

# Education, Children and Young People Committee

## 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday 4 May 2022

### Scottish Attainment Challenge inquiry

#### Introduction

The Committee is scrutinising the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the Scottish Government's policy commitment to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

Evidence taken as part of its inquiry thus far has included written evidence received in response to the Committee's [call for views](#), which closed on 8 February. The Committee has also held three formal evidence sessions, on [9 February](#), [23 February](#) and [20 April](#).

During these sessions, the Committee took evidence from—

- academics and policy experts who have researched the Scottish Attainment Challenge, on 9 February,
- third sector organisations that provide services funded through the Attainment Challenge, on 23 February and
- education trade unions on 20 April.

The Committee has also held informal engagement sessions with children at Sidlaw Primary School, and with care experienced young people and young people supported by Barnardo's in Greenock. The notes of these sessions can be found at this [link](#).

#### Case study approach

The Committee has agreed to take evidence from case-study local authority areas involving witnesses from primary schools, secondary schools, and local authority representatives from the selected areas.

The Scottish Attainment Challenge is intended to provide significant autonomy to local authorities and schools and there will be a multitude of approaches within localities. Local authorities are grouped regionally in 'Regional Improvement Collaboratives' (RIC). Scrutiny of the Scottish Attainment Challenge at the level of a RIC will allow the Committee to compare different local authorities and how they work together and with Education Scotland.

The Committee has agreed that the West Partnership RIC, which consists of eight local authorities across the west of Scotland: East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire, and West Dunbartonshire, form the case study area for this inquiry. Thirty-five percent of Scotland's school population attend a West Partnership school. There are over 1000 nurseries, primary, secondary and special schools in the West Partnership, serving mainly urban but also many rural communities.

On Monday 25 April, Members of the Committee met a group of teachers from local authorities in the West Partnership at St Roch's High School in Glasgow. On 27 April, Members of the Committee held an online meeting with parents/carers from within the West Partnership to discuss issues relating to the attainment challenge.

### **Committee meeting**

At its meeting today, the Committee will take evidence from Directors of Education from four local authorities from within the West Partnership—

- Ruth Binks, Director of Education, Communities & Organisational Development, Inverclyde Council;
- Gerry Lyons, Head of Education, Glasgow City Council;
- Tony McDaid, Executive Director of Education Resources, South Lanarkshire Council;
- Mark Ratter, Director of Education, East Renfrewshire , East Renfrewshire Council.

### **Supporting Information**

- A SPICe briefing prepared for this session is included in the Annexe to this paper.

**Education, Children and Young People Committee Clerks  
29 April 2022**



## Education, Children and Young People Committee

### Poverty-related attainment gap – Local Authorities

**4 May 2022**

#### Introduction

This meeting is part of the Committee's inquiry into the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the Scottish Government's policy commitment to close the poverty-related attainment gap. This week the Committee will take evidence from—

- Ruth Binks, Director of Education, Communities & Organisational Development, Inverclyde Council
- Gerry Lyons, Head of Education, Glasgow City Council
- Tony McDaid, Executive Director of Education Resources, South Lanarkshire Council
- Mark Ratter, Director of Education, East Renfrewshire

All four of the local authorities are part of the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative.

The Committee has undertaken three formal sessions with experts, third sector bodies and trade unions. The official reports and papers are linked below.

- [9 February 2022, academics and experts](#)
- [23 February 2022, Third Sector](#)
- [20 April 2022, Trade Unions](#)

The Committee issued [a call for views](#) which ran from 18 January 2022 to 8 February 2022. The Committee has [published 29 responses](#). A briefing on the

themes from those submissions was included in Members' papers for the meeting of 20 April. The Convener sought information on approaches and evidence from other jurisdictions. A short paper outlining some work and examples was also included in members' papers for 20 April.

The Committee is undertaking a programme of informal sessions with young people, teachers and parent/carers. Some of the Committee's engagement has focused on the area covered by the West Partnership RIC.

In previous sessions, the Committee has explored the role of local authorities in supporting closing the attainment gap. The Scottish Government recently updated its approach to the Scottish Attainment Challenge. This session is an opportunity to explore with the panel how local authorities operate, separately and in partnership, as a 'middle layer' of governance and support, and the panel's views on the refreshed approach.

## Refreshed approach to the Scottish Attainment Challenge

In November 2021, the Cabinet Secretary announced a refreshed approach to the Scottish Attainment Challenge. On 30 March, the Scottish Government published a number of documents setting out its new approach.

- [Framework for recovery and accelerating progress](#) ("the Framework")
  - The framework included a refreshed [logic model](#), covering national, regional, and school level activities.
- [Pupil Equity Fund national guidance](#) and [allocations](#).
- [Strategic Equity Fund national guidance](#).
- [Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund national guidance](#)

Perhaps the biggest structural change was a move away from funding of the nine Challenge Authorities, which were determined on the basis of project funding to those local authorities with the highest density of SIMD20 neighbourhoods, to that funding being spread across all local authorities based on the DWP's [Children in Low Income Families data](#) for the 2019/20 financial year. The revised funding approach is called the Strategic Equity Fund. The Challenge Schools Programme has also stopped, with the funding from that programme supporting the funding of PEF.

PEF and SEF Allocations to schools and local authorities have been set out for the 2022-23 to 2025-26 financial years. The intention is that greater certainty of funding will encourage longer term planning, guidance for local authorities on the SEF stated, "in line with the agreement on multiyear funding, it would be beneficial to prepare a 4 year strategic plan." Funding under the SEF includes a number of transition years to 25-26. The allocations for each local authority are reproduced in Annexe A to this paper. Local Authority PEF allocations are also set out in the

Annexe. Comparing PEF funding under the new model to the old model is complicated by the additional 15% Pupil Premium (c£20m) added to 2021-22 to support recovery and rolling challenge schools funding into PEF.

Two of the local authorities represented on the panel were Challenge Authorities: Glasgow and Inverclyde. South Lanarkshire schools received £1.95m through the challenge schools programme. [The four authorities' totals of PEF+SEF allocations in 2025-26 and the percentage change between that figure and the 2020-21 Challenge Funds (school or authority) and PEF (not including the covid related 15% Pupil Premium) are as follows:]<sup>1</sup>

- Inverclyde, £3.2m, down by 47% on 21-22 (ex 15% Pupil Premium)
- Glasgow, £30.3m down by 3%
- South Lanarkshire, £11.4m, up 8%
- East Renfrewshire, £2.0m, up 43%

These figures do not include the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund as, at the time of writing, allocations under that fund are not set out for future years.

It is not clear whether the Scottish Government will up-rate these allocations to take account of inflation and consequent rising wages in the sector – this will of course be subject to decisions in future budgets. Taken as a whole, the funding to local authorities per annum under PEF and SEF is planned to be around £4m lower in 2025-26 than in the funding for the challenge authorities, schools programme and PEF in 2021-22 (not including the pupil premium). If we include the pupil premium into the 2021-22 baseline, the fall is over £23m. However, Members should note that including the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund and the national SAC programmes, the total ASF is going from £195m (+£20m Pupil Premium) in 2022-23 to £200m annually from this financial year.

In the last session, trade union representatives expressed concern to the committee at funding cuts for change authorities. The Committee has also heard criticism about the coverage of funding based on SIMD during this inquiry and previously. Emma Cosgrove from the Fraser of Allander institute told the Committee—

“The evidence that we have in Scotland is often not as good as we would want it to be to identify which small areas, households or children in particular would benefit the most from more resource allocation. It is incredibly difficult for a diverse country with different needs in different parts of the country to agree on what the best approach is. We see that throughout local government funding discussions, and education is no different.” (OR 9 February 2022, col 10)

The [Scottish Government stated](#)—

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<sup>1</sup> This sentence was amended on 4 May 2022 as the original published version contained a typographical error that made the meaning unclear.

“This next phase of the SAC has been developed in partnership with and agreed by COSLA and builds on the evidence set out in the Scottish Government and Education Scotland 5 year report on progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap, the Equity Audit, the Audit Scotland report on educational outcomes, and the OECD review.”

COSLA’s submission to the Committee discussed its view on the process of agreeing the renewed approach to SAC. It said—

“Throughout 2021 we engaged in an open and constructive dialogue with the Scottish Government around the next phase of the Scottish Attainment, resulting in COSLA Leaders agreeing the refreshed structure of SAC funding last year. In particular we welcomed the much clearer links between tackling poverty directly and efforts to tackle the poverty related attainment gap, the multi-year allocation for SAC funding and the funding for all local authorities, in recognition of their strategic role in the programme.”

## **Aims of the programme and progress so far**

The Framework sets out the overall approach. It stated that the refreshed challenge will have a new ‘mission’. This is:

“to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap”

The Framework contextualises the continuing work of the Scottish Attainment Challenge within—

- A need to continue progress, and to speed up progress and to tackle variation in outcomes between and within local authority areas.
- A need to address the negative impact of Covid-19 on children’s health and wellbeing and learning.

It also stated—

“Improving leadership, learning and teaching and the quality of support for families and communities and targeted support for those impacted by poverty remain the key levers to improve outcomes for children and young people.”

The Framework states that work in support of improving outcomes for children and young people will not be achieved by schools alone. It said—

“Prior learning and research evidence shows us that schools and education services alone will not reduce the poverty-related attainment gap. The mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge is one that must be supported by ‘collective agency’ – the range of services, third sector organisations and community partners working together with families, with a clear focus on improving the educational experiences, health and wellbeing and outcomes of children and young people. In this way educators, who are at the heart of

these collaborations, will play a vital role in breaking the cycle of poverty and make a long-term contribution to Scotland's national mission to tackle child poverty.”

The Scottish Government has commissioned evaluations of the ASF. [The fourth was published in March 2021](#). This set out the long-term outcomes it measured progress against for the ASF funding in the previous Parliamentary session. These were—

- Embedded and sustained practices related to addressing the impact of the poverty-related attainment gap.
- All children and young people are achieving the expected or excellent educational outcomes, regardless of their background.
- An education system which is aspirational, inclusive in practice and approaches for all including teachers, parents and carers, children and young people.
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people.

The evaluation highlighted a mixed picture in terms of the quantitative data. It says—

“For the majority of measures, attainment of those from the most deprived areas has increased, although in some cases not at the same rate as those in least deprived areas.”

The evaluation also noted the complexity of this area and that “it remains difficult to assess the reasons behind any observed improvement in attainment or closing the poverty-related attainment gap, and whether these changes have occurred as a direct result of the fund.”

The Committee has explored the progress so far with witnesses. Professor Mel Ainscow stated—

“One of the major achievements, which should not be underestimated, is that, as far as I can see, everyone in the Scottish education system is clear on the agenda. They are clear that the push for equity and the concern for excellence are central to everything. Achievement of that in a short time is something to celebrate. We are talking about a complex process, and, as I said, change takes time.” (OR 9 February 2022, col 2)

During the session with trade union representatives, witnesses drew a distinction between whether the SAC had worked to close the attainment gap and whether it was working. Jim Thewliss from SLS argued that progress was being made, but more could be done to ensure that ASF funded projects were evaluated. (OR 20 April 2022, col 5). The Committee has also explored the impact of covid and there is wide agreement that the pandemic has impacted on the aims to close the attainment gap.

Audit Scotland published its report [Improving outcomes for young people through school education](#) in March 2021. The Audit Scotland report stated—

“The poverty-related attainment gap remains wide and inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19. Progress on closing the gap has been limited and falls short of the Scottish Government’s aims. Improvement needs to happen more quickly and there needs to be greater consistency across the country. The government and councils recognise that addressing inequalities must be at the heart of the response to Covid-19, longer-term recovery and improving education.”

It also stated—

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

The Framework setting out the refreshed approach began by acknowledging that more progress is required. It said—

“The first five years of the Scottish Attainment Challenge saw much progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap but at a limited pace. The pandemic disrupted the learning of our children and young people and had a disproportionate impact on children affected by poverty. The refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge programme, backed by a further commitment of £1 billion from Scottish Government through the Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF), aims to address these challenges and ensure that equity lies at the heart of the education experience for all.”

## **Role of local authorities in closing the gap**

The Framework has a focus on planning processes and ensuring that there is strategic coherence in local authority areas. The role of headteachers to determine PEF activities in their school remains but this is “freedom within a framework”. Local authorities will be expected to work with schools to develop annual ‘stretch aims’ on improving educational and health and wellbeing outcomes and closing the attainment gap. The stretch aims will include certain measures in common (“core”) and others that will be determined locally – in both cases the expected annual improvement will be determined at each local authority level and guidance on how to set these aims is included in the Framework. These aims should be included within the existing local authority education service improvement planning processes.

The Framework sets out monitoring and accountability processes. These will include—

- schools will “explicitly report on the impact on outcomes for learners impacted by poverty” to parent councils and their parent forum



- Scottish Government and Education Scotland will sample these reports annually to continue to inform our understanding of the approaches to tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.
- on-going and regular dialogue between local authorities and Education Scotland
- Local authorities' local education quality and improvement reports should include specific information on how SAC funds are delivering on the agreed aims. These reports will be shared with the Scottish Government and Education Scotland.

Commenting on the pre-refresh SAC model, COSLA's submission stated—

“The structure of funding under the original SAC resulted in a lack of clarity in the role of local authorities, with a greater expectation placed upon Challenge Authorities in line with the additional funding they received from the Scottish Government. However, the role of ‘Non-Challenge Authorities’ was unclear, regarding their role in supporting schools to use their Pupil Equity Fund, and the Challenge Schools in their use of additional funding.”

The role of local authorities was an area of political contest during the first half of the previous session of Parliament. This included a push for greater autonomy at a school level and this was reflected in the design of PEF, which must be passed directly to schools and decisions on what to spend it on made at that level. Local authorities however retained their overall statutory responsibility to provide education in their local area and to improve that education.

The distinction between schools and local authorities can be a little unclear; headteachers are senior officials of the local authority. In this context a local authority (or more properly, an education authority) is considered to be the central administrative support to the education service, in contrast with its school-based staff.

The concern that the central local authority's role can impinge too much upon the professional autonomy of headteachers in their schools has been raised by witnesses during this inquiry. Professor Ainscow suggested that “the job of schools is to improve themselves” and the job of the local authority ought to be to “ensure that happens”. He continued—

“It seems to me that we need a new kind of co-ordination at the local level, such that, rather than the local authorities doing things to schools, the local authority acts as a kind of co-ordinating mechanism, bringing together senior people, particularly headteachers, to discuss how we can work together to address the challenges that we are facing with our children and young people in this kind of culture.” (OR 9 February 2022, cols 4 & 5)

Jim Thewliss saw a similar role for local authorities. He said—

“Empowerment should be based on local authorities acting as agencies to support schools and enable them to spend the available funding and use the

available staffing in the best possible way. Funding should be used at the school level to buy into the services that are required at the local authority level. ... It is about the ethos. We need to look at that and consider how the layer of governance that sits between the Scottish Government and schools can function and operate as an agency to support schools, rather than being a filter.” (OR 20 April 2022, col 16)

The Framework sets out the roles and responsibilities for local authorities, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, Education Scotland, the Scottish Government, the Inspectorate (which is listed separately to Education Scotland), and other services and partners. Local authorities under the SAC are to be responsible for—

- preparing annual plans, including stretch aims, to contribute to the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge;
- supporting school improvement through providing assistance to schools and partners by:
  - supporting schools to identify poverty-related gaps through coaching, professional learning and supporting access to tracking and monitoring and data analysis tools;
  - providing professional learning around planning (data, aims/ outcomes and measures), interventions and approaches;
  - offering practical support to schools, where required, in terms of financial management and HR; and
  - supporting and challenging schools in their use of PEF to make progress in improving the health and wellbeing and educational outcomes of children and young people impacted by poverty.
- effectively using data, and the Scottish Attainment Challenge Logic Model, to explore a shared understanding of the local context with Education Scotland, supporting the setting of ambitious local authority stretch aims, monitoring performance and progressing towards achieving these stretch aims;
- ongoing, active monitoring of plans for recovery and to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap and improve health and wellbeing, supporting and challenging key stakeholders and/or partners; and adjusting plans where necessary to ensure progress;
- reporting on progress toward their locally identified local authority stretch aims;
- reporting on the effective investment of Attainment Scotland Funding;
- collaborating with a range of services across the local authority and in local communities to secure additional contributions to the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge; and,

- engaging in professional dialogue with Education Scotland and Scottish Government to support maximum impact of the resources benefiting children and young people affected by poverty, including through professional dialogue to support local self-evaluation and improvement planning, such as the development of stretch aims.

As part of the reforms in the previous session, local authorities across Scotland agreed to collaborate through Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs). The role of RICS to support the SAC is also set out in the Framework.

“Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) continue to bring local authorities together to secure excellence and equity in education – including contributing to the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge – by:

- providing educational improvement support to practitioners through dedicated teams of professionals, drawing on local authority and Education Scotland staff and others;
- providing focus across partners through a joint regional plan and work programme, aligned to the NIF and to regional and local priorities; and
- facilitating and creating the conditions for impactful collaborative working between practitioners, schools and system leaders, including professional learning, innovation and the sharing of best practice.”

The Framework provides details on the expected role of the central local authority in setting the local strategic plans and aims, supporting schools and reflecting on schools’ plans in developing their improvement plans (including the SAC aspects of those) in a two-way process. The relationship between local and indeed school policy and the on-the-ground knowledge of school-based staff and practitioners was explored by Emma Cosgrove; she told the Committee that her research had highlighted that—

“Teachers have a very good gauge of pupils and are probably best able to understand what is happening in pupils’ home lives. However, it is often not possible to reflect upwards the information about the issues that children are facing across school and across the local authority. Often, it can feel as though there is a disconnect between what local authorities are saying and doing and what teachers on the ground think is necessary. Part of the reason for that is that it is very difficult for everyone to get the full picture of the situations that need to be addressed at school, local authority and Scotland levels.” (OR 9 February 2022, col 8)

The Guidance for Strategic Equity Funding states—

“Local authorities should work strategically across their school communities, which includes children and young people and their families, and collaboratively with their school leaders and with Regional Improvement Collaboratives to develop approaches to improving the health and wellbeing and educational attainment and achievement of children and young people impacted by poverty.

“Consideration should be given to how the local authority can work with wider local services, such as Community Learning and Development, Social Work or Family Services, and with community or third sector partners to support the health and wellbeing, attainment and outcomes of children and young people impacted by poverty.”

The SEF Guidance also states—

“When planning for the use of Strategic Equity Funding consideration should be given to the totality of Attainment Scotland Funding in local authorities and how the plans read across to wider local service plans to support children and young people impacted by poverty.”

The PEF guidance says, “Local authorities are advised to issue specific complementary guidance about how the funding will operate locally.”

## Implementation

Professor Mel Ainscow said—

“Educational change is about implementation; you can have the best policies in the world, with the sort of wonderful brochures and documents that Scotland is very good at—you have some fabulous documents; indeed, they are so beautiful that I have shared them in other countries—but the real challenge is implementation down the levels. As I keep reiterating, teachers are policy makers, and we have not only to engage and support them but to give them freedom. We have to give teaching back to teachers.” (OR 9 February 2022, col 5)

The freedom that Professor Ainscow envisages is one tempered by mutual professional accountability, and collaboration between teachers and between schools. Professor Becky Francis from the EEF agreed broadly with Professor Ainscow’s suggestions, she added—

“Nevertheless, within that, local authorities play a key role as brokers and in providing the sort of support and challenge that Mel Ainscow highlighted. To do that, schools and local authorities both need a pipeline of evidence-led policies and, fundamentally, interventions and programmes that they can use to support the most vulnerable children in school. That is the role that the EEF has been developing in the English education system over the past 10 years—with great success, we think—and we have been able to mobilise some of those proven approaches and interventions at national level during the pandemic. Indeed, it is heartening to see our famous teaching and learning toolkit being signposted in the pupil equity fund resources and guidance.” (OR 9 February 2022, col 17)

As with previous years, the PEF guidance highlights a number of resources which can support schools in deciding how to spend PEF monies. These include—

- [Scottish Attainment Challenge – Self-evaluation resource](#)

- [Getting It Right For All Learners during COVID-19](#)
- [Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit](#)
- [Guidance on working with the third sector](#)
- Accessing advice from Attainment Advisors who “can be integral to facilitating good communication between headteachers, helping to share best practice and provide guidance on effective planning, implementation and evaluation of interventions in schools, local authorities and Regional Improvement Collaboratives.”

The guidance stated that Education Scotland are in the process of developing an Equity Toolkit which is expected to be available from the summer of 2022. It also highlights CPAG Scotland’s Cost of the School Day work which explores barriers to learning and participation.

Greg Dempster of AHDS identified the lack of protected time for school leaders as a problem his members are concerned about. He said—

“If you are being pulled away to give one-to-one support to individual pupils or cover classes, that will obviously swallow up time that could be used to consider more strategic interventions, to look at your school’s data, to pinpoint areas for action and improvement or to examine research and evidence on what you might be able to do to address gaps.” (OR 20 April 2022, col 9)

In addition to the updated guidance on PEF, Education Scotland recently published [Pupil Equity Funding: Looking inwards, outwards, forwards](#). This publication was based on field work across the country and is intended to share practice and to “help staff involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of PEF to reflect and build on their current practice as we enter the next phase of the Scottish Attainment Challenge”. This work reported that “local authorities identified a number of areas they would like to further develop including updating local guidance, supporting increased collaboration with stakeholders, continuing to develop data literacy in staff and the way data is used to measure the impact of PEF.” It concluded—

“In light of the refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge it will be important for school leaders and local authority staff to work together to consider how they will build on current practice to:

- report robustly on the impact of PEF on children and young people affected by poverty
- ensure clear roles and responsibilities for headteachers, local authority officers and attainment advisors in relation to PEF
- develop longer-term planning which will maximise funding and allow engagement with partners to deliver the most appropriate approaches for closing poverty-related gaps

- meaningfully involve children, young people and their parents in the planning, implementation and evaluation of PEF”

In the last session with trade union representatives, members explored some aspects of the PEF guidance including the involvement of young people, teachers and parents/carers in decision making around deploying PEF resources. As implied by Education Scotland’s conclusion above, this involvement appears to have been patchy thus far.

Local Authorities role in supporting headteachers in how to use PEF appears to have been somewhat enhanced, or perhaps more explicitly set out, in the revised Framework. The Framework retains the role of the headteacher in determining approaches to using PEF in their schools. However, it says—

“Headteachers should expect dialogue with the local authority on how plans for the use of Attainment Scotland Funding at school and local authority level can be strategically aligned to shared strategic aims – collaboration at the planning stage is vital.

“Local authorities remain accountable for the use of Attainment Scotland Funding, including PEF. Therefore, local authorities should support headteachers and have processes in place to ensure plans are targeted and evidence based.”

## **Additionality**

Funding through the Attainment Scotland Fund is intended to be additional. That is, it should not simply displace what the school or local authority would have had in place without the funding. The Framework and new suite guidance for PEF and SEF reiterate that funding should be used for additional purposes. The Framework stated—

“This is additional resource to enhance or up-scale existing, or support new or additional, targeted approaches to tackling the poverty-related attainment gap and improving outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty.”

The extent to which ASF monies have been used to fill gaps has been explored by some witness in this inquiry. Greg Dempster said—

“When the funding in a school or an authority goes down, some of the PEF might not really be additional, depending on our definition of that. It might be used to prevent a reduction in staffing or in what is offered in the school. A school that is to lose a couple of support staff because of a change in funding or policy in the authority might use PEF to retain those staff because it knows that it needs them to make a difference and that losing them would have a negative impact.” (OR 20 April 2022, col 15)

## Evaluation and outcomes

Another theme of discussions both in formal meetings and during the informal sessions the Committee has undertaken has been how to measure impact of interventions.

Professor Ainscow drew the distinction between the goal of the policy to support equity in education and the measurement of the policy. He said—

“The danger that we fall into is that we confuse the goals of what we are trying to do with our ways of monitoring it. The two things must connect, but they are separate. We need to monitor the impact on attainment across the system, but the goal should not be to look for quick fixes, which does not change achievement.” (OR 9 February 2022, col 3)

Angela Bradley of the EIS held a similar view. She argued that interventions should not be determined by how well they may move certain indicators in the short term. She said—

“We need to be careful that we do not go for easily measurable interventions and approaches at the expense of ones that are more complex, with the outcomes being harder to measure.” (OR 20 April 2022, col 26)

Jim Thewliss also echoed this sentiment. He said—

“I would suggest that attainment is too narrow a focus, yes, particularly when we start to look at health and wellbeing, how young people learn within the school environment and how they exist within the local environment outwith school. If we are going to start to engage, as I think we must, with the local community and its support for and input to school, to start to look at the holistic development of young people, the focus on attainment is too narrow. It is the easy one, and I suppose that, in starting this, you start with what is easy and doable. We are now starting to move into the more challenging areas, and it is right and proper that we start to understand just exactly how the three capacities in curriculum for excellence that we have not looked at can start to be unwound a bit in relation to the way that the school environment operates within the local circumstances in which it exists.” (OR 20 April 2022, col 7)

Professor Becky Francis from the EEF stated—

“The Education Endowment Foundation is primarily focused on the attainment gap, but that is for good reason. Attainment is the key predictor of pupil life outcomes. That is well evidenced, particularly for maths and English outcomes. Although none of us would disagree that the curriculum should be broad and balanced and although pupil experience is important and supports attainment, the job of schools is to promote capability and knowledge in the curriculum and ensure that pupils gain that capability and knowledge. Therefore, it is right that we publicly measure those outcomes to see what value we gain from the school system.” (OR 20 April 2022, col 7)

Education Scotland's recently published [Pupil Equity Funding: Looking inwards, outwards, forwards](#) provides details of how local authorities and schools are delivering PEF funded activities in practice. It discusses how local authorities are supporting better data literacy in schools as well as "a wide range of professional learning to support the planning, use, monitoring and reporting of PEF".

Emma Cosgrove suggested that developing the capacity within schools to evaluate interventions is important but it is a complex activity. She said—

"That is not just about gathering metrics on a programme in isolation; it is also about benchmarking with other programmes and constructing control groups that allow you to get into the detail of what is happening and what is succeeding for pupils. That has a resource dimension; it is expensive to do that sort of thing well, and in the current climate it will be difficult to carve money out for that purpose. In the long run, however, such an approach is incredibly important for building on success." (OR 9 February 2022, col 19)

Emma Cosgrove also argued that it is important to ensure "we have a really good understanding about what works and how we will get to the targets although we have been knocked off course [by the pandemic]". (OR 9 February 2022, col 21) Jim Thewliss agreed and suggested that longitudinal studies should take place to understand the impacts of interventions in the longer term.

Ned Sharratt, Senior Researcher (Education, Culture), SPICe Research

28 April 2022

Note: Committee briefing papers are provided by SPICe for the use of Scottish Parliament committees and clerking staff. They provide focused information or respond to specific questions or areas of interest to committees and are not intended to offer comprehensive coverage of a subject area.

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP [www.parliament.scot](http://www.parliament.scot)



## Annexe A: Attainment Scotland Fund Allocations

The total funding under the Attainment Scotland Fund in 2021-22 was £195m and this was topped up with c£20m of additional funding into PEF as a consequence of the pandemic. As well as PEF, this funding included money distributed through to the 9 challenge authorities, the challenge schools programme, the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund, and national programmes.

The totality of the ASF in the current financial year will be £200m, spread across the PEF, SEF, Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund, and national programmes.

The tables below do not examine the totality of the ASF. They do not include either the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund or national programmes. For the purposes of comparison SPICe has not included the c£20m of additional funding into PEF as a consequence of the pandemic, although that baseline data is included for members information.

### *School Level Allocations*

Local Authority	2021-22			2022-23 to 2025-26	
	PEF	<i>PEF Allocation (including 15% Pupil Premium)</i>	Challenge Schools funding*	PEF	Difference in ASF School- level funding (not including 15% Pupil premium)
Aberdeen City	£3,244,452	£3,731,120	£628,360	£3,263,915	-£608,897
Aberdeenshire	£3,034,575	£3,489,762	£-	£3,238,450	£203,875
Angus	£2,277,769	£2,619,435	£-	£2,309,785	£32,016
Argyll & Bute	£1,387,907	£1,596,093	£23,867	£1,366,800	-£44,974
City of Edinburgh	£7,577,249	£8,713,837	£842,314	£7,867,125	-£552,438
Clackmannanshire	£1,593,373	£1,832,378	£-	£1,662,965	£69,592

Dumfries & Galloway	£2,993,409	£3,442,420	£137,343	£3,274,115	£143,363
Dundee City	£5,286,003	£6,078,903	£-	£5,107,235	-£178,768
East Ayrshire	£3,653,301	£4,201,297	£-	£3,809,120	£155,819
East Dunbartonshire	£1,735,251	£1,995,538	£-	£1,726,750	-£8,501
East Lothian	£1,683,058	£1,935,516	£-	£1,775,025	£91,967
East Renfrewshire	£1,411,063	£1,622,722	£-	£1,488,515	£77,452
Falkirk	£3,816,988	£4,389,536	£270,973	£3,962,315	-£125,646
Fife	£10,304,422	£11,850,085	£1,003,921	£10,456,020	-£852,323
Glasgow City	£23,153,830	£26,626,904	£-	£23,208,495	£54,665
Highland	£4,179,892	£4,806,876	£1,164,782	£4,272,140	-£1,072,534
Inverclyde	£2,499,163	£2,874,037	£-	£2,585,290	£86,127
Midlothian	£2,304,724	£2,650,432	£-	£2,423,905	£119,181
Moray	£1,454,680	£1,672,882	£-	£1,484,285	£29,605
Na h-Eileanan Siar	£304,830	£350,554	£-	£340,375	£35,545
North Ayrshire	£4,482,149	£5,154,472	£-	£4,172,180	-£309,969
North Lanarkshire	£9,501,303	£10,926,499	£-	£9,682,080	£180,777
Orkney Islands	£247,980	£285,178	£-	£244,905	-£3,075
Perth & Kinross	£1,772,007	£2,037,808	£-	£1,873,930	£101,923
Renfrewshire	£4,547,452	£5,229,570	£-	£4,769,335	£221,883
Scottish Borders	£1,876,026	£2,157,430	£173,525	£1,923,695	-£125,856
Shetland Islands	£237,444	£273,060	£-	£254,575	£17,131
South Ayrshire	£2,501,613	£2,876,855	£398,161	£2,615,625	-£284,149
South Lanarkshire	£8,616,832	£9,909,356	£1,952,129	£8,949,160	-£1,619,801
Stirling	£1,478,694	£1,700,498	£181,803	£1,452,975	-£207,522
West Dunbartonshire	£3,302,404	£3,797,765	£-	£3,380,835	£78,431
West Lothian	£5,224,743	£6,008,454	£256,365	£5,438,330	-£42,778
<b>Sum of Local Authorities</b>	<b>£127,684,586</b>	<b>£146,837,274</b>	<b>£7,033,543</b>	<b>£130,380,250</b>	<b>-£4,337,879</b>

Source, Scottish Government PEF allocations and (for the Schools Programme, personal correspondence with Scottish Government)

\*Small amounts of the schools programme was allocated to “local authority strategic bids”.

### *Local authority level funding*

This section does not include funding under the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund. At the time of writing the allocations for the current year had not been published. Equally, it will be the case that some of the national programmes will include funding spent at the local authority level.

This section is looking at the allocations of the Strategic Equity Fund and for comparison purposes, the allocations to Challenge Authorities in 2021-22.

<b>Strategic Equity Funding</b>					
<b>Local authorities</b>	<b>Challenge Authority funding 2021-22</b>	<b>2022/2023</b>	<b>2023/2024</b>	<b>2024/2025</b>	<b>2025/2026</b>
Aberdeen City	£0	£473,825	£638,079	£955,190	£1,272,300
Aberdeenshire	£0	£341,052	£678,005	£1,014,957	£1,351,910
Angus	£0	£221,234	£439,809	£658,385	£876,960
Argyll & Bute	£0	£142,162	£282,615	£423,068	£563,522
Edinburgh City	£0	£641,043	£1,274,381	£1,907,719	£2,541,058
Clackmannanshire	£1,571,821	£1,303,282	£1,034,744	£766,205	£497,666
Dumfries & Galloway	£0	£324,859	£645,813	£966,768	£1,287,722
Dundee City	£6,223,465	£4,993,490	£3,763,513	£2,533,537	£1,303,561
East Ayrshire	£3,762,790	£3,127,507	£2,492,224	£1,856,941	£1,221,658
East Dunbartonshire	£0	£133,802	£265,997	£398,191	£530,386
East Lothian	£0	£200,099	£397,793	£595,488	£793,182
East Renfrewshire	£0	£134,591	£267,565	£400,538	£533,512
Falkirk	£0	£332,745	£661,491	£990,237	£1,318,983
Fife	£0	£859,490	£1,708,651	£2,557,812	£3,406,972

Glasgow City	£8,050,000	£7,806,164	£7,562,328	£7,318,493	£7,074,657
Highland	£0	£895,005	£895,005	£1,280,783	£1,705,987
Inverclyde	£3,467,107	£2,748,713	£2,030,319	£1,311,926	£593,532
Midlothian	£0	£174,180	£346,266	£518,353	£690,439
Moray	£0	£170,500	£338,950	£507,400	£675,851
Eilean Siar	£0	£100,000	£100,000	£117,345	£156,302
North Ayrshire	£5,767,252	£4,672,951	£3,578,650	£2,484,349	£1,390,048
North Lanarkshire	£7,478,859	£6,454,948	£5,431,037	£4,407,126	£3,383,214
Orkney Islands	£0	£100,000	£100,000	£109,992	£146,507
Perth & Kinross	£0	£251,412	£499,802	£748,193	£996,583
Renfrewshire	£4,558,000	£3,749,496	£2,940,992	£2,132,488	£1,323,984
Scottish Borders	£0	£225,440	£448,171	£670,901	£893,632
Shetland Islands	£0	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£105,660
South Ayrshire	£0	£299,642	£435,211	£651,500	£867,790
South Lanarkshire	£0	£1,472,616	£1,472,616	£1,857,809	£2,474,577
Stirling	£0	£147,735	£293,694	£439,653	£585,612
West Dunbartonshire	£2,043,815	£1,745,797	£1,447,779	£1,149,761	£851,743
West Lothian	£0	£399,725	£794,646	£1,189,567	£1,584,488
<b>Total LA allocations</b>	<b>£42,923,109</b>	<b>£44,743,505</b>	<b>£43,366,147</b>	<b>£43,020,675</b>	<b>£43,000,000</b>

Source, Scottish Government SEF allocations and (for the 2021-22 Challenge Authority funding, personal correspondence with Scottish Government).

### *Discussion*

The SEF funding for authorities which were previously challenge authorities tapers down from 2022-23 to 2025-25. Funding for the other 23 authorities increases over that period. There is also a £100,000 floor for each local authority. For reference, the cost to employ a teacher full time is circa £50,000 per year.

As was the intention, moving from the 9 challenge authorities to SEF sees a redistribution of resource. With the exception of Glasgow (-3%), all of those authorities will see double-digit percentage reductions of PEF and SEF compared to PEF and Challenge funding between 2021-22 and 2025-26 (between -47% and -21%).

Some those authorities that had large grants under the school's programme in 2021-22, such as South Lanarkshire, will see a reduction in PEF and SEF compared to PEF and schools programme funding in the early years of SEF, but will have increased annual funding further into the programme.

Again, for reference it may be worth contextualising the size of these funds in terms of the budgets for schools in local authorities. In 2021-22 local authorities budgeted for £5.06bn NET (from core budgets, not including ASF funds or other ringfenced grants) on schools (not including ELC).<sup>2</sup> The total ASF, funding to local authorities, including the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund and the 15% covid-related pupil premium was £208m, which is around 4% of the funding combined. This percentage is likely to be higher in Challenge Authorities.

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<sup>2</sup> POBE 2021

