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## Education and Children's Services Improvement Report – Appendix A

### Aberdeen City 2017 Insight Briefing

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#### 1. PURPOSE OF BRIEFING

- 1.1. The purpose of this briefing is to update Committee of the most recent Aberdeen City attainment data in the Scottish Government senior phase (S4 to S6) national benchmarking tool, Insight.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. Note the information provided in this briefing

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. Overview

The Insight tool, created by the Scottish Government and its partners, has been developed to assist local authorities and secondary schools to analyse, compare and improve the performance of pupils in the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

The new tool went online in August 2014 and is updated twice a year - in September to reflect the performance of all pupils following the latest examination diet and in February to reflect the attainment and achievement of leavers.

It should be noted that the February Insight Update will continually impact and supersede any figures which are presented in advance of this Update.

The tool continues to encourage:

- engagement in school performance data to be available to a wider group of educational professionals in secondary schools including class teachers,
- professional reflection by comparing schools to a “virtual” comparator allowing users to see how the performance of their pupils compares to a similar group of pupils from across Scotland in each subject area or course,
- better alignment of data with the aims of CfE by measuring best achievement at point of exit and recognising wider achievement by including a range of SCQF credit-rated awards and learning programmes,
- a greater focus of the information on educational outcomes, including post-school destinations and attainment in literacy and numeracy

General information on Insight is available at <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/seniorphasebenchmarking>.

### 3.2. Benchmarking

The main focus of the Insight tool is to provide data on four key measures which go beyond the traditional numerical achievement of awards reported elsewhere.

The measures aim to provide understanding on:

1. **Improving Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy:** Reflects the importance placed on these crucial skills which unlock learning in all other areas of the curriculum and are therefore vital for success in learning, life and work in the modern world and workplace.
2. **Improving Attainment for All:** The overall aim, together with measure four, is to have pupils attain as highly as possible 'across the board' by considering the average tariff score of the top-attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and lowest-attaining 20% groups.
3. **Increasing Post-School Participation:** Positive destinations for our leavers are a vital measure of the success of CfE in our schools.
4. **Tackling Disadvantage by Improving the Attainment of Lower Attainers Relative to Higher Attainers:** The overall aim, together with measure two, is to have our pupils attain as highly as possible 'across the board' by considering attainment across deprivation deciles.

### 3.3 Performance Improvement in Schools

Insight aims to support the key principles and purposes of CfE by helping local authorities and schools to focus on understanding and reducing the gap between higher and lower attainers. Insight's key benchmarking features measure attainment at the point of exit from school which demonstrate the impact of effective programme routes through the senior phase.

The Virtual Comparator takes results from statistically similar pupils across Scotland.

For each pupil in the cohort of interest (e.g. S4 pupils in School A), 10 matching pupils are randomly selected without replacement from other local authorities based on four key characteristics which go into the makeup of an Authority or school:

- gender balance;
- staying-on rate;
- percentage of time spent in mainstream; and
- relative deprivation based upon the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

From these four characteristics, Insight matches ten pupils from around Scotland to every one pupil in Aberdeen City, or in the school in question, and treats this matched group as the Virtual School or Authority (Virtual Comparator).

It is worth noting that certain additional contexts need to be taken into account, such as presentation policies, senior phase models and localised intervention models, to form a comprehensive picture.

### 3.4 Insight Commentaries

Commentaries are provided in Insight to offer the teaching profession, schools and education authorities an indication of key comparisons which they may wish to drill into in more detail.

When a commentary is displayed for a comparison between a school/education authority and its national/virtual comparator this expresses that the difference is significant and that it is large enough to be considered of interest educationally.

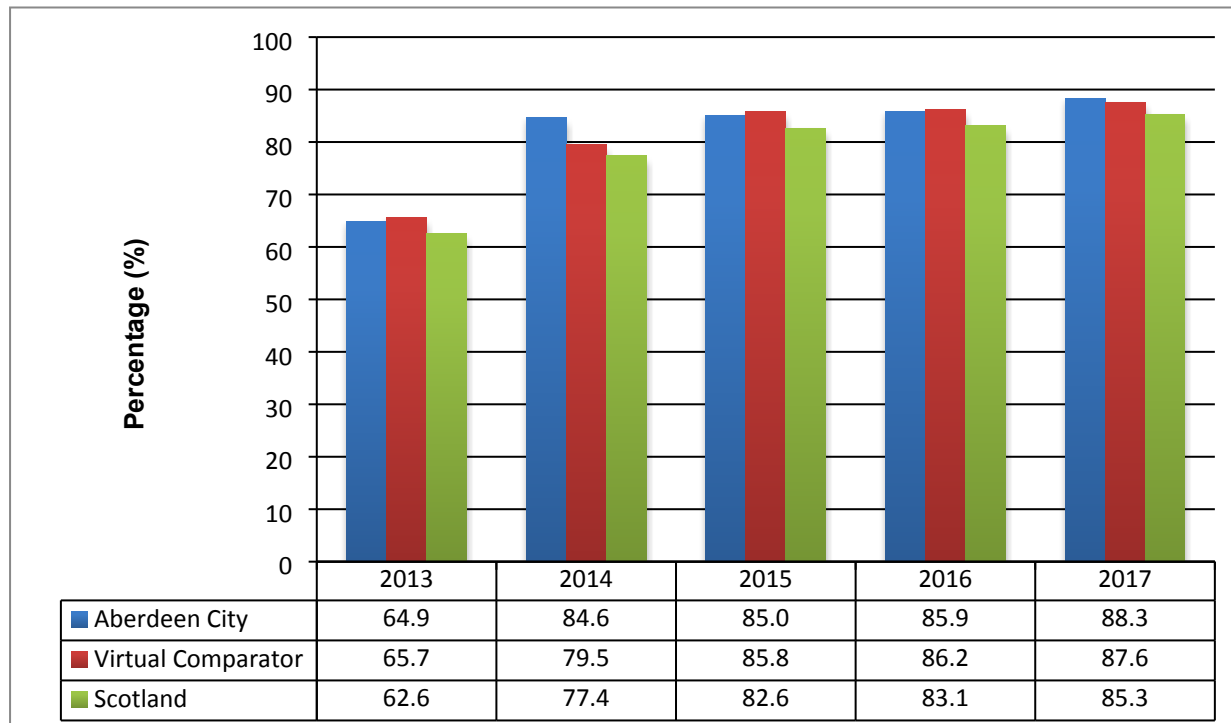
However, professional judgement, local knowledge and understanding of the context of each school/authority should also be taken into account.

This information, along with the historical comparison and cohort tracking taken from the detailed data is used to define and adjust Schools Improvement planning at both Directorate and establishment levels.

## 4. Improving attainment in Literacy and Numeracy

Number in the Cohort	2015	2016	2017
Aberdeen City	1696	1652	1577
Virtual Comparator	16960	16520	15770
Scotland	52297	51297	50336

**Figure 1: Improving Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy: Percentage of candidates attaining literacy and numeracy, SCQF Level 4, S4, 2013-2017**

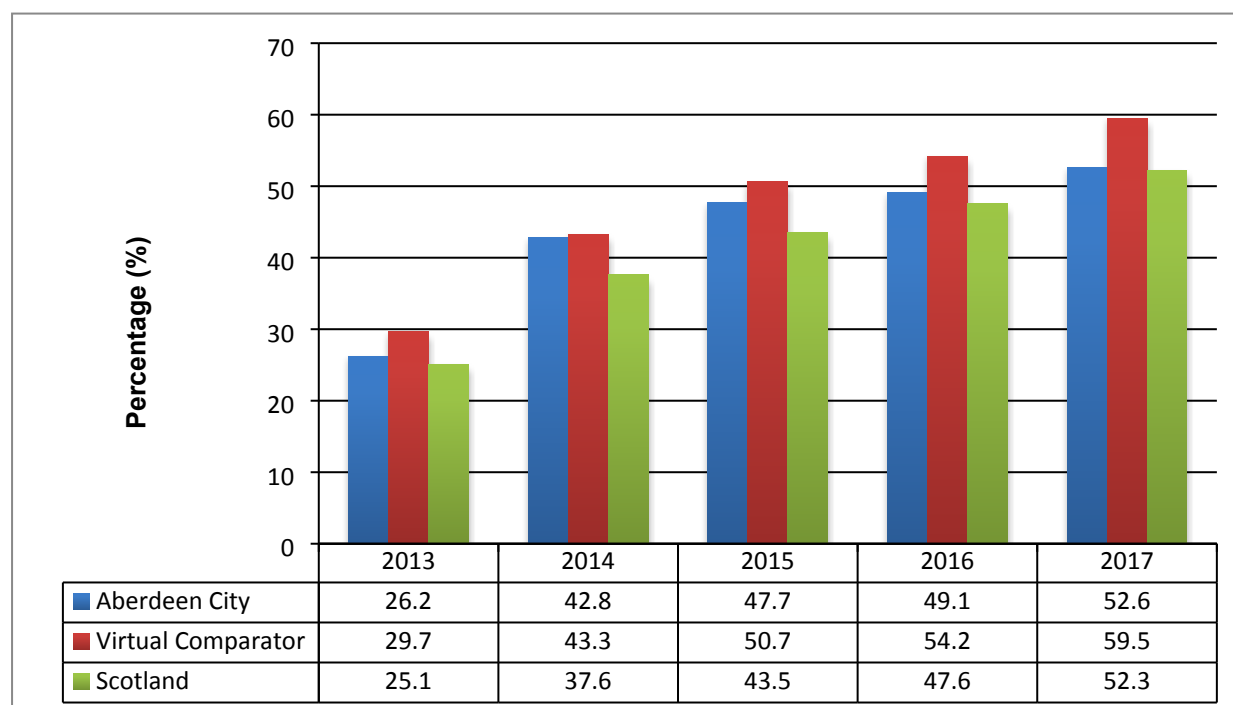


#### Data Commentary:

The percentage of S4 candidates attaining literacy and numeracy at SCQF Level 4 in 2017 rose significantly to 88.3%, which was higher than the National Establishment

figure and records an improvement rate in advance of both the National Establishment and Virtual Comparator.

**Figure 2: Improving attainment in literacy and numeracy: Percentage of candidates attaining literacy and numeracy, SCQF Level 5, S4, 2013-2017**



#### Data Commentary:

The percentage of S4 candidates attaining literacy and numeracy at SCQF Level 5 in 2017 rose significantly to 52.6%, which was higher than the National Establishment figure although the improvement rate was lower than the National Establishment and Virtual Comparator.

#### Section Narrative:

- (i) Development work on this area has been highlighted in the local authority's National Improvement Framework (NIF) Plan for 2017/2018. In partnership with secondary head teachers, an in-depth analysis of city wide data has taken place and a number of identified actions have been planned. With regards to improving, performance in literacy and numeracy, in particular at National 5, a number of key actions have been identified. These include:
  - consideration of the need for an City wide presentation policy;
  - the collation and sharing of identified good practice from quality assurance visits; and
  - specific development work with the numeracy and literacy network groups.
- (ii) Longer term improvement actions include local authority and Northern Alliance projects which are focused on development work in the Broad General Education (BGE).

## **5. Improving Attainment for All**

This measure allows us to examine how different cohorts are attaining in relation to the virtual and national cohorts.

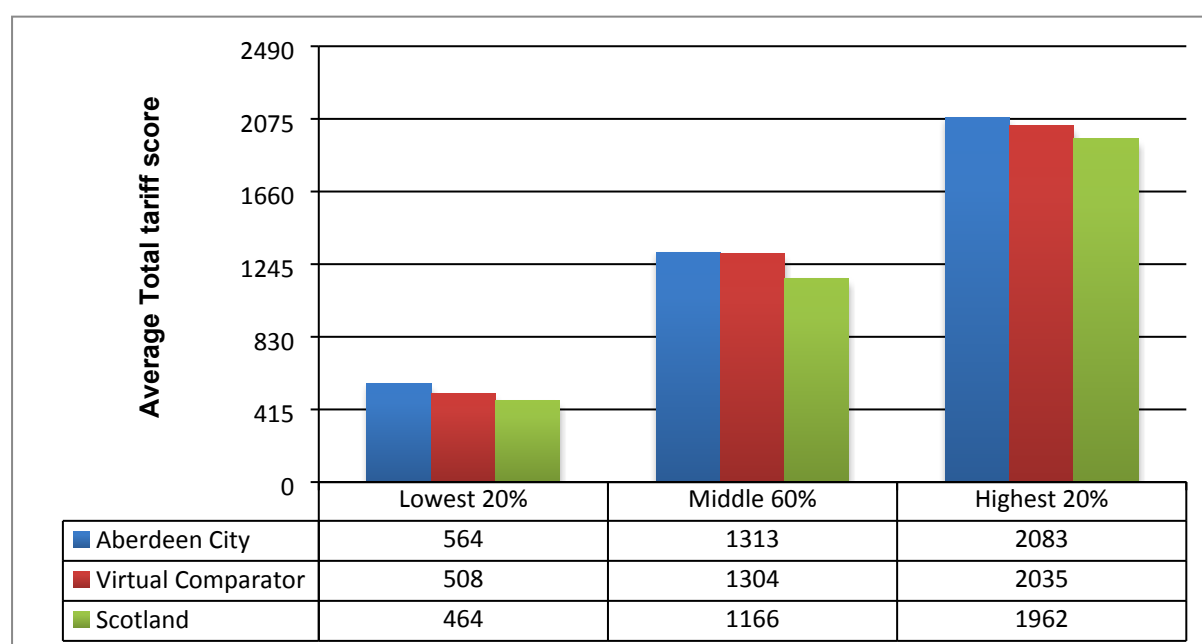
Attainment is measured using the tariff scale, developed for Insight, which allocates a specified number of points to each qualification (including units), with more demanding qualifications gaining more points than less demanding ones. Three ability cohorts are identified for the authority, its virtual equivalent and Scotland as a whole:

- those in the lowest 20% of tariff points scored;
- those in the top 20% of tariff points scored;
- and those that fall within the middle 60% of tariff points scored.

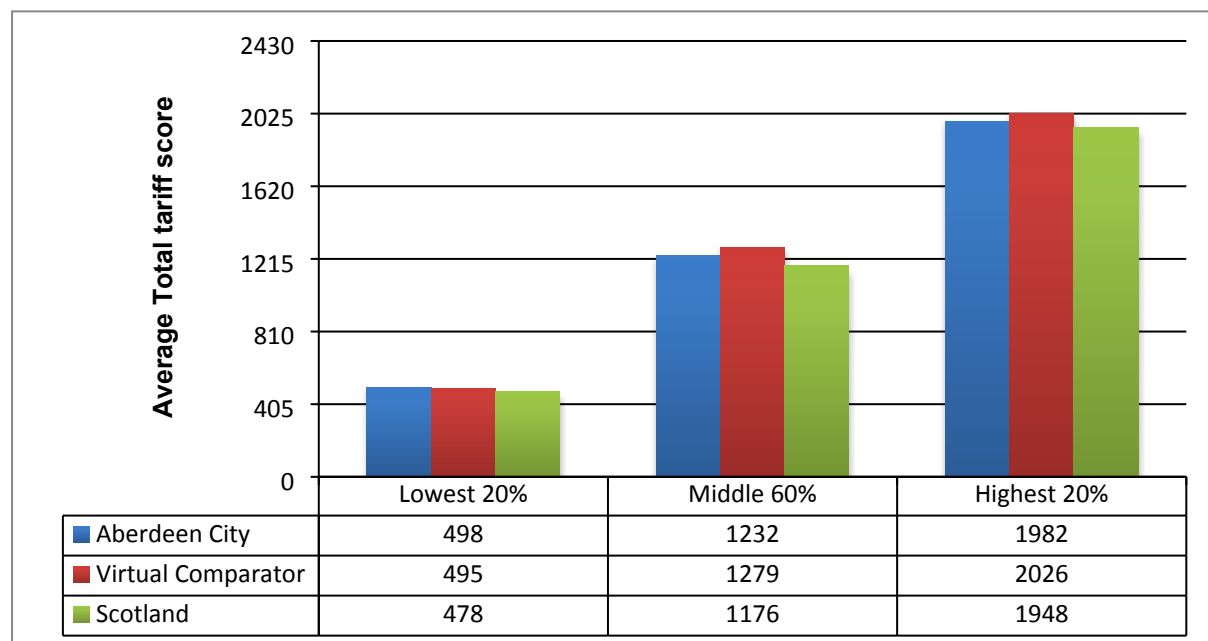
The function of using the S6 cohort exam performance as a measure is that it (a) allows for considering the cumulative attainment from S4 to S6, a core principle of Curriculum for Excellence and (b) falls in line with national comparative performance reporting frameworks.

Number in the Cohort	2015	2016	2017
Aberdeen City	858	950	909
Virtual Comparator	8580	9500	9090
Scotland	34258	34062	32759

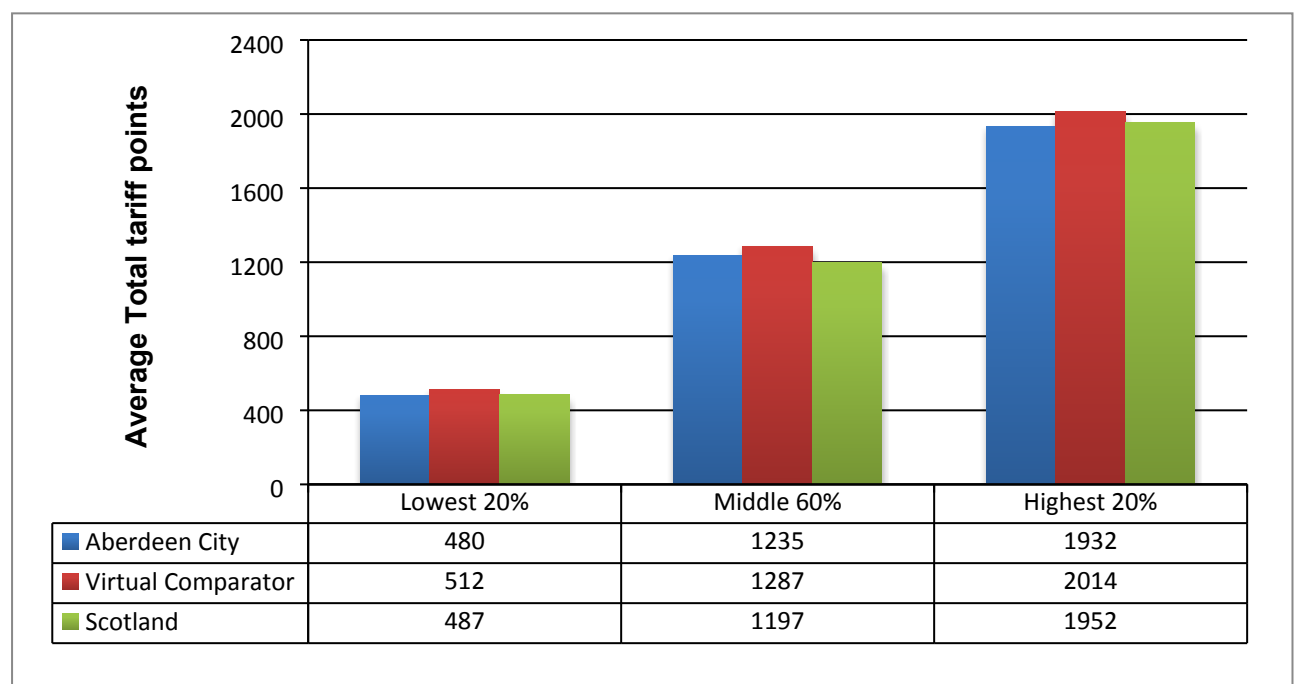
**Figure 3 : Improving attainment for all for S6 Cohort based on their cumulative attainment from S4 to S6, 2015**



**Figure 4: Improving attainment for all for S6 Cohort based on their cumulative attainment from S4 to S6, 2016**



**Figure 5: Improving attainment for all for S6 Cohort based on their cumulative attainment from S4 to S6, 2017**



#### Data Commentary:

The City's Average Total Tariff score for the Middle 60% and Highest 20% of pupil candidates was lower than the Virtual Comparator with the outcomes for all three groupings closely matching, or exceeding, the National Establishment figure.

## Attainment for All – Closing the Gap

### Performance of Lowest 20% relative to Highest 20%

The City's Average Tariff Score outcomes for both the lowest and highest 20% of candidates have experienced a reduction of 2.5% on 2016. However, this masks a significant\* closing of the Average Tariff Score gap between these two cohorts within the City. This sustains a continuous four year period over which the differential between the two cohorts, based on the new CfE measures, has recorded an improvement.

The attainment gap in 2017, based on this sub-measure, has narrowed by 2.2% in contrast to 1.9% for the Virtual Comparator and 0.3% for the National Establishment figure. Comparative change figures for 2015 to 2017 record the City having achieved an improvement of 4.4%, higher than the Virtual Comparator (1.6%), with the National data showing a positive change of just over than 2.0%

### Performance of Lowest 20% relative to Middle 60%

The City's Average Tariff Scores for the Middle 60% were largely static in 2017 resulting in a widening of the gap to the Lowest 20%. This trend pattern is repeated at the National level whilst the Virtual Comparator gap showed a marginal closing of the two cohort Tariff Scores. The three year pattern for the City parallels the national picture with the attainment gap between the Middle 60% and Lower 20% being largely static whilst the Virtual Comparator noted a reduction over the same period.

### Section Narrative:

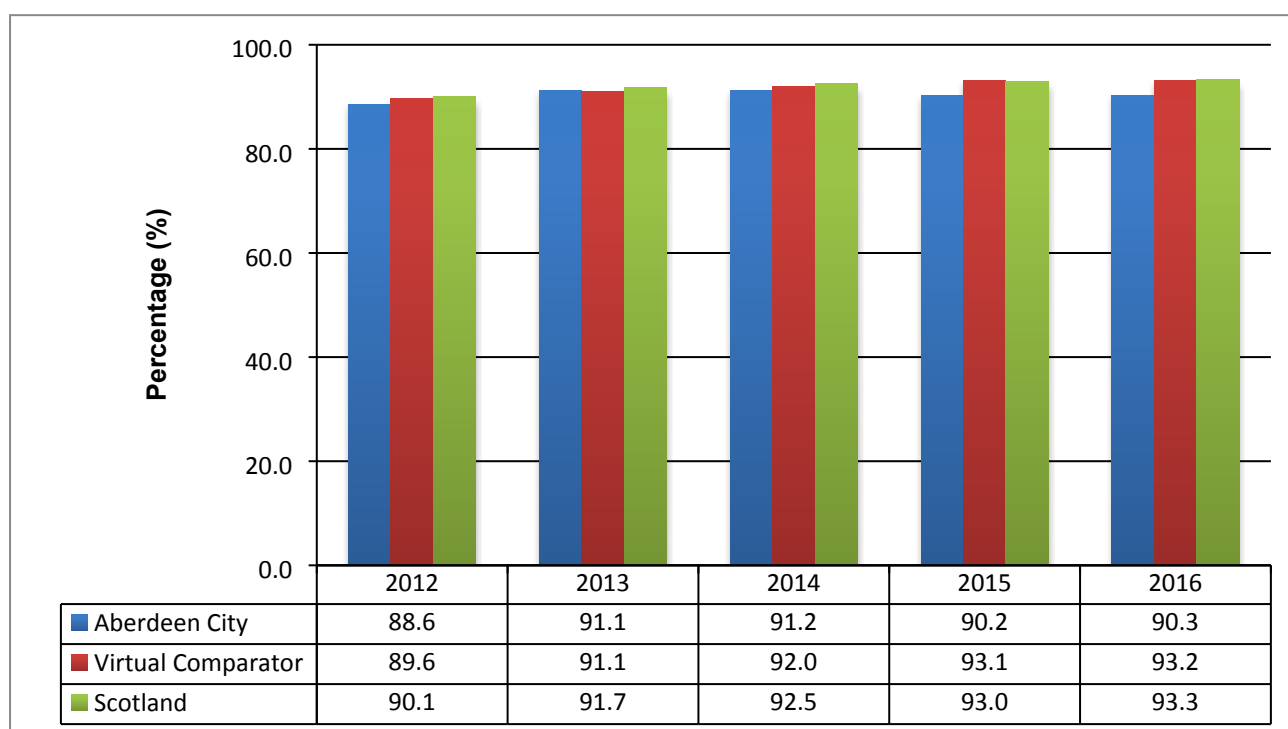
- (i) As previously noted, development work in this area has been highlighted within the local authority's NIF Plan 2017/2018 and an in-depth analysis of city wide data has resulted in the planning of a number of identified actions. With regards to improving performance for all, the following actions have been identified:
  - collation and sharing of good practice from quality assurance visits throughout the academic year, leading to a range of opportunities for collaborative working across schools;
  - formal review of curricular structures within our secondary schools, exploring the possibility of a common school week thus increasing opportunities for accessing a wider curriculum offer for our young people;
  - the creation of a vision of aspiration for all young people within Aberdeen City to be shared with schools;
  - review of the current network structure identifying areas of change which are required in order to raise attainment; and
  - development of a strategic approach to our work with all partners to ensure that appropriate pathways are developed which meet the requirements of

our schools.

## 6. Increasing Post-School Participation

Number in the Cohort	2015	2016	2017
Aberdeen City	1594	1619	1673
Virtual Comparator	15940	16190	16730
Scotland	51335	52433	52249

**Figure 6 : Percentage of school leavers in a positive destination**



### Data Commentary:

The City's initial destination outcome for school leavers from the 2016 academic year was static in comparison with 2015 and lower than both the National Establishment and Virtual Comparator.

### Section Narrative:

- (i) Data from the wider scoping Participation Measure, covering all 16-19 year olds, is presented in Appendices B and C within this Report and supersedes the previous official statistical publication of school leavers' participation (known as sustained destinations)
- (ii) The Achieving Outcome Group has developed a plan based on the outcomes set out in the Integrated Children's Plan 2017/2020. The group has identified key projects that will be taken forward, focussing on



targeting key indicators agreed with Community Planning Partnerships and Local Outcome Improvement Plans. These include:

- Development of an enhanced transition programme to college for Care Experienced Young People and vulnerable learners with a focus on developing their aspirations prior to starting college to ensure they have an appropriate course choice;
- Support programme for young people with Additional Support Needs, with a focus on skills for living, learning and work and ensuring the quality of destination;
- extended work placements for the most vulnerable young people; and
- an Activity Agreement Award developed in partnership with young people and local business to recognise the complex and subtle skills young people have developed through the activity agreement.

The projects listed will be developed and delivered in partnership with agencies across the city including Skills Development Scotland (SDS), the Foyer and North East Scotland College (NESCOT), the outcome will be to deliver a programme for young people to support their transition into a positive destination at each stage of 16-19, ultimately increasing the number of young people moving into a positive destination and reducing the barriers to positive destinations for the most vulnerable young people.

- (iii) The Achieving Outcome group have also agreed to develop a tracking tool for young people who have received Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), after they have moved onto to S4 or have left school the tracking tool will enable more accurate data gathering on the impact the PEF has made to the young person.

It is hoped that an individual school will be used to test this method and feedback into the group over the next academic year on the impact PEF has had on young people. The data will also provide guidance on transition planning and what improvements can be made to the process in individual schools.

- (iv) As part of the Quality Assurance Calendar for schools, a Head Teacher event is being planned for February 2018, focussing on improving positive destinations and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW). This is being planned with partners, and will include head teachers from all sectors.

The projects outlined above will support the continued work and partnerships in place across the city including Career Ready, Keen4Work, Activity Agreements and the Youth Employment Activity Plan.

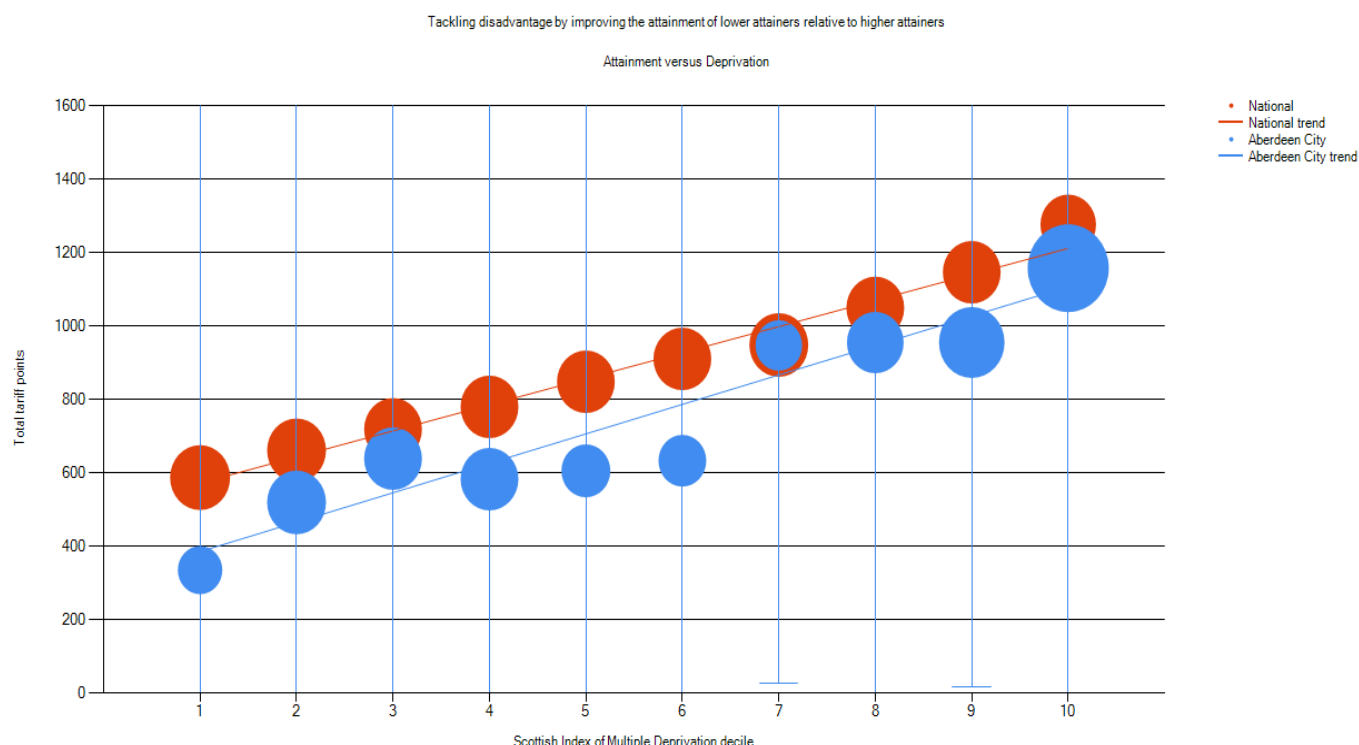
## 7. Tackling Disadvantage by Improving the Attainment of Lower Attainers Relative to Higher Attainers

Number in the Cohort	2015	2016	2017
Aberdeen City	1723	1795	1718
Virtual Comparator	17230	17950	17180
Scotland	55673	54632	52975

The following graphs display attainment (measured using the same tariff point scale as referred to in point 5) for Aberdeen City (blue shaded circles), its virtual comparator (grey) and nationally (red), broken down into ten deciles according to Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data.

Decile 1 refers to the attainment of young people with the home post codes within data zones identified as being the 10% most deprived in Scotland as defined by the seven SIMD measures of deprivation. Decile 10 refers to those young people with post codes in the top 10% of the least deprived datazones according to the SIMD. The size of the circle is an indicator of the group size in each decile.

**Figure 7: Attainment versus Deprivation for Aberdeen City and National, S6 cumulative, 2017**

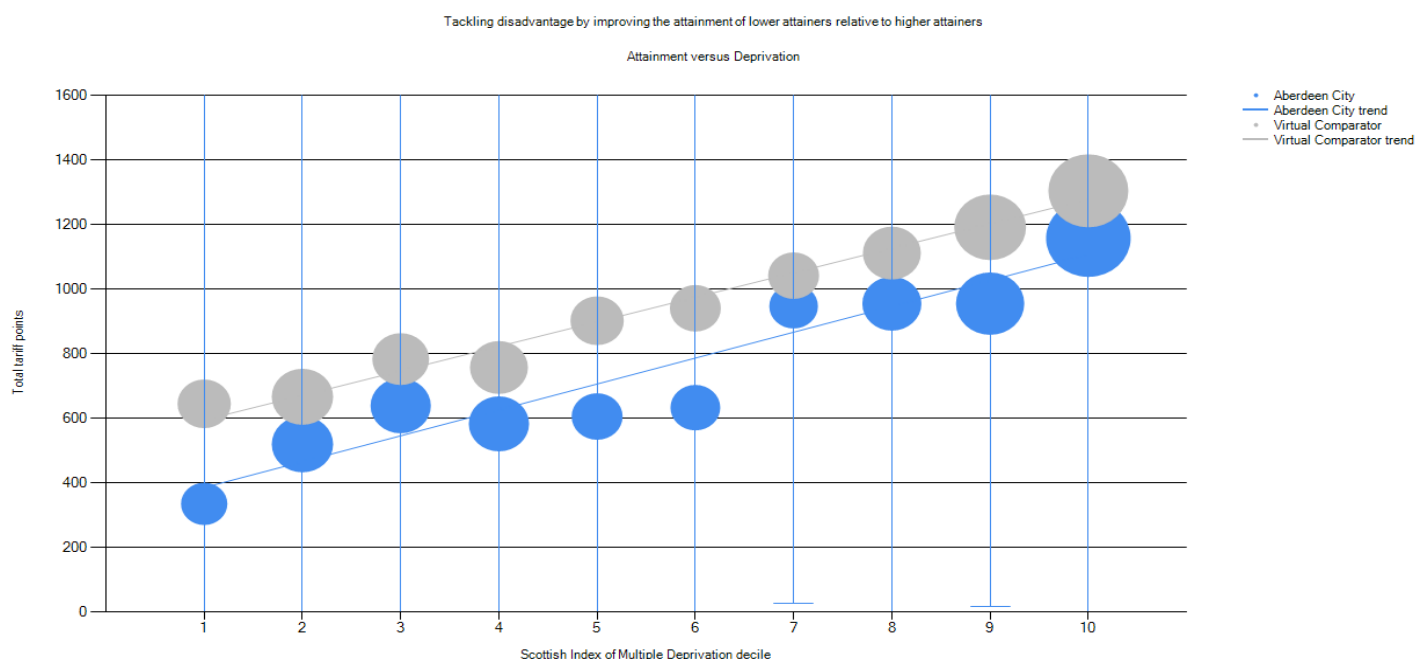


### Data Commentary:

In most instances, the City's outcomes closely match the national figures but with Deciles 1, 4, 5 and 6 being lower than the National Establishment in terms of Insight confidence level variance.

Publication, in January 2017, of the Scottish Local Government Benchmarking Framework Average Tariff Score data, providing inter-authority and quintile comparisons, and post service outcomes from Insight in February will offer additional context to this information, enabling a final and comprehensive analysis of relative outcomes.

**Figure 8: Attainment versus Deprivation for Aberdeen City and Virtual Comparator S6 cumulative, 2017**



### Data Commentary:

In most instances, the City's outcomes were statistically below the Virtual Comparator figures for 2017 but testing in Insight found that there were no significant variations for these measures.

### National Improvement Framework

The Scottish Government, in recognition that there is no single poverty-related metric available against attainment data that can measure the impact of the education system as a whole, is currently undertaking a consultation on National Improvement Framework proposals for measuring the poverty-related gap and milestones towards closing it which encompass 8 key measures and 17 sub-measures.

This suggests that, in the future, the Government intends that Average Tariff-Score based evaluations are to be supplanted by a more multi-textured approach to the benchmarking of attainment in the context of deprivation at local authority and regional level.

<https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/national-improvement-framework/measuring-the-attainment-gap/>

### Section Narrative:

In terms of closing the poverty related attainment gap, there are a number of key strategic work streams which are identified and which are documented within our NIF Plan 2017/2018. These include:

- professional development sessions with senior leadership teams on identifying the gap and setting clear measures and outcomes;
- cross service working to evaluate the impact of current interventions;
- ensuring that this is a consistent agenda item on all quality assurance visits to schools;
- developing strategic approaches ensuring that all our partners are upskilled in this area and the need for ensuring academic performance is a key priority in work with young people; and
- continued engagement with young people

In addition, we have currently 3 Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) secondary schools that have clear plans to address the poverty attainment gap. Our identified Quality Improvement Officer and Improvement Advisor work in partnership to ensure that interventions are being effectively implemented and impacting on performance.

Finally the strategic approach that we have taken with schools regarding the implementation of the pupil equity fund has resulted in all our schools having a clear focus on the poverty related attainment gap and the identification of a range of interventions to address this. The work related to this will be evaluated at year end and updated guidance will be sent to all schools.

## **8. BRIEFING SUMMARY**

When considered alongside the early release attainment data contained in the 2017 SQA Service Update and other measures contained within this Report, the performance, and outcomes, of the City's senior phase pupils against the majority of indicators of attainment and achievement is continuing to improve.

In some instances, (e.g. Average Tariff Scores), the improvement trend for this year has slowed in comparison with the national and virtual whilst in others, such as literacy and numeracy, the outcomes of the City's pupils show a sustained improvement over time and in comparison with the national picture in particular.

The Directorate is mindful of these trends and through the actions above, the strategic approaches outlined in the Excellence and Equity report to this Committee in June, (link attached below) and the Directorate Improvement Plan 2017-18, the Directorate will fully evaluate the influences behind this movement through ongoing data analysis.

At a regional level, in partnership with colleagues across the Northern Alliance, the Directorate will be working to facilitate the pooling of expertise and resource to support the Improving Attainment for All and Closing the Gap agendas which will see the development of a widened scope of benchmarking that will assist the City to evidence outcomes against our regional and local priorities.

## **9. AUTHOR DETAILS**

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