

To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: 17 March 2022

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: Attainment of 2020/21 School Leavers

1. Summary

- 1.1. INSIGHT is a performance evaluation tool provided by the Scottish Government to schools and education authorities as a way of benchmarking performance in four key measures. This report will provide data and commentary across these measures for the 2020/21 leavers cohort.
 - 1.2. The time period covered by these statistics means that the results will be affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In particular, the cancellation of exams and external assessment of coursework in 2020, and the use of the Alternative Certification Model in 2021, will have affected the attainment of many 2020/21 school leavers. The impacts of these different approaches to certification upon school leaver attainment means that care should be taken when making comparisons over time.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Members of the Education and Children's Services Policy Board are asked to note:
 - the content of this report; and
 - the efforts of our young people and the school communities in bringing about these results.
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3. Background

3.1. INSIGHT is a performance evaluation tool provided by the Scottish Government to schools and education authorities as a way of benchmarking performance in four key measures:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy;
- improving attainment for all;
- attainment versus deprivation; and
- leavers' destinations.

3.2. This report will provide data and commentary on the performance of the 2020/21 leavers cohort in these four key measures. A leavers cohort includes all pupils that left school within a year, regardless of the stage they were at when they left school.

3.3. The time period covered by these statistics means that the results will be affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In particular, the cancellation of exams and external assessment of coursework in 2020, and the use of the Alternative Certification Model in 2021, will have affected the attainment of many 2020/21 school leavers. It is also likely that the pandemic will have continued to affect the destination choices made by, and opportunities available to, some school leavers in 2020/21.

3.4. The impacts of these different approaches to certification upon school leaver attainment means that care should be taken when making comparisons over time. The attainment data provides an accurate reflection of the attainment with which school leavers in Scotland left school; for this reason attainment data for 2020/21, 2019/20 and previous years are presented together.

3.5. The INSIGHT tool uses a 'virtual comparator' (VC) to allow authorities and schools to make statistically valid comparisons between how young people have performed against young people nationally, who share four similar characteristics. These characteristics are gender, stage of leaving, percentage of time spent in mainstream classes, and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile. INSIGHT also allows us to compare our performance with the national picture.

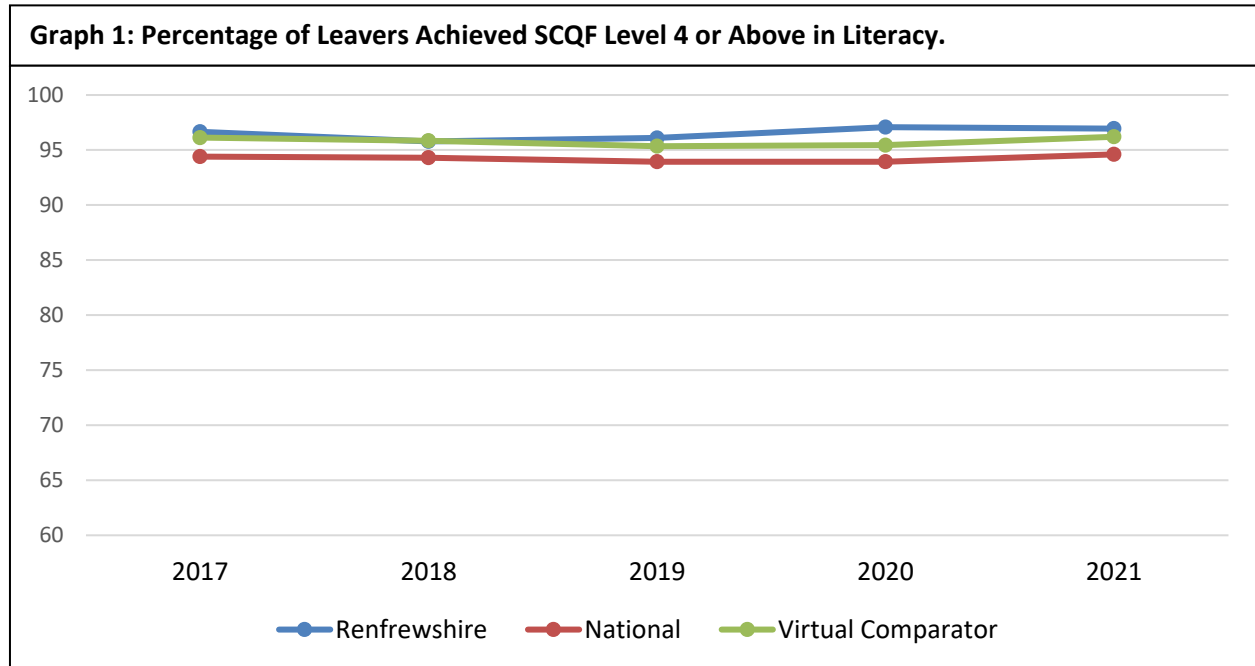
Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy

3.6. Raising attainment in literacy and numeracy remains a key priority of Renfrewshire Council Children's Services. This is also one of the Scottish Government's key priorities as detailed in its National Improvement Framework.

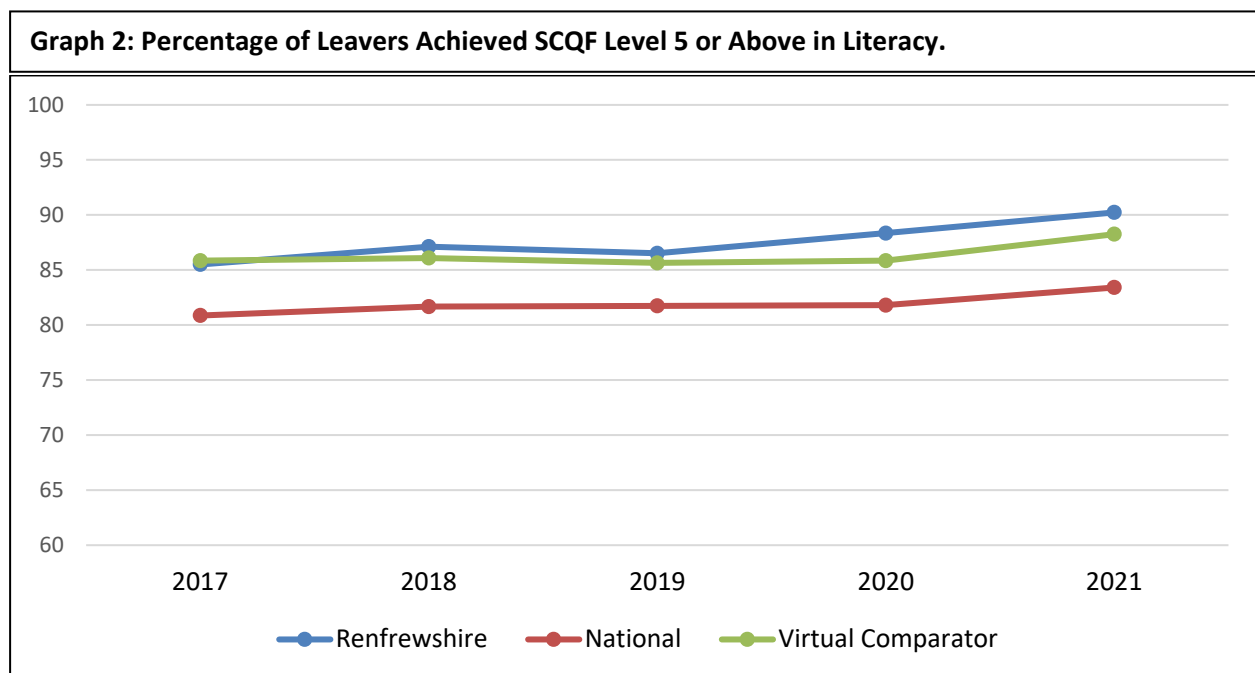
3.7. Attainment in literacy and numeracy includes passes at National 4 and 5 in English and Maths. It also includes passes in some other awards at Scottish Certificate and Qualification Framework (SCQF) levels 4 and 5 which contain certain core elements of literacy and numeracy. The tables which follow provide data on our performance of our school leaver cohort in literacy and numeracy compared to our virtual comparator and national figures.

Attainment in Literacy

3.8. The graphs that follow show the percentage of leavers achieving SCQF level 4 and SCQF 5 in literacy over 5 years.



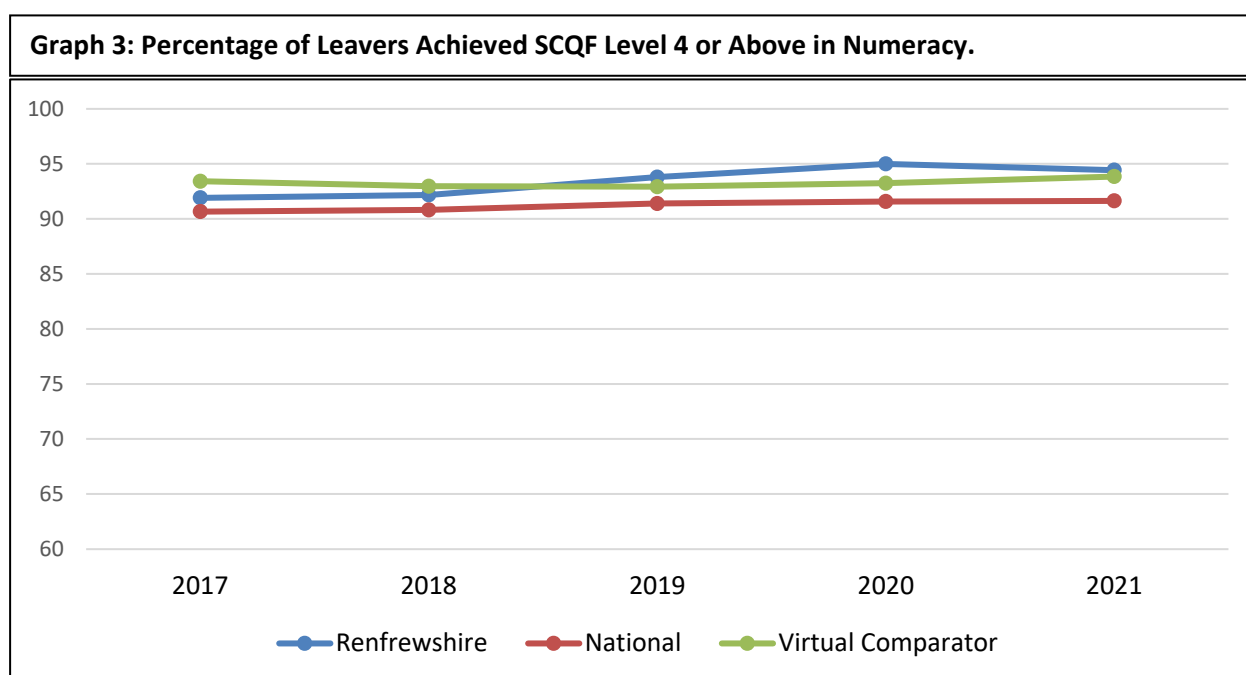
3.9. The percentage of leavers in Renfrewshire achieving literacy at SCQF level 4 or above has remained relatively constant over the past 5 years. Renfrewshire remains marginally ahead of both comparators in this measure. In the 2020/21 leavers cohort 97% of Renfrewshire pupils achieved this literacy at SCQF level 4, compared with 95% nationally and 96% for the virtual comparator.



3.10. Attainment in literacy at SCQF level 5 or above is higher than previous years. Figures remained broadly consistent for the 2016/17 to 2018/29 leavers cohorts who were presented for exam diets. The 2019/20 and 2020/21 leavers cohorts who were impacted by exam cancellations have higher attainment across Renfrewshire and its comparators. However, Renfrewshire is ahead of both comparators over 5 years. In the 2020/21 leavers cohort 90% of Renfrewshire pupils achieved this measure, compared with 83% nationally and 88% for the virtual comparator.

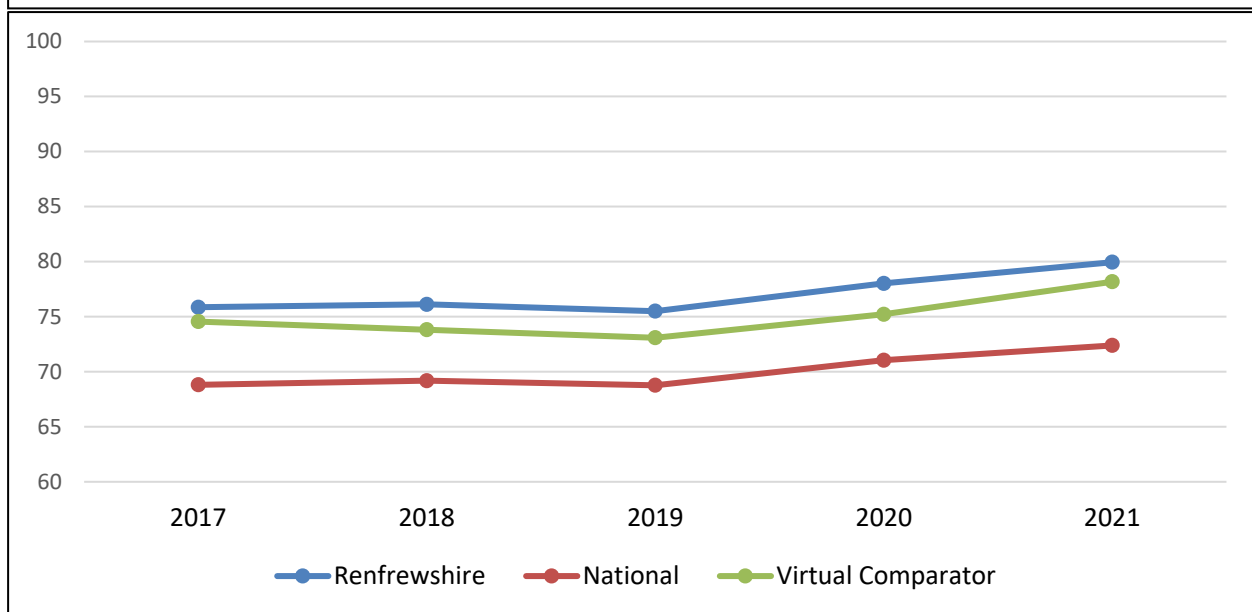
Attainment in Numeracy

3.11. The graphs that follow show the percentage of Renfrewshire leavers who have achieved SCQF level 4 and SCQF level 5 in numeracy over 5 years.



3.12. Patterns of attainment in numeracy are similar to literacy, although literacy attainment is higher across both levels. At SCQF level 4, numeracy attainment is broadly consistent over 5 years. There have been some increases in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 leavers cohorts, but these are marginal. Renfrewshire is marginally ahead of national over 5 years and ahead of the virtual comparator over 3 years. In the 2020/21 leavers cohort 94% of Renfrewshire pupils achieved SCQF level 4 numeracy, compared with 92% nationally and 94% for the virtual comparator.

Graph 4: Percentage of Leavers Achieved SCQF Level 5 or Above in Numeracy.

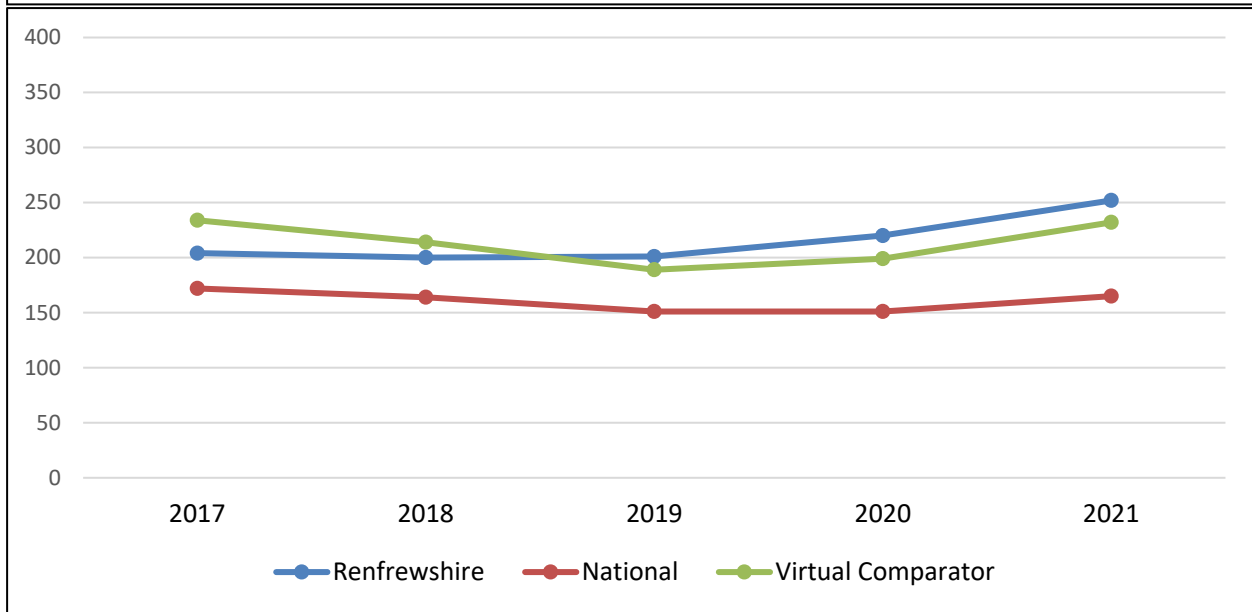


- 3.13. The percentage of Renfrewshire school leavers achieving SCQF Level 5 or above in numeracy remains above both comparators over 5 years. As with the literacy figures, attainment is highest in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 cohorts. In the 2020/21 leavers cohort 80% of Renfrewshire pupils achieved this measure, compared with 72% nationally and 78% for the virtual comparator.

Improving Attainment for All

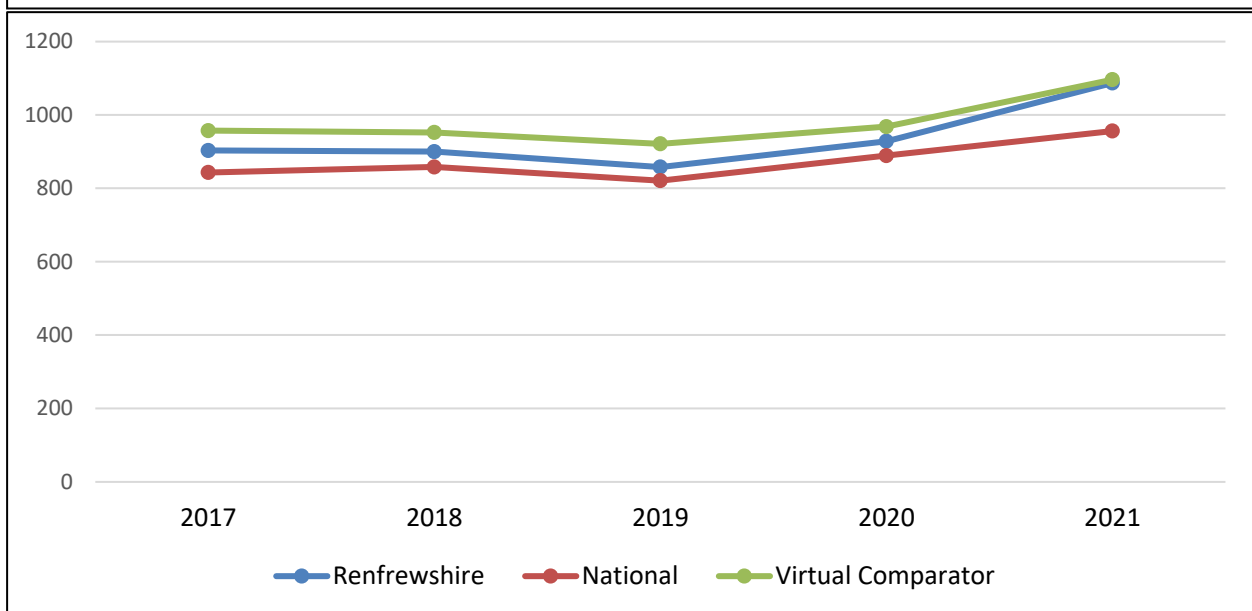
- 3.14. Each qualification on the Scottish Certificate and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is attributed a number of tariff points. The higher the level of qualification, the more tariff points are attributed. On leaving school, pupils will have a total tariff score which incorporates their latest and best achievements in the senior phase.
- 3.15. Within this measure, INSIGHT breaks the data down into three groups of leavers: the lowest attaining 20%, the middle attaining 60% and the highest attaining 20%. It then calculates the average total tariff points for each of these groups and compares their attainment with the virtual comparator and the national figure. Graphs demonstrating trends in each of these groups are shown below.

Graph 5: Average Total Tariff of Lowest 20% Attainment Cohort

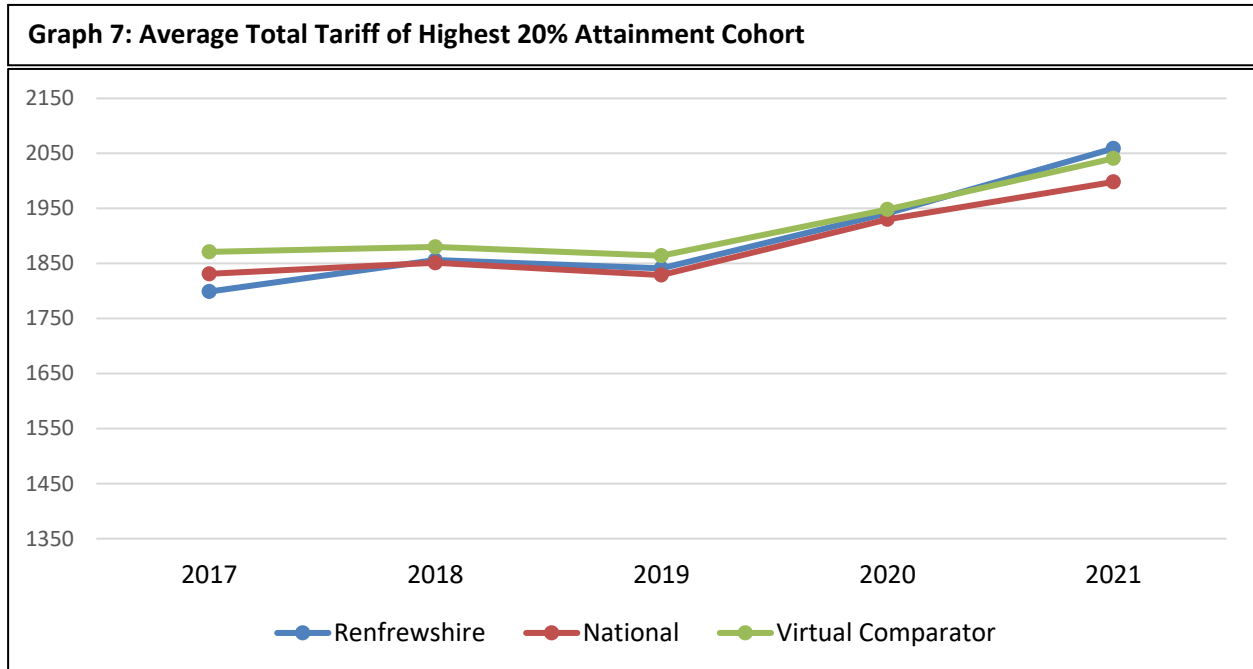


3.16. The average total tariff of the lowest attaining 20% of leavers in Renfrewshire is above the national figure over 5 years, and ahead of the virtual comparator over 3. Renfrewshire attainment is higher than previous years but both comparators remain in line with the 2016/17 cohort. In the 2020/21 leavers cohort, the average total tariff in Renfrewshire was 252. This compares to 165 nationally and 232 for the virtual comparator.

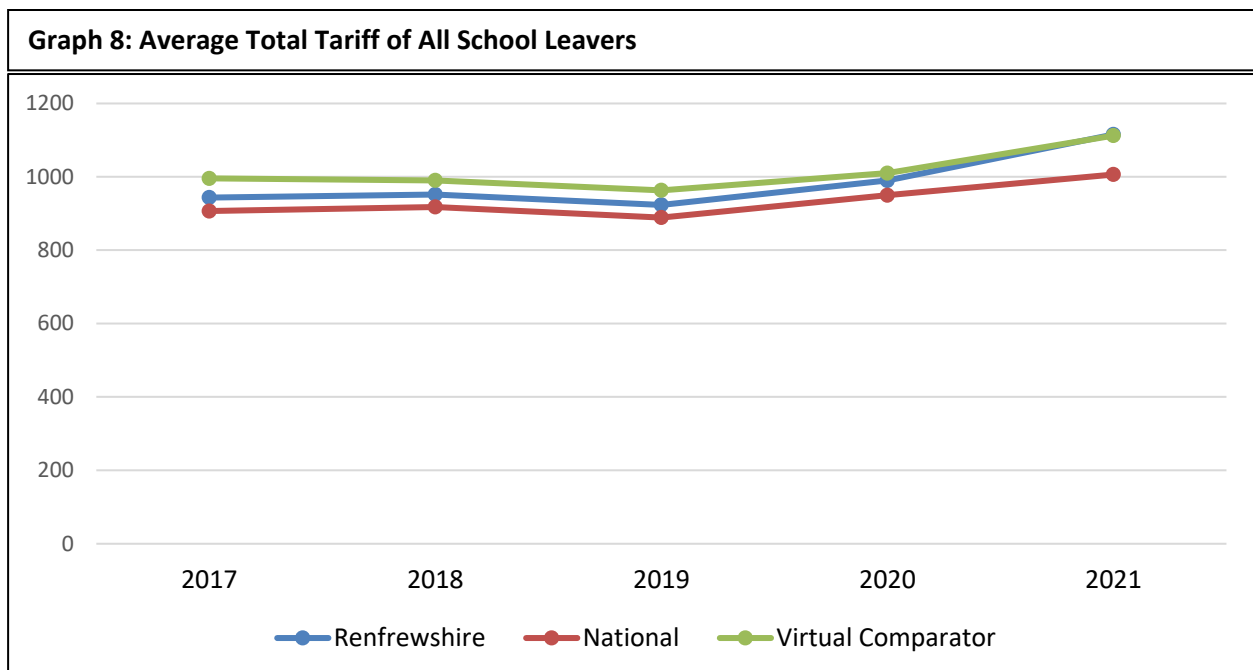
Graph 6: Average Total Tariff of Middle 60% Attainment Cohort



3.17. The performance of the middle 60% attainment cohort is higher than previous years across Renfrewshire and both comparators. Renfrewshire remains closely in line with the virtual comparator and ahead of the national figure. In the 2020/21 leavers cohort, the average total tariff in Renfrewshire was 1087. This compares to 956 nationally and 1096 for the virtual comparator.



3.18. The average total tariff of school leavers in the highest 20% attainment cohort within the 2019/20 and 2020/21 leavers cohorts is higher than in previous years. Renfrewshire is marginally ahead of the virtual comparator and national figures. In the 2020/21 leavers cohort, the average total tariff in Renfrewshire was 2059. This compares to 1998 nationally and 2041 for the virtual comparator.

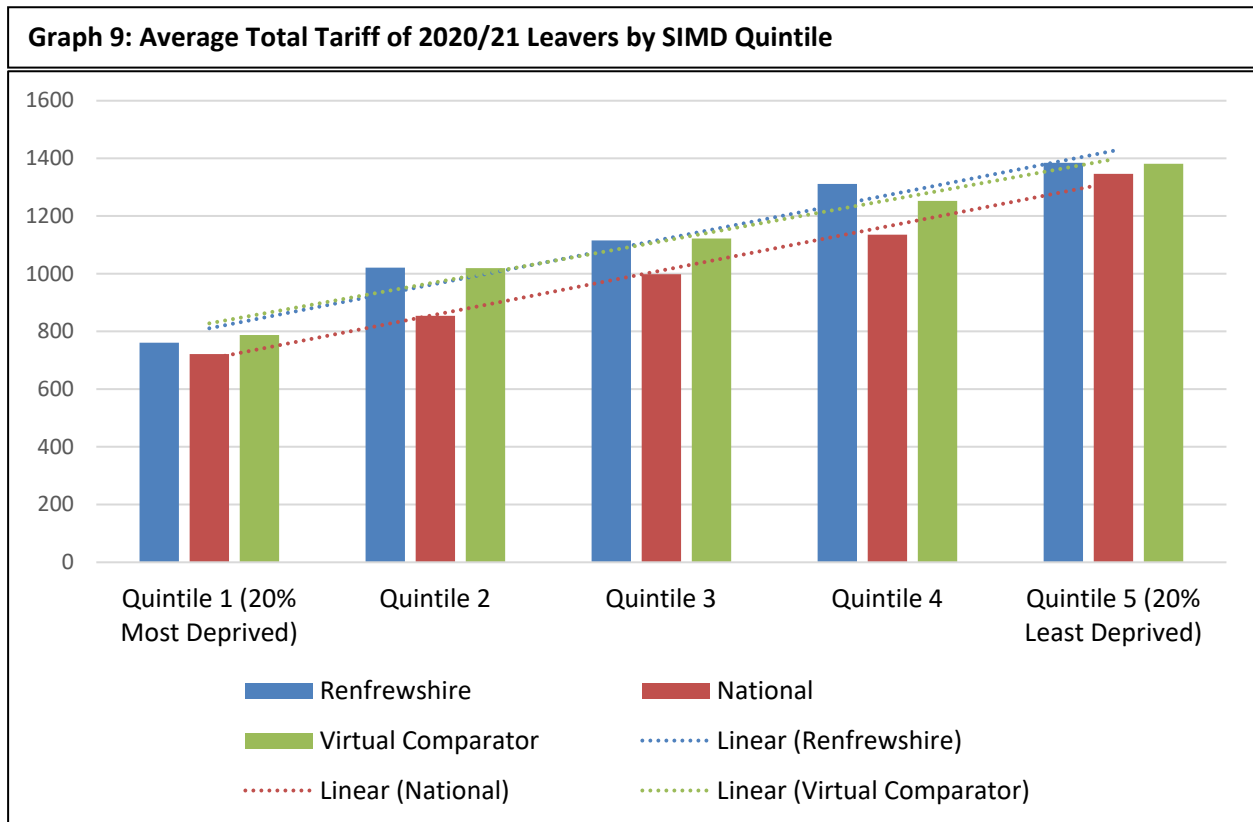


3.19. The average total tariff of all leavers, regardless of attainment cohort, in 2020/21 was 1115. This brings Renfrewshire in line with the virtual comparator for the first time. Renfrewshire remains ahead of the national figure, although the increase in the 2020/21 cohort has increased this gap.

Attainment Versus Deprivation

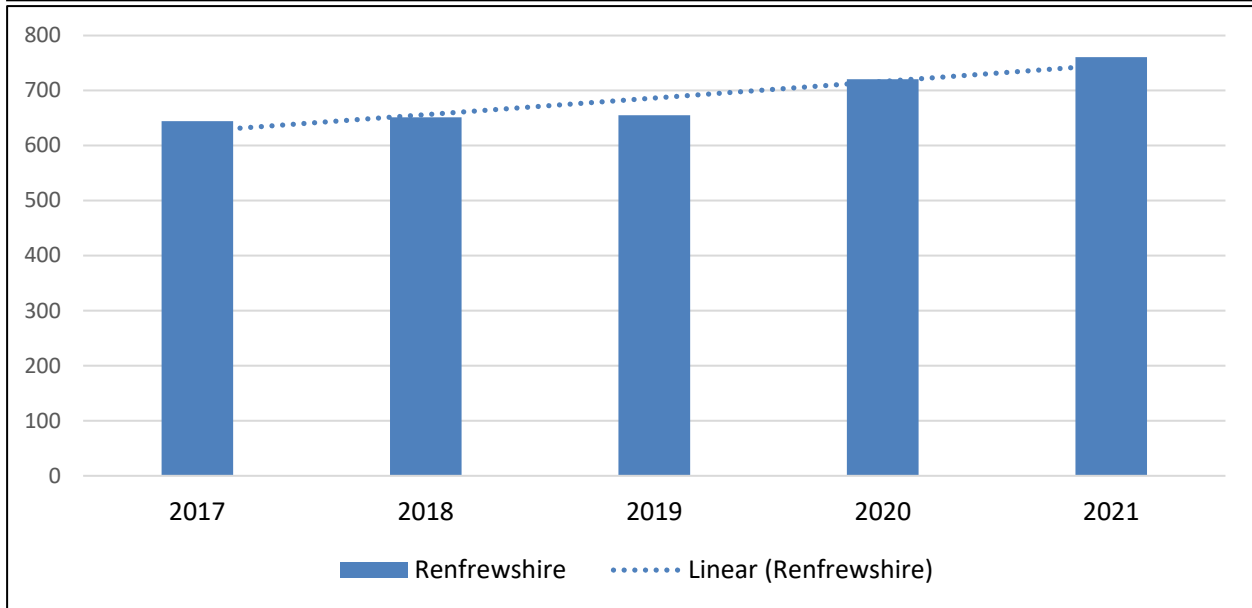
3.20. Closing the poverty related attainment gap is an overarching priority of Children’s Services. Schools in all sectors are getting increasingly better at identifying their most vulnerable pupils and using strategies to try and mitigate the impact of poverty on their attainment. The Scottish Government measures progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) quintiles. SIMD quintiles represent the 20% most deprived areas to the 20% least deprived areas.

3.21. The following chart shows the average total tariff points by SIMD quintiles for Renfrewshire and its comparators.



3.22. In the 2020/21 leavers cohort, Renfrewshire’s average total tariff is ahead of national in all quintiles and marginally behind the virtual comparator in quintiles 1 and 3. The trend across the 5 quintiles is similar between Renfrewshire and its comparators, although the national trend demonstrates lower attainment overall.

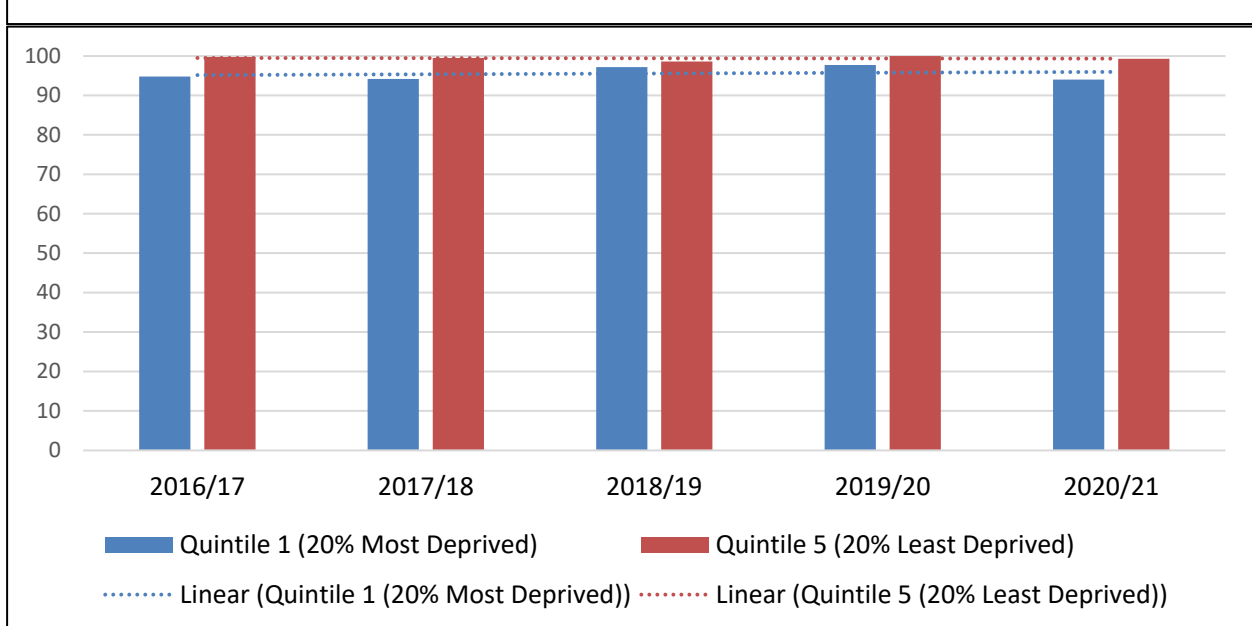
Graph 10: Average Total Tariff of Renfrewshire School Leavers Living in SIMD Quintile 1 (20% Most Deprived Areas)



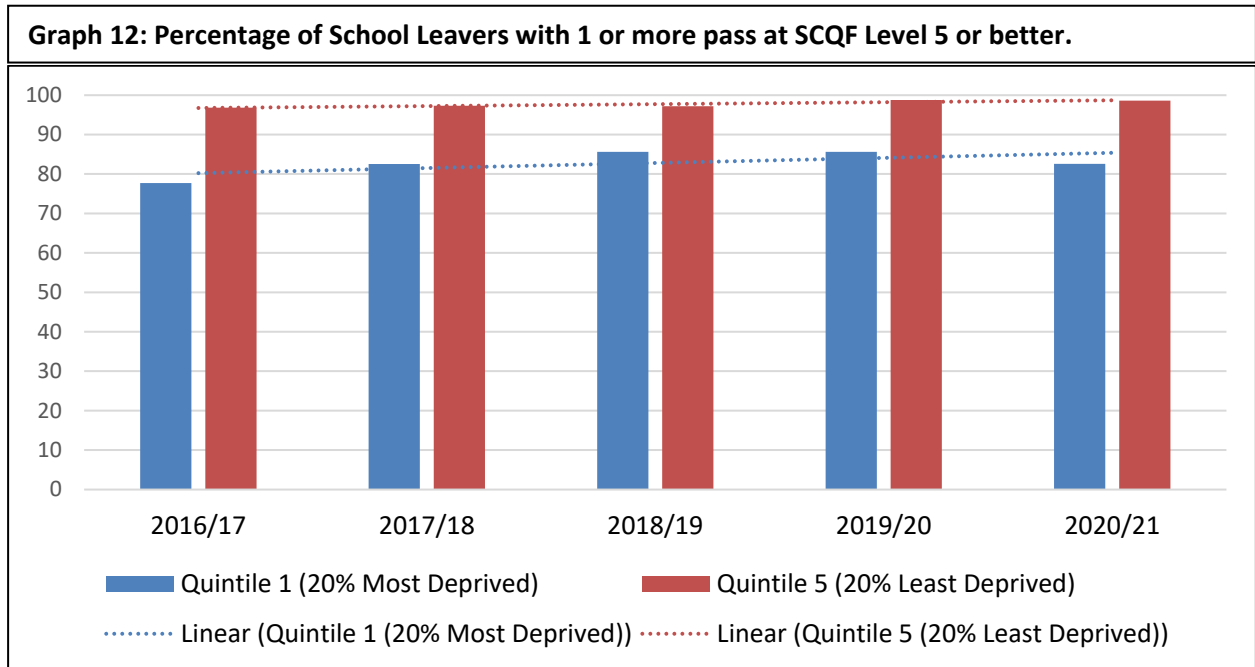
3.23. Graph 10 shows the average total tariff of school leavers living in the 20% most deprived areas in Renfrewshire over 5 years. These figures show that a consistent increasing trend over 5 years.

3.24. The graphs below show the highest SCQF level achieved by Renfrewshire school leavers living in quintile 1 (20% most deprived areas) and quintile 5 (20% least deprived areas). This comparison allows us to measure the change in the size of the poverty related attainment gap over time.

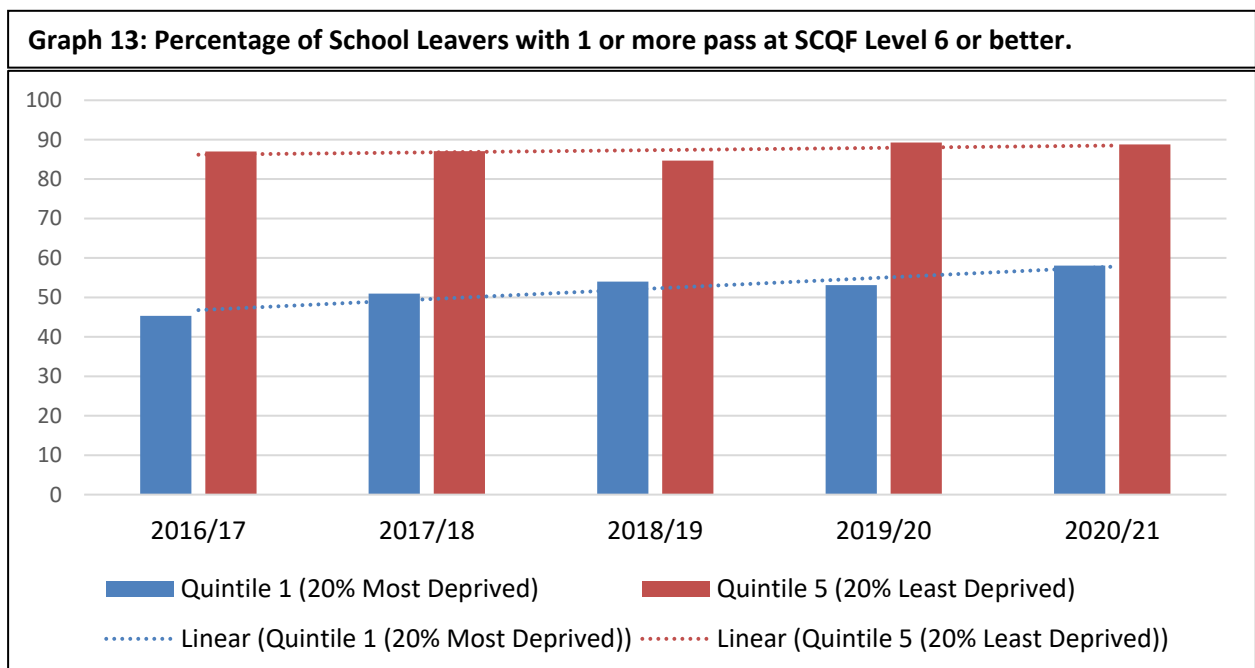
Graph 11: Percentage of School Leavers with 1 or more pass at SCQF Level 4 or better- SIMD Quintile 1 (20% Most Deprived) & SIMD Quintile 5 (20% Least Deprived)



3.25. The percentage of school leavers with one or more pass at SCQF level 4 has been consistent over 5 years. Attainment in this measure is high across both groups, with 94% of leavers living in quintile 1 areas and 99% of those living in quintile 5 areas achieving 1 or more award at SCQF level 5. The size of the gap within the 2020/21 leavers cohort was 5.3 percentage points which is in line with previous years.

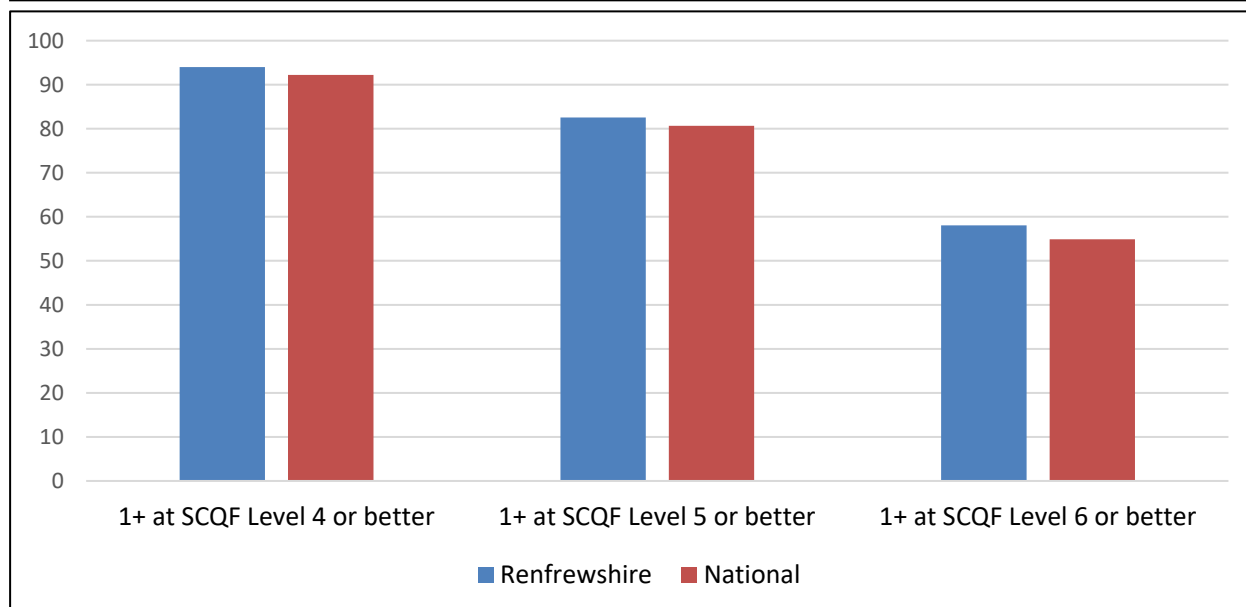


3.26. Graph 12 illustrates the percentage of school leavers with one or more pass at SCQF level 5. Attainment at this level has been consistently high within quintile 5, with 99% of leavers achieving 1 or more award at this level in the 2020/21 leavers cohort. Attainment of school leavers in quintile 1 is consistent with previous years at 83%. The size of the gap is in line with previous years.



3.27. The percentage of pupils in quintiles 1 and 5 achieving one or more pass at SCQF level 6 has increased gradually over 5 years. In the 2020/21 leavers cohort, 58% of leavers living in SIMD quintile 1 achieved this measure compared with 89% of leavers living in SIMD quintile 5 areas. The gaps at this level are larger than SCQF 4 and 5.

Graph 14: Attainment of 2020/21 Leavers in Quintile 1 (20% Most Deprived Areas)



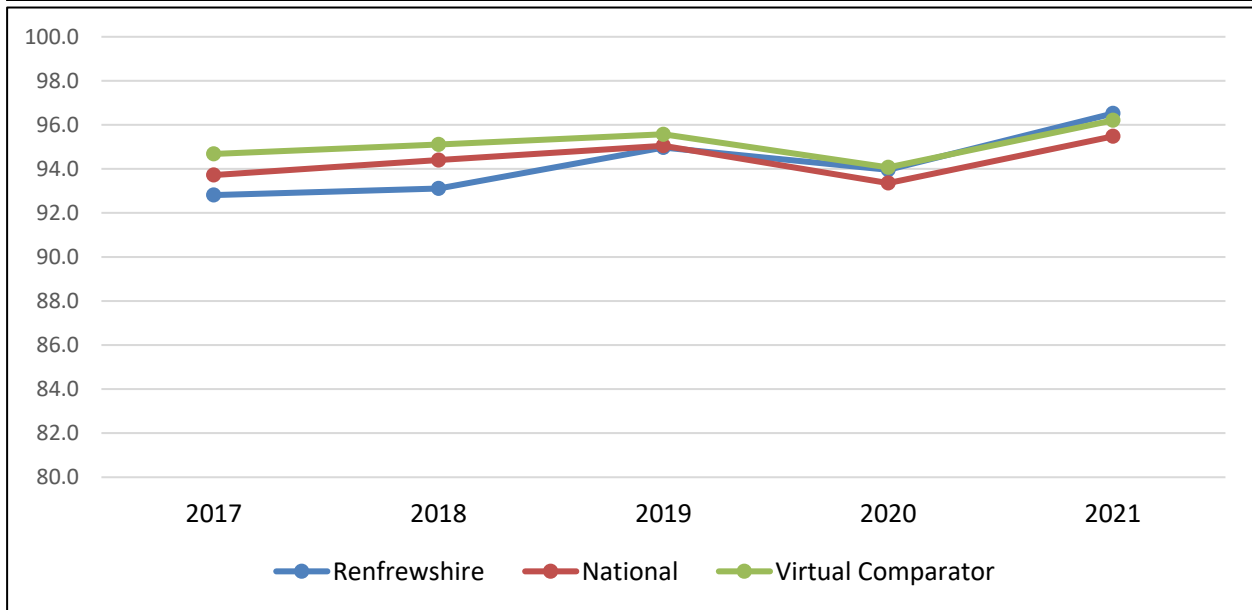
3.28. Graph 14 compares the attainment of pupils living in 20% most deprived areas in Renfrewshire and nationally. In the 2020/21 leavers cohort, a higher proportion of pupils living in the most deprived areas achieved 1 or more awards across all levels. The largest difference is within the proportion of leavers achieving 1 or more award at SCQF level 6 as 58% of Renfrewshire leavers achieved this compared with 55% nationally.

3.29. The service and schools continue to support the Council's and the Scottish Government's priority of closing the poverty attainment gap through improving and targeting our provision, utilising the Scottish Attainment Challenge and pupil equity funding.

Leaver Destinations

3.30. This measure identifies the percentage of school leavers that have entered a positive destination. Positive destinations include higher education, further education, employment, activity agreements, personal skills development and voluntary work.

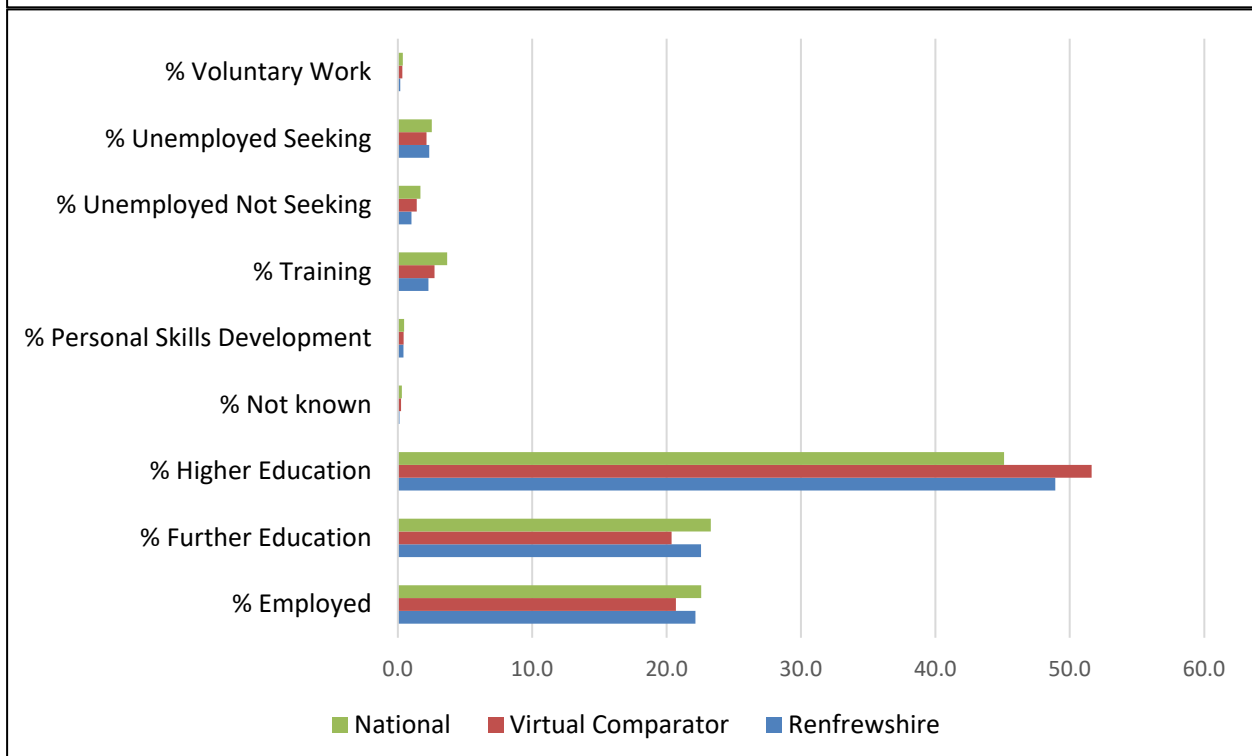
Graph 11: Percentage of School Leavers entering Positive Destinations.



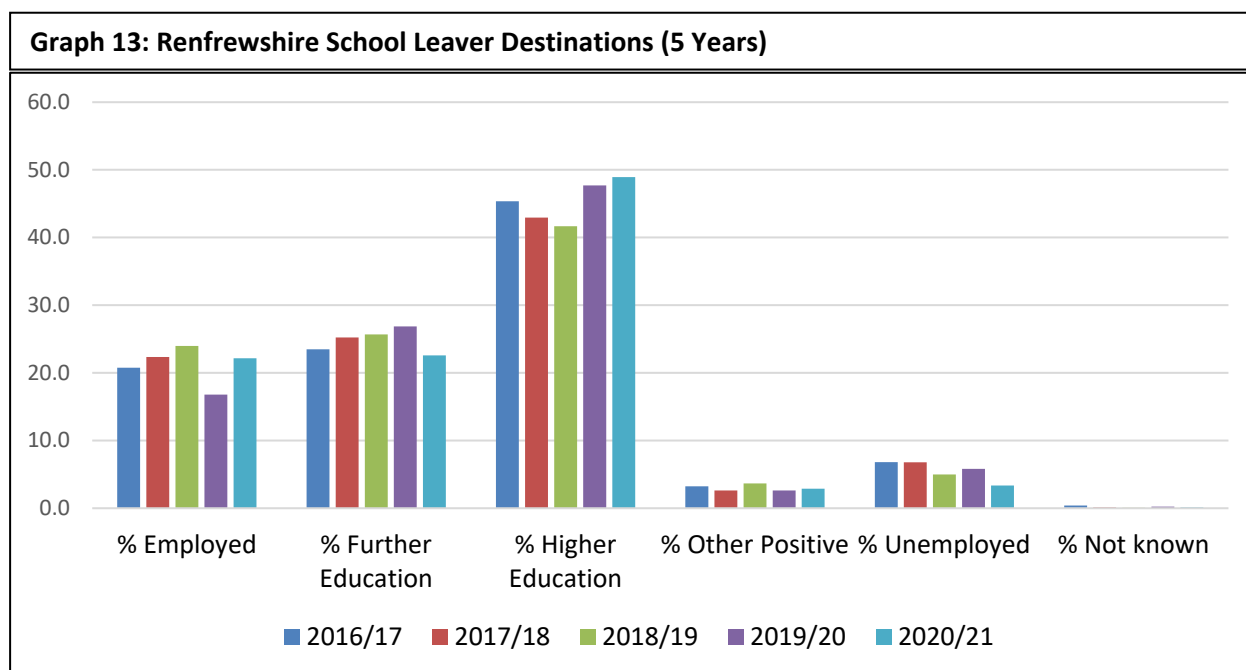
3.31. The percentage of leavers entering a positive destination has increased for Renfrewshire and both comparators, bringing all above pre-pandemic levels. In the 2020/21 leavers cohort, the percentage of Renfrewshire leavers entering an initial positive destination was 96.5, compared with 95.5 nationally and 96.2 for the virtual comparator.

3.32. The graph below shows the breakdown of the destinations of the 2020/21 leavers cohort.

Graph 12: School Leaver Destinations 2020/21



3.33. In the 2020/21 leavers cohort, 48.9% of Renfrewshire’s leavers entered higher education, 22.6% went into further education and 22.2% were employed. Compared with national figures, Renfrewshire has a higher proportion of pupils entering higher education and similar levels entering further education and employment. The virtual comparator has a greater proportion in higher education but fewer leavers in further education and employment.



3.34. Employment figures were significantly impacted by the pandemic in the 2019/20 leavers cohort but have now recovered to 22.2%. This year’s figure is still marginally below the 2018/19 cohort but in line with previous years. The proportion entering further education is below previous years but higher education has continued to increase. The percentage of leavers unemployed is at its lowest level in 5 years at 3.4%.

4. Next Steps

4.1 Renfrewshire continues to perform well against national and virtual comparators across a range of measures. The proportion of leavers achieving a positive post-school destination has recovered from a decrease in the 2019/20 cohort and has surpassed previous years. However, we recognise the scope for further improvement, particularly in relation to reducing the poverty related attainment gap. We will continue to make this a priority as we strive for even further improvement.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - none
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none

3. **Community/Council Planning –**
 - Our Renfrewshire is thriving – looking at attainment in this way provides schools and Children’s Services with a robust way to evaluate the quality of education provision.
 - Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all – attainment data is examined in the context of deprivation to ensure that we are working towards equity and excellence.
4. **Legal – none**
5. **Property/Assets – none**
6. **Information Technology - none**
7. **Equality & Human Rights**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals’ human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council’s website.
8. **Health & Safety – none**
9. **Procurement - none**
10. **Risk - none**
11. **Privacy Impact – none**
12. **Cosla Policy Position – not applicable**
13. **Climate Risk - none**

*FW/JC/LG
7 March 2022*

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