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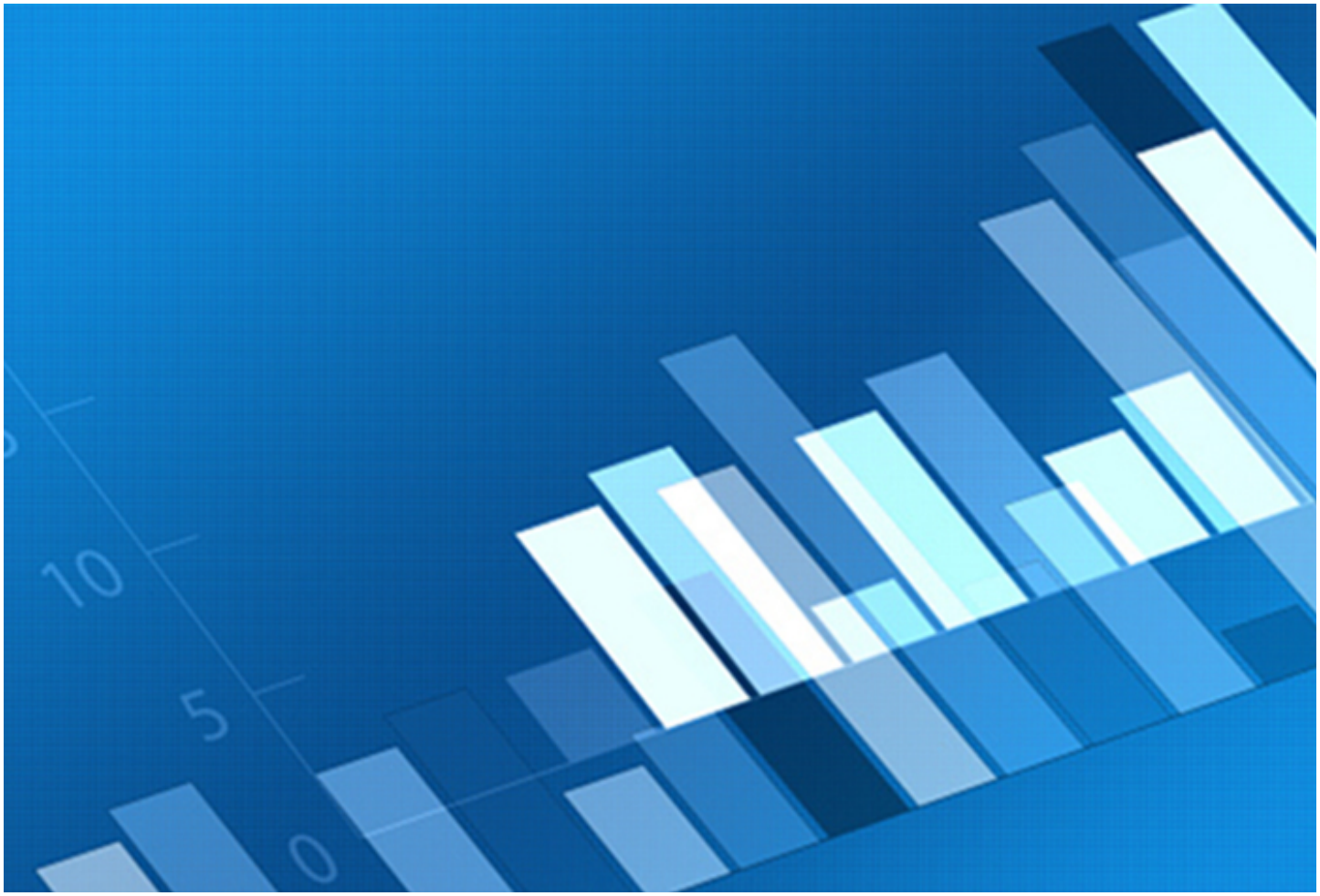

# Building Standards

## Building Standards National Annual Verification Performance Report

2020-21

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# 1. Introduction

**1.1** This report has been produced by the Building Standards Division of the Scottish Government. It provides aggregated information on the national level of performance of verifiers on the Key Performance Outcomes of the Building Standards Performance Framework for Verifiers 2021.

**1.2** It includes the key findings from the quarterly data returns made by verifiers for the reporting period covering 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

# 2. Background

**2.1** The building standards system in Scotland is established by the Building (Scotland) Act 2003. The Act gives Scottish Ministers powers to appoint Verifiers and approve Certification Schemes. At present the 32 Scottish local authorities are appointed as verifiers for their own geographical area.

**2.2** Verifiers are appointed on the basis that they can meet conditions set out in:

- **Operating Framework 2021** (https://www.gov.scot/publications/building-standards-operating-framework-april-2021/)
- **Performance Framework 2021** (https://www.gov.scot/publications/building-standards-performance-framework-april-2021/).

The Operating Framework 2021 sets out the key functions of the verifier and requires that 'Verifiers must adhere to legislative procedures and deadlines, appeals processes and complaints processes.' This includes having:

- processes and controls in place to meet legislative procedures and deadlines;
- measures in place for managing decisions and non-compliance; and
- pro-active communication with applicants regarding key decisions.

The Operating Framework sets out the key legislative procedures. Scottish Government officials proactively monitor and engage with all verifiers over the term of the appointments.

This includes satisfying Scottish Ministers that the Authority is meeting, and continues to meet, performance measures. Scottish Government, Building Standards Division (BSD) monitors performance of all local authority verifiers on an ongoing basis through quarterly performance data returns.

**2.3** The remit of the building standard system is to protect the public interest by setting the standards to be met when new building work or a conversion takes place, and providing a system for independent checking.

- Verification is the independent checking of projects against building regulations during the design phase (leading to granting the building warrant) and the construction phase (leading to acceptance of the completion certificate).
- Certification is the recognition of suitably qualified and experienced persons as competent to self-certify specific aspects of developments at design or construction stage as building regulation compliant.
- Local authorities are responsible for the enforcement role under the 2003 Act which includes building regulations and defective and dangerous buildings.

# 3. Outcomes and Targets

**3.1** The purpose of the performance framework is to improve the quality, compliance, consistency and predictability of verification activities. It addresses a wide range of actions and behaviours which, between them, demonstrate a strong customer-focused service.

**3.2** The performance framework covers 3 broad perspectives:

- Professional Expertise and Technical Processes,
- Quality Customer Experience, and
- Operational and Financial Efficiency.

**3.3** There are two additional cross-cutting themes of “Public Interest” and “Continuous Improvement”. These span all three perspectives in relation to building standards verification strategy, operational delivery, and internal and external relationships. The two cross-cutting themes are supported by a third theme ‘Partnership Working’. This reflects the importance of working collaboratively, for example, through industry engagement, benchmarking, peer review and sharing of best practice.

**3.4** To provide additional practical support for verifiers in developing improvement actions for their service a self-assessment tool was issued to all verifiers in April 2021.

# 4. Monitoring Performance

**4.1** Key Performance Outcomes (KPO) are used to monitor the work of building standards local authority verifiers.

**4.2** Reporting against the frameworks allow performance to be assessed and compared over time, identifying key trends which provide an evidence base for the effectiveness of aligning outcomes to meet key national objectives which include:

- Certainty of timescales in respect of decision making
- Reasonable inquiry of compliance during construction
- Management and assessment of building warrants and completion certificates
- Sharing of best practice
- Clear communication, provision of advice and open engagement
- Understanding of needs and 'open for business' attitude

**4.3** Verifiers provide information on their KPOs and this is supplemented by data on the number of submissions for building warrant applications, completion certificates and their corresponding value of work, (see **ANNEX A**).

# 5. Key Performance Outcomes

**5.1** The performance framework is supported by a range of key performance outcomes (KPOs). They embed a culture of continuous improvement underpinned by a greater focus on peer review, benchmarking and sharing of best practice.

**5.2** The performance framework includes reporting criteria and performance targets. These measure service delivery and can be used to highlight good practice, (see **TABLE 1**).

**5.3** The performance framework is used by verifiers to inform customers on performance levels, identify areas for improvement and prioritise actions.

**5.4** All verifiers produce an Annual Verification Performance Report, which is publicly available on their own local authority websites, see link below.

- **Annual Verification Performance Reports** (https://www.labss.org/publications/local-authority-performance-report/la-performance-links)

**TABLE 1:** KPOs and performance targets

**Professional Expertise and Technical Processes**

| | |
|---|---|
| **KPO1** | **Minimise time taken to issue a first report or to issue a building warrant or amendment to building warrant** |
| **1.1** | 95% of first reports (for building warrants and amendments) issued within 20 days – all first reports (including building warrants and amendments issued without a first |
| **1.2** | 90% of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days from receipt of all satisfactory information – all building warrants and amendments (not including BWs and amendments issued without a first report). |
| **KPO2** | **Increase quality of compliance assessment during the construction processes** |
| **2.1** | Targets to be developed as part of future review of KPO2. |

## Quality Customer Experience

| | |
|---|---|
| **KPO3** | Commit to the building standards customer charter |
| **3.1** | National customer charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (reviewed at least quarterly). |
| **3.2** | 95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days. |
| **KPO4** | **Understand and respond to the customer experience** |
| **4.1** | Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10. |

## Operational and Financial Efficiency

| | |
|---|---|
| **KPO5** | **Maintain financial governance** |
| **5.1** | Building standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%). |
| **KPO6** | **Commit to eBuilding Standards** |
| **6.1** | Details of eBuilding Standards to be published prominently on the verifier's website. |
| **6.2** | 75% of each key building warrant related process being done electronically<br>• Plan checking<br>• Building warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued<br>• Verification during construction<br>• Completion certificates being accepted |
| **KPO7** | **Commit to objectives outlined in the annual verification performance report** |
| **7.1** | Annual verification performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly). |
| **7.2** | Annual verification performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g. April 2020 – March 2021). |

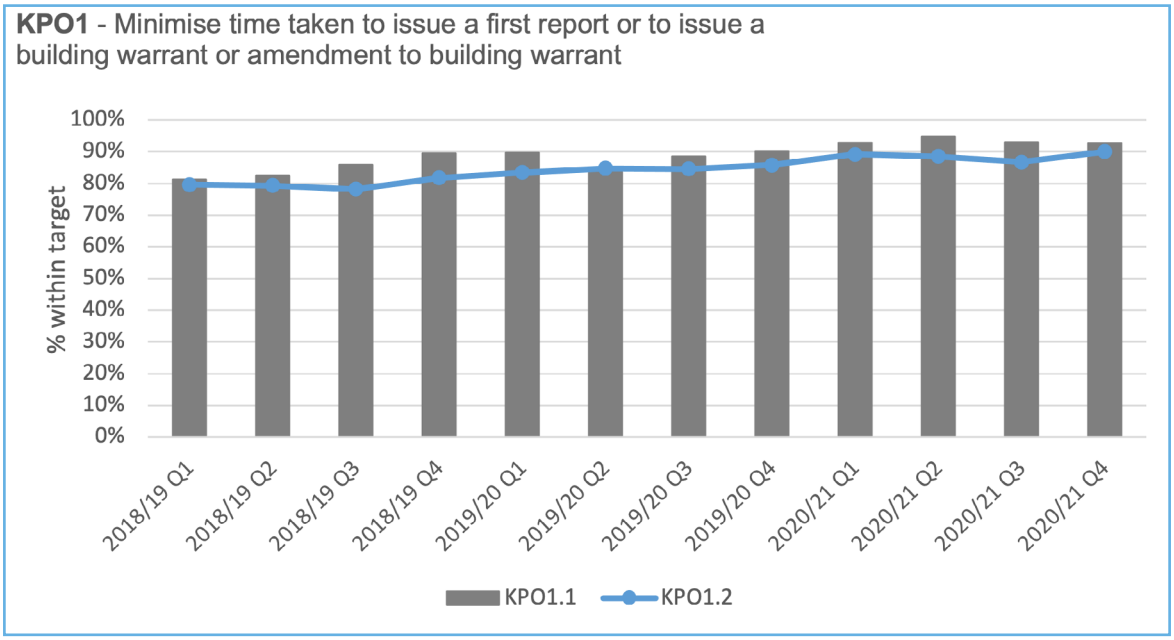
# 6. Performance Trends

## 6.1 Professional expertise and technical processes

### KPO1 - Minimise time taken to issue a first report or to issue a building warrant or amendment to building warrant

The performance for issuing a first report (KPO1.1) and building warrant or amendment to warrant (KPO1.2) has steadily improved over 2020-21, (see **Chart 1**).

**Chart 1:** KPO1 - Minimise time taken to issue a first report or to issue a building warrant or amendment to building warrant




### KPO2 - Increase quality of compliance assessment during the construction processes

There are currently no performance targets set for KPO2 and a wider review is currently underway.

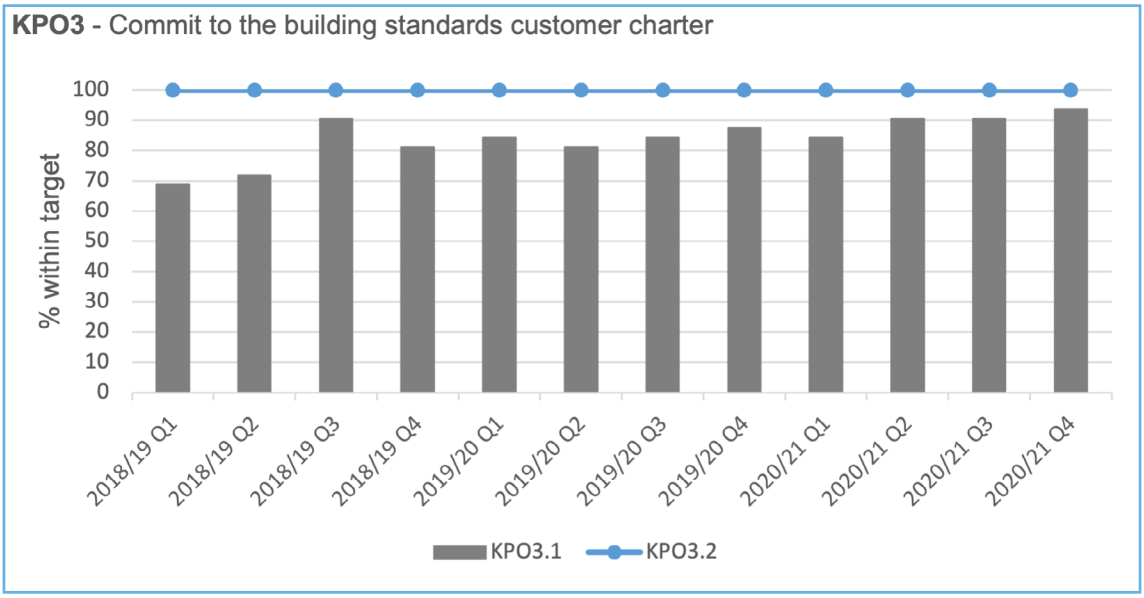
## 6.2 Quality customer experience

### KPO3 - Commit to the building standards customer charter

All 32 verifiers have implemented and published the Building Standards National Customer Charter (KPO3.1). This is supplemented with their own local charter.

Verifiers have made improvements to the quality and consistency of information published on their websites which promotes better communication for building standards customers. Verifier response times (KPO3.2) to requests for information for customers reporting performance concerns to Scottish Government have been met within the 5 day target, (see **Chart 2**).

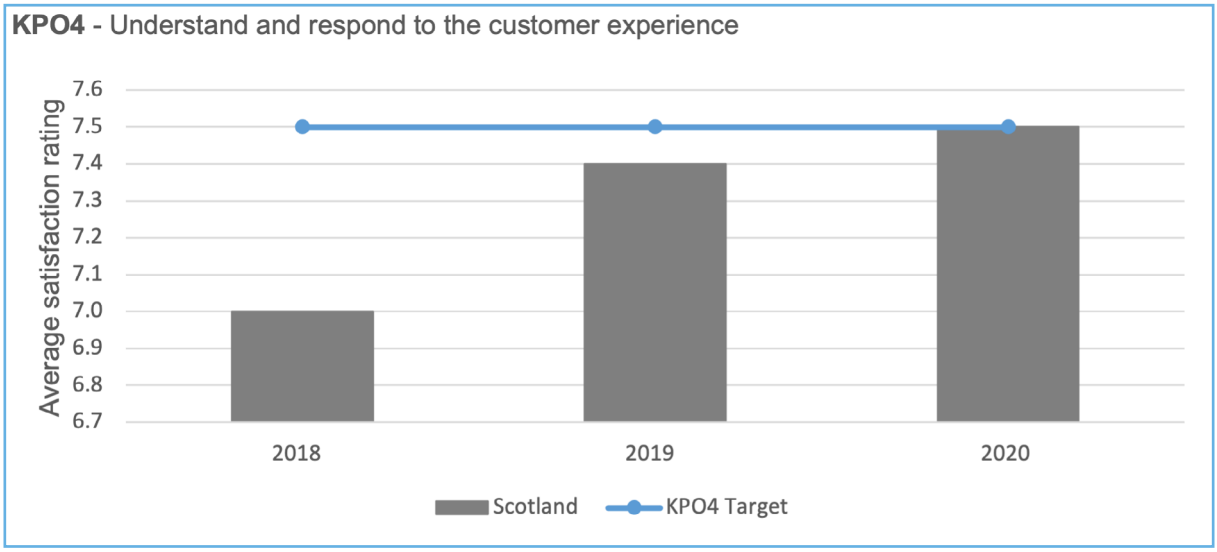
**Chart 2:** KPO3 - Commit to the building standards customer charter




### KPO4 - Understand and respond to the customer experience

The National Customer Satisfaction Survey of Building Standards customers is conducted annually by an impartial third party on behalf of Scottish Government. The overall National Customer Satisfaction rating for Scotland (KPO4) has increased year on year.
The national target of 7.5 was met in 2020, (see **Chart 3**).

**Chart 3:** KPO4 - Understand and respond to the customer experience

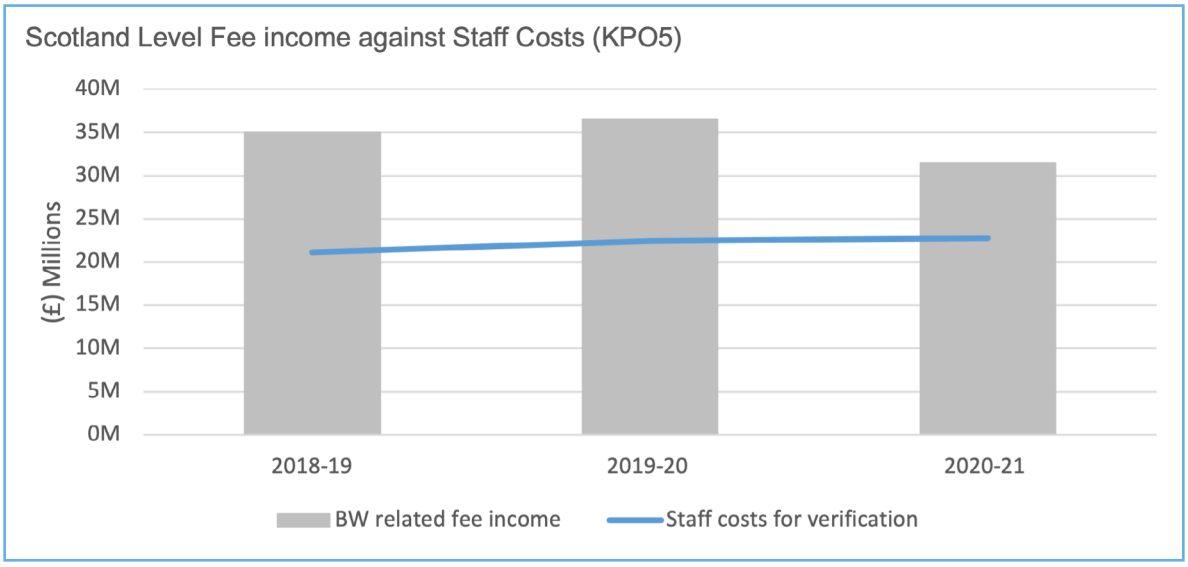


## 6.3 Operational and financial efficiency

### KPO5 - Maintain financial governance

Overall fee income has reduced by 9% compared to average levels during 2019-20. This is largely due to less construction activity during the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite this, verifiers have maintained the level of investment in staffing and continue to show a gradual improvement in overall investment levels into their building standards service, (see **Chart 4**).

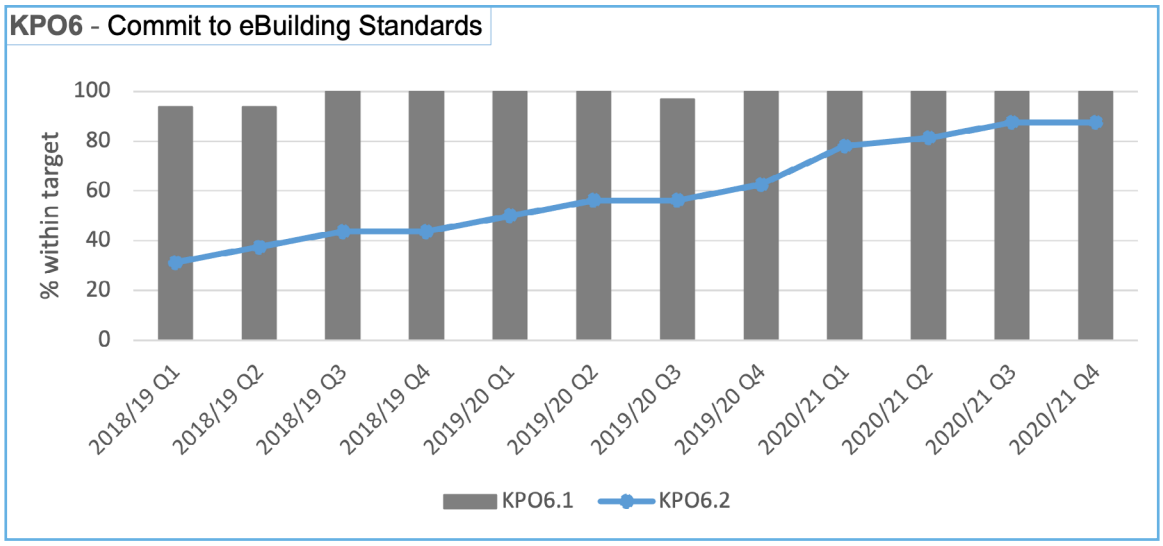
**Chart 4:** KPO5 - Maintain financial governance




### KPO6 - Commit to eBuilding Standards

The move towards digital verification services has been supported by Scottish Government's eBuildingStandards platform used by all 32 local authority verifiers (KPO6.1). The number of electronic applications has continued to rise year on year since the platform was launched in 2016. All Building Standards customers can submit electronic documents and payments directly to local authorities and the system facilitates continuous improvement toward fully digitised end to end electronic processes (KPO6.2), covering the whole customer journey (see **Chart 5**).

**Chart 5:** KPO6 - Commit to eBuilding Standards



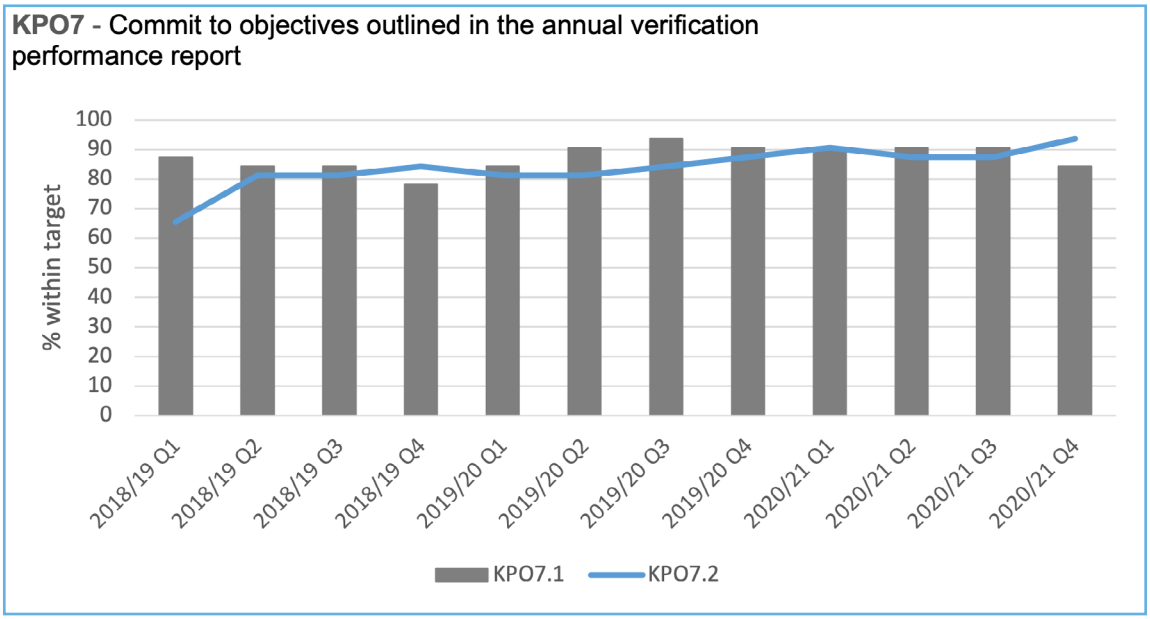
## KPO7 - Commit to objectives outlined in the annual verification performance report

The Annual Verification Performance Reports are a strategic planning and management tool to link performance reporting to continuous improvement actions. All 32 verifiers have implemented and published their reports (KPO7.1) on their own local authority website:

- **Annual Verification Performance Reports** (https://www.labss.org/publications/local-authority-performance-report/la-performance-links)

The report includes information on their vision for the service, strategy and performance data (KPO7.2), (see **Chart 6**).

**Chart 6:** KPO7 - Commit to objectives outlined in the annual verification performance report



# 7. National Performance Summary

**7.1** In 2017, a full assessment of the performance of all 32 local authority verifiers was carried out in advance of the 2017 appointments by Scottish Ministers. It was recognised that performance levels were inconsistent across Scotland. Since 2017 verifiers have been appointed for different periods of time based on their overall performance.

**7.2** Scottish Government monitor verifier performance and proactively manage issues through ongoing engagement and offer tailored support to those with business continuity issues.

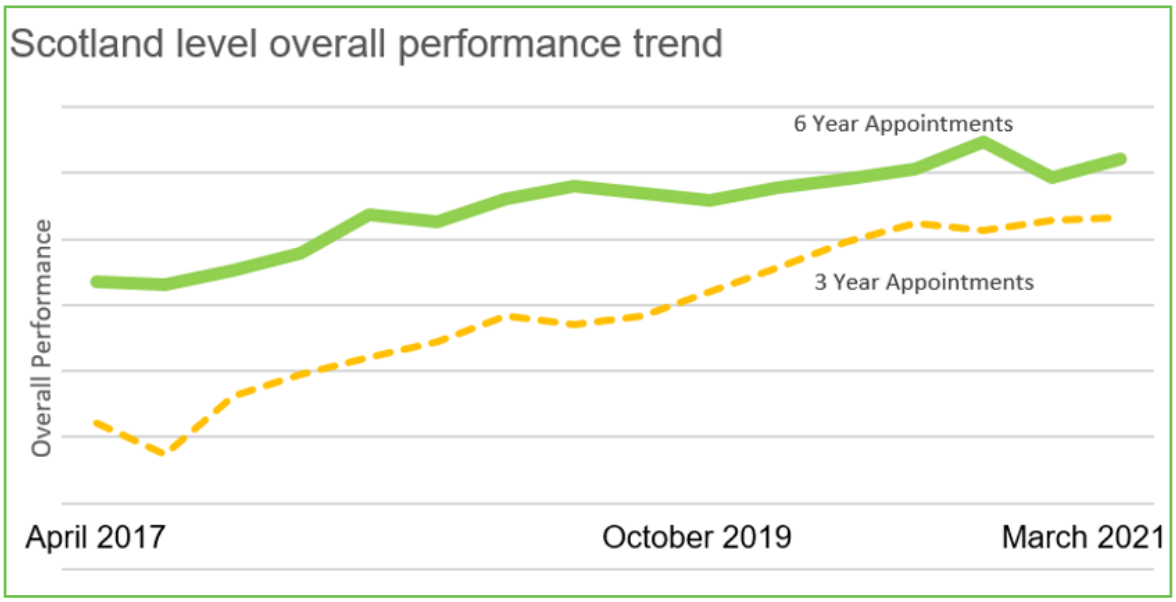
**7.3** An engagement strategy has been in place since 2017, initially focussed on verifiers where areas for improvement had been identified. This programme was expanded to all 32 local authority verifiers in 2019.

**7.4** The majority of verifiers have improved their performance levels. They are continuously improving their overall performance and providing a more consistent service across Scotland.

**7.5** Overall, performance trends across Scotland have improved and the gap between verifiers appointed for different periods of time is closing, (see **Chart 7**).

**7.6** All 32 local authorities are appointed as verifiers until 30 April 2023 and a full review of overall performance will be undertaken in advance of further periods of appointment.

**Chart 7:** Scotland level overall performance trend



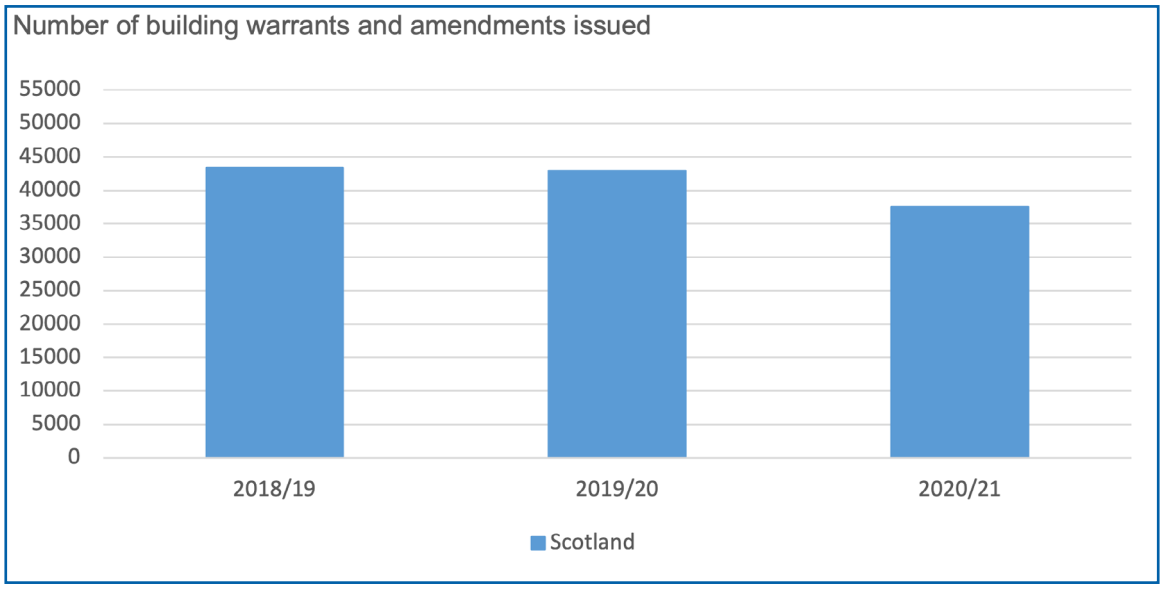
# Annex A

## Annual Data

### 1 Building Warrant Applications

The average number of building warrants and amendments issued in Scotland each year is approximately 42,000. The number of building warrants and amendments issued in Scotland dropped by 11% from average levels during 2020-21 due to Covid-19, (see **Chart A**).

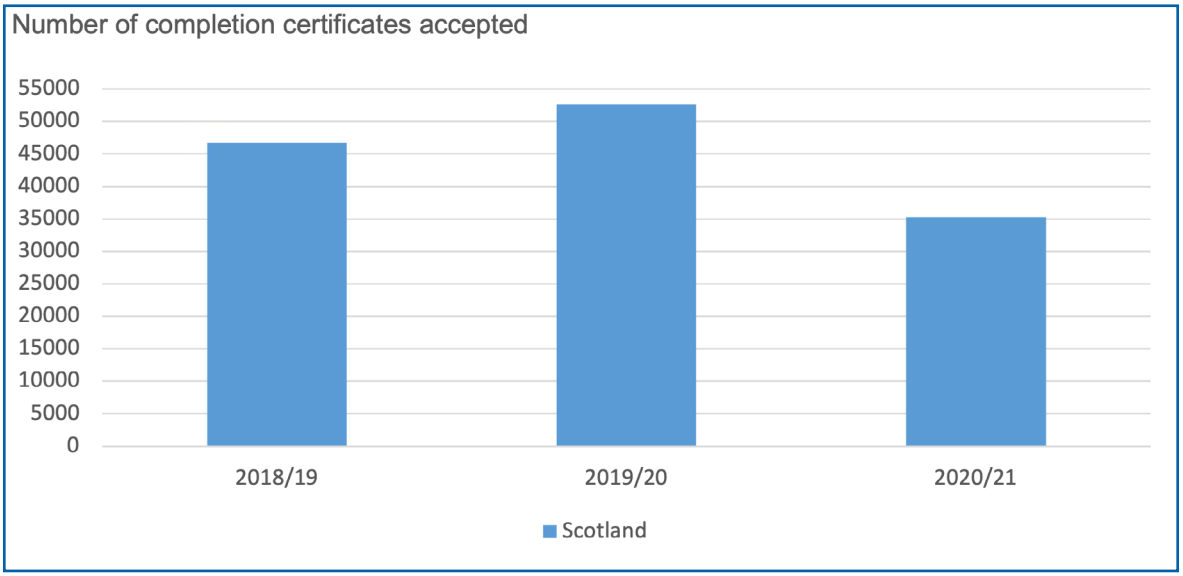
**Chart A:** Number of building warrants and amendments issued




### 2 Completion Certificates

The number of completion certificates accepted each year in Scotland is approximately 48,000. The number of completion certificates has fallen by 26% from average levels during 2020-21 due to Covid-19, (see **Chart B**).

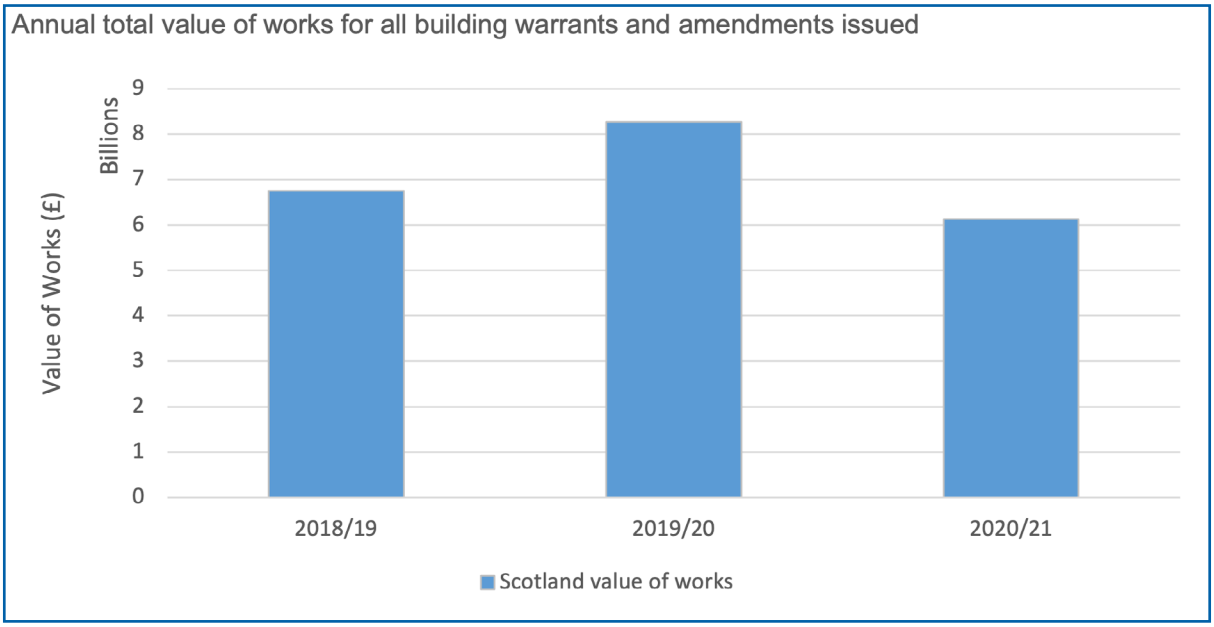
**Chart B:** Number of completion certificates accepted



## 3 Value of Works

The building standards services in Scotland verify construction projects with a value of works of approximately £7 billion annually. The value of works in Scotland reduced from average levels during 2020-21 by 14% (see **Chart C**). Building warrant fees are based on value of works, so fee income levels also reduced during 2020-21 by approximately 9%.

**Chart C:** Value of works



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