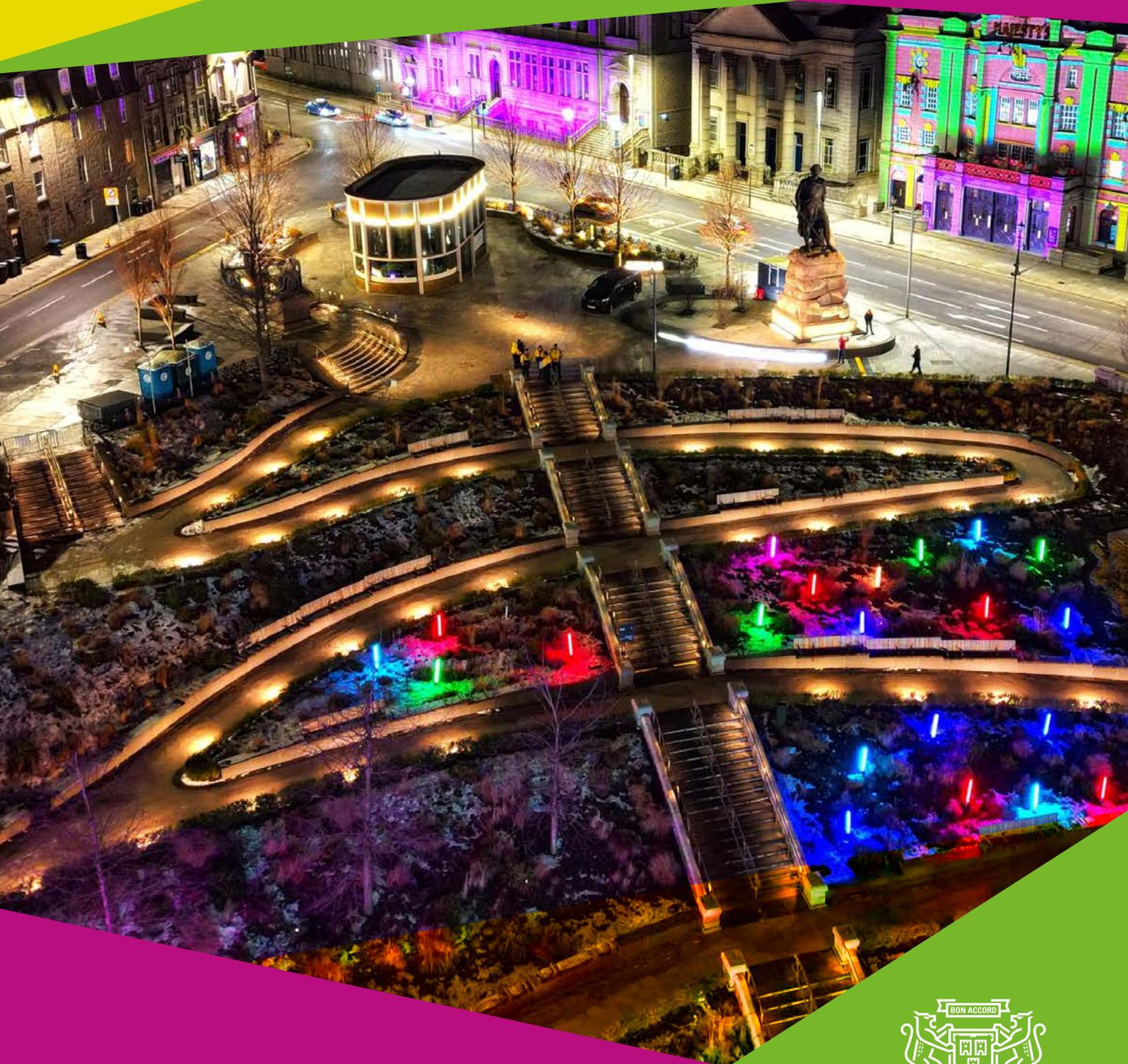


# Council Delivery Plan

ANNUAL REVIEW 2023/24



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# FOREWORD

This Annual Report provides an overview of progress made in implementing the Council Delivery Plan for 2023/24.

The report reflects the situation of Aberdeen as a city in on-going social and economic transition. A city which is well placed to manage the migration towards a low-carbon economy and is focused on diversifying its business sectors, but also one that is not isolated from national and international socio-economic impacts.

The legacy effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, through increased national and local analysis, are now better understood, and it is clear that these have increased poverty across the UK, (and by some measures, that experienced in the city), whilst the “cost of living”, although arguably rising at a slower pace, generates sustained pressures on many of our citizens, both those in employment and those not economically active. The city also faces the prospect of a declining and ageing population.

Local authorities, and the public sector in general, is also in a period of significant budgetary pressure and, in this environment, the Council Delivery Plan is one of the ways in which decision 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.

However, this report shows that the Council, together with the city’s communities and our partners, are working hard to mitigate the impacts of these influences, with early 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.

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 financial 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.



## PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT COMMITMENT UPDATES

A Partnership Agreement setting out commitments over the next 5 years was presented to Council on 18th May 2022. Its delivery will maximise opportunities from other policy drivers and programmes, as well as collaborating with external local and national partners. Progress made in 2023/24 is summarised below:

### A City of Opportunity

Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Ensure local education services identify young people with mental health problems and help them get early support and help, where appropriate, to transfer to adult services.	The transfer from child to adult services will be a priority for the Children's Services Plan 2023-26.	A working group of stakeholders has been established to look at strategies and approaches to enhance current arrangements.
Ensure the Council follows best practice as a corporate parent to get the best outcomes for looked-after young people, those in kinship care and those with additional support needs such as autism, developmental disorders or mental health problems.	Improving the outcomes for care experienced young people will continue to be a priority focus in the refreshed Children's Services Plan 2023-26. This will align to The Promise and the priorities identified in the existing Plan. Our Corporate Parenting improvement priorities will continue to be driven by our care experienced young people.	<p>The Promise continues to be at the centre of the work undertaken to improve outcomes for all children and those who are care experienced specifically. All central education staff have participated in the keeping the promise award training and this is being rolled out to schools this academic session.</p> <p>Progress against Plan 2021-2024 and our Corporate Parenting Plan will be presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee in November 2024.</p> <p>Community Learning and Development's (CLD) Family Learning &amp; Youth Work teams are working with Education Scotland/The Promise to shape &amp; deliver the Promise Award nationally for CLD practitioners.</p>

Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Continue to seek to support young people to receive care in Aberdeen, through fostering, adoption and other services and seek to reduce "out of authority" placements.	A reduction in the number of looked after children has been seen in all categories of care including out of authority placements. However, we recognise that further action is required to increase the proportion of looked after children placed in foster care. The support offer to kinship carers, developing an integrated Family Support Model, and utilisation of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund to enhance preventative and Early Intervention Approaches will continue to be moved forward at pace.	<p>We will continue to further reduce the proportion of looked after children placed in foster care with a particular focus on the number placed with independent fostering agencies. Working with the media team we are seeing an increase in the number of people interested in fostering with ACC. Assessing their capacity to undertake this role is actively being progressed as a priority.</p> <p>The support offer to kinship carers has been enhanced utilising the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund to strengthen preventative and early intervention approaches to support kinship placements. This has positively contributed to an increase in placement sustainability in kinship placements. This includes support from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and a much-enhanced offer from the 3rd Sector.</p>
Look to establish a school leavers fortnight – utilising the time between final exams and the end of the school year to offer pupils new experiences and help to build-up their life skills.	We will engage with young people to discuss potential approaches and understand what they would find most helpful.	Following consultation with young people there was no appetite to take this forward. Schools and the Employability team are currently progressing plans to better align work experience opportunities with growth sectors.
Build on the success of the Summer of Play, extending these learning experiences at least into school holidays, including the Spring and October holidays.	Committee report being presented to Education and Children's Services Committee in June 2023.	The 'In the City' programmes continue to be successful. A committee report was presented to Education and Children's Services in July 2024 to demonstrate the impact of the most recent programme.
We will actively work with partners to increase citywide delivery of music education, promoting excellence and enabling group performance.	Following a successful event at the end of 2022 planning is underway to extend the use of ensembles, etc.	The number of ensembles has been increased as has the number of opportunities for young people to perform as part of the music service and in partnership with others. The service continues to report progress through the annual Music report to the Education and Children's Services Committee every September.

A Vibrant City		
Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Establish a task force to identify disused and derelict land and buildings and help bring them back into use, including investigating the purchase and conversion of upper floors along Union Street.	Empty Shops Plan approved, and its implementation will be aligned to the work by Aberdeen Inspired on its Summit – both workstreams highlight conversion of upper floors on Union Street.	Work on delivering the Empty Shops Plan is continuing. The empty shops grant scheme was launched in July 2023, partners and stakeholders meet regularly to plan complementing activities. The vacancy rate fell from 25% to 19.5%. The Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) will end this year, after delivering significant levels of grant-based investment in the conservation-led regeneration of Union Street. Further investment will be targeted through a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund and Heritage Environment Scotland through the new Heritage & Place Programme.
Building a Greener & Sustainable City		
Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Support Aberdeen's continued pioneering of Hydrogen technologies and make the case to bring alternatively powered rail services to the City.	Ongoing delivery of H2 Plan, and this will include h2 power on other transport modes where appropriate, in consultation with NESTRANS. Support the delivery of bp Aberdeen H2 Power Ltd, the joint venture company owned by the Council and BP. Undertake further work on case for H2 powered rail.	ACC in partnership with NESTRANS and Aberdeenshire Council commissioned Arup to produce a Refuelling Report highlighting the opportunities for the Region in the Energy Transition Zone and the prospect of trimodal refuelling. ACC continued to work closely with our JV partner BP. The Final Investment Decision (FID) was approved by the BP Aberdeen H2Power Ltd board on the 15th of July, 2024. ACC have liaised with Transport Scotland regarding opportunities for H2 powered rail with ACC commissioning SNC Lavalin to produce the 'Hydrogen in Rail' Action Plan.

Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Protect and enhance Aberdeen's Green Belt, green spaces and open spaces so they can be enjoyed for purposes of leisure, sport and environmental wellbeing, and investigate the creation of new pocket parks.	The adoption of the new Aberdeen Local Development Plan includes policies protecting the Green Belt and designating space as Green Space Network all of which carry different forms of protection against development. In relation to Aberdeen's existing green spaces, they will continue to be maintained to a high standard within available resources.	The Aberdeen Open Space Audit: 2024 was approved at Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee on 11th June 2024. This Audit assesses green spaces, including parks, on their quality, accessibility and biodiversity value. The assessment also compares open space provision across wards within the city. This data will inform delivery of place-based outcomes in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and future revisions of the Natural Environment Strategy and Aberdeen Adapts. A review is currently ongoing of our Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), this includes looking at potential new sites. The Aberdeen Local Development Plan (LDP) 2023 was adopted on 19 June 2023. It includes policies protecting the Green Belt and designates space as Green Space Network and Urban Green Space; all of which carry differing levels of protection relating to development. The adopted Aberdeen Planning Guidance documents on 'Open Space and Green Infrastructure' and 'Food Growing' support the LDP in this area.

## Keeping Our City Moving

Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Creating a Road Safety Fund with an annual capital budget of at least £1 million to be used to make roads and pavements safer for pedestrians, cyclists, drivers and other road users and implement traffic management projects which improve road safety.	Scottish Government funding for “Cycling Walking Safer Streets” is expected to be £900k+ for 23/24. Roads Safety Infrastructure Fund also available for bids. Allowance still to be confirmed.	Total CWSR funding for 23/24 was £1,453,000 which was fully utilised to deliver a vast range of projects including, new and upgraded path network, dropped kerbs and footway protection. The Road Safety Improvement Fund was £255, 839 which was fully utilised to provide a junction improvement in Torry, implementation of route action plans, pedestrian safety interventions on George Street and upgrades to roundabout provisions on Wellington Road.
Cycle Hire Scheme.	Scheme now launched with over 3,000 trips taken to date which given the time of year is very encouraging.	In February 2024, the scheme operator ShareBike announced their intention to withdraw from the UK market, meaning that the cycle hire scheme in Aberdeen has ceased operations for now. Officers are currently looking at options for re-introducing the scheme.
Delivering an improved and safer junction at Shielhill.	Design work to progress facilitating land assembly, which when complete, will allow tender and construction to follow.	Council at their August 2024 meeting agreed to make a Compulsory Purchase Order to facilitate the construction of the project.

Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Reviewing our cycle and active transport network, and work with Aberdeen Cycle Forum to deliver our shared vision of making Aberdeen a cyclist friendly city and provide covered secure cycle storage in suitable locations across Aberdeen.	Work about to commence on an Active Travel Network plan for the City as part of a wider plan for the region and Shire in conjunction with NESTRANS.	In partnership with NESTRANS and Aberdeenshire Council, work has commenced on identifying an aspirational regional active travel network, with public and stakeholder consultation taking place in summer 2024. It is hoped that the network will be finalised in late 2024, with the projects identified developed into a prioritised list for the Council and partners to progress to feasibility, design and delivery stages, as resources allow.  In the meantime, various active travel projects continue to progress through the design and delivery process, with two noticeable examples being the delivery of segregated cycle infrastructure on South College Street (autumn 2023) and Craigshaw Drive (summer 2024).  Phase 1 of the implementation of safe and secure cycle parking facilities in dense residential areas was completed in 2023, with cycle shelters installed in the Seaton and Tillydrone areas. External funding has been secured from Cycling Scotland to deliver a second phase during 2024.  Quarterly meetings with the Aberdeen Cycle Forum and the Convenor and Vice Convenor of the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee have continued this year.
Delivering a revised Local Transport Strategy.	Work is ongoing completion expected in 23/24.	Draft Local Transport Strategy and associated documents reported to Net Zero, Environment and Transport (NZET) Committee in August 2023 and permission gained to take the documents out for public and stakeholder consultation. The Consultation ran from November 2023 to January 2024 and almost 550 responses were received. A report on the consultation and proposed next steps will be taken to the September 2024 NZET Committee.

## Homes for the Future

Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Repeal the guidance that exempts student accommodation developers from affordable housing contributions.	Complete as part of the new Local Development Plan.	Aberdeen Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing and Student Accommodation was agreed at Full Council in December 2023. Repealing the exemption was explored through the public consultation on these documents. However, following the consultation, it was concluded that a repeal was not appropriate, and the Council agreed to maintain the affordable housing exemption for student accommodation in its Guidance.
Review and clarify guidance for the council's buy-back scheme and look to expand the scope of what can be bought	Instruction to review policy was given at committee in January and will be considered in Spring 2023.	On 30th May, Corporate Landlord was instructed to pause any new applications under the Council House buy-back scheme (with the exclusion of any properties in Torry that may meet the requirements of RAAC affected tenants) and bring a report on the Acquisition and Disposal policy and buy-backs progress by November 2024.

## Empowering Communities

Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Double the budget for leased community centres and work with the management committees of these community centres to enhance the important services and activities they provide.	Ensure that development programmes being established by Management Committees are aligned with Locality and Community Plan outcomes and targeted to achieve maximum benefit.	The grant funding provided to leased Community Centre Associations has increased from the 2022/23 baseline of £11,065 by 65% to £18,309.56.

Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Work with communities to establish trusts, community enterprises, charities or other entities that support community empowerment and community wealth building.	Work with City Growth on the implementation of the approved community wealth building action plan.	Through the ABZWorks Development Fund, charities and social enterprises in the city have been supported to take forward activities that support community empowerment and community wealth building.  The funding has helped build capacity in these organisations to take forward future employability activity, supporting those furthest away from employment.  For example, Cairncry Community Centre has been funded to provide Confidence to Cook classes for local members of the community to gain knowledge and skills to help them better cope with the cost of living, through meal planning and learning how to cook healthily on a budget. The course has also led to participants gaining qualifications that will help with their future employability in the hospitality industry.
Support Inchgarth Community Centre with their extension plans.	£1.9m of Scottish Government Grant secured. During 2023 a design team will be appointed, detailed design work concluded with community and planning application will be submitted	At the end of concept design stage, the indicative costs provided to date indicated additional monies would be required to fully deliver the project. This budget uplift was approved at the September 2024 meeting of Finance and Resources. The expectation is construction works would commence in Spring 2025 and Practical Completion would be achieved in Spring 2026.

## An Active City

Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Install distance markers along popular walking and running routes across the city.	This is being taken forward as part of the review of the open space strategy and core paths plan.	Funding to progress this project is currently being sought.

## A Prosperous City

Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Seek to buy goods and services locally whenever possible, subject to complying with the law and public tendering requirements.	Progression of engagement events with local supply chains and providers through a dedicated supplier development programme.	The percentage of procurement spend on local enterprises is anticipated to be in excess of 35%. This is in line with the 2022/23 outcome which represented a fourth consecutive year of % spend above the national figure.

A Caring City		
Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Support the roll-out of further changing places toilets across the city.	Changing place facilities are considered in all new projects and condition and suitability projects.	This commitment was reflected within the content of the Capital Programme Delivery and Condition and Suitability reports to the September 2024 meeting of Finance and Resources Committee.
Support greater personalisation of care and consider whether it would be possible to implement policies to maintain quality of life of disabled citizens in our community and support the health and well-being of carers by providing support and respite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing implementation of revised Carers Strategy, including priorities in relation to enhancing the provision of advice and support for carers including the use of creative respite breaks through the Quarriers Respitality Bureau.</li> <li>Ongoing provision of Stay Well Stay Connected Programme focusing on inequality.</li> <li>Ongoing expansion of usage of Technology Enabled Care (TEC).</li> <li>Implementation Plan of the strategic review of Rehabilitation Services to be developed by April 2023.</li> <li>Analogue to Digital Technology Switchover to be progressed.</li> <li>Core Skills and Training Matrix to be developed for those working with people with complex needs by June 2023.</li> <li>Recommission provision of Pre-Paid Care for Self Directed Support Option 1 (Direct Payments) by July 2023.</li> <li>Health Checks to be offered to all Learning Disability Clients (+16) by October 2023.</li> <li>Transition Plan for Children with Disabilities moving into Adult Services to be implemented by November 2023.</li> <li>Review of provision of Advocacy Services by March 2024.</li> <li>Investment in specialist housing for people with complex care needs by March 2024.</li> </ul>	<p>The Annual Report on the implementation of the Carers Strategy went to IJB on 6th February. There has been a 21% increase in the total number of carers receiving support and during 2023 the Respitality Bureau were handling an average of 30 referrals per month.</p> <p>The Stay Well Stay Connected programme continues to deliver initiatives to combat social isolation including Men's Wellbeing Groups, Boogies in the Bar and Soup and Sannies in Seaton, Kincorth and Torry.</p> <p>Adult Social Work Care Management has adopted a 'TEC First' approach to assessing care and 2023/24 saw a 46% increase in the number of TEC packages from the previous year.</p> <p>The initial focus of the review of Rehabilitation Services was redesigning the Neuro Rehab pathway. This was concluded and implementation is progressing. Review of the other areas continues into 2024/25.</p> <p>A provider of the Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) has been identified. Switchover of alarm units is almost complete well ahead of the January 2026 deadline. A solution is still being pursued for group living establishments.</p> <p>A Core Skills and Training Matrix was developed and will be included in the Complex Care Framework and elements of the Supported Living Framework both due to be re-commissioned in 2024.</p> <p>The Pre-Payment Cards were successfully recommissioned. The contract was for 3 years with options to extend.</p>

Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
		<p>Nurse led pilots for Health Checks have been set up in the Vaccination and Wellbeing Hub and the Len Ironside Centre. A Project Board monitors the delivery of these overseen by the Scottish Governments Implementation Group.</p> <p>Lived Experience engagement was undertaken between May and July and draft guides: 'Parents and Carers Guide to Post-School Enhanced Transition Planning' and 'Professionals Guide to Post School Enhanced Transition Planning', were created to support parents/carers and schools with transitions planning. The full Transitions Plan was not completed in 2023/24 due to the lead officer moving on, however the work has now been picked back up again and should be completed within 2024/25.</p> <p>Advocacy services were reviewed and recommissioned and the new service commenced 1st October 2023.</p> <p>Investment for a new 8 unit development on the site of the former Stoneywood school was secured in January 2024. The specially designed, single occupancy units will be ready for occupation by Spring 2025.</p>
A City that Listens & Works		
Partnership Agreement Commitment	Key Milestones for 2023/24	Update on Milestone
Recognise that citizens and communities – rather than the City Council - are best placed to say what services they require and how these are provided and seek to give greater control over appropriate services and facilities to local communities.	Work to introduce Citizen Assemblies.	On 12 June the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee agreed to commission the Scottish Women's Budget Group to deliver a citizens' assembly approach on poverty and gender inequality. SWBG will use mixed method tools to explore the impact of poverty and gender inequality on women and families in Aberdeen and identify with participants solutions that could address these issues for individuals, families and the wider community. The findings will be reported in February/ March 2025.



## COMMISSIONING INTENTIONS

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As part of our commissioning cycle, the Council Delivery Plan sets out a series of commissioning intentions which define the contributions which the Council will make to the delivery of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, and which frame the ask of our commissioned services.

These commissioning intentions define the Council's contribution, from a single agency perspective. It should be noted that partners will also have single agency intentions to meet their obligations derived from the LOIP.

The Council Delivery Plan also shows measures for each of the commissioning intentions. This annual report highlights progress against many of these measures and up to date progress is shown against all of the LOIP and Council Delivery Plan measures in the Aberdeen Outcomes Framework which can be accessed at: <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/resources>

# ECONOMY

## KEY DRIVERS

- Supporting labour market to recover from impact of COVID-19 on employment
- Increasing the number of people in Aberdeen in sustained, fair work
- Promoting inclusive economic growth for our most disadvantaged communities
- Mitigating the causes of immediate and acute poverty
- Poverty affecting those with the protected characteristics and in specific communities
- Ensuring access for all employers to skilled labour
- Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people, families and groups



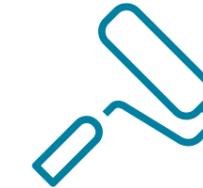
# ECONOMY HIGHLIGHTS



**224,663 visits** to Aberdeen Art Gallery, a **5% increase** on 2022/23



Number of vacant units on Union Street has **reduced by 21%** since September 2022



**57 more** Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships in Training compared to 2022/23



Hosted the **European Pipe Band Championships** which attracted around **10K of visitors** to the city

## PROGRESS MADE DURING 2023/24

### SUPPORT THE ATTRACTION OF VISITORS TO THE CITY AND INCREASE FOOTFALL

#### Aberdeen Arts Gallery & Museums (AAGM)

The AAGM Audience Development Plan delivered with VisitAberdeenshire (VA) and VisitScotland has seen AAGM included in the new South Harbour VA guide for cruise passengers, this also included AAGM presentations to Cruise Welcome Volunteers as part of their induction. Staff from AAGM also attended VisitScotland Connect travel trade expo at P&J Live in April 2023.

Staff worked with VA on their “Make a Day of It” campaigns in 2023/24, funded by UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), encouraging local people to discover something new or rediscover a long-forgotten gem, including the city’s award-winning cultural attractions.

Promotional focus for tourism has been major exhibitions in the art gallery, and permanent displays in all venues. This included AAGM developing a bookable offer for travel trade groups.

Major exhibitions included “Where Ideas are Born” from Magnum Photos; “A Quentin Blake Summer” illustrations for books and verse; “Constructed Narratives” celebrating 3 international but local artists’ careers; and the opening month of “Artist Rooms: Louise Bourgeois” from TATE. These shows, along with concerts, lecture series, family events and changes to smaller spaces attracted 224,663 visits to the gallery (5% increase on 2022/23).



Highlights of the activity programme include dementia friendly activities: Musical Memories and Our Aberdeen collection handling sessions supported by volunteers, visual description tours for visitors who have low vision led by curators, Baby Boogie disco sessions and a lunch-break concert programme where “pay as you feel” donations covered all performers’ fees. Evening concerts and special lectures were trialled and proved self-supporting with a small income; these will be developed further.

There has been a focus on social media and printed press. There is now a weekly page in the Evening Express with stories the city’s collection can tell, as well as the [events programme](#). The AAGM also had an undergraduate intern working with the team for the full academic year, which has allowed enhancement of the social media platforms including a TikTok account being launched, resulting in a rise in engagement.

TikTok followers rose from 23 in August shortly after the account was launched to 1182 in March 2024, with video “likes” in August below 100 to over 8000 by March. Monthly views average now between 4k - 19k per post. Followers and interactions are predominantly from the UK, with next highest South Korea and the United States.

Retail sales at AAGM increased 14% on prior year against a difficult trading backdrop for the sector. Success at the gallery was boosted by the popularity of the ‘A Quentin Blake Summer’ exhibition. The Maritime Museum shop opened toward the end of the period with an amended fit-out and new branding. Café business at AAGM increased by 20% on prior year under third-party operator Elixir. They continue to develop their local, seasonal offer and participate in initiatives such as Aberdeen Restaurant.

Venue hire business at AAGM venues grew by 58% year on year to £67k (£221k inc. catering). The value of evening hires was double that of daytime use. ACC used free hires to the value of £16k for high-level meetings and seminars.

An application to the UKSPF was successful in 2023/24, this funding will be used to review how methods of comms and marketing reach audiences, assess how audiences interact with what’s on offer and determine targets for audience acquisition. This will be delivered throughout 2024/25.

School visits have been slower post-covid, and secondary schools are particularly hard to attract, however collaboration with Education developed a lively and engaging programme with Northfield Academy supporting the transition of Primary 7 pupils to Northfield Academy, 173 pupils attended over 14 sessions at the Treasure Hub.

The Maritime Museum was closed for essential repairs over the winter period (October 2023 and February 2024) impacting on visitors and the ability to support curriculum-led visits, the Tolbooth Museum is currently closed until further notice whilst a comprehensive survey of the historic building is carried out, which will inform a programme of care and maintenance.

The Beach Ballroom and Civic Catering increased business by over 12% on prior year. External business growth was 21% while internal trade from ACC fell by 32%. Final turnover was £1.27m of which over £1.15m was from the private sector – a record high. Business initiatives included running the bars at the Highland Games to utilise internal resource and keep profit from the event within ACC. The Beach Ballroom was nominated for 4 events awards in 2023, including NE Wedding Venue of the Year at the Top Tier Awards and Best Unique Venue and Best Wedding Package at the Confetti Awards Scotland.

#### P&J Live

P&J Live hosted the 50th year of Offshore Europe, activating the entire venue, including the Sub-T level. Around 30k delegates attended, including c.4k from overseas. The event will return in 2025.

Entertainment highlights included Elton John, Pet Shop Boys, Lewis Capaldi, Deacon Blue, Madness, Busted, Andre Rieu, Arenacross, Harlem Globetrotters, Bill Bailey, Jack Whitehall, Jurassic Live, Bluey, Peter Pan and cult-favourite Bongo’s Bingo.

Exhibitions included Taste of Grampian, Your Wedding Exhibition, ComicConScotland, Floating Offshore Wind, and The Craft Spirit Show.

The teams at P&J Live and the Convention Bureau worked through the Ambassador Programme, a network of academics and professionals who volunteer their time to assist conference bids in specialist research areas. This secured and delivered major conferences linked to education and life sciences to the venue. Future bids won in this period include 10 between 2024 and 2027 with an economic impact of over £12m.

#### Support of Aberdeen Inspired 2021-2026 Business Plan

The council supported the cost of the city centre manager whose role is to act as the link between the council and other bodies and the businesses operating in the city centre. Through this support Aberdeen Inspired was able to achieve reaccreditation of the purple flag status.

A collaborative approach to events planning, delivery and communications is taken with any joint projects, with City Events and ACC Comms teams supporting as required e.g. Christmas Village. City Events provides operational support for projects such as NuArt and ABERDEEN letters. Aberdeen Inspired sit on the Event365 Group and the Local Organising Committee of Tall Ships Races Aberdeen 2025 to ensure that business opportunities are identified and maximised.



The 365 Event Working Group continued to work in collaboration on new events including the increased Christmas programme in Union Terrace Gardens and working toward Festival of the Sea in 2024 and the Tall Ships Races Aberdeen in 2025.



ACC awarded UKSPF funding to Aberdeen Inspired to commission a feasibility study on Union Street upper floors, which will look to benchmark the vacant space at upper levels, suggest alternative uses for this space, and identify the challenges and opportunities in activating these.

#### City Centre Masterplan

[An annual progress report](#) was reported to Council in August 2023, and another update was provided to Council [in August 2024](#). Projects such as Queen Street, the Aberdeen Market and elements of City Centre Streetscape are now reported regularly to Finance & Resources Committee as part of the Capital Programme.

#### Empty Shops Plan

Progress on the Empty Shops Action Plan was reported to Finance and Resources Committee in March 2024. Interventions under programme areas 'Distinctive Aberdeen', 'Culture and Heritage', 'Net Zero Union Street', 'Enterprising Union Street' and 'Enabling Delivery' are ongoing. City centre partners and stakeholders including Aberdeen Inspired, Our Union Street and Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce convene regularly to plan complementing activity which supports objectives and maximises impact without duplicating resource.

The Union Street Empty Shops Grant Scheme, launched in July 2023, supports internal renovation and reconfiguration works of vacant ground floor units to enable reoccupation. Ten applications have been approved to date with two more being considered at the September review panel. Through implementation of the Action Plan, partners' activity and the grant scheme, the number of vacant ground floor units on Union Street has decreased from 47 in September 2022 to 37 in May 2024. A further 9 of these 37 units are pending either planning consent, start of works or grant award.

#### Delivery of New Events to the City

New events in this period included the European Pipe Band Championships in Duthie Park which attracted around 10k visitors. Work commenced on Festival of the Sea, a precursor to the Tall Ships Races, to be delivered in July 2024. The Cruise in Company event in July 2023 saw 3 Tall Ships berth in Port of Aberdeen, including two of the largest in the fleet, enroute to Lerwick for the Shetland leg of the Tall Ships Races. A programme of events for the crew included a Civic Dinner, ceilidh at the Beach Ballroom and trips to local venues. Over 1000 members of the public visited the vessels on the quayside. The footprint of Aberdeen's Christmas Village was expanded to include Union Terrace Gardens which featured Christmas lighting and window displays as well as a weekend programme of choirs, brass bands and pipers. External funding was secured for the provision of the lights, alongside a 7m trailer stage and equipment to enable pop-up activity at events sites in future. The organisers of Mela were assisted by City Events and additional funding to move the festival to a larger site near to the beach.



#### Invest Aberdeen

ACC continues to support work by stakeholders to attract new inward investment to the city through various Strategies and Forums across the region:

Ongoing support of the delivery and rollout of the Regional Investment Tracker, led by Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC), which highlights a £16billion investment pipeline to 2033.

We are continuing to support the creation and Implementation of the refreshed Regional Economic Strategy, and we are working with regional partners on the proposed North East Scotland Investment Zone.

ACC also Lead the Regional Inward Investment Forum, which brings together stakeholders from across the region and nationally to deliver on our inward investment objectives, creating a 'Team Aberdeen' approach to enquiries and visits. We work closely with the Scottish Cities Alliance to promote inward investment opportunities in the region, including through representation at Cities Week, the UK's Real Estate and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) and by hosting Joining the Dots event in Aberdeen.

We are also working with Scottish Development International (SDI) to showcase inward investment opportunities in the region and continued ongoing partnership working with Aberdeenshire Council to boost inward investment across the region. The Invest Aberdeen website, materials and social media channels are under continued development to increase engagement.

#### SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

Delivery of the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) Employability Action Plan continues. This multi-year delivery plan sets out the priorities of the LEP including the key groups of people the partnership aims to target support towards as well as the membership and governance arrangements for the partnership. Activities and interventions delivered this year were aligned with the delivery plan and reporting took place quarterly into Aberdeen Prospers, the Outcome Improvement Group responsible for economy related stretch outcomes of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

Specific work around developing employment pathways in 2023/24 included an increased level of employer engagement activities, including the delivery of a series of events targeted at employers, with the content focusing each time on the benefits and support available when recruiting people with barriers for example young people, parents, disabled people and people with convictions. An employer recruitment incentive were also awarded to 11 employers this year who employed an individual facing barriers to employment. Working closely with colleagues in Aberdeen City Council's Education Service, the ABZCampus and ABZPipeline is also in development which explores pathways into key sectors for young people still at school.

#### Focus support towards groups (women, young people and people from ethnic minority backgrounds) that have been disproportionately disadvantaged by the pandemic and cost of living

In 2023/24 48% of participants registered with ABZWorks identified as female, representing almost half of all those supported. Within this group, further specialist interventions have been developed to offer targeted support for women who face additional barriers including parents within the priority families and parents experiencing in-work poverty as a means to tackle child poverty [note that provision for parents is available to parents of any gender, but the majority who engage tend to be women]. Activities have included specific commissioned service, paid work experience in early learning and childcare settings and funding to support lone parents to help with the costs of the transition into work.

Young people also represented a significant proportion of overall participants supported with 33% of those registered with the service aged 16-24. Specific activities aimed at young people included Fit Next, developed for school leavers in mind enabling them to attend 'taster' activities with a variety of training

providers and employers so they could make informed choices about their next steps, a commissioned test and learn project for young people and paid work experience for care experienced young people. A specific test and learn project was also commissioned for people from ethnic minorities and of all those registered this year, 17% identified as having a minority ethnic background.

Learning from the evaluation of the North East Economic Recovery and Skills Fund (NEERSF) has been considered when developing interventions to be delivered as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. One example of this is around promoting entrepreneurship, building on the success of a Start-up Accelerator delivered by the Robert Gordon University (RGU), two projects will be starting in year 2024/25 one being delivered by RGU and the second by the University of Aberdeen. Green skills is a further theme that featured in NEERSF and will be built upon through UKSPF projects with green skills activities being commissioned in sustainable energy management, sustainable waste managements, introduction to hydrogen and an introduction to green skills. Digital courses including sector specific IT skills and basic IT skills were also commissioned in 2023/24 and a paid work experience programme within health and social care was delivered to attract people into roles in this sector.

Aberdeen City Council continues to Chair the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) which was developed in alignment with the Scottish Government's framework for LEPs. The LEP membership is made up of key partner organisations that work in the employability and health space and meets monthly to share intelligence and to coordinate plans and resources with the aim of maximising the impact of members' combined efforts. A number of shared events were delivered this year with LEP members working in partnership, including employer engagement sessions, jobs fairs and the annual ABZWorks employability conference. There is a sub-group of the LEP that meets specifically around procurement which jointly scores and agrees on the winning bids for commissioned activities.

#### **Work with the Aberdeen Hydrogen Hub (AHH) JV to develop and deliver a skills action**

Work continued into 2023/24 mapping the employability and skills ecosystem and this activity concluded with the publication in August of [Council/BP report Hydrogen in Scotland – Skills and Qualifications Gap Analysis](#). The report identified five themes to help meet demand:

- Ensure interventions are truly data-led and respond to real demand for skills
- Continue to invest in community and STEM engagement to inspire people into the sector
- Invest in new pathways that will upskill and reskill people for the hydrogen sector
- Underscore inclusivity in the design of programmes and their outreach efforts
- Harness the existing delivery landscape to create truly integrated responses

The latter part of the year has been focused on moving these aspects forward this has included, for example, STEM engagement with pupils and teachers at Lochside Academy.

#### **COMMUNITY BENEFITS, INCLUDING EMPLOYABILITY BENEFITS**

The Community Wealth Building (CWB) Working Group has taken forward key actions from the Aberdeen CWB Action Plan, focused on the short and medium term with the three pillars of: Spending, Workforce and Land and Property. A small employability grants scheme has been delivered, 'ABZWorks Development Fund' which was launched in December 2023, supporting small grass-roots organisations to develop, build on, and deliver employability projects in priority areas, up to the value of £10,000. Since then, there have been two rounds of funding, with nineteen grass-roots organisations funded to take forward creative and innovative projects to support those furthest removed from the labour market who face additional barriers.

The Commercial and Shared Procurement Service are awaiting final review and publication of formal data by Spikes Cavell (which informs reported local spend figure) - but from calculations, the percentage of procurement spend spent on local enterprises is anticipated to be in excess of 35%. The local spend figures

are subject to final review through the Scottish Procurement Information Hub and that the final figure will be reported via the Annual Procurement Report which will be published later this year.

The provisional number of community benefits delivered (captured in Annual Procurement Report yet to be finalised and published) for 2023/24 is 783 benefits - ranging from work experience placements, apprenticeships, community timebank hours and environmental measures. The final figure will be reported via the Annual Procurement Report.

Ongoing support of the delivery of community benefits through major developments such as the Aberdeen Hydrogen Hub JVP and City Centre and Beachfront Masterplan. Regular six weekly meetings with contractors ensures monitoring of delivery and promotes participation in activities such as employability projects such as 'Fit Next', through ABZWorks. Working closely with Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations (ACVO), BP have utilised their WeVolunteer portal to link volunteers within the organisation to volunteering opportunities for third sector and charity groups in Aberdeen. BP and those contractors working on the City Centre and Beachfront Masterplan have engaged with schools, further and higher education providers and provided insights into careers in the energy sector and construction industry.

Since publishing the first Jobs & Skills Plan in April ETZ have supported initiative in regional primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, as well as community-focus activities. A progress report was published in May 2024 and is available on the [ETZ website](#).

The Cloverhill Housing Development in the Bridge of Don is an example of a project within the Capital Programme, which has led to opportunities for community benefit delivery and specifically employability benefits. Bancon Construction have committed to delivering benefits which are aligned to the principles of sustainability, working with Aberdeen City Council and partner organisations such as ACVO and Developing the Young Workforce to ensure these benefits are maximised. Examples of community benefits delivered are; ongoing training and development for all staff (developing the workforce), providing them with opportunities to upskill and gain qualifications, work placements and school engagements. Bancon Construction have also participated in Employability Engagement Events hosted by ABZWorks, on topics such as: 'Employing Displaced People, Refugees and Asylum Seekers' and 'Employing Disabled People.'

#### **Aberdeen City Region Deal projects**

- Seedpod remains on track to be fully constructed by end of 2024, with the roof now on and the building watertight.
- Digital 5G – There are currently 3 approved 5G projects, 2 of which are in the City. These were formally approved in early 2024 and are progressing through their procurement phases by both Port of Aberdeen, and Opportunity North East.
- Transport Links to Aberdeen South Harbour – An outline business case has been approved by Joint Committee and procurement underway.

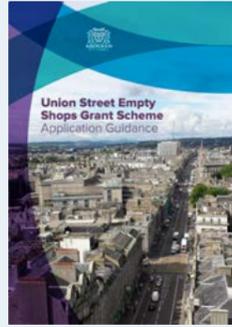
#### **Prepare for and implement, as appropriate, provisions of the Procurement Bill**

The UK Government describes the purpose of the Bill as being to reform the United Kingdom's public procurement regime following its exit from the European Union, to create a simpler and more transparent system not based on transposed EU Directives. The Bill will for the most part only apply in Scotland to the procurement activities of reserved bodies.

Any changes proposed to legislation in Scotland will be communicated to the wider public sector through Scottish Procurement Policy Notes (SPPN's), publication of SPPN's is monitored by Commercial & Procurement and changes as required made to internal policy and procedures/communicated out to delegated procurers.

## SUPPORT BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE CITY

The Business Gateway continued to deliver support to people seeking to start up and/or grow their businesses. Good links have been developed between the Business Gateway advisers and other council projects, for example the Union Street Empty Shops Grant Scheme where all enquiries are supported by an adviser in relation to their business idea and plan. Similarly, individuals who contact the employability service considering self-employment are allocated an adviser to assist them in developing their business idea. The Business Gateway Service appointed an adviser to support businesses to build their capacity and capability to tender for public sector opportunities.



The council continues to work with partners across the region as well as national agencies to ensure that the business support activities in the city are fit for purpose and easily accessible.

Aberdeenshire Council made the decision not to extend the contract for the Business Gateway service and bring the service delivery in-house, from 1 April 2024. This will ensure that the Business Gateway resources are delivered fully in line with the aims and objectives of the council.

Business Gateway has a dedicated Community Business Adviser providing targeted support and sessions for clients in priority areas of the city.

With funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and working alongside Aberdeenshire Council we launched a digital business support programme for SMEs (Small and medium sized enterprises) in the city.

Again, with funding from UKSPF, ACC will launch a Business Start-Up Grant Scheme in July 2024, supporting new city-registered businesses from 1 January 2024 with a one-off grant award to meet start-up costs. To ensure new business owners in priority areas are engaged and made aware of the Scheme, officers will engage with Business Gateway's dedicated community officer, ABZ Works Colleagues and Locality Managers.

### Build and Strengthen Relationships with the Local Supply Base

Key to delivering progressive procurement to strengthen existing and build new relationships within the local supply chain is a targeted approach to Supplier Development activity for the Council, building upon and maintaining networks, sharing information, seeking input from suppliers to shape requirements for the benefit of the local economy and to understand their views on how we could employ more progressive procurement to build supply chains.

A Supplier Development Action Plan will be prepared annually based on the opportunities identified for Community Wealth Building, the plan will be developed in conjunction with both internal partners i.e., Economic Development and external partners i.e., Scotland Excel/Supplier Development programme. This will include participation and engagement of the Commercial & Procurement team in national events to support supplier awareness of how to do business with the Council (Meet the Buyer Scotland/Meet the Buyer North) and also aligned tender training/bidder days.

### Energy Transition Zone

A Masterplan of the Energy Transition Zone site was adopted by the Council's Planning Development Management Committee as Aberdeen Planning Guidance in January 2024. Applications for planning permission are currently being progressed.

## Delivery of BP Aberdeen H2 Power Ltd

The Final Investment Decision (FID) was approved by the BP Aberdeen H2Power Ltd board on the 15th July, 2024. Annual Work Programmes and Budget are agreed at JV Board and Shareholder level to deliver agreed community benefit, supply chain development and training and skills outcomes.

### Hydrogen Infrastructure

Hydrogen Infrastructure Feasibility study commissioned with funding from the Hytrec2 project and NESTRANS and delivered by Arup. The purpose of the study was to inform ACC, Aberdeenshire Council and NESTRANS of a standardised hydrogen refuelling station concept design which can be replicated across Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, and other areas.

The results of the Study will allow NESTRANS, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire to make informed bids for future energy transition and net zero funding opportunities to further develop and establish a network of hydrogen refuelling points across the North East of Scotland in line with the NESTRANS Regional Transport Strategy and both Council's net zero and energy transition ambitions for the decarbonisation of transport.

To encourage further investment in the city in hydrogen, we supported the delivery of Department of Business & Trade (DBT) Hydrogen High Potential Opportunity document and continued the development of energy transition investment opportunities materials. We are currently, working with SDI on a refreshed Regional Inward Investment Proposition. In addition, we are creating opportunities within Energy Transition through North East Scotland Investment Zone.

The Green Freeport Bid is being transitioned into deliverables as part of the Investment Zone proposal and Investment Plan and the new [Regional Economic Strategy](#) was approved by partners in 2023.

## SUPPORT THE CITY TO BECOME A "SMART CITY"

The Full Fibre Infrastructure project is complete. The Duct network extension phase 2 is now complete with Phase 3 underway with completion scheduled in 2025. City Fibre/Vodafone investment continues.

Port of Aberdeen were awarded funding through Aberdeen City Region Deal and are procuring a private 5g network.

Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society (SAOS) awarded funding through Aberdeen City Region Deal and are in procurement phases for a solution to facilitate delivery of agri-tech applications within rural areas.

ONE awarded funding through Aberdeen City Region Deal for 5g pop up network to enable testing of applications in real life environments by companies.

Proposals are in development which consider opportunities for further investment within areas identified in the region as having very low/no coverage. These could come before Joint Committee as early as September 2024.



## PEOPLE (CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE)

### KEY DRIVERS

- Mitigating the causes of immediate and acute poverty
- Ensure those experiencing in-work poverty have access to all appropriate benefits
- Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people, families and groups
- Poverty affecting those with protected characteristics and in specific communities
- Ensuring that families receive the parenting and family support they need
- Improving health and reducing inequalities
- Improving education outcomes for care experienced children and young people
- Improving pathways to education, employment and training for identified groups (including disability, ASN, term time leavers and those from priority neighbourhoods)
- Keeping Young Children Safe
- Improving timely access to support
- Increasing children's knowledge and understanding of their own physical and mental wellbeing and take an early intervention and prevention approach
- Ensuring that children and young people receive accessible information and opportunities to engage and participate in decision making
- Supporting attainment of balance of care where children are able to remain more often at home and or with kin
- Young people receive the right help at the right time to improve outcomes for young people at risk of becoming involved in the Justice System
- More people appropriately diverted from Justice System to effective interventions aimed at reducing the likelihood of reoffending, where appropriate



## PEOPLE (CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE) HIGHLIGHTS



**88.2%** of Looked After Young People leaving school and go on to **positive destinations**



**455 families** being supported by the Fit Like Family Wellbeing Hubs



**24% decrease** in children identified as having communication difficulties in SEEMIS



**94%** of ELC settings registered to **provide 1140 hours**

## PROGRESS MADE DURING 2023/24

### REDUCING CHILD POVERTY

We continue to promote support from money advisors across our schools and in term 4 reissued electronic and hard copies of the financial booklet provided for parents signposting sources of support. Money advisers offer support to parents, carers and families by offering free, confidential and impartial advice on various aspects of their financial situation, such as income & expenditure, debts, benefits, tax credits, grants and other sources of support. They can also help parents to deal with creditors, negotiate payment plans, apply for insolvency options, and access emergency funds or food banks if needed.

We continue to increase uptake of free school meals and are prepared for around 1000 more eligible children across P6 and 7 to benefit from a free school meal. The increase to a universal offer of free school meals for all P6 and P7 pupils has been paused as part of the 24/25 Programme for Government.



All core curriculum charges continue to be removed with the Scottish Government grant passed to schools to support the removal of charges. Schools continue to remove the cost of the school day, offering uniform swap stations and providing foodbanks where there is a need.

Pupil Equity network meetings have been established and well attended by school leaders. These meetings have been seen as key in sharing best practice across the city and improving outcomes for learners impacted by poverty. The equity tracker provides an authority overview of how Pupil Equity funds are being spent and an evaluation of the impact of interventions. This enables an increased level of scrutiny and ensures the greatest impact.

Guidance and professional learning has been offered to all staff to ensure more accurate analysis of data and identification of poverty-related gaps at all levels from class to faculty to whole school. This will continue to be offered next session.

The Children's Services Annual Report was presented to Committee in February 2024 (CFS/24/046). The Report outlined the need to consider how best to deliver family centric approaches to support families facing complex challenges living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1.

There is considerable variation in outcomes at ward level signalling a need to ensure that our approaches reflect the unique context of each community and the complexity of individual families, rather than presume that centrally designed supports will meet needs. This work is being progressed through our developing Family Support Model which has secured funding from Scottish Government as a place based Fairer Futures Partnership.

### Development of Family Learning offer in school Associated School Groups

Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding has meant family learning has been made available through each of the 11 Associated School Groups (ASGs), with 1:1 family support being available alongside a wide variety of city-wide, universal courses and activities which are available to all parent/caregivers across Aberdeen. Opportunities are designed to improve knowledge around specific themes, encourage peer connections, reduce isolation, develop skills and confidence as well as provide direct support to families.

Almost all (96% 2023/24 data) of all registered learners share that their confidence levels increase due to their engagement with the service and almost all (96% 2023/24 data) report gaining new knowledge and skills. There is clear evidence that the targeted and inclusive programmes delivered by Family Learning improve life chances and effectively enable parents to develop their parenting skills, helping to enable families to give their child the best start in life.

This resource continues to have a clear remit for early intervention and to target those children, young people and families most at risk of disengaging from education. Data and feedback from schools, children, young people and families indicates that the resource is proving successful in achieving the planned outcomes and is sufficiently agile to be able to respond to emerging needs in a timely manner.

The work of this resource is strongly aligned to the Family Support Model being developed across the local authority.

### With partners, deliver support which maximises opportunities and minimise the stigma for children and families living in Aberdeen who have No Recourse to Public Funds

Children's and Adult Protection services, along with other services across the Council, and partner agencies, actively collaborate, and cross-reference knowledge around both the extent and impacts of poverty associated with children in families who have No Recourse to Public Funds.



This work is designed to (a) improve the evidence base around this theme to better understand the social and economic impacts on these families and (b) to refine the effectiveness of responses available to the local authority and its partner organisations.

The focus of this collaboration is directed by, amongst other separate referral pathways schools who will refer to Child Protection Social Work to assess the immediate and interim needs of a family who present as destitute and have NRPF. Similarly Adult Protection Social Work's engagement focus on the assessments of adults who present to the service as experiencing destitution as a result of their NRPF status and is first and foremost driven by the theme of protection.

In the above circumstances, both Child and Adult Social Work services can call upon their respective protective teams to support families to mitigate potential harms arising directly from poverty related to their NRPF status, and secondary to these statutory roles, ensuring children are accessing the services they are entitled to receive (health and education). In addition, teams signpost these families to additional sources of available community support which are most appropriate, and accessible to them.

Children's Social Work are mandated to receive unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people from other parts of the UK. Upon arrival these young people are considered 'looked after' and given they have NRPF, the Council is responsible for ensuring the needs are accounted for while their immigration status is resolved.

Through this approach, Aberdeen City Council seeks to act as a gateway providing immediate and direct support to alleviate harm and ensure vulnerable adults and children are protected. Additionally, these services act as enablers, signposting these families and children to those supports and advisory services delivered by and through the wider range of partners in the city, in order to facilitate young people with access to opportunities that their financial circumstances and status may materially limit.

## EARLY YEARS

The expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) to deliver 1140 hours of funded ELC for all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year old children has been fully implemented in the city. One of the overarching aims of this policy is to support more families into employment.

There are currently 53 Local Authority ELC settings and 41 Funded Provider ELC settings. There are also 63 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. A map has been produced which shows a visual of the location of our ELC provision across the city and Associated School Groups (ASGs).

This is a slight decrease on the 1418 places offered last year, this could be the first indication of the predicted drop in demand due to a lowering birthrate. In response the service will pilot a system to allow families to pay to top up their allocation of 1140 in a settings where capacity allows to help determine next steps.

79.5% of all ELC applications over 2023/24 were offered their 1st choice of ELC placement. There remain challenges in recruiting quality ELC staff at all levels and the service is working closely with the employability team to support placements from those coming back into work as well as continuing to deliver successful Foundation and Modern Apprenticeship programmes.

The Early Years Team continue to monitor demand across the city and in individual ASGs. This is in order to meet the needs of families and to achieve best value. We know from parent and carer feedback that a large majority of respondents (79.4%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the range of ELC providers and models within their local area/Associated Schools Group (ASG); and (75.8%) were able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area/ ASG.

The full ELC offer across each 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.

### Eligible 2's

The application process for Eligible 2 places has been refined, streamlined and is now online, bringing it into line with the application process for ELC places for 3-5 year olds at Local Authority ELC settings. This has enabled us to better monitor the volume of applications and demand for places.

The Scottish Government has introduced the Data Pipeline project which gives Local Authorities access to data identifying possible eligible families. Aberdeen City Council signed up to this project in 2023 and families in the city have been sent information, via flyer and incorporating a QR code, about the Eligible 2's service and how to apply. We continue to monitor application numbers to gauge the impact this has had. The number of children allocated an Eligible 2's place has increased by 12% from 183 in 2022/23 to 205 in 2023/24. Population projections suggest that we have increased the percentage of eligible population from 31.66% to 38% in the same period.

We also work in partnership with multi-agency partners, for example Health Visitors, to identify Eligible 2 children and we continue to receive a number of applications for discretionary placements which are considered on a case-by-case basis.



## Quality Improvement

Overall, there has been an upward trend of improvement in inspection evaluations, with almost all ELC settings improving in at least one Quality Indicator following reinspection.

The Education Service presented an updated ELC Quality Improvement Framework to the Education and Children's Services Committee in June 2023. The service's own self-evaluation had determined that early gains were evident but that some variation remains as the framework is being implemented.

There has been significant collaboration with officers and Head Teachers to work on improvement through a Collaborative Improvement model. Following a three-day visit in November 2023 which involved visits to ELC settings and focus groups, the Collaborative Improvement Team (CIT) recognised the commitment of Local Authority senior leaders to realise high quality ELC provision and endorsed the ambitious aims of the ELC expansion programme believing that the Plan is likely to improve outcomes in the longer term. The establishment of a wider range of roles and development of a clear workforce progression pathway as part of the expansion programme was thought to be particularly impactful. The CIT saw clear evidence of both Support Workers and Modern Apprentices seizing opportunities to further their skills and qualifications in order to secure positions with more responsibility. The team identified that the public health restrictions in place at the time 1140 hours of funded ELC was fully implemented, will have contributed to the variation currently being experienced.

The collaborative improvement process has been exceptionally beneficial to the Education Service. In general terms the team has validated our own self-evaluation and endorsed our long-term ambition. They have helpfully shared national best practice that can now be used to enhance our approaches and these areas will be taken forward with support from the team where beneficial. The team has also provided a helpful reminder to pause and take stock of how far many have come and guided us to start to consider arrangements to support good or very good settings to drive their own on-going journey to excellence. It has also provided a central monitoring role to allow wider team support for individual schools to provide quality teaching and learning.

### Provide access to PEEP across all ACC early learning and childcare settings

The Peep offer has been aligned to Quality Framework. Meetings have taken place with the Peep Co-ordinator to look at ways of increasing the Peep offer across the city. The plan includes videoing a current Peep session in a LA setting to share in the fortnightly communications. Links to How good is our Early Learning and Childcare and Quality Framework for Daycare of Children are also being created. 18 Local Authority ELC settings are currently delivering Peep to families. This has nearly doubled since 2022/23.

Work is underway to deliver joint Peep sessions within the Tillydrone Campus. There will be input from two Funded Provider ELC settings, Aberdeen City Library Service and Riverbank School staff.

### Bookbug

Bookbug is managed nationally by Scottish Book Trust (SBT) and delivered in Aberdeen by Aberdeen City Libraries (ACL) in every library. The Bookbug programme is measured against the LOIP, Library and Information Service Action Plan, Forward National Strategy and reports regularly to SBT. ACL has worked with partners including the NHS, PEEP, local care homes, early years settings and schools. National initiatives such as Maths Week Scotland and British Science Week were supported in collaboration with CityMoves and TechFest. In 2023/24 the frequency of sessions increased and drop-in sessions were reintroduced to remove barriers to access.



Regular Bookbug session evaluations assess impact, with most respondents strongly agreeing that attending Bookbug sessions benefits their child's development and encourages them to share rhymes and stories at home.

- In 2023/2024, 217 Bookbug sessions were held across community libraries, with 1987 children in attendance
- 29 outreach sessions were held with partner agencies with 329 children in attendance.
- 98 Bookbug sessions/events were held in libraries within the 1 and 2 deciles of SIMD, with 9 outreach sessions held in these areas.
- 1875 Bookbug Baby bags and 1790 Bookbug Toddler bags were gifted by colleagues in the NHS .
- 2256 Bookbug Explorer Bags were delivered to early years settings
- 2214 Primary 1 Bookbug Family Bags were delivered to schools.
- 1051 children aged 0-5 became library members in 2023/24.

In addition, 124 tactile books to support children with ASN were gifted.

### **RAISE ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT**

A Quality Improvement Framework has been put in place to help drive improvement across our schools. The Framework guided a far more proportionate approach to quality improvement over 2023/24; however, capacity issues impacted on the consistency of application across localities in the primary sector as members of the central team covered vacant head teacher posts. This knowledge triggered a review of the working arrangements and an updated Framework for use over the 2024/25 academic year.

The new framework seeks to broaden the evidence base gathered during school quality assurance visits to help monitor the impact of our work against an agreed Behaviour Plan, and more intensive arrangements for schools yet to evaluate as good or better.

A centrally organised interactive workshop on effective learning and teaching has been used to support Head Teacher engagement events throughout the session. The session exemplified national expectations and clarified the role of the Head Teacher in leading the development of learning, teaching and assessment in our schools.

Our focus on improving learning and teaching is also now a feature of collaborative work across partner Local Authorities within the Northern Alliance. A senior officer (primary Head Teacher) has been appointed to work with leads from other local authorities to develop a learning and teaching toolkit to support staff development in schools. This resource is on track to be published in September 2024.

Staff have delivered the Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative's (CYPIC) approach to supporting improvement in writing to 16 schools across ACC, primarily at the P4 stage with 11 of these schools then receiving additional training for their P3 – P7 teachers ensuring the spread and scale of the approach is consistent and of high quality. All staff who have attended the training were more confident in their understanding of the key aspects of the Quality Improvement Journey, using data to inform practice and involving their children in the assessment, feedback and interpreting data process.

The Northern Lights pilot is now complete allowing for the planning of full roll out to all schools providing every child from P6 – S6 with a new device. In addition, wifi networks are being upgraded and there has been a refresh of smart boards to ensure schools have access to the latest technology.

### **Improving the tracking and monitoring of all learners**

The Broad General Education tracker is in place and updated three times per session providing schools with access to all data in a customised report. An agreed tracking system for secondary has been agreed and will be implemented over the current school session.

### **Programme of professional learning for leaders at all levels**

There continues to be a strong interest in professional learning engagement by Aspiring and Early Phase Middle Leaders. Each course teaches a different aspect of leadership. This is followed up by considering how attendees effectively implement to ensure impact on pupil outcomes.

Our most experienced Middle Leaders involved in 'Readiness for Into Headship' programme are demonstrating improving understanding and engage in quality dialogue around leadership themes. A few attendees are giving consideration to building on this by undertaking Into Headship Programme next session.

Two Head Teachers who have recently completed 'Into Headship' shared their top tips and further information about this qualification. At this stage it looks like there will be a strong uptake entering this process for next session.

Over the course of the academic session, 111 live universal sessions were offered to staff across the service, as well as a range of safeguarding training and opportunities to commission bespoke support from our specialist services. The Grassroots (GPLP) programme continued this session delivered by classroom teachers, with programmes focussing on Numeracy, Sensory Stories and Circuits, Understanding ADHD and An Anti-Racist Ethos. Feedback for these sessions remained positive with evaluations highlighting the benefits of practical examples to take back into the classroom and opportunities to work with colleagues across the city.

The book groups run by our Orchard Brae Outreach Teacher were very well received, with requests to continue this next session. Some of the attendees have plans to develop book groups within their own settings following on from this learning opportunity.

There is emerging evidence of the positive impact of involving members of secondary school leadership teams in quality improvement activities beyond their own secondary schools. Widening the quality improvement team members to include a cross section of senior leaders is benefitting the school being visited and the individual team members home school by building a shared understanding of what high quality looks like and building capacity across our schools.

### **Increasing opportunities for music ensembles within localities and across the city**

The Music Service has continued to [evaluate](#) how well they are expanding the provision of music tuition, increasing more equitable access and providing greater opportunities for students to perform individually and in partnership with other groups in the city.

The success of the Big Sing 2023 was built upon further with all P4s again coming together to sing at the Duthie Park. The event was well received by parents and families and plans are already in place to have a bigger and more international event next session. Termly concerts have provided regular opportunities for learners to share with parents. Groups have also performed at each of the face to face head teacher meetings and committees where a music report is being presented. Strong links have been made with the Music School and shared events are helping to promote both services.

### Promoting Gaelic Medium Education

Gaelic medium has been fully staffed this session with probationers choosing to stay on for session 2024/25. Learners participated in the Mod (the national festival for celebrating Gaelic linguistic and cultural heritage) this session and a link has been made with schools in Ireland to support further developments in the service.

### Programme of learning experiences offered to families in partnership with 3rd sector during school holidays

In the city programmes continue to run Easter, Summer and October. Successful and popular sessions are offered by city staff and 3rd sector partners. There is a high level of satisfaction from both learners and their families.

Since summer 2021, the programmes have provided more than 53,000 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. More than 17,000 bookable opportunities have been made available since Easter 2023.

The enjoyability rating as provided by children and young people for one of the most recent programmes (Easter in the City, 2024) was 9.6 out of 10.

Both Countesswells and Greyhope are fully operational with learners and staff enjoying being in the new buildings. Construction has resumed on the new school in Tillydrone with completion planned next session. Feasibility studies are ongoing to inform investment and delivery of the planned future school estate.



### CLOSING THE ATTAINMENT GAP

The new equity tracking format was adopted in 2023 and is monitored as part of the Quality Improvement Framework. Evidence can be seen that most schools are becoming confident in ensuring plans demonstrate a clear understanding of context through increased use of data. Increasingly, interventions are time specific and being tracked more regularly with signs of greater confidence to adopt, adapt or abandon if desired progress is not being made.

Youth Workers and Family Learning Workers have a clear remit for early intervention and continue to target children, young people, and families most at risk of disengaging from education. Data is routinely gathered to support rigorous evaluation of the impact of interventions and help inform next steps. We are now looking to align this data set more carefully with our work to develop a Family Support model and will carefully consider how learning can be used to avoid duplication of support. Financial advisors continue to support families ensuring they have access to all benefits they are entitled too.

The tracking of those children and young people who are Looked After and educated in another authority continues to be developed alongside the other local authorities with 3 points in the year when information on exclusions / attendance / Curriculum for Excellence data is requested. The data is used to target resource and review support offered.

### Development and implementation of a literacy and numeracy

A Writing Skills Progression focus group has been formed from colleagues across sectors and localities, to work collaboratively on a digital framework to support planning, teaching and assessment of writing skills. The group have looked outwardly to other local authorities and inwards, ensuring consultation with schools across the city on the text types taught in preparation for the forthcoming work planned.

A numeracy focus group is being established to review the current numeracy framework and develop planning, teaching and assessment materials as well as professional learning for staff.

### Provision of intelligence led ASN services to better meet demand

ASN and outreach is an agile service which uses data to identify how best to align resource. The Educational Psychology service is undertaking a review of the level of support available in schools to identify best practice approaches to support future plans. The outcome of this review will be presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee in November 2024.

### The CIRCLE framework and Angela Morgan's "Support for Learning" Review

All schools have a designated CIRCLE lead who attends network meeting to update on progress within each establishment. The network meets twice termly and head teachers are updated annually on authority progress.

Work continues on the implementation of the 'Support for Learning' review. Training is offered regularly to teaching and support staff and central officers offer drop in session for parents twice termly facilitated by a local parental support group.

### Multi agency support provided in partnership with the virtual school to improve outcomes for those on the edge of care

The multi-agency teams (Virtual School, Family Learning, social work and youth work) are embedded in both Northfield and Lochside Academy. A [full evaluation](#) has been undertaken and was presented to the July 2024 Education and Children's Services Committee Edge of Care Pilots to give consideration to a further roll out to the St Machar ASG. Both quantitative and qualitative data provides strong evidence of a positive impact on improving outcomes for both young people and families.

### Monitoring of attendance and exclusion levels weekly to secure improvement

Updated guidance was issued to schools and families in April 2024. A new, improved, flow chart is helping ensure a consistent approach is adopted across ACC settings. Quality Improvement visits are used to monitor compliance and to ensure consistency in approach. An updated PowerBI Broad General Education Tracking & Monitoring system provides a platform to monitor attendance easily.

### HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Our schools offer a range of pupil voice groups to provide our children and young people an active voice in shaping both their school experience and to inform and support school improvement. These routinely include school councils, eco groups, health and wellbeing groups, digital (champions), etc.

The mental health of our children and young people is improving. All settings continue to participate in the Schools Health and wellbeing Improvement Network ([SHINE](#)) mental wellbeing survey and the ACC Physical Health and Wellbeing survey to support our understanding of the needs of P6/7 and Secondary learners across our settings. This year's surveys had higher completion rates by learners: over 500 for SHINE and almost an additional 2000 for the Physical Health Surveys. The interventions provided and work undertaken

across our settings has led to an improved data picture. Positive improvements were seen in a number of areas compared to the previous two survey returns (March 2022 & November 2022). Of particular interest were the following:

- reduction of pupils reporting low mood and at risk of depression
- improvements in the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which measures mental health difficulties
- increases in reported self-confidence levels and optimism
- improvements in physical health
- improvements in feelings of safety, inclusion, good health, aspects of sleep, and being listened to.

Generally, Aberdeen City outcomes now sit above national comparator data. Two previous areas of concern for Aberdeen, reports of self-harming, and happiness with appearance have both improved this year. The 'Did Not Disclose' gender, and 'Girls' gender groups both showed improvements on previous surveys in these areas.

There are other areas the data directs us to consider further:

- the gap between the Family Affluence Scale Groups (low, medium and high) even though each group is showing an improved position
- how to increase positivity towards school (especially at the transition between primary and secondary stages), although improvements against feelings of pressure in relation to schoolwork, and higher reporting of liking school were reported
- the expected poorer mental health and wellbeing of girls with a focus on our cohort of S4 girls (our S3 group last year) who are continuing to show poorer self-reporting in mental health measures relative to their peers in other stages, and their male counterparts
- increased use of technology and devices including its impact on sleep, and going to bed later
- how to support and encourage secondary pupils to eat breakfast
- continuing work with the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership to address slight increases in the number of pupils trying of e-cigarettes/vapes and other substances

Youth Work is embedded in primary and secondary schools. A refined learning offer and improved referral process has been developed. The learning offer includes one to one support, support for transition from P7 to S1, SQA-approved youth awards such as Hi5 and Dynamic Youth, break-time drop-ins and Confidence to Cook classes. C2C participants learn how to prepare nutritious meals with a limited budget.

CLD Family Learning's approach and provision supports families with their mental health needs through intensive 1-1 support, group work provision and mental health counselling as well as offering guidance and support to access other services.

We continue to offer counselling services in all our secondary schools and this has been extended to P6 and P7 learners across the city. Our counselling services are now part of the request for assistance process allowing us to better evidence impact alongside other interventions.

### **Sport Aberdeen**

Sport Aberdeen continue to provide activities which are being offered across the city and the work has been extended to include six ELC settings across the city to encourage increased physical activity habits. They also provide a school swimming programme which all P4 learners participated in.

### **'Fitlike Aberdeen'**

The Fit Like Family Wellbeing Team, have continued to offer targeted whole family support to children, young people and families in Aberdeen City since 2019.

Fit Like? have seen a change in the level of need experienced by families over the past year, with parental mental health, poverty needs and child and adolescent emotional and mental health being saturated themes in the requests for assistance. The service continues to evolve to respond to the increasing demand for support and the noted complexity prevalent in families lives. The Fit Like? Family Wellbeing Team offers a variety of different supports to help families with a range of needs, help can extend from advice and guidance, consultation, group work to individualised support delivered to the whole family network. Those accessing the service tell us that it feels like a "bespoke service" and that it is the first-time support has 'felt right'. There is clear evidence that engagement with services helps families to achieve outcomes including:

- parents feeling supported to manage their anxieties and worries,
- feeling listened to and heard,
- strengthened family relationships
- improved child mental health and wellbeing.

*'Getting support from the FitLikeHubs was so scary at the start, luckily for me I was given someone who has been absolutely amazing. She's supported me with so much, that I don't know where I'd be if it wasn't for her support. She's literally saved my life, which sounds extreme but when someone is so low and life's so difficult and someone comes in and makes such a big impact on how they support you, it can be life changing. To have someone come in and show you so much respect, not judge you and listen to you has not been something I am used to but [worker] has done all this and showed me that I can trust her. She's not given up on me when I thought I wasn't worthy of any support, she's allowed me the time to feel comfortable to be open and honest to her. I feel I still have lots to work on with [worker] but I am so thankful for how much she taken me on with her advice and support and continues to allow me to move forward.'* [Parent]

The Fit Like? team have developed a range of group work programmes for parents/carers/children and families with the areas that they tell us they need help with: Parent Led CBT – helping parents support their anxious children, Distress to Success – helping parents understand and respond to their child's distress behaviour, Stay and Play – giving families the opportunity to come together in a relaxed family friendly environment which offers support and guidance when needed, Girls Group – a rights led group. We are also delighted to be piloting a new group in October 2024 'Helping your Autistic Child'.

Throughout the 2023/2024 period 178 Parents/Carers have been offered our groups and provided invaluable feedback:

*'I felt the group covered a lot of what we go through as a family. And how to handle certain situations whether its meltdowns, sleeping, mood swings, hitting. I feel I have learned so much coming to the group and will try what I have learned and hope that it works for my son and family. Thank you so much'* [Parent: Distress for Success Group]

*'All the information provided was great, great topics, presentation was great as it was so relaxed but professional. The environment felt safe, the ladies made everyone feel welcome. There was also a good few new videos for me that have really stuck with me.'* [Parent: Distress to Success]

*'Speaking to other people who are in the same position. Knowing I am not alone.'* [Parent: Distress to Success]

We have offered LIAM (Lets Introduce Anxiety Management) Groups in schools, successfully engaging with 9 schools reaching up to 90 children throughout 2023/2024. Young people told us:  
*'I feel I was listened to and able to speak. I feel I have improved a lot.'* [Young person attending the LIAM Group]

The Fit Like Hubs in partnership with Children Social Work and Education colleagues have developed a local child protection pathway, to support families where there is escalating need to get the right support from the right service at the right time. This pathway has been further developed with the integration of other Tier 2 commissioned services, allowing services to respond to family's needs in a timely way, preventing overlap and duplication and providing opportunities for effective collaboration. This has allowed for a more co-ordinated, integrated approach to supporting families and minimises the need for families to keep repeating their stories to various professionals.

Our data and evaluation of the Fit Like Hubs has consistently demonstrated that support delivered in a non-stigmatising and trauma informed manner often enables families to feel heard emotionally and their needs deescalated to universal/community-based supports mitigating an escalation into Children's Social Work or CAMHS. In 2023, of a sample of 113 families who moved on from Fit Like help saw 87 (76%) families went on to engage in universal support, 14 families went on to require social work support and 12 families went on to CAMHS.

### TRANSITION TO POSITIVE DESTINATIONS

ABZ Campus phase 1 is complete offering 38 additional courses across the schools and partners and phase 2 which includes anytime courses and increases the offer to 54 courses ready to start delivery in August 2024.

Common transition week and plans in place for curricular and pastoral transitions from P7 to S1 Aberdeen City Council Transition Standard has been reviewed by the Learning and Teaching Group and shared with school staff. Revised Transition Guidance for Learners with Additional Support Needs will be shared with school leaders in August 2024.

A numeracy group will be established next session to build on the good work of individual ASGs and ensure consistency across the city. There is a pilot underway to provide employability experience for learners with more complex needs and a working group looking at improving transitions from children's to adults services.

Foundation apprenticeships increased by 50% and there are plans to increase these further next session. There is also planning in place to support ongoing work experience to support learners in achieving a positive destination.

### SUPPORTING CARE EXPERIENCED AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

*\* Care Experienced is the collective term for anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked-after background at any stage in their life*

*\*\* Looked After refers to children/young people who are currently 'legally' looked after*

We have continued focus on implementing 'The Promise' with all central staff having participated in the keeping the promise award training. A multi-agency evaluation of progress to deliver on Plan 21 – 24 was submitted to the [Education & Children's Services Committee in November 2023](#) and thereafter to Community Planning Aberdeen. Our assessment demonstrated continuing progress to deliver on the aspirations of The Promise. At the end of Year 2 of the three-year plan 88% of required improvement activity was "well underway" (up from Y1 68%) and that 12% of the required improvement activity was "underway but does not yet appear sufficient" (down from Y1 24%). There were no areas where improvement activity had yet to commence.

### Expand digital connection opportunities for care experienced young people in line with peers through local approach and access scheme

Digital Inclusion needs are assessed as part of Pathway planning with care leavers. Pathway planning is undertaken with 100% of those who engage in/with Aftercare support. These include the needs of those who have entered the UK as unaccompanied minors and become looked after.

#### Actions delivered against this theme include:

WiFi MiFi connection; mobile phone and laptop and iPad devices continue to be purchased with around 33 young people, supported on an Aftercare basis, benefitting. 22 Wi-Fi/MiFi/33 iPad and laptops; 30 mobile phones.

Continuing use of Aberdeen Care Experienced (ACE) Facebook as a communication device; there are 581 followers on ACE Facebook page and 555 followers on Youth Team Facebook page.

146 care experience young people have Mind of My Own (MOMO) accounts; 200 CSW professionals have accounts.

Sign posting young people to free to access and use resources e.g. the data bank, this is being promoted on a case-by-case basis.

The Youth Team as a care leaving team have all completed Circuit Digital Inclusion Training which offers Digital Inclusion Rights Training for professionals. Aligning professional knowledge with the commitments identified in the Promise to care experienced community.

The above has also facilitated access to the National Digital Inclusion network. Hub which we will explore re use re how best to deliver free digital inclusion support to the group eg access to free devices and free data.

### The delivery of participatory opportunities for care experienced young people

#### Continuous participation events

Children's Rights monthly walks are attended by on average 8 young people per walk and with monthly connection group attended by around 12 young people. Thematic group work sessions e.g. Warm Space, are attended by around 5 young people: Supper Club events as above connected group activity, regularly engage around a dozen young people.

#### Event based participation

Young people attended the summer Picnic in the Park Day, with care leavers, and their children, participating in festive period events; Christmas crafts and baking, Advent and a Christmas Party which was attended by 30 participants.

#### Personal developmental and advocacy participation

The development of interview skills with and for young people. along with participation in the recruitment process for the candidate into the new post of Participation Lead Officer has directly supported young people to gain insight around pathways/transitions into the world of work.

Brights Spots Research was jointly designed, and delivered with CELCIS and Children's Social Work, connecting with all young people presently looked after and those who qualify for statutory Aftercare. Substantive engagement by our young people with this research was noted with 345 of those looked after completing a Bright Spots survey with an additional 227 responses from those beyond care.

Our care experienced young people are also provided with now extended opportunities for dialogue/ engagement within and across corporate parenting support teams (and between each other) though Focus group and Champions Board meetings, In the digital realm, sign-posting and daily posts of wider events

within the Aberdeen City community through dedicated Facebook channels, and the establishment of the Children's Rights webpage on the Aberdeen Protects site, ensures that our young people are offered critical information, and the opportunity to engage with extended activities within the city.

#### **Mind of My Own App**

The Mind of My Own app continues to be utilised with and for care experienced young people in the settings where they are cared for. The uptake, as part of specific child protection investigatory processes, is relatively low but with expansion of the engagement offers noted above this may change in time.

In 2023/24, 46 children have shared their feelings whilst participating as part of Child Protection processes; 22 times for initial child protection meetings.

Contextually, in the past six years, Child Protection stakeholders have noted that there is a significantly lower uptake in use of the app when accessed by young people preparing to attend or after they have attended a meeting in general.

In addressing this trend, there is ongoing workforce development to promote better uptake across Child Protection processes and, with cognisance of the increased utilisation of the app language feature, driven by the growing number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People (UASYP) in our care, this has been identified as an area for development and focus in 2024/25.

#### **Celebration of Care Day and Care experienced week**

Care Day was celebrated in February 2024, incorporating a series of events and digital engagement/information opportunities, including a celebratory event at Westburn Resource Centre. This had the theme of 'participation.' and highlighted the launch of the Bright Spots research programme, (see above) with over 30 young people and their supporters in attendance.

Both Care Day itself, and the Week. were extensively supported and enabled by both Aberdeen City Council, and partner team professionals, with sharing of the lived experiences of our Care Experienced Young people, in the context of policies and interventions applied to support these young people.

#### **Support Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People (UASYP) access supports which enables and offers them physical and emotional wellbeing benefits**

Presently 52 UASYP are supported as looked after young people or care leavers by Children's Social Work teams.

The extended support framework currently in place, both that delivered directly by Aberdeen City Council, and that provided in partnership with a range of formal/third sector organisations include educational, emotional and practical daily living assistance.

With the establishment of a fixed term, specialist Children's Social Work resource of four professional practitioners/workers, Aberdeen City Council has acted as both a lead service, and enabler to support, and continue to develop, educational provision for those who are in secondary education, and through NESCOL have provided/offered access to language support for these young people through 2nd language short courses attended by 22 participants.

All 52 young people have a combination of care and/or pathway plans in place, reflecting their status as Looked After Young People which places material responsibilities on Aberdeen City Council, and others, as corporate parents. Outreach support is presently provided to more than 20 of these young people. As with all our Care Experienced young people, UASYP have access to the support tools, Forums and Groups which are identified in the section above around participatory opportunities.

Housing needs cultural event promotion and support, along with access to recreational activities (in partnership with Sport Aberdeen) are each supported by an allocated worker resource within Aberdeen City Council.

Additionally, the young people are provided with access to a specific point of contact within Child and Adult Mental Health Services and have participated in/attended Health Assessment clinics arranged by our partner organisations where immunisation updating, and the offer of additional health advice was made available. 30 young people attended this clinic setting at the first event in 2023/24. In terms of sustaining healthy living through accessibility to food stuffs, each of these young people is also provided with access to products from the Westburn foodbank, that includes culturally based preferences.

### **PREVENT CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE ENTERING THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

#### **Preventative whole family support approaches to supporting young people at risk of offending**

In the period the Barnardo's led RAFT consortium received 33 referrals from Youth Justice Management Unit (YJMU). Many of these young people were referred on more than one occasion, this was seen as positive in terms of future capacity building with them. 87 under 18s were diverted from prosecution by COPFS in this period. Around 50% of these were referred to RAFT .

LOIP charter activity in 2022 sought to increase the number of children, with particular focus on 16/17-year-olds, who were jointly reported being referred to the reporter.

In 2020/21 61% of the 16/17-year-olds jointly reported were referred to reporter, an increase from only 33% referred in 2016/17. Available data shows that children have continued to be held within the age-appropriate children's hearing system, i.e. for the period May 2023 to April 2024 of the 39 16/17-year-olds jointly reported on 2 were retained by the Procurator Fiscal, a significant improvement.

Workforce development sessions took place with over 60 members of the multi-agency workforce attending awareness raising sessions. High participation indicates that the continued workforce development initiated as part of the charter activity continues to have the desired impact.

There is an agreed communication and information exchange system with JSW partners in place that ensures support is in place for children who are to appear in court. A briefing note for Children Services has been in place for some time and sets out expectations for allocated workers of a child appearing in court. We have adopted and applied the Whole Systems Approach review system for 16- to 21-year-olds who have been remanded or sentenced to custody in YOI. Through discussion, preparations have been put in place for the ending of under 18s in YOI arising from the implementation of this element of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024 in Summer 2024.

### **ENSURE THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN ARE CONSIDERED AND PROTECTED**

Initial training has been delivered on the UNCRC and there is considerable evidence of consideration of children's rights in all schools. Schools are providing child friendly policies and plans.

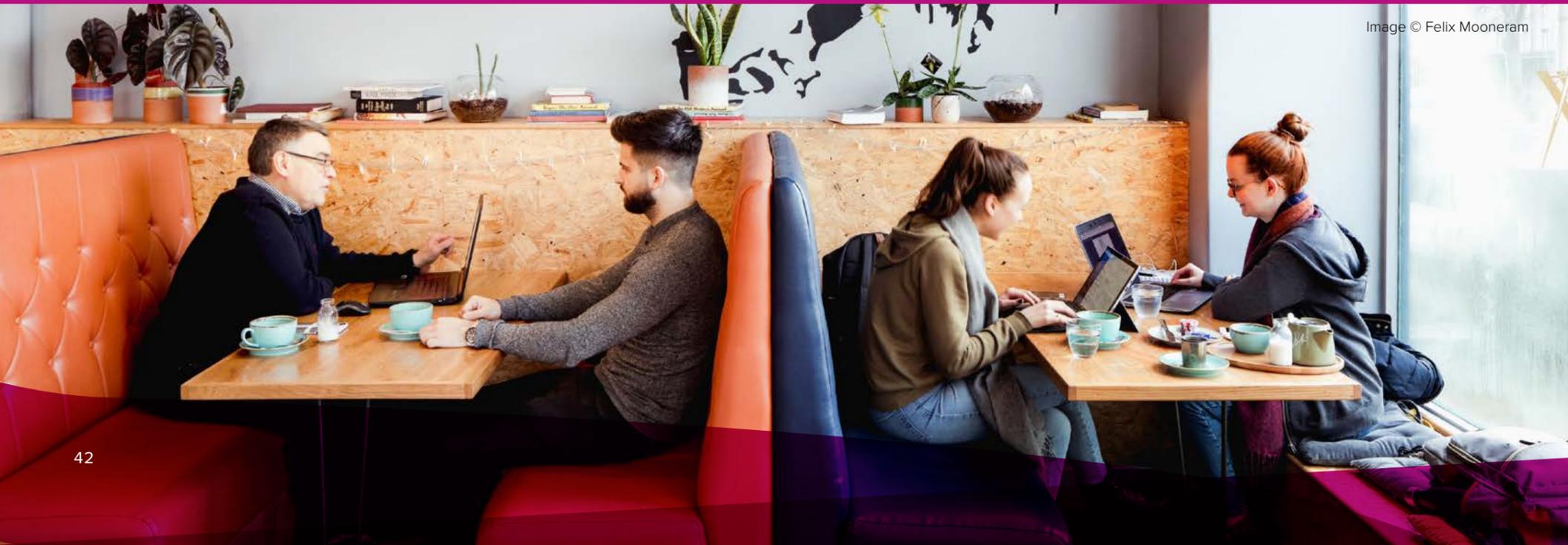
Work continues across all schools to increase learner voice and to embed children's rights across school policy and practice. Consideration is given, and opportunities routinely provided, to ensure that children and young people are provided with appropriate mechanisms to influence decision-making regarding (Education) service design and delivery.

All school improvement plans have evidence of learner voice and all schools produce a child /family friendly version of their plan.

# PEOPLE (ADULTS)

## KEY DRIVERS

- Mitigating the causes of immediate and acute poverty
- Ensure those experiencing in-work poverty have access to all appropriate benefits
- Poverty affecting those with protected characteristics and in specific communities
- Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people, families and groups
- Provide individuals and communities with the social resources needed to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation
- Encouraging adoption of healthier lifestyles through a whole family approach
- Reduce levels of harmful alcohol consumption across the whole population through “making every opportunity count” approaches
- Enhance early intervention and preventative treatment for those at greatest risk of harm from drugs and alcohol
- Increase visibility and support of recovery in our communities
- Provide individuals and communities with the social resources needed to make informed decisions about health and lifestyle
- Tackling antisocial behaviour in problem areas with appropriate and effective interventions
- Changing attitudes about domestic abuse in all its forms and ensuring victims receive access to the right support
- Those who are convicted are supported to engage with relevant services and reduce re-offending



# PEOPLE (ADULTS) HIGHLIGHTS



**90.4%** of ACC properties meeting **SHQS**



**806** affordable homes delivered in 2023/24



Over **90%** of Adult Learnings supported through our CLD Team reported an **increase in confidence and skills**



**75% increase** in the number of staff trained to administer Naloxone

## PROGRESS MADE DURING 2022/23

### HOUSING

#### Increasing the supply of affordable housing

The Council's new build programme is ongoing. Developments at Wellheads, Auchmill Road, Summerhill, Tillydrone and Kaimhill have been completed and handed over. Craighill has been re-rendered and is due for completion in Summer 2026. Kincorth is due to be re-rendered in summer 2024. Completion dates will be supplied in due course. Development of specialist provision homes at Stoneywood is onsite and Cloverhill development is being handed over in phases.

A review of housing for varying needs is ongoing with Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership, Housing and Bon Accord Care. Work is ongoing to allow Provost Hogg Court to transition to a hybrid model of sheltered housing and very sheltered housing.

A 25% allocation of affordable housing is required as part of the planning process for new developments. These developments will then form part of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan. Reduction in affordable housing supply grant means there are more developments than funding. In 2023/24, 806 affordable homes were delivered across the city, 8 of which have full wheelchair accessibility. This is the highest number of affordable homes delivered through the affordable housing supply programme.

There continues to be a post that supports Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) to consider their housing options and access suitable housing support. CEYP are given a high priority on the urgent list to ensure they can move in to suitable settled accommodation as quickly as possible. The Housing Support for Care Leavers procedure is in place.

#### Reduce Homelessness

A new stretch outcome dedicated to reducing homelessness in the city was introduced as part of the LOIP refresh towards the end of 2024. Planning for this started in 23/24 with the creation of the Ending Homelessness in Aberdeen Partnership. This has evolved into the Homelessness Outcome Improvement Group in partnership with Homewards (The Royal Foundation). The stretch outcome has a focus on the prevention of homelessness, with an aim to reduce homelessness by 10% and youth homelessness by 6% by 2026, ensuring it is rare, brief, non-recurring with a longer-term ambition to end homelessness in Aberdeen City.

Housing First continues to operate in the city and has continued to feature in our recent commissioning of an updated Outreach Housing Support Service in the city. Ongoing monitoring of the current contract and plans to support the implementation of a new contract are underway.

The Private Landlord Support Officer has been in post since April 2023, the post continues to support the progression of the following key areas

- Establishing relationships with key stakeholders
- Tenant Support & Advice -raising awareness of tenants' rights in the Private Rented Sector
- Landlord Support and Advice - Providing advice and guidance on tenancy management
- Improving the standard of private rented accommodation
- Assisting with the prevention of homelessness from the Private Rented Sector



There continues to be an officer who works from Grampian Prison, with a focus on sustaining tenancies wherever it is possible to do so for people who are in prison, this group also benefits from a high priority on the urgent list, if they have to terminate their ACC tenancy as it is not possible to sustain, which aims to plan for a secure tenancy being available on their release.

The Housing & Support Officer role continues to focus on supporting the prevention of homelessness as an outcome by ensuring existing tenants are supported to sustain their tenancy either through direct support from their housing & support officer or through support to access the most appropriate commissioned service in the city.

Tenancy sustainment rates have stayed the same between 22/23 and 23/24, whilst post COVID-19 there has been an increase in evictions from council housing due to rent arrears, from 6 to 24 in the same period. The repeat rate of homelessness remains relatively low and has reduced from 22/23 when it was at 44 cases, to 40 cases in 23/24. The sustainment rate for people experiencing homelessness has risen slightly with only 68 households not sustaining for more than 1 year in 23/24 compared with 85 in 22/23. There has however been an increase in people who go from a prevent 1 classification to homeless, which was at 51.5% (1623) in 22/23 increasing to 52.9% (1722) in 23/24.

#### Youth Homelessness

Nightstop (Community Hosting) is currently operational in the city. This is a different concept, and it has been a challenge to find young people who are accepting of the notion of living with a non-relative for a period of time whilst being supported with the Foyer to consider their housing options. The project is currently due to continue until September 2024.

#### Supporting people who have settled in temporary accommodation to flip their accommodation to their permanent address

This option continues to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Due to the increased need for temporary accommodation this has had to be a balanced approach to ensure availability of temporary stock. In 23/24 15 tenancies were flipped from temporary accommodation to mainstream, with the tenant remaining in the property to support them to sustain their tenancy.

#### Supporting people in financial difficulty who have no recourse to public funds

Child and Adult Protection Social Work Service are responsible for assessing families and individual adults who have a NRPF condition attached to their immigration status.

Families/Individuals with NRPF often approach Social Work during crisis situations, marked by destitution and urgent, essential needs which they cannot meet themselves. These individuals may need a safe place to live or have no financial means to meet basic needs

We work collaboratively across the Council (Social Work, Housing, Financial Inclusion Team) and with partners (CFine, Abernecessities and faith groups) to ensure families and adults are supported by those services best placed to do so to mitigate risk and alleviate destitution. Where necessary, we also work with external services, such as the Home Office, Police and/or third sector providers.

#### Priority Families

The Priority Families Service was recommissioned in 2024 and aims to: *Improve whole family outcomes through the delivery of family intervention support to families affected by complex and multiple issues which impact on their life outcomes.*

Families, resident in Aberdeen City Council tenancies and affected by a range of issues such as anti-social behaviour and low school attendance with adverse life experiences impacting on their ability to achieve successful life outcomes are offered intensive support for up to 12 months. There are 3 key features to the model - intensive and consistent support by a dedicated Practitioner, appropriate to the level of assessed need, small caseloads to ensure Practitioners have the necessary capacity and time to dedicate to families and avoid drift and a persistent, assertive and practical, hands-on approach to sustaining engagement, support and continued progress. Outcomes across a range of domains are measured to ensure progress.

#### **COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT (CLD)**

The CLD adult Learning team has supported 505 learners in 2023/24 which equates to 10727 learner hours and 170 learning opportunities to access literacy, IT and ESOL. Over 90% reported an increase in confidence and skills, we also worked with 20 Gypsy Traveller families and Criminal Justice Learners.

The Healthy Minds Team (Part of Community Learning and Development) supports adults in recovery of an enduring mental illness access learning opportunities in the community and the Forensic Unit (Blair) at Cornhill Hospital. Over 23/24 we supported 54 learners in the community (21 males/33 females) and 10 learners from the Blair unit (8 males/2 females). This equates to 844 learner hours. Almost all learners reported an increase in confidence and skills.

#### **SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE**

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

The Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act has received Royal assent, but the individual provisions have not yet been brought into force. No timescales have been given for implementation of the legislation at this point in time. Key points of the legislation involve Social Landlords having additional reasons for ending a Scottish secure tenancy when a tenant has been abusive to their partner or ex-partner. The landlord can only seek to end the tenancy if they plan to let the person who has been abused continue to live in the house. The person who has been abused must also wish to continue to live in the house. This will prevent further abuse to families and prevent families from becoming homeless or having to access refuge accommodation.

##### **Services for those experiencing or fleeing domestic abuse**

We have recently implemented two additional posts within ACC's Domestic Abuse Team. This allowed for the increase in referrals created through the end of the service currently commissioned by Housing Access and Support to deliver Refuge and Outreach Services for Women and Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse from Grampian Women's Aid. Additionally, we have recently recruited a post to liaise between the Domestic Abuse Team, Early Intervention and Community Empowerment and partners, to enable effective communication and allow for the Domestic Abuse Team to be accessed as a specialist service should this be required in addition to the support offered through the Housing Support Services and Financial Inclusion Services. The Liaison Officer will also be required to link with Housing Allocations to enable the appropriate allocation of properties from Council housing stock as a replacement for the refuge properties. The next 12 months will be key for improving collaborative work between Housing and Support Services and the Domestic Abuse Team.

##### **"Safe & Together" project**

Funding was received to support the local implementation of the Safe & Together model. This is an internationally recognised suite of tools and interventions designed to help key public sector and third sector professionals to become domestic abuse-informed and promote multi-agency, collaborative responses to working with families experiencing violence and abuse.

Supporting the implementation of Safe & Together locally will directly contribute to priority 3 of Equally Safe; by helping service providers and other professionals to competently identify domestic abuse and respond effectively to women, children and young people experiencing abuse. Specifically, this project will promote local workforce wellbeing, capacity building and development. Ensuring key staff have the training, tools and other resources they need to identify and respond to domestic abuse within families in a way that promotes the safety and wellbeing of the mother and child, holding the perpetrator to account for their behaviours. 250 staff members (mostly from Children's Social work and Justice Social Work, with some representation from Education and Health) have attended one day Overview training. The Overview sessions gave staff an introduction to the model, suite of tools and interventions designed to help child and family serving systems become domestic abuse informed. 80 staff members from across children and families social work and justice social work have been undertaking the 4 day, more intensive Core training. We have 4 certified in-house trainers who can deliver this training.

The Domestic Abuse policy is fully in place, and has recently been reviewed, with training offered to all Housing and Support staff on the Dynamics of Domestic Abuse.

#### **REDUCING DRUG AND ALCOHOL MISUSE**

Multi-agency improvement has made significant strides in increasing engagement with drug services through innovative developments focusing on individual needs, and their family in a focus to reduce harm and save lives. This has included the introduction of:

- Treatment for those at risk: assertive outreach approach with daily crisis intervention/home visits to individuals identified at risk to provide support in their homes and encourage engagement
- Harm reduction: raising awareness of safer drug use practices, sterile injecting equipment to reduce the risk of blood borne infections and sexual health advice
- Communities: raising awareness in the community of risks of drug use; how to respond to an overdose and where support is available;
- Referral pathways: a direct referral pathway between ADA and the custody suite, Police Scotland introduced.
- Whole family/city approach to increasing access to naloxone –reach beyond alcohol and drug services
- Alcohol Brief Intervention training being rolled out in non-clinical settings.

Many children face the traumatic experience of a parent dying from substance use and multi-agency work in the last year has contributed to children's services having amended child protection processes to ensure, that where there was a risk of a child being adversely affected by the potential death of a parent, professionals are required to ensure naloxone is held in the house.

The preventative approach has also been community focused, as we strive to ensure that naloxone is always available when needed, and we have seen a number of community centres in priority neighbourhoods undertake the training and have a publicly available stock of naloxone.

This infrastructure will continue to ensure naloxone is easily available and the number of kits being distributed can be targeted to making every opportunity count to save lives. Example of other new naloxone distributors in the city also include Shelter Scotland and Grampian Housing Association.

We continue to run media campaign to raise awareness of naloxone, how to use it, and how to access it has also been successful. The campaign used radio, bus, and social media platforms to reach a wide audience. The campaign increased the number of people who visited the website, ordered naloxone online, or attended the training sessions. The campaign also addressed the stigma and fear associated with carrying or using naloxone.

### Access to support

Multi-agency project work aimed to increase uptake of drug treatment and specifically within Locality Areas by 10% each year and to increase naloxone supply by 10%. The project achieved both aims with a 24% increase in uptake of drug treatment (active clients at Integrated Drug Service (IDS) from 1083 (2019/20) as an average across the year for the number of active clients at IDS to 1340 in 2023/24.

The improvements tested have allowed for barriers such as access/support to get to appointments and engagement to be reduced. Having a clear pathway for people who have had a near fatal overdose has allowed discussion with partners and an assertive approach to encourage engagement with services in our priority neighbourhoods. The indication is that this support is helping people re engage with services.

Between July 2022 and December 2023, 490 individuals overall have been supported, with 65 unique individuals receiving a service through the sharp response service and 425 unique visits being undertaken by the Crisis Response service. In addition, there were 72 referrals from Kittybrewster Custody Suite. From the targeted approach, data has shown increased engagement with ADA Drugs Services by key priority neighbourhoods.

The 10% increase in engagement has been achieved in each postcode, with a 26%, 23%, 42% and 27% increase in 22/23 in AB11, AB16, AB24 and other respectively compared to 20/20-21/23 3-year average. In 2023/24 the project showed sustained improvement with a further 74 new individuals engaged with ADA drug service support from the three priority neighbourhoods: AB11 [12], AB16 [27] and AB24 [35].

There has also been a 34% increase in referrals to Assertive Outreach (AO) in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22, which has led, to referrals to the Sharp Response and Crisis Response services.

Through the Crisis Response service, a team is available daily to check in with partners in Housing (ACC), ARI (NHS), Assertive Outreach (AO) team and others to identify those at risk and who are requiring support/ access to treatment. Daily crisis intervention/home visits are then undertaken, enabling rapid assessment and referral to the appropriate service.

### Naloxone Access and Training

We have increased the supply of naloxone through non-Drug and Alcohol services, resulting in a 31% increase in naloxone distribution between 2022 and 2023. Aberdeen City Council has developed a self-sustaining training and resource naloxone model which can be used as a template for other organisations/ groups. The training takes a “trauma” lens to substance use which is an important factor in reducing the stigma many substance users experience in services and communities and sets many of their challenges in the context of potential adverse childhood and adult experiences. This approach also recognises that many of our staff are also community members and may also have friends or family members experiencing harms from substance use.

To date 350 staff within ACC have been trained and 9 service points stocking naloxone (community centres, library, community justice settings, children’s services settings). As well as training individual staff an approach has been taken to train up whole departments. This has included housing and homelessness services, justice staff and library staff. Local Elected members have undertaken the naloxone training and participated in efforts to raise public awareness.

Plans are in place to continue to spread the use of naloxone with all our libraries (apart from 2) soon to be stocking to distribute naloxone and to train volunteers in all our Warm Spaces. Upcoming naloxone distributors in the city also include Langstone Housing Association and Instant Neighbour.



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# PLACE

## KEY DRIVERS

- Reducing emissions across the city through delivery of Aberdeen's Net Zero Vision & Route-map
- Provide individuals and communities with the social resources needed to make informed decisions about health and lifestyle
- Encouraging adoption of healthier lifestyles through a whole family approach
- Supporting different ways for active travel in everyday journeys, using partners and volunteers to address safety, infrastructure, fitness, wellbeing and confidence
- Increasing the diversity, quality and use of the Aberdeen's green spaces by facilitating community participation in them to restore nature and increase people's satisfaction, health, and wellbeing
- Increasing the area of public, private and community land managed for nature, in recognition of the nature crisis and in alignment with global and national ambitions to protect 30% of land and 30% of water by 2030 (30-30-30)
- Provide individuals and communities with the social resources needed to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation
- Contributing to the delivery of Aberdeen Adapts by developing a bottom-up approach to community resilience to encourage greater ownership and independent action towards understanding communities' risks from climate change and adapting to them
- Mitigating the causes of immediate and acute poverty



Image © Felix Mooneram

# PLACE HIGHLIGHTS



**60% reduction** in electricity and carbon emissions due to the installation of ultra efficient LED lanterns across the city



**8.6% reduction** in NO2 concentrations ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) across the city



An estimated **20% reduction** in annual electricity consumption at Marischal College due to the **LED lighting project**

## MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

### Reducing emissions

A city-wide Mobility Strategy was published in November 2022, as part of a suite of enabling strategies launched alongside the Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap. The Mobility Strategy was developed by NESTRANS with support from Aberdeen City Council and sets key outcomes, strategic objectives and measures to enable a transition towards a more sustainable transport network. Ongoing work on a new Local Transport Strategy supports the Mobility Strategy and will allow for it to be refreshed in due course.

In partnership with NESTRANS and Aberdeenshire Council, work has commenced on identifying an aspirational regional active travel network, with public and stakeholder consultation taking place in summer 2024. It is hoped that the network will be finalised in late 2024, with the projects identified developed into a prioritised list for the Council and partners to progress to feasibility, design and delivery stages, as resources allow.

Bikeability Training continues to be delivered in Aberdeen City Schools by Adventure Aberdeen and by Sustrans I Bike Officers with external funding. In addition to Bikeability Level 2 taking place, a need was identified by the ACC TSAP team to offer Bikeability Level 1 to some children who did not yet have the necessary cycling skills to be able to undertake Level 2. External Funding for this was sought in 2023/24 which was supplied by Adventure Aberdeen and funding has been sought for 2024/25.

Engagement on the key projects has continued as progress on the city centre and beach masterplan moves into delivery.

The Fleet Replacement Programme continues to consider carbon friendly alternatives where possible. This is currently negatively impacted by insufficient EV infrastructure and supply of hydrogen.

The installation of ultra efficient led lanterns now being used throughout the city have seen a 60% reduction in electricity consumption and carbon emissions (4348 down to 2091) tCO<sub>2</sub>e. All lighting now on central management system (CMS) which enables monitoring of onsite equipment reducing the number of site visits required by engineers and adaptively control the city's lighting.

The Joint Procurement Service, covering Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Highland Councils have been leading on a project which will see all three Councils, plus Moray Council, work together to improve their public electric vehicle charging offering in the north of Scotland. A business case was developed; to look at how the Councils could jointly procure a partner to work with them, both to manage and to grow the EV charging infrastructure on Council land for both fleet and public to use. Part of this looked at the opportunities for growth and the likely investment that would be required from all parties. Off the back of this, a funding application was made to Transport Scotland for £6.9M to cover all Council areas and was successfully received in January 2024. This has enabled the joint procurement service to launch the procurement exercise to market in 2024/25. It is anticipated that a 15-20 year contract will be offered, depending on the responses received and a partner is expected to be in place by April 2025. The Council also continues to encourage other parties to install publicly-available EV charge points on their own land and has been pleased to see an uptake from supermarkets, leisure destinations, shopping centres and petrol filling stations in doing this.

Meantime, the Council continues to use its own funds, from the Non-Housing Capital Plan, to install electric vehicle charging infrastructure. New units have been installed and powered up at Virginia Street and Summer Street car parks (public) and Mastrick Road and Duthie Park (Fleet) in 2023/24. More units are being installed during the 2024/25 financial year and will be reported on in the next update.

Phase 1 of the South College Street improvements, and associated city centre bus priority measures (both funded via the Bus Partnership Fund), were delivered in autumn 2023. Work is ongoing to identify, design and deliver further improvements on key corridors to and from the city centre via the individual corridor studies and through the development of Aberdeen Rapid Transit. This work is now being funded through the Aberdeen City Region Deal.

Bus priority measures on Market Street, Guild Street and Bridge Street were implemented in autumn 2023, via Experimental Traffic Order. This also included traffic management measures on Union Terrace and Schoolhill. Construction of Union Street Central is now underway.



## NATURAL ECONOMY

### Open Spaces

79% of respondents in the Aberdeen Open Space Audit: 2024 Public Survey were satisfied, fairly satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of Aberdeen's greenspace and open space areas. Note this question formed part of a stand-alone survey as part of the Aberdeen Open Space Audit: 2024. Respondents in the Aberdeen City Voice: 46th Survey reported being satisfied or fairly satisfied with the quality of green/open spaces (66.9% and 68% respectively)

### Blue/Green Infrastructure

City Scale Trial Project delivered through the SEPA and Scottish Water's agreement. ACC hosted the agreement trial to strategically review improvements to Aberdeen's drainage systems. A report is close to completion and may be submitted to Council to seek support to continue to work towards:

- Managing rainwater and wastewater drainage more sustainably.
- Investing wisely to protect the water environment to minimise energy and resource use and maximise social and economic benefits.

### Increasing Nature Areas

The Den Burn Restoration project has completed concept design and is now looking for funding to complete detailed design and construction.

Aberdeen B-Lines is working to restore 20 hectares of council owned land for pollinating insects by restoring wildflower meadows and grassland habitats. The project is focused along the River Don and River Dee corridors and along the coast.

### Community Involvement

A Citywide Nature Awareness Campaign will be launched in 2024 to address LOIP Project Improvement Aim 15.3 that 25% of people report that they understand the importance of nature on both their neighbourhood and individual wellbeing by 2026. The campaign was approved at the Natural Environment & Transport (NZET) Committee on 11th June 2024.

The Aberdeen Climate and Nature Pledge (launched November 2022) continued to be promoted to organisations and citizens across the city. There are over 100 signatories to date, 75 of which are individuals or households.



The Aberdeen Local Environmental Action Fund (LEAF) pilot was recently launched with NESCAN (North East Scotland Climate Action Network). The purpose of this fund is to empower communities to take positive action in the places and on things that matter to them, with a focus on communities making environmental improvements, improving biodiversity and tackling climate change. Options to further expand the fund in 2024/25 are being explored.

#### Protect the City's natural environment

A [property level flood protection grant](#) remains in place. The Council runs a 50% funded grant scheme to assist protecting property from flooding. The grant is for private residences and commercial properties.

Where there is surface water flood risk, the status of priority hakes and gullies continue to be checked so these can be cleared if necessary.

Enabling prompt response to flood alerts, the Council continues to operate a Duty Flood Officer rota, checking SEPA water Levels for the Rivers Dee and Don, ACC water levels for Den Burn and Culter Burn and monitoring coastal tide levels. Monthly visual inspections take place for any defect or issues with the rock armour, seawall structures, including ramps and steps and condition of timber groynes. Beach levels are also monitored on a bi-weekly basis, these can vary naturally along the Aberdeen coastal front, low sand levels present a risk to the stability of the seawall and a risk to the public access and safety.

Flood studies are ongoing in high priority flood risk areas.

Water level gauges have been installed in critical locations all over Aberdeen which give a warning for potential flood risk, allow us to monitor potential debris built up at the trash screens and use data for flood studies.

A CCTV camera has been fitted to monitor water levels at Maryculter Bridge on the River Dee and more are planned for other critical locations where remote visualisation with assist prioritisation of resources during a flood event.

Enhancement of Green infrastructure is ongoing through the application of relevant Aberdeen Local Development Plan and NPF4 policies. Also, through the City Centre and Beach Masterplan projects.

### WASTE AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

#### Minimise the levels of waste

Following three online stakeholder workshops carried out in March 2023 in partnership with Zero Waste Scotland, an output report was published in May 2023 summarising the output of this series. The report is available on the Net Zero Aberdeen website and includes output from facilitated discussions on the city-wide approach to a circular economy, and further opportunities, as part of the Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap and Circular Economy Strategy.

#### Reduce carbon emissions from waste

Construction of the Ness Energy from Waste Facility (EFW) was completed in December 2023 and a formal opening event was held in April 2024. The facility is now treating residual waste from Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils. Electricity is generated by the facility and being exported to the national grid. Work is ongoing to connect the EFW to the Torry Heat Network and this is expected imminently.

Actions through the Green Champion Network to promote and increase reuse and recycling of the Council's internal waste included a Repair What You Wear series to support learning and development of core mending skills. In addition, a learning workshop for Champions took place on reusable period products, covering the impacts of plastic products on the planet and the work by colleagues to distribute products across the city. Further actions carried out by the Champions included workplace growing, food waste champions and litter picks. Work by Archives, Galleries and Museums included reducing coffee waste and continued recycling of wood waste from crates for local growing initiatives such as the community garden in Seaton. A Libraries Service Green Week was held in October 2023 with activities focused on repair and growing. Tasks relating to the environment and waste management were added to the Council's Premises Responsible Person procedure.

### ENERGY SUPPLY

#### Support growth and development of decarbonised energy supplies

A hydrogen infrastructure feasibility study was completed, and the outputs of the study were used as the basis for a proposal to the Clean H2 Partnership, Horizon Europe fund, to establish an H2 Valley in the North East of Scotland focused on stimulating demand for H2 in relation to mobility (vehicles, maritime and trains), agriculture and decarbonising whisky distilleries. The decision on the success of us securing funds will be made in late 2024.

Aberdeen City Council currently works with Scottish Enterprise, ETZ Ltd and AREG to support potential supply chain companies based in Aberdeen to recognise and develop their capabilities to benefit from the major investment that is happening in respect of ScotWind.

There is ongoing discussion with Aberdeen Heat & Power and Scottish Government for the preparation of the Licensing and Consenting under Heat Networks (Scotland) Act.

Due to Scottish Government financial constraints the Green Growth Accelerator programme has been suspended. When it comes back into operation the Council will re-engage with the Scottish Government.

#### Reduce fuel poverty

Phase 1 of Torry Heat Network is complete, and Phase 2 is under construction, it is anticipated that the low carbon heat from Energy from Waste will contribute towards decarbonisation of heat throughout the city heat network. As part of the Heat Networks (Scotland) Act, the heat consumption will be metered, and heat charges will be monitored.

The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) priority areas includes fuel poverty data and identifying energy efficiency improvements which can potentially mitigate fuel poverty.

Continuous engagement with NHS, SCARF and other partners around providing support wherever its needed and assisting in mitigating fuel poverty.

Marischal College LED lighting project now complete with an estimated 20% reduction in annual electricity consumption for the building.

# KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS / LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING

The preceding sections of this report provide a both narrative and quantitative review of the commitments set out within the Aberdeen City Council Delivery Plan 2023/24. Supplemental to this review, this section provides an overview of certain key performance indicators and directs readers to detailed benchmarked performance information comparing the performance of council services over time and in relation to Scotland’s other local authorities.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARK FRAMEWORK (LGBF)

The LGBF is a high-level benchmarking tool designed to support understanding of why variations in cost and performance are occurring between similar councils, and through this understanding act as a catalyst for improving services, targeting resources to areas of greatest impact and enhancing public accountability.

The LGBF helps compare key council services against a suite of efficiency, output and outcome indicators that cover all areas of local government activity.

All of Aberdeen City Council’s data outputs for these LGBF measures can be accessed through the link: [Council Delivery Plan Key Measures](#) The LGBF applies the standards for statistical rigour set out in the three pillars of the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice – trustworthiness, quality, and value. One impact of this is that data can take some time to be analysed and released for all 32 local authorities. The data that follows is, therefore, for the year 2022/23.

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL BENCHMARKED PERFORMANCE

The tables below relate to the ranking for Aberdeen City Council’s performance relative to all of Scotland’s local authorities i.e. position out of 32. Table 1 below showing that the Council had almost the same number of measures ranked in the top half as in the bottom half. It also shows that this reflects an improvement on the previous year. There are many reasons why the relative performance of councils might differ including different demographics and legitimately different priorities and choices on the use of resources.

Table 1

	Indicator Outcomes by Quartile Position			
	2022-23	% of total	2021-22	% of total
Indicator Outcomes in Quartile 1 (1st to 8th)	18	19.7%	17	18.7%
Indicator Outcomes in Quartile 2 (9th to 16th)	27	29.7%	22	24.2%
Indicator Outcomes in Quartile 3 (17th to 24th)	29	31.8%	31	34.1%
Indicator Outcomes in Quartile 4 (25th to 32nd)	17	18.7%	21	23.1%

Table 2 below shows that the Council’s relative ranking improved for almost twice as many indicators as it declined.

Table 2

	Improvement by Quartile Standing			
	2022-23	% of total	2021-22	% of total
No. of Indicators Improving by Quartile Standing	20	21.9%	11	12.1%
No. of Indicators Unchanged by Quartile Standing	60	65.9%	63	69.2%
No. of Indicators Deteriorating by Quartile Standing	11	12.1%	17	18.7%
Total Number of Indicators	91	100.0%	91	100.0%

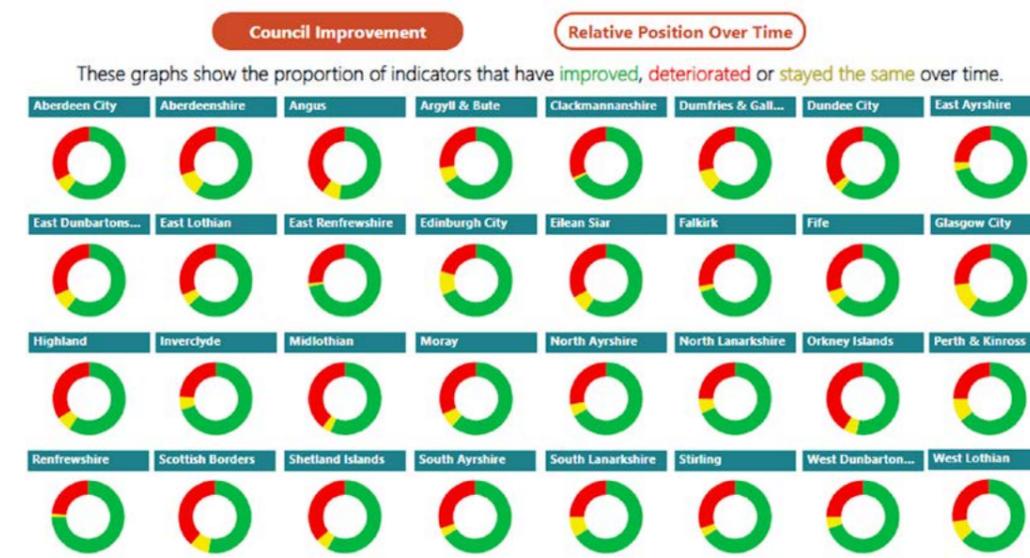
Finally, Table 3 compares performance against each LGBF indicator to the target agreed by the Council and expressed in a Red, Amber, Green “traffic light” system, where green represents that the target was met, amber that the target was nearly met and within an agreed threshold, and red that the target was missed. Overall performance in 2022/23 was almost identical as in the previous year with just over two thirds of LGBF indicators holding green status against the agreed target.

Table 3

	Performance Data Traffic Light – Value based			
	2022-23	% of total	2021-22	% of total
Green	61	67.1%	61	67.1%
Amber	18	19.7%	20	21.9%
Red	12	13.1%	10	10.9%

The graphic below provides a visual representation of improvement against the full Local Government Benchmarking suite of Performance Indicators on the base year for each of the 32 Scottish Local Authorities.

This suggests that Aberdeen City’s general improvement performance is in line with the national median over time and that, where performance deterioration is evident, these trends largely track those same measures where, at a national level, a decline in performance can also be observed.



Source: Local Government Benchmarking Framework Benchmarking Overview Report 2024