families, for example, income maximisation.

Examples of practice
<i>Ensuring accessibility and equity for all, the authority's commercial services have increased awareness of the 'MyTribe' free period product initiative, with many schools now having 'MyTribe' ambassadors. A group of ambassadors recently met with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice to share their positive experiences of this initiative.</i>
<i>One cluster, in partnership with Social Security Scotland, appointed a financial inclusion officer. This was the first within the city. Weekly 'drop-in' sessions for parents and carers are in place. This role is having a direct impact on families, helping to ensure they are receiving benefits to which they are entitled. Following this success, the pilot will now be extended across two additional school clusters.</i>
<i>Two schools have shared their effective practice. This included the move of focus for their Parent Council from fundraising to supporting the school to secure funding from local businesses and housing association grants. The Parent Council also consulted stakeholders on the use of Pupil Equity Funding to fund trips and residential experiences. A secondary school developed a 'Cost Of the School Day' information booklet, shared with families at enrolment, highlighting access to a variety of supports. The document is shared on social media allowing it to reach a wider audience. An annual pupil survey assisted the school in embedding and developing practice. Additional sharing of practice illustrated work with 'Achieve More Scotland' and 'Citizen's Advice' colleagues sharing information on financial entitlement. The use of the toolkit, and the need to develop a policy and relentlessly communicate it, was a key theme of the event.</i>
<i>One secondary school addressed young people's concerns about the stigma of school breakfast clubs, resulting in a free breakfast being offered to every young person in the school. The food poverty referral gateway was introduced to address the root cause of people's food poverty, increasing the readiness of children to learn and improve outcomes for those most impacted by poverty.</i>

### Access to additional experiences and mitigation of curricular costs

An integral part of mitigating educational costs has been the removal or reduction of fees associated with curricular areas has been an integral part of mitigating educational costs e.g. Home Economics. These costs were more prevalent within secondary departments and have been removed completely in an increasing number of schools.

Many schools continue to review costs and to be sensitive to events that may incur charges throughout the year, including:

- Fundraising days
- Trips and outings

- Non-uniform days
- Additional experiences

In the majority of local authorities, additional experiences are provided free of charge or at a reduced rate, particularly for those living in poverty. This could suggest the recognition of the importance of participation for all in a variety of experiences, both within and out with the school day. Reduced stigma, increased attendance and engagement and ultimately improved achievement, are noted as key areas of impact.

<b>Access to additional experiences and mitigation of curricular costs</b>
<i>Session 2022-23 saw the re-introduction of swimming lessons for primary 5 children. This was provided free of charge to all pupils. To further reduce barriers to participation, swimwear, towels and goggles were also given free of charge where needed.</i>
<i>Pupil Equity Funding continues to be used discretionally to fund school excursions for eligible families. This ensures that all learners can participate in such learning activities which has a positive impact on attendance as well as improving attainment for those children living in poverty.</i>
<i>Recognising the gap in wider experiences resulting from poverty, the 'Creative and Cultural Schools Programme' provides opportunities for children and young people to participate in high quality workshops and performances. It is delivered in collaboration with professional artists and cultural organisations at no cost to children and young people.</i>
<i>Practice and approaches to support the cost of the school day are embedded in almost all schools. Almost all schools provide a foodbank and/or clothes swaps. All schools reviewed their curriculum and practice to remove associated fees, including ingredients for cooking, trips and non-uniform days. Schools effectively use Pupil Equity Funding to address financial barriers. As a result, there is reduced stigma and pressure for families, particularly during the cost-of-living crisis.</i>
<i>Schools have worked with community partners to provide resources or additional experiences free of charge and many schools have reduced the cost of school uniform by ensuring it can be bought through a range of suppliers including local supermarkets.</i>
<i>Since 2021-22, the authority 'Cost of the School Day' initiative removed curriculum costs for subjects such as home economics and technical and ensured free music tuition.</i>

## Targeted interventions

In addition to educational approaches, there is some evidence of wider targeted interventions across a few local authorities. Within these, commitment from councils to provide extra payments or extend free school meal provision is evident. Positively, there are partnerships among organisations in many local authorities. Further development of partnership working and planning could maximise impact during a time of budget constraints.

## Targeted interventions

*An extra £50 winter payment was given to those who qualify for the clothing allowance. This has assisted children, young people and their families who are affected by poverty. A total of £41,000 in school meal debt has been erased. Parents and carers of children who qualify for free school meals, due to their eligibility for benefits, were given a payment of £24 per child for the October holidays. In 2022-23, a total of 23,000 crisis funds were allocated to families, with a significant portion of them falling under one of the six priority groups outlined in the 2017 Child Poverty Act (Scotland).*

*There is strong commitment across the council to mitigate cost-related barriers. Since April, all families who meet the criteria for the clothing grant now also receive free school meals (FSM). As ELC and P1-5 already receive universal FSM, this encompasses qualifying children in P6–S6. This will be reviewed at the end of the financial year.*

*The education officers and Active Schools coordinators participate in the delivery of the holiday, food and fun programme. This provides free food for all participants and almost all activities are free. The programme involves partners working together to promote healthy lives, support positive wellbeing and maintain engagement with education during holiday periods. As a result, children have improved relationships and improved engagement on return to school.*

Several local authorities highlighted the use of Pupil Equity Funding, and for a few, Strategic Equity Funding, to mitigate educational cost barriers. Making use of participatory budgeting, particularly at school level, could strengthen both child and parent voices in co-constructing plans and accelerate progress and impact.

## Section 3

### 3.1 Next steps for continuous improvement for families and communities

Next steps describe how local authorities can further strengthen implementation of the Scottish Attainment Challenge in relation to improvements for families and communities. Several common themes emerged:

- Policies or strategies for family learning
- Consultation with parents
- Cost of the school day
- Systems to track and monitor family learning
- Attendance

#### Policies or strategies for family learning

In over half of the local authorities, the development, review or launch of a policy or strategy to support family learning or engagement was cited as a priority. In the best of these examples, methods for evaluation of impact were seen as important.

Policies or strategies for family learning
<i>Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy 2023-2026 to be published in November 2023 and implemented across the authority</i>
<i>Progress work to revise the strategy for parental involvement, ensuring a focus on equity</i>
<i>Consider how to expand the delivery of the family involvement programmes across all education groups</i>
<i>Launch the parental engagement strategy and monitor its impact</i>
<i>Develop a revised Parental Engagement Strategy and Action Plan. The strategy and action plan will be completed following consultation with a range of partners</i>
<i>Launch and implement refreshed parental engagement strategy following education committee approval.</i>
<i>Develop a family/parental engagement strategy taking account of national guidance</i>
<i>The new parental involvement and engagement policy will be launched at the next headteachers' meeting. Next steps will be implementing this policy</i>
<i>Continue with plans to update the parental and family engagement strategy</i>
<i>Develop a parental engagement strategy and ensure it has an appropriate focus on equity. Further develop opportunities for parents to be involved in decision-making</i>

#### Consultation with parents

Almost half of all local authorities identified the need to improve consultation and collaboration with parents about decision-making. Within these authorities, there is evidence that consultation around PEF is already underway but could be further strengthened. While a minority have identified consultation on the wider funding

streams within ASF, especially SEF, this is an emerging priority requiring further consideration. A few authorities identified consultation with parents on CECYP Funding as a next step.

<b>Consultation with parents</b>
<i>Develop further tools to support authentic engagement with parents</i>
<i>Continue to refine approaches to stakeholder consultation, especially regarding the Attainment Scotland Fund</i>
<i>Build on current practice to increase the meaningful involvement of parents in decision-making, especially in relation to the Attainment Scotland Fund</i>
<i>Ongoing development of participatory budgeting, addressing challenges of poverty and inequality through the Pupil Equity Fund and the Scottish Attainment Challenge</i>
<i>Continue to develop approaches that ensure parents/carers and learners engage in the decision-making around the Attainment Scotland Fund</i>
<i>Strengthen parental involvement in decision-making related to the Attainment Scotland Fund, with a particular focus on school level Pupil Equity Fund planning and local authority priorities</i>
<i>Work in partnership with schools to raise awareness and knowledge of Pupil Equity Funding, including involvement of parents/carers</i>
<i>Build on partnerships developed to include parents and carers in school renewal planning, including PEF spend and reducing the cost of the school day</i>
<i>Strengthen the use of meaningful parent and children and young people's voice in the planning of Pupil Equity Funding and Strategic Equity Funding</i>
<i>Identify ways to further involve parents in decision-making processes around how Pupil Equity Fund is spent</i>
<i>Explore opportunities to meaningfully consult with parents/carers around use of the Pupil Equity Fund</i>
<i>Through various council forums, ensure meaningful consultation with learners and families around services in their local community, particularly those with experience of care and/or poverty</i>
<i>Plans are to be implemented with a particular focus on improving communications with parents/carers, particularly dads, to support children's learning at home</i>
<i>Schools, learning and education have accepted the recommendation from the authority internal audit to 'develop and implement a consistent, service-wide approach to be applied by schools when they are consulting with parents/carers on Pupil Equity Funding priorities. In addition, the approach to involving parents and families in Strategic Equity Funding should progress at pace to allow participation in the next round of funding</i>

### Cost of the school day

Almost half of all local authorities cited the improvement of understanding of all those involved on the impact of reducing the cost of the school day. A consistent approach through the development of policies or guidance is planned. Professional learning is an essential part of this. Cost of the School Day resources created by the Child Poverty Action Group are highlighted as a way forward to address practical mitigations. A few authorities included the use of participatory budgeting to involve parents in decision-making about the cost of the school day.

<b>Cost of the school day</b>
<i>Continue to support schools to mitigate the cost of the school day and share approaches that are working well locally and nationally</i>
<i>Develop plans to support schools with the Cost of the School Day programme</i>
<i>Make use of social justice baseline data to develop targets for improvement in reducing the cost of the school day</i>
<i>Finalise the cost of the school day policy and ensure it is launched effectively</i>
<i>Cost of the school day to be rolled out to all schools. Professional learning around this is included in the professional learning offer to all schools this session</i>
<i>Implement the authority's policy operating procedures in relation to reducing the cost of the school day</i>
<i>Ensure schools actively reduce costs for families and are more aware of how to implement the Cost of the School Day principles</i>
<i>To gather and share information on effective cost of the school day practice in schools including a framework for schools, guidance, and case studies</i>
<i>Set up cost of the school day cluster leads, devise framework and plan a professional learning offer</i>
<i>Continue to raise awareness of cost of the school day, including providing regular professional learning</i>
<i>Cost of the school day will be considered by schools when completing the school quality and improvement plan. The cost of the school day policy will be written in consultation with all stakeholders and reviewed annually</i>
<i>Ensure meaningful engagement of children and young people in cost of the school day activities. Enhance professional learning opportunities, including engagement with the Cost of the School Day e-learning module</i>

## Systems to track and monitor family learning

A minority of local authorities prioritised tracking and gathering data to evidence the impact of family engagement and learning. In the best examples, this forms part of the policies or strategies and ensures evidence is gathered. It would be beneficial to set clear, measurable outcomes in advance to ensure the desired impact is effectively monitored.

<b>Systems to track and monitor family learning</b>
<i>Continue to develop tracking processes to refine data collection linking to participations and engagement with family learning, youth work and financial services</i>
<i>Continue to develop the use and capability of pupil tracking to inform opportunities for partnerships and collaborations</i>
<i>Gather data on the usage and impact of the digital literacy package being made available to all families</i>
<i>Develop key outcomes and measures to track the impact of the new strategy and support its implementation at all levels</i>
<i>Finalise all cluster community strategic equity funding plans and ensure monitoring of progress and impact</i>
<i>Finalise the parental and engagement strategy, working across services to focus on family learning and develop a plan for implementation</i>
<i>Ensure procedures are in place to effectively track the impact of the Family Wellbeing Hubs</i>



*Pilot and roll out of a closing the gap tool to support analysis of contextual, progress and achievement data as well as identification of areas where intervention is required  
Evidence will be gathered to provide information on the scalability of a specific family learning programme with targeted families*

## Attendance

A minority of local authorities included a focus on attendance as a next step. Where this has been identified, consultation and relationships with families is seen as important.

<b>Attendance</b>
<i>Continue to engage with families to strengthen messaging and support for consistent attendance at school</i>
<i>Develop a clear strategy to work with parents to improve attendance</i>
<i>Implementation of the new attendance policy in consultation with parents, leading to improved attainment, improved social opportunities and greater employment prospects for learners</i>
<i>Progress the implementation of the revised attendance guidance, and relationships, behaviour and learning policy framework</i>
<i>Evaluate the impact of the attendance test of change activity in one cluster and decide whether to implement this approach</i>
<i>Regular attendance and exclusions meetings in place to ensure attendance policy is consistently applied, that areas requiring intervention and targeted support are identified to improve outcomes, in line with the service plan</i>
<i>To further develop attendance guidance and support programmes</i>
<i>Consider how SEF could be best utilised to support improvement for families and communities, specifically on maximising attendance</i>
<i>Continue well-paced implementation of a locality-based services model to support improvements in attendance, exclusions, and transitions in local communities</i>

To a lesser extent, additional common themes included resources or workshops to support family learning, working with partners and the development of home link workers.

## Section 4

### 4.1 Stretch aims

All local authorities set stretch aims for 2025-26, accompanied by annual trajectories for progress. This section outlines the approaches taken to set stretch aims and how progress towards these will be monitored. It also provides some information about the focus of, and rationale for, the plus aims which local authorities have identified.

#### 4.1.1 Setting stretch aims

Local authorities have further developed their approaches to setting stretch aims. There is strong evidence they have built on the processes used last session to set their initial stretch aims. A range of information and data has been considered including:

- Recent attainment
- Trends over time
- Specific cohorts
- National measures

Where appropriate, a small number of local authorities have used alternative measures to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) to accurately capture poverty-related gaps within their stretch aims.

Positively, there is evidence of strengthened collaboration between schools and local authorities in agreeing stretch aims. A few local authorities would have welcomed earlier publication of national guidance which would have allowed more time for meaningful consultation. However, in almost half of local authorities consultation has been highlighted as a key part of the process.

There is growing evidence that school level stretch aims or targets have also been set. In half of these examples, these have been determined by the schools themselves. In others, they are informed by the local authority stretch aims.

#### Setting stretch aims

*Building on learning from 2022-23, there is a revised approach to the setting of stretch aims for 2025-26. As a result, The process is robust and collaborative. All schools were involved in the process, setting school targets which were quality assured and aggregated to create draft stretch aims. Senior leaders in schools were supported throughout the process via a programme of presentations, workshops and school visits. Rigorous analysis of current data and data over time, at school and authority levels, along with comparisons against national data underpinned the process.*

*Stretch aims have been developed taking account of the national guidance whilst considering the context of the local authority. As there are no areas within SIMD quintile one and quintile five, the gap has been articulated by comparing the performance of pupils in receipt of free school meals versus those not in receipt of free school meals.*

*The setting of stretch aims has been established as an ongoing, collaborative process between schools and the local authority. All schools are supported in using data to calculate poverty-related attainment gaps. Professional dialogue, support and challenge encourages schools to analyse data, including trend data, together with recognition of contexts. Quality assurance processes ensure stretch aims are closely aligned with school improvement planning.*

*There is a 'bottom up' approach to setting stretch aims. Last session, a data dashboard was developed for the Broad General Education in primary which enabled headteachers to access a consistent data set. All schools were asked to use this data and their contextual knowledge to set stretch aims. School stretch aims were collated to create the overall stretch aims.*

#### 4.1.2 Plus stretch aims

Plus stretch aims reflect individual contexts and improvement priorities which have been identified through data analysis and self-evaluation. These are often targeted at improving outcomes for particular groups of children and young people. For example, the majority of local authorities identified at least one aim that focuses on improving outcomes for children and young people who have experienced care. A few local authorities have focused on children or young people with additional support needs.

Over half of all local authorities also set stretch aims that focus on improvements at particular stages. For example, almost a third of local authorities intend to focus on improving attainment at S3.

The majority of local authorities have targeted improvements for literacy or numeracy attainment. Over a quarter of those who have a focus on literacy have set a specific plus aim in relation to writing attainment in primary schools.

Plus stretch aims also reflect the intention of local authorities to improve specific aspects of attainment within the Senior Phase. For example, almost a third set a stretch aim relating to SCQF Level 6. These include the percentage of S5 young people achieving three or more awards at Level 6. They also highlight particular groups for example, increased percentages of young people in receipt of free school meals who will achieve a Level 5 award in literacy and numeracy.

A quarter of local authorities also focused on improvements in positive or sustained destinations for school leavers.

A few local authorities set stretch aims relating to early years. These included improvement in the uptake of nursery places for two-year-olds and increased numbers of P1 entrants meeting developmental milestones.

Local authorities have clear rationales which underpinned the plus stretch aims.

#### Plus stretch aims

*Following analysis of a range of information, including Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level data and observations during learning visits, there is a focus on primary four writing as one of the 'plus' stretch aims. Furthermore, there will be a focus on reducing exclusions in secondary schools as there is a significant gap when comparing learners from quintile one and quintile five.*

*Plus stretch aims have been set for the Senior Phase to ensure inclusion of all learners. Attendance will continue to be a focus through targets at school level following a year of positive progress. Specific stretch aims for CECYP have been set in recognition of the improvement needed in their outcomes.*

*Current attainment of looked after children and young people has been increasing steadily. This is due to the creation of the virtual school. The trajectory indicates continued, sustained improvement year on year. This stretch aim will continue to ensure that care-experienced learners' progress and attainment remains a priority.*

#### 4.1.3 Tracking progress towards stretch aims

All local authorities have systems in place to monitor progress towards achieving their stretch aims. There is strong evidence that these have been refined since last session. Most local authorities identified regular data uplifts across the year as key to tracking progress. In the best practice, this informs decisions around the targeting of support. Several local authorities have increased the number of times across the year where attainment data is analysed. A variety of data tracking tools are being used effectively to support analysis.

Opportunities for centre staff or peer headteachers to engage with each other around attainment data has been highlighted. This as an important part of the tracking process identified by more than a third of local authorities.

Almost a fifth of local authorities noted that they are still refining approaches to effectively tracking Senior Phase stretch aims.

#### Tracking progress towards stretch aims

*Data dashboards are well established and track progress in the primary stages. Dashboards for BGE secondary and Senior Phase are almost ready to be launched. The Senior Phase dashboard will identify those learners who indicate that they intend to leave. This will facilitate more effective tracking of leavers' attainment. Attendance data sets have also been reviewed and will be available to support tracking in the*

*coming month. The SAC project lead officer will track progress and meet with individual school leaders regularly to provide support and challenge.*

*Biannual ACEL predictions and school-level stretch aim trackers will monitor progress in primaries. Insight data in February 2024, Annual Participation Measure snapshot in August and a new school tracking tool will monitor progress in secondaries. Routine school improvement visits and monthly attendance tracking will offer additional performance data. The attainment advisor and director of education meet regularly to discuss progress against stretch aims.*

*Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Level predicted data will be collected in November and March. Attendance data will be collected monthly and shared with schools. Quality assurance processes, including QIO school visits are in place to ensure a continued focus on stretch aims, with officers adopting a coaching in context approach to improve the quality of raising attainment meetings and local moderation.*

Local authorities continue to develop and further refine their approaches to the monitoring and tracking of stretch aims. Almost a third have identified further improvements they plan to implement.

## Section 5

### 5.1 Collaboration with Education Scotland to deliver the Scottish Attainment Challenge

#### 5.1.1 Attainment advisors

All local authorities work collaboratively with their attainment advisor (AA) to deliver the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC). Each local authority is at a different stage in implementing the SAC. It was the introduction of PEF that enabled all local authorities to benefit from ASF. This took time to be embedded within local authorities, and in schools in particular. This, coupled with the individual local context, determines the focus of support.

AAs provided guidance and challenge throughout the process of setting stretch aims. Analysis of the data was a key feature and often supported authorities to set achievable but aspirational stretch aims.

Advice on planning for targeted and impactful use of the Attainment Scotland Fund was an important area. Attainment advisors provided support for planning, defining outcomes and measures, analysis of data and for local networks. As a result, attainment advisors provided a continued focus on excellence, equity and closing the poverty-related attainment gap. There is evidence to suggest that the design and delivery of professional learning has further built the capacity of school leaders and practitioners.

Building strong professional relationships with local authority central officers has been identified as important. Attainment advisors support schools in a variety of ways. During this reporting period, this has included:

- Universal offers to improve PEF planning
- Delivery of professional learning to school leaders or practitioners
- Guidance, support and challenge to targeted schools as identified by the authority
- Facilitation of networks or drop-in sessions

Working with central teams and in individual establishments allows appropriate challenge to be given, whilst maintaining a relentless focus on equity.

#### **Attainment advisors**

*Through collaboration with quality improvement officers and education support officers, the attainment advisor supports schools and senior leaders to ensure that effective plans are in place to address the needs of pupils. This is resulting in a more focused approach to achieving equity.*

<i>The attainment advisor and senior regional advisor participated in learning visits to several establishments where high numbers of children and young people live in poverty. This has supported central officers in ensuring there continues to be a strong focus on equity and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.</i>
<i>Members of the central officer team collaborate with the attainment advisor (AA) to plan and deliver the SAC priorities and provide appropriate support and challenge for school leaders. In the reporting period the AA has provided support in reviewing and setting stretch aims, the analysis of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) plans and the development of the Literacy Strategy. Targeted support for schools in implementing PEF plans is ongoing.</i>
<i>The attainment advisor (AA) works with the central team and with individual establishments. Senior education officers have encouraged the AA to challenge and support establishments to ensure Pupil Equity Fund allocations are used effectively. The AA has a positive relationship with the SAC lead. They work together to support the effective use of all SAC resources. The AA attends secondary school reviews to support the review of the impact of PEF and is closely involved in all aspects of SAC planning.</i>
<i>There has been a clear focus on building capacity in the central team to become data literate and data informed. Pulling on a variety of sources for data intelligence has enabled central officers to fully understand the complexities and intersectionality of the data available to inform practice. There has been extensive support provided on setting stretch aims and collating information for Pupil Equity Funding - focusing on outcomes, measures, and impact. Professional learning sessions have focused on building capacity of the deputy headteacher networks.</i>
<i>The attainment advisor (AA) works directly with all schools. The support, challenge and professional learning has improved planning, tracking and monitoring of attainment. It has also led to better identification of gaps and targeting interventions. Working collaboratively with local authority officers, the AA helps ensure that the Attainment Scotland Fund is targeted and used appropriately. A focus of this work has been to support the development of tracking and monitoring of PEF. Significant progress has been made in reducing the underspend.</i>
<i>As a result of quality engagement with the attainment advisor, strong working relationships have been formed. SAC planning, implementation and evaluation are discussed at monthly meetings and clear actions identified. The attainment advisor supports targeted schools with self-evaluation, leadership, use of data, pedagogy, ensuring progress and impact of SAC funding and facilitating opportunities for sharing effective practice.</i>
<i>The attainment advisor has developed a series of equity-focused professional learning sessions aimed at practitioners and middle-leaders. Sessions were piloted with the new Strategic Equity Fund equity team, providing them with a shared understanding of the impact of poverty on learners. The sessions received positive feedback and helpful improvement suggestions. An initial exploratory session was held with five nurseries and their catchment primaries to agree effective transition practice. All establishments are in areas impacted by poverty.</i>

### 5.1.2 Regional and National Directorates

Within this reporting period, there is evidence of local authorities working collaboratively with both the Regional and National directorates within Education Scotland. Where there is a focus on equity, it includes but is not limited to:

- Advice, guidance and signposting to policies and examples of effective practice for inclusion and positive relationships
- Professional learning which supports improvements in literacy, numeracy and supporting learners with additional support needs
- Development work within identified areas, whilst building capacity of both central officers, school leaders and practitioners e.g., the National Writing Programme
- Training to increase understanding and consistency within moderation and assessment
- Advice and guidance to specific networks or working groups

Evidence of impact is directly related to the nature and context of the support. However, some examples of noteworthy impact are included below.

Regional and National Directorates
<i>Self-evaluation for continuous improvement (SECI) training was delivered to primary headteachers The authority developed their own SECI training aimed at building DHTs capacity in effective self-evaluation practices enabling sustainability and scalability. Almost all evaluated training as being highly effective in improving approaches to self-evaluation, particularly the use of data to improve attainment and outcomes for learners.</i>
<i>Recently, for example Education Officers (Literacy) currently support associated school groups with the development of a consistent approach to writing.</i>
<i>The education support officer for literacy and English has worked collaboratively with the AA and local authority to co-design an approach to improving teacher confidence in teacher judgements about first level writing. This has provided the local authority with analysis and insights. Work to support targeted schools is underway.</i>
<i>Effective collaboration with Education Scotland's Community Learning and Development (CLD) officer led to the sharing of materials demonstrating effective practice in tackling poverty. This resulted in a greater awareness of effective interventions. CLD and local authority collaboration also supported the implementation of a community-based numeracy programme for those over 19 years of age. This will support the development of numeracy skills, increasing employment opportunities. The NIF officer is currently revising the Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officer programme for special schools. This work is progressing well and aims to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of learners with additional support needs.</i>
<i>The local authority has successfully engaged with several colleagues from the Northern Regional Team. For example, the education officer for literacy and the National Improvement Framework officer led a project across the whole authority to improve listening and talking. This resulted in improved learning and teaching, teachers' confidence in professional judgements and more effective moderation across schools and sectors. All of this led to improved attainment in listening and talking.</i>

This support is often part of a longer term or ongoing piece of work and therefore impact continues to be monitored. There is some evidence that where a range of support is in place, this is leading to increased capacity for improvement and positively impacting on delivery of the SAC.



## 5.2 Key messages

- When planning and developing support for families and communities, local authorities should:
  - Ensure that strategies/policies/frameworks have been developed with children, young people and their families, including those with lived experience of poverty
  - Enhance mechanisms to better involve parents in decision-making
  - Further promote the use of CPAG resources and seek opportunities to increase networking and sharing of practice nationally
  - Make use of participatory budgeting, particularly at school level, to strengthen both child and parent voices to co-construct plans and accelerate progress and impact

Local authorities will be further supported in this work by Education Scotland

- Attainment Scotland Funding is used effectively by local authorities and schools to support families and communities, especially for specific roles e.g., home link workers, engagement officers, virtual schools etc.
- Community Learning and Development teams are very effective in providing a wide range of key services to families and communities
- Attainment advisors continue to provide support and challenge to local authorities and schools
- Collaboration with Regional and National Directorates has had a positive impact on capacity and improvement for local authorities

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