

Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)

Key themes from 24/25 national overview report and supporting improvement

Item 8

Director for the Commission and Audit Director, Performance Audit and Best Value

Meeting date:
13 August 2026

Purpose

1. This report sets out a summary of the report presented to the Commission in April as well as an overview of how the framework is being used to support improvement and potential areas of exploration for the future.

Recommendations

2. The Commission is invited to:

- Note the previous report provided on the LGBF national overview published in 2024/25
- Note the use of the LGBF within councils to support improvement
- Note potential future areas of focus for the Commission in its use of LGBF
- In advance of the meeting, provide an indication of areas of interest for discussion with LGBF Board members on 13 August.

Background

3. The LGBF's [2024/25 Overview Report](#) was published on 11 March 2026. It was the 14th edition of the report, representing local government's ongoing commitment to using data to support continuous improvement.

4. In April, the Director provided the Commission with a [summary](#) (in private) of the national report including this year's key messages, areas of significant improvement or deterioration, persistent challenges and key data trends as they relate to the Commission's current work programme, in particular:

- **Housing** – increase in ratio of financing costs to Housing Revenue Account revenue, significant capital vulnerabilities, housing repairs performance decline, and housing quality declining since base year.

- **Health and social care** – modelling of actual and required gross spend shows a growing gap (Figure 4 within the report). Underlying demand growth and increasing complexity driving a sharper rise in total hours of care than in the number of individuals supported. Ongoing recruitment and retention challenges, high absence levels, and market instability remain key constraints on delivery capacity.
- **Education outcomes** – ongoing protected spend, steady improvement in primary attainment but overall progress across the system remains uneven, with widening inequalities and falling pupil numbers set against rising levels of need and complexity.
- **Digital** – digital maturity cited as a reason for variations in service performance (as well as differing approaches to innovation redesign and transformation). Housing Peer Collaborative Improvement work surfaced innovations such as environmental sensors, broadband-enabled monitoring and tenant-facing apps but recognised the need for many councils to make smarter use of existing technology.

5. It was agreed in April that Kenneth Lawrie, Chair of the LGBF Board and Emily Lynch, Programme Manager would attend the Commission in August for a fuller, public discussion on the report. Members are asked to review the national report – alongside this report - and indicate in advance of the meeting the areas they would like to discuss with Kenneth and Emily.

Considerations

Sector-led work to demonstrate use of LGBF

6. In March, the LGBF Board discussed how to strengthen the impact of the LGBF. Members agreed that a clearer and more visible evidence base was needed to show how councils are using the framework in practice to inform decision making and drive improvement.

7. Since then, the Improvement Service (IS) has been working with a selection of councils to develop short case studies that clearly demonstrate how the LGBF is being used in practice, focusing on specific and practical examples of how it is being applied to support decision making, improvement, and sharing of good practice. A refreshed set of examples is now available on the [LGBF website](#).

Commission's expectations on use of LGBF within councils

8. The LGBF website states that the framework is “*not an end in itself - it is how it is used within local planning, improvement, change management, scrutiny and reporting activities that matters*”. This is an important point as the Commission reflects on how councils are fulfilling the requirements of the new Statutory Performance Information (SPI) Direction for their public performance reporting, applicable from audit year 2025/26.

9. Within the Direction, the Commission expects councils to maximise the use of LGBF as a primary means of facilitating comparisons, alongside or in conjunction with other locally appropriate measures of performance. Councils should be transparent as to why specific measures have been chosen for local benchmarking and performance reporting purposes (including public reporting), particularly where they have chosen not to use LGBF indicators.

10. There may be merit, following the 2025/26 annual audits (the first audit year to which the new Direction applies) to assess the extent to which councils are using LGBF indicators and where they are not, in which services areas and why.

Using LGBF to assess performance and value for money

11. In previous years, the Commission has expressed a desire to produce an output/commentary on the LGBF overview report, seeking to assess overall council performance and value for money. During 2025, it was concluded that more work is required to think about what type of output would add value, to what was already in the comprehensive national report. This could include “joining up” data sets to recognise the wider impact of spending decisions out with the immediate service area e.g. council’s expenditure on wider children’s services or housing will have an impact on educational attainment gap indicators.

12. From recent audit work, there are some service areas where audit colleagues have found limitations with the LGBF data:

- [Spotlight on culture and leisure services](#) – one of the report’s key messages was “*Limitations within the LGBF data, beyond attendance and satisfaction indicators, currently makes it difficult to monitor how effectively culture and leisure services are contributing to improving outcomes*”. The Commission’s expectation is that more work is done in this area by the sector.
- [Community health and social care performance 2025](#) – the report stated that there were limitations of performance information. The report recommended that councils and partners (including IS) assess the current measures for monitoring performance across community health and social care, and address gaps in information to support decision making, benchmarking, and transparent public performance reporting.

13. There is scope, at the outset of all performance audit work, to review LGBF data and to be clearer about how it can and cannot tell us about service performance, and to work with the sector to address data gaps.

Conclusion

14. LGBF board members will attend the Commission on 13 Aug to discuss not only the [2024/25 Overview Report](#), which was published on 11

March 2026, but how councils are using the framework to support improvement. Members are asked to indicate aspects of the LGBF they would want to discuss at the meeting.

15. The Commission's new SPI Direction demonstrates its commitment to the ongoing use of LGBF in council performance report. The Commission has also expressed a desire to develop further its use of the framework to assess performance and value for money.