



Stirling and Clackmannanshire Education Service

# Raising Attainment Strategy



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## Stirling and Clackmannanshire Context

This strategy outlines the vision, priorities and expectations of Stirling and Clackmannanshire Education Service in relation to raising educational attainment and achievement, particularly for vulnerable children and young people. It builds upon the success of schools and other educational settings in raising attainment and progress and is ambitious for the future. The Education Service believes that through educational success children and young people, particularly those who are vulnerable, will maximise their life chances and secure their future economic well-being. The Education Service is committed to partnership working and believes that everyone working in the Service has a part to play in addressing this critical issue.

Successful education systems are founded on the belief that every child or young person matters and can achieve. The life chances of children and young people in Stirling and Clackmannanshire are often determined by their attainment and achievement in their early years and at school. This understanding is expressed in the four over-arching and over-lapping capacities of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Successful, confident, responsible and effective learners, individuals, citizens and contributors will have and will take opportunities to attain and achieve at the highest level. It is essential that the work of the Education Service enables every child and young person in Stirling and Clackmannanshire to achieve his or her potential.

Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils have high aspirations for all children and young people. The Education Service is committed to securing improved educational outcomes for all our children and young people. Schools and nurseries play a key role in securing positive outcomes for all learners. In both Councils improving the outcomes of those children and young people most at risk of not attaining expected minimum levels of attainment is a key priority. There is a strong emphasis on working with partners to support learners at risk of under-performance. Early and systematic intervention is required to break the cycle of disadvantage and to close the attainment gap between high attaining learners and the lowest 20%.



The strategic priorities of Stirling and Clackmannanshire's Education Service highlighted in the 2014 – 2017 Strategic Plan are:

**Our learners are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities;**

**Our learners enjoy physical and emotional wellbeing leading to healthy lifestyles;**

**Our learners get the help they need when they need it;**

**Our learners get the best start in life and are ready to succeed.**

Raising attainment, together with providing achievement and inclusion, are at the heart of nurseries', schools' and the Education Service's work in Stirling and Clackmannanshire, in order to **improve life through learning.**

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## Section One: Rationale

There is a need to continue to improve the attainment and achievement of children and young people in Stirling and Clackmannanshire, particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Accordingly, this strategy aims to support raising the attainment of all learners, with a particular focus on improving the outcomes of those learners from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

Probably the biggest contributor to the attainment gap is the significant economic, health, and social inequalities in Scotland. This is apparent from the earliest years of children's lives. Evidence from the Growing Up in Scotland survey (2011) suggests that "at age 5, children with a degree educated parent have a vocabulary ability [...] around 18 months ahead of those whose parents have no qualifications".

Our young people are competing in a global market. National Outcome 2 (realising our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities) and National Outcome 3 (being better educated, more skilled and more successful) are both dependent on Scotland's ability to raise educational attainment in line with the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence.

Nationally there has been a significant improvement in key SQA key attainment measures over recent years. However, the most significant improvements have been seen amongst those achieving the very highest levels of attainment. These improvements have not done enough to address the underlying problem of significant social inequality in attainment. SQA attainment shows a significant variation across the social spectrum. It is, however, difficult to determine the extent to which external factors (such as changes in the staying on rate due to the current economic depression) have contributed to these trends. What is clear is that the issue of unfulfilled potential amongst those from less-advantaged backgrounds must be addressed.

This gap persists from early years through all stages of education. It is clear that if Scotland is to ensure raised attainment and deliver national outcomes 2, 3 and 4, it needs a framework, in line with the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) agenda that will recognise and help to break the link between lower attainment and economic disadvantage.

In order to support a focus on tackling disadvantage in Stirling and Clackmannanshire schools and educational settings, this strategy encourages staff in schools and other educational settings to examine the context and attainment, in Stirling and Clackmannanshire, of learners who are in the lowest 20% in Scotland, as defined by the Scottish

This strategy aims to ensure that the full range of services within the Stirling and Clackmannanshire Education Service and partners work coherently with schools and other educational settings to maximise the impact of available resources in further raising the attainment and increasing the progression of learners.

*Attainment is an individual's passport to personal, social, cultural and economic opportunities. Raising attainment means improving life chances. This does not mean just focusing on exam results, but instead looking at attainment in its widest sense. It is this rich attainment which enables all children and young people to make good progress and develop the skills, ambition and know-how they need to improve life chances.*

*(Raising attainment, Education Scotland, 2012)*

*The very best school systems (in the world) intervene at the level of the individual student, developing processes and structures within schools that are able to identify whenever a student is starting to fall behind, and then intervening to improve that child's performance.*

*(McKinsey and Company, 2007)*

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There is a strong consensus in the published research about the attributes of a successful school system, including effective classroom practice. These key attributes have been summarised by the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) in 2012 as:

Education systems that have successfully raised attainment exhibit wide community and family support for the value of education, in

### **Enabled, visionary leaders and effective and professional practitioners, who:**

- believe that every child has the capacity to continue to learn;
- create an appropriately supportive but challenging learning environment, based on good relationships which make it safe for children to learn;
- use proven, structured classroom strategies;
- are willing to learn new, research-based methods;
- continuously develop their professional skills and knowledge;
- continuously challenge their own beliefs and practices and are restless for improvement.



### **Learners who:**

- are engaged and motivated by the context within which they learn and by the learning;
- aspire to the highest levels of achievement are well supported to develop social and emotional competencies;
- are well supported by their families or carers.

### **Parents/carers who are:**

- included;
- confident in the capacity of their children and young people to succeed at school;
- engaged, motivated and are aspirational for their children.

### **Appropriate evidence and data used rigorously to:**

- monitor and support learners' progress and to understand their learning;
- enable leaders to identify key performance issues and to adopt interventions that are appropriate to each school's context;
- ensure accountability, in every part of the education system for every child's or young person's learning.

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## Section Two: Role of the Education Service

*In Scotland today, over one in five children lives in poverty. It affects their health, their education, their connection to wider society and their future prospects for work. Although Scottish education does well for many of its children, it does not serve these most vulnerable children well and the gap in educational attainment between pupils from the richest and poorest background is wider than in many similar countries. (Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2014)*

In developing a strategy for Stirling and Clackmannanshire that seeks to close the attainment gap, the Education Service has developed a range of approaches which embrace those of successful systems. These approaches have been developed to support **six key themes** to raise attainment for all children and young people:

**Increasing ambition** - raising aspirations; supporting self-motivation and confidence of children and young people; and intervening appropriately when attainment levels should be better.

**Family and community** – engaging and involving families and the wider community to enrich learning experiences.

**Enabled leadership** – developing leadership capacity at all levels; and holding colleagues accountable for the progress of each and every learner.

**Excellent learning and teaching** – sharing experiences with and seeking to learn from colleagues; developing practitioners' professional skills and knowledge.

**Literacy and numeracy** – ensuring essential literacy and numeracy skills run through all aspects of learning.



**Data analysis** – tracking learners' progress to advise and coach them on their learning; and using benchmarking information intelligently to improve school performance.

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## Increasing ambition

**Staff need to ‘believe’ in the learning potential of *all* children and young people.**

This needs to be reflected in the approaches used by *all* practitioners and leaders. It must be explicit in systems of accountability which value the outcomes for *all* learners and which recognise effective practice in *all* social contexts.

### ***What is the Education Service going to do?***

The Education Service will support the effective implementation of the raising attainment strategy by:

- implementing self-improving school partnerships to challenge the way in which schools and other educational settings raise aspirations and ensure progress and very good attainment for the most vulnerable;
- rolling out the use of the *Raising Attainment for All* improvement methodology across learning communities to close the educational gaps in their localities, building upon the views and needs of vulnerable children, young people, parents and carers;
- meeting the entitlement of every child and young person to a broad general education from nursery to S3, which equips them with skills for planning their futures and careers through a focus on setting challenging and achievable targets;
- celebrating strong performance in raising attainment that is evidenced by *Insight*, a performance framework that values positive outcomes for all learners, regardless of social context;
- working with Forth Valley College to offer S4 pupils the opportunity to participate in the *SCOTS programme*;
- encouraging past pupils to return as positive role models to foster aspirations and possibly mentor learners;
- developing a broader vision of the senior phase (S4-S6) that incorporates multiple pathways to enable young people to experience work-based learning that will support the transition from school in to adulthood;
- developing a much expanded role for employers in supporting learning pathways in the senior phase (S4-S6);
- meeting the entitlement for every young person to a senior phase (S4-S6) that gives a wide range of work-related opportunities, including the option of acquiring industry recognised qualifications.

## Family and community

**Intervene more systematically to break the cycle of disadvantage at all stages but with an initial emphasis on the early years and subsequent sustained intervention.**

### ***What is the Education Service going to do?***

The Education Service will support effective implementation of the raising attainment strategy by:

- ensuring that children, young people and families receive the most appropriate intervention and support to meet their needs, including the use of multi-agency approaches to prevent underachievement of the most vulnerable learners at all phases in their education;
- promoting a range of evidence-based language developments to close the educational gaps at the earliest opportunity;
- developing locality-working to close educational gaps for vulnerable learners and scaling up any identified successful strategies in other locations across Stirling and Clackmannanshire through the work of the Early Years Collaborative;
- building bridges with parents, families and communities, working in partnership with other professionals for reciprocal communication. These will go beyond traditional ways to involve parents;
- developing a parenting and family support strategy to provide effective support and intervention for parents, families and communities;
- providing 600 hours of flexible, affordable and high quality early learning and childcare for all three- and four-year olds and entitled two-year olds.



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## Enabled leadership

**Create a culture which enables strong leadership of learning and values visionary leaders focused on improved outcomes for all learners.**

We need to model a culture of support and care based on mutual trust amongst leaders and practitioners. We need to develop performance systems which define and value the outcomes of effective leadership, helping leaders to identify key performance issues and appropriate interventions within their school's context.

**We should expect and support the development of effective and reflective teachers and leaders.**

We need to achieve more consistent practice by providing opportunities for professional development that meet all individual needs, including: collegiate discussion, constructive feedback, mentoring, and the development of effective networks within and across schools.

### ***What is the Education Service going to do?***

The Education Service will support effective implementation of the raising attainment strategy by:

- redesigning the Education Service, including the establishment of a School Improvement Team to meet the challenges of raising attainment in Stirling and Clackmannanshire;
- working with key services and partners to bring closer alignment to the ways in which the Education Service and other Council services work with schools and educational settings to support the closing of educational gaps for vulnerable groups;
- developing sophisticated workforce planning strategies, encouraging the best staff to join and remain in the Service, with opportunities for professional development;
- using data to analyse where the most significant educational gaps are to inform work with all schools as well as targeting resources and capacity where the gaps are the greatest and where collaborative work could potentially make the biggest difference;
- embedding Professional Update and PRD across the Service to promote effective review and development for all employees;
- establishing collaborative school partnerships to develop networks across schools which help school leaders and practitioners to develop practice in school improvement and improve outcomes for learners;
- developing research-based strategies and programmes which promote leadership and pedagogical development across and within schools and other educational settings;
- developing staff skills at all levels.

## Excellent learning and teaching

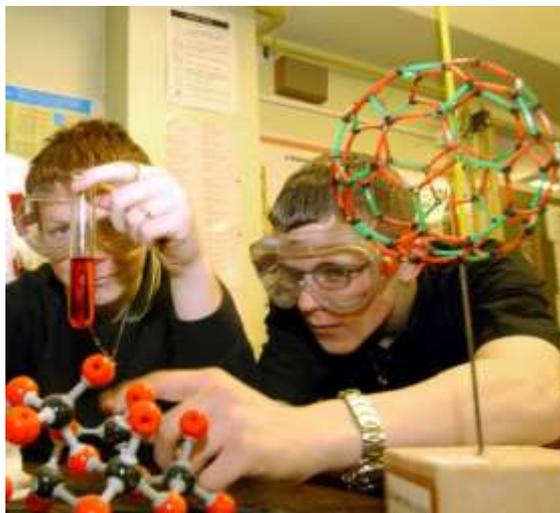
**We should expect and support the development of effective programmes which lead to improved learning and teaching in every classroom and playroom.**

These programmes need to be based on methods appropriate to context (e.g. stage, learners' prior attainment, learners' social context) and to be based a well-researched understanding of what works in the classroom.

### ***What is the Education Service going to do?***

The Education Service will support effective implementation of the raising attainment strategy by:

- creating a culture that ensures the principles of raising attainment are at the core of the curriculum offered in schools and other educational settings;
- ensuring approaches to teaching engage and motivate all children and young people and enable them to develop effective skills for learning;
- ensuring reliable assessment of learning through the consistent use of valid assessment criteria. This will include: encouraging practitioners to use a wide range of evidence to support judgements; making sure that ongoing assessment is used to determine precise provision for learning; ensuring approaches to teaching engage and motivate all children and young people and enable them to develop effective skills for learning;
- developing the curriculum on offer in schools and other educational settings to meet the needs of all learners, including the more able and those whose prior attainment and earlier experiences are not positive;
- strengthening the capacity of the workforce in building resilience and improving learning outcomes for children and young people with additional support needs;
- developing a monitoring and tracking system for the Broad General Education (nursery-S3) that is valued and provides timely, regular and accurate feedback for learners; and that the feedback is used to review progress, confirm impact and ensure rapid change and intervention where necessary;
- offering career long professional development opportunities (CLPL) for staff that develop well-researched practice across the service and promotes improved pedagogy amongst teaching staff, for example, through teacher learning communities and improvement science.



## Literacy and numeracy

**We need to improve the quality of the evidence about the link between learning and teaching, particularly of literacy and numeracy, and sustained life outcomes for school leavers.**

We need evidence about the *ongoing* life outcomes for young people, if schools are to focus on long-term rather than short-term outcomes.

### ***What is the Education Service going to do?***

The Education Service will support effective implementation of the raising attainment strategy by:

- developing a 3-18 literacy and numeracy strategy which will give clear guidance and ensure a shared understanding and consistent approach to learning and teaching across establishments;
- providing an effective framework which will underpin both strategies and lead to improved learning and teaching in literacy and numeracy in every establishment. Frameworks will be based on methods appropriate to context and based on a well-researched understanding of what works, i.e. relevant, current, evidence based and proven impact;
- improving the prominence and quality in the teaching of literacy and numeracy;
- embedding literacy and numeracy as key components of all areas of the curriculum;.
- building practitioners' professional networks at both national and authority level through: participation in national literacy and numeracy events; developing partnerships with other local authorities; sharing practice and staff development opportunities. This will include further developing partnerships with universities;
- developing authority-wide literacy and numeracy networks across all sectors; early years, primary and secondary. Membership will be made up of lead practitioners from each establishment with responsibility for literacy and numeracy. Groups will meet regularly to share good practice, engage in professional dialogue about aspects of literacy and numeracy, new developments, moderation, standards and national qualifications;
- building the capacity of all practitioners to develop appropriate skills and knowledge to enhance literacy and numeracy teaching and learning through the provision of high quality staff development opportunities/CLPL at authority level and within learning communities;
- using the results of the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy to monitor the progress of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills over time, at national level and key points in primary and secondary: P4, P7 and S2;
- supporting establishments to track individual progress of each child or young person in a robust consistent and systematic manner which will ensure each learner is making progress in literacy and numeracy.

## Data analysis

**We need to create credible performance management systems for all leaders and practitioners which draw on rich and reliable data.**

It should provide information that is relevant to the school context. It should provide information about the progression of all learners. It should help to identify the key performance challenges facing a school, department or class, It should support the development of sound professional judgement, providing evidence that helps to improve.



### ***What is the Education Service going to do?***

The Education Service will support effective implementation of the raising attainment strategy by:

- ensuring that leaders and all staff analyse historical and live data in detail in order to address the needs of all learners within a 'no excuses' culture;
- creating a credible performance management system for all leaders and practitioners which draws on rich and reliable data. It should provide information that is relevant to the school context. It should provide information about the progression of all learners. It should help to identify the key performance challenges facing a school, department or class. It should support the development of sound professional judgement, providing evidence that helps to improve professional understanding and skills, through processes such as moderation;
- supporting the use of *Insight* in secondary schools and developing a similar tool for the Broad General Education for local use;
- introducing a proportionate and collaborative model of validated self-evaluation which will support schools in taking improvement forward;
- increasing the confidence of schools and educational settings to self-evaluate and implement school improvement;
- focusing intervention and support to schools and educational settings from the Education Service appropriately and effectively, in partnership with seconded school leaders from primary and secondary settings;
- ensuring performance visits have high priority with a focus on intervention and improvement, based on the analysis of data.

### Section 3: Current Developments (2014 – 2015)

The charts on the next two pages illustrate the range of developments taking place across Stirling and Clackmannanshire to continue improving the performance of children and young people in Stirling and Clackmannanshire, particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Taken together all of the approaches are designed to have a positive impact on the attainment and achievement of Stirling and Clackmannanshire's children and young people. Some of these approaches are at an early stage whilst others are more embedded.

These charts will be updated annually to illustrate the key developments being undertaken across the Education Service to raise attainment.



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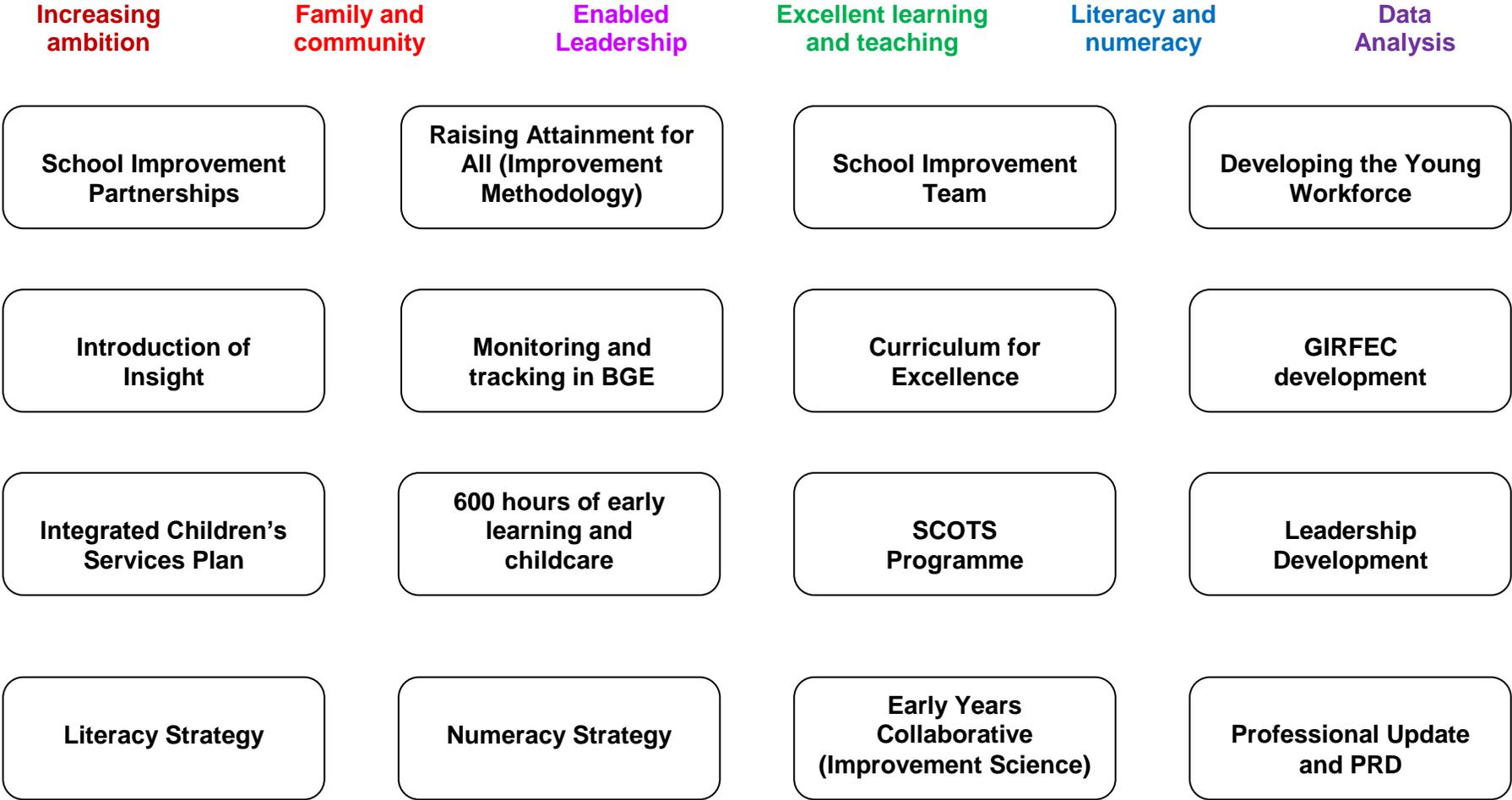
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**Raising Attainment in Stirling and Clackmannanshire**



## Section 4: How Will Success Be Measured?

Success will be achieved if schools and other educational settings in Stirling and Clackmannanshire:

- improve attainment in literacy and numeracy
- improve attainment and achievement for all children and young people
- tackle disadvantage by continuing to reduce the attainment gap within the different parts of the pupil population
- increase the number of young people entering sustained positive destinations from school
- increase attendance rates
- reduce exclusion rates



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## Section 5: Summary

This raising attainment strategy will continuously evolve. It will grow, change and develop over time as schools and other educational settings embrace their increased responsibility for school improvement, including closing educational gaps for vulnerable children and young people.

This will require effective partnership working based on a shared moral purpose to raise aspirations and maximise life chances for all children and young people, but particularly for the most vulnerable.

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# Stirling and Clackmannanshire Education Service

Municipal Buildings, Corn Exchange Road, Stirling FK8 2HU

## Clackmannanshire Council

Phone 01259 450000

E-mail [customerservice@clacks.gov.uk](mailto:customerservice@clacks.gov.uk)

[www.clacksweb.org.uk](http://www.clacksweb.org.uk)

## Stirling Council

Phone 0845 277 7000

Email [info@stirling.gov.uk](mailto:info@stirling.gov.uk)

[www.stirling.gov.uk](http://www.stirling.gov.uk)

