

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by Chief Education Officer****Council Meeting: 9 February 2022**

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**Subject: Attainment Challenge Funding Reduction – Motion from Educational Services Committee 1 December 2021.****1. Purpose**

- 1.1. To follow up on the Motion at the Educational Services Committee Meeting of 1 December 2021;
- 1.2. To advise Council of new information and data regarding Primary School educational attainment and the impacts of the Pandemic on communities with challenging circumstances.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. Council is asked to note and comment on the likely impacts on West Dunbartonshire of the cuts to our share of the Scottish Attainment Fund (Appendix 1);
- 2.2. Council is further asked to note and comment on a Scottish Government Report published on 14 December 2021 which confirmed the links between educational attainment in Primary Schools and those communities hit hardest by the Pandemic (Appendix 2);
- 2.3. Council is asked to advise if any further information or action is required on this matter.

**3. Background**

- 3.1. The Scottish Attainment Challenge was established by Scottish Government in 2015 with a core aim of breaking the generational link between poverty and educational attainment. Nine Challenge Authorities were established including West Dunbartonshire and there has followed a successful programme of improving attainment as reported regularly to Educational Services Committee.
- 3.2. The approach and the associated additional resources has allowed West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC) to make significant improvements in and across Local Learning Communities and positively discriminate in children's services as well as school based learning. Our ability to develop an early intervention and family welfare model has proved to be highly successful alongside some innovative practice that has been

nationally recognised. In national measures, our SQA results have risen year on year across our secondary schools with the two most recent years being delivered through an Alternative Certification Model. Prior to the pandemic our attainment in primary had increased and the attainment gap narrowed.

- 3.3** A decision was taken nationally to alter the approach taken to the Scottish Attainment Challenge and to move to a national approach using a set of distribution indicators which are based on the Children in Low Income Families data as opposed to SIMD indicators. Appendix 1 illustrates the impact on the share West Dunbartonshire is to receive.

#### **4. Main Issues**

- 4.1.** West Dunbartonshire Council has benefitted greatly from the Scottish Attainment Challenge since its inception in 2015 and its associated funding streams, which have helped us increase attainment levels and the life chances of young people year on year:

##### WDC Progress 2015 to pre pandemic 2019

Long term progress had been made with data from 2019 showing improved outcomes for learners with a focus on maximising progress and embedding sustainable change. Trends over four years in the percentage of learners who achieved the appropriate Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level for their age and stage showed a stable high performance for P1 and S3 and a generally increasing performance for P4 and P7.

Since 2016 achievement in writing had increased by 9% for P4 and 13% for P7. In relation to P1,4,7 reading, the poverty related attainment gap was 4% narrower than the national average and attainment had improved for learners in SIMD Q1 by 5% since 2017. In relation to P1,4, 7 writing, the poverty related attainment gap was 1% narrower than the national average and attainment for learners living in SIMDQ1 had improved by 2% since 2017.

- 4.2.1** The reallocation of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Fund from a highly targeted basis established in 2015 to 9 Councils, to a new, nationally distributed formula is available for information and comment in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 4.2.2** In 2021 West Dunbartonshire was allocated £2,043,815 decreasing year on year to £851,743 in 2025/26. This signals a 58% decrease for WDC as detailed below:

### **West Dunbartonshire SAC allocations 2021/22 – 2025/26**

<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>
£2,043,815	£1,745,797	£1,447,779	£1,149,761	£851,743
	Reduction of £298,018 (-15%)	Reduction of £298,018 (-17%)	Reduction of £298,018 (-21%)	Reduction of £298,018 (-26%)

**4.2.3** The likely impacts of the highly significant decrease in funding will include limiting our ability to adopt an authority wide strategic approach to a range of matters relating to raising attainment. The requirement to work at pace to accelerate progress will be challenging. Examples of this are likely to be:

- scrutiny and challenge by excellence and equity team to support sustained improvement in schools and ELC;
- additional resource to support out of hours and holiday learning;
- provision of fast access to welfare / wellbeing support for parents ; family outreach support;
- provision of specialist staff to provide well being and mental health support in schools and provision of additional Educational Psychologist support; and
- provision of authority wide collaborative and professional learning focusing on excellence and equity.

**4.3** On 14 December 2021 Scottish Government published data on literacy and numeracy levels which confirmed that the attainment gap between pupils from the most and least deprived areas of Scotland has widened. The full report is Appendix 2 to this report. While national Attainment figures have reduced overall, those pupils from the poorest areas of Scotland have seen the biggest decrease. The socio economic profile of West Dunbartonshire as well as our own evidence suggests that this national trend is mirrored in West Dunbartonshire schools. The reallocation of funds nationally, and in particular the consequential reduction of our share will limit our capacity to support our pupils through recovery. However, we do have an Education Recovery Plan which will provide enhanced personalised support to schools by central officers (Appendix 3).

**4.4** The adjustment of workstream priorities and resourcing within the period of March 2020 to June 2021 in response to the context of COVID

impacted upon further expected long term gains to increase attainment and reduce the poverty related attainment gap in West Dunbartonshire.

- 4.5.1** National data for primary school aged children published in December 2021 shows a decrease in attainment in Scotland. This is summarised in Table 1. The percentage decrease in attainment in West Dunbartonshire is similar to the national decrease with a widening in the attainment gap between children living in the most and least deprived areas of Scotland.

Table 1:

<b>National Attainment 2019 compared to 2021</b>	<b>WDC Attainment 2019 compared to 2021</b>
Literacy decreased by 5.4percentage points to 67%.	Literacy decreased by 6 percentage points to 62 %.
Numeracy decreased by 4.4 percentage points to 75%.	Numeracy decreased by 4 percentage points to 72 %.

- 4.5.2** National attainment data published in December 2021 for primary school aged children shows an increase in the attainment gap between the most and least deprived pupils since 2019. This is summarised in Table 2:

Table 2:

<b>National Attainment Gap difference from 2019 to 2021</b>	<b>WDC Attainment Gap difference from 2019 to 2021</b>
Literacy increased gap by 4% from 20.7pp (percentage points) to 24.7 pp	Literacy increased gap by 4 % from 17pp to 21pp
Numeracy increased gap by 4.6% from 16.8 pp to 21.4 pp	Numeracy increased gap by 7% from 13pp to 20pp

- 4.5.3** Analysis of the WDC attainment data for 2021 tells us that the dip in performance levels is mostly in those areas of highest deprivation. Those schools in the less deprived areas have managed to maintain levels of performance since 2019. This is detailed in Table 3:

Table 3:

<b>West Dunbartonshire Schools with Maintained/Improved Performance</b>	<b>West Dunbartonshire Schools with Reduction in Performance</b>
In literacy 25 % of primary schools maintained or improved their performance from 2018/19 to 2020/21. In 38 % of those primary schools which maintained or improved their performance in literacy less than a fifth of children attending those schools live in SIMD quintile 1 (most deprived).	In literacy 75% of primary schools showed a reduction in performance from 2018/19 to 2020/21. In 54% of those primary schools which showed a reduction in performance in literacy more than half of children attending those schools live in SIMD quintile 1 (most deprived).
In numeracy 31 % of primary schools maintained or improved performance from 2018/19 to 2020/21.	In numeracy 69 % of primary schools showed a reduction in performance from 2018/19 to 2020/21.

In 40 % of those primary schools which maintained or improved their performance in numeracy less than a fifth of children attending those schools live in SIMD quintile 1 (most deprived).	In 59 % of those primary schools which showed a reduction in performance in numeracy more than half of children attending those schools live in SIMD quintile 1 (most deprived).
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**4.6** While there are other Scottish Government funding streams that will support raising attainment strategies, such as the Pupil Equity Fund which goes directly to schools, or the Early Learning and Childcare investment, the loss of such a high percentage of resource within the Attainment Challenge weakens Authority wide and targeted approaches available to us. This presents particular challenge in light of increasing levels of child poverty and the commitments contained in West Dunbartonshire Council's Child Poverty Report to improve life chances for children and young people via continued multi-agency collaboration and approaches to helping families with housing, debt, to access employability support and employment and with income maximisation.

## **5. People Implications**

**5.1** The Scottish Attainment Challenge funding enabled the provision of additional temporary (seconded) funded posts within the education service, partner council services and external providers. The main areas supported through this additionality are: early intervention in learning, welfare advice and poverty support, nurturing mental well being, community safety, school and learning community collaboration to improve quality, professional learning and personalised learning pathways. The decreased funding will reduce the number of staff available to deliver in these areas with the seconded staff returning to their substantive post, and any backfill element will cease.

**5.2** In session 2021/22 the Scottish Attainment Challenge is funding 41.5 posts as detailed in Table 4:

Table 4:

<b>Planned Staffing Breakdown</b>	<b>FTE planned</b>
Data Analysis Officer	1
Education Development Officers	3.4
Family Link / Outreach Worker	17
Psychologist	1.5
Teachers	7
Others - Project Manager, Excellence & Equity Lead, Police Officer, Senior Phase Officer , Professional Learning	11.6
<b>Staff Total 2021/22</b>	<b>41.5</b>

The new funding model will reduce this number of posts by 42% from 41.5 to 24.07 posts by 2025/2026.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implications**

Since its inception in 2015/16 to March 2022 WDC will have received £12,642,432 in funding. Attainment Challenge allocations to WDC have been £2,043,815 in both 2020/21 and 2021/22. The revised funding model announced in November 2021 will reduce the annual allocation to WDC each year from 2022. WDC will receive £5,195,080 between March 2022 and 2026.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

- 7.1** The reduced funding model coupled with the current context of the pandemic increases risk of a negative impact on priorities to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for all learners in our communities.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 8.1** Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) screening conducted and included as Appendix 4.

## **9. Consultation**

- a. Legal Services and the Section 95 Officer have been consulted in relation to the content of this report.
- b. In response to the revised funding model consultation will be conducted with Education Scotland, the Scottish Government, local Trade Unions and Heads of Establishments to produce West Dunbartonshire's Scottish Attainment Challenge plan for 2022-2026.

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

- 10.1** This reports reflects the Council's 2017-2022 overarching priority to reduce inequalities for the people of West Dunbartonshire which supports improved outcomes for all learners in our community.

Laura Mason  
Chief Education Officer  
February 2022

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**Appendices:** 1. Table of National Allocations of SAC budget to Local

Authorities.

2. Scottish Government Report: Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Levels 2020/21 – published 14 December 2021
3. Education Recovery Plan
4. Equalities Impact Assessment

**Background Papers:** None

**Wards Affected:** All wards

