

REPORT TO: CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 20 JANUARY 2025

REPORT ON: SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE UPDATE

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 16-2025

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on Dundee's Strategic Equity Fund (SEF) allocation for 2025/26. SEF is a funding stream in the Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF), which supports the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC).

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Children, Families and Communities Committee is asked to note the content of the report.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Strategic Equity Fund (SEF) is a fully funded specific grant from the Scottish Government's Attainment Scotland Fund.
- 3.2 The Strategic Equity Fund allocation for Dundee City Council for 2025/26 is £1,303,561. This is a reduction in grant allocation of £1,229,976 from the funding level of 2024/25. Table 1 provides the allocations to all 32 Local Authorities from Scottish Government from 2022/23 – 2025/26 and Table 2 provides the overview of the funding allocations with the reduction for this year to Dundee City Council from 2021/22 – 2025/26. Table 3 provides an overview of the allocation of funding in 2025/26.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched in February 2015 with the strategic aim of "closing the poverty-related attainment gap between children and young people from the least and most disadvantaged communities". The Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF), which supports the Scottish Attainment Challenge, prioritises improvements in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing of those children adversely affected by poverty in Scotland's schools. Achieving excellence and equity in education are the key aims.
- 4.2 In November 2021, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills set out plans for a refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) from April 2022. The mission of this refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) is to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.
- 4.3 The refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge introduced several changes to the programme at national, regional, and local level. This included changes to the ASF with the introduction of Strategic Equity Funding (SEF), which replaced Challenge Authority and Schools Programme Funding. The ASF is now made up of the SEF, the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) and the Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding,
- 4.4 Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) is £43 million annually to be shared by all 32 local authorities to invest in approaches to achieving the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC). A link to further information about SEF, including the SEF allocation for each of the 32 local authorities, is included in Appendix 1. Table 1 provides the allocations to all 32 Local Authorities from Scottish Government from 2022/23 – 2025/26.

Table 1 – Local Authority Allocations

Strategic Equity Funding: allocations 2022/2023 to 2025/2026				
Local authorities	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026 final
Total LA allocations	£44,743,505	£43,366,147	£43,020,675	£43,000,000

- 4.5 The £43 million in SEF is distributed based on Children in Low Income Families data for the 2019/2020 financial year. As a result of the change from Challenge Funding (for 9 challenge authorities, including Dundee) to SEF, Dundee City Council's funding allocation to achieve the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge is tapering over four years from £6,223,466 in 2021/22 to £1,303,561 in 2025/26 (See appendix 1 and Tables 2 and 3). Therefore, Dundee's allocation will reduce by a further £1,229,976 from 2024/25 to 2025/26. As yet, there is no confirmation of any SEF beyond 2025/26.

Table 2 – Dundee City Allocations

Strategic Equity Funding: allocations 2021/2022 to 2025/2026					
	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026 final
Dundee City	£6,223,466	£4,993,490	£3,763,513	£2,533,537	£1,303,561
				Reduction: -	£1,229,976

- 4.6 Dundee's SEF for 2024/25 is allocated to different interventions and activities and used for either staffing or contract work/providers/resources to build capacity and provide targeted support. Plans for sustainability are built into this. SEF for 2024/25 is allocated, broadly, as follows:

Table 3 – SEF grant funding 2024/25

INTERVENTION	STAFF - FTE	OTHER ALLOCATION OF FUNDING e.g., contract work/providers/resources	TOTAL
Pedagogy Team and Central Support - Learning Provision lever	7.0		£597,377
Speech and Language Therapy - Learning Provision lever		£80,000	£80,000
Targeted Support - Learning Provision lever	13.0		£549,393
Health and wellbeing - Learning Provision lever	10.8		£561,840

Participation lever Includes Health and Wellbeing/Additional Support Needs - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide targeted support to pupils to overcome barriers to learning and to build capacity around supporting young people with additional support needs. Provide additional learning pathways to ensure all pupils make appropriate progress in achieving planned outcomes Additional support for targeted health and wellbeing support in the primary and secondary sector. 	9.0		£272,669
Presence lever Includes Parental Engagement – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head Teachers involved in determining where School and Family Development Workers (SFDWs) can have greatest impact. SEF and Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) will be used to fund SFDWs to provide targeted support to pupils and families, with a particular focus on school attendance. 	16.2		£783,711
TOTAL	27.2		£1,303,561

- 4.8 The reduction in FTE in the 2025/26 SEF plan will be managed through the redeployment of staff to other roles, retirements, or the end of temporary contracts; or, through using other funding streams. All teaching posts will be mainstreamed as part of the annual staffing exercise for 2025/26. The posts related to the central team, including the Educational Psychology Service, will be deleted posts as postholders retire and are not replaced. Any reduction in support staff will be managed by returning permanent staff on secondments to their substantive posts or ending those on temporary contracts.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report has been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment to identify impacts on Equality & Diversity, Fairness & Poverty, Environment and Corporate Risk. An impact, positive or negative, on one or more of these issues was identified. An appropriate senior manager has checked and agreed with this assessment. A copy of the Integrated Impact Assessment showing the impacts and accompanying benefits of/mitigating factors for them is included as an appendix to this report.

6 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 The Council Leadership Team was consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with its content.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

Audrey May
Executive Director of Children and Families
Services

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December 2024

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIM	Anxiety in Motion
ASF	Attainment Scotland Fund
EDLM	Every Dundee Learner Matters
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
PEF	Pupil Equity Funding
SAC	Scottish Attainment Challenge
SEF	Strategic Equity Fund
SFDW	School and Family Development Worker
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority

GLOSSARY

AIM	AIM (Anxiety in Motion) is a provision within for secondary school pupils who are unable to attend school due to significant anxiety and related mental health needs.
ASF	The ASF is an additional, targeted investment to be used strategically alongside existing funding at and across local authority and school level, with local authorities and schools collaborating to achieve the shared, national mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Resources for the Scottish Attainment Challenge, through the ASF, will be provided to all 32 local authorities through Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) and Care Experienced Children and Young People funding (CECYP); and to schools through Pupil Equity Funding (PEF).
PEF	Pupil Equity Funding is allocated directly to schools and targeted at closing the poverty related attainment gap. This funding is to be spent at the discretion of the head-teacher working in partnership with each other and their local authority, with Pupil Equity Funding: national operational guidance designed to help support those plans.
SAC	The Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched in February 2015 with the strategic aim of “closing the poverty-related attainment gap between children and young people from the least and most disadvantaged communities”.
SEF	Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) is £43 million to be shared by all 32 local authorities to invest in approaches to achieving the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC).

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APPENDIX 1**STRATEGIC EQUITY FUNDING ALLOCATIONS**

Year	Amount
2021/2022 – final year of SAC funding	£6,223,466
2022/2023 – allocation SEF	£4,993,490
2023/2024 – allocation SEF	£3,763,513
2024/2025 – allocation SEF	£2,533,537
2025/2026 – allocation SEF	£1,303,561

STRATEGIC EQUITY FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR EACH LOCAL AUTHORITY

[Pupil attainment: closing the gap - Schools - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/pupilsattainment/closing-the-gap/schools)

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Integrated Impact Assessment

Committee Report Number: 16-2025

Document Title: Scottish Attainment Challenge Update

Document Type: Service

Description:

This report provides an update on how the Children and Families Service will use Dundee's Strategic Equity Fund (SEF) allocation for 2025/26.

Intended Outcome: Report is noted.

Period Covered: 01/04/2025 to 31/03/2026

Monitoring:

Chief Education Officer and Education Manager will review and evaluate the impact of the remaining Strategic Equity Fund.

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Equality, Diversity and Human Rights **Impacts & Implications**

Age: No Impact

Disability: No Impact

Gender Reassignment: No Impact

Marriage & Civil Partnership: No Impact

Pregnancy & Maternity: No Impact

Race / Ethnicity: No Impact

Religion or Belief: No Impact

Sex: No Impact

Sexual Orientation: No Impact

Are any Human Rights not covered by the Equalities questions above impacted by this report?

No

Fairness & Poverty **Geographic Impacts & Implications**

Strathmartine:	Not Known
Lochee:	Not Known
Coldside:	Not Known
Maryfield:	Not Known
North East:	Not Known
East End:	Not Known
The Ferry:	Not Known
West End:	Not Known

Household Group Impacts and Implications

Looked After Children & Care Leavers: No Impact

Carers: No Impact

Lone Parent Families: No Impact

Household Group Impacts and Implications

Single Female Households with Children: No Impact

Greater number of children and/or young children: No Impact

Pensioners - single / couple: No Impact

Unskilled workers or unemployed: No Impact

Serious & enduring mental health problems: No Impact

Homeless: No Impact

Drug and/or alcohol problems: No Impact

Offenders & Ex-offenders: No Impact

Socio Economic Disadvantage Impacts & Implications

Employment Status: No Impact

Education & Skills: Negative

With the reduction in the allocation of Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) to Dundee, there will be interventions that will either cease or be reduced in terms of their reach. This has been planned for and there are plans for sustainability in place, however, there may still be an impact.

The plans in place to minimise the impact of the reduction in funding include the effective use of all Attainment Scotland Funds e.g. working with Head Teachers to use SEF and Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) together. Learning from evaluations of impact will also assist schools, Head Teachers and their communities to inform planned interventions for 2025/26. This should also allow for better alignment and targeting of resources.

Income: No Impact

Caring Responsibilities (including Childcare): No Impact

Affordability and accessibility of services: No Impact

Fuel Poverty: No Impact

Cost of Living / Poverty Premium: No Impact

Connectivity / Internet Access: No Impact

Income / Benefit Advice / Income Maximisation No Impact

Employment Opportunities: No Impact

Education: Negative

With the reduction in the allocation of Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) to Dundee, there will be interventions that will either cease or be reduced in terms of their reach. This has been planned for and there are plans for sustainability in place, however, there may still be an impact.

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Health: No Impact

Life Expectancy: No Impact

Mental Health: No Impact

Overweight / Obesity: No Impact

Child Health: No Impact

Neighbourhood Satisfaction: No Impact

Transport: No Impact

Environment

Climate Change Impacts

Mitigating Greenhouse Gases: No Impact

Adapting to the effects of climate change: No Impact

Resource Use Impacts

Energy efficiency & consumption: No Impact

Prevention, reduction, re-use, recovery or recycling of waste: No Impact

Sustainable Procurement: No Impact

Transport Impacts

Accessible transport provision: No Impact

Sustainable modes of transport: No Impact

Natural Environment Impacts

Air, land & water quality: No Impact

Biodiversity: No Impact

Open & green spaces: No Impact

Built Environment Impacts

Built Heritage: No Impact

Housing: No Impact

Is the proposal subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)? No further action is required as it does not qualify as a Plan, Programme or Strategy as defined by the Environment Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

Corporate Risk

Corporate Risk Impacts

Political Reputational Risk: Not Known

It is not known how this report may be perceived by members of the public, media etc and as such the likelihood of political or reputational damage to the Council is not known.

Economic/Financial Sustainability / Security & Equipment: No Impact

Social Impact / Safety of Staff & Clients: No Impact

Technological / Business or Service Interruption: No Impact

Environmental: No Impact

Legal / Statutory Obligations: No Impact

Organisational / Staffing & Competence: No Impact

Corporate Risk Implications & Mitigation:

The risk implications associated with the subject matter of this report are "business as normal" risks and any increase to the level of risk to the Council is minimal. This is due either to the risk being inherently low or as a result of the risk being transferred in full or in part to another party on a fair and equitable basis. The subject matter is routine and has happened many times before without significant impact.

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