



Glasgow City Council Response

Scottish Parliament Finance and Public Administration Committee National Performance Framework: Ambitions into Action

Glasgow is Scotland's largest city with over 635,000 citizens. We are a thriving cosmopolitan city which is the powerhouse of the Scottish economy, sitting at the centre of a metropolitan region of 1.85m people which generated over £47bn of Gross Value Added to the Scottish economy in 2019.

This city region is responsible for providing 34% of all Scottish jobs, producing 32% of Scottish GVA but has around a quarter of children living in poverty.

In Glasgow City, 44% of our citizens live within the 20% most deprived communities in Scotland, as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, with 26% of children growing up in poverty in families living an average of £121 a week below the poverty line.

While the City Council and our partners continue to focus on policies and initiatives aimed at both the symptoms and root causes of poverty, significant long term health and socio-economic challenges which stop our citizens from reaching their full potential still stubbornly exist.

We continue to live in a city of stark contrast with both a highly skilled workforce and with many citizens facing barriers to work that are based in their poverty.

The City Council is focused on ensuring that all Glaswegians can benefit from Glasgow's new growth and opportunity and in a way that supports the most vulnerable in our city; recognising that we live in a time of increasing demand on the city's services and a reduction in its resources.

As we look towards the recovery phase of the pandemic, Glasgow remains committed to bold and decisive action that delivers better services and better outcomes for our city.

The scourge of poverty has long been a challenge to the city but the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably exacerbated existing inequalities.

Since the start of the pandemic the number of households living in relative poverty has risen from 13,827 to 15,346 with the number of children living in relative poverty increasing from 25,485 to 27,995. A 10% (2,510) increase in the number of children experiencing the effects of relative poverty.

Our analysis also shows that not only are more families and children living in poverty, but the depth of that poverty, measured by the amount of money per week they live below the poverty line, has increased as well.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only made life more difficult for those families living in poverty before the pandemic but families who now find themselves living in relative poverty are on average initially worse off than those that have been living in relative poverty since before the pandemic by at least £6 per week compared to the city average.

We are committed to working as a partnership, across services and communities, to ensure that Glasgow achieves its potential at a citizen, organisation and city level. As well as benefitting Glasgow, the learnings and experience can be transferred across the wider region and country.

There is much to do to truly effect change across our city, and in particular levels of child poverty. Only by understanding and engaging with all stakeholders, working in partnership and combining experiences, ideas and knowledge can we hope to co-design the solutions that will empower and enable our citizens to make significant and lasting change to their lives

Glasgow City Council, the Scottish Government, CoSLA and the Improvement Service continue to work together, along with a range of other city organisations to support and address the issues that put too many of our citizens at risk of poverty.

As well as ensuring that any contact with our services can serve as a gateway to holistic support with packages of services built around their needs, capabilities and aspirations.

The Council's mission is to bring together key stakeholders in the city, to produce short and long term significant strategic and practical improvements to services that will help reduce poverty for our citizens and make Glasgow a more equitable place to live, work and visit.

To do this the Council assesses its performance through a variety of measures which are informed by the same principles that underpin the National Performance Framework.

While the framework does not dictate how the Council provides services it allows local government to develop local solutions and programmes alongside a shared vision with government, providing flexibility and a common benchmark.

Moving forward the Council believes that there is opportunity for the framework to develop and integrate closer with the work of local government while still recognising that local issues and ambitions require local flexibility to be efficiently delivered.

The principles and ambition of the NPF is a shared thread that runs through the Council's formal performance structures, principally the Council's Strategic Plan. As such, the Council is constantly monitoring its performance and service delivery against the principles of the NPF if not necessarily using the framework as a benchmark.

This recognises that councils are the on-the-ground delivery partner of government and that a one size fits all approach is not the most effective way when we focus on policy outcomes rather than policy inputs or outputs.

Officers and civil servants are working together to try and make sure that we can be jointly accountable for delivering the change and service levels that are needed. This will require systemic changes in approach that will evolve how the NPF interacts with local government.

Considering a wider context for performance reporting between local and national government; the Council has voiced its opinion that how local government is asked to deliver a number of its services and policies by national government can suffer from being produced in silo.

Multiple policies operate in the same space without the necessary joins to maximise impact such as the significant overlaps in the Child Poverty Action Plan, The Promise, Getting it right for every child, Young Persons Guarantee, Family Wellbeing Fund and other policies supported by local government.

This is also seen in the use of ringfenced funding, or funding provided with significant restrictions, such as teacher numbers which obtain government's immediate aim, but which can also act as a significant multiplier to reductions in funding to other core services.

This is often well meaning to ensure investment is directed solely into shared priorities, however the big picture impact is often not fully considered and left to local government, and local communities, to manage.

Policies affecting one area of the Council's operations rarely have an impact that is limited to its immediate team or department which often have counter-productive effects on other council and government priorities. While the funding may be there to help local government increase the amount of funded hours of early years care to 1140 hours, local government is left to manage the significant cost pressures of delivering the initial commitment.

There is always a critical tension between performance metrics of cost and impact and this negatively impacts upon measures of local government performance when viewed narrowly and in isolation. A strict and inflexible focus on inputs, such as teacher numbers and funded hours of early years care, does not account for their outcomes or the impact of policies on pupil learning, employment or child poverty.

This is also true of pressures faced by our delivery partners in the public, private, third and community sectors of our city.

Understanding this is crucial to any review of how performance is monitored, measured and reported as is the impact of partnership working which is vital to the success of national and local policy. A more holistic view of the benefits of this work and related performance will better inform future policy decisions.

Through the Council's next strategic plan we will move to a mission based performance framework; which being underpinned by the Sustainable Development Goals will embed more strategic alignment with the National Performance Framework; and allow greater read across in reporting and delivery.