

Education, Children and Young People Committee

14th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday 18 May 2022

Scottish Attainment Challenge inquiry

Introduction

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

Evidence taken as part of its inquiry thus far has included written evidence received in response to the Committee's [call for views](#), which closed on 8 February. The Committee has also held five formal evidence sessions, on [9 February](#), [23 February](#), [20 April](#), [4 May](#) and [11 May](#).

During these sessions, the Committee took evidence from—

- academics and policy experts who have researched the Scottish Attainment Challenge, on 9 February,
- third sector organisations that provide services funded through the Attainment Challenge, on 23 February,
- education trade unions on 20 April,
- Directors of Education on 4 May and
- Education Scotland on 11 May.

The Committee has also held informal engagement sessions with—

- children at Sidlaw Primary School;
- care experienced young people;
- young people supported by Barnardo's in Greenock;
- teachers; and
- parents and carers.

Notes of these sessions will be published on the [inquiry webpage](#).

Case study approach

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

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

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

On Monday 25 April, Members of the Committee met a group of teachers from local authorities in the West Partnership at St Roch's High School in Glasgow. On 27 April, Members of the Committee held an online meeting with parents/carers from within the West Partnership to discuss issues relating to the attainment challenge. On 9 May, Members held an informal engagement meeting with teachers from within the West Partnership who are members of the EIS.

Committee meeting

At its meeting today, the Committee will take evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and officials from the Scottish Government.

Supporting Information

- A SPICe briefing prepared for this session is included in the [Annexe](#) to this paper.

Education, Children and Young People Committee Clerks
13 May 2022



Education, Children and Young People Committee

Poverty-related attainment gap – Cabinet Secretary

18 May 2022

Introduction

This is the final meeting of the Committee's inquiry into the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the Scottish Government's policy commitment to close the poverty-related attainment gap. This week the Committee will take evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

The Committee has undertaken five formal sessions with experts, third sector bodies, trade unions, local authorities and Education Scotland. The official reports and papers are linked below.

- [9 February 2022, academics and experts](#)
- [23 February 2022, Third Sector](#)
- [20 April 2022, Trade Unions](#)
- [4 May 2022, Directors of Education](#)
- [11 May 2022, Education Scotland](#)

The Committee issued [a call for views](#) which ran from 18 January 2022 to 8 February 2022. The Committee has [published 29 responses](#). A briefing on the themes from those submissions was included in Members' papers for the meeting of 20 April. The Convener sought information on approaches and evidence from other jurisdictions. A short paper outlining some work and examples was also included in members' papers for 20 April.

The Committee has undertaken a programme of informal sessions with young people, teachers and parent/carers. Some of the Committee's engagement has focused on the area covered by the West Partnership RIC. Links to the published write ups from this work can be found below—

- [Note from Sidlaw Primary School](#)
- [Note from virtual meeting with care experienced young people](#)
- [Note from Barnardos visit](#)
- [Note from meeting with teachers in Glasgow](#)

Further write-ups will be published [on the Committee's website](#).

Refreshed approach to the Scottish Attainment Challenge

On 30 March, the Scottish Government published a number of documents setting out its new approach.

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

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

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

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

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

It also stated—

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

Roles and responsibilities

The Framework sets out the expected roles and responsibilities of—

- Local authorities and their staff, including:
 - Central authority staff
 - Schools
 - Other services
- Regional Improvement Collaboratives
- Education Scotland
- HMIE
- The Scottish Government
- Other services and partners and stakeholders, including the third sector, children and their families, and universities.

One of the shifts under the new model is that there is more emphasis on the roles of all local authorities in supporting how Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF) monies are spent at school and local authority levels. The Framework provides details on the expected role of the central local authority in setting the local strategic plans and aims, supporting schools and reflecting on schools’ plans in developing their improvement plans (including the SAC aspects of those) in a two-way process.

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

The Framework states that the Scottish Government is “responsible for delivering the policy agenda of Ministers and supporting key partners to contribute to that.” Among other things, this involves: funding; collecting data; supporting and challenging areas where there is “limited progress”, and “collaborating across government and other partners to ensure a coherent and impactful policy landscape to support progress in

both the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the national mission to tackle child poverty.”

Policy links

The National Improvement Framework sets out plans to improve outcomes policy around school and early years. Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people is a key priority under the NIF. The Framework states that planning and reporting of activities and improvements as part of the SAC should be part of normal improvement planning processes. Those in turn should reflect the NIF. In addition one of the main aims of the recent expansion to 1,140 hours of funded ELC is to “improve children’s outcomes and help close the poverty-related attainment gap”. The Scottish Government also has targets to widen access to higher education to individuals from households in SIMD20¹ areas.

One part of the [Scottish Government’s recovery plan](#) from the pandemic is to maintain a focus on equity in Education. Other aspects include additional funding for teachers and staff and digital devices.

The [recent child poverty delivery plan set out](#) “Scotland’s offer” to families which includes ELC and the expansion of school aged childcare and “providing holistic and whole family support”. Policies that reduce poverty would likely have positive impacts on children’s education; the plan also highlights the role of education in “mitigating the impacts of poverty on children today and helping them to realise their full potential, we can reduce the risk of them becoming the parents of children in poverty in the future.” The child poverty delivery plan references the SAC in this regard.

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

“Prior learning and research evidence shows us that schools and education services alone will not reduce the poverty-related attainment gap. The mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge is one that must be supported by ‘collective agency’ – the range of services, third sector organisations and community partners working together with families, with a clear focus on improving the educational experiences, health and wellbeing and outcomes of children and young people. In this way educators, who are at the heart of these collaborations, will play a vital role in breaking the cycle of poverty and make a long-term contribution to Scotland’s national mission to tackle child poverty.”

¹ The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation is a relative measure of deprivation across 6,976 small areas (called datazones). SIMD looks at the extent to which an area is deprived across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing. SIMD ranks data zones from most deprived (ranked 1) to least deprived (ranked 6,976). People using SIMD will often focus on the data zones below a certain rank, for example, the 5%, 10%, 15% or 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. SIMD20 refers to the datazones in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

The value of holistic family-focused support has been a recurring theme in the Committee's work. For example school leaders the Committee spoke to at St Roch's High School in April highlighted the critical impact that family support workers had in their schools. Another group of teachers highlighted the importance of the family environment and the limits of what schools might be able to achieve to militate against the impacts of poverty. That group also noted both the importance and sometimes the difficulty of building positive relationships with parents and argued for a holistic approach to supporting families. This included considering what barriers may exist to families accessing a wide range of support.

Maureen McAteer from Barnardo's Scotland stated—

"I am interested in the interface between the work on the attainment challenge fund and other Scottish Government funding streams. From our perspective, fragmentation can be challenging. A family's needs are not cut into chunks, with some being attainment issues, some being family support issues and some being early years issues. Those things are all connected, which is why a more holistic approach, rather than a school-centric approach, is essential for getting good outcomes for children, young people and families." (Official Report, 23 February 2022, col 13)

Policy development

In developing education policy and implementation plans, the Scottish Government takes advice from a number of bodies and fora. These include the [Scottish Education Council](#), the [Teacher Panel](#), the [International Council of Education Advisers](#), a Children and Young People's Education Council, Education Scotland, Local Government and external advice such as from the OECD. The Government will also take account of recommendations of the Parliament and Audit Scotland.

The [Scottish Government states](#)—

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

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

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

This policy change was not subject to a public consultation.

Funding streams

Along with clearer accountability (“challenge and support”) structures and processes, the new approach also includes changes to the funding streams of the SAC.

Compared to the previous model, the key changes are the removal of the Challenge Authority and Challenge School programmes. The Strategic Equity Fund has replaced the Challenge Authority. Pupil Equity Funding remains. The funding for both SEF and PEF have been set out up to 2025-26.

Allocations for the other two aspects of the ASF, the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund and the National Programmes, have not been confirmed.

The totality of the spending is due to be around £200m per year in the coming five years.

The table below shows the ASF in 2021-22 and the allocated funding in 2022-23.²

	2021-22	2022-23
Challenge Authority Funding	£42,923,109	-
SEF	-	£44,743,505
PEF	£127,797,059	£130,490,760
Challenge Schools Funding	£7,033,543	-
CECYPF*	£11,500,000	£11,500,000
National Programmes*	£6,161,000	£13,300,000
Total	£195,414,711	£200,034,265
<i>CV19 PEF Top up</i>	£19,169,559	-

*2022-23 figures are likely estimates

The PEF allocations are intended to remain the same up to 2025-26. The PEF allocation, not including the Covid-related top up in 2021, will increase by around £3m compared to 2021-22. It is worth noting that PEF began as a £120m fund in 2017-18. Taking last year as a baseline, the increase in PEF does not match the loss in funding through the Schools Programme. The greatest increase has come under the National Programmes (discussed below).

2022-23 is the first year of SEF and there are transitional funding arrangements through to 2025-26. The next table sets out the SEF allocation from 2022-23 to 2025-26.

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
SEF	£44,743,505	£43,366,147	£43,020,675	£43,000,000

² PEF data in these tables is the totality of PEF and includes grant maintained schools' allocations. A previous SPICe paper for the Committee looked only at LA funding. This accounts for the small discrepancies in the reported PEF figures.

Members will understand that any future allocations are subject to the annual budget processes. Members will also be aware that flat-cash funding over four years is likely to translate as real terms cuts. However, the intention is that greater certainty of funding will encourage longer term planning, guidance for local authorities on the SEF stated, “in line with the agreement on multiyear funding, it would be beneficial to prepare a 4 year strategic plan.”

Pupil Equity Fund

Aside from the overall funding increasing, PEF is similar to previous years. It is based on estimates of statutory eligibility for free school meals at a school level.

Decision making on how to spend PEF lies at the school level. Schools are encouraged to use a variety of sources to determine how to spend PEF. Headteachers are expected to take account of the views of staff, pupils and the parent body in doing so. Schools should also evaluate and, if necessary, make changes to any interventions through PEF.

The Guidance for PEF is now more explicit that the work funded by PEF should be strategically aligned to local authority plans (and vice versa).

The move to universal free school meals in Primary schools means that, come the end of the funding to 2025-26, there will likely need to be a different metric to allocate equity funding at a school level.

Strategic Equity Fund

The SEF replaces the Challenge Authority funding.

The nine Challenge Authorities were identified on the basis of the density of SIMD20 neighbourhoods in the area. The funding itself was essentially project funding to those eligible authorities – it was not allocated on a per capita basis. The Challenge Schools funding was available to schools outwith those nine authorities with the highest densities of pupils from SIMD20 areas. The criticism of SIMD20 is that, as a community or small neighbourhood-based measure, it did not capture individual families who were materially deprived living in areas where this is less common. In addition, the datazones in rural areas can be quite large, which could mask pockets of deprivation using this measure.

The Scottish Government has abandoned using SIMD as a measure to allocate ASF monies and has spread the challenge authority funding across all 32 local authorities. The SEF allocations are determined using the relative low income measurement of Children in Low Income Families data. By directly measuring household income at the individual level, CILIF provides data on the number of deprived children in each local authority.

As is set out above, there is a taper in the funding to 2025-26 which is intended to support the transition for the nine Challenge Authorities and to allow the other 23

local authorities to develop and scale up their approaches. Some of the challenge authorities will lose significant amounts of funding the table below compares PEF and Challenge Authority funding in 2021-22 (not including the Covid-19 top up) with the combined planned PEF and SEF allocations at end of the tapering in 2025-26.

Difference between PEF+Challenge Authority Funding (2021-22, ex Covid 15%) and PEF +SEF (2025-26)

	£m	%age change
Clackmannanshire	-£1.00	-32%
Dundee City	-£5.10	-44%
East Ayrshire	-£2.39	-32%
Glasgow City	-£0.92	-3%
Inverclyde	-£2.79	-47%
North Ayrshire	-£4.69	-46%
North Lanarkshire	-£3.91	-23%
Renfrewshire	-£3.01	-33%
West Dunbartonshire	-£1.11	-21%

The impact of these funding changes have been explored by the Committee. Andrea Bradley from the EIS stated—

“I have to say that we have been absolutely appalled at the levels of funding cuts to six of the original challenge authorities. It beggars belief. We do not understand why those cuts would be made at a time when we know that poverty levels are rising, when the pandemic has absolutely bludgeoned some communities and we know that individual families and the young people within those families are struggling as a result of Covid.” (Official Report 20 April 2022 Col 31)

Emma Congreve from the Fraser of Allander Institute noted the difficulties in accurately identifying the areas and individuals in need and agreeing funding models based on that need. She said—

“It is incredibly difficult for a diverse country with different needs in different parts of the country to agree on what the best approach is. We see that throughout local government funding discussions, and education is no different.” (Official Report 9 February 2022, Col 10)

Inverclyde is one of those areas which will lose SAC funding under the new approach compared to the previous model. However, Ruth Binks from that local authority stated—

“I am not saying that I welcome it; I think that it was a fair thing to do. We needed to look altruistically across Scotland. When we started as attainment challenge authorities we were very much told that we were the pathfinders, looking at how to make things work. We were asked to adopt, adapt and abandon initiatives, which we certainly did. It is very helpful to see that many of the initiatives that the attainment challenge authorities took forward in the

early days are now being rolled out more widely. I started my answer by saying that if I could keep the £2.8 million I would absolutely welcome that. It is a big cut for Inverclyde, but it is one that we always knew could and would happen ...

“Let us look at the totality of the system and the learning that has taken place. I hope that the experience of our young people will very much benefit from the attainment challenge work that has been done to date.” (Official Report 4 May 2022, Cols 8 and 9)

However, Ms Binks also highlighted particular challenges her authority will face—

“We are worried about whole-family wellbeing and our partnership with the third sector. We have a very good partnership with the third sector, but we will probably not be able to keep that going, given the amount of money that we will end up with in 2024-25. However, there are opportunities now for us to revise our approach by working across children’s services to look at whole-family wellbeing.” (Official Report 4 May 2022, Col 7)

South Lanarkshire was not a challenge authority although twenty of its schools received £1.9m in 2021-22 through the schools programme. Tony McDaid from South Lanarkshire stated—

“We would not necessarily have picked those 20 schools. Those schools were picked on the basis of a particular profile, but that did not take into account rural poverty or the concentration of poverty in a couple of our schools. The bulk of the money still goes through PEF, but there is also the strategic equity fund, which comes to just over £2 million for us [£2.5m by 2025-26]. We will be able to redirect that resource to more concerted activity around the 124 primary schools and, indeed, across our 20 secondary schools as well. We can take some of the learning that has happened with the schools. ...

“Some of our rural schools do not really get any PEF, but there is rural poverty and one of our workstreams is on rural poverty. The strategic equity fund will allow us to redirect some of that resource.” (Official Report 4 May 2022, Col 13)

The Guidance for Strategic Equity Funding states—

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

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

“The three organisers of learning and teaching; leadership; and, families and communities should shape local approaches.”

Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund

New national guidance for the CECYP Fund stated—

“The Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund is a targeted resource provided to local authorities to support care experienced children and young people from birth to the age of 26. The funding is provided to local authorities and aims to improve the educational outcomes for care experienced children and young people, supported by the strategic goals of The Promise and the Scottish Attainment Challenge.”

The scope of this fund is somewhat different to the other funding streams – it covers support for children and young people both before and after school-age. It is intended to support local authorities, as corporate parents, to support care experienced children and young people inside and outside of school. The guidance states that local authority planning activities under this fund should take place jointly between the Chief Social Work Officer and Chief Education Officer, with support from the Attainment Advisor. The guidance also highlights CELCIS’ [Looked After and Learning](#) as a resource that can inform planning for activities under the CECYP fund.

As with other aspects of the ASF, local authorities provide “end year reports submitted to the Scottish Government and Education Scotland, highlighting evidence of the impact on attainment alongside qualitative and, where available, quantitative information.”

In 2021-22, the total value of the fund was £11.5m. The [local authority-level allocations for 21-22 are set out on the Scottish Government website](#) but those allocations for 22-23 have not yet been published. Allocations are based on the number of looked after children aged 5-15 in the Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland. The [published drawdown dates for 22-23](#) are—

- First Drawdown: January 2023
- Second Drawdown: May 2023

It is notable that the second date falls in the 23-24 financial year.

National programmes

In 2021-22 national programmes funded under the ASF totalled £6.6m. These were:

Young Scot – #YSAttain programme	£129,000
Curiosity Collective – Children's University	£50,000

Youth Link – youth work and schools partnership programme	£115,000
Winning Scotland – Mindset in Education	£50,000
Child Poverty Action Group – Cost of the School Day	£93,000
Attainment Scotland Fund evaluation (incl. headteacher survey and local authority survey)	£60,000
Scottish Council of Deans of Education – <i>Developing pedagogies that work for pre-service and early career teachers to reduce the attainment gaps in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing</i>	£58,000
Teacher recruitment and professional learning and leadership	£1,530,000
Education Scotland – Attainment Advisors	£1,000,000
Training of Educational Psychologists	£627,000
Regional Improvement Collaboratives	£2,000,000
Scottish Mentoring and Leadership programme	£399,000
CELCIS – Virtual Headteacher Network	£50,000
Total	£6,161,000

In 2022-23, the funding for National Programmes will increase to around £13.3m. SPICe understands that much of the list above is likely to continue, although exact allocations are still to be confirmed.

The increase from £6.2m to £13.3m is largely accounted for by the additional investment in a national youth work/community learning and development fund (£2m) and the Easter study support funding (£4m).

Evaluation

To date

The [National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan](#) (NIF) sets out the vision for Scottish Education—

- **Excellence through raising attainment and improving outcomes:** ensuring that every child and young person achieves the highest standards in literacy and numeracy, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to shape their future as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors;

- **Achieving equity:** ensuring every child and young person has the same opportunity to succeed, no matter their background or shared protected characteristics, with a particular focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

The NIF sets out 11 measures to measure the attainment gap. These are:

- 27-30 month review (children showing no concerns across all domains)
- Two Health and Wellbeing measures: Children total difficulties score at ages 4-12 and at ages 13 & 15
- Four measures of literacy and numeracy in primary and secondary schools
- Three school-leaver measures, having at least one qualification at SCQF Levels 4, 5 and 6 on leaving school
- 16-19 year olds participating in education, training or employment.

A number of data collections have been interrupted by the pandemic. Changes to SQA qualifications also makes national level comparisons over time difficult.

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

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

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

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

The evaluation also reported that the majority of headteachers observed an improvement in closing the attainment gap. The evaluation also found evidence of continuing culture change in terms of greater collaboration, understanding the barriers faced by pupils and families affected by poverty, and embedding approaches to equity in practice.

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

At the same time as the fourth annual progress report, the Scottish Government published [Closing the poverty-related attainment gap: progress report 2016 to 2021](#) looking at progress across the last Parliament. Unsurprisingly, similar themes were explored as in the fourth annual evaluation. It said—

“Over the 5-year time period a number of key elements have been put in place that provide strong foundations for on-going progress. Important strengths of the Scottish approach include: a systemic change in terms of culture, ethos and leadership; a strengthened awareness of the barriers facing children and young people adversely affected by socio-economic disadvantage; the significant role of local authorities in driving forward a strategic vision for equity at local level.” (p6)

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

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

It also stated—

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

While progress on national or local measures has been reported as slow or mixed, witnesses have highlighted other areas of progress achieved through the work of the SAC. This included greater capacity and improvements of pedagogy, better collaboration within and outwith the profession, use of data, and a culture under which the barriers to learning faced by pupils from deprived households are better recognised and understood. Witnesses and participants in informal engagement activities have also recognised that more work is required.

Logic model

A '[logic model](#)' was presented along with the Framework and guidance on particular funding streams in the SAC. A logic model is “a visual planning tool that shows the journey from resources and activities to a programme’s intended outcome”.

The logic model was “developed in collaboration and in consultation with a wide range of education stakeholders including Education Scotland, Local Authority Scottish Attainment Challenge Leads, the Scottish Education Council, the Teachers’ Panel and the International Council of Education Advisors through a series of virtual, interactive workshops”. It has been designed to support a range of activities—

- Planning e.g. support development and monitoring of stretch aims, school improvement plans
- Communicating the Scottish Attainment Challenge Mission
- Promoting system wide understanding of short, medium and long term outcomes
- Collaboration and engagement with wider stakeholders on activities and the outcomes of the programme
- Forming the basis for evaluation
- Celebrating success

The SAC logic model sets out the inputs, activities and the short, medium and long-term outcomes from the programmes. There are four iterations of the logic model, the school/community level, the local/regional level, the national level and the programme overall.

The short, medium and long-term outcomes are the same at all the levels. These are reproduced in Annexe A of this paper. The timescales relating to the short, medium and long-term outcomes are not clear.

The Framework suggests that local authorities, school leaders and Education Scotland would “use available data and the Scottish Attainment Challenge Logic Model to explore a shared understanding of the local context, support setting of ambitious local authority stretch aims and monitoring performance and progress towards achieving these stretch aims”.

Future approaches

A theme of discussions both in formal meetings and during the informal sessions the Committee has undertaken has been how to measure impact of interventions. Particularly how to capture and value more intangible outcomes, such as engagement in learning and health and wellbeing. The Committee has also explored how longer term outcomes can be tracked, eg through to college or apprenticeships.

The Framework notes that “additional national measures reflecting wider poverty-related and health and wellbeing issues will need to be developed and agreed for future versions of the Framework from the start of the school year 2023-24.” It is possible that any future national measure will reflect local authorities’ stretch health and wellbeing aims if agreement on how to measure this emerges through these processes.

The Scottish Government’s [Implementation Framework](#) for taking forward recommendations in the OECD report includes a commitment to consult “on changes to the NIF measures [which] will begin in January 2022 and conclude in September 2022.” The Consultation opened on 9 May. This consultation linked to the framework and stated—

“[The Scottish Government will] develop a national picture of the ambition for progress across the system by aggregating the ambitious, locally identified, stretch aims for progress towards the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge set by all local authorities, in line with the Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress. In doing so, we will recognise the impact of the pandemic on children and young people’s attainment, and on their health and wellbeing, and understand the scale of the challenge to recover and improve from there.”

The consultation stated that the Government’s view is that “it is important to retain the existing 11 key measures to ensure that we do not lose the consistent time series which is crucial for tracking the trends and changes in the data on closing the attainment gap over time”. It lists four potential additions to the NIF, which are:

- Data on the new Health and Wellbeing Census
- The views and priorities of staff in school and early learning settings
- PISA
- Engagement with children and young people

The consultation also identified several principles in undertaking the work. These were—

- “we are looking at the difference in attainment between those children and young people from SIMD quintiles 1 and 5. However, we recognise the importance of increasing attainment for all children and are therefore proposing to recalibrate the national stretch aims for all five SIMD quintiles
- focusing on a single measure is neither helpful or meaningful and would provide a false and limited picture
- measures and milestones should be relatively simple to measure and report against
- there needs to be a clear line of sight from the agreed measures and milestones to the key priorities set out in the National Improvement

Framework, including the need to place the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education

- there also needs to be a clear line of sight from the key measures in the NIF, to the strategies and approaches adopted in schools, and local authorities, to improve outcomes for children and young people
- the focus should be across the age ranges – from 3-18
- they should be a credible set of measures – understood to fairly reflect progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap
- the need to avoid perverse incentives through whatever milestones or stretch aims are set.”

Professor Ainscow drew the distinction between the goal of the policy to support equity in education across the broad aims of the curriculum and the measurement of the policy – closing the gap based on attainment particularly in literacy and numeracy. (Official Report 9 February 2022, col 3) Jim Thewliss also argued that “attainment is too narrow a focus”. (Official Report 20 April 2022, col 7)

One of the issues in making progress towards to overall goal of closing the attainment gap has been inconsistent progress. Mark Ratter from East Renfrewshire told the Committee about a project ADES was undertaking of local authorities offering critical support to each other to improve outcomes. (Official Report, 4 May 2022, cols 28-29) Tony McDaid suggested that clarity of what outcomes are being sought would also help. He said—

“We need to be clear about the outcomes and the measures that we are looking at. Are we looking at the national improvement framework measures, longitudinal activity, the programme for international student assessment— PISA—criteria or global competence that goes beyond simple attainment measures? We have lots of data in the country. The question is, what measures are important to us and help us to measure the gap?” (Official Report, 4 May 2022, col 28)

The design of the SAC puts the evaluation of interventions at the local authority and school levels. Emma Congreve suggested that developing the capacity within schools to evaluate interventions is important but it is a complex activity. She particularly highlighted that interventions should be compared to other possible additional work. She said—

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

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

Additionality

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

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

The extent to which ASF monies have been used to fill gaps has been explored by some witnesses in this inquiry. Greg Dempster of the Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland said—

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

During the session with the Directors of Education, Ruth Binks from Inverclyde stated—

“We are aware of funding issues in the core, and we must ensure that core funding and additionality for schools—the entire system—work hand in hand. Attainment challenge funding is only a small part of the funding that we give to schools, but that funding has definitely been additional—and very welcome.” (Official Report 4 May 2022, col 2)

Tony McDaid responding to quote from Greg Dempster above, indicated that it would be possible that, if the local authority had reallocated resource, a school could have made the decision under the devolved nature of PEF to maintain that resource in a school. However, he said—

“It is additionality. Priorities change, as does ensuring that your priorities are focused on the activity. It is not just about the resource; it is about your priority and focus, and ensuring that those staff or additional resources are used for the purpose of closing the poverty-related attainment gap.” (Official Report 4 May 2022, col 4)

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

12 May 2022

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

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Annexe A Logic Model Outcomes

These outcomes are extracted from the [Scottish Attainment Challenge Logic Model](#).

Short Term

1. **Leadership**
Actively developing empowered leadership capabilities in the education system with embedded structures in place to improve learning, teaching and self-evaluation.
2. **Professional learning**
All practitioners engage in professional learning with a focus on equity and reducing poverty-related attainment gap.
3. **Collaboration**
Established collaborations with local authorities, schools, the third sector and families and communities identifying key priorities across education delivery.
4. **Data and evidence**
Practitioners are able to use data effectively to identify the needs of their learners and improve learning and teaching.
5. **Shared understanding**
There is shared understanding and shared work amongst all local authorities, practitioners and partners on the Scottish Attainment Challenge aims/mission.
6. **Focus**
Sustained focus on physical and mental health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy using pedagogical skills to improve personal achievement, attainment, and positive destinations for children and young people living in poverty.
7. **Readiness to learn**
A sustained focus on children and young people's readiness to learn through focusing on engagement and attendance, confidence and wellbeing.
8. **Engagement**
Meaningful engagement with children and young people and their families and communities embedded in decision making in relation to the Scottish Attainment Challenge.
9. **Approaches**
All parts of the system are aware of the range of approaches to support equity, can apply them in their local context and identify impact evidence

Medium term

1. **Leadership**
Strong leadership in the education system, using skills developed through

continuous professional learning focused on equity and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

2. **Professional learning**

Professional learning focussed on equity is embedded and practitioners use these skills and knowledge to improve outcomes for children and young people.

3. **Collaboration**

Strategic collaboration across the education system results in innovative, impactful and sustainable approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

4. **Data and evidence**

An embedded use of data and evidence is used to build and share an understanding of effective interventions in closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

5. **Culture and ethos**

An embedded culture and ethos based on educational equity exists in the education system that promotes high aspirations and recognises broader achievement for all children and young people and their families.

6. **Learning and teaching**

High quality learning, teaching and assessment, focussing on achieving equity for learners, across Health and Wellbeing, literacy and numeracy.

7. **Readiness to learn**

Improvements in engagement, attendance, confidence and wellbeing of children and young people.

8. **Engagement**

Embedded engagement and participation of children and young people, families and communities in the learner journey.

9. **Approaches**

Evidence based approaches embedded in the system with continuous refinement/ adaptation based on effective interventions in the local context.

Long term

1. **Closing the gap**

Closing of the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people, in line with stretch aims.

2. **Embedded practices**

An embedded culture focused on equity continuously supporting and developing practice at all levels of the system addressing impacts of the poverty-related attainment gap.

3. Educational outcomes

Children and young people have rights to equality of opportunity to positive and excellent educational outcomes regardless of their background.

4. Education system

An education system which actively addresses poverty, removing barriers through inclusive ethos, practice and approaches for children and young people, parents and carers and practitioners.

5. Achievement

An education system which encourages, reflects, and values the breadth of achievements that contribute to improved outcomes for children

Annex B Teacher numbers

The Convener asked SPICe to provide data on the total number of teachers employed in Scotland. The data below is taken from the annual teacher census; figures are in FTE.

	Total teachers (excluding ELC)	Pupil Teacher Ratio
2009	51,344	13.2
2010	50,498	13.3
2011	49,907	13.4
2012	49,867	13.5
2013	49,790	13.5
2014	49,521	13.7
2015	49,679	13.7
2016	49,985	13.7
2017	50,592	13.6
2018	51,138	13.6
2019	51,449	13.6
2020	52,672	13.3
2021	53,581	13.2

The next table is from the school support staff statistics. Here the data is presented from 2018. However, the methodology of calculating an FTE classroom assistant varies between local authorities and has changed over time. There is a discontinuity of FTE data between 2017 and 2018. The data presented here therefore begins from 2018.

<i>FTE</i>	Pupil Support Assistant	Behaviour Support	Home-school link worker	Library staff	Educational Psychologist
2018	13,803	122	376	266	368
2019	13,909	148	373	265	372
2020	15,263	148	409	260	378
2021	16,299	187	475	234	383