

The Scottish Attainment Challenge



Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress



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Overview

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

This Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress (the Framework) has been developed to support the next phase of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. It aims to:

- reinforce our collective commitment to equity in education, to mitigate the impact of poverty on children's outcomes and tackle the poverty-related attainment gap;
- set high expectations, including annual, ambitious locally identified stretch aims, to help ensure significant progress is made in recovering from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and in achieving the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. By setting these annual aims we will know how much progress is expected and by when in each locality. Informed by this data, we can tailor further support for improvement, and focus on the immediate impact it can have on improving leadership, learning and teaching, and our work with families and communities, for the benefit of children and young people now;
- take advantage of multi-year funding allocations for schools and local authorities to plan and set aims for long-term progress in the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. This will build on the sizable investment in the Scottish Attainment Challenge to date, to make a greater difference, more quickly, for children and young people;
- use existing improvement processes, as far as possible, in order to minimise additional bureaucracy; this is accompanied by specific new guidance to ensure there is greater consistency on how processes are used across the country and enable a more accurate national picture;
- through local stretch aims, drive improved outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty in the local authority. In the first instance a 'core plus' model is expected, with the "core" setting a minimum expectation for aims measurable by the National Improvement Framework key measures and local data for health and wellbeing; and the "plus" reflecting additional local priorities. 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; and
- build on the continued commitment to empowerment for local planning and decision making, while ensuring strategic direction, support and challenge is provided by local authorities and national agencies. This will help ensure that the best possible outcomes for our children and young people are achieved.

Summary

Scope

- The mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge: *to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.*
- Support education recovery, increase pace of, and reduce variation in progress.

Planning

Schools:

- Within existing mechanisms, include plans for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) in School Improvement Plans, including clear aims for progress in tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.
- Collaborate with children and young people, families, local authorities and other partners meaningfully when planning and throughout the process.

Local authorities:

- In order to avoid duplication of effort, local authorities should include plans and stretch aims for the Scottish Attainment Challenge (details on stretch aims below) within the existing local authority education service improvement planning process.
- Stretch aims should be informed by, and inform, school plans for progress.
- Planning should read across and into other services' plans and identify opportunities to collaborate with other services and partners.
- Stretch aims to be agreed annually, as a result of robust evidence-informed self-evaluation, supported and challenged through professional dialogue with Education Scotland.
- One-page financial plan for Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) to be submitted to Scottish Government by September each year.

Monitoring and Reporting

Schools:

- Report on the impact of PEF through school Standards and Quality Reports and use these to report to their Parent Council and Forum and through other channels.
- Implement robust monitoring of children's and young people's progress with appropriate support and challenge from the local authority, peers and Education Scotland and engagement with parents and carers to ensure continual ambitious progress in improving health and wellbeing and tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.

Local authorities:

- Through existing reporting mechanisms and channels, report on progress against the agreed stretch aims through Standards and Quality Reports (or local equivalents).
- Ensure robust monitoring of progress, with support and challenge from Education Scotland and collaboration with peers, to ensure continual ambitious progress in improving health and wellbeing and tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.

National:

- Scottish Government and Education Scotland will discuss local progress in improving health and wellbeing and tackling the poverty-related attainment gap, informed by local and national data, evidence, intelligence and attainment advisor reporting.
- Education Scotland will use data and evidence to tailor support and challenge.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Reflect existing statutory duties and those in the [2018 Joint Agreement](#).
- Expectation of collaboration, transparency, support and challenge in a mature system focused on the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

1. Introduction



1.1 Background

The Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched in 2015 with the mission of closing the poverty-related attainment gap. This is a key contribution to the delivery of the shared vision for Scottish education to deliver excellence and equity for all.

Education remains one of the most effective means we have to improve the life chances of all of our young people, and the right to and goals of education are enshrined in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#). The pandemic has not changed that.

The pandemic has – as set out in the Scottish Government and Education Scotland [Equity Audit](#) of January 2021 and a range of other research – had a disproportionate impact on children and young people affected by poverty. This reinforces our moral imperative to do everything we can to support the best possible outcomes for our future generations by focusing resources on recovery and tackling the poverty-related attainment gap. This is an imperative borne of our commitment to a human rights-based approach to children and young people's care, support and education.

In November 2021, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills [set out plans](#) for a refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge from April 2022. The mission of this refreshed Challenge 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

This mission recognises the need to reflect the breadth of achievements and experiences and the importance of health and wellbeing to contribute to improved outcomes for children and young people including through improved post-school participation in positive destinations. This represents strengthened alignment with the Curriculum for Excellence and the findings of the [OECD](#) and [Audit Scotland](#) reports of 2021, which indicate the need for stronger national and local data on the wider benefits of Scottish education; and acknowledges articles 29 and 31 of the UNCRC.



In refreshing the Scottish Attainment Challenge, there is an opportunity to further strengthen our collective focus on supporting children and young people impacted by poverty, learning from and building on the work to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap to date. We have considered a range of evidence, including the findings of both the [Scottish Government and Education Scotland's analysis of the Scottish Attainment Challenge](#) (published March 2021) and Audit Scotland's [report: Improving outcomes for young people through school education](#) (also of March 2021).

Reflecting on that evidence, some key considerations can be drawn:

- Progress in tackling the poverty-related attainment gap was made before the pandemic. This provides solid foundations on which we can seek to accelerate both recovery and progress.
- The findings of the 2021 Audit Scotland report highlighted a need to make quicker progress even in relation to pre-pandemic gains, and to tackle variation in outcomes between and within local authority areas.
- There is a need for continued and accelerated progress to address the negative impact of Covid-19 on children's health and wellbeing and learning.
- 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.

1.2 Purpose of the Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress

This Framework will underpin the ambition contained in the refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge mission and applies to teachers, school leaders, local government, Education Scotland and Scottish Government. It is also relevant to the wider education community as they work in partnership with schools to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap.

It is being developed to:

- provide clear direction to our collective work – as educators, leaders, advisors, policy makers and elected officials – to improve outcomes for those children and young people most impacted by poverty;
- articulate and emphasise the targeted nature of the Scottish Attainment Challenge;
- support acceleration of continuous improvement through ambitious, achievable and measurable objectives, identified locally and recognised nationally;
- support a shared understanding and collective accountability for expected progress in the attainment, health and wellbeing and broader outcomes of children and young people impacted by poverty over the next four years and by the end of 10 years of the Scottish Attainment Challenge; and
- drive a whole system focus on improvement with clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders in the system working together to reduce variation.

It is accompanied by a refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge Logic Model (which can be found as a supporting document to the [Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress](#)), clearly articulating the theory of change.

Resources for the Scottish Attainment Challenge, through the ASF, will be provided to all 32 local authorities through Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) and Care Experienced Children and Young People funding (CECYP); and to schools through Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). The ASF is an additional, targeted investment to be used strategically alongside existing funding at and across local authority and school level, with local authorities and schools collaborating to achieve the shared, national mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

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](#).

1.3 Scope

This Framework focuses on the poverty-related “equity” element of the Scottish Government’s overall aim to achieve “equity and excellence” in education. Equity and excellence must be mutually reinforcing if education is to best meet the needs and aspirations of our children and young people.

The Framework sets out expectations for planning, reporting, monitoring, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. These should be applied consistently across the system to support education recovery and accelerate the pace of progress in achieving the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

There are particular expectations in the context of the Scottish Attainment Challenge for:

- a prospective improvement plan and financial plan for the year ahead, within the context of an overarching longer term plan;
- ongoing monitoring of progress; and
- a retrospective report and financial statement for the year past.

In order to minimise additional burden on the system existing planning and reporting mechanisms are being used as far as possible.

The National Improvement Framework (NIF) is not replaced or altered by this Framework and the existing measures of the poverty-related attainment gap set out in the NIF will continue to form the key national measures of success. These measures alone however are not all that a local authority should consider in their local approaches to achieving the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.





2. Planning

This section focuses on planning arrangements related to the Scottish Attainment Challenge for schools and local authorities. It is designed to include minimal bureaucracy; to ensure transparency and shared levels of ambition for progress; and, taking into account key learning from the Scottish Attainment Challenge to date, to support swift and lasting education recovery, increase the pace of progress and reduce variation in progress.

The key element of the Framework that is new to schools and local authorities is the requirement for locally identified stretch aims to be set out in local authority plans.

All 32 local authorities receive both SEF and CECYP, and almost all (97%) schools in all 32 local authorities receive PEF. Detailed planning and reporting requirements for each of these funding streams is set out in the respective guidance documents for each. However, there are some overarching requirements related to all three streams set out below.

- Attainment Scotland Funding (whether SEF, PEF or CECYP) should not be the only resource directed to approaches to achieving the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge or the locally identified stretch aims for doing so. 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.
- Headteachers are empowered to identify and implement approaches to using PEF in their local settings.
- Headteachers should expect dialogue with the local authority on how plans for the use of Attainment Scotland Funding at school and local authority level can be strategically aligned to shared strategic aims – collaboration at the planning stage is vital.

- Local authorities remain accountable for the use of Attainment Scotland Funding, including PEF. Therefore, local authorities should support headteachers and have processes in place to ensure plans are targeted and evidence based.
- Local authorities and headteachers should work together closely to consider how to maximise the utility or reach of PEF to undertake shared approaches – with the explicit agreement of headteachers – to achieve shared aims. There are many examples of this working well. Such examples can be found in the Education Scotland [*Pupil Equity Funding: Looking inwards, outwards, forwards – sharing effective practice to maximise support for learner and practitioners*](#) publication.

2.1 School planning: Pupil Equity Funding

2.1.1 General principles

Schools will continue to use their school improvement plans and processes to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap and to use PEF to provide additional activities or resources to contribute to those plans.

Headteachers will continue to have access to their school's full PEF allocation.

Funding must provide targeted support for children and young people (and their families if appropriate) affected by poverty to help support them achieve their full potential.

Headteachers should endeavour to work in partnership with their local community partners, such as [*youth work*](#), to develop approaches to utilising the funding to best effect. Schools must take account of the statutory responsibilities of the local authority to deliver educational improvement, secure best value, and fulfil the authority's role as employer. Collaboration with local authorities, other schools or school clusters, or community partners, may provide

opportunities to increase the reach and impact of PEF, including through agreeing opportunities to pool resources. Local Guidance will set out more detail on how this will operate in local settings.

The operation of Pupil Equity Funding should align with the strategic local authority plans and stretch aims for tackling the poverty-related attainment gap – essentially freedom within a framework. Equally, school plans should inform local authority strategic plans as part of a two-way collaborative planning process between local authorities and schools.

Importantly, parents and carers, children and young people and other key stakeholders should be meaningfully involved throughout the process of planning, evaluation and any future developments. The PEF guidance includes further advice on potential approaches to doing this and signposts evidence of effective approaches to utilising PEF.

Further, specific guidance on the use of Pupil Equity Funding is available [here](#).

2.1.2 Practicalities

Schools must have plans, grounded in evidence of what is known to be effective at raising attainment for children affected by poverty, in place before the beginning of each academic year. These plans should be developed with teachers and school communities and outline clear outcomes to be achieved and how progress towards these, and the impact on closing the poverty-related attainment gap, will be measured. If, as a result of ongoing local monitoring, the plans are not achieving the impact intended, these plans should be amended.

Scottish Government and Education Scotland will sample these plans annually, with a focus on PEF, to continue to inform our understanding of the approaches to tackling the poverty-related attainment gap undertaken in specific settings and potentially inform the annual evaluation of the Attainment Scotland Fund.

Local authorities will provide to Scottish Government an annual report on PEF spend at the end of each financial year.

There is provision for PEF allocations to be carried forward into the subsequent financial year (and, in exceptional circumstances into the new academic year). Schools should liaise closely with their authority to agree arrangements for this. However, with Pupil Equity Funding allocations having been confirmed until March 2026, opportunities to implement longer term interventions over this period can be realised and supported.

School leaders should have a clear and robust rationale for any accumulating underspends, as the national aim is to maximise the potential impact of PEF. School leaders should seek support from their local authority and their attainment advisor to achieve the full benefit for the children and young people it is intended to support. Further detail can be found in the specific [guidance for PEF](#).

2.2 Local authority planning: Strategic Equity Funding

2.2.1 General principles

All 32 local authorities will, from April 2022, access SEF. This funding is provided to support local authorities in developing and implementing strategic approaches to achieving the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, working with schools, wider local authority services and national and community partners, such as youth work.

Planning for the use of SEF will be low in bureaucracy and, as far as possible, use existing processes, in particular, local authority education service improvement plans (or equivalents).

In planning strategic local approaches to achieving the Scottish Attainment Challenge mission, local authorities should **consider the totality of Attainment Scotland Funding** coming into the local authority and, working with headteachers in recognition of their decision making role in the use of PEF, consider how this is best utilised to enhance local plans to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap. Local authorities should co-create plans with stakeholders.

All local authorities should use their strategic plans to set out **local stretch aims for progress**.

SEF [allocations through to March 2026](#) are available on gov.scot. It would be beneficial to consider outcomes to be achieved by the end of this four year cycle rather than changing longer term outcomes on an annual basis. Annual identification of stretch aims and monitoring of progress will be required to oversee progress towards these longer term aims.

The mission to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap should feature in all local authority education service improvement plans. These plans should include how Scottish Attainment Challenge funding will be used to address this mission as well as how these plans align to other local authority plans, such as Community Learning and Development plans, Children's Services plans and Child Poverty Action Plans, which have related aims.

This is also an opportunity to identify and articulate how the pandemic has impacted the educational experiences and health and wellbeing of children most impacted by poverty and how local strategies are being used to make progress for children and young people.

2.2.2 Stretch aims

Local authority plans and stretch aims for the Scottish Attainment Challenge should be embedded within existing local authority education service improvement plans (or equivalents), which are shared annually with Scottish Government as part of statutory plans and reports, and include the following:

Setting local stretch aims

- Set specific local authority stretch aims for improving outcomes for all while closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
- These stretch aims should be both ambitious and achievable within local contexts.
- They should focus on the specific aims which local evidence and data suggest are the priority areas for improvement. In the first instance a ‘core plus’ model is expected.
- At a minimum these should include (core) stretch aims for both overall progress and for reducing the poverty-related gaps in:
 - a) achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (literacy combined and numeracy combined);
 - b) the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more pass at SCQF level 5 based on the “Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations” publication;
 - c) the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more pass at SCQF level 6 based on the “Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations” publication;
 - d) the proportion of 16-19 olds participating in education, employment or training based on the Annual Participation Measure produced by Skills Development Scotland; and
 - e) a locally identified aim for health and wellbeing, to be measured using local datasets.
- Each identified stretch aim should clearly articulate ambitions for progress for all pupils and progress in narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap in 2022/23. Nationally, aims a), b), c) and d) will be aggregated so that a national picture for progress on the poverty-related attainment gap can be identified. Consistency in the articulation of the NIF key measures identified above will be vital to developing that national picture (see exemplar in Annex B).
- It is acknowledged that this is a starting position which will evolve over time, as NIF measures are adapted (after consultation in Spring 2022) and any wider measures of the curriculum are introduced (recognising the OECD recommendations). However, for the 2022/23 academic year existing and widely used NIF measures have been selected for aims a), b), c) and d).
- It is also acknowledged that the above aims do not include the NIF measures for ACEL at level 3 in S3, on the basis that this has not been collected nationally for the previous two years. This may be introduced for 2023/24.
- Whilst a national dataset for health and wellbeing gathered consistently across all local authorities does not yet exist, amongst the core aims – with absolute parity of esteem – must be an ambitious locally identified and measured aim for improvement and closing of the poverty-related gap in progress in health and wellbeing.
- The aims for health and wellbeing could, for instance, focus on local measures for attendance or inclusion.

- Should particular measures for health and wellbeing be used consistently across the country, this may inform a future agreed measure for the “core” aims beyond 2022/23.
- Recognising the importance of readiness to learn and a broad and varied curriculum, plans should also include additional (plus) stretch aims which are specific to the local authority’s own context and datasets. These aims are of equal importance to those that form the “core” and could include, for example:
 - aims for pupils’ wider achievement;
 - aims for parental engagement in learning;
 - aims regarding readiness to learn; or
 - regarding the cost of the school day.
- Articulation of the suite of core plus additional stretch aims should detail:
 - what change do you want to see for learners?
 - how much change?
 - who are the target groups?
 - by when?
 - how progress will be measured and tracked – indicators of progress.
- Examples of such stretch aims are included at Annex B.

Agreeing local stretch aims

- Setting of local stretch aims should be an iterative and collaborative process between local authorities and schools. There should be a two-way process which sees school plans inform the local authority stretch aims and local authority aims and strategic plans reflected in school plans. This approach can be developed through existing local authority quality improvement processes with schools and should not see stretch aims imposed on schools. Professional dialogue, support and challenge should take account of the specific local context of each school.
- The setting and ambition of these aims should be achieved by local authorities as a result of robust evidence-informed self-evaluation, supported and challenged through professional dialogue with Education Scotland.

Plans underpinning these aims

- Planning should be shaped around the Scottish Attainment Challenge organisers of: learning and teaching; leadership; and families and communities.
- Both qualitative and quantitative measures should be identified to demonstrate the progress and impact of supports and interventions.
- There should be a clear articulation of how Scottish Attainment Challenge funding will contribute to the aims of the plans – whether directly, by augmenting/enhancing existing approaches, or by leveraging input from other services/partners.
- The contributions of wider services supporting children and young people and their families are vital to supporting readiness to learn. Plans should read across to related local authority service improvement plans and tackling child poverty plans as noted previously.

Timing

- In line with the agreement on multiyear funding, it would be beneficial to prepare a four year strategic plan. A year 1 plan should be established with outcomes and stretch aims identified, and the plan should be evaluated and adapted on an annual basis.
- The planning cycle will use the academic year, aligning with existing annual Education Service Improvement Planning cycles.
- Stretch aims should be agreed annually by the end of September, if not before.

There is a requirement for a high level **financial planning** template for SEF to be submitted which sets out how funding will be invested. This will provide Scottish Government with an audit trail of funding use in each local authority.

There will be two draw-down points for funding, one at the mid-point of the financial year and one at the end of the financial year. Draw down of funds should be based on actual spend aligned to the planning template.

Recognising the plans may change in-year, a notification of change process will be in place.

Unused funding can be carried into the subsequent financial year for use within the same academic year to continue existing plans. Funding to be carried forward should be identified and set out alongside the grant claim submitted in March each year.

Further guidance and specific practical arrangements for the use of SEF can be found in the [SEF guidance here](#).



2.3 Local authority planning – Care Experienced Children and Young People

2.3.1 General Principles

Current planning (and reporting) arrangements for CECYP funding will continue and are set out fully in the refreshed CECYP funding guidance. This will continue to require the Chief Social Work Officer and Chief Education Officer (or equivalent) to work together to ensure there are strategic plans in place with processes for reporting on impact. This should take place in collaboration with Attainment Advisors and, where appropriate, [virtual school headteachers](#).

This funding is issued to local authorities, as corporate parents. The Chief Social Work Officer and the Chief Education Officer (or equivalent), assisted by Education Scotland, working in collaboration with planning partners, and other professionals, carers and children and young people, will assess how the funding can be utilised to have the most impact on attainment and achievement.

Plans to utilise the funding should have a clear focus on delivering equity and improving educational outcomes and supporting the health and wellbeing of children and young people who are care experienced, for those aged between 0-26. These plans should be reflected in local authority improvement plans for education and any other relevant existing planning processes for children. Examples of this include Child Poverty Action Plans, additional support plans, Child's Plans, Looked After Children reviews, or children's services plans.

2.3.2 Practicalities

CECYP funding is issued over the academic year and will continue to be drawn down at two points in the financial year.

Outcomes, measures of success and evaluation of impact should be built into any programme or initiative at the outset and clearly set out in the relevant plans. Measures for individual children should also be included in the child or young person's plan.

Identified measures set out in plans should reflect the strategic decisions taken around how the funding is used and local authorities should agree the mechanisms which best illustrate impact on attainment. These can be quantitative or qualitative measures, for example capturing the experiences and feedback from care experienced children and young people, or through the Chief Social Work Officer Reports.

Further guidance on the use of CECYP funding can be found [here](#).

3. Reporting and monitoring

3.1 In-year monitoring of progress

It is important that in-year monitoring of progress occurs in local settings to ensure an ongoing understanding of progress. This enables early support and intervention where required. This already happens in most schools and authorities and should be a key part of local approaches.

Monitoring of progress will be part of the ongoing and regular dialogue between local authorities and Education Scotland, through the Senior Regional Advisors and Attainment Advisors in particular.

Through the Scottish Attainment Challenge joint programme Scottish Government and Education Scotland will discuss local progress in improving health and wellbeing and tackling the poverty-related attainment gap quarterly. This will be informed by national data, evidence and intelligence and attainment advisor reporting to ensure appropriate levels of support are provided and that the best possible progress and outcomes are being achieved.

These quarterly progress discussions will be an opportunity to reflect on successes, wider barriers to progress and the types of support, collaboration and challenge required to help ensure future progress across all local authorities. Support will be offered and provided using a staged approach:

- Universal support will be available to all local authorities and schools.
- Targeted support will be provided to local authorities and schools with the most need. This may be those with the highest levels of poverty or others depending on the data and contextual analysis.

- Intensive support will be provided to local authorities and schools where there is a consistent barrier and no, or very limited, progress is being made to improving outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty.

As is set out in the [2018 Joint Agreement](#), in rare cases where evidence suggests there is cause for concern, the following approaches will be deployed as appropriate:

- *professional dialogue between LA and ES will have explored concerns about limited progress and a variety of supports provided*
- *continued concerns will be shared with all partners*
- *the SNCT will collectively address concerns if there is evidence of non-compliance by local authorities with the Code of Practice on staff selection*
- *COSLA will facilitate challenge and support drawing in expertise from ADES/ES and others. This will include evidence review and challenge sessions leading to a clear action plan, offer of peer support and follow-up activity to monitor impact and improvement*
- *evaluation of progress*
- *clear line of escalation to audit and scrutiny inspection bodies if insufficient progress.*

3.2 Reporting

Reporting on the impact of plans *to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on reducing the poverty-related attainment gap* will be through existing mechanisms within the education system.

Schools

In line with arrangements for Pupil Equity Funding since its roll-out in 2017/18, schools are expected to incorporate details of their Pupil Equity Funding plans and explicitly report on the impact on outcomes for learners impacted by poverty within existing reporting processes to their Parent Council and Forum, including in their annual Standards and Quality Reports.

These reports should be made publicly available so that parents can understand what is happening in their school.

Scottish Government and Education Scotland will sample these reports annually to continue to inform our understanding of the approaches to tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.

Key findings from this sampling will be made available to local authorities and schools.

Agreeing local stretch aims

Reporting should be done through the existing requirement for local authority Education Standards and Quality Reports (or local equivalent reports). These reports, whilst covering the overall progress and impact of local authority service improvement plans and school improvement plans, should for the Scottish Attainment Challenge (considering the impact across all funding streams) have specific details on:

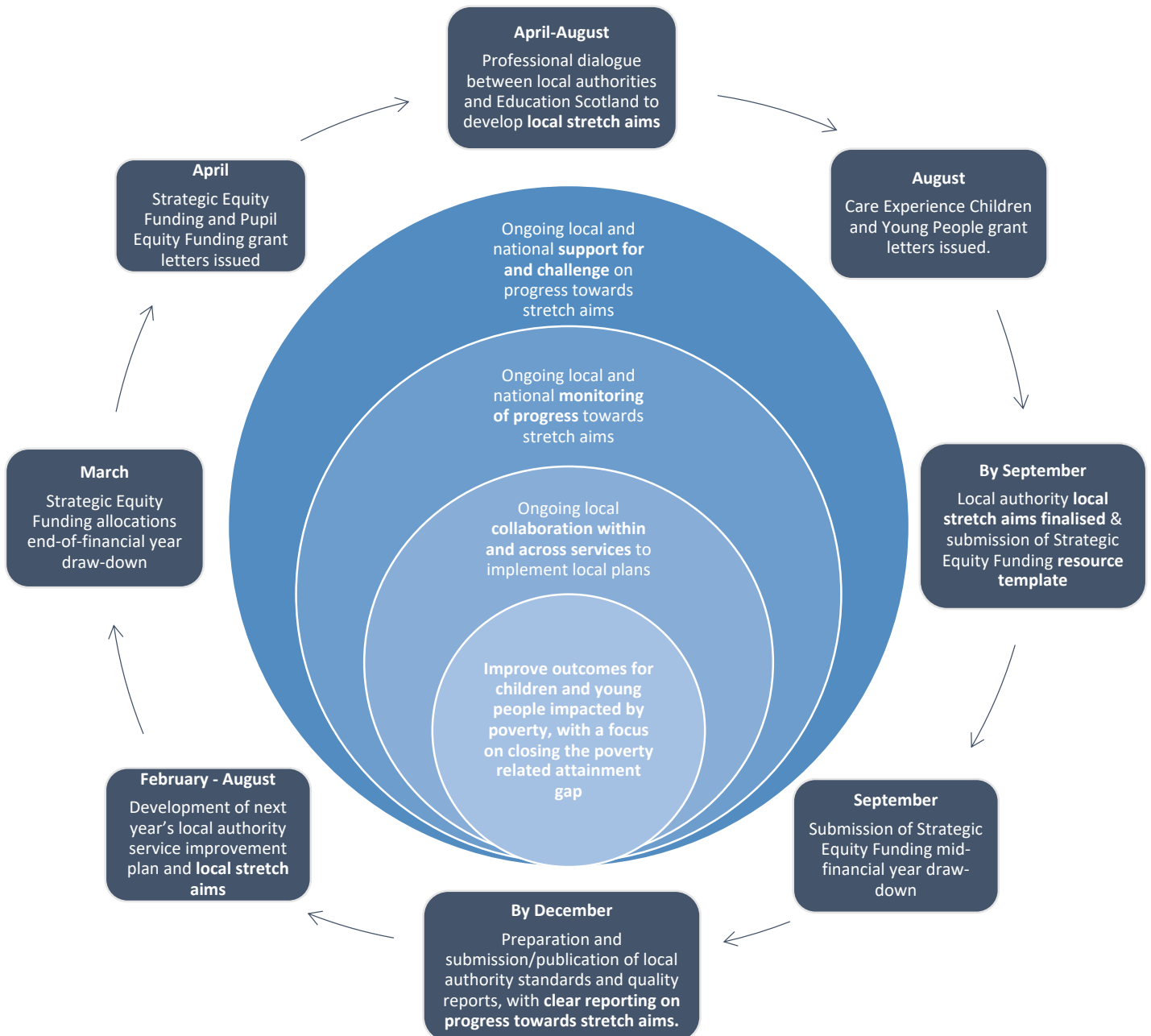
- the original stretch aims set out in the local authority education service improvement plan and the extent to which they have been achieved;
- the measures described in the local authority education service improvement plan and any additional data to report on the impact on children and young people affected by poverty. Both qualitative and quantitative data should be used to detail whether the expected impact was achieved – with clear quantitative progress against the NIF measures included; and
- examples of supports and interventions which have been effective.

There should be clear narrative on how Attainment Scotland Funding (PEF, SEF and CECYP funding) contributed to local approaches to meeting locally identified stretch aims. There should be evidence of strategic coherence and alignment to the use of these funding streams.

Local authorities should share reporting on progress with Scottish Government and Education Scotland by the end of December annually. This can be via their annually published improvement reports (for which education authorities have an existing duty to provide Scottish Ministers a copy once published).

For CECYP funding, arrangements will continue as they have done since its roll-out in 2018/19 as part of existing relevant authority reporting requirements, with reports shared with the Scottish Government and Education Scotland at the end of the academic year, highlighting evidence of impact through both qualitative and quantitative information. Separate CECYP guidance sets this out in full.

Fig. 1. Scottish Attainment Challenge – planning and reporting cycle





4. Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities

The roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the range of key stakeholders engaged in education/school improvement, including reducing the poverty-related attainment gap, are well established and are articulated in the [Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000](#) and the [2018 Joint Agreement](#).

This Framework seeks to further articulate the responsibilities for monitoring, support and challenge in relation to the Scottish Attainment Challenge in particular and focuses on local authorities, schools, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, Education Scotland and the Scottish Government.

4.1 Local authorities and their staff

Local authorities are responsible for:

- preparing annual plans, including stretch aims, to contribute to the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge;
- supporting school improvement through providing assistance to schools and partners by:
 - supporting schools to identify poverty-related gaps through coaching, professional learning and supporting access to tracking and monitoring and data analysis tools;
 - providing professional learning around planning (data, aims/ outcomes and measures), interventions and approaches;

- offering practical support to schools, where required, in terms of financial management and HR; and
 - supporting and challenging schools in their use of PEF to make progress in improving the health and wellbeing and educational outcomes of children and young people impacted by poverty.
- effectively using data, and the Scottish Attainment Challenge Logic Model, to explore a shared understanding of the local context with Education Scotland, supporting the setting of ambitious local authority stretch aims, monitoring performance and progressing towards achieving these stretch aims;
 - ongoing, active monitoring of plans for recovery and to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap and improve health and wellbeing, supporting and challenging key stakeholders and/or partners; and adjusting plans where necessary to ensure progress;
 - reporting on progress toward their locally identified local authority stretch aims;
 - reporting on the effective investment of Attainment Scotland Funding;
 - collaborating with a range of services across the local authority and in local communities to secure additional contributions to the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge; and,
 - engaging in professional dialogue with Education Scotland and Scottish Government to support maximum impact of the resources benefiting children and young people affected by poverty, including through professional dialogue to support local self-evaluation and improvement planning, such as the development of stretch aims.
- School leaders** are responsible for:
- the improvement of outcomes and attainment, including tackling the poverty-related attainment gap and improved health and wellbeing, in their schools;
 - working as part of a collaborative learning community, the local authority and working with others, in order to make decisions that most benefit their children and young people's outcomes;
 - ensuring that children and young people participate meaningfully in their own learning, in decision-making relating to the life and work of the school and in the wider community;
 - the development and implementation of School Improvement Plans which include approaches to contributing to the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge;
 - the effective use of data, and the Scottish Attainment Challenge Logic Model, to explore a shared understanding of local context with local authority colleagues and/or Education Scotland, including to support the development of ambitious plans and monitoring of performance and progress towards achieving the aims within those plans;
 - using Pupil Equity Funding to provide additionality to enhance, scale or introduce new approaches to tackling the poverty-related attainment gap within the school, across the learning community or in partnership with local services; and
 - reporting on progress towards stated aims and tackling the poverty-related attainment gap in their annual Standards and Quality Report.

Other services within local authorities:

All services within a local authority play a valuable role in the contribution they make to the Scottish Attainment Challenge. It would be beneficial to reflect their contribution to the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge in local plans, for example, in Children's Services plans, Local Child Poverty Action Plans and Reports and Community Learning and Development plans. This will ensure there is alignment of the Scottish Attainment Challenge mission with other relevant local authority plans and there are references to relevant plans in education service improvement plans.

4.2 Regional Improvement Collaboratives

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

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

4.3 Education Scotland

The Scottish Attainment Challenge mission is central to all of Education Scotland's work supporting Scottish educators. To support this all teams will review and enhance approaches to professional learning and leadership and provision of professional advice and support in closing the poverty-related attainment gap. They will lead improvement and build capacity, share practice and broker connections with partners. Working collaboratively with local authorities and stakeholders, staff will support the identification of any gaps in service provision and provide support, where required, to address these.

Through senior leaders, Senior Regional Advisors, Attainment Advisors and NIF Officers, Education Scotland will:

- play a key role in working with local authority senior leaders to develop local stretch aims ensuring these are appropriately ambitious and focused on closing the poverty-related attainment gap and improving outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty;
- effectively 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;
- engage in professional dialogue with local authority senior leaders to support local self-evaluation and improvement plans, including the stretch aims;
- support local authorities to deliver an agreed plan which provides universal, targeted and intensive support as required to ensure recovery, progress and achievement of stretch aims; and

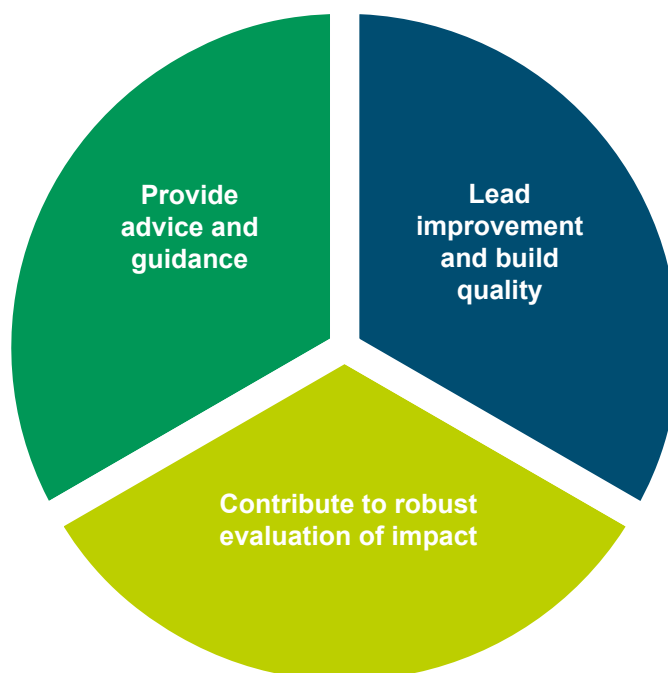
- provide professional advice and support to local authority senior leaders. This will have a focus on supporting collaboration and sharing practice within and between local authorities to maximise impact of the resources to support children and young people affected by poverty.

Attainment Advisors will have additional roles in supporting education leaders and practitioners with the above through their 3 key functions, all of which are informed by evidence gathered through local, regional and national data (fig 2).

They will work collaboratively with local authority staff in their varying roles to co-create and deliver a programme of support and challenge to be delivered across the local authority. This

universal, targeted or intensive support aims to support recovery and accelerate progress in tackling the poverty-related attainment gap and improving outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty. It will include monitoring, evaluating and providing feedback on progress towards achieving the agreed aims, the impact of the Attainment Scotland Fund at local level and Scottish Attainment Challenge self-evaluation and reporting. This will include both local authority stretch aims and schools' aims/outcomes. Attainment Advisors have a role and responsibility to support and challenge the effective planning, implementation and evaluation of the impact of all aspects of the ASF, including SEF, PEF and CECYP funding.

Fig. 2. Attainment Advisors – 3 key functions





Education Scotland will evaluate the impact of their work against the outcomes and measures set out in the organisation's corporate plan and draw on stakeholder feedback to support this; and through the Attainment Scotland Fund evaluation by Scottish Government.

4.4 Scottish Government

The Scottish Government is responsible for delivering the policy agenda of Ministers and supporting key partners to contribute to that. In the context of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, this includes:

- responsibility for the improvement in the quality of school education provided for Scotland;
- in doing the above, exercising powers to reduce inequalities of outcome for pupils impacted by socio-economic disadvantage;
- accountability to Parliament;
- setting policy framework for the Scottish Attainment Challenge, based on extensive stakeholder consultation and agreement of Ministers;
- distributing funding to local authorities and (indirectly) to schools via the

Attainment Scotland Fund to support local implementation of the Scottish Attainment Challenge;

- monitoring the investment of Attainment Scotland Fund and national progress towards achieving the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge;
- engaging in annual dialogue, alongside Education Scotland, on locally identified stretch aims and the associated Attainment Scotland Fund allocations used to contribute to plans to achieve those aims;
- engaging in annual dialogue, alongside Education Scotland, on local progress towards identified stretch aims;
- supporting and challenging, with and through Education Scotland, limited progress and variation in outcomes;
- gathering and publication of attainment and other related data; 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](#).

4.5 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education has a key role in giving assurance about the quality of education children and young people experience. HM Inspectors also have a unique role in providing evidence to inform policy and practice because the advice is independent and based on first-hand, observed evidence of the impact of policy implementation on the learner. HM Inspectors will inspect the effectiveness of the arrangements to accelerate progress on improving outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty are being improved. They will gather and share evidence of what is working well and where further development is needed. Evidence from inspection activity will also be used to help leaders and practitioners to build their own capacity to improve.



4.6 Other services and partners

A range of other services, partners and stakeholders beyond local and national government and its agencies have vital contributions to make to achieving the mission the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Amongst these are:

- children, young people and their families, who (as noted above and is clear in the associated guidance for the Scottish Attainment Challenge funding streams) have a key role in influencing the approaches undertaken locally and also in sharing their views on the success/impact of any given approach. As is clear in the UNCRC, “every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously” (Article 12, UNCRC);
- the third sector, with its wide range of national and community based organisations whose skills and expertise are vital supports that local authorities and schools should seek to draw on to support and enhance their work to achieve the Scottish Attainment Challenge mission; and
- academic institutions have a vital role to play in terms of the support that they can provide to local authorities and schools, the training of new teachers and leaders, and research on equitable approaches to education in Scotland and internationally.

Annex A – National Improvement Framework – 11 key measures

27-30 month review

HWB total difficulties score: age 4 – 12

HWB total difficulties score: age 13 & 15

ACEL Primary – literacy – P1, P4 & P7 combined

ACEL Primary – numeracy – P1, P4 & P7 combined

ACEL Secondary – literacy – S3 3rd level or better

ACEL Secondary – numeracy – S3 3rd level or better

SCQF level 4 or above – 1 or more on leaving school

SCQF level 5 or above – 1 or more on leaving school

SCQF level 6 or above – 1 or more on leaving school

Participation measure

Annex B – Local Authority Stretch Aims and Reporting Exemplars

Senior leaders across education are familiar with developing aims, outcomes and measures at the start of their planning process. They are equally familiar with evaluating and reporting on the impact of plans through Standards and Quality reports.

This annex draws together practice from local authorities to highlight examples of stretch aims and reporting expected for the Scottish Attainment Challenge Strategic Equity Funding.

DATA LOCAL AUTHORITIES USED TO DEVELOP THEIR AMBITIOUS, ACHIEVABLE AIMS:

Local authorities completed robust contextual analysis which allowed them to set ambitious but achievable stretch aims. This included looking at and analysing:

- ACEL and Senior phase data for children and young people affected by poverty. This data included SIMD as well as other data sources such as free school meals, clothing and footwear grants and/ or local data sets. Some also considered the intersectionality of data with factors like ASN, gender, etc.
- Looking at data longitudinally. Data was considered over at least a 3-year period to determine any pattern of progress. Some considered average progress achieved over several years as part of this.
- Data being considered and benchmarked against national measures.
- Impact of COVID-19 on children and young people affected by poverty in their area and the impact on their attainment.
- The impact of interventions previously implemented on outcomes for children and young people.
- The views of stakeholders, especially children and young people.

Reporting is relatively simple when plans have set initial aims and measures which are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed) and progress is monitored, collating evidence of impact throughout the year. All of this information is then used to report on impact.

Detail required within local authority stretch aims:

Consistency in the articulation of the essential stretch aims is vital. Exemplars therefore include a table that sets out how these aims could be articulated in local authority plans. The composition of the plans, the substance to reach stretch aims and the underlying indicators of progress will still be entirely in the gift of local authorities to develop in line with local processes and approaches. However local authority plans must provide information on:

- **Annual stretch aims for:**

1. Overall attainment for all.
2. SIMD Q1 and Q5.
3. Tackling the poverty related attainment gap.

- **At a minimum these should include (core) stretch aims for:**

- a. ACEL levels – P1, 4, 7 literacy combined and numeracy combined;
- b. Proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more passes at SCQF level 5 based on ‘Summary statistics for attainment and initial leaver destinations’ publication;
- c. Proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more passes at SCQF level 6 based on ‘Summary statistics for attainment and initial leaver destinations’ publication;
- d. Participation measure: proportion of 16-19 years olds participating in education, employment or training based on Annual Participation Measure produced by Skills Development Scotland; and
- e. Health and wellbeing, using a local measure/suite of measures, including, for example, attendance.

The importance of wider achievements and other aims, including HWB is recognised. Therefore local authorities can also detail additional stretch aims which are more specific to local authorities own context and datasets. These can include: attendance, HWB, wider achievement aims, reducing cost of the school day, etc.

- Recognising the importance of wider achievements and a range of other factors that underpin positive outcomes for children and young people, stretch aims should also be detailed for a range of further local priorities, using local measures.

The template below details all the information required for the “core” aims. It is important that to ensure consistency and enable a national understanding of local ambitions, local authorities articulate their “core” stretch aims using the four NIF measures set out above using this format. This can be embedded in existing local plans however it might work best for local authorities.

Blank template:

	NIF Measure or wider LA measure?			
	Overall levels	SIMD Quintile 1	SIMD Quintile 5	Gap (Q1 – Q5)
Current level				
Stretch aim to be achieved 2022/23				
Improvement (percentage point)				

There are a small number of local authorities where SIMD Q1 and Q5 data is not available or suitable to be used in this format. If this is the case, this should be discussed further and an alternative format agreed with Education Scotland and Scottish Government as part of the ongoing professional dialogue. Any alternative format should be designed to represent how the local authority is improving outcomes for their most disadvantaged learners. For example, this could consider alternative SIMD quintile comparisons or FSM data.

As noted in section 2.2.2 in the body of the Framework, it is also recognised that the “core” measures are likely to evolve in time as NIF measures are consulted upon and wider measures of the curriculum are introduced following recent OECD recommendations (2021).

Providing this information will enable annual national data aggregation. It will support monitoring and tracking of progress towards achieving the programme’s mission of improving outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty related attainment gap.

Exemplar 1: ACEL and improving outcomes for learners affected by poverty

Information within local authority Education Plan:

Overall levels for children achieving expected levels in numeracy in *local authority A* are slightly above national averages. However the percentage of children in SIMD Q1 achieving expected levels in numeracy is below their peers in Scotland. Therefore we will be prioritising action in this area over the next 4 years. Self-evaluation indicates further work on pedagogy of numeracy and adult confidence (staff and parent/carer) in numeracy is required.

	ACEL P1, 4, 7 Numeracy Combined			
	Overall levels	SIMD Quintile 1	SIMD Quintile 5	Gap (Q1 – Q5)
Current level (2020/ 21)	76%	60%	86%	26%
Stretch aim to be achieved 2022/23	80%	66%	87%	21%
Improvement (percentage point)	4pp	6pp	1pp	5pp

Reporting (through local authority Standards and Quality Report)

Support was provided across *local authority A* for Numeracy Champions and Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs) in almost all primary schools in CPA (Concrete Pictorial Abstract) approaches. There was also a pilot study in 5 primary schools looking at different ways to engage families using these approaches.

Data collected through ACEL tracking in December and March indicated that most schools were on track to achieving the aims they had set for numeracy in P1, P4 and P7 combined. Additional support was provided to schools if required. The focus of this support was around the fidelity of targeted interventions through additional support for PSAs and sharing practice across schools regarding pedagogy. It also highlighted further work required on staff confidence in P3-5 across the local authority.

By June 2023, 67% of children from Q1 achieved expected levels of numeracy in P1, 4, 7 combined. Therefore this stretch aim was achieved. Children in Q5 also improved expected levels from 86 to 89%. This resulted in the gap decreasing by 4% rather than the 5% expected. Nevertheless stretch aims set for expected levels in numeracy for P1, 4, 7 combined were achieved for children from both quintile 1 and quintile 5, with children from quintile 1 improving at a faster rate than their less disadvantaged peers. Overall children in *local authority A* continue to achieve above national averages for expected levels in numeracy across primary schools. The annual stretch aim was exceeded and 81% of children overall achieved expected levels of numeracy in 2023.

Exemplar 2: Health and wellbeing

Information within local authority Education Plan

Although attendance rates for children who are looked after has improved over the past 5 years, *local authority B* data indicates that attendance for children and young people who are looked after is lower than that of peers. This is true for both primary and secondary school learners.

	Attendance rates for children and young people who are looked after			
	Overall levels (PS)	Overall levels (Sec)	CYP who are looked after (PS)	CYP who are looked after (Sec)
Current level (2020/ 21):	95%	92%	90%	79%
Stretch aim to be achieved 2022/23:	96%	94%	96%	85%
Improvement (percentage point)	1pp	2pp	6pp	6pp

Local authority learning reviews, the local Champions Board, The Promise and the ASL Review all stress the importance of having the voice of the young person at the centre of decision making. At present, our survey of children and young people who are looked after indicates that only half of children who are looked after feel their voices are heard and represented at their reviews in school and at looked after reviews. Our stretch aim for this will be that by July 2023, 75% of children and young people will advise their voices are heard and acted upon. This evidence gathering will be further supported through a random sampling activity by Educational Psychology Services. They will review 20% of children's plans completed from August 2022-July 2023 to evaluate the sections detailing the child or young person's view. This is currently not as consistent as it should be. Therefore our stretch aim is that all multi-agency children's plans reviewed will have the children and young people's views fully completed, detailing their views on their current situation and learning.

Reporting through the local authority Standards and Quality report

The stretch aims for children attending primary school who are looked after was met in *local authority B*, with attendance rising to 94.2%. Although the stretch aim for secondary schools was not met this year, it did improve to 82%. Additional evidence indicated that interventions did effectively impact on the numbers of young people who are looked after and who have long term absence at secondary schools. The attendance improved with only 8 learners attending education for less than 50% of openings. This is an improvement from 16 learners the previous year.

80% of children and young people who are looked after and who completed the local authority survey indicated they felt their voices were heard and acted upon. This was supported through the sampling activity by Educational Psychology Services of the multi-agency children's plans. All children's plans reviewed had completed the sections detailing children and young people's views on their current situation and learning. Further analysis of why 20% of children did not feel their voices were heard will be carried out to inform aims and interventions for next year.

Annex C – Summary for Schools

Scope

- The mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge: *to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.*
- Support education recovery, increase pace of progress and reduce variation in progress.

General principles

- Resources for the Scottish Attainment Challenge, through the Attainment Scotland Fund, will be provided to schools through Pupil Equity Funding (PEF).
- Educators will play a vital role in breaking the cycle of poverty and making a long-term contribution to Scotland's national mission to tackle child poverty through the collaboration between schools, local authorities and other partners.
- Funding must provide targeted support for children and young people (and their families if appropriate) affected by poverty to help support them achieve their full potential.

Planning

- Headteachers will continue to have access to their school's full PEF allocation and should work in partnership with each other, their school community, children and young people and their families, and their local authority, to agree the use of the funding.
- Use existing mechanisms, include plans for PEF in annual School Improvement Plans, include clear, measurable aims for progress in tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.

Monitoring and Reporting

- Report on the impact of PEF annually in school Standards and Quality Reports.
- Use existing reporting mechanisms to Parent Council and Forum.
- There is provision for PEF allocations to be carried forward into the subsequent financial year. Schools should liaise closely with their authority to agree arrangements for carrying forward the funding into the new financial year (and, in exceptional circumstances, into the new academic year). Other than in exceptional circumstances, it should be invested in full within the same academic year.
- Where underspends accumulate, schools should expect scrutiny from their local authority, Scottish Government and Education Scotland; and be prepared to discuss approaches to effectively utilising the funding to ensure it supports pupils most impacted by poverty.
- Ongoing local monitoring of progress and engagement with children and young people, families required, with support and challenge from local authority, peers and Education Scotland, and appropriate adjustments made locally to ensure progress in tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Reflect existing statutory duties and those in the [2018 Joint Agreement](#).
- Expectation of collaboration, transparency, support and challenge in a mature system focused on the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.
- Use PEF to provide additionality to enhance, scale or introduce new approaches to tackling the poverty-related attainment gap within the school or in partnership with local services.

Annex D – Abbreviations and key terms

Abbreviation or term used in document	Further information
AA	Education Scotland, Attainment Advisor
ACEL	Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Level
Annual local authority plan	The plan which details local authority stretch aims is the current plan which the local authority uses to plan to improve the educational outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty.
ASF	Attainment Scotland Fund – the £1bn investment in the Scottish Attainment Challenge, which includes Strategic Equity Funding, Pupil Equity Funding and Care Experienced Children and Young People funding.
ASN	Additional Support Needs
CECYP	Care Experienced Children and Young People
ES	Education Scotland
FSM	Free School Meals
HWB	Health and wellbeing
Intensive support	Support provided to local authorities and schools where there is a consistent barrier and no, or very limited, progress is being made to improving outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty.
NIF	National Improvement Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PEF	Pupil Equity Funding
RIC	Regional Improvement Collaborative
SAC	Scottish Attainment Challenge
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SEF	Strategic Equity Funding
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SNCT	Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers
SQR	Standards and Quality Report

Abbreviation or term used in document	Further information
SRA	Education Scotland, Senior Regional Advisor
Stretch aim	Stretch aims for improvement purposes are specifically focussed on the improvement which a system needs to make in order to reach a goal eg closing the gap. Achieving the aims mean significant steps are made to achieving the goal.
Targeted support	Support provided to local authorities and schools with the most need. This may be those with the highest levels of poverty or others depending on the data and contextual analysis.
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
Universal support	Support which is available to all local authorities and schools



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