

Agenda Item	3
Report No	HC/02/25

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: The Highland Council

Date: 27th March 2025

Report Title: Annual Report 2023/24- Statutory Performance Indicators, Benchmarking and Best Value

Report By: Chief Executive

1. Purpose/ Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides performance information on the Council's Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) for 2023/24. The SPIs are locally determined and are drawn from local performance indicators (LPI) and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) indicators used in the Council's Performance Plan.
- 1.2 For 2023/24 there were 81 SPIs and all of these had performance targets set. Data is not yet available for 11 of the indicators, as they are published after this report is provided, the latest information against target has been provided in Appendix 3. The summary performance against the target for the 70 SPI's we have performance data for shows:
- 55 or 79% (55/70) were performing on target or within the performance threshold.
 - 15 indicators or 21% (15/70) of the targets had not been achieved.
 - This compares to 77% on target or within threshold and 23% not achieving target as reported at the same time last year.
- 1.3 There are 34 SPIs that the Council considers to be Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These provide a high-level overview of the Council's performance and are selected considering their weighting in terms of evidencing effective service delivery of key Council functions. Performance data against targets is available for 27 of these KPIs with previous years data provided for the 7 remaining, which are all within the Children's Services heading where the benchmarked data for these will be published later this year.

The available performance data for the 27 KPIs shows:

- 23 or 85% (23/27) were performing on target or within the performance threshold
- 4 or 15% (4/27) of the targets had not been achieved
- This compares to 78% on target or within threshold and 22% not achieving target as reported at the same time last year.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Scrutinise the performance of the Council's SPIs for 2023/24 outlined in Appendices 1 and 2 and 3 of this Report.
- ii. Note that the updated performance data for 2022/23 has been provided at Appendix 3.
- iii. Note the high level summary of the Draft LGBF National Report set out in section 6.6.
- iv. Note the outcome of the Best Value thematic review set out at section 7.2, that a full BV review will be undertaken during 2024/25 and the examples of Best Value set out in Appendix 4.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource

There are no resource implications as a result of this performance report. The report Appendices do contain a number of cost indicators which can support service improvement towards monitoring and reducing costs.

3.2 Legal

Implications relate to meeting statutory requirements for public performance reporting and demonstrating Best Value which are being met through performance management and performance reporting activity.

3.3 Risk: There is a risk of data being misinterpreted. For example, spend on services may be increased in response to political and public priorities increasing the overall unit cost per annum whereas the national benchmark assumes that the lowest cost per unit demonstrates better performance.

3.4 Health & Safety: There are no implications arising from this report.

3.5 Gaelic: There are no implications arising from this report.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies, or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment

4.3 Whilst there are no impacts arising as a result of this report, it is worth noting that the performance indicators cover a broad range of areas falling under the Councils Impact Assessment Process. These include for example, Equality, Children's Rights & Well Being & Climate Change and provide valuable insight as to how the work across the Council is impacting our progress in these areas.

5. Background

5.1 Accounts Commission Statutory Performance Information (SPI) Direction

The Accounts Commission has the statutory power to define the performance information that Councils must publish for performance comparison and benchmarking purposes. This is undertaken through the provision of a SPI Direction setting out the requirements for Councils to report their performance to their citizens and communities. The 2021 Direction, covering the current reporting period 2021 - 2024, requires each Council to report as follows:

Statutory Performance Indicator 1: Improving local services and local outcomes:

- Performance in improving local public services, both provided by itself and in conjunction with its partners and communities.
- Progress against the desired outcomes agreed with its partners and communities.

The Council is expected to report information which allows comparison (i) over time and (ii) with other similar bodies (the Local Government Benchmarking Framework and from other benchmarking activities). This requirement has been met through the information set out in Appendices 1- 3.

Statutory Performance Indicator 2: Demonstrating Best Value:

- An assessment of how it is performing against its duty of Best Value, including self-assessments and service review activity, and how it has responded to this assessment.
- Audit assessments (including those in the annual audit) of its performance against its Best Value duty, and how it has responded to these assessments.
- Assessments from other scrutiny and inspection bodies, and how it has responded to these assessments.

Details of how these requirements are met is provided in Section 7 of the report and Appendix 4. In addition, the Council is required to report on its Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) within 12 months of the end of the financial year they refer to.

5.2 The data the Council holds on corporate performance is extensive and is managed on an electronic database system called the Performance and Risk Management System (PRMS). PRMS contains dashboards providing graphs, additional information and data on performance indicators, and is available to Elected Members and Council officers.

5.3 A new SPI Direction for the years 2025/26 – 2027/28, has been issued by the Accounts Commission. This has provided further guidance to support the previous version, however there is no material change to the Direction or the Council's statutory obligations to note.

6. Statutory Performance Indicators and LGBF data

6.1 The detailed performance information is set out in Appendix 1, and this is summarised in Table 1 below. This shows that 79% (55/70) of the indicators are performing on target (equal to or better than the target) or within the performance threshold (below target but within an agreed level of tolerance). However, this does mean that 15 indicators (21%) were not achieved. For 11 indicators we do not have performance against target for 2023/24 as advised in section 1.2, however, the most recent year available has been reported in Appendix 3.

The summary position for 2022/23 is also provided for comparison purposes. The first column details performance for 2023/24. The second column shows the data reported

in March 2024 for 2022/23 performance, when there were 11 indicators awaiting an update. The last column provides the final reported position for 2022/23 with this data included.

Table 1 – Summary of SPI performance

Performance against target		2023/24	2022/23	2022/23
		Number of SPIs	Number of SPIs (March 24)	Number of SPIs (final)
G	Performance is “On Target”	43	41	46
A	Performance is “Some Slippage”	12	12	17
R	Performance is “No Significant Progress”	15	16	17
	The indicator is data awaited/ no data available	11	11	0
	Total	81	80	80

- 6.2 The Council’s Performance Plan sets out its strategic and operational priorities along with relevant LGBF indicators and targets to monitor progress, with the Council’s Delivery Plan being a key mechanism through the which the priorities are delivered. These LGBF indicators along with locally determined indicators are now the focus of the Council’s SPI reporting.

Appendix 1 shows the available performance information on the SPIs for 2023/24 together with the 2 previous years which have been provided for comparison purposes. The target for 2023/24 is also shown, these have either been set by Members through the Performance Plan or have been established by Council officers. The type of target varies by indicator and may relate to an indicator’s position in national benchmarking or seeking improved local trends.

Within the 81 SPIs, 34 are Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which were agreed to achieve a balanced strategic view of performance across the Council. All KPIs are denoted in bold. For 7 KPIs we do not have performance against target for 2023/24 but have reported the most recent year available.

In considering the information provided the 2023/24 performance has been measured against the target and “ragged” accordingly. Any SPIs which are shown as **R** (progress is below the set threshold for a Green or Amber rating against the target) has further commentary provided detailing the reason why performance is less than expected, and the actions being undertaken to address this. Where indicators are shown as not meeting the target, this does not automatically signal a lack of improvement.

In some cases, the figures show improvement, but this is not meeting the expected pace of change required. An assessment is shown in Appendix 1 (Progress Column), as to the trend of performance over the three-year period. This has been calculated by taking an average of the first two years and comparing it with this year’s performance.

- 6.3 Whilst commentary is only specifically provided for those indicators that are below the set threshold, it is worth noting the trend analysis does show a broad range of indicators evidencing an improved performance which can be seen throughout Appendix 1.

Highlights of these improvements are set out in Table 2 below, those denoted in bold sit within the Councils 34 KPIs.

Table 2 – Improvement Highlights

	SPI	Actual 2021/22	Actual 2022/23	Actual 2023/24	Target 2023/24	Performance Against Target
Children’s Services	The average number of children and young people accommodated out with Highland (Annual)	24	20	13	18	G
Adult Services	Criminal Justice - % offenders on new Community Payback Orders (Supervision) seen within 5 working days	46.10%	46.00%	62.60%	69%	A
Corporate Services	Benefits Administration costs – Gross cost per case	£41.99	£30.76	£28.99	£39.89	G
Corporate Services	Average Days to Process Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Claims - Changes of Circumstances	1.8	1.9	1.6	2	G
Business and Development Services	Average Time Planning Applications - All Majors	56.7	75.2	38.6	52	G
Housing Services	Homelessness - case duration for all applications (weeks)	50	45	35	48	G
Cultural and Leisure Services	Net cost per visit to libraries	£1.53	£1.31	£1.07	£1.87	G

6.4 Another area of Improvement worth noting is in attainment. A detailed [Attainment Update](#) Report of P1,4,7 Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) was presented at Education Committee 26th February 2025. Highland improvement in all measures compared to National has resulted in reducing the gap for literacy and numeracy between Highland and National by 3% and 2% respectively. In Literacy, improvement over the last 2 years equates to a 10% increase and is now 12% above pre covid figures. In Numeracy the improvement over the last 2 years equates to a 6% increase and is now a 7% increase on pre covid figures.

The BGE (Broad General Education) Toolkit Data was also presented and gives a wider range of data than overall average with more depth how children have attained and ‘nearly there’ to achieve level. The data is used for targeted support and linked to schools’ improvement planning and actions. The data ensures that all children's scores are included, and a numerical factor applied. The data shows an increase of 20% in literacy and 14% on numeracy since 2021 compared to Scottish average of improvement of 7% in literacy and 5% in numeracy. Working on the basis of current trajectory for the rate of improvement in Highland and National, Highland will surpass Scotland average by 2027/28 for Literacy and match Scotland average for Numeracy. This is based on the average rate of improvement for Highland versus Scotland with Highland improving year on year three times as quickly as Scotland

6.5 Appendix 2 of this report provides data on the Council’s performance for those LGBF indicators which it has selected to use as part of its SPIs. This provides details of the Council’s benchmarking position for 2023/24 and the previous reporting year, as well as the national benchmarking averages, minimum, and maximum values for 2023/24.

The full LGBF data published can be accessed using the [Improvement Service's website](#).

- 6.6 A national report on the LGBF performance indicators is jointly published each year by SOLACE, COSLA, and the Improvement Service. This report aims to identify high level performance trends and variations across all 32 Scottish Councils. The report has been produced but is still in draft and will be made available to Members once published, key messages from the report are set out below.

The draft report states that while evidence within this year's LGBF report reveals the extraordinary effort and achievements delivered across local government against an increasingly challenging backdrop, it also shows how sustained financial, demand and workforce pressures have substantially disrupted performance and efficiency improvements gained in previous years. Councils are having to make increasingly difficult decisions about how they deliver services and what services may have to stop or reduce if they are to deliver balanced budgets as required by statute.

The focal points for the report are as follows:

1. Financial pressures
2. Workforce challenges
3. Health & social care pressures
4. Education for children & young people
5. Tackling poverty & financial hardship
6. Performance of local government services.

The report notes, there is now significantly limited capacity for councils to manage and mitigate ongoing financial constraints, with financial resilience tested as a result of funding constraints and ring-fencing. The scale of change and savings made over a period of austerity, lasting over 10 years within local government services, cannot be repeated, even in the short term.

Councils' financial plans and spending patterns reveal a system under pressure and highlight the difficult decisions that are being required to deliver balanced budgets. To bridge the growing budget gap, councils are relying increasingly on recurring savings, increases to Council Tax, and the use of reserves.

It is apparent that given the deepening fiscal, workforce and demand pressures facing the sector, councils are having to make increasingly difficult decisions about the shape and level of service delivery, and these are beginning to have a clear impact on service performance. While the recent slow-down in performance improvement is system wide, and true for all councils regardless of local priorities and the policies they are pursuing, there is variation in the depth, severity and focus of impacts.

It is likely that some of these effects will be felt for a long time to come. Coupled with the demand and budgetary pressures facing councils currently, councils may be required, in the short-term, to focus more on prioritising and maintaining performance, rather than service improvement.

It also states, in recognition of these pressures, local government, as a sector, is taking clear pro-active steps to mitigate the effects of these challenges. Many of the examples quoted in the report, reflect the work being undertaken by the Council and will be familiar to Members. These include, increasingly incorporating digital technology in service design. making better use of data to understand needs and make decisions, reconfiguring the local government estate and working with partners, third sector and communities to build place-based approaches and reshape services.

7. Best Value

7.1 Members will be aware that Audit Scotland's current approach to auditing Best Value (BV) in Councils is integrated within their annual audit work. This is also supported by a programme of annual BV thematic reviews. Both the annual audit reports and BV thematic reviews are reported to the Audit Committee.

The previous requirement for a statutory report on each Council during the five-year appointment period (2022/23 to 2026/27) remains. We have been informed that this will be undertaken within Highland during 2024/25.

7.2 During 2023/24 the second thematic review was undertaken on "workforce innovation". This examined how well the Council is responding to workforce challenges through building capacity, increasing productivity and innovation. The scope of the review considered the following questions:

- How effectively are the council's workforce plans integrated with its strategic plans and priorities?
- How effectively has digital technology been used to support workforce productivity and improve service quality and outcomes?
- How effectively is the council using hybrid and remote working and other innovative working practice such as a four-day week to achieve service and staff benefits?
- What innovative practice is the council using to develop its future workforce capacity and skills needs and manage staff reductions in line with its priorities?
- What progress has the council made with sharing roles or functions across its services and/or with other councils and partners?
- How effectively is the council measuring the impact of its workforce planning approach?

The [report](#) was considered by the Audit Committee on 26 September 2024. A number of areas for improvement were identified by Audit Scotland, under five headings:

- Workforce strategy and priorities
- Digital technology and the workforce
- Flexible working and other innovative staff deployment
- Developing future skills and capacity
- Joint workforce arrangements.

Audit Scotland also recognised that many of the issues highlighted within their report had been identified by management with plans in place to address these. In particular, there were clear links with the Operational Delivery Plan 2024-27 approved by Council on 9 May 2024.

A number of management actions were agreed to address the audit recommendations, and these are detailed within the action plan at Appendix 1 of the report. Progress in implementing these will be followed up and reported by Audit Scotland in their 2024/25 annual audit report.

7.3 Audit Scotland's 2023/24 [annual audit report](#) was presented to the Audit Committee on 28 November 2024. This report included the following conclusions:

- The Council has effective and appropriate arrangements to secure sound financial management. A balanced budget was set for 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- There are appropriate and effective financial management arrangements in place with regular budget monitoring reports provided to Members and Committee.
- The Council has an appropriate and effective Best Value framework in place.
- The Council has effective and appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that resources are deployed to improve strategic outcomes, that meet the needs of service users.

- There is an effective performance management framework in place.

7.4 **Appendix 4** provides some examples on how the Council has met its Best Value duties as required by SPI 2.

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 11.03.2025

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References: The Council's performance data can be accessed at:
www.highland.gov.uk/performance

Statutory Performance Indicator Report 2023/24

Performance against target:		*Progress of performance:	
G	Performance is "On Target"		Improving
A	Performance is "Some Slippage"		Being maintained
R	Performance is "No Significant Progress"		Worsening
	Indicator is new/ changed /verified data awaited/ no data yet available (n/a)	n/a	Cannot be assessed as no data yet available

Notes:
Indicators shown in bold are Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
CP Ref – denotes link to Performance Plan indicator
LGBF – denotes LGBF reference number

- *Progress of performance:
 - Based on the percentage difference between the average performance of years 2012/22 and 2022/23 and the performance figure for 2023/24.
 - A variation of plus or minus 3% indicates progress is being maintained, a greater variance in either direction indicates either an improving or worsening performance.

Children's Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2021/22	2022/23	Previous Performance	2023/24	Target	Performance against target	Progress
School Meals - gross cost per meal provided			£4.18	£4.44	G	£4.59	£5.13	G	
School Transport - cost per pupil transported <i>Retrospective correction to 21/22 and 22/23 figures, please see below</i>			£1,731	£2,108	R	£2,541	£2,192	R (note 1)	
No of accommodated children and young people – residential <i>2023/24 figure is provisional</i>			65	52	G	57	65	G	
The average number of children and young people accommodated outwith Highland (Annual)	CP1.08		24	20	A	13	18	G	
% of Children and Young People in formal kinship care	CP1.08		19.1%	18.4%	R	19.2%	22.0%	A	
% of statutory health assessments started within 4 weeks of a new episode of care (Annual)						56.5%	70%	R (note 2)	n/a
The number of foster carer approvals (Annual)			13	8	R	10	10	G	

Children's Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2021/22	2022/23	Previous Performance	2023/24	Target	Performance against target	Progress
SCQF Level 5 attainment by all children	CP1.01	CHN04	65%	64%	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
SCQF Level 6 attainment by all children	CP1.01	CHN05	33%	31%	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
SCQF Level 5 attainment by children from deprived backgrounds	CP1.02	CHN06	42%	42%	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
SCQF Level 6 attainment by children from deprived backgrounds	CP1.02	CHN07	16%	13%	R	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Pupils entering positive destinations	CP1.03	CHN11	94.5%	95.3%	A	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
% of Children and Young People in care in the community <i>2023/24 figure is provisional as data and target tied to benchmark data which is not yet available.</i>	CP1.08	CHN09	83.8%	87.5%	A	86.8%	n/a	n/a	
% P1/4/7 Pupils Achieving in Literacy	CP1.01	CHN13a	59.3%	64.8%	A	68.7%	67%	G	
% P1/4/7 Pupils Achieving in Numeracy	CP1.01	CHN13b	68.8%	72.2%	A	74.4%	75%	A	
% of child protection re-registrations within 18 months <i>2023/24 figure is provisional. Target tied to benchmark data which is not yet available.</i>		CHN22	1.5%	3.7%	G	5.7%	n/a	n/a	
School Leavers - Highest attaining 20% - Complementary Tariff Score	CP1.01		1257	1251	A	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
School Leavers - Lowest attaining 20% - Complementary Tariff Score	CP1.01		134	121	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
School Leavers - Middle attaining 60% - Complementary Tariff Score	CP1.01		618	575	A	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

School Transport Costs: Data was recalculated and corrected in January 25 for FY21/22, FY22/23, in-line with the FY23/24 calculation. Due to inflationary pressures a more appropriate target of 4% increase on previous year's performance was applied retrospectively for FY22/23 performance and going forward. These figures exclude escort costs.

The Improvement Service have changed the methodology for SCQF Levels 5 and 6 measures (CHN04, CHN05, CHN06, CHN07). The cohort of pupils has changed to the leaver cohort, that is the group of pupils that left school in the year regardless of the stage of leaving eg S4, S5 or S6. The measure

takes account of all awards achieved in the senior phase by pupils at the point of leaving. All historic information reported for the measures has been revised in line with the new methodology.

CHN22 2022/23 data revised to 3.8% was the provisional figure reported last year was 3.7%.

Children's Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2019-2021	2021-2023	Previous Performance	2023-2025	Target	Performance against target	Progress
School attendance rates % (Biennial)	CP1.01	CHN19a	91.5%	90.0%	A	89.6%	90.3%	A	↔
School attendance rates % for those who are Care Experienced (Biennial)	CP1.01	CHN19b	86.9%	83.3%	A	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Commentary on red ragged indicators for Children's Services

<u>Performance Indicator</u>	<u>Commentary and Improvement Action</u>
(1) <u>School Transport - cost per pupil transported</u> The target for this indicator is to be less than 4% above the previous year's cost figure. For FY23/24 performance that was to achieve a cost of £2,192 per pupil.	We had very steep rises in our contract costs from April 2022 in Skye (and to a lesser extent in Lochaber) and from January 2023 in the rest of Highland. This was the main reason for our introduction of the in-house bus service, which held the January 2023 increase to around £1M below what it would otherwise have been. Since that time, the service has been gradually reducing these costs as capacity and contractual commitments allow.
(2) <u>% of statutory health assessments started with 4 weeks of a new episode of care</u> The target for this indicator is to start 80% of assessments in the 4-week time period. Monitoring of this indicator started mid-way through 2023/24. The data collected is for the last 2 quarters of the year. There were 62 health assessments, 35 of these were started with 4 weeks of a new episode of care.	The assessment turnaround time to meet statutory requirements is 4 weeks, the decline in performance indicates the full assessment has not been achieved within this period of time. This is as a result of vacancies within the advanced qualified school nursing workforce. Assessments which are not completed within the window of 4 weeks are completed in the 2-4 weeks thereafter. A mitigation plan is in place with improvements including the appointment of a portfolio for out of region children experiencing care, a designated Health Visitor for The Promise and increasing support to care experienced children in residential homes through the role of staff nurses in our teams.

Adult Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2021/22	2022/23	Previous Performance	2023/24	Target	Performance against target	Progress
Criminal Justice - % offenders on new Community Payback Orders (Supervision) seen within 5 working days			46.1%	46.0%	R	62.6%	69.0%	A	↑
% Criminal Justice Social Work reports submitted to court by due date			95.0%	95.0%	A	93.2%	100.0%	A	↔
Criminal Justice - % offenders on new Community Payback Orders (Unpaid Work) 1st placement within 7 working days			47.4%	47.2%	R	43.8%	62.0%	R (note 3)	↓
Criminal Justice - % Community Payback Order (Unpaid Work) Beneficiaries			100%	100%	G	100%	100%	G	↔
Criminal Justice - % Level 3 MAPPA cases reviewed once every 6 weeks			100%	100%	G	100%	100%	G	↔
Criminal Justice - % Level 2 MAPPA cases reviewed once every 12 weeks			100%	100%	G	100%	100%	G	↔
The average Adults with Incapacity waiting list				2	A	6	0	R (note 4)	n/a
Direct payments spend on 18+ adults	CP2.05	SW02	7.5%	7.3%	R	9.1%	9.1%	G	↑
% of people aged 65+ with long-term care needs receiving personal care at home	CP2.05	SW03a	55.8%	52.5%	R	55.4%	62.8%	R (note 5)	↔

SW03a 2022/23 data revised to 52.47% was previously reported as 52.9%.

Adult Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2019-2021	2021-2023	Previous Performance	2023-2025	Target	Performance against target	Progress
% Adults supported at home who agree the services and support had an impact in improving or		SW04b	78.0%	84.3%	G	73.6%	74.4%	R (note 6)	Not comparable

Adult Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2019-2021	2021-2023	Previous Performance	2023-2025	Target	Performance against target	Progress
maintaining their quality of life (Biennial)									

SW04b due to a change the survey wording the percentage reported for 2023-25 is not comparable with previous years.

Commentary on red ragged indicators for Adult Services

<u>Performance Indicator</u>	<u>Commentary and Improvement Action</u>
(3) <u>Criminal Justice - % offenders on new Community Payback Orders (Unpaid Work) 1st placement within 7 working days</u> A target of 62% has been set for this indicator. In 2023/24 43.8% was achieved.	The Justice Team are working towards increasing the percentage of offenders starting placements within 7 working days by improving record keeping. In the situation where a person has several unpaid work requirements, placements cannot commence until the initial placement has concluded. Currently the record keeping does not take this circumstance into account.
(4) <u>The average Adults with Incapacity waiting list</u> The target for this indicator is zero, that is to have no-one on the waiting list. The average number on the waiting list during 23/24 was 6. This is an increase on the average reported for 22/23 of 2.	This increase in the waiting list does not reflect any deficit in the Mental Health Officer (MHO) service or inability to allocate work due to service issues. This increase arises as a result of other agency professionals encountering difficulties in sourcing reports which are in turn require to be submitted to the MHO service prior to begin to undertake its duties. Until we receive these reports we cannot proceed. This is a live issue which senior management in Council and NHS Highland are sighted on.
(5) <u>% of people aged 65+ with long-term care needs receiving personal care at home</u> The target for this benchmarked indicator was to be ranked in the second quartile (ranked 9-16) of local authorities. In 2023/24 Highland was ranked 28 th , the rank 16 authority reported 62.8%. The percentage of people increased from 52.5% in 22/23 to 55.4% in 23/24.	NHS Highland is still reporting increasing levels of unmet need in terms of care at home. The percentage of people supported is increasing but the target has not been met. Our priority in 2024-25 is to sustain existing levels of service in a multi-faceted complex area with recruitment, workforce and accommodation issues facing both NHS Highland and our partner providers. A new payment tariff was implemented, including increasing carer mileage in Oct 24. Co-production of actions with our independent sector partners remain a priority to support stabilisation of the sector with the focus on Improving Access and Processes and Valuing Staff.
(6) <u>% Adults supported at home who agree the services and support had an impact in improving or maintaining their quality of life</u> The target for this benchmarked indicator was to be ranked in the first quartile (ranked 1 to 8) of local authorities. In 2023/24 Highland was ranked 12 th . The % of adults surveyed that	The data that informs this indicator is published by Public Health Scotland and is based on a sample survey of people aged 17 and over registered with a GP practice in Scotland. Due to changes in survey wording 23/24 data is not comparable with previous years.

agreed with the statement was 73.6%, the rank 8 value was 74.4%

Cultural and Leisure Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2021/22	2022/23	Previous Performance	2023/24	Target	Performance against target	Progress
Net cost per attendance at sports facilities		C&L1a	£6.73	£3.74	R	£3.10	£2.66	A	↑
Net cost per visit to libraries		C&L2a	£1.53	£1.31	G	£1.07	£1.87	G	↑
Net cost per museum visit		C&L3a	£1.29	£0.24	G	£0.57	£4.50	G	↑

Road Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2021/22	2022/23	Previous Performance	2023/24	Target	Performance against target	Progress
Average Bridge Stock Condition Index			78.8	77.7	A	78.7	80.0	A	↔
Cost of electricity per street lighting unit			£30.36	£30.79	G	£36.70	£30.91	R (note 7)	↓
Cost of maintenance per street lighting unit			£13.72	£13.32	A	£16.85	£13.18	R (note 8)	↓
Traffic light failures completed in 3 hours			93.0%	90.0%	A	100.0%	91.33%	G	↑
Street light failures completed in 7 days			62.0%	60.0%	A	60.0%	59.0%	G	↔
Street lighting energy consumption (kWh)	CP4.07		10,035,100	9,175,349	G	8,375,106	8,500,00	G	↑
Road network to be considered for maintenance	CP2.03		36.7%	36.5%	G	38.6%	37.4%	A	↓

Commentary on red ragged indicators for Road Services

<u>Performance Indicator</u>	<u>Commentary and Improvement Action</u>
(7) <u>Cost of electricity per street lighting unit</u>	The costs reported against this indicator rose by 19% from £30.79 in 2022/23 to £36.70 in 2023/24. This can be attributed to a significant increase in the unit cost of electricity.

<p>The target set for this indicator is a rolling average of the previous 3 year's performance. In 2023/24 this worked out as a target of £30.91, that year the cost of electricity was £36.70 per unit.</p>	
<p>(8) <u>Cost of maintenance per street lighting unit</u> This indicator also uses a 3-year rolling average target. For 2023/24 the target was £13.18, and the maintenance cost was £16.85.</p>	<p>The cost of maintenance per unit increased from £13.32 in 22/23 to £16.85 in 2023/24. This is mostly due to increased rates from contractors.</p>

Environmental Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2021/22	2022/23	Previous Performance	2023/24	Target	Performance against target	Progress
Net Cost of Waste Collection per Premise		ENV1a	£90.50	£87.72	G	£97.86	£89.10	R (note 9)	↓
Net Cost of Waste Disposal per Premise		ENV2a	£100.11	£103.06	G	£108.49	£121.50	G	↓
Net Cost of Street Cleaning per 1,000 population		ENV3a	£9,696	£9,978	G	£10,845	£9,648	R (note 10)	↓
Street Cleanliness Score	CP2.07	ENV3c	93.7%	96.1%	G	96.4%	95.7%	G	↔
% Household waste recycled	CP4.06	ENV6a	37.4%	37.2%	G	36.0%	37.0%	A	↔
% adults satisfied - refuse collection		ENV7a	91.3%	92.0%	G	91.0%	86.7%	G	↔
% adults satisfied - street cleaning		ENV7b	65.7%	69.7%	G	64.0%	58.0%	G	↓
Trading Standards – Business advice requested completed within 14 days			86.3%	81.6%	A	69.2%	84.3%	R (note 11)	↓
High risk private water supplies inspected and sampled (Calendar year)			42%	44%	R	57%	95%	R (note 12)	↑

ENV3a – All historical data has been reconfigured for this indicator in line with revised population figures.

Commentary on red ragged indicators for Environmental Services

<u>Performance Indicator</u>	<u>Commentary and Improvement Action</u>
<p>(9) <u>Net Cost of Waste Collection per Premise</u> The target for this benchmarked indicator is to be ranked in the 3rd quartile of local authorities, that is rank 17 to 24. In 2023/24 Highland was ranked 29 with a cost of £97.86 per premise. The cost of the local authority ranked 24 was £89.10.</p>	<p>Business waste is collected alongside household waste, income from business waste and garden waste collections are factored into the calculated Net cost of Waste collection per premise. Service income increased during 2023/24. Performance and cost improvement actions remains underway with route optimisation software being used actively to avoid additional collection costs arising from providing a service to around 1000 new households each year. The Council have a legal duty to expand food waste collections, this is being achieved through service change in 2024/25, this will result in higher collection costs and lower disposal costs in future years. No change was made to the collection delivery model during 2023/24, and no other additional service resource was introduced. The higher than anticipated fuel costs during 2023/24 are especially relevant for delivering a collection service to rural areas of Highland. Fuel cost increases impacts significantly more on Highland when compared with more urban Council's.</p>
<p>(10) <u>Net Cost of Street Cleaning per 1,000 population</u> The target for this benchmarked indicator is to be ranked in the 1st quartile of local authorities, that is rank 1 to 8. In 2023/24 Highland was ranked 11th with a cost of £10,845. The cost of the local authority ranked 8 was £9,648.</p>	<p>The cost of street cleaning per 1000 population was reported as £11,418 in 2015/16. The service reduced service spend from that time with the figure remaining year on year at a consistent level; no additional service resource was introduced within street cleaning during 23/24, however the service did have higher than anticipated staffing and fuel costs.</p>
<p>(11) <u>Trading Standards – Business advice requested completed within 14 days</u> The 23/24 target for this indicator was 84.3% derived from its previous 3 year's performance. 69.2% was reported against indicator.</p>	<p>This indicator does not measure quality of performance, it simply measures the time taken to close a case, against a baseline of 14 days. Some cases legitimately take longer than that, due to various issues including complexity and delays caused by waiting for necessary information to be received from the enquirer or other involved parties. More cases of this kind than usual were dealt with during the period under review. This indicator has outlived its usefulness and plans are in train to replace it with a set of other indicators that measure performance quality and community impact.</p>
<p>(12) <u>High risk private water supplies inspected and sampled</u> The target set for this indicator is 95%. In 2023/24 57% of high-risk private water supplies were inspected and sampled.</p>	<p>The Highland Council private water supply (PWS) register has increased by 40 supplies. The Service continues to manage the annual monitoring (sampling) programme alongside the risk assessment programme. Additional resource in the appointment of Technical Assistant's (3 temporary fixed term posts and 1 permanent post) to undertake the monitoring programme in FY25/26 will be completed by end of October 2024, with an anticipated performance of 100% in the reporting period FY25/26. This will enable the Technical Officers' to prioritise the PWS risk assessment programme.</p>

Business and Development Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2021/22	2022/23	Previous Performance	2023/24	Target	Performance against target	Progress
% of Building Standard Warrants determined within 6 days			100.0%	100.0%	G	100.0%	90.0%	G	↔
% of Completion Certificates issued within 3 days			99.7%	99.1%	G	99.6%	90.0%	G	↔
Average time per planning application (weeks):									
- all Local Developments	CP3.07		13.1	16.2	R	14.6	15.5	G	↔
- all Majors	CP3.07		56.7	75.2	R	38.6	52.0	G	↑
- Other Consents	CP3.07		9.9	12.1	A	11.8	11.5	A	↓
Businesses supported by Economic Development and Business Gateway Services			2,208	2,742	G	3,496	2,198	G	↑
No. Business Gateway start-ups per 10,000 population	CP5.09	ECON05	8.56	13.36	R	15.15	13.57	G	↑
Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband	CP2.08	ECON08	83%	86%	G	87%	87%	G	↔

ECON05 – All historical data has been reconfigured for this indicator in line with revised population figures.

Housing Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2021/22	2022/23	Previous Performance	2023/24	Target	Performance against target	Progress
Average time to complete emergency housing repairs (hours)			5.8	5.5	R	4.1	5.5	G	↑
Average time taken to re-let homes (days)			35.5	32.1	G	38.7	35.0	R (note 13)	↓
Homelessness - case duration for all applications (weeks)	CP2.05		50	45	G	35	48	G	↑
Gross rent arrears as % of rent due	CP5.10	HSN1b	5.5%	7.1%	R	7.2%	5.0%	R (note 14)	↓
No. council houses built/ purchased per year 2022-27	CP3.01			180	G	192	130	G	↑

Housing Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2021/22	2022/23	Previous Performance	2023/24	Target	Performance against target	Progress
Avg. time to complete medical adaptation applications (days)	CP3.05		45.6	38.6	G	38.1	50.0	G	↑

Commentary on red ragged indicators for Housing Services

<u>Performance Indicator</u>	<u>Commentary and Improvement Action</u>
(13) <u>Average time taken to re-let homes (days)</u> A target of 35 days has been set for this indicator. In 2023/24 the number of days increased to 38.7.	<p>Reletting times have increased, largely as a result of the time taken for major refurbishment works to be completed for some long-term voids. Despite the increase in relet times, performance continues to compare very favourably with the national benchmarking figures.</p> <p>The Scottish Housing Network has indicated that the local authority average for 2023/24 has increased further to 73 days. As with the situation nationally, Highland is experiencing delays with utility companies in terms of clearing meter debt and installing new gas and electric meters. There have also been significant challenges in terms of contractor capacity to carry out major refurbishment works at the void stage.</p> <p>An internal review into how re-let times can be improved has commenced. Any improvement in performance is likely, however, to have a negative impact on the time taken to complete non-emergency repairs if tradespersons are redeployed to complete re-let works. Similarly, expenditure on sub-contractors is likely to increase if the priority is to re-let properties quicker.</p>
(14) <u>Gross rent arrears as % of rent due</u> A target of 5 % or lower has been set for this target. In 2023/24 gross rent arrears were 7.16% of the rent due for the year.	This reflects the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on the ability of our tenants to sustain rental incomes and manage their household finances. Performance however remains impressive compared to national benchmarking figures which reflects the ongoing support and assistance available to our tenants.

Corporate Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2021/22	2022/23	Previous Performance	2023/24	Target	Performance against target	Progress
Cost of Accounting (% of net revenue budget + housing revenue account)			0.28%	0.21%	G	0.23%	0.25%	G	↑
Non-Domestic Rates collected by year end			97.5%	97.9%	G	94.7%	97.9%	A	↔
Cost of Non-Domestic Rates collection per chargeable property			£17.93	£12.54	G	£13.24	£15.21	G	↑
Overall Council Tax collection level (previous 5 years)			97.2%	97.3%	G	97.1%	96.1%	G	↔

Corporate Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2021/22	2022/23	Previous Performance	2023/24	Target	Performance against target	Progress
Income sundry debtors collected during year			83.8%	86.8%	G	86.8%	84.5%	G	↔
Sickness – Days lost per employee (all staff)			7.4	8.6	A	11.4	12.5	G	↓
Average Days to Process Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Claims:									
- Changes of Circumstances			1.8	1.9	G	1.6	2.0	G	↑
- New Claims			9.4	11.0	G	10.0	10.0	G	↔
Benefits Administration costs – Gross cost per case			£41.99	£30.76	G	£28.99	£39.89	G	↑
Council carbon emissions tonnes CO2e	CP4.07		33,766	36,147	G	33,229	47,605	G	↑
Cost of Procurement Section as a proportion of net revenue budget			0.109%	0.091%	G	0.092%	0.101%	G	↑
Women managers in top 2% of earners			42.7%	46.6%	G	53.6%	43.6%	G	↑
Accident injury rate			125	151	G	155	142	A	↓
Sickness absence days per employee (non-teacher)		CORP06b	8.2	9.2	G	12.7	13.9	G	↓
Council Tax received Annual percentage received	CP5.10	CORP07	96.5%	96.7%	G	95.9%	95.5%	G	↔
% of procurement spend on local enterprises	CP2.11	ECON04	49.8%	49.1%	G	51.8%	33.3%	G	↔
Asset Management - % Suitability	CP5.08	CAST1	75.9%	77.7%	R	76.8%	82.4%	R (note 15)	↔

Commentary on red ragged indicators for Corporate Services

<u>Performance Indicator</u>	<u>Commentary and Improvement Action</u>
(15) <u>Asset Management % suitability</u>	Suitability performance is linked to several development plan workstreams, each with actions designed to improve suitability scores.

The target for this benchmarked indicator is to achieve the Family Average, in 2023/24 this was 82.4%, Highland reported a Suitability rate of 76.8%.

A revised suitability survey format and programme for non-school properties is currently being produced. In addition, support will be provided to occupying services to develop suitability standards for their respective areas of service delivery. This will enable effective measurement against this performance indicator.

Extract from the Local Government Benchmark Report 2023/24

Targets: “Scot Avg.” means that the Council’s target is the Scottish average; “Fam Avg.” means that the Council’s target is family group average.	Rankings: The rank position of indicators is as published by the Improvement Service. This may be subject to change as data is reviewed by local authorities, any such changes are shown in italics.	Quartiles: First quartile (rank 1-8); Second quartile (rank 9-16); Third quartile (rank 17-24); Fourth quartile (rank 24-32).	Years: FY – Financial Year AY – Academic Year
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Children’s Services	Highland				Benchmarking (23/24)			
	Rank 22/23	Rank 23/24	Target 23/24	Actual AY 23/24	Family Average	Scottish Average	Min	Max
CHN4 – SCQF Level 5 attainment by all children	18 th	n/a	TBC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
CHN5 – SCQF Level 6 attainment by all children	25 th	n/a	TBC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
CHN6 – SCQF Level 5 attainment by children from deprived backgrounds	19 th	n/a	42%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
CHN7 – SCQF Level 6 attainment by children from deprived backgrounds	25 th	n/a	13%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
CHN9 – Percentage of Children and Young People in care, in the community. <i>Provisional Highland data for 23/24, benchmarking not yet available</i>	17 th	n/a	16 th	86.8%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
CHN11 – Pupils entering positive destinations <i>23/24 data not yet available</i>	17 th	n/a	TBC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
CHN13a - % P1/4/7 Pupils Achieving in Literacy	31 st	30 th	67.0%	68.7%	72.8%	74.0%	68.3%	89.4%
CHN13b - % P1/4/7 Pupils Achieving in Numeracy	31 st	32 nd	75.0%	74.4%	78.9%	80.3%	74.4%	92.1%
CHN22 – Child protection re-registrations within 18 months. <i>Provisional Highland data for 23/24, benchmarking not yet available.</i>	16 th	n/a	16 th	5.7%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

CHN4, CHN5, CHN6 and CHN7 - All historical data has been reconfigured for these indicators in line with new methodology detailed in Appendix 1.

Children's Services	Highland				Benchmarking (23-25)			
	Rank 22/23	Rank 23/25	Target 23-25	Actual AY23-25	Family Average	Scottish Average	Min	Max
CHN19a – School attendance rates % Bi-ennial	23 rd	25 th	90.3% Scot Avg	89.6%	90.7%	90.3%	88.3%	93.1%
CHN19b – School attendance rates (Care Experienced) % Bi-ennial	20 th	n/a	Scot Avg	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Adult Services	Highland				Benchmarking (23/24)			
	Rank 22/23	Rank 23/24	Target 23/24	Actual FY 23/24	Family Average	Scottish Average	Min	Max
SW02 – Direct payments spend on adults (aged 18+)	11 th	8 th	8 th	9.1%	6.8%	9.1%	2.1%	33.0%
SW03a – Adults (aged 65+) with long term care needs receiving personal care at home	31 st	28 th	16 th	55.4%	59.1%	62.6%	52.5%	75.0%

Adult Services	Highland				Benchmarking (23-35)			
	Rank 21-23	Rank 23-25	Target 23-25	Actual 23-25	Family Average	Scottish Average	Min	Max
SW04b – Adults supported at home who agree the services and support had an impact in improving or maintaining their quality of life	4 th	12 th	8 th	73.6%	73.1%	69.8%	61.4%	89.6%

Culture and Leisure Services	Highland				Benchmarking (23/24)			
	Rank 22/23	Rank 23/24	Target 23/24	Actual FY 23/24	Family Average	Scottish Average	Min	Max
C&L1a – Net cost per visit to leisure facilities	11 th	12 th	9 th	£3.10	£2.97	£4.33	£12.32	£0.95
C&L2a – Net cost per visit to libraries	2 nd	4 th	8 th	£1.07	£2.72	£2.38	£8.35	£0.74
C&L3a – Net cost per museum visit	4 th	4 th	16 th	£0.57	£11.73	£3.50	£42.14	£0.12

Environmental Services	Highland				Benchmarking (23/24)			
	Rank 22/23	Rank 23/24	Target 23/24	Actual FY 23/24	Family Average	Scottish Average	Min	Max

ENV1a – Net cost of waste collection per premises	23 rd	29 th	24 th	£97.86	£79.44	£78.48	£131.2 4	£39.66
ENV2a – Net cost per waste disposal per premises	18 th	19 th	24 th	£108.49	£140.19	£104.41	£251.2 3	£44.40
ENV3a – Net cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population	7 th	11 th	8 th	£10,845	£14,062	£16,181	£28,55 4	£1,411
ENV3c – Street cleanliness score	5 th	5 th	8 th	96.4%	93.3%	92.1%	86.4%	98.7%
ENV6a – Percentage of household waste that is recycled (calendar year)	26 th	28 th	37.0% Fam Avg	36.0%	37.0%	43.5%	21.0%	58.0%
ENV7a – Adults satisfied with refuse collection	1 st	1 st	8 th	91.0%	83.3%	78.3%	56.3%	91.0%
ENV7b – Adults satisfied with street cleaning	3 rd	12 th	58.0% Scot Avg	64.0%	64.3%	58.0%	37.0%	75.7%

ENV3a – All historical data has been reconfigured for this indicator in line with revised population figures.

Economic Development	Highland				Benchmarking (23/24)			
	Rank 22/23	Rank 23/24	Target 23/24	Actual FY 23/24	Family Average	Scottish Average	Min	Max
ECON04 – % of Procurement Spend on Local Enterprises	1 st	1 st	8 th	51.8%	36.4%	30.7%	11.4%	51.8%
ECON05 – Number of Business Gateway start-ups per 10,000 population	21 st	16 th	13.6 Scot Avg	15.1	17.0%	13.6	4.6	22.5
ECON08 – Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband	27 th	28 th	87%	87%	86%	96%	77%	99%

ECON05 – All historical data has been reconfigured for this indicator in line with revised population figures.

Housing Services	Highland				Benchmarking (23/24)			
	Rank 22/23	Rank 23/24	Target 23/24	Actual FY 23/24	Family Average	Scottish Average	Min	Max
HSN1b – Gross rent arrears as a percentage of rent due <i>NB only 26 of the 32 local authorities in Scotland provide Housing services</i>	5 th	7 th	5.0%	7.2%	8.1%	9.5%	18.3%	4.6%

Corporate Services	Highland				Benchmarking (23/24)			
	Rank 22/23	Rank 23/24	Target 23/24	Actual FY 23/24	Family Average	Scottish Average	Min	Max
CORP06b – Sickness absence days per employee (non-teacher)	1 st	4 th	13.9 Scot Avg	12.7	13.3	13.9	19.6	10.3
CORP07 – Council Tax – Annual percentage received	16 th	18 th	95.5% Scot Avg	95.9%	96.2%	95.5%	92.8%	97.6%

Corporate Assets	Highland				Benchmarking (23/24)			
	Rank 22/23	Rank 23/24	Target 23/24	Actual FY 23/24	Family Average	Scottish Average	Min	Max
CAST1 – Asset Management – Suitability for use	29 th	29 th	82.4% Fam Avg	76.8%	82.4%	85.5%	66.5%	97.4%

Updated 2022/23 Statutory Performance Indicator Report

The table below provides the performance data for the 11 Children's Services indicators which were not available at the time of reporting in March 2024. The updated information is shown in blue font.

Children's Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Target	Performance against target	Progress
SCQF Level 5 attainment by all children*	CP1.01	CHN04	COVID	65%	64%	63%	G	↔
SCQF Level 6 attainment by all children*	CP1.01	CHN05	COVID	33%	31%	31%	G	↓
SCQF Level 5 attainment by children from deprived backgrounds*	CP1.02	CHN06	COVID	42%	42%	42%	G	↔
SCQF Level 6 attainment by children from deprived backgrounds*	CP1.02	CHN07	COVID	16%	13%	16%	R	↓
% of Children and Young People in care in the community	CP1.08	CHN09	85.4%	83.8%	87.5%	88.1%	A	↔
Pupils entering positive destinations	CP1.03	CHN11	94.3%	94.5%	95.3%	95.5%	A	↔
% of child protection re-registrations within 18 months		CHN22	9.3%	1.5%	3.8%	3.8%	G	↑
School Leavers - Highest attaining 20% - Complementary Tariff Score	CP1.01		1302	1257	1251	1260	A	↔
School Leavers - Lowest attaining 20% - Complementary Tariff Score	CP1.01		139	134	121	120	G	↓
School Leavers - Middle attaining 60% - Complementary Tariff Score	CP1.01		656	618	575	583	A	↓

For indicators CHN04, CHN05, CHN06 and CHN07:

Please refer to the explanatory information in Appendix 1 about the change in methodology used by the Improvement Service which affects the reported data, there will be variances in the historical data reported as a result in the changes to the methodology. Measures where the methodology changed are denoted by a *. Performance for the year 20/21 has not been displayed as the method of assessment was different during that academic year and does not provide a fair comparison.

Children's Services	CP Ref.	LGBF Ref	2017-2019	2019-2021	2021-2023	Target	Performance against target	Progress
School attendance rates % for those who are Care Experienced (Biennial)	CP1.01	CHN19b	85.7%	86.9%	83.3%	84.4%	A	↓

Commentary on red ragged indicators

<u>Performance Indicator</u>	<u>Commentary and Improvement Action</u>
<p>(16) <u>SCQF Level 6 attainment by children from deprived backgrounds</u> This measure tracks the attainment of pupils from the most deprived areas in Highland at the point they leave school. It monitors the number of pupils in this group that achieve 5 awards or more at SCQF level 6 (equivalent to a SQA Higher grade). The target for this indicator was to maintain the performance of 16% from 21/22. The % of pupils reduced to 13% in 22/23.</p>	<p>The data reported is session 2022/23 and it is known that the pandemic had an impact on those living in deprived households. Schools with learners in SIMD Quintile 1 are focused on developing alternative curricular models to allow young people to achieve Level 6 qualifications. They are also improving their tracking systems so that more timely support can be given to learners who are not on target to pass a course.</p>

The following examples are provided as illustrations which demonstrate how the Council has met its Best Value duties during 2023/24.

Redesign Board

The Council has a [Redesign Board](#) which leads on the review and redesign of specific areas of service delivery across the Council. During this year the Board considered progress on the following redesign projects and outcomes achieved:

- Asset management – relocation of staff from a number of buildings within Inverness and one in Dingwall.
- Roads – a number of policies have been reviewed and LEAN reviews undertaken of various operations.
- In-house bus operation – expanded with additional coaches and bus routes being provided.
- My Council – cloud-based telephony solution implemented, new Customer Relationship Policy and Customer Charter agreed.
- Employability review – corporate review of employability services across the Council and partners was undertaken and reported. This is now being addressed through the Operational Delivery Plan.

A project commenced in 2021 to identify potential income generation opportunities at the Storr. This culminated in the decision to install a unit at the Storr site which provided retail space showcasing local suppliers and products, and a multipurpose space available for registrar wedding ceremonies, exhibitions, and community use. In December 2023, the Redesign Board agreed the operational delivery model which would be implemented from April 2024 ahead of the opening of “The Storr Centre” in July 2024.

Self -assessment activity

The 2023/24 [National Improvement Framework Annual Report](#) was considered by the Education Committee on 21/11/24. The report includes details of progress against the national priorities which was informed by a range of ongoing methods of self-evaluation. In addition, school standards, quality reports and school improvement plans have been reviewed to identify where further improvement is required.

An evaluation of the arrangements for [“Keeping the Promise in Highland”](#) for the period January 2022 to January 2024 was reported to the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee on 29 August. This report included a number of priority areas for improvement and identified that the focus for the next two-year period would be on measuring the impact of the promise.

Assessments by other scrutiny and inspection bodies

Inspections of Nurseries and Schools are undertaken by Education Scotland. The aim of this work is to secure continuous improvement. Different themes may be inspected, and each is assessed using the following standard assessment:

Grade	Meaning
Excellent	outstanding, sector-leading
Very good	major strengths
Good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak	important weaknesses

Unsatisfactory	major weaknesses
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This [link](#) can be used to access the inspection reports issued during 2023/24. Information on schools by their Associated School Group, which includes Standards and Quality reports and Education Scotland Inspection reports, are reported to the appropriate Area Committee for scrutiny purposes.

A number of care services are registered with the Care Inspectorate. These consist of residential children’s houses, fostering, adoption and continuing care services (adult services). Where these services are subject to inspection then each area examined is graded using a six-point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent. Details of the 2023/24 care inspections were reported to the Health, Social and Wellbeing Committee on 16 May 2024. This also included details of work being undertaken to improve those where the gradings were considered to be unsatisfactory. A summary of the reported evaluations are shown in the table below.

Registered Services

Report Date	Subject	Evaluation	Grade
15/03/24	Fostering Service	How well do we support people’s wellbeing?	3 - Adequate
		How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
		How good is our staff team?	5 – Very good
		How well is our care and support planned?	4 - Good
15/03/24	Adoption Service	How well do we support people’s wellbeing?	3 - Adequate
		How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
		How good is our staff team?	5 – Very good
		How well is our care and support planned?	4 - Good
15/03/24	Continuing Care Adult Placement Service	How well do we support people’s wellbeing?	2 - Weak
		How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
		How good is our staff team?	5 – Very good
		How well is our care and support planned?	2 - Weak

Children's Houses

Three Children's House were inspected during 2023/24, and the evaluations were as follows:

Report Date	Subject	Evaluation	Grade
04/09/23	Mainstay House	How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	4 - Good
13/12/23	The Orchard		2 - Weak
04/04/24	Oakwood House		5 – Very good

An evaluation of the [Home to Highland Programme](#) covering both care and education services was undertaken in November and December 2023. The outcome of this work including details of the areas for improvement identified was reported to the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee on 14 February 2024.