



**Scotland's Commissioner for  
Children and Young People**

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Dear Colleague

On behalf of the Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers' Network, a network on which my office sits as an observer, I enclose a report on the extent to which children's issues have been addressed and prioritised in Single Outcome Agreements for 2009-10.

Following the publication of the first round of SOAs in 2008-09, the Policy Officers' Network has met on a regular basis to discuss the SOAs and the extent to which issues affecting children have been addressed within them. The network reviewed the first round of agreements against a list of key children's issues including child poverty, child protection, looked after children and children's participation, amongst others. A report of this work was published in January 2009, providing an overview on the extent to which key children's issues are addressed and prioritised.

The Network has reviewed the second round of SOAs in a similar way, principally to identify any improvements in the way children's issues are being addressed. While they found some marked improvements, most notably in the way SOAs are embedding the ethos of national frameworks such as GIRFEC and Early Years, there are a number of issues which continue to raise concerns for children in Scotland. Not only are key issues receiving limited attention, on a broader level, the agreements often fail to demonstrate through their indicators how local outcomes will be actually be achieved. I believe this report provides a well-balanced review of SOAs in terms of what they say with regard to children and young people. I found it enormously informative and I hope you do too.

As the implementation phase of the SOAs begins, it is hoped that this report will assist those working in and with local and central government and, in particular, those responsible for developing future SOAs and prioritising issues. The SOAs have given increased attention to the important role that the voluntary sector plays, both as a service provider and a strategic partner. The organisations that form part of the network, both individual and collectively, look forward to working with local authorities and the Scottish Government in the future to ensure that all children in Scotland and their families receive appropriate and adequate services so that our children may reach their fullest potential.

The Network would welcome any comments you have on this report.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tam Baillie'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tam Baillie  
Scotland's Commissioner for Children & Young People

On behalf of the Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers' Network

# SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENTS FOR SCOTTISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT, 2009-10

## A thematic analysis by the Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers' Network

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Written by Emma Davidson on behalf of the Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers' Network and Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People

## About the Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers' Network

The Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers' Network is an informal Network which meets approximately every three months to discuss legislative and policy developments affecting children and young people in Scotland. The Network's discussions sometimes result in joint work between the organisations represented, such as this analysis of Single Outcome Agreements.

Members of the SOA working group comprised Aberlour; Barnardos Scotland; CHILDREN 1<sup>ST</sup>; Children in Scotland; for Scotland's Disabled Children (fSDC) liaison project; Save the Children; Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People; Who Cares? Scotland and YouthLink Scotland.

These organisations are also members of the Network:

Action for Children; Capability Scotland; Childline Scotland; CCPS; Fairbridge Scotland; Family Fund; Includem; NDCS Scotland; Quarriers; SACR; Scottish Refugee Council; Scottish Youth Parliament; Shelter Scotland and YWCA Scotland. As a statutory body, the office of Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP) attends Network meetings as an observer and was involved in the development of this report.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Single outcome agreements (SOAs) were introduced in 2008 following a 'Concordat' between central and local government in Scotland.
- The main policy objective was to devolve decision making to local authorities and their strategic partners. In this way, councils could be more responsive to local needs.
- Much ring fenced funding was removed with the outcome that many voluntary organisations have expressed concern that their service users would lose out to more pressing national concerns (such as the economy or alcohol abuse)
- Our review of the 2009-10 SOAs has found the following:
  1. There has been some improvement in relation to the treatment of children's issues since the first round of SOAs. Important national frameworks such as Early Years, the Curriculum for Excellence and Getting it Right for Every Child, appear to be impacting on the strategic direction Councils are taking.
  2. Issues affecting children are receive considerable attention in the national outcomes and overall, are covered extensively in the Single Outcome Agreements. However, children are most commonly discussed in relation to their protection, education and health thereby limiting how children are conceptualised in the context of the SOAs.
  3. Key national priorities such as play, children with disabilities and children's rights continue to receive little attention, while issues such as mental health, domestic abuse or learning disability have difficulty competing with bigger and more public concerns.
  4. On the whole local outcomes tend to be aspirational and strategic but are often too broad and lack specificity. There was a notable 'disconnect' between the way a topic is discussed, the local outcomes set and the indicator used for measurement.
  5. The volume and inconsistency of the indicators being utilised make the system unwieldy and frequently they were inadequate for monitoring outcomes.
  6. Many of the indicators and targets set lacked ambition. It is questionable how aspirational the SOAs are in improving children's lives.
  7. It is understood that the 2009-10 SOAs are the basis upon which future progress will be monitored. However, there remains a lack of understanding as to how progress made will be reported and monitored. In particular, it is unclear whether the inspectorate regimes are ready to collect evidence of success.

## **Introduction**

In November 2007 the Scottish Government entered into a 'Concordat' with local authorities, setting out a new relationship between the two tiers of government based on mutual respect, trust and joint accountability. Central to this way of working has been the replacement of much ring-fenced funding with block grants, thereby giving councils more discretion over how to allocate their budgets.

A key element of the Concordat has been the introduction of the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA). A SOA is a document which sets out the outcomes each local authority is seeking to achieve. Not only should a SOA reflect local needs and priorities, but it should also be related to the Scottish Government's national outcomes (NOs). The first round of SOAs was in place by June 2008 and the second was submitted to the Scottish Government in February 2009 and agreed in May 2009.

For those working in policy areas related to children and families, these changes raised a number of concerns:

- That the movement from national to local prioritisation could result in the loss of a strategic approach and reduce the priority given to children and families in need of social care and support.
- That the removal of the ring-fence from a number of social care and support funding streams may result in funding being absorbed into the main local government settlement and subsequently reduced.
- That within the new framework there is an absence of clear indicators and targets which would enable local and central government to effectively measure performance.

In response, the Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers' Network completed a thematic review of the 2008/09 SOAs. Published in January 2009, the report concluded that within all 32 agreements there was a general lack of attention given to children's issues. Where children were considered, it was most commonly in relation to their poverty or their vulnerability, rather than their rights, ability to participate or their agency. The report also found a disappointing level of attention being given to key national priorities for Scottish children, such as looked after children, children with disabilities, play and the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). On a general level, the report revealed that many of the indicators were poorly devised and inadequate for measuring outcomes.

Our first report acknowledged that the 2008/09 SOAs represented a new way of working and therefore required time to 'bed in'. The aim of this new report is to interrogate the second round of SOAs to determine whether progress has been made in the last year. In particular, we are seeking to understand if the extent and depth of attention given to issues affecting children and families has been improved upon.

## **Our Approach**

We have adopted a similar approach to this report as in the previous year. First, the 32 documents were divided amongst members of the Network with the objective of reviewing each agreement according to what they said about children. A list of key themes of mutual concern to the Network was drawn up. These are broadly in line with those used in the previous report, with some minor refinements (see Annex 1 for details).

Following this initial review, a more detailed thematic analysis was conducted following the same approach as adopted in the previous report. To ensure consistency the analysis was completed by one officer from SCCYP and in particular looked at:

- The extent of coverage that each theme was given by the 32 local authorities.
- The national outcome(s) and local outcome(s) within which each theme was situated.
- The national and/or local indicator(s) chosen to measure performance against the outcome.
- The types of issues discussed under each theme and the identification of any common issues or gaps.
- The links made to other documents.

The findings of this analysis follow below. Throughout the text, references are made to numbered National Outcomes and Indicators. These numbers can be cross referenced against the list contained in Annex 2. The term 'children' is used throughout the report and refers to anyone under the age of 18.

## **1. Asylum Seeking Children**

Asylum seeking children received no coverage within the SOAs. While it is recognised that this will not be an issue of strategic importance for all LAs, it is concerning that Council areas responsible for dispersal programmes have made no reference to the specific vulnerabilities that young asylum seekers may face; either in school, at home or in their wider communities.

Wider discussions on migration, particularly from A8 countries, feature in a small number of SOAs, yet these generally consist of scant references to the size of the minority population. Only two local authorities – interestingly both rural – discuss migration as a key strategic outcome in relation to achieving a diverse and prosperous economy.

For adult asylum seekers, there is limited discussion relating to the high levels of demand for learning programmes that support English language development, but there is no consideration of how this may affect or relate to families.

## **2. Child Poverty**

All the 2009-10 SOAs discuss poverty or deprivation - some make it a key priority, while others give it only limited attention. Most authorities are able to identify specific localities suffering from multiple deprivation and make reference to data from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (a tool for measuring poverty) as their main source of evidence. Some LAs are concerned about growing levels of deprivation and the impact this has in relation on learning, health and employability. Commitments to tackling the causes of poverty and the introduction of local poverty strategies are discussed by several LAs.

While poverty receives considerable attention, only half of the agreements contain specific reference to the effects of poverty on children. This is lower than the previous round of agreements. Nonetheless, it remains difficult to identify LAs who are engaged with the issue of child poverty. While there are examples of SOAs explicitly discussing child poverty, there are instances where this fails to be followed through into local outcomes or indicators. Conversely, some local authorities who make no explicit reference to child poverty have strong anti-poverty strategies which will have a positive impact on children's lives.

In relation to national outcomes, there appears to have been a shift in the way child poverty is discussed by the SOAs. It is most commonly discussed in relation to NO7 ('we have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society'), while NO8 ('we have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk') is used far less frequently. Interestingly, very few LAs (only 4) make specific reference to poverty in relation to NO2 ('we realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people').

While many LAs have signalled their commitment to tackling the significant inequalities in society, the local outcomes expressed in the SOAs tend to be weak in their strategic approach. In a number of cases, the local outcome is merely a broad promise to reducing poverty or multiple deprivation and while some agreements are more focused – for example on equal access to services or improving the quality of life in the most deprived areas - few capture the LAs unique strategic direction. While it is recognised that the SOAs are not a vehicle for describing services provision, the SOAs would benefit from a clearer expression of what they consider to be the main contributors to deprivation (be it health, education, employment) and how they intend to address these.

The indicators used provide some understanding how LAs will seek to monitor their efforts, although again many of the measurements are fairly generic. For example, most attention has been given to tracking the number of households experiencing multiple deprivation. In many cases, this translates into the measurement of income levels or numbers on state benefits. In relation to children, the most commonly used indicator relates to the number of children living in households dependent on benefits

(or similar). Access to free school dinner and the prevalence of dental disease are used fairly infrequently.

### Child Poverty – Summary

Context	NOs	Themes in LOs	Indicators used	Links made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Strategic commitments and the Fairer Scotland Fund</li> <li>o % most deprived datazones in area</li> <li>o Impact of poverty on health, learning and equality</li> <li>o Unemployment, worklessness, benefit claimants</li> </ul>	Core: 7,  Other: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Reduce the impact of poverty / fewer people living in poverty</li> <li>o Prosperous economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Median earnings of workforce</li> <li>o No of key benefit claimants</li> <li>o % children living in workless households</li> <li>o Proportion of children living in low income households or households dependent on benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Local anti-poverty strategy</li> <li>o Health partnership agreements</li> <li>o Fairer Scotland Fund</li> <li>o Local economic strategy</li> <li>o Local regeneration strategy</li> </ul>

### 3. Child Protection

All 32 SOAs give some attention to child protection issues, however, the quality and the extent of the coverage is mixed. All but three LAs discussed child protection within the contextual sections of their SOAs. The majority of these statements outlined service delivery issues, such as progression in relation to 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC), integrated assessment frameworks and arrangements for multi-agency working. This is an improvement on the previous year's SOAs, where examples of collaborative working were fairly limited. A small number specifically mention the Early Years Framework in relation to child protection, thereby making the link between early intervention and the protection of children. While strategic discussions such as these are positive, in a small but significant number of cases this contextual information remains limited to descriptive statistics – for example, the number of children currently on protection registers or the number of social work referrals.

In the majority of cases, child protection was aligned to one or more national outcomes (NO) – this was most commonly NO8 ('we have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk'). However, NO5 ('our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed') and NO9 ('we live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger') were also cited fairly frequently.

Four local authorities had no local outcomes relating to child protection. Of those that did, the need to protect vulnerable and at risk children is mentioned in 16 agreements - perhaps surprisingly this number is not higher. Typical examples of outcomes relating to protection include ensuring that "children are protected from abuse, neglect, harm by others" and "vulnerable children will be protected". Other Councils have chosen to include local outcomes which consider support through either the provision of high quality services or within the family. Local outcomes also discuss child protection in relation to the broader theme of safety. Key themes here include road safety, antisocial behaviour, crime and domestic violence.

Four of the LAs contained no indicators relating to child protection. Those that did principally fell into two categories – achieving positive inspection reports for child protection services and reducing the number of child protection referrals / re-referrals being made. Child protection processes (i.e. timescales, the number of children visited after referral or the number of assessments being completed, number given exit interviews) were a further key theme, although staff training was only mentioned by three Councils. Corresponding to the local outcomes on safety, there were a number of issue based indicators relating to domestic abuse, accidents on the road and in the home and antisocial behaviour.

In several LAs, the indicators used are limited to inputs and outputs; and in some cases include only one or two indicators. Overall, it is difficult to understand how the aspirational local outcomes set out by LAs will actually be achieved. Furthermore, indicators which measured young people's personal experiences of child protection had limited coverage. While there are good practice examples (i.e. the percentage of children feeling safe at school or in the wider community, percentage feeling safe accommodated away from home, percentage reporting intimidation and harassment and the number of pupils who have reported bullying incidents who feel that adults have listened and responded appropriately to their concerns) these were fairly limited.

Finally, it is also worth noting that like last year the child protection indicators were extremely varied, highlighting the difficulties in undertaking any national monitoring based on SOA data. Taking domestic abuse as an example, some LAs set targets to reduce the rates of incidents, some to increase the reporting of domestic abuse incidents; while others set targets related to services (i.e. number accessing outreach and refuge services). Indicators relating to road accidents were more straightforward, with the majority adopting local indicator 38 (reduce number of children killed or seriously injured in road accidents).

## Child Protection – Summary

Context	NOs	Themes in LOs	Indicators used	Links made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Baseline data</li> <li>o Trends</li> <li>o Strategic service delivery (GIRFC, early years, integrated assessments, multi-agency working)</li> </ul>	Core: 8, 9, 5  Others: 1, 4, 6, 7, 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Protected</li> <li>o Safe</li> <li>o Supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Inspection rating</li> <li>o No of referrals / re-referrals</li> <li>o Specific issues (no. killed on road / no. of victim domestic abuse, crime, ASB)</li> <li>o Process i.e. timescales, assessments completed</li> <li>o Staff training (limited coverage)</li> <li>o Young people's experiences (limited coverage)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o GIRFEC</li> <li>o Children's Services Plan</li> <li>o Early Years Strategy</li> <li>o Inspection reports</li> </ul>

## 4. Children's Rights and Participation

NO4 aims to give children the 'best start in life' and make them 'successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens'. However, this is set principally in the context of children's welfare, rather than their agency or ability to participate. For example, the need for children to participate in issues or services that affect them is only given attention in 15 SOAs. Where it is discussed, this is most commonly done in the context of community engagement and the need to work with children on local issues (i.e. community planning and service development). Participation on national issues or in facilitating young people to have a voice in wider society receives only limited coverage. The desire to increase children's participation in volunteering and other cultural activities also features in a minority of SOAs.

Nonetheless, there are several good examples of involving children in their communities, such as youth forums, a young congress, consultation events, surveys and conferences for 'hard to hear' groups. While this demonstrates some recognition of children's contribution and the need to involve them in services that affect them, there is no notable improvement in the coverage of this issue since last year.

References to participation are most commonly made in relation to NO4, although NO11 ('we have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others') also features in a small number of SOAs.

There are numerous examples of local outcomes which seek to improve engagement and consultation with residents and communities or which seek to involve citizens in community life. Only ten of these specifically mention children, raising the question of whether there is an assumption that children are included or whether children are simply not regarded as citizens.

The indicators used to measure these processes vary across local authorities. The key ones relate to monitoring the number of children who take part in active citizenship activities or surveying children on the extent to which they believe their voices are heard. Most of the indicators relate to children's participation in formal settings (forums, pupil councils). It would be useful to have had more extensive consideration of alternative forms of participation (i.e. for young people who do not wish or are not able to become involved in formal settings).

Children's rights receive negligible attention, being explicitly mentioned by only one SOA (which makes direct reference to the UNCRC). Despite being an issue of national concern<sup>1</sup>, children's rights do not feature in any of the national indicators or local outcome indicators.

## Children's Rights and Participation – Summary

Context	NOs	Themes in LOs	Indicators used	Links made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Community engagement</li> <li>o Community planning</li> <li>o Volunteering</li> <li>o Local issues</li> </ul>	Core: 4, 11  Others: 5, 8, 13, 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Involvement in community life</li> <li>o Involvement in volunteering</li> <li>o Active citizenship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o % taking part in volunteering</li> <li>o % reporting that their views influence their school</li> <li>o No. of children participating in active citizenship activities</li> <li>o Satisfaction ratings from youth surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Community planning partnerships</li> <li>o Children's services</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/08/27133115/0>. This report, 'Do the Right Thing', was published in 2009 and outlines action taken by the Scottish Government in response to the UN Committee Concluding Observations 2008.

## 5. Disabilities

All the SOAs make some reference to disabilities in their area profiles; yet disappointingly few make any substantive reference to children with disabilities or children affected by disability.

Unlike the previous year, less attention has been given to the suitability and accessibility of public buildings and transport. This is perhaps the result of these facilities having met the necessary standards over the past year. Where accessibility is mentioned, only one makes specific reference to the access needs of children with disabilities (in this example, a school). This reflects a more general point that disabilities are often discussed by the SOAs in relation to the LAs statutory duties (for example that it complies with the Disability Discrimination Act). Not only should many of these duties have already been achieved, it also remains questionable as to whether the SOA is the correct place for monitoring such requirements.

As with last year's SOAs, only a very small number specifically mention learning disabilities. The majority choose to refer to 'disability' generically. Only two mention the implementation of the 'Same As You?'<sup>2</sup> and where estimates of needs are made these tend to relate to those aged over 16. A minority of SOAs have framed their discussion about disability under the category 'additional support needs'. Concerns are highlighted about the growing number of children with ASN and the implications this will have, both on universal and early years services. Children with additional support needs are also mentioned in relation to risk and child protection, assessment procedures and service provision.

In terms of national outcomes, disability is most frequently cited in relation to inequalities and life chances (NO7 'we have tackled the most significant inequalities in Scottish society' and NO8 'we have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk'). However, disability is also referred to under a range of other outcomes. Only limited reference was made in relation to NO4 ('our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens'), indicating that children with disabilities are considered primarily in relation to their needs, rather than their aspirations. This profile is similar to that of the 2008/09 SOAs.

The weak strategic position of disabilities is re-emphasised when the local outcomes are examined. While some SOAs specifically discuss children and disabilities, this is generally not translated into a specific local outcome. The limited references that are made tend to be very generic or concern service provision – for example "children get the help they need, when they need it" or "develop programmes and services for children with additional support needs, including disabilities".

In turn there are very few indicators that present targets for children with disabilities or children affected by disability. The examples that are included relate to assessment timescales, the provision of respite care and accessibility of public buildings (including schools). No local authorities have outcomes or indicators that challenge the more divisive attitudinal or financial barriers that serve to exclude disabled children and their families. There is only one example of engaging individuals with disabilities in decision-making processes via a Disability Equality Forum. However, this does not specifically mention children, nor is it attached to a specific local outcome.

### Disabilities – Summary

<b>Context</b>	<b>NOs</b>	<b>Themes in LOs</b>	<b>Indicators used</b>	<b>Links made</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Estimates of need (normally 16+)</li> <li>o Accessibility</li> <li>o Integrated assessment</li> <li>o Service provision (support services)</li> </ul>	Core: 6, 7, 10, 8  Others: 2, 11, 13, 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Meeting needs (generic statements)</li> <li>o Service provision</li> <li>o Accessibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Timescales for providing service</li> <li>o % assessments completed meeting national standards</li> <li>o 100% public buildings accessible</li> <li>o No. of respite nights</li> <li>o Provision of community based support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Same as You?</li> <li>o Social inclusion action plan</li> <li>o Challenging Disability</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/ldsr/docs/tsay-00.asp>. This report contained 29 recommendations for developing learning disability services and set out a ten year programme for change. The main message from 'The Same as You?' was that 'children and people with learning disabilities and their families should be able to have a good life, like anyone else'.

## 6. Drugs and Alcohol<sup>3</sup>

Drugs and alcohol continue to be an issue of national importance and unsurprisingly all the SOAs make some reference to it. However, only 17 make any specific reference to alcohol/drug use by children, a figure slightly above the previous year. Within the SOAs, the level of analysis on children's alcohol and drug use varies enormously. For example, one LA has simply included a local indicator 'prevalence of alcohol use by 13-15 year olds', with no contextual information; while others have provided rich background accompanied by strong indicators.

The most common theme discussed by the 17 SOAs is the impact that drugs and alcohol can have on young people's health, mental wellbeing and their safety. Indeed, a number of LAs have specifically commented on alcohol and drug misuse in relation to child protection. Only a small number of LAs explicitly made the connection between alcohol, drugs and antisocial behaviour. This recognition of children as potential victims of substance misuse is encouraging and moves away from a position where children are seen solely as users (and therefore a problem) or where the impact of misuse is ignored.

In terms of national outcomes, references to children's drug and alcohol use are spread between NO6 ('we live longer, healthier lives') and NO9 ('we live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger'). NO5 ('our children have the best start in life') and NO7 ('we have tackled the most significant inequalities') also feature fairly frequently.

The local outcomes set fall into three broad themes. The most common is simply an outcome which seeks to reduce substance misuse. Others focus more broadly on reducing the harmful affects of drugs and alcohol, either in terms of health and wellbeing or in relation to crime. Only a small number of LAs have included local outcomes which seek cultural change in the attitudes and behaviours towards drugs and alcohol.

The indicators relating to children and substance misuse vary considerably. Examples include numerical targets for referrals to the Children's Reporter on the grounds of alcohol or drugs misuse, 13 to 15-year-olds drinking or taking drugs in the previous fortnight/month, alcohol related A&E admissions for under 25-year-olds and children supported by community addiction teams.

Only a small number of authorities emphasised the importance of prevention and early intervention. Notable initiatives include targeted operations to reduce binge drinking amongst young people, support services, personal development programmes and youth diversionary activities. Multi-agency partnership working (police, health, education and social welfare services) was also highlighted as an important route to tackling substance misuse, while many authorities made specific links to their alcohol and/or drugs strategies. Unlike last year, only one LA made a call to the Scottish Government to support them in a continued focus on changing the culture of alcohol use in Scotland.

### Drugs and Alcohol – Summary

<i>Context</i>	<i>NOs</i>	<i>Themes in LOs</i>	<i>Indicators used</i>	<i>Links made</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Estimates on extent of problem</li> <li>○ Information about current programmes or initiatives</li> <li>○ Impact on health and wellbeing</li> </ul>	Core: 6, 9, 5, 7  Others: 4, 8, 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reduce substance misuse</li> <li>○ Reduce harmful affects</li> <li>○ Cultural change in the attitudes and behaviours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Number of referrals to the Children's Reporter on the grounds of alcohol or drugs misuse</li> <li>○ Number of children drinking or taking drugs in the previous fortnight/month</li> <li>○ Number of alcohol related A&amp;E admissions for under 25-year-olds</li> <li>○ Number of children assessed or supported by community addiction teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Alcohol and drugs strategies</li> <li>○ Health improvement plans</li> </ul>

## 7. Early Years Framework

For the majority of the SOAs, the Early Years Framework has been positioned as a key strategic priority (only two make no reference to the Framework). Throughout the documents there is a clear strategic awareness of the Scottish Government's guidance on early years and many have made explicit links to GIRFEC principles. Most LAs seem confident of the progress being made in relation to

<sup>3</sup> Note: alcohol and drug misuse by family and parents is considered in 'families and parenting' section.

early years, with several providing details of the strategic / multi-agency groups that have been established, the milestones that have been reached and the visions underpinning this work. Early years is most commonly discussed in relation to giving children 'the best start in life', but its role in tackling inequalities and 'breaking the cycle' of deprivation also features in several SOAs.

It is therefore unsurprising that early years is most commonly discussed in relation to NO5 ('our children have the best start in life') and NO4 ('our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens'). Despite several SOAs discussing early years in the context of 'breaking the cycle', only one LA referenced it in relation to NO7 ('we have tackled the most significant inequalities').

Most of the LAs (25) have included a local outcome in relation to early years which relates to the quality or access to services – for example, 'children have access to positive learning environments' or 'we will provide a range of enhanced support and services for children'. While attention is given to services, the SOAs are particularly poor in making a connection between early years and the role of families and parenting (for example, the quality of parent/child interaction). Another significant weakness is the lack of attention given to 'play', a key theme in early years. Only two local authorities discussed the importance of play opportunities in early years and the barriers to play. Some have focused more specifically on health inequalities in their local outcomes, either in relation to children or pregnant mothers. Others have simply included a more generic statement which seeks an outcome which will deliver young people 'the best start in life'.

Compared to the other topics, the early years indicators have much greater consistency (although any national monitoring would still not be possible). Commonly used examples are the proportion of new born children breastfed at 6-8 weeks, percentage of preschool education centres and nurseries receiving positive inspection reports, percentage of pre-school children attending pre-school provision / early years service and percentage women smoking in pregnancy. A much smaller number of LAs included indicators which specifically target vulnerable groups i.e. percentage of vulnerable children receiving early years service such as Sure Start. Only one LA included an indicator relating to the measurement of learners' experiences, although this may also be a feature of a positive inspection report. Staff training was also mentioned infrequently.

While indicators may be fairly consistent, they are notably reliant on existing datasets rather than seeking to develop new indicators which reflect the principles of the early years framework. Overall, the indicators are overly focused on measuring deficits, rather than the more positive elements of early years (such as play, pro-social behaviour or parent/child interaction). Based on the indicators currently being used by LAs, it remains unclear as to whether the SOAs alone will be able to adequately measure the success of early years policies across Scotland.

### Early Years Framework – Summary

Context	NOs	Themes in LOs	Indicators used	Links made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Strategic development / goals</li> <li>o Partnership working / delivery structures</li> <li>o Importance of early years on determining future outcomes</li> <li>o Breaking the cycle of deprivation</li> </ul>	Core: 4,5  Others: 3, 6, 8, 7, 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o All children have best start in life</li> <li>o Access to quality early years learning experiences</li> <li>o Improve health and emotional well being of children / pregnant mothers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o proportion of new born children breastfed at 6 weeks</li> <li>o % of preschool education centres and nurseries receiving positive inspection report</li> <li>o % of pre-school children attending pre-school provision / early years service</li> <li>o % women smoking in pregnancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Early Years Framework</li> <li>o GIRFEC for Curriculum Excellence</li> <li>o Parenting strategy</li> </ul>

## 8. Education

The SOAs have a strong focus on education and its importance in giving children the best start in life. While general discussions about attainment levels, the performance of schools and school rolls feature in almost all SOAs, the strategic importance given to the Curriculum for Excellence is also apparent. Several SOAs dedicate space to discussing their strategic approach to Curriculum for Excellence, and have included details of joint working, new approaches to 'active' learning, innovative classroom practices and new build projects.

References and indicators on education are most frequently contained within NO4 ('our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens') which

echoes the aims of the Curriculum for Excellence, and NO3 (we are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation). In the context of NO3, children are regarded as the future; the route towards a better educated and more successful Scotland. There are also a significant number of references to NO5 ('our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed') and NO8 ('we have improved life chances, for children, young people and families'). This latter NO draws the link between the role of education in tackling poverty and deprivation. The number of young people not in education, training or employment is highlighted as a priority issue in many SOAs, with one LA going as far as saying that there is a 'poverty of ambition' within its deprived communities, which leads young people to believe they have no chance at all.

We can see the Curriculum for Excellence philosophy translating into local outcomes, with many aiming to enable all young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Several talk of ensuring access to positive or high quality learning environments, while others demonstrate a commitment to the delivery of a flexible curriculum that meets the need of all young people and allows them to fulfil their potential. The word 'success' features heavily across the local outcomes and there is a sense that this does not simply relate to academic success, but personal achievements such as increased self esteem, motivation, resilience and confidence. Details of flexible learning and vocational opportunities support this. Yet while the majority of the local outcomes are progressive and aspirational, there are instances where outcomes and outputs are confused – for example, one LA has included a local outcome relating to the number of places in the vocational school programme; another has set an outcome to improve core skills of literacy and numeracy.

A further concern is that the local outcomes, whilst being strongly linked to the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence, are not adequately translated into indicators. The main indicators relate to academic performance and stages of learning (i.e. percentage of pupils attaining specific qualifications, pupil attendance / exclusion rates, proportion obtaining national levels for attainment in reading and numeracy), rather than the experience of the learner. Many include indicators seeking to maintain or increase the number of schools receiving positive HMle inspection reports and while it is likely that these will give attention to learners' experiences, the SOAs do not highlight this. Interestingly, only one LA included an indicator relating to the actual implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence.

There are nonetheless some good examples of measuring learning experiences. For instance, measuring the percentage of children who have positive perceptions of themselves as learners, the number of children involved in award schemes, playing musical instruments / outdoor learning and the percentage of pupils agreeing that 'my school recognises my achievements in and out of school'.

Finally, it is worth reiterating a point made with respect to the 2008/09 SOAs. The concept of inclusive education is considered within the SOAs, yet this continues to be focused on children living in deprived communities. Other aspects of inclusion (children with additional support needs, gender, ethnicity, A8 migrants<sup>4</sup>, Gypsy/Travellers and unaccompanied asylum seeking children) receive little or no attention.

### Education – Summary

Context	NOs	Themes in LOs	Indicators used	Links made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Attainment / performance of school Curriculum for Excellence philosophy / strategy</li> <li>o Deprivation and life changes</li> <li>o State of schools</li> </ul>	Core: 3, 4 Others: 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Enable all young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors</li> <li>o Ensuring access to positive learning environments</li> <li>o Opportunity to develop skills, confidence and self esteem to fullest potential</li> <li>o Young people are successful learners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o % pupils obtaining appropriate level in maths, reading and writing</li> <li>o Proportional educational establishments receiving positive inspection reports</li> <li>o Cumulative attainment of national qualifications</li> <li>o Attendance and exclusion rates</li> <li>o % school leavers in positive and sustained destinations</li> <li>o Learners' experiences / learners' needs are met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Education Service Plan</li> <li>o More Choice, More Chances</li> <li>o Children's Services Plan</li> <li>o Curriculum for Excellence</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> That is, migrants from the eight former Eastern European countries that acceded to the EU in 2004 (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia).

## 9. Employability

With regards to children and employability, the 2009/10 SOAs are very similar to the previous year. Employability remains an important strategic priority and with the exception of one document, all the SOAs make reference to helping young people into positive destinations after leaving school. Several mention the new 'More Choices, More Chances' agenda, while others provide details of projects aimed at supporting vulnerable young people into work. Importantly, most of the attention in terms of children is given to helping young people into work, with negligible attention given to the employability of parents currently excluded from the workforce. Again, this demonstrates little joined up thinking in relation to early years (see section above), especially given that lone parents are particularly vulnerable in terms of employability and welfare reform.

Helping young people into employment is most commonly referred to under NO2 ('we realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people') and NO3 ('we are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation'). We therefore see some balance between the desire to provide young people with better life chances and the need to realise Scotland's economic potential (i.e. seeing children as the future workforce). This balance is also reflected in the local outcomes, which range from ensuring that young people are supported reach their potential and have opportunities to access to rewarding jobs, to the need to create a vibrant economy.

The majority of SOAs use the indicator 'percentage of school leavers in positive and sustained destinations' or a variation of this (i.e. percentage of school leavers going into employment, education, training or volunteering). Other indicators relating to young people include statistics on the number of young people in 'More Choices, More Chances' category, number of 16 to 19-year-olds claiming benefits, the number of young people participating in skills for work / get ready for work programmes and the number of young people involved in vocational training schemes.

### Employability – Summary

Context	NOs	Themes in LOs	Indicators used	Links made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Data on number of young people going on to positive destinations on leaving school</li> <li>o More Choices, More Chances agenda</li> <li>o Link between supporting young people into employment and closing the gap</li> </ul>	Core: 2,3  Other: 1, 4, 7, 8, ,10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Creating vibrant economy</li> <li>o Maximising young people's opportunities to employment / reduce barriers to employment</li> <li>o Young people supported / prepared to enter world of work</li> <li>o People are better educated and skilled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o No of young people in 'More Choices, More Chances' category</li> <li>o No of 16 to 19-year-olds claiming benefits</li> <li>o No of young people participating in skills for work / get ready for work programmes</li> <li>o Number of young people involved in vocational training schemes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o More Choices, More Chances</li> <li>o Employability plans / jobs strategies</li> <li>o Economic strategies</li> <li>o Local and national programmes (Job Centre Plus, Skills Development Scotland, New Deal etc)</li> </ul>

## 10. Equalities

In line with the previous round of SOAs, all the agreements make some reference to equalities. This is done by stating their commitment to equality issues, emphasising that the SOA has been developed in accordance with equalities legislation and stressing that all partners are committed to delivering these duties. Beyond these broad statements, the extent to which the 32 SOAs discuss equalities varies considerably, from making detailed commitments to providing no detail at all. Nonetheless, there has been a marked improvement in both the coverage and quality of the information pertaining to equality issues, perhaps a result of the attention currently being given to the new equality legislation for Britain and the publication in December 2008 of the Scottish Government Equality Impact Assessment Scheme for Single Outcome Agreements<sup>5</sup>.

The SOAs generally discuss equality in the context of NO7 ('we have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society') and to a lesser extent NO13 ('we take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity'). The inclusion of NO7 is notable, since several LAs have chosen to give their attention to inequalities and their attempts to improve life chances. A few have included equalities

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/18507/EQIADetails/Q/Type/10/Id/166> for details.

within several national outcomes, perhaps in an attempt to emphasise the cross cutting quality of this theme.

The SOAs that do discuss equalities generally do this with respect to the following strands of equality – age, disability, gender, race and religion. While sexual orientation takes a less prominent role, a number of LAs have prioritised homophobia as a key issue to address. Interestingly, some LAs also have included income or economic circumstances as an equality strand.

While age is cited as a separate equality strand by many LAs, there is little consideration given to age discrimination against children. Rather, children are principally discussed in relation to other equality themes (for example, young carers, young people from BME community, children with additional support needs). Overall, the local outcomes tend to be generic statements relating to the desire to reduce inequalities across all strands.

In 2008/09, some authorities noted the lack of suitable national datasets for monitoring equality objectives. It appears that this has continued to be a problem, with most local outcomes and indicators focusing not on equalities but inequalities and deprivation (see the poverty section for further discussion of these). Overall, the indicators that are used in relation to equalities focus on the process of addressing inequality – for example, by concentrating on the need to put in place strategies, schemes or plans. These indicators are largely inputs, and alone, are unlikely to drive forward equality objectives. Several SOAs have made use of Equality Impact Assessments and this is one positive step forward. However, none mention the use of the Children’s Rights Impact Assessment – a tool developed by Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People for looking at decisions, policies or legislation and identifying and measuring their effect on children and their rights<sup>6</sup>.

Finally, it is notable that only a small number of SOAs have included indicators relating to experiences of and attitudes to discrimination - for example, by monitoring recorded hate crime or collecting data on the percentage of people who consider that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area. None of these specifically focus on children’s experiences.

### Equalities – Summary

<b>Context</b>	<b>NOs</b>	<b>Themes in LOs</b>	<b>Indicators used</b>	<b>Links made</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Commitment to equalities expressed</li> <li>○ Outline equality strands</li> <li>○ Partnership working</li> <li>○ Recorded incidents of discrimination</li> </ul>	Core:7, 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Those disadvantaged on the basis of age, race, disability, gender or sexual orientation is reduced</li> <li>○ Everyone in community has equal chances</li> <li>○ Equality of opportunity is improved across all equality strands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Equality action plan targets met</li> <li>○ Partner equality schemes in place</li> <li>○ New plans, policies and strategies subject to Equalities Impact Assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Equality Action Plans</li> </ul>

## 11. Families and Parenting

Where parenting is discussed by SOAs, it tends to be in relation to vulnerable families with the two most prominent themes being domestic abuse and substance misuse by parents. The need to support lone parent families was also emphasised by a minority of LAs. Several documents include no specific discussion on parenting or families.

The national outcome where families and parenting are most frequently mentioned is NO8 (‘we have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk’), emphasising the local authority’s role as corporate parent to support those most in need. Additional references to families and parenting are spread across several other national outcomes.

Parenting programmes are cited in a minority of SOAs and tend to focus on the provision of support services and/or early intervention for families most ‘at risk’. It is encouraging to note that a minority of SOAs are developing dedicated parenting and family support strategies.

<sup>6</sup> SCCYP has developed a children’s rights impact assessment model and has published accompanying guidance. For further information, visit [www.sccyp.org.uk](http://www.sccyp.org.uk).

While this strategic development is positive, overall the SOAs demonstrate a weakness in the development of joined up local outcomes and indicators. Several SOAs include very general local outcomes such as ‘parents are supported to give children best start in life’ or ‘increase proportion of parents who are capable, responsible and supported’. Typical indicators relate to the number of parents receiving some form of parenting support, yet there is no information on how such packages will deliver measurable outcomes for children. One LA has included the implementation of a parenting capacity assessment tool, although it is unclear precisely what such a tool would measure. Although the connection between local outcomes and indicators becomes stronger when specific issues are discussed (such as reducing substance misuse / domestic abuse), overall insufficient attention is given to the important role that parenting and families have on children’s lives and the connection it has with other stands such as early years.

### **Families and Parenting – Summary**

<b>Context</b>	<b>NOs</b>	<b>Themes in LOs</b>	<b>Indicators used</b>	<b>Links made</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Recorded incidents of domestic abuse, substance misuse</li> <li>o Parenting strategies</li> <li>o Parenting programmes / early intervention projects</li> </ul>	Core: 8  Others: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children will be nurtured and supported to have best start in life</li> <li>o Parents supported to give children best start in life</li> <li>o Increase proportion of parents who are capable, responsible and supported</li> <li>o The cycle of deprivation is broken through intervention in early years</li> <li>o Harmful substance misuse reduced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o % of new-born children exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks</li> <li>o % women smoking through pregnancy</li> <li>o Number of substance misusing parents</li> <li>o Number of children with substance misusing parents who are improving school attendance, are participating in community activities, are being supported to stay in family home.</li> <li>o Number of lone parents being supported</li> <li>o Number of parents participating in parenting programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Parenting Strategy</li> <li>o Early Years Framework</li> <li>o GIRFEC</li> <li>o Children's Services Plan</li> <li>o Domestic abuse Action Plan</li> </ul>

## **12. Homelessness**

29 SOAs discuss homelessness in some way, and as in 2008/09, the key challenge continues to be the 2012 target to abolish ‘priority need’. This is heavily dependent on a sufficient supply of affordable rented housing and many LAs continue to face pressures in relation to both housing quality and availability. Two SOAs specifically commented on the impact of the recession on repossessions and levels of homelessness. Only a minority of LAs are positive about successfully meeting the 2012 target; the majority remain acutely aware of the challenges ahead in relation to meeting housing needs.

References to homelessness are made in relation to a range of national outcomes, most commonly NO7 (‘we have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society’), NO8 (‘we have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk’) and NO10 (‘live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need’). NO5 (‘our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed’) and NO6 (‘we live longer, healthier lives’) were also mentioned by a smaller number of LAs. The inclusion of NO8 and NO5 is positive and reflects an acknowledgement of the role decent housing plays in creating healthy and happy lives for children.

The local outcomes developed in the SOAs have a principle focus on improving housing supply, increasing affordability and ultimately reducing homelessness – typical local outcomes include ‘the housing needs of residents are met’ or ‘levels of homelessness are reduced’. In turn, the indicators mainly relate to the rate of new affordable house building, the percentage of housing meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, the number of homeless applications and the percentage of re-lets offered to homeless households.

Only a small number of SOAs specifically discuss children, young people and families in relation to homelessness. Perhaps more significantly, homelessness prevention – including tenancy support – continues to have fairly limited coverage. Only five LAs specifically contain an indicator relating to young people – these include the proportion of young people sustaining a tenancy after six months, the percentage receiving support packages and the percentage re-presenting within 12 months after

working with a homelessness prevention team. Reducing the number of families placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation (such as bed and breakfast hotels) for more than 14 days was only mentioned by two LAs.

### Homelessness – Summary

Context	NOs	Themes in LOs	Indicators used	Links made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Lack of affordable housing</li> <li>o 2012 target</li> <li>o Impact on inequalities</li> <li>o Impact on economy</li> </ul>	Core: 7, 8  Others: 5, 6, 10, 12, 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o More affordable housing</li> <li>o Reduce levels of homelessness</li> <li>o Improve housing quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o rate of new affordable house building</li> <li>o % of housing meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard</li> <li>o number of homeless applications</li> <li>o % of re-lets offered to homeless households</li> <li>o % re-presenting as homeless</li> <li>o proportion of young people sustaining a tenancy after six months</li> <li>o % young people receiving support packages percentage young people re-presenting within 12 months after receiving tenancy support</li> <li>o number of children housing in TA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Homelessness strategy</li> <li>o Housing strategy</li> <li>o Children's Services Plan</li> </ul>

### 13. Looked After Children

The majority of SOAs mention looked after children (LAC) with reference to NO8 ('we have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk'), although NO5 ('children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed') was also mentioned fairly frequently.

Within the context sections of the SOAs, the overall focus is on the quality of accommodation and care being provided by LAs and the need to create safe and nurturing environments for looked after children. Most of the agreements provide general data on the number of looked after children and the proportion being looked after at home or in community settings. Several also draw attention to the increasingly complex needs that looked after children have (i.e. mental health, substance misuse), the pressure this is placing on children's services and the poorer outcomes (specifically educational) that looked after children can expect. A number emphasise that corporate parenting responsibilities are being given the highest priority and outline the changes to strategies, policies and practices which seek to improve outcomes for looked after children.

The local outcomes set out for looked after children focus on providing them with the best start in life and the need to address the disadvantages they face. Within the local outcomes there is also a desire, wherever possible, to support children to live in family or community settings. As we noted in last year's report, none of the SOAs discuss the need to increase the capacity of the system as a whole, nor consider the motivations for increasing the proportion of LAC living in family or community settings. Within the SOAs no attention is given to children's own views and experiences of residential or group care options, which in some instances can be more suited to their needs.

In terms of indicators, one of the main targets relates to the educational outcomes for LAC. Most include an indicator to increase the number of young people in care achieving Maths and English Standard Grade (normally at grade three or above). This target not only excludes part of the care population (i.e. those in S4 and above) but it also continues to reflect the low aspirations being set for looked after children.

The other frequently used indicator relates to the number of looked after children moving into positive destinations after leaving school, reflecting the wider drive to improve destinations for all school leavers. While a small number of SOAs mention pathway plans for care leavers, on the whole little attention is given to the inputs required to successfully achieve this and other outcomes. As with last year's SOAs, the indicators are on the whole inadequate in measuring real improvements in the quality of care provided and more significantly, limited attention is given to monitoring how children themselves rate or experience these services. Only one LA discusses staff training, while two include indicators which assess young people's own experiences of care. One of these related to the percentage of children who feel safe when accommodated away from home and the other was the percentage of children who say they are happy in their placement.

One final and important point is that the problems associated how a successful outcome for a looked after child is defined. By limiting outcomes to, for example, positive destinations after leaving school, the agreements take no account of what looked after children themselves see as being successful. Furthermore, the indicators fail to take account of the changes needed to help realise success or challenge the adverse impact of stigma on children in care<sup>7</sup>.

### Looked After Children – Summary

Context	NOs	Themes in LOs	Indicators used	Links made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Data on the number of looked after children and the proportion being looked after at home or in community settings.</li> <li>○ Support needs for LAC</li> <li>○ Poorer outcomes</li> <li>○ Planned improvements to strategies, policies and practice</li> </ul>	Core: 8, 5 Other: 4, 6, 7, 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Children will live in supportive family setting with additional assistance if required. Where this is not possible in another care setting ensuring a positive and rewarding childhood</li> <li>○ Better life chances for LAC</li> <li>○ All children have better start in life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ % of LAC achieving English and Maths standard grade at level 3 or above</li> <li>○ % LAC with 3 or more placements</li> <li>○ % looked after children going into employment, training or education</li> <li>○ % looked after children with pathway plan</li> <li>○ % LAC in residential placement (reduce)</li> <li>○ % children who feel safe when accommodated away from home / % happy in placement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Children's Services Plan</li> <li>○ Parenting Strategy</li> <li>○ GIRFEC</li> <li>○ Kinship care policy</li> </ul>

## 14. Mental Health and Wellbeing

While mental health is covered fairly well in the SOAs, the mental health of children, young people and families receive far lower priority. It is referred to in just over a third of SOAs and in several cases receives only limited attention. For example, one LA has a local outcome which states that children should enjoy the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health (reflecting the wording in Article 24 of the UNCRC) but makes no other reference to the issue. Those that do discuss children's mental health focus on the connection between mental health and other aspects of wellbeing. Deprivation, poverty, living in care and substance misuse are all characteristics which arguably give rise to problems with mental health.

Where children's mental health is considered, this is normally done under NO5 ('our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed') and NO6 ('we live longer, healthier lives'). It is also occasionally mentioned under NO8 ('we have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk'), reflecting the connection between deprivation and mental wellbeing.

A very small number of SOAs had indicators relating specifically to children's mental health and wellbeing. These included increasing the number of children who received a service from children and adolescent mental health services, average score on the mental wellbeing scale across all ages and self harm and suicide rates amongst children. There are several other indicators relating to mental health and well being, however, it is unclear whether they relate to children or adults alone – for example, the percentage of people with positive perceptions of general mental or emotional wellbeing.

While there are some positive examples of mental health services for children (for example, a dedicated mental health key worker for children and early intervention programmes aimed at enhancing children's mental health and resilience) overall this area continues to received very little attention.

### Mental health and Wellbeing – Summary

Context	NOs	Themes in LOs	Indicators used	Links made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Connection between mental health problems and deprivation</li> <li>○ Mental health of looked after children</li> <li>○ Early intervention and supporting families</li> </ul>	Core: 5, 6 Other: 8, 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Children will be healthy and happy</li> <li>○ Young people will have best start in life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No of children receiving service from children and adolescent mental health services</li> <li>○ Average score on the mental wellbeing scale across all ages</li> <li>○ Rates of self harm and suicide rates amongst children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mental Health Strategy</li> <li>○ Health Improvement Plan</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.whocaresscotland.org/caring\\_about\\_successreport.htm](http://www.whocaresscotland.org/caring_about_successreport.htm)

## 15. Physical Health and Wellbeing

Children's physical health and wellbeing generally receives good coverage in the SOAs. The main health improvement priorities identified include obesity/healthy eating, alcohol misuse, smoking, dental health and sexual health / teenage pregnancy. Most of the agreements also consider health inequalities and their link to deprivation and life chances.

The SOAs consider this topic principally under NO5 ('our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed'), NO6 ('we live longer, healthier lives') and NO7 ('we have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society'). NO9 ('we live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger') and NO8 ('we have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk') are also cited fairly frequently.

The nature of the local outcomes varies – some are high level (to reduce health inequalities or improve health and wellbeing) while other focus on specific issues (increase proportion of population with healthy BMI). Several SOAs have included local outcomes which look to support residents in making positive health choices. This links to the promotion of schemes to educate children and help them make informed choices such as health promoting schools.

Aspects of physical health covered in the indicators range from pregnancy through to adulthood. It is also one of the topics with the most comprehensive list of indicators which may relate to the greater ease with which physical health can be measured compared to other topics. Healthy weight interventions continue to be referred to frequently, with almost all SOAs citing an indicator relating to this (completion rates for healthy weight intervention, proportion of children with healthy BMI and healthy eating). Closely connected to this were a range of outcomes relating to the provision of exercise and outdoor activities, such as the proportion of children walking or cycling to school or the proportion undertaking physical activity. Several LAs included an indicator relating to initiatives in schools such as 'Health Promoting Schools' and 'Eco Schools'. Also relating to healthy lifestyles were targets relating to dental health, take-up of vaccinations and substance misuse amongst children. Only three LAs included an indicator relating to sexual health and relationships education.

Another commonly mentioned issue within the SOAs was breastfeeding and in particular the benefits it can offer the health of children in deprived areas. The indicator normally used is the proportion of children being breastfed at 6 to 8 weeks. Smoking during pregnancy and the proportion of low weight births were the main pre-natal indicators used. While parents do receive some attention, when discussing physical health most of the agreements focus on state interventions and the role that external agencies (principally schools) play in children's lives.

### Physical Health and Wellbeing – Summary

Context	NOs	Themes in LOs	Indicators used	Links made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Main health improvement priorities - obesity / healthy eating, alcohol misuse, smoking, dental health and sexual health / teenage pregnancy</li> <li>o Health inequalities and deprivation</li> <li>o Education and awareness raising</li> </ul>	Core: 5, 6, 8, 9  Others: 4, 7, 12, 14, 11, 10, 15, 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children have the best start in life</li> <li>o Children enjoy highest standard of physical health</li> <li>o Health inequalities are reducing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o % mothers smoking in pregnancy</li> <li>o Proportion of low weight births</li> <li>o % of child exclusively breast fed at 6-8 weeks</li> <li>o % children with healthy BMI</li> <li>o % of children with no sign of dental disease</li> <li>o % children walking / cycling to school</li> <li>o Teenage pregnancy rate</li> <li>o No of children drinking / smoking regularly</li> <li>o No of children taking up healthy school meals</li> <li>o No of health promoting schools</li> <li>o No of eco schools</li> <li>o Delivery of quality sexual health and relationship programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Health Improvement Plans</li> <li>o Children's Services Plan</li> <li>o Healthy Weight Strategy</li> <li>o GIRFEC</li> </ul>

## 16. Voluntary Sector

Through the SOAs, local authorities must work in partnership with Community Planning Partners (CPPs) to reach their shared priorities. In 2009/10 the role of Community Planning Partnerships was strengthened with a requirement for all CPPs to either review or develop their SOAs. Each agreement must now be endorsed by the CPP Board and signed by the Scottish Government, local authority,

statutory Community Planning partners and also, at a minimum, by those other public bodies in the Community Planning Partnership.

In line with this, the majority of the SOAs specifically mention the role of voluntary organisations within the CPPs and in developing the agreement. Others have created thematic sub-groups or steering groups with representation from voluntary organisations. Furthermore, in the preparation of their agreement several LAs held community planning conferences or one to one meetings to engage with voluntary organisations. While these moves are positive, engagement with the voluntary sector often appeared to be limited to one-off events and only a small number of LAs went beyond making a broad or general statement about partnership working with voluntary agencies.

Some SOAs mention the voluntary sector in relation to the delivery of a particular service; however, this tends to be limited to a reference with a list of other partners (i.e. local partners include voluntary sector etc). The voluntary sector is most frequently discussed in relation to volunteering, although there are examples of a growing awareness of the diverse role the sector plays. For example, some LAs used the SOAs to draw attention to the need to work more closely with the sector. One LA highlighted a poorly defined structure for engaging with voluntary organisations which had contributed to ineffective partnership working. Others made more general observations about the opportunities that working more closely with the voluntary sector could provide and made general commitments to support the sector. While these are examples of good work, given the proportion of public services being delivered by partners in the voluntary sector, this is an issue which warrants more attention.

In relation to national outcomes, the voluntary sector is most commonly discussed in relation to NO11 ('we have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others'). Interestingly, the sector is mentioned only once in relation to NO15 ('our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs'). Throughout the SOAs, there are several local outcomes relating to the improvement of services or the need to deliver accessible and quality services. Given the important role the voluntary sector plays in service delivery, the agreements would have benefited from a greater connection being made with NO15.

Local outcomes relating to the voluntary sector were included in about half of the agreements. These ranged from general commitments to partnership working or fostering a stronger voluntary sector to more substantive pledges on developing the role of the voluntary sector in strategic planning and service delivery. Two included local outcomes for improving the infrastructure for working with the voluntary sector. Local outcomes also included statements relating to volunteering and community involvement.

Indicators used principally focused on measuring levels of volunteering or volunteering opportunities. Some included indicators relating to the number of voluntary organisation or charities, while a small number were seeking to measure the number of groups receiving support or assistance. Only one included a more radical indicator which sought to improve the way in which voluntary organisations are co-ordinated and supported.

### **Voluntary Sector – Summary**

<b>Context</b>	<b>NOs</b>	<b>Themes in LOs</b>	<b>Indicators used</b>	<b>Links made</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o General statement relating to partnership working with the voluntary sector</li> <li>o Details of events / meetings with voluntary sector representatives</li> <li>o Voluntary sector and service delivery</li> <li>o Volunteering levels</li> </ul>	Core: 11 Others: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 15, 7, 9,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Improved partnership working</li> <li>o Stronger voluntary sector</li> <li>o Improving the infrastructure for working with the voluntary sector.</li> <li>o Volunteering and community involvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Levels of volunteering or volunteering opportunities.</li> <li>o Number of voluntary organisation or charities</li> <li>o The number of groups receiving support or assistance</li> <li>o Improve co-ordination of and support to voluntary organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o No specific links to other documents have been made</li> </ul>

## 17. Young Carers

Since the previous round of SOAs, there has been little improvement in relation to the priority given to carers, with a significant number making no mention of this group. Very few make any specific reference to the lives of young carers.

Where carers in general are mentioned, this is most frequently in relation to NO6 ('we live longer, healthier lives'), NO7 ('we have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society') and NO8 ('we have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk'). There are only a small number of local outcomes relating to carers although the most common relates to support provision ('carers are supported to undertake their caring role').

The indicators used relate to the number of carers receiving support, the number of additional short breaks provided and the number of carer assessments completed. Only two LAs included an indicator specifically related to children. These were 'increase the number of young carers accessing support services' and 'increase the number of carer assessments, including young carers'.

As in the previous year, there is virtually no mention of carers in the context of service development or satisfaction, although one LA has included two interesting indicators - one to measure carer satisfaction with the design of their care package and a second to measure the percentage of carers who have information and training when they need it. The community care indicator 'assess the percentage of carers who feel able to continue their role' has not been included in any of the SOAs. Two LAs mentioned that they have developed a dedicated young carers' strategy, although there is no detail on how this will contribute to the delivery of local outcomes.

### Young Carers – Summary

Context	NOs	Themes in LOs	Indicators used	Links made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Baseline figures (no of carers)</li> <li>o Strategy development</li> <li>o Description of support services available</li> </ul>	Core: 6, 7, 8  Other:  5, 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Carers supporting to undertake their caring role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The number of carers receiving support</li> <li>o Number of additional short breaks</li> <li>o The number of carer assessments completed (both adult and young)</li> <li>o Number of young carers accessing support services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Carers strategy</li> <li>o Young carers strategy</li> </ul>

## 18. Youth Justice

While all SOAs discussed community safety, only 26 specifically mentioned youth justice. Of these, the amount of attention it received varied – for example, only 19 included an indicator related to youth justice. In line with last year, the SOAs concentrate on persistent young offenders. Youth related antisocial behaviour is also a key theme (for example, vandalism, gangs hanging around, boy racers), however, there is no evidence of young people being targeted as the most antisocial. In some cases the contrary is true – for example, one LA states that the high volume of calls relating to children hanging around is influenced by public perceptions of youth and levels of tolerance. Another explicitly states that young people are held disproportionately responsible for crimes in the area.

There continues to be a fairly strong commitment to diversionary work, support services and restorative justice projects. Good practice examples include a highly successful Midnight Football Scheme, support and advice project for parents of children who drink, educational projects and multi-agency Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

These issues are normally discussed in relation to NO9 ('we live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger'), thereby making it a community safety concern. There are only seven examples where youth justice is considered under national outcomes that focus on the needs of the child, for example NO4 ('our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens') and NO8 ('we have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk').

The local outcomes relating to youth justice tend to reflect NO9 and focus on making communities safer and reducing the number of people who are victims and perpetrators of crime and ASB. A limited number include outcomes for children, such as ensuring that children are safe and protected. While in general the context sections of the SOAs and the national outcomes used suggest a more considered

view of children as being both victims and perpetrators, the indicators focus almost exclusively upon children as offenders – for example, the number of referrals to SCRA on offence grounds, the number of persistent young offenders and the number of offences caused by children. Only a small number of SOAs have included indicators relating to the number of children participating in diversionary work or restorative justice projects. Importantly, only two few SOAs acknowledged the status of children as victims of crime and there was correspondingly limited attention on monitoring how safe children feel.

### Youth Justice – Summary

Context	NOs	Themes in LOs	Indicators used	Links made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o No of persistent offenders / reports of ASB</li> <li>o Description of services</li> <li>o Strategy and multi-agency working</li> </ul>	Core: 9  Others: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 13,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Our communities are and feel safer</li> <li>o Our children are safe and nurtured</li> <li>o Crime and antisocial behaviour is reduced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o No of referrals to SCRA on offence grounds</li> <li>o No of persistent young offenders</li> <li>o No of offences caused by children</li> <li>o No of youth related ASB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Children's Services Plan</li> <li>o Community Safety Strategy</li> <li>o ASB Strategy</li> <li>o Youth justice strategy</li> </ul>

### 19. Youth Work

Youth work is normally discussed in relation to NO 4 ('our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens'). There are several positive examples in relation to the way youth work is considered, and these fall into three main categories. First is the role of youth work in involving children in decisions that affect them. Here youth work is given an empowering role. Second, youth work is discussed in terms of its role in intervention and prevention. In this context youth work plays an important diversionary role in relation to reducing antisocial behaviour and increasing community cohesion. Finally, youth work is discussed in relation to its role in personal development and the positive impact it can have on an individual's self confidence, health and social capital. The local outcomes developed in the SOAs reflect the different roles youth work plays.

While there are positive examples of youth work discussed in some SOAs, a significant number do not discuss the topic or do so in a limited way. Often, youth work is discussed only in relation to volunteering or young people's involvement in formal schemes (such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award). This limited coverage of youth work remains consistent with the first round of SOAs.

Where local outcomes are developed in relation to youth work, the indicators used to measure progress are seldom adequate. For example, one LA includes a local outcome for 'young people to be involved in decisions that affect them'. However, the only relevant indicator is the percentage of young people participating in youth work activities. Such an indicator, while useful in measuring demand and provision, says nothing about the quality of the opportunities offered, nor the experiences of children using the service. Disappointingly, none of the SOAs refer to the Scottish Government's latest framework, 'Valuing Young People' (April 2009)<sup>8</sup> which promotes youth work opportunities and approaches as key drivers in supporting young people to achieve their potential.

### Youth Work – Summary

Context	NOs	Themes in LOs	Indicators used	Links made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Volunteering</li> <li>o Local youth work strategy</li> </ul>	Core: 4  Others: 3, 5, 8, 11, 9, 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Young people actively participate in their communities</li> <li>o Young people involved in decisions that affect them</li> <li>o Support young people to benefit from youth work opportunities</li> <li>o Work with communities to reduce antisocial behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Number of children participating in youth work services</li> <li>o Number of children volunteering</li> <li>o Number of children participating in leadership and achievement awards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Local youth strategy</li> <li>o Volunteering strategy</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/04/21153700/0>

## Summary and conclusions

This performance framework has now been in place since June 2008 and while it is still a relatively new process, local authorities and their partners should now be becoming familiar with this way of working. Our report on the 2008-09 SOAs found that the documents were giving many children's issues minimal priority and having reviewed the second round of agreements, we are able to report some improvements. Our review has found that SOAs are giving increasing attention to national frameworks such as Early Years, the Curriculum for Excellence and Getting it Right for Every Child and importantly, the principles and ethos of these initiatives appear to be impacting on the strategic direction Councils are taking. A number of individual LAs were also noted as having markedly improved the way children's issues were considered since their first SOAs and we were able to identify several good practice examples throughout the report.

Overall, issues affecting children continue to receive considerable attention through the national outcomes and as a result are covered extensively in the SOAs. However, this coverage tends to be limited to specific areas. For example, children are most commonly discussed in relation to their protection, their education or their health. While this attention is welcome, it does serve to limit the way in which children are conceptualised.

Within the SOAs we also found a failure to prioritise national priorities relating to the lives of children. Key themes such as families and parenting, children with disabilities, play (especially for older children) and children's rights received little or no attention in the agreements. Meanwhile other arguably 'hidden' issues such as mental health, domestic abuse or learning disability continued to find it difficult to compete with bigger and more public concerns.

On the whole we found that the local outcomes being set by LAs were aspirational and strategic. This meant however, that they were often too broad and lacking in specificity. Furthermore, there was a notable 'disconnect' between the ways in which a topic was discussed, the local outcomes set and the indicators used for measurement.

Disappointingly, we continued to find instances where key concepts such as outcomes, inputs and outputs were used incorrectly or in an inconsistent manner. The sheer volume of the indicators being utilised across the 32 documents make the system unwieldy and frequently they were found to be inadequate, and at times even ineffective, for monitoring outcomes.

There was also a sense that the SOAs, and specifically the indicators and targets being set, lacked ambition. Examples of this were most notable in relation to children with disabilities and looked after children. Related to this point was the reliance placed upon Statutory Performance Indicators in many SOAs. While this may appear sensible in relation to achieving a streamlined system for monitoring performance, it calls into question how aspirational the indicators within the SOAs actually are. Statutory indicators are after all a legal requirement which LAs should already be meeting, or aiming to meet.

It is understood that the 2009-10 SOAs will be the basis upon which progress against national outcomes will be measured over the coming years. However, there remains a lack of clarity in the relationship between the monitoring of outcomes through the SOAs and the statutory reporting and inspection regimes. In particular, it is unclear as to how progress made will be reported and whether the inspectorate regimes are ready to collect and interpret evidence of success.

There is clearly still further work to be done to ensure that issues relating to children and their families, both national and local, receive priority in future SOAs. The voluntary sector and other agencies working in this area have an important role to play here. At a local level, there is a much stronger commitment to involve partners in the production of new agreements through Community Planning Partnerships and this is demonstrated in the SOAs. However, given the varying success of CPPs across Scotland it is uncertain how effective this arrangement will work. It remains to be seen how much opportunity voluntary organisations - especially national organisations representing children - will have in influencing the SOAs as the implementation and monitoring phase moves forward.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND OTHER READING

### Web sites

<http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/single-outcome-agreements/>. As well as the 32 SOAs, this site contains SOA guidance, lists of indicators and briefing papers.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms>. Sets out the Scottish Government's strategic objectives and national outcomes.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/11/13092240/9>: Details of the national performance framework which underpins the Scottish government's agenda.

### Other research

Other voluntary organisations are currently preparing in-house reviews of the 2009-10 Single Outcome Agreements and more will be available in the coming months. Key documents reviewing the SOAs include:

- Community Care Providers Scotland (2009) *Single Outcome Agreement 2009-10: An Analysis by Community Care Providers Scotland*, Edinburgh: Community Care Providers Scotland. See: <http://www.ccpscotland.org/publications/research-reports>
- Community Care Providers Scotland (2008) *Single Outcome Agreement 2008-09: An Analysis by Community Care Providers Scotland*, Edinburgh: Community Care Providers Scotland. See: <http://www.ccpscotland.org/publications/research-reports>
- Davidson, E. (2009) *Single Outcome Agreements for Scottish Local Government, 2008/09 – A Thematic Analysis by the Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers' Network*. See: [http://www.sccyp.org.uk/webpages/pr\\_single.php?article=Single%20Outcome%20Agreements%20for%20Scottish%20Local%20Government%20,%202008/09:%20a%20thematic%20analysis%20by%20the%20Children's%20Voluntary%20Sector%20Policy%20Officers'%20Network&id=170](http://www.sccyp.org.uk/webpages/pr_single.php?article=Single%20Outcome%20Agreements%20for%20Scottish%20Local%20Government%20,%202008/09:%20a%20thematic%20analysis%20by%20the%20Children's%20Voluntary%20Sector%20Policy%20Officers'%20Network&id=170)
- Engender (2008) *Single Outcome Agreements 2008-09: An Analysis*, Edinburgh: Engender
- Herbert, S. (2008) *Single Outcome Agreements*, SPICe Briefing, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2008, 08/47, Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament Information Centre. See: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/research/briefings-08/sb08-47.pdf>
- Scottish Women's Aid (2008) *Scottish Women's Aid analysis of local authority Single Outcome Agreements 2008*, Edinburgh: SWA. See: <http://www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk/assets/files/Scottish%20Womens%20Aid%20SOA%20Report%202008.pdf>

## ANNEX 1

### Overview of themes for analysis

<b>2009/10 Themes</b>	<b>Change from previous year</b>
Asylum Seeking Children	New category
Child Poverty	As previous
Child Protection	As previous
Children's Rights and Participation	As previous
Disabilities	Combined previous categories of learning and physical disabilities
Drugs and Alcohol	As previous although specifically concerns young people's use of drugs and alcohol
Early Years Framework	New category
Education	As previous
Employability	As previous
Equalities	As previous
Families and Parenting	As previous – parental use of drugs and alcohol should be included here.
Homelessness	Previously 'homelessness and independent living'
Looked After Young People	Previously 'looked after and accommodated children'
Mental Health and Wellbeing	Previously within single category 'mental and physical health'
Physical Health and Wellbeing	
Voluntary Sector	New category
Young Carers	As previous
Youth Justice	As previous
Youth Work	Now encompasses previous categories 'youth work' and 'play'

## **ANNEX 2**

### **National Outcomes**

1. We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe.
2. We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.
3. We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.
4. Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.
5. Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.
6. We live longer, healthier lives.
7. We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.
8. We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.
9. We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.
10. We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.
11. We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.
12. We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.
13. We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.
14. We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.
15. Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.