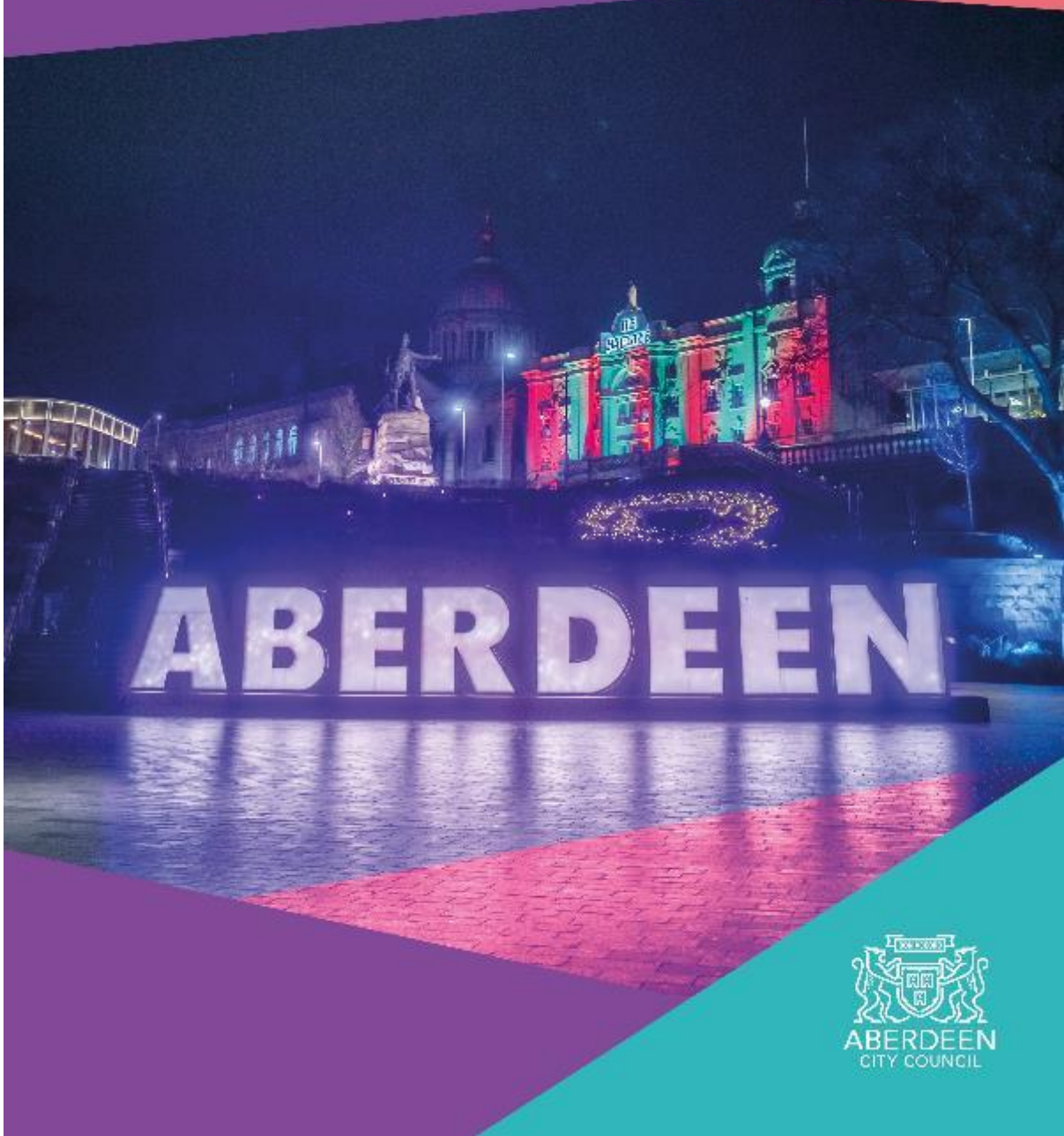


# Council Delivery Plan

ANNUAL REVIEW 2024/25



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# Foreword

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This Annual Review Report provides an overview of progress made in implementing the Council Delivery Plan for 2024/25 and the contributions of the respective Council Functions, Clusters and Services to these objectives.

The report also reflects the influences/drivers of change in Aberdeen as a city continuing to move through on-going social and economic transitions.

It is now five years since the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is clear that this event still resonates nationally and locally in terms of the legacy that this continues to impart on the lives of our citizens, particularly those children and young people whose development and transitions between early life stages were disrupted at the height of the pandemic.

The 'cost of living crisis', peaking in 2023, and into 2024, although mitigated by the efforts of the Council, and with inflationary pressures arguably rising at a slower pace, continues to exert stresses on many of our citizens, both those in employment and those not economically active, despite signs that, by various measures, the extent of relative poverty in the city has been falling since the high point experienced in 2022/23.

As in 2023/24, local authorities, and the public sector in general, continue to operate in an environment of significant budgetary pressure and, in this context, the Council Delivery Plan is one of the ways in which decisions are made both in terms of which services and projects are prioritised and to whom and at what standard they can be delivered. Often this represents difficult choices and necessitates a keen understanding of how improvement within these selected priority areas has been, and will continue to be, maximised.

However, this report shows that the Council, together with the city's communities and our partners, are working hard to mitigate the impacts of the stressors noted above, with additional sustainable evidence of gains in some areas of strategic intervention, including those around the city's quality of environment; and commitments to tackling health inequalities among our citizens, against which early improvement evidence was available in 2023/24.

The achievements highlighted in this report stand as a testament to the resilience and dedication of the staff of both the Council and our partner organisations, as well as to the people of Aberdeen themselves.

The Council Delivery Plan is a key element of our commissioning approach and brings together, at the beginning of each budget year:

- Details of the Council's strategy framework
- Relevant new statutory duties being placed on the Council;
- Outstanding commitments arising from the Council's approved Policy Statement and Partnership Agreement
- Council commissioning intentions, through which we express the services we will provide.

Importantly, each of these elements of our Council Delivery Plan are aligned to the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and represent a statement of how the Council will deliver on its contribution to the implementation of the LOIP.

# Strategic Alignment

Theme	LOIP Stretch Outcome 2016 - 2026	Council Priorities
Economy	1. 20% reduction in the percentage of people who report they have been worried they would not have enough food to eat and/ or not be able to heat their home by 2026.	Reduce child poverty
		Increase the value of community benefits, including employability benefits
	2. Working towards a 74% employment rate for Aberdeen City by 2026.	Support mitigation of fuel poverty
		Support multi-agency efforts to increase benefits uptake and improve debt management
People (Children & Young People)	3. 95% of all children will reach their expected developmental milestones by their 27–30 month review by 2026.	A thriving innovation driven economy
		A Healthy and Skilled Population
		A Strong Community and cultural identity
		An outstanding Natural Environment
	4. 90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all of the time by 2026.	Maximise the impact of Early Learning and Childcare
		Support improvement in the health & wellbeing of children and young people
	5. By meeting the health and emotional wellbeing needs of our care experienced children and young people they will have the same levels of attainment in education and positive destinations as their peers by 2026.	Support care experienced children and fulfil our role as Corporate Parents
		Raise attainment and achievement
6. 95% of children living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 & 2) will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.	Support transition to positive destinations	
	Prevent children & young people from entering the criminal justice system and support those who do	
7. 83.5% fewer young people (under 18) charged with an offence by 2026.	Protect Children from harm	
8. 100% of our children with Additional Support Needs/disabilities will experience a positive destination.	Support multi-agency efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour	
People (Adults)	9. 10% fewer adults (over 18) charged with more than one offence by 2026	Protect citizens through enforcement and protective services

		Support multi-agency efforts to reduce domestic abuse and support victims
	10. Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026.	Cross cutting
	11. Reduce the rate of both alcohol related deaths and drug related deaths by 10% by 2026.	Support multi-agency efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour
		Protect citizens through enforcement and protective services
12. Reduce overall homeless presentations by 10% and youth homelessness by 6% by 2026.	Support Council tenant	
	Housing needs analysis and delivery	
	Reduce homelessness and respond appropriately to those who do become homeless	
Place	13. Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.	Improve the quality, efficiency and suitability of Council property
		Reduce carbon emissions by increasing public transport
		Minimise the levels of waste created
	14. Increase sustainable travel: 38% of people walking; 5% of people cycling and wheeling as main mode of travel and a 5% reduction in car miles by 2026	Maintain an effective operational fleet
		Reduce carbon emissions and support physical and mental wellbeing by increasing active travel
		Reduce carbon emissions from transport infrastructure
	15. 26% of Aberdeen's area will be protected for nature and 60% of citizens report they feel that spaces and buildings are well cared for by 2026.	Reduce carbon emissions through travel to and within the city
		Increase the amount of land managed for nature and increase access to and quality of green spaces
		An outstanding Natural Environment
		Cost effective delivery of Capital projects
		Maintain the City's green space environment, local road and pavement network
	Community Empowerment	Improve the Performance of the Commercial Estate
Deliver Efficient and Effective Facilities Management		
	16. 50% of citizens report they feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026	Cross cutting

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# Improvement Activity and Service Standards

## Introduction

Within the following sections, this report outlines the Council’s performance strengths, vulnerabilities and the level of improvement activity undertaken during the 2024/25 period, aligning these with the expectations set out in the Council’s 2024/25 Delivery Plan against both our Commissioning Intentions and Service Standards. Service Standards act as an important guide to the level of service that our citizens can expect and, as a measure of the efficiency of service delivery.

These areas of scrutiny, by Members, partner organisations and citizens alike, form part of a wider evidence suite around accountability for delivery, including [Statutory Performance Indicator](#) reporting and critical evaluation of our relative performance in the context of comparative local authorities and the national performance landscape aligning with the Local Government Benchmarking Framework [Aberdeen City Council - Local Government Benchmarking Summary](#). A small number of Standards set for 2024/25 are awaiting population from forthcoming national publications.

In the context of delivering outcome change linked to the LOIP and our Commissioning Intentions, it needs to be borne in mind that improvement activity at an operational level can extend over more than a single annual period, be reliant on the contributions of extended partnership/multi-agency work and may only be capable of full evaluation and evidencing through a series of local/national research and statistical publications throughout current and subsequent years.

Development of the Council Delivery Plan for 2026/27, which is under way, will both capture and reflect on data and evidence that becomes available over this timeline, taking advantage of the increasing sophistication and scope of data the Council’s digital transformation is providing at service management and Function levels.

### Legend: Service Standards RAG Status (Risk Tolerance Based)

On target	Within risk tolerance of target	Outwith risk tolerance of target
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# City Regeneration & Environment Function

This function leads our work to improve the economic and environmental performance of the city and ensure that decisions taken around neighbourhoods and our built environment take account of the conditions required to improve population health, including driving our work towards net zero. The function will oversee all place-based capital investment from inception through to delivery, as well as delivering our planning and building standards services, economic development, cultural services and operational services. The City Regeneration and Environment Function works closely with the Families and Communities Function in order to ensure that our collective activity is sufficiently and appropriately targeted to support an improvement in outcomes for targeted communities. The Function is enabled and supported by the Corporate Services Function who help ensure the sound governance of the Function.

## High Level Priorities

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A thriving innovation driven economy</li><li>• An outstanding Natural Environment</li><li>• A healthy skilled population</li><li>• A strong community and cultural identity</li><li>• Cost effective delivery of capital projects</li><li>• Reduce carbon emissions by increasing public transport</li><li>• Reduce carbon emissions and support physical and mental wellbeing by increasing active travel</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce carbon emissions from transport infrastructure</li><li>• Increase the amount of land managed for nature to decrease flood risk management and increase access to and quality of green spaces</li><li>• Minimise the levels of waste created</li><li>• Maintain the City's green space environment, local road and pavement network</li><li>• Minimise the levels of waste created and optimise waste collection and disposal</li><li>• Maintain an effective operational fleet</li></ul> |
|--|---|

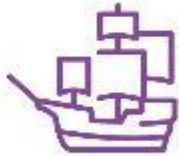
## HIGHLIGHTS



The employability and skills team won the **'Achieving better outcomes for the most vulnerable'** category at the COSLA Excellence Awards



**New Riverside School** was **completed** and made operational



The **Tall Ships 2025** event saw over **400,000 visits** to the harbour



**20,000+ trees** have been **planted** during 2024/25



# City Development and Regeneration Cluster

## Role of the Cluster

The City Development and Regeneration Cluster works to improve the economic performance of the city. The cluster is responsible for contributing to the outcomes stated in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and Regional Economic Strategy. The cluster represents the Council and the city of Aberdeen on local, regional, national and international stages, supporting inward investment and the promotion of the city as a competitive business location, as a key location for cultural activities, events and tourism, taking this approach helps drive city centre footfall and secondary spend.

## Progress made during 2024/25

### Business Gateway

Transition of the Business Gateway contract to Aberdeenshire Council has been completed and has been operating as an in-house service now since April 2024. Reporting is shared monthly as to start-ups; early-stage growth; business boost; growth and enquiries; with data split by Shire and City. The City figures form the basis of a monthly catch up with Business Gateway.

Using UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) funding, a business start-up grant scheme was offered to city businesses engaged with a Business Gateway Advisor in 24/25. UKSPF funding was also awarded to Business Gateway to run a Digital Business Support Programme in 2024/25 for city businesses, providing access to 1-2-1 or group coaching in a range of digital themed areas.

### Support job creation

Aberdeen City Council has overseen the infrastructure developments linked to the new harbour to support job creation resulting from the second cruise ships season. The third cruise ship season is now underway, with around 60 ships expected, up from 21 in 2022. This is forecast to generate over £20M in regional spend. With the harbour expansion projected to create 5,550 jobs locally and £0.8B GVA annually.

Aberdeen City Council are working in partnership with the ETZ Board and others to develop and deliver Green Energy research and innovation investments to unlock Investment Zone Funding and support job creation. Multiple green energy RDI proposals have been submitted under the Investment Zone framework, including digital tech and fuel test centres. The ETZ Innovation Campus and Hydrogen Campus are key anchor projects, with support from bp, Scottish Enterprise, and NZTC.

Proposals are progressing through the Investment Zone gateway. Funding will align with **Fair Work First Guidance**, including the real living wage.

We have continued investment in hydrogen to stimulate demand, address Net Zero and increase green energy employment opportunities through:

- **H2 Buses Project:** The fleet is temporarily offline due to fuelling issues, but maintenance fuelling was delivered in March 2025. Buses are expected to return to service once supply resumes
- **5-Year Export Programme:** The TH2ISTLE Hydrogen Valley bid was submitted for €9M Horizon Europe funding. It aims to aggregate demand and expand hydrogen use across transport and industry
- **BP/ACC Joint Venture Phase 2:** The JV (bp Aberdeen Hydrogen Energy Ltd) awaits Final Investment Decision. Phase 1 includes a hydrogen production and refuelling station

**In collaboration with Strategic Place Planning, work with Aberdeen Heat & Power to prepare for the requirement to hold a licence/consent under the Heat Networks (Scotland) Act 2021 to support on-going expansion of job opportunities, in green energy**

Aberdeen ranks highly for heat network suitability. The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) is being developed to identify zones for future installations. The City Combined Heat and Power Network already serves 33 multistorey blocks and 15 public buildings, reducing emissions by 56% and fuel bills by up to 50%.

### **Invest Aberdeen**

Invest Aberdeen continues to support inward investment, with over 60 enquiries and 160 progressed actions across energy, life sciences, food & drink, and tech. The team has launched a refreshed prospectus and business plan and is actively involved in promoting the region's £30B investment pipeline.

### **City Centre Masterplan**

- **Queen Street & Aberdeen Market:** Progress continues under the City Centre Masterplan. The market redevelopment is part of a broader streetscape strategy
- **Beach Masterplan:** Phase A projects (Beach Park, Events Park, Broadhill) are underway, with the first project of Phase A - Broadhill – completed in Summer 2025
- **City Centre Streetscape:** Streetscape proposals aim to enhance accessibility and public realm. Union Street Central currently on-site.

### **Union Street**

Progress implementing the themed areas and priority activity of the Empty Shops Action Plan was last reported via Service Update in March 2025. Key updates included the appointment of a City Centre Project Officer; supporting Aberdeen Inspired with a feasibility study on Union Street upper floors; launch of the Business Toolkit; and delivery of short-term projects including the Iconic Bricks Dinosaur and Hidden Lego Trail and Freebie Fortnight.

As of March 2025, the number of currently available vacant units was 31. Huq Signals footfall data recorded a 3.1% increase in unique visitors to the city centre between 1 January 2024 and 31 December 2024 compared to the same period in 2023. Via the Union Street Empty Shops Grant Scheme, 15 applications had been approved representing an allocation of £510,000.

**In collaboration with Strategic Place Planning, create a framework and 10-year plan to rationalise stored collections to reduce carbon footprint & future storage requirements in line with changes being made to St Peters school**

Focus for 2025/26 has been on reduction of storage use at Torry reserve store. The plan is now in place for 10-year strategy to decant and rationalize collection in a phased approach. In addition, archaeology currently in separate storage facility in Dyce has been reviewed and rationalisation/restorage is underway. Activity has been supported to date by external funding creating a dedicated officer post – this will be embedded in future service redesign.

Decant from St Peter's school has been completed. Archives currently in commercial storage pending identification of a long-term storage solution.

**In partnership with Aberdeen Alcohol and Drugs Action and NHS Grampian, support individuals in recovery from substance use through an employability pipeline through keyworker support and paid work experience placements**

UKSPF funding has been secured to continue working in partnership with Aberdeen Alcohol and Drugs Action and NHS Grampian to support individuals in recovery from substance use through an employability pipeline through keyworker support and paid work experience placements. The funding will allow this project to continue through to March 2026.

This year to date, three participants have secured employment, one continues in a paid work experience placement within Aberdeen City Council, and placements are being sought for others who are approaching work readiness. Others are being supported either directly by a keyworker or being moved onto training programmes commissioned via No One Left Behind monies. We continue working to support people in recovery prior to and on release from HMP Grampian.

In 2024/25 19 people in recovery engaged with the programme. Of those, seven disengaged, the majority of whom due to relapse or health issues. Of the remaining 12, three moved into full time employment, four moved into paid work experience placements, three started actively and regularly volunteering, and two moved into a rehabilitation facility. Keyworkers held, and continue to hold, weekly drop-in sessions at Ocean House.

An employer engagement session was held at the Beach Ballroom in March 2025, with a focus on encouraging employers to consider hiring people in recovery from substance misuse, where individuals in recovery told their stories and the difference that an employer taking a chance on them and giving them a job had made to their lives. A naloxone training session was included in the event.

We have been continuing to work together to increase the number of people who are engaged with different areas of the Justice System being supported to make progress on the employability pipeline.

Using UKSPF funding, we provided three construction training courses to prisoners who will be released to Aberdeen, enabling participants to secure the Construction Skills Certification Scheme card which is required for all building site roles. 56 city prisoners participated in the construction industry training with 10 successfully passing the test and securing certification in custody. Some participants were unable to complete due to various reasons; being transferred out, moving to rehab or being released before completion, however a number of participants continue to work towards certification.

We also funded a World Host Customer Service course. Through ABZWorks we continue to support HMP Grampian and Greene King to deliver activity through the training kitchen, which has continued to be popular and to secure positive results for participants. This activity was heavily featured in the BBC's Jailed: Women In Prison documentary, particularly telling the story of one female inmate and her progress from prisoner to trainee, and into employment. Through these routes, 67 people in HMP Grampian were supported on the employability pipeline in 2024/25.

The past year has also seen ABZWorks provide a broad range of supplies to the prison to support the development of numeracy skills and broader skills among the prison population, via UKSPF. This includes craft materials, maths puzzle books, board games with a numeracy focus, fitness equipment, painting by numbers kits, and supplies for the creation of a "Liberation Station" set up by female inmates who are making soft toys and tote bags for prisoners on release from HMP Grampian, to help remove some of the stigma of leaving jail with a plastic bag full of belongings, while simultaneously building a range of employability skills.

No One Left Behind funding from Scottish Government has also been used to provide other skills-focused equipment and activities, including outdoor workwear (Personal Protective Equipment) and safety boots, gardening supplies, and kitchen supplies amongst other things.

ABZWorks has secured £30,000 of UK Shared Prosperity Fund monies from this year's People and Skills allocation for use in HMP Grampian and we are in talks with the prison meantime on how this could best be invested to deliver employability and skills activities for individuals who will be released to the city. The Employability and Skills team leader now sits on the Scottish Prison Service's Northern Employment Advisory Board.

**Carry out a skills audit across priority areas to establish skills gaps, barriers to employment, and training needs in order to carry out a tendering exercise to secure a mixed economy of provision to match local need**

Keyworkers and a youth worker door knocked across Torry and Northfield, and canvassed people attending appointments in Aberdeen Job Centre. The survey was published online and promoted via the Council's and ABZWorks social media channels, as well as via the Local Employability Partnership and Employability Training Providers Forum. Targeted efforts were focused on young people who were listed on Skills Development Scotland's School Leaver Destinations records as either being 'not in a positive destination' or 'unknown,' with attempts made by phone, text, and door-knocking. The results from the survey are currently being compiled and will be shared later this year.

**Commission a range of test and learn employability projects across priority areas focused on the target groups identified in the Local Employability Partnership Action Plan**

A number of test and learn employability project tenders were offered via the employability services procurement framework. These included projects for disabled people, New Scots, people with long-term health conditions, parents, young people and saw the creation of some innovative and co-designed with employability participants. We are meantime reviewing the project end reports.

Additionally, 12 ABZWorks Development Grants were awarded to grass roots organisations operating in the city. A broad variety of activities were offered, including volunteering support, digital skills, activities for parents, support for people in recovery from substance use, and job clubs. We have now received evaluation reports for each of these Development Grant projects and will be pulling together an overall evaluation report. An immediate finding is that this type of activity extends the reach of employability services beyond training providers and ABZWorks to the heart of communities and to the people who are furthest removed from the labour market and hardest to reach.

**Commission a range of green and renewables skills training courses**

NESCol won the tender for commissioning a range of green and renewable skills training courses, including offering National 5 Skills for Work: Energy, Introduction to Hydrogen, Sustainable Energy Management, and Principles of Waste Management courses.

Some staffing challenges resulted in the Nat 5 course not being delivered, however 45 people were referred to green skills courses at other levels. Of those, 22 enrolled and 16 completed the courses, securing a qualification.

Further UKSPF funding has been secured for green skills training this year. We are in talks with industry about the range of skills required, with a view to creating a green skills pipeline to employment.

### **Accelerate participation in cultural volunteer programmes including archives, gallery & museums venues and Tall Ships 2025**

Tall Ships 320-strong volunteer workforce worked throughout the event following a series of professional volunteering workshops. Volunteer commitments lasted for between 2 and 12 days and included ship liaison officers, media support, artist liaison and welcoming thousands of visitors to the city and the event.

Archives, gallery & museums have hosted 45 active volunteers in the past year, with 60 new volunteers signed up to support activities and events in the coming year. In total AAGM volunteers contributed just over 5,416 hours, which represents an increase of over 2,000 hours from the previous year.

### **In partnership with the Science Museum Group and targeted Aberdeen city schools, develop a “science capital” approach to teaching and interpretation in archives, gallery & museums in 2024/25 and 2025/26**

Staff training was designed to grow the confidence of the AAGM team to explore and share science in Aberdeen’s collections with visitors from all ages and backgrounds, included hidden science in paintings, challenging observation skills and conversations about how “science-y” you might be without even knowing it. We also provided various programmes throughout the schools in the city to promote science. Highlights of the programme included:

- Our World in Science... our Sensory World, a workshop, developed by specialist ASN teacher Karen Gebbie -Smith for the AAGM team, offering practical ways to interpret museum objects based on how our senses connect us to the world.
- Supported 146 S1 pupils at Lochside Academy to explore a science capital approach to learning via our Science in Your World Mystery tins sessions. Mystery Tins encourage a range of scientific enquiry including sensory exploration, trial and testing, discussion and hypothesizing. Pupils followed this by visiting the Art Gallery to explore the collection and made their own cyanotype photographs.
- We welcomed 40 pupils to Wild Life photographer of the Year science themed workshops in the Art Gallery. The pupils learned about animal conservation and the climate crisis and participated in activities that supported literacy and creativity across learning.

Funding for these programmes continues to run until Autumn 2025 (academic year 2025/26).

### **Design and deliver Aberdeen Events 365 Strategy through the Aberdeen Events 365 Plan 2023-2026 (including Tall Ships 2025), and support through targeted sponsorship and fundraising income**

Quarterly meetings were held to support Event 365 delivery across the city. It is hoped that the establishment of a visitor levy will allow for investment in future years. EventScotland regularly attend and have used the meetings as an opportunity to add forums to shape the national events strategy and report on its progress.

Tall Ships 2025 event saw over 400,000 visits to the harbour, with footfall counters in the city recording 600,000 visits over the extended weekend. Event 365 partners delivered activities to the wider event for public and crew participation and extend the social impacts of the event.

Festival of the Sea ran for the second year over 2 weeks either side of Tall Ships, with cultural partners in the city and further afield creating a low-cost city-wide festival for July 2025. Partners continue to work towards city bids for major events.

Sponsorship and fundraising income for Tall Ships specifically was c.£1m in cash and in-kind. This supported critical elements of event delivery, alongside additionality for social and enterprise programmes. Sponsorship for Spectra was also secured both in cash and in-kind.

The delivery of The Dennis Law Trail and murals in the Printfield Locality was completed and on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the Lord Provost officially launched Printfield 10: The Denis Law Legacy Trail

We continue to develop venues to provide best value cultural services and increase opportunities for cultural tourism as per the updates below:

- **Tolbooth** – delayed handover from Building Services; expect to open for full season in spring 2026
- **Maritime Museum** – external review of visitor flow, interpretation and access for visitors undertaken. Plan in development for phased improvements. Focus in 2025/26 has been response to Tall Ships, with 2 new displays “Tales of Tall Ships” and “Ship Shapes”, and digital stories of Aberdeen-built ships accessible via Bloomberg Connects app
- **Art gallery top floor** – All Fired Up installed and opened to the public June 2025
- **Provost Skene’s House** – ground floor plans being developed for installation over winter closed period
- **Archives** – now fully decanted from shared site of St Peter’s School; OCB and phased investment plan in preparation
- **Glover House** – Feasibility work on a visitor attraction is underway led by external partner who will also identify necessary capital investment
- **Arts Hub** – Regional Creative Industries mapping research commissioned to identify sector needs and investment opportunities, brief includes assets mapping to identify Arts Hub need.

## Service Standards – City Development and Regeneration Cluster

Service Standard	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
We will, with partners, support established businesses through the Business Gateway service within 5 working days of approach.		100.0%	100%
We will maintain Accreditation standards for the Art Gallery. UK Museum Accreditation Scheme	Completed – full accreditation	100.0%	100%
We will maintain Accreditation standards for Museums. UK Museum Accreditation Scheme	Completed – full accreditation for Maritime Museum and Provost Skene’s House; Tolbooth – currently under provisional accreditation awaiting full reopening	100.0%	100%
We will maintain or increase the number of external outdoor public events.	Increased, primarily through the delivery of Tall Ships, including the main event (classed as external due to the extent of partnership working); 4 large-scale music gigs (cap. 7k); STEM activity zone on the Castlegate; and a ‘Military Village’ led by the Royal Air Force with all three British armed forces.	135 events	



# Capital Cluster

## Role of the Cluster

The Capital Cluster creates the physical architecture which enables the provision of services as well as contributing to improvements in the neighbourhood and built environment to support good population health. The cluster provides professional technical design, construction and contractual expertise to deliver the Council's Capital Plan. It primarily consists of individuals with professional disciplines that deal with the design, planning, construction and management of capital funded construction projects. These projects include delivery of the city centre masterplan, the city region investments, the school estate strategy, roads infrastructure, housing and all aspects of our current general fund capital programme.

## Progress made during 2024/25

There are a number of Capital projects ongoing across the city:

- **Transportation Link to Bay of Nigg:** Main works procurement is due to be undertaken Summer 2025 to achieve financial close of Transportation Link to Bay of Nigg.
- **Union Street Central:** Main construction works of Union Street Central have commenced with completion due in 2026, and partial section re-opening in late Summer 2025.
- **The new Riverbank School:** Construction works were completed in April 2025 with the school operational in early May 2025. Currently in the rectification period (12 months) with the principal contractor attending to any urgent matters.
- **Joint Integrated Mortuary at ARI:** Works have commenced, completion is due late Summer 2025 for the new building, prior to handover to NHS Grampian.
- **Bridge of Don Household Waste Recycling Centre:** Works have commenced and was due to be complete late May, however, the water connection has delayed this. This has now delayed the estimated completion date until mid-September. The latest Cost report estimates we are circa £87k under budget even with the utility delays.
- **The new Hazlehead Academy:** End of design period and preparation for contract appointment /works to commence in early 2026.

- **Refurbishment of St Peter’s Primary School:** Detailed design is progressing with targeted demolition of former school building at the end of 2025 and planning application submission thereafter.
- **Affordable Housing:** Continuing on-going delivery of agreed programme of affordable house building work with planned new housing developments at Kincorth and Craighill.
- **Torry Heat Network:** Phase 1, main infrastructure works: were practically complete on 10th August 2023. Phase 2, main infrastructure works: were practically complete on 28th February 2025. Phase 1 and Phase 2 heating change overs of a number of non-domestic buildings have been undertaken. The connection of up to 650 homes to this network will be undertaken over a number of years, in preference to the replacement of the current gas boilers to voided properties.
- Delivery of Capital Voids, Housing Investment and providing support and advice managing our RAAC programme obligations is also continuing.

## Service Standards – Capital Cluster

Service Standard	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
We will ensure the specification on new construction projects meet the required environmental and building quality standards.	All projects met standards	100%	100%
We will ensure all capital projects have gate stage reviews completed in accordance with our project management governance protocols.	All projects met standards	100%	100%

# Strategic Place Planning Cluster

## **Role of the Cluster**

The Strategic Place Planning Cluster works to support the city's Net Zero Route Map and 6 Enabling Strategies. This work is done alongside partner agencies. The cluster supports improvements in the neighbourhood and built environment in order to realise the conditions required to support improvement across all of the determinants of good health. As a result, the cluster works to ensure that the physical, social and economic activities are used to maintain, regenerate and strengthen the place of Aberdeen - seeking to strike the balance across the economic, social and environmental outcomes stated in the LOIP. The focus is to enable, facilitate and deliver Strategic Place Planning. This includes all transport, environment, net zero, climate change and planning strategies, in addition to development management and building standards in order to help deliver major infrastructure projects.

## **Progress made during 2024/25**

### **Local Transport Strategy and Travel Network Plans**

Preparation of a revised Local Transport Strategy is ongoing, and will be informed by the "Your Place, Your Plans, Your Future" public consultation held in Spring 2025, and the public engagement on Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART). The document will be aligned with the development of the emerging Local Development Plan to ensure a joined-up approach to place and movement.

A preferred ART route network was agreed in June 2024, and work has continued to identify the infrastructure requirements on these corridors to support the delivery of ART, incorporating the work previously done through the Multi-Modal Corridor Studies. A Strategic Outline Business Case was completed in March 2025 and was endorsed by Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans in June 2025, enabling progression to Outline Business Case stage.

A Regional Active Travel Network Plan has been completed and was approved by the Nestrans Board in February 2025. This will form a key element of the next Local Transport Strategy. Active travel plans as part of the beach and city centre masterplans are ongoing, through the design team and contractors. The focus over the last twelve months has been on the Castlegate area and managing issues related to construction activities.

Bus Lane Enforcement (BLE) funding to implement distance markers was approved in June 2025. Work is now taking place to identify the key routes for signage and the optimum style of signs to install.

An update to the Strategic Car Parking Review was completed in March 2025, with the outcomes informing the consideration of revised parking policies within the next Local Transport Strategy.

A new foot and cycle bridge over the River Dee was dependent on the outcomes of the Regional Active Travel Network Review and next steps will be reviewed in 2025/26.

A development partner has been appointed to lead the growth of the electric vehicle charging network across the Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Highland areas. The Low Emission Zone (LEZ) was implemented and became fully operational from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024.

### **Increase the amount of land managed for nature to decrease flood risk management and increase access to quality of green spaces**

In 2024/25 we aimed to work with external partners such as the James Hutton Institute to develop a natural environment strategy implementation plan. We are currently developing a scope of potential works and shaping a partnership agreement to govern the collaboration. The main effort of the project will take place across 2025/26.

### **The Sustainable Growth Agreement (SGA) project**

The SGA project run by SEPA and Scottish Water completed in early 2025, however the outcome of the project has been superseded by proposed changes at a national level to both legislation and policy

### **Public land for nature, naturalised grassland and expanding tree planting**

Various methods continue to be trialled on publicly managed land, within a variety of settings, to manage grassland to improve biodiversity. During the review period the Aberdeen B-Lines project, in partnership with Buglife, was undertaken and completed in March 2025. This successful project led to 12.24ha of habitat being enhanced or better managed for pollinators, with learnings for future land management and 29.4 hectares of land now managed as B lines.

The Tree and Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan (TWSIP), approved in June 2022, identifies suitable land to expand tree planting. Each year the Council undertakes tree planting on streets, open spaces and woodland areas. 20,000+ trees have been planted during 2024/25. Sites and funding have also been identified for 2025/26 planting.

**In collaboration with Operations and Commercial and Procurement, improve waste reduction and product lifespan through ACC procurements.**

Climate change, net zero and circular economy is a strategic theme in the Joint Procurement Delivery Plan 2023-26; and procurement continued as a core workstream under the Council Climate Change Plan 2021-25. Currently, initiatives are underway to implement these strategic documents. An example is the recent rollout and installation of resource-efficient multifunctional printers, with this contract taking into account the product lifecycle of the devices.

**For 2024/25 aim to work with Operations to ensure alignment between the Waste Strategy and the Circular Economy Bill and support Operations in relation to ongoing programmes to reduce waste (including exploring opportunities for repair hubs).**

Supporting the city strategies for Circular Economy and Waste, partnership work progressed to deliver a new “Bike Hub” initiative for the repair and refurbishment of unwanted bikes for the Reuse Shop at Hazlehead Household Waste and Recycling Centre, with a further hub in development. Our active staff Green Champions Network ran several minimisation and circular economy learning activities and led on initiatives including the upcycling of packaging crates to support local food growing.

The Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024 and Scotland’s Circular Economy and Waste Routemap were both published in 2024, enabling requirements under these to be considered in the planned refresh of strategic waste and climate document.

## Service Standards – Strategic Place Planning Cluster

Service Standard	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
We will ensure that the local authority area is covered by an up to date Local Development Plan.		100%	100%
We will respond to building warrant applications within 20 working days.	927 responses	98%	90%
We will respond to building warrant approvals within 10 working days.	840 responses	87%	80%
We will ensure that each existing Tree Preservation Order (TPO) is reviewed as fit for purpose at least once every 10 years.	21 TPO reviews	100%	100%
We will, on average, determine applications for works to protected trees (under TPO and Conservation areas) within six weeks.	156 applications	99%	100%
We will maintain independent Customer Service Excellence accreditation.		100%	100%
We will meet the annual CO2 emissions reduction target for 2024/25 set out in the Council's current Climate Change Plan (-48% on baseline year)	25,989 tCO2e	100%	100%

# Operations Cluster

## Role of the Cluster

The Operations cluster makes a significant contribution to the neighbourhood and built environment. The cluster is responsible for the delivery of frontline services related to green space environment, local road and pavement network, domestic waste collection and recycling including the NESS Energy from waste facility. The work of the cluster is increasingly aligned with the city's Net Zero Routemap and Enabling Strategies as well as being a major contributor to Aberdeen Adapts, the Framework for responding to the harm created through climate change. In addition, the cluster has a key role in ensuring operational health and safety and fleet compliance requirements are met in accordance with legislation.

## Progress made during 2024/25

### **Replace remaining 500 Street Lights with Smart LED**

These remaining units are the most difficult to replace. A total of 87 units were replaced with 413 units still to complete. The service is looking to have completed replacing all units in financial year 25/26.

### **Develop and implement measures to support the implementation of The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, in relation to pavement parking.**

Enforcement of pavement parking commenced within the city on 1st July 2024. Traffic Regulation Orders have been proposed and progressed for several pavement parking exemptions, and these will be implemented on-street in 2025/26.

### **Improve road safety through implementation of the Road Safety Plan, Route Action works, and traffic management/ road safety measures.**

Road safety projects have been delivered at Oscar Road/ Grampian Place, George Street pedestrian safety interventions, speed indicator devices across the city, implementation of route action plans and closing central reservation gaps on Anderson Drive.

### **Complete and implement strategic flood risk management plans**

The production of local flood risk management plans is an ongoing process which is carried out by the ACC Flooding Team in collaboration with Scottish Water and SEPA. Aberdeenshire is the Lead Local Authority for the North East.

### **Increase the green network of community partners and volunteers by 10%.**

200+ community partnerships in place across the city. The partnerships link to our In Bloom, Clean Up Aberdeen, Tree Planting, Green Flag and Environmental Improvement projects and campaigns.

### **Increase provision of allotments and food growing spaces e.g. Seaton**

£100K allocated to create new allotments at Eroll Street. Work is progressing well and allotments to be opened in 2025.

### **Play Areas across the City**

The £1million play area at Hazlehead Park was completed and officially opened to the public on 23 July 2024 (ahead of schedule). The play area has been designed to cater for all ages and includes gigantic towers, a zip line, wheelchair-accessible trampolines, and many musical items.

The project has achieved its aim to improve play provision and add more inclusive play items.

As well as the play equipment, significant drainage upgrades have taken place. The space has been designed to ensure that it can cope with flash floods which the previous barked play area could not. Other improvements included new seating, picnic benches, litter bins and landscaping works. The new play area is a huge success.

2024/25 play area refurbishment programme was also completed. The main projects carried out during 2024-25 were:

- The completion and opening of 2 fully Refurbished Play Areas at Hazlehead Park
- 18 Play Areas saw an upgrade through the installation of new play equipment of various types including new or upgraded safety surfacing – Roundabouts, See-saws, Spring Items, Spinning Items, Swings, and Slides.
- 10 Play Areas were upgraded to include safety surfacing involving – Installing new attenuating Rubber Tiles, upgrading existing safety surfaces with Wet Pour surfacing, renovation of existing Wet Pour surfaces, and restoration of existing Rubber Grass Matting safety surfaces.
- 12 Play Areas saw upgraded infrastructure – Benches, Picnic Tables, and Litter Bins.

Various other minor repairs were also identified and undertaken as part of each individual project, reducing risks on each site and preventing future wear & tear to the surface and equipment on site.



**Rebuild of Altens Materials Recovery Facility and transfer station**

Rebuild ongoing. Transfer station due for completion summer 2025. Construction of the building that houses the materials recovery facility (MRF) largely complete and kit out commenced January 2025 and expected to be complete late summer to enable commissioning of the plant.

**Operationalise new Household Waste and Recycling Centre in Bridge of Don as replacement for existing site at Scotstown Road**

Build ongoing. Successfully bid for £580K Recycling Infrastructure Fund grant to expand and enhance reuse facilities at House hold Waste and Recycling Centres, including the development of a hub at the new Bridge of Don site.

The review of the Waste Strategy has now been complete in light of impending regulatory changes and development of the new strategy is ongoing.

**In collaboration with Strategic Place Planning, develop Fleet Replacement Programme with a focus on alternative fuel vehicles and associated infrastructure**

Fleet continue to work in collaboration with Strategic Place Planning to identify appropriate sites and requirements for electric and alternative fuels infrastructure. The progress on the move from carbon fuelled replacements to alternative fuelled vehicles is slow and dependent on available budgets / grants being identified that can support the necessary fuelling and other infrastructure for the provision of alternative fuels.

## Service Standards – Operations Cluster

Service Standard	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
We will remove litter from adopted roads and pavements to a minimum of Grade B of the Keep Scotland Beautiful “Local Environmental Audit Management System” (LEAMS) standard. (averaged from monthly survey scores)		89.3%	80%
We will maintain all parks and amenity open spaces to a minimum of Grade B of the Keep Scotland Beautiful “Land Audit Management System” (LAMS) standard. (averaged from monthly survey scores)	Surveys on which this Standard is based are only carried out from Apr - Oct with individual scores given for each month	81.6%	80%
We will visit, inspect and maintain outdoor amenity play areas (excludes education and community centre settings) on a fortnightly basis to national safety standards (BSEN 1177 for safety surfacing, BSEN 1176 for play equipment and BSEN 14974 for wheeled sports).	9728 inspections met standards	100%	100%
We will inspect lifebelts at the beach on a daily basis and twice weekly at other locations in keeping with the National Water Safety Strategy or ROSPA water safety guidance.	14,825/15,127 inspections completed	98%	100%
We will deliver Cremation Services to a standard that achieves a positive evaluation by the Inspector of Cremation. <i>* This is based on measure 'No. of complaints to Inspector of Crematoria upheld' with a target of 0.</i>		No complaints were upheld in 2024/25	0
We will support the active participation of 150 partnership / community environmental groups. <i>* This is based on the number of partners supported in each quarter</i>		184 supported groups (average)	150
We will achieve first time MOT pass for HGVs subject to a pre-check and then presented for annual test.	82/89 vehicles	92.2%	95%

We will achieve first time MOT pass for Light vehicles when presented for annual test following a pre-test.	273/287 vehicles	95.1%	93%
We will only provide vehicles which comply with ECO Stars scheme ratings Euro iv, v or vi.	685/696 vehicles	98.4%	100%
We will increase the proportion of alternative fuelled vehicles in the Council's fleet	106/700 vehicles	15.1% YTD	
We will promote the diversion of household waste from landfill to help limit the use of landfill.	2255.7 tonnes	97.5% (as at end Q4 based on rolling 12 month period)	85%
We will promote the recycling and composting household waste to help limit the use of landfill.	38116.5 tonnes	42.5%	50%
We will repair (High/Medium priority) carriageway / footway defects within 7 days.	4,699/5,219 defects	90%	95%
We will respond to general street lighting faults within 7 days.	1,800/1,906 faults	94.4%	90%

## Context of performance vulnerabilities

### Percentage of household waste that is re-cycled

Despite a fall in recycling rates in the last two years linked to the loss of the re-cycling facility at Altens, the city is performing at a level which is above that of its Large Urban comparators. At the same time, this reduction in rates has resulted in the City performing below the national average in consecutive years, and stalled progress towards the ambitious local target.

The Service has developed and introduced an Improvement Charter with the aim of improving Aberdeen's Household Recycling rate by 2 percentage points on 2024 levels by 2027. In a Summer 2025 pilot scheme to encourage improved re-cycling awareness and outputs, focused on the Lochside Academy catchment area, this has seen quantifiable evidence of the benefits of additional communications and awareness raising within this community.

This evidence is being considered by senior management teams across the Council that are integral to the delivery of this project, to establish the scalability of this type of activity, and how best to take the learning from the project, and to potentially resource this, going forwards towards city-wide implementation.

# Families and Communities Function

This Function leads our work to use social and community capital and education to improve outcomes for citizens over the longer term. The function leads on the development of a partnership Family Support Model that takes full account of the various influences on population health, including housing, education and community-based support systems. As a result, the Function plays a key role in delivering on the child poverty agenda. The function oversees the provision of supports for children, young people and families at community level, by working with communities to understand what matters to them, and reshaping council services to better address the complex situations many face. The Families and Communities Function works closely with the City Regeneration and Environment Function to ensure that our collective activity is sufficiently and appropriately targeted to support an improvement in outcomes for targeted communities. The Function is enabled and supported by the Corporate Services Function who help ensure the sound governance of the Function.

## High Level Priorities

- Reduce child poverty
- Raise attainment
- Maximise the impact of Early Learning and Childcare
- Support Improvement in the health & wellbeing of children and young people
- Support transition to positive destinations
- Support care experienced children and fulfil our role as corporate parents
- Support multi-agency efforts to reduce domestic abuse and support victims
- Prevent children & young people entering the criminal justice system & support those who do

- Protect children
- Support Council tenants
- Housing needs analysis and delivery
- Reduce homelessness
- Improve the quality, efficiency and suitability of housing
- Improve the quality, efficiency and suitability of Council property
- Improve the performance of commercial estate
- Deliver efficient and effective facilities management

## HIGHLIGHTS



More than **17,000** bookable **opportunities**, as well as numerous drop-in activities, have been made available through **In The City** activity programmes in 2024/25



**10% increase** in the number of eligible 2's placed in our ELC provision



The proportion of **homeless journey cases being closed within the 100 day target** rose by 17%



**34** participation events, responding to feedback provided from our **care experienced young people**, were programmed with **in excess of 200 stakeholders**, predominantly care leavers/those with care experience, attending

# Education and Lifelong Learning Cluster

## **Role of the Cluster**

The Education & Lifelong Learning Cluster works in partnership with others to reduce inequalities in educational outcomes and raise attainment given the key role education plays in long term outcomes. The cluster supports lifelong learning to enable and empower the people of Aberdeen to fulfil their potential and contribute to the social, cultural and economic prosperity of our city. The cluster oversees all funded Early Learning and Childcare settings (including funded childminders), out of school care provision, schools (primary, secondary and special), library and community learning provision as well as a range of support services.

## **Progress made during 2024/25**

### **REDUCE CHILD POVERTY**

#### **Context**

There are early signs, from the most recent national data release, that the levels of child poverty in the city are retreating from the peak which was experienced in 2022-23. The information below reflects the focal points of activity within the Cluster aimed at reducing the impacts of poverty and reducing the differentials in outcomes between children experiencing disadvantage in the context of the various measures of relative poverty.

#### **Co-design and deliver co-ordinated whole family preventative services with a particular focus on those living in SIMD1 to reduce involvement with statutory services.**

Our model of family support continues to focus on those groups at greatest risk. Outcomes for those in SIMD 1 continue to be of greatest concern. Our work continues with Scottish Government as part of the Fairer Future Partnerships, with particular consideration given to the outcomes we seek to improve and our approach to evaluation. Work is ongoing to explore how services can work together in a smarter way by utilising a series of multi-agency 'deep dives' and service design approaches to better understand where reform may be required. This model is looking at the resources available and how they can be remodelled to ensure they are targeted to ensure maximum impact for those with greatest need. Through working more closely together and focusing on the family as a whole rather than seeing adults and children separately will ensure families will be better served and reduce the likelihood of duplication of services and advice.

**Maintain readiness to increase uptake of free school meals, responding, as appropriate, to any requirement to deliver free school breakfasts and lunches for all primary school pupils in keeping with Scottish Government policy.**

Pupils in Primaries 6 and 7 whose parents are in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment have been eligible for free school meals (FSM) from the return to school after the February mid-term holiday. Because there was no data sharing agreement in place between Social Security Scotland and Scottish Local Authorities at the commencement of eligibility, it was impossible for FSM to be auto awarded meaning an interim application and verification process had to be developed. This delayed the go live date for those eligible in our Primary Schools to 14 April 2025.

Scottish Government are running a 'Test of Change' pilot which will see pupils in S1 to S3 whose parents are in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment become eligible for FSM. Aberdeen City Council are one of eight Local Authorities in Scotland who have agreed to participate in the Test of Change, with the pilot commencing from the start of the commencement of the new school session on 19 August 2025.

School Age Childcare colleagues are working together with Schools and Facilities colleagues to establish / expand free breakfasts in 10 primary schools in SIMD 1 and 2 areas, which were successful in being awarded Bright Start Breakfasts funding, from August 2025.

**Continued allocation of grant to support delivery of the Scottish Government commitment to abolish core curriculum charges.**

The Scottish Government Grant continues to be distributed to schools to reduce the cost of the school day ensuring there are no curricular costs passed on to families.

**Continue to prepare for implementation of the Scottish Government commitment to expand free childcare services to support targeted families into employment when national plan is known.**

Aberdeen City Council fully delivers its statutory duty to provide the universal Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) funded entitlement for all 3- and 4-year-olds, eligible 2-year-olds and those who choose to have a deferred year in ELC.

We are working in partnership with the Scottish Childminding Association, as part of the National Recruitment programme, to continue to recruit more childminders to support potential expansion and to increase the number of childminders who opt to become Funded Providers. There has been no further update from the Scottish Government on the national plans to further extend provision.



### **Delivery of 'In the City Programmes' to those most likely to be impacted by poverty for easter, summer and autumn, subject to Council budget decision**

In the City programmes continue to run Easter, Summer and October. Successful and popular sessions are offered by city staff and partners. There is a high level of satisfaction from both learners and their families.

Since summer 2021, the programmes have provided more than 66,000 bookable opportunities, including multiday camps, day long and short activities being offered, as well as numerous drop-in activities in parks, museums, galleries and local communities and bespoke programmes for those with complex additional support needs. Between 2024-2025 (Easter, Summer, October 2024 and Easter 2025) more than 17,000 bookable opportunities, as well as numerous drop-in activities, have been made available through In the City programmes.

The enjoyability rating as provided by children and young people for one of the most recent programmes (Easter in the City, 2025) was 9.3 out of 10, this high rating is consistent with the previous programmes.

### **RAISE ATTAINMENT**

#### **Context**

Through evaluation of the extensive range of measures relating to attainment, there are signs of improving outcomes amongst particular groups and phases of the education curriculum from the 2023-24 academic year. It is anticipated that data from the 2024-25 academic year will demonstrate a similar pattern, with some reinforcement of the trends established, although full analytical data from the 2025 examination diet and the Curriculum for Excellence is awaited.

The [Evaluation of the National Improvement Framework Plan 2024-25](#) report considered at the Education and Children's Services Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2025 offered some first impressions around the likely attainment and achievement outcomes from the 2024-25 year.

#### **Evaluate the impact of approaches to Local Authority and school quality improvement to determine their effectiveness in addressing variation**

The Quality Improvement Framework (QIF) established for 2024/25 school session was put in place to help drive improvement across all sectors ( ELC, primary and secondary). The frameworks continue to provide a helpful scaffold to support central officers and headteachers to deliver proportionate quality improvement support.

The quality improvement framework has supported significant improvement in ELC settings with almost all now being graded as good or better.

Trios and quads comprising schools sitting across all categories are ensuring that those leading schools in lower categories are being supported by those with higher evaluations. This approach is providing improved peer mentoring of Head Teachers and is supporting the reduction in variability across the system.

### **Evaluate the impact of pupil tracking arrangements in addressing variation in attainment across SIMD groups.**

All secondary schools have adopted a common tracking system which allows greater scrutiny of attainment and achievement at city, school and faculty level. This allows us to compare performance by cohort (including SIMD) supporting a more targeted approach to interventions

### **MAXIMISE THE IMPACT OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE (ELC)**

#### **Context**

In 2024-25, the numbers of children registered with Council funded Early Learning and Childcare provision, (including Deferred Entries) rose to 4,620 placements (+0.8%) As a proportion of the eligible population, this represented a +2.9% increase for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds in comparison with 2023-24. An outline of the breakdown between the various age groupings that are accommodated within the city's provision was presented in the Performance Management Framework report to the Education and Children's Services Committee in September 2025.

#### **Maximise the uptake of 1140 hours of ELC for all eligible children, with a particular focus on eligible 2s (205) in 2023/24) and those currently in families living in SIMD 1**

There are currently 53 Local Authority ELC settings and 41 Funded Provider ELC settings. There are also 62 Funded Provider childminders working in partnership with Aberdeen City Council to deliver the funded ELC entitlement, with a range of flexible options, for 3-5 year old and eligible 2 year old children across the city.

The full ELC offer across each Associated School Group (ASG) ensures a good mix of 8am-6pm all year round ELC provision and 9am-3pm term time provision. Our ELC Funded Providers also offer fully flexible funded ELC across the city and can meet the needs of families who require wrap around care and additional hours.

We continue to work with the Scottish Government Data Pipeline to help us identify eligible 2s families. Once identified the families are sent information about eligible 2s and details on how to apply. Based on the data shared with the local authority, we sent information to 488 families. The service currently

supports 254 eligible 2s in our ELC provisions. We have increased the number of children placed from 2023/24 to 2024/25 by 22%. We have also increased the number of eligible children placed from 38.3% in 2023/24 by 10 percentage points to 48.3% in 2024/25.

**Support early language acquisition and development through the roll out of appropriate programmes with a particular focus on schools with a high proportion of children living in SIMD 1 to reduce referrals to Speech and Language Therapy.**

Individual school Parents as Early Education Partners (PEEP) sessions have been reestablished in 50% of settings with a plan to expand to all settings by the end of session 25/26. Throughout 2024/25 work was ongoing to update the service level agreement with speech and language colleagues. There is now an increased understanding of Social communication, emotional regulation and transactional support (SCERTS) across both the specialist and primary sector. Early Talkboost and Talkboost continues to be delivered in schools with trained staff. Refresher training for current staff and training for staff new to the programme is planned for session 25/26.

27 of our Primaries have now completed the CYPIC National Writing Programme training. 70 P4 teachers and managers have attended the extensive training with another 123 teachers from P3-7 attending the spread and scale twilight training to allow for continuity of approach from P3 – 7 in our trained schools.

**Support Corporate Landlord to deliver the agreed School Estate Plan in line with approved capital programme (subject to Council budget decisions and external funding).**

Central officers meet regularly with Corporate Landlord to review the school estate workplan in line with the capital plan. This is reported to committee annually in September of each year.

**Development and approval of the future library model with an associated transition plan.**

A team has been established to implement the future library model, and planning is ongoing and an artist in residence has been employed to work with library users to support collaborative planning and shared vision for the Central Library.

**Development and implementation of a literacy strategy to align the future library model with our Family Support Model.**

A team developed a literacy progression. Following a successful pilot, the progression was implemented in August 2025. This progression is being used by school staff and those supporting literacy in other services across the local authority to provide a consistent approach.

**Roll out the second Request for Assistance process to help meet emerging demand across communities**

Our request for assistance process is still in development and has been designed to ensure all partners will be able to track interventions families have accessed. This will reduce resource duplication, ensure support is offered timeously and help determine the interventions which best mitigate risk.

**Develop a statutory Community Learning and Development Plan for 2024-2027.**

Our Community Learning and Development Plan has been developed involving all partners and will be presented at committee in September 2025.

**SUPPORT IMPROVEMENT IN THE HEALTH & WELLBEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Context

The Education and Children's Services Committee in June 2025, considered the Health and Wellbeing Report which noted that within the curriculum, health and wellbeing is currently organised into six areas: mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing, planning for choices and changes, physical education, physical activity and sport, food and health, substance misuse, relationships, sexual health and parenthood.

It noted that there are encouraging widescale improvements in almost every aspect of wellbeing compared to previous data sets which include: a reduction in levels of pupils with low mood and at risk of depression; an improved picture on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which measures mental health difficulties; improved levels of reported self-confidence levels and optimism; improvements in physical health; an improved picture in relation to feelings of safety, inclusion, good health, aspects of sleep, and being listened to; and reduction in reporting of loneliness

In general, city outcomes continue to sit above national comparator data, although the Services, and partnership organisations, remain alert to reports of self-harming and happiness with appearance and both continued to improve in this year's data.

**Support the evaluation of the neurodevelopmental pathway project and collaborate with partners to determine how best to pivot our system to take account of the learning.**

A collaboration between Aberdeen City's Educational Psychology Service and the Health and Social Care Partnership aims to streamline, prioritise and further develop options to support those with Neurodivergent Differences. NHS project lead will continue to integrate learning from the neurodevelopmental pathway project as our planning develops.

**Work with stakeholders, including a Head Teacher working group, to determine a local response to the Scottish Government 5 Point Plan to support a reduction in distressed behaviour in schools.**

Officers have reviewed local and national incident data; progress made against the local and national behaviour plans and professional learning on offer to school staff in order to understand the impact of the interventions currently in place and to determine how best to continue to support staff and young people in our schools.

A mandatory staff training module on how to report incidents was rolled out with all staff for completion during in-service or staff development sessions. This has ensured all staff who completed the module know how to report an incident. An increase in awareness of how to report incidents would be expected to lead to an increase in the number of incidents being reported and this is evident in the upward trend. There is ongoing development Person Centred Risk Assessment guidance and the associated plans to allow a deeper understanding of behaviours presented and how to best to support that distress.

## **SUPPORT TRANSITIONS TO POSITIVE DESTINATIONS**

### Context

The most recent Annual Participation Measure release ( August 2025) indicates a 1.8 percentage point improvement in the proportion of 16-19 year olds achieving a positive destination ( 91.9%) in comparison with 2023/24, ( 90.1%) with a larger proportion in Employment destinations than has been prevalent in the city over 2021-24, when participation in this category materially fell. The 2024/25 outcome is the highest figure for the city against this measure to date, and closes the distance to the National Outcome, with increased robustness around the APM methodology playing a part in better capturing the city's outcomes.

### **Deliver a broader curriculum offer through digital and partnership delivery of Phase 3 of ABZ Campus to secure improvement in senior phase attainment.**

Having completed Phase 1 (2023-24), in the process of concluding Phase 2 (2024-25) and preparing for the launch of Phase 3 (2025-26), a picture of increasing breadth can now be seen. The three phases have seen; a widening of growth-sectors covered, an increasing range of courses from Level 4 to Level 7, and a diversification in the method of delivery from Phase 2 onwards, with 'anytime' and 'twilight courses' increasingly available to young people across Aberdeen City.

ABZ Campus offers an opportunity to work with partners in wider organisations to develop the scope of certificated experiences for young people.

### **Further improve transition from children and adult services as part of the GIRFE Pathfinder to bring forward transition planning.**

Officers have reviewed current processes and updated data sharing arrangements to allow for improved planning for families and young people.

Schools are working closely with other services to identify families earlier in order to reduce anxiety and increase engagement prior to the traditional transition planning window. Improved data sharing will allow for a more agile response to need in adult services.

**Work with Skills Development Scotland, NHS Grampian and other key partners to try to secure an increased allocation of foundation apprenticeships.**

We have contracted access for small cohorts of our young people to Foundation Apprenticeships in Construction and Automotive with Aberdeenshire Council and, in turn, offer access to some of our in-person and 'anytime' courses for young people from Aberdeenshire Council. The intention is that some course delivery could be offered across local authorities to further develop the range of certificated experiences our young people can access and officers will explore the funding of this approach in the coming year.

NESCol continue to offer a significant proportion of ABZ Campus Courses, with a number of Foundation Apprenticeships, HNC and Skills for Work courses.

## Service Standards – Education and Lifelong Learning Cluster

Service Standard	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
We will meet all eligible requests for early learning and childcare placements within one month.	2,805	100%	100%
We will meet all mainstream requests for a primary and secondary school placement within one month.		100%	100%
We will work to ensure early learning and childcare settings achieve an average minimum evaluation of 'good' (the National Standard) in core Quality Indicators ( financial year)	39 inspections completed	97.2%	100%
We will ensure primary, secondary, and special schools achieve an average minimum evaluation of 'good' in core Quality Indicators. (financial year)	7 inspections completed	96.8%	100%
Provide CLD services to a level that achieves a rating of good or better through external inspection.		100%	100%
We will process requests for additional support to meet the wellbeing needs of children and young people within 40 days.		100%	100%
We will work to ensure that school attendance is as good or better than the national average.		92.3%	90.3%
We will work to ensure that all young people in the senior phase have access to city wide courses through ABZ Campus.	Harlaw Acad. Introduced ABZ campus curriculum in August 2025	100%	100%
We will ensure library item requests are satisfied within 21 days.	42,176 / 57,375	73.5%	73%

# Children's Social Work and Family Support Cluster

## **Role of the Cluster**

The Children's Social Work & Family Support Cluster works with other Clusters and multi-agency partners to prevent families from experiencing the care and justice systems by offering preventative intervention and support in line with the statutory framework in which social work operates. The cluster is responsible for the delivery of all frontline services designed to support children, young people and families identified as being at risk of harm.

Working with partners we will continue to ensure children remain within their family network where it is safe for them to do so. Where children cannot remain in their family network alternative care arrangements will be designed to meet their needs. The Chief Officer will continue to oversee the redesign of children's social work as we transform delivery models to better reflect the intentions of generating [Progress toward delivering The Promise Plan](#). The Cluster takes a lead role in ensuring that the Council complies with its Corporate Parenting and child protection responsibilities and leads the coordination of the multi-agency model of Family Support.

## **Progress made during 2024/25**

### **Deliver age assessments for unaccompanied asylum seekers who state that they are under 18 years of age.**

In this period 21 brief enquiries were undertaken in respect of those claiming to be children. In conjunction with the National Age Assessment Board there were three Merton Age Assessments undertaken.

### **Celebrate our care experienced young people via National Care Day and other events.**

As Corporate Parents we have hosted events which have celebrated care experience with and for young people with 2 specific Care Experience Week and Care Leaver events. In addition to and moving beyond these specific events, there have been a range of events calendared as participation opportunities responding to feedback provided by our care experienced young people which has sought to engage a wider, and also at time specific corporate parenting response. For example, monthly connection session; capacity building small group session; seasonal specific events; identifying bespoke opportunities for new events to be included which recognize young people's achievements, with a total of 34 events attended by in excess of 200 stakeholders (predominantly care leavers/those with care experience)



### **Preparations for and a response to the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021 including Domestic Abuse Protection Orders.**

The Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021 is still not yet in force across the country. As such, we are limited in what we can make preparations for when it has not yet been agreed how some elements of the Act will be enforced. We continue to support provisions within our own policies such as the Domestic Abuse Council Housing Policy, which gives delegated powers to remove perpetrators from properties. This Policy has recently been reviewed, and a further review will be undertaken when the Act is implemented.

### **Support the implementation of the “Safe & Together” model.**

In this period, we delivered eight Safe & Together Overview Days to 90 multi-agency professionals and two Core Training sessions to 45 participants. The Overview training is a one-day course introducing the Safe & Together Model, including its principles, components, and the perpetrator pattern framework, aimed at supporting domestic abuse-informed child welfare practice. One session was held online and one in person. We also delivered a one-hour briefing to 85 professionals to introduce the model and our four certified trainers, with plans to offer tailored briefings to specific teams.

Core Training was delivered in-person over four days by two certified trainers, covering modules on Assessment, Interviewing, Documentation, and Case Planning. Each module builds on the previous, focusing on practical skills and applying the model to real cases. One Core session supported a full third-sector team. Additionally, three staff members completed the Certified Trainer qualification, and three more began the 12-week course, which develops competencies in domestic abuse-informed practice and delivery of the Safe & Together Model.

The Safe & Together training has significantly influenced how professionals respond to domestic abuse, shifting the focus toward survivor strengths, perpetrator accountability, and collaborative, multi-agency practice. Participants reported a transformation in their thinking and daily work, with many adopting a more survivor-centred approach. For example, professionals now highlight the protective actions survivors take, which helps build their confidence and affirms their role in safeguarding their children. The training has also empowered staff to challenge inappropriate language and assumptions within their own services, reinforcing the importance of holding perpetrators accountable rather than placing the burden on survivors. Beyond mindset shifts, the training has improved documentation and communication practices. Professionals are now more mindful of language that could inadvertently blame survivors or excuse perpetrators, and they place greater emphasis on recording even minor details to support risk assessments and safety planning. The training’s multi-disciplinary format was praised for fostering shared understanding and collaboration across sectors. With 100% of surveyed attendees recommending the training and 80% eager to apply its principles, it’s clear the programme is driving meaningful change.

### **Implement Equally Safe and a gendered lens to public protection policy and practice.**

The Development Officer for Public Protection has engaged with Adult Social Work staff which has provided valuable insights into their experiences and challenges in addressing domestic abuse. These findings informed the development of the first draft of the *Adult Protection and Domestic Abuse Guidance*, which is currently being refined. In response to recommendations from the Adult Support and Protection (ASP) Learning Review, 15 accessible “quick guides” on domestic abuse were created to support practitioners across public protection, with plans to expand them to other areas of violence against women and girls (VAWG). Additional support was given to the council’s domestic abuse service to strengthen its reach and collaboration with partners, including the creation of promotional materials and identifying joint working opportunities.

Further contributions included input into the refresh of the Adult Support and Protection Operational Guidance, particularly around MARAC processes, to ensure alignment with best practice. Early work began on updating the VAWG Partnership Strategy and Improvement Plan, applying an *Equally Safe* lens. A draft position statement on commercial sexual exploitation was developed and is under review, while a report on new statutory guidance on forced marriage was produced to support local implementation. Work also commenced on a local honour-based abuse protocol, supported by training from the Daisy Project. Ongoing learning and training participation ensured that all guidance and resources remain current, inclusive, and informed by best practice.

The funded activity continues to drive a more consistent and strategic approach to tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) across public protection. Key pieces of guidance, including the updated *Adult Support and Protection* guidance and the *Commercial Sexual Exploitation* position paper, have progressed to formal endorsement, demonstrating their influence on local policy and practice. The creation of a new service delivery group has further strengthened multi-agency collaboration, with strong partner engagement reflecting a shared commitment to improving outcomes for women and children. Safe & Together training remains well attended, reinforcing the shift toward domestic abuse-informed practice.

Practical tools like the domestic abuse quick guides have been widely praised for their usefulness and adaptability across services, helping to align frontline practice with overarching policy. Originally developed for Adult Protection, their relevance has extended to other areas of public protection, highlighting their broader value. The work has also fostered stronger inter-agency links, with increased collaboration and joint casework between services.

### **Develop a Bairns Hoose at the Links Hub to support young people who have experienced abuse and harm as well as those young people under the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has caused harm to others.**

Building work was completed on target in July 2025, with professionals from Children’s Social Work, Police Scotland and Children First beginning to move service delivery into this setting. With the direct support of our Changemakers group of children and young people we are ensuring that the aesthetics inside and surrounding the building are conducive to the therapeutic approach of this new model of working. We will continue to develop our services to

our children and young people through our tests of change via our Bairns Hoose Delivery Group ultimately aiming to allow children to recover from their experiences and ultimately by eradicating the need for them to require to give evidence in Court.

**Develop enhanced advocacy opportunities for children experiencing all aspects of child protection & justice systems.**

The Young Person's Rights Service provides advocacy, guidance and support to Aberdeen children, young people and young adults, aged 0-26 years old, who are care experienced or are or have been involved in child protection processes, wherever they live. Its improvement priorities centred around 2 key areas: further development of inclusive practice to promote rights, participation, and voice and the provision of related workforce learning opportunities.

Focusing on the advocacy aspect of the service, it received nearly 200 referrals during this period. All were responded to, through the direct individualized provision of advocacy support, support to connect with engagement and participation opportunities, signposting to other services or consultation support to the workforce.

Improvement examples included more individualized, non-instructive advocacy related to the voices of pre-birth babies, infants, and neurodivergent individuals and either non-instructive or instructive advocacy support given to those experiencing justice systems. We also ran 3 inclusive communication workshops.

The service sustained its collaboration with those independent Advocacy Service (IAS) Providers aligned to the National Practice Model within the Children's Hearing System. This collaboration convenes around key principles such as ensuring children are aware of their right to advocacy support, that they can choose whether to access this or not and if so, that they are supported to make an informed and relational choice about who they want to advocate for them.

## Service Standards – Children’s Social Work and Family Support

Service Standard	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
All initial screenings will be undertaken and action decided on new referrals within 7 days.	241/248 completed within 7 days	97%	100%
We will hold initial Child Protection Planning Meetings within 28 days.	41/59 scheduled meetings completed	64%	80%
We will ensure care provided within Council children’s homes achieve a care standard of good or better.	2 inspections completed	100%	100%
We will ensure care provided by the Council’s fostering service achieves a care standard of good or better.	No change to current assessment	100%	100%
We will ensure care provided by the Council’s adoption service achieves a care standard of good or better.	No change to current assessment	100%	100%
We will work to maintain or increase the current number of foster carers. (additional households)	9 additional households/10 foster families	100%	9
We will undertake an initial age assessment within 2 weeks of UASC where there is a dispute to their age.	21 assessments completed	100%	100%
We will ensure that fewer than 7.5% of care experienced children and young people have 3 or more placements/year.	26 CEC&YP	5%	7.5%
We will ensure care experienced children and young people have a pathway plan by the age of 15 years.		74%	95%
We will support, where safe to do so, more than 75% of children and young people open to CSW live in family care.		75%	75%

## Context of performance vulnerabilities

### Pathway Plan allocation

Taking account of the increasing data refinement/analysis that has been offered through the implementation of D365 and the need for continuous development in case recording that this has highlighted, the 2024/25 figure presents an improved status against the prior year. At the same time, given that significant work on case recording and accuracy has only more recently been impacting on this metric, the extent of improvement year-on-year may be muted but is expected to rise over the course of 2025/26. The frequency of reporting of this data will be adjusted to align with the requirements of the Services statutory Children Looked After Statistics submissions going forwards.

# Housing Cluster

## **Role of the Cluster**

The Housing Cluster plays a key role in supporting one of the key determinants of population health – having shelter and hopefully a home. The cluster delivers housing strategy and services for individuals and families and aims to reduce inequalities by providing affordable housing which meets the Scottish Housing Regulator housing standards. The cluster has a key role in understanding community need, increasing community capacity and resilience, and working with partners to tackle the cause rather than the consequences of failure demand. Key areas of responsibility include Housing Strategy & Operational Improvement, Housing Services, Housing Options, Homelessness & Resettlement. The cluster makes a significant contribution to our dispersal and asylum support, helping to coordinate the work of other Clusters to ensure a coordinated response.

## **Progress made during 2024/25**

**Evaluate the impact of the current housing and support model to help identify where a multi-disciplinary locality-based approach could help support families more holistically (to include those with more complex needs).**

Further to the Housing and Support Officer focus groups held last year, staff were surveyed to help prioritise actions around the housing and support model. Drawing on the insight gained from this staff feedback, we have prioritised key areas for improvement and initiated targeted tests of change. These efforts ensure that valuable ideas from teams directly inform the development and implementation of service enhancements across patch teams, which plays a crucial role in strengthening our ability to support tenancy sustainment.

**Implement the Housing Domestic Abuse Policy to ensure consistency of delivery.**

The policy was most recently refreshed in 2023, with full implementation of the policy being iteratively rolled out in both 2023/24 and into 2024/25 through the provision of additional training capacities within Aberdeen City Council.

This phasing has now concluded, with on-going support for/ staff understanding and application of the policy principles in Housing ( and other Clusters) continuing to be provided through access to the DAART (Domestic Abuse Awareness Training Tool) and Equally Safe in Practice Tool through ACC Learn.

Staff and management teams also have access to additional resources through the [Aberdeen Protects](#) collaborative, including in-person training sessions which all ACC employees supporting vulnerable citizens are encouraged to engage with and attend as part of the [Safe and Together Training](#) relevant to

Family Job groups. This activity has fed into the current [Aberdeen Violence Against Women and Girls](#) improvement plan and supports the Aberdeen Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership Strategy 2024-2029 [VAWGPS](#) which became effective at the beginning of 2025.

In the current year to date, 26 staff members have completed the Safe and Together in-person training, a substantive increase on the numbers attending at the same point in 2024.

**In collaboration with Corporate Landlord, Finance, Capital, Strategic Place Planning analyse housing needs to inform the early development of a city-wide Housing Strategy to include an HRA Asset Management Plan, 30-year business plan and consideration of those with complex and life-long needs.**

The Aberdeen Local Housing Strategy was submitted to, and agreed by, the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee on the 26 August 2025.

The Asset Management Model is being developed with clear linkages between that and the Local Housing Strategy. The Housing Asset Plan, and HRA 30 Year Business Plan, will be presented to Council for approval in October 2025.

**In collaboration with Corporate Landlord and the Capital cluster, support families impacted by RAAC**

Since the beginning of the rehoming program in early 2024, prioritising the safety and wellbeing of all tenants affected has been the key priority. We took proactive steps to safeguard residents, maintaining regular engagement and a dedicated Housing & Support Officer supported them to transition to their new home. As a result of these coordinated efforts, the majority of tenants have been successfully rehomed, and the last remaining tenants are continuing to be supported through tailored assistance and ongoing engagement.

SAMH have also set up their 'Hear for You' service which specifically support individuals affected by RAAC and can be accessed online or face to face at the weekly Torry drop-in's or other locations within the city. They can offer 1:1 sessions with a dedicated Link Practitioner and also a Wellbeing Practitioner.

**Develop and implement, in collaboration with Corporate Landlord, a cross council plan to help realise a reduction in void Council houses**

As at 26/08/25 the number of housing voids is 2,012, of which 1791 are lettable voids. Of the 2,012 voids there are currently 142 properties under offer, 221 off charge for major works, 362 awaiting demolition and 87 buy backs being brought up to current standards. Properties being held for those impacted by RAAC who are interested in a property swap are currently inflating the number of lettable voids.

Considerable work has been undertaken to understand the complexity of the current void process, and the process will be simplified as the new NEC system becomes operational in mid-2026. In the meantime, housing and Corporate Landlord continue to look at how further efficiencies can be realised and will present a detailed Plan when the second version of the Housing Emergency Action Plan is presented to Committee in November.

**Work towards reducing the journey time for people experiencing homelessness, to secure improved performance.**

Homeless journey time is improving against a backdrop of increased demand. There has been a 21% increase in homeless presentations when compared with this time last year. The homeless journey time has reduced from 134 days in 2023/24 to 116 days in 2024/25. 66% of cases closed have been within the 100 day target which is an improvement of 17% on previous years.

Local Outcome Improvement Project Charters are currently being developed and implemented with a preventative focus to reduce homelessness in Aberdeen.



## Service Standards – Housing Cluster

Service Standard	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
We will assess all homeless applications within 28 days.	Financial year to date: 694 Assessed /380 Met Target	54.8%	100%
We will ensure all homeless people secure a permanent tenancy within 100 days average.	Financial year to date: 668 Outcomes/437 Met Target	112 days average	100 days
We will review and process housing applications within 28 days.	Financial year to date: 459 Processed/ 320 Processed within target	69.7%	100%
We will ensure a decision is made on all Tenancy Management actions within statutory timescales.	Financial year to date: 227 Actions/ 202 Processed within target	89%	100%
We will ensure an average time to let a property of 210 days.	Financial year to date: 1,019 relets/465 met target	256 days average	210 days
We will ensure that our support for people being liberated from prison meets the SHORE standards.		Not applicable	

### Context of performance vulnerabilities

The [Housing Board Bi Annual Report](#), presented to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee in May 2025, outlined the challenges around the measures identified above where performance fell short of expectations, and in detail, presented the Housing Board's response, including the iterative approach being taken to improvement against particular areas of focus.

In concert with this strategic overview, more recent housing related committee reports, covering inter-related activity such as the [Rent Assistance Fund](#) and [Aberdeen City Local Housing Strategy 2025-2030](#) and [New Housing Capital Programme: Projects Update](#) reports in August 2025, ( to highlight just a proportion of the on-going intervention and prevention workstreams being delivered), are representative of the intensive level of Council improvement activity being led by Housing, Corporate Landlord, Capital and Citizen Services Clusters through a fully collaborative approach.

This activity is overlaid with considerable individual service level work, as described above, being undertaken to improve the process related Standards which affect our citizens in terms of the impacts/experiences around engagement with the Council against the Housing themes, which are, in themselves, identified as posing risk vulnerability to the organisation.

The [Aberdeen City Affordable Housing Delivery Programme](#) report in May 2025, noted that there were 459 affordable housing completions in 2024/25, with a further 472 homes scheduled for completion. Of these, Aberdeen City Council contributed to the delivery of an additional 242 homes.

# Corporate Landlord Cluster

## **Role of the Cluster**

The Corporate Landlord Cluster makes a key contribution to neighbourhoods, the built environment and the social and community context in order to improve population health. The cluster consolidates all our property activities within one cluster, including health and safety activities, and is responsible for the management of commercial and non-commercial land and property assets, hard facilities management, asset and contract management across the council stock.

## **Progress made during 2024/25**

### **Commission annual School estate plan and delivery of projects committed in the Council budget.**

The School Estate Plan annual update was reported to and approved by Education and Children's Services Committee in September 2024.

Works to improve and expand Ferryhill School and Harlaw Academy are being progressed on site as are a number of condition and suitability projects. Future development work is progressing on St Peters and Hazlehead academies including a range of projects which flow from the school estate plan including a strategic business case in Northfield, and a review of the Victorian school estate.

### **Installation of new and replacement of bus shelters with green roofed and solar powered shelters.**

13 replacements shelters through NESTRANS funding are either fully installed, installation has commenced or is scheduled. 20 new shelters from Capital funding are awaiting confirmation of installation schedule. All on track for completion within financial year.

### **Implement, in collaboration with Housing, tests of change to realise a reduction in void Council houses.**

Considerable progress has been made in addressing the levels of buy backs, with 165 requiring considerable works and therefore not occupied in March 2025, reducing to only 87 by the end of August 2025. Work to further address Housing Voids has been detailed in the Housing Asset Plan, developed by Corporate Landlord to support the presentation of the HRA 30 Year Plan to Council in October.

Central to addressing housing voids, is ensuring that HRA investment supports the provision of sustainable housing stock. To support the effective use of the HRA, officers have invested time in populating a housing asset model. A Housing Asset Model is a data depository that allows consideration of a very wide range of data around our Housing stock to determine if our assets are fit for purpose.

The model considers:

**Service Planning:** Does our stock meet tenant requirements and do we manage it effectively?

The asset management model is being advanced, and an asset management plan has been prepared to be presented to committee in September and influence the 30 years business plan. A restructure of the service will consider long term planned maintenance fragilities. Response repair performance remains high as does SHQS and EESSH compliance.

**Financial Planning:** Can we afford to manage, maintain and invest in our stock? Do parts of our stock cost more than we collect in rent? Is our stock sustainable?

**Investment Planning:** How do we develop a long term costed plan for the repair and maintenance of our stock?

Data on all current housing stock was input to help develop the Model. Following a period of data cleansing and refining, our housing data can now be more easily interrogated in order to identify areas for investment and support assessments on viability. Interrogation will be on-going and will inform the yearly reviews of the Housing Asset Plan.

The process of developing and maintaining the Housing Asset Management Model will continue to require a significant investment of officer time; and it will now be routinely maintained to ensure that the associated Housing Asset Plan takes account of yearly changes in housing stock. The method of collecting information on the housing stock for updating the asset management model will move to the new NEC Asset Management Module in mid-2026. Further refinement of the Asset Management Model will be carried out after this date.

The Housing Asset Management Plan and associated HRA 30 Year Business Plan has been developed to support delivery of the Local Housing Strategy. The Housing Asset Plan, and HRA 30 Year Business Plan, will be presented to Council for approval in October 2025.

**Undertake a review of Council house repairs and housing improvements to secure improved performance.**

Considerable challenge exists as a result of their not being a single system in place to track all housing repairs and housing improvements. As a result, a new NEC module was commissioned to address this gap.

The Housing NEC system is a comprehensive and flexible Housing Management platform designed to provide a 360° view of customers and assets. It drives automation across housing management, repairs, and asset management, supporting safe communities and ensuring compliance.

The NEC system is being implemented to streamline the housing management process, particularly in reducing void periods and improving the efficiency of housing repairs and asset management.

The system is expected to bring significant improvements in the management of housing stock, including reducing the length of time to relet a property and addressing the high number of voids. The system aims to replace the current reliance on multiple spreadsheets, which often contain conflicting data, and improve the overall efficiency and accuracy of housing management. Officers continue to prepare for the roll out of the new module and anticipate it being fully operational by mid-2026.

**Prepare an implementation plan for the implications of the Housing (Cladding Remediation) (Scotland) Act 2024 enacted earlier this year and potential adjustments to devolved legislation/guidance arising from the Grenfell enquiry recommendations.**

Work is progressing, in partnership with Scottish Government, on single building assessments and officers remain ready to respond to the outcome of those assessments and of published finalised recommendations.

**Reduce energy consumption across the full council estate by 0.5% through implementation of the Local Housing Energy Efficiency Strategy.**

The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and associated delivery plan was agreed at the meeting of the Net Zero and Environment Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2025. The Council has identified four main priorities for the LHEES: Priority A: Heat network development Priority B: Building level decarbonisation Priority C: Improving building energy efficiency Priority D: Alleviating fuel poverty, with the objective aim of reducing energy consumption across the full Council estate by 0.5% and consequently reducing GHG emissions with the scope of the local authority and contributing the Council Climate Change Plan.

**Commission a review of the commercial estate to better reflect current market conditions and determine investment / disinvestment opportunities, subject to availability of specialist resource**

Work is currently being undertaken with colleagues from People and Citizens Services in order to address a skills shortages that are hampering progress in this area. Work is currently being undertaken with colleagues from People and Citizens Services to address a skills shortage that are hampering progress in this area.

**Prepare an implementation plan for the implications of the anticipated Net Zero Standard for Social Housing.**

Inspections against current standards currently sit at over 90%, and officers remain ready to respond to the new standards once published.

## Service Standards – Corporate Landlord Cluster

Service Standard	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
We will work to ensure that our public buildings, which have been awarded a dispensation, meet accessibility requirements under the Equality Act 2010.		82.9%	82%
We will work to ensure that our public buildings achieve a condition rating of C or better.		91.3%	90%
We will work to ensure that our buildings achieve a suitability rating of C or better.		76.5%	75%
We will work to ensure minimal disruption to schools and ELC provisions due to building defects/extreme weather.		23 half days	50 half days
We will work towards school occupancy at 80%-95% for primary schools ( average)		84%	80-95%
We will work towards school occupancy at 80%-95% for secondary schools ( average)		99%	
We will complete statutory maintenance works on public buildings in accordance with the legal duties.		100%	100%
We will complete statutory maintenance works on council houses in accordance with the legal duties.		100%	100%
We will make good or make safe emergency daytime housing repairs within 4 hrs.		3.8 hours (YTD)	4.1 hours
We will complete non-emergency housing repairs within 5 working days.		7.4 days (YTD)	8.3 days
We will complete repairs right first time.		91.5%	90%
We will complete housing repairs pre-inspections within 20 days.		96% 2024/25 (YTD)	100%

(Catering) All meals served to children and young people in our schools will meet The Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2020		100%	100%
Emergency cleans within 4 working hours – all response	132/138	95.7%	100%
Emergency cleans within 4 working hours – Voids	560/655	85.5%	100%
We will respond to fly tipping alerts at multi-storey blocks within 60 working hours	247/259	95.4%	100%
We will deliver 39 weeks contracted school cleaning to the standards set in our generic specification		100%	100%
We will deliver cleaning services within all (non-school) operational properties to the standards set in our generic specification		100%	100%
We will provide janitorial support to every (non 3Rs) primary school for a minimum of 4 hours per day when the school is open to pupils.		100%	100%
We will provide janitorial support to every (non 3Rs) secondary school between 07:00 and 18:00 on each day when the school is open to pupils.		100%	100%
We will assess mainstream school transport applications for children and young people who live more than 2 (primary) or 3 (secondary) miles from their local school within 1 calendar week, from date of receipt.	206/207	99.5%	100%
We will assess ASN/Exceptional Circumstances school transport applications within 1 calendar week, from date of receipt.	195/195	100%	100%
We will undertake spot checks on at least 50% of all school transport contracts over the course of the Academic year.	73/123	59.3%	50%
We will review and respond to local bus service registration changes within the prescribed 28-day period.	22/23	95.6%	100%

# Corporate Services Function

The Corporate Services function is essential for the council to reach its strategic objectives by giving the required support and infrastructure that allows data driven decisions to support the political direction set by elected members. The Function offers various support services to the council that help it to perform its duties in providing high quality services to citizens and staff while also managing the financial and regulatory risks involved, by ensuring that there is effective co-ordination of effort across the clusters by managing and coordinating corporate activities.

Delivery is focused on the effective governance of the Council. Clusters within the Function enable those across City Regeneration & Environment and Families & Communities, to comply with processes put in place to ensure compliance with a range of statutory duties. These include, but are not limited to, compliance with financial and procurement regulations, duties to secure best value and employment law.

The Function also has a key role in enabling both City Regeneration & Environment and Families and Communities through the provision of data insights to support the shaping of services and digital and technology to enable the Council to deliver modern services. It brings together engagement activities, diversity & inclusion, ease of contact and assurance led transactional services for staff and citizens, with the focus on digital transformation, skills and platforms underpinning all of these.

## High Level Priorities

- Corporate Governance & Democracy
- Risk and Resilience
- Enforcement and Protective Services
- Increase the value of community benefits, including employability benefits
- Use of digital technology to support the best possible customer experience
- A modern and effective school digital estate
- Support and develop staff and the organisation

- Improved efficiency and reduction in avoidable contact to increase focus on those with most need
- Reduce carbon emissions through travel to and within the city
- Support multi-agency efforts to increase benefits uptake and improve debt management
- Management of Council finances, including the Pension Fund, to meet statutory duties and enable service delivery in the context of diminishing resources
- Data management for insights and improvement



## HIGHLIGHTS



Successfully launched the **Responsible Retailers Charter** to tackle proxy sales of vapes & tobacco products



**18 AI pilots** were completed across 12 business areas delivering **total savings of 78,000 hours in resource**



**100% of data protection** related incidents received an initial response within 24 hours



Rapid delivery of the new Rent Assistance Fund **has supported 499 tenancies, providing over £483,000 in funding** to sustain existing tenants

## **Governance Cluster**

### **Role of the Cluster**

The Governance Cluster supports the organisation to manage its corporate governance activities, including democratic decision-making structures, legal compliance and systems of assurance; all of which are supporting the achievement of the LOIP outcomes.

### **Progress made during 2024/25**

**Deliver the Scheme of Governance review to reflect a revised organisational structure and the annual requirement to align with CIPFA principles of good governance.**

This was reported in August 2024, April 2025 and again in July 2025 with final changes to Standing Orders. The Scheme of Governance now reflects organisational structure.

**Support the organisation to plan for the demand from legislative changes and to reflect these within corporate policies, strategies and priorities.**

Governance has maintained its legislative tracking and horizon scanning activities since the previous update. The latest findings and proposed changes are communicated to the relevant Clusters, enabling policy, strategy, and priority owners to evaluate potential impacts and implement any necessary revisions.

**Continue review of Community Council governance into 2024.**

The Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils was approved by the Council and became operational prior to the commencement of the triennial elections for Community Councils in October 2024. The next review will commence in 2026 with a view to approval being obtained ahead of the Community Council elections in October 2027.

**Finalise and exercise emergency plans (National Power Outage Response Plan version 1.0 and CONTEST Delivery Plan).**

These plans are in draft form and not yet ready for testing. It is anticipated this will be completed during quarter 4.

**Enforcement of the requirements of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 in respect of pavement parking.**

All necessary systems and training were developed in advance to support the enforcement of pavement parking restrictions under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. This included configuration of enforcement software, statutory documentation, staff training, and coordination with relevant stakeholders. Formal enforcement commenced on 1 July 2024, following the completion of preparatory work. Since then, City Wardens have been actively enforcing the new legislation, issuing Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) to vehicles found in contravention of the pavement parking restrictions.

**Launch the Responsible Retailers Charter to tackle proxy sales of vapes and tobacco products and take account of the recent ban on single use vapes.**

This was successfully launched in 2024, with the majority of retailers within the Union Street area signing up, this is where the main issues are.

**Work towards transferring mortuary provision responsibilities to NHS to commence in the new North East Combined mortuary.**

As noted above, the construction phase of this project is, as yet, to be completed, with handover of the building to NHS Grampian due ( pending commissioning and equipment fit -out works) expected within this calendar year. As noted above, the construction phase of this project is, yet to be completed, with handover of the building to NHS Grampian due (pending commissioning and equipment fit -out works) expected within this calendar year. Protective Services management are in advanced discussions with NHSG around the transfer of responsibilities, and providing assurance to both the future operator, and the public, that this migration will be as seamless as if possible.

## Service Standards – Governance Cluster

Service Standard	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
We will acknowledge requests for review within 14 days (Local Review Body).		100%	100%
We will hear School Placing and Exclusion hearings within 28 days of request.		100%	100%
We will determine Civic License applications within 9 months of a valid application.		100%	100%
We will hold all hearings to determine a Premises License application or Variation application within 119 days of the last date for representations.		100%	100%
We will issue decision letters for alcohol applications within 7 days of Board meeting.		100%	100%
We will issue Personal Licenses within 28 days of date granted.		100%	100%
We will acknowledge Civic licensing complaints within 24 hours.		97%	100%
We will investigate Civic licensing complaints within 10 days.		100%	100%
We will visit 20% of all registered tobacco and nicotine vaping products retailers yearly to give business advice on compliance with legislation.	50/150 (tobacco) 60/180 (NVP)	33.3% (tobacco) 33.3% (NVP)	20%
We will undertake test purchasing of registered tobacco and nicotine vaping products in 10% of retailers yearly to test retailer compliance with age restrictions.	24/150 (tobacco) 36/180 (NVP)	16% (tobacco) 20% (NVP)	10%
We will respond to initial non-domestic noise nuisance requests within 5 days.		98.5%	100%
We will respond to high priority initial pest control requests within 2 days	833/848	98.2%	100%

We will respond to low priority initial pest control requests within 5 days	739/744	99.3%	100%
We will respond to initial public health requests within 2 days for high priority cases.	827/844	98.0%	100%
We will respond to dog fouling incident requests within 2 days and other dog incident requests within 5 days.	Dog fouling: 416/428	97.2%	100%
All scheduled food service premises inspections will be carried out on time.	105/105	100%	100%
Aberdeen Scientific Services Laboratories will examine/analyse and report food and environmental samples within specified turnaround times.	8,318 / 11,635	71.5%	80%
% of External Quality Assurance reported results that were satisfactory (Aberdeen Scientific Services Laboratory)	324/345	93.9%	95%

# Commercial & Procurement Cluster

## **Role of the Cluster**

The Commercial & Procurement cluster supports the Council and partner organisations to both commission and procure the best service / partner to deliver the identified outcomes within agreed budgets, as a result, the activity of the cluster impacts on all of the determinants of good health. Work extends to include the decommissioning and or/recommissioning of services, the development of commercial opportunities as well as activities focused on shaping the market.

## **Progress made during 2024/25**

### **Development of Commercial Opportunities, notably in this period on the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVIF) contract:**

Aberdeen City is a partner in the EVIF project which will support the expansion of a regional electric vehicle (EV) network in collaboration with Aberdeenshire, Highland, and Moray Councils. This initiative aligns with climate change commitments and aims to encourage the shift toward low-carbon transportation for the Council and its communities, in addition to generating an income stream for the Council. The contract award was announced on 30 May 2025.

### **Further development of assurance reporting in conjunction with colleagues in Data & Insights, Governance & Internal Audit**

PowerBI reporting has been developed to demonstrate procurement compliance at cluster level, compliance issues will be reported through the Risk Board as appropriate.

### **Updates and revisions to Procurement Guidance, training and templates**

A review was conducted across all procurement guidance, templates and training in response to updates to best practice and internal audit recommendations including a review of team procedures for Social Care Procurement including updates to the procurement process documents.

### **Go Award Scotland Finalists 2024**

The GO Awards Scotland set out to recognise the achievement and successes of procurement teams from all aspects of the public, private and third sector organisations. The Commercial & Procurement Shared Service team in conjunction with colleagues involved in projects submitted entries and were finalists

in the Procurement Team of the Year, Social Value (joint entry including Scarf and BP) and Procurement People of Tomorrow Categories for the event held on 24 October 2024. The team were highly commended in both the Social Value and Procurement Team of the Year Awards.

### Procurement & Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP) Assessment

In May 2024, the PCIP assessment evaluated 11 areas, assigning 'advanced practice' to five, 'good practice' to five, and 'improving' to one area. Key strengths, opportunities, and areas needing further improvement were identified. These will be considered by the Strategic Procurement Board for the three Councils supported under the collaboration agreement, with progress monitored accordingly.

### Community Benefit Outcomes

During the reporting period, 1062 Community Benefit outcomes were either planned, underway, or delivered across various themes. In 2024/25, 95% of contracts awarded by the Council included both Community Benefit outcomes and Fair Work Practices. Highlights include the creation of new employment and apprenticeship opportunities, 1442 hours of volunteering contributed to the local third sector, and £30,866 donated to local causes.

### Service Standards – Commercial and Procurement Cluster

Service Standard	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
We will ensure demand management is embedded for all revenue contracts above £50K at strategy stage and throughout the life of the contract to ensure that the quantity and specification of goods and services match, but do not exceed, the actual needs of the Council.		100.0%	100%
We will enable access to all internal procedural procurement information online.		100.0%	100%
We will publish annual contract pipelines for each financial year online after the Council Budget is set.		100.0%	100%
We will ensure that all contracts above £50K in value can be tracked to show community, local economic and environmental benefits.		100.0%	100%

We will ensure that all contracts above £50K have standard clauses to require providers to demonstrate commitments towards carbon reduction and efficiency.		100.0%	100%
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# Digital & Technology

## Role of the Cluster

The Digital & Technology cluster is an enabling service, providing Information Technology (IT) services that are secure, highly available, effective and efficient to enable the provision of customer focused services to the citizens, visitors and businesses of Aberdeen. The cluster provides core IT infrastructure, implements and supports line of business applications and delivers and supports End User Computing services. The cluster also provides business analysis and project management to support digital transformation for the Council and the wider city.

## Progress made during 2024/25

### Release new citizen platform with single identity.

New generative AI chatbot released. Citizen portal, contact centre and case management undergoing final testing before planned release.

### Release Educational Psychology and HR as part of the Dynamics365 developments to automate processes

Educational psychology released. HR inception phase completed with build underway. HR rescoped with approval via Finance and Resources committee on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2025. Expected completion January 2026.

### Complete AI pilots using Co-pilot technology and develop long term use cases to support delivery of TOM 1.2 and chatbot web services.

18 pilots completed across 12 business areas as part of the early access programme with a total saving of 78,000 hours identified. New AB-1 chatbot released based on Copilot Studio with an employee bot based on the same technology in scope for the HR project delivery. Copilot capability is being extended via project delivery with virtual training sessions and prompt-a-thons being held.

### Completion of 2 pilot schools in Q1 2024. Extend delivery to whole educator group completing in Q3 2024. Deliver the full upgrade plan for schools in the 24/25 programme including new high-capacity Wi-Fi, deployment of agreed 1:1 device allocation for learners and replacement active panels in classrooms.

Delivery rephased to accommodate testing and align with school requirements around exams. Only 2 academies remain to be completed, and these are scheduled for August/ September 2025 with a view that all schools will be transitioned by the end of October 25.

## Service Standards – Digital and Technology Cluster

Service Standards	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
We will resolve calls to the IT Service Desk right first time.	5,938/7,833	75.8%	70%
We will ensure critical systems are continuously available.		99.5%	99.5%
We will close Priority 1/2 incident calls within 4 working hours.	38/57 (P1 & 2 combined)	66.7%	99.5%
We will close Priority 3 incident calls within 3 working days.	18,586 / 23,483	79.1%	95%

### Context of performance vulnerabilities

#### Priority 1 and 2 incident calls

This indicator reflects the proportion of Priority 1 and 2 calls that are closed within the 70% of the target timescale. The current figures are influenced by several incidents linked to specific records, which have been responded to but not yet fully closed, affecting resolution times. It is also the case the number of incident calls had risen in 2024/25 from 14 to 57, placing additional pressures on handling teams. We are planning a review of our catalogue to better monitor and manage ongoing activities related to these incidents.

# People & Citizen Services Cluster

## **Role of the Cluster**

The People & Citizen Services cluster is responsible for supporting the delivery of the Target Operating Model by enabling, empowering and engaging staff to deliver the best service and outcomes for our citizens, communities, businesses and visitors to our city. The cluster provides vital front line, administration and support functions, fundamental to the effective delivery of services. The cluster actively improves outcomes for themes such as recovery of unpaid council debts, financial inclusion, people development, person centricity and engagement.

## **Progress made during 2024/25**

### **Develop talent pipelines to support internal career progression and development.**

The apprenticeship programme (Foundation Apprentice work placements, Modern Apprenticeships and Graduate Apprenticeships) has continued to be developed in line with new framework opportunities and organisational need. Working closely with the Employability Team we have continued to develop internships targeted at some of our harder to fill roles with a focus on groups with additional barriers to securing employment, including care experienced young people. Another successful cohort of Career Ready students completed their internship programme where our managers mentor students throughout the programme. Following a successful pilot of the ABZ Employability Pathway Programme, another cohort of young people has come through this programme also including a trial programme for ASN pupils, providing them with vital work experience and skills.

### **Use job families and worker styles to provide more tailored development and appropriate mandatory training.**

The focus of mandatory training by job family has so far been on Frontline Operations. Each mandatory training course is being reviewed to ensure the training is accessible for this job family as they may not have easy and ongoing access to a device to complete online training.

### **Utilise the 6 equalities working groups to shape an Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.**

Following approval of the new Equality Outcomes in March 2025, a Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan has been developed in collaboration with the equalities working groups and approved at Staff Governance Committee in August.

### **Build on our approaches to hybrid and flexible working through developing staff digital skills and use of technology.**

The Digital Super Champions programme continues to support developing digital skills and use of technology by helping employees develop digital skills and adapt to digital change.

**Implement the People Change Toolkit and build the capacity of leaders in change management.**

The ACC approach to leading people through change training has been rolled out.

We are currently working in partnership with colleagues in the Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership and NHS Grampian to look at opportunities for collaboration on this topic.

**Empower ACC 'coaches' to support peers to embed a culture of coaching at all levels across the organisation.**

The Leader and Manager as a Coach training has been delivered over 9 sessions during the period with 75 employees attending and we have sessions planned for the upcoming year. The training provides a coach approach to leadership and tools and techniques to successfully lead through coaching.

Our Aspiring Leader candidates have been allocated a coach to support them during their programme, and in addition, an internal 'coach bank' is in place where any employee can request a coach, to support their development. A plan is being developed to implement supervision for coaches, so support is available for them in their coach role on an ongoing basis.

A range of resources on coaching is available on Sharepoint as well as eLearning resources.

**Deliver targeted wellbeing support for male employees and those experiencing the menopause.**

A number of initiatives have been undertaken to date. This includes a major poster campaign targeting our frontline services, where we have a significant male workforce, to promote our Employee Assistance Programme and Counselling Service to ensure visibility and awareness. A Men's Health page has been developed on the Intranet to target initiatives directly to the male workforce with regular blogs posts and directed comms to this group of staff signposting initiatives like Men in Mind and Andy's Mans Club and directing staff to these external initiatives to support Men's Mental Health. Initiatives including prostatic cancer awareness are planned to be delivered over the coming months.

The Council has signed a Menopause pledge and continues to raise awareness across the organisation through comms campaigns including a Menopause campaign championed by our Chief Executive last October. A dedicated intranet page and Viva Engage channel providing peer support to women across the organisation continue to be popular tools to raise awareness and provide support to our employees.

**Modernisation of the Contact Centre and redesign of the supporting operating model, to maximise efficiency and support for those most vulnerable**

The new digital telecare alarm receiving technology went live on 28 July 2025 and the migration of over 13,000 telecare community alarms across Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray to the new alarm receiving centre (ARC) is now underway.

The development stage for the Contact Centre omni channel is nearing completion and we are preparing to launch this alongside a new operational delivery model which will improve how citizens interact with us.

Opportunities to expand the integrated access approach continue to be explored and also the 'life events' approach to accessing services, with supporting website content in development.

**Introduce an appeals service for Low Emission Zone (LEZ) and incorporation of pavement parking into the Penalty Charge Notice appeals process.**

An appeals service for LEZ went live on 01 June 24 and the appeals service for Pavement Parking went live on 01 July 2024.

**Deliver co-ordinated whole family early intervention and prevention services to increase benefits uptake and improve debt management.**

To support early intervention and improve financial outcomes for families, the Financial Inclusion Team has embedded the use of the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) across its service delivery. LIFT enables the team to identify households at risk of financial hardship by analysing welfare data and modelling the cumulative impact of policy changes. This intelligence has been used to proactively target support, particularly for families with children, by linking them to unclaimed benefits and tailored debt advice

**Review corporate debt processes to introduce more streamlined and effective early intervention processes to secure improved performance.**

During 2024/25 the corporate debt processes for Rent Arrears have been reviewed alongside Housing colleagues. During 2024/25 new processes have been introduced for low balance arrears and the process for debts passed to the Sheriff Officer has been reviewed.

In addition, the Rent Assistance Fund has been introduced. This new fund helped 499 tenancies sustain their tenancies with a value of £450,830 awarded.

## Service Standards – People and Citizen Services Cluster

Service Standard	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
We will deliver annual workforce planning meetings for each Cluster.		100%	100%
Continue our workforce commitment to connecting young people to a range of opportunities and supporting and developing them in their roles, including maintaining Young Person's Guarantee employer status.		Not applicable	Not applicable
We will complete evaluation panels upon receipt of all completed and verified documentation within 15 working days for each individual job, in relation to Job Evaluation.		96%	100%
We will make initial contact with redeployees within 3 working days of redeployment confirmation.		100%	100%
We will refresh our Employer, Service Provider, Education, Licensing Equality Outcomes every 4 years, and comply with requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and its Scottish Specific Duties		Not applicable	Not applicable
We will support council officers to complete comprehensive Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA) by turning around feedback within ten working days.		100%	100%
We will update our Gaelic Language Plan every 5 years, providing Monitoring Reports to the Gaelic Board on an annual basis. We will promote the GLP internally and externally in line with Scottish Government requirements.		Not applicable	Not applicable
We will update our British Sign Language Plan every 6 years and deliver the actions required by the Scottish Government		Not applicable	Not applicable
We will process all new housing benefit claims within 25 calendar days on average.	1,715 New Claims	14.9 days	25 days
We will process change of circumstances in relation to housing benefit claims within 12 calendar days on average.	13,066 Changes	6.1 days	12 days

We will process Crisis Grant applications within 2 working days.	16,789 Applications	99.0%	100%
We will pay the correct amount of housing benefit to customers.	14,781 claims and changes	97.3%	100%
We will process Community Care Grant applications within 15 working days.	3,337 applications	62.0%	100%
We will ensure that all people assessed as homeless are offered a financial assessment to check they are accessing all appropriate benefits.	1,294	100.0%	100%
We will ensure accurate Registration of all Births, Deaths and Marriages.	4,885/4,949 (calendar year 2024)	98.7%	100%
We will issue copy birth, death, marriage and civil partnership certificates within 7 days of the request being received.	3,446/3,527	97.7%	100%
We will answer 80% of Customer Contact Centre calls within 180 seconds.	632,226/802,088	78.8%	80%
We will respond to, and resolve, complaints within the prescribed timescales	1505/1801	83.6%	75.0%
We will respond to Freedom of Information Requests will the prescribed timescales	1382/1703	84.0%	85.0%

#### Context of performance vulnerabilities

##### Community Care Grant application processing

Resource constraints and application volumes have remained a challenge throughout 2024/25. Since the implementation of the Scottish Welfare Fund, demand for Community Care Grants has increased by 78% and demand for Crisis Grants by 186% however, staffing levels have remained the same.

Resource is prioritised towards Crisis Grant processing due to the higher volume of Crisis Grant applications and significant difference in processing timescales. Structural changes had been implemented from 1 September 2025 which should result in improved performance in 2025/26, but the service will continue to review other areas of work within the team to maximise performance.

# Finance Cluster

## **Role of the Cluster**

The Finance Cluster is central to our governance arrangements and is responsible for the financial planning, including the Medium Term Financial Strategy, monitoring and reporting of the Council budget. The Finance Cluster is central to our governance arrangements and is responsible for the financial planning, including the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, monitoring and reporting of the Council budget. The Cluster provides financial advice to officers and members and administers the North East Scotland Pension Fund.

## **Progress made during 2024/25**

### **Oversee revisions to the 2024/25 budget protocol for 2025/26 and ensure all deadlines are met**

The Budget protocol for 2025/26 was revised and agreed at Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2025, the deadlines set within this document were met this included the sign off of competent budgets for publication by Chief Officer Finance by 10am and the Chief Officer Governance issuing by noon on the last working day before the meeting.



## Service Standards – Finance Cluster

Service Standard	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
We will deliver all relevant statutory financial reporting and returns.	Statutory accounts, quarterly monitoring, budget preparation data and reports, tax and statutory returns - LFR, POBE and LGBF Returns	100%	100%
We will provide budget holder meetings across all Council service areas no less than once a quarter.	410/450 scheduled meetings	91%	100%
We will ensure that the treasury strategy is prepared and implemented annually to comply with statutory requirements and credit rating updated annually.	3 Treasury Strategy Reports & 1 Credit Rating Presentation	100%	100%
We will provide all LSE announcements in line with established timescales.	4 for Quarterly Financial Performance Reports, 2 for Unaudited and Audited Accounts Committee Reports, also MTFs, Council Budget and HRA Budget	100%	100%
We will process care income assessments within 40 days once all relevant information is received from Care Management.		70%	100%
We will pay creditor invoices within 30 days. ( full year)	155,517/168,630 sampled	92.2%	90.0%
We will ensure that 1% of the Council's annual revenue budget is subject to community budgeting. ( full year)	Fairer Aberdeen £1,490,245, Priority Neighbourhood Locality Planning £45,000, Environmental Improvements £324,032, Cost of Living Fund £1m 1% Target £4,606,740	62%	100%
We will send outstanding debt details to the Sheriff Officer no less than quarterly. (full year)		50%	100%

## Context of performance vulnerabilities

### Care Income Processing

Resource constraints and wider system development priorities remained a challenge throughout 2024/25. We have also had to use limited resource in order to meet wider demands on the team. Regular sprint development cycles should now allow us to leverage further functionality within D365 and streamline existing processes. We are looking to review other areas of work within the team and envisage an upgrade to our existing Finance solution early 2026, will also deliver efficiencies.

### Community Budgeting

The financial conditions in which ACC's budget was set remained challenging as continued resource constraint, settlement conditions and funding targeted on specific projects / priorities meant that less money was available to fund the core Council operations that it had in place therefore less money was available for Community Budgeting activities. These pressures remain in 2025/26, which we will review as part of the 2026/27 budget process and explore using existing funding for Community Budgeting activities.

### Forwarding of outstanding debt details

The Transactions Income team have been working extensively with other services on internal recovery prior to escalation by moving to debts owed to Sherriff Officers. Resource constraint have impacted the delivery, and this remains a pressure within 2025/26. Regular monitoring reporting is undertaken, and the development of AI tools should assist with moving debt to Sherrif Officers for each quarter.

## Data Insights (HDRCA) Cluster

### **Role of the Cluster**

The Data Insights (HDRCA) cluster is responsible for enabling the organisation to identify social, economic and digital trends; how these will impact the city in the future; and how those needs can be met through stronger partnership working. At an instructional level, this cluster is responsible enabling understanding of why people use our services, how they access our services and analysing information to understand the impact of the service. The cluster has a role in identifying outcomes which will reduce demand for services across the Council.

### **Progress made during 2024/25**

#### **Expand the use of the Council's Central Data Platform to improve speed and quality of insights to support policy making.**

The Council has moved key datasets to an upgraded Microsoft Fabric and, through this, has invested in training and resources to enable expanded and rapid deployment as a Central Data Platform. This is an important element of a modern organisation, allowing effective use of data to inform and drive decision making at all levels.

#### **Operationalise Master Data Management to enable greater understanding of individual needs and inform targeted and preventative services.**

The Cluster has upgraded servers within ACC Azure domain, rewritten the coding to enable Multiview MDM upgraded version to consume the data from our source systems. This has enabled readiness to connect the system data streams from source systems and test output within our new Fabric environment.

#### **Work with local and national partners to promote and enable the effective sharing of data across organisational boundaries.**

Officers have continued to manage essential, safe and ethical data sharing through its strong information governance arrangements. We are also pioneering data sharing and matching, for example on issues of poverty, housing and health, with local and national partners to better understand the needs of citizens and communities.

#### **Leverage the resources of the Health Determinants Research Collaboration Aberdeen to support understanding of the drivers of demand, the effectiveness of interventions and the evaluation of public services.**

Good progress continues to be made by the impact of the Health Determinants Research Collaboration Aberdeen (HDRCA). Demonstrable change is evident in how the Council engages with the wider determinants of health and the use of research and evidence more broadly. The Council's organisational structure, strategies, multi-agency Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), Delivery Plan, job profiles, and staff development are now directly shaped by the social determinants of health and relevant research.

The HDRCA have led the revision of the Council's Strategy Framework, aligned its activities to the implementation of that Framework, and supported the development of the first strategies through this approach, beginning with the Local Housing Strategy.

There has been significant involvement in the refresh of the LOIP from support in public engagement, through synthesis of evidence of what works, to the role of Embedded Researchers within each Outcome Improvement Group as well as the Council's Strategy Board.

Additional resources have been added to support further research culture change and skills knowledge sharing which has helped the visibility of the HDRCA through multiple conferences, seminars, masterclasses, a Collaboration Hub, PhD projects and training opportunities.

HDRCA has also been central in the city's participation in the "Collaboration for Health Equity in Scotland," along with The Institute of Health Equity at University College London and Public Health Scotland.

Collaboration with academic partners has continued to develop including through a 2 day "Sandpit Event" to agree research priorities and associated funding opportunities. Additional successful funding the HDRCA has been involved in this year include: an NIHR Consortium on issues of maternal health; extension of Scottish Government Child Poverty Accelerator Fund monies to support the development of our "Low Income Family Tracker;" the Scottish Government funded "Fairer Futures Pathfinder." Further funding bids have been submitted and are pending decision.

Research priorities progressed this year include: a longitudinal study on Early Learning & Childcare; the integration of NHS patient level data and housing data; evidence reviews on the needs of asylum seekers; the options for debt cancellation; factors affecting substance use; the implementation of a whole system approach to obesity; and the use of financial incentives in behavioural change.

HDRCA has, in addition, further developed its online Health Inequalities Atlas.

## Service Standards – Data Insights (HDRCA) Cluster

Service Standard	Number completed in the year/appropriate measure	Percentage being completed at the Service Standard	Target
We will ensure reported data protection related incidents receive an initial response within 24 hours (weekdays).	320/320	100%	100%
We will make relevant and up to date data, information and insights permanently available to stakeholders through our online platforms.		100%	100%
We will provide school roll forecasts every two years.	Completed for 2024/25	100%	100%
We will schedule monthly data forums with Council colleagues and deliver data products in line with timeframes agreed by the Forums.		100%	100%

## Service Standards Summary

In 2024/25, the overwhelming majority of Service Standards were fully met, (69.4%) **against a background of increased rigour around the target expectations** placed upon Clusters and Services for these measures of performance. This is captured in detail within the [2024/25 Service Standards Report](#)

Of those Standards which showed risk vulnerability, (7.5%) these have been under the continuous scrutiny of the 'parent performance' Committees throughout the year and concerted efforts and actions have been made across the 12 month period to address and improve these outputs/outcomes. A further 30 Standards (22.6%) closely aligned with the targets, and risk levels set.

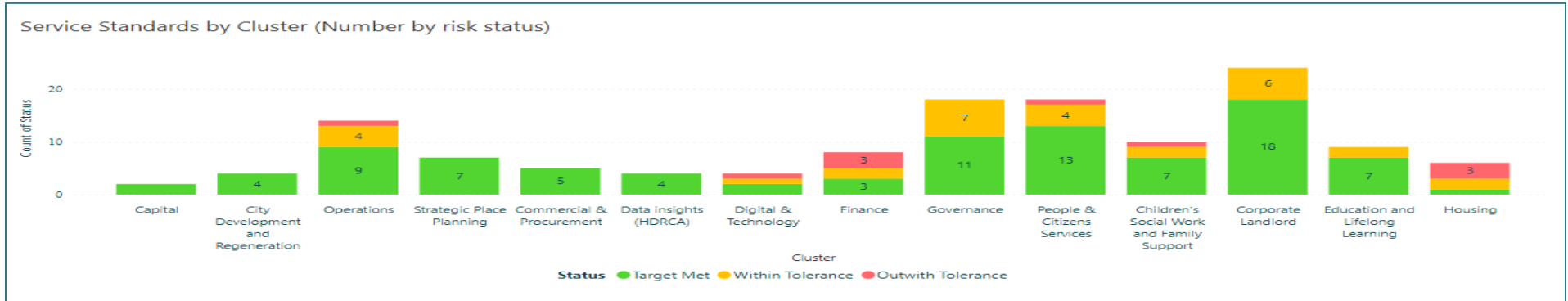
At the same time, it is acknowledged that the pace of improvement in those Standards that have performed less well, often against a background of a series of complex challenges, had not progressed at a rate that has lifted these closer to the expectations defined by the targets set within the 2024/25 Council Delivery Plan, which were in themselves designed to create a phase-shift in performance against particular measures where heightened vulnerability was identified.

However, as a practical time lag may occur between the application of improvement activity arising from 2024/25 Council Delivery Plan, and it effecting a positive change in outputs, it's important to recognise that incremental progress has been made against both these Standards, and in the overall achievement of targets in the period since the Plan was agreed.

The number of Standards which were met and within risk tolerances in combination was 124 out of a total of 134, equal to 92.5% of those measures set for the organisation in the 2024/25 year.

The graphics below offer an overview of the Council's Function, and Cluster level, Service Standards performance related to the Council Delivery Plan for 2024/25.

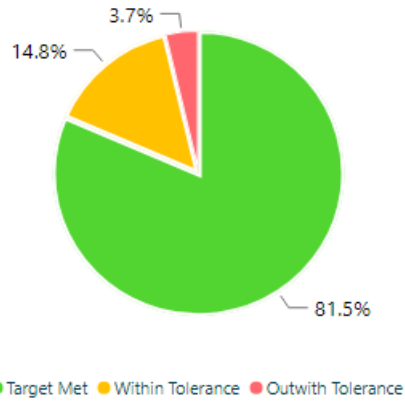
**Chart 1 – Service Standards by Cluster ( number by risk status)**



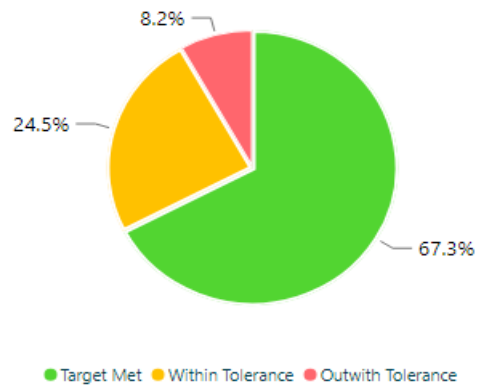
**Table 1: Service Standards by Cluster and risk status**

Function	Cluster	Target Met	Within tolerance	Outwith tolerance
<b>City Regeneration &amp; Environment</b>	City Development & Regeneration	4	0	0
	Capital	2	0	0
	Strategic Place Planning	7	0	0
	Operations	9	4	1
		22	4	1
<b>Families &amp; Communities</b>	Education and Lifelong Learning	7	2	0
	Children's Social Work & Family Support	7	2	1
	Housing	1	2	3
	Corporate Landlord	18	6	0
		33	12	4
<b>Corporate Services</b>	Governance	11	7	0
	Commercial & Procurement	5	0	0
	Finance	3	2	3
	People & Citizen Services	12	5	1
	Digital & Technology	2	1	1
	Data Insights HDRCA	4	0	0
		37	15	5

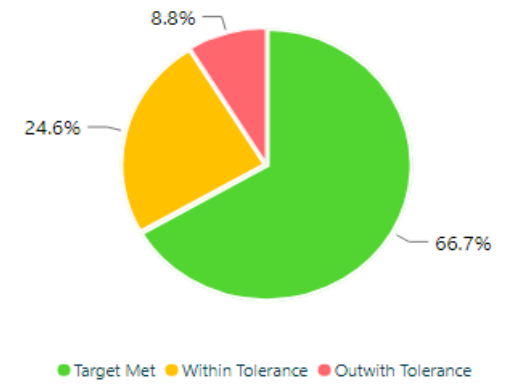
City Regeneration & Environment



Families & Communities



Corporate Services



**Chart 2. Number of Standards by Function, Status and % Met/Within Tolerance Combined**

