DATA LABEL: Public


West Lothian Council

# *Corporate Policy and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel*

West Lothian Civic Centre
Howden South Road
LIVINGSTON
EH54 6FF

6 December 2022

A hybrid meeting of the **Corporate Policy and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel** of West Lothian Council will be held within the **Council Chambers, West Lothian Civic Centre, Livingston** on **Monday 12 December 2022** at **11:30am**.

For Chief Executive

## BUSINESS

### Public Session

1.      Apologies for Absence

2.      Declarations of Interest - Members must declare any interests they have in the items of business for consideration at the meeting, identifying the relevant agenda items and the nature of their interests.

3.      Order of Business, including notice of urgent business and declarations of interest in any urgent business

4.      Confirm Draft Minutes of Meeting of Corporate Policy and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel held on Friday 23 September 2022 (herewith)

5.      Introduction of Tariffs for Electric Vehicle Charging - report by Head of Finance and Property Services (herewith)

6.      Scottish Welfare Fund Budget and Funding Report - report by Head of Finance and Property Services (herewith)

7.      Update on Approach to Enhancing Support for Customers in relation to Corporate Debts due to the council - report by Head of Finance and Property Services (herewith)

8.      Corporate Asset Management Strategy - Annual Performance Update 2021/22 - report by Head of Finance and Property Services (herewith)

9.      Property Asset Management - Performance Update 2021/22 - report by Head of Finance and Property Services (herewith)

10.     2022/23 Financial Performance - Month 6 Monitoring Report - report by Head of Finance and Property Services (herewith)

11.     Scottish Public Service Ombudsman - Annual Report 2021/22 - report by Chief Executive (herewith)

12.     Library and Museum Services Performance Report - report by Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services (herewith)

13.     Museums Access Policy Report - report by Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services (herewith)

14.     Armed Forces Act 2021 and Armed Forces Covenant Duty Statutory Guidance 2022 - report by Depute Chief Executive (Education, Planning and Economic Development) (herewith)

15.     Horizon Scan - joint report by Head of Finance and Property Services and Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (herewith)

16.     Quarterly Performance Report - Quarter 2 of 2022/23 - report by Depute Chief Executive (Corporate, Operational Services and Housing) (herewith)

17.     West Lothian Council Gaelic Language Plan Monitoring Report - report by Head of Corporate Services (herewith)

18.     Sickness Absence (1 April to 30 September 2022) - report by Head of Corporate Services (herewith)

19.     ICT Asset Management Plan (2019/20 to 2027/28) - Annual Review - report by Head of Corporate Services (herewith)

20.     Workplan (herewith)

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NOTE    **For further information please contact Val Johnston, Tel No.01506 281604 or email val.johnston@westlothian.gov.uk**

# CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (2021)

**This form is a reminder and an aid. It is not a substitute for understanding the Code of Conduct and guidance.**

**Interests must be declared at the meeting, in public.**

**Look at every item of business and consider if there is a connection.**

**If you see a connection, decide if it amounts to an interest by applying the objective test.**

**The objective test is whether or not a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard your connection to a particular matter as being so significant that it would be considered as being likely to influence your discussion or decision-making.**

**If the connection does not amount to an interest then you have nothing to declare and no reason to withdraw.**

**If the connection amounts to an interest, declare it as soon as possible and leave the meeting when the agenda item comes up.**

**When you declare an interest, identify the agenda item and give enough information so that the public understands what it is and why you are declaring it.**

**Even if the connection does not amount to an interest you can make a statement about it for the purposes of transparency.**

**More detailed information is on the next page.**

January 2022

Look at each item on the agenda, consider if there is a "connection", take advice if necessary from appropriate officers in plenty of time. A connection is any link between the item of business and:-
- you
- a person you are associated with (e.g., employer, business partner, domestic partner, family member)
- a body or organisation you are associated with (e.g., outside body, community group, charity)

Anything in your Register of Interests is a connection unless one of the following exceptions applies.

A connection does not exist where:-
- you are a council tax payer, a rate payer, or a council house tenant, including at budget-setting meetings
- services delivered to the public are being considered, including at budget-setting meetings
- councillors' remuneration, expenses, support services or pensions are being considered
- you are on an outside body through a council appointment or nomination unless it is for regulatory business or you have a personal conflict due to your connections, actions or legal obligations
- you hold a view in advance on a policy issue, have discussed that view, have expressed that view in public, or have asked for support for it

If you see a connection then you have to decide if it is an "interest" by applying the objective test. The objective test is whether or not a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard your connection to a particular matter as being so significant that it would be considered as being likely to influence your discussion or decision-making.

If the connection amounts to an interest then:-
- declare the interest in enough detail that members of the public will understand what it is
- leave the meeting room (physical or online) when that item is being considered
- do not contact colleagues participating in the item of business

Even if decide your connection is not an interest you can voluntarily make a statement about it for the record and for the purposes of transparency.

The relevant documents are:-
- Councillors' Code of Conduct, part 5
- Standards Commission Guidance, paragraphs 129-166
- Advice note for councillors on how to declare interests

**If you require assistance, contact:-**
- **James Millar, Interim Monitoring Officer and Governance Manager, 01506 281613, james.millar@westlothian.gov.uk**
- **Carol Johnston, Chief Solicitor and Depute Monitoring Officer, 01506 281626, carol.johnston@westlothian.gov.uk**
- **Committee Services Team, 01506 281604, 01506 281621 committee.services@westlothian.gov.uk**

January 2022

MINUTE of MEETING of the CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on 23 SEPTEMBER 2022.

Present – Councillors Lawrence Fitzpatrick (Chair), Kirsteen Sullivan, Janet Campbell, Tom Conn, Damian Doran-Timson, Lynda Kenna and George Paul

In Attendance - Malcolm Hill (Joint Forum of Community Council's Representative)


1.      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

        Councillor Janet Campbell stated a connection in that she was an NHS employee.


2.      MINUTE

        The Panel approved the Minute of its meeting held on 19 August 2022. The Minute Was thereafter signed by the Chair.

        With regards to a question raised about the content of the Minute, the Governance Manager undertook to provide further guidance to Panel Members on the matter after the meeting was concluded.


3.      ANNUAL COMPLAINT PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22

        The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive providing the council's annual Complaint Performance Report 2021/22.

        It was recommended that the Panel notes the annual Complaint Performance Report 2021/22.

        Decision

        To note the content of the report and of the annual Complaint Performance Report 2021/22.


4.      COUNCIL TAX SCENARIOS

        The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services providing members with an appraisal of potential scenarios regarding future council tax increases to inform discussions on the approach to achieving a balanced budget for 2023/24, which is the first year of the revenue strategy for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28, and for council tax scenarios for future years.

        It was recommended that the Panel :-

            1. Notes the benchmarking information provided in section D.2.2 on the rates of council tax across Scotland and England, compared to

the council tax level in West Lothian.

2. Notes the potential rates of council tax for the period 2023/24 set out in section D.3 and the potential council tax scenarios to significantly reduce the extent of further service reductions to 2023/24.

3. Notes the considerations and factors to mitigate the impact of raising council tax on people on lowest incomes in West Lothian communities provided in section D.4.

4. Notes the assumptions for council tax increases for years 2023/24 to 2027/28 in section D.5 future budget strategy 2023/24 to 2027/28.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report; and

2. To agree that the Head of Finance and Property Services provide all Panel Members with details of the number of properties in West Lothian which were being used as holiday lets.

5.     LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive which provided members with a high-level comparative analysis of the 2020/21 performance of the council in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF), against previous years and the performance of the other 31 local authorities.

It was recommended that the Panel note the council's comparative performance in the LGBF 2020/21.

Decision

To note the content of the report.

6.     QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 1 2022/23

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive which provided the current level of performance for all indicators that support the council's Corporate Plan and are the responsibility of the Corporate Policy and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

It was recommended that the Panel note the performance information and determine if further action or enquiry is necessary for any of the performance indicators in the report.

Decision

To note the content of the report

7.    PROPOSED GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF COMMON GOOD PROPERTY

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services advise of work undertaken by officers to develop suitable governance arrangements for the management of common good property in accordance with the requirements of Part 8 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

It was recommended that the Panel :-

1. Notes and considers the work undertaken by officers to develop suitable governance arrangements for the management of common good property in accordance with the requirements of Part 8 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

2. Notes that officers intend to submit a report to Council Executive on 25 October 2022 that will seek approval and implementation of the proposed governance arrangements.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report; and

2. To agree that the report be presented to a future meeting of Council Executive for approval.

8.    ADULT DISABILITY PAYMENT

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services advising of the local roll out of Adult Disability Payment and the partnership work undertaken to raise awareness and support the application process locally.

It was recommended that the Panel :-

1. Notes the national roll out of Adult Disability Payment, and;

2. Notes the targeted work undertaken to raise awareness of Adult Disability payment

Decision

1. To note the content of the report; and

2. To note that Members Training on 28 September 2022 would cover welfare reform.

9.      COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT POLICY REPORT

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing a draft Museums Service Collection Development Policy 2022-2027.

It was recommended that the Panel considers and provides comment on the draft Museums Service Collection Development Policy, 2022-2027, which will be presented to Council Executive for approval.

Decision

1.  To note the content of the report and of the draft Museums Service Collection Development Policy 2022-2027; and

2.  To agree that the report/policy be presented to a future meeting of Council Executive for approval.

10.     LIBRARY AND MUSEUM SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services provides an update on Library and Museum services performance and activities from October 2021 to March 2022.

The Panel is asked to note the performance and activities of the Library and Museum Service for the period October 2021 to March 2022 contained in Appendix 1 and the 2021/2022 Annual Reader Development Review attached as Appendix 2.

Decision

To note the content of the report

11.     WORKPLAN

A copy of the workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the workplan

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West Lothian Council

## CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

## INTRODUCTION OF TARIFFS FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

## REPORT BY HEAD OF FINANCE & PROPERTY SERVICES

### A.    PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present to the Panel proposals for the introduction of tariffs for use of the electric vehicle (EV) public charging network from 1 February 2023.

### B.    RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel:

1.  Notes the contents of the report and the attached appendices;

2.  Notes the context and rationale for introducing a tariff;

3.  Considers and comments on the proposals to introduce tariffs for use of council operated EV charging facilities, and;

4.  Notes that it is intended to submit the proposals to the Council Executive for approval on 20 December 2022 prior to the introduction of tariffs on 1 February 2023.

### C.    SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I | **Council Values** | Being honest, open and accountable; making best use of our resources; working in partnership. |
| II | **Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)** | Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, section 44; Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019; Public Bodies Duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009; Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, sections 20-22; Scottish Government Power to Advance Wellbeing Guidance (2004); Climate Change Strategy 2021-2028. See D1 for more information.<br><br>An Integrated Relevance Assessment is attached as Appendix 5. |
| III | **Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers** | Delegated authority to carry out reviews of tariff levels and amend accordingly to be added to the Scheme of Delegation for the Head of Finance & Property Services. |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| IV | **Impact on performance and performance Indicators** | The introduction of tariffs for charging will facilitate sustainable provision of services for electric vehicles. |
| V | **Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement** | Outcome 4 – We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities. |
| | | Outcome 8 - We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment. |
| VI | **Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)** | It is forecast that the council will incur expenditure of £275,772 for energy alone from public use of council owned charge points in 2022/23.  This expenditure is forecast to increase to £469,271 in 2023/24. |
| VII | **Consideration at PDSP** | Initial tariff proposals were considered at Environment PDSP on 3 February 2021 where they were widely supported. |
| VIII | **Other consultations** | Operational Services; Financial Management Unit; Legal Services, Corporate Transformation Team; Governance Manager. |

## D.  TERMS OF REPORT

### D.1  Background

The Scottish Government has pledged to phase out the need for new petrol and diesel cars and vans across Scotland by 2032. West Lothian Council owns a total of 32 public charge points at seventeen locations across the area, details of which are set out in Appendix 1.  In addition to those owned by the council, there are a number of charge points operated by other operators including at Bathgate, Uphall and West Calder railway stations.  Capital funding for these public charge points has until recently been provided by Transport Scotland through their Local Authority Installation Programme (LAIP) and the network itself is currently operated by ChargePlace Scotland.  All of the council owned facilities are currently free to use.

The council's approved Climate Change Strategy 2021-28 (CCS) includes an action to consider the introduction of tariffs as part of the development of a wider EV infrastructure plan. £60,000 of funding has been received from the Scottish Government to develop the plan in collaboration with Transport Scotland, Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) and others with a deadline for completion in December 2022, slightly later than the original deadline set out in the CCS.  This infrastructure plan will be used to support future bids to the LAIP replacement, the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (EVIF), and authorities have been advised that continued grant funding will be dependent on tariffs being in place.

Due to rising energy costs and usage levels of existing charging facilities, the tariff proposals set out in this report are being brought forward separately to the plan.  They will, however, be subject to review and amendment if required following its publication.

The introduction of tariffs supports the Scottish Government to deliver the targets set out in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act, helping the council to fulfil our Public Bodies Duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and assists in the delivery of the council's own objectives set out in the Climate Change Strategy 2021-2028.

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The council is legally bound to comply with duties for public sector bodies within the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The duties require that the council must, in exercising its functions, act:

(a) in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of the targets set in or under Part 1 of the Act;

(b) in the way best calculated to help deliver any programme laid before the Scottish Parliament under section 53;

(c) in a way that it considers is most sustainable.

The implementation of tariffs for the use of EV charging is being brought forward using the powers set out in Section 20 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 (Power to advance well-being). The continued operation, development and expansion of an electric vehicle charging network in West Lothian is considered to help advance the wellbeing of residents in West Lothian who have access to electric vehicles. This is to the benefit of current and future EV driving residents, businesses and visitors to the area.

In making that assessment, and as required by the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, officers have had regard to the statutory guidance on the use of the wellbeing power. Drawing on that guidance:

- Councils are in an excellent position to make an assessment of what is needed to advance well-being, and can respond directly to local, regional and national issues
- The power is wide-ranging and enables councils (subject to statutory rules) to do anything they consider is likely to promote or improve the well-being of their area and/or persons in it
- The power may be exercised in relation to, or for the benefit of the whole or any part of a local authority area, and/or all or some of the persons within that area
- Key factors taken into account include economic factors (for example, efficient and effective transport links, the provision of infrastructure) and environmental factors (for example, clean air, protecting communities against the threat of climate change, improving and conserving the quality of the local environment)
- Decisions to commit funds need to be transparent and reflect good practice in assessing options
- Councils should take account of other guidance when appropriate, for example, Ofgem guidance (May 2022) on the provision of power to an EV chargepoint and charging vehicles from the chargepoint
- The Ministers intend that councils should be allowed the flexibility to recover costs from use of the power

Having determined that the use of the power is appropriate, the legislation allows councils to impose reasonable charges for service so long as there is no trading operation involved (none in these circumstances). The justification for the proposed charges is set out below. Without the introduction of tariffs, the operation of council owned chargers would no longer be sustainable.

## D.2  Public Charging Network Tariffs

As the uptake of electric vehicles and the number and use of council owned facilities has increased, so have the costs of operating and maintaining the network.  As noted in Transport Scotland and SFT's EV Charging Infrastructure Report published in July 2021, whilst an important driver of early uptake, the provision of free to use public charge points through the ChargePlace Scotland network needs to change and more sustainable financing models are required to remove barriers to private sector investment.  The Scottish Government recently published their Vision for Scotland's Public Electric Vehicle Charging Network.  The vision sets out five key outcomes:

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- People have access to a well-designed and comprehensive public network of charge points;
- The public electric vehicle network works for everyone regardless of age, health, income or other needs;
- Scotland has attracted private sector investment to grow the public electric charging network, ensuring it meets the needs of all people;
- The public charging network is powered by clean, renewable energy and drivers benefit from advancements in energy storage, smart tariffs and network design, and;
- People's first choice wherever possible is active and public transport with the location of electric vehicle charging points supporting those choices.

The draft vision follows on from a joint Scottish Government and SFT report "Report on Public Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure in Scotland - Opportunities for Growth". This report sets out context on the current landscape of electric vehicle charging in Scotland, draws out initial considerations for growing opportunities for investment in electric vehicle charging in line with the Scottish Government agenda for a just transition to net zero emissions and highlights opportunities for greater private sector investment and involvement in the short to medium term through partnership approaches with local authorities. Further information on potential future delivery models can be found in section D5.

At the time of preparing this report (November 2022) 20 of the 32 local authorities in Scotland have introduced tariffs for use, with others planning to introduce them soon. A summary of local authority tariffs is set out in Appendix 2. In July 2022 ChargePlace Scotland produced a summary of tariff levels using publicly available information, comparing public sector tariffs with those of commercial operators. Results of this benchmarking survey are attached as Appendix 3. It should be noted that a number of these tariffs have been in place for some time and were set before recent increases in energy costs.

Details of existing usage and costs of operating the council owned charge points are set out in section D.3 of this report.

## D.3   Existing and Future Usage and Costs

While the initial capital costs for developing the existing network and providing warranty cover has been met by Transport Scotland grant funding, there are a range of ongoing operating costs which are the responsibility of the council. These include the provision of electricity, replacement of damaged equipment not covered under warranty through damage or misuse and the forecast replacement of assets as they reach the end of their useful lifespan (estimated at around ten years). In addition, existing warranties will expire between 2025 and 2027, further increasing the costs of inspecting and maintaining the charging network.

Table 1 below sets out the cost of electricity for operating the charging network from years 2019/20 to date, demonstrating the significant increases experienced. Costs for the year to date in 2022/23 have increased significantly due to increases in the cost of electricity, and also a significant increase in usage as the number of charge points has expanded.

**Table1 – EV Charge point electricity costs 2019-20 to 2021/22**

|  | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 (Apr-Sept) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Electricity Cost** | £16,430.66 | £34,973.15 | £85,208.63 | £128,500 |

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Table 2 provides details of the number of charging sessions recorded in 2021/22 and 2022/23 (to 31 October). Number of sessions and consumption have been adjusted to remove failed sessions lasting below five minutes and some metering anomalies.

**Table 2 – Charging Session Details**

| Date Range | Total Sessions | Total kWh | Number of Days | Average Sessions/day | Average kWh/Session |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 August 2021 - 31 March 2022 | 25,117 | 487,902 | 243 | 103 | 19.43 |
| 1 April 2022 – 31 October 2022 | 42,733 | 893,293 | 214 | 200 | 20.90 |

Based on the average number and consumption of daily sessions year to date, the projected total number of sessions (not including any further network expansion) in 2022/23 is 66,684, leading to a total electricity consumption of 1,523,607 kWh and an estimated cost of £275,700 for electricity alone.

The cost of repairs and faults not covered by existing warranties is currently approximately £8,000 per annum, although it is expected that this figure will increase due to continued network expansion and increased usage to £10,000 per annum

Based on the latest electricity price information and consumption forecasts, it is estimated that the annual cost of operating and maintaining the council owned EV charging network in 2023/24 will be £606,449 as set out in the table below:

**Table 3 – Estimated Costs of Operation 2023/24**

| | Unit Cost | Total Cost |
|---|---|---|
| Electricity | | £469,271 |
| Maintenance | £0.007 | £15,000 |
| Investment & expansion | £0.040 | £41,899 |
| Replacement | £0.022 | £30,000 |
| Transaction cost | £0.025 | £41,899 |
| Administration | £0.005 | £8,379 |
| Total Cost | | **£606,449** |

**D.4  Proposed Introduction of Tariffs**

It is proposed that in order to recover these costs, ensure the continued operation of the network and support its continued development, tariffs are introduced for use of EV charging facilities. The proposed tariff levels set out in the table below have been designed to be simple to understand and to provide a relatively consistent approach with other local authorities. They are also broadly in line with the recommendations set out by Electric Vehicle Association Scotland in their 2022 Tariff Guidance document and incorporate the following elements:

- Unit cost of electricity
- Maintenance
- Future investment & expansion
- Cost of capital for replacement of existing equipment
- Transaction costs
- Administration costs

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**Table 4 – Proposed Tariffs from 1 February 2023**

| Charger Type | Minimum Charge | Unit Rate/kWh | Maximum Stay Limit | Overstay Charge |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rapid Charger (43-50kW) | £1 | £0.40 | 50 Minutes | £10 overstay charge (following 10-minute grace period).<br><br>No return within 90 Minutes |
| Fast Chargers (22kW) | £1 | £0.30 | 180 Minutes | £10 overstay charge (following 10-minute grace period).<br><br>No return within 90 minutes |
| Other Chargers (7kW) | £1 | £0.30 | None | None |

Based upon EV charging usage estimates, the tariffs set out in the above table will generate estimated income of £603,348.

It is proposed that tariffs would be reviewed at least annually prior the start of each financial year, taking account of latest electricity prices (which are the main cost component) and other costs, and it is recommended that powers to amend tariff levels are delegated to the Head of Finance and Property Services.  Charges would be confirmed by the end of February for the forthcoming financial year but would be subject to further review if costs change significantly in year.  It is forecast that continued uncertainty in the global energy markets will lead to further increases in the unit cost of electricity in 2024/25 and tariffs will need to reflect this.  It should also be noted that as grant funding for infrastructure delivery reduces and potential alternative delivery models as set out in section D.4 are developed, other elements of the tariff (and particularly those relating to relating to network expansion, maintenance, replacement costs and administration) are likely to increase considerably.

As well as recovering the costs of operating the network, the tariffs have been designed to maximise availability of rapid and fast charging facilities while encouraging good driver behaviour, with an overstay charge applied on rapid and fast chargers which is triggered when the maximum stay and grace periods have expired.  In order to further ensure that availability of chargers is maximised, it is proposed that Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) will be put in place to formally designate EV charging bays for use by electric vehicles only.

In order to make usage as accessible as possible, contactless payment facilities will be fitted to existing charge points where possible and all new chargers will have this included as standard.  ChargePlace Scotland as the network operators will collect payments on behalf of the council and users can also set up an account that is automatically debited when the charge points are used.

**D.5   Future Infrastructure Delivery Models**

As noted in the background to this report and in section D.2, officers are currently working with SFT and Transport Scotland to develop an EV infrastructure Plan.  £60,000 of grant funding has been made available to all local authorities to support development of these plans in 2022, with the aim of supporting the objectives set out in the Scottish Government's Vision for Scotland's Public Electric Vehicle Charging Network.  The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (EVIF) launched in April 2022 will provide up to £60 million to local authorities over the next four years (2022 – 2026), with £30 million coming

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from the Scottish Government and a further £30 million anticipated to be invested from the private sector. One of the priorities put forward to accelerate commercial investment and support outcome three of the vision is "Enabling new models of public electric vehicle charge point financing and delivery, focused on public and private partnerships, to support and coordinate investment".

Some of the potential alternative delivery models for the delivery of future EV Infrastructure are set out below. A crucial first stage to support all of these models is the introduction of tariffs for the use of charge points as the current free at the point of use model is unsustainable and disincentivises commercial investment. In addition, it is likely that there will be geographical locations which are less suitable for commercial operators but would be important to ensure a just transition to zero carbon vehicles. As such, there is a small provision within the proposed tariff to support continued development in these areas through network expansion and investment.

**Table 5 – Potential Alternative Delivery Models**

| Model | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|---|
| Council Owned & Operated Network | • Council retains full control over tariff setting, locations, specifications and pace of rollout. | • Significant resources required to develop and deliver the network.<br>• All risks retained by council |
| Joint Venture between Council and Private Sector Partner | • Council retains a degree of control over levels of tariffs, locations and specifications<br>• Benefit of private sector experience in developing, delivering and managing networks<br>• Shared risks<br>• Leveraging of private finance could provide more rapid expansion | • Potentially complex legal arrangements required |
| Network Fully Divested to Private Sector | • Minimal council intervention and resources required<br>• Benefit of private sector experience in developing, delivering and managing networks<br>• Contractor takes on all risks<br>• Leveraging of private finance could provide more rapid expansion | • Potential reluctance to develop less profitable infrastructure (e.g. residential)<br>• Potentially complex legal arrangements required<br>• No control over tariffs, locations and specifications |

The EV Infrastructure Plan will be developed over the coming months and will be presented to the Panel for review once complete.

### D.6   Planning & Building Standards

In order to encourage charging at home where possible and the wider expansion of EV charging facilities in other locations the council, through the approved Air Quality Planning Guidance, has required the installation of EV charge points in new developments for some time. The Scottish Government is also bringing forward legislation in 2022 that will amend Building Standards regulations to specify EV charging requirements in new builds

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and major refurbishments. Details of the current Planning Guidance and proposed Building Standards are set out in Appendix 4.

**D.7 Next Steps**

In order to implement tariffs for council owned public use EV charging points by 1 February 2023, allowing for the one month notice period required by CPS, it is proposed that the following timetable is agreed:

- Report to Council Executive – 20 December 2022
- Implement tariffs at council owned sites – 1 February 2023

Officers from Property Services will liaise with Operational Services colleagues to bring forward the TRO's required to support the introduction of tariffs.

**E. CONCLUSION**

Usage of council operated EV charge points in West Lothian has increased significantly in recent years, with forecasts indicating a continued rise in EV ownership and therefore further increased demand. The introduction of tariffs for council operated charge points will allow us to recover the costs of operating the network, maximise availability of rapid chargers by improving driver behaviour and encourage private investment in the network, further increasing provision.

**F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

Climate Change Strategy - West Lothian Council 26 October 2021
https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/viewDoc.asp?c=e%97%9Di%91oy%8C

Scottish Government's Vision for Scotland's Public Electric Vehicle Charging Network
https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/a-network-fit-for-the-future-draft-vision-for-scotland-s-public-electric-vehicle-charging-network/

Report on Public Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure in Scotland - Opportunities for Growth
https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/report-on-public-electric-vehicle-ev-infrastructure-in-scotland-opportunities-for-growth/

Electric Vehicle Association Scotland Tariff Guidance 2022
https://www.eva.scot/assets/documents/EVA_Scotland_Tariff_Guidance_for_Scotland_2022_Issue_2.pdf

Taking charge: selling electricity to electric vehicle drivers (Ofgem Guidance)
https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-03/Taking%20charge%20-%20selling%20electricity%20to%20EV%20drivers%20-%20accessible%201.4.pdf

**Appendices/Attachments:**
Appendix 1 – Existing West Lothian Council Public Network
Appendix 2 – Summary of Current Local Authority Tariffs (Scotland)
Appendix 3 – SFT Tariff Benchmarking Exercise (November 2022)
Appendix 4 – Planning and Building Standards Requirements
Appendix 5 – Integrated Relevance Assessment Form

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**Donald Forrest**

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**Head of Finance & Property Services**
**12 December 2022**

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## Appendix 1 – Existing West Lothian Council Public Network

| Site | Charger Type | Vehicle Capacity |
|---|---|---|
| Acredale Car Park, Bathgate | 1 x 22kW Dual Outlet | 2 |
| Almondvale Stadium, Livingston | 1 x 22kW Dual Outlet | 2 |
| Almondvale Stadium, Livingston | 1 x 50kW Rapid Charger | 2 |
| Bathgate Partnership Centre | 1 x 50kW Rapid Charger | 2 |
| Blackridge Primary School | 1 x 22kW Dual Outlet | 2 |
| Calderwood Primary School | 1 x 50kW Rapid Charger | 2 |
| Calderwood Primary School | 1 x 22kW Dual Outlet | 2 |
| Fauldhouse Partnership Centre | 1 x 50kW Rapid Charger | 2 |
| Gideon Street Car Park, Bathgate | 1 x 22kW Dual Outlet | 2 |
| Linlithgow Sports Club | 1 x 50kW Rapid Charger | 2 |
| Lister Road, Livingston | 2 x 22kW Dual Outlet | 4 |
| Morris Square, Livingston | 2 x 50kW Rapid Charger | 4 |
| Morris Square, Livingston | 2 x 22kW Dual Outlet | 4 |
| Polkemmet Country Park, Whitburn | 2 x 7kW Dual Outlet | 4 |
| Strathbrock Partnership Centre | 1 x 50kW Rapid Charger | 2 |
| Strathbrock Partnership Centre | 1 x 22kW Dual Outlet | 2 |
| The Vennel, Linlithgow | 1 x 22kW Dual Outlet | 2 |
| Water Yett Car Park, Linlithgow | 1 x 22kW Dual Outlet | 2 |
| Whitburn, East Main Street | 1 x 7kw Dual Outlet | 2 |
| Whitburn Xcite | 1 x 50kW Rapid Charger | 2 |
| Winchburgh | 2 x 50kW Rapid Charger | 4 |
| Winchburgh | 2 x 22kW Dual Outlet | 4 |
| Winchburgh | 4 x 7kW Dual Outlet | 8 |
| Total | 32 Chargers | 64 |

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## Appendix 2 – Summary of Local Authority Tariffs (Scotland) (as of November 2022)

| Local Authority | 7kW (£/kWh) | 22kW (£/kWh) | 50kW (£/kWh) | Minimum/ Connection Fee | Overstay Charge |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aberdeen City Council | £0.19 | £0.19 | £0.19 | £0.38 Connection Fee | N/A |
| Aberdeenshire Council | £0.24 | £0.24 | £0.24 | N/A | N/A |
| Angus Council | £0.23 | £0.23 | £0.23 | N/A | N/A |
| Argyll & Bute Council | £0.26 | £0.26 | £0.26 | £1.80 minimum charge | £30 after 4 hours (22kW) £30 after 2 hours (50kW) |
| Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar | £0.20 | £0.20 | £0.20 | £1 minimum charge | £5 after 4 hours (22kW) £5 after 1.5 hours (50kW) |
| Dumfries & Galloway Council | £0.25 | £0.25 | £0.25 | £1.50 minimum charge | N/A |
| Dundee City Council | £0.20 | £0.20 | £0.25 | £0.38 Connection fee | £10 after 190 mins (7-22kW) £10 after 70 mins (50kW) |
| East Lothian Council | £0.25 | £0.40 | £0.50 | £1 minimum charge (7kW), £2 minimum charge (all others) | £30 after 45 mins (22kw and above) |
| Falkirk Council | £0.25 | £0.25 | £0.25 | £1 minimum charge | £5 after 4 hours (22kW) £5 after 1 hour (50kW) |
| Fife Council | £0.15 | £0.15 | £0.15 | £1.60 connection fee | N/A |
| Inverclyde Council | £0.20 | £0.20 | £0.30 | £1 connection fee | N/A |
| Midlothian Council | £0.16 | £0.16 | £0.30 | £1 minimum charge | £1/min after 60 mins (50kW) |
| Moray Council | £0.28 | £0.28 | £0.28 | £1 minimum charge | N/A |
| North Ayrshire Council | £0.19 | £0.19 | £0.30 | £2 minimum charge | £10 after 190 mins (7-22kW) £10 after 70 mins (50kW) |
| Orkney Islands Council | £0.30 | £0.30 | £0.38 | £1.50 minimum charge (7-22kW); £3 minimum charge (50kW) | £5 after 3 hours (7-22kW) £1/minute after 1 hour (50kW) |

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## Appendix 2 – Summary of Local Authority Tariffs (Scotland) (as of November 2022)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perth & Kinross Council | £0.30 | £0.30 | £0.35 | £1 minimum charge | £10 after 3 hours (7-22kW) £10 after 1 hour (50kW) |
| Scottish Borders Council | £0.16 | £0.16 | £0.30 | £1 minimum charge | N/A |
| South Lanarkshire Council | £0.27 | £0.27 | £0.40 | None | £30 overstay fee (50kW) after 60 minutes with 10-minute grace period. |
| The City of Edinburgh Council | £0.25 | £0.30 | £0.35 | £1 minimum charge | £30 after 12 hours (7kW) £30 after 3 hours (22kW) £30 after 30 mins (50kW) |
| The Highland Council | £0.20 | £0.20 | £0.30 | £1 minimum charge | £1/min (capped at £30) after 45 minutes |
| West Lothian Council (proposed) | £0.30 | £0.30 | £0.40 | £1 minimum charge | £10 after 2 hours (22kW) £10 after 50 mins (50kW) |

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## Appendix 3 – SFT Tariff Benchmarking Exercise (November 2022)

**Correct as of 1 November 2022** - Summary excludes free or subsidised tariffs

| Destination Charging Tariffs (7-22kW AC) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Tariff Count** | **Min** (£ / kWh) | **Max** (£ / kWh) | **Average** (£ / kWh) | **Average Cost for 30 kWh** |
| Local Authorities | 24 | £0.15 | £0.30 | £0.22 | £6.94 |
| Private CPOs | 11 | £0.28 | £0.75 | £0.45 | £13.59 |
| All | 35 | **£0.15** | **£0.75** | **£0.29** | **£9.03** |

| Journey Charging Tariffs (50kW+ DC) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Tariff Count** | **Min** (£ / kWh) | **Max** (£ / kWh) | **Average** (£ / kWh) | **Average Cost for 30 kWh** |
| Local Authorities | 20 | £0.15 | £0.50 | £0.29 | £8.91 |
| Private CPOs | 19 | £0.35 | £0.85 | £0.65 | £19.55 |
| All | 39 | **£0.15** | **£0.85** | **£0.47** | **£14.09** |

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## Appendix 4 – Planning and Building Standards Requirements

### West Lothian Council – Air Quality Planning Guidance

For residential developments of ten or more residential units or a site area of more than 0.5Ha the following will apply;

- Where off-street parking is provided, one in every six residential units shall have an active ready to use electric vehicle charging point (7kw) located either in a garage or in close proximity to a dedicated car parking place within the driveway of the property. For all other residential units with off-street parking, passive provision (cabling and individual fuse boxes provided) shall be provided to enable easy conversion to an active charging point should demand manifest itself.

- For on-street parking, one in every six spaces shall have a fully connected, active and ready to use electric vehicle charging point (slow 7kw). Electric vehicle parking spaces should be counted as part of the overall car parking provision and not in addition to it.

- For commercial developments that have between 10 and 50 parking spaces, there would be a requirement to install one active, ready to use fast (22kw) charging point. For commercial developments that have more than 51 car parking spaces there is a requirement for a ready to use, active rapid charging points (50kW) on the following basis; 51 – 100 car parking spaces – 1 rapid charger 101 – 150 car parking spaces – 2 rapid chargers 151 – 200 car parking spaces – 3 rapid chargers and so on.

### Building Standards Changes – 2023

**New residential buildings:**
- All dwellings with a parking space to have at least one EV charge point socket with minimum 7kW output power rating.
- Exemption to requirement to install EV charge point if additional cost of electricity grid connection exceeds £2,000.
- If exemption applies ducting infrastructure to be installed in each car parking space.

**Residential buildings (undergoing major renovation):**
- For buildings with more than 10 car parking spaces, ducting to be installed in each residential car parking space to support the future installation of an EV charge point (unless the cost of recharging and ducting infrastructure exceeds 7% of total major renovation cost).
- EV charge points sockets to be installed, with minimum 7kW output power rating, in as many residential car parking spaces as the electrical capacity of building post-renovation allows.

**New non-residential buildings:**
- For buildings with more than 10 non-residential car parking spaces, 1 in every 2 non-residential parking spaces to have ducting installed and 1 in every 10 non-residential parking spaces to provide an EV charge point socket with minimum 7kW output power rating.

**Non-residential buildings (undergoing major renovation):**
- For buildings with more than 10 non-residential car parking spaces, 1 in every 2 non-residential parking spaces to have ducting installed and 1 in every 10 non-residential parking spaces to provide an EV charge point socket with minimum 7kW output power rating (unless the cost of recharging and ducting infrastructure exceeds 7% of total major renovation cost).

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## Appendix 5 – Integrated Relevance Assessment Form



West Lothian Council

| | |
|---|---|
| **Policy Title** (include budget reference number if applicable) | **Introduction of Tariffs for Electric Vehicle Charging** |
| **Service Area** (detail which service area and section this relates to) | Finance & Property Services |
| **Lead Officer** (Name and job title) | Peter Rogers, Energy & Climate Change Manager |
| **Other Officers/Partners involved** (list names, job titles and organisations if applicable) | N/A |
| **Date relevance assessed** | 18/11/2022 |

| **2. Does the council have control over how this policy will be implemented?** |
|---|

| **YES** | ✓ | **NO** | ☐ | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**3. The General Duty of the Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:**

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct**
- **Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and**
- **Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not**

**NB: In this section you must also consider the Human Rights Act and the key PANEL(Participation, Accountability, Non-Discrimination, Empowerment and Legality) principles of Human Rights – (further detail on what these are, are provided in the guidance document)**

**Which groups of people do you think will be, or potentially could be, impacted upon by the implementation of this policy? You should consider employees, clients, customers and service users (Please tick below as appropriate)**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Age** - Older people, young people and children | No |
| **Disability** - people with disabilities/long standing conditions | No |
| **Gender reassignment - Trans/Transgender Identity** – anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex assigned to them at birth | No |
| **Marriage or Civil Partnership** – people who are married or in a civil partnership | No |
| **Pregnancy and Maternity** – woman who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave | No |
| **Race** - people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and different racial backgrounds | No |
| **Religion or Belief** – people with different religions and beliefs including those with no beliefs | No |
| **Sex -** female, male and intersex | No |

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| | |
|---|---|
| **Sexual Orientation** – lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual/straight | No |

| **4. Do you have evidence or reason to believe that this policy will or may impact on socio-economic inequalities? Consideration must be given particularly to children and families** | |
|---|---|
| **Socio-economic Disadvantage** | **Impact – please tick below as appropriate)** |
| **Low Income/Income Poverty** – cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing | Neutral |
| **Low and/or no wealth** – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future | Neutral |
| **Material Deprivation** – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies | Neutral |
| **Area Deprivation –** where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of transport) | Neutral |
| **Socioeconomic Background** – social class i.e. parents education, employment and income | Neutral |

| **5. Integrated impact assessment required?** (Two **ticks (✔)** above = full assessment necessary) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **YES** | ☐ | **NO** | ✓ | |

| **6. Decision rationale – if you have ticked no above, use this section to evidence why a full IIA is not required** |
|---|
| The purpose of the change being proposed is to introduce tariffs for the use of council owned electric vehicle (EV) charge points from 1 February 2023.  The current model of free to use chargers is unsustainable in the face of significantly increasing usage and costs.  It is also noted in Transport Scotland and Scottish Future's Trust's EV Charging Infrastructure Report that whilst an important driver of early uptake, the provision of free to use charge points needs to change and more sustainable financial models are required to remove barriers to private sector investment. At the time of preparing this assessment (November 2022) 20 of the 32 local authorities in Scotland have introduced tariffs for use, with others planning to introduce them soon. The council is currently developing an Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan which will consider the scale of expansion required to meet future demand and how this will be delivered.  A full Integrated Impact Assessment will be carried out for the Plan which will ensure that network expansion is accessible for all.  This will consider issues such as the obstruction of pavements by cables and charging infrastructure, the layout of EV parking bays and the design and accessibility of charging equipment.<br><br>The Scottish Government recently published their Vision for Scotland's Public Electric Vehicle Charging Network.  The vision sets out five key outcomes:<br><br>• People have access to a well-designed and comprehensive public network of charge points; |

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- The public electric vehicle network works for everyone regardless of age, health, income or other needs;
- Scotland has attracted private sector investment to grow the public electric charging network, ensuring it meets the needs of all people;
- The public charging network is powered by clean, renewable energy and drivers benefit from advancements in energy storage, smart tariffs and network design, and;
- People's first choice wherever possible is active and public transport with the location of electric vehicle charging points supporting those choices.

The introduction of tariffs supports these outcomes and has an overall positive impact for all current and future EV owners, including those with protected characteristics and vulnerable groups by:

- Encouraging improved user behaviour, making better use of existing assets and increasing their availability;
- Facilitating continued expansion of the public charging network, particularly in rural areas and those which are likely to be less attractive to commercial operators;
- Opening up the opportunity for private sector investment to further accelerate network expansion.

Demographic information published by the UK government in April 2022[1] included the following findings in relation to existing EV users:
- 95% of owners had access to off-street parking
- 86% of these were private driveways or garages
- 95% of owners were either in employment or retired
- 76% of drivers had an income higher than £28,000, with 21% having an income of over £83,000

This demographic information reinforces the assertion that the introduction of tariffs will improve availability for those who do not have access to off-street parking or home charging as users with that option available to them will no longer be incentivised to use the public charging network for free.  It is expected that these demographic patterns will change over time to reflect a broader societal mix and as such the tariff levels set have been designed to be fair and reflective of actual operating costs.
For the lower power chargers which are more likely to be used in or close to residential areas to allow overnight charging, the rate is set at a level which is only slightly above the council's forecast electricity costs and is below the current cap set through the current Energy Price Guarantee, ensuring that those who do not have the option to charge at home have a viable alternative.
Supporting the change from conventional vehicles to zero carbon alternatives also has additional benefits including improving air quality through lower vehicle emissions.
[1]Electric Vehicle Charging Research. Survey with electric vehicle drivers. Research report. (publishing.service.gov.uk)

| Signed by Lead Officer | Peter Rogers |
| --- | --- |
| Designation | Energy & Climate Change Manager |
| Counter Signature (Head of Service or Depute Chief Executive responsible for the policy) | Donald Forrest |
| Date j | 23/11/2022 |

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DATA LABEL: PUBLIC


West Lothian Council

# CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

## SCOTTISH WELFARE FUND BUDGET AND FUNDING REPORT

## REPORT BY HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROPERTY SERVICES

### A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Panel with an appraisal of potential risk to the Scottish Welfare Fund budget from 2023/24 onwards.

### B. RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to:

1. Note the potential impact on the available Scottish Welfare Fund budget in 2023/24 if there is no significant increase in Scottish Government funding; and
2. Note the current Scottish Welfare Fund spend as outlined in D.3 of the report; and
3. Note the progress of the ongoing Scottish Government Scottish Welfare Fund review.

### C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I | **Council Values** | Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; making best use of our resources; working in partnership. |
| II | **Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)** | |
| III | **Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers** | None. |
| IV | **Impact on performance and performance Indicators** | Corporate and service performance indicators will be monitored when the budget position becomes clear. |
| V | **Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement** | • Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.<br>• We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities.<br>• People most at risk are protected and supported to achieve improved life chances. |

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- We live longer, healthier lives and have reduced health inequalities.

| VI | Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property) | Officers will continue to assess the ongoing financial and staffing implications for the council. |

| VIII | Other consultations | None. |

## D.    TERMS OF REPORT

### D.1    Overview

Since April 2013, local authorities have had a statutory duty to administer Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) on behalf of the Scottish Government.  The fund consists of two grants: Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants.

Crisis Grants (CG) meet short term financial emergencies and Community Care Grants (CCG) provide furniture for homes to help applicants set up or maintain their home.

The Scottish Government is responsible for distributing funds on an annual basis to local authorities for both the Programme funding and Administration funding. Programme funding is the amount of funds the local authority receives to make awards to successful applicants and Administration funding is the funds provided to administer the SWF scheme.  This report highlights that funding provided to West Lothian Council is insufficient for both the programme and the administration funding and without the additional funding from the council, it would not be possible to support the most vulnerable households in our communities.

### D.2    Budget

The Scottish Government allocate funds using the agreed Income Domain of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) methodology, based on the most recent publication in 2020.

In 2019/20 the Scottish Government Budget allocation for SWF was £37.9 million.  In 2020/21, the budget increased to £40.9 million and has remained at that level since with no increase in funding other than the additional financial resources provided to councils during the Covid-19 pandemic.  The table below highlights the additional funding WLC received from SG to support applicants through the pandemic.  The additional funds were paid in 2020/21 only.

The table below provides an overview of the funding from the Scottish Government and West Lothian Council over the last 4 years.

|  | 2019/20  (£) | 2020/21  (£) | 2021/22  (£) | 2022/23  (£) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Programme** | 1,067,475 | 1,148,053 | 1,134,159 | 1,134,149 |
| **Administration** | 157,814 | 173,947 | 171,841 | 174,851 |
| **Covid funding SG** |  | 712,000 |  |  |
| **Covid WLC** |  | 400,000 |  |  |
| **WLC top up** |  |  | 1,000,000 | 1,198,000 |
| **TOTAL** | **1,225,289** | **2,434,000** | **2,306,000** | **2,507,000** |

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Excluding the administration budget, and any additional Scottish Government top ups for Covid 19 or additional funds by WLC, the above table demonstrates that year on year funding has reduced.

**D.3    Spend**

Local authorities are responsible for monitoring the spend against the budget. To help manage the budget, councils can move the priority level on which awards are assessed.  The priority levels are High, Medium and Low.  High priority is usually used when budgets are being stretched due to the demand on the fund.  Councils on high priority can only award grants to highly vulnerable individuals/families and the need for the financial support or goods they have asked for must be of high priority to their health and safety.  An example of applicants who fall into high priority would be those who are homeless and moving to a permanent tenancy.  Low priority is used when demand on the scheme is much lower and the fund is not under pressure.  Applicants only need to have a low level of vulnerability and the need for the grant would have little to no impact on their health and safety but would assist them in meeting household finances.

West Lothian Council is currently paying on Medium priority and will continue to do so until the budget is reviewed at the end of quarter three (December 2022).  The table below provides an overview of the spend position from 2019/20 onwards.

The demand on the scheme has increased significantly as both the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis squeezes household finances.  It is anticipated that the demand on the scheme will continue to increase as we move through the winter months.  In addition, the cost of providing furniture for homes is increasing by the rate of inflation and the amount paid out in CG's has increased by 173.7% from £373,561 in 2019/20 to £1,025,212 in 2021/22.

The table below demonstrates the demand on the scheme through the number of applications received and the number of people supported, and how the cost compares to the allocated budget.  With the exception of 2020/21, when the council was provided with additional Covid budget from Scottish Government, the budget has not covered the cost of the grants being paid.

The priority level set for each of the financial years outlined in the table below is; in 2019/20 the priority level was set at High and Medium priority from 2020/21 onwards.  The table shows that even on High priority in 2019/20, when it was known that the budget would not meet the demand, there was still a significant shortfall.  Moving to Medium priority in 2020/21 when there was considerable additional financial resource, allowed us to meet the demand of the significantly inflated applications as a result of the Pandemic.  The priority level has remained on Medium because the support needed by vulnerable individuals and families as they recover from the effect of the Pandemic and deal with the Cost of Living Crisis, would not be met if the priority level was moved to High.  However, with reducing Scottish Government budget and the additional financial support by West Lothian Council not guaranteed, it will become a necessity in 2023/24 to consider moving the priority level to High so that we can maintain our budget and help individuals, albeit in a lesser way, throughout the financial year without running out of money.

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| | Crisis Grant | | Community Care Grant | | Spend £ | Budget £ | Shortfall £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Apps received | Paid | Apps received | Paid | | | |
| **2019/20** | 8644 | 5158 | 2822 | 1164 | 1,199,725 | 1,067,475 | 132,250 |
| **2020/21** | 12,789 | 9105 | 2373 | 1488 | 2,106,395 | 2,260,053 | |
| **2021/22** | 12,284 | 7938 | 2866 | 1664 | 2,237,910 | 2,134,159 | 103,751 |
| **2022/23** | 6328 | 4041 | 1728 | 1021 | 1,186,373 | 1,166,074 | 20,299 |

For 2022/23 the figure provided is at 30 September 2022. This highlights that at the end of the second quarter, the SWF is already in an overspend position. It is very probable that the overspend will increase as the impact of the cost of living crisis and recession are felt and pressure on household finances are increased.

It is also important to highlight that the allocation of Administration funding by the Scottish Government is also insufficient and does not cover the cost of delivering the service. The table below shows the funding provided against the actual cost of delivering the Scottish Welfare Fund.

| | Budget (£) | Actual cost (£) |
|---|---|---|
| **2019/20** | 157,814 | 395,073 |
| **2020/21** | 173,947 | 478,946 |
| **2021/22** | 171,841 | 537,629 |
| **2022/23** | 174,851 | **Not yet known** |

Without the additional financial support provided by the council over the last few years, support would not have been able to be provided timeously to vulnerable people across West Lothian.

The Scottish Welfare Fund team also provide a holistic service to each applicant that they deal with by completing onward referrals to support services across West Lothian VIA the FORT platform. This is to allow the appropriate support to be accessed to help individuals resolve the crisis that resulted in an application to the fund. This provides a vital safety net to help vulnerable households who with the right support are less likely to need to utilise the Scottish Welfare Fund in the future.

**D.4    Scottish Welfare Fund Review**

The Scottish Government has commissioned Ipsos to undertake a review of the SWF. The review started in January 2022 with all 32 local authorities involved in interviews with Ipsos on the delivery of the current scheme. The review will consist of research and data analysis undertaken independently by Ipsos and will include examination of levels of funding and take-up as well as gathering insight into how the Fund is administered.

At the point of writing this report, it is anticipated that a report will be presented to the Scottish Government early 2023 by Ipsos on their findings. Initial findings show that all councils have indicated that the preferred method of delivery is for SWF be administered locally. Councils consider that those applicants who are seeking support can be referred for further help to both internal and external partners to alleviate financial hardship and improve the applicants financial outlook, thus removing the need for applicants repeatedly using the scheme. In order for this to happen the SWF needs to be funded sufficiently.

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**E.    CONCLUSION**

The council has announced savings of £47.1m over the next five years with the potential that this could increase as we move closer to 2027. Currently, the council is subsidising both the Programme fund and Administration funding for SWF.  This additional funding is not guaranteed beyond the current financial year.  Should the budget allocation by the Scottish Government remain on the same trajectory in 2023/24 and beyond, it is clear that supporting the increasing numbers of people in need of the fund will become very challenging.  The restriction in budget would require a move to high priority. Consequently, this would mean that less than 50% who have received support over the least three years would have received help via the fund.

It is clear that the direct and lasting impact of the rising cost of living will continue to be a concern for many households throughout 2022 and 2023. Without sufficient funding for the Scottish Welfare Fund, both in terms of programme and administration funding, vulnerable families and children are at risk of being left without the financial help they may so desperately need.

**F.    BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None.

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Nahid.Hanif@westlothian.gov.uk

**Donald Forrest**
**Head of Finance and Property Services**
**12 December 2022**

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**DATA LABEL: PUBLIC**



**CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**UPDATE ON APPROACH TO ENHANCING SUPPORT FOR CUSTOMERS IN RELATION TO CORPORATE DEBTS DUE TO THE COUNCIL**

**REPORT BY HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROPERTY SERVICES**

**A.    PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To provide the Panel with an update on the council's Corporate Debt approach and progress relating to this.
.

**B.    RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Panel notes the progress made in implementing the approach and the plans for progressing with the approach.

**C.    SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

| I | Council Values | Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership |
|---|---|---|
| II | Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment) | There is substantial legislation covering the manner in which the collection and recovery of different council debts can be administered and recovered. |
| III | Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers | The Corporate Debt Policy sets out the arrangements for the Scheme of Delegation. |
| IV | Impact on performance and performance indicators | Performance indicators continue to be developed to assess performance. |
| V | Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement | Outcome 5 - People most at risk are protected and supported to achieve improved life chances |
| VI | Resources (Financial, Staffing and Property) | None. |
| VII | Consideration at PDSP | Annual update. |
| VIII | Details of consultations | Ongoing work is driven by the Corporate Debt Monitoring Group comprised of cross-service officers. The approach is part of the Anti-Poverty Strategy. |

**D.** **TERMS OF REPORT**

**D.1** **OVERVIEW**

Following the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012, with significant changes to welfare, it was recognised that many people would face challenges in managing their finances; including council tax, rent, and other council charges.

In response a Corporate Debt Policy which was approved by the Council Executive on 25 August 2015. Processes were put in place for front-line services to deliver:

- A joined-up approach for customers
- Early intervention/ prevention/ sustainability
- Best use of resources

It was further agreed that the proposed approach should build on current good practice and develop cross-service operational practices.

**D.2** **DELIVERING THE APPROACH**

The policy complements the wider strategies of the council and its Community Planning Partners in relation to financial/social inclusion as part of the Anti-Poverty Strategy. The policy set out the objectives; to ensure that support is available for vulnerable customers and those experiencing financial hardship and that the collection and recovery of council charges is managed efficiently and that collection rates are maximised.

Enhanced benefits for customers include:

- Delivery of a joined-up approach in relation to an individual's debts owed to the council, helping customers to avoid recovery charges
- Referrals for specialist money and welfare advice
- Assistance for customer to manage their own affairs
- Sustainable arrangements based on individual financial circumstances and taking account of all their debts

Different debts were managed through a number of IT systems and there was no single system that showed customers debts. Over time a system was developed that enables front line services to view the main council debts, providing a tool to assist them when engaging with customers.

The approach is delivered by the following teams: Revenues, Housing Offices, Council Information Service, the Anti-Poverty Service and the Customer Service Centre.

Each service takes a holistic joined-up approach with customers who have more than one debt due to the council: including Rent, Council Tax, Service Accounts and Housing Benefit Overpayments, thereby helping to coordinate and avoid the additional costs and stress around recovery action. The aim is to deal with customers' whole indebtedness and build a sustainable, long term solution which takes account of their financial circumstances and offers specialist money and benefit advice to help customers to deal with their debts going forward.

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Benefits for the council include:

- A more efficient approach to collection
- Consistency of message about the importance of paying council debts
- A single view of customer debts in a joined-up IT system to properly inform decision making for individual customers
- Early intervention to help prevent customers building up high levels of debts
- Reduction in outstanding debts with realistic and sustainable arrangements as agreed with customers
- Better use of resources to concentrate on a holistic approach
- Utilising the improved systems information to inform strategic direction

West Lothian Council is considered to be at the forefront of delivering a corporate approach to customers.

D.3 **ANALYSIS AND PERFORMANCE**

An early pilot found that 97% of those in debt with council rent charges also had on average approximately double the amount of council tax arrears. This remained fairly consistent although based on a sample of cases with high arrears the profile showed slightly more rent than council tax.

Pre-covid analysis has shown that council tenants were directly attributable to over 40% of the outstanding in-year council tax and water charges, whilst they only accounted for 16% of households.

As their landlord, the policy implementation is designed to assist council tenants with multiple debts to the council, helping them to avoid further recovery charges on top of their outstanding debt.

Front-line Council Information Service and Customer Service Centre, reported dealing with or referring on corporate debt cases on over 850 occasions from January to October this year. The Council Information Service have reviewed and updated their process in relation to corporate debt and held training sessions. The Customer Service Centre also have regular reminders and refresher sessions for staff.

Over the last two financial years to 31 March 2022, Corporate Debt Team activity has generated income and/or reduction in debt to the value of £4.4m. The Corporate Debt Team have scheduled Train the Trainer session for housing which will enable them to hold ongoing training and refresher sessions for housing staff.

Housing Operations continue to work with colleagues in CDT to support tenants who have failed to pay rent to ensure that they have accessed all available support, to mitigate further action such as eviction for non-payment of rent.

All the front-line services have access to the FORT system, which is a system used for signposting and referrals across the advice sector. It is used to the make referrals to the Advice Shop and other organisations, particularly for money or benefit advice.

The Advice Shop continue to deal with customers who have multiple debts due to the council and since January 2022 for this group they have found an increase in debt relating to living costs including credit card debt, utility bill and mobile phone arrears. In contrast, the most common other debt types for corporate debt customers in the previous year, January to December 2021 were more credit-based debt such as personal loans and hire purchase. The Advice Shop have then been able to support applicable customers by delivering an energy fund, with one of payment of up to £100.

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As of November, 1324, council tenants had received £116,500.

All services are responsible for carrying out audits on the approach for their service area.

**D.4    NEXT STEPS**

Although Covid-19 restrictions are lifted, we are now facing a cost of living crisis and recession. Officers are looking at new approaches to joined up ways to assist customers who are in debt.

For example, work is ongoing between Revenues, Benefits and the Advice Shop to attempt to identify & engage those customers who may be entitled to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

**E.    CONCLUSIONS**

The Corporate Debt Policy and approach has been designed to support customers and to deliver efficient collection that is joined-up, makes best use of resources across services and assists with early intervention, prevention and sustainability.

The approach aims to respond to the growing challenges of welfare reforms, Covid-19 recovery and the cost of living crisis. Meanwhile there is ever increasing pressures for income maximisation, including rent and council tax collection to support council budgets.

**F.    BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

Council Tax and Water Charge Arrears in-year analysis – available on request
Appendix/ Attachment - none

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**Donald Forrest**
**Head of Finance and Property Services**
**12 December 2022**

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**DATA LABEL:  PUBLIC**

![West Lothian Council logo]

**CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**CORPORATE ASSET MANGEMENT STRATEGY - ANNUAL PERFORMANMCE UPDATE 2021/22**

**REPORT BY HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROPERTY SERVICES**

**A.      PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The report provides a review of the Corporate Asset Management Strategy for the financial year 2021/22, including progress against the planned actions and an overview of the performance to date.

**B.      RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Panel:

1.  Notes the performance against the outcomes.

2.  Notes the progress made in implementing the key activities and actions.

**C.      SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **I.** | **Council Values** | Focusing on our customers' needs; Being honest, open and accountable; Making best use of our resources |
| **II.** | **Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)** | None. |
| **III.** | **Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers** | None. |
| **IV.** | **Impact on performance and performance indicators** | A performance scorecard has been developed to support the delivery of the strategy outcomes. This will be used to track and monitor performance of key indicators throughout the period of the strategy and reported publicly. |
| **V.** | **Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement** | Priorities identified within the Single Outcome Agreement are supported by an effective Corporate Asset Management Strategy. |

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| VI. | **Resources (Financial, Staffing and Property)** | Resources deployed in the management of assets are outlined within the specific asset management plans for each asset category. |
|---|---|---|
| VII. | **Consideration at PDSP** | This report is presented annually for consideration by the Corporate Policy and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (formerly the Partnership and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel). |
| VIII. | **Other consultations** | The strategy was developed through consultation with the key stakeholders, Depute Chief Executives and Heads of Service and the relevant PDSP. The strategy and relevant resources were approved by Council Executive in February 2018. |

## D. TERMS OF REPORT

### D.1 Background

The council has a clear mission, values and strategic outcomes. These influence every part of the way that we operate and also how we evaluate our success as an organisation. The council has also developed a set of integrated corporate strategies that will help to improve the quality and value of our services and drive a culture of performance and transformation at all levels of the organisation.

There are two features that allow tracking of progress in the strategy outcomes and measuring delivery, these are:

- Performance indicators that are linked to the strategy outcomes and key activities;

- Action / Management Plans comprising defined outcomes, actions, timescales, resources and responsible officers.

In line with monitoring and reporting requirements for corporate strategies, this report provides an update for the 2021/22 financial year on the performance of strategy outcomes and progress in the action plan.

### D.2 Corporate Asset Management Strategy

In February 2018, West Lothian Council approved a new Corporate Asset Management Strategy (CAMS) for 2018/19 to 2027/28. The CAMS covers all assets managed and resources deployed by the council to support the delivery of services and comprises Property, Open Space, Roads and other infrastructure, ICT, Housing and Fleet asset categories.

Whilst each asset category has its own asset management plan that is reported upon separately to their appropriate PDSP, the CAMS establishes the overall governance structure, strategic outcomes and activity themes.

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**D.3**    **Strategy Outcomes**

The general vision of the CAMS is to manage assets efficiently and effectively to support the achievement of corporate priorities and to ensure that resources deployed in their management have maximum benefit. To support the achievement of this, the following strategic outcomes are identified:

1. Compliance
2. Condition
3. Suitability
4. Sufficiency
5. Utilisation
6. Accessibility
7. Sustainability

For each asset category a number of performance measures are used to monitor and measure achievement and progress against these strategic outcomes. Whilst each asset category's management plan is reported separately, a number of performance measures are identified within the strategy.

**D.4**    **Performance Scorecard**

The strategy scorecard is a reporting tool that is used to monitor progress of the performance indicators in each strategy outcome. Achievement in the key activities can be tracked and it also allows officers to identify areas for improvement.

The scorecard provides a snapshot of performance to date across the whole strategy and a copy is included in Appendix 1.

A total of 52 performance indicators are contained in the scorecard and this is managed using the council's performance management system (Pentana). At present, the status of those indicators is as shown in Table 1 below:

| Table 1: Summary of Performance Indicator status (RAG) | |
|---|---|
| Status (against target) | Number of PIs |
| ✅ Green | 43 |
| ⚠️ Amber | 3 |
| 🔴 Red | 4 |
| ℹ️ Unknown | 2 |

The following commentary confirms the performance and the corrective action that will be taken to address those indicators that are currently triggering as red.

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Outcome 2: Condition

| ● Indicator: P:ARCHSD421_9b: Percentage of council houses meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance 2021/22 | Target 2021/22 | Target 2022/23 | Target 2023/24 |
| 89.84% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

In 2021/22, officers reported that 89.84% of the stock met Scottish Housing Quality Standards. The 1.71% improvement between 2020/21 and 2021/22 can primarily be attributed to an increased number of properties now meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard. This increase was curtailed by a rise in the number of abeyances applied for, primarily in relation to electrical testing. Whilst some progress has been made with voluntary access to properties previously refused, the service is now progressing to use its powers of forced access to address the remaining outstanding properties. Performance is above the Scottish average of 74.26%, with WLC ranked 4 from 26 in the Scottish Housing Regulator Local Government Benchmarking Group.

Outcome 3: Suitability

| ●Indicator: P:RTS107_9b.1a: Number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance 2021/22 | Target 2021/22 | Target 2022/23 | Target 2023/24 |
| 67 | 42 | 42 | 42 |

This performance indicator shows the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents within West Lothian as published annually by Transport Scotland. This indicator is a combination of the separate casualty reduction targets for the number of people killed and the number of people seriously injured in line with Scottish Government national casualty reduction targets.

Outcome 6: Accessibility

| ● Indicator: ITS025_6b.5: Annual Percentage of Service Desk calls answered within 20 seconds. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance 2021/22 | Target 2021/22 | Target 2022/23 | Target 2023/24 |
| 64.50% | 80% | 80% | 80% |

Performance in 2021/2022 achieved 64.50% and missed target by 15.50%. This was an improvement of 16.10% on the previous year and as such can be viewed as positive progress.

The improvement can be attributed to the implementation of the upgraded contact centre phone system early in 2021. The target was not achieved due to the ongoing requirement of IT Services Service Desk (ITSD) staff having to attend the Civic Centre during the Covid-19 pandemic to undertake ITSD and mobile phone tasks, meaning less advisors were able to answer telephone queries during these times. This affected the time customers needed to wait to speak to an advisor.

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Outcome 7:  Sustainability

| 🔴 Indicator: P:SOA1308_10: Energy generated as a result of the installation of renewables and low carbon technology (kWh of electricity produced). | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance 2021/22 | Target 2021/22 | Target 2022/23 | Target 2023/24 |
| 256,978 | 330,000 | 330,000 | 330,000 |

The data is a combination of the outputs from the council's installed solar photovoltaic (PV) systems. Generation has increased from 242,720kWh in 2020/21, to 256,978kWh in 2021/220. This includes actual data from twelve sites and estimates for two where metered data is not currently available (Southdale and Calderwood Primary Schools). Generation is anticipated to rise again in 2022/23 with the completion of works at Inveralmond Community High School and repairs to systems at Meldrum Primary School and Kirkton Service Centre.

"Unknown" Status

Table 1 above identifies the status of two performance indicators as "Unknown". These are indicators:

- P:ITS065_9b 1c (Annual Public Sector Network (PSN) compliance certification).
- SCL05b_6a: (Percentage of adults satisfied with Parks and Open Spaces).

P:ITS065_9b 1c (Annual Public Sector Network (PSN) compliance certification) forms part of the performance scorecard for the council's ICT Management Strategy. The council requires to achieve annual compliance accreditation from the Cabinet Office to be able to share data with other government departments and agencies across the Public Sector Network (PSN). There are a range of technology and operational business measures and controls that are assessed by the Cabinet Office to achieve this compliance. This performance measure is performed as part of the council's annual accreditation programme.

Due to the Covid-19  pandemic, insufficient devices were present within council offices to enable accreditation to be carried out during the year and the work was therefore rescheduled. The previous year's accreditation was extended and the council remains connected to the PSN.

SCL05b_6a (Percentage of adults satisfied with Parks and Open Spaces) forms part of the performance scorecard for the council's open space assets. This performance indicator is based on information published at national level. The Local Authority Dataset has not been published for 2021 due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and as such it has not been possible to update this performance indicator.

**D.5    Highlights 2021/2022**

Over the course of 2021/22, progress on the delivery of actions and the sustaining and improvement of performance has generally occurred for all asset categories. As noted, each asset category has its own asset management plan and these are reported separately. Within these separate update reports, progress is outlined. The following are key highlights on projects and actions progressed during 2021/22 for each of the asset categories.

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**D.5.1 Property**

The management of property continues to be driven by sustaining and where possible improving performance across all measures and portfolios. Ensuring safe and compliant environments to support service delivery whilst improving the efficiency of resources deployed in the management of property has continued to be achieved during 2021/22.

In pursuance of this, during 2021/22 there was significant capital investment in general planned improvements to the operational property estate with a view to building condition being sustained and improved where possible. The percentage of properties in satisfactory or better condition was 96.65% in 2021/22.

The council's learning estate is evaluated and reported for condition as part of the Scottish Government School Estate Core Facts. Performance has been and is consistently in the upper quartile amongst all thirty two Scottish local authorities. This is projected to continue based on current investment commitments. In addition, the council has consistently been ranked in the top three for learning estate condition as part of the Chartered Institute of Public Financial Accounting (CIPFA) Asset Management Property Performance Benchmarking Group, which involves twenty one other Scottish local authorities.

Officers continue to adopt a pro-active approach to statutory compliance, with fire safety, asbestos and legionella being managed effectively.

On suitability, sufficiency and accessibility, performance was sustained. Projections for 2022/23 indicate that this trend is likely to continue. On sustainability and energy efficiency, officers have continued to make reductions in consumption and our overall impact on the environment.

New denominational and non-denominational secondary schools, together with a new denominational primary school and shared sports hub in Winchburgh have continued to progress in support of the growing population associated with the Winchburgh Core Development Area. These schools are being delivered as a bundle of projects that represent the largest education investment by the council in a single location.

The new Holy Family Primary School, Winchburgh Academy and a sports hub have all now been completed and became operational in August 2022. Work on the new denominational secondary school, Sinclair Academy, is proceeding and that new facility is due to become operational in August 2023.

Construction of the new Cedarbank ASN school in Livingston was completed during 2022 and that new facility in now operational. Work to refurbish and extend Pinewood ASN school in Blackburn was also completed during 2022 and that facility is also now operational. The project to deliver a new Beatlie ASN school in Craigshill, Livingston has continued to progress and work commenced on-site during 2022. Completion of that project due in 2023.

The council has developed and submitted business cases to the Scottish Government for funding support for a new primary school in Craigshill as part of Phase 3 of the Learning Estate Investment Programme. Those submissions are supported by the council's Learning Estates Strategy, which was approved by Council Executive on 25 October 2022. The outcome of those funding applications is expected towards the end of 2022.

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The new Livingston North Partnership Centre has now been completed and was opened in May 2021. This brings together CIS and library services as well as providing modern facilities for the Ability Centre service and other external partners, including McMillan Cancer Research.

The new Whitburn Partnership Centre, on the site of the former Burgh Halls, has been completed and became operational in October 2022. The new facility brings together CIS and library services, housing and social policy services, a local history museum and general purpose community space.

Council Executive on 21 June 2022 considered an update report on properties within the council's estate that have roofs planks constructed using Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). Robust monitoring and mitigation measures are in place in properties where RAAC roofing is present and remedial work is ongoing at Lanthorn Community Centre, Whitburn Community Centre, St. Kentigern's Academy and Knightsridge Primary School to address identified structural defects.

## D.5.2    Roads, Footpaths and other assets

The management of roads, footpaths and other assets covers a diverse range of assets, but mainly focusses on ensuring they are safe, kept in adequate condition and improvements made where required. The asset includes over 1,043 km of public roadway, 1,390 km of public footway, 48,193 street lights, 163 traffic light installations, 2,419 grit bins, 11,295 illuminated and non-illuminated signs and bollards, 578 bridges and other structures.

In addition to their normal reactive maintenance activities, the Roads Maintenance team completed a programme of potholes repairs and A-class road remarking with additional funding of £750,000 and £113,000 respectively. They have also programmed to deliver Covid recovery projects including road remarking and the provision of new handrails across West Lothian.

Notable achievements included the investment of approximately £3.4 million in roads and footpaths. A further £2.4 million was invested in road lighting, including the replacement LED programme, which continues to progress well. A £1.7 million investment was made in the maintenance and improvement of the council's bridge assets

A programme of Cycling Walking Safer Routes (CWSR) projects continue to be progressed, including the completion of a cycle path connecting Armadale to Whitburn.

An investment of £1.1 million in flood risk management prevention and drainage projects was progressed

£1.5 million of projects was also delivered in villages and towns across West Lothian through Town Centre funding.

## D.5.3    Open Space

Asset performance continued to generally improve due to investments in excess of £1.6 million on Open Space and Sports facilities projects and planned improvements. This demonstrates the council's continued commitment to sustaining and improving the overall availability, accessibility and quality of our open space facilities. A further £1.8m was invested in maintaining and upgrading tree and woodlands areas, country parks infrastructure, rural footpaths, public art and education facilities such as kick pitches and

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MUGAs (Multiple Use Games Areas) to improve the condition of these assets and sustain the quality of these assets for communities and users.

Projects to note for Open Space include completion of a new 3G Pitch in East Calder and the replacement of a synthetic pitch St Margaret's Academy; and park improvements at Balbardie Park of Peace that include a new pump track. Over £605,000 was also invested in children's play areas including those at Eliburn Park, Livingston; Beecraigs Country Park Play Area, Drove Road, Armadale; Hope Park Gardens, Bathgate; Polkemmet Country Park Play area; Sutherland Way, Livingston and Tippetknowes play park.

**D.5.4    ICT**

Good progress on the delivery of ICT asset investments occurred during 2021/22 with further investment made into Digital opportunities to update a number of our widely used systems. Upgrade of the council's antivirus and cyber security software capabilities were also carried across the whole estate to further support staff working remotely.

Procurement of Microsoft 365 licencing was completed with service units testing the wider capabilities and opportunities available to the council, The rollout of Microsoft Teams was also progressed during 2021/22.

The council's Digital inclusion and Desktop Refresh for the education estate was completed and Windows Central Servers were also upgraded.

**D.5.5    Housing**

Significant resources continue to be invested in the creation and acquisition of new homes, with budgeted resources of £29.123 million allocated in 2021/22. New housing supply includes increasing the existing council housing stock through new builds, open market acquisitions and mortgage to rent properties. Good progress has been made in 2021/22 with a number of new build projects on site. Developments have been completed at Standhill (Bathgate) and Eliburn, Livingston, totalling 42 units. Mossend (West Calder), Deans South, Eagle Brae & Wellhead, Livingston are all well underway & due to complete in 2022/23, totalling 169 units.

Major Investment in refurbishments, major elemental upgrades and planned improvements to existing housing stock continued during 2021/22 with approximately £8.2 million expended in these areas. These represent major investments in ensuring that our housing stock condition is sustained and where possible improved.

Compliance works to housing stock include asbestos management, legionella upgrades, periodic testing and electrical upgrades and a number of energy efficiency projects aimed at meeting the requirements of The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). These works include central heating upgrades, enhanced investment in external wall insulation, Electrical Checks, Smoke and Heat Detector Upgrades. The programme in 2021/22 consisted of approximately: 1,000 central heating replacements, periodic testing of 4,511 houses and the installation of LD2 smoke heat detector systems in 1,400 properties.

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**D.5.6    Fleet**

Fleet Services ensure the council continues to comply with the terms, conditions and undertakings of the Goods Vehicle Licensing of Operators Act 1995 and hold responsibility for the procurement, management and disposal of the council's fleet and mechanical equipment.

The service is currently undergoing a comprehensive improvement programme to enhance the support it provides. Its workshop facility at Whitehill Service Centre continued to operate throughout nationwide restrictions in support of frontline services, including social care and waste collection. The council has also been accepted as members of the nationwide fleet recognition scheme "Eco-Stars", which will help improve fleet efficiency, reduce fuel consumption and emissions and make cost savings whilst reducing environmental impact in West Lothian.

**D.6    Strategy Activities**

The CAMS does not contain specific actions with timescales and responsibilities as it primarily establishes the overarching priorities and activity areas. For each asset category, activities and workstreams are aligned to the priority performance measures and these are carried through to the appropriate asset management plans.

In addition to the corporate priority measures, there are general activity themes that are identified to support the delivery of improvements and asset modernisation that will improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of asset management and the investments made. In summary these general activity themes are as follows:

**D.6.1**    Activity Theme:    **Asset Efficiency and Effectiveness**

Status:    Active

Objective:    All resources deployed in the management of all assets will be regularly reviewed with proposals to improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of assets in supporting service delivery and the improvement of priority performance measures (i.e. compliance, condition etc).

General Update:    Through the council's performance management framework and the monitoring and governance of asset management plans and the capital programme through the Capital and Asset Management Board, Asset Lead Officers are encouraged to review service delivery and ensure that effective monitoring of performance measures associated with their category is undertaken and reported upon regularly. Assessing the effectiveness of assets to support service delivery is a key element of all asset management plans.

This will continue to enable the development of improvement initiatives and programmes which will improve the efficiency of assets and the resources we deploy in their use.

**D.6.2**    Activity Theme:    **Project Management**

Status:    Active

Objective:    Investment across all asset categories will be prioritised based on corporate and asset management priorities and in supporting service modernisation initiatives. Projects and programmes

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developed to deliver these will be subject to effective governance with outcomes identified and measured.

General Update: As part of developing investment proposal strategic outline business cases continue to form the first step and a key component in the prioritising and allocation of resources. For major projects key stage reviews are used to ensure that projects are developed effectively in line with business case requirements and corporate parameters are met and progress is in accordance with timescales.

To ensure that resources allocated are deployed effectively and efficiently governance arrangements are in place to monitor progress, identify risks and to enable action where necessary.

Examples of effective project management include monthly project monitoring, variance reporting to the Capital Asset Management Board, project updates to the ICT Board and post project reviews and evaluation.

**D.6.3** Activity Theme: **Delivery Models**

Status: Active

Objective: All service leads for asset categories and senior responsible officers will review the methods and delivery models for projects and programmes under their remit.

General Update: As part of achieving the effective delivery of projects and programmes ensuring the appropriate method of delivery or procurement is essential. In support of this activity, Asset Lead Officers will seek to ensure appropriate approaches are applied to projects to ensure effective delivery. Examples of this include using HUBco for schools, traditional procurement for small projects, framework contracts for planned improvement works and in-house teams for appropriate maintenance works.

**D.6.4** Activity Theme: **Partnership Working**

Status: Active

Objective: Working collaboratively with partners and communities to deliver services will benefit the delivery of outcomes and provide greater opportunities for success across all asset categories. This area of activity will seek to implement activities to maximise opportunities for partnership working where they improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and use of our assets.

General Update: The council is committed to working in partnership and good examples include SEstran, Tenants Panel, Digital Office, Scottish Government, partnership centres and community asset transfer.

**E.     CONCLUSION**

The Corporate Asset Management Strategy 2018/19 to 2027/28 is designed to support the council's aim of managing its assets effectively and efficiently to support the delivery of services. It has supported the establishment of structures and governance arrangements in pursuance of this and facilitated a consistent performance framework

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across asset categories. The strategy remains relevant and appropriate with the scorecard showing that performance continues to generally improve across all asset categories. Where performance targets have not been achieved, appropriate actions are proposed and are outlined in the report.

**F.      BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

Corporate Asset Management Strategy 2018/19 to 2027/28 - Report by Head of Finance and Property Services approved by Council on 13 February 2018.

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete Roofs Update – Report by Head of Finance and Property Services to Council Executive on 21 June 2022.

**Appendices/Attachments:**

Appendix 1:  Corporate Asset Management Strategy Scorecard 2021/22

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**Donald Forrest**
**Head of Finance and Property Services**

**12 December 2022**

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## Appendix 1: Corporate Asset Management Strategy Scorecard 2021/22

**Outcome 1 – Compliance**

| Status | Performance Indicator | 2021/22 Value | 2021/22 Target | Lead officer(s) |
|--------|----------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| ⚠ | P:HQSARC15_6b Percentage of properties that had a gas safety check and record complete by the anniversary date | 99.93% | 100% | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services (Julie Whitelaw) |
| ❓ | P:ITS065_9b.1c Annual Public Sector Network (PSN) compliance certification | N/A | 100% | Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |
| ✅ | P:ITS077_9b.1c Annual Percentage of ICT assets that comply with EU safety standards | 100% | 100% | Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |
| ✅ | P:NLCS032_6b.5 Play Areas - Percentage of notifications of unsafe play equipment responded to within 1 working day | 100% | 100% | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |
| ✅ | P:PS617_9b.1a Percentage of Active Operational Properties with Legionella Risk Assessments less than 30 months old | 100% | 100% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:PS803_9b.1a Percentage of Properties with a Five Yearly Fire Safety Risk Assessment (FSRA) updated within required timescales. | 100% | 100% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:PS805_9b Percentage of buildings with responsible person identified | 100% | 100% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:PS806_9b Percentage of buildings with up to date compliance log books | 100% | 100% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:RTS100_9b.2a Percentage of the overall Road Network which should be considered for maintenance treatment. | 29.9% | 29.5% | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |
| ✅ | P:WM162_9b.1c Percentage of Heavy Goods vehicles passing their MOT test first time | 98.08% | 100% | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |

**Outcome 2 – Condition**

| Status | Performance Indicator | 2021/22 Value | 2021/22 Target | Lead officer(s) |
|--------|----------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 🔴 | P:ARC HSD421_9b Percentage of council houses meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). | 89.84% | 100% | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services (Julie Whitelaw) |
| ✅ | P:ITS078_9b.1a Annual Percentage of ICT faults related to hardware failure | 2.3% | 3% | Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |
| ✅ | P:ITS079_9b.1c Annual Percentage of ICT Corporate desktop and laptop assets in use beyond their expected lifespan. | 0% | 0.5% | Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |
| ✅ | P:NLCS104_9b.2a Quality assessment score on Open Spaces in West Lothian | 99 | 93 | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |
| 🔺 | P:PAMP203_9b.2 Percentage of Secondary Schools considered to be in Satisfactory or better condition. | 91% | 100% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| 🔺 | P:PAMP204_9b.2 Percentage of Primary Schools considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition. | 97% | 100% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:PAMP205_9b.2 Percentage of Additional Support Needs Schools considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition | 100% | 100% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:PAMP206_9b.2 Percentage of Nursery Schools considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition | 100% | 100% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:PAMP207_9b.2 Percentage of Other Operational Properties (non-education) considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition | 96% | 98% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:PS910_9b Percentage of Admin Buildings considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition. | 100% | 100% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:RTS100_9b.2a Percentage of the overall Road Network which should be considered for maintenance treatment. | 29.9% | 29.5% | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |

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| Status | Performance Indicator | 2021/22 Value | 2021/22 Target | Lead officer(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✅ | P:SCORPASSET02 Proportion of Internal Floor Area of Operational Buildings in Satisfactory Condition | 95.18% | 99% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:WM142_9a.1a Average annual maintenance cost per vehicle - All Cars (Pool). | £613.80 | £650.00 | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |

**Outcome 3 – Suitability**

| Status | Performance Indicator | 2021/22 Value | 2021/22 Target | Lead officer(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✅ | ITS076_9b.1c Annual Percentage of active network accounts fit for purpose | 100% | 100% | Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |
| ✅ | RTS094_9b.2a Percentage of lighting columns exceeding life expectancy | 20.37% | 23% | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |
| ✅ | P:RTS103_9b.1a Bridges- Percentage failing 40 tonnes (All bridges) | 0.88% | 1% | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |
| 🔴 | P:RTS107_9b.1a Number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents | 67 | 42 | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |
| ❓ | SCL05b_6a Percentage of Adults satisfied with Parks and Open Spaces | N/A | N/A | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |
| ✅ | P:SCORPASSET01 Proportion of Operational Buildings that are Suitable for their Current Use | 96.7% | 96% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |

**Outcome 4 – Sufficiency**

| Status | Performance Indicator | 2021/22 Value | 2021/22 Target | Lead officer(s) |
|--------|----------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| ✅ | HQSLETS001m_9b Average length of time taken to re-let mainstream properties | 46.57 | 48 | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services (Julie Whitelaw) |
| ✅ | P:ITS071_9b.2 Maintain Optimum Server Processing Capacity | 34% | 75% | Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |
| ✅ | P:ITS072_9b.2 Percentage of Annual Service Continuity Test that Supports WLC1 Business Continuity Plans | 100% | 100% | Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |
| ✅ | P:PS911_9b.1a Percentage of properties that are considered satisfactory or better in terms of sufficiency | 100% | 95% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |

**Outcome 5 – Utilisation**

| Status | Performance Indicator | 2021/22 Value | 2021/22 Target | Lead officer(s) |
|--------|----------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| ✅ | P:PAMP401_9b.1c Total Office Accommodation Area (m2) per staff FTE | 12.79 | 15 | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:PAMP405_9b.1c Average School Estate Capacity (% roll to total capacity) | 80.5% | 83% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:PS301_9b.1a Industrial Portfolio - Percentage of Total Units Let | 95.89% | 90% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:PS302_9b.1a Retail Portfolio - Percentage of Total Shops Let. | 97.09% | 94% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |

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| Status | Performance Indicator | 2021/22 Value | 2021/22 Target | Lead officer(s) |
|--------|----------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| ✅ | P:PS303_9b.1a Office Portfolio - Percentage of Office Units Let | 97.22% | 90% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:PTS097_9b.1c Percentage of Community Transport bus runs which are completed | 100% | 100% | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |

## Outcome 6 – Accessibility

| Status | Performance Indicator | 2021/22 Value | 2021/22 Target | Lead officer(s) |
|--------|----------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 🔴 | ITS025_6b.5 Annual Percentage of Service Desk calls answered within 20 seconds | 64.5% | 80% | Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |
| ✅ | ITS026_6b.5 Number of ICT Service Desk Telephone calls | 27,259 | 32,000 | Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |
| ✅ | P:PAMP501_9b.2 Percentage of all operational buildings from which the council delivers services that are fully accessible for disabled persons. | 76.52% | 78% | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | PTS004_6a.7 Percentage of Service Users who rated the overall quality of the service provided by Community Transport as good or excellent. | 100% | 90% | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |
| ✅ | RTS038_6b.5 Percentage of Abnormal Loads Processed on Time (2 Days) | 100% | 100% | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |

**Outcome 7 – Sustainability**

| Status | Performance Indicator | 2021/22 Value | 2021/22 Target | Lead officer(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✅ | P:CMP001_9b.1 Carbon Footprint - Total annual carbon emissions (tonnes CO2e) from non-domestic buildings, transport, external lighting, waste and water. | 30,748 | 34,803 | Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (C McCorriston) |
| ✅ | CMP002_9b.1 Total Annual CO2 - Transport | 4,108,589 | 6,056,000 | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |
| ✅ | ITS056_8b Annual Percentage of IT Desktop equipment with power management policies | 99% | 98% | Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |
| ✅ | P:PAMP610_9b.2 Number of Properties with renewable and low carbon energy generation installation | 32 | 25 | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:PS907_9b Average life expectancy of all property assets | 17 | 18 | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |
| ✅ | P:RTS093_9b.2b Lighting Energy Consumption (kwh) | 1,321,604 | 1,500,000 | Head of Operational Services (J Jack) |
| 🔴 | P:SOA1308_10 Energy generated as a result of the installation of renewables and low carbon technology. kWh of electricity produced (Cumulative) Source: WLC, Annual | 256,978 | 330,000 | (R)SOA13 Admin |

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West Lothian Council

**CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCUTINY PANEL**

**PROPERTY ASSET MANAGEMENT - PERFORMANCE UPDATE 2021/22**

**REPORT BY HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROPERTY SERVICES**

**A.    PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to update the Panel on the performance of the council's operational property assets during the 2021/22 financial year.

**B.    RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Panel notes:

1.  The overall condition of operational property assets during 2021/22.

2.  The overall suitability of operational property assets during 2021/22.

3.  The overall performance of operational property assets during 2021/22.

4.  The projects that have contributed to delivery of the council's property asset management priorities.

**C.    SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I | **Council Values** | Being honest, open and accountable, making best use of our resources, working in partnership. |
| II | **Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)** | The council is required to demonstrate best value through a structured framework for the management of its property assets. No environmental equality or health and safety issues have been identified. |
| III | **Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers** | None. |
| IV | **Impact on performance and performance Indicators** | Scottish Specified Performance Indicators Framework – Suitability and Condition. |
| V | **Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement** | The management of our property assets supports all council services and those delivered by partners. Local Outcome Improvement Plan priorities supported include: |

1

- Outcome 1 – Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.

- Outcome 2 - We are better educated and have access to increased and better quality learning and employment opportunities.

- Outcome 8 – We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| VI | **Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)** | The property assets covered by the report are managed and operated in line with provisions of the approved Revenue Budget and the General Service ten-year Capital Investment Strategy for 2018/19 to 2027/28. |
| VII | **Consideration at PDSP** | This report is presented annually for consideration by the Corporate Policy and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (formerly the Partnership and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel). |
| VIII | **Other consultations** | None. |

## D.   TERMS OF REPORT

### D1   Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update the Panel on the current performance of the council's operational property assets. The council owns and manages property assets that support the delivery of council services. These include schools, community centres, partnership centres, care homes, service centres, administrative buildings and more. The operational estate extends to 239 properties comprising approximately 418,637m$^2$ as at 31 March 2022.

The council's approved Corporate Asset Management Strategy for 2018/19 to 2027/28 included the need to manage our assets efficiently and effectively to support the delivery of our service and corporate priorities. In pursuit of this aim, it set out six performance measures. These were Compliance, Condition, Suitability, Sufficiency, Accessibility and Sustainability.

### D2   Property Asset Management Performance Measures

The Property Asset Management Plan (PAMP) for 2018/19 to 2027/28 sets out the activity themes for the management of property assets and highlights a number of key performance measures. The key performance measures are outlined in Appendix 1 together with the respective results. The following two indicators are reported as part of the Scottish Specified Performance Indicators framework:

2

**Condition** – The percentage of properties in satisfactory or better condition decreased from 97.50% in 2020/21 to 96.65% in 2021/22. In terms of Gross Internal Floor Area considered to be in satisfactory or better condition, this has also decreased from 99.73% in 2020/21 to 95.18% in 2021/22.

Performance in this area has decreased due to St. Kentigern's Academy in Blackburn and Letham Primary School in Livingston both dropping from satisfactory to poor condition and Riverside Primary School in Livingston dropping from satisfactory to bad condition. In the case of St. Kentigern's Academy and Riverside Primary School, this is primarily due to recently identified issues relating to roof structures. In the case of Letham Primary School, a recent condition report identified that major building components need replacement.

The council's education estate is evaluated and reported for condition as part of the Scottish Government School Estate Core Facts. Performance has been and is consistently in the upper quartile amongst all 32 Scottish Local Authorities. This is projected to continue based on current investment commitments. In addition, the council has consistently been ranked in the top three for school estate condition as part of the CIPFA Asset Management Property Performance Benchmarking group, which involves 21 other Scottish local authorities.

The current PAMP outlines a number of activity themes that will be progressed to improved performance

**Suitability** – The percentage of properties that are considered satisfactory or better in terms of suitability remained at 93% in 2021/22, which is the same result as 2020/21. The current PAMP will continue to seek to improve suitability further.

### D3    Property Asset Management Highlights

During 2021/22 a number of significant projects and planned improvements were undertaken, including the following:

Winchburgh Schools
The new denominational and non-denominational secondary schools, together with a new denominational primary school and shared sports hub at Winchburgh, have continued to progress and will support the growing population associated with the Winchburgh Core Development Area. These schools are being delivered as a bundle of projects that represent the largest education investment by the council in a single location.

The new denominational Holy Family Primary School, the non-denominational Winchburgh Academy and shared sports hub have all now been completed and became operational in August 2022. Work on the new denominational secondary school, Sinclair Academy, is proceeding and the new facility is due to become operational in August 2023.

ASN School Estate
Construction of the new Cedarbank School in Livingston was completed during 2022 and the new facility in now operational. Work to refurbish and extend Pinewood School in Blackburn was also completed during 2022 and that facility in also operational. The project to deliver a new Beatlie School in Craigshill, Livingston has continued to progress and work commenced on-site during 2022. Completion of that project is due in 2023.

3

Partnership Centres

The new Livingston North Partnership Centre, on the site of the former Carmondean Ability Centre in Livingston, opened in May 2021 following easing of national Covid-19 restrictions. This brings together CIS and library services as well as providing modern facilities for the Ability Centre service and other external partners such as McMillan Cancer Research.

The new Whitburn Partnership Centre, on the site of the former Burgh Halls, became operational in October 2022. The new facility brings together CIS and library services, housing and social policy services, a local history museum and general-purpose community space.

All these projects and the continued significant investment in planned improvements demonstrate the ongoing commitment to improving the performance of the council's property assets.

**D4** **Property Asset Management Plan – Activity Update**

Within the approved PAMP for 2020/21 to 2027/28, there are activity themes that encapsulate projects and programmes to sustain and improve the performance of our property assets. These are outlined in Appendix 2.

**D5** **Future Investment**

Key project and investment programme highlights for the coming years are as follows:

The School Estate

Work on the new denominational secondary school in Winchburgh, Sinclair Academy, is proceeding and that new facility is due to become operational in August 2023. The project to deliver a new Beatlie ASN school in Craigshill, Livingston has continued to progress on schedule and completion is due in 2023.

A successful bid was made to the Learning Estate Investment Programme that will enable a new East Calder Primary School to be delivered, with the new school expected to become operational from August 2024.

A number of developer funded projects are also being progressed towards future delivery. These include proposals for new non-denominational primary schools in Winchburgh and Bangour Village along with extensions to St. Paul's RC Primary School in East Calder and Livingston Village Primary School.

Learning Estate Investment Programme

The council has developed and submitted business cases to the Scottish Government for funding support for a new primary school in Craigshill as part of Phase 3 of the Learning Estate Investment Programme. Those submissions are supported by the council's Learning Estates Strategy, which was approved by Council Executive on 25 October 2022. The outcome of those funding applications is expected towards the end of 2022.

General Operational Property Projects

The project to deliver new-build supported housing for young homeless people is progressing, with a preferred site identified at Almondvale Crescent in Livingston. Subject to statutory consents being secured, it is anticipated that this new facility will be completed during 2023/24.

The new complex care housing facility at Cawburn Road in Pumpherston continues to progress and the new facility is expected to become operational during 2022/23.

4

<u>New ten-year strategic capital investment programme 2023/24 – 2032/33</u>
Officers are currently working to develop a proposed new strategic capital investment programme that will cover the period 2023/24 to 2032/33. That programme, once approved, will determine the capital budgets available to invest in the council's assets, including its property assets. The funding available under that ten-year programme will be used ensure the council's property assets continue to remain safe, statutorily compliant and fit for purpose, with the performance of the estate being maintained or improved where it possible to do so.

**D6    Performance Indicators**

A full list of all performance indicators, their trends and commentary are provided in Appendix 3. This covers the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and, where necessary, additional relevant information is included. Where performance indicators cover beyond the performance report period, comments are provided within the relevant commentary for the measure.

**E.    CONCLUSION**

The Panel is invited to note the ongoing performance of our property assets, the achievements during 2021/22 and the planned future investment in the estate.

**F.    BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

Property Asset Management Plan 2018/19 to 2027/28, approved by Council 18 December 2018.

Asset Management Strategy and General Services Capital Investment Programme 2018/19 to 2027/28, approved by Council 13 February 2018.

Learning Estates Strategy, approved by Council Executive on 25 October 2022.


Appendices/Attachments:

Appendix 1 – Property Asset Management Performance Measures

Appendix 2 – Property Asset Management Activity Theme Update Summary

Appendix 3 – Asset Management Performance 2021/22:- Performance Indicator Report


Contact Person: Scott Hughes, Strategic Property Asset Manager, Finance and Property Services, Email: scott.hughes@westlothian.gov.uk, Tel: (01506) 281825

**Donald Forrest**
**Head of Finance and Property Services**

**12 December 2022**

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## Appendix 1 – Property Asset Management Performance Measures

The following are key property asset management performance measures that demonstrate we are efficiently and effectively managing property assets.

1. **Condition – Ensuring that our property assets are maintained in a satisfactory or better condition to support service delivery.**

This performance measure demonstrates that our property assets are being effectively maintained so they continue to support the delivery of services. By ensuring property assets are in satisfactory or better condition, we minimise the number of days properties are not available as a result of building failure.

- The percentage of properties in satisfactory or better condition decreased to 96.65% in 2021/22 from the 97.50% in 2020/21.
- In terms of Gross Internal Floor Area considered to be in satisfactory condition or better, this decreased to 95.18% in 2021/22 from 99.73% in 2020/21.
- The number of school days lost due to building condition failure for 2021/22 was 0.5 days, which is an increase from zero in 2020/21.

The decrease in the percentage of properties considered to be in satisfactory condition or better is due to St. Kentigern's Academy and Letham Primary School being classified as being in poor condition and Riverside Primary Schools being classified as in bad condition.

2. **Suitability – Ensuring that our property assets are suitable to support the delivery of services**

This performance measure demonstrates that our property assets are fit for purpose in terms of accommodation types and layout to support the delivery of services. By ensuring property assets are suitable, we can ensure the delivery of services is not impeded due to building constraints.

- The percentage of properties that are considered satisfactory or better in terms of suitability remained at 93% in 2021/22, the same as 2020/21.
- In terms of Gross Internal Floor Area considered to be satisfactory or better in terms of suitability, the performance indicator remained the same at 98.5% in 2021/22 as in 2020/21.

Suitability continues to be sustained and improved over the longer term as a consequence of the council's commitment to investing in planned improvements across our property portfolio and through the delivery of new property assets.

3. **Sufficiency – Ensuring that our property assets are sufficient to support existing service delivery demands.**

This performance measure demonstrates that our property assets are of sufficient size to support the delivery of services whilst not being underutilised. By ensuring property assets are sufficient, we can ensure the delivery of services is not impeded due to building capacity constraints. This performance measure area primarily relates to the capacity of the school estate.

1

- The average percentage of school estate capacity occupied is 80.54% for 2021/22, which is a decrease from the 81.34% recorded in 2020/21.

This indicates that the council's investment into school capacity is currently in line with the growing population from ongoing and projected new housing developments across West Lothian.

## 4. Accessibility – Ensuring that our property assets are as accessible as possible for all service users and staff.

This performance measure demonstrates the proportion of our property assets that are considered fully accessible for service users and staff.

- The percentage of properties that are considered fully accessible has increased to 76.52% for 2021/22 from 75.86% in 2020/21. In 2004/05, when the indicator was originally measured, accessibility was 21.7%.

Accessibility continues to improve as a consequence of the council's commitment to investing in planned improvements across our property portfolio and through the delivery of new property assets.

## 5. Sustainability – Ensuring our property assets negative impact on the environment is minimised.

There is a general trend of decreasing emissions from energy usage, which reflects the council's ongoing investment in renewables and energy efficiency.

- Total carbon emissions from property assets for 2021/22 are confirmed at 18,721 tonnes. This is a modest increase of 234 tonnes from 18,487 tonnes in 2020/21 and is attributable to staff returning to the workplace following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

- KWh of electricity and gas used per $m^2$ in the operation of our corporate property assets are 62.23 and 172.35 Kwh / per $m^2$ respectively in 2021/22.  Electricity has increased from 55.65 in 2020/21 as consumption increased due to a return to normal following the impact of Covid pandemic. Gas has seen a significant increase in usage during 2020/21 due to impacts of Covid pandemic and additional ventilation requirements. Electricity and gas consumption is expected to return to normal levels during 2022/23.

This demonstrates the commitment of the council to sustainability and minimising the impact on the environment through continued investment in energy reduction and efficiency works.

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## Appendix 2 – Property Asset Management Activity Theme Update Summary

**School Estate Improvements**

Significant planned improvement works were undertaken at schools across the estate, including programmes of mechanical and electrical upgrades, boiler replacements, lighting upgrades, roof replacements, kitchen and toilet upgrades and window replacements.

The continued investment in planned improvements resulted in 100% of our nursery and Additional Special Needs (ASN) schools being confirmed as being in satisfactory or better condition. One secondary school (St. Kentigern's Academy) and one primary school (Letham Primary School) have recently been classified as being in poor condition. A further primary school (Riverside Primary School) has been classified as being in bad condition.

2022 has seen significant new additions and improvements to the school estate, with the completion of two new schools and a shared sports hub in Winchburgh. The new denominational Holy Family Primary School and non-denominational Winchburgh Academy both opened in August 2022, with a third new Winchburgh school, the denominational Sinclair Academy, due to open in August 2023. The new Cedarbank ASN school in Livingston was also completed during 2022, as was the full refurbishment and extension of Pinewood ASN school in Blackburn.

**Non-Operational (Tenanted Non-Residential) Property Portfolio**

The performance of the Non-Operational (Tenanted Non-Residential) Property portfolio (TNRP), which incorporates the commercial property portfolio, is reported separately. In summary however, the TNRP continues to support economic development activity and generate vital revenue income in support of council services. .

**Risk Management and Compliance**

Effective compliance and risk management is critical to the success of the Property Asset Management Plan. The council has approved Asbestos, Legionella, Electrical and Fire Safety policies and has undertaken a wide range of works relating to these to ensure that the risks of compliance failures are mitigated as far as is practically possible. The policies and procedures relating to compliance are under continuous review to ensure our properties are as safe as possible.

A comprehensive Responsible Persons' framework, incorporating guidance for those involved, has also been deployed across the council. All maintenance and planned improvement works are prioritised based on the evaluation of risk.

The council has also invested in a new property asset management solution (Concerto) that provides a systematic approach to the governance and realisation of all property information and works delivery processes for planned and reactive maintenance.

3

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**Resource Deployment and Financial Planning**

Through established revenue and capital budget monitoring frameworks, the deployment of resource in the management, maintenance and improvement of our property assets is undertaken in a structured and effective manner. This ensures that resources are used efficiently and that decision making processes are robust and transparent.

**Energy and Sustainability**

Energy efficiency works and the installation of renewables continue to reduce our impact on the environment. A number of policies relating to energy efficiency and carbon emissions are being implemented whilst others continue to be developed. These are reported separately through the Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Management Plans.

Works have been ongoing to ensure an up to date IT infrastructure is in place to support the upgrade of the school estate to a modern Building Management System (BMS) that will provide centration of the heating and lighting controls for all education properties.
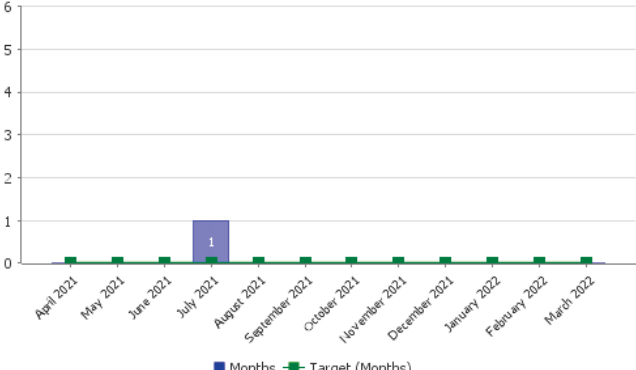
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\Appendix 3

# Property Asset Management Performance 2021/22: Performance Indicator Report

## 06. Corporate Strategy - Asset Management 2018/28

### (a) Outcome 1 - Compliance

| Status | Performance Indicator | Lead officer(s) | Performance Data Trend Chart |
|---|---|---|---|
| ✅ | P:PS616_9b.1a Number of Instances where the Total Viable Count (TVC) of Bacteria Readings have been Recorded above Safe Levels in Water | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |  |

**Number of Instances where the Total Viable Count (TVC) of Bacteria Readings have been Recorded above Safe Levels in Water**

Legend: ■ Months ━■━ Target (Months)

Trend Chart Commentary:

This Performance Indicator monitors any instances where the Total Viable Count (TVC) of bacteria including Legionella is recorded above safe levels in water at all operational properties.

The trend reflects the rigorous monitoring regime in place across operational properties. There has however been one instance in the last twelve months where the TVC of bacteria has been recorded above safe levels. This occurred at Eliburn Resource Centre spa pool in July 2021. The pool was cleaned and disinfected and the readings returned to normal. The spa pool has been closed to the public and drained down due since October 2021 due to lack of specialist trained resources to operate the pool.

Following review, the target for 2022/23 remains at 0%.

P:PS617_9b.1a Percentage of Active Operational Properties with Legionella Risk Assessments less than 30 months old

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)



Percentage of Active Operational Properties with Legionella Risk Assessments less than 30 months old
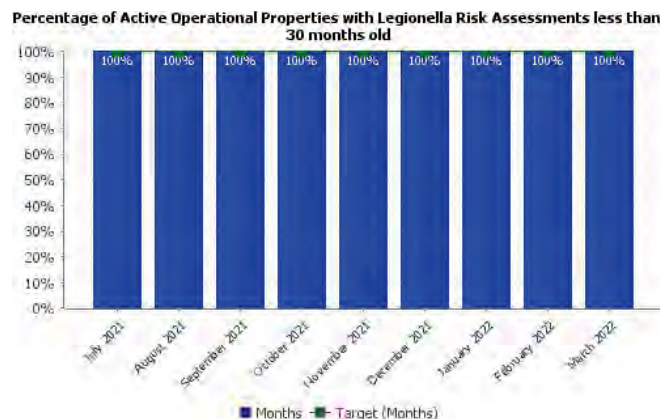
**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The council has a duty to manage Legionella in water systems in accordance with the Approved Code of Practice L8. This monthly indicator measures the number of risk assessments due to be undertaken within each month against the number completed. The council has set a standard of renewing risk assessments every 30 months regardless of whether there have been any significant changes to the water system.

Performance has consistently met the target from April 2021 to April 2022 with all risk assessments have been reviewed and updated within target.

Following review, the target will remain at 100% for 2022/23.

PS620_9b.1a Number of Teaching Days lost at school due to building failure (excluding Public Private Partnership Schools)

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)



Number of Teaching Days lost at school due to building failure (excluding Public Private Partnership Schools)
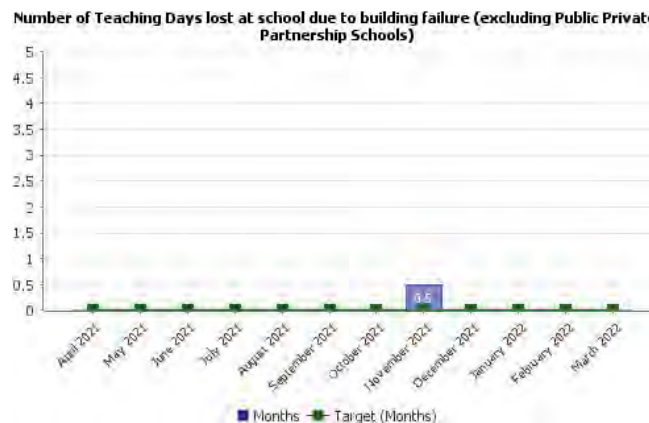
**Trend Chart Commentary:**

This performance indicator measures the teaching days lost as a result of school closures due to building failure.

During 2021/22 there was a half day closure at schools due to building failure. This occurred at Pinewood School in November 2021 when an issue with the mains water pressure led to the water tanks not refilling.

Following a review of performance, the target for 2022/23 remains at 0%.

| ✅ | P:PS803_9b.1a Percentage of Properties with a Five Yearly Fire Safety Risk Assessment (FSRA) updated within required timescales. | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |  |

**Percentage of Properties with a Five Yearly Fire Safety Risk Assessment (FSRA) updated within required timescales.**
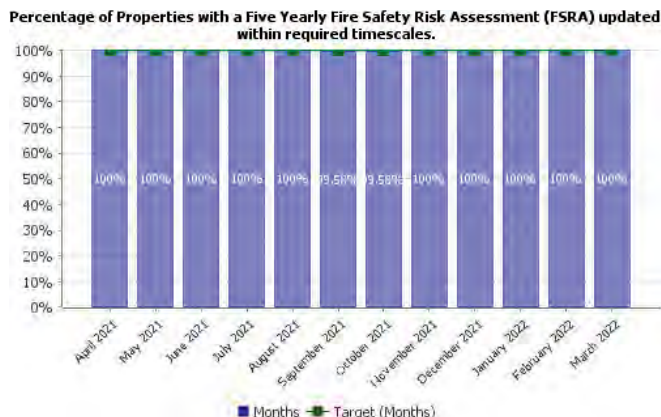
Trend Chart Commentary:

The purpose of this performance measure is to monitor the percentage of five yearly FSRA's which fall due to be updated on a monthly basis and are dealt with within required timescales.

From April 2020 to August 2021 the target was met. Performance was not met in September and October 2021, which was associated to one premises that had become overdue due to a misunderstanding of the curtilage of the property subject to a 5-year Fire Safety Risk Assessment (FSRA). This was completed in October 2021. All remaining five-year FSRA's were undertaken in line with programme and due date.

Following review of performance, the target for 2022/2023 remains at 100%.

P:PS804_9b.1a. Percentage of Properties where an annual review of the Fire Safety Risk Assessment (FSRA) has taken place within the last 12 months

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

In the months of July, September, October, November 2021 and March 2022 the target was not met. Performance has been high as a percentage of the property estate as a whole, achieving over 99% of annual FSRA returns over a twelve-month period.

During the COVID 19 outbreak period from March 2020 a number of properties were closed. The Chief Executive gave dispensation to RP's of closed buildings to not return a FSRA unless it is safe to do so until restrictions were lifted. The buildings have re-opened and the dispensation has been rescinded.

Outstanding annual FSRAs from previous months are escalated through the Corporate Management Team, Heads of Service and the Property Compliance Working Group. Property Services continue to enter dates in individual calendars which notifies Responsible Persons two weeks before the due date.

Following review of performance, the target for 2022/2023 remains at 100%.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ✅ | P:PS807_9b Percentage of Operational Properties & Domestic Common Area premises where an annual review of the asbestos register has taken place in the last 12 months | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |

**Percentage of Operational Properties & Domestic Common Area premises where an annual review of the asbestos register has taken place in the last 12 months**



■ Months ──■── Target (Months)
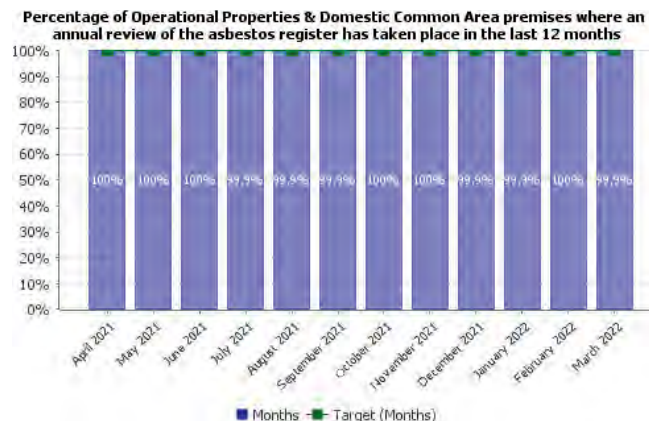
**Trend Chart Commentary:**

This performance indicator records the overall percentage of operational properties & domestic common areas where a review of the asbestos register has taken place in the last 12 months.

The stabilisation of the reinspection programme of operational properties and domestic common areas was complete in 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. All re-inspections are undertaken by members of the asbestos compliance team in operational & domestic common area properties where Regulation 4 of Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (duty to manage asbestos) applies.

Performance overall is high in this area, however there were six months when the target was not met. Targets in July, August, September and December 2021 and January, and March 2022 were not met due to access issues in domestic common areas. Officers are working with HCBS to identify if these are part of the common areas and access individual stores affected.

The target for 2022/2023 will remain at 100%.

## (b) Outcome 2 - Condition

| Status | Performance Indicator | Lead officer(s) | Performance Data Trend Chart | Trend Chart Commentary |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ⚠ | P:PAMP203_9b.2 Percentage of Secondary Schools considered to be in Satisfactory or better condition. | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |  | |

**Percentage of Secondary Schools considered to be in Satisfactory or better condition.**

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The performance indicator for Secondary Schools identifies the physical condition of the building and its component parts.

The indicator currently shows that 91% of all secondary schools remain in satisfactory or better condition. Performance in this area has dropped as a result of St Kentigern's Academy falling from satisfactory condition to poor.

Condition is assessed using an established framework of periodic assessments and surveys.

Target for 2022/23 is set at 91% based on existing condition assessments and investment proposals.

P:PAMP204_9b.2
Percentage of Primary
Schools considered to be in
Satisfactory or better
Condition.

Head of Finance
and Property
Services (D
Forrest)



Percentage of Primary Schools considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition.
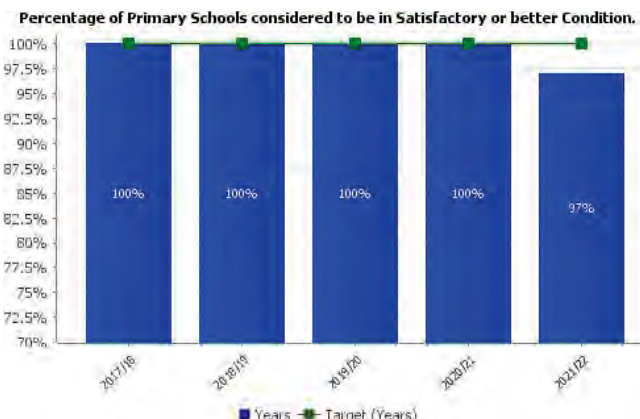
### Trend Chart Commentary:

The performance indicator for Primary Schools identifies the physical condition of the building and its component parts.

The indicator currently to show that 97% of primary schools remain in satisfactory or better condition. Performance has dropped as a result of Letham Primary Schools falling from satisfactory condition to poor and Riverside Primary School falling from satisfactory condition to bad.

The council's education estate is evaluated and reported for condition as part of the Scottish Government School Estate Core Facts. Performance has been and is consistently in the upper quartile amongst all 32 Scottish Local Authorities. This is projected to continue based on current investment commitments. In addition, the council has consistently been ranked in the top 3 for school estate condition as part of the CIPFA Asset Management Property Performance Benchmarking group, which involves 21 other Scottish local authorities.

Target for 2022/23 is set at 97% based on existing condition assessments and investment proposals.

P:PAMP205_9b.2
Percentage of Additional Support Needs Schools considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)



**Percentage of Additional Support Needs Schools considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition**
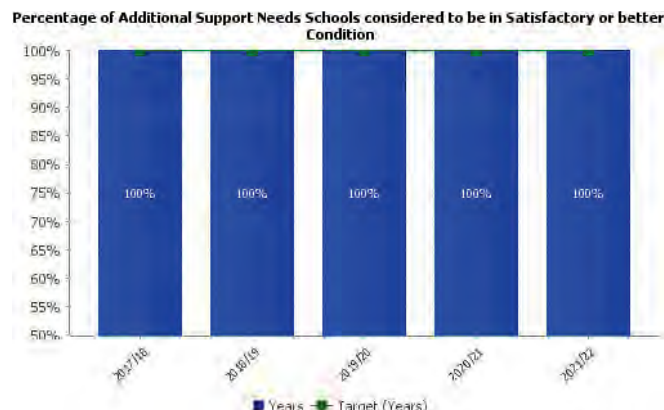
## Trend Chart Commentary:

The performance indicator for Additional Support Needs (ASN) Schools identifies the physical condition of the building and its component parts.

The indicator continues to show that all ASN schools remain in satisfactory or better condition. Performance has remained at 100% for the last five years as a consequence of the council's commitment to investing in its school estate. Condition is assessed using an establish framework of periodic assessments and surveys.

The council's education estate is evaluated and reported for condition as part of the Scottish Government School Estate Core Facts. Performance has been and is consistently in the upper quartile amongst all 32 Scottish Local Authorities. This is projected to continue based on current investment commitments. In addition, the council has consistently been ranked in the top 3 for school estate condition as part of the CIPFA Asset Management Property Performance Benchmarking group which involves 21 other Scottish local authorities.

Target for 2022/23 is set at 100% based on existing condition assessments and investment proposals.

P:PAMP206_9b.2 Percentage of Nursery Schools considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)

**Percentage of Nursery Schools considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition**
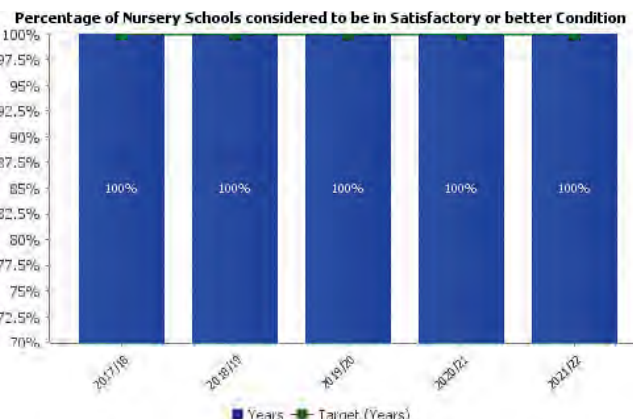


## Trend Chart Commentary:

The performance indicator for Nursery Schools identifies the physical condition of the building and its component parts.

The indicator continues to show that all Nursery schools remain in satisfactory or better condition. Performance has remained at 100% for the last five years as a consequence of the council's commitment to investing in its school estate. Condition is assessed using an establish framework of periodic assessments and surveys.

The councils Education Property Assets are evaluated and reported for condition as part of the Scottish Government School Estate Core Facts. Performance has been and is consistently in the upper quartile amongst all 32 Scottish Local Authorities. This is projected to continue based on current investment commitments. In addition, the council has consistently been ranked in the top 3 for school estate condition as part of the CIPFA Asset Management Property Performance Benchmarking group which involves 21 other Scottish local authorities.

Target for 2022/23 is set at 100% based on existing condition assessments and investment proposals. It is therefore projected that the current level of performance will be maintained. Due to the expansion of early years a number of nursery schools will be subject to significant investment to increase capacity and therefore it is proposed to undertake condition improvement works at the same time thereby maximising investment and sustaining long term condition.

✅ P:PAMP207_9b.2 Percentage of Other Operational Properties (non-education) considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)

**Percentage of Other Operational Properties (non-education) considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition**



| 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
90.9% | 94.2% | 94.2% | 97.5% | 96%

■ Years  —■— Target (Years)

## Trend Chart Commentary:

The performance indicator for the council's operational (non-education) property assets identifies the physical condition of the building and its component parts.

The performance has dropped from 97.5% in 2020/21 to 96% in 2022/23 as a result of the overall number of operational properties captured being reduced. There has been no change to the overall condition of operational properties in the current year. Performance has improved over the years as a consequence of the council's commitment to investing in its property assets and the rationalisation of accommodation used by services. Condition is assessed using an establish framework of periodic assessments and surveys.

Target for 2021/22 was set at 98% based on existing condition assessments and investment proposals. It is therefore projected that the current level of performance will be maintained and where possible improved. It is recognised however, that over the longer term the condition of the operational estate will require significant investment to sustain performance or become more efficient through modernisation to allow greater investment on "core" properties with long term service delivery requirements.

The council benchmarks its results and is currently ranked 2nd in relation to Operational Property amongst 21 local authorities who participate in the CIPFA Benchmarking Group.

Target for 2022/23 is 98% reflecting projects being progressed.

P:PAMP211_9b Number of School Days lost due to building condition failure.

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)
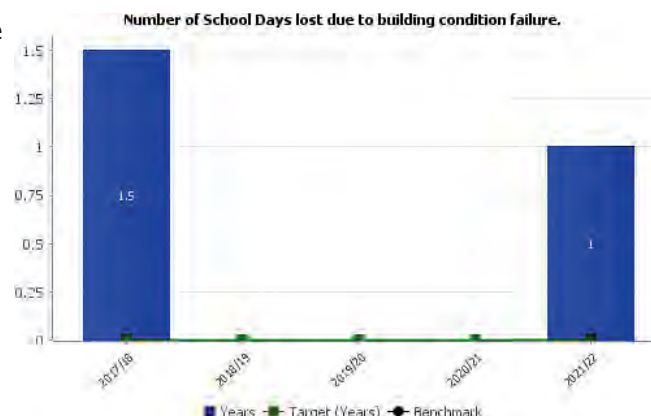
## Trend Chart Commentary:

This annual performance indicator shows the number of school teaching days lost due to building failure.

The target for 2021/22 (zero) was not met due to Pinewood ASN School closing for 0.5 days in November 2021 due to a mains water pressure issue.

Whilst the aim is to achieve zero days, this target has not always been achieved due to unforeseen events. However, the general trend shows improvement in reducing in the overall teaching days lost (from 2.5 in 2015/16 to 0.5 in 2021/22). This reduction in days lost primarily relates to greater proactivity of maintenance (cyclical inspections and servicing, planning improvements and improved reactive repair response).

There is no benchmarking undertaken for this performance measure as other local authorities who are involved in the CIPFA Scottish Property Asset Management Benchmarking Group do not collect this measure or are unwilling to publish it.

The target for 2021/22 will remain at zero with the aim of achieving no days lost due to building condition failure. This will remain the council's target going forward reflecting the high standards set for the management of our school estate.

P:PAMP213_6b.5

Percentage of Operational Properties Resurveyed for Condition and Maintenance Assessment (Number of Properties)

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)



**Percentage of Operational Properties Resurveyed for Condition and Maintenance Assessment (Number of Properties)**

## Trend Chart Commentary:

Condition is a key priority performance measure within the council's Corporate Asset Management Strategy and Property Asset Management Plan. Condition is measured and reported annually. Each year, every asset is subject to a condition and maintenance assessment that identifies maintenance requirements and considered risk elements for inclusion in short term investment requirements. In accordance with best practice and guidance, all property assets should be subject to a full detailed condition survey to identify long term investment requirements and condition risks.

Good practice indicates that assessment of condition is undertaken on a rolling 5-year programme. This equates to an average annual target of 20%. That target was not met in 2019/20 or in 2020/21 due to a combination of resourcing issues and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Condition assessments for 2021/22 increased to 17.3% as a result of full commissioned condition surveys carried out on 21 properties and projections are that this figure will increase again in 2022/23.

There is no benchmarking undertaken for this performance measure as other local authorities who are involved in the CIPFA Scottish Property Asset Management Benchmarking Group do not collect this measure or are unwilling to publish it.

Target for 2022/23 will continue to be 20%

P:PS619_9b.1a Number of Teaching Days lost at schools due to utilities failure (Supplies – gas, electricity, water) excluding Public Private Partnership schools

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)



Number of Teaching Days lost at schools due to utilities failure (Supplies – gas, electricity, water) excluding Public Private Partnership schools
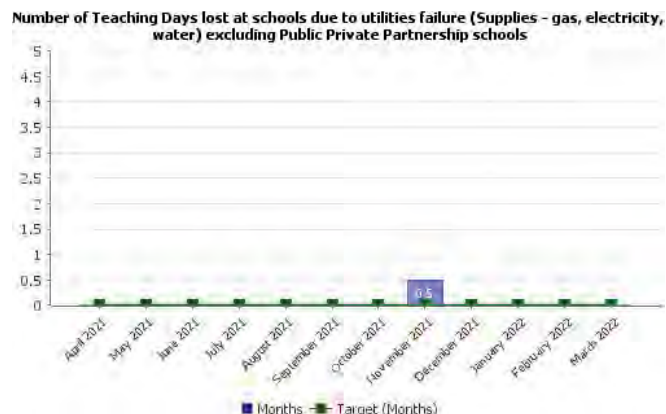
**Trend Chart Commentary:**

This performance indicator measures the teaching days lost as a result of school closures due to utilities failure (gas, electricity or water).

During the last twelve months there has been a half day closure at schools due lost due to utility failure. This occurred at Pinewood School in November 2021 when an issue with the mains water pressure led to the water tanks not refilling.

Following a review of performance, the target for 2022/23 remains at 0%.

P:PS910_9b Percentage of Admin Buildings considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition.

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)



Percentage of Admin Buildings considered to be in Satisfactory or better Condition.
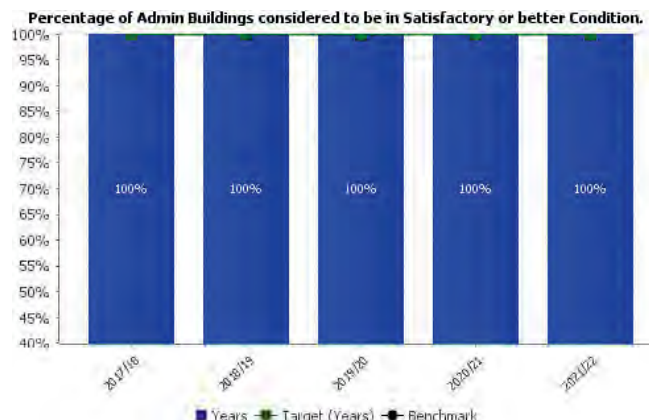
**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The performance indicator for the council's administrative office property assets identifies the physical condition of the building and its component parts.

The indicator continues to show improvement in condition across this part of the estate with those considered to be in satisfactory or better condition being sustained at 100%. Performance will continue at this level as a consequence of the council's commitment to investing in its property assets and modernisation of office accommodation to support service needs. Condition is assessed using an establish framework of periodic assessments and surveys.

The council has consistently been ranked in the upper quartile (currently 1st) for condition of its operational property (excluding education) assets as part of the CIPFA Asset Management Property Performance Benchmarking group which involves 21 other Scottish local authorities.

Target for 2022/23 will be 100%, reflecting sustained performance and projects being progressed.

P:SCORPASSET02
Proportion of Internal Floor Area of Operational Buildings in Satisfactory Condition

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)
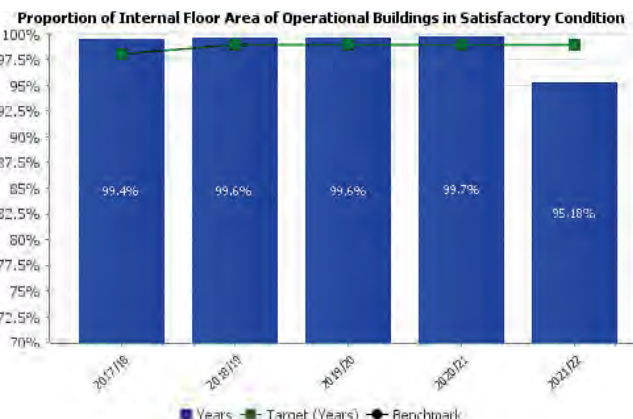


Proportion of Internal Floor Area of Operational Buildings in Satisfactory Condition

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The performance indicator is applicable to all the council's operational property assets and seeks to identify the proportion of floor area that is considered to be satisfactory or better in terms of physical condition.

Gross Internal Floor area has decreased from 434,147m2 in 2020/21 to 418,637m2 in 2021/22.

Assets which are not satisfactory or better condition include existing minor properties that are to be replaced as part of approved development proposals together with minor pavilion, cemetery and bothy buildings which are under review.

In terms of Gross Internal Floor Area considered to be in satisfactory condition or better this has decreased to 95.18% in 2021/22 from 99.73% in 2020/21.

LGBF data has been submitted and the council has consistently been ranked in the upper quartile (currently 3rd) for condition of its operational property assets as part of the CIPFA Asset Management Property Performance Benchmarking group which involves 21 other Scottish local authorities.

The target for 2022/23 is set at 96% based on existing condition assessments and investment proposals. It is therefore projected that the current level of performance will be maintained and where possible improved.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **(c) Outcome 3 - Suitability** | | | |
| Status | Performance Indicator | Lead officer(s) | Performance Data Trend Chart |
| ✓ | P:PAMP302_9b.2 Percentage of Nursery Schools that are considered suitable for service delivery | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |  |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The performance indicator for nursery schools identifies the suitability of the building and its environment to satisfactorily enable and support the delivery of service.

The indicator continues to show that the suitability of nursery schools has been maintained and the assets generally perform well. Only one nursery school is not considered to be satisfactory of better in terms of suitability, this is Eastertoun Nursery School in Armadale.

Whilst performance has been sustained, a range of improvements have been undertaken that have improved those that were already considered satisfactory or better thereby improving the overall quality and performance based on a floor area as opposed to property numbers. The council's education estate is evaluated and reported for suitability as part of the Scottish Government School Estate Core Facts. Performance has been and is consistently in the upper quartile amongst all 32 Scottish Local Authorities.

Education Suitability Assessments for 2021/22 show no change from the 2020/21 results, with only one nursery school not considered to be satisfactory or better in terms of suitability.

The target for 2022/23 is set at 92% based on existing suitability assessments and investment proposals. It is therefore projected that the current level of performance will be maintained.

P:PAMP303_9b.2
Percentage of Primary
Schools that are considered
suitable for service delivery

Head of Finance
and Property
Services (D
Forrest)



Percentage of Primary Schools that are considered suitable for service delivery
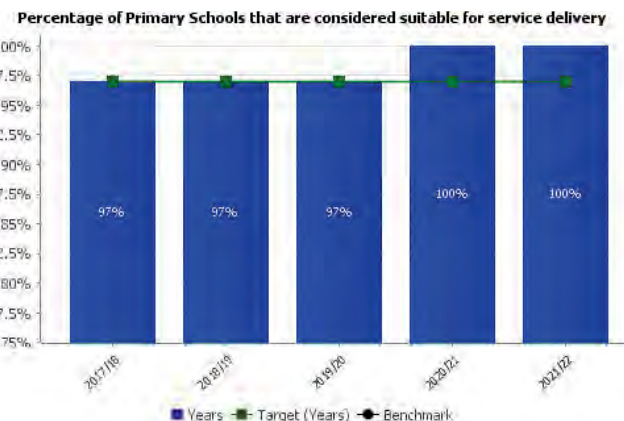
## Trend Chart Commentary:

The performance indicator for primary schools identifies the suitability of the building and its environment to satisfactorily enable and support the delivery of service.

The indicator continues to show that the suitability of primary schools has been sustained and improved.

The council's education estate is evaluated and reported for suitability as part of the Scottish Government School Estate Core Facts. Performance has been and is consistently in the upper quartile amongst all 32 Scottish Local Authorities. This is projected to continue based on current investment commitments.

Suitability Assessments for 2021/22 shows no change from the 100% reported in 2020/21 as part of the programme of investments that has been carried out within all primary school properties to ensure they are considered suitable for service delivery.

Target for 2022/23 is set at 100% based on existing suitability assessments and investment proposals. It is therefore projected that the current level of performance will be maintained.

P:PAMP304_9b.2
Percentage of Secondary
Schools that are considered
suitable for service delivery

Head of Finance
and Property
Services (D
Forrest)



Percentage of Secondary Schools that are considered suitable for service delivery
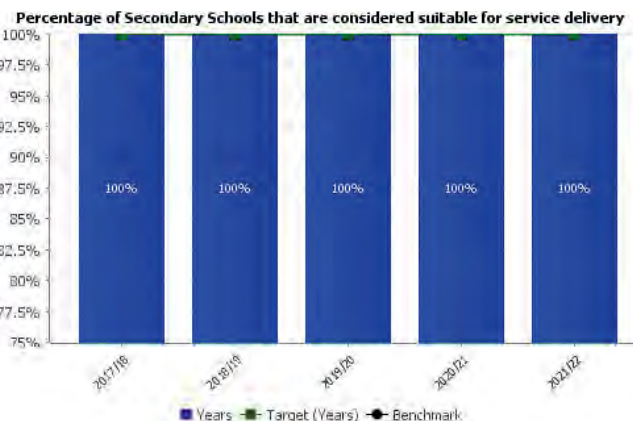
## Trend Chart Commentary:

The performance indicator for secondary schools identifies the suitability of the building and its environment to satisfactorily enable and support the delivery of service.

The indicator continues to show that the suitability of secondary schools has been sustained.

Suitability Assessments for 2021/22 shows no change from the 100% recorded in 2020/21 as all secondary schools are considered to be satisfactory of better in terms of suitability,

Whilst performance has been sustained, suitability improvements continue to be made where appropriate within the secondary school estate, thereby improving the overall quality and performance based on a floor area as opposed to property numbers.

Target for 2022/23 is set at 100% based on sustaining the existing suitability. It is therefore projected that the current level of performance will be maintained over the longer term.

P:PAMP305_9b.2
Percentage of Additional
Support Needs (ASN)
Schools that are considered
suitable for service delivery

Head of Finance
and Property
Services (D
Forrest)



Percentage of Additional Support Needs (ASN) Schools that are considered suitable for service delivery
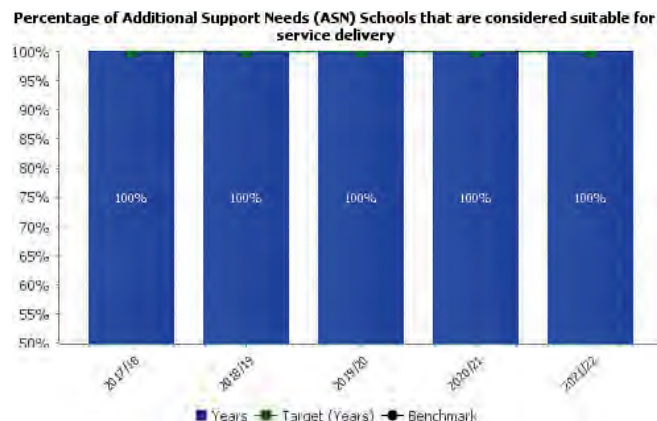
## Trend Chart Commentary:

The performance indicator for Additional Support Needs (ASN) Schools identifies the suitability of the building and its environment to satisfactorily enable and support the delivery of service.

The indicator continues to show that the suitability of ASN Schools has been sustained. All ASN schools are considered to be satisfactory of better in terms of suitability.

Whilst performance has been sustained, a range of investments have been undertaken that have improved those ASN Schools that were already considered satisfactory or better thereby improving the overall quality and performance based on a floor area as opposed to property numbers.

Suitability Assessment for 2021/22 show no change from 2020/21 as the indicator is currently showing 100%.

The target for 2022/23 is set at 100% based on sustaining existing performance.

P:PAMP306_9b.2
Percentage of other
Operational Buildings (non-
education) that are
considered suitable for
service delivery

Head of Finance
and Property
Services (D
Forrest)



Percentage of other Operational Buildings (non-education) that are considered suitable for service delivery
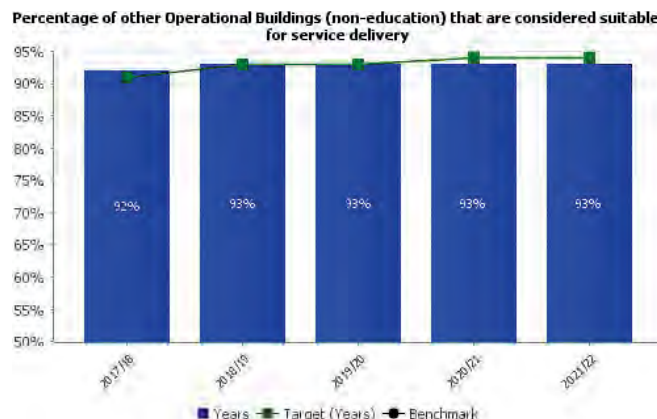
## Trend Chart Commentary:

The performance indicator for the council's operational (non-education) property assets identifies the suitability of the building to support service delivery.

Performance has been maintained as a consequence of the council's commitment to investing in its property assets and the rationalisation of accommodation of unsuitable property used by services.

The council has consistently been ranked in the upper quartile for suitability (currently 2nd) of its operational property (excluding education) assets as part of the CIPFA Asset Management Property Performance Benchmarking group which involves 21 other Scottish local authorities.

Suitability Assessment for 2021/22 show no change from 2020/21 as surveys on non-education operational properties where not completed in year. A revised programme is currently being reviewed to ensure surveys are completed as required in going forward.

The target for 2022/23 is set at 94% based on existing suitability assessments and investment proposals. It is projected that the current level of performance will be maintained and where possible improved. It is recognised however, that over the longer term the suitability of the operational estate will require significant investment to sustain performance or become more efficient through modernisation to allow greater investment on "core" properties with long terms service delivery requirements.

P:PAMP308_6b.5 Percentage of all operational properties (non-education) that have had suitability assessments reviewed

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)



Percentage of all operational properties (non-edcuation) that have had suitability assessments reviewed
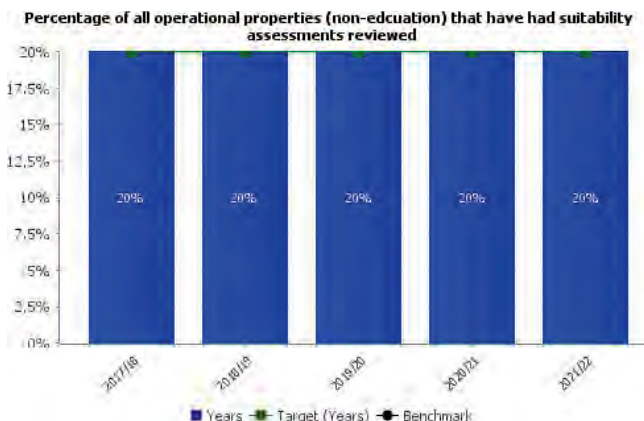
## Trend Chart Commentary:

This performance measure has been implemented since 2014 and seeks to demonstrate the ongoing review of property assets for suitability.

The trend chart supports the demonstration that West Lothian Council continues to review the suitability of its properties on a minimum of a 5-yearly basis and uses the findings to prioritise works to those properties that can achieve satisfactory or better suitability.

Suitability Assessment for 2021/22 show no change from 2020/21

There is no benchmarking undertaken for this performance measure as other local authorities who are involved in the CIPFA Scottish Property Asset Management Benchmarking Group do not collect this measure or are unwilling to publish it.

Target for 2022/23 is 20% based on quinquennial programme.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ✅ | P:PAMP309_6b.5 Percentage of all school properties that have had suitability assessments reviewed | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) | |

**Percentage of all school properties that have had suitability assessments reviewed**
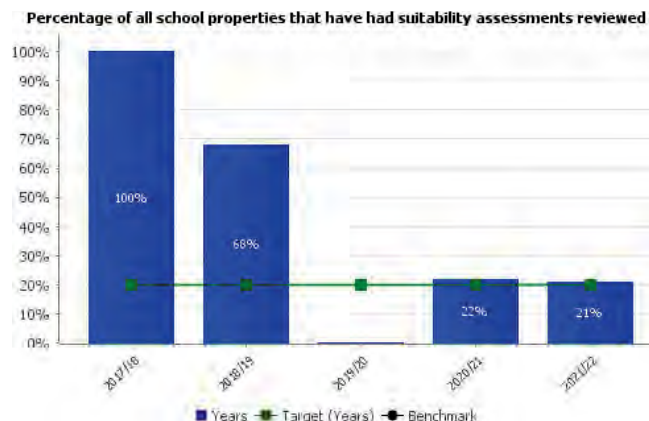


**Trend Chart Commentary:**

This performance measure has been implemented from April 2014 and seeks to demonstrate the ongoing review of school estate property assets for suitability.

The trend chart supports the demonstration that West Lothian Council continues to review the suitability of its properties.

A full refresh of the Suitability Assessment is to be carried out by West Lothian Council as part of the new Core Facts Guidance by the Scottish Government, which requires for schools in particular that assessment of suitability is to be undertaken on a rolling 5-year programme. Currently 100% of schools have been resurveyed based on the new guidance.

During 2021/22, 21% of the education estate had suitability surveys carried out in line with the new Core Facts Guidance by the Scottish Government.

Benchmarking will be considered going forward as part national benchmarking groups and the review of submissions by Scottish Government who will monitor and publish the suitability core fact data.

The target for 2022/23 of 20% has therefore been adopted in line with the new quinquennial programme.

P:SCORPASSET01
Proportion of Operational
Buildings that are Suitable
for their Current Use

Head of Finance
and Property
Services (D
Forrest)
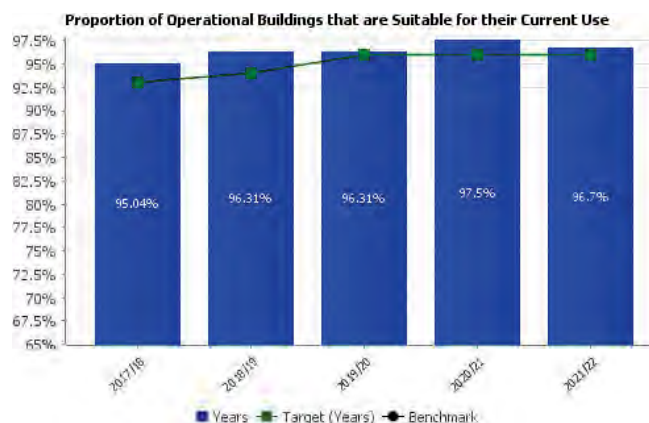


**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The performance indicator is applicable to all the council's operational property assets and seeks to identify the proportion of Operational Buildings that are suitable for their current use.

The indicator shows that the suitability of the council's property assets has improved over a 5-year period as a result of effective investment and property improvement programme and the replacement, closure and modernisation of property assets.

The specified performance indicator is 96.7% for 2021/22 based on 231 properties out of 239 being satisfactory or better for use. This is a decrease from 97.5% in 2020/21.

The indicator has shown increased progress from the 92% recorded in 2016/17. This is a result of property improvement programmes and building rationalisation as the number of operational properties has dropped from 261 in 2016/17 to 239 in 2021/22.

Assets which are not satisfactory or better for suitability include existing minor properties which have been identified to be replaced as part of approved investment proposals.

LGBF data has been reported and the council has consistently been ranked in the upper quartile (currently 3rd) for suitability of its operational property assets as part of the CIPFA Asset Management Property Performance Benchmarking group which involves 21 other Scottish local authorities.

Target for 2022/23 has been set at 96% to retain the current levels whilst looking for areas for improvement.

| | **(d) Outcome 4 - Sufficiency** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Status | Performance Indicator | Lead officer(s) | Performance Data Trend Chart |
| ✅ | P:PAMP401_9b.1c Total Office Accommodation Area (m2) per staff FTE | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |  |

**Total Office Accomodation Area (m2) per staff FTE**

■ Years  ■ Target (Years)  ● Benchmark
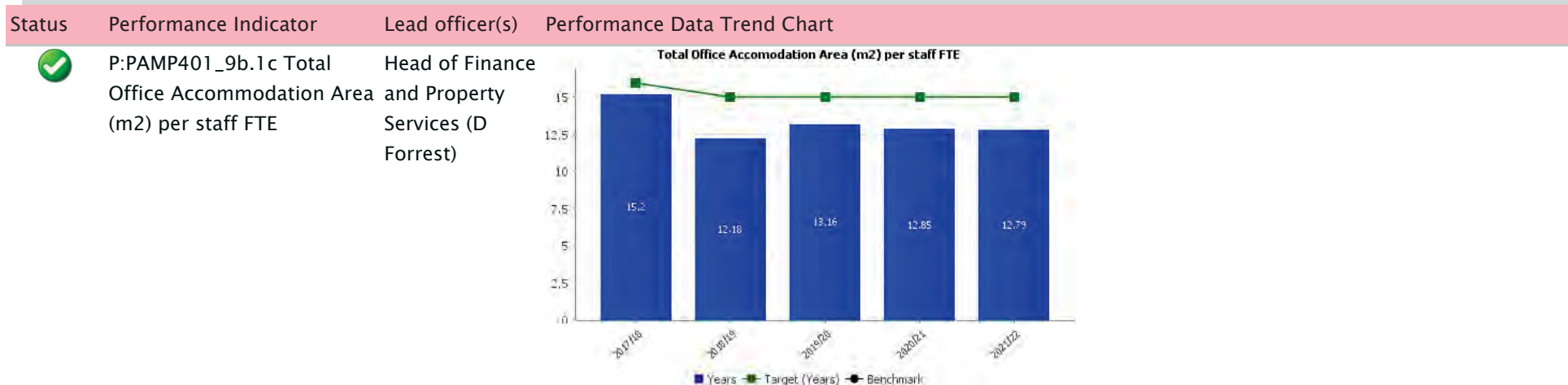
## Trend Chart Commentary:

This performance measure illustrates the area per person within our office accommodation as expressed as a m2 per FTE.

The current performance is 12.79 m2 per FTE for 2021/22, which is a decrease from 12.85 m2 per FTE in 2020/21. Current office/ administrative properties include West Lothian Civic Centre, St David's House and Arrochar House (12,918 m2)

This performance indicator currently does not capture office areas within Partnership Centre buildings, which is contributed to the reduction in the outcome figure for 2018/19 as currently our surveys don't identify administrative/ operational or non-operational areas within each partnership centre building. Remeasuring / calibration of floor areas within Partnership Centres to identify the total office area within each building will be carried out going forward.

The long-term trend going forwards will be to generally reduce the amount of space per staff member, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Office Modernisation Strategy. This indicator is benchmarked against another 21 local authorities as part of the CIPFA Scotland Benchmarking Group. The council is currently ranked 3rd for space utilisation.

The target for 2022/23 is 15 square metres per FTE recognising the introduction of office accommodation within partnership centres as part of this indicator (remeasure and calibration required).

25

P:PAMP405_9b.1c Average School Estate Capacity (% roll to total capacity)

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)



Average School Estate Capacity (% roll to total capacity)
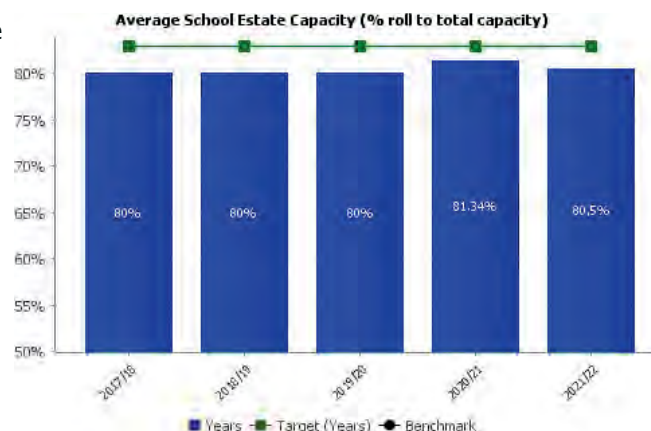
## Trend Chart Commentary:

This performance indicator (introduced in 2014) allows the council to demonstrate that it maximises the utilisation of its school estate capacity to deliver curriculum activities (i.e. the percentage of the capacity to accommodate pupils that is used). The calculation is based on all primary and secondary school pupils attending as a percentage (the average school roll) against the capacity of the school. This is reported within the School Estate Core Facts.

The general trend for this performance measure is an increasing utilisation of the school estate which when reflected against an increasing school population means that we are accommodating more pupils without adding excessive capacity. Performance measure is calculated by using Base Audible Summary of School Roll Forecasts provided by Education Planning.

Primary: 15,277 out of 20,335
Secondary: 11,908 out of 13,420.
Totals: 27,185/ 33,755.

The target for 2022/23 is to remain at 83% to reflect increasing school roll. The long-term trend sought will be to have ongoing improvement and the maximisation of utilisation for the coming years.

P:PS911_9b.1a Percentage of properties that are considered satisfactory or better in terms of sufficiency

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)

Percentage of properties that are considered satisfactory or better in terms of sufficiency
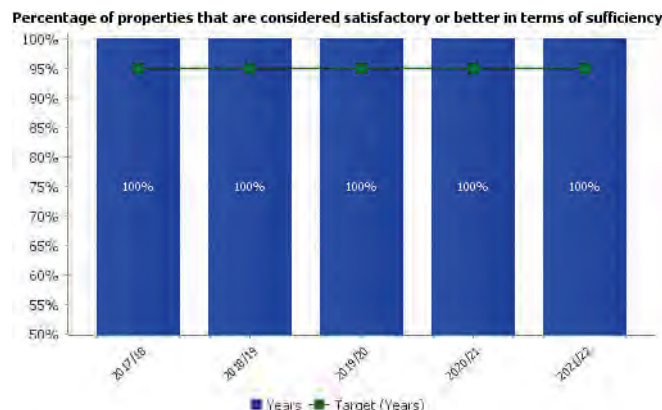


## Trend Chart Commentary:
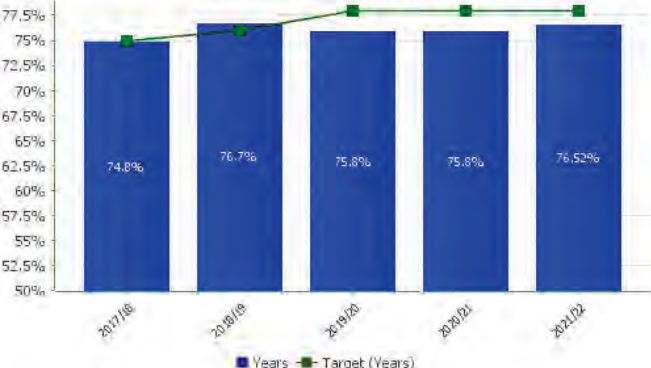
This performance indicator introduced in 2017/18 as part of the corporate asset management strategy allows the council to demonstrate the sufficiency of its school estate capacity, reflecting the demands and user requirements by measuring the average school roll against the capacity of each building individually. This element of asset management allows the council to create plans to support service development as well as identify assets that are underutilised.

This indicator has only recently started to be collected, however the result of the recent data collection shows that all the school estate properties are within capacity, so the percentage will be 100% for 2021/22. The target 2022/23 and going forward will be set at 95% to maintain a high level of sufficiency whilst identifying areas for improvement.

It is assumed that all other operational buildings are currently within capacity and therefore sitting with a 100% sufficiency rating. Currently, there is no benchmarking being carried out for this performance indicator against other local authorities, however this will be raised for review at the next benchmarking meeting as this allows the council to identify best practice from other local authorities.

## (e) Outcome 5 - Accessibility

| Status | Performance Indicator | Lead officer(s) | Performance Data Trend Chart |
|---|---|---|---|
| ✓ | P:PAMP501_9b.2 Percentage of all operational buildings from which the council delivers services that are fully accessible for disabled persons. | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |  |

**Percentage of all operational buildings from which the council delivers services that are fully accessible for disabled persons.**

74.8%  76.7%  75.8%  75.8%  76.52%

■ Years  ■ Target (Years)

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

Performance has continued to improve due to the ongoing investment in customer specific adaptations, general accessibility improvements and the modernisation of the operational property portfolio. This trend chart shows that the council is increasing the accessibility of our operational properties to those members of the public with disabilities as a result of effective investment.

The target for 2021/22 was 78%, with an out-turn of 76.52%. Performance has increased from 75.8% in the prior year as a result of improvements achieved through implementation of a wide variety of accessibility projects. Reflecting investment in accessibility works together with the delivery of new and redeveloped properties, it is expected to improve the performance for 2022/23.

The performance measure is benchmarked as part of the CIPFA Scotland Property Asset Management Benchmarking Group. The council is currently rated as 6th amongst 21 other Scottish Local Authorities.

P:PAMP502_9b.2 Percentage of Nursery Schools that are fully accessible to Disabled Pupils

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)



Percentage of Nursery Schools that are fully accessible to Disabled Pupils
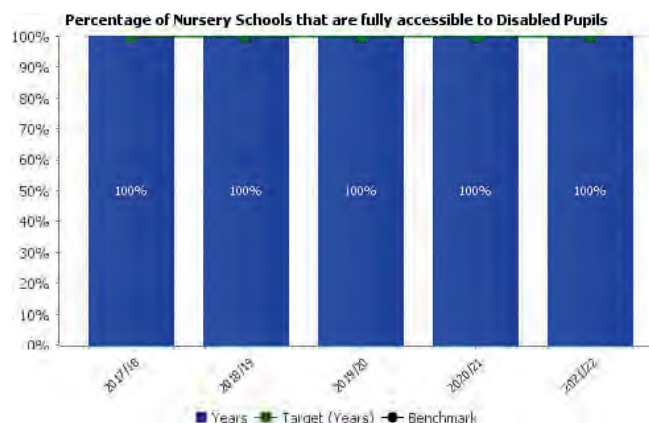
**Trend Chart Commentary:**

This performance measure aims to illustrate the number of the council's nursery school property assets as a percentage that are considered accessible for persons who consider themselves disabled together with demonstrating compliance with equalities legislation for the impact on service delivery relating to the built environment.

Current performance is 100% of our nursery schools are considered accessible.

Performance has been maintained due to the ongoing investment in customer specific adaptations, general accessibility improvements and the modernisation of the nursery school property portfolio. This trend chart shows that the council is maintaining the accessibility of our nursery properties to those members of the public with disabilities as a result of an effective investment.

The target for 2022/23 is 100%, representing a sustaining of performance. The wider accessibility performance measure is benchmarked as part of the CIPFA Scotland Property Asset Management Benchmarking Group. The council is currently rated as 6th amongst 21 other Scottish Local Authorities. No segmentation / breakdown is provided for nursery schools however, given results the council will be in the upper quartile.

P:PAMP503_9b.2 Percentage of Primary Schools that are fully accessible to Disabled Pupils

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)

**Percentage of Primary Schools that are fully accessible to Disabled Pupils**

(Chart showing bars at 58.2% for years 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22)

Legend: ■ Years ■ Target (Years) ● Benchmark
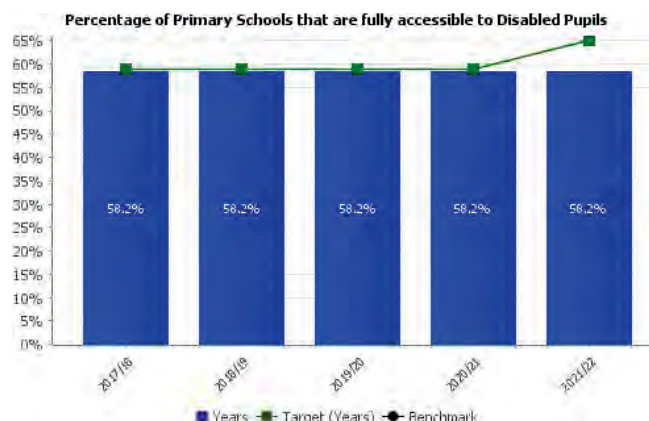
## Trend Chart Commentary:

This performance measure aims to illustrate the number of the council's primary school property assets as a percentage that are considered accessible for persons who consider themselves disabled together with demonstrating compliance with equalities legislation for the impact on service delivery relating to the built environment.

Current performance is 58.2% of our primary schools are considered fully accessible.

Performance has improved due to the ongoing investment in pupil specific adaptations, general accessibility improvements and the modernisation of the primary school property portfolio. This trend chart shows that the council is increasing the accessibility of our primary school properties to those pupils with disabilities as a result of an effective investment. A significant investment since 2012/13 has seen an increase of over 35% in the performance of the primary school estate. The council's strategy is to have at least one fully accessible non-denominational and one fully accessible denominational primary school in each electoral ward and secondary school catchment area.

This performance indicator remained static during 2021/22. Full assessment for all school estate properties is required going forward as part of the new Core Facts review due to be implemented.

The target for 2022/23 is 65%, representing a sustaining and modest improvement of performance. The wider accessibility performance measure is benchmarked as part of the CIPFA Scotland Property Asset Management Benchmarking Group. The council is currently rated as 6th amongst 21 other Scottish Local Authorities. No segmentation / breakdown is provided for primary schools.

P:PAMP504_9b.2 Percentage of Secondary Schools that are fully accessible to Disabled Pupils

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)



Percentage of Secondary Schools that are fully accessible to Disabled Pupils

■ Years ▬■▬ Target (Years) ▬●▬ Benchmark
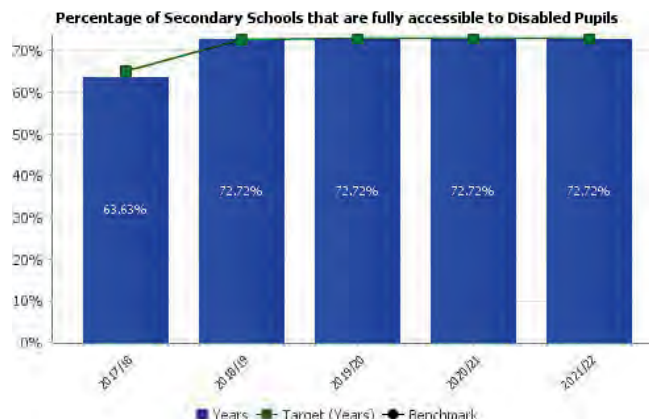
## Trend Chart Commentary:

This performance measure aims to illustrate the number of the council's secondary school property assets as a percentage that are considered accessible for persons who consider themselves disabled together with demonstrating compliance with equalities legislation for the impact on service delivery relating to the built environment.

Current performance is 72.72% of our secondary schools are considered fully accessible.

Performance has been sustained and whilst there has been investment in pupil specific adaptations, general accessibility improvements and the modernisation of the secondary school property portfolio, there are 3 schools that are not fully accessible. These are Broxburn (PPP), Whitburn (PPP) and Bathgate (PPP) This trend chart shows that the council is sustaining the accessibility of our secondary school properties to those pupils with disabilities. Due to the nature of PPP contracts, the improvement of these schools for accessibility is prohibitively costly.

The target for 2022/23 is 73%, representing a sustaining of performance. The wider accessibility performance measure is benchmarked as part of the CIPFA Scotland Property Asset Management Benchmarking Group. The council is currently rated as 6th amongst 21 other Scottish Local Authorities. No segmentation / breakdown is provided for secondary schools.

P:PAMP505_9b Percentage of Additional Support Needs (ASN) Schools that are fully accessible to Disabled Pupils

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)

**Percentage of Additional Support Needs (ASN) Schools that are fully accessible to Disabled Pupils**
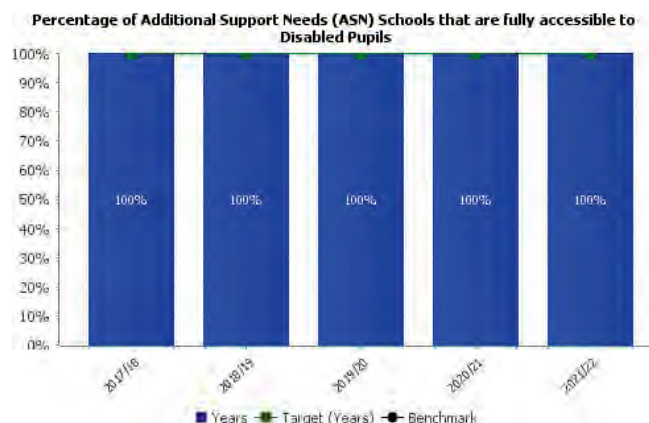


**Trend Chart Commentary:**

This performance measure aims to illustrate the number of the council's Additional Support Needs (ASN) School property assets as a percentage that are considered accessible for persons who consider themselves disabled together with demonstrating compliance with equalities legislation for the impact on service delivery relating to the built environment.

Current performance is 100% of our ASN schools are considered accessible.

Performance has improved due to the ongoing investment in customer specific adaptations, general accessibility improvements and the modernisation of the ASN school property portfolio. This trend chart shows that the council has increased the accessibility of our ASN school properties to those pupils with disabilities as a result of an effective investment. A significant investment during 14/15 and 15/16 saw an increase of 40% in the performance of the ASN school estate.

The target for 2022/23 is 100%, representing a sustaining of performance. The wider accessibility performance measure is benchmarked as part of the CIPFA Scotland Property Asset Management Benchmarking Group. The council is currently rated as 6th amongst 21 other Scottish Local Authorities. No segmentation / breakdown is provided for ASN Schools however, given results the council will be in the upper quartile.

✅ P:PAMP507_9b.2 Other Operational Buildings (non-education) that are considered fully accessible to disabled members of staff and visitors.

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)
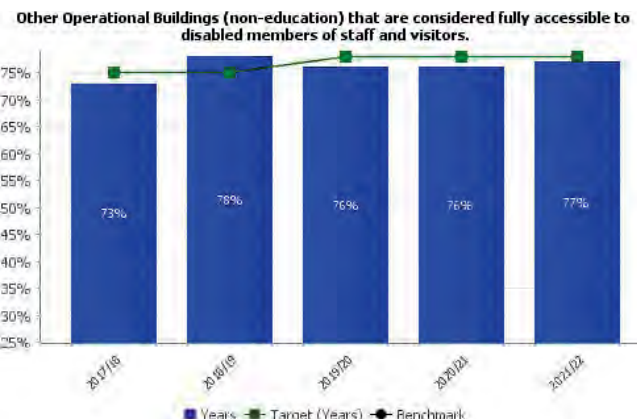
**Other Operational Buildings (non-education) that are considered fully accessible to disabled members of staff and visitors.**



Legend: ■ Years  ■ Target (Years)  ● Benchmark

Chart values: 2017/18: 73%, 2018/19: 78%, 2019/20: 76%, 2020/21: 76%, 2021/22: 77%

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

This performance measure aims to illustrate the number of the council's operational property assets (excluding schools) as a percentage that are considered accessible for persons who consider themselves disabled together with demonstrating compliance with equalities legislation for the impact on service delivery relating to the built environment.

Performance has continued to improve due to the ongoing investment in customer specific adaptations, general accessibility improvements and the modernisation of the operational (non-education) property portfolio. This trend chart shows that the council is increasing the accessibility of our operational properties to those members of the public with disabilities as a result of an effective investment.

The target for 2021/22 was 78% with an out-turn of 77%. The target for 2022/23 will remain at 78%, reflecting a number of projects that are currently in progress and investment in accessibility works. Non-education assets are not segmented in terms of national benchmarking however, in relation to wider operational property (all asset) which is benchmarked as part of the CIPFA Scotland Property Asset Management Benchmarking Group the council is currently rated as 5th amongst 23 other Scottish Local Authorities.

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## (f) Outcome 6 - Sustainability

| Status | Performance Indicator | Lead officer(s) | Performance Data Trend Chart |
|---|---|---|---|
| ✅ | P:PS901_9a.1 Carbon emissions from energy used in buildings (annual) | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |  |

**Carbon emissions from energy used in buildings (annual)**

Years — Target (Years) — Benchmark

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

2021/22 shows an increase in emissions from the previous year with a reported figure of 18,721 tonnes against a revised target of 17,920 which reflects the new net-zero objectives set out in the Climate Change Strategy.

Targets reflect the 2013/14 baseline figure and realignment required to achieve the interim 2028 targets as set out in the new Climate Change Strategy 2021-28. The increase is primarily due to higher electricity consumption as staff returned to buildings post Covid-19. In 2019/20, the last full year prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, total emissions were over 1,200 tonnes higher than 2021/22.

| | P:PS902_9a Electricity consumption kWh/m2 | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) | Electricity consumption kWh/m2 |
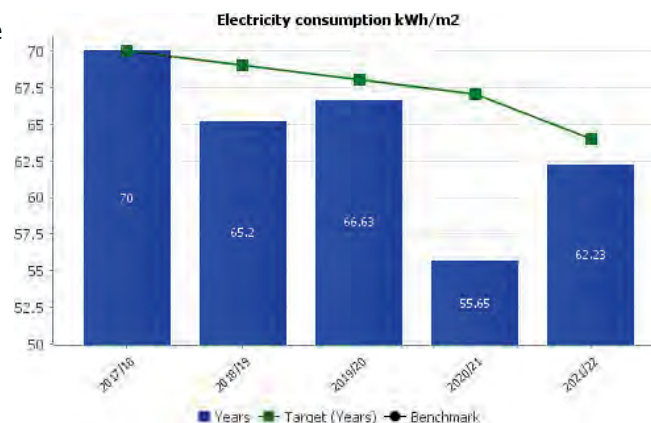


## Trend Chart Commentary:

While 2021/22 saw an increase from the artificially low 2020/21 figure of 55.65kWh/m2 to 62.63kWh/m2, this figure is still better than target for the year (64).

Consumption has again been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and it is expected that this will stabilise in 2022/23. The overall trend is generally one of consumption reduction.

The target for 2022/23 is 61kWh/m2. Further improvements to buildings, including upgrading of lighting to LED and introduction of more efficient equipment and controls will be the key contributor to reductions.

P:PS903_9a Gas consumption kWh/m2

Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)
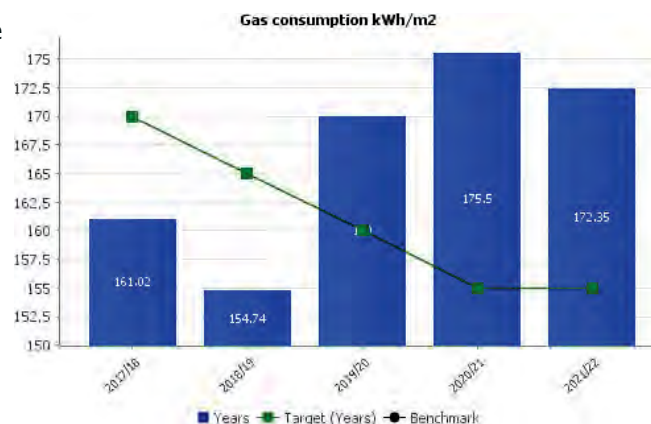


**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The figure for 2021/22 is 172.35 kWh/m2 versus 175.5kWh/m2 in 2020/21 and against the target of 155.

While overall gas consumption has reduced, it continues to be impacted considerably by Covid-19, with our biomass heating systems being out of commission for a period over our heating season and the additional heating requirements as a result of increased ventilation and no warm air recirculation.

Further projects are being taken forward to reduce gas consumption, including BMS optimisation, a number of boiler replacements and other measures.

The target for 2022/23 is 149 kWh/m2 in line with reduction levels set out in the Climate Change Strategy 2021-28.

P:PS905_9a Water m3/m2     Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest)
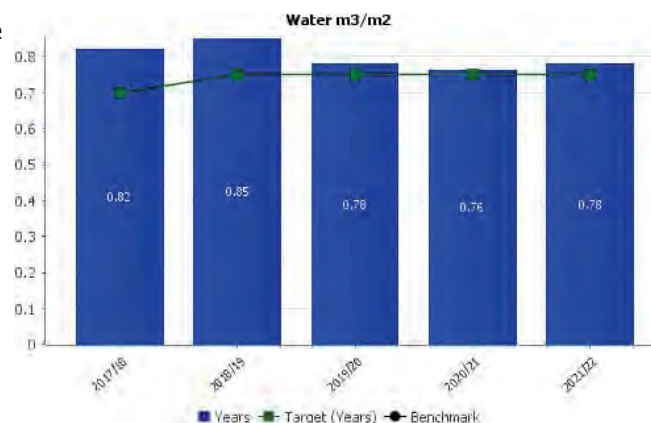


**Trend Chart Commentary:**

Data shows that water consumption has increased slightly from 0.76m3/m2 to 0.78m3/m2 in 2021/22.

We continually review with our water provider (Business Stream) to identify sites where there are high consumption issues with a view to targeting resources to improve this. In addition, supplier data continues to improve, with consumption data available for more buildings and Automated Meter Readers installed at sites with large consumption profiles. This improves reading and billing accuracy and ensures there is less reliance on estimates.

The target for 22/23 remains 0.75m3/m2 as minimal changes are anticipated.

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 🛑 | P:PS906_9b Percentage completion of Energy Performance Certificates in operational buildings where required | Head of Finance and Property Services (D Forrest) |



**Percentage completion of Energy Performance Certificates in operational buildings where required**

(Bar chart: 2017/18 = 99%, 2018/19 = 100%, 2019/20 = 100%, 2020/21 = 100%, 2021/22 = 64%. Legend: ■ Years — Target (Years))

## Trend Chart Commentary:

EPC requirements mean that a higher number of buildings must have a certificate displayed. All publicly accessible buildings with a floor space of more than 250m2 must now be included.

Following a comprehensive audit in 2015/16, a number of EPC's were completed in early 2017 which took the council to 100% compliance. In 2018/19 and 19/20, 100% compliance was again achieved.

Renewals for those sites where certificates were first produced in 2009 are underway, although this process was delayed due to uncertainty over the future of EPC's as a standard and the work being deemed non-essential during the Covid-19 pandemic.  As such, while we have EPC's in place, a number of these have now passed their original expiry date (53 out of 147). As the work to establish a replacement to EPC's is still ongoing and access for surveys etc is now possible, a new EPC provider has been appointed to renew certificates and it is anticipated that all overdue renewals will be completed by the end of 2022.

**DATA LABEL: PUBLIC**

West Lothian Council

# CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

## 2022/23 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE – MONTH 6 MONITORING REPORT

## REPORT BY HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROPERTY SERVICES

### A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Panel with an update on the financial performance of the Corporate Policy and Resources portfolio.

### B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel:

1. Notes the financial performance of the Corporate Policy and Resources portfolio as at month 6;
2. Notes that the Corporate Policy and Resources portfolio position at month 6 is part of the overall council budget position reported to Council Executive on 15 November 2022;
3. Notes actions to be taken by Heads of Service and budget holders to manage spend within available resources.

### C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I | **Council Values** | Focusing on customers' needs, being honest, open and accountable, making best use of resources, working in partnership. |
| II | **Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)** | Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, Section 95; Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, section 1-14. |
| III | **Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers** | No implications at this stage. |
| IV | **Impact on performance and performance indicators** | Effective budget management is an essential element of service performance. Additional financial reporting provides elected members with information to allow for proper scrutiny of performance of services. |
| V | **Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement** | The revenue budget provides resources necessary to help deliver the Single Outcome Agreement. Effective prioritisation of resources is essential to achieving key outcomes. |
| VI | **Resources – (Financial, Staffing and Property)** | A projected underspend of £2.873 million is the position for the Corporate Policy and Resources portfolio revenue budget in 2022/23. |

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There was net slippage of £2.309 million on the capital programme for the portfolio area.

**VII    Consideration at PDSP**    A financial performance report will be presented to the Panel twice yearly on an ongoing basis.

**VIII   Other Consultations**    Depute Chief Executives, Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration, Head of Corporate Services & Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services

## D.    TERMS OF REPORT

### D.1    Introduction

This report provides an update on the general fund revenue financial performance in respect of the Corporate Policy and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP) portfolio of services.  The council's revenue budget is operationally managed at a Head of Service level, and the financial position included within this report formed part of the overall council position reported to Council Executive on 15 November 2022.  This report also includes the position on the delivery of approved budget reduction measures relevant to the Corporate Policy and Resources portfolio for 2022/23.

The budget monitoring process is undertaken in line with the council's budgetary control framework and procedures, which place particular focus on a risk based and pro-active approach to budget monitoring.

This report focuses on the financial performance of council services which further enhances the information presented to elected members to allow scrutiny of service and financial performance.  The report contains reference to key performance measures for service areas which are contained within Service Management Plans and referenced in the 2020/21 Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) data-set.  LGBF data for 2021/22 will be collated by the Improvement Service and will be made available later in the financial year. The cost information for the LGBF for 2020/21 and 2021/22 will be materially impacted by Covid-19 related changes to expenditure and income.

### D.2    Financial Outturn for 2022/23

The table below summarises the position in relation to service expenditure for the portfolio area.  As part of the monitoring exercise, a number of key risks and service pressures have been identified and these are noted in the narrative for the relevant service area.

| Service | Budget £'000 | Month 6 Forecast £'000 | Variance £'000 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **GENERAL FUND REVENUE** | | | |
| **Chief Executive, Finance and Property Services** | | | |
| Chief Executive and Elections | 802 | 781 | (21) |
| Finance | 3,682 | 2,990 | (692) |
| Anti-Poverty | 10,803 | 10,588 | (215) |
| Property Services | 15,713 | 16,043 | 330 |
| **Total** | **31,000** | **30,402** | **(598)** |
| | | | |
| **Corporate Services** | | | |
| Corporate Procurement | 414 | 544 | 130 |
| Information Technology | 3,537 | 3,537 | 0 |
| Performance & Improvement | 662 | 578 | (84) |
| Corporate Communications | 364 | 416 | 52 |

| Service | Budget £'000 | Month 6 Forecast £'000 | Variance £'000 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Legal Services | 675 | 706 | 31 |
| Human Resources and Support Services | 3,991 | 3,862 | (129) |
| Corporate Transformation Team | 418 | 418 | 0 |
| **Total** | **10,061** | **10,061** | **0** |
| | | | |
| **Housing, Customer and Building Services** | | | |
| Customer Service Centre | 1,326 | 1,271 | (55) |
| Customer & Community Services | 3,037 | 2,964 | (73) |
| **Total** | **4,363** | **4,235** | **(128)** |
| | | | |
| **Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration** | | | |
| Community Planning | 171 | 171 | 0 |
| **Total** | **171** | **171** | **0** |
| | | | |
| **Joint Boards** | | | |
| Joint Boards | 1,312 | 1,312 | 0 |
| **Total** | **1,312** | **1,312** | **0** |
| | | | |
| **Non Service Expenditure** | | | |
| Non Service Expenditure | 50,001 | 49,319 | (682) |
| **Total** | **50,001** | **49,319** | **(682)** |
| | | | |
| **Funding** | | | |
| Council Tax | (93,249) | (94,714) | (1,465) |
| **Total** | **(93,249)** | **(94,714)** | **(1,465)** |
| | | | |
| **TOTAL GENERAL FUND REVENUE CPR PDSP** | **3,659** | **786** | **(2,873)** |

| GENERAL SERVICES CAPITAL | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Property | 50,329 | 47,921 | (2,408) |
| ICT | 6,206 | 6,305 | 99 |
| **TOTAL GENERAL SERVICES CAPITAL CPR PDSP** | **56,535** | **54,226** | **(2,309)** |

**D.3      Summary of Main Issues in Service Expenditure Budgets and Impact on Performance**

**D.3.1    General Fund Revenue – Chief Executive, Finance and Property Services**

The revenue budget for Chief Executive, Finance and Property Services is forecast to underspend by £598,000, largely due to an increase in intervention income as a result of changes in legislation meaning payments are received earlier.  Staff savings in Revenues contribute to this position.  These underspends have helped absorb some of the additional pressures within property services as maintenance expenditure continues to be a risk, as does the collection of commercial rents due to cost pressures on tenants. Utility costs remain a pressure area, currently forecast to be £3.736 million over budget, which is being met by one off resources in 2022/23.  This will result in a recurring budget pressure from 2023/24 and will continue to be closely monitored.

The LGBF includes a number of key indicators that relate to Finance and Property Services including percentage of invoices paid within 30 days and the cost per dwelling of collecting council tax.  The LGBF data shows that West Lothian's performance for 2020/21 was 95.02% of invoices were paid within 30 days which ranked ninth in Scotland. The data for council tax collection for 2020/21 indicates that West Lothian ranks third lowest for cost per dwelling for

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collecting council tax. West Lothian's cost of support services as a proportion of total council expenditure is ranked third lowest out of the 32 Scottish local authorities.

**D.3.2    General Fund Revenue – Corporate Services**

The revenue budget for Corporate Services is forecast to break even. There are continuing service pressures for legal fees and procurement rebates and additional spend is forecast within Admin and HR Services from contracts for agency staff.  An under recovery of income in Legal Services also remains which will be partially mitigated by the additional funding ringfenced to mitigate Covid-19 related pressures.  The pressures identified can be offset against one-off savings against other budgets within the service.

**D.3.3    General Fund Revenue – Housing, Customer and Building Services**

Expenditure within Housing, Customer and Building Services relating to the Corporate Policy and Resources portfolio includes Customer and Community Services and the Customer Service Centre.  There are projected underspends of £55,000 within the Customer Service Centre and £73,000 within Customer & Community Services, due to staffing savings.  This position is supported by one-off resources of £46,000 to mitigate the impact of the pressure on Registration activity income.

Performance information for Customer and Community Services and for the Customer Service Centre indicates that, for the first 6 months of 2022/23, the percentage of customers who rated the overall quality of service as good or excellent was above target for both areas at 98.7% and 98.2% respectively.

**D.3.4    General Fund Revenue - Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration**

Community Planning costs are forecast to be broadly in line with budget.

**D.3.5    General Fund Revenue – Joint Boards**

A break-even position is forecast.

**D.3.6    General Fund Revenue – Non Service Expenditure**

Non-Service Expenditure is forecast to underspend by £682,000. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) is currently forecast to underspend by £19,000. Legislation was introduced in April 2022 to better align CTRS received by Universal Credit (UC) customers with that of legacy benefits which will mean that, on average, CTRS awards for UC claimants will increase. The impact of this is being monitored. In addition, there is a forecast underspend of £323,000 in housing benefits due to a continuing decrease in housing benefits caseloads, as people who require additional assistance with housing costs will claim universal credit unless they meet specific criteria. A forecast underspend in pensions contributes to the overall position.

**D.3.7    General Fund Revenue – Funding**

Council Tax income is currently forecast to over recover by £1.465 million at month 6. In year collection rates have increased to 58.63% in September 2022 compared to 54.82% in September 2021 (3.81% increase) and 53.87% in September 2020 (4.76% increase).  This increase is due to the Council Tax Cost of living £150 being paid to 61,195 households since 1 April 2022. The 2022/23 collection rates have increased for both in year and all years when comparing to 2021/22. The outturn position is a forecast over recovery in income of £1.465 million, based on a bad debt provision of 3%. The majority of this over recovery (£1.309 million) comes from recovery of prior years' debt which has already been provided for.

**D.3.8** **General Fund Revenue – Monitoring of approved budget reductions**

For the Corporate, Policy and Resources portfolio, savings in 2022/23 are anticipated to be fully delivered by the end of the financial year. The digital transformation savings of £248,000 are being delivered by services as an operational measure.

**D.3.9** **General Services Capital**

The projected outturn for Property and ICT asset categories at month 6 was net slippage of £2.309 million for the financial year.

Property

Projected outturn expenditure at month six is £47.921 million with £36.114 million of expenditure committed to date.

Property Planned Improvements
Within schools, the traditional summer programme has delivered over 94 individual projects, demonstrating the council's continued commitment to investing in our learning estate. Works on the asbestos removal at Blackburn primary school have been rescheduled and rephased to weekends during the school term, to minimise any disruption. Delays in obtaining the materials to allow for the installation of notice boards at Cedarbank, have resulted in the these being rescheduled to be undertaken during term time.

Property Projects
The additional support needs Skills Centre at Burnhouse Campus in Whitburn, is estimating slippage of £800,000 at month 6. It is estimated that the design stage will be complete in 2022/23 with a view to commencing construction in 2023/24. Works at the Beatlie Campus are progressing well and are on target.

The valuations received for the new production kitchen at Stoneyburn primary school, part of the Early Learning Childcare expansion, exceed the agreed budget. As a consequence, officers are working through options to bring the project in line with the approved budget.

Slippage of £1.8 million is forecast for the developer funded planned extension to increase the capacity at St Paul's primary school in East Calder. Further to discussions, it was established that the addition of a new kitchen would be incorporated within the project. As this was not part of the original scope of works, the design of the project had to be reconsidered and corresponding building warrants had to be updated to accommodate the inclusion of the kitchen. Officers are confident that the contract for these works will be awarded by March 2023.

Whitburn Partnership Centre is complete and open to the public. The site has now been approved for the Single Person Homeless Accommodation & Assessment Centre project and the design stage is currently in progress. In relation to the Lanthorn Community Centre RAAC Roof project, the contract has been awarded and the construction programme is estimated to take 52 weeks.

ICT

The monitoring exercise is projecting an outturn expenditure of £6.305 million at month 6. In terms of actual spending to date, £3.578 million of expenditure, representing 57% of the 2022/23 projected outturn. Since the month 4 report, the Social Care Administration (SWIFT) Replacement project has made good progress, a contract has been agreed that will cover this financial year, as well as the next four years. Similar to other asset categories, ICT are experiencing resourcing issues within the service, however officers continue to assess all possible options that will help mitigate this.

The desktop refresh projects, both corporate and schools, are reporting on budget and delivered within this financial year.

**D.4     SUMMARISED BUDGET POSITION FOR 2022/23**

The month 6 position for the Corporate Policy and Resources portfolio which is part of the overall outturn forecast for the General Fund Revenue budget in 2022/23, is an underspend of £2.873 million, and this was reported to Council Executive on 15 November 2022.  Capital projects have slippage of £2.309 million.

**D.5     FUTURE BUDGET ISSUES AND RISKS**

There remains significant risks and uncertainties associated with the financial assumptions in the council's budget which continue to be monitored, including the recovery from Covid-19, the cost of living crisis and forecast energy prices which are continuing to rise significantly. Ongoing negotiations around the 2022/23 pay award which has yet to be agreed for Teachers and Chief Officers are also a risk.  The magnitude of the financial challenges facing the council are unprecedented with substantial risks that are largely out with the council's control creating significant budget implications.

Specifically for the Corporate Policy and Resources portfolio, the key risks and uncertainties include the delivery of staffing savings which will require restructures and changes to the way staff operate.  Sickness absence levels and above inflationary contractual price changes are risks that can affect services across the portfolio area and are monitored closely.  Additional one off budget of £3.736 million has been provided in 2022/23 to manage the anticipated price increases on gas and electricity and this will be closely monitored over coming period.

The council's risk based approach to budget monitoring will ensure that effective action is taken to manage risks during the course of the financial year.  Officers will continue to provide updates on risks as part of the quarterly budget monitoring reporting to Council Executive at period 4, 6 and 9.

**E.     CONCLUSION**

The 2022/23 position for the Corporate Policy and Resources portfolio is a forecast underspend of £2.873 million.  As noted, the position for the Corporate Policy and Resources portfolio is part of the overall outturn forecast position for 2022/23 which was reported to Council Executive on 15 November 2022.  There is net slippage of £2.309 million on the capital programme for the portfolio area.

**F.     BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

1.  2022/23 General Fund Revenue Budget – Month 6 monitoring report - Report by Head of Finance and Property Services on 15 November 2022

2.  2022/23 General Services Capital Budget  - Month 6 monitoring report - Report by Head of Finance and Property Services on 15 November 2022

3.  General Services Capital Investment Programme 2022/23 to 2027/28 – Update - Report by Head of Finance and Property Services on 21 June 2022

4.  Revenue Budget 2022/23 – report by Head of Finance & Property Services on 15 February 2022

5.  Local Government Benchmarking Framework

Appendices/Attachments:   None

Contact Person:     Fiona Russell, Group Accountant

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**Donald Forrest**

**Head of Finance and Property Services**

**Date: 12 December 2022**

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**CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN: ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22**

**REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**A.   PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To update the Panel on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's annual report 2021-22.

**B.   RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Panel is asked to note the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) annual report 2021-22, and recommend that it be submitted to the Council Executive for information; and,
2. The Panel is asked to note West Lothian Council's performance in relation to the number of complaints received by the SPSO and the outcome; and,
3. The Panel is asked to note the learning from SPSO complaints which is appended to this report for information.

**C.   SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I | **Council Values** | Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; making best use of our resources; |
| II | **Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)** | None. |
| III | **Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers** | None. |
| IV | **Impact on performance and performance Indicators** | The council is required to report against a set of performance indicators developed by the SPSO. |
| V | **Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement** | None. |
| VI | **Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)** | None. |

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| VII | **Consideration at PDSP** | The previous annual report was considered by the Partnership and Resources PDSP at its meeting of 4 February 2022. |
|---|---|---|
| VIII | **Other consultations** | None. |

**D.** **TERMS OF REPORT**

**D1** **Background**

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) handles complaints at the final stage for public services in Scotland, including local authorities, the National Health Service (NHS), housing associations, prisons, water and sewage providers, the Scottish Government, universities and colleges and most Scottish Public Authorities. The SPSO investigates complaints when the complainer has exhausted the formal complaints procedure of the relevant authority.

The SPSO has specific powers and responsibilities to publish complaints handling procedures, and monitor and support best practice in complaints handling.

Additionally, the SPSO is the Independent Review Service for the Scottish Welfare Fund with the power to overturn and substitute decisions made by councils on Community Care and Crisis Grant applications.

**D2** **Local Authority Sector – Annual Review of Complaints and Issues**

A copy of the SPSO's Annual Letter is attached as Appendix 1 which provides an overview of the challenges faced in this reporting period as well as an overview of the cases handled.

The SPSO reports that the number of complaints received regarding local authorities was 1,191 for 2021-22, a 25% increase from 951 the previous year.

In 2021-22, complaints about local government made up 27% of all complaints to the SPSO; a decrease from 30% in 2020-21. The local authority sector received the second-highest numbers of complaints in 2021-22, just behind the health sector which received 28%.

In 2021-22 the total number of cases determined in relation to the local authority sector was 1,124.

The number of premature complaints about local government for this period was 296 which amounts to 25%. This is a significant increase from 2% in 2020-21, however this was noted as being unusually low at the time. The overall rate of premature complaints across all sectors for 2021-22 was 24%.

Of the total number of local authority complaints investigated in this period, the number of upheld (in full or part) complaints for the sector was 25 (66%). This is an increase from 54% in 2020-21. Of all complaints investigated by the SPSO in 2021-22, 63% were upheld (in full or part).

**D3** **West Lothian Council – Statistics and Update**

The SPSO provides each council with information specific to that local authority to consider. Appendix 2 provides tables of statistics about complaints to the SPSO regarding West Lothian Council for the past two years. The tables illustrate complaints received by subject area and complaints closed by outcome for 2020-21 and 2021-22.

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Appendix 2 highlights that the total number of complaints received about West Lothian Council is 62, which has increased from the 44 complaints received in 2020-21. As detailed in Appendix 2, the greatest number of complaints about West Lothian Council were in relation to Housing, which is in line with the sector as a whole. Environmental Health & Cleansing, Planning and Social Work were ranked the joint second most complained about areas in West Lothian.

The SPSO closed 56 complaints about West Lothian Council in 2021-22. 25 of these complaints were dealt with at the advice stage, whilst a further 30 were considered to have had an early resolution.

The council received nine decisions from the SPSO during 2021-22. Eight of these cases were not progressed, one case was fully upheld and none were partially upheld. Further detail on the breakdown of these cases by subject and by outcome is provided in Appendix 2.

**D4      Scottish Welfare Fund**

The SPSO received 1,494 review applications in relation to the Scottish Welfare Fund in 2021-22, representing a 37% increase on the 1,093 received in 2020-21. The SPSO took decisions on 1,391 review applications, a 27% increase on the previous year's 1,099. Cases are recorded as upheld when the SPSO changes the council's decision.

Appendix 3 provides further information on the requests for reviews that the SPSO received for Scottish Welfare Fund applications in 2021-22.

Appendix 4 has been included to advise of the number of review applications received in relation to West Lothian Council, and also to allow comparison of review applications for other Scottish local authorities.

**D5      Improving Complaints Standards**

The Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) is fully adopted across Scottish public bodies under SPSO's jurisdiction, with their focus focusing to be on monitoring compliance and supporting improvement. The SPSO monitor in various ways, for example through conducting compliance assessments of organisations' complaints handling procedures, following-up issues identified from the complaints made to SPSO, acting on what is learned from complaints, and through working directly with organisations to share and support good practice in complaints handling.

**D6      SPSO Recommendations**

In 2021-22 the SPSO investigated one complaint against West Lothian Council and it was fully upheld. This complaint was in relation to the council's handling of an anti-social behaviour issue. Appendix 5 sets out the SPSO recommendations and service improvement actions for this complaint for information, which Housing, Customer and Building Services confirm have now been actioned.

The recommendations and learning from SPSO decisions are also reported to the council's Complaints Steering Board and Performance Committee on a quarterly basis.

**E      CONCLUSION**

The SPSO has published its annual report along with its annual letter to local authorities.

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The SPSO reports that the total number of complaints received about West Lothian Council has increased to 56 in 2021-22, however only one complaint was upheld after SPSO investigation in this period. It should also be noted that 29% of complaints about West Lothian Council were determined by the SPSO as having been reported prematurely.

The SPSO continue to expect organisations to be proactive in ensuring that opportunities for learning from complaints is embedded in governance structures.  A report will continue be submitted quarterly to the council's Complaints Steering Board and quarterly to Performance Committee, outlining the learning from SPSO decisions, which have been implemented by the council in response to complaints made.

## F    BACKGROUND REFERENCES

- Scottish Public Services Ombudsman: Annual Report 2021-22
- Partnership and Resources PDSP, 4 February 2022

**Appendices/Attachments: 5**

**Appendix 1: Letter to West Lothian Council from Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**

**Appendix 2: Tables of statistics to illustrate West Lothian Council complaints received by subject area and complaints closed by outcome for 2020-21 and 2021-22**

**Appendix 3: 2021-22 Scottish Welfare Fund – Summary**

**Appendix 4: 2021-22 Scottish Welfare Fund – Outcome Breakdown**

**Appendix 5: Scottish Public Services Ombudsman – Complaint Recommendations and Service Learning 2021-22**

**Contact Person:** Caitlin Hirst, Project Officer, 01506 281278
                    Caitlin.Hirst@westlothian.gov.uk

**Graham Hope**
**Chief Executive**

Date of meeting: 12 December 2022

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# SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN

**People Centred | Improvement Focused**

**Bridgeside House**
**99 McDonald Road**
**Edinburgh**
**EH7 4NS**

Tel    **0800 377 7330**
Fax   **0800 377 7331**
Web  **www.spso.org.uk**

27 October 2022

## Annual Report from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

I am very pleased to enclose my 2021-22 Annual Report: Performance Report. In addition to the attached PDF document, there is also a web version at SPSO Annual Report 2021-22 that is easy to navigate digitally.

If you want to read a full copy of the Report and Financial Statements, which includes the accountability report, this will be available in due course at www.spso.org.uk/finance. Look out for updates in our monthly e-newsletter, our website and twitter.

Since I took up office in 2017, my team has, year on year, taken on new functions and duties and had to cope with unprecedented change and challenges. We would have faced many of these irrespective of COVID-19.

We started 2021-22 in the knowledge we had high workloads and faced capacity and resourcing challenges. Despite uncertainty about lockdown and the ongoing impact of COVID-19, on ourselves and Scottish public services, we were, and remain, optimistic. We set ourselves an ambitious business plan, driven by our values and strategic aims and were successful in delivering many of these objectives.

This report features our performance across all our functions and our important significant achievements during 2021-22. Some highlights include:

- we received **3,665** public service complaints and closed **3,492**

- of all investigated public service complaints we upheld **63%**

- made **511** recommendations to public bodies, **51%** being about learning and improvement

- our Scottish Welfare Fund independent review service observed a **36.7%** increase in review applications and handled **26.6%** more than the previous year

- our Independent National Whistleblowing Officer function completed its first year of service, considering **107** whistleblowing enquiries and cases

- we successfully launched three project work streams to review our own organisational learning and recommend improvements on **future working**

**arrangements, intelligence and learning from casework** and **internal communications**.

Detailed statistical information about public service complaints is available here: www.spso.org.uk/statistics.

Driven by our values, we are committed to delivering the best service we can with the resources we have.  Reducing the number of unallocated public service complaints, shortening the time taken to decide complaints, and increasing stakeholder engagement are top priorities for 2022-23. We also look forward to supporting the development of child friendly complaints procedures in anticipation of the incorporation of the United Nations Conference on the Rights of the Child (the UNCRC) developments.

If you would like to talk to us about our work, my SPSO colleagues and I welcome feedback on this report, or on any aspect of our work.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Agnew
**Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**

Tel:          0131 240 8850 (Fiona Paterson, Executive Assistant)
Email:       Fiona.Paterson@spso.gov.scot

## LOCAL AUTHORITY CASES RECEIVED BY SUBJECT

| SUBJECT | 2020-21 | | 2021-22 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | WLC | TOTAL | WLC | TOTAL |
| Building Control | 0 | 6 | 0 | 10 |
| Consumer Protection | 0 | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| Economic Development | 0 | 4 | 1 | 11 |
| Education | 2 | 109 | 5 | 135 |
| Environmental Health & Cleansing | 8 | 62 | 7 | 107 |
| Finance | 1 | 68 | 4 | 82 |
| Fire & Police Boards | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Housing | 15 | 232 | 21 | 284 |
| HSCP - Social Work | Not included | | 1 | 2 |
| Land & Property | 0 | 12 | 0 | 15 |
| Legal & Admin | 5 | 54 | 2 | 55 |
| National Park Authorities | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Other | 0 | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| Personnel | 0 | 4 | 0 | 5 |
| Planning | 2 | 115 | 7 | 161 |
| Recreation & Leisure | 0 | 13 | 0 | 11 |
| Roads & Transport | 4 | 63 | 3 | 98 |
| Social Work | 5 | 135 | 7 | 139 |
| Subject unknown or Out of Jurisdiction | 2 | 48 | 2 | 46 |
| Valuation Joint Boards | 0 | 2 | 0 | 6 |
| Welfare Fund - Community Care Grants | 0 | 3 | Not included | |
| Welfare Fund - Crisis Grants | 0 | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| TOTAL | 44 | 951 | 62 | 1,189 |

**LOCAL AUTHORITY CASES DETERMINED BY OUTCOME**

| STAGE | OUTCOME GROUP | 2020-21 WLC | 2020-21 TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| Advice | Discretion – alternative action proposed | 0 | 1 |
| | Organisation not in jurisdiction | 0 | 1 |
| | Premature | 11 | 244 |
| | Subject matter not in jurisdiction | 0 | 1 |
| | Unable to proceed | 5 | 140 |
| | Total | 16 | 387 |
| Early Resolution | Cause and impact test not met (s 5 (3)) | 0 | 7 |
| | Discretion –  alternative route used or available | 0 | 7 |
| | Discretion –  Insufficient benefit would be achieved by investigation | 6 | 85 |
| | Discretion – alternative action proposed | 2 | 17 |
| | Discretion - Good complaint handling | 18 | 291 |
| | Discretion – referred back | 4 | 25 |
| | Member of the public test not met (s 5 (6)) | 0 | 1 |
| | Premature | 0 | 11 |
| | Right of appeal to court/tribunal/Scottish ministers (s 7 (8)) | 0 | 8 |
| | Subject matter not in jurisdiction | 0 | 23 |
| | Time limit (s 10) | 0 | 7 |
| | Unable to proceed | 1 | 21 |
| | Total | 31 | 503 |
| Investigation | Fully upheld | 1 | 29 |
| | Not upheld | 0 | 22 |
| | Some upheld | 1 | 12 |
| | Total | 2 | 63 |
| **TOTAL COMPLAINTS** | | **49** | **953** |

Source: https://www.spso.org.uk/statistics-2020-21

| STAGE | OUTCOME GROUP | 2021-22 WLC | 2021-22 TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| Advice | Member of the public test not met (s 5 (6)) | 0 | 1 |
| | Premature | 16 | 296 |
| | Unable to proceed | 9 | 143 |
| | Total | 25 | 440 |
| Early Resolution | Cause and impact test not met (s 5 (3)) | 2 | 13 |
| | Discretion –  Insufficient benefit would be achieved by investigation | 5 | 104 |
| | Discretion – alternative action proposed | 1 | 8 |
| | Discretion – Alternative route used or available | 1 | 7 |
| | Discretion - Good complaint handling | 16 | 383 |
| | Discretion – referred back | 2 | 42 |
| | Discretion - Resolved - both parties satisfied with proposed outcome | 1 | 13 |
| | Member of the public test not met (s 5 (6)) | 0 | 7 |
| | Organisation not in jurisdiction | 0 | 1 |
| | Premature | 0 | 6 |
| | Right of appeal to court/tribunal/Scottish ministers (s 7 (8)) | 1 | 6 |
| | Subject matter not in jurisdiction | 1 | 18 |
| | Time limit (s 10) | 0 | 18 |
| | Unable to proceed | 0 | 20 |
| | Total | 30 | 646 |
| Investigation | Fully upheld | 1 | 14 |
| | Not upheld | 0 | 10 |
| | Outcome not achievable | 0 | 1 |
| | Resolved | 0 | 2 |
| | Some upheld | 0 | 11 |
| | Total | 1 | 38 |
| **TOTAL COMPLAINTS** | | **56** | **1,124** |

Source: https://www.spso.org.uk/statistics-2021-22

**Scottish Welfare Fund
Independent Review**
0800 014 7299

# Statistics 2021-22

With the introduction of Self-Isolation Support Grants in October 2020, 2021-22 marks the first full year of our expanded remit. While applications for Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants have remained fairly static, applications for Self-Isolation Support Grants have been rising and account for the significant differences in numbers from last year.

In 2021-22 we received:

- **1,494\*** review applications – a **37%** increase on the **1,093** in the previous year.

  - **213** community care grants
  - **740** crisis grants
  - **540** self-isolation support grants

We determined:

- **1,391\*** review applications – a **27%** increase on the **1,099** in the previous year

  - **209** community care grants
  - **724** crisis grants
  - **457** self-isolation support grants

## Other key figures

- **3,837** – the total number of people to contact us. This is an increase of **60%** from the previous year.
- **2,311** – the number of people we signposted to other forms of assistance. **96%** were signposted to their local council.
- **1,094** – the number of review requests that progressed to a decision being made:

  - **52%** - the uphold rate for community care grants. Down from **53%** in the previous year.
  - **18%** - the uphold rate for crisis grants. Down from **25%** in the previous year.
  - **42%** - the uphold rate for self-isolation support grants. Up from **29%** in the previous year.

- **93%** - the percentage of community care grants determined within 21 working days.
- **95%** - the percentage of crisis grants determined within one working day.
- **90%** - the percentage of self-isolation support grants determined within one working day.

Detailed information about the enquiries and reviews we handled over the course of the year is provided below:

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- 2021-22 Scottish Welfare Fund outcome breakdown (Excel, 53KB)
- 2021-22 Scottish Welfare Fund outcome breakdown (PDF, 2MB)
- 2021-22 Scottish Welfare Fund findings breakdown (Excel, 52KB)
- 2021-22 Scottish Welfare Fund findings breakdown (PDF, 4MB)

*One applicant, who reached us too early in the process, did not specify the grant they wished to apply for. They were referred back to the council to make their application.

Updated: May 26, 2022

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**APPENDIX 4**

**SPSO SCOTTISH WELFARE FUND OUTCOME BREAKDOWN 2021-22**
**COMMUNITY CARE GRANT**

| COMMUNITY CARE GRANT - cases closed at decision stage, by council and outcome | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | OUTCOME | | |
| COUNCIL | Upheld | Not Upheld | Total | Uphold Rate |
| Aberdeenshire Council | 1 | 0 | 1 | 100% |
| Angus Council | 1 | 0 | 1 | 100% |
| Argyll and Bute Council | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0% |
| Clackmannanshire Council | 1 | 1 | 2 | 50% |
| Dumfries and Galloway Council | 2 | 1 | 3 | 67% |
| Dundee City Council | 1 | 2 | 3 | 33% |
| East Ayrshire Council | 1 | 1 | 2 | 50% |
| East Dunbartonshire Council | 3 | 1 | 4 | 75% |
| Fife Council | 1 | 1 | 2 | 50% |
| Glasgow City Council | 30 | 29 | 59 | 51% |
| Inverclyde Council | 1 | 0 | 1 | 100% |
| Midlothian Council | 1 | 2 | 3 | 33% |
| North Ayrshire Council | 1 | 0 | 1 | 100% |
| North Lanarkshire Council | 1 | 1 | 2 | 50% |
| Perth and Kinross Council | 1 | 0 | 1 | 100% |
| Renfrewshire Council | 18 | 19 | 37 | 49% |
| South Lanarkshire Council | 4 | 0 | 4 | 100% |
| Stirling Council | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0% |
| The City of Edinburgh Council | 8 | 7 | 15 | 53% |
| West Dunbartonshire Council | 1 | 1 | 2 | 50% |
| West Lothian Council | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0% |
| **TOTAL** | **77** | **72** | **149** | **52%** |

| COMMUNITY CARE GRANT - cases closed at pre-decision stage, by council and outcome | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OUTCOME | | | | | | |
| COUNCIL | Advice Only | Not duly made or withdrawn | Out of Jurisdiction | Outcome not achievable | Premature | Referred back to council | Resolved | Total |
| Aberdeen City Council | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Clackmannanshire Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Dumfries and Galloway Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Dundee City Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| East Ayrshire Council | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| East Dunbartonshire Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Falkirk Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Fife Council | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Glasgow City Council | 2 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 19 |
| Inverclyde Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Midlothian Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| North Ayrshire Council | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Renfrewshire Council | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| South Lanarkshire Council | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| The City of Edinburgh Council | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| West Dunbartonshire Council | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| West Lothian Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | **3** | **18** | **3** | **2** | **30** | **3** | **1** | **60** |

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**SPSO SCOTTISH WELFARE FUND OUTCOME BREAKDOWN 2021-22**
**CRISIS GRANT**

| CRISIS GRANT - cases closed at decision stage, by council and outcome | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | OUTCOME | | |
| COUNCIL | Upheld | Not Upheld | Total | Uphold rate |
| Aberdeenshire Council | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0% |
| Angus Council | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0% |
| Argyll and Bute Council | 1 | 1 | 2 | 50% |
| Clackmannanshire Council | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0% |
| Dumfries and Galloway Council | 3 | 3 | 6 | 50% |
| Dundee City Council | 4 | 31 | 35 | 11% |
| East Ayrshire Council | 7 | 5 | 12 | 58% |
| East Dunbartonshire Council | 0 | 5 | 5 | 0% |
| Falkirk Council | 4 | 4 | 8 | 50% |
| Fife Council | 8 | 73 | 81 | 10% |
| Glasgow City Council | 17 | 86 | 103 | 17% |
| Inverclyde Council | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| Midlothian Council | 0 | 5 | 5 | 0% |
| North Ayrshire Council | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0% |
| North Lanarkshire Council | 4 | 14 | 18 | 22% |
| Perth and Kinross Council | 2 | 15 | 17 | 12% |
| Renfrewshire Council | 6 | 24 | 30 | 20% |
| South Ayrshire Council | 0 | 8 | 8 | 0% |
| South Lanarkshire Council | 6 | 26 | 32 | 19% |
| Stirling Council | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0% |
| The City of Edinburgh Council | 40 | 132 | 172 | 23% |
| The Highland Council | 1 | 13 | 14 | 7% |
| The Moray Council | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| West Dunbartonshire Council | 1 | 7 | 8 | 13% |
| West Lothian Council | 1 | 14 | 15 | 7% |
| TOTAL | 105 | 484 | 589 | 18% |

| CRISIS GRANT - cases closed at pre-decision stage, by council and outcome | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OUTCOME | | | | | | |
| COUNCIL | Advice Only | Not duly made or withdrawn | Out of Jurisdiction | Outcome not achievable | Premature | Referred back to council | Resolved | Total |
| Aberdeen City Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Angus Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Clackmannanshire Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Dumfries and Galloway Council | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Dundee City Council | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| East Ayrshire Council | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| East Dunbartonshire Council | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| East Lothian Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Falkirk Council | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Fife Council | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Glasgow City Council | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 21 |
| Midlothian Council | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| North Ayrshire Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| North Lanarkshire Council | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Perth and Kinross Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Renfrewshire Council | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| South Ayrshire Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| South Lanarkshire Council | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Stirling Council | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| The City of Edinburgh Council | 1 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 4 | 2 | 42 |
| The Highland Council | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| West Dunbartonshire Council | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| West Lothian Council | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 3 | 45 | 1 | 1 | 76 | 5 | 4 | 135 |

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**SPSO SCOTTISH WELFARE FUND OUTCOME BREAKDOWN 2021-22**
**SELF-ISOLATION SUPPORT GRANT**

| SELF-ISOLATION SUPPORT GRANT - cases closed at decision stage, by council and outcome | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OUTCOME | | | | |
| COUNCIL | Upheld | Referred back to council | Not Upheld | Total | Uphold rate |
| Argyll and Bute Council | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| Clackmannanshire Council | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0% |
| Dumfries and Galloway Council | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 50% |
| East Ayrshire Council | 2 | 0 | 10 | 12 | 17% |
| East Dunbartonshire Council | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 33% |
| East Lothian Council | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0% |
| East Renfrewshire Council | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 100% |
| Falkirk Council | 4 | 0 | 9 | 13 | 31% |
| Fife Council | 8 | 0 | 9 | 17 | 47% |
| Glasgow City Council | 39 | 0 | 55 | 94 | 41% |
| Inverclyde Council | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| North Ayrshire Council | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 100% |
| North Lanarkshire Council | 2 | 0 | 16 | 18 | 11% |
| Orkney Islands Council | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0% |
| Perth and Kinross Council | 4 | 0 | 6 | 10 | 40% |
| Renfrewshire Council | 22 | 0 | 31 | 53 | 42% |
| South Ayrshire Council | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0% |
| South Lanarkshire Council | 0 | 0 | 11 | 11 | 0% |
| Stirling Council | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0% |
| The City of Edinburgh Council | 52 | 1 | 31 | 84 | 62% |
| The Highland Council | 10 | 0 | 4 | 14 | 71% |
| The Moray Council | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0% |
| West Lothian Council | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0% |
| TOTAL | 148 | 2 | 206 | 356 | 42% |

| SELF-ISOLATION SUPPORT GRANT - cases closed at pre-decision stage, by council and outcome | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OUTCOME | | | | | | |
| COUNCIL | Not duly made or withdrawn | Out of Jurisdiction | Outcome not achievable | Premature | Referred back to council | Resolved | Total |
| Clackmannanshire Council | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Dumfries and Galloway Council | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| East Ayrshire Council | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| East Renfrewshire Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Falkirk Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Fife Council | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Glasgow City Council | 5 | 2 | 0 | 14 | 11 | 0 | 32 |
| North Ayrshire Council | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| North Lanarkshire Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Renfrewshire Council | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| South Ayrshire Council | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| South Lanarkshire Council | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| Stirling Council | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| The City of Edinburgh Council | 8 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 25 | 0 | 36 |
| The Highland Council | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 7 |
| West Lothian Council | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 23 | 3 | 1 | 26 | 45 | 3 | 101 |

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**SPSO Recommendations and Service Improvement Actions for Upheld Complaint (see D6 of report)**

**Wording lifted from decision notice:**

What we are asking West Lothian Council to do **for the complainant:**

| | What we found | What the organisation should do | What we need to see |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | We found that the Council failed to reasonably follow their antisocial behaviour procedures to investigate and respond to C's reports of antisocial behaviour. | Apologise to C for failing to reasonably investigate and respond to their reports of antisocial behaviour.<br><br>The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spso.org.uk/informationleaflets | A copy or record of the apology.<br><br>By: One month of the date of the final decision |
| **2** | We found that the Council failed to reasonably follow their antisocial behaviour procedures to investigate and respond to C's reports of antisocial behaviour. | Carry out an interview with C under Stage 1 of their process, to ascertain what problems, if any, they are still experiencing, and actions those through the remaining stages of the antisocial behaviour procedures, as appropriate. | A copy or record of the action taken.<br><br>By: One month of the date of the final decision |

We are asking West Lothian Council to **improve the way they do things**:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3** | We found that the Council failed to reasonably follow their antisocial behaviour procedures to investigate and respond to C's reports of antisocial behaviour. | The Council should follow their antisocial behaviour procedures when handling all reports of antisocial behaviour, and clear records should be kept of all steps taken. | Evidence that the findings of this investigation have been shared with relevant staff and that, where appropriate, training on the procedures has been carried out.<br><br>By: Two months of the date of the final decision |

Note for information: all required actions were completed by the council within the required timescales.

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC

**West Lothian Council**

**CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**LIBRARY AND MUSEUM SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT**

**REPORT BY INTERIM HEAD OF HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES**

**A.    PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides an update on Library and Museum services performance and activities from April 2022 to September 2022.

**B.    RECOMMENDATION**

The Panel is asked to note the performance and activities of the Library and Museum Service for the period April 2022 to September 2022 contained in Appendix 1**.**

**C.    SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I | **Council Values** | Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership |
| II | **Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)** | Public library services are a statutory service |
| III | **Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers** | None |
| IV | **Impact on performance and performance Indicators** | An update on performance against a range of key indicators is included in appendix 1. |
| V | **Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement** | Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed<br><br>We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment. |
| VI | **Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)** | Within existing resources. |

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| VII | Consideration at PDSP | A performance report for the service is presented to the PDSP twice each year. |

| VIII | Other consultations | Not applicable. |

**D.    TERMS OF REPORT**

The Library and Museum Service performance report, attached as Appendix 1, includes a summary of the latest performance figures and key achievements over the period April 2022 to September 2022 across the main service activities of Library and Museum services.

The performance across this period reflects a steady increase in footfall, book issues and activities as we return to a fully operational position in our libraries.   The activities programme is developing with a focus on promoting the libraries as safe spaces to come to socialise, study, stay warm, engage in digital opportunities and improve knowledge and skills, ensuring libraries remain at the leading edge of empowering communities.    The service continues to be successful in attracting external funding which allows projects and partnership to be develop.  Examples include "Libraries can do it – funded by Scottish Library Information Council's Covid Relief fund" and Eco Ableism – funded by The Public Library Improvement Fund.

Although physical borrowing is still the preferred method of reading for our customers our eResource performance continues to grow.  Borrowbox is where customer can download e-Books & e-Talking books.  Performance has remained steady from April 2022. There has been an increase of 2.55% in borrowing of eBooks and 5.85% for e-Talking books from April to October 2022 in comparison to the previous 6 months.  New registrations have increased by 26.28% over the same 6 month period.

E-Magazine downloads have increased during the period from April to October 2022, with an increase of 8.6% magazines downloaded in comparison to the previous 6 months and an increase of 7.75% of new registrations over the same period.    We continue to promote the service on the Council website, plasma screens, at events and sharing information with colleagues and partners and library staff will demonstrate using the Libby app and borrowbox to customers.

The museum service worked to commemorate the life of H.M.Queen Elizabeth II. Images and stories were posted which documented her visits to West Lothian on social media and digitised films which were held in archives, to mark her passing. The films were also shared on our social media platforms.

The Museum service have also been preparing for the opening of the museum at Whitburn Partnership Centre. The museum's first temporary exhibition has been developed by Whitburn Band.  The interpretative script for the permanent display has been researched, designed and installed. New display cases have arrived and exhibitions are complete.  Work with the community volunteers has been fruitful with them arranging the loan of objects for display in the museum and schools helped to create a time capsule which will be opened in 50 years time.

To access a full detailed report for this period please clink on the link.  – http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/76578/

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**E.**     **CONCLUSION**

The service delivers on key outcomes of access to reading, learning, information and heritage and continues to work in an integrated way to deliver customer information services in all our communities. The service operates in a customer focussed way and continues to take advantage of opportunities which will improve delivery.

**F.**     **BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None

Appendices/Attachments:  **Appendix 1 Library and Museum Services performance report.**

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Julie Whitelaw
Interim Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services
12 December 2022

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# Library 6 Monthly PDSP Report New

**Report Author:** Anne-Marie Vance
**Generated on:** 24 November 2022 09:23
**Report Layout:** .NEW. PDSP_PIs_All(Detail)_Grid

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CuCS012_6b.5 Libraries - Percentage of requested library books supplied within 7 calendar days | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | Library Services offer customers the ability to request books not immediately available. Requests can be made to the library staff or online via the library catalogue. Where possible the book will be sourced from another West Lothian library . We aim to fulfil the majority of customer requests within 7 days. | PI Owner(s): zCuCS_Admin; Anne-Marie Vance |



Libraries - Percentage of requested library books supplied within 7 calendar days

2017/18: 41.37%
2018/19: 41.2%
2019/20: 43.46%
2020/21: 33.06%
2021/22: 39.49%

Years — Target (Years)

2021/22 result

40.85%
38.7%
0% — 39.49% — 100%

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | 2021/22 |
| Status: | ⚠ |
| Current Value: | 39.49% |
| Current Target: | 43% |
| Red Threshold: | 38.7% |
| Amber Threshold: | 40.85% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Culture & Leisure; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

**2022/2023** Target is set at 43%

**2021/2022** Target set at 43%
Performance is recorded at 39.49%, this is an increase on last year as customers are now able to return their books to libraries. Some customers are still reluctant but this is gradually improving as confidence grows post pandemic.

**2020/2021** Target was set at 43% to reflect last year performance and to monitor the impact of the reduction in the book fund and the increased cost to purchase books. Performance is recorded at 33.06%, this is due to customers not being able to return books to the library at all between April to July 2020. Six libraries opened for returns at the end of July and in September all 14 libraries opened but customers were still reluctant to return during COVID 19. This reduces the stock we have to meet the request requested.

**2019/20**- Performance was recorded as 43.46% this is above the target of 41% and is an increase of 2.26% on the previous year. This is the results of a reduction in the book fund. We are unable to purchase the same number of copies of bestsellers so borrowers have to wait in the reading queue for longer. Also in March the libraries closed as a result of COVID 19 which pushed many customers online to use the eresources. This increased the waiting items for customers.

**2018/19**- Performance was recorded as 41.20% this is above the target of 38% and is a very small decrease of 0.2% on the previous year. This is the results of a reduction in the book fund. We are unable to purchase the same number of copies of bestsellers so borrowers have to wait in the reading queue for longer. We expected performance to decrease in 2018/2019 and worked to try and combat the impact of the drop. Most recently we reviewed allocation of the book fund and have made significant changes to what is being purchased. We have also increased the use of our "Collection HQ" system to increase the move of stock around the libraries creating the illusion of new stock within the library. We will continue to monitor performance going forward.

**2017/18** - Performance was recorded as 41.37% this is a decrease of 5.31 % on the previous year and the results of a reduction in the book fund. We are unable to purchase the same number of copies of bestsellers so borrowers have to wait in the reading queue for longer. The target was dropped accordingly but fell short of the actual target of 42%. The bookfund will be reduced again in the next financial year 2018/2019 so the target will be reduced to reflect the reduction.

| | |
|---|---|
| **PI Code & Short Name** | **P:CuCS027_9b.2a Active Library Members as a percentage of the West Lothian resident population.** |
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the total number of active members who have either borrowed an item either physically or through the eresourse service, or who have used a computer in a library over the previous twelve months. An active borrower is a customer who has borrowed a book, downloaded an eresource or used a public access library PC in the previous 12 years. This indicator does not count the people utilising libraries for learning and information purposes and using stock within the libraries. The calculation is an average percentage of the 12 monthly percentages. This includes active high schools and college members. |
| **PI Owner(s):** | zCuCS_Admin; Anne-Marie Vance |



Active Library Members as a percentage of the West Lothian resident population.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | 2021/22 |
| **Status:** | 🔴 |
| **Current Value:** | 3.98% |
| **Current Target:** | 13% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 11.44% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 12.22% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Culture & Leisure; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**2021/22 result** 12.22% 11.44% 0% 30% 3.98%

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

Target for 2022/2023 is set at 7% to support a gradual increase of active library members returning to the service.

**2021/2022-** Performance is recorded at 3.98%, the decrease is due to the slow return of customers after the lifting of restrictions. It is also a result of the library management system not being reset due to Covid. If we reset the system too early we will loss customer information.

**2020/2021** - Target is set at 18% for 2020/21 to reflect the increase in population. Performance is recorded at 12.42%, this is due to reduced customer use as libraries closed for a period of time during COVID 19. 6 Libraries opened in July 2020 for a click and collect service bringing many customers back but some were still reluctant to attend the library or go out in public.

**2019/20-** Performance is recorded as 17.70% which is below the target of 20%. This is a result of the population of West Lothian increasing to 182,410 and the loss of the last week of business in March from COVID 19.

**2018/19-** Performance is recorded as 18.20% which is 1.8% below target. This is the result of Blackburn library being closed for relocation into the new partnership centre in June reducing both physical issues and public access PC usage. It is also the result of public access PCs reducing in certain areas of the service. Whitburn Library changed from 8 pc's to 5 due to CIS move. Linlithgow Partnership Centre reduced from 10 to 7 pc'.
Population is recorded as being 181,310.

**2017/18-** Performance is recorded as 21.8% which is a slight reduction of 0.4% on last year. This is the result of a reduction in library borrowers at Linlithgow, Armadale, and East Calder libraries while they were closed for relocated into new Partnership Centres and an increase in population. Population is recorded as being 181,310.

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:CuCS031q_9b.1c Library Service - Percentage of available public access computer sessions that are used in libraries.** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Description | This Performance Indicator describes how much the computers in libraries are used against the total availability. A key indicator for public libraries is how much engagement is provided in terms of digital literacy for the West Lothian wide population. This performance indicator covers all libraries and includes libraries located within partnership centres. The indicator gathers the number of available hours of 104 PCs and the number of issues of PCs in libraries and a percentage is calculated from this. There are a number of reasons for this which include the requirement for jobseekers to prove their online job hunting activities and the requirement to find house swap opportunities because of the changes in the welfare system. | PI Owner(s): | zCuCS_Admin; Kay Ali |



Library Service - Percentage of available public access computer sessions that are used in libraries.

| | Q2 2022/23 result |
|---|---|
| | 11.76% / 11.4% / 0% / 60% / 11.2% |
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | 🔴 |
| Current Value: | 11.2% |
| Current Target: | 12% |
| Red Threshold: | 11.4% |
| Amber Threshold: | 11.76% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Culture & Leisure; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

**2022/2023 Target set at 17%**
**Quarter 1-** Performance is recorded at 10.8% , this increase represents customers slowly returning to use the computer facilities in libraries.

**2021/2022 Target set at 10%.** This has been reduced to reflect the pandemic. Only 5 libraries piloted the return of Public Assess PCs on the 26th April 2022. On the 17th May 2022 all other libraries opened the Public Assess PCs but they were reduced by more than half to support safely Socially Distanced.

**2021-22**
**Quarter 4-** Performance is recorded at 9.26%. This increase represents customers slowly returning to use the computer facilities in libraries.
**Quarter 3-** Performance is recorded at 6.94%. This is a reduction in the second quarter, this is due to Scottish Government advice to increase social distancing again in the run up to Christmas.

There was no date recorded in 2020-21 as the Public Access PCs were closed to the public due to COVID 19.

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CuCS050_9a.1a Net cost per item borrowed from branch libraries. | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This indicator is designed to show the efficiency of Library Services by taking the annual libraries budget and dividing it against the total number of books issued, this includes electronic issues, secondary school and West Lothian College issues as they come through our Library Management system. This figure is an annual average across all branch libraries. The issues send to CIPFA does not include schools or college and that is why the issue figure differs from the CIPFA returns. | **PI Owner(s):** | zCuCS_Admin; Anne-Marie Vance |



Net cost per item borrowed from branch libraries.

**2020/21 result**

£12.60
£13.20
£15.00
£1.00
£12.42

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | 2020/21 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | £12.42 |
| **Current Target:** | £12.00 |
| **Red Threshold:** | £13.20 |
| **Amber Threshold:** | £12.60 |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Culture & Leisure; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

**2021/2022** - Performance figures will be available in November 2022 as the accounts close and figures are calculated.

Target rational is set around changes in service delivery and previous performance. Target is set at £10 as we expect more books to be issues as we remobilise from Covid 19.

**2020/2021** - The net cost per item borrowed is recorded as £12.42. In 2020/2021 115,295
books were issued and it cost £1,338,000. to run the service + £95,000 book fund. There was 33,414 physical books issued and 81,881 digital books issue. Due to Covid 19 the libraries were closed for a period of time resulting in less books being issues throughout the year. Other main factors for the movement were the pay award and a drop in income as libraries were closed and activities funded by grant couldn't take place as planned resulting in the grant carrying forward.
Benchmarking is carried out with other local authorities of similar size in November once the cipfa results have been released. West Lothian libraries also engage with other local authorities to look for service improvements where possible around all library issues. This is done by using a basecamp address that all local authorities ask questions on and respond to allowing us to compare information. We also attend quarterly Association of Public Library meetings to discussion performance.

**2019/2020** - The net cost per items borrowed increased to £5.13. In 2019/2020. 392,316 books were issued and it cost £1,915,717 to run the service + £96,878 book fund. There was 336,475 physical books issued and 55,841 digital issues. This is an increase of 0.58p on last year . Book issues decreased by 34,882 as the result of libraries being closed at the end of the year due to Covid and the result of the number of books the service can purchased being reduced as the book fund decreased in 2018/2019. The cost to run the service also increased due to an increase in support costs. This comes in at year end. Finance provide the cost to run the service and this figure reflects the cifpa returns.

**2018/19** - The net cost per items borrowed increased to £4.55. In 2018/2019 427,198 books were issued and it cost £1,852,283 to run the service + £95,000 book fund. This is an increase of 0.27p on last year . Book issues decreased by 4,438 as the result of Blackburn libraries being closed for relocation and the result of the number of books the service can purchased being reduced as the book fund decreased by 50.5%. The cost to run the service also increased due to an increase in support costs. The cost to run the actual service has actually gone down but the support cost allocation has gone up. This comes in at year end. Finance provide the cost to run the service and this figure reflects the cifpa returns.

**2017/18 -** The net cost per items borrowed decreased to £4.28. In 2017/2018 431,636 books were issued and it cost £1,660,013 to run the service + £188,000 book fund. This is an decrease on last year of 0.37p . Book issues decreased as the result of a number of libraries being closed for relocation and severe weather. The cost to run the service also decreased due to staff reductions. Finance provide the cost to run the service and this figure comes from the Cipfa returns. In 2017/2018 we have also included the book fund as this is a library cost. This has not been included previously but will be included going forward.

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CuCS230_9b.1c Number of visits to libraries per annum. | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Description | This indicator aims is maximise the number of visits to libraries by West Lothian's population. This indicator counts both physical and online visits to the library service including the Local History Library. This information is obtained from the fifteen libraries in the West Lothian council area. Data is collected on a daily basis using footfall counters and is used when benchmarking with other local authorities and also to monitor people accessing the library service and to drive improvement by using engagement programmes to improve performance | PI Owner(s): | zCuCS_Admin; Anne-Marie Vance |



Number of visits to libraries per annum.

2021/22 result

339,500
332,500
200,000 — 1,500,000
405,411

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | 2021/22 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 405,411 |
| Current Target: | 350,000 |
| Red Threshold: | 332,500 |
| Amber Threshold: | 339,500 |
| Categories: | PDSP_Culture & Leisure; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

**2022/2023** - Target has been set at 450,000 to support a gradual return of customers to the service.

**2021/2022** - Target has been set at 350,000 as visits to libraries where by appointment only at the beginning of this period and had been very limited in numbers during this period to ensure the safety of customers. Performance was recorded at 405,411. 141,090 physical visits and 264,321 virtual.

**2020/21-** Target was set to 830,000 in line with previous performance. Performance is recorded at 305,072, this is virtual visits only as all libraries were closed 2020-21 due to COVID 19. Virtual visits have increased by 72,106 from the same period last year.

**2019/20 -** Performance is recorded at 809,534. There was 576,568 physical visits and 232,966 virtual visits. Physical visits are down as a result of the libraries being closed at the end of March due to COVID 19 and in July 2019 the service also modified some of the visitor percentages to libraries as they were too high this new way of counting gives a more accurate gathering of the visits per year. Virtual visits are also down as we are now only recording unique visits . This means that only one visit to the website is recorded per person per visit, whereas before every page customers clicked on, even when just navigating the webpages were recorded as separate visits. There was a National agreement with all Scottish libraries that this is how we would start to count virtual visits so that when we were benchmarked we were counting like for like.

**2018/19 -** Performance is recorded at 994,136 which is 5,864 below target. There were 651,514 physical visits and 342,622 virtual visits. This is the result of no longer subscribing to the Driving Test Theory Test and Ancestry. The community can still access Ancestry via the Family History Society and the Driving Test Theory online for free. Blackburn library was also closed for relocation in June which reduced number of physical visits to the Library. Benchmarking data will be available in November at the Chartered Institute of Public finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) returns come out.

**2017/18** - Performance is recorded at 1,277,515 which is an increase of 185,866 on last year. This is a 17% increase on the previous year and 27.8% above the target. A significant increase especially as several libraries were closures to enable relocations into new partnership centres and the severe weather over the winter months.

West Lothian
Council

**CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**MUSEUMS ACCESS POLICY REPORT**

**REPORT BY INTERIM HEAD OF HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES**

## A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present the draft Museums Access Policy, 2022-2027.

## B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel considers and provides comment on the draft Museums Access Policy, 2022-2027, which will be presented to Council Executive for approval.

## C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I | **Council Values** | Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; making best use of our resources; working in partnership |
| II | **Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)** | The measures outlined will support the council's commitment to the Equality Act 2010, General Duties. A draft Integrated Impact Assessment has been developed. |
| III | **Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers** | None |
| IV | **Impact on performance and performance Indicators** | The adoption of this policy will enable the Museums Service to retain Fully Accredited Status under the UK National Accreditation Standard for Museums and Galleries. This qualifies WLC for external funding and helps to ensure high quality service provision. |
| V | **Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement** | The council is committed to tackling discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and promoting good relation within our workforce and the wider community. |
| VI | **Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)** | The policy will be delivered within existing revenue budgets and grant aid for which accredited museums are eligible |

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**VII    Consideration at PDSP**

**VIII    Other consultations**    This policy has been informed by consultation with Museums Service users and stakeholders.

## D.  Terms of Report

### D.1    Background

It is a core requirement of the UK Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries that museums have an Access Policy which has been approved by their governing body. This was identified as an action following the council's last accreditation assessment. The council will be invited to re-apply for accreditation in 2025. As part of that application, an Access Policy, updated where relevant, must be adopted by the council and submitted to the accreditation panel.

### D.2    Museums Access Policy

The mission of the council's Museums Service is to enhance quality of life by providing a museums service that serves the educational, cultural and leisure needs of the community now and in the future. The draft Access Policy seeks to ensure equity of service delivery by maximising access to our museums, and to identify ways in which this can be achieved.

The Access Policy relates to all collections held by West Lothian Council as well our community museums, programmes and interpretation both onsite and online. It covers how people can see, use, and reference the collection, gain access to museum buildings and sites, and how the Museums Service shares information about the collection with others.

Areas of access covered in the policy include:

- Physical access: we aim to ensure that our community museums are as physically accessible as possible.

- Intellectual access: we aim to provide information in a range of formats appropriate to the needs of a wide range of visitors.

-  Emotional access: we aim to provide a good standard of customer care to ensure that all visitors feel welcome and comfortable in our venues.

- Financial access: we aim to make collections, services, and engagement activities freely available to maximise equal access to West Lothian's heritage.

## E.    Conclusion

The draft Access Policy will support the maximisation of access to community museums, interpretation and programmes. This will assist the Museums Service to achieve the UK accreditation standard, to remain eligible for grant aid in the museums sector and to continue high-quality community engagement and collections management work.

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**F. Background References**

None.

Appendices/Attachments: One
Appendix 1 Museum Access Policy, 2022-2027

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Julie Whitelaw
Interim Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services
12 December 2022

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**APPENDIX ONE**

# West Lothian Council Museums Service



# ACCESS POLICY 2022-2027

![West Lothian Council logo]

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**APPENDIX ONE**

**Date on which this policy was approved by Council Executive:**

**Policy review procedure:**

The access policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

**Date at which the policy is due for review:** TBC

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### 1. Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to set out our commitment to maximising access to the Museums Service, and to identify ways in which this can be achieved.

An approved Access Policy is a central requirement of the UK Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries. Museums who are part of the scheme are required to have an access policy or statement approved by its governing bodies.

### 2. Scope

The Access Policy relates to all collections held by West Lothian Council as well as our community museums, programmes and interpretation both onsite and online. It covers how people can see, use, and reference the collection, gain access to museum buildings and sites, and how the Museums Service shares information about the collection with others.

### 3. Responsibilities

The council is responsible for ensuring that the Museums Service fulfils it obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Museums Association's "Code of Ethics" by doing everything reasonably possible to make our collections, content and sites accessible to the widest range of people. The Museums Officer is responsible for ensuring that the work of both staff and volunteers reflects the need to maximise access.

### 4. Access Assessment

Access Audits have regularly been undertaken since the establishment of the Museums Service in the 1990s. These are currently undertaken with reference to sector best practice guidelines on access. An access action plan is undertaken after each audit setting our work required to remove barriers identified by the audit.

### 5. Our commitment to access

This Policy supports our mission statement by providing a framework that strives to include all our visitors, potential visitors, volunteers and staff. We will make our collections and buildings accessible, by removing as many physical, intellectual or cultural barriers to access as practicable, within the limits of legal, budgetary, and planning considerations. We are committed to  developing a programme of activities that are designed to involve, educate and engage

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**APPENDIX ONE**

groups from a wide range of backgrounds and all sectors of West Lothian's community. Areas of access covered in this policy include:

- Physical access: we aim to ensure that or community museums are as physically accessible as possible.

- Intellectual access: we aim to provide information in a range of formats appropriate to the needs of a wide range of visitors.

- Emotional access: we aim to provide a good standard of customer care to ensure that all visitors feel welcome and comfortable in our venues.

- Financial access: we aim to make collections, services, and engagement activities freely available to maximise equal access to West Lothian's heritage.


## 5.1 Consultation and audiences

- The Museums Service is committed to understanding who its visitors/users and non-visitors/users are, so that we meet their needs and provide access to collections and services.

- The Museum is committed to developing and diversifying its audiences.

- We will regularly consult and evaluate our services with users and use this information to ensure our services meet their needs.

- We will consult with non-users/less-engaged users to identify barriers to participation.

## 5.2 Community links and outreach

- The Museum Service is committed to actively engaging with local communities. We aim to develop links with the community, especially through partnership and co-production.

- The Museums Service will offer outreach to parts of the community who may not be able to engage with our museum spaces; this will include the provision of reminiscence loan boxes for care homes and community groups and loan boxes and object-based learning sessions for schools.

- The Museum is committed to providing volunteer opportunities and seeks to explore the recruitment of volunteers from a range of backgrounds, including those with protected characteristics.

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### 5.3 Premises

- The Museum Service operates from six sites:

- Collections store at Kirkton Service Centre
- Whitburn Community Museum at Whitburn Partnership Centre
- Broxburn Community Museum at Strathbrock Partnership Centre
- Armadale Community Museum at Armadale Partnership Centre
- Blackridge Community Museum at the Craig Inn Centre
- Wee Museum of Memory, Livingston Centre (a partnership with the Living Memory Association)

- The Museum Service is committed to providing full access to all of its facilities although there are some restrictions due to the constraints of both our stores and the buildings that house our community museums/

- Information for potential visitors explaining our opening times, services and access to the collections is available on our website, leaflets, and by telephone and e-mail.

### 5.4 Collections

- The Museums Service is committed to increasing public access to the collections and information, and to increasing knowledge and understanding of the collections and heritage sites.

- We will provide varied means of access and interpretation to the collections including permanent displays, temporary exhibitions, loans, object handling and activities.

- The provision of access will be balanced against the appropriate care and management of the collection in question.

- We will promote public awareness of the full extent of the collections through displays on digital kiosks (where resources allow), on-line (website and social media) and through other means (e.g. talks by staff).

- Stored collections are available to view by appointment with the Museums Officer and a research space can be provided at Kirkton Service Centre.

- Collections are continually being updated and developed to better reflect the diversity of the local area.

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## 5.5 Information

- The needs of visitors are considered when preparing and presenting collections information and interpretation

- The Museums Service will ensure that all information and communications follow good practice and sectorial guidelines for text and style.

- Where resources allow, video-based interpretation will incorporate subtitles. The Museums Service aims to keep the public informed of its collections, temporary displays and events through appropriate publicity including social media.

- The Museums Service will seek to display exhibits which reflect the range and diversity of the Museum's collections, and engage with the diversity of our users and their needs.

- We will provide levels of information and interpretation to suit a range of audiences and abilities.

- Information and interpretation will be provided in a range of formats, for example labels, film, interactives and audio, as resources allow.

- The Museums Service will provide and improve internal signage and information to enable all visitors to explore the Museum and locate facilities easily.

- The Museums Service will explore the provision of targeted translation of core information into other key languages on the website or in the museum galleries.

- We will provide information about access provision on our website

## 5.6 Learning and programming

- The Museum will provide a range of suitable handling materials drawn from the collections for different audiences and levels of ability.

- Outreach based delivery will be used to maximise access to collections and learning experiences.

- Educational materials will be made available for different audiences and abilities, as required and as resources allow.

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**APPENDIX ONE**

- Temporary exhibitions and activities will be programmed throughout the year.

## 5.7 Customer care

- All staff members and volunteers are involved in implementing this policy, assisting and welcoming our customers.

- The Museum will work within the framework of West Lothian Council's customer service commitments and standards.

- All users of the Museum will be treated with equal respect within an inclusive atmosphere and welcomed according to their individual needs.

- Where possible, community museums will be located in buildings that provide baby changing facilities, access and parking for pushchairs and seating for the comfort and ease of visitors.

- The Museums Service will respond to requests made by the public regarding information required in alternative formats, as resources allow.

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**West Lothian Council**

**CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**ARMED FORCES ACT 2021 AND ARMED FORCES COVENANT DUTY STATUTORY GUIDANCE 2022**

**REPORT BY DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EDUCATION, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOMENT**

## A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the Armed Forces Act 2021, the Armed Forces Covenant Duty Statutory Guidance, outline the implications for West Lothian Council and set out what officers are doing to implement its obligations.

## B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel:

1. notes the publication of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty Statutory Guidance;
2. notes the key areas of focus of the Duty;
3. notes that the Duty came into force on 22 November 2022; and
4. notes the process officers have put in place to implement the Duty locally.

## C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

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| I | Council Values | Focusing on our customers' needs. Being honest, open and accountable. providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership. |
| II | Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment) | The report does not raise any health or risk assessment issues. No strategic environmental assessment is required. |
| III | Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers | None. |
| IV | Impact on performance and performance Indicators | None |
| V | Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement | We live in resilient, cohesive and sae communities. |
| VI | Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property) | There are no unmanaged resource implications arising from this report. |
| VII | Consideration at PDSP | |

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Reports on the scheme have been presented previously to the PDSP.

**VIII   Other consultations**

The work to support the Covenant is reported to the Community Planning Partnership Board.

## D.      TERMS OF THE REPORT

### D.1      Background

At the Policy and Resources PDSP meeting on 4 February 2022 the panel were provided with an update on the Armed Forces Act, the process being followed to put the Act into effect and what, at that stage, were the key areas that West Lothian Council was likely to need to address.

The report also provided an update on the award to West Lothian Council of gold recognition under the Employer Recognition Scheme, the highest level of award under the scheme.

On the 27 September Full Council instructed an update on the Armed Forces Covenant was provided to the panel. The report provides an update on the Armed Forces Covenant focusing on the Act, the recent publication of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty Statutory Guidance, the implications for West Lothian Council and the approach being taken to put the Duty into practice.

### D.2      Armed Forces Covenant Duty Statutory Guidance

The Armed Forces Act 2021 gained Royal Assent in Parliament on 15 December 2021. As previously reported the Act enshrines the Armed Forces Covenant in law for the first time to help prevent service personnel and veterans being disadvantaged when accessing essential services. This statutory duty applies to public bodies, including Local Authorities, and requires these bodies to pay due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when carrying out specific functions in the areas of housing, healthcare and education. Although now passed into law, the new duty did not come into force straight away but was supported by statutory guidance to support implementation.

Ministry of Defence (MOD) officials have developed the statutory guidance in Scotland with Local Authorities though focus group sessions facilitated by COSLA. This has subsequently progressed through Parliament and was officially published on 8 November 2022 as the Armed Forces Covenant Duty Statutory Guidance, a copy of this is attached as Appendix 1. The new Armed Forces Covenant Duty came into force on 22 November 2022.

### D.3      Who is covered by the Duty

The Duty applies to the following members of the Armed Forces Community, collectively defined in the Act as 'Service people':

> a. members of the regular forces and the reserve forces;
> b. members of British overseas territory forces who are subject to Service law;
> c. former members of any of Her Majesty's forces who are ordinarily resident in the UK; and,
> d. relevant family members [of those in (a) to (c) above].

These four groups are detailed in the guidance in appendix one.

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**D.3.1    Relevant functions in scope of the Duty**

The Duty focusses on three key functions:

a.   **Health:** NHS Primary Care, NHS Secondary Care, and Local Authority-delivered healthcare service where consideration should be given to provision of services; planning and funding; and co-operation between bodies and professionals.

b.   **Education:** admissions; educational attainment and curriculum; child wellbeing; transport; attendance; and additional needs support.

c.   **Housing:** allocations policy for social housing; tenancy strategies (England only); homelessness; and disabled facilities grants.

The Covenant is about removing disadvantage that may have arisen from the unique obligations and sacrifices made by individuals service. To ensure this happens the Council is required to pay due regard and '*place an appropriate amount of weight on the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when they consider all the factors relevant to how they carry out relevant functions.*'

**D.3.2    Implications for West Lothian Council**

The published guidance is in line with what was in the earlier drafts the MOD consulted on as part of the consultation period. It provides a framework to allow those bodies covered by the Act to implement the Act to meet the needs of their organisation.

As West Lothian Council signed up to the Covenant in 2011 it has actively supported the delivery of the Covenant over the years and adjusted relevant policies accordingly. The Council is therefore well placed to incorporate the required Duty going forward , particularly given the Gold Recognition under the Employer Recognition Scheme already in place.

**D.4    Council Officer Steering Group**

To consider all the implications of the Act and Duty in terms of updating existing policy to support veterans and look at any new areas of work Officers have established a standing working group consisting of representative from:

1.   Community Wealth Building;
2.   Housing;
3.   Education;
4.   Health; and
5.   Human Resources.

This may expand as the Act and implementation develops.

The working group will initially consider all the implications of the Duty on West Lothian Council, will set up an ongoing monitoring and review processes to ensure policy and support available is updated as required.

In addition to the Duty Officers will also oversee the Council's commitments to maintaining and developing the Councils' Gold Employer Recognition Scheme award.

The group will work with the long-standing West Lothian Armed Forces Community Covenant Steering Group, chaired by the Veterans' Champion and made up of

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external partners representing veterans' organisations, local business, advice services and forces representatives.

**E      CONCLUSION**

The panel is asked to note the report, the publication of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty Statutory Guidance and to the approach being taken to ensure the Council complies with the requirements of the Act. It is also asked to note that once Officers have fully considered the Armed Forces Covenant Duty and implement any changes required in line with the Duty further updates will be brought to the Panel..

**F.      BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

P&RPDSP 18 June 2021
https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/submissiondocuments.asp?submissionid=48877 .
P&RPDSP 4 February 2022
https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/submissiondocuments.asp?submissionid=51070.

Appendices/Attachments: Appendix 1 Statutory Guidance on the Armed Forces Covenant Duty

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12 December 2022

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# Statutory Guidance on the Armed Forces Covenant Duty

## Covering the United Kingdom

Issued under section 343AE(1) of the Armed Forces Act 2006

November 2022

**GUIDANCE**

This Guidance has been produced by the UK Government, in consultation with the Devolved Administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, local authorities across the United Kingdom, schools, colleges, the NHS, NHS Trusts and health boards, agencies and commissioning groups, Service charities and Families' Federations, subject matter experts, and members of the Armed Forces Community.

# Contents

# About

## Context for this Guidance

0.1.      The Armed Forces Act 2021 amended the Armed Forces Act 2006 ('the Act') by inserting sections 343AA to 343AF. These place a legal duty (the 'Covenant Duty') on specified public persons and bodies ('specified bodies'), to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when exercising certain statutory functions in the fields of healthcare, education and housing ('relevant functions'). The specified bodies and relevant functions are listed in sections 343AA to 343AD of the Act. The Covenant Duty came into effect on 22 November 2022.

0.2.      This Guidance is issued under section 343AE of the Act, which states that the specified bodies must have regard to this Guidance when exercising a relevant function.

## Purpose of this Guidance

0.3.      The purpose of this Guidance is to assist the specified bodies comply with their legal obligations, by providing information about the Duty and those people within the Armed Forces Community who are beneficiaries of the Duty. It highlights the issues these people can face as a result of Service life, and illustrates good practice in the areas of healthcare, education and housing. If specified bodies have any questions about this Guidance or the Duty, they should seek legal advice and/or contact the Ministry of Defence's Armed Forces Covenant Team (see Appendix 3 for contact details).

0.4.      This Guidance is specifically about the statutory Covenant Duty. Information about the wider Covenant is available from the sources listed in Appendix 3.

## Intended audience

0.5.      The primary audience for this Guidance is the specified bodies across the UK that are subject to the Duty. This Guidance will be of interest to staff throughout these bodies, but particularly those involved in policymaking, business planning, procurement, delivery, and governance. This Guidance is also aimed at other organisations delivering any of the relevant functions on behalf of the specified bodies. This Guidance will also be of interest to members of the Armed Forces Community, and other organisations that work with them, such as charities.

## Contents of this Guidance

0.6.      Chapter 1 provides an overview of the Covenant Duty, including what it is and to whom and when it applies. It describes in detail some of the unique obligations and sacrifices of Service life, and introduces the concepts of disadvantage and special

provision. The remaining chapters describe in detail some of the disadvantages that can be experienced by members of the Armed Forces Community in the areas of healthcare (chapter 2), education (chapter 3), and housing (chapter 4). Case studies are provided throughout to illustrate ways that the Armed Forces Covenant principles may be considered and applied.

0.7.        The appendices provide a list of the specified bodies that are subject to the Duty and the relevant functions to which the Duty applies (Appendix 1), information about how to become more aware of Armed Forces issues (Appendices 2 and 3), and information about how to resolve disputes (Appendix 4).

## Publication information

0.8.        This is the only Statutory Guidance on the Covenant Duty to be published by His Majesty's Government. Further advice and support on the Armed Forces Covenant and the Covenant Duty is available from the Armed Forces Covenant Team in the Ministry of Defence.

0.9.        This Guidance is also available in Welsh. If there is a need for this Guidance to be provided in an alternative format and/or language, please contact the Armed Forces Covenant Team to discuss the requirement. This is the first edition of this Guidance, published in November 2022. This document remains subject to future updates. Any suggestions for content in future versions can be sent to the Armed Forces Covenant Team.

# Foreword by the Secretary of State for Defence

Service in the Armed Forces can be profoundly rewarding for those who sign up. It can offer a life of challenge and adventure; an opportunity to gain new skills and develop a resilient approach to life; and the chance to travel the world, while protecting and serving one's country.

But it is not an easy career. Members of the Armed Forces fulfil many obligations and make many sacrifices in order to do their duty and keep us all safe. The stresses and pressures of the job can be immense, and their impact can stay with a person long after they have left the Armed Forces and returned to civilian life.

Because of this, members of the Armed Forces, and their families, rarely lead what might be called 'normal' lives. This means they will often have different experiences when accessing and using day-to-day public and private services in the UK, compared to the general population. Whether it is through unfamiliarity with civilian life, or frequent moves around the country and the subsequent difficulties in maintaining support networks, for example, members of the Armed Forces can find accessing such goods and services challenging.

That is why we have the Armed Forces Covenant. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, along with their families, should be treated fairly. It is a promise that they should not be disadvantaged because of their service. And it is a recognition of the sacrifices they make on our behalf and the responsibilities we owe them in return.

We are grateful to the thousands of organisations across the UK that have demonstrated their support to the Armed Forces and their families, by pledging to honour the Covenant, by removing disadvantages our Armed Forces Community would otherwise face as a result of their service, and, in some cases, by creating bespoke services to recognise the sacrifices of those who have given the most.

But there is further to go. Members of the Armed Forces Community continue to face disadvantage due to service life. That is why we set out our manifesto commitment to further strengthen the Covenant in law. We have created a new legal obligation on certain local public organisations, to require them to pay due regard to the Covenant and its principles, focussing on the key areas of healthcare, education and housing, which provide the basis of successful lives. I am confident this will raise awareness of the Covenant, improve understanding of the experiences of the Armed Forces and their families, and lead to better outcomes for our people. Placing the Covenant in statute in this way also ensures it lasts into the future and becomes an enduring part of British life.

This Statutory Guidance is a key tool in helping these public organisations understand the legal obligations placed upon them, the issues facing our Armed Forces and their families, and showcases many examples of good practice, demonstrating what successful Covenant delivery looks like. I would encourage you to provide my department with further examples of good practice in your area, to help further the successful delivery of the Covenant.





The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP
– Secretary of State for Defence


November 2022

# Executive Summary

## The Armed Forces Covenant

0.10.     The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation that the Armed Forces Community should be treated fairly and face no disadvantage when accessing public and commercial services, with special provision made in appropriate cases for those who have sacrificed the most. The Covenant was established in its current form in 2011 and since then, thousands of different organisations – including businesses, local authorities, universities, and charities – have chosen to sign a pledge to honour the Covenant and support their Armed Forces Community. As a result of this, there have been many examples around the UK of good practice to remove, mitigate, or prevent incidents of disadvantage from occurring.

## The Armed Forces Covenant Duty

0.11.     Building on this good progress, the Armed Forces Act 2021 amended the Armed Forces Act 2006 to create the following legal obligation on specified bodies in all four home nations of the UK. This is the Armed Forces Covenant Duty.

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When a specified body exercises a relevant function, it must have due regard to: (a) the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces; (b) the principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces, and (c) the principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces.

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This legal obligation applies to specified bodies whether or not they have signed the Covenant pledge. It is explained further below.

## Specified bodies subject to the Covenant Duty

0.12.     The specified bodies that are subject to the Covenant Duty are the bodies listed in sections 343AA(3), 343AB(3), 343AC(3) and 343AD(3) of the Act. They are bodies responsible for providing local services in the areas of healthcare, education and housing, such as local authorities, governing bodies of schools, and NHS bodies. (See section 1C)

## Relevant functions in scope of the Covenant Duty

0.13.     The relevant functions in scope of the Duty are functions under or by virtue of the legislative provisions listed in sections 343AA(4)-(6), 343AB(4)-(6), 343AC(4)-(6) and 343AD(4)-(6) of the Act, summarised in sub-paragraphs (a) – (c) below. (See section 1D)

a.  In the settings of NHS Primary Care, NHS Secondary Care, and local authority-delivered healthcare services, the following functions: provision of services; planning and funding; and co-operation between bodies and professionals.

b.  In compulsory education settings, the following functions: admissions; educational attainment and curriculum; child wellbeing; transport; attendance; additional needs support; and, for England only, use of Service Pupil Premium funding.

c.  The following housing functions: allocations policy for social housing; tenancy strategies (England only); homelessness; and disabled facilities grants.

## Due regard

0.14.     The Duty is about informed decision-making, and means that specified bodies should think about and place an appropriate amount of weight on the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when they consider all the factors relevant to how they carry out relevant functions. It is not prescriptive about the actions specified bodies should take in order to comply with their legal obligations, and it does not mandate specific public service delivery outcomes. Bodies might wish to draw on their experience and practice in complying with similar due regard duties. (See section 1F)

## Unique obligations and sacrifices

0.15.     These include: danger; geographical mobility; separation; Service law and rights; unfamiliarity with civilian life; hours of work; and stress. (See section 1G)

## Removing disadvantages

0.16.     A disadvantage is when the level of access a member of the Armed Forces Community has to goods and services, or the support they receive, is comparatively lower than that of someone in a similar position who is not a member of the Armed Forces Community, and this difference arises from one (or more) of the unique obligations and sacrifices of Service life. (See section 1H)

0.17.     In healthcare, veterans and Service families might experience more challenges in accessing healthcare, or more delays in receiving treatment, compared to non-Service patients. (See chapter 2)

0.18.     In education, Service children might experience an interrupted education, a disrupted social experience, reduced mental wellbeing, a longer journey to school, or not being able to take holidays during normal school holiday periods. Service children with additional needs might suffer delays relating to assessments and plans. (See chapter 3)

0.19.     In housing, veterans, Service personnel leaving Service, and Service families might lack knowledge about housing services, not have built up sufficient 'local connection', not be prioritised to receive social housing, experience a lack of available social housing, find it more difficult to communicate with housing bodies, be reluctant to seek early help, or require adaptations to be made to their home when they re-locate. (See chapter 4)

## Special provision

0.20.     Special provision is the taking of actions that go beyond the support provided to reduce or remove disadvantage. Special provision may be justified by the effects of the unique obligations and sacrifices of Service life, especially for those that have sacrificed the most, such as the bereaved and the injured (whether that injury is physical or mental). (See section 1I)

## Service people

0.21.     The people who benefit from the Duty are defined collectively as 'Service people' in section 343B(1) of the Act, comprising: currently serving members of the UK regular and reserve forces; currently serving members of British Overseas Territories' Armed Forces who are subject to UK Service law; former members of the UK regular and reserve forces and British Overseas Territory Forces, who are ordinarily resident in the UK ('veterans'); and the 'relevant family members' of people in these groups. (See section 1J)

# 1. The Armed Forces Covenant Duty

## 1A. What is the Armed Forces Covenant?

1.1.      The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation, founded on the unique obligations and sacrifices of those who serve, or have served, in the Armed Forces, that they and their families should be treated fairly. This was designed to ensure that the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces Community in the national interest should not come at significant cost when accessing goods and services in the UK.

1.2.      The Covenant has existed in its current form since 2011, and each year since then, the UK Government has been statutorily required to present to Parliament a Covenant Annual Report, covering all four home nations of the UK. Thousands of organisations from the public, private and charity sectors have committed their support to the Armed Forces Community by signing a pledge to honour the Covenant,[1] or making other commitments. National and local governments have collaborated with these bodies to improve the lives of members of the Armed Forces Community. This has been done by improving access to existing goods and services, and, in some cases, by creating new bespoke services or pathways as part of special provision. A collection of resources has been published to help local bodies deliver the Covenant in their area. These cover a range of policy areas, including healthcare, education, housing, and areas that are outside the scope of the Covenant Duty, including employment, remembrance and recognition, for example.

1.3.      The Government recognises the valuable contributions of organisations across the UK in support of the Armed Forces Covenant – and service provision to the Armed Forces Community has significantly improved as a result.  However, in certain areas of public service provision, delivery of the Covenant remains inconsistent, and some members of the Armed Forces Community can still find themselves disadvantaged as a result. From cases brought to the attention of the Ministry of Defence, Service charities, and ombudsmen, it appears a lack of awareness of issues affecting the Armed Forces Community can be a major factor in some incidents of disadvantage. This led to the creation of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty in 2021. This was achieved by using the Armed Forces Act 2021 to insert the Duty into the Armed Forces Act 2006. Therefore, references throughout this Guidance to the legislation underpinning the Duty are references to the Armed Forces Act 2006 ('the Act').

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[1] Who has signed the covenant?

## 1B. What is the Armed Forces Covenant Duty?

1.4.        The Armed Forces Covenant Duty is the following legal obligation. When a specified body exercises a relevant function, it must have due regard to:[2]

    a.  *the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces;*

    b.  *the principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces; and,*

    c.  *the principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.*

1.5.        Sub-paragraphs (a) to (c) are a summary of the Armed Forces Covenant. The Duty builds on – but is distinct from – the pre-existing voluntary Covenant pledge. **This legal obligation applies to all specified bodies, when exercising relevant functions, whether or not that body has signed the Covenant pledge.**

1.6.        The Covenant Duty is designed to raise awareness of the principles of the Covenant, the reasons for it, and in turn improve decision-making in respect of the Armed Forces Community. It requires that decisions about the development and delivery of specific services are made with conscious thought to the needs of those members of the Armed Forces Community within scope.

1.7.        The Covenant Duty applies across the whole of the UK. However, specified bodies within the different home nations of the UK are subject to different legal frameworks and administrative procedures underpinning the relevant functions in scope of the Duty. The Duty works in accordance with the legal system where the body operates. This is reflected in the list of bodies and functions in scope in each home nation of the UK, set out later in chapter 1, at sections 1C and 1D. The Secretary of State's power to add to these bodies and functions is described in section 1E.

1.8.        This is followed by explanations of the key terms in the Duty: 'due regard' in section 1F; 'unique obligations and sacrifices' in section 1G; 'removing disadvantages' in section 1H; 'special provision' in section 1I; and 'Service people' in section 1J. Section 1K describes what is not in scope of the Duty.

## 1C. Specified Bodies subject to the Covenant Duty

1.9.        The specified bodies subject to the Covenant Duty are listed in the Act[3] and Appendix 1 of this Guidance, and summarised in Table 1 below. Many of the illustrative case studies in chapters 2-4 involved collaborative working between different bodies.

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[2] The Armed Forces Act 2021 inserted the due regard Duty into the Armed Forces Act 2006 section 343AA(1) in relation to England, section 343AB(1) in relation to Wales, section 343AC(1) in relation to Scotland, and section 343AD(1) in relation to Northern Ireland.

[3] The Armed Forces Act 2021 inserted these bodies into the Armed Forces Act 2006 section 343AA(3) in relation to England, section 343AB(3) in relation to Wales, section 343AC(3) in relation to Scotland, and section 343AD(3) in relation to Northern Ireland.

1.10.     The private and third sectors are not in scope (though some bodies in scope, such as academies, might have charitable status). However, when relevant functions have been contracted out to private companies or third sector organisations, the specified public body responsible for that function needs to ensure that any third parties exercising functions on their behalf are required to comply with the Covenant Duty and do so in practice. Therefore, the responsible public body might wish to reflect the Duty in the contracts it has with contractors exercising relevant functions on its behalf. This Guidance will therefore be of interest to some private and third sector bodies, particularly if they deliver any of the relevant functions on behalf of a public body.

| England | <ul><li>Local authorities</li><li>Governing bodies of maintained schools and further education institutions</li><li>Proprietors of Academies</li><li>Non-maintained special schools and special post-16 institutions</li><li>NHS England, integrated care boards, NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts</li></ul> |
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| Wales | <ul><li>Local authorities</li><li>Governing bodies of maintained schools</li><li>Local Health Boards, Special Health Authorities, and NHS Trusts</li></ul> |
| Scotland | <ul><li>Local authorities and local authority landlords</li><li>Integration authorities, Health Boards, Special Health Boards, and the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service</li><li>Persons or bodies whose help is requested under section 23 of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004</li></ul> |
| Northern Ireland | <ul><li>The Northern Ireland Housing Executive</li><li>The Education Authority and the Board of Governors of a grant-aided school</li><li>The Department of Health (Northern Ireland), but only when exercising the relevant healthcare functions in scope of the Duty that were exercised by the former Regional Health and Social Care Board prior to its dissolution[4]</li><li>Local Commissioning Groups, and Health and Social Care Trusts</li></ul> |

Table 1. Summary of Specified Bodies subject to the Covenant Duty

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[4] The Act makes reference to Northern Ireland's Regional Health and Social Care Board in the list of bodies specified in section 343AD(3) who are subject to the Duty. This Board was dissolved by the Health and Social Care Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, with effect from 1 April 2022, with its functions transferring to the Department of Health (Northern Ireland). Under the 2022 Act's transitional provisions, the Duty will continue to apply to the relevant functions formerly exercised by the Board as now exercised by the Department for Health (Northern Ireland).

# 1D. Relevant Functions in Scope of the Covenant Duty

1.11.     The relevant functions in scope of the Covenant Duty are functions under or by virtue of the legislative provisions listed in the Act[5] and Appendix 1 of this Guidance. They are summarised in Table 2 below. The Duty must be complied with when a specified body makes a decision relating to the matters in Table 2, such as when it develops, implements and/or reviews a relevant policy, or makes decisions on its delivery of relevant services.

1.12.     Relevant functions in scope of the Duty are the listed functions within the fields of healthcare, education, and housing services. These are key areas where disadvantages to members of the Armed Forces Community have commonly arisen. The focus of the legislation is on local – and, as appropriate, regional – provision of these services.

| Healthcare | <ul><li>Provision of services</li><li>Planning and funding</li><li>Co-operation between bodies and professionals</li></ul> These healthcare functions are within scope of the Duty in the following settings: <ul><li>NHS Primary Care services, including general practice, community pharmacies, NHS dental, NHS optometry services and public health screening services.</li><li>NHS Secondary Care services, including urgent and emergency care, hospital and community services, specialist care, mental health services, and additional needs services (as applicable).</li><li>Local authority-delivered healthcare services, including sexual health services and drug and alcohol misuse services.</li></ul> |
|---|---|
| Education | <ul><li>Admissions</li><li>Educational attainment and curriculum</li><li>Child wellbeing</li><li>Transport</li><li>Attendance</li><li>Additional needs support</li><li>Use of Service Pupil Premium funding (England only)</li></ul> These education functions are within scope of the Duty in compulsory education settings, that is, primary, secondary, and, for England only, compulsory further education. The Duty does not cover nursery (early years education), higher education, or other voluntary adult education settings. |
| Housing | <ul><li>Allocations policy for social housing</li><li>Tenancy strategies (England only)</li><li>Homelessness</li><li>Disabled Facilities Grants</li></ul> |

Table 2. Summary of Relevant Functions in Scope of the Covenant Duty

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[5] The Armed Forces Act 2021 inserted these legislative provisions into the Armed Forces Act 2006 section 343AA(4-6) in relation to England, section 343AB(4-6) in relation to Wales, section 343AC(4-6) in relation to Scotland, and section 343AD(4-6) in relation to Northern Ireland.

## 1E. Reviewing the Operation of the Duty and Extending its Scope

1.13.　　The Act gives the Secretary of State the power to extend, by regulations, the scope of the Duty to include additional bodies and functions.[6] This is so that the Duty can be adapted to meet the changing needs of the Armed Forces Community. The Secretary of State is required to consult the Devolved Administrations and other appropriate stakeholders before making regulations under this power.[7] The Ministry of Defence will keep the operation of the Duty under review and continue to work closely with its Covenant stakeholders.

## 1F. Due Regard

1.14.　　The Act does not state what a body must do in order to have due regard. How a body meets the Covenant Duty, and how the Duty is reflected in relevant policies or procedures, are therefore matters for the body in question. It is about informed decision-making, and means that specified bodies should think about and place an appropriate amount of weight on the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when they consider all the factors relevant to how they carry out relevant functions. Therefore, specified bodies should ensure that mechanisms are in place that prompt decision-makers to assess how their decision might impact on service users from the Armed Forces Community in scope of the Duty. Bodies might wish to draw on their experience and practice in complying with other similar due regard duties.

1.15.　　Keeping written records of how key policies and decisions have been made, and documenting the factors that were taken into account in each decision, will help bodies demonstrate that they have had due regard to the principles of the Covenant, if challenged.

## 1G. Unique Obligations and Sacrifices

*Due regard to the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces.*

1.16.　　Being part of the Armed Forces offers both challenge and adventure, providing those who serve with much in terms of skills and experience, as well as the opportunity to protect and serve their country. The majority of people leaving the Armed Forces do so empowered with skills, a strong team work ethic, and a resilient approach to life. However, to effectively meet the demands upon them, the Armed Forces Community faces unique obligations and sacrifices. Some of these are described below.

1.17.　　Members of the Armed Forces Community experience these obligations and sacrifices to different degrees and at different times throughout, and in some cases after, their Service career, as personal circumstances vary.

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[6] The Armed Forces Act 2021 inserted this power into the Armed Forces Act 2006 at section 343AF(1).
[7] The Armed Forces Act 2021 inserted this requirement into the Armed Forces Act 2006 at section 343AF(7).

Armed Forces Covenant · www.armedforcescovenant.co.uk

## 1G1. Danger

1.18.    Serving members of the Armed Forces can be exposed to a wide range of threats of violence, and exposure to environments that are physically unsafe for natural, manmade or political reasons, with a danger of death, or short or long-term injury to physical and/or mental health. While some injuries might be temporary, others can be career-ending or life-altering. The Service person's family can also suffer significantly in these circumstances.

## 1G2. Geographical Mobility

1.19.    Serving members of the Armed Forces need to be highly geographically mobile and ready to move, depending on the Service need. Sometimes this is in response to a live military operation. Many other moves are routine, regular re-locations around the country and across the globe to ensure the effective running of the Armed Forces. In this case, family members often move with the Service person. The Service person and their family might see their lives uprooted, and a reduction in the availability of support structures, as they move away from wider family and friends. It is likely that the Service person lacks choice on timing and location, and sometimes the move is at short notice. This requirement to re-locate is likely to happen multiple times during a Service career, and the frequency of moves is often higher for Army personnel than for others.

## 1G3. Separation

1.20.    Serving members of the Armed Forces might be required to spend significant periods of time away from their family, for weeks or months at a time, for example, if deployed overseas on operations. Operational requirements might mean some Service personnel (especially Naval personnel, such as submariners) cannot contact their families for months at a time, making the separation particularly tough. Or, if the Service person is required to move within the UK or is posted overseas, the family might decide to stay at home. While this helps the family to build roots and local support networks – mitigating some challenges – it also means that families can be separated long-term, or during the working week, from the Service person. The Naval Families Federation has published more information about the impact of parental absence.

## 1G4. Service Law and Rights

1.21.    Members of the Armed Forces are normally expected to carry out a minimum term of Service. Furthermore, operational readiness requires personnel to achieve a high state of discipline and organisation. As such, Service personnel become subject to an additional system of law (Service law). This is fundamental to ensuring the effective operation of the Armed Forces. However, it requires personal sacrifices to be made. For example, personnel cannot simply opt out from a move that inconveniences them. As they are bound to serve certain engagement lengths, they must obtain permission to discharge early, rather than have the right to give notice. Members of the Armed Forces are also not permitted to be politically active or go on strike. These are rights available to most of the wider public, but not to serving members of the Armed Forces.

### 1G5. Unfamiliarity with Civilian Life

1.22.    Due to the requirements of Service, the Armed Forces provides Service personnel with many essential services, including accommodation, healthcare, training, sports, clothing, and transport. There is also a separate Service Justice System. Therefore, having spent so much of their time in the Armed Forces environment, Service personnel – and their families who have been accompanying them – might lack knowledge or experience of civilian life. They might not know what services are available to them, or how to gain access to them, or they might have a general sense of disconnection from civilian society.

### 1G6. Hours of Work

1.23.    Armed Forces Regular personnel and mobilised Reserves do not receive the full benefits of working hours legislation. They are required to be available for duty 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. They might be required to work unsociable or long hours. Further, they might not be able to take all their leave entitlement, or their booked leave might be cancelled at short notice.

### 1G7. Stress

1.24.    Members of the Armed Forces Community might experience stress as a result of the other obligations and sacrifices of Service life. For Service personnel this might be exacerbated by the pressures of the work itself, including having to conduct operations in a range of unfamiliar, dangerous or distressing environments, and the importance of the work of protecting their country. Deployment abroad can be tough on family members, who might experience feelings such as loneliness or worry about the safety of loved ones deployed abroad. The Service partner might have the burden of acting as a single parent while the Service person is deployed. Families might also find themselves suddenly needing to take on additional caring responsibilities in the event of injury or bereavement. Members of the Armed Forces Community might suffer in silence and try to cope with issues alone, due to a perceived stigma of speaking up, or a belief that people outside the Armed Forces will not understand their experiences.

## 1H. Removing Disadvantages

*Due regard to the principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.*

1.25.    A disadvantage is when the level of access a member of the Armed Forces Community has to goods and services, or the support they receive, is comparatively lower than that of someone in a similar position who is not a member of the Armed Forces Community, and this difference arises from one (or more) of the unique obligations and sacrifices of Service life.[8]

1.26.    This principle is that it is desirable to remove all such disadvantages arising for all members of the Armed Forces Community within scope of the Duty (defined in section 1J).

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[8] Note that disadvantages do not have to be uniquely experienced by the Armed Forces to be within scope. For example, non-Service children also sometimes move school during the school year.

However, it should not be assumed that everyone associated with the Armed Forces Community experiences disadvantages because of Service life. Research commissioned by the Forces in Mind Trust and the Local Government Association included a survey of the Armed Forces Community that found that 38% of respondents felt they had been disadvantaged at least once as a result of Service life, indicating that many had not been. Some members of the Armed Forces Community are more likely to experience disadvantage than others. For example, currently serving personnel and their families, due to their greater geographical mobility, may be more likely to experience related disadvantages than veterans who may be more settled in their communities.

1.27.     The following chapters describe some of the ways that disadvantage can be experienced by the Armed Forces Community in the areas of healthcare (chapter 2), education (chapter 3), and housing (chapter 4). The unique obligations and sacrifices of Service life from which each disadvantage can arise are identified. Since 2011, when the Covenant was established in its current form, there have been many examples of best practice to remove, mitigate, or prevent incidents of disadvantage from arising. Some of these case studies are described in the healthcare, education, and housing chapters. These case studies do not prescribe mandatory actions, but they have been included to provide examples and ideas of the kinds of behaviours and actions that have resulted in a better experience for the Armed Forces Community.

## 1I. Special Provision

*Due regard to the principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.*

1.28.     Special provision is the taking of actions that go beyond the support provided to reduce or remove disadvantage. These are actions that result in the provision of something bespoke, or something not normally available to the general public and the Armed Forces Community.

1.29.     Special provision may be justified in some cases by the effects of the unique obligations and sacrifices of Service life, especially for those that have sacrificed the most, such as the bereaved and the injured (whether that injury is physical or mental). This contrasts with the previous principle aimed at removing disadvantages, which is for the benefit of the Armed Forces Community as a whole. This is because the Armed Forces Covenant is not about giving members of the Armed Forces Community advantageous treatment as a matter of course (see section 1K).

1.30.     There are different ways that special provision could be given, when appropriate, including the following.
   a. Implementing a bespoke solution to mitigate an identified disadvantage, for the benefit of a group or individual that has sacrificed the most, where the solution goes above and beyond what is provided for the general public and most members of the Armed Forces Community.
   b. Offering something additional to a group or individual in the Armed Forces Community that has sacrificed the most, not to directly mitigate an identified disadvantage, but more as a general recognition of particularly sacrificial Service to

the country. An example of this is the Integrated Personal Commissioning for Veterans Framework, described in section 2C7.

   c. Establishing different policies or procedures, for the benefit of a group or individual in the Armed Forces Community that has sacrificed the most. An example of this is the priority treatment commitment described in section 2C1.

## 1J. The Armed Forces Community

1.31.     The Duty applies to the following members of the Armed Forces Community, collectively defined in the Act as 'Service people':[9]
   a. members of the regular forces and the reserve forces;
   b. members of British overseas territory forces who are subject to Service law;
   c. former members of any of Her Majesty's forces who are ordinarily resident in the UK; and,
   d. relevant family members [of those in (a) to (c) above].

1.32.     These are therefore the groups of people that must be considered when complying with the Duty. These four groups are described below. The term 'Armed Forces Community' is used more commonly than 'Service people' in the context of the Covenant. Therefore, this Guidance uses the term 'Armed Forces Community', or just 'the Community', to mean the same four groups of people. Note that the functions carried out by specified bodies could have the potential to affect the whole of this Community, or groups or individual members within it.

### 1J1. Members of the regular forces and the reserve forces

1.33.     Under the Act, the 'regular forces' are the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular Army and the Royal Air Force. This group therefore includes all currently serving members of these forces. Citizens of some other countries can join these forces, and they are included in this group.

1.34.     This group also includes all currently serving members of one of the volunteer reserve forces (the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Army Reserve and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force) or the ex-regular reserve forces (the Royal Fleet Reserve, the Regular Reserve and the Royal Air Force Reserve). The volunteer reserve forces are mainly made up of individuals who have civilian jobs and volunteer to serve as a reservist, which involves training in the evening and on weekends and annual training camps. The ex-regular reserve forces are made up of former members of the regular forces who have civilian jobs but are required to be a member of a reserve force for a set period and may have to undertake training to maintain or augment their skills. Reservists are liable to be compulsorily mobilised for set periods of full-time service, during which time they can be deployed in the same way as regulars; in practice reservists are mostly selected for mobilisation only if they agree to this in advance. Reservists do active service on operations alongside regulars, normally when they are serving under particular types of commitment or have been mobilised.

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[9] These four groups are collectively defined as 'Service people' in section 343B(1) of the Armed Forces Act 2006 for the purposes of Part 16A of that Act (Armed Forces Covenant).

1.35.      This Guidance uses the terms 'UK Armed Forces', 'Service person' or 'Service personnel' for people in this group. Note therefore that the term 'Service personnel' has a different meaning to the term 'Service people'. People in this group are in scope of the Duty wherever they are located – in the UK or abroad. This contrasts with veterans who are within scope of the Duty only if they are ordinarily resident in the UK (see section 1J3).

## 1J2. Members of British Overseas Territory Forces who are subject to Service law

1.36.      A 'British Overseas Territory Force' is 'any of Her Majesty's forces that is raised under the law of a British Overseas Territory'.[10] This group therefore comprises the **currently serving members of the British Overseas Territories' Armed Forces**. For example, a member of the Royal Bermuda Regiment or the Royal Montserrat Defence Force. People in this group are not members of the UK Armed Forces. They are also not to be confused with British Forces Overseas, who are members of the UK Armed Forces that have been posted to other countries.

1.37.      People in this group are in scope of the Duty when they are **subject to UK Service law**. This is while they are 'undertaking any duty with or training with a [UK] regular or reserve force'.[11] There are times when a member of a British Overseas Territory Force is deployed to the UK for a period, for example, to deliver training to UK Armed Forces. They might also be accompanied by their family members depending on the duration of the posting. The UK Armed Forces take care of British Overseas Territory personnel in the UK.

1.38.      While it might be rare for specified bodies in the UK to encounter these personnel, specified bodies should regard the British Overseas Territory Forces who are subject to Service law as part of the Armed Forces Community in terms of the Covenant Duty.

## 1J3. Former members of any of Her Majesty's forces who are ordinarily resident in the UK

1.39.      Under the Act, 'Her Majesty's forces' means the UK regular and reserve forces and the British Overseas Territories' Armed Forces. Therefore, included in this group are: **former members of the UK regular and reserve forces**, that is, former members of the forces listed in section 1J1, noting this includes those who served in the UK Armed Forces as part of Wartime Conscription and National Service; and **former members of British Overseas Territories' Armed Forces**. A former member of any of these forces is anyone who has served for at least one day. The term 'Her Majesty's forces', as it is used in the Act, does not include the Armed Forces of other Commonwealth countries or wider groups such as the Merchant Navy. Therefore, former members of these other groups are not within scope of the Duty. (Though some could still be considered under the broader Covenant, see section 1J5.)

1.40.      People in this group are in scope of the Duty if they are **ordinarily resident in the UK**. The Act does not provide any further definition of 'ordinarily resident in the UK'.

1.41.      These individuals are also known as 'veterans' or 'ex-Service personnel', and this Guidance uses the term 'veterans' for this group. A 2017 study estimated that there are 2.4

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[10] Section 343B(4) of the Armed Forces Act 2006
[11] Section 369 of the Armed Forces Act 2006

million veterans in Great Britain, making up an estimated 5% of household residents aged 16+,[12] and that veterans are estimated to be predominantly male (89%) and/or aged 65+ (60%), though both of these characteristics are changing as the veteran population becomes younger and more diverse.

1.42.　　There are several reasons why someone might leave the Armed Forces, such as expiration of contract, resignation, medical and compassionate reasons, and misconduct. No matter the reason for discharge, all such veterans benefit from the Covenant Duty.

## 1J4. Relevant family members

1.43.　　The definition of 'relevant family members' for the purposes of the Duty is set out in the Armed Forces (Covenant) Regulations 2022.[13] Note that elsewhere in this Guidance, the term 'Service families' is used for ease of reference, therefore, references to Service families are references to 'relevant family members'.

1.44.　　Service life primarily impacts on family members as a result of their cohabitation with, or dependency on, a member or former member of the Armed Forces. It is this connection that is therefore the basis of the definition. Functions carried out by specified bodies can affect different groups in different ways. Some functions may have the potential to affect some categories of family members more than others or not at all.

1.45.　　The following people are prescribed in the Regulations as relevant family members. They are family members of the people in the three other groups in scope of the Duty, and the term 'Service members' is used to mean all the people in these three other groups.[14] That is, **'Service members' are the current members (serving personnel) described in section 1J1 and section 1J2, and the former members (veterans) described in section 1J3**. References below to Service members includes references to former Service members.

    a.　**Partners:** This comprises the current and former spouses and civil partners of Service members, and any person whose relationship with a Service member is or was formerly 'akin to a relationship between spouses or civil partners', such as a cohabiting couple in a committed relationship. It should be remembered that Service members might be required to live away from their partner on posting or deployment for a considerable period (see section 1G), but this should not be taken as affecting whether they are in such a relationship. This group includes former partners as they can continue to be impacted by Service life following a break-up from a Service member, particularly if they have children together. Including former partners ensures they can receive appropriate consideration as they become independent of the Service member, for example, to take account of the former partner's first re-location after the end of the relationship. This Guidance uses the term 'Service partners' for this group.

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[12] The Censuses in England, Wales and Scotland now ask respondents whether they had previously served in the UK Armed Forces. This data will facilitate a more accurate understanding of the size and distribution of the veteran populations in England, Wales and Scotland.

[13] The Armed Forces (Covenant) Regulations 2022 are made under section 343B(4) of the Armed Forces Act 2006.

[14] This is the collective term used for these three other groups in the Regulations and in Section 343B(4) of the Armed Forces Act 2006.

b.  **Children:** This comprises children (including adopted children) under the age of 18 who are children of Service members or Service partners, and any other children under the age of 18 that are otherwise the responsibility of Service members or Service partners. A child is the responsibility of a Service member or Service partner if the Service member or Service partner has parental responsibility for the child, if the child is wholly or mainly financially dependent on the Service member or Service partner, or if the child is someone for whom the Service member or Service partner has assumed regular and substantial caring responsibilities (such as a foster child). This Guidance uses the term 'Service children' for this group.

Whilst the impact of Service life on children of serving members of the Armed Forces may be more easily apparent, children of veterans are included as they can experience disadvantages arising from Service life after their parent(s) have left Service. This could be the continuation of a disadvantage first experienced while their parent(s) were in Service, or a new disadvantage experienced due to the family's resettlement out of the Armed Forces into civilian life.

Note that, while all Service children under 18 fall within the definition of relevant family member via this 'Children' category, upon turning 18 they will continue to meet the definition of relevant family member as a 'Relative' if they meet any of that category's three criteria (i)-(iii) (that is, if they have a dependency on the Service member or Service partner).

c.  **Relatives:** This comprises the relatives (including through adoption) of Service members or Service partners that are:
(i) **living in the same household** as the Service member. Service members might be required to temporarily live elsewhere, either for a set period of time or during the working week, due to postings or deployments (see section 1G). In such cases, where the relative would otherwise be living with the Service member (but for the fact the Service member is away for Service reasons) they are still to be considered a member of the Service member's household; or
(ii) **wholly or mainly financially dependent** on the Service member or Service partner; or
(iii) someone for whom the Service member or Service partner **has assumed regular and substantial caring responsibilities**, such as those with additional needs who may be otherwise unable to care for themselves.

The term 'relative' means:
(a) a parent, step-parent, son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter, grandparent, step-grandparent, great-grandparent, step-great-grandparent, grandchild, step-grandchild, great-grandchild or step-great-grandchild;
(b) the brother, sister, uncle, great-uncle, aunt, great-aunt, niece, great-niece, nephew, great-nephew or first cousin (whether of the full blood or of the half blood or by marriage or civil partnership);
(c) any person aged 18 or over who was the responsibility of the Service member or Service partner as a child. Being the responsibility of a Service member or Service partner has the same meaning as in the 'Children' category above. This ensures this group will continue to be relevant family members when they are adults where there is a level of dependency.

d. **Bereaved family members:** When a Service member is deceased, this comprises any person who was a relevant family member under one of the above categories immediately before the Service member's death.

## 1J5. Groups not within scope of the Duty

1.46.　　For the purposes of the Duty, the Armed Forces Community includes only the four groups above. For Covenant issues that are not part of the Duty, the Armed Forces Community may be defined more broadly. Therefore, in the spirit of the Covenant, although not bound by the Duty to do so, specified bodies may also wish to consider the needs of individuals within these wider groups if individual circumstances merit it. Included in these wider groups are members of the Merchant Navy that have seen duty on defined military operations, and wider family members not within scope of the definition of 'relevant family members' above.

1.47.　　Some groups are not within scope of either the Duty or the broader Covenant. The Armed Forces of other nations, such as NATO and Commonwealth countries, are not within scope of either the Duty or the broader Covenant (the only other countries in scope are British Overseas Territories). Also, Cadets and Adult Volunteers in the Cadet Forces are not members of the UK Armed Forces, and are not within scope of either the Duty or the broader Covenant.

# 1K. The Armed Forces Covenant Duty: What it is not

1.48.　　The Covenant Duty is not prescriptive about the approach a specified body should take in order to comply with their legal obligations. It also does not mandate that any particular conclusions are reached or specific public service delivery outcomes achieved as a result of that consideration. The actions and outcomes that bodies deem appropriate will vary across the country depending on local circumstances.

1.49.　　The Covenant Duty does not abolish or replace existing Covenant pledges and other commitments. Public and private bodies will still be encouraged to honour these. Similarly, the Covenant pledge will remain open for new bodies to sign up to, should they wish to do so, as there are matters within scope of the wider Covenant that have not been brought within the legal Duty, including the following.
   a. The Duty only applies to specific functions in healthcare, education, and housing. Other functions in these three areas, and functions in other, unrelated areas, are not within the scope of the Duty, though may still be relevant to the wider Covenant.
   b. The Duty only applies to specified bodies. Many organisations that have signed the wider Covenant pledge are therefore not within scope of the legal Duty at all.
   c. The Duty applies to specific groups in the Armed Forces Community. Other groups in the Community may be included within the purposes of the wider Covenant.

1.50.　　Some issues affecting the Armed Forces Community are not covered by the Covenant so cannot be within scope of the Duty. The Covenant's purpose is to address the negative experiences of the Armed Forces Community, arising from Service life, in the provision of public and commercial services. Many matters affecting the Armed Forces Community do not fall within this category.

1.51.     The Covenant Duty does not supersede or replace any other statutory requirement. Those subject to the Duty must balance the requirements of the Duty with the need to deliver services more generally and the need to satisfy other statutory requirements, such as the Public Sector Equality Duty in England, Scotland and Wales, or the statutory duty on public authorities regarding equality of opportunity in s.75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

1.52.     Advantageous treatment as a matter of course is not within scope of the Duty, such as offering discounts to all through the Defence Discount Service, or to a broad group through the Veterans Railcard. However, bodies are still free to implement such schemes as part of their support to the Armed Forces Community. Similarly, the Duty does not give an individual any automatic right to the best house, best school, or to jump a queue. However, special provision can sometimes be justified (see section 1I).

# 2. Healthcare

## Summary

2.1.      The provision of healthcare to full-time Service personnel is split between the Ministry of Defence and the NHS. Reservists, veterans, and Service families normally receive healthcare via the NHS, while veterans also have access to some dedicated and bespoke support services (section 2A). People in the Armed Forces Community mostly have similar levels of health to the general population, though some veterans have particular healthcare needs arising from Service. Healthcare disadvantages arising from the unique obligations and sacrifices of Service life are most likely to be experienced by Service families and veterans. They include the following.

a. **Challenges in accessing healthcare, or the right kind of healthcare.** Service families and veterans might find it harder than non-Service patients to gain access to the healthcare they need, if:
   (1) healthcare bodies lack awareness of the composition of their local Armed Forces Community and their healthcare needs (section 2B1);
   (2) healthcare professionals do not know which of their patients are veterans (section 2B2);
   (3) healthcare professionals do not fully understand, or have experience of treating, health conditions arising from Service (section 2B3);
   (4) healthcare professionals are unaware of the healthcare services provided for veterans by the NHS, local authorities and third sector (section 2B3);
   (5) Service families re-locate for Service reasons and lose access to services they received in their previous location (section 2C5);
   (6) Service families re-locate for Service reasons and lack knowledge of the healthcare and support services available to them in their new local area (section 2C5); or
   (7) Service families re-locate for Service reasons and lose access to healthcare professionals with whom they have an established relationship, and who have experience of treating them and understand their individual healthcare needs (section 2C6).

b. **Delays in receiving treatment.** Service families might have to wait significantly longer for treatment if they are required to re-locate for Service reasons, and:
   (1) having already spent time on a waiting list in their previous location, they are placed at the back of the waiting list in their new location (section 2C2);
   (2) they have to join a waiting list to resume treatment that had begun at their previous location (section 2C3);
   (3) health professionals in the new location decide to conduct a reassessment (section 2C4);
   (4) there are delays relating to support for Service children with additional needs (sections 2C4 and 3H);
   (5) there is a lack of clarity as to which funding arrangements apply after a re-location (section 2D); or
   (6) insufficient information is passed between health systems and healthcare staff, or there are delays in passing on information (section 2E).

## 2A. The Armed Forces Community and public healthcare services

2.2.        Responsibility for the healthcare of **full-time Service personnel** is split between the Ministry of Defence and the NHS. MOD's Defence Medical Services provides a range of healthcare services for Service personnel in the UK and overseas, including primary care and mental health care. Secondary care, such as specialist referrals, hospital admissions and emergency care, is normally provided by the NHS.[15]

2.3.        **Veterans** primarily receive their healthcare from the NHS, while also having access to some dedicated and bespoke support services. Most veterans have similar levels of health to the general population, but a small minority require ongoing care due to the effects of their Service. Veterans might have healthcare requirements resulting from Service, or they might have pre-existing issues exacerbated by Service.

2.4.        **Reservists** that are mobilised into a period of full-time Service receive occupational health advice and care from Defence Medical Services. When not deployed on full-time Service, their healthcare needs are primarily the responsibility of the NHS.

2.5.        **Service families** normally receive their healthcare via the NHS in the same way as non-Service families, though they can sometimes receive care from Defence Medical Services. Therefore, Service families living and moving with the Service person are usually required to register with an NHS GP, and access treatment from a dentist, in each location.

2.6.        The following sections describe some of the ways that disadvantage can be experienced by the Armed Forces Community in different areas of healthcare. The issues described are not exhaustive as other issues might arise for a variety of reasons.

2.7.        Case studies in text boxes have been included as helpful illustrations of some of the ways that bodies have helped to mitigate these disadvantages or, where appropriate, made special provision. **These case studies do not prescribe mandatory actions**, but they have been included to provide examples and ideas of the kinds of behaviours and actions that have resulted in a better experience for the Armed Forces Community, and which bodies might wish to consider when complying with the Duty.

## 2B. Understanding the healthcare needs of the local Armed Forces Community

2.8.        Healthcare bodies and professionals will need to understand the healthcare needs of the local Armed Forces Community. Without this, the Armed Forces Community might experience **challenges in accessing healthcare, or the right kind of healthcare**.

### 2B1. Understanding local need in order to plan the provision of healthcare services

2.9.        Healthcare bodies with a planning or commissioning role are heavily dependent on having a detailed understanding of local population demographics. Members of the Armed Forces Community can be present anywhere in the country. Healthcare bodies should

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[15] For more information, see Healthcare for the Armed Forces community: a forward view

therefore have a good awareness of the composition of their local Armed Forces Community and their healthcare needs. This can include local authorities when undertaking their role in producing Joint Strategic Needs Assessments or Population Needs Assessments, which look at current and future health and care needs of local populations.

Re-assessment of Local Needs

- Following the closure of RAF Cottesmore and the establishment of Kendrew Barracks (an Army base), Rutland County Council identified the need to reassess its health offer to the new Armed Forces Community. The Council's Armed Forces Officer and Public Health team worked with local units to conduct a health needs assessment to understand the different needs of an RAF station vs an Army base, how those needs differ to the local civilian population, and whether military and civilian health services could meet the new demand. It established the local population and their health needs – particularly those impacted by Service life. It used literature reviews for health conditions, policy reviews, primary qualitative data collection (in the form of interviews and focus groups) and quantitative analysis. National data, as well as local data, was used. A report was published, and a Health & Wellbeing Board was dedicated to the health needs of the Armed Forces Community. The report informed the Council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

- Concerns were raised by the local Armed Forces Community in West Norfolk that there was insufficient dental service provision near the local base, RAF Marham. The views of families, supported by research from Healthwatch Norfolk into local health provision and user needs, were fed into the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, ensuring the commissioning process reflected local, as well as regional, needs. Led and negotiated by the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board, partner organisations then collaborated to find a solution to meet those needs. NHS England worked closely with RAF Marham and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation to address the gap by opening the first NHS dental practice based on an MOD site.

Conducting Research to Understand Local Armed Forces Healthcare Needs

- Harborough Locality Integrated Leadership Team has representatives from public and third sector organisations working to enhance individuals' health and wellbeing experiences through collaborative working. A Local Authority and HealthWatch survey of Armed Forces Community members found that many respondents had mental (22%) and physical (29%) health issues directly related to Service, but felt they had a lack of support, access, and understanding from their public service providers. The Locality Integrated Leadership Team responded to the survey findings and reached out to the NHS to improve this experience. They worked with Armed Forces officers and case workers providing healthcare support to members of the Armed Forces Community. The result was an online training workshop to improve health practitioners' awareness of Service life and related health concerns. Anecdotal evidence showed increased engagement with Armed Forces Community clients and referrals to specialist providers.

- Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board worked with Healthwatch Hertfordshire to undertake to conduct a survey, interviews, and focus groups with 100 local veterans, as well as NHS professionals, funded by Hertfordshire Public Health. This led to an action plan, including action to increase understanding of Service life and the Armed Forces Covenant among secondary care practitioners, promotion of Veteran Aware to local hospitals, and the Royal College of General Practitioners' Veteran Friendly GP Practice scheme to local surgeries.

- Rutland County Council led tri-Council work (with Harborough and South Kesteven District Councils) to commission HealthWatch to create a user-friendly survey of the military community online and on paper over a four-month period. The Rutland Armed Forces Officer worked closely with HealthWatch to construct the survey and promote completion across the community. Supported by a communications strategy (social media, radio, posters, and visiting bases), this led to 700 verified responses and a report that assisted in policy changes.

- In 2020, research by the Veterans' Gateway found that, out of all issues facing the veteran community, at least 23.27% of searches on its online portal were for mental health services, and at least 6.75% of searches were for physical health issues. In order of highest number of searches, veterans were most concerned about: accessing support; support groups; treatment; drug, alcohol, and rehab services; bereavement; home and physical mobility aids; GPs; blindness; limb loss; and end of life care.

- Reports are also available from wider experts and Armed Forces advocates that identify issues for veterans and families, and make recommendations over how public bodies can respond. For example, the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's reports Veteran's Health & Wellbeing A Distinctive Scottish Approach and Are We Getting It Right?

## 2B2. Identifying service users from the Armed Forces Community

2.10.    An awareness by the specified bodies of those using their healthcare services who are members of the Armed Forces Community will help to improve the way in which their needs are met. While many veterans are forthcoming about their Service history and the issues they faced, making it simpler for healthcare professionals to recommend treatment pathways, this is not always the case. Some veterans may be less likely to seek out support services and can be reluctant to reveal their prior life in Service, and less forthcoming about the nature of their injuries. This could be because:

   a. They feel a stigma in accessing support, either because it is perceived that accessing support could bring shame on them or the unit they served in, or they believe they are not entitled to the support they require.
   b. They believe that civilian healthcare providers will not understand or support them.
   c. They lack awareness of the support available to which they are entitled.
   d. They might not regard themselves as a veteran, for example if they served a very short amount of time, or if they view their time in Service as a job that was in the past, and not something that affects their current life.
   e. There might be issues in their local area which make it difficult to access support. For example, veterans in parts of Northern Ireland might be particularly unwilling to

come forward and access dedicated support, for fear of stigma and/or recrimination.

Therefore, healthcare professionals might not know which of their patients are veterans, making it less likely that they will be provided with the right kind of healthcare.

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Improving Identification of Veterans on NHS Systems

- In 2018, in response to data highlighting the veterans' code was applied to veteran patients in only 7.9% of cases, Prof. Alan Finnegan created a study to find ways to motivate veterans to notify primary care staff of their veteran status or register with a GP, and to improve primary care staff's understanding of veterans' health issues. The study found that, after a 6-week intervention period centred on an advertising campaign, the number of patients with a veteran code increased by 200% (180 to 537 in Lancashire).

- Gateshead Armed Forces Network identified that there were very low numbers of veterans registered and coded at GP practices in Gateshead, and Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) agreed to carry out a project to increase this. From 2014-15, the project involved the CCG including veteran identification as one of its Quality Indicators that practices could choose to focus on. During 2016-17, veteran identification was also added to the CCG's master templates installed on all practice clinical systems. At the start of the project there were only 368 veterans registered, identified and coded in Gateshead. By February 2019 this had increased to over 7000. As a result of this, GP practices in Gateshead can now better identify veterans with long-term conditions which might be due to Service. This means veterans can then be sent to appropriate NHS services, which could be veteran-specific. The CCG has also been working to further share and extend this best practice across Newcastle, and across the North East Armed Forces Forum (covering 12 local authority areas).

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## 2B3. Healthcare professionals' knowledge of healthcare issues relevant to the Armed Forces Community

2.11.   The unique obligations and sacrifices of *danger* and *stress*[16] can result in members of the Armed Forces Community (including veterans and Service families) requiring treatment for physical or mental injuries arising from Service, or for pre-existing issues exacerbated by Service. Service in the Armed Forces may result in a number of conditions, including:

    a. Sensory disorders (such as hearing loss).
    b. Musculoskeletal injuries such as fractures, dislocations, and other conditions.
    c. Amputations, wounds, scarring and non-freezing cold injury (NFCI).
    d. Mental disorders (such as stress, anxiety and depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or moral injury). Some veterans might suffer from Dual Diagnosis, consisting of mental disorder related to Service caused by trauma experienced during active Service, and substance self-medication to manage this.

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[16] The unique obligations and sacrifices in *italics* throughout this chapter are explained in section 1G.

2.12.     Healthcare professionals might not fully understand the health conditions that can arise from Service, or they might not have experience of treating them. Healthcare professionals might also be unaware of the services provided for the Armed Forces Community by the NHS, local authorities and third sector. These issues can result in members of the Armed Forces Community not being able to access healthcare, or the right kind of healthcare. Ensuring healthcare staff have an awareness of the healthcare services available, and that they and their establishments signpost the Armed Forces Community to these services, can lead to improved health outcomes.

Improving GPs' Awareness of their Local Veteran Healthcare Needs

- In response to concerns identified by the Armed Forces Community and associated groups, the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) and the UK Government conducted research into ways to better equip GPs with the knowledge to serve the veteran community and their families in their local area. Research identified that it was difficult to identify and manage veterans and their families, which prevented them identifying health issues and signposting them to relevant support as required. It also identified that, in some cases, more awareness of the support services, both within the NHS and externally, was required. The RCGP and UK Government created the veteran-friendly accreditation. This is a voluntary initiative. Accreditation is currently open to GP practices in England, though the RCGP is working with the Devolved Administrations to extend the programme. Accreditation lasts for three years and requires GP practices to do the following.
  - Ask patients registering with the surgery if they have ever served in the British Armed Forces.
  - Code it on the GP computer system.
  - Have a clinical lead for veterans in the surgery, to undertake dedicated training, stay up-to-date with the latest research and innovations, ensure that the practice is meeting the health commitments of the Armed Forces Covenant, and provide advice to colleagues, as well as possibly seeing veterans themselves.
  - Practices should have a Care Quality Commission 'good' rating or higher.

- Westfield Surgery in Leominster, Herefordshire, is accredited as veteran-friendly. By going through the accreditation process, it has been able to support Armed Forces patients in a way it would not otherwise have done. It has a nominated clinical lead for veteran health. It has supported a number of patients through fast-tracking treatment for a military-related injury, and has been able to put lonely veterans in touch with appropriate social contacts. It has established links with local military charities and support agencies. It has successfully encouraged veterans to identify as such on the surgery's systems, for example the telephone messaging asks patients that are veterans to make the surgery aware. Through ongoing training of its staff, it continues to improve its awareness of the specific needs of the Armed Forces Community, enabling correct support or care pathways to be followed.

Creating a Toolkit for GPs to Improve Services for Veterans

- The RCGP worked in partnership with NHS England and NHS Improvement, consulting the Ministry of Defence and other stakeholders, to conduct and collate

research into the healthcare needs of veterans and their families. The RCGP published its findings in the form of a [toolkit](#) that could be used by GPs to help meet veterans' healthcare needs. The toolkit includes the following.

- o Information on the Armed Forces Covenant and NHS Constitution.
- o A list of dedicated services for veterans and contact information, both inside and outside the NHS.
- o Information on the nature of veteran-sustained physical and mental health injuries.
- o Information on requesting a veteran's medical records from the Armed Forces.
- o Learning resources, such as webinars, podcasts, and videos.

Training of Healthcare Staff about Armed Forces Issues

- NHS Education for Scotland identified a lack of awareness in frontline health practitioners of how Service life impacts members of the Armed Forces Community. It approached NHS Highland and the Department for Community Mental Health to develop and trial a 4-hour, online training session on the Armed Forces Community for final-year trainee GPs. Training covered the journey of a Service person through the Defence and NHS medical systems, the barriers and challenges potentially facing veterans and Service families, and introduced the Armed Forces Covenant. It was supported by Q&A sessions. Training also included a GPs' toolkit, links to research hubs and papers on Armed Forces Community healthcare issues, such as non-freezing cold injury. Feedback was positive, with trainees noting it had not been covered in medical school or GP training.

- York St John University has delivered training courses to public service workers in local authorities and health services, who had identified a lack of awareness and understanding of Service life. Participants received resources and training from the University and BLESMA (Military Charity for Limbless Veterans) to better support veterans and their families. The training benefitted those in occupational therapy, physiotherapy, counselling, and psychology.

- The Sussex, Kent & Medway (NHS) Armed Forces Network runs its award-winning, CPD-accredited, [Service Champions Training](#), for attendees from the NHS and other organisations such as local authorities. There are about 50 attendees per month. It is delivered in partnership with local reservists, veterans, and military charities. It is designed for people interested in the services they offer becoming more focussed on the Armed Forces. Through the training, a support network of Service champions is formed to help further develop knowledge and skills across different organisations.

- Some health bodies use internal communication methods to promote Armed Forces Community issues and the Armed Forces Covenant among their staff. In Wales, this has been realised, in part, by the [Welsh Health Circular](#) – a detailed instruction to all health boards and staff in Wales which outlines key information on topics such as identification of veterans, the Covenant, mental health, the Veterans' gateway, limb loss and adaptations.

- NHS Highland also developed an internal, bi-annual newsletter about healthcare and the Armed Forces Community, providing definitions (e.g. what is a veteran), a directory of useful contacts, and upcoming events. It also developed an intranet site with a repository for resources, tools, and information.

Sharing Good Practice Between Healthcare Providers

- In 2014, The Chavasse Report analysed care provided to the Armed Forces and veterans to find ways to improve care while raising NHS standards. One of its recommendations was to create a support network of hospitals. This led to the creation of the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance and their Veteran Aware accreditation programme, and the eight manifesto standards that healthcare providers use to aim to improve the healthcare that veterans, and the wider Community, receive from the NHS. The Alliance works closely with NHS Improvement, NHS England, Service charities and the Ministry of Defence. The Alliance seeks to showcase high quality veterans' healthcare, and support NHS Trusts to learn from each other by sharing good practice. This includes committing to the Armed Forces Covenant, raising awareness among staff of veterans' healthcare needs, and establishing clear links with Service charities and local support providers.

# 2C. Provision of services

## 2C1. Priority treatment

2.13.    Members of the Armed Forces Community might suffer physical or mental injuries caused by the unique obligations and sacrifices of *danger* and *stress*. The prioritisation of their care by healthcare providers is always subject to clinical need and will be clinically determined. Members of the Armed Forces Community are not entitled to jump the queue ahead of someone with a higher clinical need. However, there is a commitment that veterans in Great Britain may be considered for priority access to NHS services providing focused treatment for conditions arising from their Service, compared to non-Service patients with the same level of clinical need. This is a clinical decision made by the relevant physician. More information about prioritisation, and veteran-specific services through the NHS, is available for England, Wales and Scotland.

## 2C2. Waiting lists to start treatment

2.14.    Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *geographical mobility*, Service families on a waiting list for treatment, or other health services, in one area might be required to move to another area before they are treated. If they are placed at the back of their new waiting list, the Service family might experience **delays in receiving treatment**, and they might have to wait significantly longer for treatment compared to non-Service families who are able to stay in one place. If these waits are further exacerbated by subsequent moves, the Service family could wait years for treatment.

2.15.    While the fundamental NHS principle of treatment on the basis of clinical need remains paramount, healthcare staff should be aware that patients from the Armed Forces Community might have already waited a considerable time for treatment in another locality and that their re-location might not have been made by choice. As such, healthcare staff may wish to consider total time spent on waiting lists, both inside and outside the local area, and ensure that the Service family keeps its relative place on the waiting list in their new area, when possible.

2.16.    Specified bodies will also find it useful to consider if transfers between providers' waiting lists can be requested to ensure that relative places on waiting lists are maintained. Failing this, the sharing of appointment letters and making specific requests to retain places on waiting lists might also help significantly.

2.17.    If a decision on waiting lists can only be made with information provided by the previous clinician, then providing information on the length of time the patient has already waited can help the patient's new clinician in the prioritisation process.

<u>Accounting for Time Spent on Previous Waiting Lists</u>

- One Service child had had his orthodontic treatment delayed multiple times due to the family being required to move. Each re-location was after he had moved close to the top of a waiting list in their current area. NHS England investigated the family's concerns, and agreed to liaise with the local NHS primary care service to ensure that the Service child's new treatment time reflected time already waited.

## 2C3. Waiting lists to resume treatment

2.18.    Some health conditions or treatments are of long duration, and the Service family might have to re-locate while in the middle of receiving the course of treatment, or other health services. In this case, the treatment could be interrupted if they have to join a waiting list to resume the treatment in their new location. Healthcare bodies will find it useful to consider how treatment plans can continue with minimal disruption, and continuity of care can be maintained, after re-locations.

## 2C4. Reassessments

2.19.    If a Service family re-locates to a new area due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *geographical mobility*, the health professionals in the new location might decide to conduct a reassessment of a family member's condition. Health professionals should be aware that the family member might have already experienced a prolonged wait time for treatment, and so any decision to conduct a new assessment, or 'go back to square one', could **add additional delays to their treatment, or cause them additional stress**. In some cases, the Service family member might subsequently be required to move again before treatment can commence or resume.

2.20.    This can be a particular concern for those Service children with additional needs. Delays to assessments or reassessments associated with the authorisation of statutory plans can see Service children with such needs suffer a **delay in the provision of support** (see section 3H).

## 2C5. Local variability in healthcare services

2.21.    The provision of healthcare services varies locally and across the different home nations of the UK, to reflect different local approaches to healthcare, and different needs and priorities. Therefore, when members of the Community are required to re-locate, they could move to an area with different healthcare services or access criteria. This could lead to a **lack of access to special services**, such as Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, that were being provided to the Service family in their previous location.

2.22.    The local variability in services, along with the possibility of *unfamiliarity with civilian life*, could also lead to a **lack of knowledge** amongst the Armed Forces Community of the healthcare and support services available to them in their new local area, thereby affecting their ability to access local healthcare services.

<u>Signposting of Services</u>

- [Forces Connect](#) is a free mobile app that signposts veterans, Armed Forces personnel, Reservists and their families to support and advice on a range of important issues including health, housing and education in their local area. It was developed by [Forces Connect South East](#), a cross-border partnership comprising local authorities in the south east region, local Armed Forces representation, Service charities, and the local NHS Armed Forces Networks, with initial funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. Evaluation has shown that the app, which is currently used by over 11,000 people including the Armed Forces, increased staff confidence and their ability to help the Armed Forces Community.

- Identifying a local lack of awareness of available health services among the Armed Forces Community and health professionals, the Suffolk Covenant Group created a [webpage](#) on their Suffolk Military Covenant website that provides a list of health services available to the Armed Forces Community in the NHS and charity sectors. Both mainstream (Samaritans, NHS) and bespoke, exclusive services (Op COURAGE) are listed with clear explanations and links.

- Rutland County Council and Harborough District Council share a dedicated 'Armed Forces Officer' whose role is to support the local Armed Forces Community. The officer can help with access to healthcare, as well as education and school placements, employment and training opportunities, and access to housing and accommodation.

- The Armed Forces Network and NHS providers in Kent and Sussex have also identified a need to make information accessible to those in the Armed Forces Community with knowledge or language barriers, and has created a public service [toolkit](#) for the Gurkha community.

## 2C6. Relationship with healthcare professionals

2.23.    Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *geographical mobility*, Service families might have to leave a location where they have an established relationship with

their local healthcare professionals. While Service families could continue to see the same healthcare professionals after they move, in practice this can be unrealistic, and they will usually need to receive care from new healthcare staff, and register with a new GP practice. Where that is the case, although medical records are transferred between healthcare providers, the Service family can **lose access to healthcare professionals with whom they have an established relationship, and who have experience of treating them and understand their individual healthcare needs**. Should they subsequently return to the area, they might find they are unable to re-register with their original GP if the register is full.

## 2C7. Provision of tailored services

2.24.      Sometimes, bespoke healthcare services or care pathways may be justified to meet the distinct needs of the Armed Forces Community. Alternatively, it may be beneficial to tailor health advice to members of the Armed Forces Community to take account of the unique obligations and sacrifices of Service life.

Provision of Bespoke NHS Health Services

- Op COURAGE is NHS England's bespoke mental health treatment pathway for veterans. This comprises the Mental Health Transition and Liaison Service, High Intensity Service and Complex Treatment Service. Op COURAGE is a national scheme that sees NHS staff working with those in the Service charity sector to deliver therapy, rehabilitation services and, in extreme cases, inpatient care, to hundreds of veterans each year. Those needing urgent help receive same-day referrals. Working with charities helps NHS staff understand the experiences and issues faced by veterans. It also provides a clear pathway for veterans to access and helps to integrate veterans with mental ill health back into everyday life.

- NHS England's Veterans Trauma Network supports veterans with Service-related injury and illness to access appropriate care. The Network works alongside Op COURAGE. The Network provides personalised treatment within the NHS, staffed by military and civilian clinicians who understand the military environment and specialise in military healthcare, and assists families and carers of veterans with physical health problems to access appropriate support services. NHS Wales also operates a Veterans Trauma Network.

- The Veterans NHS Wales service is a specialised, priority service for veterans in Wales experiencing mental health difficulties resulting from their Service in the Armed Forces. The service was formed in response to the specific and evolving needs of veterans. Not only does the service tackle the disadvantage resulting from their time in the Armed Forces, it also provides specific treatment pathways for unique conditions. Veterans First Point provides a similar service for veterans living in Scotland.

Provision of Bespoke Services in the Community

- The Integrated Personal Commissioning for Veterans Framework (IPC4V) is a personalised care approach for a very small number of veterans with complex and enduring physical, neurological and mental health conditions resulting from injury

whilst in Service. The bespoke care they receive ensures they are effectively supported as they transition to civilian life and beyond.

- In Tameside, an allotment project provides veterans with mental health issues, addictions, or isolation, a place to engage in physical activity while having a network of support. In Rhondda Cynon Taff and Vale of Glamorgan, a free movie night was set up for veterans and their families to support those with PTSD who were triggered by local fireworks. Both councils also secured external funding to enable veterans suffering from loneliness, who were prevented from attending their weekly meetup support groups during Covid-19, to purchase computer tablets. Training to use the tablets was provided, and the tablets were linked to a live events calendar.

- Veterans First Point drop-in services are available in six health areas in Scotland, developed by veterans and clinicians for veterans. This offers a 'one stop shop' for help and assistance to veterans and their families, no matter what that need might be, not just for physical or mental health issues, but for housing, socialising, education, employment, and other issues. Veterans can access support centres and in some cases are assigned a peer support worker who can recommend therapies, make referrals, navigate veteran support services or assist with practical steps to get veterans back on their feet.

- Surrey Fire and Rescue Service worked with partners to set up a monthly hub at the Surrey Fire Service. The hub provides a safe place for members of the Armed Forces Community to come together, share stories, make friends and access relevant support (particularly around health and welfare). The hub plays a significant role in establishing a network of likeminded veterans who have not only benefitted from the regular camaraderie and friendly interaction, but on several occasions received life-saving support, a new job and help to find housing.

## 2D. Planning and funding

2.25.    Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *geographical mobility*, Service families might be posted abroad. If local service provision abroad is inadequate, overseas Service families might have their healthcare delivered by the Ministry of Defence, through the Defence Medical Services. If local service provision is adequate, international agreements might be in place for free or discounted healthcare services to be provided to the Armed Forces and their families.

2.26.    When Service families overseas are then posted back to the UK, they might experience **delays in receiving treatment, or a refusal of treatment**, if it is not clear which funding arrangements should apply to them. The rules for what services are available, and who is eligible for them, might also differ within different areas, and between the four nations of the UK.

Mid-treatment Patient Returning from Overseas

- A Service child had been undergoing orthodontic treatment while living in Saudi Arabia. When she returned to the UK, five more treatments were still required until the work was completed. As the original moulds were lost, it could not be ascertained whether she would have met the NHS Index of Orthodontic Treatment Need criteria for treatment. Without this proof, the NHS Business Services Authority refused approval for NHS treatment. Defence Primary Healthcare could also not offer any solution. The family approached two orthodontic practices who both said that she did not meet NHS treatment criteria, which was to be expected because she had already been having treatment. The Army Families Federation worked with NHS England and the NHS Improvement Armed Forces Commissioning team and dental commissioners, where it was agreed that the orthodontic work could be completed under NHS funding.

## 2E. Co-operation between bodies and professionals

2.27.    If, when Service families are required to re-locate, insufficient information is passed between health systems and healthcare staff, or if there are delays in passing on information, this can cause distress, impact continuity of care, and cause **delays in receiving treatment**, or the Service family might even have to start again.

2.28.    For personnel transitioning out of Service, Defence Medical Service's integrated digital platform 'CORTISONE', currently being developed, will enable medical records to be safely transferred from Defence Medical Services to the NHS. This will assist practitioners to deliver a consistent and effective standard of care, ensure that assessments better reflect patient histories, and reduce possible disruption to medical care access when leaving the Armed Forces.

2.29.    In Scotland, under section 23 of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, education authorities can request help from other agencies in their exercise of functions under that Act. Health Boards in Scotland might be called upon to support education authorities in this way. More information is given in section 3H.

# 3. Education

## Summary

3.1.      Service children are normally educated in state-funded schools in the same way as non-Service children. Service personnel, and almost all veterans and Reservists, do not normally themselves engage with the state-funded education sector, unless as the parent of a child in a state-funded school (section 3A). Many Service children thrive, but the following education-related disadvantages can arise for Service children.

a. **An interrupted education** can arise if a Service family is required by the Armed Forces to re-locate, and moves between schools are not well managed (section 3C), or if the child is placed in a new school that uses different curriculums or different exam boards, or if they experience multiple moves at important stages in their education. A child's educational attainment can also be affected if they have to help care for other family members while a serving parent is deployed, and if their mental wellbeing is affected (see below). (Section 3D)

b. **A disrupted social experience** can arise if a Service family is required by the Armed Forces to re-locate, and the child has to make new friendships in a new school. If the child is not able to be placed in a school inside their local community, they might find it harder to develop out-of-school friendships, or access extra-curricular activities at school. (Section 3E)

c. **Mental wellbeing can be affected** by a disrupted social experience and the other disadvantages, by losing access to support structures such as friends and teachers, due to a re-location, or if they are unable to be placed in the same new school as their siblings. The separation from a serving parent, and worry for their safety, also affects wellbeing. (Section 3E)

d. **A longer journey time to school, or a more difficult journey**, can result if a Service family is required to re-locate outside the normal admissions round, and the child cannot be placed in a school close to their new home. (Section 3F)

e. **Being unable to take holidays with parents during normal school holiday periods** if the serving parent can only return home during term-time (Section 3G)

f. **Delays relating to support for Service children with additional needs**. (Sections 2C4 and 3H)

3.2.      A Service partner might have to **take on burdens** such as transporting the child to school, and they might consequently suffer disadvantages such as finding it harder to continue their own employment. (Section 3F)

3.3.      Knowledge of which of the children in their school(s) are Service children will underpin successful responses to these issues by the specified education bodies (section 3B). In England, the Service Pupil Premium is also available to help (section 3I).

## 3A. The Armed Forces Community and state-funded education services

3.4.      Most **full-time Service personnel, Reservists** and **veterans** do not normally themselves engage with the state-funded education sector, unless as a parent of a child in a state-funded school. Though, as eligibility to join the Reserve Services begins at 15 years and 9 months,[17] some Reservists may be in state education. Also, in England, where there is a statutory duty to participate in education or training until one's 18th birthday, veterans might also require state-funded education should they be released from Service before they are 18.

3.5.      **Service children** are normally educated in state-funded schools in the same way as non-Service children. Many thrive, but they can suffer a range of educational disadvantages as a result of Service life. Service children might have to move school a number of times, as they accompany their serving parent(s). Statistics indicate that on average Service children move schools much more frequently than their non-Service peers during their educational career. School moves might happen in the middle of an academic year, outside the normal admissions round. While non-Service families might face similar issues when moving, Service families are likely to move more frequently, and as a result of a mandatory requirement in Service to their country.

3.6.      The following sections describe some of the ways that disadvantage can be experienced by the Armed Forces Community in different areas of education. The issues described are not exhaustive as other issues might arise for a variety of reasons. It should also be noted that Service children can face a number of these disadvantages at the same time. For example, difficulties with admissions to a new school after a re-location could affect both the child's educational attainment and wellbeing. **In this chapter, the word 'school' means all the different types of education institution within scope of the Duty, as listed in section 1C.**

3.7.      Case studies in text boxes have been included as helpful illustrations of some of the ways that bodies have helped to mitigate these disadvantages or, where appropriate, made special provision. **These case studies do not prescribe mandatory actions**, but they have been included to provide examples and ideas of the kinds of behaviours and actions that have resulted in a better experience for the Armed Forces Community, and which bodies might wish to consider when complying with the Duty.

## 3B. Identifying Service Children

3.8.      Specified bodies should have an awareness of which children in their school(s), or due to move to their school(s), are Service children. Local authorities should have an awareness of which children in their care are Service children. This will help to improve the way these children's needs are met. As explained in section 1J4, it is not only children of currently serving personnel that are Service children within scope of the Duty, but also children of veterans.

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[17] The RAF Reserve can be joined from 15 years and 9 months old, the Royal Naval Reserve from 16 years old, and the Army Reserve from 18.

<u>Asking Families</u>

- Highland Council has a dedicated group, the Military Liaison Group (Education), which is a partnership of local Armed Forces representatives and specialist providers and experts, who have built a strong, proactive and committed relationship, and work to an Action Improvement Plan. The Group has made changes to Enrolment Forms, Guidance to Head Teachers, and School Handbooks, to encourage identification of Service children. Enrolment Forms now prompt families to identify whether they are part of the Armed Forces, which Service they are from, and whether Serving, Reservist or veteran, with a link (or hardcopy) to a leaflet 'Why do we want to know?'. This data helps to ensure that the right targeted support can be given to the child or young person at the right time. Identification is gradually increasing, creating a wider understanding of need.

<u>Conducting Research</u>

- In 2015, the SSCE Cymru project commissioned a study into the numbers of Service children in each local authority in Wales, based on 2011 census data. The study also included a survey of schools to capture information on the schools' awareness of the issues and current practice in supporting Service children. In a subsequent data collection exercise, SSCE Cymru worked with the local authorities and independent schools in Wales to provide a snapshot of the number of schools with Service children, and the number of Service children, in each local authority in Wales as of March 2021.

## 3C. Admissions

3.9.        Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *geographical mobility*,[18] Service children might have to move school a number of times. They might experience **an interrupted education** if moves between schools are not well managed. The effectiveness of a pupil's transfer is affected by the speed with which they are assigned to a new school, the time taken for records to be transferred, and the quality of the information included. Timely transfer of school records (including information on curriculum areas covered and outcomes achieved) means the receiving school has access to vital information about the child and their progress, and avoids delays in the provision of appropriately differentiated teaching and learning, or in any necessary support being made available. Moves between schools in different home nations of the UK can be more complicated than moves between schools in the same home nation, due to differences in the educational systems. This can lead to a less timely transfer of information, and delays in the provision of appropriate teaching or support.

3.10.       A number of disadvantages around child wellbeing (section 3E) and transport to school (section 3F) could be mitigated if children are able to be placed in a school close to where they live, and if Service children siblings can be placed in the same school, depending on other factors such as their ages, whether primary or secondary, and whether there are places available. Disadvantages around educational attainment (section 3D) can

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[18] The unique obligations and sacrifices in *italics* throughout this chapter are explained in section 1G.

be mitigated if children can be placed in a school that uses similar curriculums to their previous school.

3.11. The School Admissions Codes for England and Wales both include requirements relating to children of Service personnel. The Code for England requires local authorities to ensure that 'arrangements in their area support the Government's commitment to removing disadvantage for service children'. Both Codes require admission authorities to allocate a school place to a Service child in advance of the family moving to the area (as long as one is available), provided the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a re-location date. Where requested by the parent, admission authorities are able to use a unit or quartering address (or, in England, a private address) as the child's home address when considering an application. The Code for England allows priority in oversubscription criteria to be given to children eligible for the Service Pupil Premium, and both Codes allow exceptions to infant class size limits for children of Service personnel admitted outside the normal admissions round.

3.12. In Scotland, local authorities are responsible for the setting of school admissions policy. This includes the procedures for dealing with requests for places both from parents who live within the school catchment area and those from other areas. The local authority's admissions policy provides details of any priority arrangements. Parents in Scotland have a right to express a preference when choosing which school they wish their children to attend.[19] Local authorities make every effort to meet that request wherever possible. However, the size of the school, the current roll, and number of children who already live in the catchment area, and other factors, affect the local authority's ability to grant a placing request.

Admissions Support

- In response to Service family concerns, Gloucestershire County Council allows Service families to apply two terms in advance of the date the school place is required.

- Service families posted to Gloucestershire are permitted to use the garrison or military base as an address for school applications until a quartering address has been obtained.

- When appealing to an oversubscribed school for an in-year placement, Gloucestershire County Council reviews every Service family case to see if the school's admission limits can be exceeded. This ensures Service children have the same access to better schools when moving location.

Provision of Information

- The Association of Directors of Education in Scotland identified a need for a bespoke website to provide information and resources specifically for Service families moving into, around and away from Scottish schools. The significant assortment of information available on various Scottish websites proved overwhelming for families to negotiate as part of their transition process. Mobile

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[19] Choosing a school: a guide for parents, revised November 2016

families who had experienced numerous and frequent moves requested a dedicated portal linking to local authorities and related sources of information and support, initially aligned with locations of postings, accommodation, communities, and local schools. The Forces Children's Education website was therefore established, providing a gateway to this information, and a first point of contact for Service families. It links directly to local authorities and provides information specific to each.

## 3D. Educational attainment and curriculum

3.13.    As Service families re-locate for Service reasons, Service children might have to move school a number of times. While the educational attainment of Service children as a group is largely on a par with that of non-Service children, their **educational attainment may be affected** if they are placed in a school that uses different curriculums or different exam boards, or if they experience multiple moves at important stages in their education. They might experience gaps in learning or repeat topics already covered in previous schools. The number of moves a Service child might have to make could lead to a greater cumulative effect on their education than would typically be experienced by a non-Service child. If the child's educational attainment is affected, this could in turn affect their progression to their next level of education.

3.14.    Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *separation*, Service children might have to spend weeks or months, or the working week, away from their serving parent. The impact on their emotional wellbeing might in turn cause their educational attainment to suffer. The separation from the serving parent might also mean that children have to help care for their younger siblings or non-serving parent when the serving parent is away, meaning they have less time to devote to their schoolwork, also causing their educational attainment to suffer.

3.15.    If nationals of other countries (such as Gurkhas from Nepal) join the Armed Forces and have family join them in the UK, this can create additional educational attainment issues for Service children if English is an Additional Language (EAL).

Forums

- Rutland County Council found a significant proportion of pupils in its area were Service children.  Engagement across the council, partner agencies, Rutland Health Watch, local military unit welfare teams, and Service charities, identified concerns that some Service children were underachieving in education, some rates of SEND were higher than the national average, and there was a confused picture of available support. The council co-ordinated a meeting of concerned parties to discuss ways to improve, leading to the creation of a Forces Family Forum. This meets five times per year with attendees from these organisations to provide updates on concerns, as well as guest speakers who provide targeted information and new support connections.

English as an Additional Language

- A school in South Cerney identified that while Service pupils were achieving normal Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar scores, the group lacked depth in English vocabulary. A large proportion of the Service children were from Nepal, and although they were fluent in English, they lacked technical and colloquial expertise in the language. The school met with the parents via the military base's Welfare Officer, to discuss the issue of English as an Additional Language (EAL). Many parents had not identified their child as having an EAL requirement, believing their child had an effective command of the language – myths were dispelled, and parents were reassured that EAL children would be supported more, not that less would be expected of them. The school agreed to focus on vocabulary with EAL pupils to ensure they could achieve their full potential.

## 3E. Child wellbeing

### 3E1. Wellbeing

3.16.      If Service children are required to move school, they might experience **a disrupted social experience**, and have to make new friendships. If a move happens outside the normal admissions round, and a child is not able to be placed in a school inside their local community, they might find it harder to socialise with their school friends outside of school hours, form friendships in the area in which they live, or access extra-curricular activities at school, such as after school clubs, impacting their social experience.

3.17.      A Service child's **mental wellbeing can be affected** if the requirement to re-locate results in the child losing access to support structures such as friends and teachers. If Service families have more than one child, there can be difficulties finding schools that will take all the children, resulting in the separation of the child from their sibling(s), and additional stress. If Service children are required to spend weeks or months, or the working week, away from their serving parent, the separation, and their worry for the safety of a parent deployed abroad, can also significantly affect the child's mental wellbeing. The disrupted social experience, and the other disadvantages in this chapter, such as a longer journey to school, can also affect mental wellbeing.

3.18.      In Wales, the [SSCE Cymru](#) project, funded by Welsh Government, works with schools, children and young people, local authorities, education professionals, Armed Forces families and support organisations to gather their views and experiences, build networks across Wales and raise awareness and understanding of the experiences of Service children.

3.19.      In Scotland, the [GIRFEC](#) (Getting It Right For Every Child) approach has been used since 2010. It is child-centred and based on an understanding of the child's current situation, including wider influences on them when thinking about their wellbeing. This includes consideration of the impact of transitions, mobility and deployments which affect Service families and children. It requires joined-up working, so services supporting children work in a co-ordinated way to meet their specific needs and improve their wellbeing.

3.20.    In Northern Ireland, the Department of Education recently published the Children & Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework, which promotes an ethos in education settings that provides early support for those children and young people showing signs of needing extra help to cope with emotional difficulties that may arise.

Friendship Nurture Groups

- Teachers at Walbottle Village Primary School near Newcastle, concerned with ensuring Service children integrated into a new educational environment, worked with a Service child in Year 2 to create an environment where Service children could foster new friendships with children already at the school, to aid their wellbeing and create new support structures. The result was the creation of a 'friendship nurture group' which has allowed Service children to create friendships lasting for years.

Service Pupils' Champions

- Service Pupils' Champion is a role created by North Yorkshire County Council to provide extra support to its large numbers of Service children. There are two Champions in North Yorkshire working to support the emotional wellbeing and social development of children and young people aged 5-18, especially during periods of active deployment, and at times of transition. The Champions aim to strengthen the pupil voice by promoting and developing the work of Military Kids Club Heroes currently established in many of the schools in North Yorkshire. The Champions provide one-to-one support, anxiety workshops, emotional first aid and support for serving parents, events, information outreach to serving parents with children with additional educational needs, and liaison between bases and schools (for example, advanced warning of incoming Service families).

Additional After School Clubs

- A school in South Cerney identified that Service pupils were not accessing after school clubs, as the bus timetable did not enable Service children, commuting from the local military base, to stay beyond the school day. The school liaised with the local base and set up an after-school club (with a third-party sports provider) on base using its facilities.  Recognising this was an issue for other local schools with Service children, any spare spaces were offered to those other schools. This supported the community, maximised use of facilities, and brought Service children together. The club expanded to liaise with serving parents, and to include members of the community to improve civilian-military relations.

Consulting Service Children on their Needs

- Oxfordshire County Council organised a conference for Service children to share their experiences of life in a Forces family, and how schools could support them. The Service children raised a number of difficulties, and said they wanted headteachers to:
  - Listen to every Service child, provide someone to talk to, and create a Service pupils' council which meets with the headteacher.

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- o Ease transitions between school and enable introductions with teachers.
- o Provide a buddy system for new school joiners.
- o Provide a space for Service children to think and work through feelings.
- o Set up a school club for Service children for activities and sharing feelings.
- o Have a teacher who is a Service Pupils Champion.
- o Find ways to share what Service life is like with non-Service pupils and staff.
- o Have days where the school celebrates the Armed Forces.

Oxfordshire County Council responded to the feedback and created the Service Pupil Promise on how they would action the feedback received.

Providing a Forum for Service Children

- In Autumn 2017, Royal Caledonian Education Trust (now known as Forces Children Scotland) held a series of 'Teen Talks' student conferences across Scotland, giving young people from Service families an opportunity to come together and discuss issues important to them. There was an overwhelming view from participants that their views are often overlooked in decisions affecting them. In response, the Trust established and now manages and delivers a Youth Participation Programme which works closely with the Ministry of Defence, community workers and schools, supported by external funding. The programme has seven local forums and a national forum. Groups are led by young people for young people, and increase youth confidence, skills, networking, and opportunities to have a say on policies and services. The programme led to the development of the 'Your Mind Matters' project to assist Service children with their mental health, the 'Our Forces Life' project to raise awareness of Service life among civilian peers, and the 'Manifesto for Service children' published ahead of the Scottish Parliament elections in 2021.

Providing Information

- Highland Council has a dedicated group, the Military Liaison Group (Education), which is a partnership of local Armed Forces representatives and specialist providers and experts. The Group works with children, young people, and their families, listening and acting on their views. The Group has a dedicated Armed Forces website providing information, resources, support and training opportunities for families, children and schools. The Group issues a regular newsletter with information updates, links, and resources for families, schools and the Armed Forces Community, which has both a local and national reach.

Thriving Lives Toolkit for Schools

- The Service Children's Progression Alliance is a partnership of organisations focused on improving outcomes for Service children, hosted by the University of Winchester and supported by the Ministry of Defence. The Alliance undertook extensive, targeted research, working in collaboration with schools and other partners across the UK to establish a toolkit. This toolkit helps schools ensure they provide effective support to Service children. It provides detailed resources including the evidence base, what schools can do to support their Service children, who can help, and a range of case studies. The toolkit provides a framework of 7

principles through which schools can reflect on their practice and a 3-tier set of CPD resources.  The principles are as follows.
1. Clarity of approach – Leaders' understanding and approach ensure resources and policies improve Service children's outcomes.
2. Wellbeing is supported – Tailored pastoral provision supports Service children's mental health and wellbeing.
3. Achievement is maximised – Teaching, assessment and support ensure the continuity of Service children's learning and progression.
4. Transition is effective – Systems and support ensure seamless transitions for Service children arriving at and leaving school.
5. Children are heard – Service children's diverse voices are heard and inform the support they receive.
6. Parents are engaged – Strong home-school partnerships help Service families feel valued as part of the school community.
7. Staff are well-informed – Supportive training and networks ensure all staff understand and support each Service child.

Further examples relating to the improvement of Service child wellbeing can be found in section 3I.

### 3E2. Safeguarding

3.21.　　If Service children move frequently between schools, it will be especially important that any child protection/safeguarding information is shared between schools. This is the responsibility of the safeguarding lead, as set out for England in the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, and for Wales, the designated safeguarding person as set out in Keeping Learners Safe. Knowledge of the wellbeing issues described above may support school staff when considering how best to safeguard a Service child. The statutory guidance for England on Working Together to Safeguard Children, and for Scotland, the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021, include sections on Service children. For Wales, Working Together to Safeguard People: Information sharing to safeguard children, and its accompanying resources, provide non-statutory advice on information-sharing to safeguard children.

## 3F. Transport

3.22.　　If a Service child is required to move schools outside the normal admissions round, the local authority might not be able to place them in a school close to their new home, resulting in them experiencing **a longer journey time to school, or a more difficult journey**.

3.23.　　This might be mitigated through the normal application of the free school transport policy – the Service child might meet the eligibility criteria for free school transport in England, Wales, Scotland, and N Ireland.

3.24.　　If a Service child, who is eligible for free home to school transport, is required to move home within a local area, but able to remain at the same school, they might find they no longer qualify for free transport to that school. In 2015, the (then-named) Local

Government Ombudsman upheld a complaint about a council in England discontinuing school transport for a Service child after the family was required to move elsewhere in the area for Service reasons. One of the Ombudsman's findings was that the council had not properly considered the Armed Forces Covenant. It recommended that the council remedy the situation by putting in place home to school transport for the child as soon as possible, and by paying the family £2,000 to reimburse the costs they had incurred and acknowledge the stress they were caused as a result of the council's faults.

3.25.    Bodies responsible for home to school transport may wish to consider using their discretionary powers to provide free or subsidised transport to Service children who do not meet the eligibility criteria. In England, this could include 16–17-year-old Service children attending school or further education as part of their statutory duty to participate in education or training until their 18th birthday, as the level of support provided to them is for local authorities to decide, and the arrangements do not have to include free or subsidised travel.

3.26.    When the Service child is not entitled to free school transport, the Service person might not be available to assist with transporting the child to school, due to the unique obligations and sacrifices of *separation* and *hours of work*. Other support structures such as grandparents might also not be available, and this can place **a significant burden on the Service partner**. This can be worse if siblings are placed in separate schools some distance apart, due to lack of school places, as it means juggling different transport arrangements. The need to manage school transport arrangements might mean the Service partner finds it harder to continue their own employment, as it could affect the hours they can work. These challenges may be more difficult for Service families with children who have additional needs.

Mitigating Action

- Upon moving to a new area, two sibling Service children were placed in different schools. Their mother described the challenges faced in getting both children to school on time. They were provided with a free taxi service for one child, allowing her to walk the other child to school. The schools also offered free after school care until she could collect one child and until she was at home for the taxi to drop off the other child.

Amending the School Transport Policy

- In response to the 2015 decision by the (then-named) Local Government Ombudsman described above, the council committed to improving its practice by:
  - making sure officers and panels identify at an early stage if the Covenant is relevant to an application;
  - amending its school transport policy to stress that the list of examples it provides (of exceptional circumstances in which it will consider exercising its discretion to provide transport) is not intended as a definitive list, and to clearly invite parents to identify if their circumstances are similar to the circumstances listed;
  - amending its school transport appeal forms to ask parents to highlight any reasons why they may not be able to maintain any arrangements they have put in place for the child to get to school.

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<u>Adapting to Local Circumstances</u>

- When transport is provided for pupils in Northern Ireland, they are, in most cases, transported directly from the military base to the school. Northern Ireland's Department of Education liaises with the Armed Forces' designated Family Officer to ensure the Education Authority and the taxi drivers complete the correct compliance checks for access to the military base.

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## 3G. Attendance

3.27.     Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *separation*, Service families might be **unable to take holidays, or spend time together, during normal school holiday periods**. Service children might find they have limited time to spend with their serving parent(s) if the parent can only return home during term-time. The unique obligation and sacrifice of *hours of work* might mean that, even if the Service person remains on their UK base location, their duties prevent them taking leave during normal school holiday periods. The Service family might therefore ask the school for permission to take a holiday during term-time.

3.28.     As with all children, the decision on whether to authorise term-time holidays for Service children sits solely with the head teacher of the school. While the educational needs of the Service child will always be a critical factor in determining whether term-time absence should be granted, the wider family impacts on Service children should also be considered. It can be difficult for serving parents to obtain permission to take their child out of school during term-time if the school's attendance policy and decision-making fails to take account of the nature of Service life.

3.29.     It is for Service families to apply to the school in advance, presenting evidence of how operational needs of the Armed Forces have legitimately prevented a Service family from taking holiday during normal school holiday periods.

3.30.     In the past, head teachers have sought advice on applications for school absence from Unit Commanding Officers and their Welfare staff, who are able to provide advice, verification and endorsement as required. The Ministry of Defence has produced Guidance that provides advice to head teachers regarding school term-time absence for Service children. It includes contact details that can be used if head teachers are unsure how to make contact with the relevant Armed Forces unit.

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<u>Attendance Code</u>

- Northern Ireland's Department of Education has created a specific pupil attendance code referred to as Code J (Extended Leave), that schools can apply in circumstances where time away from school is required to address a range of domestic and family-related issues. Usage of the code does not adversely affect the pupil's attendance record.

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## 3H. Additional needs support

3.31.      'Additional needs' is the term used here to describe children who require further support. This is referred to as Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in England, Additional Learning Needs (ALN) in Wales, Additional Support for Learning (ASL) in Scotland, and Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Northern Ireland.

3.32.      The challenges that all Service children experience as a result of being required to move schools can be felt even more profoundly by Service children with additional needs. If a statutory plan is already in place, it may take some time for the new authority to make similar arrangements as were in place in the previous location. This can be mitigated if the originating authority is able to provide all necessary child records to the new authority in a timely manner. Some Service families have reported that their children have spent time out of school, or receive inappropriate provision (such as being placed in Pupil Referral Units), due to local authority difficulties securing a school placement that could offer the relevant provision.

3.33.      Service children might be required to move between the home nations of the UK or to overseas locations, where local provision and processes to acquire the appropriate support are different to that to which children and families were previously accustomed. Management of additional needs plans can be difficult for Service families who are posted from their home nation to elsewhere in the UK or overseas – when they return, they might need to go through a new assessment process.

3.34.      Delays in accessing specialist support and provision for Service children can cause additional challenge for Service families. In addition, over the course of a number of re-locations, the potential disruption to services may impact on the Service child's progress and wellbeing.

3.35.      In England, the SEND code of practice, which has statutory force in England, includes guidance relating to Service children and families.

3.36.      In Wales, chapter 18 of the ALN Code for Wales includes guidance relating to educational provision for Service children with ALN. The ALN Code also sets out specific duties for maintained schools, colleges and local authorities when deciding upon ALN and when preparing or reviewing an individual development plan for a Service child or young person.

3.37.      In Scotland, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 requires local authorities to identify and address any barriers to learning a child or young person experiences. These barriers can occur for any reason and can be short or long-term in duration. This would include, for example, the anxiety a child may have when a parent is deployed or the impact of interrupted learning due to frequent moves. The statutory guidance in the Code of Practice which accompanies the 2004 Act also provides support in this process, and makes specific reference to Armed Forces families and to transitions. The Scottish Government funds a range of services which seek to support families to access advice and support on ASL. This includes Enquire, the national advice and information service for parents on ASL, and My Rights, My Say, which provides support to children who are seeking to exercise their rights under the 2004 Act.

3.38.　　Statutory plans are not transferrable to Northern Ireland, so if a Service child with additional needs re-locates to Northern Ireland, to obtain a Statement of SEN they would have to undergo the formal process for Statutory Assessment from the beginning.

Agreement of Principles by Multiple Local Authorities in England

- The Ministry of Defence Local Authority Partnership (MODLAP) is a partnership between the MOD and local authorities in England that have committed to work together to improve the experience and outcomes of Service children with SEND. The MODLAP established a set of principles to provide a framework for the effective management of transfers of Service children with SEND. The principles build on the SEND code of practice.

## 3I. Use of Service Pupil Premium funding (England only)

3.39.　　In England, extra funding to schools with enrolled Service children is available through the Service Pupil Premium (SPP). It can therefore help remove disadvantage. Schools should be aware of best practice in the use of these funds and communicate to concerned parents how funds are being spent. The SPP is only available in England.

3.40.　　In response to parents' concerns over the use of the SPP, the UK Government worked with schools to establish the best ways schools have used SPP funding. The UK Government published these findings for the benefit of all schools.

3.41.　　Examples of good uses of SPP include:
   a. Monitoring Service child progress against other children
   b. Development of intervention strategies
   c. Provision of trained teaching assistants and pastoral support mentors
   d. School trips to increase awareness of the Armed Forces
   e. Membership of Military Kids Club Heroes – a network for Service children in education
   f. Extra-curricular activities
   g. Liaising regularly with Service parents
   h. Building links to local Armed Forces bases

3.42.　　The template that schools are required to complete and publish, setting out their overall Pupil Premium strategy, now includes an optional field on how the SPP was spent in the previous academic year, and what impact this had on eligible pupils.

3.43.　　In Wales, Service children are supported by the Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru Programme, funded by the Welsh Government, which includes targeted funding to support individual schools and local authorities.

3.44.　　Whilst Scotland does not have a direct equivalent of the SPP, all children in Scotland with an additional support need are eligible for support. This includes needs arising from a parent's mobility and deployment in the Armed Forces.

## SPP Resource Directory

- The [West Yorkshire Service Pupil Premium Resource Directory](#) has been produced as part of the West Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Project. The Directory pulls together information from the Department for Education, Ministry of Defence, Service Children in State Schools, and the Service Children's Progression Alliance. It has been created to support schools develop their understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant, the Armed Forces Community, and the Service Pupil Premium.

- Shropshire Council has a [portal](#) for Armed Forces support for use by both the Armed Forces Community and public services. One section provides clarity over the purpose of the SPP and recommended uses, pointing to official government advice.

## Sharing Best Practice

- Local schools in Gloucestershire worked together to set up a network for sharing resources, training and ideas around helping Service children to succeed in education. A strong sharing culture was created and a better understanding of approaches and how to nurture Service pupils grew across the cluster. This particularly benefitted smaller schools with less funding and fewer Service children.

# 4. Housing

## Summary

4.1.      Only a small minority of the Armed Forces Community will need to access the housing services provided by the housing bodies subject to the Duty (section 4A). When members of the Armed Forces Community do need to access housing services, the disadvantages they can experience, arising from the unique obligations and sacrifices of Service life, include the following. When these disadvantages are experienced, they are most likely to be experienced by veterans, Service personnel that are about to leave Service and become veterans, and Service families.

a. **A lack of knowledge about the social housing services available in their local area, or how to access them.** This might make them less likely to seek the housing services to which they are entitled. (Section 4C1)

b. **Not building up sufficient 'local connection'** in accordance with a local authority's allocation scheme, reducing their access to social housing in the area where they live. (Section 4C2)

c. **Not being prioritised to receive suitable social housing, or experience a lack of available social housing**, that meets particular housing needs caused by physical or mental injury sustained in Service. (Section 4C3)

d. **Finding it more difficult to communicate with a housing body**, while on a posting overseas, compared to the housing body's non-Service clients, who are in the UK. (Section 4C4)

e. **A lack of knowledge about how to navigate the civilian housing sector, welfare system and budgeting**, leading to difficulty gaining or maintaining a social housing tenancy (section 4D) or increasing their likelihood of becoming homeless (section 4E).

f. **A reluctance to seek early help to avoid homelessness**, for reasons such as stigma, shame, or a belief that civilian bodies will not understand their experience, which could also increase their likelihood of becoming homeless. (Section 4E)

g. **Requiring adaptations to be made to their home when they move to a new area, or lacking knowledge of what grants are available**, how to make applications for them, and what information is required to support their application. This could result in them spending more time in a home that does not meet their needs. (Section 4F)

4.2.      Knowledge of which of the people that use their services are members of the Armed Forces Community will underpin successful responses to these issues by the specified housing bodies. (Section 4B)

## 4A. The Armed Forces Community and public housing services

4.3.    Some **full-time Service personnel** live in their own privately owned, or privately rented, housing. If Service personnel are unaccompanied on a posting (either because they are single or because their family stays living elsewhere), the Armed Forces offers them Single Living Accommodation, normally by means of a mess or accommodation block, or suitable substitute accommodation. If Service personnel are accompanied by their family to a posting, the Armed Forces offers them dedicated Service Family Accommodation, or suitable substitute accommodation. Therefore, Service personnel do not themselves normally require social housing.

4.4.    However, if **families** of Service personnel do not accompany them on their posting, they might remain living in social housing away from the Service person, and receive more limited support from the Armed Forces. **Reservists** might also live with their family in social housing.

4.5.    The majority of **veterans** make a smooth transition from military to civilian life. Only a small minority of veterans struggle to settle down and maintain housing. Veterans might require housing services in terms of social housing, tenancies, and adaptations (as explained below).

4.6.    The following sections describe some of the ways that disadvantage can be experienced by the Armed Forces Community in different areas of housing. The issues described are not exhaustive as other issues might arise for a variety of reasons.

4.7.    Case studies in text boxes have been included as helpful illustrations of some of the ways that bodies have helped to mitigate these disadvantages or, where appropriate, made special provision. **These case studies do not prescribe mandatory actions**, but they have been included to provide examples and ideas of the kinds of behaviours and actions that have resulted in a better experience for the Armed Forces Community, and which bodies might wish to consider when complying with the Duty.

## 4B. Identifying Service Users from the Armed Forces Community

4.8.    An awareness by the specified bodies of those using their housing services who are members of the Armed Forces Community will help to improve the way in which their needs are met.

4.9.    In June 2020, statutory guidance was published for local authorities in England, titled 'Improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces'. This includes a section on how local authorities in England can identify applications from members of the Armed Forces Community, to ensure that they are considered appropriately.

Better Identification of Members of the Armed Forces Community

- Application forms to Wigan and Leigh Housing now include the question, 'If you or your partner are serving or have formerly served in the Armed Forces, please provide details of your service number'. This is to assist with identification of

members of the Armed Forces Community, to improve the way their needs are met.

- The Cobseo Housing Cluster's No Homeless Veterans Campaign aims to ensure veterans are identified at the point of need, and signposted to the enhanced support services available. It encourages public bodies to 'Think Veteran' by:
    - Identification – routinely asking every person who applies for housing whether they are a veteran, record and maintain the data, and label veteran-specific information on their website.
    - Support – consider whether they can meet housing needs and any unique needs arising from Service, refer them to the Veterans' Gateway when all routes are exhausted, and appoint an accountable champion to ensure commitments are met.

Stories of support provided to veterans and their families are available.

## 4C. Allocations policy for social housing

### 4C1. Access to housing services

4.10.    Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *unfamiliarity with civilian life*,[20] veterans and Service families might **lack knowledge about the social housing services available in their local area, or how to access them**. This might make them less likely to seek the housing services to which they are entitled.

4.11.    Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *danger*, veterans and Service families might experience mental health issues which exacerbate their challenges in accessing services from which they could benefit.

Employment of Outreach Officers

- In 2012, Gateshead Council identified a lack of members of the Armed Forces Community accessing local authority housing services. A dedicated Armed Forces Outreach officer was funded to connect the council with the local Armed Forces Community, leading to a 25% increase in members of the Armed Forces Community approaching Gateshead Council for housing advice. In 2020/21, as part of a larger regional Armed Forces Outreach Service including Newcastle, Durham and Northumberland local authorities and Believe Housing, the regional service offered support to 424 members of the Community, raised £61,979 to pay rent arrears, assigned correct social housing priority to 93 members, and assisted 76 members to move into social housing.

- In Glasgow, the city's veterans' hub Helping Heroes has a housing expert post, funded by Glasgow Housing Association, the city's largest registered social landlord. Those interviewed in Glasgow identified that having a professional directly employed by the city's largest registered social landlord means that the

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[20] The unique obligations and sacrifices in *italics* throughout this chapter are explained in section 1G.

steps which many in the Community have to go through in order to get to the right advice are significantly reduced.

- Councils in the Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil have identified a gap in the provision of tailored advice and information. Posts have been created to provide direct help and advice to the Armed Forces Community on all subjects, including housing, and simple signposting to ensure the Armed Forces Community can access the right public and third sector services for them. The officers are present in the community and organise coffee mornings and other events. This is supported by a website, telephone, and email service. Face-to-face appointments can be booked at the council or at home. Since this Veteran Advice Service launched in 2017 in Cardiff, and 2018 in Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil, over 4,000 enquiries have been received across the four authorities.

Signposting of Services

- Recognising that many in the Armed Forces Community have never applied for social housing before, Hull City Council created a dedicated webpage, setting out, in clear terms, how to apply for social housing, criteria (including local connection), prioritisation of applications, and details about statutory rights and requirements.

- In Wigan, the council employs a key worker for veterans and their families, who can help them navigate the public services landscape. They have also mapped all the charities in the borough. This means that they can respond to need effectively and quickly so that if, for example, housing is provided without furniture, the key worker can refer to the Charities Map to understand how they could arrange for some furniture to be provided.

Managing Tenancies

- A veteran had been medically discharged from the Army after suffering a brain haemorrhage. The veteran lived independently, until stress and depression led to trouble with neighbours, and he went to live with his mother. During this time, he received support from his GP to manage his depression. As his mother suffered from dementia, he began the process of having her tenancy agreement transferred to him. However, his brain injury led to him forgetting to submit the application. The tenancy was not transferred, and he was facing legal proceedings to evict him. The council and the Royal British Legion worked with the Registered Social Landlord to allow him to stay until he secured a new tenancy.

## 4C2. Local connection

4.12.    Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *geographical mobility*, veterans or Service families might find they have **not built up sufficient 'local connection'** in accordance with a local authority's allocation scheme, reducing their access to social housing in the area where they live. This could prevent them accessing waiting lists for social housing once they leave the Armed Forces and are no longer eligible for Service accommodation.

4.13.      Regulations, first introduced in 2012, set out criteria under which members of the Armed Forces Community in England cannot be disqualified from social housing because of a local connection requirement. The June 2020 statutory guidance for local authorities in England makes clear that local authorities in England are expected to disapply any local connection requirement from divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who are required to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence.

4.14.      Exemptions to local connection criteria also exist in Wales, provided that the applicant can evidence that they were posted to an area in Wales during their time in the Armed Forces. These exemptions are explained in the Welsh Government's guidance.

4.15.      In response to the Scottish Veterans' Commissioner's recommendations, the Scottish Government published a Practice Guide for social landlords on allocations for people leaving the Armed Forces. It includes guidance on giving priority to Service leavers and on ensuring that veterans are not at a disadvantage when applying for social housing due to Service time spent outside an area. Following consultation, the Scottish Government published a ministerial statement, in March 2021, which sets out the circumstances and general criteria which would act as the reference for exercising the power to modify local connection.

Exemption from Residency Criteria

- Central Bedfordshire Council has a housing allocations policy that includes an exemption to residency and employment criteria to all currently serving and former Regular personnel. Ordinarily, applicants must have lived in the area for three years or worked in the area for six months. However, current and former Regular personnel are exempted, and also there is not a five-year time limit on ex-serving personnel making an application.

## 4C3. Availability of suitable social housing

4.16.      Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *danger*, veterans might have particular social housing needs caused by physical or mental injury arising from their time in Service. For example, supported housing, or a home which allows wheelchair access. Other members of the Armed Forces Community, such as Service families, might also have urgent social housing needs. However, they might find they are **not prioritised to receive suitable social housing, or experience a lack of available social housing**.

4.17.      Statutory guidance on allocation of accommodation in England, first published in June 2012, and statutory guidance on allocation of accommodation in Wales, first published in March 2016, both ensure that 'additional preference' – high priority – for social housing is given to certain groups in the Armed Forces Community. Also, the June 2020 statutory guidance sets out how local authorities in England can ensure that members of the Armed Forces Community suffering from mental ill health (wholly or partly attributable to Service) are given appropriate priority for social housing. It should be noted that a mental health issue as a result of Service can continue or start years after the person has left the Armed Forces.

4.18.    The Scottish Government published new and refreshed guidance to improve awareness of the Armed Forces Community's housing needs. The refreshed Local Housing Strategy guidance encourages local authorities to consider fully the housing requirements of the Armed Forces Community. It was also strengthened to encourage appropriate engagement with relevant organisations, such as Veterans Scotland, to understand better the needs of this Community when developing the Strategies.

4.19.    A variety of other reports are available, such as the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's report Getting Transition Right in Scotland, FiMT's report Working Together to Meet the Housing Needs of Ex-Service Personnel, and Riverside and Stoll's Accommodation for Single Veterans.

Prioritisation

- Veterans in Wigan with medical need related to Service are given priority on the housing waiting list, and spouses going through divorce will also be given priority.

- In Welwyn Hatfield, the waiting list for social housing is around three years. Those not in the Armed Forces Community are able to apply for social housing with this in mind, knowing it will take roughly three years to access housing, however veterans may not be able to do so, as the Armed Forces might have moved them to the area (when they were still in Service) only recently. Welwyn Hatfield Council changed its social housing policy. The banding for Service leavers via giving notice (one of the routes of discharge) was modified to take into account the shorter time frame veterans face when leaving via this route.

- When South Lanarkshire Council's housing allocation policy was introduced in 2009, Service applicants were awarded the highest single award of points available under the policy. The aim being that this would enable an offer of housing to be made when the applicant was discharged. However, in 2010, it was identified that the points awarded to Service applicants were sometimes insufficient to enable an offer of housing to be made. An amendment to the allocation policy was made, to allow Service applicants who meet certain criteria to be awarded the highest priority for housing, and be queued on the Urgent Housing Need list, along with homeless applicants and those with an urgent medical need. In 2019, further amendments to the eligibility criteria were made in relation to Service applicants, to allow connection to the area through previous kinship care arrangements, and to extend the timescale within which priority for housing can be awarded after date of discharge, from six weeks to up to six months.

Provision of Supported Housing

- A council became aware of an 82-year-old veteran and his wife who were soon to become homeless from their static caravan which was situated for some time on a touring site, not a residential site. The wife had dementia and Alzheimer's and, in accordance with local Armed Forces housing policy, they were fast-tracked to supported housing. A homeless accommodation house was provided, entitlement for benefits was assessed, and the council worked with local groups and the Royal British Legion to fully furnish the home with discounted blinds, furniture and white

goods, while the wife was placed in a care home for two days. The couple believe that the help and kindness they were given extended their time together.

Dedicated Housing Stock

- Herefordshire has a significant shortage of available housing stock to meet the demand. Herefordshire Council identified and gifted some land in Leominster for a ground-breaking veteran self-build project, partnering with Stonewater Housing (a social housing provider), local builders Harpers, and Alabare charity. Ground was broken at the end of 2018, and the project was completed at the end of 2020. Nine veterans, of whom six were classed as homeless with a range of complex needs, took part, building their own homes whilst also gaining experience, training, and construction qualifications. It had a positive and significant impact on their lives. A total of 19 homes were built, reducing social housing waiting times in the county. Herefordshire Council is now seeking other sites where this can be replicated.

- To help single male veterans, some with a criminal record, and other single males with a non-priority status under homelessness legislation, the Watling Street Project was set up by North Warwickshire Borough Council and Veterans Contact Point with funding from Warwickshire Council. It worked with Cornerstone Partnership (a local housing social enterprise) to lease a 5-bed property to accommodate single males. Four veterans and nine civilians have used the home, and the charity also supports them for up to 12 months after they leave.

- East Lothian Council created some brand-new properties specially for veterans, comprising six 2-bedroom flats, three of which are fully wheelchair-accessible units on the ground floor. These are council tenancies set aside for the express use of veterans, who were identified and nominated by Veterans Housing Scotland. All six properties have been allocated. These tenancies have all been sustained and the residents have integrated well into their local community.

## 4C4. Communication with Service families

4.20.     Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *geographical mobility*, Service families who are clients of a housing body might be overseas. They might **find it more difficult to communicate with a housing body than the housing body's non-Service clients**, who are in the UK. For example, they might not be able to access online forms due to military operational requirements preventing access to the Internet, or they might have difficulty phoning the housing body's helplines during normal UK office hours due to time differences.

Adopting a Flexible Approach

- The Armed Forces Outreach Service based in the North East of England supported a Service person, based in Germany, who was about to discharge from the Armed Forces, and wanted to move back to the North East after his discharge. A flexible, tailored approach was taken. Council offices were used as a contact address, as the computer system had not been designed to register addresses overseas. Once a suitable property was identified, a virtual viewing of the property

was provided, and photos and videos were sent. A family member also viewed the property on his behalf before he accepted the offer of the property. The property sign-up was done via email, and keys were in a lock box for him to collect upon his return. Some of these practices have now been adopted into mainstream working practice for those applying for housing whilst being based overseas, significantly benefitting the Armed Forces Community applying for housing in these circumstances.

## 4D. Tenancy strategies (England only)

4.21.    Local housing authorities in England are required to publish a strategy setting out the matters to which the registered providers of social housing in its district are to have regard. Public bodies might wish to consult private or third sector housing strategies that address the Armed Forces Community, such as Riverside's Strategy for Veterans.

4.22.    Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *unfamiliarity with civilian life*, veterans and Service families might have **a lack of knowledge about the civilian housing sector, welfare system and budgeting**, leading to difficulty gaining or maintaining a social housing tenancy, or they might possess a general sense of disconnection from civilian society and need supported housing.

4.23.    Veterans and Service families can have diverse needs from social housing tenancies. Some members, such as vulnerable tenants, require short-term, supported, transitional accommodation with flexible tenancies of less than five years, while others may benefit from long-term secure, or even lifetime, tenancies.

Lifetime Tenancies

- Dover Council's Tenancy Strategy 2012-16 states that former members of the Armed Forces who qualify for social housing should be offered lifetime tenancies.

Offering a Variety of Tenancies

- Ealing Council Tenancy Strategy (Draft) 2021 identifies that vulnerable veterans might require short-term supported, transitional accommodation, requiring flexible tenancies of less than five years. It also requires landlords to provide tenancy sustainment support.

Improving Understanding of Issues

- A not-for-profit housing association in the North of England, Johnnie Johnson Housing, identified a need to improve housing for veterans and awareness of Armed Forces issues. Along with other housing providers, local authorities, and Service charities, they seek to identify areas for service improvement, share best practice, and hear from local and national speakers on Armed Forces issues. The group also employs a network of champions who meet and share best practice which is then shared across their organisations. Key initiatives include the following.

- o Creating e-learning projects to improve staff awareness of Armed Forces issues.
- o Creating a local online portal to signpost key services that veterans can access.
- o Dedicating five new-build properties for veterans who meet specified criteria.
- o Making veterans a high-level priority needs category for social housing.

## 4E. Homelessness

4.24.    Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *unfamiliarity with civilian life*, veterans might **lack knowledge about how to navigate the civilian housing sector**, which could increase their likelihood of becoming homeless at some point in their future. Veterans who are homeless might be less aware of their entitlements or the services available to them. Alternatively, they might be **reluctant to seek early help to avoid homelessness** for reasons such as stigma, shame, or a belief that civilian bodies will not understand their experience, which could increase their likelihood of becoming homeless.

4.25.    The majority of veterans make a smooth transition from military to civilian life. Less than 1% of households in England that are owed a homelessness duty have a support need as a result of serving in the Armed Forces.[21] Also, a Royal British Legion study found that 'There is little evidence to support the notion that military life… is a cause of veterans' homelessness'.[22] However, the unique obligations and sacrifices of *geographical mobility* and *unfamiliarity with civilian life* might reduce a veteran's general ability to cope in civilian life, and exacerbate a vulnerable individual's situation. Service personnel are required to vacate their living quarters after leaving Service, so those who do become homeless should not be considered as having become homeless intentionally.

4.26.    Service personnel receive a high level of support to plan and prepare for their discharge from the Armed Forces, and are able to access a number of support services available to veterans who are, or are at risk of becoming, homeless. Service personnel must usually give a 12-month notice period prior to the end of their Service, which includes dedicated periods for resettlement to allow them to prepare for civilian life, including sourcing private accommodation. Service personnel receive three months' notice to vacate their accommodation, with the end of the notice period being their last day of Service, and, in some cases, those requiring further time may be granted it. In most cases of short notice discharge, three months' notice to vacate will still be given even if this goes past the discharge date, the exception to this is in cases of discharge on disciplinary grounds or misconduct, where a minimum of 28 days' notice is given. Housing advice is available to all Service personnel and their families, both during and after Service.

4.27.    The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requires the Secretary of State for Defence to refer members of the Regular Armed Forces in England, who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, to a local housing authority.

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[21] Live tables on homelessness, Table A3 – Number of households owed a homelessness duty by support needs of household.
[22] Page 1 of the linked Royal British Legion study.

4.28.    Working with Armed Forces stakeholders, the Welsh Government has developed a National housing pathway for veterans of the Armed Forces to provide clarity and support for veterans and their families into either home ownership, or renting in the private or social sectors.

4.29.    In Scotland, a person should be treated as homeless, even if they have accommodation, if it would not be reasonable for them to continue to stay in it. Local authorities have a legal duty to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Research into Homelessness and the Armed Forces

- Riverside charity is conducting research alongside the University of York to explore current provision and effectiveness of housing-related information, and advice provided to the Armed Forces Community, with the aim of creating an action plan which addresses veterans' homelessness. Riverside will conduct an international literature review, conduct fieldwork with serving personnel and veterans, and consult with key stakeholders, to identify and map impacts. This will map the journey from someone joining the Armed Forces through to their experiences of homelessness, enabling a view of the right type of interventions to make and when to make them.

Signposting of Services about Homelessness

- Rugby Borough Council has a webpage that provides advice to the Armed Forces Community who are at risk of becoming homeless or who are homeless. It provides clear advice, explaining entitlements, additional preference, advice on how to interact with their services, and other help available from third parties.

## 4F. Disabled Facilities Grants

4.30.    Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *danger*, members of the Armed Forces might suffer injuries which require significant adaptations to be made to their homes when they leave Service.

4.31.    Family members who are disabled might also require adaptations to be made to their home when they move to a new area, during the Service person's time in Service. While this can also be an issue for non-Service families, Service families can move often due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *geographical mobility*. This could result in them **spending more time in a home that does not meet their needs**.

4.32.    Due to the unique obligation and sacrifice of *unfamiliarity with civilian life*, veterans and Service families might **lack knowledge of what grants are available** for themselves or family members, how to make applications for them, and what information is required to support their application.

4.33.    When an entitled Service family needing adaptations lives in Ministry of Defence accommodation, the Ministry of Defence ensures that suitable accommodation is provided, in line with its policies. Also, on occasions, the Ministry of Defence may fund adaptations to private accommodation for wounded, injured and sick personnel transiting out of Service.

4.34.    Local housing authorities in England and Wales have a statutory duty to provide home adaptations for people of all ages and tenures eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant, subject to a needs assessment, eligibility criteria and a means test. This can include Armed Forces personnel or their families living in their own accommodation, and veterans.

4.35.    Local housing authorities in England and Wales can also publish a local housing assistance policy under powers of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) to use Government funding for Disabled Facilities Grants more flexibly to best meet local need, including the provision of home adaptations assistance to specific groups. In putting together local policies, local authorities should consider how to address the particular needs of Armed Forces personnel or their families living in their own accommodation, as well as veterans.

4.36.    Guidance has been published for local authorities in England on the effective delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant. It includes a section on the Armed Forces Community.

4.37.    In Scotland, this is called the Scheme of Assistance. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 (Scheme of Assistance) Regulations 2008 state that where adaptations required are essential to the disabled person's needs and the required work is structural (or involves permanent changes to the house) the applicant must also be awarded a mandatory grant.

# Appendix 1: Bodies and functions in scope of the Covenant Duty

A1.1.    The **specified bodies** who are subject to the Covenant Duty are listed in the Armed Forces Act 2006 at section 343AA(3) in relation to England, section 343AB(3) in relation to Wales, section 343AC(3) in relation to Scotland, and section 343AD(3) in relation to Northern Ireland. They are listed in the table below, grouped by healthcare, education and housing.

A1.2.    The **relevant functions** in scope of the Covenant Duty are those functions exercised under or by virtue of the legislative provisions listed in the Armed Forces Act 2006 at section 343AA(4-6) in relation to England, section 343AB(4-6) in relation to Wales, section 343AC(4-6) in relation to Scotland, and section 343AD(4-6) in relation to Northern Ireland. These functions in the fields of healthcare, education and housing are listed in the table below.

A1.3.    When terms relating to the specified bodies and relevant functions are further defined in sections 343AA to 343AD of the Act, those definitions have also been included in the table below for ease of reference.

| Country | Specified bodies | Relevant functions are functions under or by virtue of the following legislative provisions |
|---------|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Healthcare** | | |
| England | • NHS England<br>• Integrated care boards, which means a body established under section 14Z25 of the National Health Service Act 2006.<br>• NHS Foundation Trusts<br>• NHS Trusts<br>• Local Authorities, which means a county council in England, a district council, a London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London, or the Council of the Isles of Scilly.[23] | • The National Health Service Act 2006<br>• Any provision of Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (children and young people in England with special educational needs or disabilities), so far as it deals with health care provision. 'Health care provision' is to be interpreted as in Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (see section 21 of that Act). |

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[23] Unitary authorities are not explicitly listed in the definition of 'local authority in England' in section 343AA(8) of the Armed Forces Act 2006, and therefore not explicitly listed in this table, as legally they remain either a county council or district council, so are brought within scope of the Duty by the inclusion of these terms.

| Wales | • A Local Health Board established under section 11 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006<br>• A Special Health Authority established under section 22 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006, other than a cross-border Special Health Authority. 'Cross-border Special Health Authority' means a Special Health Authority which is established under the National Health Service Act 2006 and the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006 by virtue of (a) paragraph 1(2) of Schedule 2 to the National Health Service (Consequential Provisions) Act 2006, or (b) the power under section 28 of the National Health Service Act 2006 and the power under section 22 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006 being exercised together.<br>• A National Health Service Trust in Wales.<br>• A local authority in Wales, which means the council of a county or county borough in Wales. | • The National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006 |
|---|---|---|
| Scotland | • An integration authority (within the meaning of section 59 of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 (asp 9))<br>• A Health Board constituted under section 2 of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978<br>• A Special Health Board constituted under section 2 of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978.<br>• The Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service | • The National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 |
| Northern Ireland | • The Department of Health (Northern Ireland), but only when exercising the relevant healthcare functions in scope of the Duty that were exercised by the former | Functions under or by virtue of any of the following, so far as the function relates to health care, where 'health care' means all forms of health care provided for individuals, whether relating to physical or mental health: |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Regional Health and Social Care Board prior to its dissolution.[24]<br>• A Local Commissioning Group appointed under section 9 of the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009)<br>• A Health and Social Care trust established by virtue of Article 10 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (S.I. 1991/194 (N.I. 1)), other than the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust. | • The Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 (S.I. 1972/1265 (N.I. 14))<br>• The Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (S.I. 1991/194 (N.I. 1))<br>• The Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009 (c.1 (N.I.)). |
| **Education** | | |
| England | • Local Authorities, which means a county council in England, a district council, a London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London, or the Council of the Isles of Scilly.[25]<br>• Governing bodies of maintained schools, where 'maintained school' has the same meaning as in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (see section 20 of that Act)<br>• Proprietors of Academies, where 'Academy' has the same meaning as in the Education Act 1996 (see section 579(1) of that Act), and 'proprietor', in relation to an Academy, has the meaning given by section 579(1) of the Education Act 1996.<br>• Non-maintained special schools, which means a school which is approved under section 342 of the Education Act 1996. | • The Education Act 1996<br>• Part 3 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (school admissions)<br>• s175 of the Education Act 2002 (duties of local authorities and governing bodies in relation to welfare of children)<br>• Any provision of Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, so far as it deals with special educational provision. 'Special educational provision' is to be interpreted as in Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (see section 21 of that Act). |

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[24] The Act makes reference to Northern Ireland's Regional Health and Social Care Board in the list of bodies specified in section 343AD(3) who are subject to the Duty. This Board was dissolved by the Health and Social Care Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, with effect from 1 April 2022, with its functions transferring to the Department of Health (Northern Ireland). Under the 2022 Act's transitional provisions, the Duty will continue to apply to the relevant functions formerly exercised by the Board as now exercised by the Department for Health (Northern Ireland).

[25] Unitary authorities are not explicitly listed in the definition of 'local authority in England' in section 343AA(8) of the Armed Forces Act 2006, and therefore not explicitly listed in this table, as legally they remain either a county council or district council, so are brought within scope of the Duty by the inclusion of these terms.

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| | • Governing bodies of institutions within the further education sector, where 'governing body' here has the meaning given by section 90 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, and 'institution within the further education sector' is to be interpreted in accordance with section 91(3) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.<br>• Special post-16 institutions – this term has the same meaning as in the Children and Families Act 2014 (see section 83 of that Act). | |
| Wales | • A local authority in Wales, which means the council of a county or county borough in Wales.<br>• The governing body of a maintained school in Wales, where 'maintained school' has the same meaning as in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (see section 20 of that Act). | • The Education Act 1996<br>• Part 3 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (school admissions)<br>• Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 (duties of local authorities and governing bodies in relation to welfare of children)<br>• Sections 2 to 7 and 9 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008<br>• Chapters 2 (individual development plans) and 3 (supplementary functions) of Part 2 of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018. |
| Scotland | • A local authority in Scotland, which means a council constituted under section 2 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994.<br>• A Health Board constituted under section 2 of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978<br>• A person or body in their capacity as an appropriate agency for the purposes of section 23 of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (asp 4) | • In Part 2 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (rights and duties of parents and functions of education authorities in relation to individual pupils), sections 28A, 28B, 42 and 51<br>• Sections 1 and 2 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 (asp 6) (provision of school education: right of child and duty of education authority)<br>• The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (asp 4), except sections 15 to 21 of, and Schedule 1 to, that Act<br>• Parts 3 (children's services planning) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (asp 8). |
| Northern Ireland | • The Education Authority established under section 1(1) of | • Article 52 (school transport) of the Education and Libraries (Northern |

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|---|---|---|
| | the Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (c. 12 (N.I.))<br>• The Board of Governors of a grant-aided school in Northern Ireland, where 'grant-aided school' means a grant-aided school within the meaning of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.<br>• The Regional Health and Social Care Board established under section 7 of the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009 (c.1 (N.I.))<br>• A Health and Social Care trust established by virtue of Article 10 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (S.I. 1991/194 (N.I. 1)), other than the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust. | Ireland) Order 1986 (S.I. 1986/594 (N.I. 3)<br>• In Part 2 (special educational needs) of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (S.I. 1996/274 (N.I. 1)), Articles 6 to 16 and 19 to 20A<br>• Article 16(4) and (5) (admission criteria) of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (S.I. 1997/866 (N.I. 5))<br>• Articles 17 (duty on boards of governors to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils) and 22 (admission to special schools of children resident outside Northern Ireland) of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 (S.I. 2003/424 (N.I. 12)). |
| **Housing** | | |
| England | • Local Authorities, which means a county council in England, a district council, a London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London, or the Council of the Isles of Scilly.[26] | • Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (allocation of housing accommodation)<br>• Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (homelessness: England)<br>• Part 1 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (grants, etc for renewal of private sector housing)<br>• Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 (duty of local housing authority in England to formulate a homelessness strategy)<br>• Section 150 of the Localism Act 2011 (tenancy strategies)<br>• Regulation 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (S.I. 2002/1860) (power of local housing authorities to provide assistance), so far as that regulation deals with the provision of |

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[26] Unitary authorities are not explicitly listed in the definition of 'local authority in England' in section 343AA(8) of the Armed Forces Act 2006, and therefore not explicitly listed in this table, as legally they remain either a county council or district council, so are brought within scope of the Duty by the inclusion of these terms.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | financial assistance for a purpose corresponding to any purpose specified in s23 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (disabled facilities grants: purposes). |
| Wales | • A local authority in Wales, which means the council of a county or county borough in Wales. | • Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (allocation of housing accommodation)<br>• Part 1 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (grants, etc for renewal of private sector housing)<br>• Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (anaw 7)<br>• Regulation 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (S.I. 2002/1860) (power of local housing authorities to provide assistance), so far as that regulation deals with the provision of financial assistance for a purpose corresponding to any purpose specified in section 23 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (disabled facilities grants: purposes). |
| Scotland | • A local authority in Scotland, which means a council constituted under section 2 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994.<br>• A local authority landlord – this term has the same meaning as in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (asp 10) (see section 11(3) of that Act). | • Sections 19 to 21 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (housing lists etc)<br>• Part 2 of that Act (homeless persons)<br>• Sections 1 and 2 (homelessness: strategies and advice) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (asp 10)<br>• Section 71(2)(e) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 (asp 1) (adaptation of a house for a disabled person). |
| Northern Ireland | • The Northern Ireland Housing Executive | • Articles 22 (house allocation scheme) and 22A (allocation only to eligible persons) of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 (S.I. 1981/156 (N.I. 3))<br>• Part 2 (housing the homeless) of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 (S.I. 1988/1990 (N.I. 23)), except article 15<br>• Chapter 2 of Part 3 of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 (S.I. 2003/412 (N.I. 2)), so far as that |

| | | Chapter relates to disabled facilities grants. 'Disabled facilities grant' has the meaning given by Article 35(4) of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. |
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# Appendix 2: How bodies can raise awareness of Armed Forces issues

A2.1.     While the Duty is not prescriptive about the actions bodies should take in order to promote awareness of the Duty and the issues faced by the Armed Forces Community, the type of actions that they might wish to consider adopting have been included below. These are based on the existing good practice of those bodies already working to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant in their local area.

## Appointing individuals
- Local authorities can appoint an elected member champion.
- Appointing a dedicated officer, staff group, or other lead person, who can advise on and co-ordinate Armed Forces issues across the whole organisation.
- Promoting a single point of contact within the organisation that members of the Armed Forces Community can contact if they require assistance or advice.

## Communication and Engagement
- Organising and/or attending regular meetings with Armed Forces representatives, charities, public sector representatives, the local Armed Forces presence, Armed Forces Covenant networks, and/or organisation champion(s).
- Establishing and/or attending local partnership boards to collaborate with other similar organisations, sharing best practice and information.
- Providing a web page or material with key information and links for members of the Armed Forces Community (such as examples 1 2 3), including details on complaints procedures and signposting relevant organisations such as ombudsmen.
- A clear statement of what members of the Armed Forces Community can expect from the organisation in terms of support (such as this example).
- A mechanism for reporting actions and achievements.
- A mechanism for prompting further research.
- Training frontline staff.

## Collaboration
- Sharing awareness, data and good practice on the Armed Forces Community within the organisation and other similar organisations.
- Requesting more information from organisations who have dealt with the Armed Forces Community before.

## Research
- Understanding the make-up of the Armed Forces Community in the local area.
- Identifying gaps in knowledge.
- Consulting online information and tools, such as the Veterans' Gateway or the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's Knowledge Network.

- Conducting a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on the needs of the local Armed Forces Community and, where possible, anticipate the needs of those moving into the local area.
- Undertaking primary evidence capturing exercises, such as a CHAIN style report to capture homeless veterans.
- Collecting and analysing data on the local Armed Forces Community, including by asking service users about their Armed Forces status.
- Consulting national data sources such as the census, and statistics on the locations of Armed Forces pension and compensation recipients and recipients of Service Pupil Premium.
- Consulting research and best-practice guides, such as the Forces in Mind Trust's 'Our Community Our Covenant' report.
- Engaging regularly with service end-users who are members of the Armed Forces Community.

## Vision
- Having an action plan that is regularly monitored and reviewed.
- Conducting regular policy reviews.

# Appendix 3: Further information

A3.1.     This publication, and other resources related to the Armed Forces Covenant, are available from the Covenant website: www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk. The website contains a freely available learning platform with training tools, advice and wider guidance aimed at (and populated by) service providers, to ensure that they have easy access to the information they require to comply with the Armed Forces Covenant Duty, and more.  More guidance can also be found at The Armed Forces Covenant.

A3.2.     For advice, information, or guidance on Covenant issues, the Ministry of Defence's Covenant Team can be contacted at: COVENANT-MAILBOX@mod.gov.uk.

## Other Useful Sources

**Statutory Frameworks, Policies and Guidance**
Healthcare:
- Healthcare for the Armed Forces Community (NHS)
- NHS 111 Wales
- Scotland's Health on the Web
- Health and Social Care Northern Ireland

Education:
- School Admissions Code and Fair Access Protocols (England)
- School Transport:  A Guide for Parents (England)
- School admissions (Wales)
- Additional Learning Needs Code (Wales)
- Attendance – Included, engaged and involved (Scotland) Part 1 and Part 2
- Getting it Right for Every Child (Scotland)
- Admissions (Northern Ireland)

Housing:
- Guidance on Allocations
- Improving Access to Social Housing for the Armed Forces
- Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities
- Armed Forces and ex-Service Personnel – A Scottish Housing Guide
- Welsh Government's Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness
- Welsh Government's National housing pathway for veterans of the Armed Forces

Other:
- Scotland Armed Forces and Veterans Community
- Veterans Wales
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Armed Forces Covenant guidance to councils

## Documents and Research
- Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report and other useful publications
- Armed Forces Covenant Local Authority Guide and other useful resources
- Armed Forces Families Strategy
- Duty and Care: Armed Forces Family Mobility and Health Care Report

- The Emotional Cycle of Deployment
- Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum 30th Anniversary Report
- Forces In Mind Trust 'Our Community Our Covenant' Report
- Living in our shoes: Understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces families
- Greater Manchester Armed Forces Covenant Guide
- Relocating to Scotland
- Reserve Forces Review 2030
- Voice of Schools Survey

## Contacts, Stakeholders and Training

- ABF The Soldiers' Charity
- Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust
- Army Families Federation
- Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)
- ADES Forces Children's Education
- BLESMA: The Military Charity for Limbless Veterans
- Children's Education Advisory Service CEAS (MOD)
- Confederation of Service Charities (COBSEO)
- Defence Medical Welfare Service
- Forces Children Scotland
- Forces in Mind Trust
- Housing e-Learning for Frontline Workers (Greater Manchester Housing Partnership)
- Joint Services Housing Advice Office
- The Military Human: Understanding Military Culture and Transition (York St John University)
- Naval Families Federation
- National and Regional Schools Commissioners (England)
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner's Office
- Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Office
- RAF Benevolent Fund
- RAF Families Federation
- Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations
- Royal British Legion
- Royal Naval Benevolent Trust
- Scottish Veterans Commissioner
- Service Children's Progression Alliance and SCiP Alliance Map of Service children
- Service Children in State Schools
- SSAFA The Armed Forces Charity
- Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru
- Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committees (VAPCs)
- Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance
- Veterans' Gateway
- Veterans UK
- War Widows Association

# Appendix 4: Resolving disputes

## Complaints Process

A4.1.    The Armed Forces Covenant Duty does not introduce any new enforcement mechanism.

A4.2.    In the instance of a dispute over whether a body has complied with the Covenant Duty, this should be raised with the body concerned, following that body's standard complaints process. Public bodies should clearly advertise their complaints procedures to make the process easy to access. In many cases, communicating clearly and proactively with the complainant throughout about the decision taken and reasons why should help to alleviate concerns.

## Unresolved Complaints

A4.3.    Should the body's standard complaints process fail to achieve an adequate resolution, complainants may be able to engage in a mediation, appeal, or tribunal process, or to refer the matter to the relevant ombudsman where appropriate. Bodies should clearly signpost these further means of redress to make the process easy to access.

A4.4.    Ombudsmen:
- **England:** In England, there are different ombudsman services for different public services. If you have a complaint about the following you may wish to go to:
    - Homelessness, School Transport, School Admissions or SEND: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
    - Housing: Housing Ombudsman
    - Healthcare: Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
- **Wales:** Public Service Ombudsman for Wales
- **Scotland:** Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
- **Northern Ireland:** Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
- **Service Complaints:** Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces

A4.5.    Complainants and bodies are encouraged to engage with the Armed Forces Covenant Team in the Ministry of Defence to make them aware of an issue. The Ministry of Defence has no formal powers to adjudicate disputes. However, it has substantial experience of dealing with Covenant issues, and by working with complainants, bodies in scope, and other stakeholders such as local Armed Forces Champions, it has been able to resolve many Covenant-related disputes or mediate a solution.

Further advice:
- Armed Forces Covenant Team (UK)
- Office for Veterans' Affairs (UK)
- Armed Forces Expert Group (Wales)
- Scottish Veterans Commissioner
- Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner's Office
- Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Office

## Unresolved Complaints: Judicial Review

A4.6.     It might be possible to seek to challenge any alleged non-compliance with the Covenant Duty by making an application to judicially review a body's actions or omissions. Time limits apply for judicial review and, therefore, legal advice should be sought early. Rules and procedures can differ across the different home nations of the UK. Further guidance on the judicial review process is available at the following sources:

- 'Judge Over Your Shoulder' Guide
- Guide for England & Wales
- Guide for Scotland
- Guide for Northern Ireland

**CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**HORIZON SCAN**

**REPORT BY HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROPERTY SERVICES AND HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION**

**A.      PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Panel with a summary of the latest economic indicators and announcements for the UK, Scotland and West Lothian, particularly regarding the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic and the potential impact on the council.

**B.      RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Panel notes:

1. The results of the horizon scan for the UK, Scotland, West Lothian and West Lothian Council;
2. The risks and uncertainties in relation to the council's budget model.

**C.      SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I. | **Council Values** | Being honest, open and accountable, focusing on our customers' needs, making the best use of our resources, working in partnership |
| II. | **Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)** | The council is required to approve a balanced revenue budget for each financial year. Audit Scotland and CIPFA best practice guidance recommends medium term financial plans are prepared a five-year period, with detailed revenue budget for three years.<br><br>The Covid-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the UK exit from the EU have significant implications for West Lothian, the local economy, communities and the council. |
| III. | **Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers** | No implications at this stage. |
| IV. | **Impact on performance and performance indicators** | The current EU programmes support business development, community regeneration and employment projects. Ongoing government restraint has implications for the council's budget and performance. |
| V. | **Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement** | The revenue budget provides the resources necessary to help deliver the Single Outcome Agreement. Effective prioritisation of resources is essential to achieving key outcomes. |
| VI. | **Resources (Financial, Staffing and Property)** | Scottish Government grant funding is not sufficient to meet increasing costs and demand for services, meaning savings have to be found on an ongoing basis. |

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| VII. | **Consideration at PDSP** | This report is part of the regular horizon scan updates to the Panel. |
|---|---|---|
| VIII. | **Other consultations** | Heads of Service and Depute Chief Executives. |

## D. TERMS OF REPORT

### D.1 BACKGROUND

Horizon scan and budget model updates are provided on a quarterly basis and set out latest information on the UK, Scottish, West Lothian and council economic position, and the potential impact on the council's medium-term financial strategy.

This report provides an update on the latest UK economic indicators and announcements, including the implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Covid-19 pandemic. It also includes key implications following the UK exit from the EU and the latest update on economic factors that could influence the council's financial strategy. The report also provides an update on the council's approved revenue financial plan for the period as well as setting out the budget model risks and uncertainties.

The report includes an update on the Scottish Government Emergency Budget Review (EBR) which was presented to the Scottish Parliament on 2 November 2022 and the Autumn Statement which was delivered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 17 November 2022.

### D.2 HORIZON SCAN – UK

#### The War in Ukraine

The Russian invasion of Ukraine which started on 24 February 2022, continues to powerfully destabilize the global economy. It has led to a severe energy crisis in Europe that is sharply increasing costs of living and hampering economic activity. Gas prices in Europe have increased more than four-fold since 2021, with Russia cutting deliveries to less than 20 percent of their 2021 levels, raising the prospect of energy shortages over the next winter and beyond. The conflict has also pushed up food prices on world markets, causing serious hardship for low-income households worldwide. The IMF has cut its global forecast and also downgraded its outlook for the UK. This means the UK will no longer be the fastest growing economy in the G7 group of leading Western nations, and will be the slowest in 2023, it says.

Food and energy prices were already being hiked by the supply bottlenecks after the Covid-19 pandemic, before one of the world's biggest energy suppliers invaded one of the world's biggest food exporter. With Russia being a major energy producer and key supplier of staples such as wheat and corn alongside Ukraine, the consequences will ripple far beyond their borders, the IMF warned. There have been two acute shocks to the world economy in quick succession, the pandemic and the Ukraine war. The latter is building on the problems created by the former, adversely impacting on what had been a healthy recovery, and sending prices rising at an even faster rate. Rising raw material costs and the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine are projected to keep UK inflation higher for longer.

#### Covid-19 Pandemic

The pandemic was the largest shock to the UK economy in a century. While successful vaccines have enabled much of the UK economy to return to normal, the emergence of new vaccine-escaping Covid-19 variants remains a key downside risk. All Covid-19 restrictions have now been lifted in the UK. At 16 November 2022, Covid-19 infections continue to decrease in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, the latest weekly Office for National Statistics figures suggest. A Covid-19 vaccination programme has so far reached nine in 10 people aged 12 and over with a first dose, nearly nine in 10 had received two doses and around seven in 10 had received three or more doses by the end of August 2022.

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**The UK Exit from the EU**

The EU and UK reached a post-Brexit trade deal on 24 December 2020. The £668 billion a year agreement enables UK goods to be sold without tariffs and quotas in the EU market. There remain ongoing uncertainties around the Northern Ireland protocol and any implication this may have for the wider trade agreement.

Since the UK left the EU in January 2021, there has been on impact on people and businesses, although it has sometimes been challenging to distinguish the Brexit effect from the overwhelming impact of Covid-19. The UK economy is currently around the same size as it was in early 2015. The main effects of leaving the EU include:

- British imports from and exports to the EU have been impacted by new border formalities. Although some sectors report improvements since the early challenges in January, they also say the problems run deeper than "teething troubles".
- British manufacturers reported a near-record increase in supply chain disruption which appears to be continuing, and rising costs, attributed to the exit from the EU and Covid-19.
- The Brexit deal contained vague commitments on services and left financial services to a separate process. The UK and the EU have now reached a "memorandum of understanding on future cooperation. It is thought it could help City of London firms regain some access to the EU that was lost when the UK left the EU's single market.

**UK Economic Update**

Debt and Borrowing

The most recent forecast from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) on 17 November 2022 provided updated UK borrowing figures. The OBR forecast public sector net borrowing rises sharply from £133.3 billion last year to £177 billion in 2022/23, £140 billion in 2023/24, £84.3 billion in 2024/25, £76.9 billion in 2025/26, £80.3 billion in 2026/27 and then reduces to £69.2 billion in 2027/28.

The public sector net debt is to rise to 89.9% of GDP in 2022/23. Public Sector Net Debt is expected to increase further to 95.9% in 2023/24, 97.2% in 2024/25, 97.6% in 2026/27 and 2027/28 and then reduce slightly to 97.3% in 2027/28.

Economic Growth

The most recent update from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in October 2022 was the World Economic Outlook. Growth estimates have been revised downwards for the UK, with the IMF expecting growth to decrease from 7.4% in 2021 to 3.6% in 2022 and then 0.3% in 2023.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) released economic growth figures on 11 November 2022. UK gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to have fallen by 0.6% in September 2022, after a fall of 0.1% in August 2022. UK GDP decreased by 0.2% in the three months to September 2022, compared with the three months to June 2022. Monthly GDP is now estimated to be 0.2% below its pre-coronavirus pandemic levels (February 2020).

In September 2022, production grew on the month by 0.2%, after a fall of 1.4% in August 2022. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply grew by 1.5% and was the largest contributor to growth in production in September 2022. Services fell by 0.8% in September 2022 after growth of 0.1% in August 2022. The largest contribution to the fall came from a 3.2% fall in information and communication activity, and a 2.0% fall in wholesale and retail trade, and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles. Output in consumer-facing services fell by 1.7% in September 2022, after a fall of 1.6% in August 2022

In the Bank of England's quarterly monetary policy report published on 3 November 2022, following growth of 0.2% in quarter 2 2022, it is expected to have contracted by 0.5% in quarter 3, and is projected to fall by 0.3% in quarter 4. The weakness in GDP partly reflects the squeeze on real incomes from higher global energy and tradable goods prices. The fall in activity around the end of this year is expected to be less marked than in the August Report, however, reflecting support from the Government's EPG for households.

GDP is projected to continue to fall throughout 2023 and 2024, as high energy prices and materially tighter financial conditions weigh on spending. In the Committee's central projection, calendar-year GDP growth is -1½% in 2023 and -1% in 2024. Four-quarter GDP growth picks up to around ¾% by the end of the projection, although GDP growth is expected to remain well below pre-pandemic rates.

The British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) published its latest Quarterly Economic Forecast for 2022 in September 2022. The BCC's quarter three 2022 forecast downgraded its expectations for UK GDP growth in 2022 to 3.3% from 3.5% in its previous forecast. In the short term, the BCC is now forecasting a recession for the UK economy with three consecutive quarters of contraction between quarter two and quarter four in 2022. Annual expectations for GDP growth also continue to decline, with 3.3% forecast for 2022, significantly below the 7.4% growth recorded in 2021. The BCC expects the economy to grow in 2023, albeit at a very low 0.2%, with a slight increase to 1% in 2024. The downgrade reflects deteriorating economic conditions; rising energy costs, a decline in household spending and real wages; weaker export prospects and a pessimistic global economic outlook; and weakening business confidence and cashflow. Many of these issues were initially caused by the global response to Covid-19 and have been further compounded by the war in Ukraine.

Exports and Inward Investment

In the immediate wake of the EU referendum, sterling fell sharply making the goods the UK buys from abroad more expensive, affecting the cost of living, but also potentially helping to support UK exports. The pound has been making a very slow recovery against the dollar and, on 25 July 2022, the pound was $1.21 against the dollar and €1.18 against the euro.

The British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) published its latest Quarterly Economic Survey for quarter three 2022. The latest survey indicates a significant decline in business confidence, with a clear shift downwards in many of the key indicators BCC track. Every sector has seen a falling proportion of firms reporting increased domestic sales, with the retail and wholesale sector particularly affected. Diminishing sales coupled with soaring inflation is a toxic mix, and many firms are no longer looking to the future with optimism. Profitability and turnover confidence for the next year have dipped significantly since last quarter. Both measures are heading towards levels not seen since the onset of the Covid-19 crisis. Many firms are caught in the pincer movement of soaring inflation and rising interest rates. The devaluation of the pound has also added a huge cost base for businesses reliant on imports.

Inflation

Consumer Prices Index (CPI) inflation rose by 11.1% in the 12 months to October 2022, up from 10.1% in September 2022. On a monthly basis, CPI rose by 2.0% in October 2022, compared with a rise of 1.1% in October 2021.

The Bank of England November 2022 Monetary Policy Report stated that CPI inflation has been above the 2% target since May 2021 and averaged 10% in 2022 quarter three. That rise in inflation mainly reflects large increases in global energy and other tradable goods prices, though services inflation has also increased. CPI inflation is projected to increase to 10.9% in October, reflecting the increase in energy bills from Ofgem's April 2022 cap to the level of the Government's Energy Price Guarantee. CPI inflation is expected to remain close to 11% through the remainder of quarter four. It then eases towards 10% in 2023 quarter one, before falling further in subsequent quarters to some way below the 2% target in years two and three of the projection.

Interest Rates

The Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted by a majority of seven to two to increase the Bank Rate by 0.75% to 3% on 2 November 2022. At this meeting the MPC sets monetary policy to meet the 2% inflation target, which is intended to assist in sustaining growth and employment. The majority of the Committee judges that, should the economy evolve broadly in line with the latest Monetary Policy Report projections, further increases in Bank Rate may be required for a sustainable return of inflation to target, albeit to a peak lower than priced into financial markets. There are, however, considerable uncertainties around the outlook. The Committee continues to judge that, if the outlook suggests more persistent inflationary pressures, it will respond forcefully, as necessary.

Unemployment

The latest figures published in November 2022 show the UK unemployment rate was estimated at 3.6% over the period July to September 2022. There were an estimated 32.739 million people in employment from July to September 2022, 52,000 less than last quarter.

House Prices

The latest ONS House Price Index published on 16 November 2022 showed that, over the year to September 2022, average house prices in the UK increased by 9.5%, down from 13.1% in August 2022. The average UK house price was £295,000 in September 2022, which is £26,000 higher than this time last year.

D.3    **HORIZON SCAN – SCOTLAND**

**The War in Ukraine**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has increased the level of uncertainty in the economic outlook and presented a new downside risk to growth at a time when the economy is still in recovery from the economic shock of the pandemic. Scotland's direct trade links with Russia and Ukraine are small and, as such, the direct impacts of the situation are expected to be limited. However, the recent surge and volatility in the price of global commodities such as oil and gas, grains and metals in which Russia and Ukraine are key global producers, means the indirect impacts of higher inflationary pressures is something that all importing economies, including Scotland, will be exposed to.

**Covid-19 Pandemic**

Scotland's economy experienced a significant shock due to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions. GDP in Scotland fell by record amounts and although GDP is gradually recovering, and is now above pre-pandemic levels after two years. At its peak, around one in three jobs in Scotland was supported by a combination of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and business grants. The extent of impact and pace of recovery has varied. Customer facing businesses, such as retail, hospitality, tourism and the culture sector, have been most affected for longest by restrictions.

**EU Implications**

The Scottish economy is being affected by the UK's exit from the EU, in a similar way to that of the UK in general terms, however changes to the tax system now means that Scotland's own economic performance will have a more direct impact on the Scottish Budget.

**Scottish Economic Update**

Economic Growth

Scotland's GDP remained unchanged (0.0% growth) in real terms during the second quarter of 2022 (April to June) and is still 0.1% below pre-pandemic levels. Over the same period, GDP in the UK as a whole fell by 0.1% and is now 0.6% above pre-pandemic levels. Compared to the same quarter last year, Scotland's GDP grew by 3.5%. In 2022 quarter two, output in the construction sector increased by 2.3%, output in the production sector decreased by -0.5% and Services sector output decreased by -0.1%. Over the same period, the UK as a whole grew by 2.9%. The largest contributor to change this quarter was Government & Other Services, specifically the Health & Social Care sector.

Unemployment

The Scottish Government's latest Labour Market Briefing was published in November 2022. This showed that between July and September 2022, the unemployment rate was 3.5%, with 98,000 people unemployed. There were 2.705 million people employed, meaning the rate of employment is 75.3%.

House Prices

The ONS publication for House Price Index showed that the average house price in Scotland increased by 7.3% over the year to September 2022 to stand at £192,000.

D.4    **HORIZON SCAN – WEST LOTHIAN**

**Covid-19 Pandemic**

West Lothian's key economic strengths are located in several sectors such as biotechnology, logistics/distribution, food and drink, electronics, retail, engineering and construction. Around 70% of West Lothian's young dynamic workforce are employed in these fast-growing sectors and that percentage looked set to grow as more companies relocate to West Lothian.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on businesses and employment throughout Scotland and West Lothian. KPMG's UK Economic outlook report that was published in June 2020 projected the impact of Covid-19 on Gross Value Added (GVA), for 2021 at 3.6% in West Lothian compared to Scotland at 3.4% (-5% and -6.5% respectively for 2020).

**West Lothian Economic Update**

House Completions

House Completions for July to September 2022 (quarter two) were 314 compared to 190 for the same period in 2021. Compared to the comparative period in 2021, the 2022 quarter two figures are higher levels compared to quarter two in 2021, as we saw some impact on construction industry activity during the second half of 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Unemployment

Unemployment at local authority level is measured by the proportion of working age people not in work. In West Lothian this is 2.6% for October 2022, which is lower than the Scottish rate (3.1%) and the British rate (3.6%).

The data in the table was published on 11 October 2022 / 15 November 2022 by Office for National Statistics. It looks at the position across Scotland based on the claimant count across the region.

*Table 1: Claimant Count Across the Region*

| Councils | | Working Age People Not in Work | | | | % Change | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Pre-Covid baseline (Feb-20) | Nov-21 | Sep-22 | Oct-22 | Year Change (Nov 21 - Oct 22) | Month change (Sep 22 - Oct 22) |
| Edinburgh | Count | 7,105 | 11,405 | 8,580 | 8,530 | -25.2% | -0.6% |
| | Rate | 1.9% | 3.1% | 2.3% | 2.3% | | |
| East Lothian | Count | 1,765 | 2,245 | 1,450 | 1,450 | -35.4% | 0.0% |
| | Rate | 2.7% | 3.4% | 2.2% | 2.2% | | |
| Fife | Count | 8,765 | 10,180 | 7,770 | 7,795 | -23.4% | 0.3% |
| | Rate | 3.8% | 4.4% | 3.4% | 3.4% | | |
| Midlothian | Count | 1,470 | 1,785 | 1,310 | 1,235 | -30.8% | -5.7% |
| | Rate | 2.60% | 3.1% | 2.3% | 2.1% | | |
| Scottish Borders | Count | 1,860 | 2,415 | 1,955 | 1,910 | -20.9% | -2.3% |
| | Rate | 2.8% | 3.6% | 2.9% | 2.8% | | |
| West Lothian | Count | 3,425 | 4,015 | 3,195 | 3,055 | -23.9% | -4.4% |
| | Rate | 2.9% | 3.4% | 2.7% | 2.6% | | |
| **South East** | Count | 24,385 | 32,045 | 24,260 | 23,975 | -25.2% | -1.2% |
| | Rate | 2.7% | 3.5% | 2.6% | 2.6% | | |

### D.5  HORIZON SCAN – WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL

The economy has recently been subject to a succession of very large shocks. The economy has been recovering from the effects of Covid-19, however inflationary pressures have intensified following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Economic implications from Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine still remain uncertain and may not be clear for some time.

The council has an approved revenue budget for 2022/23, and proactive financial planning has provided as strong as possible a position in the current climate to address ongoing challenges in public sector funding.  Economic and budget announcements will continue to be reviewed and taken into consideration to ensure that financial planning assumptions remain reflective of the current position. In particular officers will continue to monitor key announcements in relation to public spending, interest rates, inflation and economic risks, in order to assess the likely impact on the council's future budget position.

### D.6  BUDGET PLANNING SCENARIO AND CHANGES TO THE BUDGET MODEL

The 2022/23 detailed revenue budget was approved by Council on 15 February 2022. In addition to agreeing time limited investment for 2022/23 to support outcomes in priority areas and Covid-19 pressures, budget savings of £9.1 million were approved to ensure a balanced budget for 2022/23. Officers continue to monitor announcements and other information to review and refine budget assumptions.  The main risk areas currently being reviewed are:

- Energy / fuel prices
- War in Ukraine related pressures
- Covid-19 related pressures
- Inflation and indexation
- School demographics
- Delivery of savings
- Pay Award
- Service budget pressures

The council currently only has Scottish Government funding confirmed for one year, 2022/23, however it is becoming apparent that the war in Ukraine and the recovery from the pandemic will continue to have implications for the council beyond the current financial year. Commentators are attempting to analyse the impact on public sector funding, however given the unprecedented nature of the war, and its impact on government spending and the economy more widely, the outlook for non-protected areas of the Scottish budget remains uncertain.

The pay award for 2022/23 remains subject to negotiation and agreement at a Scottish level for Teachers and Chief Officers. The 2022/23 pay package was concluded on 25 October 2022 for Scottish Joint Council (SJC) staff which includes an extra day's holiday on a recurring basis and payment of Scottish Social Services Councils fees from this year onwards.

Officers are continuing to analyse announcements and economic analysis.

**D.7    HORIZON SCAN BUDGET MODEL RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES**

In addition to the risks outlined in section D.6 of this report there are a number of risks and uncertainties in the long-term financial assumptions underlying the budget model, which have intensified with the war and the pandemic. These include the risk that the increase in costs associated with demand led services, such as social care, is greater than assumed and the increased incidence of ring-fenced funding and the new policy or legislative changes by the UK or Scottish governments which restrict the council's flexibility to decide how to deliver services locally.

The nature of forecasting means it is challenging to identify with any certainty expenditure pressures and income.  In addition, there are more general risks and uncertainties which will continue to be monitored.  Some of the more general risks and uncertainties are:

- Economic growth being less than forecast, with high uncertainty around future economic growth due to war in Ukraine and the recovery from the pandemic.
- Funding not being provided to fully cover the costs of introducing new legislation.
- Policy changes by the UK or Scottish governments which restrict the council's flexibility to decide how to deliver services locally.
- Ring fencing of grant funding, constraining how local authorities allocate resources.
- Changes to local government remits with uncertainty for service provision and funding.

In addition, there continues to be a high degree of uncertainty around the impact of the war in Ukraine.  At this point it is difficult to assess what impact the various permutations could have for the council specifically and for public funding more widely, however the council will continue to monitor.  Updates on how the war in Ukraine may impact on the council's financial strategy will continue to be provided as part of the quarterly horizon scan update to the Panel.

**D.8    REVENUE BUDGET FIVE YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN**

A report on the high-level central planning scenario budget model was considered by Council Executive in October 2021 and Council in February 2022. The budget model has been updated and reported to Council Executive on 21 June 2022 and most recently on 4 October 2022. The update reported to Council Executive on 4 October 2022, stated that following further developments in the Cost of Living crisis and related cost pressures on energy costs the budget gap had increased to £47.1 million over the five-year period 2023/34 to 2027/28, with a budget gap of £36.5 million over the three-year period 2023/34 to 2025/26.

At that point in time the most recent pay award quantum of 5% and a £10.50 living wage agreed by COSLA Leaders on 20 August 2022 was applied to the budget model. The budget model has been updated to reflect the 2022/23 pay package that was concluded on 25 October 2022 for Scottish Joint Council (SJC) staff. The pay award for 2022/23 remains subject to negotiation and agreement at a Scottish level for Teachers and Chief Officers.

Although allocations from other portfolios were not confirmed in the Spending Review, traditionally funding for Scottish Government commitments are funded by these transfers. On that basis it is assumed that all national commitments, such as additional teachers and expansion of free school meals and early learning and childcare, will be fully funded through transfers from other portfolios and not from core local government funding as outlined in the review. In addition, it is also assumed that £2.5 million per annum will be allocated from the health portfolio to support investment in social care in addition to the high-level local government funding envelope outlined in the review.

The nature of medium to long term forecasting means it is challenging to identify with any certainty expenditure pressures and income. To allow for consideration of the potential budget gap, an assessment has been made of the potential costs and funding. This provides an understanding of the potential budget gap the council is likely face, however forecasts will change as the planning period gets closer and planning assumptions are solidified or confirmed.

## D.9    CONSULTATION

On 24 June 2022, the Council Executive approved the three stage West Lothian (WL) 2028 Your Council Your Say public consultation approach. Phase 1 of the consultation commenced on 24 June 2022 and closed on 31 July 2022.

A report providing an update on the feedback received from respondents to Phase 1 of the WL2028 Your Council Your Say public consultation, and an update on the key dates and activities associated with Phase 2 of the public consultation was reported to Council Executive on 4 October 2022.

The second phase of the consultation opened for a six week period from 7 October to until 20 November 2022. The results of the Phase 2 consultation will be reported to Council Executive, on 20 December 2022, with proposals for Special PDSPs to be scheduled in January 2023 to allow elected members to consider the responses received at the Phase 2 stage.

The Council budget setting meeting in February 2023 will set the Corporate Plan and 5-year financial plan 2023/24 to 2027/28, a three year detailed revenue budget 2023/24 to 2025/26 and taxation levels for 2023/24 to 2027/28.

The Phase 3 consultation on the 2026/27 and 2078/28 budget proposals will be progressed during 2023/24 prior to the Council budget setting meeting in February 2026.

## D.10   AUTUMN STATEMENT AND SCOTTISH BUDGET ANNOUNCEMENTS 2022

The Chancellor of Exchequer delivered his Autumn Statement 2022 to the House of Commons on 17 November 2022. It included an assessment and forecast from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) on borrowing, growth and employment. Scotland will receive an additional £1.5 billion over the next two years (2023/24 and 2024/25) through the Barnett consequentials. The Scottish Government is free to spend these additional monies on any area of devolved competence, and does not need to replicate the UK Government's choices. There are no changes to the financial settlement for the current financial year (2022/23), meaning that the Scottish Government will have no additional flexibility from this fiscal event to fund more generous public sector pay deals as part of the ongoing negotiations.

The acting finance minister, John Swinney, presented the Scottish Governments Emergency Budget Review (EBR) to the Scottish Parliament on 2 November 2022. The EBR identified £615 million of in-year savings to tackle the budgetary challenges brought about by rising inflation in 2022/23. In combination with the £560 million of in-year savings identified in September 2022, the combined total of in-year movements for 2022/23 is nearly £1.2 billion in spending cuts.

The EBR also notes that, as a result of the reversal of 'mini-budget' measures (introduced by Kwasi Kwarteng and overturned by Jeremy Hunt), instead of Scotland receiving an extra £660 million of funding in the three years to 2024/25 it will now receive £230 million less through the Block Grant Adjustment.

A full report on the Autumn statement and Scottish budget announcements was presented to Council Executive on 6 December 2022. This report also contained an update on the revenue budget model for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28, with potential options for consideration for managing the significantly worse financial position facing the council as a result of major cost pressures. As outlined in the report, the estimated budget gap over the five years has increased to £57 million. An update will be provided at the PDSP meeting on the substance of the Council Executive consideration of the report.

The Scottish Budget will be announced on 15 December 2022, the tax and spending plans will be accompanied by the Scottish Fiscal Commission's (SFC) economic and fiscal forecasts. A report will be presented to the Council Executive on 17 January 2023 detailing the Scottish Government's allocation of the total Scottish block.

E.    CONCLUSION

The report provides a high-level overview of the latest economic indicators and other announcements likely to have a financial impact on the council, predominantly as a result of the war in Ukraine, cost of living crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. Economic implications resulting from the war in Ukraine and covid-19 remain uncertain and the UK, Scottish, West Lothian and council position will continue to be reported on a quarterly basis as part of the horizon scanning of factors that could have an impact on the council's medium-term financial strategy. In view of the challenges, the council is responding pro-actively and the consultation process in relation to future plans and budget is ongoing. The deterioration in the financial position facing the council means that urgent action is necessary to ensure the ongoing financial sustainability of the council.

F.    BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Scottish Spending Review 2022 and Future Budget Strategy 2023/24 to 2027/28 Update - Report by Head of Finance and Property Services to Council Executive on 21 June 2022.

Autumn Statement and Scottish Budget Announcements 2022 - Report by Head of Finance and Property Services to Council Executive on 6 December 2022.

WL2028 Your Council Your Say – Public Consultation - Report by Depute Chief Executive to Council Executive on 4 October 2022.


Appendices/Attachments: None

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**Donald Forrest**
**Head of Finance and Property Services**

**Craig McCorriston**
**Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration**

Date of Meeting: 12 December 2022

**DATA LABEL: PUBLIC**


West Lothian Council

**CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 2 OF 2022/23**

**REPORT BY DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**A.    PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose is to report the current level of performance for all indicators that support the council's Corporate Plan and are the responsibility of the Corporate Policy and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

**B.    RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Panel note the performance information and determine if further action or enquiry is necessary for any of the performance indicators in the report.

**C.    SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I | **Council Values** | Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; making best use of our resources; working in partnership. |
| II | **Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)** | In compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance |
| III | **Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers** | None |
| IV | **Impact on performance and performance Indicators** | Challenges current service performance through the evaluation of performance indicators |
| V | **Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement** | Indicators support various outcomes in the SOA |
| VI | **Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)** | Met from existing budgets |
| VII | **Consideration at PDSP** | N/A |
| VIII | **Other consultations** | None |

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**D. TERMS OF REPORT**

**D.1 Background**

Overseeing and challenging council performance is contained within the remit of every Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP). Scrutiny of performance by elected members in PDSPs forms a key part of the council's wider scrutiny and public performance reporting arrangements.

To support this, each PDSP is allocated areas of the Corporate Plan, strategic priorities and key council performance, relevant to the focus areas of the Panel, and receives quarterly and annual performance reports.

**D.2 Quarterly Performance Report**

The quarterly performance scorecard report for the Corporate Policy and Resources PDSP contains a range of relevant service performance information for scrutiny.

A summary position of the status of the 56 performance indicators in the Partnership and Resources PDSP scorecard is contained in Appendix 1, with a more detailed commentary provided in Appendix 2 of this report. The 56 performance indicators are categorised as follows:

| Summary of Performance Indicator status (RAG) | |
| --- | --- |
| Status (against target) | Number of PIs |
| ✅ Green | 36 |
| ⚠️ Amber | 5 |
| 🔴 Red | 13 |
| ❓ Unknown | 2 |

*Note: the Unknown status occurs when a service does not record performance during the period, for example, if the service did not receive any complaints to process.*

The RAG status is against the performance target that has been set by the service in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. In Appendix 2 a trend chart commentary offers an explanation on the current performance levels (against the target) for each indicator. This information will also highlight to the Panel the measures that services will take to improve performance.

**D.3 Red Performance Indicators**

The current trend for those indicators that are currently at Red status is summarised.

1. <u>P:IA015_9b.1a Average length of time (in weeks) to issue draft audit reports</u>

Current performance: 12
Target: 10

The target for this performance indicator is to achieve 10 weeks and is in line with the council's Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Strategy. Performance to quarter two 2022/23 was 12 weeks, and was slightly greater than target. Draft reports have been taking marginally longer to issue since midway through 2021.

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2. <u>P:PS304  Percentage of rent outstanding for commercial property (Current debt)</u>

   Current performance: 6.47%
   Target: 4%

   The trend from the start of the (financial year) has outstanding rent levels remaining above target level. The service has established a debt recovery / rent arrears group led by the Corporate Estates Manager and involving other financial services (Revenues and Financial Management) to improve the recovery of debts.

3. <u>P:REV027 Percentage of Business Rates and Council Tax correspondence processed within 10 working days of receipt</u>
   Current performance: 79.3%
   Target: 96.4%

   Performance in quarter 2 was below target however, the deficit has been reduced by 9.2% over the quarter. There were 25,085 items of correspondence received with 19,889 processed within the target of 10 working days. The level of correspondence is similar to same quarter in 2021/22.

4. There were 8 services triggering red for the percentage of sickness absence:

   - Anti-Poverty Service (P:APS041)
   - Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud (P:IA051)
   - Corporate Procurement (P:CPU017a)
   - Customer and Communities (P:CuCS021)
   - HR Services (P:HS525)
   - IT Services (P:ITS051)
   - Property Services (PS112)
   - Revenues (REV048a)

5. There was 1 service with an indicator triggering red for the number of complaints received:

   - Revenues (P:REV112)

6. There was 1 service with an indicator triggering red for the number of complaints upheld or part upheld:

   - HR Services (P:HRS554)

**D.4  Unknown Performance Indicators**

There were 2 performance indicators with an Unknown status that related to the percentage of complaints upheld or partially upheld. This is due to services not receiving complaints within the time period presented and therefore the indicators show blank data.

**E.    CONCLUSION**

The performance scorecard shows that a significant proportion of performance indicators are achieving targeted levels of performance. Where performance is not at the expected level, Appendix 2 of this report offers details to the Panel of the corrective actions being taken by services to improve performance.

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## F.    BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

**Appendices/Attachments:** 2
Appendix 1 – Partnership and Resources PDSP Performance Scorecard Summary Report
Appendix 2 – Partnership and Resources PDSP Performance Scorecard Detailed Report


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**Graeme Struthers**
**Depute Chief Executive**

**12 December 2022**

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**APPENDIX 1**

West Lothian
Council

# CORPORATE POLICY & RESOURCES SCORECARD REPORT – QUARTERLY

**Generated on:** 16 November 2022

**Traffic Light: Red**

| Status | PI Code & Short Name | Head of Service | Value | Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 🛑 | P:APS041_7b.1 Cumulative percentage of sickness absence within the Anti-Poverty Service | Head of Finance and Property Services | 8% | 3.6% |
| 🛑 | P:CPU017a_7b.1 Percentage of sickness absence in Corporate Procurement Unit | Head of Corporate Services | 8.08% | 3.6% |
| 🛑 | P:CuCS021_7b.1 Customer and Communities - Percentage of Sickness absence | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | 9.0% | 3.6% |
| 🛑 | P:HRS525_7b.1 Percentage of sickness absence in HR Services | Head of Corporate Services | 7.81% | 3.6% |
| 🛑 | P:HRS554_6b.4 Percentage of complaints by HR Services which were upheld/part upheld per quarter | Head of Corporate Services | 100% | 25% |
| 🛑 | P:IA015_9b.1a Average length of time (in weeks) to issue draft audit reports | Head of Finance and Property Services | 12 | 10 |
| 🛑 | P:IA051_7b.1 Cumulative percentage of sickness absence within the Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud Unit | Head of Finance and Property Services | 4.16% | 2% |
| 🛑 | P:ITS051_7b.1 Percentage of Sickness Absence in IT Services (cumulative) | Head of Corporate Services | 5.56% | 3.6% |
| 🛑 | P:PS112_7b.1 Property Services - Cumulative Percentage of Sickness absence Days | Head of Finance and Property Services | 2.52% | 2% |
| 🛑 | P:PS304_9b.1c Percentage of rent outstanding for commercial property (Current debt). | Head of Finance and Property Services | 6.47% | 4% |
| 🛑 | P:REV027_6b Percentage of Business Rates and Council Tax correspondence processed within 10 working days of receipt. | Head of Finance and Property Services | 79.3% | 96.4% |
| 🛑 | P:REV048a_7b.1 Monthly Sickness Absence Levels | Head of Finance and Property Services | 6.73% | 2.5% |
| 🛑 | P:REV122_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by the Revenues Unit | Head of Finance and Property Services | 33 | 25 |

1

**Traffic Light: Amber**

| Status | PI Code & Short Name | Head of Service | Value | Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ⚠️ | P:FM001_6b.5 Percentage of Suppliers paid within 30 Days of Receipt | Head of Finance and Property Services | 93.9% | 95% |
| ⚠️ | P:FM048_7b.1 Percentage of Sickness Absence in Financial Management Unit - Cumulative | Head of Finance and Property Services | 2.47% | 2% |
| ⚠️ | P:HRS550_6b.3 Number of complaints received by HR Services | Head of Corporate Services | 2 | 1 |
| ⚠️ | P:ITS017a_9b.1c Percentage of Incidents Resolved at First Point of Contact | Head of Corporate Services | 33% | 40% |
| ⚠️ | P:LS031_7b.1 Percentage Sickness Absence Levels in Legal Services | Head of Corporate Services | 4.65% | 3.6% |

**Traffic Light: Green**

| Status | PI Code & Short Name | Head of Service | Value | Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✅ | P:APS017_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by the Anti-Poverty Service | Head of Finance and Property Services | 25 | 25 |
| ✅ | P:APS018_6b.4 The percentage of complaints received by the Anti-Poverty Service that were upheld / partially upheld against the total complaints closed in full | Head of Finance and Property Services | 24% | 50% |
| ✅ | P:APS019_6b.5 Percentage of Blue Badges processed within 28 working days (quarterly) | Head of Finance and Property Services | 79.93% | 75% |
| ✅ | P:APS060_9b.1a Total quarterly amount the Advice Shop has gained in extra benefits for its customers | Head of Finance and Property Services | £6,001,539 | £6,000,000 |
| ✅ | P:APS077_9b Housing Benefit monthly new claims | Head of Finance and Property Services | 13.93 | 14 |
| ✅ | P:CC014_6b.3 Total number of complaints received per quarter | Head of Corporate Services | 1 | 0 |
| ✅ | P:CC016_6b.4 The percentage of complaints by Corporate Communications that were upheld/part upheld per quarter | Head of Corporate Services | 0% | 0% |
| ✅ | P:CC031_7b.1 Percentage of sickness absence in Corporate Communications | Head of Corporate Services | 2.3% | 3.6% |
| ✅ | P:CC081_9b.1a Percentage of new social media followers on the West Lothian Council sites per quarter | Head of Corporate Services | 3.4% | 1% |
| ✅ | P:CPU019b_9b.1a Percentage of relevant compliant council expenditure per quarter | Head of Corporate Services | 95% | 99% |
| ✅ | P:CPU047c_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by the Corporate Procurement Unit on a Quarterly basis | Head of Corporate Services | 0 | 0 |

2

| Status | PI Code & Short Name | Head of Service | Value | Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✅ | P:CPU047d_6b.4 The percentage of complaints received by the Corporate Procurement Unit that were upheld / partially upheld against the total complaints closed in full | Head of Corporate Services | 0% | 0% |
| ✅ | P:CSC007mq_6a.7 Customer Service Centre (CSC) Generic - Percentage of customers who rated the overall quality of the service as good or excellent | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | 97.9% | 97.0% |
| ✅ | P:CSC062m_6b.3 Total Number of Complaints against Customer Service Centre (CSC) | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | 3 | 7 |
| ✅ | P:CSC063m_6b.4 Percentage of Complaints Upheld and Part Upheld against Customer Service Centre | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | 33.33% | 55% |
| ✅ | P:CSC104q_9b.1a Percentage of Customer Service Centre enquiries resolved at first point of contact | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | 94.63% | 90% |
| ✅ | P:CuCS007q_6a.7 Customer and Communities - Percentage of customers who rated the overall quality of service as good or excellent | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | 98.7% | 99.0% |
| ✅ | P:CuCS010q_6b.3 Customer and Communities - Total number of complaints received by Customer and Community services | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | 16 | 20 |
| ✅ | P:CuCS011q_6b.4 Customer and Communities - The percentage of complaints received by Customer and Communities Service that were upheld / partially upheld against the total complaints closed in full | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | 37.5% | 60.0% |
| ✅ | P:CuCS026q_9b.1a Percentage of customer enquiries recorded on the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) which are resolved at the first point of contact | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | 73.5% | 75.0% |
| ✅ | P:FM037_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by the Financial Management Unit | Head of Finance and Property Services | 2 | 3 |
| ✅ | P:HRS104_9b.2 Number of reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive per quarter | Head of Corporate Services | 2 | 7.25 |
| ✅ | P:IA066_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud | Head of Finance and Property Services | 0 | 0 |
| ✅ | P:ITS007_6a.7 Percentage of IT Services Customers Rating the Overall Quality as Good or Excellent | Head of Corporate Services | 98% | 98% |
| ✅ | P:ITS011_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by IT Services per quarter | Head of Corporate Services | 0 | 0 |
| ✅ | P:ITS012_6b.4 Percentage of complaints received that were upheld/partially upheld | Head of Corporate Services | 0% | 0% |
| ✅ | P:LS013_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by Legal Services | Head of Corporate Services | 0 | 2 |
| ✅ | P:LS014_6b.4 Percentage of all complaints closed quarterly by Legal Services that were upheld / partially upheld | Head of Corporate Services | 0% | 0% |
| ✅ | P:LS091_6b.5 Percentage of Taxi/Private Hire Car Applications Not Granted or Refused within 90 Days | Head of Corporate Services | 4% | 6% |
| ✅ | P:PIS011_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by the Performance and Improvement Service per quarter | Head of Corporate Services | 0 | 1 |
| ✅ | P:PIS023_7b.1 Percentage of Sickness Absence in Performance and Improvement Service | Head of Corporate Services | 2.11% | 3.6% |

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| Status | PI Code & Short Name | Head of Service | Value | Target |
|--------|---------------------|-----------------|-------|--------|
| ✅ | P:PS301_9b.1a Industrial Portfolio - Percentage of Total Units Let | Head of Finance and Property Services | 94.86% | 90% |
| ✅ | P:PS303_9b.1a Office Portfolio - Percentage of Office Units Let | Head of Finance and Property Services | 97.22% | 90% |
| ✅ | P:REV002_9b Percentage of Non Domestic Rates (Business Rates) received in the year | Head of Finance and Property Services | 57.02% | 55.55% |
| ✅ | P:REV047_9b.1a Percentage of income collected in the current year from Council Tax | Head of Finance and Property Services | 58.63% | 54.82% |
| ✅ | P:REV123_6b.4 The percentage of complaints received by the Revenues Unit that were upheld or partially upheld | Head of Finance and Property Services | 15% | 25% |
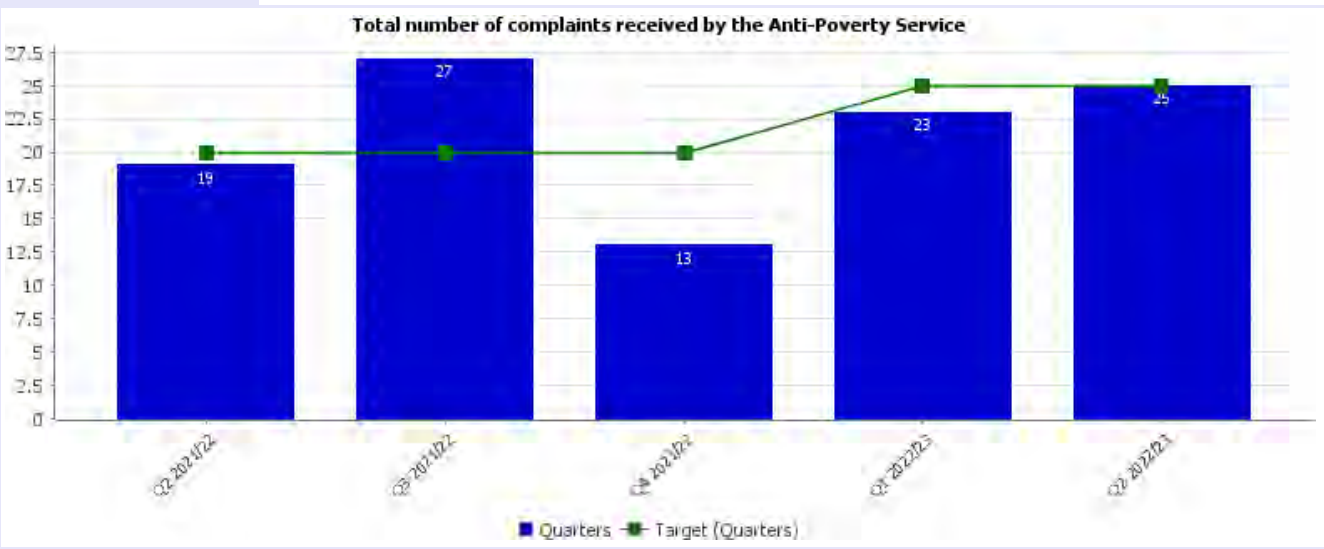
**Traffic Light: Unknown**

| Status | PI Code & Short Name | Head of Service | Value | Target |
|--------|---------------------|-----------------|-------|--------|
| ❓ | P:IA067_6b.4 The percentage of complaints received by Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud that were upheld or partially upheld against the total complaints closed in full. | Head of Finance and Property Services | N/A | 0% |
| ❓ | P:PIS013_6b.4 Percentage of all complaints closed by the Performance and Improvement Service that were upheld / partially upheld per quarter | Head of Corporate Services | N/A | 25% |

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**APPENDIX 2**

# PDSP – Corporate Policy & Resources Quarterly Scorecard Report

**Generated on:** 16 November 2022 17:00

**Traffic Light**

| PI Code & Short Name | P:APS017_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by the Anti-Poverty Service | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the total number of complaints received by the Anti-Poverty Service. It is the total number of complaints received by the service at stage one (complaints that the council aims to deal with within 5 working days) and those received directly at stage two (more complex complaints that the council aims to deal with within 20 working days). Note: This is to ensure complaints escalated from stage 1 and stage 2 are not double counted.<br><br>All complaints are collected throughout each quarter and the complaints are analysed to identify trends and improvements to the way the service is delivered to customers.<br><br>Complaints are collected from all areas of the service including the Advice Shop, Benefits, Scottish Welfare Fund, Blue Badge and Education Benefits teams. | **PI Owner(s):** zAPS_PIAdmin; Nahid Hanif |



Total number of complaints received by the Anti-Poverty Service

| | |
|---|---|
| | Q2 2022/23 result |
| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 25 |
| **Current Target:** | 25 |
| **Red Threshold:** | 27.5 |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 26.25 |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**
The Anti-Poverty Service investigates and manages all complaints by following corporate procedure. We closely monitor and analyse complaints to identify any trends and to make improvements in our service.

**2022/23**

**Quarter 2 -** During this period the Anti-Poverty Service received 25 complaints. This is a slight increase compared to the 23 complaints received in the previous quarter. The complaints were relating to standard of service, claims being processed incorrectly, delay in processing, employee attitude, standard of service, policy related, waiting and response time, and poor communication. 19 complaints were not upheld, one complaint was partly upheld and five complaints were upheld during this period.

**Quarter 1 -** During period the Anti-Poverty Service received 23 complaints. This is significant increase compared to the 13 complaints received in the previous quarter. The complaints were relating to standard of service, claims being processed incorrectly, delay in processing, employee attitude, failure to reply, policy related, waiting and response time, and poor communication. 19 complaints were not upheld, three complaints were partly upheld and one complaint was upheld during this period. Three complaints were escalated to stage 2. 95% of stage one complaints were completed within 5 days and 100% of stage 2 complaint were completed within the 20 day target.

**2021/22**

**Quarter 4 -** During this period the Anti-Poverty Service received 13 complaints. This is significant decrease compared to the 27 complaints received in the previous quarter. The complaints were relating to standard of service, claims being processed incorrectly, delay in processing, employee attitude and discretionary payment decision. 8 complaints were not upheld, two complaints were partly upheld and three complaints were upheld during this period. One complaint

2
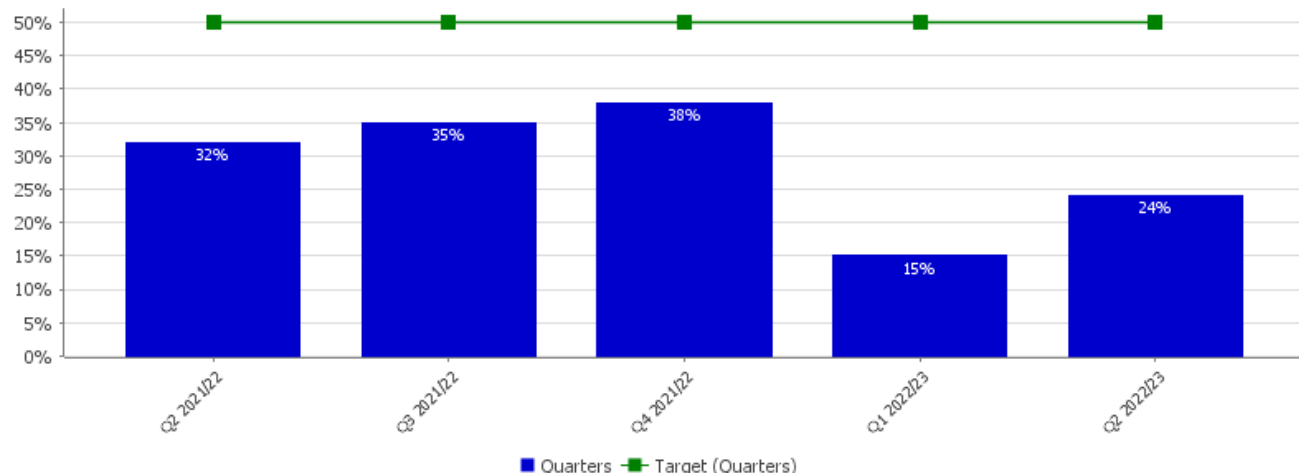
was escalated to stage 2 and 83% of complaints were managed within the 5 day target.

**Quarter 3 -** During this period the Anti-Poverty Service received 27 complaints. This is significant increase compared to the 19 complaints received in the previous quarter. The complaints were relating to standard of service, claims being processed incorrectly, delay in processing, employee attitude, failure to reply, policy related, waiting and response time, and poor communication. 20 complaints were not upheld, three complaints were partly upheld and four complaints were upheld during this period. One complaint was escalated to stage 2 and 92% of complaints were managed within the 5 day target.

**Quarter 2 -** During this period the Anti-Poverty Service received 19 complaints. This is significant increase compared to the 8 complaints received in the previous quarter. The complaints were relating to delay in processing, claims being processed incorrectly, employee attitude and incorrect or conflicting advice, poor communication and standard of service. 12 complaints were not upheld, two complaints were partly upheld and four complaints were upheld during this period. One complaint was escalated to stage 2 and 94% of complaints were managed within the 5 day target.

**Target 2022/23** - Our target has increased to 25 complaints per quarter. Due to the ongoing economic recovery, increased cost of living and the increased volume of customer contacts across the broadening service, customers face significant challenges with limited support available. Delivery of difficult messages along with limited available support suggests the service may face increased numbers of complaints. We have set our trigger levels to early identify trends.

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| PI Code & Short Name | **P:APS018_6b.4 The percentage of complaints received by the Anti-Poverty Service that were upheld / partially upheld against the total complaints closed in full** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the total number of complaints received by the Anti Poverty Service which were upheld or partially upheld, as a percentage of all complaints received.<br><br>All complaints are collected throughout each quarter and the complaints are analysed to identify trends and improvements to the way the service is delivered to customers.<br><br>Complaints are collected from all areas of the service including the Advice Shop, Benefits, Scottish Welfare Fund, Blue Badge and Education Benefits teams. | **PI Owner(s):** | zAPS_PIAdmin; Nahid Hanif |



The percentage of complaints received by the Anti-Poverty Service that were upheld / partially upheld against the total complaints closed in full

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 24% |
| Current Target: | 50% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 55% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 52.5% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The Anti Poverty Service investigates and manages all complaints by following corporate procedure. We closely monitor and analyse complaints to identify any trends and to make improvements in our service.

**2022/23**

**Quarter 2 -** During this period the Anti-Poverty Service received 25 complaints. 24% of these complaints have been upheld or partly upheld. This is an increase compared to the 15% of the 23 complaints received in the previous quarter. The complaints were relating to standard of service, claims being processed incorrectly, delay in processing, employee attitude, standard of service, policy related, waiting and response time, and poor communication. 19 complaints were not upheld, one complaint was partly upheld and five complaints were upheld during this period.

**Quarter 1** - During period the Anti-Poverty Service received 23 complaints. This is significant increase compared to the 13 complaints received in the previous quarter. The complaints were relating to standard of service, claims being processed incorrectly, delay in processing, employee attitude, failure to reply, policy related, waiting and response time, and poor communication. 19 complaints were not upheld, three complaints were partly upheld and one complaint was upheld during this period. Three complaints were escalated to stage 2.

**2021/22**

**Quarter 4 -** During this period the Anti-Poverty Service received 13 complaints. This is significant decrease compared to the 27 complaints received in the previous quarter. The complaints were relating to standard of service, claims being processed incorrectly, delay in processing, employee attitude and discretionary payment decision. 8 complaints were not upheld, two complaints were partly upheld and three complaints were upheld during this period. 38% of complaints were upheld/ partially upheld during this period and this is a slight increase from the previous quarter.

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**Quarter 3 -** During this period the Anti-Poverty Service received 27 complaints. This is significant increase compared to the 19 complaints received in the previous quarter. The complaints were relating to standard of service, claims being processed incorrectly, delay in processing, employee attitude, failure to reply, policy related, waiting and response time, and poor communication. 20 complaints were not upheld, three complaints were partly upheld and four complaints were upheld during this period. 35% of complaints were upheld of partly upheld during this period.

**Quarter 2 -** During this period the Anti-Poverty Service received 19 complaints. This is significant increase compared to the 8 complaints received in the previous quarter. The complaints were relating to delay in processing, claims being processed incorrectly, employee attitude and incorrect or conflicting advice, poor communication and standard of service. 12 complaints were not upheld, two complaints were partly upheld and four complaints were upheld during this period. 32% of complaints were upheld or partly upheld during this period,

**2022/23 Target** - Our target will remain at 50% for this period.

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| PI Code & Short Name | **P:APS019_6b.5 Percentage of Blue Badges processed within 28 working days (quarterly)** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This indicator measures the percentage blue badge applications that are processed by the service within 28 days on a quarterly basis. This is a service standard to ensure that blue badges are processed in a timely manner. There are two distinct categories of blue badge application, the first is those that automatically qualify by meeting eligibility criteria. The second is discretionary applications, which require desktop assessment and in some cases an Independent Mobility Assessment to assess eligibility. The service aims to process all blue badge applications within twenty eight days to ensure that customers receive a timely decision and blue badges are issued to eligible customers as quickly as possible. | **PI Owner(s):** zAPS_PIAdmin; Nahid Hanif |



Percentage of Blue Badges processed within 28 working days (quarterly)

Q2 2022/23 result

79.93%

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 79.93% |
| **Current Target:** | 75% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 67.5% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 71.25% |
| **Categories:** | |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

In line with the information below, the target for Blue Badge administration will remain at 75% within 28 days for 2022/23. This is in recognition of the new Code of Practice due to be introduced within the first couple of months of the 22/23 financial year and the unknown impact this may have on our current performance.

The new processing system for Blue Badges W360 has been developed to provide statistical information on Blue Badges. Over the last quarter, analysis has been done on what information is available and how best to report the performance against the expectation of Transport Scotland in relation to the delivery of Blue Badge administration. The estimated wait time for a Blue Badge from application to receipt is 12 weeks as reported on Transport Scotland website. On analysis of the data available to us, these timescales can be met by some considerable margin. In line with the new reporting tool and analysis of our current performance, the target for Blue Badge administration is being retained at 75% of all claims processed within 28 days. This wait time is in line with current working practices and meets customer expectation. There are 4 different types of Badge, all with differing timelines for completion depending on their complexity. These are Automatic badges; Discretionary badges; Risk In traffic and Organisational Badges. The reported performance will be an average across all badge types.

Q2 2022/23 - 79.93% of all Blue Badge applications received were processed within 28 days. This is above target and is a result of additional resource being trained on Blue Badge work to help bring the processing within target. During the 2nd quarter, 1385 application were received. Performance will continue to be monitored.

Q1 2022/23 - 74.83% of all Blue Badge applications were processed within 28 days. This is under target as resource, normally directed to Blue Badges was on occasion redirected to work on other priority areas of work. It is expected that this performance will improve as the overall workload of the team starts to align with pre Pandemic statistics. The performance will continue to be monitored.

Q4 - 2021/22 - 84.06% of all Blue Badge applications were processed within 28 days. This is an excellent achievement given the staff working on Blue Badges also work on National Entitlement Cards for both Bus Pass and Young Scot and within this quarter were dealing with the new Under 22 travel scheme. We will monitor this performance going into the new financial year as the new Blue Badge Code of Practice is introduced to determine if any changes to the scheme impact our performance.

Q3 - 2021/22 - 75.88% of all Blue Badge applications were processed within 28 days. Within this quarter, we were working to introduce the new U22 Young Scot Travel scheme including a new NEC software system and the staff

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responsible for Blue Badges are also responsible for the administration all NEC work. Despite staff being taken away for training, learning a new software system and taking part in discussions about how the new U22 scheme was going to be administered, they still kept the processing of Blue Badges within target.

Q2 - 2021/22 - 79% of all Blue Badge applications were processed within 28 days. Within this quarter, we had staff holidays due to the school break and at times it was not possible to divert additional resource to the Blue Badge team due to significant pressures caused by additional and existing workstreams. However, the performance remains above target at 79% against a target of 75%.

7

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:APS041_7b.1 Cumulative percentage of sickness absence within the Anti-Poverty Service** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the cumulative percentage of sickness absence within the Anti-Poverty Service. For each financial year, we aim to have equal to or less than the council's target of 3.6% sickness absence. The SPI figure provided by HR is used to populate this indicator. | **PI Owner(s):** | zAPS_PIAdmin; Nahid Hanif |

Cumulative percentage of sickness absence within the Anti-Poverty Service

| | |
|---|---|
| | September 2022 result |
| **Last Updated:** | September 2022 |
| **Status:** | ⬢ |
| **Current Value:** | 8% |
| **Current Target:** | 3.6% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 4.8% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 4.31% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

This key performance indicator was introduced for the Anti-Poverty Service which was developed April 2019. Recording of this information commenced in May 2019. Previously, this information was record under the Advice Shop and Revenues and Benefits.

**2022/23**

**September** - The reported figure for September is 8.00% which is an increase from the previous month which was 7.82%. In total there were 974 sick days out of a total 12,171 target days available between 01st April 2022 and 30th September 2022. 76% of absences were due to long term sickness. The service continues monitor in line with the council's supporting attendance at work policy.

**August** - The reported figure for August is 7.82% which is a decrease from the previous month which was 7.86%. In total there were 790 sick days out of a total 10,104 target days available in between 1st April 2022 and 31st August 2022. 76% of absences were due to long term sickness. The service continues monitor in line with the council's supporting attendance at work policy.

**July** - The reported figure for July is 7.86% which is a decrease from the previous month which was 7.89%. In total there were 631 sick days out of a total 8,028 target days available in between 1st April 2022 and 31st July 2022. 78% of absences were due to long term sickness. The service continues monitor in line with the council's supporting attendance at work policy.

**June** - The reported figure for June is 7.89% which is an increase from the previous month which was 7.27%. In total there were 475 sick days out of a total 6,017 target days available in between 1st April 2022 and 30th June 2022. 84% of absences were due to long term sickness. The service continues monitor in line with the council's supporting attendance at work policy.

**May** - The reported figure for May is 7.27% which is a decrease from the previous month which was 7.87%. In total there were 291 sick days out of a total 4,001 target days available in between 1st April 2022 and 31st May 2022. 79% of absences were due to long term sickness. The service continues monitor in line with the council's supporting attendance at work policy.

**April** - The reported figure for April is 7.87% which is an increase from the previous month which was 7.36%. In total there were 152 sick days out of a total 1,932 target days available in between 1st April 2022 and 30th April 2022. 83% of absences were due to long term sickness. The service continues monitor in line with the council's supporting attendance at work policy.

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**2021/22**

**March -** The reported figure for March is 6.65% which is an increase from the previous month which was 6.49%. In total there were 1,612 sick days out of a total 24,254 target days available in between 1st April 2021 and 30th March 2022. 90% of absences in March were due to long term sickness. The service continues monitor in line with the council's supporting attendance at work policy.

**February -** The reported figure for February is 6.49% which is an increase from the previous month which was 6.21%. In total there were 1,468 sick days out of a total 22,614 target days available in between 1st April 2021 and 28th February 2022. 86% of absences in February were due to long term sickness. The service continues monitor in line with the council's supporting attendance at work policy.
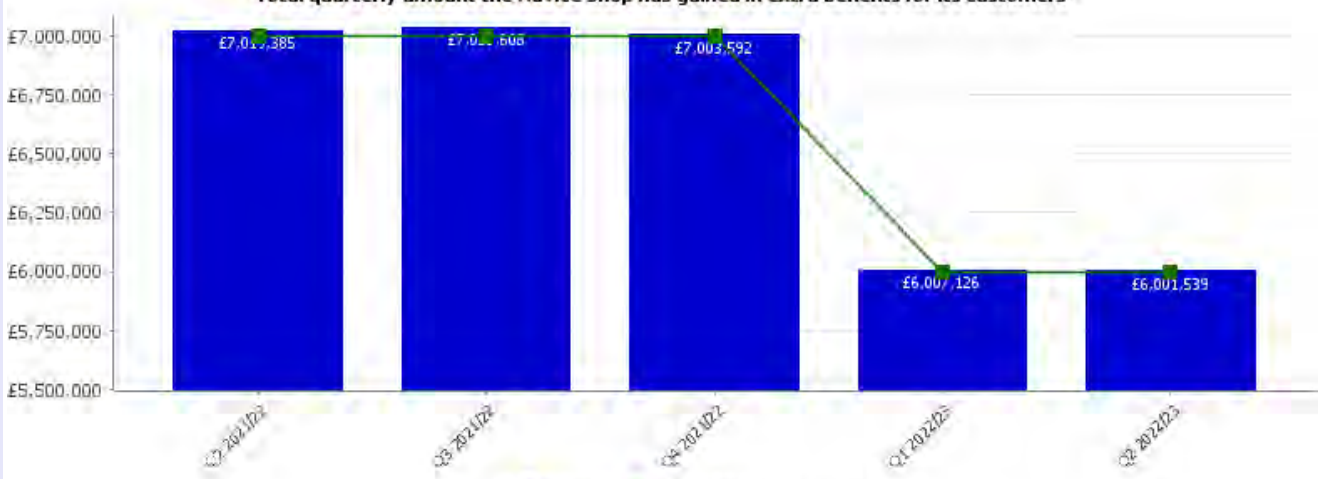
**January -** The reported figure for January is 6.21% which is an increase from the previous month which was 5.79%. In total there were 1,285 sick days out of a total 20,689 target days available in between 1st April 2021 and 31st January 2022. 88% of absences in January were due to long term sickness. The service continues monitor in line with the council's supporting attendance at work policy.

**December -** The reported figure for December is 5.79% which is an increase from the previous month which was 5.69%. In total there were 1064 sick days out of a total 18,377 target days available in between 01st April 2021 and 31st December 2021. 90% of absences in December were due to long term sickness. The service continues monitor in line with the council's supporting attendance at work policy.

**November -** The reported figure for November is 5.69% which is an increase from the previous month which was 5.6%. In total there were 153 sick days out of a total 2,023 target days available in November and 915 sick days out of a total of 16,091 since April 2021. 88.42% of absences in were due to long term sickness. The service continues monitor in line with the council's supporting attendance at work policy.

**October -** The reported figure for October is 5.6% which is an increase from the previous month which was 5.5%. In total there were 764 sick days out of a total 13,647 target days since April 2021. 90.45% of absences were due to long term sickness. The service continues monitor in line with the council's supporting attendance at work policy.

**Target 2022/23 -** Our target will remain at 3.6% in line with the WLC target.

9

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:APS060_9b.1a Total quarterly amount the Advice Shop has gained in extra benefits for its customers** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the amount the Advice Shop has gained in extra benefits for its customers.<br><br>Information is collected as the service is informed of benefit outcomes and this is reported on a quarterly basis.<br><br>This figure includes any successful benefit claims and appeals we help customers with. These figures can vary due to many factors such as the time it takes the Department for Work and Pensions to make decisions and for the Appeals Service to set tribunals but these average out over the year. | **PI Owner(s):** | zAPS_PIAdmin; Nahid Hanif |



Total quarterly amount the Advice Shop has gained in extra benefits for its customers

| | |
|---|---|
| | Q2 2022/23 result |
| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | £6,001,539 |
| **Current Target:** | £6,000,000 |
| **Red Threshold:** | £5,760,000 |
| **Amber Threshold:** | £5,910,000 |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary**

We closely monitor our target on a daily basis and have established partnerships which allow us to target those most in need. Welfare reforms continue to have an impact on this performance indicator and the service has a proactive approach in developing and implementing targeted campaigns and initiatives to meet customer need.

**2022/23**

**Quarter 2 -** During this period the service has gained 6,001,538 in extra benefits for customers. This is a slight decrease from the previous quarter. Service delivery has significantly changed over this period due to Covid-19 and the service continues to adapt and develop new initiatives to deliver the service through more digital channels.

**Quarter 1 -** During this period the service has gained £6,007,125 in extra benefits for customers. This is a decrease from the previous quarter due to the target changing from £7m to £6m. Service delivery has significantly changed over this period due to Covid-19 and the service continues to adapt and develop new initiatives to deliver the service through more digital channels.

**2021/22**
**Quarter 4 -** During this period the service has gained £7,003,592 in extra benefits for customers. This is a slight decrease from the previous quarter and is mainly due to now being up to date with benefit outcome decisions. Service delivery has significantly changed over this period due to Covid-19 and the service continues to adapt and develop new initiatives to deliver the service through more digital channels.

**Quarter 3 -** During this period the service has gained £7,033,607 in extra benefits for customers. This is a slight increase from the previous quarter and is mainly due to now being up to date with benefit outcome decisions. Service delivery has significantly changed over this period due to Covid-19 and the service continues to adapt and develop new initiatives to deliver the service through more digital channels.

**Quarter 2 -** During this period the service has gained £7,019,385 in extra benefits for customers. This is a slight decrease from the previous quarter and is mainly due to now being up to date with benefit outcome decisions. Service

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delivery has significantly changed over this period due to Covid-19 and the service continues to adapt and develop new initiatives to deliver the service through more digital channels.

**Quarter 1 -** During this period the service has gained £7,069,988 in extra benefits for customers. This is a decrease from the previous quarter and is mainly due to now being up to date with befit outcome decisions. Service delivery has significantly changed over this period due to Covid-19 and the service continues to adapt and develop new initiatives to deliver the service through more digital channels.

**2022/23 Target -** Our target has been set to £6,000,000 per quarter for this period. Due to the ongoing economic recovery, increased cost of living and the increased volume of customer contacts across the broadening service, customers face significant challenges with limited support available. Increased complexity of enquiries, an increased demand of support in areas such as Foodbank and Fuel Vouchers along with continued changes in Welfare Benefits such as Universal Credit and Adult and Child Disability Payments has meant there has been a downwards shift in the amount and value of financial gains available to customers.

11

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:APS077_9b Housing Benefit monthly new claims** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the average number of days to process Housing Benefit new claims on a monthly basis. The average number of days is calculated from the date of receipt of the application to the date that a decision is made. Receipt of a claim for Housing Benefit at any designated office will be the starting point at which the count for the processing time begins. The count for the processing time stops the day the decision is made. This data is gathered by the Single Housing Benefit Extract tool which reports to the Department for Work and Pensions on all data entered on the Housing Benefit processing system. This information allows management to monitor ongoing performance and to compare performance against other Local Authorities. The date that the SHBE is run differs from month to month and is set by the DWP, with the performance information being recorded against the month the data is gathered, regardless of the date of collection within the month. | **PI Owner(s):** | zAPS_PIAdmin; Nahid Hanif |



Housing Benefit monthly new claims

| September 2022 result | |
|---|---|
| | 15.4 — 14.28 — 6 — 13.93 — 30 |
| **Last Updated:** | September 2022 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 13.93 |
| **Current Target:** | 14 |
| **Red Threshold:** | 15.4 |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 14.28 |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:** The target for 2022/23 remained at 14 days. The target has been set based on last year's performance and factoring in a number of changes that will impact the Benefit Team over the coming year.

**2022/23**
September 22 - Performance has dipped this month with 99 claims being processed on average within 13.93 days but remains within target.
August 22 - Performance has improved this month with 114 claims being processed, on average within 10.33 days
July 22 - Performance has improved this month with 110 new Housing Benefit claims processed, on average, within 12.25 days.
June 22 - Performance has improved and has returned within target with 114 new Housing Benefit claims processed, on average, within 13.75 days.
May 22- Performance has dipped significantly this month and is out with target due to resources being redirected to administer Winter Support Payments and additional enquiries as a result of a Council Tax Reduction system issue with 84 New Housing Benefit claims being process ion average within 15.63 days.
April 22 - Performance has improved with 121 new Housing Benefit claims processed, on average, within 12.31 days.

**2021/22**
March 22 - Performance dipped this month due to system down time as a result of year end processing with 104 claims being processed within 13.23 days.
February 22 - Performance has improved this month with 103 claims being processed on average within 11.33 days.
January 22 - Performance has improved this month with 111 claims being processed on average within 10.85 days.
December 21 - Performance has stabilised this month with 97 claims being processed on average within 11.82 days.
November 21 - Performance has improved this month with 141 claims being processed on average within 11.45 days.

12

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CC014_6b.3 Total number of complaints received per quarter | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the total number of complaints received quarterly relating to Corporate Communications. Performance is reviewed on a regular basis and reported quarterly to ensure that there is sufficient focus on the quality and standard of customer service. The data for this performance indicator is captured through the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, Social Media and Councillor Enquiries. All complaints received are analysed to identify improvements to the quality of the service and the way it is delivered to customers. | **PI Owner(s):** zCC_PIAdmin; Garry Heron |



Total number of complaints received per quarter

Q2 2022/23 result

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 1 |
| Current Target: | 0 |
| **Red Threshold:** | 5 |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 2 |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The service handle complaints made by members of public through social media and councillor enquiries, the service receives a small number of complaints.

**2022/23**
Q2 2022/23 - the service received 1 complaint. One in relation to inaccurate web information.
Q1 2022/23 - the service received 3 complaints. Two in relation to inaccurate web information. Another in relation to an issue accessing a web form.

**2021/22**
Q4 2021/22 - the service received no complaints
Q3 2021/22 - the service received 2 complaints. One in relation to social media and another in relation to an issue accessing a web page.
Q2 2021/22 - the service received 2 complaints. Both in relation to information provided on the web which was out of date.

Complaints are handled following corporate procedures and analysed to identify trends.

The target for 2022/23 will remain at 0 per quarter, this is to reflect the small number of complaints the service received in previous quarters. Targets are reviewed annually.

13

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:CC016_6b.4 The percentage of complaints by Corporate Communications that were upheld/part upheld per quarter** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the overall percentage of Corporate Communications complaints that have been investigated and upheld or part upheld during each quarter.<br><br>For each quarter the total number of complaints responded to within relevant timescale is divided by the total number of stage one complaints received to determine a percentage. The data for this indicator is extracted from the Customer Relationship Management (CRM).<br><br>The complaints are analysed to identify improvements to the way the service is delivered to customers. | **PI Owner(s):** zCC_PIAdmin; Garry Heron |



The percentage of complaints by Corporate Communications that were upheld/part upheld per quarter

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 0% |
| **Current Target:** | 0% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 0% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 0% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

**2022/23**
Q2 2022/23 0 complaints were upheld as the complaint related to information provided by another service. The issue was rectified by the service
Q1 2022/23 3 complaints were received and 2 were upheld. Both related to incorrect web information that related to another service providing incorrect data

**2021/22**
Q4 2021/22 0 complaints were upheld as none were one received
Q3 2021/22 2 complaints were received but none were upheld as one related to the customer web browser not working and another related to a misunderstanding on the customer's part.
Q2 2021/22 2 complaints were received but none were upheld as the web content related to other services

Please note, where there have been no complaints received within the quarter, no value will be added to the chart. Therefore, this will show as blank or missing a one-year period on the chart.

The target for 2022/23 will remain at 0% based on previous years' results.

14

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CC031_7b.1 Percentage of sickness absence in Corporate Communications | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures, as a percentage, the total level of sickness absence in the Corporate Communications team in Corporate Services. The data is provided by the council's Human Resource Services on a monthly basis and is tracked and monitored to ensure absence is managed appropriately in the service and any corresponding impact on performance is understood and managed. | **PI Owner(s):** zCC_PIAdmin; Garry Heron |



Percentage of sickness absence in Corporate Communications

September 2022 result

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | September 2022 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 2.3% |
| **Current Target:** | 3.6% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 3.85% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 3.74% |
| **Categories:** | Absence - sickness; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**
The trend highlights that absence has been below the council target for the entire reporting period. Due to the small size of the team a single absence can have an impact on absence levels.

Since April 2021 there has been few absences which is reflected in the trend. The trend highlights a significant rise in absence in April 2022 and the subsequent months and this was due to one member of staff in the service having a long-term and serious illness.

Absence is monitored and addressed in line with the council's Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedures.

The corporate target is 3.6%.

15

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:CC081_9b.1a Percentage of new social media followers on the West Lothian Council sites per quarter** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This Performance indicator measures the percentage increase or decrease of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram followers on the main council sites. The data is obtained from the social media platforms and is calculated by comparing the change in numbers and calculating what the percentage change.<br>This indicator allows the corporate communications team to monitor and measure the usage of key social media channels allowing us to evaluate staffing resources and determine the appropriate content required to attract new service users to this communications channel. | **PI Owner(s):** zCC_PIAdmin; Garry Heron |



Percentage of new social media followers on the West Lothian Council sites per quarter



Q2 2022/23 result

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 3.4% |
| **Current Target:** | 1% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 0.25% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 0.5% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The quarterly chart for number of social media likes generally shows a steady increase of around 1% to 3% for most periods prior to 2020/21. This reflects the growing numbers of residents using social media and choosing to follow our channels. Growth has slowed since then as we reach closer to a saturation point when the majority of local residents with social media follow at least one of our channels.

We have reduced the target for 22/23 to 1% as the previous target of 2% is not considered achievable. A 1% increase still represents close to 900 new followers every three months, which is very challenging to reach. Our existing large following on social media means the majority of residents who use social media and want to engage with the council are likely to already follow us.
We also no longer have a dedicated social media officer to enable us to target resources on driving up growth and we are unable to meet the increasing demand from residents for customer service via social media, as this is not currently supported by the council.

We recorded a 3.4% rise in Q2 2022/23, with the majority of new followers on our Facebook channels. This is the largest rise in close to two years, and can be attributed to a number of high profile posts including updates on strike action and events around the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

We will try and improve growth on our Instagram channel in particular during 22/23, after the channels saw a 3.7% rise in Q1 2022/23. Instagram has grown into one of the most popular social media platforms in recent years, and we will look to increase of use of it as it has more potential to grow our followers than other channels.

16

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CPU017a_7b.1 Percentage of sickness absence in Corporate Procurement Unit | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the percentage of sickness absence within the Corporate Procurement Unit on a month by month basis. For each month, the service aims to have equal to or less than 3.6 percent sickness absence. The monthly sickness statistics used for this performance indicator are recorded from data issued by HR services. | PI Owner(s): | zCPU_PIAdmin; Angela Gray |

**Percentage of sickness absence in Corporate Procurement Unit**



**September 2022 result**



8.08%

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | September 2022 |
| Status: | 🛑 |
| Current Value: | 8.08% |
| Current Target: | 3.6% |
| Red Threshold: | 4.8% |
| Amber Threshold: | 4.2% |
| Categories: | Absence - sickness; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**
The trend shows that, generally performance has exceeded the target of 3.6%.

Performance from February 2022 to April 2022, has been varied due to intermittent absence across the team.

All absences are managed in accordance with the Council's sickness absence policy and procedure. Within a small team of 13.5FTE, carrying 4 vacancies during the period, 2 longer term absence adds pressure for remaining staff, and with remaining vacancies only recently filled, this has had an overall impact on service delivery.

Target performance will continue to be set at the Corporate Services standard of 3.6%, with CPU will continuing to monitor performance in this area.

17

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CPU019b_9b.1a Percentage of relevant compliant council expenditure per quarter | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the percentage of relevant Supplies, Services and Works expenditure covered by contracts awarded in line with standing orders. Relevant Spend is identified as being spend which is influenceable by the Corporate Procurement Unit, Non influenceable spend is identified and removed from the overall spend to allow for a more accurate calculation. Calculated on a quarterly basis, the service identifies the council's contracted suppliers from the Corporate Contract Management System (CCMS) and measures their spend against the total council spend within the council's purchase to pay systems. Levels of spend with non-contracted suppliers is monitored by the service on a quarterly basis to ensure that the year-end target performance is achieved. This performance indicator is related to ensuring that the target savings agreed for the next five years can be achieved through effective procurement activity. | PI Owner(s): zCPU_PIAdmin; Angela Gray |



Percentage of relevant compliant council expenditure per quarter

| Quarter | Value |
|---|---|
| Q2 2021/22 | 92% |
| Q3 2021/22 | 94% |
| Q4 2021/22 | 95% |
| Q1 2022/23 | 95% |
| Q2 2022/23 | 95% |

Legend: Quarters — Target (Quarters)



Q2 2022/23 result

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 95% |
| Current Target: | 99% |
| Red Threshold: | 89.1% |
| Amber Threshold: | 94.05% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary**

Performance in this indicator has been varied since Q4 2020/21.

This is predominantly as a result of the new Procurement Thresholds in 2015/16 and the approach for non-regulated procurement continues to allow flexibility in contracting options.

CPU will continue to enforce compliant spend to ensure performance is maintained at or above target levels.

The target for performance for 2022/23 will remain at 99%, in line with the Procurement Strategy Target. The strategic target and method of calculation for this indicator will be reviewed for the new strategy period.

18

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CPU047c_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by the Corporate Procurement Unit on a Quarterly basis | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This indicator measures the total number of complaints received by the Corporate Procurement Unit. It is the total number of complaints received by the Corporate Procurement Unit at stage one (complaints that the council aims to deal with within 5 working days) and those received directly at stage two (more complex complaints that the council aims to deal with within 20 working days).<br><br>Note: This is to ensure complaints escalated from stage 1 and stage 2 are not double counted. | PI Owner(s): zCPU_PIAdmin; Angela Gray |

Total number of complaints received by the Corporate Procurement Unit on a Quarterly basis

Q2 2022/23 result

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 0 |
| Current Target: | 0 |
| Red Threshold: | 3 |
| Amber Threshold: | 1 |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

A total of 1 complaint has been received during 2022/23, and was upheld.

External customers are advised on the corporate complaint procedure from the CPU internet pages. They can also raise questions of clarification through formal tendering and contract notices also provide information on Procedures for review.

Customers are also surveyed following completion of tender exercises.

The target for 2022/23 will remain at 0, in line with the corporate target.

19

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CPU047d_6b.4 The percentage of complaints received by the Corporate Procurement Unit that were upheld / partially upheld against the total complaints closed in full | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This indicator measures the total number of complaints received by the Corporate Procurement Unit which were upheld or partially upheld, as a percentage of all complaints received. It is the total number of complaints received by the Corporate Procurement Unit at stage one (complaints that the council aims to deal with within 5 working days) and those received directly at stage two (more complex complaints that the council aims to deal with within 20 working days). | PI Owner(s): zCPU_PIAdmin; Angela Gray |


The percentage of complaints received by the Corporate Procurement Unit that were upheld / partially upheld against the total complaints closed in full

| | |
|---|---|
| Q2 2022/23 result | |
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 0% |
| Current Target: | 0% |
| Red Threshold: | 10% |
| Amber Threshold: | 5% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

A total of one complaint has been received during 2022/23 and was not upheld.

External customers are advised on the corporate complaint procedure from the CPU internet pages. They can also raise questions of clarification through formal tendering and contract notices also provide information on Procedures for review.

In lieu of Internal customer complaints procedure, customers are surveyed following completion of tender exercises.

The target for 2022/23 has been set at 0 in line with previous year's performance.

20

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CSC007mq_6a.7 Customer Service Centre (CSC) Generic - Percentage of customers who rated the overall quality of the service as good or excellent | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the percentage of customers who rated the overall quality of service as 'good' or 'excellent'. This information is gathered through using our monthly survey and a number of customers are randomly selected. The target is reviewed annually. The data from surveys is analysed to identify service improvements. | **PI Owner(s):** zCSC_PIAdmin; Anna Brash |



Customer Service Centre (CSC) Generic - Percentage of customers who rated the overall quality of the service as good or excellent

Q2 2021/22: 97.0%
Q3 2021/22: 97.6%
Q4 2021/22: 99.1%
Q1 2022/23: 97.7%
Q2 2022/23: 97.9%

Legend: Quarters, Target (Quarters)



Cumulative result for Q2 2022/23 as of October 2022

87.0%
92.0%
70.0%  97.9%  100.0%

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 97.9% |
| **Current Target:** | 97.0% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 87.0% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 92.0% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

The fluctuations in the overall performance are largely influenced by a number of factors, such as the staffing resourcing levels in the CSC, length of time that customers are waiting to have calls answered, changes and disruption in service delivery throughout the organisation, but many surveys are returned with little or no comment on the cause of customers level of satisfaction. We encourage the CSC team to promote and request customer feedback whenever appropriate to do so, which enables CSC to improve service delivery and customer satisfaction.

**2022/23**
Quarter 2 - 97.9% based on 375 customers rating the overall performance as excellent or good from 383 surveys completed. Customer satisfaction levels increased by 0.2% from the previous quarter and although this is an increase in satisfaction ongoing levels of absence and a number of vacant posts continue to impact the team's performance. CSC are recruiting to fill all vacant posts and training is ongoing for new members of staff.

Quarter 1 - 97.7% based on 468 customers rating the overall performance as excellent or good from 479 surveys completed.
Customer satisfaction levels decreased by 1.4% from the previous quarter, ongoing levels of unplanned absence as well as a number of vacant posts continue to impact this teams performance. CSC are currently recruiting to fill all vacant posts and 5 new staff have completed training and are now calls handling.

**2021/22**
Quarter 4 - 99.1% based on 626 customers rating the overall performance as excellent or good from 632 surveys completed. Customer satisfaction levels increased from the previous quarter by 1.5% and although an increase in performance ongoing levels of unplanned absence as well as a number of vacant posts continue to impact this team's performance. CSC are currently recruiting to fill all vacant posts.

Quarter 3 - 97.6% based on 319 customers rating the overall performance as excellent or good from 327 surveys completed. Customer satisfaction levels increased by 0.6% from the previous period, fewer surveys were completed during this period as priority was given to handling incoming calls. A number of vacant posts throughout the service and unplanned absence continue to impact the performance of this team. CSC are recruiting to fill vacant posts and all absences are managed in line with the Managing Attendance at Work policy.

Quarter 2 - 97% based on 415 customers rating the overall performance as excellent or good from 428 surveys completed. There is no clear reason from customers comments for this decreased level of customer satisfaction however a number of vacant posts throughout the service continue to impact the performance of this team. CSC are currently recruiting to fill vacant posts.

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In 2022/23 - following a review, this target has remained at 97% as this is deemed to be an achievable target based on the previous 12 months performance.

22

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CSC062m_6b.3 Total Number of Complaints against Customer Service Centre (CSC) | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the total number of complaints received against Customer Service Centre that have been investigated during each month. The data for this indicator is extracted from the customer relationship management system (CRM). The complaints are analysed to identify improvements to the way the service is delivered to customers. | PI Owner(s): zCSC_PIAdmin; Anna Brash |



Total Number of Complaints against Customer Service Centre (CSC)

September 2022 result

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | September 2022 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 3 |
| Current Target: | 7 |
| Red Threshold: | 10 |
| Amber Threshold: | 8 |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

Throughout the period the number of complaints received by the service within a month has ranged between 1 complaints in December 2021 and March 2022 to a peak of 9 complaints in June 2022. Generally, increases in the number of complaints can be attributed to periods when the call volumes are high, and/or waiting times have increased. Periods, when the number of complaints have increased correspond with changes to service delivery throughout the organisation required to meet changes in lockdown restrictions. Customers express dissatisfaction with employee attitude when service resources have been negatively impacted due to the ongoing pandemic.
Complaints are analysed by the CSC management team in order to identify service improvements and ways to improve the overall customer experience. For example, complaint information has influenced the development of service training and call standards and is being used to inform investment in new technologies for the CSC.

**2022/23**
September 2022 - 3 complaints reported, 1 for standard of service, 1 for employee attitude and 1 for incorrect/conflicting information.
August 2022 - 5 complaints reported, 2 for standards not met and 3 for employee attitude.
July 2022 - 3 complaints reported, 2 for waiting time and 1 for customer standards not met.
June 2022 - 9 complaints reported, 2 for employee attitude,1 for lack of communication, 2 for poor communication, 1 for no action taken, 2 for standard of service and 1 for customer standards not met.
May 2022 - 2 complaints reported, 1 for equality and 1 for failed timescales.
April 2022 - 2 complaints reported for standard of service.

**2021/22**
March 2022 - 1 complaint reported for employee attitude.
February 2022 - 6 complaints reported- 1 for waiting time, 3 employee attitude, 1 for incorrect advice and 1 for discrimination.
January 2022 - 2 complaints reported, dissatisfaction related to employee attitude.
December 2021 - 1 complaint reported, dissatisfaction related to employee attitude.
November 2021 - 6 complaints reported, dissatisfaction related to employee attitude and a telephony Issue.
October 2021 - 4 complaints reported, customers dissatisfaction related to a telephony issue, waiting time, incorrect advice and poor communication.

In 2022/23, after review the target remains at 7 complaints per month as this was deemed as a challenging but achievable target on the basis of the past 12 months performance. Thresholds were also adjusted to encourage continuous performance improvement.

23

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CSC063m_6b.4 Percentage of Complaints Upheld and Part Upheld against Customer Service Centre | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the overall percentage of Customer Service Centre complaints that have been investigated and upheld or part upheld during each month. For each month the total number of complaints responded to within relevant time-scale is divided by total number of stage 1 complaints received to determine a percentage. The data for this indicator is extracted from the customer relationship management system (CRM). The complaints are analysed to identify improvements to the way the service is delivered to customers. | PI Owner(s): | zCSC_PIAdmin; Anna Brash |



**Percentage of Complaints Upheld and Part Upheld against Customer Service Centre**

| | **September 2022 result** |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | September 2022 |
| Status: | ✔ |
| Current Value: | 33.33% |
| Current Target: | 55% |
| Red Threshold: | 60% |
| Amber Threshold: | 58% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

Throughout the period the percentage of complaints upheld or part upheld by the service within a month has ranged between 0% in 6 of the months shown and has peaked at 66.67% in June 2022.

The peaks in upheld / part upheld complaints can coincide with periods when the service is receiving higher call volumes, which can lead to longer wait time. The CSC uses complaint categorisations to analyse trends in customer dissatisfaction and identify opportunities to improve the standard of service received by customers. Complaints in relation to employee attitude or communication for example, are addressed by the relevant line manager through call evaluations using call recording technology, the CSC trainer may then be required to deliver additional training for individuals and teams or performance management processes, as appropriate. Customers express dissatisfaction with employee attitude when service resources are negatively impacted by the ongoing pandemic. Throughout this period, a number of vacant posts resulted in longer waiting times for calls to be answered, some customers expressed dissatisfaction with this standard of service by logging a complaint.

Throughout the lockdown period changes have been implemented very quickly often before CSC have been updated, this also leads to frustrations from both the customer and employee, and complaints being made.

**2022/23**
September 2022- 3 complaints received, 1 complaint part upheld.
August 2022- 5 complaints received, 1 complaint upheld.
July 2022- 3 complaints received, 0 complaints upheld.
June 2022- 9 complaints received, 4 upheld and 2 part upheld.
May 2022- 2 complaints received, 2 complaints upheld.
April 2022- 2 complaints received, 0 complaints upheld

**2021/22**
March 2022- 1 complaint received, 0 complaints upheld
February 2022- 6 complaints received, 3 complaints upheld.
January 2022- 3 complaints received, 0 complaints upheld

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December 2021- 1 complaint received, 0 complaints upheld.

November 2021- 7 complaints received, 0 were upheld.

October 2021- 4 complaints received with 1 part upheld and 3 not upheld.

This target remains at 55% in 2022/23 after a review of the performance in the previous year. This is a challenging target and it will be reviewed as part of annual management planning and performance review. Thresholds were also adjusted to encourage continuous performance improvement.

25

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CSC104q_9b.1a Percentage of Customer Service Centre enquiries resolved at first point of contact | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Description | This indicator measures the percentage of customer enquiries that are resolved by the Customer Service Centre so that the customer does not need to make any further contact with the Council. The data for this indicator is extracted in a report from the customer relationship management system (CRM). In Quarter 2 2020/21 the content of this report was reviewed and updated to give a truer and more accurate reflection of the percentage of contacts that were handled in line with first point resolution within CSC. Recognised good practice for contact centre is to achieve a minimum of 75% enquiry resolution. | PI Owner(s): | zCSC_PIAdmin; Anna Brash |

Percentage of Customer Service Centre enquiries resolved at first point of contact

| | Q2 2022/23 result |
|---|---|
| | 82.8% 87.3% 94.63% |
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ✓ |
| Current Value: | 94.63% |
| Current Target: | 90% |
| Red Threshold: | 82.8% |
| Amber Threshold: | 87.3% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

Chart values: 89.03%, 90.97%, 89.76%, 90.46%, 94.63% across quarters Q2 2021/22, Q3 2021/22, Q4 2021/22, Q1 2022/23, Q2 2022/23 (Quarters / Target (Quarters))

Over the last year performance for this indicator has reached a high of 94.63% for 1 of the quarters shown and a low of 89.03% in quarter 2 2021/22. An increasing number of customers are able to self serve via automated payments and online web forms. This means a larger number of calls being dealt with are more complex and need support from other services before a resolution can be confirmed. Some fluctuations over this period are also due to the changes following COVID-19 pandemic and the council dealing with emergency situations only for some periods.

**2022/23**
Quarter 2 - 94.63% first point resolution, an increase of 4.17% from the previous quarter.
Quarter 1 - 90.46% first point resolution, an increase of 0.7% from the previous quarter.

**2021/22**
Quarter 4 - 89.76% first point resolution, a decrease of 1.21% from the previous quarter
Quarter 3 - 90.97% first point resolution, an increase of 1.94% from the previous quarter.
Quarter 2 - 89.03% first point resolution, a decrease of 0.97% from the previous quarter.

In 2022/23 the target was reviewed and increased to 90% as this is deemed to be an achievable and challenging target based on the previous 12 months performance.

26

| PI Code & Short Name | P:CuCS007q_6a.7 Customer and Communities - Percentage of customers who rated the overall quality of service as good or excellent | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Description | Service customers are randomly selected to complete a customer satisfaction survey. This indicator shows the percentage of customers rating the overall satisfaction with the customer service they received as good or excellent. The target is reviewed on an annual basis. This information is representative of Bathgate Partnership Centre, Community Facilities, Customer Information Service, Fauldhouse Partnership Centre, Library Services and Registration Services.<br><br>This performance indicator is part of the performance scorecard for the council's Customer Services Strategy 2018/23 and will contribute to outcome 1 which is that services are designed to meet the needs and preferences of customers. | PI Owner(s): | zCuCS_Admin; George Scott |



Customer and Communities - Percentage of customers who rated the overall quality of service as good or excellent

Cumulative result for Q2 2022/23 as of September 2022

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ✓ |
| Current Value: | 98.7% |
| Current Target: | 99.0% |
| Red Threshold: | 95.0% |
| Amber Threshold: | 97.0% |
| Categories: | Customer Service Strategy 2018-23; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

**2022/23**
Quarter 2 - 98.7% of customers rated the overall quality of service as good or excellent. There was a total of 394 responses.
Quarter 1 - 98.8% of customers rated the overall quality of service as good or excellent. There was a total of 682 responses.

**2021/22**
Quarter 4 - 516 out of 521 responses rated the overall quality of service as good or excellent
Quarter 3 - 276 out of 278 responses rated the overall quality of service as good or excellent
Quarter 2 - 115 out of 116 responses rated the overall quality of service as good or excellent

Due to COVID restrictions customer contact has been minimal across the service. Customer satisfaction data therefore reflects this with a period of non-collection. During this time the service has been developing and testing an e-form to replace the traditional paper format Customer Satisfaction Survey. After a trial period it has now been rolled out across all service areas. Data will be available at the end of August

**2020/21 target: 99% in line with the Customer Service Strategy**

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| PI Code & Short Name | P:CuCS010q_6b.3 Customer and Communities - Total number of complaints received by Customer and Community services | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Description | This indicator measures the total number of complaints received by the Customer and Community services. It is the total number of complaints received by the Customer and Community services at stage one (complaints that the council aims to deal with within 5 working days) and those received directly at stage two (more complex complaints that the council aims to deal with within 20 working days).<br><br>Note: This is to ensure complaints escalated from stage 1 and stage 2 are not double counted. | PI Owner(s): | zCuCS_Admin; Ralph Bell |



Customer and Communities - Total number of complaints received by Customer and Community services

| | |
|---|---|
| **Q2 2022/23 result** | 21 / 24 / 0–40 / 16 |
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 16 |
| Current Target: | 20 |
| Red Threshold: | 24 |
| Amber Threshold: | 21 |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**
Overall the number of complaints compared to the number of customers dealt with is very small. However, the performance will be reviewed each year with an aim to continue to improve.

**2022/23**
**Target:** the target has been reduced to 20 - this is a reduction of 25% on previous year and is due to the low numbers of complaints the service has been receiving. All services are now back up and running (post pandemic) so any complaints received will be about service received, staff attitude etc rather than an inability to access services.

**Quarter 2 -** 16 complaints were received during this quarter, an increase of 8 from the previous quarter. Of the 16 complaints received, only 5 were upheld with Customer standards not being met accounting for 3 of the upheld complaints. An area of concern was around the appointment system and information provided prior to attending the appointment. This has been addressed with specific training and guidance provided for the new staff engaging with the customer at this first point of contact.

**Quarter 1 -** 8 complaints were received during this quarter, significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels. The complaints were received for the following areas. Bathgate Partnership Centre x1, Fauldhouse Partnership Centre x1, Customer Information Service x1, Registration x2 and Libraries x3.

Two complaints were upheld: one was procedure related and one was about staff attitude. A further two were partially upheld due to customer standards not met and employee attitude.

**2021/22**
**Target:** the target was set at 27 based on the limited access to our facilities during lockdown

**Quarter 4:** 4 complaints were received during this quarter. 1 complaint was received for Community Facilities, 1 complaint for the Customer Information Service, 1 complaint for the Fauldhouse Partnership Centre and 1 complaint for

28

Libraries.

**Quarter 3:** 6 complaints received during the quarter - no significant trends associated with the complaints. It should be noted that footfall and interaction with customers across all activities have been reduced due to the pandemic.

**Quarter 2**: 8 complaints were received during this quarter, significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels.

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| PI Code & Short Name | **P:CuCS011q_6b.4 Customer and Communities - The percentage of complaints received by Customer and Communities Service that were upheld / partially upheld against the total complaints closed in full** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This indicator measures the total number of complaints received by Customer and Communities Service which were upheld or partially upheld, as a percentage of all complaints received. This information is representative of Bathgate Partnership Centre, Community Facilities, Customer Information Service, Fauldhouse Partnership Centre, Library Services and Registration Services. | **PI Owner(s):** zCuCS_Admin; Ralph Bell |



Customer and Communities - The percentage of complaints received by Customer and Communities Service that were upheld / partially upheld against the total complaints closed in full

75.0% (Q2 2021/22), 66.7% (Q3 2021/22), 75.0% (Q4 2021/22), 50.0% (Q1 2022/23), 37.5% (Q2 2022/23)

■ Quarters — Target (Quarters)

Q2 2022/23 result

61.2%
67.2%
0.0% — 37.5% — 100.0%

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 37.5% |
| **Current Target:** | 60.0% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 67.2% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 61.2% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Culture & Leisure; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**
**2022/23**
The target will remain at 60% - this is based on historic performance

**Quarter 2 -** 16 complaints in total: 5 upheld, 1 partially upheld and 10 not upheld. There were no themes observed.
Of the six that were upheld/partially upheld, the reasons were: customer standard was not met, incorrect or conflicting advice, poor communication general, Staff conduct/attitude. Staff are regularly involved in training/discussions to ensure customer standards are adhered to and to ensure data/information accuracy is paramount in the service.
**Quarter 1 -** 8 complaints in total: 2 upheld, 2 partially upheld and 4 not upheld. There were no themes observed.
Of the four that were upheld/partially upheld, the reasons were: customer standard was not met, employee attitude, procedure was not followed and the general waiting time for an appointment.

**2021/22**
The target will remain at 60%, based on historic performance

**Quarter 4 -** 4 complaints received, 3 were upheld. There were no themes observed and the complaints were: staff awareness and sharing of information, a training issue on the process during triage for CIS appointments (wrong information) and standard of cleanliness for a booking in one of the halls for a function - previous user had not tidied up the room booked.
**Quarter 3 -** 6 complaints were received during the period with 1 complaint being upheld (staff attitude) and 3 partially upheld relating to employee attitude: 2 and 1 for customer expectations not being met
**Quarter 2 -** 8 complaints were received and 6 were partially upheld, 2 relating to Employee Attitude, 2 relating to Standard of Service,1 relating to Customer Standards not met and 1 relating to Incorrect or Conflicting Advice. No significant trends, complaints addressed with individuals.

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:CuCS021_7b.1 Customer and Communities - Percentage of Sickness absence** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | Number of full time days lost to sickness absence expressed as a percentage of overall full time days. This information is representative of Bathgate Partnership Centre, Community Facilities, Customer Information Service, Fauldhouse Partnership Centre, Library Services and Registration Services. | **PI Owner(s):** zCuCS_Admin; Ralph Bell |



Customer and Communities - Percentage of Sickness absence

September 2022 result

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | September 2022 |
| **Status:** | 🛑 |
| **Current Value:** | 9.0% |
| **Current Target:** | 3.6% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 4.3% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 3.8% |
| **Categories:** | Absence - sickness; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary**

After a significant improvement in attendance the trend shows a steady increase in absence. The service continues to utilise the tools and guidelines of the Attendance at Work Policy. Long term continues to be the major factor in absence, with mental & behavioural health issues being the main reason for long term absence.

**2022/23**

September - Absence recorded at 8.99% with 227 lost days from 2,526 working days. Long term absence recorded as 79% of the total absence

August - Absence recorded at 7.7% with 208 lost days from 2,709 working days. Long term absence recorded as 79% of the total absence

July - Absence recorded at 6.9% with 368 lost days from 5,409 working days. Long term absence recorded as 82% of the total absence

June - Overall absence improved to 5.8% with long term absence reducing to 79% of all absences. It is anticipated that a further reduction in long term absences over the next month will see an overall reduction in absences levels. Managers continue to utilise the absence management tools at their disposal.

May - Absence recorded at 6.13%, remains in line with the recorded absence for April. Long term continues to be the main concern, this has increased to 88% of the total absence with stress a contributing factor, as well as long term bereavement absence. Managers continue to apply the Attendance at work policy and advice of the four pillars of wellbeing.

April - Absence recorded at 6.2% with 183 lost days from 2,952 working days. This is a reduction of 1.1% from the previous month. Long term absence recorded as 69% of the total absence.

**2021/22**

March - Absence recorded at 7.3% with 223 lost days from 3,065 working days. Long term absence recorded as 90% of the total absence.

February - Absence recorded at 6.9% with 187 lost days from 2,711 working days. Long term absence recorded as 91% of the total absence.

January - Absence recorded at 5.68% - a slight improvement as one short term absence returned to work, however long-term absence results in 92% of our absence for the month.

December - Absence recorded at 6.8% based on 200 sick days from 2,950 working days. The majority (90%) are long term absences which the service continues to manage through the Attendance at work policy.

November - Absence recorded at 6.6%, based on 185 sick days from 2,822 working days.

October - Absence recorded at 6.6%, based on 198 sick days from 2,998 working days.

The target for sickness absence is 3.6%, which remains the corporate target.

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| PI Code & Short Name | P:CuCS026q_9b.1a Percentage of customer enquiries recorded on the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) which are resolved at the first point of contact | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Description | This annual indicator measures the percentage of customer enquiries that have been resolved at the first point of contact by staff within the four Customer and Community Service neighbourhoods during the initial customer interaction. This removes the need for the customer to make any further contact with the council to have their enquiry resolved. There is a national target of 75% set by the Customer First initiative (COSLA). | PI Owner(s): | zCuCS_Admin; Lorraine Evans |



Percentage of customer enquiries recorded on the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) which are resolved at the first point of contact

Cumulative result for Q2 2022/23 as of October 2022

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 73.5% |
| Current Target: | 75.0% |
| Red Threshold: | 69.8% |
| Amber Threshold: | 72.8% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary**

**2022/23**
**Target remains at 75%**

**Quarter 2:** 73.5% of enquiries were resolved at the first point of contact. This was 1.5% below the target of 75% and 1.3% down on the previous quarter.

**Quarter 1:** 74.8% of enquiries were resolved at the first point of contact. This is 0.2% below the target of 75%.

**2021/22**
**Quarter 4:** 78.9% of enquiries were resolved at the first point of contact. This is 3.9% above the target of 75% and an increase of 11.3% on the previous quarter.

**Quarter 3:** 67.6% of our enquiries were resolved at the first point of contact - this is 7.4% below the new target of 75%. and 10.4% below the quarter 2 figure. This reduction in performance is due to the fact we handled a high volume of outbound calls to customers where were arranged various building services appointments with them (e.g. smoke alarm installations). We had to pass the appointment details to Building Services in the form of a case - and this affects our first time resolution performance.

**Quarter 2:** performance is recorded at 78% which 10% above the target of 65%. All our enquiry offices were back open from 19 July 2021. This meant that, from that date, the amount of 'back office' work we were doing whilst we were closed to face to face customers stopped. That work had involved the creation of a high volume of cases as were passing work or information to internal services - the act of creating a case is a measure that the enquiry was not dealt with at the first point of contact. Now that we are back open these have ceased and we are able to deal with a larger volume of enquiries at the first point of contact.

32

| PI Code & Short Name | P:FM001_6b.5 Percentage of Suppliers paid within 30 Days of Receipt | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Description | This indicator measures the percentage of correctly presented invoices from suppliers paid within 30 calendar days of receipt. Thirty calendar days reflects the normal credit term period in accordance with the Late Payments of Commercial Debts (Interests) Act 1998. West Lothian Council recognises the importance in paying invoices in a timely manner. The target used is set internally by the Head of Finance and Property and ensures challenging targets year on year which are always higher than the Scottish average. Note that this performance indicator monitors the performance on a monthly basis and the cumulative figure for the year is included in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (Indicator CORP8). The payment of invoices is a key activity for Finance and Property Services, ensuring that the council's suppliers are paid on a timely basis. Note that the performance indicator records the cumulative performance for the year to date, commencing April. | PI Owner(s): | zFM_PIAdmin; Patrick Welsh |



Percentage of Suppliers paid within 30 Days of Receipt

| | September 2022 result |
|---|---|
| |  |
| Last Updated: | September 2022 |
| Status: | ⚠️ |
| Current Value: | 93.9% |
| Current Target: | 95% |
| Red Threshold: | 90.25% |
| Amber Threshold: | 95% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

Performance to September 2022 was 93.9% which is below the performance target.

Performance in 2021/22 was 95.3% and in 2020/21 it was 95%.

The Financial Management Unit works closely with services to improve invoice processing time and regular reports are issued to services on performance.

The council participates in a benchmarking exercise with the other local authorities in Scotland via the Local Government Benchmarking Framework. The average performance in Scotland was 91.76% for 2020/21. West Lothian Council was ranked 9th out of 32 Scottish Local Authorities in 2020/21 for this indicator. 2021/22 data will be available in late 2022. Services will continue to be supported in 22/23 to ensure that the strong performance is maintained. The target for 22/23 is 95% taking into account previous year performance.

33

| PI Code & Short Name | P:FM037_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by the Financial Management Unit | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the total number of complaints received during a financial year relating to the Financial Management Unit. Performance is reviewed on a regular basis and reported annually to ensure that there is sufficient focus on the quality and standard of customer service. The data for this performance indicator is extracted from the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which is used to manage and monitor complaint handling procedures in the council. All complaints received are analysed to identify improvements to the quality of the service and the way it is delivered to customers. | PI Owner(s): zFM_PIAdmin; Patrick Welsh |

**Total number of complaints received by the Financial Management Unit**



Chart data — Quarters: Q2 2021/22 = 1; Q3 2021/22 = 3; Q4 2021/22 = 5; Q1 2022/23 = 1; Q2 2022/23 = 2. Target (Quarters) = 3.

Legend: ■ Quarters   ■— Target (Quarters)

**Q2 2022/23 result**



| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 2 |
| Current Target: | 3 |
| Red Threshold: | 6 |
| Amber Threshold: | 4 |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

This core indicator monitors complaints received by the Financial Management Unit and measures the combined level of stage 1 and 2 complaints received.

One complaint was received in the first quarter of 2022/23. This related to an insurance claim and after investigation the complaint was not upheld.

Two complaints were received relating to the Financial Management Unit in quarter 2. Of these, one was a stage one complaint and the other a stage 2 complaint. Both complaints were responded to within the set time limits and neither complaint was upheld. They both related to insurance claims.

The majority of complaints received by FMU, and all complaints received in 2021/22, relate to complaints regarding the handling and outcomes of Insurance claims. In this case the complaint was not upheld with no fault from either the council or the council's claims service provider found. The council continually works with its insurers to minimise such occurrences and improve the service provided to our customers.

The Financial Management Unit will continue to aim to minimise all complaints were possible and where they do arise that these are dealt with timeously.

Please note, that on months where there have been no complaints received this will show as zero on the chart.

The target for 2022/23 is to receive no more than 3 complaints per quarter which is consistent with the 2021/22 target.

| PI Code & Short Name | P:FM048_7b.1 Percentage of Sickness Absence in Financial Management Unit - Cumulative | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures, as a percentage, the total level of sickness absence in the Financial Management Unit on a cumulative basis. The data is provided by the council's Human Resource Services on a monthly basis and is tracked and monitored to ensure absence is managed appropriately in the service and any corresponding impact on performance is understood and managed. | PI Owner(s): zFM_PIAdmin; Patrick Welsh |



Percentage of Sickness Absence in Financial Management Unit - Cumulative

| Month | Value |
|---|---|
| October 2021 | 1.89% |
| November 2021 | 1.7% |
| December 2021 | 1.49% |
| January 2022 | 1.76% |
| February 2022 | 1.85% |
| March 2022 | 1.94% |
| April 2022 | 0.27% |
| May 2022 | 2.51% |
| June 2022 | 2% |
| July 2022 | 1.93% |
| August 2022 | 2.25% |
| September 2022 | 2.47% |

September 2022 result

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | September 2022 |
| Status: | ⚠️ |
| Current Value: | 2.47% |
| Current Target: | 2% |
| Red Threshold: | 2.67% |
| Amber Threshold: | 2.33% |
| Categories: | Absence - sickness; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

Cumulative sickness absence for the period 1 April 22 to 30 September 22 was 2.47 percent. The majority of this was long term sickness absence.

All line managers within the unit comply with the council's sickness absence policy and seek specialist advice if required from Human Resources when there are more complex sickness absence situations arising.

The target set by the service for 2022/23 is 2.0 percent.

35

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:HRS104_9b.2 Number of reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive per quarter** | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the total number of reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive on a quarterly basis. Reportable incidents are occurrences which must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the legislative requirements of the Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013.   When an incident meets the criteria outlined in the regulations, a formal notification report must be submitted by the authority to the Health and Safety Executive within timescales stipulated in the regulations. | PI Owner(s): zH&S_PIAdmin; Kim Hardie |



Number of reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive per quarter

| | Q2 2022/23 result |
|---|---|
| | 8.12 / 7.685 ... 0 ... 2 ... 25 |
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ✓ |
| Current Value: | 2 |
| Current Target: | 7.25 |
| Red Threshold: | 8.12 |
| Amber Threshold: | 7.68 |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

Reportable incidents are occurrences which must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the legislative requirements of the Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013. When an incident meets the criteria outlined in the regulations, a formal notification report must be submitted by the authority to the Health and Safety Executive within timescales stipulated in the regulations. This records the total number of reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive per quarter.

Although the indicator is reported in quarters there is nothing that would warrant comparing one to quarter against another and the annual target better reflects the aimed reduction in RIDDOR reportable incidents.

Each incident recorded in the online safety management system should be investigated. Where specific criteria are met as outlined in the Incident Investigation Guidance the investigation is completed by a Health and Safety adviser. The investigation aims to identify the immediate, underlying and root causes of an incident and to ensure that corrective and preventative measures are implemented to prevent a recurrence of a similar type of incident as far as reasonably practicable.
All RIDDOR reportable incidents are escalated to each responsible Head of Service and to the Corporate Management team on a monthly basis for consideration.

Overall Incident statistics are monitored examined to establish potential trends and identify required actions to be incorporated into service annual health and safety action plans and corporate health and safety work plan for 2022/2023.

The aim is to decrease the number of reportable incidents by a further five percent annually.

36

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:HRS525_7b.1 Percentage of sickness absence in HR Services** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This measure records the Human Resources Shared Services Sickness/ Absence level as is reported through monthly management reports from HR Services using the standard performance indicator percentage. It is used to review the effectiveness of sickness absence management. | **PI Owner(s):** zHRS_PIAdmin; Claire Wallace |



Percentage of sickness absence in HR Services

September 2022 result

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | September 2022 |
| **Status:** | 🛑 |
| **Current Value:** | 7.81% |
| **Current Target:** | 3.6% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 3.96% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 3.78% |
| **Categories:** | Absence - sickness; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

Performance is likely to fluctuate over the reporting period the current rate for October 2022 is 5.55%. Performance variation has been as a result of employees being off and then returning from periods of short- and long-term absence. The service continues to have employees off on long- and short-term absences. We have seen a decrease in this which has resulted in a lower figure for October 2022

All cases of absence are actively managed in accordance with the requirements of the council's Policy & Procedures for Supporting Attendance at Work.

As absence rates have fluctuated over the reporting period, the target remains at the council target of 3.6%.

| PI Code & Short Name | P:HRS550_6b.3 Number of complaints received by HR Services | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This indicator measures the total number of complaints received by HR Services. It is the total number of complaints received by HR Services at stage one (complaints that the council aims to deal with within 5 working days) and those received directly at stage two (more complex complaints that the council aims to deal with within 20 working days).<br><br>Note: This is to ensure complaints escalated from stage 1 and stage 2 are not double counted. | PI Owner(s): zHRS_PIAdmin; Claire Wallace |



Number of complaints received by HR Services

Q2 2022/23 result

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ⚠ |
| Current Value: | 2 |
| Current Target: | 1 |
| Red Threshold: | 3 |
| Amber Threshold: | 2 |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**
Complaints into HR and Support Services are low with performance being at or better than target in all but one Quarter of the reporting period.

In Quarter 2 of 2022/23 there were 2 complaints received
In Quarter 1 of 2022/23 there were no complaints received

In Quarter 4 of 2021/22 there were no complaints received.
In Quarter 3 of 2021/22 there were no complaints received.
In Quarter 2 of 2021/22 there were no complaints received.

Most complaints received relate to either a failing in service deliver or misapplication of council HR policy and practice. All complaints trigger reviews of process to reduce the likelihood of similar service failure in the future.

The complaints target of 1 per quarter is based on the average number received over the reporting period.

38

| PI Code & Short Name | P:HRS554_6b.4 Percentage of complaints by HR Services which were upheld/part upheld per quarter | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the overall percentage of closed complaints received by HR Services that have been upheld or part upheld during each quarter. In each period, the total number of upheld and partially upheld complaints is divided by the total number of complaints closed to determine the overall percentage. The data for this performance indicator is extracted from the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which is used to manage and monitor complaint handling procedures in the council. All complaints received are analysed to identify improvements to the quality of the service and the way it is delivered to customers. | **PI Owner(s):** zHRS_PIAdmin; Claire Wallace |



Percentage of complaints by HR Services which were upheld/part upheld per quarter



Q2 2022/23 result

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | 🔴 |
| Current Value: | 100% |
| Current Target: | 25% |
| Red Threshold: | 27.5% |
| Amber Threshold: | 26.25% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**
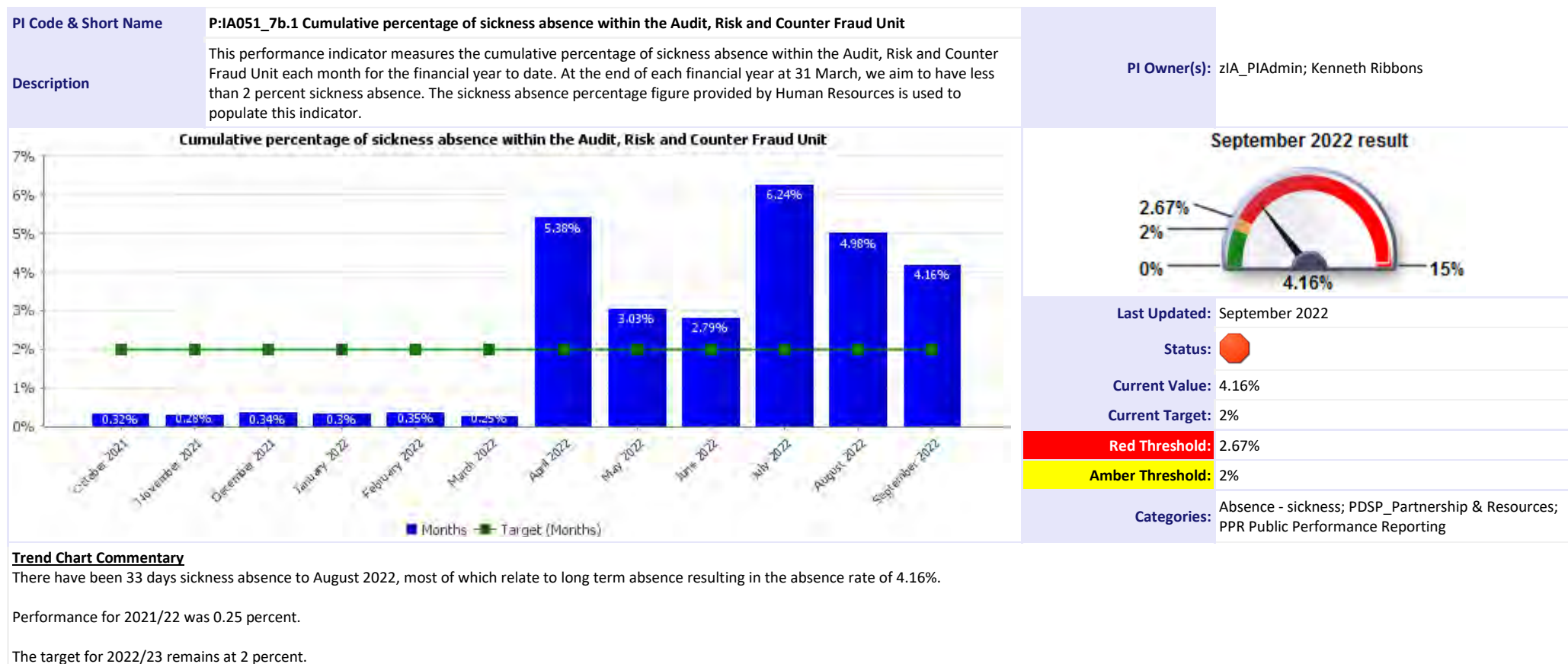As a result of the low complaint numbers, an upheld complaint has a significant impact on the percentage of upheld complaints.

**2022/23**
Quarter 2 of 2022/23 there were 2 complaints received and they were each part-upheld.
Quarter 1 - the service did not receive any complaints.

**2021/22**
Quarter 4 - the service did not receive any complaints.
Quarter 3 - the service did not receive any complaints.
Quarter 2 - the service did not receive any complaints.
Quarter 1 - the service did not receive any complaints.

Complaints received normally relate to the misapplication of a council policy, failure in administrative process or delays in processing timescales. All complaints trigger reviews of process to reduce the likelihood of similar service failure in the future.

**Target**: the service has always received low numbers of complaints which results in large fluctuations in the performance of this indicator, making target setting more challenging. Annually the service targets a total of 4 complaints or less and expects that around one quarter of those complaints will be upheld or partly upheld, therefore a target of 25 percent is applied throughout the year.

39

| PI Code & Short Name | P:IA015_9b.1a Average length of time (in weeks) to issue draft audit reports | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator is part of the performance scorecard for the council's Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Strategy and will contribute to outcome 1 "the deployment of an internal audit service which provides assurance on the council's risk management, control and governance processes, and adds value to the council's operations". This indicator measures the average length of time in weeks to issue draft audit reports. The date of issue of the draft audit report is subtracted from the date that the audit commenced to show the number of weeks taken. The date of commencement is agreed with our customers and we aim to complete all risk-based audit work within 10 weeks of this date. This indicator is reported on quarterly and a 12-month average is calculated to the end of each quarter. The objective of our 10-week target is to ensure that audit reports are issued timeously so that they are current and meaningful to both the service area and any related stakeholders. | PI Owner(s): zIA_PIAdmin; Kenneth Ribbons |



Average length of time (in weeks) to issue draft audit reports

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | 🛑 |
| Current Value: | 12 |
| Current Target: | 10 |
| Red Threshold: | 12 |
| Amber Threshold: | 11 |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

Q2 2022/23 result

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The target for this performance indicator is to achieve 10 weeks and is in line with the council's Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Strategy.

Performance to quarter two 2022/23 was 12 weeks, and was slightly greater than target. Draft reports have been taking marginally longer to issue since midway through 2021.

Performance to quarter four 2021/22 was 10.4 weeks, and therefore did not quite meet the target of 10 weeks.

The 10-week target and the appropriateness of the timescales achieved is substantiated by reference to Indicator IA001: Percentage of customers who rated internal audit's timeliness as good or excellent, for which high performance is also reported and shows that customers are satisfied with the timescales being achieved.

The average length of time to issue draft audit reports can fluctuate as a result of factors such as the complexity of individual audits, the time taken for the customer to provide audit information and respond to queries, and the level of reactive work which may be given priority over routine audits.

The number of draft audit reports issued for each rolling 12-month period reported was: 2021/22 Q2(20), Q3(18), Q4(19), 2022/23 Q1 (19) and Q4 (19).

The 10-week target continues to be appropriate and will remain in place for 2022/23.

| PI Code & Short Name | P:IA051_7b.1 Cumulative percentage of sickness absence within the Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud Unit | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the cumulative percentage of sickness absence within the Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud Unit each month for the financial year to date. At the end of each financial year at 31 March, we aim to have less than 2 percent sickness absence. The sickness absence percentage figure provided by Human Resources is used to populate this indicator. | PI Owner(s): | zIA_PIAdmin; Kenneth Ribbons |



Cumulative percentage of sickness absence within the Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud Unit

| | September 2022 result |
|---|---|
| | 2.67% / 2% / 0% ... 15% / 4.16% |
| Last Updated: | September 2022 |
| Status: | 🛑 |
| Current Value: | 4.16% |
| Current Target: | 2% |
| Red Threshold: | 2.67% |
| Amber Threshold: | 2% |
| Categories: | Absence - sickness; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary**

There have been 33 days sickness absence to August 2022, most of which relate to long term absence resulting in the absence rate of 4.16%.

Performance for 2021/22 was 0.25 percent.

The target for 2022/23 remains at 2 percent.

41

| PI Code & Short Name | P:IA066_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the combined level of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints received by the service each quarter. The data for this performance indicator is extracted from the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which is used to manage and monitor complaint handling in the council. All complaints received are analysed to identify improvements to the quality of the service and the way it is delivered to customers. | **PI Owner(s):** | zIA_PIAdmin; Kenneth Ribbons |



Total number of complaints received by Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud

■ Quarters ─■─ Target (Quarters)

Q2 2022/23 result

| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
|---|---|
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 0 |
| **Current Target:** | 0 |
| **Red Threshold:** | 8 |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 4 |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**
The service has had no complaints since 2016.

Target per quarter is set at 0 complaints.

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:IA067_6b.4 The percentage of complaints received by Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud that were upheld or partially upheld against the total complaints closed in full.** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This Performance Indicator measures service failure of the combined level of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints shown as a percentage of complaints upheld or partially upheld against the total number of complaints received.<br><br>The data for this performance indicator is extracted from the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which is used to manage and monitor complaint handling procedures in the council. All complaints received are analysed to identify improvements to the quality of the service and the way it is delivered to customers. | **PI Owner(s):** | zIA_PIAdmin; Kenneth Ribbons |

| The percentage of complaints received by Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud that were upheld or partially upheld against the total complaints closed in full. | | Q2 2022/23 result N/A |
|---|---|---|
|  | **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| | **Status:** | [?] |
| | **Current Value:** | N/A |
| | **Current Target:** | 0% |
| | **Red Threshold:** | 0% |
| | **Amber Threshold:** | 0% |
| | **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The number of complaints received by Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud has been historically low. No complaints were received in 2021/22, 2021/22, 2020/21, 2019/20 or 2018/19.

A service wide complaint improvement action report is prepared on a quarterly basis and is reported to both the Head of Finance and Property Services and the Complaints Steering Board.

The target for 2022/23 will remain as 0.

43

| PI Code & Short Name | P:ITS007_6a.7 Percentage of IT Services Customers Rating the Overall Quality as Good or Excellent | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the percentage of customers that rated the overall quality of the service as good or excellent. Collected as part of our monthly survey, customers are asked to rate the quality of the service provided as excellent, good, adequate, poor, very poor or not applicable. The results are analysed to identify improvements to the way the service is delivered to customers.<br><br>This survey is directed to all customers that have had work completed either as an Incident (fault) or a Service Request (enhancement) by IT Services within the last full month. Data is available from the 18th of each month. | PI Owner(s): zITS_PIAdmin; Ian Forrest |



**Percentage of IT Services Customers Rating the Overall Quality as Good or Excellent**

October 2021: 98%, November 2021: 97%, December 2021: 98%, January 2022: 98%, February 2022: 97%, March 2022: 95%, April 2022: 97%, May 2022: 98%, June 2022: 97%, July 2022: 99%, August 2022: 98%, September 2022: 98%

Legend: Months — Target (Months)

**September 2022 result**

91%, 94%, 0%, 98%, 100%

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | September 2022 |
| Status: | ✓ |
| Current Value: | 98% |
| Current Target: | 98% |
| Red Threshold: | 91% |
| Amber Threshold: | 94% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

Performance from October 2021 to September 2022 demonstrates that performance regularly meets or falls just below target of 98%. Performance ranges from 92% to 99%.

Performance is continuously monitored by team leaders and managers, who review customer feedback and identify and address the areas where customers are dissatisfied and discuss with them their concerns with relevant themes discussed at team meetings and directed with staff at one to ones to improve service.

April 2022 - September 2022 has seen the service consistently either meet the target or fall just under target but never below the amber marker.
June 2022's performance dropped by 1% compared to May 2022 but continued the trend of this indicator either meeting target or missing but remaining in the Amber Marker.
May 2022's performance sees the trend continue with the 98% target being achieved.
Performance in April 2022 achieved 98% missing target by 1% meaning 3 customers of the 153 customer responses for April 2022 rated The Overall Quality as Poor or Average. These responses will be investigated by the relevant Team Leads.
Performance in March 2022 achieved 95% and failed to meet target by 3% meaning 7 customers of the 148 customer responses for February 2022 rated The Overall Quality as Very Poor, Poor or Average.
This result can be attributed to an increase in the number of incidents and service requested raised for the month of March 2022.
Performance in February 2022 achieved the 97% target for this indicator meaning 2 customers of the 181 customer responses for February 2022 rated The Overall Quality as Very Poor, Poor or Average. These responses will be investigated by the relevant Team Leads.
Performance in January 2022 achieved the 98% target for this indicator. 3 customers of the 184 customer responses for January 2022 rated The Overall Quality as Average.
Performance increased by 1% in December 2021 to 98% and achieved target. 3 customers of the 145 responses rated the overall quality as average, poor or very poor.
Performance fell in November 2021 by 1% to 97% due to 5 customers rating the services overall quality as average or very poor.

The target for 2021/22 was 98% to reflect previous year's performance and encourage improvement. The target for 2022/23 remains at 98%.

44

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:ITS011_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by IT Services per quarter** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the total number of complaints received during each quarter relating to IT Services. Performance is reviewed on a regular basis and reported annually to ensure that there is sufficient focus on the quality and standard of customer service. The data for this performance indicator is extracted from the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which is used to manage and monitor complaint handling procedures in the council. All complaints received are analysed to identify improvements to the quality of the service and the way it is delivered to customers. | **PI Owner(s):** zITS_PIAdmin; Ian Forrest |



Total number of complaints received by IT Services per quarter



Q2 2022/23 result

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 0 |
| **Current Target:** | 0 |
| **Red Threshold:** | 2 |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 1 |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

Performance from Q2 2021/22 to Q2 2022/23 is mixed with three complaints over the period.

Q1 2022 received complaints in relation to windows updates and the service received from the IT Helpdesk. A review of the deployment method of software has been completed to prevent future incidents to members and CSC, with training session planned with the service desk team to highlight service needs and appropriate escalation actions.

The target for 2022/23 will remain at zero to ensure that focus on customer service remains a priority in the provision of IT across the council.

45

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:ITS012_6b.4 Percentage of complaints received that were upheld/partially upheld** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the overall percentage of closed complaints received by the IT Services that have been upheld or part upheld during each quarter. In each period, the total number of upheld and partially upheld complaints is divided by the total number of complaints closed to determine the overall percentage. The data for this performance indicator is extracted from the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which is used to manage and monitor complaint handling procedures in the council. All complaints received are analysed to identify improvements to the quality of the service and the way it is delivered to customers. | **PI Owner(s):** zITS_PIAdmin; Ian Forrest |

**Percentage of complaints received that were upheld/partially upheld**



| | Q2 2022/23 result |
|---|---|
| |  |
| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 0% |
| **Current Target:** | 0% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 2% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 1% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

During periods where no complaints were received the chart will show as a blank.

Q1 2022 received complaints in relation to windows updates and the service received from the IT Helpdesk. A review of the deployment method of software has been completed to prevent future incidents to members and CSC, with training session planned with the service desk team to highlight service needs and appropriate escalation actions.

The target for 2022/23 will remain at zero percent to ensure that focus on customer service remains a priority in the provision of IT across the council.

46

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:ITS017a_9b.1c Percentage of Incidents Resolved at First Point of Contact** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the overall percentage of IT incidents (faults) resolved within at the first point of contact with the customer in a monthly period. The data for this indicator is extracted from the IT Services work tracking system.<br><br>The IT Service Centre may be unable to complete a resolution to an incident (fault) where the issue is beyond their technical capability/complexity or is a major incident that requires advanced technical skills. | **PI Owner(s):** zITS_PIAdmin; Ian Forrest |



**September 2022 result**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | September 2022 |
| **Status:** | ⚠ |
| **Current Value:** | 33% |
| **Current Target:** | 40% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 32% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 36% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**
Performance from October 2021 to September 2022 demonstrates an inconsistent period of target achievement with the IT Service Desk achieving or exceeding target on 7 occasions in the rolling 13-month period.
Performance ranged from 33% to 58% and is heavily influenced per month by the number of calls logged, major Incidents logged, planned and unplanned absence as well as school term times.

During the 10 months of 2022 (January 2022 - October 2022) has seen the service meet or just miss the target for this indicator and compared to the same period for 2021 is performing better.

Performance in May 2022 achieved 37% (238 of 644 incidents were first line resolved) and failed to achieve target of 40% by 3%.
There are still a number of previously first line incidents being handled by 2nd line staff based in Civic Centre due to Covid-19 pandemic and hardware incidents that need hands on work due to office remobilisation.

Performance in April 2022 achieved 46% (139 of 302 incidents were first line resolved) demonstrating a 7% increase in performance compared to March 2022 performance and exceeded target by 6%.

Performance in March 2022 achieved 39% (193 of 494 incidents were first line resolved) demonstrating a 1% increase in performance compared to February 2022 performance but failed to achieve target of 40% by 1%.
There continue to be a number of previously first line incidents being handled by 2nd line staff based in Civic Centre due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Performance in February 2022 achieved 38% (200 of 527 incidents were first line resolved) demonstrating a 3% decrease in performance compared to January 2022 performance and failed to achieve target of 40% by 2%.
There are still a number of previously first line incidents being handled by 2nd line staff based in Civic Centre due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Performance in January 2022 achieved 40.71% (261 of 642 incidents were first line resolved) demonstrating a 4.66% decrease in performance compared to December 2021 performance but achieved target of 40%.
There are still a number of previously first line incidents being handled by 2nd line staff based in Civic Centre due to Covid-19 pandemic. The roll out of the new UEM Blackberry management service for smart devices has allowed IT Service Desk to reclaim some of the first line resolves due to the new solution allowing us to work more remotely than the previous Mobile Device Management solution but there are still a number of devices requiring hands on work to repair or configure that pre covid-19 would be handled at first line. Increase in performance can also be attributed to staff training and new IT Service Desk Analyst increasing their own first line resolves.

47

Performance in December 2021 achieved 40.22% (192 of 424 incidents were first line resolved) demonstrating a 5.2% increase in performance compared to November 2021 performance and achieved target.
There are still a number of previously first line incidents being handled by 2nd line staff based in Civic Centre due to Covid-19 pandemic. The roll out of the new UEM Blackberry management service for smart devices has allowed IT Service Desk to reclaim some of the first line resolves due to the new solution allowing us to work more remotely than the previous Mobile Device Management solution but there are still a number of devices requiring hands on work to repair or configure that pre covid-19 would be handled at first line. Increase in performance can also be attributed to staff training and new IT Service Desk Analyst increasing there own first line resolves.

Performance in November 2021 achieved 40.22% (242 of 602 incidents were first line resolved) demonstrating a 5.04% increase in performance compared to October 2021 performance and achieved target.
There are still a number of previously first line incidents being handled by 2nd line staff based in Civic Centre due to Covid-19 pandemic. The roll out of the new UEM Blackberry management service for smart devices has allowed IT Service Desk to reclaim some of the first line resolves due to the new solution allowing us to work more remotely than the previous Mobile Device Management solution but there are still a number of devices requiring hands on work to repair or configure that pre covid-19 would be handled at first line. Increase in performance can relate to staff training and new IT Service Desk Analyst increasing there own first line resolves.

This performance is likely to continue to be an issue due to the high volume of mobile, laptop and desktop devices having to come to Civic Centre for repair.

48

| PI Code & Short Name | P:ITS051_7b.1 Percentage of Sickness Absence in IT Services (cumulative) | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the percentage indicator of sickness absence in IT Services. The percentage is a cumulative measure of sickness absence over the period of the financial year. HR Services calculate the percentage comparing sickness days as a percentage of total available staff days and provide the monthly data on approximately the 17th day of the following month. The data is then verified and uploaded into the performance management system by the service. | PI Owner(s): zITS_PIAdmin; Ian Forrest |



Percentage of Sickness Absence in IT Services (cumulative)

■ Months  ─■─ Target (Months)

September 2022 result

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | September 2022 |
| Status: | 🔴 |
| Current Value: | 5.56% |
| Current Target: | 3.6% |
| Red Threshold: | 5% |
| Amber Threshold: | 4% |
| Categories: | Absence - sickness; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The trend chart illustrates sickness absence levels in IT Services. All sickness absence is managed in accordance to the Sickness Absence Policy and procedures.

Performance May 2022 - September 2022 decreased as a result of the return of 3 new long term and short-term absences over the period.

Performance January 2022 - April 2022 increased as a result of the return of 3 long term absences over the period.

Performance October 2021 - December 2021 decreased as a result of 3 long term absence and short-term absences over the period.

The target is at an overall council level target of 3.6%.

Please note monthly data is provided by HR on approximately 17th day of the following month.

49

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:LS013_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by Legal Services** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This indicator measures the total number of complaints received by Legal Services. It is the total number of complaints received by Legal Services at stage one (complaints that the council aims to deal with within 5 working days) and those received directly at stage two (more complex complaints that the council aims to deal with within 20 working days). Information regarding complaints at Stage 1 and Stage 2 is scrutinised within the service and utilised to assist in identifying improvements to service delivery and support corrective action in respect of any particular trends which may emerge. Information is collated from the councils CRM system<br><br>Note: This is to ensure complaints escalated from stage 1 and stage 2 are not double counted. | **PI Owner(s):** | zLS_PIAdmin; Carol Johnston |



Total number of complaints received by Legal Services

Legend: ■ Months  ■ Target (Months)

**September 2022 result**



| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | September 2022 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 0 |
| **Current Target:** | 2 |
| **Red Threshold:** | 5 |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 3 |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The trend shows that there were no complaints received during the reporting period October 2021 to July 2022.

During August 2022 3 complaints were received. These all related to issues of licensing policy and the occurrence of cultural parades. None of the complaints were upheld. All 3 were dealt with as Stage 1 complaints. One was was dealt with within 5 days in accordance with the council's complaints procedure. 2 complaints were dealt with within 10 days as a result of the necessity to prioritise other business.

Complaints regarding the service can be made in accordance with the Councils complaints procedure, in addition to contacting the Service Manager or Head of Service directly. Where complaints are received, the service takes full advantage of the opportunity to reflect on its performance and identify areas for improvement to avoid similar complaints recurring.

During 2020 Benchmarking was undertaken with all 31 local authorities and 11 public bodies. Of the 8 local authorities and 4 public bodies responding to this element, none specifically record or report on the number or nature of complaints regarding legal services. Further Benchmarking activity is planned during 2022/23.

The target is reviewed quarterly at service performance meetings. The target for 2022/23 remains at 2 having regard to historical performance.

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:LS014_6b.4 Percentage of all complaints closed quarterly by Legal Services that were upheld / partially upheld** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the overall percentage of closed complaints received by Legal Services that have been upheld or part upheld during each quarterly period. In each period, the total number of upheld and partially upheld complaints is divided by the total number of complaints closed to determine the overall percentage. The data for this performance indicator is extracted from the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which is used to manage and monitor complaint handling procedures in the council. All complaints received are analysed to identify improvements to the quality of the service and the way it is delivered to customers.<br><br>Legal Services provides legal services to West Lothian Council including conveyancing, litigation, tribunals and inquiries, planning, transportation, social services, education, clerking to the Licensing Board, Committees, Sub-Committees, Committee Services and Civic Government & Miscellaneous Licensing. | **PI Owner(s):** zLS_PIAdmin; Carol Johnston |

Percentage of all complaints closed quarterly by Legal Services that were upheld / partially upheld

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 0% |
| **Current Target:** | 0% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 75% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 50% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

Q2 2022/23 result

**Trend Chart Commentary:** No complaints have been received during the reporting period to Q2 2022/23. Complaints regarding the service can be made in accordance with the Councils complaints procedure, in addition to contacting the Service Manager or Head of Service directly. Where complaints are received, the service takes full advantage of the opportunity to reflect on its performance and identify areas for improvement to avoid similar complaints recurring. During periods where no complaints were received the chart will show as a blank. Following review of historical performance, and consideration of the nature of complaints which are generally received, the nature of those complaints, the target for 2022/23 was set at 0%

| PI Code & Short Name | P:LS031_7b.1 Percentage Sickness Absence Levels in Legal Services | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This measure records Legal Services Sickness Absence levels as reported through monthly management reports from HR Pay and Reward. This indicator measures the actual absences during each month. It is used to review the effectiveness of sickness absence management. The sickness absence data for each month is not available until the 18th of the following month. | PI Owner(s): zLS_PIAdmin; Carol Johnston |



Percentage Sickness Absence Levels in Legal Services

September 2022 result

4.65%

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | September 2022 |
| Status: | ⚠️ |
| Current Value: | 4.65% |
| Current Target: | 3.6% |
| Red Threshold: | 5% |
| Amber Threshold: | 4% |
| Categories: | Absence - sickness; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary**

The chart shows that whilst there have been variations in levels of sickness absence, the service is consistently generally well below the corporate target. During June 2021 absence rates were as a result of ongoing medium-term absence. During October 2021 until June 2022 there were absences below the corporate trigger which reduced during that time frame. These absences related to limited short-term absence and one medium term absence. All absences were resolved in February 2022 when there was no absence. An increase in absence is reported during April 2022. This was the result of short-term illness. As a result of planned long term sickness absence and a limited number of short-term absences during June 2022, absence rates increased for the service. Given the nature of the absences, essentially planned and long term, it was anticipated that the impact would continue beyond June through into September, which is evidenced from the trend. There has been a gradual reduction in absence levels over that period as short-term absences have resolved but levels remain above the corporate trigger level. It is anticipated that this will continue to be the case until ongoing long terms planned absence is resolved.

As Legal Services are a relatively small team, a few absences can have a significant impact on the sickness absence levels. Incidents of short-term sickness absence experienced are due to minor ailments. There are no general patterns of sickness absence within Legal Services which would give rise to particular concerns. All absences are managed in accordance with the Councils Supporting Attendance at Work policy.

The target is set in accordance with the Corporate target which for 2022/23 is 3.6%.

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| PI Code & Short Name | **P:LS091_6b.5 Percentage of Taxi/Private Hire Car Applications Not Granted or Refused within 90 Days** | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 originally set a statutory deadline of 6 months for an application to be granted or refused, that deadline was extended to 9 months for applications received after 1 May 2017. That deadline has been temporarily increased to 12 months by emergency legislation following the coronavirus pandemic. The Licensing Team has set a local target of 90 days for applications to be granted or refused. The process of determining applications for a licence involve referral to and input from third party agencies. The manner in which those agencies manage their input into the process can affect the progression of the application from the point it is made, to the point it is determined. The Licensing Team has no influence over those parts of the process which rely upon third parties either in respect of timescales or outcomes. This can have an impact on overall customer satisfaction levels. | **PI Owner(s):** zLS_PIAdmin; Audrey Watson |



Percentage of Taxi/Private Hire Car Applications Not Granted or Refused within 90 Days

| | August 2022 result |
|---|---|
| |  |
| **Last Updated:** | August 2022 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 4% |
| **Current Target:** | 6% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 6.66% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 6.42% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

The trend shows that performance is generally within target but that there have been four months during the report period when the target was not met. During November and December 2021 delays in medical testing along with delays by applicants in presenting vehicles for test affected performance. Medical testing recommenced locally in December 2021 which reduced delays in processing new driver's applications. The target was not achieved in February 2022 but failures to meet the target that month were all attributable to delays caused by applicants in the application process. During July 2022, target was not achieved. This was due to delays by applicants, the necessity to schedule medical appointments and a delay in the committee process.

Data for September 2022 will be input by end November 2022.

The 2022/23 target is 6% having regard to historical fluctuations in performance but will be closely reviewed in conjunction with review of processing timescales which may impact the service ability to achieve performance in line with target.

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| PI Code & Short Name | P:PIS011_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by the Performance and Improvement Service per quarter | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the total number of complaints received during each quarter relating to the Performance and Improvement Service. Performance is reviewed on a regular basis and reported quarterly to ensure that there is sufficient focus on the quality and standard of customer service. The data for this performance indicator is extracted from the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which is used to manage and monitor complaint handling procedures in the council. All complaints received are analysed to identify improvements to the quality of the service and the way it is delivered to customers. | PI Owner(s): zPIS_PIAdmin; Rebecca Kelly |



Total number of complaints received by the Performance and Improvement Service per quarter

Q2 2022/23 result

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 0 |
| Current Target: | 1 |
| Red Threshold: | 3 |
| Amber Threshold: | 2 |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary**

The service has recorded no complaints in the period of the chart (Q3 2020/21 to Q2 2022/23). The Blue Badge entitlement process was transferred to the Anti-Poverty Service in June 2019 and this was the source of past complaints received by the Performance and Improvement Service. It is expected that the number of complaints received by the Performance and Improvement Service will be below historic levels.

**Target:** the target was set at one complaint per quarter for 2021/22 and will remain in place for 2022/23.

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| PI Code & Short Name | P:PIS013_6b.4 Percentage of all complaints closed by the Performance and Improvement Service that were upheld / partially upheld per quarter | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the overall percentage of closed complaints received by the Performance and Improvement Service that have been upheld or part upheld during each quarter. In each period, the total number of upheld and partially upheld complaints is divided by the total number of complaints closed to determine the overall percentage. The data for this performance indicator is extracted from the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which is used to manage and monitor complaint handling procedures in the council. All complaints received are analysed to identify improvements to the quality of the service and the way it is delivered to customers. | **PI Owner(s):** | zPIS_PIAdmin; Rebecca Kelly |

Percentage of all complaints closed by the Performance and Improvement Service that were upheld / partially upheld per quarter

■ Quarters  ■ Target (Quarters)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Q2 2022/23 result** | |
| N/A | |
| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| **Status:** | [?] |
| **Current Value:** | N/A |
| **Current Target:** | 25% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 60% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 50% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary**

The service typically receives a low number of complaints each quarter as much of the activity delivered is an enabler/support function. Where complaints were received, they typically related to administration of the Blue Badge scheme. This was transferred, along with administration of the National Entitlement Scheme, to the council's Anti-Poverty Service in June 2019 (Quarter 2 of 2019/20).

**2022/23:** The service received no complaints in Quarters 1 and 2 2022/23.

**2021/22:** The service received no complaints in Quarters 1, 2, 3 and 4 2021/22.

**Target**: a target of 25 percent has been set for 2022/23.

55

| PI Code & Short Name | P:PIS023_7b.1 Percentage of Sickness Absence in Performance and Improvement Service | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures, as a percentage, the total level of sickness absence in the Performance and Improvement Service in Corporate Services.  The data is provided by the council's Human Resource Services on a monthly basis and is tracked and monitored to ensure absence is managed appropriately in the service and any corresponding impact on performance is understood and managed. | PI Owner(s): zPIS_PIAdmin; Rebecca Kelly |



Percentage of Sickness Absence in Performance and Improvement Service

September 2022 result

3.78%
3.74%
0%
2.11%
10%

| | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | September 2022 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 2.11% |
| Current Target: | 3.6% |
| Red Threshold: | 3.78% |
| Amber Threshold: | 3.74% |
| Categories: | Absence - sickness; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary**

The Performance and Improvement Service comprises 11.79 full time equivalents and due to the size of the service, a small number of staff absent from work can greatly impact the performance in this indicator.

The trend shows that there were eight periods where performance was 0 or less than 1 percent. Periods of absence in the service are historically mostly short-term. The absence in November 2021 accounts for 2 days of sickness in the service during that month, there were 20 days of absence in the service in January 2022, 15 days in February 2022, 5 days in March 2022, 1 day in July and August 2022 and 4 days in September 2022. All staff have since returned to work.

Sickness levels are monitored on a monthly basis and the service takes the appropriate action in compliance with the Council's Supporting Attendance at Work Policy and procedures to manage all periods of absence.
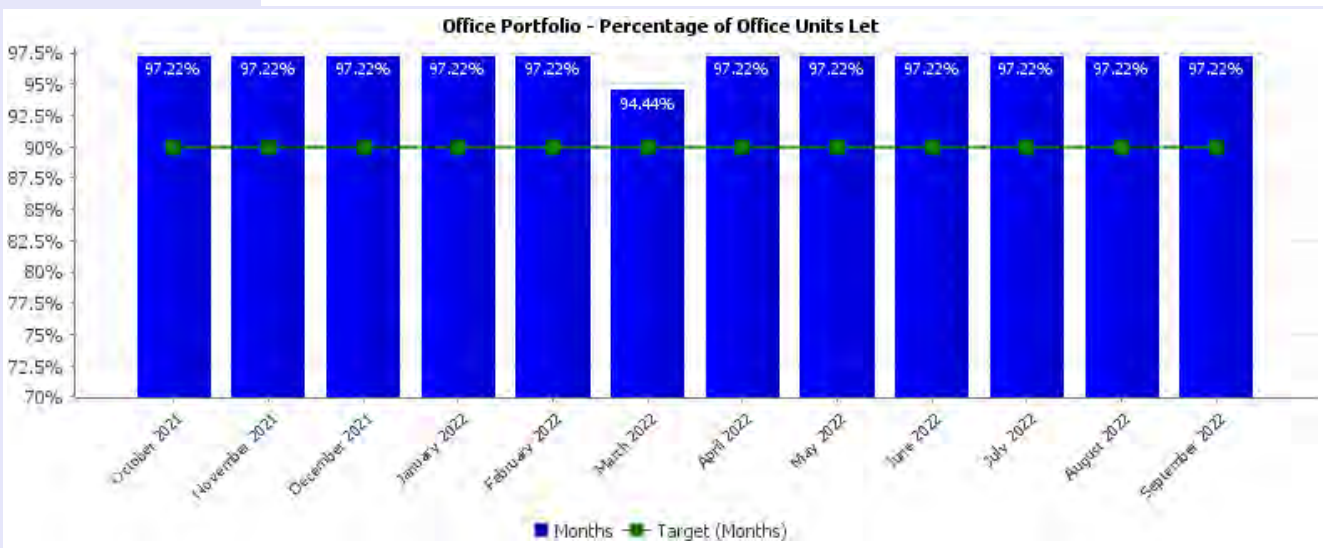
**Target:** the corporate target of 3.6% is used and will remain at this level for 2022/23.

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| PI Code & Short Name | P:PS112_7b.1 Property Services - Cumulative Percentage of Sickness absence Days | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Description | This monthly performance indicator records the cumulative Property Services Sickness/ Absence level as is reported through monthly management reports from HR Pay and Reward using the SPI percentage. It is used to review the effectiveness of sickness absence management.<br><br>The monthly sickness absence figures are contained in PSg300_7b.3a. | PI Owner(s): | zPS_Admin - Property Services PS; David Baird |



Property Services - Cumulative Percentage of Sickness absence Days

| | |
|---|---|
| September 2022 result | |
| | 2.1% 2.06% ... 0% ... 8% 2.52% |
| Last Updated: | September 2022 |
| Status: | 🛑 |
| Current Value: | 2.52% |
| Current Target: | 2% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 2.1% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 2.06% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

Sickness absence levels in Property Services increased but is below corporate target of 3.6% but above the service target of 2% at the end of September 2022. All sickness absence is managed in line with Council policy.

The target is set at 3.6% corporately, and following review the Finance & Property Services service target for 2022/23 is 2%.

57

| PI Code & Short Name | P:PS301_9b.1a Industrial Portfolio - Percentage of Total Units Let | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator is part of the performance scorecard for the council's asset management strategy and will contribute to outcome 5 utilisation. This is one of three Performance Indicators (PI) that record the occupancy levels of the major parts of the council's Tenanted Non-Residential Property (TNRP) portfolio, i.e. those properties that the council owns but does not occupy itself, and which are leased to third parties. This PI is based on 300 industrial units. The calculation of the PI was reviewed in April 2010 to ensure its comparability with PI's produced by our benchmarking partners in other local authorities, and again in August 2015 to reflect changes in the portfolio. The base figure primarily consists of properties that are let on short term agreements, where occupancy levels are expected to be more volatile. Targets are reviewed annually in April and take account of the economic climate, the property market, and our rental income target, with the objective of maximising occupancy levels. | **PI Owner(s):** zPS_Admin - Property Services PS; David Metcalf |



Industrial Portfolio - Percentage of Total Units Let

| | September 2022 result |
|---|---|
| |  94.86% |
| Last Updated: | September 2022 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 94.86% |
| Current Target: | 90% |
| Red Threshold: | 81% |
| Amber Threshold: | 85.5% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Development and Transport; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

Occupancy for this month (September 2022) is 94.86% against a target of 90%. This is in the middle of the 12 month range (93.47% to 97.59%).

WLC's portfolio are mainly less than 3,000 sq. ft units. Demand is healthy and occupancy is well above pre COVID level. The rents charged are also at pre – COVID level.

The nature of most of the lease agreements - easy-in, easy-out, month to month - means that the occupancy level is particularly volatile. Capital improvements have been undertaken over the past three years to preserve the income stream from the portfolio. We will continue to work on improving the appeal of our properties.

2022/23 target is set at 90% this allows us to maintain current levels whilst investigating areas for improvement.

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| PI Code & Short Name | P:PS303_9b.1a Office Portfolio - Percentage of Office Units Let | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator is part of the performance scorecard for the councils asset management strategy and will contribute to outcome 5 utilisation.<br>This is one of three Performance Indicators that record the occupancy levels of the major parts of the council's Tenanted Non-Residential Property (TNRP)  portfolio, i.e. those properties that the council owns but does not occupy itself, and which are leased to third parties.  This PI is based on 42 self contained offices, or suites in multi-occupancy buildings. The calculation of the PI was reviewed in April 2010 to ensure it's comparability with PI's produced by our benchmarking partners in other local authorities. The total also reflects recent changes in the portfolio (reviewed August 2015). Targets are reviewed annually in April and take account of the economic climate, the property market, and our rental income target, with the objective of maximising occupancy levels. More details on the council's portfolio can be found on http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/2494/Land-and-Property | PI Owner(s): zPS_Admin - Property Services PS; David Metcalf |



Office Portfolio - Percentage of Office Units Let

| September 2022 result | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | September 2022 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 97.22% |
| Current Target: | 90% |
| Red Threshold: | 81% |
| Amber Threshold: | 85.5% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Development and Transport; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

This month (September 2022) sees occupancy at 97.22%. This above the target of 90% and is at the top of the 12 month range (94.44% to 97.22%).

Occupancy has been fairly stable. Where units do become void they are taking longer to re let compared to the shop and industrial properties, which is indicative of the weak office market in West Lothian.

The Council hold a 36 lettable units therefore a single vacancy or letting has disproportionate effect on occupancy rates.

The office market for larger suites in West Lothian continues to be challenging. An Edinburgh commercial agent is assisting the marketing of the council's largest office void this has been vacant for nearly two years.

The Target for 2022 is set at 90% this allows us to maintain current levels whilst investigating areas for improvement.

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| PI Code & Short Name | **P:PS304_9b.1c Percentage of rent outstanding for commercial property (Current debt).** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This Performance Indicator (PI) measures the amount of current debt from the council's Tenanted Non-Residential Property (i.e. commercial) portfolio. Current debt is considered to be rent due from an **existing tenant** that has been outstanding for over 30 days, expressed as a percentage of the total rental income billed. The portfolio comprises those properties that the council owns, but does not occupy for direct service delivery, and totals almost 700 properties, including shops, offices, and industrial units. The indicator measures the position on debt on the 1st of the previous month. Total income billed adopts the annual income as at the first of the month.<br><br>Targets have been set in consultation with our benchmarking partners in other councils and reflect commercial levels. They are also considered against other council revenue income / debt levels. | **PI Owner(s):** | zPS_Admin - Property Services PS; David Metcalf |



Percentage of rent outstanding for commercial property (Current debt).

| | September 2022 result |
|---|---|
| |  |
| **Last Updated:** | September 2022 |
| **Status:** | 🛑 |
| **Current Value:** | 6.47% |
| **Current Target:** | 4% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 5% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 4.5% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Development and Transport; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

The debt level for September 2022 has decreased to 6.47% exceeding the target of 4%. It is in the upper quarter of the 12 month range of 5.12% - 7.37%.

Current debt level has increased due to increased billing amounts over the last month. Similar to previous period in 2021 level increased between months of July and August comprising Scottish quarter day billing periods. A combination of lease terminations has impacted upon income however demand is still high for purposes of re-letting.

Debt level is below target set prior to Covid-19 pandemic and is still subject to payments plans created throughout this period. Officers shall continue recover outstanding rental demands timeously in line with standard processes and procedures to reduce debt levels

Although the majority of payments are monthly, regular variations are to be expected from both quarterly and six-monthly cycles, reflecting the timing and method of payment of rent by some tenants, i.e. where payments are for three- or six-month periods. This is particularly evident in older and longer leases where payments are not collected by Direct Debit, unlike the monthly payments. As a result, we expect fluctuation after the annual, quarterly and six-monthly payments become due. Internal and partner agreements are also regularly late in payment due to the "soft nature" of debt collection on these

Target for 2022 is set at 4% and reflects the unit targeting to improve these results in the future.

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:REV002_9b Percentage of Non Domestic Rates (Business Rates) received in the year** | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the percentage of Non Domestic Rates (Business Rates) income received in the current year.<br><br>This indicator records the progress on a cumulative monthly basis at the end of each month by calculating the total Business Rates payments received for the year as a percentage of the net charges due for the year. Income collection rates link in to the overall financial planning strategy. Monthly monitoring and analysis allow any risks and actions to be identified. | **PI Owner(s):** zREV_PIAdmin; Scott Reid |



Percentage of Non Domestic Rates (Business Rates) received in the year



September 2022 result

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | September 2022 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 57.02% |
| **Current Target:** | 55.55% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 49.99% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 55.55% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

This indicator shows the percentage of Non Domestic Rates (Business Rates) collected cumulatively on a monthly basis for the current year.

2022/23

September 2022: In year collection is up 1.47% from this time last year.

August 2022: In year collection is up 2.83% from this time last year. This increase can be attributed to the issuing of recovery notices.

July 2022: In year collection is up 2.14% from this time last year. This increase can be attributed to the issuing of reminder notices and summary warrants. Work is ongoing in relation to maximisation of intervention income.

June 2022: In year collection is up 1.74% from this time last year. This increase can be attributed to the issuing of reminder notices and summary warrants. There has also been work on those cases at the intervention stage.

May 2022: In year collection is up 0.33% from this time last year. This increase can partly be attributed to the issuing of reminders at the beginning of the financial year.

April 2022: In year collection is up 2.03% from this time last year. Instalments for Business Rates are not due until May.

2021/22

March 2022: In year collection is up 3.35% from this time last year. This increase can be attributed in part to the new recovery timetable for Business Rates.

February 2022: In year collection is up 2.75% from this time last year. This increase can be attributed in part to the new recovery timetable for Business Rates.

January 2022: In year collection is up 2.52% from this time last year. This increase can be attributed in part to the new recovery timetable for Business Rates.

December 2021: In year collection is up 2.65% from this time last year. This increase can be attributed in part to the new recovery timetable for Business Rates.

November 2021: In year collection is up 3.40% from this time last year. This increase can be attributed in part to the introduction of the new recovery timetable for Business Rates.

October 2021: In year collection is up 1.57% from this time last year. This month Business Rates reminders were issued following a change in legislation from April 21.

Target 2022/23: The cumulative collection target for 2022/23 has been reviewed and after taking in to account previous year performance, recovery from the impact of Covid 19, staffing levels and the statutory changes following the

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Barclay Review has been set at 97%. The cumulative monthly target will be based on the collection rate achieved in the same month in the previous year as this will give us a guide on monthly performance against the end of year target.

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| PI Code & Short Name | P:REV027_6b Percentage of Business Rates and Council Tax correspondence processed within 10 working days of receipt. | |
|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the percentage of customer correspondence received in relation to Business Rates and Council Tax that is processed within 10 working days of receipt.<br><br>The performance indicator is cumulative across the financial year and is calculated using data from the Council Tax and Business Rates workflow system. The data provides the date the customer correspondence is received and the date it is processed to completion or pended whilst awaiting further information. This performance indicator provides an insight to the level of customer service provided with performance being monitored and analysed to identify any risks and actions required. | **PI Owner(s):** zREV_PIAdmin; Scott Reid |



Percentage of Business Rates and Council Tax correspondence processed within 10 working days of receipt.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| **Status:** | 🔴 |
| **Current Value:** | 79.3% |
| **Current Target:** | 96.4% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 91.58% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 95.44% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Q2 2022/23 result**

91.58%
95.44%
100%
50%
79.3%

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

**2022/23**

Quarter 2: Performance in quarter 2 was below target. However the deficit has been reduced by 9.2% over the quarter. There were 25,085 items of correspondence received with 19,889 processed within the target of 10 working days. The level of correspondence is similar to same quarter in 2021/22.

Quarter 1: Performance in quarter 1 was below target due to the impact of staff absence in this quarter with a total of 18.2% of staff hours being lost There were 11,625 items of correspondence received with 8,157 processed within the target of 10 working days. The level of correspondence received reduced by 1,428 compared to the same point last year which can be mostly attributed to the change in the Business Rates Retail, Hospitality and Leisure application process for 2022/23.

**2021/22**

Quarter 4: Performance in quarter 4 was below target by 0.7%. 49,474 items of correspondence were received with 47,341 processed within the target of 10 working days. The level of correspondence received has reduced by 3,894 compared to the same point last year. This can be mostly attributed to the fact that the Collections Team have not had to process Business Support Grants during this period.

Quarter 3: Performance in quarter 3 was above target. 37,708 items of correspondence were received with 36,509 processed within the target of 10 working days. The level of correspondence received has reduced significantly which can be attributed to the fact that the Collections Team are no longer processing Business Support Grants on behalf of the Scottish Government.

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Quarter 2: Performance in quarter 2 was below target. However the deficit has reduced from 2.77% to 0.3% over the quarter . 25,265 items of correspondence were received with 24,270 processed within the target of 10 working days. The team is currently in the process of recruiting staff to fill vacancies.

Target 2022/23: We have reviewed the target for 2022/23 and set it at 96.4%. This target has been set taking into account the increased number of properties, the level of customer correspondence being received for both Council Tax and Business Rates and the potential impact of the rise in the cost of living as well as staffing levels within the Collection's Team.

| PI Code & Short Name | **P:REV047_9b.1a Percentage of income collected in the current year from Council Tax** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the percentage of Council Tax income received in the current year.<br><br>This indicator records the progress on a cumulative monthly basis at the end of each month and is calculated using the statutory formula set out in the Water Order using the total Council Tax payments received for the year as a percentage of the net charges due for the year. Income collection rates link in to the overall financial planning strategy. Monthly monitoring and analysis allow any risks and actions to be identified. Whilst recovery action to collect all previous year debt continues, in year collection is a recognised benchmark standard. The benchmark data for the in year collection is captured in the performance indicator SCorp 07. | **PI Owner(s):** zREV_PIAdmin; Scott Reid |



Percentage of income collected in the current year from Council Tax

| | September 2022 result |
|---|---|
| | 54.27%<br>54.44%<br>58.63% |
| **Last Updated:** | September 2022 |
| **Status:** | ✅ |
| **Current Value:** | 58.63% |
| **Current Target:** | 54.82% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 54.27% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 54.44% |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**
This indicator shows the percentage of Council Tax collected cumulatively on a monthly basis for the current year.

**2022/23**
September 2022: In year collection is 3.81% above target. This increase is due to £150 Cost of Living Awards applied in April 22. It is expected that the level of increase will continue to reduce each month.
August 2022: In year collection is 4.37% above target. This increase is due to the £150 Cost of Living Awards applied in April 22. It is expected that the level of increase will continue to reduce each month.
July 2022: In year collection is 4.95% above target. This increase is due to the £150 Cost of Living Awards applied in April 22. It is expected that the level of increase will continue to incrementally reduce each month.
June 2022:In year collection is 5.58% above target. This increase is due to the £150 Cost of Living Awards applied in April 22. It is expected that the level of increase will incrementally reduce each month going forward.
May 2022: In year collection is 6.39% above target. This increase is due to the £150 Cost of Living Awards applied to 59,688 households in April 22.
April 2022: In year collection is 6.96% above target. This increase is due to the £150 Cost of Living Awards applied to 59,688 households in April 22. The total value of the awards in April were £8,953,200 which has positively impacted this year's collection.

**2021/22**
March 2022: In year collection is 0.94% above target. This increase can be partly be attributed to the Low Income Pandemic Payments made in November 21 which positively impacted this year's collection by 0.49%.
February 2022: In year collection is 1.15% above target. This increase can be partly be attributed to the Low Income Pandemic Payments made in November 21 which positively impacted this year's collection by 0.49%
January 2022: In year collection is 1.23% above target. This increase can be partly be attributed to the Low Income Pandemic Payments made in November 21 which positively impacted this year's collection by 0.49%.
December 2021: In year collection is 1.44% above target. This increase can partly be attributed to the Low Income Pandemic Payments made in November 21 which positively impacted this year's collection by 0.49%.
November 2021: In year collection is 1.38 above target. This increase can partly be attributed to the Low Income Pandemic Payments which were make to eligible Council Tax accounts in November.
October 2021: In year collection is 0.94% above target. This increase can be attributed to the increased number of direct debit payers compared to last year.

Target 2022/23: The cumulative collection target for 2022/23 has been reviewed and after taking in to account previous year performance, the impact of Covid recovery and the rise in the cost of living as well as staffing levels has been set at 96.2%. The cumulative monthly target will be based on the collection rate achieved in the same month in the previous year as this will give us a guide on monthly performance against the end of year target.

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| PI Code & Short Name | **P:REV048a_7b.1 Monthly Sickness Absence Levels** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This performance indicator measures the levels of monthly sickness absence in the Revenues Unit on a month by month basis. For each month we aim to have equal to or less than 2.5% sickness absence. The sickness absence statistics used for this performance indicator are recorded from data issued by Human Resources. Sickness absence is discussed as a standing item on the monthly agenda of both the Revenues Management Team and Finance and Property Services Management Team meetings. | **PI Owner(s):** zREV_PIAdmin; Scott Reid |



Monthly Sickness Absence Levels

**September 2022 result**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | September 2022 |
| **Status:** | 🔴 |
| **Current Value:** | 6.73% |
| **Current Target:** | 2.5% |
| **Red Threshold:** | 3% |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 2.75% |
| **Categories:** | Absence - sickness; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

**2022/23**

September 2022: Sickness absence levels for September 2022 have increased. In September 2022 there were 65 sick days out of a possible 966 days. All actions required under the policy are being undertaken in relation to sickness absence monitoring. Monthly sickness absence in the unit for September 2022 is above that of Finance and Property Services which is 5.43% (289 out of 5,322 days).

August 2022: Sickness absence levels for August 2022 have reduced. In August 2022 there were 30 sick days out of a possible 1,013 days. All actions required under the policy are being undertaken in relation to sickness absence monitoring. Monthly sickness absence in the unit is below that of Finance and Property Services which is 4.5% (247 out of 5,483 days) for August 2022.

July 2022: Sickness absence levels for July 2022 have fallen as staff continue to return from long term absence. In July 2022 there were 49 sick days out of a possible 1,055 days. All actions required under the policy are being undertaken in relation to sickness absence monitoring. Monthly sickness absence in the unit is now below that of Finance and Property Services which is 4.97% (276 out of 5,552 days) for July 2022.

June 2022: Sickness absence levels for June 2022 have fallen as staff continue to return from long term absence. In June 2022 there were 80 sick days out of a possible 1,055 days. All actions required under the policy are being undertaken in relation to sickness absence monitoring. Monthly sickness absence in the unit is above that of Finance and Property Services which is 5.1% (285 out of 5,584 days) for June 2022.

May 2022: Sickness absence levels for May 2022 have fallen as staff return from long term absence. In May 2022 there were 82 sick days out of a possible 1,055 days. All actions required under the policy are being undertaken in relation to sickness absence monitoring. Monthly sickness absence in the unit is above that of Finance and Property Services which is 4.64% (259 out of 5,576 days) for May 2022.

April 2022: Sickness absence levels for April 2022 continues to increase due to long and short term sickness absence. In April 2022 there were 121 sick days out of a possible 1,003 days. All actions required under the policy are being undertaken in relation to sickness absence monitoring. Monthly sickness absence in the unit is above that of Finance and Property Services which is 6.6% (353 out of 5,351 days) for April 2022.

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**2021/22**

March 2022: Sickness absence levels for March 2022 continues to increase due to long and short term sickness absence. In March 2022 there were 116 sick days out of a possible 1,055 days. All actions required under the policy are being undertaken in relation to sickness absence monitoring. Monthly sickness absence in the unit is above that of Finance and Property Services which is 5.99% (334 out of 5,580 days) for March 2022.

February 2022: Sickness absence levels for February 2022 continues to increase due to long and short term sickness absence. In February 2022 there were 90 sick days out of a possible 936 days. All actions required under the policy are being undertaken in relation to sickness absence monitoring. Monthly sickness absence in the unit is above that of Finance and Property Services which is 6.27% (316 out of 5,036 days) for February 2022.
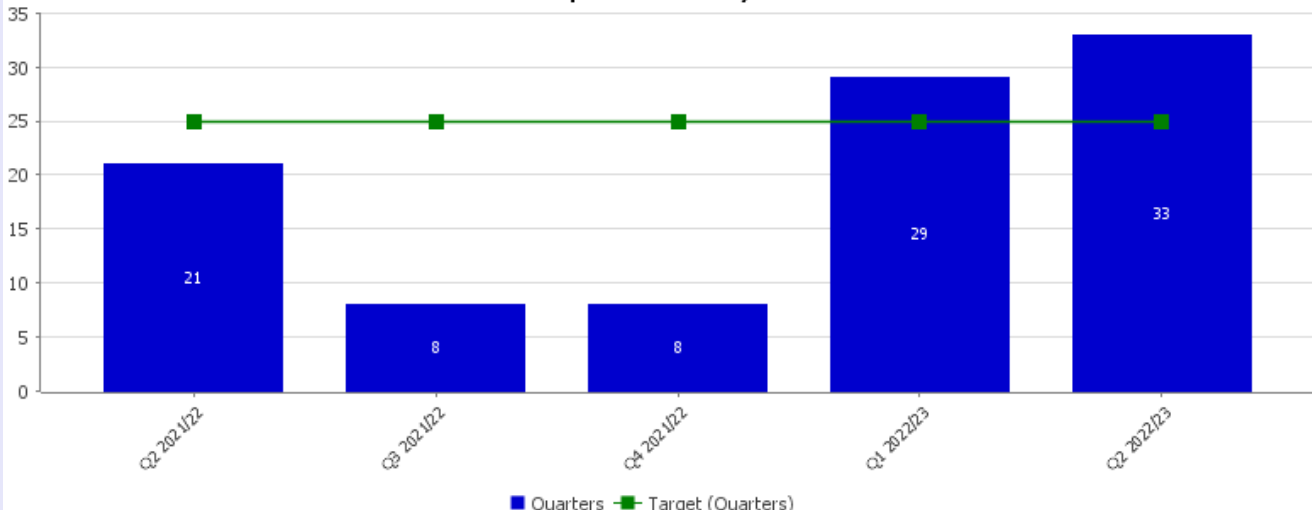
January 2022: Sickness absence levels for January 2022 continues to increase due to long and short term sickness absence. In January 2022 there were 87 sick days out of a possible 1,056 days. All actions required under the policy are being undertaken in relation to sickness absence monitoring. Monthly sickness absence in the unit is above that of Finance and Property Services which is 5.8% (325 out of 5,603 days) for January 2022.

December 2021: Sickness absence levels for December 2021 increased significantly from the previous month due to long and short term sickness absence. In December 2021 there were 73 sick days out of a possible 1,055 days. All actions required under the policy are being undertaken in relation to sickness absence monitoring. Monthly sickness absence in the unit is above that of Finance and Property Services which is 4.01% (223 out of 5,556 days) for December 2021.

November 2021: Sickness absence levels for November 2021 decreased from the previous month. In November 2021 there were 22 sick days out of a possible 1,022 days. All actions required under the policy are being undertaken in relation to sickness absence monitoring. Monthly sickness absence in the unit is below that of Finance and Property Services which is 3.32% (176 out of 5,299 days) for November 2021.

October 2021: Sickness absence levels for October 2021 decreased from the previous month. In October 2021 there were 23 sick days out of a possible 1,017 days. All actions required under the policy are being undertaken in relation to sickness absence monitoring. Monthly sickness absence in the unit is below that of Finance and Property Services which is 2.51% (133 out of 5,308 days) for October 2021.
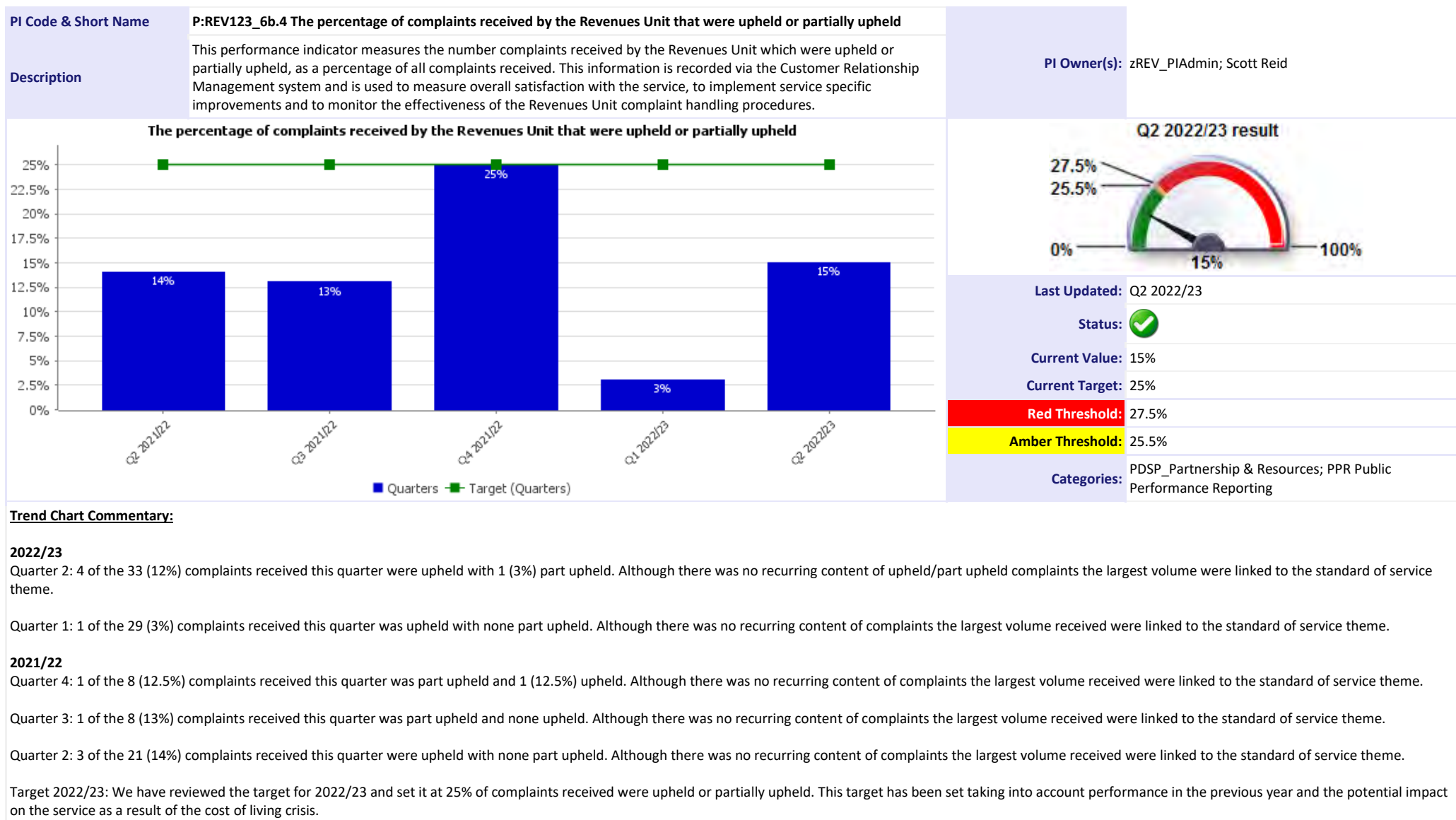
Target 2022/23: For 2022/23 the target has been set by the Service Management Team for the Revenues Unit at 2.5%.

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| PI Code & Short Name | P:REV122_6b.3 Total number of complaints received by the Revenues Unit | |
|---|---|---|
| **Description** | This indicator measures the total number of complaints received by the Revenues Unit. It is the total number of complaints received by the Revenues Unit at stage one (complaints that the council aims to deal with within 5 working days) and those received directly at stage two (more complex complaints that the council aims to deal with within 20 working days). Complaints are recorded on the Customer Relationship Management system and addressed by Revenues Managers. The indicator is used to measure levels of satisfaction with service delivery and to identify particular areas for improvement. | **PI Owner(s):** zREV_PIAdmin; Scott Reid |



Total number of complaints received by the Revenues Unit



Q2 2022/23 result

| | |
|---|---|
| **Last Updated:** | Q2 2022/23 |
| **Status:** | 🔴 |
| **Current Value:** | 33 |
| **Current Target:** | 25 |
| **Red Threshold:** | 28 |
| **Amber Threshold:** | 26 |
| **Categories:** | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

**2022/23**

Quarter 2: 33 complaints were received during this quarter. There was an increase in the number of complaints in this quarter as a direct result of the strike action that affected domestic bin collections. Complaints were focussed on customers demanding a reduction in their Council Tax as a result of their bins not being emptied. 85% of complaints were not upheld.

Quarter 1: 29 complaints were received during this quarter. Although there was no recurring content of complaints the largest volume received were linked to the standard of service. The number of complaints were the same in this quarter compared to quarter 1 in the previous year. A larger number of complaints are received in quarter 1 due to the large scale annual billing cycle and the initial arrears recovery for the year. 97% of complaints were not upheld.

**2021/22**

Quarter 4: 8 complaints were received during this quarter. Although there was no recurring content of complaints the largest volume received were linked to the standard of service. The number of complaints remained the same in this quarter with 75% of complaints not upheld.

Quarter 3: 8 complaints were received during this quarter. Although there was no recurring content of complaints the largest volume received were linked to the standard of service. The number of complaints decreased in this quarter with 87% of complaints not upheld.

Quarter 2: 21 complaints were received during this quarter. Although there was no recurring content of complaints the largest volume received were linked to the standard of service. The number of complaints decreased in this quarter with 86% of complaints not upheld.

Target 2022/23: We have reviewed the target for 2022/23 and set it at 25 complaints received in the quarter. This target has been set taking into account previous years performance and the potential impact on the service of the cost of living crisis.

| PI Code & Short Name | P:REV123_6b.4 The percentage of complaints received by the Revenues Unit that were upheld or partially upheld | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Description | This performance indicator measures the number complaints received by the Revenues Unit which were upheld or partially upheld, as a percentage of all complaints received. This information is recorded via the Customer Relationship Management system and is used to measure overall satisfaction with the service, to implement service specific improvements and to monitor the effectiveness of the Revenues Unit complaint handling procedures. | PI Owner(s): | zREV_PIAdmin; Scott Reid |



The percentage of complaints received by the Revenues Unit that were upheld or partially upheld

| Q2 2022/23 result | |
|---|---|
| Last Updated: | Q2 2022/23 |
| Status: | ✅ |
| Current Value: | 15% |
| Current Target: | 25% |
| Red Threshold: | 27.5% |
| Amber Threshold: | 25.5% |
| Categories: | PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting |

**Trend Chart Commentary:**

**2022/23**

Quarter 2: 4 of the 33 (12%) complaints received this quarter were upheld with 1 (3%) part upheld. Although there was no recurring content of upheld/part upheld complaints the largest volume were linked to the standard of service theme.

Quarter 1: 1 of the 29 (3%) complaints received this quarter was upheld with none part upheld. Although there was no recurring content of complaints the largest volume received were linked to the standard of service theme.

**2021/22**

Quarter 4: 1 of the 8 (12.5%) complaints received this quarter was part upheld and 1 (12.5%) upheld. Although there was no recurring content of complaints the largest volume received were linked to the standard of service theme.

Quarter 3: 1 of the 8 (13%) complaints received this quarter was part upheld and none upheld. Although there was no recurring content of complaints the largest volume received were linked to the standard of service theme.

Quarter 2: 3 of the 21 (14%) complaints received this quarter were upheld with none part upheld. Although there was no recurring content of complaints the largest volume received were linked to the standard of service theme.

Target 2022/23: We have reviewed the target for 2022/23 and set it at 25% of complaints received were upheld or partially upheld. This target has been set taking into account performance in the previous year and the potential impact on the service as a result of the cost of living crisis.

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**DATA LABEL: PUBLIC**

![West Lothian Council logo]

**CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN MONITORING REPORT**

**REPORT BY HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES**

**A.     PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of the report is to present to the Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel a draft submission of the first monitoring report for West Lothian Council's Gaelic Language Plan, prior to its submission to the Bord na Gaidhlig.

**B.     RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel notes the first monitoring report which is appended to this report.

**C.     SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

| I | Council Values | Focusing on our customers' needs; providing equality of opportunities; working in partnership |
|---|---|---|
| II | Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment) | The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 requires Local Authorities to develop a Gaelic Language Plan and submits annual monitoring reports. |
| III | Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers | None |
| IV | Impact on performance and performance Indicators | None |
| V | Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement | None |
| VI | Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property) | There may be financial resource requirements to implement actions included in the Gaelic language plan. Various funding streams are available should the council wish to pursue these routes. |

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**VII    Consideration at PDSP**

**VIII    Other consultations**

**D.    TERMS OF REPORT**

**D.1    Background**

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 establishes the "Bòrd na Gaidhlig" (the "Bòrd") to promote and facilitate the promotion of the use and understanding of the Gaelic language, Gaelic education and Gaelic culture and to advise on matters relating to the Gaelic language. The functions conferred on the Bòrd by the Act are stated as being with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language.

The 2005 Act required the Bòrd to develop a national Gaelic language plan. The national plan was approved in June 2010.

Section 3 of the 2005 Act empowers the Bòrd to issue a notice to a public authority to require the development of a local Gaelic language plan, setting out the measures to be taken in relation to the use of the Gaelic language in connection with the exercise of the authority's functions.

The plan should be introduced incrementally and over a five-year time span, to be renewed every five years.

The Bòrd are empowered to monitor implementation of the plan on an annual basis and recommend that a commitment to submit an annual monitoring report is included in local plans. The Bord has requested that the council submit the first monitoring report for the West Lothian Council's Gaelic Language Plan.

**D.2    West Lothian Council Gaelic Language Plan**

The Council received statutory notice to develop a Gaelic Language Plan and the Council's plan was formally approved by Council Executive on 17 December 2021.

The Council's Gaelic language plan, which is attached as Appendix 1, and the actions contained in it recognised that the West Lothian Council area has not been one of Scotland's traditional Gaelic speaking areas, nor has a large number of people who speak Gaelic today. The actions in the plan therefore focus on pursuing a pragmatic approach to help develop the Gaelic language in the West Lothian area.

The actions are focused on an incremental approach to the introduction of dual language signage, responses to communications in Gaelic where this is appropriate, to provide training to staff who require Gaelic language in order to undertake their duties and to enhance and develop the use of Gaelic language through education in schools.

The monitoring report attached as Appendix 2 provides an update on progress in the roll out of the agreed actions. The format of the monitoring report is as requested by the Bord and will be forwarded to them following review by the PDSP.

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**E.    CONCLUSION**

The draft monitoring report for West Lothian Council's Gaelic Language Plan sets out the incremental progress made against the Gaelic Language Plan.  The monitoring report will be forwarded to the Bord na Gaidhlig following review by the PDSP.

**F.    BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

Report to Council Executive on 17 December 2019

Appendices/Attachments:

Appendix 1 –
Appendix 2 - Daft monitoring report for West Lothian Council's Gaelic Language Plan


Contact Person: Garry Heron
Email: garry.heron@westlothian.gov.uk, tel 01506 282006


Lesley Henderson
Interim Head of Corporate Services

12 December 2022

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# PLANA GÀIDHLIG COMHAIRLE LODAINN AN IAR

*2021-2026*

**West Lothian Council**

*This plan has been prepared under Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and was approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig on [insert approval date]*

# WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL
# GAELIC LANGUAGE
# PLAN

## 2021 – 2026

This plan has been prepared under Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005

## FOREWORD

West Lothian Council is committed to the use and promotion of the Gaelic Language in recognition of its status as one of Scotland's national languages and its unique contribution to the richness and diversity of Scottish culture today. In taking this forward we recognise that our contribution will help to sustain and develop the Gaelic language and its place as a part of the Scottish way of life and within the nation's heritage.

The West Lothian Council area has not been one of Scotland's traditional Gaelic speaking areas. This is an opportunity to positively and incrementally grow the use of the language in West Lothian in a way that is proportionate. The council will develop an approach which supports and responds positively to this heritage and demographic.

This will include proposals to enhance the status of Gaelic across the area and promote the acquisition and learning of the language as well as encourage its increased use. The council's actions will aim to support the aspirations and objectives included in the National Gaelic Language Plan and the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

Graham Hope
Chief Executive

**Summary**


**Chapter 1**        **Introduction**
- **The Gaelic Language Plan**
- **West Lothian Council**
- **Gaelic in West Lothian**
- **Implementing the National Plan for Gaelic**


**Chapter 2**        **Commitments**
- **Key Principles**
- **High Level Aims and Implementing the National Gaelic Language Plan**
- **Corporate Services Aims**

**Chapter 3**        **Implementation and Monitoring**

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**Summary**

West Lothian Council recognises that Gaelic is an integral part of Scotland's heritage, national identity and cultural life. West Lothian Council is committed to the objectives set out in the *National Gaelic Language Plan* and has put in place the necessary structures and initiatives to ensure that Gaelic has a sustainable future in Scotland.

Our Gaelic Language Plan aims to:

- Enhance the status of Gaelic
- Promote learning of Gaelic
- Encourage increased use of Gaelic

This document is West Lothian Council's Gaelic Language Plan prepared within the framework of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. It sets out how we will use Gaelic in the operation of our functions, how we will enable the use of Gaelic when communicating with the public and key partners, and how we will promote and develop Gaelic.

This Gaelic Language Plan has been prepared in accordance with statutory criteria set out in the 2005 Act, and having regard to the *National Gaelic Language Plan* and the *Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans*.

The key components of our Gaelic Language Plan are:

**Chapter 1 – Introduction**
This chapter provides the background and context relating to the preparation of Gaelic Language Plans under the 2005 Act and the structure of West Lothian Council's main areas of operation. It also provides a summary of the use of the Gaelic language in West Lothian.

It also shows how we intend promoting the use of Gaelic in service planning and delivery and how we will take account of Gaelic and our Gaelic Language Plan when drafting new policies and considering new strategies.

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**Chapter 2 – Commitments**

This chapter sets out how West Lothian Council will use and enable the use of Gaelic in relation to our main business functions. It covers key areas of operation such as corporate identity, signage, communication with the public and the use of Gaelic on our website. This chapter sets out the level of Gaelic language provision which we are committed to providing in the lifetime of the Plan.

**Chapter 3 – Implementation and Monitoring**

This chapter sets out how the implementation of our Gaelic Language Plan will be taken forward, and how implementation and outcomes will be monitored.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

**Gaelic Language Plan**

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 (The Act) seeks to secure the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language.

The Act builds on and sits beside other measures to support the rights of minority languages, including: the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992) and the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992).

The Act established Bòrd na Gàidhlig as an executive non-departmental public body, responsible through Ministers to the Scottish Parliament with responsibility for promoting Gaelic development and providing advice to the Scottish Ministers on Gaelic issues. The Act requires Bòrd na Gàidhlig to prepare a National Gaelic Language Plan and gives it the power to request that public authorities, including local authorities, prepare and publish Gaelic Language Plans. This provision was designed to ensure that the public sector in Scotland plays its part in creating a sustainable future for Gaelic by raising its status and profile and creating practical opportunities for its use.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig provides public authorities with official notification of when they must prepare their Plan and details of the high level aims which should be met by the Plan. West Lothian Council received official notification from Bòrd na Gàidhlig in June 2018 that it has to prepare a statutory Gaelic Language Plan under the framework of the Act. The notification set out the corporate service aims and the high level aims the Plan should meet.

The categories align with the 2018-2023 National Gaelic Language Plan which contains the following three key aims: namely:

- **Increasing the use of Gaelic**
- **Increasing the learning of Gaelic**
- **Promoting a positive image of Gaelic**

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West Lothian Council has consulted publicly on the draft of this Gaelic Language Plan and has considered representations made to it during the consultation process.

*West Lothian Council's Gaelic Plan was submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for approval on 20 December 2019.*

**West Lothian**

West Lothian has a population of round 181,000 and has one of the fastest growing and youngest populations in Scotland, reflecting the area's location and attractiveness as a place to invest, live, work and visit. West Lothian Council is a publicly accountable organisation. West Lothian Council is one of 32 Scottish unitary local authorities, serving a community of over 175,000 citizens in central Scotland. West Lothian is home to an extensive business base with almost 72,000 jobs in the area.

# Lodainn an Iar

**Taghadh de dh'ainmean-àite bhon Ghàidhlig**

Airson tuilleadh air na h-ainmean seo, feuch
an stòr-dàta air www.ainmean-àite.scot.

# West Lothian

A selection of Gaelic-derived place-names

For more on these names, consult the
database on www.ainmean-aite.scot.

**Dùn Tarbhaidh**
**Duntarvie**
'at the bull-fort'

**Creag nan Gall**
**Craigengall**
'the rocky hill associated with the outlanders'

**Baile na Craoibhe**
**Ballencrieff**
'the settlement (at) the tree'

**An Druim Beag**
**Drumbeg**
'the small ridge'

**An Tòrr Bàn**
**Torbane**
'the pale heap-shaped hill'

**Achadh na h-Àirde**
**Auchenhard**
'the field (at) the projection'

**Achadh na h-Olainn**
**Auchinoon**
'the field noted for wool'

**A' Mhaol-Dhronn**
**Muldron**
'the bare ridge'

**Am Maol Odhar**
**Mealowther Hill**
'the bare brownish grey hill'

Rannsachadh le Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba & Bòrd na Gàidhlig.
Mapa le Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2019 a' cleachdadh QGIS 3.
Research by Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba & Bòrd na Gàidhlig.
Map by Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2019 using QGIS 3.

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**West Lothian Council's mission statement is**

**"striving for excellence... working with and for our communities"**

... and the following **values** demonstrate the practices West Lothian Council employees should adopt.

**values - we are striving for excellence in:**

- focusing on our customers` needs
- being honest, open and accountable
- providing equality of opportunities
- developing employees
- making best use of our resources
- working in partnership

**West Lothian Council's priorities are:**

1. Improving attainment and positive destinations for school children
2. Delivering positive outcomes and early interventions for early years
3. Minimising poverty, the cycle of deprivation and promoting equality
4. Improving the quality of life for older people
5. Improving the employment position in West Lothian
6. Delivering positive outcomes on health
7. Reducing crime and improving community safety
8. Protecting the built and natural environment

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The council employs around 8,000 employees. Over 3,100 full time equivalent (FTE) staff (47% of the total) are employed in the education service, including teachers and support staff.

The council has 33 elected members across nine multi-member wards. Those members meet periodically at meetings of full council, and these take place approximately every six weeks. The area also has two Scottish Parliament constituencies Almond Valley and Linlithgow, and two parliamentary constituencies Livingston and Linlithgow and East Falkirk.

West Lothian Council operates from three main locations: West Lothian Civic Centre (Livingston), Whitehill Depot (Bathgate) and Kirkton Service Centre (Livingston). The Council has 242 operational properties including:

- 11 secondary schools
- 67 primary schools / early years centres
- 5 assisted special needs schools
- 8 partnership centres
- 3 children's residential care homes
- 3 care homes for the elderly
- 14 libraries
- 10 sports centres / swimming pools (operated by a Leisure Trust)
- 33 community centres/village halls

**Gaelic in West Lothian**

There are Gaelic speakers located across the Council area. The 2011 census recorded that there are:
    667 residents able to speak Gaelic – 0.4% of the population compared to 1.1% across Scotland.
    1,179 residents with 'any Gaelic skill' (0.7% of the population) compared to the Scottish average of 1.7%.

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With 'any Gaelic skill' (age 3+) breakdown:

- Age 3-15  (71)
- Age 16-24 (105)
- Age 25-34 (185)
- Age 35-49 (347)
- Age 50-64  (279)
- Age 65+ (192)

| | Gaelic Language skills in West Lothian | | % change to 2011 & comparison with Scottish average |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2001 | 2011 | |
| Residents able to speak Gaelic | 573 | 667 | (+16.4% change to 2011). The  Scottish average is -1.8% |
| Residents who can read Gaelic | 350 | 408 | (+16.6% change to 2011). The  Scottish average is -1.9% |
| Residents with 'any Gaelic skill' | 1155 | 1179 | (+2.1% change to 2011). The  Scottish average is -5.8% |
| Gaelic literate speakers | 276 | 354 | (+28.3% change to 2011). The  Scottish average is +2.8% |

- Gaelic Medium Education (GME) is currently provided by West Lothian Council through a partnership arrangement with City of Edinburgh Council. This partnership arrangement supports delivering of high-quality GME for children and young people from West Lothian through effective use of resources across the Lothians. Children and young people attending GME travel to Parkside Primary or Gillespie's High School in Edinburgh. During academic sessions 2017-18 and 2018-19, under ten pupils attended GME in the City of Edinburgh.

- We already have 40 Gaelic language library and reference books in libraries across schools and communities. We will increase this provision and encourage uptake as part of our active offer of Gaelic service.

- There are no Gaelic adult learning courses in West Lothian

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- The council offers a translation and interpretation service and this requires further development and promotion to increase uptake.

**Gaelic within West Lothian Council**

The council does not hold data on the total number of Gaelic speaking staff within the organisation.

**A staff survey was conducted in April 2019 to identify information relating to staff. 947 members of staff responded to the survey. This included:**

1. *Number of staff that do not understand any Gaelic – 842*
2. *Number of staff who are Gaelic learners – 2*
3. *Number of staff who have expressed a desire to learn Gaelic - 437*
4. *Number of staff who can speak in Gaelic (basic words and phrases through to fluent) – 88*
5. *Number of staff who can speak in Gaelic comfortably and/or fluently - 0*

*A commitment will be made to maintain viable data on the above.*

**Implementing the National Gaelic Language Plan**

West Lothian Council recognises that the various priority areas identified in the National Gaelic Language Plan will be primarily implemented through our Gaelic Language Plan but that opportunities will arise to promote and develop the language through existing policy measures. West Lothian Council will examine policy commitments to identify areas where Gaelic can be pro-actively incorporated and the priorities of the National Gaelic Language Plan initiated through additional methods. We see this development as corresponding to the normalisation principle which aims to include Gaelic as an everyday part of life in Scotland.

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## 2. COMMITMENTS

In its statutory *Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans*, Bòrd na Gàidhlig notes that creating the right environment for the use of Gaelic in public life is one of the key components of language regeneration.

### 2.1 – Key Principles

The Key principles included within our Statutory Notice are:
**Equal Respect**
Gaelic language plan commitments to deliver to an equal standard in both Gaelic and English
**Active Offer**
Practical measures to ensure that staff and public are kept regularly informed of all opportunities that exist to use Gaelic in relation to the work of the public authority.
**Third Parties**:
Ensure that Arm's Length Executive Organisations and other contractors help deliver the public authority Gaelic language Plan
**Normalisation**
Gaelic Plan commitments are normalised within the structures of the public authority over time, with opportunities to grow Gaelic within existing budgets constantly assessed.
**Corporate Parenting**
That the authority is aware of the duties of a Corporate Parent to ensure that looked after children and young people and care leavers with Gaelic receive the same opportunities as those with other languages. Looked after young people and children will be offered the same opportunities to learn Gaelic, as those who are not care experienced.

### 2.2 - High Level Aims and delivering the National Gaelic Language Plan

West Lothian Council recognises that the various priority areas identified in the National Gaelic Language Plan will be primarily implemented through our National Gaelic Language Plan but that opportunities will arise to promote and develop the language through existing policy measures. West Lothian Council will examine policy commitments to identify areas where Gaelic can be pro-actively incorporated and the priorities of the National Gaelic Language Plan initiated through additional methods. We see this development as corresponding to the normalisation principle which aims to include Gaelic as an everyday part of life in Scotland. West Lothian Council and Bord na Gaidhlig have agreed a strategic set of High Level Aims closely linked to the following three headings in the National Gaelic Language Plan.

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**The three strategic aims of the National Gaelic Language Plan are:**
 - increasing the use of Gaelic
- increasing the learning of Gaelic
 - promoting a positive image of Gaelic.

**The high-level aims sent in our statutory notice are:**

**Using Gaelic**

Support existing and new Gaelic language and culture groups in the West Lothian Council area to help grow the profile and use of Gaelic.

**Promoting Gaelic**

Undertake the duty outlined in the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 to promote, in such manner as it thinks appropriate, the potential provision for Gaelic medium and Gaelic learner education to West Lothian Council residents, including the opportunity that exists under this Act for parents to request the establishment of Gaelic Medium Education.

Once approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, promote the West Lothian Council Gaelic Language Plan and its key commitments to residents in the council area.

Include aspects of Gaelic language and culture to pupils educated by West Lothian Council, with the aim of attracting more young people to learn and use Gaelic.

**Learning Gaelic**
Establish a dialogue with the Gaelic Learning in the Primary School (GLPS) consortium, with a view to establishing Gaelic learner education within the council area during the lifetime of the plan.

Support families and groups of families within the Council area to access opportunities for Gaelic early years and / or primary school provision.

Support and encourage Gaelic learning opportunities for adults in West Lothian Council area, including an active and on-going dialogue with Newbattle Abbey College.

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The following sections – Gaelic Acquisition, Usage, Status and Corpus – demonstrate how West Lothian Council will deliver the high-level aims and the National Gaelic Language Plan.

**Acquisition and Usage**

The National Plan sets out a vision for Gaelic of a healthy, vibrant language increasingly used, valued and respected in a modern, multicultural and multilingual Scotland. The National Plan explains why, in order to achieve that vision, four key concepts of language development must be addressed: how people are enabled to acquire Gaelic; how they are enabled to use Gaelic; how the status of Gaelic can be enhanced; and how the Gaelic corpus can be developed.

The 2005 Act is structured to require public authorities that have been issued with a statutory notice by the Bòrd to develop a Gaelic Language Plan, to engage with the National Plan.

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## **Education**

West Lothian Council recognises and values the importance of the development of Gaelic language learning and of the rights of young people to access education in Scotland's indigenous languages.

In terms of education, Gaelic is defined by two distinct approaches; Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and Gaelic Learner Education (GLE). Bòrd na Gaidhlig provides the following definitions in its Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education.

- GME from early years until the end of primary school is delivered through immersion. With this form of education, Gaelic is the sole language of learning, teaching and assessment in the first three years of primary school. From P4-P7 immersion education continues and English is introduced. From P4 onwards, Gaelic remains the predominant language of the classroom. The purpose being to ensure that children achieve equal fluency and literacy in both Gaelic and English whilst reaching expected attainment levels in all areas of the curriculum.

- GME in secondary education continues the immersion process begun in early years and primary GME, and delivers a range of subjects in the broad General Education and Senior Phases through the medium of Gaelic.

- GLE is distinct from GME in that it is delivered to pupils who are in English medium education and Gaelic is offered as an additional language.

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Gaelic Medium Education (GME)

Gaelic Medium Education is currently provided by West Lothian Council through a partnership arrangement with City of Edinburgh Council. This partnership arrangement supports delivering of high-quality GME for children and young people from West Lothian through effective use of resources across the Lothians. Children and young people attending GME travel to Bun-Taobh na Pairce or Gillespie's High School in Edinburgh.

Provision of GME is supported by West Lothian Council and information about its availability is provided to parents on the  council's website and on application. Further support and communication for parents wishing their children to access GME has been identified as an aim of the West Lothian Gaelic Language Plan and is included in the actions listed below. West Lothian Council will continue its dialogue with communities about GME with an invitation to Parent Councils to contribute to the draft Gaelic Language Plan consultation.

Under the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 parents have the right to request GME in their Council area. Parents have access to Gaelic Medium Playgroups in City of Edinburgh through partner providers at a range of locations in the city. More information is available via Cròileagan Dhùn Èideann's website here http://www.gaelicplaygroup.com/ and this will be further promoted to West Lothian residents during the lifetime of the plan. Resources are also available at www.e-sgoil.com

The demand for, and provision of, GME will be monitored on an ongoing basis by West Lothian Council in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council and this will be a key feature of ongoing strategic planning. West Lothian Council officers will also support the ongoing development of effective partnership working across the Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative.

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**Gaelic Learner Education (GLE)**

Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) provides young people with progressive opportunities to learn Gaelic language and experience Gaelic culture as part of the wider offer of languages in schools. Opportunities for schools to engage with GLE will be developed in collaboration with key local and national partners including Bòrd na Gaidhlig, regional local authorities, higher and further education establishments, schools and parents.

A West Lothian Gaelic Education Steering group will be convened to support the strategic development of GLE in schools and this group will include key local authority officers, primary and secondary teachers, parents and local partners. West Lothian officers will seek advice and expertise of colleagues at Newbattle Abbey College, where professional development and engagement opportunities for schools, parents and adult learners are offered, in order to explore the scope to participate in existing programmes or to develop local alternatives. Teachers who have experience or an interest in Gaelic learning have been identified and local training opportunities will be developed and offered. West Lothian Council is also planning to work with other schools where GLE is currently being delivered (James Gillespie's High School, City of Edinburgh) to offer digital opportunities to open up Gaelic learning to learners across the region.

Awareness of Gaelic is included in cultural and educational provision as appropriate to the curriculum rationale and contexts for learning in individual schools. Through the Gaelic Language Plan there will be further exploration of how learning opportunities can be planned which raise awareness of Gaelic in primary and secondary schools through Curriculum for Excellence and community and cultural activities

A stock of Gaelic language books is available through West Lothian Library Services and 22 items are available in children's collections across West Lothian libraries. Requests for Gaelic items are infrequent however this may be due to a lack of awareness and so has been identified as an area for development in the Gaelic Language Plan.

Library services provide Bookbug bags in Gaelic at each stage:

- Baby (gifted by the health visitor at around 6 weeks)
- Toddler (gifted by the health visitor at around 18 months
- Explorer (gifted by nurseries at 3)

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- Family Bag (gifted through schools in P1)

Gaelic Bookbug packs have been provided to the Bathgate Gaelic circle and there is scope to explore opportunities for Gaelic Bookbug sessions which has also been identified for future development in the Gaelic Language Plan.

**Language Acquisition**

West Lothian Council recognises that a sustainable future for Gaelic requires more people to learn the language and that attention requires to be focused on the home, education and adult learning as the key means of achieving this. We will take the following steps to help create a supportive environment for growing the number of Gaelic speakers in Scotland. Information is available here: https://www.duolingo.com/course/gd/en/Learn-Scottish%20Gaelic and https://learngaelic.scot/a1.jsp

- Gaelic in the Home
- Gaelic in Education
- Gaelic in Adult Learning

| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| **Gaelic in the Home** | This is currently undeveloped in West Lothian. | Signpost Comann nam Parant, the national parent representation body, Bord na Gaidhlig and other national organisations via the council's website.<br><br>Further promote Gaelic resources such as Bookbug packs and online activities to encourage usage of Gaelic in the home.<br><br>Explore Family Learning opportunities, and identify | Raised awareness of the importance of the home in the acquisition and usage of Gaelic. | Education Services | By 2023 |

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| | | facilitators, initially through the Gaelic Circle group in Bathgate. | | | |
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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gaelic Learner Education (GLE)** | There is currently no GLE in West Lothian. | Establish a Gaelic steering group for education. | Increased support and opportunities for GLE at all levels. | Education Services | By 2022 |
| | | Support schools with planning and development of GLE through provision of learning and teaching resources. https://go-gaelic.scot/ | Increased number of learners experiencing GLE. | | |
| | | Develop GLE opportunities as part of the 1+2 Languages approach. | | | |
| | | Promote opportunities for digital learning of Gaelic in secondary, including opportunities for regional SQA accredited courses (for example through the E-Sgoil or schools in Edinburgh). | | | |
| | Interested teachers / teachers with knowledge of Gaelic are being identified. | Explore opportunities for learner involvement in Gaelic cultural experiences. Increased opportunities for young people to be involved in Gaelic cultural experiences. | Increased opportunities for professional learning in Gaelic for teachers and improve education. | | |

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| | | Offer professional learning opportunities for interested teachers / teachers with a knowledge of Gaelic (for example through adult learning opportunities and the Gaelic Learning in Primary School Consortium). | Better staff awareness of Gaelic learning, resources and funding opportunities. | | |
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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Raise awareness across school communities of GLE through established communication channels (for example via 1+2 Twitter account, school Twitter accounts, school websites, council communications, etc) | | | |
| **Gaelic Medium Education (GME)** | GME is currently provided through a partnership agreement with City of Edinburgh Council. | Review existing information on GME provided on West Lothian Council's website to include broader information about GME provision at all levels in line with the statutory guidance for Gaelic education.<br><br>Communicate and promote pre-school age Gaelic Medium Playgroup opportunities through Early Learning and Childcare communication channels and via West Lothian Council's website. In order to increase the | Clear information on GME at all levels is easily available through West Lothian Council's website. | Education Services | By 2022 |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | learning of Gaelic in the area at early years level, we will support Gaelic early years' organisations. | | | |
| | | Track and monitor uptake of | Sustained or increased uptake of GME | | |

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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | GME in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council. | partnership provision with ongoing review of arrangements and capacity. | | |
| | | Work in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council to support and sustain current arrangements and to align planning around GME. Provide opportunities for dialogue with Parent Councils and wider parent body regarding Gaelic Language Plan and GME / GLE provision. | Positive evaluation of GME arrangements and co-ordinated planning in place. | | |
| | | The council provides a commitment to consider what the West Lothian position and strategy would be in the event that provision by City of Edinburgh Council is unavailable or insufficient to meet West Lothian's GME needs, including entering into dialogue with other local authorities to explore alternative partnership arrangements. | | | |
| | | Commitment to support adult learning opportunities and promote where possible. | | | |

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| Gaelic in Adult Learning | There is currently no Gaelic Adult Learning provision in West Lothian | A commitment to support adult learning opportunities and promote these where possible.<br><br>A commitment to support adult learning opportunities and promote these where possible, particularly for adult learning community classes (paid for) and offer as part of the community schools programme.<br><br>Develop opportunities for digital Gaelic learning for adults. A commitment to support adult learning opportunities and promote these where possible.<br><br>Work with partners/schools to support Family Learning in Gaelic. | Adults in West Lothian have access to Gaelic language provision where there is a demand for this.<br><br>Adults in West Lothian increase their Gaelic language skills where there is a demand for this. | Adult Learning (Education Services) | By 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Working with Partners** | An Education Officer and 1+2 Languages Development Officer (with Gaelic as part of remit) are engaging with national organisations and local authorities to support Gaelic Language Planning and build networks. | Maintain dialogue and co-operation with East and Mid Lothian Councils in development, implementation and review of Gaelic Language Plan.<br><br>Develop dialogue regarding Gaelic learning with partners in the Regional Improvement Collaborative and explore opportunities for joint working.<br><br>Work in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council to sustain GME provision.<br><br>The council provides a commitment to consider what the West Lothian position and strategy would be in the event that provision by City of Edinburgh Council is unavailable or insufficient to meet West Lothian's GME needs, including entering into dialogue with other local | Partnership working leads to strategic planning, increased collaboration and sharing effective practice in development of Gaelic learning. | Education Services | By 2022 |

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| | | authorities to explore alternative partnership arrangements. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Establish a Gaelic steering group for education including key stakeholders. | | | |
| | There is currently no Gaelic provision with local further education providers | Consult with local further education sector regarding Gaelic provision and seek expertise of colleagues at | Opportunities are developed for adults to engage in Gaelic learning. | | |

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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | or local businesses/tourism. | Newbattle Abbey College to explore development of local opportunities.<br><br>Identify key local partners (for example from business or tourism) and explore potential for collaboration to support Gaelic learning and usage. | Increase awareness of Gaelic learning and usage with local partners including tourism sectors | Economic Development Manger | |

**Language Usage**

The National Plan seeks to encourage greater use of Gaelic, to provide opportunities to use the language and to promote access to Gaelic forms of expression. The Council will encourage its use, and seek to support them. For example, the Council will continue to offer Gaelic groups access to council controlled meeting accommodation free of charge, where this is possible. The council will continue to work with Gaelic groups and Management Committees to provide alternative accommodation, where required. The Council is working, through the tackling depopulation outcome in the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA), to develop its tourism offer, and the National Plan will be used to inform this development.

West Lothian Council recognises that creating a sustainable future for Gaelic requires not only increasing the number of people able to speak the language, but increasing actual usage. We recognise the importance of enabling more people to use Gaelic as their preferred and normal mode of communication in an increasingly wide range of daily activities.

- Gaelic in Communities
- Gaelic in the Arts
- Gaelic in Tourism, Heritage and Recreation

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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gaelic in Communities** | There is currently no Gaelic Adult Learning provision in West Lothian | A commitment to support adult learning opportunities and promote these where possible. Consider opportunities for digital Gaelic learning for adults.<br><br>Work with partners/schools to support Family Learning in Gaelic. | Adults in West Lothian have access to Gaelic language provision where there is a demand for this.<br><br>Adults in West Lothian increase their Gaelic language skills where there is a demand for this. | Adult Learning (Education Services) | By July 2022 |
| **Gaelic in the Arts** | There is currently no routine consideration of the Gaelic language when programming Public and Visual Arts provision.<br><br>There is currently no routine consideration of the Gaelic | On an annual basis, the Public Art Strategy Group will identify options to enhance the use of Gaelic in the council's Public and Visual Art programmes.<br><br>The council will work with its partners who have responsibility for the operation of West Lothian's Performing Arts.<br><br>A commitment is made to include information about Feisean and | The council can demonstrate inclusion of Gaelic language in its Public and Visual Art programmes.<br><br>The council can demonstrate inclusion of Gaelic language and/or culture in key | Education Services (Culture and Sport)<br><br>Education Services (Culture and Sport) | By 2023 |

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| | | Gaelic Books Council on the council's website | | | |
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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | language when working with key delivery partners on programming the Performing Arts. | venues to encourage programming which incorporates the Gaelic language and/or culture. | delivery partners Performing Arts programmes | | |
| **Gaelic in Tourism, Heritage and Recreation** | There is currently no routine consideration of the barriers to participating in physical activity for Gaelic language speakers | The partnership agreement with sportscotland for the delivery of Active Schools and Community Sports will include a commitment to considering the barriers to participation for Gaelic language speakers and this consideration will be given when developing annual programmes of activity on a school by school basis. Community sports clubs will also be encouraged to consider such barriers and be supported to identify approaches to overcome them.<br><br>A commitment to liaise with Visit Scotland regarding opportunities to promote Gaelic tourism in the area | Increased levels of participation in physical activity for Gaelic language speakers and in the number of community sports clubs whose plans identify approaches to overcome barriers for Gaelic language speakers | Education Services (Culture and Sport) | By 2023 |

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**Language Status**

The National Plan seeks to increase the visibility of Gaelic, enhance its recognition and create a positive image for Gaelic in Scottish public life. In preparing this Gaelic Language Plan West Lothian Council is helping to raise the profile of the Gaelic language in the West Lothian area.

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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Language Status** | There is currently no routine consideration of the Gaelic language when considering signage | Recognising the importance of Gaelic, the Council will seek to promote a positive image of Gaelic locally and increase the visibility of Gaelic, for example in new signage. | The council will demonstrate inclusion of Gaelic language and ensure that the language is more visible in West Lothian | Road Services Manager/Asset Manager | By 2023 |
| **Language Status** | There is currently no routine Consideration of consultation with Gaelic groups or promotion of the Gaelic language | The council will continue to consult with Gaelic groups in West Lothian on the development and progression of the Gaelic Language Plan.<br><br>Gaelic will feature in the council's communications guidelines | West Lothian Council recognises that the status of a language is affected by its presence in the daily environment and the extent to which it is used, valued and perceived to be valued by those institutions which play an important role in our daily lives. | Customer Services Manager/Corporate Communications Manager | By July 2022 |

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**Language Corpus**

West Lothian Council recognises the need to strengthen the relevance and consistency of Gaelic, the importance of facilitating translation services.

| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/Indicator | Lead Officer/Service | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Language Corpus** | There is currently no routine consideration of Gaelic language in the council's translation services. | The Council will adhere to the most recent Gaelic Orthographic conventions (2009) and place-names as advised by The Gaelic Place-names of Scotland.  A commitment is provided to ensure Gaelic translations are provided to a high professional standard. | West Lothian Council recognises that the status of a language is used consistently, correctly | Asset Manager/Customer Services Manager/Roads Manager/Corporate Communications Manager | By October 2022 |

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## 2.3. Corporate Service Aims

The Bòrd has identified four core areas of service delivery that it wishes public bodies to address when preparing Gaelic Language Plans:

1. **Identity and Status** including, corporate identity and signage and expanding visibility of Gaelic

2. **Communications**, including, reception, telephone, mail and e-mail, forms and complaints procedures

3. **Publications**, including, public relations and media, printed material and websites

4. **Staffing**, including recruitment and training

West Lothian Council recognises that action in each of these areas can help raise the visibility and profile of Gaelic and bring greater opportunity for Gaelic speakers to use the language.

The plan has been developed taking account of the West Lothian residents who are Gaelic speakers and of the demand made for information or communication in Gaelic. The council provides a commitment to better promote Gaelic learning opportunities to staff, customers and community.

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**Identity and Status**

**Rationale**

The presence of Gaelic in the corporate identity and signs of a public authority enhances the visibility of the language, increases its status and makes an important statement about how Gaelic is valued and how it is given recognition. Developing the use of Gaelic through signage can also enrich the vocabulary of Gaelic users, raise public awareness of the language and contribute to its development. West Lothian Council recognises the importance of raising the visibility of Gaelic, increasing its status and creating a positive image of the language.

**Summary of current practice:**

West Lothian Council does currently have an agreed policy for the use of Gaelic in its corporate identity.

| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Corporate Identity** | West Lothian Council's corporate identify does not include any Gaelic language elements | We will review the Council's corporate identity and engage with stakeholders to identify how Gaelic language should be reflected in the Council's corporate identity. Guidelines will be disseminated across the organisation. | The Council's corporate guidelines will incorporate guidelines for the use of Gaelic language in the Council's corporate identity. | Communications Manager | Year one ongoing |
| | | The council's corporate logo will be made fully bilingual when next renewed. | To show equal respect to Gaelic. | | Year one ongoing |
| | | Until then, a bilingual version of the council's logo and corporate letterhead will be developed and used on any Gaelic | Should any communications be received or | | By 2022 |

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| | | correspondence with equal respect to English. Guidelines will be disseminated across the organisation. | requested in Gaelic, a Gaelic version of the council's logo will be used on correspondence from the council (letterheads etc) | | |
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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Signage** | No council owned bilingual signage exists in West Lothian | A commitment to create fully bilingual "West Lothian Council" boundary signs and 'Welcome to West Lothian' signs will be introduced on a renewal basis | Welcome signs at the main entry points into West Lothian will include Gaelic, demonstrating equal respect for Gaelic and English | Road Services Manager | Year one ongoing |
| | | When signage is being renewed or replaced at council-owned visitor locations or key council buildings (e.g. country parks and arts venues), a commitment is provided that the new signage shall include Gaelic | All new signage at council-owned visitor locations will include Gaelic, demonstrating equal respect for the Gaelic and English languages. | Park & Woodlands Manager/Arts Manager | |

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**Communications**

*West Lothian Council recognises the importance of creating opportunities for the practical use of Gaelic in a wide range of everyday situations and is committed to increasing its level of provision in this area.*

**Rationale**
The use of Gaelic at the initial point of contact that members of the public have with a public authority increases the visible and audible presence of the language, and contributes to the sense that the use of Gaelic is possible and welcome. In addition to raising the profile of the language, it also creates opportunities for its practical use and encourages members of the public to use Gaelic in subsequent dealings with the public authority.

The use of Gaelic in interactions with the authority by mail, e-mail and by telephone is important in creating practical opportunities for the use of the language, and in contributing to the sense that its use is possible and welcome. The presence of Gaelic in a wide range of bilingual forms and Gaelic only forms can also greatly enhance the visibility and prestige of the language. The preparation of Gaelic versions of forms, applications and similar documents can also help the development of the language itself.

**Summary of current practice**
The council has a translation service contract in place. However West Lothian Council doesn't currently have an agreed policy for the use of Gaelic in its corporate communications or customer service strategy.

| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|----------|------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|
| **Reception** | The Council does not currently have any Gaelic provision in reception areas | The Council's Translation and Interpretation services includes provision of Gaelic | Customers coming into reception areas in Council offices will be offered, encouraged and supported in making use of translation services in Gaelic and material to | Customer Services Manager | By 2022 |

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| | | | assist in communication | | |
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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Reception/customer services/ contact centre staff will be offered and encouraged to uptake Gaelic language skills training to enable them to meet the needs of Gaelic customers.<br><br>Customers who speak Gaelic will be will be actively offered translation in the Gaelic language. | All customer services / contact centre staff will be supported to communicate in Gaelic | | By 2023 |
| **Telephone** | The Council does not currently have any provision for telephone call handling in Gaelic | The Council's Translation and Interpretation services includes provision of Gaelic<br><br>Training for customer services/ contact centre staff in how to meet customer needs and ensuring that the needs of people who speak languages other than English including the Gaelic language.<br><br>Customers who speak Gaelic will be actively offered translation in the Gaelic language | Customers contacting the Council by telephone will be engaged with in Gaelic<br><br>All customer services / contact centre staff will be supported to communicate in Gaelic | Customer Services Manager | By July 2022 |

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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mail and E:Mail** | The Council does not currently have an agreed policy on how to respond to Gaelic mail and e:mail | The Council's Translation and Interpretation services includes provision of Gaelic

Any mail or e:mail received in Gaelic will be translated and responses will be provided in Gaelic

The council will publicise the council's Gaelic services, such as translation, to the public and stakeholders. | All staff will be made aware of the provision to translate mail and e:mail from and into Gaelic.

All correspondence received in Gaelic will be replied to in Gaelic | Customer Services Manager & HR (equality) | By July 2023 |
| **Forms (including complaints procedure and handling of complaints)** | The Council does not currently have any forms in Gaelic | The Council's Translation and Interpretation services include provision of Gaelic.

The Council's website includes an accessibility and translation facility that includes Gaelic. All forms and documents on the Council's website, such as the Council's complaints procedure, can be translated into languages other than English, including Gaelic.

Forms or complaints submitted | All staff will be made aware of the website facility that allows all on-line forms to be translated into languages other than English, including Gaelic. | Customer Services Manager/Project and Systems Manager | By July 2023 |

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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | in Gaelic will be dealt with in line with English-medium Council standards and protocol.<br><br>The council will actively publicise the council's Gaelic services, such as translation, to the public and stakeholders. | | | |
| **Communications Guidelines** | The Council does not currently have reference to or guidance on the use of Gaelic within its communications guidelines (West Lothian Way) | The Council's communications guidelines, "The West Lothian Way", will be updated to inform staff on how to respond to communications via mail and email in Gaelic. | Guidance will be in place on the council's website about the Gaelic Language Plan and the requirement to communicate with customers in Gaelic if that is their language of choice. | Corporate Communications Manager | By July 2022 |
| **Website** | The council does not currently have any website information aimed at a Gaelic audience | The council will develop a specific web page, with Gaelic content, setting out information relating to the council's Gaelic Language Plan. The council will follow the BnG national guidance on public authority websites when developing our website. | Provide Gaelic speaking customers with information without the need to translate the content | Corporate Communications Manager | By July 2022 |

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**Publications**

***West Lothian Council is committed to increasing the use of Gaelic in these areas where the subject matter is of most interest to the general public or relates specifically to Gaelic issues.***

The use of Gaelic in a range of printed material can assist Gaelic development in a variety of ways. It helps increase the visibility of the language, it enhances Gaelic's status by being used in high profile publications and it can help develop new and enhance existing terminology. The use of Gaelic in the media helps demonstrate a public authority's commitment to making important information available through the medium of Gaelic, as well as enhancing the visibility and status of the language. As more people access information about public authorities through their websites, making provision for the use of Gaelic can significantly enhance the status and visibility of the language.

**Summary of current practice**
- West Lothian Council does not currently print material in Gaelic or issue any communications in Gaelic.
- West Lothian Council currently has no Gaelic content on its webpages and no reports are published in Gaelic.

| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Website** | No content on the website is provided in Gaelic | Review the use of the translation facility. Ensure Gaelic function is fully operational via web translation<br><br>Review word and PDF forms. Ensure that any documents and forms are available on the web as non PDFs thereby allowing them to be more easily | The council website has an accessibility and translation facility that enables the site and all documents on the site to be translated into Gaelic | Communications Manager | By July 2022 |

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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | translated<br><br>The council will provide a commitment to actively publicise the council's Gaelic services, such as translation services, to the public and stakeholders. | | | |
| **Public Relations and Social Media** | The Council does not currently have guidelines relating to the use of Gaelic in press releases and social media | Review the use of Gaelic in press releases when requested. The Council's communications guidelines, "The West Lothian Way", will be updated accordingly. | All press releases will be provided in Gaelic and English if related to Gaelic language or culture and when requested by news/media outlets<br><br>Guidelines will set out how the Council will use Gaelic in press releases relating to Gaelic subject matter | Communications Manager | By July 2022 |

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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Social Media will be utilised to raise awareness of Gaelic activities. | Promotion of Gaelic activities (internal or external) will be promoted on council's Social Media channels and other available channels. Promotion of Gaelic via social media will be recorded and reported on. | | |
| | | The council will promote the council's Gaelic Language Plan in the council's corporate publications (e.g. Bulletin) | Promotion of the council's plan and responsibilities contained within the council's corporate newspaper and distributed to all homes | | |
| **Printed material – Council documents and papers** | The Council does not have a policy relating to the use of Gaelic in printed material | Ensure that guidelines are in place via the West Lothian Way to ensure that content aimed at a Gaelic audience is available in Gaelic. | Documents and printed material that are available on the Council's website can be translated using a new online facility | Customer Services Manager/Communications Manager/Education Services | By July 2022 |

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| | | The Council's Translation and Interpretation | Materials that exist to reach a Gaelic audience will be produced in Gaelic online | Materials that exist to reach a Gaelic audience will be | | |

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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | services includes provision of Gaelic | and print | produced in Gaelic online and print | | |
| **Printed material in libraries** | There is over 40 Gaelic language library and reference books in libraries across schools and communities | The Library service will review its book purchasing policy and practice and source relevant books and printed resources in Gaelic to meet demand | Gaelic books and printed material will be available | Customer Services Manager | By 2024 |
| **Public Exhibitions** | The Council has not made any provision for Gaelic in any exhibitions it holds | The Museum and Library services will review their exhibitions policies and will make provision for Gaelic in exhibitions | Where there is a demand, will make provision for Gaelic in exhibitions | Customer Services Manager | By 2024 |

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**Staffing**

West Lothian Council recognises the importance of seeing Gaelic as an important job skill for some job roles. The council will identify all job roles where it is essential or desirable to learn Gaelic and enable those staff to develop their Gaelic skills.

**Rationale**

In order to deliver services through the medium of Gaelic, it is necessary to develop the requisite job skills and language skills of staff. The provision of language learning for staff helps promote adult Gaelic learning and promotes Gaelic as a useful skill in the workplace. The identification of jobs in which Gaelic is a designated skill will contribute greatly to the status of the language and to identifying it as a positive skill to acquire.

| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Recruitment** | There are currently no jobs where speaking Gaelic is an occupational requirement. | If a job has an occupational requirement to speak Gaelic, a commitment is provided to advertise the vacancy in both English and Gaelic. | Bilingual advertisements for posts requiring Gaelic language will appear on myjobscotland and Gaelicteaching.com | HR | By 2023 |
| **Training** | As there are currently no services provided through the | Gaelic awareness training will be developed for staff. Community classes will be provided and promoted to staff. | The council's Gaelic Language Plan will be available on the intranet and staff will | HR | By 2023 |

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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | medium of Gaelic, there is no training provided for employees. | Gaelic language skills will be offered to staff who noted an interest in their staff survey response and where Gaelic has a direct impact on their role. Priority will be given to staff in roles such as: Communications, schools and education, community development, senior officers, those delivering on the plan | be directed to Gaelic personal learning opportunities should they wish to pursue these | | |

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| Language Learning | As there are currently no services provided through the medium of Gaelic, there is no training provided for employees. | Employees will be made aware of the council's Gaelic Language Plan and will be provided with contact information should they wish to develop their own learning in Gaelic. A commitment will be provided to promote community classes and this will be promoted to staff.<br><br>Should any staff member require to learn or improve their knowledge of Gaelic language to fulfil their work remit, then the council will offer language learning opportunities<br><br>2019 staff survey results suggested that there is a healthy interest amongst staff to learn Gaelic. As included as part of future Employee skills audits/questionnaires, the council will seek to include | The council's Gaelic Language Plan will be available on the intranet and staff will be directed to Gaelic personal learning opportunities should they wish to pursue these.<br><br>The council will offer language learning opportunities for staff where this is required to fulfil work remit. | HR | By 2023 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

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| Function | Current Position | Proposed Action | Proposed Outcome/ Indicator | Lead Service/ Officer | Timescale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | questions relating to staff' Gaelic skills | | | |
| **Policy development** | Gaelic is not currently included as part of the council's Integrated Impact Assessment Process | The Council's Integrated Impact Assessment process will include screening questions relating to Gaelic and signposting those who are developing relevant new policies to the council's Gaelic Language Plan and the National Gaelic Language Plan to ensure that policies are developed in line with these policies. | Ensure council policies are considered and in line with Gaelic Language Plan and national policies | HR | By 2023 |

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## 3. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

**Timetable**

This Gaelic Language Plan will formally remain in force for a period of 5 years from this date or until a new plan has been put in place.

The plan will be publicised on the council's website and intranet so that employees can be made aware of the councils' duties under The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and what actions the council intends to take.

**Publicising the Plan**

West Lothian Council's Gaelic Language Plan will be published bilingually on its website. In addition, we shall:

- issue a press release announcing the plan

- make copies of the plan available in our public offices and reception areas

- make the plan known to employees via our Intranet

- distribute copies of the Plan to Gaelic organisations

- make copies available on request.

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**Administrative Arrangements for Implementing the National Gaelic Language Plan**

This plan is the policy of West Lothian Council and has been endorsed both by our senior management team and Council members.

**Overall Responsibility:**

The Chief Executive and elected members will be responsible for ensuring that the Council delivers on the commitments set out in this plan.

**Individual Staff members:**

All employees will be provided with information on the content of the plan via the council intranet and developments will be notified via internal email and departmental meetings. Staff will also be made aware of the plan via the staff induction.

**Services delivered by third parties:**

All third party organisations which deliver services on behalf of the Council will be advised of the commitments within the Gaelic Language Plan.

**Informing other organisations of the Plan**

Partner organisations will be advised of the Council's commitments within this Gaelic Language Plan through the Community Planning Partnership. There is a commitment that all third party organisations, partner organisations and others delivering services are aware of the Council's expectation and requirements.

**Resourcing the Plan**

West Lothian Council will resource the activities outlined through the budgets of responsible services.

**Monitoring the Implementation of the Plan**

Progress towards the delivery of the plan will be reported annually to the Policy and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel annually. These progress reports will then be submitted to Bòrd na Gaidhlig. The council's internal Gaelic officer group – with representation from all Council services – will oversee the delivery and monitoring of the plan.

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**Contact details**

The senior officer with operational responsibility for overseeing preparation, delivery and monitoring of West Lothian Council's Gaelic Language Plan is:

Julie Whitelaw
Head of Corporate Services
West Lothian Council
West Lothian Civic Centre
Livingston
EH54 6FF

01506 282200
E-MAIL ADDRESS Julie.whitelaw@westlothian.gov.uk

Alternatively, contact:
Garry Heron
Corporate Communications Manager
West Lothian Council
West Lothian Civic Centre
Livingston
EH54 6FF

01506 282006
E-MAIL ADDRESS gary.heron@westlothian.gov.uk

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# BÒRD NA GÀIDHLIG

## FOIRM DÀTA BLIADHNAIL 2021-2022
## ANNUAL RETURN FORM 2021-2022

| Ainm na buidhne<br>Organisation's name | West Lothian Council |
|---|---|

## Prìomh Dhàta Measaidh
## Primary Indicator Data

| | |
|---|---|
| **Fios bhon Phoball**<br>**Communications from the Public** | Cia mheud brath sgrìobhte a fhuair am buidheann bhon phoball ann an Gàidhlig am-bliadhna?<br>How many written communications have the organisation received from the public in Gaelic this year?<br>None |
| **A' sgaoileadh fiosrachaidh**<br>**Dissemination of information** | Cia mheud pìos a sgaoil am buidheann air na meadhanan sòisealta ann an Gàidhlig am-bliadhna?<br>How many posts did the organisation distribute on social media in Gaelic this year?<br>Three |
| | Cia mheud fios-naidheachd a chaidh a sgaoileadh leis a' bhuidheann anns a' Ghàidhlig am-bliadhna?<br>How many press releases did the organisation publish in Gaelic this year?<br>None |
| **Luchd-obrach**<br>**Staff** | Cia meud neach-obrach a fhuair cothrom trèanaidh ann an sgilean Gàidhlig am-bliadhna?<br>How many staff received Gaelic skills training this year?<br><br>Following the successful launch of a 6-week West Lothian Gaelic language course for primary and secondary practitioners in February 2021 and in response to level of interest, 24 practitioners participated in an 8-week beginner Gaelic course in made available in March 2022. |
| | Cia mheud dreuchd a th' agaibh an-dràsta far a bheil Gàidhlig ann mar sgil riatanach?<br>How many posts do you currently have where Gaelic is an essential skill?<br>None |

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| | |
|---|---|
| | *Cia mheud neach-obrach a th' agaibh an-dràsta aig a bheil sgilean Gàidhlig?* |
| | How many staff currently within the organisation have Gaelic skills? |
| | A survey conducted in 2019 identified 88 members of staff who can speak Gaelic (basic words and phrases through to fluent). No staff were identified who can speak in Gaelic comfortably and/or fluently. |
| | This survey has not been repeated, therefore there is no update on these figures. |
| **Foillseachaidhean** **Publications** | *Cia mheud foillseachadh a dh'fhoillsich am buidheann gu dà-chananach am-bliadhna?* |
| | How many organisational publications have been published bilingually (Gaelic and English) this year? |
| | None |
| **Inbhe** **Status** | *Cia mheud soidhne dà-chànanach a chuir am buidheann an àirde am-bliadhna?* |
| | How many new bilingual signs has the organisation erected this year? |
| | None |

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## Prìomhachasan a' Phlana Cànain Nàiseanta Gàidhlig
## National Gaelic Language Plan Priorities

### Cleachdadh na Gaidhlig / Using Gaelic

*Ciamar a tha a' bhuidhinn a' toirt fàs air cleachdadh na Gàidhlig?*

How is the organisation increasing the use of Gaelic?

West Lothian Council is increasing the use of Gaelic through engagement with national and regional partners, the development of local initiatives, and through the strategic planning of 1+2 Languages. The Development Officer attends the Gaelic Local Authority Network (GLAN) meetings, works closely with officers from other local authorities, and participates with the Gaelic Language in the Primary School (GLPS) consortium to source opportunities.

The West Lothian Gaelic Steering Group (established October 2021) meets termly to review the implementation of key education actions stated within the plan. The group includes representation from education, CLD, community partners and Newbattle Abbey College. In 21-22, the WL Gaelic Steering Group worked collaboratively to increase the use of Gaelic with a focus on enhancing the Gaelic language skills of interested education staff, and by extending opportunities for learners to experience Gaelic language and culture.

**Gaelic in the Home**

- Gaelic Book Bags were shared with WLC early learning and childcare settings, and some local baby and toddler groups.
- The local Gaelic Circle Group are represented on the West Lothian Steering Group, providing information to share with the local community and dialogue around key objectives.
- A Gaelic Family Fun Day took place in October 2022 to celebrate and signpost Gaelic family learning. The WL Steering Group organised this event following a successful bid to the Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund (GLAIF) to promote a positive image of Gaelic and increase its use in West Lothian.

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- The Development Officer worked collaboratively with the WL Steering Group to prepare a sustainable Gaelic in the Home project for Languages Week Scotland (February 2022). This resource supported family learning, Gaelic through food, story and song and high quality professional learning for staff.

**Gaelic Learner Education (GLE)**

- The 1+2 Languages communication approach for West Lothian schools includes signposting resources, supports and guidance that can be used by schools, teachers, parents and learners interested in developing Gaelic learning. This has included links to resources such as Speak Gaelic, Go Gaelic, and creating a Gaelic Resource and Activity Padlet for Scotland Loves Languages week in February 2022.
- Gaelic workshops and activities are featured during 1+2 Languages events and sessions for lead learners. The Gaelic Specific Grant received has supported the procurement and development of resources which are shared with primary and secondary schools across West Lothian.
- Professional learning opportunities for teachers, such as the Fèisean nan Gàidheal offering, an 8 week beginner's Gaelic course, online training materials, Speak Gaelic promotion, and the "Fás" Early years programme are shared with lead learners from each school setting.
- GLAIF funding, secured by the West Lothian Gaelic Steering Group, has supported the increase in opportunities for professional learning and adult learning opportunities in the local community. West Lothian successfully delivered two twelve-week blocks of Gaelic Adult Learning Classes in the community in January 2022 and again in April 2022.
- There is currently one Nat 4 student and five BGE Beginners at one of our secondary schools. We also have one primary school who are at the early stages of using Gaelic as one of their L3 languages.

## Ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig / Learning Gaelic

Ciamar a tha a' bhuidhinn a' toirt fàs air ionnsachadh na Gaidhlig?

How is the organisation increasing the learning of Gaelic?

GLAIF funding, secured by the West Lothian Gaelic Steering Group, has supported the increase in opportunities for professional learning and adult learning opportunities in the local community.

- Two twelve-week blocks of Gaelic Adult Learning classes were delivered in the reporting period. A beginner class was delivered online in January 2022 with 13 adult learners attending, and a follow-on course was delivered in April 2022 with seven learners.
- The council contracted an external company to deliver both initial courses but has now recruited two Gaelic tutors to allow an expanded and more flexible programme of classes to be delivered in future.
- Beginner classes will commence in January 2023, with both online and face to face options giving greater scope for access and support to learners.
- It is expected that a further six blocks of classes will be delivered by the end of the 2022/23 academic year.
- Learners completing the beginner course will have the option of progressing to a follow-on intermediate course.
- Adult Learning classes have been delivered online via Zoom, making it easier for participants to access the class from across the local authority area.
- A concessionary rate is available to pensioners, students and those in receipt of benefit income.
- Classes have been promoted via the Learn Gaelic website, the council's social media and through established local networks**.**

## A'cur air adhart na Gàidhlig / Promoting Gaelic

Ciamar a tha a' buidhinn a' cur deagh iomhaigh air adhart airson na Gàidhlig?

How is the organisation promoting a positive image of Gaelic?

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West Lothian Council post Gaelic messages where there are events and classes. West Lothian Council have promoted the Gaelic Plan and set out its purpose and aims. West Lothian Council have also promoted it internally to staff making them aware of our role in promoting Gaelic.

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## Fiosrachadh dearcnachaidh eile
## Other monitoring information

### A' brosnachadh Foghlam Gàidhlig
### Promotion of Gaelic Education

Chan fheum ach Ùghdarrasan Ionadail seo a lìonadh a-steach

For Local Authorities only to complete

Fo Earrainn 15 de dh'Achd an Fhoghlaim (Alba) 2016, feumaidh ùghdarrasan ionadail aig a bheil foghlam Gàidhlig anns an sgìre aca seo a shanasachd ann an dòigh iomchaidh. Feumaidh gach ùghdarras ionadail sanasachd a dhèanamh air na còraichean a th' aig pàrantan gus tagradh a dhèanamh airson foghlam Gàidhlig aig ìre na bun-sgoile agus foghlam luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig a stèidheachadh. Ciamar a tha sibh a' coileanadh an dleastanais seo?

Under Section 15 of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016, local authorities which already provide Gaelic education in their area must take reasonable steps to promote this. All local authorities must take reasonable steps to promote the rights which parents have under the Act to make a request for Gaelic Medium Primary Education and the potential provision of Gaelic Learner Education. Could you tell us how you are undertaking this?

A small number of West Lothian pupils access Gaelic Medium Education (GME) provision in City of Edinburgh and Council officers monitor any changes to this on a termly basis.

Information regarding GME provision and transport is easily accessible on the Council's website. The website also provides details to parents of their right to request an assessment of the need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education within West Lothian, and all relevant documents are available to download to support this process. In addition, further links signposting support and guidance are available from the Council website. All West Lothian Council School Handbooks also contain information for parents regarding the arrangements for the provision of GME.

Officers respond to any enquiries from parents/carers regarding GME and Gaelic Learner Education (GLE), signposting support and resources available. Over the past year, officers have also developed links with colleagues in other local authorities and across the Regional Improvement Collaborative to gather information about approaches to GME and GLE, and to explore opportunities for joint planning in the future.

GLE is promoted in West Lothian as part of the 1+2 Languages approach, working in partnership to promote the use and positive image of Gaelic.  In 21-22, the WL Gaelic Steering Group worked collaboratively to establish GLE through a variety of activities to develop and enhance Gaelic language skills of education staff and extend opportunities for learners to experience Gaelic language and culture.

### Pàrantan Corporra
### Corporate Parenting

Chan fheum ach Pàrantan Chorporra  seo a lìonadh a-steach

For Corporate Parents  only to complete

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|---|
| Am b' urrainn dhuibh dàta a thoirt dhuinn air an àireimh de dhaoine òga le Gàidhlig a tha, no a tha air a bhith, fo chùram a tha clàraichte leis an Ùghdarras.<br><br>Please provide data on the number of Gaelic-speaking care experienced young people registered with the Authority. |
| West Lothian Council do not have any Gaelic speaking care experienced young people registered with the authority. |
| Am b' urrainn dhuibh fiosrachadh a thoirt dhuinn air tachartasan no cothroman a tha sibh a' cur air dòigh airson daoine òga le Gàidhlig a tha, no a tha air a bhith, fo chùram a tha clàraichte leis an Ùghdarras.<br><br>Please provide information on activities or opportunities you provide for Gaelic- speaking care experienced young people. |
| West Lothian Council do not have any specific Gaelic related activities or opportunities for care experienced young people however the following is available:-<br><br>• Library services provide access to Gaelic books which includes titles suitable for children, young people and adults.<br>• We have access to translation services.<br>• We can provide education within a Gaelic Medium School and transport to attend in partnership with Edinburgh where this is appropriate.<br>• There is a Gaelic Circle (An Cearcall Gaidhlig) drop in group which runs on a Saturday run by the Voluntary Gateway. This also runs free workshops in teaching the Gaelic language.<br>• Gaelic speaking care experienced children and young people receiving support will be encouraged in relation to their language and heritage and opportunities provided in keeping with this. |
| **Co-ionannachd Equalities**<br>Bu chòir don a h-uile buidheann seo a lìonadh a-steach<br>For all organisations to complete |
| An do chomharraich an t-ùghdarras poblach agaibh cùisean sònraichte sam bith co-cheangailte ri co-ionannachd chothroman a thaobh leasachadh na Gàidhlig?<br>Has your public authority identified any particular issues relating to equality of opportunity with regard to the development of Gaelic language?<br>No |
| A bheil poileasaidhean, modhan-obrach no dòighean-obrach sam bith co-cheangailte ri co- ionannachd a chaidh a chur an gnìomh leis an ùghdarras phoblach agaibh, no a tha gan cur an gnìomh an-dràsta, a bhuineas ri bhith a' cur co-ionannachd chothroman air adhart an lùib leasachadh na Gàidhlig? An inns sibh dhuinn mun deidhinn?<br><br>Are there any equalities policies, procedures or measures that have been implemented by your public authority, or are in the process of being implemented, that are relevant to advancing the equality of opportunity in the development of Gaelic language? Can you tell us about them? |

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While not specifically referencing the development of the Gaelic language, the council's policy on Equality in Employment and Service Provision sets out the council's commitment to provide services that are inclusive and accessible and to adopt measures which will eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between different groups both within and out with the workplace.

A bheil eisimpleirean ann de cheumannan sònraichte a ghabh sibh gus piseach a thoirt air in- ghabhail agus com-pàirteachas a tha air obrachadh gu sònraichte math a thaobh leasachadh na Gàidhlig taobh a-staigh an ùghdarrais phoblaich agaibh? An inns sibh dhuinn nam biodh sibh toilichte nan sgaoileadh Bòrd na Gàidhlig na h-eisimpleirean agaibh agus nan dèanamaid sanasachd orra.

Are there examples of implementing specific measures to improve inclusivity or engagement that have worked particularly well regarding Gaelic language development for your public authority? Please indicate if you would be happy for Bòrd na Gàidhlig to share and promote the examples provided.

West Lothian Council recently held and promoted a Gaelic Language Open day event

West Lothian Council organised a Gaelic Family Fun Day on the 29th October 2022 in the Holy Primary School, Winchburgh.

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| Amasan airson Seirbhisean Corporra | Corporate Service Aims | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Àrd Phrionnsabalan | Overarching Principles | 🟩 | 🟧 | 🟥 |
| **Spèis Cho-ionann**<br>A h-uile gealladh anns a' phlana Ghàidhlig air a lìbhrigeadh dhan aon ìre anns a' Ghàidhlig agus anns a' Bheurla. | **Equal Respect**<br>Gaelic language plan commitments delivered to an equal standard in both Gaelic and English. | | | |
| **Cothroman Follaiseach**<br>Gnìomhan practaigeach gus dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil fios aig luchd-obrach na buidhne agus am poball daonnan air na cothroman a th' ann gus Gàidhlig a chleachdadh leis an ùghdarras phoblach. | **Active Offer**<br>Practical measures to ensure that staff and public are kept regularly informed of all opportunities that exist to use Gaelic in relation to the work of the public authority. | | | |
| **Treas Phàrtaidhean**<br>A' dearbhadh gum bi ALEOs agus cunnradairean eile ag obair gus plana Gàidhlig an ùghdarrais phoblaich a chur an gnìomh. | **Third Parties**<br>Ensure that Arm's Length Executive Organisations and other contractors help with the delivery of the public authority Gaelic language plan. | | | |
| **Gàidhlig na nì àbhaisteach**<br>Geallaidhean bhon phlana Ghàidhlig air an gabhail a- steach ann an structaran an ùghdarrais phoblaich tro thìde, le sgrùdadh cunbhalach airson cothroman a chomharrachadh taobh a-staigh bhuidseatan stèidhichte gus Gàidhlig a thoirt air adhart. | **Normalisation**<br>Gaelic plan commitments are normalised within the structures of the public authority over time, with opportunities to grow Gaelic within existing budgets constantly assessed. | | | |
| **Pàrantan Corporra**<br>Gu bheilear mothachail air na dleastanasan a th' ann mar Phàrant Corporra gum bi a h-uile pàiste is neach òg fo chùram no a b' àbhaist a bhith fo chùram le Gàidhlig a' faighinn na h-aon cothroman 's a tha clann le cànain eile. | **Corporate Parenting**<br>That the authority is aware of the duties of a Corporate Parent to ensure that looked after children and young people and care leavers with Gaelic receive the same opportunities as those with other languages. | | | |

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| Inbhe | Status | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Suaicheantas**<br>Ag amas air suaicheantas corporra anns a' Ghàidhlig agus anns a' Bheurla a chruthachadh nuair a thig a' chiad chothrom agus mar phàirt den phròiseas ùrachaidh. Bu chòir an aon ìre follaiseachd a bhith ann airson an dà chànain san t-suaicheantas. | **Logo**<br>Aim to render the corporate logo in both Gaelic and English at the first opportunity and as part of any renewal process. The logo should demonstrate equal prominence for both languages. | | | |
| **Soidhnichean**<br>Prìomh shoidhnichean air an dèanamh dà-chànanach nuair a thathar gan ùrachadh. | **Signage**<br>Prominent signage will include Gaelic and English as part of any renewal process. | | | |
| **Conaltradh leis a' phoball** | **Communicating with the public** | | | |
| **Adhartachadh**<br> A' toirt teachdaireachd bhrosnachail seachad gum bithear daonnan a' cur fàilte air conaltradh a nì am mòr-shluagh ris an ùghdarras ann an Gàidhlig. | **Promotion**<br>Positive message that communication from the public in Gaelic is always welcome. | | | |
| **Conaltradh sgrìobhte**<br>Bithear daonnan a' gabhail ri conaltradh sgrìobhte ann an Gàidhlig (litrichean, puist-d agus na meadhanan sòisealta) agus thèid freagairtean Gàidhlig a thoirt seachad a rèir a' phoileasaidh choitchinn. | **Written Communication**<br>Written communication in Gaelic is always accepted (post, email and social media) and replies will be provided in Gaelic in accordance with the general policy. | | | |
| **Ionad-fàilte agus am fòn**<br> Nuair as urrainn do luchd-obrach le Gàidhlig an t-seirbheis seo a thoirt seachad, gheibh iad taic airson sin a dhèanamh, agus thèid sanasachd a dhèanamh air an t-seirbheis am measg a' mhòr-shluaigh. | **Reception and phone**<br>Where Gaelic speaking staff are capable of providing this service, they are supported to do so and the service is promoted to the public. | | | |
| **Coinneamhan**<br> Thèid coimhead gu cunbhalach air na cothroman a th' ann gus coinneamhan poblach a chumail gu dà-chànanach no ann an Gàidhlig, agus thèid sanasachd a dhèanamh orra. | **Public meetings**<br>Opportunities to hold public meetings bilingually or in Gaelic are regularly explored and promoted. | | | |

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| Fiosrachadh | Information | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fiosan-naidheachd** Prìomh fhiosan-naidheachd agus fiosan-naidheachd mu dheidhinn na Gàidhlig air an cuairteachadh sa Ghàidhlig agus sa Beurla. | **News releases** High profile news releases and all news releases related to Gaelic are circulated in both Gaelic and English. | | | |
| **Na Meadhanan sòisealta** Thèid susbaint Ghàidhlig a sgaoileadh gu cunbhalach sna meadhanan sòisealta, agus sin a rèir an uiread luchd-cleachdaidh Gàidhlig a th' ann agus a dh'fhaodadh a bhith ann. | **Social Media** Gaelic content distributed regularly through social media, guided by the level of actual and potential users | | | |
| **An Làrach-lìn** Bu chòir susbaint Ghàidhlig a bhith ri faotainn air làrach-lìn an ùghdarrais phoblaich, agus prìomhachas ga thoirt do na duilleagan a dh'fhaodadh an àireamh as motha de dhaoine a tharraing. | **Website** Gaelic content should be available on the public authority's website, with emphasis given to the pages with the highest potential reach. | | | |
| **Foillsichidhean Corporra** Thèid an ullachadh ann an Gàidhlig is Beurla, agus prìomhachas ga thoirt don fheadhainn a dh'fhaodadh an àireamh as motha de dhaoine a leughadh. | **Corporate Publications** Produced in Gaelic and English, with priority given to those with the highest potential reach. | | | |
| **Tairbhe a' Chànain** Bidh pròiseas ann gus dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil a' Ghàidhlig a gheibhear san fhiosrachadh chorporra uile aig deagh ìre agus gun gabh a tuigsinn | **Language Utility** A process is in place to ensure that the quality and accessibility of Gaelic language in all corporate information is high. | | | |
| **Taisbeanaidhean** Bu chòir beachdachadh gu cunbhalach air cothroman gus taisbeanaidhean poblach a shealltainn gu dà-chànanach no ann an Gàidhlig, le prìomhachas ga thoirt don fheadhainn a dh'fhaodadh a' bhuaidh as motha a thoirt air cùisean. | **Exhibitions** Opportunities to deliver public exhibitions bilingually or in Gaelic should be explored on a regular basis, with priority given to those with the highest potential impact. | | | |

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| Luchd-obrach | Staff | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sgrùdadh air sgilean**<br>Thèid sgrùdadh a dhèanamh air sgilean Gàidhlig an luchd-obrach agus na feumalachdan trèanaidh aca a thaobh Gàidhlig rè ùine gach plana. | **Internal audit**<br>Conduct an internal audit of Gaelic skills and training needs through the life of each plan. | | | |
| **Fiosrachadh Inntrigidh**<br>Bidh fiosrachadh mu Phlana Gàidhlig an ùghdarrais phoblaich mar phàirt den fhiosrachadh inntrigidh a gheibh luchd-obrach ùr. | **Induction**<br>Knowledge of the public authority's Gaelic language plan included in new staff inductions | | | |
| **Trèanadh cànain**<br>Thèid cothroman trèanaidh is leasachaidh airson sgilean Gàidhlig a thabhann don luchd-obrach, gu h-àraidh mar thaic do bhith a' coileanadh Plana Gàidhlig an ùghdarrais phoblaich. | **Language training**<br>Gaelic language skills training and development offered to staff, particularly in relation to implementing the public authority's Gaelic language plan. | | | |
| **Trèanadh le Fiosrachadh mun Ghàidhlig**<br>Trèanadh le fiosrachadh mun Ghàidhlig, le prìomhachas air luchd-obrach aig àrd ìre, luchd co-dhùnaidh eile agus luchd-obrach air a bheil dleastanas a bhith a' conaltradh leis a' mhòr-shluagh. | **Awareness training**<br>Gaelic awareness training offered, with priority given to senior staff, other key decision makers and staff dealing directly with the public. | | | |
| **Fastadh**<br>A' toirt aithne do is a' cur sùim ann an sgilean Gàidhlig an lùib nam pròiseasan fastaidh air feadh an ùghdarrais phoblaich. | **Recruitment**<br>Recognising and respecting Gaelic skills within the recruitment process throughout the authority | | | |
| Fastadh<br>Bidh Gàidhlig air a h-ainmeachadh mar sgil riatanach agus / no a tha na buannachd ann an tuairisgeulan obrach gus cuideachadh le bhith a' cur a' Phlana Ghàidhlig an gnìomh agus a rèir an stiùiridh bho Bhòrd na Gàidhlig airson luchd-obrach fhastadh. | Recruitment<br>Gaelic named as an essential and / or desirable skill in job descriptions in order to deliver the Gaelic language plan and in accordance with the Bòrd na Gàidhlig recruitment advice. | | | |

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| Fastadh<br>Bidh sanasan-obrach dà-chànanach ann no ann an Gàidhlig a-mhàin airson a h-uile dreuchd far a bheil Gàidhlig na sgil riatanach. | Recruitment<br>Bilingual or Gaelic only job adverts for all posts where Gaelic is an essential skill. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Corpas na Gàidhlig** | **Gaelic Language Corpus** | | | |
| **Gnàthachas Litreachaidh na Gàidhlig**<br>Thèid cumail ris an tionndadh as ùire de Ghnàthachas Litreachaidh na Gàidhlig anns na stuthan sgrìobhaidh uile a thèid fhoillseachadh leis an ùghdarras phoblach. | **Gaelic Orthographic Conventions**<br>The most recent Gaelic Orthographic Conventions will be followed in relation to all written materials produced by the public authority. | | | |
| **Ainmean-àite**<br>Iarrar agus gabhar ri comhairle bho Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba air ainmean-àite Gàidhlig. | **Place names**<br>Gaelic place name advice from Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba is sought and used. | | | |

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Data Label: Public

![West Lothian Council logo]

**CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**SICKNESS ABSENCE (1 APRIL 2022 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2022)**

**REPORT BY HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES**

**A.    PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To report on sickness absence rates during the period 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022 and to provide an update on the ongoing application of the council's Policy & Procedure on Managing Supporting Attendance at Work.

**B.    RECOMMENDATION**

That the Panel notes the content of the report.

**C.    SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **I** | **Council Values** | Focusing on our customers' needs |
| | | Being honest, open and accountable |
| | | Providing equality of opportunities |
| | | Developing employees |
| | | Making best use of our resources |
| | | Working in partnership |
| **II** | **Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)** | Council policy seeks to strike a balance between effective management of sickness absence and the promotion of a healthy workforce taking into account the council's obligations under Equality legislation. |
| **III** | **Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers** | None |
| **IV** | **Impact on performance and performance Indicators** | The sickness absence SPI for 2022/23 commenced at higher rates compared to previous years and has continued to rise during the quarter. |
| **V** | **Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement** | National Outcome 15: Our Public Services are high quality, continually improving and responsive to local people's needs. Reduced |

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sickness absence levels increase the efficiency and productivity of the council.

| VI | Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property) | Sickness absence is managed within service budgets. |
| VII | Consideration at PDSP | None |
| VIII | Other consultations | None |

## D.     TERMS OF REPORT

### D.1     BACKGROUND

The council's Policy and Procedure for Supporting Attendance at Work, which was approved by Council Executive on 26 June 2018, requires sickness absence levels to be reported to Council Executive on a quarterly basis.

This report relates to absence rates for the period from 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022.

### D.2     SICKNESS ABSENCE RATES

Standard Performance Indicator – Council Wide

The sickness absence Standard Performance Indicator (SPI) for the cumulative period from 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022 is 5.94%.  A total of 2,970 employees were absent from work for one or more days in this reporting period.

The SPI absence rate is higher than the same period in the previous year, 2021/22, which was 5.27%.  However, this lower rate was impacted by reduced absence rates during the later stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Appendix 1** of this report provides an overview of the SPI performance indicators for the full years 2017/18 to 2022/23.

Standard Performance Indicators – Services

The sickness absence SPI for each service area (figures for teaching and non-teaching staff shown separately), for the period 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022 is set out at **Appendix 2**.

Of the seven council service areas, six reported sickness absence rates above the council target of 3.6%. Only Education Services reported 3.31% which is below the 3.6% target. Education Service is counted as one service although the chart reflects teaching and non-teaching figures separately.

Long –Term Absence (1 April 2022 – 30 September 2022)

Of the days lost due to sickness absence during this period, a significant proportion of those absences are attributable to long term absence which is defined in the policy as a period of continuous absence 'in excess of 4 weeks.'

A further breakdown of days lost for the six services with rates above the council sickness absence target indicates the following:

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- Of the total number of 1537 days lost in CEO, Finance & Property Services, 1173 (76.32%) of those days were due to long-term absence and were accounted for by 20 employees.

- Of the total number of 888 days lost in Corporate Services, 720 (81.08%) of those days were due to long-term absence and were accounted for by 11 employees.

- Of the total number of 7,458 days lost in Housing, Customer & Building Services, 5,864 (78.63%) of those days were due to long-term absence and were accounted for by 92 employees.

- Of the total number of 13,682 days lost in Operational Services, 11,360 (83.03%) of those days were due to long-term absence and were accounted for by 180 employees.

- Of the total number of 879 days lost in Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration, 810 (92.15%) of those days were due to long-term absence and were accounted for by 8 employees.

- Of the total number of 12,268 days lost in Social Policy, 10,515 (85.71%) of those days were due to long-term absence and were accounted by 150 employees.

The average percentage of days lost from long term absence across the six services was 82.82%. The average percentage of days lost from long term absence across the full council is 79.56%.

The average length of long-term absence during the period was 63 days with the longest absence lasting 131 days.

Analysis of Categories of Absence (1 April 2022 – 30 September 2022)

Top four reported reasons for all absences across the council, split by long term are as follows:

**Table 1**

| Level 1 Reasons | Days | Long Term % | All Absence% |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mental & Behavioural | 1,808 | 35.54% | 31.87% |
| Musculoskeletal | 5,825 | 14.53% | 13.47% |
| Infectious | 4,730 | 11.80% | 14.55% |
| Accidents, Injuries, Poisoning | 2,875 | 7.17% | 7.05% |
| **Total** | **27,679** | **69.04%** | **66.94%** |

Mental & Behavioural Level 2 Category

The main category for absences is Mental and Behavioural. A breakdown of all mental and behavioural absences recorded is set out below:

**Table 2**

| Mental & Behavioural | Days | Long Term % | All M&B Absences% |
|---|---|---|---|
| Stress (Work & Personal) | 7,055 | 39.98% | 43.94% |
| Anxiety | 3,629 | 19.92% | 22.60% |
| Stress (Personal Only) | 1,762 | 8.73% | 10.97% |
| Depression | 1,745 | 10.00% | 10.87% |

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Not specified | 1,217 | 6.63% | 7.58% |
| Stress (Work only) | 314 | 1.55% | 1.96% |
| Panic attacks | 210 | 1.30% | 1.31% |
| Self-harm | 59 | 0.35% | 0.37% |
| Alcoholism | 349 | 0.28% | 0.31% |
| Other psychiatric illnesses | 16 | 0.00% | 0.10% |
| Insomnia | 1 | 0.00% | 0.01% |
| **Total** | **16,057** | **88.74%** | **100.00%** |

**D.3   MANAGEMENT OF SICKNESS ABSENCE**

**i)   Sickness Absence Case Management**

The HR Services team continue to work closely with managers across the council, providing advice and guidance on the monitoring and management of sickness. Table 3 below shows the number of employees at each stage of the Policy & Procedure as at 30 September 2022, compared to the previously reported positions.

**Table 3**

| | Counselling/ Informal Review Meeting | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total at 30 September 2022 | **560** | **353** | **250** | **1163** |
| Total at 30 September 2021 | 740 | 283 | 158 | 1181 |
| Total at 30 September 2020 | 729 | 418 | 253 | 1400 |

A breakdown of live cases as at 30 September 2022 is set out in Table 4.

**Table 4**

| | Counselling/ Informal Review Meeting | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cases on going from 30 June 2022 | 328 | 283 | 212 | 823 |
| New cases since 30 June 2022 | 232 | 70 | 38 | 340 |
| Total | **560** | **353** | **250** | **1163** |

**ii)   Other Support Initiatives**

HR Adviser Input – Management Meetings

During 2022/23, the following functional areas were targeted for input and support from Human Resources Advisers;

- Education (Teaching & Non-Teaching)
- Care Homes
- Facilities & Support Services
- Recycling Waste & Fleet Services
- NETS, Lands & Countryside

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- Roads & Transportation
- Building Services

Within the level of advisory resource available, Human Resources continue to provide as much ongoing support as possible to a number of Service Managers across those functional areas to develop action plans to address issues and to help line managers manage staff absences in line with policy.

Facilities and Support Services (8.60%), NETS & Countryside Services (6.54%), Education-Teaching (2.13%) have all reported decreases of up to 0.31% during Quarter 2.

Employee Assistance Programme

Since 1 November 2018, a telephone-based counselling service (Help EAP) has been in operation provided by our occupational health provider, Optima Health.

Statistics from Quarter 2 (2022/23) show that 22 employees received mental health assessment during this period which is a decrease from last quarter where 34 employees were assessed.  Of the 22 assessed, 21 employees were referred for counselling services and 1 employee was provided onward referral and guidance.

Of the 21 employees who were referred for counselling, 13 received structured telephone counselling sessions, 3 provided with video counselling sessions and 5 provided with CBT.

Contact reasons indicate that 2.86% of calls in Quarter 2 were in relation to solely work-related issues, 42.86% in relation to personal issues and 54.29% due to a combination of work and personal related issues.

Further analysis of contact reasons identified the following categories:

**Table 5**

| Personal Categories | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Addiction | 6.06% |
| Bereavement | 33.33% |
| Carer responsibilities | 9.09% |
| Debt/Finance | 3.03% |
| Domestic Violence | 3.03% |
| Mental Health | 6.06% |
| Relationships (personal) | 21.21% |
| Physical Health | 18.18% |
| **Total** | **100.00%** |

**Table 6**

| Work Categories | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Change | 14.71% |
| Control | 11.76% |
| Demands | 23.53% |
| Relationships | 8.82% |
| Role | 29.41% |
| Support | 11.76% |
| **Total** | **100.00%** |

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The work categories are the HSE Management Standards which cover the six key areas of work design, that if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and wellbeing, lower productivity and increased sickness absence.

As this is a confidential service we are unable to canvas employees directly for specific feedback on their experiences, although anecdotally, services have reported a mainly positive response from staff who have accessed these services.

HR Advisers will continue to promote the use of this service and the trade unions have been asked to promote these services to their members.

**D.4    APPLICATION OF MANAGEMENT DISCRETION (1 April 2022 – 30 September 2022)**

The Policy and Procedure for Supporting Attendance at Work has the provision for the relevant manager, in consultation with Human Resources, to exercise discretion not to progress an employee through a stage of the procedure to take account of extenuating circumstances.

Since April 2022, Human Resources have been consulted in regard to 206 requests for management discretion to be considered.  Of those 206 requests, 198 (96.12%) have resulted in discretion being applied to suspend application of the trigger level for a limited period considering the circumstances of the individual case.

A breakdown of the general categories in respect of which requests for discretion have been considered are as follows:

**Table 7**

| Main Category | Discretion Applied | Discretion Not Applied |
|---|---|---|
| Bereavement | 53 | 0 |
| Carer Responsibilities | 5 | 0 |
| Industrial Injury | 12 | 0 |
| Medical Treatment | 38 | 4 |
| Personal Difficulties | 27 | 3 |
| Surgery | 63 | 1 |
| Trauma | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **198** | **8** |

The policy provides for management decisions not to apply discretion to be reviewed by a more senior manager if requested by the employee concerned.  No requests for review have been requested during this quarter.

**D.5    ABSENCE AS A RESULT OF COVID-19**

Effective from 1 July 2022 absences in relation to COVID, including the need to self-isolate, are being treated as sickness absence.  Staff absent due to COVID symptoms and Long COVID accounted for 10.56% of all sickness absences since April 2022.

In Quarter 2, the council had 34 employees reported as being absent due to Long COVID/extended COVID symptoms of which 16 returned to work during the period.

**D.6    ACTIONS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE WELLBEING**

Members of the Human Resources team attended Education Services first Wellbeing Conference for both pupils and staff held in Winchburgh Academy in September 2022.

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This provided attendees the opportunity to discuss with HR Advisers the wellbeing supports the council offered to all staff as well as guidance to managers on how to support their staff wellbeing.

During Quarter 2 the service wellbeing representatives continued to promote awareness on various topics, such as suicide awareness day and world mental health day.

On 1 October 2022, the council launched its new Employee Benefit portal which was widely promoted within the services.  This has a number of benefits that can support financial wellbeing and staff are encouraged to sign up in order to receive a range of discounts in major supermarkets, high street stores, mobile, broadband and utilities.

The Council has also offered key workers who are not covered by the NHS winter immunisation programme, the opportunity to get the flu vaccine free of charge.  This is being processed through our OH provider issuing e-vouchers to be utilised at participating pharmacies.

## E.      CONCLUSION

Absence rates for the Council in 2022/23 have seen an increase in comparison to 2021/22.

Stress continues to be the highest contributor to levels of sickness absence across the council and the focus will continue to be on targeting additional support at those service areas that are reporting high levels of stress related absence.

The council continues to have a focus on employee health and wellbeing and a range of actions are being progressed to raise the profile and importance of good employee wellbeing.

## F.      BACKGROUND REFERENCES

- Policy & Procedure for Supporting Attendance at Work
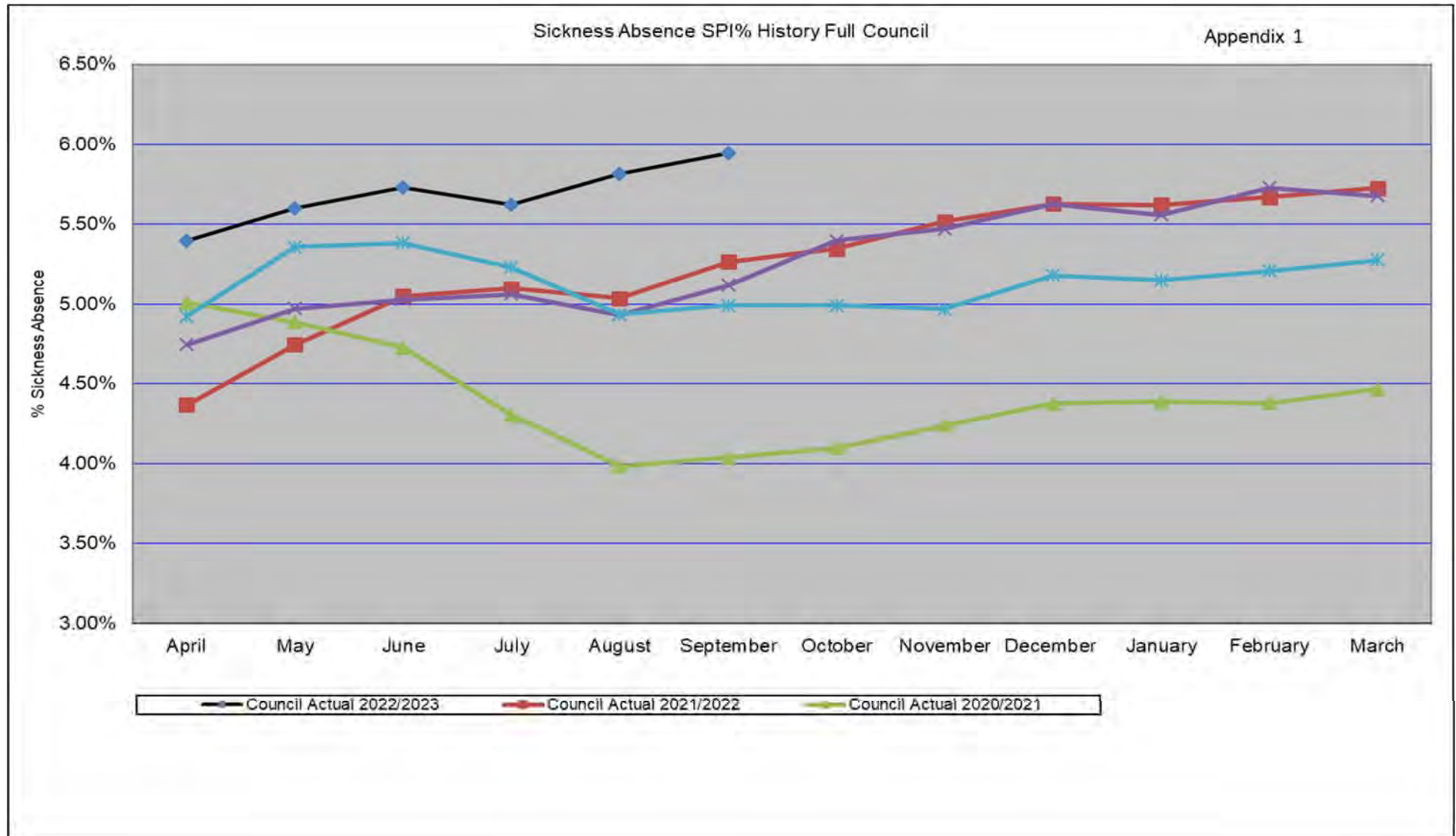
Appendices/Attachments:  3

1. Sickness Absence SPI% History – Full Council
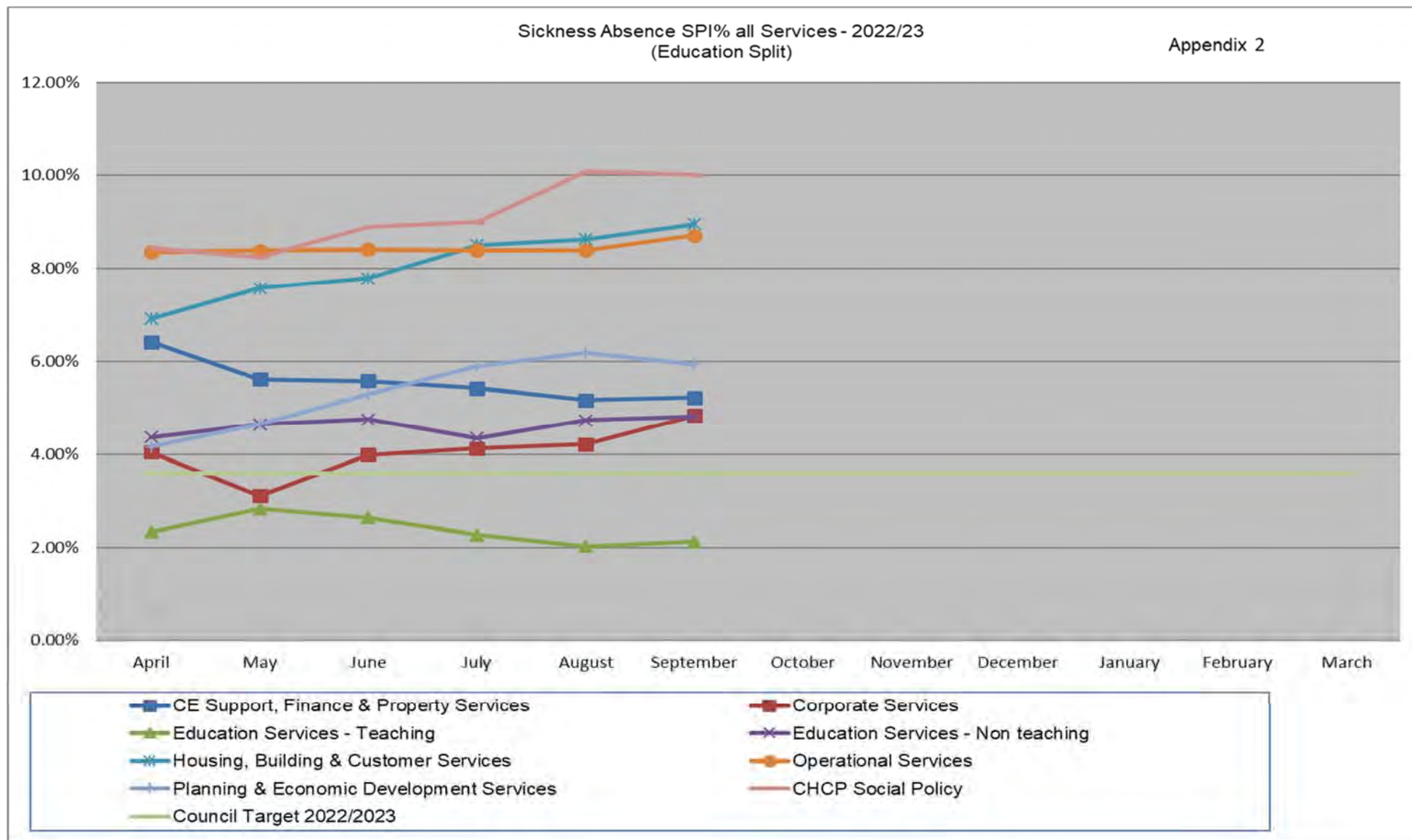2. Sickness Absence SPI% all services – 2021/22

Contact Person: Claire Wallace, Interim HR Services Manager

**Lesley Henderson**

**Interim Head of Corporate Services**

**12 December 2022**

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Sickness Absence SPI% History Full Council — Appendix 1

Legend: Council Actual 2022/2023 · Council Actual 2021/2022 · Council Actual 2020/2021

Sickness Absence SPI% all Services - 2022/23
(Education Split)

Appendix 2

Legend:
- CE Support, Finance & Property Services
- Corporate Services
- Education Services - Teaching
- Education Services - Non teaching
- Housing, Building & Customer Services
- Operational Services
- Planning & Economic Development Services
- CHCP Social Policy
- Council Target 2022/2023

**PARTNERSHIP AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**ICT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN (2019/20 to 2027/28) – ANNUAL REVIEW**

**PROGRESS REPORT BY HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES**

**A.    PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The report provides a review of the ICT Asset Management Plan 2019/20 to 2027/28 to the Partnership and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel, including progress against planned outcomes and an overview of the performance to date.

**B.    RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Panel:

1.   Note the performance against the planned outcomes.

2.   Notes the progress made in delivering the planned capital investment.

**C.    SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

| I | **Council Values** | Being honest, open and accountable; focusing on our customer's needs; making best use of our resources, Working in partnership |
|---|---|---|
| II | **Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)** | The council is required to demonstrate Best Value through a structured framework for the management of its assets. The establishment of this plan will support achievement of this. |
| III | **Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers** | Not Applicable |
| IV | **Impact on performance and performance Indicators** | The implementation of the ICT Asset Management Plan will sustain and where appropriate improve the performance measures highlighted in the plan. |
| V | **Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement** | The ICT Asset Management Plan supports activities under a number of outcomes including the following:<br><br>Outcome 1 -We make West Lothian an attractive place for doing business in Scotland. |

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Outcome 3 – we are better educated, more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.

Outcome 14 – we reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.

Outcome 15 - Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **VI** | **Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)** | IT revenue and general services capital investment will support the implementation of the ICT Asset Management Plan 2019/20 to 2027/28 |
| **VII** | **Consideration at PDSP** | N/A |
| **VIII** | **Other consultations** | The plan has been prepared in consultation with relevant services. |

## D.     TERMS OF REPORT

### D.1     Background

At its meeting on 19 February 2019 Council approved the nine-year general services capital investment programme for 2019/20 to 2027/28 together with the Corporate Asset Management Strategy. The Corporate Asset Management Strategy (CAMS) establishes the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and how these relate to the management of all the council's assets, together with aligning to the investment resources set out in the capital programme. The ICT Asset Management Plan distils these priorities and how they relate to the management of ICT assets. In addition, the ICT Asset Management Plan re-establishes the corporate framework for the management of ICT assets.

The ICT Asset Management Plan for the period 2019/20 to 2027/28 has the aim of managing our ICT assets effectively and efficiently whilst continuing to improve performance and was approved by Council Executive in April 2019. The plan is for a nine-year period and this is the second annual progress report. The plan will be formally reviewed in 2022/23.

### D.2     COVID-19 Pandemic Implications

The Covid-19 pandemic has been the most significant public health emergency that the UK has faced in generations. The lockdown restrictions first put in place by the UK and Scottish Government on 23 March 2020 placed significant restrictions on the ability of people to meet, travel and attend work and has had a huge impact nationally and locally on businesses, communities and residents.

The restrictions put in place meant that many council staff were required to work from home. The restrictions have largely remained in place over both the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years and as we move out of those restrictions at the start of the 2022/23 financial year the flexible working pilot means there will be an ongoing requirement to facilitate mobile and remote working. This is likely to provide some challenges as the relaxations in compliance regimes put in place to

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recognise the changed balance of risks relating to different working practices during the pandemic are now being removed.

Despite restrictions imposed by the pandemic, IT Services have continued to deliver projects in support of Transforming Your Council, the Capital Programme and service led demands.

**D.3** **Performance Scorecard**

The ICT Asset Management scorecard is a reporting tool that is used to monitor progress in the performance indicators in each outcome. Achievement in the key activities can be tracked and it also allows the council to identify areas for improvement.

The scorecard provides a snapshot of performance to date across the ICT Asset Management Plan and is included in Appendix 1.

A total of eight performance indicators are contained in the scorecard and this is managed using the council's performance management system (Pentana). At present, the status of those indicators are as follows:

| Summary of Performance Indicator status (RAG) | |
| --- | --- |
| Status (against target) | Number of PIs |
| ✅ Green | 6 |
| ⚠️ Amber | 0 |
| 🛑 Red | 0 |
| ❓ Unknown | 2 |

A commentary on the performance and the corrective action that will be taken to address the performance indicators that were triggering as amber or unknown is outlined:

Outcome 1: Compliance

| ❓ Indicator: P:ITS064_9b.2 Annual Cyber Essential Plus Accreditation | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Performance 2021/22 | Target 2021/22 | Target 2022/23 | Target 2023/24 |
| N/A | 100% | 100% | 100% |

This measure is performed as part of the council's annual CyberEssentials+ accreditation programme. Due to Covid pandemic measures during the year, fewer devices are present in offices combined with a changing picture of schools occupation, the accreditation programme could not be carried out during the year.

A project brief outlining work required to submit for CyberEssentials+ within the context of the wider cyber security landscape was submitted to the February 2022 ICT Programme Board. CyberEssentials+ accreditation for 2022/23 will be progressed as part of that project.

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| ❓ Indicator: P:ITS065_9b.1c Annual Public Sector Network (PSN) compliance certification | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance 2021/22 | Target 2021/22 | Target 2022/23 | Target 2023/24 |
| N/A | 100% | 100% | 100% |

This measure is performed as part of the council's annual accreditation programme. Due to Covid pandemic measures insufficient devices were present within council offices to enable accreditation to be carried out. During Q3 sufficient devices were present on the council network to allow submission to proceed however delays within the Cabinet Office (Covid related) have meant that accreditation has not yet been processed however previous accreditation has again been extended and the council remains connected to the PSN.

A project brief outlining work required to implement controls and processes relating to staff requiring access to the PSN whilst working from out with the council network as part of the flexible working pilot as well as considerations of the changing wider cyber security landscape was presented to the February 2022 ICT Programme Board. PSN accreditation for 2022/23 will be progressed as part of that project.

**D.4    Capital Investment Progress Report**

Good progress was made in delivering the capital programme in 2021/22 despite the challenging nature of delivering projects during the pandemic generally and periods of lockdown in particular, raw material shortages continues to provide delays within physical technology products such as laptops, desktops, servers, and network equipment.  Another key area for the council which has been impacted is the delivery of digital telecare hubs as a result of raw material shortages, IT Services and Social Policy continue to work with our suppliers to progress.

Below is a summary of the progression made during 2021/22 within the ICT Capital programme:

- Annual planned progression of the central server refresh programme

- Delivery of the annual desktop refresh programme across education and corporate estates

- Delivery of digitally enabled Alarm Receiving Centre platform for Care Line customers.

- Delivery of phased Network refresh programme across education and corporate sites.

- Introduction of new technology to enable hybrid meetings within the council chamber.

- Implementation of robotics and automation within existing and new council processes.

- Delivery of the next phases of the HR and Payroll system

- Additional schools added to the IPT system to replace legacy telephony

The updated ICT Capital Programme Phasing is attached as Appendix B.

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E.      CONCLUSION

The ICT Asset Management Plan reflects and supports the priorities of the Corporate Plan and Corporate Asset Management Strategy. It sets out the framework and resources required for the remaining period of the plan to ensure we manage our ICT assets effectively and efficiently whilst ensuring we seek continuous improvement.

F.      BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Asset Management Strategy and General Services Capital Investment Programme 2019/20 - 2027/28. Report approved 19 February 2019

ICT Asset Management Plan 2019/20 to 2027/28

Appendices/Attachments:

Appendix A – Performance Report

Appendix B – ICT Capital Plan

Contact Person: Ian Forrest, IT Manager, 01506 281081, ian.forrest@westlothian.gov.uk

**Lesley Henderson**
**Interim Head of Corporate Services**

12 December 2022

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## Appendix A

## Corporate Strategy - Information Communication Technology (ICT) Asset Management Strategy 2018-23

### (a) Outcome 1 - Compliance

| Status | Performance Indicator | Last Update | Current Value | Current Target | Lead officer(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✅ | P:ITS054_7b.3 Percentage of staff with an email account who have completed the council's mandatory training courses | 2021/22 | 99.5% | 100% | .Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |
| ❓ | P:ITS064_9b.2 Annual Cyber Essential Plus Accreditation | 2021/22 | N/A | 100% | .Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |
| ❓ | P:ITS065_9b.1c Annual Public Sector Network (PSN) compliance certification | 2021/22 | N/A | 100% | .Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |

### (b) Outcome 2 - Condition

| Status | Performance Indicator | Last Update | Current Value | Current Target | Lead officer(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✅ | P:ITS078_9b.1a Annual Percentage of ICT faults related to hardware failure | 2021/22 | 2.3% | 3% | .Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |
| ✅ | P:ITS079_9b.1c Annual Percentage of ICT Corporate desktop and laptop assets in use beyond their expected lifespan. | 2021/22 | 0% | 0.5% | .Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |

### (c) Outcome 3 - Suitability

| Status | Performance Indicator | Last Update | Current Value | Current Target | Lead officer(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✅ | ITS076_9b.1c Annual Percentage of active network accounts fit for purpose | 2021/22 | 100% | 100% | .Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |

### (d) Outcome 4 - Sufficiency

| Status | Performance Indicator | Last Update | Current Value | Current Target | Lead officer(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✅ | P:ITS072_9b.2 Percentage of Annual Service Continuity Test that Supports WLC1 Business Continuity Plans | 2021/22 | 100% | 100% | .Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |

### (e) Outcome 5 - Utilisation

| Status | Performance Indicator | Last Update | Current Value | Current Target | Lead officer(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✅ | P:ITS071_9b.2 Maintain Optimum Server Processing Capacity | 2021/22 | 34% | 75% | .Head of Corporate Services (Lesley Henderson) |

## Appendix B
### ICT ASSETS - 2021/22 TO 2027/28

| | Budget 2022/23 £'000 | Budget 2023/24 £'000 | Budget 2024/25 £'000 | Budget 2025/26 £'000 | Budget 2026/27 £'000 | Budget 2027/28 £'000 | Total Budget £'000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Corporate and Modernisation** | | | | | | | |
| Antivirus/Malware | 126 | 0 | 208 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 334 |
| Central Firewall Refresh | 28 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 139 | 167 |
| Central Server Refresh | 47 | 36 | 130 | 200 | 350 | 100 | 863 |
| Central Storage Refresh | 219 | 725 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 944 |
| Customer Relationship Management System | 192 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 192 |
| Desktop Refresh | 517 | 120 | 269 | 77 | 27 | 128 | 1,138 |
| Digital Transformation | 133 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 433 |
| Electronic Document Records Management (EDRM) - refresh | 81 | 590 | 105 | 23 | 31 | 31 | 861 |
| Electronic Document Records Management (EDRM) - system | 129 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 129 |
| Email Filtering/Encryption | 0 | 443 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 507 |
| Email System Upgrade | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 250 | 250 |
| General Provision - IT future technology developments | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 |
| HAVS System | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 |
| HR & Payroll Replacement - system | 9 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 34 |
| Internet Protocol Telephony Refresh | 0 | 475 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 475 |
| Library Books (including eBooks & reader development) | 94 | 95 | 95 | 95 | 95 | 95 | 569 |
| Library/Customer Information Service Integration | 51 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 51 |
| Local Area Network Refresh | 0 | 381 | 311 | 311 | 211 | 211 | 1,425 |
| Looked After Children (LAC) Device Replacement | 70 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 70 |
| MFD Software | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 475 | 475 |
| MS Office Refresh | 0 | 55 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 55 |
| Office Modernisation ICT | 0 | 84 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 84 |
| Remote Access/Swivel | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 22 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Remote Working - split tunnelling | 169 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 175 | 0 | 344 |
| Scottish Wide Area Network | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Self Service Kiosks in Libraries Replacement | 1,053 | 0 | 150 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,203 |
| Social Care Administration (SWIFT) Replacement | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21 |
| Social Policy Electronic Call Monitoring | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 17 |
| Technology Enabled Care Programme - internal infrastructure | 745 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 745 |
| Upgrade from Windows 7 | 70 | 0 | 228 | 0 | 0 | 228 | 526 |
| Workplace Manager Replacement Feasibility | 55 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 55 |
| **Corporate and Modernisation - Total** | **3,884** | **3,069** | **1,593** | **771** | **954** | **1,754** | **12,025** |
| | | | | | | | |
| **Schools** | | | | | | | |
| Antivirus/Malware | 0 | 0 | 214 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 214 |
| Central Firewall Refresh | 74 | 0 | 78 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 152 |
| Central Server Refresh | 41 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 81 |
| Desktop Refresh | 674 | 500 | 450 | 450 | 450 | 450 | 2,974 |
| Digital Inclusion | 48 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 48 |
| Education Wireless Local Area Network Refresh | 0 | 653 | 0 | 536 | 653 | 268 | 2,110 |
| Internet Protocol Telephony Refresh | 77 | 209 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 286 |
| School Telephone Replacement System | 40 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 165 |
| Scottish Wide Area Network Bandwidth Upgrade | 375 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 375 | 0 | 750 |
| Wireless Refresh | 993 | 0 | 0 | 1,056 | 0 | 0 | 2,049 |
| **Schools - Total** | **2,322** | **1,387** | **767** | **2,067** | **1,503** | **783** | **8,829** |
| | | | | | | | |
| **TOTAL ICT ALLOCATION** | **6,206** | **4,456** | **2,360** | **2,838** | **2,457** | **2,537** | **20,854** |

**CORPORATE POLICY & RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**WORKPLAN TO 3 FEBRUARY 2023**

| | Agenda Item | Lead Officer | CP&R PDSP Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Code of Conduct Annual Report | Chief Executive | Annually<br><br>December 2023 |
| 2. | Annual SPSO Report | Chief Executive | Annually<br><br>December 2023 |
| 3. | Property Asset Management – Performance Update | Head of Finance and Property Services | Annually<br><br>December 2023 |
| 4. | ICT Asset Management Plan – Annual Review | Head of Finance and Property Services | Annually<br><br>December 2023 |
| 5. | Corporate Asset Management Strategy – Annual Update | Head of Finance and Property Services | Annually<br><br>December 2023 |
| 6. | Lothian Valuation Joint Board Annual Report | Chief Executive | Annually<br><br>21 April 2023 |
| 7. | Annual Complaints Report | Depute Chief Executive, Corporate, Operational and Housing Services | Annually<br><br>August 2023 |
| 8. | Corporate Strategies Update (Digital Transformation, ICT, Improvement, People and Customer) | Head of Corporate Services | Annually<br><br>August 2023 |
| 9. | Managements Plans:<br>• Finance & Property<br>• Corporate Services<br>• Customer Service (HCBS) | Heads of Service | Annually<br><br>2 June 2023 |
| 10. | Quarterly Performance Report | Depute Chief Executive, Corporate, Operational and Housing Services | Quarterly<br><br>21 April 2023<br>2 June 2023<br>August 2023<br>December 2023 |

|  | Agenda Item | Lead Officer | CP&R PDSP Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11. | Horizon Scan Report | Head of Finance and Property Services | Quarterly<br><br>3 February 2023<br>2 June 2023<br>August 2023<br>December 2023 |
| 12. | Quarterly Sickness Absence Update | Head of Corporate Services | Quarterly<br><br>3 February 2023<br>2 June 2023<br>August 2023<br>December 2023 |
| 13. | Social Security Benefits and Welfare Reform | Head of Finance and Property Services | Biannually<br><br>3 February 2023<br>August 2023 |
| 14. | Financial Performance Report | Head of Finance and Property Services | Biannually<br><br>August 2023<br>December 2023 |
| 15. | Museum Learning and Access Policy | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | Every 3 years<br><br>December 2025 |
| 16. | Report on Savings Options (2023/24 – 2025/26) | Head of Finance and Property Services | January 2023 (will likely require special meeting) |
| 17. | Libraries Book Week Scotland Report | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | Annually<br><br>3 February 2023 |
| 18. | The Museum Forward Plan | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | Every 3 years<br><br>December 2025 |
| 19. | Library and Museum 6 Monthly Performance Report (April 2022 – September 2022) | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | 21 April 2023 |
| 20. | Non-Domestic Rates Empty Property Relief | Head of Finance and Property Services | 3 February 2023 |
| 21. | Council Tax Scenarios Update | Head of Finance and Property Services | 3 February 2023 |
| 22. | Macmillan Cancer Services Update | Head of Finance and Property Services | 2 June 2023 |

| | Agenda Item | Lead Officer | CP&R PDSP Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| 23. | Library and Museum 6 Monthly Performance Report (October 2022 – March 2023) | Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services | 2 June 2023 |
| 24. | Lothian Valuation Joint Board minutes | Chief Executive | As available |

**Graham Hope**
**Chief Executive**

**DATA LABEL: PUBLIC**