

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OUTCOME DELIVERY REPORT

Report by Chief Officer Education and Children's Services

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to present the year-end progress of the 2024/25 Departmental Strategic Priorities for the Education and Children's Services (ECS) Department.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 This Report provides a 2024/25 year-end report on the strategic priorities aligned to the Department. An update on departmental key areas of strategic risk is included, progress on the strategic outcomes and the resources identified to implement the business plan.
- 2.2 Strategic risk is aligned with the Corporate Strategy 2022-2027. In the reporting period, there are no key areas of strategic risk identified for the Department. Strategic risk is monitored on Interplan and reported externally via the Comhairle's website. Graphical representation of the Comhairle's strategic risk is provided at paragraph 6.
- 2.3 The Service Business Plan is aligned to the Comhairle's strategic priorities within the Corporate Strategy, and three service areas within the Department contribute to the achievement of nine strategic outcomes. Progress on the outcome delivery plans is detailed in the main body of the report at paragraph 7.
- 2.4 Full detail in regard to business plan progress for the Department can be viewed at: [Service Business Plan Progress Reports](#). In line with Audit Scotland's recommendations, Elected Members are also encouraged to access the Comhairle's online performance monitoring and reporting system Interplan, which contains all Departmental Business Plans.
- 2.5 Analysis of the budgets at end of year shows that Service budgets were within tolerances for the period. Financial performance is detailed in paragraph 8.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle notes the year-end progress of the 2024/25 Education and Children's Services Departmental Outcome Delivery Plans.**

Contact Officer: Donald Macleod, Chief Officer for Education & Children's Services

Appendix: None

Background Papers: None



IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	None
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities/Child Rights	None
Corporate Strategy	The Education and Children's Services Business Plan is aligned with the Corporate Strategy 2022-27.
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	There is no consultation associated with this Report. The Business Plan and the quarterly progress updates are published on the Comhairle's website.

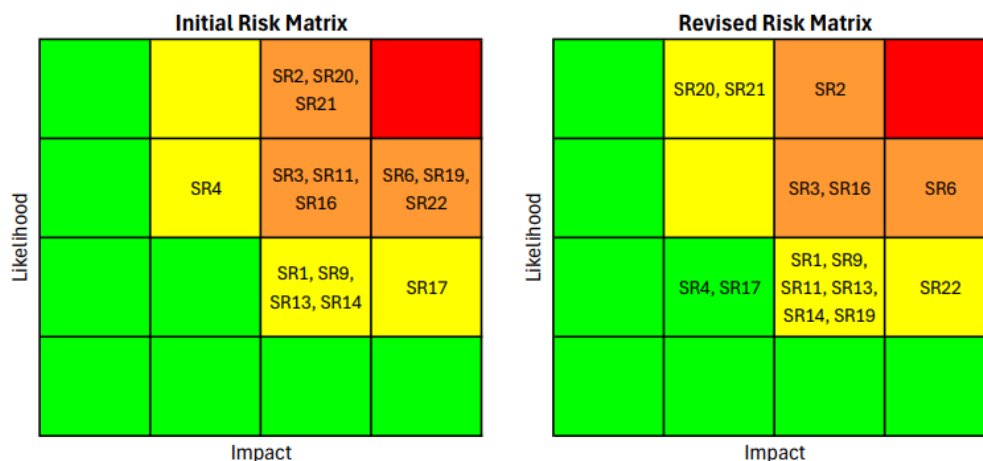
BACKGROUND

- 5.1 While previous quarterly reporting provided an update on business plan progress, this Report is designed to provide Members with information on progress of the strategic priorities that the department is aligned to. The report includes an update on departmental key areas of strategic risk, progress on the strategic outcomes that the department contribute to, and the resources identified to implement the business plan.
- 5.2 The Corporate Strategy has four strategic priorities and 20 strategic outcomes.

RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The Comhairle has identified 15 strategic threats. There are no departmental key areas of strategic risk identified for the Department. The full risk register details can be accessed via the Interplan Risk Management Module.

STRATEGIC RISK MATRICES - September 2024
THREATS



OUTCOME DELIVERY PLANS

- 7.1 The department is aligned to all four Strategic Priorities and contributes to the fulfilment of nine Strategic Outcomes and progress on the Outcome Delivery Plans are reported below under each of these.

Priority 2.1 Support Children, Families, and Young People

Outcome 2.1.1. Attainment rates continuously improve

- 7.2 Predicted Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels for 2024-25 demonstrate that the proportion of learners achieving the expected level in literacy and numeracy across our primary and secondary schools has increased compared to attainment data for 2023-24.
- 7.3 For numeracy, 81.3% of learners across P1, P4 and P7 are predicted to reach expected levels, while S3 predictions demonstrate that 93.1% of learners are expected to achieve. For literacy and English, 80.3% of learners across P1, P4 and P7 are predicted to achieve, while 92.4% of learners in S3 are expected to achieve. In Literacy and Gàidhlig, 81.9% of learners in P1, P4 and P7 and 94.0% in S3 are predicted to reach expected levels.
- 7.4 Across all our primary schools, continued engagement in the National Improving Writing Programme with the Scottish Government Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC) has resulted in an increase in learners' engagement and attainment in writing.
- 7.5 We have undertaken a full review of Scottish Attainment Challenge provision and performance data across our schools to ensure effective delivery of the programmes. This is to strengthen our strategic approach in supporting and challenging our schools to improve outcomes for learners. Our review included professional learning sessions for school leaders and staff with responsibility for PEF. This professional learning was delivered by the Quality Improvement Officer (Attainment) and the Education Scotland Attainment Advisor to clarify roles and responsibilities to ensure a consistency of approach. An updated Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) operational guidance document has been issued to schools which supports school leaders, school staff with responsibility for PEF and the Education Attainment Team as they further develop and refine their approaches to narrowing poverty related attainment gaps.
- 7.6 A tracking and monitoring system has been introduced across our primary schools. This tracking system will ensure a consistent approach to gathering and tracking data, including the robust monitoring, and tracking of individual learners and specific groups (FSM and care-experienced). Refreshed local authority literacy and numeracy progression pathways are linked to the tracking and monitoring system. This will allow senior leaders to moderate, and quality assure data.
- 7.7 We have created a local authority attainment data collection and quality assurance processes calendar. This calendar provides a framework to support our schools and local authority in the robust analysis of a range of intelligence and data. This will support our commitment to using data effectively to improve outcomes for learners.
- 7.8 Early in 2025-26 we plan to deliver professional learning on HGIOS Quality Indicators 2.3 and 3.2. This is to support senior leaders in our schools on the effective use of data to improve learning experiences, attainment, achievement and attendance. We will develop our tracking and monitoring system and progression pathways into S1-S3 to ensure learners progress appropriately through the Broad General Education (BGE) and as they continue on their learning journey into Senior Phase and beyond. We look



to introduce a number of strategic approaches to ensure a well-structured and regular analysis of children and young people's ongoing attainment data.

Outcome 2.1.2. Early intervention in place to keep our most vulnerable children safe

- 7.9 Colleagues from both Education and Children's Services have been working with colleagues from NHS Western Isles to undertake a review of local GIRFEC procedures and documentation, including those relating to early intervention and prevention referral pathways. The focus is on providing an updated GIRFEC page on the Comhairle website. The group will provide further update the Child Protection Committee, the Bairns Hoose Implementation Group and the Children and Young Persons Planning Partnership on progress early in 2025-26.
- 7.10 The Promise initiatives taking place within Room 19 and at The Kabin have continued to be very successful in the second half of 2024-25, with these early interventions for care-experienced young people providing bespoke and targeted support. Many of the young people involved are on course for qualifications and accreditation in the 2025 qualifications diet that they would not otherwise have had.
- 7.11 The Shed, through its intergenerational work and through Safe Families is providing impactful interventions with an increasing number of families with young children. Action for Children, through ADP funded projects, is working with a number of children involved in alcohol or substance misuse and/or youth offending/anti-social behaviours. Working alongside these partnerships has been the Campus Support Officer based at the Nicolson Institute. A combination of these supports and interventions has resulted in signs of a decrease in anti-social behaviour in this period.

Outcome 2.1.3 Schools are centres for lifelong learning and key assets for the community.

- 7.12 The Education and Children's Services Department implement and uphold the Comhairle School and Room Letting Policy and the Corporate Pitch Policy along with managing the operation of community facilities within schools such as Swimming Pools, Libraries and Sports Halls. Schools are available for community lets of rooms and internal facilities from between one and three nights per week depending on size and designation of school and all schools are available for let on Saturdays. The exception to this is the Sports Halls where the school forms part of the Comhairle Sports Facilities 'Slainte Mhath' scheme. This is now the case in Castlebay, Lionacleit and Sir E Scott schools.
- 7.13 School lets are booked centrally using an online booking system and booking forms have a safeguard built in to ensure lets have a 14-day notice period before allowing a let to be booked. Bookers wishing to book school lets at short notice must contact the Resources Section of the Department to ensure there will be staffing available to cover the event they are planning. The Department will endeavour to accommodate short notice room let bookings or school pitch bookings if at all possible and especially if it is an important community event or a rearranged football league or cup fixture.

Outcome 2.1.4. People are healthy and active

- 7.14 During the reporting period, the Sports Development team ran a well-attended programme of sports activities for primary schools in Lewis and Harris, with support from local sports clubs. Pupils took part in Unihoc and Sportshall Athletics during the winter term. A Cross-Country event was held for Uist and Barra pupils. Sports Development staff organised Child Wellbeing and Protection in Sport and 1st Aid Courses for sports club members. Jane Grant visited the islands from 5th-8th Nov to deliver training to volunteers and school staff. We now have a member of staff signed off to deliver Badminton Basics. To support the delivery of our Bikeability training we were successful in applying to Hi-Trans funding to replace bikes in Lewis and Barra.



- 7.15 Our Sports Centre's at ISL and Lionacleit played host to two very successful and well attended DYW Careers Fairs as part of Scottish Careers Week. Following on from a successful trial during Women and Girls in Sport Week staff have supported the establishment of regular women only activity sessions at ISL and Lionacleit.
- 7.16 Sport Scotland Head of School and Community Sport, the Lead Manager - H&I and Grampian and the Partnership Manager - H&I visited the island to meet with senior staff. They also visited Stornoway Primary to hear from staff and pupils about the journey towards achieving their Gold SportScotland School Sport Award and the benefits to the school.
- 7.17 Our main pool at Lewis Sports Centre developed an unexpected fault when some floor tiles lifted. Thanks to a collaboration of centre staff, technical advisers, suppliers, Lewis Builders Ltd and understanding users the pool was back in action after 4 weeks. This time allowed staff to provide the centre with a thorough deep clean. Working with colleagues in Assets & Infrastructure we have secured funding of £34,000 through the People & Places Local Authority Direct Award (PPLADA) for 2025-26. The funding will be used to support the Active Schools Bikeability programme, provide training and education, and support behaviour change activities.
- 7.18 The Sports Development team organised a very successful Sportshall Athletics event for primary pupils at Lionacleit Sports Centre attended by 71 pupils. An Indoor Rowing Festival at ISL was attended by 180 P5-7 pupils from 10 schools. To provide teaching staff with an opportunity to try a new activity, compete against other school's staff and let off some steam the team organised a pilot competition attended by 30 staff from a number of schools – to be repeated by request!
- 7.19 Our pool in Castlebay developed a fault with the Heat exchanger leading to problems maintaining the water temperature at permissible levels. Staff did what they could to keep the pool open while authorisation for repair was sought. The repair has now been completed and the pool was due to reopen fully in early April, following a satisfactory water test by Scottish Water.
- 7.20 With the International Island Games taking place this year in Orkney preparations for the Western Isles Island Games Association (WIIGA) squad are now well under way. Approx squad of 110 will compete in 10 sports 12-18 July. The squad is due to be confirmed in early April. A number of the squad have been supported through our SportScotland Institute of Sport Performance Development Programme and ATAS funding programme, also supported by SportScotland. Sport & Health staff provide managerial and secretarial support for WIIGA.
- 7.21 Our swim programmes are still operating to high demand with every effort being made to reduce waiting lists. With the help of funding received from SportScotland 8 members of staff are currently going through a Swim Teachers course.
- 7.22 Our Slainte Mhath memberships have increased further over the quarter to a year end figure of 2883, an increase of 218 (8.18%). This includes individual, family, concessions and corporate memberships.

Outcome 2.1.5. Childcare facilities in place to meet the needs of working parents

- 7.23 The current early learning and childcare provision across the Western Isles consists primarily of Comhairle-operated Early Learning and Childcare centres situated within schools offering combinations of Gaelic and English in different locations. In addition, there are two partner provider nurseries operated by private and community entities and one partner childminder service operating



in conjunction with the Comhairle. In addition to this there are eight childminder services operating on a private commercial basis.

7.24 This has supported offering varied and flexible childcare options across our settings affording parents a choice of options to meet their needs and that of their children. This has included maximising uptake of Early Learning and Childcare for eligible 2-year-olds, tackling childhood poverty and supporting the most disadvantaged families.

7.25 In order to achieve this currently across the Western Isles there are –

- 21 childcare provisions made up of nineteen local authority nurseries and two partner providers. There are nine settings offering 52-week childcare from 8.30am-5.30pm (8 LA and 1 partner), four of these settings also provide 0-3-year-old provision (3 LA and 1 partner). Of the remaining twelve term time settings, four are open from 8.30am-5.30pm and the others close at 3.30pm or 4.30pm.
- Since January 2025 we have supported our most vulnerable families by provided placements for funded 2year olds across our settings.
- Presently there are eight registered Childminders across the Western Isles, 1 of whom is now working in partnership with CNES and can offer ELC funded places for parents.
- There is currently one childminder going through the Care Inspectorate application process in Barra which was one of our target recruitment areas.
- There is also an after-school club which is based in Stornoway Primary School providing care for up to 20 children.

7.26 We are continuing to strive to increase the number of childminders through Childminding recruitment campaigns (both CNES and in partnership with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and information sharing at our planned events and through our social media channels. We have also approached Employability to see what support package they are able to offer those who wish to return to work and see Childminding as a career path.

7.27 We have worked with the Scottish Government Improvement Service on the 2-year Parental Consultation of Early Learning and Childcare provision across the Local Authority – the Consultation went ‘live’ on the 22nd April 2025 with collated results expected in June/July. Whilst working to increase childcare provision we are continuing to ensure the implementation of high-quality early learning and childcare to support children to develop, achieve and reach their full potential.

7.28 The service continues to recognise the increasing and variable demand for childcare services and the Comhairle’s strategic priorities to improve access to childcare and early learning in the interests of meeting demand, addressing depopulation and maximising parental employability.

Priority 3.1: Support Resilient Communities and Quality of Life

Outcome 3.1.1 The Gaelic language, natural heritage and cultural of our communities is supported and promoted



- 7.29 **Education Service:** The service has been working particularly hard during this reporting period to promote the uptake of Gaelic medium Education as P1 enrolment falls within this period. Significant activity took place from November 2024 to January 2025 holding parent activities in schools and nurseries, running promotional events, publishing materials and promotional content online and providing support and follow-up to parents considering GME. A number of new GME testimonials were recorded too.
- 7.30 The latest enrolment figures for 2025-26 , based on enrolments undertaken in February 2025, show that 57% of all pupils entering P1 will be in GME, a huge rise of 15% in GME enrolments compared to 2024. This is the biggest ever rise in enrolments in one year and, in addition the work detailed above, it is testament to the hard work of the Early Years team in promoting the benefits of GME and supporting parents to make informed choices about enrolment in GME.
- 7.31 The promotional campaign, managed by the Gaelic Education Manager, was instrumental in engaging with parents. Some of the links can be viewed here:
- <https://www.foghlamgaidhlig.com/gmefmg/naidheachdan/>
- <https://www.foghlamgaidhlig.com/gmefmg/mi-fhein-s-mo-ghaidhlig/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/GMEeileansiar/>
- 7.32 **Library Service:** As part of our Reading Schools project, library staff worked with school staff via Teams or in person at Stornoway Primary, Sir E Scott, Lionacleit and Eoligarry to help them develop their Action Plans. A Senior Librarian (Gaelic & Outreach) joined the library team in January with responsibility for overseeing all library programmes, and our Gaelic collections and services. This is a trainee post and the postholder will be studying for a Masters in Librarianship. Supporting this role, a Gaelic Arts Officer was appointed in March. The post is in partnership with An Lanntair and CNES Employability and funded for 12 months by Scottish Government/Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) Public Library Innovation Fund.
- 7.33 The EDC staff have worked with Early Years staff and practitioners to develop 'story kits', including sensory story kits for children with additional needs, that will be available to schools, parents and voluntary organisations e.g. parent and toddler groups to borrow in the new year. In October we launched 'Libraries After Dark' across Stornoway, Tarbert & Lionacleit branches, and another After Dark Storytime in December. All sold out.
- 7.34 November was Book Week Scotland with events across all libraries including a fully immersive Gaelic children's book launch of 'Uncail Dod agus na dineasairean' by local author Mary Gillies with over 40 attendees, and a visit by author Freya North. The Western Isles Steering Group was started in November and Library/EDC staff met with CnAG to identify resource needs for Gaelic Bookbug. We supported An Lanntair once again with Faclan, the Hebridean Book Festival, with our Libraries Manager chairing an author event at the Lanntair and Stornoway Library hosting a bilingual Gaelic/English poetry evening with Irish poet Emma McKervey, as well as an author event for children at Tarbert Library.
- 7.35 A new "Challenging Poverty" Collection was developed to support the OHCPP's Winter Campaign Against Poverty. Work has re-commenced on the Ar n Aite digital archive website lost in the cyberattack with the aim of launching in May 2025.



- 7.36 Our learning and leisure programmes continued to develop with a strategic focus on establishing core offerings that embed libraries as key contributors to literacy and culture. We participated in the National Library of Scotland's Love Libraries Day 100-year anniversary campaign launch with an open day and visit from MP Torcuil Crichton, as well as delivering "Love Libraries" care packages to local business and organisations. Our Mobile Libraries were selected as a case study for the NLS 100 year celebration.
- 7.37 Western Isles Libraries again featured in a national case study for Languages Week Scotland, with a guest blog post by our new Gaelic Librarian: A' comharrachadh Seachdain Cànanan na h-Alba tron seirbheis Leabharlann as Na h-Eileanan an Iar. Seachdain na Gaidhlig was an opportunity to showcase the vital role libraries play in supporting Gaelic,
- 7.38 March was the official launch of our "Reading Schools" project with our "Islands Literacy Symposium" in the Stornoway Town Hall. Scotland's Makar, Peter Mackay, opened the symposium and it concluded with Agnes Rennie chairing a panel on 'Strengthening Gaelic Reading Culture'. Three staff from the Scottish Book Trust travelled to Lewis for the Symposium, visiting numerous local schools and supporting the library staff training day as well as providing professional learning for teachers. They also assisted library staff to carry out a makeover of the Stornoway Primary library (one of our Reading Schools partners). The Reading Schools project pilot phase is now complete, with the Western Isles going from no pins on the map to 4 schools: Bun Sgoil Steornabhagh, Sgoil MhicNeacail, Sgoil Lionacleit and Sgoil Bagh a Chaisteil.
- 7.39 As well our major events, core programming has continued to improve across all libraries with the launch of weekly "Digital Drop-ins", health literacy events with Captain Toothpaste, another successful "Libraries after Dark" with Stornoway Beavers, and a variety of Spring school holiday activities. Libraries supported literary arts with a series of book launches and author talks, most in partnership with our island publishers, Acair and The Islands Book Trust who hosted a very popular illustrated talk with Donald Martin and Roddy Morrison on the Bunabhaineadar Whaling Station in Harris attracting almost 50 attendees.

Outcome 3.1.5: Reduce inequality and poverty and promote social mobility

- 7.40 The Department continues to contribute to the completion of actions and meeting of targets within the Comhairle's Local Child Poverty Action Plan. This has been particularly in terms of the 'Cost of Living' theme through supporting families and reducing the routine cost of the school day and schools have continued to prioritised this in 2024-25. Schools are tasked with reducing or removing incidental costs placed upon families and are advised to reduce, redesign or seek new approaches to 'School Fund' or charitable fundraising. The ECS Department has provided direct financial support to families through four main schemes. Firstly, Free School Meals (FSM) has been made available in 2024/25 to 240 children (approx. 3.6% decrease since last year). Secondly, Clothing Grants have been paid to 339 children, equating to a total grant sum of £42,990. Thirdly, 24 eligible young people were in receipt of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to support their continuation in education. Finally, there were 27 applicants supported by the new initiative to give Free School Meals to P6/P7 pupils from families in receipt of Scottish Child Payment. The Comhairle introduced this for all eligible pupils from the 1st of February 2025.
- 7.41 The service has also been working with Scottish Government of the expansion of the provision Free School Meals to families in receipt of Scottish Child Payments. This roll-out commenced in the reporting period and, whilst eligible numbers are less than initially forecast, the project has brought more financial support to vulnerable families.



Priority 4.1: Be a sustainable and inclusive Council

Outcome 4.1.4 Efficient and sustainable services are provided to the community

- 7.42 The deployment of resources across the service and the development and implementation of our workforce strategy, as referenced in section nine is inclusive and recognises the needs of employees and community in the delivery of services. The adoption of UNCRC and potential for increases in demand for Additional Support Needs provision do need to be considered in terms of ensure appropriate and efficient resources are available.
- 7.43 The service commenced work on implementing budget savings and continues to do so with the aim of making service delivery and internal operations as efficient and sustainable as possible.

RESOURCING THE PLAN

8.1 Financial Performance

Education and Children's Services 2024/25 Outturn

At the end of Q4, and after the application of specific carry forwards and grant carry forwards, the Education, Sport and Children's Services Department is reporting an underspend of £136k for 2024-25 after application of £569k of specific carry forwards. This figure is within the 1% carry forward tolerances highlighted in the budget strategy of the Comhairle in February 2024.

The centrally held Mainland Placement budget was overspent by £271k at year end which affects Comhairle centrally held funds.

Head of Children's Services

There is a year-end under-spend in this service of £400k, which reduced to £37k following the application of the specific carry forwards for ring-fenced funding and grant funding carry forward. The shortfall on the Residential contract costs, has mainly been dealt with and met from within available budgets providing a more permanent budget solution. A smaller shortfall in the region of £40k was evident in 2024/25 with further work ongoing to bridge the gap fully and align the Comhairle's future level of contracted services with budget provision.

Director of Education, Skills and Children's Services

There is a year-end overspend in this service of £78k which increases to £192k following the application of the specific carry forwards. This overspend is mainly related to the Trading Operation Catering and Cleaning Overspend and the corporate efficiency savings. There is a slight offset due to an underspend in ASN and Swimming Transport.

Head of Education

There are some larger areas of underspend in this service producing the overall underspend of £383k which reduced to £156k after the application of specific carry forwards. There were corporate savings removed during 2024/25 from the Department for energy costs in the region of £120k, with the bulk of this affecting this service. ASN is showing an overspend of £39k for 2024/25 and has significantly improved from last financial year following a successful review of the delivery of ASN to pupils in 2024/25. E-Sgoil and the National e-Learning offer have generated funding through the year and were underspent by £75k. The Early Years Service shows a significant underspend of £281k this year. The bulk of this is from higher than budgeted income in the region of £160k. There were also underspends related to relief staff and a difficulty in filling posts through the year. Sports and Health are reporting an overspend of £106k. There was approximately £50k additional income achieved in Sports Centres



which was offset by overspends on staffing, rates, water charges, energy costs, refuse costs, equipment costs and software licencing costs. The issues causing these overspends will be addressed during 2025/26. The Library Service is reporting an underspend of £12k due to a variety of minor underspends.

Performance Monitoring 2024/25 Q4
Education, Sport and Children's Services Committee

	Total Budget £k	Actual £k	Actual Over/(Under) £k
Director of Education and Children's Services			
Director of Education and CS - Strategy	0	0	0
Transport	604	532	-72
Community & Youth Services	81	17	-64
Education Resources	3,495	3,574	79
Education Trading Operations	0	135	135
Total	4,180	4,258	78
Education			
Head of Education	71	70	-1
Early Years	5,630	5,349	-281
ASN / Psychology	5,228	5,267	39
Schools & Attainment	33,982	33,926	-56
e-Sgoil, Employability and Adult Learning	374	299	-75
Gaelic & Culture	792	689	-103
Sport and Health	1,440	1,546	106
Libraries	779	767	-12
Total	48,296	47,913	-383
Children's Services			
Head of Children's Services	625	534	-91
Mainland Placements	1,356	1,627	271
Children & Families Practice Teams	755	696	-59
Children's Serv. Resource Team	2,017	1,767	-250
Total	4,753	4,624	-129
Committee Total	57,229	56,795	-434

Workforce Planning

- 9.1 The annual workforce planning exercise for the staffing of schools for both teaching and non-teaching staff for session 25-26 has been under way since January 2025. It continues to be significantly affected the on-going national debate regarding retention of teacher numbers and provision of an additional 90mins of non-contact time for teachers. The service retained the same number of teachers in 2024-25 as in 2023/24.
- 9.2 The Education Service continues to be challenged in the provision of sufficient probationer teachers via the GTCS-administered Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS). The Comhairle failed to get sufficient probationer teachers in shortage subjects in 2024-25 and this affected our ability to recruit into these



roles. We do not expect TIS allocations to be any more successful in 2025-26 but we are required to let that process run its course before we explore other recruitment options.

- 9.3 Work is underway on a new Workforce Planning Strategy for Education and Children's Services. The review will assist the department to meet its saving and efficiency targets across the totality of its service.
- 9.4 Children's Services teams are currently facing significant challenges related to on-going vacancies, including the role of Chief Officer for Children's Services and Chief Social Work Officer. Recruitment is expected early in 2025-26 to this role and then subsequent remaining vacancies will be addressed to bring the service back up to operational capacity. It is forecast that the service may experience challenges in successfully recruiting maingrade social workers.
- 9.5 External grant funding continues to provide important additionality to assist in retaining a full staffing complement. The service does face pressures in terms of increasing demand, especially in the Children and Families Team and is susceptible to depreciating resilience due to factors such as potential sickness absence. Grants received via the Bairns' Hoose Pathfinder Project have permitted funding for officers to lead on delivery of that scheme and reduced demand on the core team.
- 9.6 The department continues to carefully manage and mitigate against workforce-related risks in terms of potential recruitment of skilled staff in senior positions and in the availability of fluent Gaelic speakers across key parts of the department's direct service delivery.

CONCLUSION

- 10.1 This report provides an overview on the year-end progress of the 2024/25 Departmental Outcome Delivery Plans for Education and Children's Services.

