

**REPORT TO: CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 1 SEPTEMBER 2025**

**REPORT ON: SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (SQA) 2025 EXAM RESULTS**

**REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE**

**REPORT NO: 244-2025**

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides an initial high-level summary of provisional, pre-appeal, Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) 2025 exam results, published 5 August 2025.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Children, Families and Communities Committee:
- Notes the contents of the report and,
  - Requests the Executive Director to provide a further update report on the achievement and attainment of our young people in the Senior Phase in academic session 2024/25 following the Insight (national benchmarking tool) update scheduled to take place late September 2025.

## **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 SQA results for 2025 were published on Tuesday 5 August 2025. SQA announced the results of National Courses at National 2 to National 4, Higher and Advanced Higher, in addition to a wide range of National Progression Awards, National Certificates, Skills for Work and SQA Awards.
- 4.2 The data published on 5 August reflects current information at a particular point in time (22 July 2025) and the figures are subject to change later in the year. This data is therefore considered 'provisional' subject to processes including appeals and late amendments. Final figures are due to be published by the SQA in December 2025.
- 4.3 Last year, 2024, saw the return of full course assessment in National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses for the first time since 2019. This follows the modifications to assessments that were put in place to help limit the impact of disruption on learning and teaching caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the removal of coursework and practical assessments.
- 4.4 The SQA has stated: 'The different awarding arrangements in place between 2019 and 2023 mean that it is not possible to compare attainment between years without full consideration of this contextual information.'
- 4.5 It is also important to note that the pandemic will have impacted individuals, and year groups, differently. For example, the S5 cohort in the 2025 exam diet were in the final year of primary school when the first lockdown, and subsequent school closures, happened in March 2020. Therefore, these pupils made the important transition to secondary school without the usual support.
- 4.6 Following adjustments to SQA awarding approaches for 2022 and 2023, in 2024 the SQA stated that it has returned to a 'well-established awarding approach.' '...While adjustments were made across a range of courses overall, at an aggregate level, grade boundary adjustments were similar to 2019.'

Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) Family Group

- 4.7 This report references Dundee's local government benchmarking framework ([LGBF](#)) family group for comparison purposes. In addition to Dundee City, Family Group 4 includes: East Ayrshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, Na h-Eileanan Siar, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire. All local authorities in Family Group 4 except for Na h-Eileanan Siar are previous Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities.

## 5.0 SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (SQA) RESULTS 2025 – HEADLINE

- 5.1 3,361 pupils from Dundee's schools received the results of their SQA awards on 5 August. These pupils were presented for a total of 16,428 awards in 2025 compared to 14,956 in 2024. Key messages from each year group in the Senior Phase in Dundee include:

### **S4** (1,656 pupils. 1,576 sat awards)

- 59% (972) of pupils achieved 5 or more qualifications at SCQF Level 4 or above, up from 50% last year.
- 56% (930) of S4 pupils sat four or more awards at SCQF Level 5 or better, up from 54% last year.
- 112 pupils were awarded six National 5s at Grade A.
- 23% (380) of S4 pupils achieved 6 or more awards at National 5 (A-C), up from 20% in 2023, and 8 percentage points higher than 2019.

### **S5** (S5 2024/25 1,281. Cohort: S4 2023/24 1,621, 1,028 sat awards)

- 740 S5 pupils passed one or more SCQF Level 6 (Higher) awards at grades A-C.
- The percentage of our S5 cohort with 4 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 increased from 18% last year to 19% (316).
- This year 50 young people in S5 achieved Grade A passes in all their Higher awards.
- 177 young people achieved five SCQF Level 6 awards at grades A to C.

### **S6** (S6 2024/25 809. Cohort: S4 2022/23 1,560. 735 sat awards)

- The percentage of our S6 cohort with 4 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 increased from 27% last year to 28% (438).
- 16% (246) of pupils in our S6 cohort gained at least one Advanced Higher, up from 15% last year.
- 28 pupils gained at least three Advanced Highers

- 5.2 In addition to the above 20 pupils in stages S1 to 3 and 7 adults sat SQA awards in the 2025 diet.

- 5.3 Pass rates for National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers increased across Scotland in 2025 compared to 2024. Key messages related to pass rates for National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers in Dundee include:

- Similar to the Scotland average, the pass rate at grades A-C for National 5s in Dundee has increased from 74.9% in 2024 to 77.0% in 2025, higher than our pre-pandemic, 2019, pass rate of 74.9%. In our Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) Family Group (The local authorities experiencing highest levels of deprivation), Dundee's National 5 A grade pass rate is fourth out of eight.
- Similar to the Scotland average, the pass rate at grades A-C for Highers increased from 70.3% in 2024 to 70.6% in 2025. In our LGBF Family Group, Dundee's Higher A grade pass rate is fifth out of eight.
- Similar to the Scotland average, the pass rate at grades A-C for Advanced Highers increased from 70.0% in 2024 to 73.4% in 2025. In our LGBF Family Group, Dundee's Advanced Higher A grade pass rate is the highest out of the eight authorities.

## **6.0 NEXT STEPS**

- 6.1 Senior Officers in the Children and Families Service are currently undertaking a thorough analysis of Dundee's pre-appeals SQA results – at local authority, school, and subject levels. This will include looking for patterns, trends and anomalies in schools or subjects for different cohorts of pupils and determining the next steps. This will inform improvement actions to be implemented in academic session 2025/26.
- 6.2 Head Teachers, and their school's link Quality Improvement Education Officer, will also be issued with data packs to help them carry out their own attainment reviews at subject level. This analysis will help inform individual school, as well as service, improvement plans. As part of Every Dundee Learner Matters collaborative improvement strategy impactful practice will be shared across all schools.
- 6.3 The Strategic Education Manager (Secondary & Inclusion), in partnership with the Senior Information and Research Officer, will undertake an analysis of each subject area to identify city strengths and areas for development. This will be shared with Head Teachers and the newly formed Collaborative Improvement (Faculty) Networks where subject and faculty leads will develop plans to share best practice and provide support where required.
- 6.4 The Chief Education Officer and the new Strategic Education Manager (Secondary & Inclusion) will visit each Secondary school to undertake attainment reviews in collaboration with each school's Senior Leadership Team.
- 6.5 The Children and Families Service Improvement Plan 2023-2027 approved by Elected Members, Article III of the minute of meeting of the City Governance Committee of 4 September 2023 refers, report number 185-2023 sets out how the service, working with others, plans to further improve outcomes for children, young people, and families. Informed by the processes outlined in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2, the Service will also develop a specific action plan for 2025/26 to improve the progress, presence and participation of pupils. This will be informed by the broad strategic actions above.
- 6.6 A full report on the attainment and achievement of our young people in the Senior Phase, beyond just SQA exams, will be submitted to the Children, Families and Communities Committee later this year following the Insight (national benchmarking tool) update scheduled to take place late September 2025.

## **7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services, or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate senior manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

## **8.0 CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The Council Leadership Team has been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with its content.

## **9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1 None.

AUDREY MAY  
Executive Director of Children and Families Service

PAUL FLEMING  
Head of Education, Learning & Inclusion  
Chief Education Officer

7 August 2025

This page is intentionally left blank

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|             |                                         |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <b>LGBF</b> | Local Government Benchmarking Framework |
| <b>SDS</b>  | Skills Development Scotland             |
| <b>SIMD</b> | Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation  |
| <b>SQA</b>  | Scottish Qualifications Authority       |

## GLOSSARY

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Insight</b>           | <p>Insight is an online tool for benchmarking the senior phase. It is a professional tool available to secondary schools and local authorities to allow them to look at specific cohorts of learners and identify areas of success and where improvements can be made.</p> <p>Although Insight provides data on the attainment of a wide range of Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) awards from a range of providers, not all SCQF achievement awards are included.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>LGBF Family Group</b> | <p>To understand why variations in cost and performance are occurring, councils work together to 'drill-down' into the benchmarking data across service areas. This process has been organised around 'family groups' of councils so that we are comparing councils that are similar in terms of the type of population that they serve (e.g., relative deprivation and affluence) and the type of area in they cover (e.g., urban, semi-rural, rural). The point of comparing like with like is that this is more likely to lead to useful learning and improvement.</p> <p>Dundee is in Family Group 4 for Children, Social Work and Housing indicators. Councils are grouped by the type of population they serve, e.g., level of deprivation and affluence.</p> |
| <b>School Leaver</b>     | <p>A school leaver is defined as a young person of school leaving age, who left school during or at the end of the school year. The leaver year is based on the dates of the Scottish Government's pupil census, details of which can be found in the Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland publication.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Senior Phase</b>      | <p>The senior phase curriculum, from S4 to S6 (from around ages 15 to 18), follows a young person's <a href="#">broad general education</a>, building firmly on the <a href="#">Experiences and Outcomes</a> they will have experienced and achieved to end of S3.</p> <p>It enables them to extend and deepen their learning and continue to develop skills for learning, life and work, through qualifications and also through a range of opportunities for personal development (for example work experience, volunteering etc).</p> <p>It ultimately supports young people in moving on to the next stage – whether that is college, university, training or employment.</p>                                                                                   |

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Participation Rates</b> | <p>Skills Development Scotland (SDS) produce the Annual Participation Measure (APM) which complements school leaver destination statistics. Published every August, the APM captures the activity of all 16–19-year-olds across a complete year, including those who choose to stay on at school as well as those who have left school.</p> <p>The APM has been adopted as the metric for measuring success in relation to the young people's participation national indicator within the National Performance Framework. The indicator measures the percentage of young adults (16–19-year-olds) participating in education, training or employment.</p> |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|