SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

While local authorities are primarily responsible for their own performance and improvement, and for developing performance improvement tools such as benchmarking, the Scottish Government is engaged in a range of strategic and focused work to promote improvement and provide support both across the sector and to individual local authorities and Community Planning Partnerships. This work is being carried out in partnership with local authorities and others to ensure that the support reflects local priorities and needs.

Strategic Oversight of Analysis and Use of Evidence

Part of the work to take forward the Community Planning Review relates to the analysis and use of evidence by CPPs in the preparation of SOAs and wider community planning activity. The former ILOIP Board has been reconstituted as the Improving Evidence and Data Group (IEDG) to lead this workstream. The IEDG is chaired by Lorraine McMillan, on behalf of SOLACE, and includes representatives from Scottish Government, COSLA, the Improvement Service and other bodies. Its overarching aims are to help build local analytical and performance capacity, and to help improve the design of supporting frameworks and approaches. It is in the process of developing an analytical work programme to maximise the impact and effectiveness of evidence and data in supporting community planning.

Specific Support on Benchmarking and Performance Measurement

The Scottish Government plays a central role in supporting local government to make effective use of performance data, ensuring outcomes can be measured consistently over time or compared across areas for self-evaluation and benchmarking purposes. This is delivered in a number of ways including:

- Involvement in the SOLACE-led Improving Local Outcome Indicators Project (ILOIP) and chairing the ILOIP task group. The publication of the Menu of Local Outcome Indicators has been a key output from the Project and has provided our Community Planning Partners with access to relevant and robust outcome indicators for tracking progress in SOAs. This has helped to rationalise the number of outcome indicators included in SOAs and encouraged consistent use of data.

- Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics (SNS) which is our ongoing programme of work to improve the availability, consistency and accessibility of small area statistics in Scotland. The SNS website contains a wealth of information across a range of topics such as health, education, poverty, unemployment, housing, crime and the environment. Data is published for a range of geographies, including local authorities and health boards, and many indicators are available at small area level. SNS also includes standard reports providing users with easy access to the latest time series data for national and local outcome indicators, allowing consistent comparisons over time or across areas.
• Provision of **tailored analytical support** to improve the evidence base used within **Single Outcome Agreements**, promoting evidence based delivery of outcomes at local level. This type of support is delivered by analysts across the SG to Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs).

• Engagement through the **Public Sector Analysts Network** which brings together colleagues in CPPs and SG with an interest in analytical issues, particularly in relation to SOAs. The Network has also delivered a programme of workshops to support capacity building on a range of analytical issues, such as contribution analysis, measuring change, setting targets and evaluating progress.

• Using relevant networks, such as ScotStat and the Public Sector Analysts Network, to **disseminate learning** around best practice in performance monitoring and reporting.

• Enhancing capacity through the **provision of guidance and learning material** which includes the publication of the Statistics Methodology Glossary and Analytical Guidance Library.

• **Regular collection of high quality data at local authority level through the Scottish Government’s large scale population surveys**, which include the Scottish Household Survey, the Scottish Health Survey and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey. The Scottish Government’s Long Term Strategy for Population Surveys (2009-2019) improves the way our population surveys are run and aims to increase the availability and use of survey data, both at a national and local level. National surveys are an important source of data in SOAs and provide an efficient means of collecting data consistently for all local authorities.

• **Supporting benchmarking of educational performance through the STACs (Standard Tables and Charts) system.** STACs is used by local authorities, secondary schools and national education agencies for self-evaluation and improvement purposes. The Scottish Government and its partners are updating and adapting STACs so that it is fully aligned to Curriculum for Excellence. The new system, provisionally known as SMART-ER: Smart Education Results, will include a number of national measures that will be displayed on entry to the new system. SMART-ER will also enable local authorities and schools to develop additional customised "dashboards" to display the most important and relevant information at local and school level. An important feature of SMART-ER will be the links that it provides to related data sources such as Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics and Skills Development Scotland's 16+ Learning Choices data hub. SMART-ER is expected to be launched in summer 2014.

• The **Local Financial Returns (LFR) Review Group** is a joint Scottish Government and Local Government group set up to review the revenue expenditure statistics collected from local authorities by the Scottish Government through the Local Financial Returns (LFRs). The SOLACE Benchmarking Project uses LFR data. The group aims to update and improve the information collected through the LFRs to ensure the provision of timely and high quality data whilst minimising unnecessary complications or burden.
Wider Programmes

The Scottish Government also supports some wider programmes, which may include performance management. One example is the **Economic Outcomes Programme (EOP)**, a two-year programme developed by the Improvement Service, Scottish Local Authorities' Economic Development (SLAED) group and the Scottish Government to strengthen the impact that Scottish local authorities have on their local economies. The Programme provides resources to embed the SLAED Improvement Guide, launched last year, and ultimately maximise economic outcomes for Scotland.

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