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## NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

1 May 2018

### Cabinet

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**Title:** **INSIGHT School Leavers' Attainment Results 2017**

**Purpose:** To update Cabinet on the overall performance of the 2017 North Ayrshire Council school leavers<sup>1</sup> as highlighted in the INSIGHT benchmarking tool.

**Recommendation:**

- (i) Agree to note the content of the report and the achievements of school leavers in last year's SQA examinations;
- (ii) Approve the measures being taken to make further improvements to the attainment and achievement of future school leavers.

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### 1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report summarises the key performance measures for all school leavers in the session 2016-17 as highlighted in the national benchmarking analysis tool INSIGHT released at the end of February 2018 and outlines proposals for future actions to secure further improvements in performance.

### 2. Background

2.1 Since 2014, the Scottish Government has produced a customised web interactive analytical tool to benchmark and inform performance evaluation in schools and education authorities. INSIGHT is published twice a year – interim release in September and main results in February – based on the annual Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examination results and awards offered by other accredited providers. Schools are now engaging with the various dashboards, which support them to analyse, compare and improve performance of young people in the senior phase.

2.2 INSIGHT is consistent with the Curriculum for Excellence ethos as it emphasises the best achievement at the point of exit from school<sup>2</sup>, rather than at stage-by-stage level, although it still allows users to drill down to cohort, level, subject or socio-demographic

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<sup>1</sup> The annual leavers' cohort in INSIGHT now matches with the Skills Development Scotland (SDS) school leavers return.

<sup>2</sup> The 2017 benchmarking "point of exit" indicators published in INSIGHT on 28 February 2018 are called "National Benchmarking Measures". The set of similar indicators referring to specific cohorts of pupils on the school roll (S4, S5, S6) are designated as "Local Benchmarking Measures" in INSIGHT.

characteristics of pupils. INSIGHT continues to be updated and upgraded to include a wider range of qualifications from more qualification providers and aims at reducing the risk of creating adverse incentives through the performance measures provided

2.3 The new benchmarking methodology used by INSIGHT is centred on the idea of a "Virtual Comparator". This virtual school is built around four key characteristics, which go into the make-up of any school. From these four areas, the tool matches ten leavers from across Scotland to every one of the leavers in each school/authority and treats this matched group as the virtual school/authority.

2.4 The main analysis of 2017 attainment and achievement for secondary schools was released by the Scottish Government on 27 February 2018<sup>3</sup>. For the first time, the INSIGHT analysts have also provided the performance of the South West Collaborative (SWC)<sup>4</sup> region as comparison and these values are represented in the supporting charts. This Report is structured – as in previous years - along the four key national benchmarking measures aimed at:

1. Improving attainment in Literacy and Numeracy (% of candidates attaining Literacy and Numeracy)
2. Improving attainment for all (Average Total Tariff Score distribution)
3. Tackling Disadvantage by Improving the Attainment vs. Deprivation Gap (Average Total Tariff Score by SIMD decile)
4. Increasing Post-school participation (School Leaver Destinations for 2017).

2.5 **Improving attainment in Literacy and Numeracy** (These highlights are supported by charts in Appendix 1)

2.5.1 The percentage of leavers in North Ayrshire achieving Literacy at SCQF level 4 is consistently over 95% for the past three years, exceeding the Virtual Comparator and overall National and SWC levels. Literacy at Level 5 or better in 2017 has significantly increased to 81.6%, - the highest performance to date. This not only exceeds the Virtual Comparator performance, but – as last year – is also above the National performance. This is a reflection of the increased focus on core Literacy skills from the Broad General Education stages and throughout the Senior Phase. The vast majority of learners are challenged towards achieving SCQF levels 4 and above in English SQA qualifications so that school leavers are equipped with the literacy skills required for life after leaving school.

2.5.2 The performance of North Ayrshire school leavers in Numeracy decreased slightly last year, although the general increasing trend recorded over the last five years, both at level 4 and level 5, is continuing. While North Ayrshire performance in Numeracy exceeds the one of the Virtual Comparator in both measures and the

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<sup>3</sup> The data for previous years' attainment is annually updated, to account for some corrections in the national methodology and the inclusion of some school leavers' records that were not available at the time. Therefore, the values of the indicators in this Paper will not match exactly the figures available in the report presented to Members this time last year.

<sup>4</sup> The SWC region comprises North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, South Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway local authorities.

SWC performance at level 4, the gap with respect to National performance at both levels was around two percentage points in 2017.

- 2.5.3 Although not part of the National Benchmarking Indicators, Literacy and Numeracy results at level 6 are also encouraging. At 52.5% of school leavers attaining in Literacy at Higher level or above (27.5% in Numeracy), North Ayrshire performance exceeds Virtual Comparator levels in both measures.

## 2.6 **Improving attainment for all** (These highlights are supported by charts in Appendix 2)

- 2.6.1 This measure focuses on the average total tariff score of the candidates' latest and best qualifications. Tariff points are assigned to each unit or course achieved by learners – in all SCQF-graded awards, not only those provided by SQA. This acknowledges to a greater extent the drive towards wider achievement qualifications and encourages schools to offer curricular choices tailored to a variety of pupil abilities and aspirations. The information is presented as the total tariff score per average leaver in one of three categories of: the lowest attaining 20%, the middle attaining 60% and the highest attaining 20%.

- 2.6.2 The average total tariff score of the lowest attaining 20% of leavers (Appendix 2) has dipped slightly again in 2017 but has remained well above the Virtual Comparator and above National performance. In four of the last five years, the performance of the lowest attaining 20% of leavers in North Ayrshire has been greater than the National performance and remains on an upward trend over the last 5 years.

- 2.6.3 The performance of the middle attaining 60% of school leavers from North Ayrshire has steadily improved over the last 5 years (Appendix 2). At an average total tariff score of 805 in 2017, North Ayrshire is well above the Virtual Comparator, and while we currently remain below the National performance, the gap is narrowing.

- 2.6.4 The performance of the highest attaining 20% of leavers (Appendix 2) has continued to improve in 2017, exceeding the corresponding performance of the Virtual Comparator.

## 2.7 **Attainment vs. Deprivation** (These highlights are supported by charts in Appendix 3a - 3b)

- 2.7.1 The INSIGHT measure aimed at tackling disadvantage presents the Average Total Tariff Score (ATTS) compared across the SIMD datazone deciles<sup>5</sup> where the school leavers reside.

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<sup>5</sup> The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) – 2016 update - ranks the 6976 datazones across Scotland according to a composite of measures of socio-economic deprivation. We are able to pinpoint the SIMD deprivation decile of the area where a pupil resides using the pupil's postcode as collected on the occasion of the annual School Census. SIMD decile 1 represents the 10% most deprived datazones in Scotland while SIMD decile 10 represents the least SIMD deprived of datazones in Scotland. INSIGHT has now updated their analysis is based on SIMD2016 and the new (redrawn) datazones based on the 2011 population census.

- 2.7.2 The chart referring to this measure (Appendix 3a) highlights "bubbles" for which the centre is marking the ATTS of leavers in the respective decile and the size of the bubble suggests the proportion of the total cohort residing in those SIMD decile areas. The "lighter" bubbles represent North Ayrshire and the "darker" bubbles designate the national picture. The steeper the line through the bubbles, the more pronounced the disparity between the attainment of leavers residing in more deprived areas and that of leavers from less deprived areas.
- 2.7.3 The Attainment vs. Deprivation chart for 2017 SIMD decile performance (Appendix 3a), clearly shows that North Ayrshire school leavers have out-performed the learners from the similar areas at the National level. This is the first year when average total tariff score of school leavers in every decile (with a minor exception of SIMD decile 10) is above National performance. Considering that over 50% of our school leavers reside in SIMD deciles 1 to 3, this has a considerable influence over the overall performance of school leavers in North Ayrshire. School leavers in SIMD decile 6 have performed significantly higher than the National establishment.
- 2.7.4 Looking at the cumulative attainment of 2017 school leavers (Appendix 3a), the average trend line for North Ayrshire has shifted discernibly above National trend line, indicating higher average performance, with a similar attainment vs. deprivation correlation.
- 2.7.5 The cumulative attainment of school leavers (in terms of the total tariff score of the average school leaver of each year's cohort) is derived from the information provided by INSIGHT, Attainment vs. Deprivation measure. Appendix 3b shows the eight-year trend of the average total tariff score in North Ayrshire vs the National establishment.
- 2.7.6 The graph shows that the pace of improvement in average total tariff score is greater in North Ayrshire than nationally, which points toward a long-term convergence of the total tariff score performance of the average school leaver from North Ayrshire and that of the average school leaver in Scotland, despite the considerable deprivation gap disadvantage. This is only a rough indication that curriculum choices available to our learners and the individual attainment of school leavers from the different SIMD areas has improved the potential for higher attainment to all North Ayrshire school leavers and opportunities at all stages and levels have started to reflect positively in last year's performance. Sustainability of this improving path should now be the priority for all schools in the authority.

## 2.8 Increasing Post-School Participation (Appendix 4)

- 2.8.1 Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has ceased to publish the School Leavers Destination Return (SLDR) and has now started publishing the **Participation Measure** – which takes into account the entire 16-19 year-old population within an area. Consequently, INSIGHT has become the only source for the annual School Leavers (initial) Destinations indicator. Over the last few years, the percentage of school leavers moving into positive destinations in North Ayrshire has been one of the highest across Scotland.

- 2.8.2 In 2017, the percentage of leavers into positive destinations continued to decrease following the dip in performance in 2016. Consequently, although 93.4% of school leavers in North Ayrshire left for positive destinations – in line with the 93.7% performance in the whole of Scotland – this is still considerably higher than the Virtual Comparator benchmark performance of 92.2%. Areas of lower deprivation and better employment opportunities in the other SWC authorities raised the average SWC performance to 94.1% in 2017. An action plan has been devised to address these areas with specific focus on targeting vulnerable young people at risk of not entering into a positive destination when they leave school.

### 3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet agrees to note the content of the report and the achievements of the leavers as highlighted in this annual INSIGHT report.
- 3.2 The following improvement actions are proposed in respect of the key performance measures in INSIGHT:
- 3.2.1 **Improving attainment in Literacy & Numeracy:** The attainment in Literacy and Numeracy will continue to be the main focus of the Broad General Education phase and the introduction of the Scottish National Standardised Assessments will support teachers judgement for efficient and accurate assessments to support learning and teaching. North Ayrshire's Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Funding will continue to focus on developing better literacy and numeracy skills for targeted groups of learners.
- 3.2.2 **Improving Attainment for All:** There will be a continuation of the focus on the middle and highest achieving learners to ensure that our performance continues to reduce the gap between North Ayrshire and the National performance. Specific work will also be undertaken to improve the performance of the lowest achieving school leavers in S4, which our analysis has identified as an area for further improvement. Part of our work will include a further expansion of available courses and units to ensure that the Senior Phase is meeting the learning needs and aspirations of all learners.
- 3.2.3 **Attainment versus Deprivation:** North Ayrshire's Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund will continue to implement interventions for pupils living in the most deprived areas to improve their attainment and achievement levels. These interventions include support from the Professional Learning Academy and Family Learning Team. This work will be accelerated in session 2018-19 through the introduction of the Pupil Equity Fund. There will also be an ongoing focus on the learners living in decile 10 (least deprived areas) to endeavour to bring their performance into line with national levels.
- 3.2.4 **Increasing Post-School Participation:** An action plan specifically focusing on maximising positive destinations has been developed.

#### 4. Implications

<b>Financial:</b>	There are no financial implications.
<b>Human Resources:</b>	There are no human resource implications.
<b>Legal:</b>	There are no legal implications.
<b>Equality:</b>	There are no equality implications
<b>Children and Young People:</b>	
<b>Environmental &amp; Sustainability:</b>	There are no environmental and sustainability implications.
<b>Key Priorities:</b>	<p>NAC Council Plan 2015-2020: Priority 3 - "Ensuring people have the right skills for learning, life and work". Education and Youth Employment Directorate Plan 2015-2018: Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. We are reducing inequalities and delivering improved outcomes for children and young people.</li><li>2. High quality learning and teaching is taking place in all our schools.</li><li>4. Levels of attainment and achievement are improving for all learners.</li><li>5. High numbers of our young people are entering positive and sustainable post-school destinations.</li></ol>
<b>Community Benefits:</b>	N/A

#### 5. Consultation

- 5.1 There is a robust Quality Improvement Framework in place which has been evaluated by Education Scotland as sector leading. This self-evaluation tool includes a structured approach to regular evaluative school visits by Senior Managers and Head of Service. During these visits challenging discussions take place on how schools are using the analysis of their attainment as a mechanism to inform their targets. There is a clear focus on data literacy with a robust programme of CLPL in place to help establishments turn their data into action.
- 5.2 A common approach to target setting and tracking has been introduced across all secondary schools. Schools are using a combination of SEEMiS monitoring and tracking module and a bespoke approach to matching pupil characteristics to the tracking entries, which is ensuring more robust target setting, tracking and monitoring is taking place this session and the years ahead. A new SEEMIS Module for tracking and monitoring in the Broad General Education Phase ("Progress and Achievement") will be available for

implementation in our schools next session. We will ensure that the tool will be customised to meet the needs of the school community in North Ayrshire and will ensure a consistent and robust way to record, utilise and share information about pupil learning progress involving the entire “team around the child” and facilitating teaching, moderation and efficient performance management at all levels.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Butcher', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

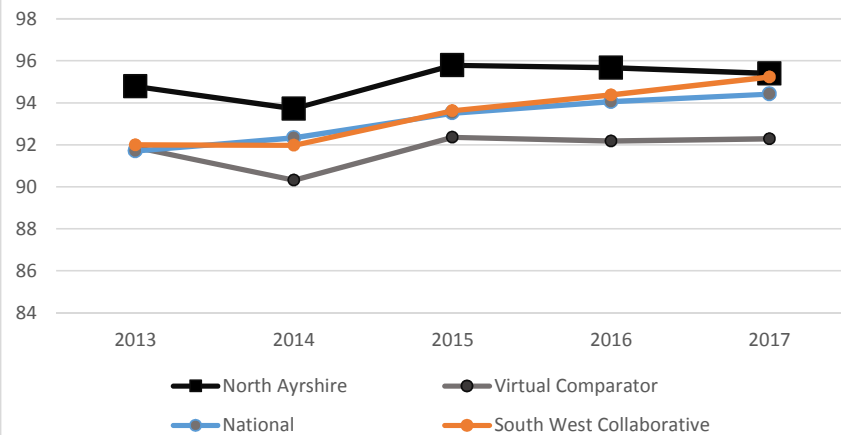
**John Butcher**  
**Executive Director (Education and Youth Employment)**

For further information please contact: Andrew McClelland, Head of Service on 01294 324413

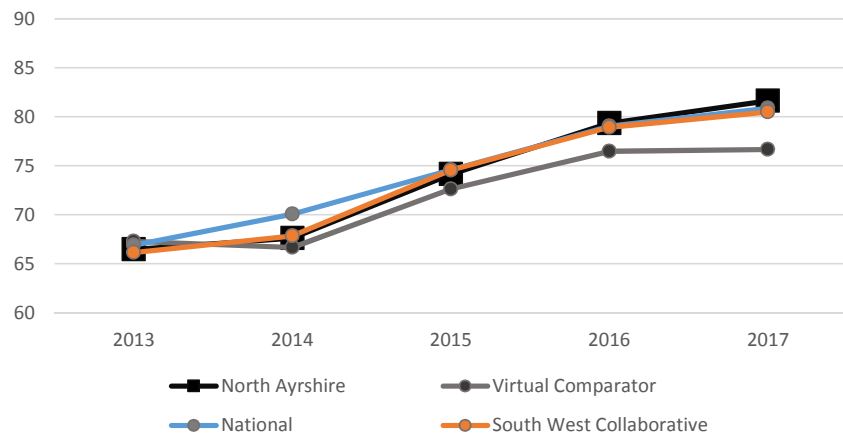
**Background Papers**

N/A

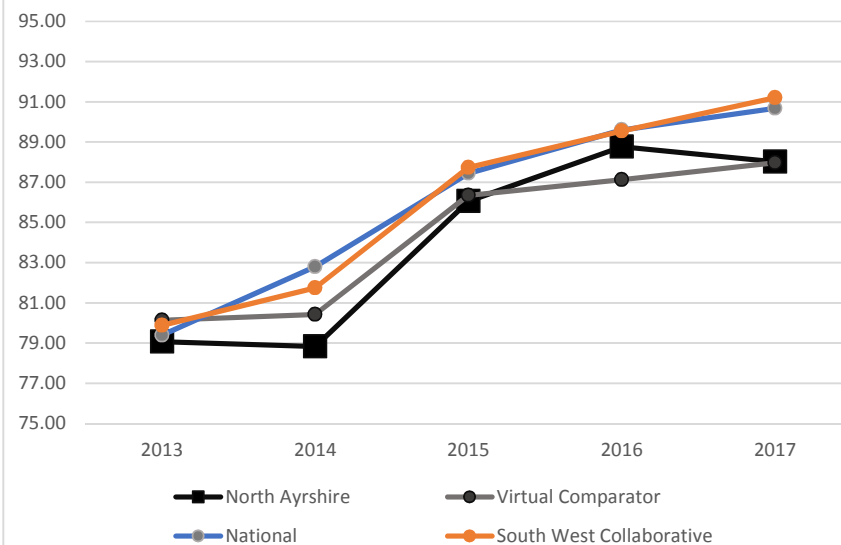
Percentage of school leavers attaining SCQF level 4 or better in Literacy



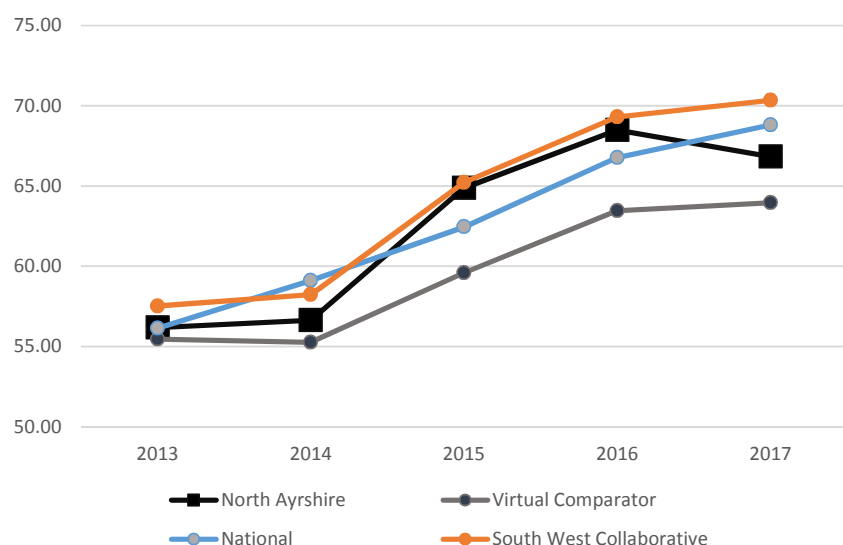
Percentage of school leavers attaining SCQF level 5 or better in Literacy



Percentage of school leavers attaining SCQF level 4 or better in Numeracy

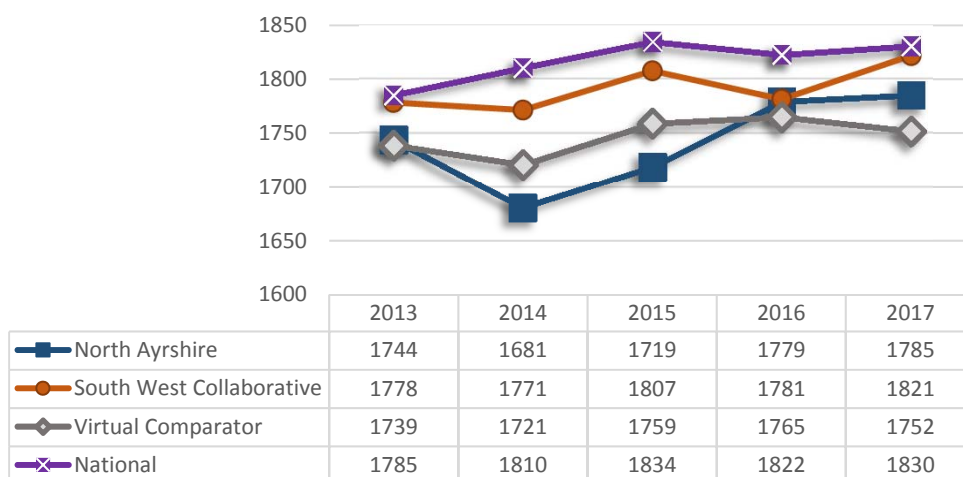


Percentage of school leavers attaining SCQF level 5 or better in Numeracy

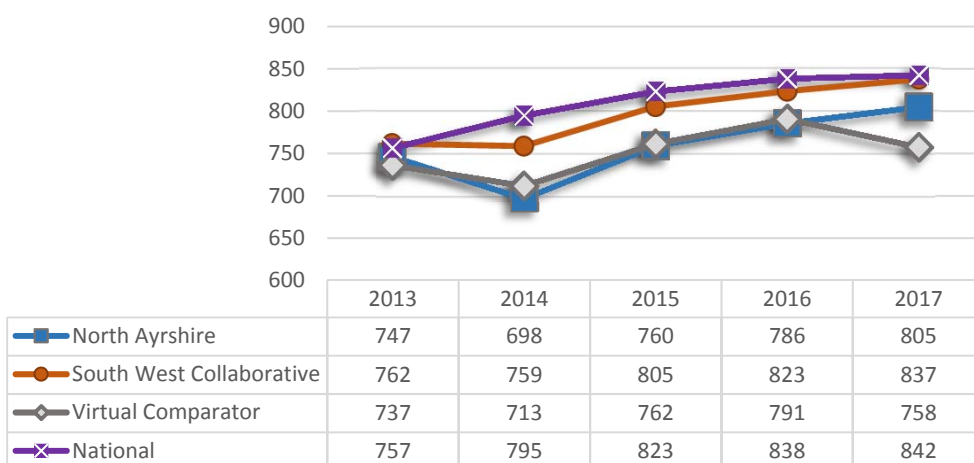




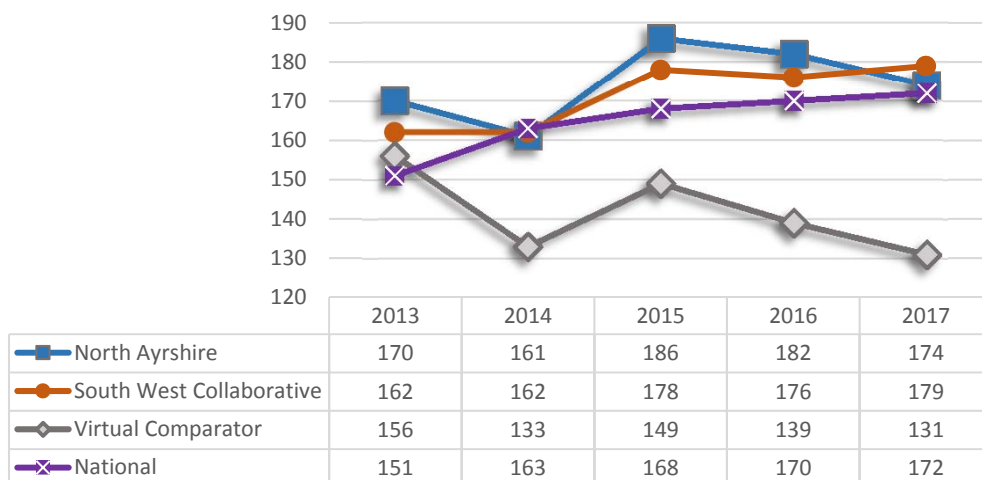
### Attainment for All - Highest 20%

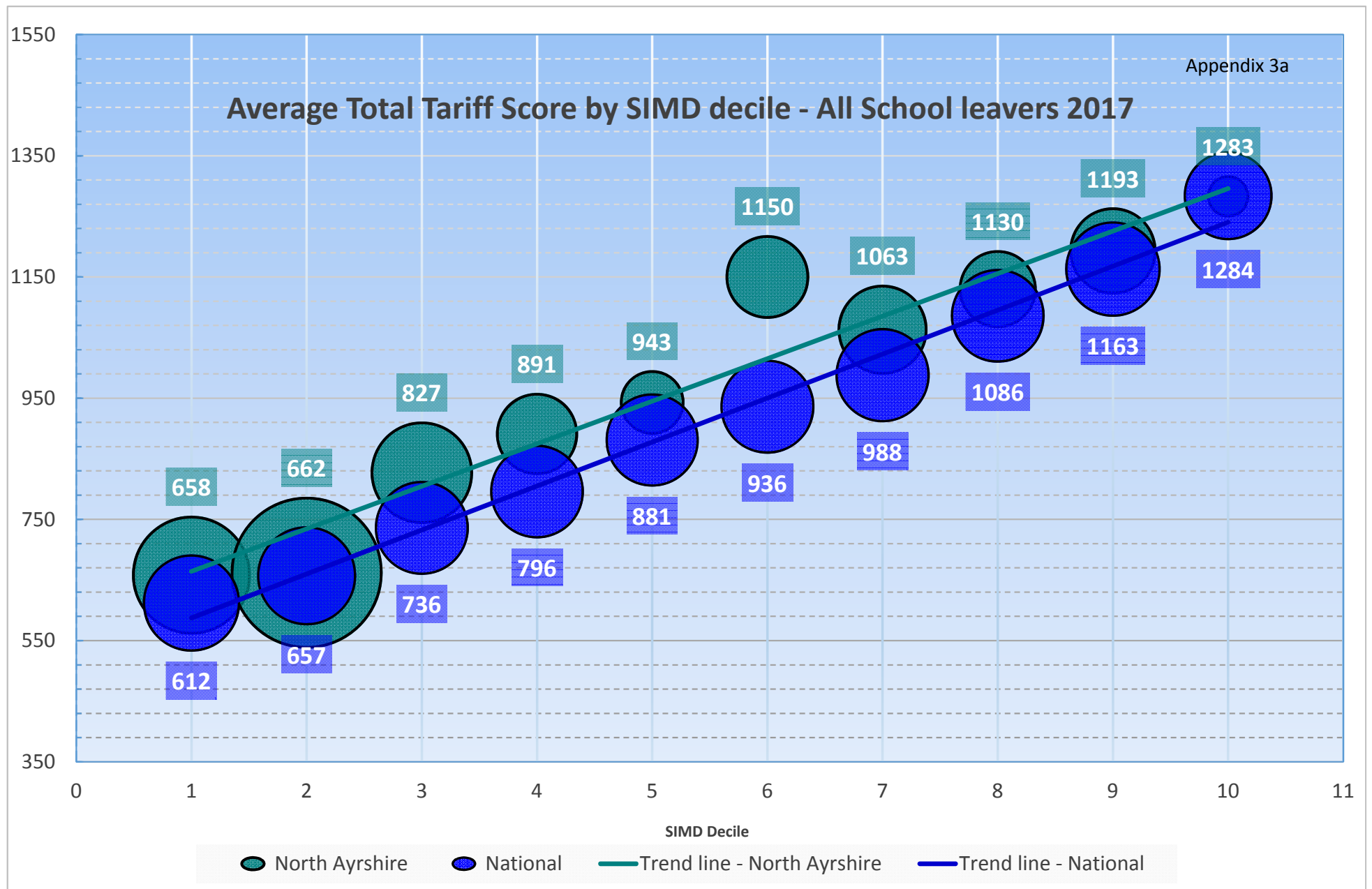


### Attainment for All - Middle 60%

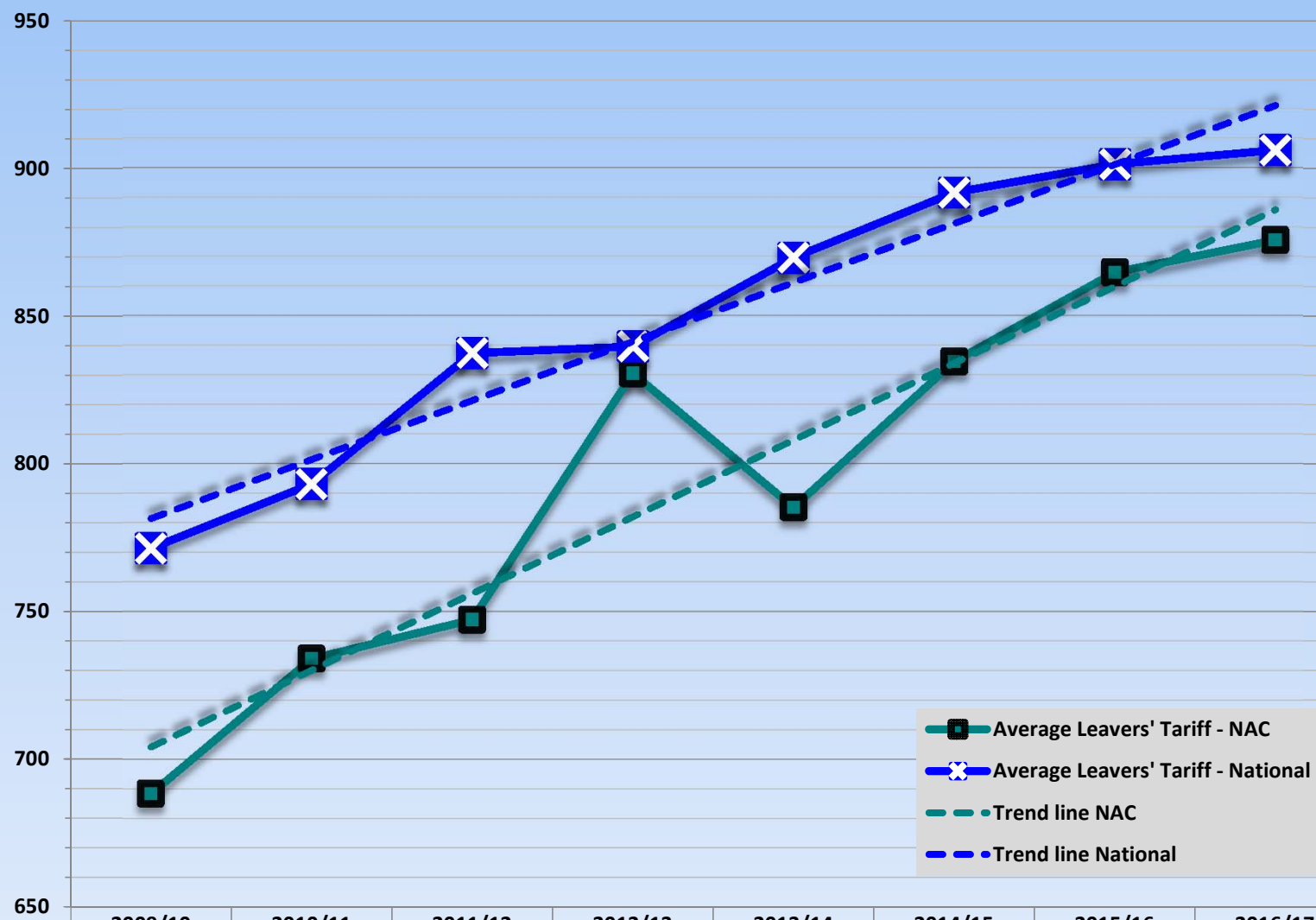


### Attainment for All - Lowest 20%





## Average Total Tariff Score per School Leaver - 8 years



Average Leavers' Tariff - NAC

2009/10

688

2010/11

734

2011/12

747

2012/13

830

2013/14

785

2014/15

835

2015/16

865

2016/17

876

Average Leavers' Tariff - National

2009/10

771

2010/11

793

2011/12

837

2012/13

840

2013/14

870

2014/15

892

2015/16

901

2016/17

906

# Comparative Performance on % of School Leavers Moving to Positive Destinations

Appendix 4

