

Scottish Commission on Social Security

Annual Audit Plan 2023/24



 AUDIT SCOTLAND

Prepared for Scottish Commission on Social Security

February 2024

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Introduction

Summary of planned audit work

1. I, Lisa Duthie, have been appointed by the Auditor General for Scotland as external auditor of the Scottish Commission on Social Security (SCoSS) for the period from 2022/23 until 2026/27. The 2023/24 financial year is therefore the second of my five-year audit appointment. A brief biography of the audit team is provided at [Appendix 1](#).

2. This document summarises the work plan for my 2023/24 audit. The main elements of the audit include:

- an audit of the financial statements and an opinion on whether they give a true and fair view and are free from material misstatement
- an audit opinion on regularity and other statutory information published with the financial statements in the annual report and accounts, including the Performance Report, Governance Statement, and the Remuneration and Staff Report
- concluding on the financial sustainability of SCoSS and a review of the Governance Statement.
- provision of an Independent Auditor's Report expressing my opinions on the different elements of the annual report and accounts and an Annual Audit Report setting out my conclusions on financial sustainability.

Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the Scottish Commission on Social Security

3. The [Code of Audit Practice](#) sets out in detail the respective responsibilities of the auditor and SCoSS. Key responsibilities are summarised below.

Auditor responsibilities

4. My responsibilities as appointed auditor are established by the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000 and the Code of Audit Practice (including [supplementary guidance](#)) and guided by the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard.

5. Auditors in the public sector give an independent opinion on the financial statements and other information within the annual report and accounts. We also comment on financial sustainability in the medium and longer term. We define this as medium term (two to five years) and longer term (longer than five years) sustainability.

6. We will carry out work and conclude on the effectiveness of financial planning in identifying and addressing risks to financial sustainability. In doing this, we aim to support improvement and accountability.

The Scottish Commission on Social Security responsibilities

7. SCoSS is responsible for maintaining accounting records and preparing financial statements that give a true and fair view.

8. SCoSS has the primary responsibility for ensuring the proper financial stewardship of public funds, compliance with relevant legislation, and establishing effective arrangements for governance, propriety, and regularity that enable them to deliver their objectives.

Adding Value

9. My team and I aim to add value by: tailoring audit work to the circumstances of SCoSS and the audit risks identified; being constructive and forward looking; providing independent conclusions; attending meetings of the Audit Sub-Committee and by recommending and encouraging good practice. In so doing, we will help SCoSS promote improved standards of governance, better management and decision making, and more effective use of resources.

Annual report and accounts

Introduction

10. The annual report and accounts are an essential part of demonstrating SCoSS's stewardship of resources and its performance in the use of those resources.

11. As appointed auditor, I am required to perform an audit of the financial statements, consider other information within the annual report and accounts, and express a number of audit opinions in an Independent Auditor's Report in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) in the UK, Practice Note 10 from the Public Audit Forum which interprets the ISAs for the public sector, and guidance from Audit Scotland.

12. My team and I focus our work on the areas of highest risk. As part of our planning process, we perform a risk assessment highlighting the audit risks relating to each of the main financial systems relevant to the production of the financial statements.

Materiality

13. The concept of materiality is applied by auditors in planning and performing the audit, and in evaluating the effect of any uncorrected misstatements on the financial statements. I am required to plan my audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement. The assessment of what is material is a matter of professional judgement over both the amount and the nature of the misstatement.

Materiality levels for the 2023/24 audit

14. We have assessed the different materiality levels for SCoSS as described in [Exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1

2023/24 Materiality levels for the Scottish Commission on Social Security

Materiality	Amount
Planning materiality – This is the figure we calculate to assess the overall impact of audit adjustments on the financial statements. Materiality has been set based on our assessment of the needs of the users of the financial statements and the nature of SCoSS's operations. For the year ended 31 March 2024, we have set our materiality at 2% of gross expenditure based on the latest financial forecast presented to the Board.	£8,000
Performance materiality – This acts as a trigger point. If the aggregate of errors identified during the financial statements audit exceeds performance materiality,	£5,000

this could indicate that further audit procedures are required. Using our professional judgement, we have assessed performance materiality at 60% of planning materiality.

Reporting threshold (i.e. clearly trivial) – We are required to report to those charged with governance on all unadjusted misstatements more than the 'reporting threshold' amount.	£400
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Source: Audit Scotland

Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements

15. Our risk assessment draws on our cumulative knowledge of SCoSS, its major transaction streams, key systems of internal control, and risk management processes. It is informed by our discussions with management, attendance at committees and a review of supporting information.

16. Audit risk assessment is an iterative and dynamic process. Our assessment of risks set out in this plan may change as more information and evidence becomes available during the progress of the audit. Where such changes occur, we will advise management, and where relevant, report them to those charged with governance.

17. Based on our risk assessment process, we identified the following significant risk of material misstatement to the financial statements. This is the risk which has the greatest impact on our planned audit procedures. [Exhibit 2](#) summarises the nature of the risk, management's sources of assurance over this risk, and the further audit procedures we plan to perform to gain assurance over the risk.

Exhibit 2

2023/24 Significant risk of material misstatement to the financial statements

Significant risk of material misstatement	Management's sources of assurance	Planned audit response
<p>1. Risk of material misstatement due to fraud caused by management override of controls</p> <p>As stated in ISA (UK) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of management's ability to override controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.</p>	<p>Owing to the nature of this risk, assurances from management are not applicable in this instance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the design and implementation of controls over journal processing. • Make inquiries of individuals involved in the financial reporting process about inappropriate or unusual activity. • Test journals at the year-end and post-closing entries. • Evaluate significant transactions outside the normal course of business.

Source: Audit Scotland

18. As set out in ISA (UK) 240: *The auditor's responsibilities relating to fraud in an audit of financial statement*, there is a presumed risk of fraud over the recognition of revenue. There is a risk that revenue may be misstated resulting in a material misstatement in the financial statements. We have rebutted this risk as SCoSS does not generate any income.

19. In line with Practice Note 10: *Audit of financial statements and regularity of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom*, as most public sector bodies are net spending bodies, the risk of material misstatement due to fraud related to expenditure recognition may in some cases be greater than the risk relating to revenue recognition. We have rebutted this risk for SCoSS because expenditure incurred by SCoSS is administered using well-established Scottish Government systems and controls. Furthermore, the nature of this expenditure is not complex with approximately 82 per cent of costs forecast to be spent on staff-related costs.

20. We have not, therefore, incorporated specific work into our audit plan in these areas over and above our standard audit procedures.

Other areas of audit focus

21. As part of our assessment of audit risks, we have identified an area where we consider there to be a risk of material misstatement to the financial statements. Based on our assessment of the likelihood and magnitude of this risk, we do not consider this to represent a significant risk. We will keep this under review as our audit progresses.

22. The area of specific audit focus is regarding the Social Security (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill. The provisions in the Bill expands the types of regulations that SCoSS is able to review, removes the requirement for SCoSS to prepare accounts for external audit and removes the body corporate status. These changes aim to better reflect how SCoSS operates in practice. We will monitor developments as the Bill progresses through Parliament and consider the impact on our audit.

Regularity

23. Auditors are required by the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000 to report on whether expenditure and income were incurred or applied, in all material respects, in accordance with applicable enactments and guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers (generally referred to as the regularity opinion).

24. We will adopt an integrated audit approach to meeting this responsibility and use work on the audit of the financial statements supplemented by additional testing for any irregular transactions, where necessary.

Wider Scope and Best Value

Introduction

25. Reflecting the fact that public money is involved, public audit is planned and undertaken from a wider perspective than in the private sector. The Code of Audit Practice sets out the four areas that frame the wider scope of public sector audit, and requires auditors to consider and conclude on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the arrangements in place for the wider scope area in audited bodies.

26. The Code of Audit Practice includes provisions relating to the audit of less complex bodies. Where the application of the full wider audit scope is judged by auditors not to be appropriate to an audited body then the audit work can focus on the appropriateness of the disclosures in the governance statement and the financial sustainability of the body and its services. We plan to apply these provisions of the Code to the 2023/24 audit of SCoSS considering the low value and less complex nature of the financial transactions.

27. Our audit of the wider scope will include:

- **Financial sustainability** – we will look ahead to consider whether SCoSS is planning effectively to continue to deliver services, and will comment on financial sustainability in the medium (two to five years) to longer term (longer than five years).
- **Governance** – we will consider the effectiveness of the governance arrangements in place at SCoSS and review the governance statement.

Duty of Best Value

28. [Ministerial Guidance to Accountable Officers](#) for public bodies and the [Scottish Public Finance Manual](#) (SPFM) explain that Accountable Officers have a specific responsibility to ensure that arrangements have been made to secure Best Value. We will be carrying out a high-level review to confirm that such arrangements are in place within SCoSS.

Reporting arrangements, timetable, and audit fee

Reporting arrangements

29. Matters arising from our audit will be reported on a timely basis and will include agreed action plans. Draft reports will be shared with the relevant officers to confirm factual accuracy.

30. We will provide an Independent Auditor's Report to SCoSS, the Scottish Parliament, and the Auditor General for Scotland setting out our opinions on the annual report and accounts. We will provide SCoSS and the Auditor General for Scotland with an annual report on the audit containing observations and recommendations on significant matters which have arisen during the audit.

31. [Exhibit 3](#) outlines the target dates for our audit outputs set by the Auditor General for Scotland. In determining the target reporting date of 31 October, due regard is paid to meeting the statutory deadline for laying the accounts of 31 December 2024.

32. We plan to issue our Independent Auditor's Report and Annual Audit Report by the target date.

Exhibit 3

2023/24 Audit outputs

Audit Output	Target date	Audit Sub-Committee Date
Annual Audit Plan	31 March 2024	21 February 2024
Independent Auditor's Report	31 October 2024	22 August 2024
Annual Audit Report	31 October 2024	22 August 2024

Source: Audit Scotland

33. All Annual Audit Plans and the outputs detailed in exhibit 3, and any other outputs on matters of public interest, will be published on our website: www.audit-scotland.gov.uk.



Timetable

34. To support an efficient audit, it is critical that the timetable for producing the annual report and accounts for audit is achieved. We have included a proposed timetable for the audit at [Exhibit 4](#) that has been discussed with management.

35. We will continue to work closely with management to identify the most efficient approach as appropriate and will keep timeframes and logistics for the completion of the audit under review. Progress will be discussed with management and finance officers over the course of the audit.

Exhibit 4

Proposed annual report and accounts timetable

 Key stage	 Provisional Date
Latest submission date for the receipt of the unaudited annual report and accounts with complete working papers package	3 June 2024
Latest date for final clearance meeting with the Accountable Officer and Lead Secretary	18 June 2024
Agreement of audited and unsigned annual report and accounts	21 June 2024
Issue of Letter of Representation and proposed Independent Auditor's Report	15 August 2024
Issue of Annual Audit Report to those charged with governance	15 August 2024
Audit sub-committee consideration of audited and unsigned annual report and accounts	22 August 2024
Signed Independent Auditor's Report	To be confirmed

Source: Audit Scotland

Audit fee

36. In determining the audit fee, we have taken account of the risk exposure of SCoSS and the planned management assurances in place. Fee levels are also impacted by inflation which increases the cost of audit delivery. The proposed audit fee for 2023/24 is £8,470 (2022/23: £7,507).

37. In setting the fee for 2023/24, we have assumed that SCoSS has effective governance arrangements and will prepare a comprehensive and accurate set of annual report and accounts for audit in line with the agreed timetable for the audit. The audit fee assumes there will be no major change in respect of the scope of the audit during the year and where our audit cannot proceed as planned, a supplementary fee may be levied.

Other matters

Independence and objectivity

38. I am independent of SCoSS in accordance with relevant ethical requirements, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard. This standard imposes stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors.

39. Audit Scotland has robust arrangements in place to ensure compliance with Ethical Standard including an annual *'fit and proper'* declaration for all members of staff. The arrangements are overseen by the Executive Director of Innovation and Quality, who serves as Audit Scotland's Ethics Partner.

40. The Ethical Standard requires auditors to communicate any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the audit team. I am not aware of any such relationships pertaining to the audit of SCoSS.

Audit Quality

41. Audit Scotland is committed to the consistent delivery of high-quality public audit. Audit quality requires ongoing attention and improvement to keep pace with external and internal changes. A document explaining the arrangements for providing assurance on the delivery of high-quality audits is available from the [Audit Scotland website](#).

42. The International Standards on Quality Management (ISQM) applicable to Audit Scotland for 2023/24 audits are:

- ISQM (UK) 1 which deals with an audit organisation's responsibilities to design, implement and operate a system of quality management (SoQM) for audits. Our SoQM consists of a variety of components, such as: our governance arrangements and culture to support audit quality, compliance with ethical requirements, ensuring we are dedicated to high-quality audit through our engagement performance and resourcing arrangements, and ensuring we have robust quality monitoring arrangements in place. Audit Scotland carries out an annual evaluation of our SoQM and has concluded that we comply with this standard.
- ISQM (UK) 2 which sets out arrangements for conducting engagement quality reviews, which are performed by senior management not involved in the audit to review significant judgements and conclusions reached by the audit team, and the appropriateness of proposed audit opinions of high-risk audit engagements.

43. To monitor quality at an individual audit level, Audit Scotland also carries out internal quality reviews of a sample of audits. Additionally, the Institute of

Chartered Accountants of England and Wales (ICAEW) carries out independent quality reviews.

44. Actions to address deficiencies identified by internal and external quality reviews are included in a rolling Quality Improvement Action Plan which is used to support continuous improvement. Progress with implementing planned actions is regularly monitored by Audit Scotland's Quality and Ethics Committee.

45. Audit Scotland may periodically seek your views on the quality of our service provision. The team would also welcome feedback more informally at any time.

Appendix 1: Your audit team

46. The audit team involved in the audit of SCoSS have significant experience in public sector audit.

Lisa Duthie
Senior Audit Manager
lduthie@audit-scotland.gov.uk

Lisa has over 15 years of public sector audit experience and has delivered external audit services to a range of bodies including local authorities, health boards and central government bodies.

Marie McFadden
Senior Auditor
mmcfadden@auditscotland.gov.uk

Marie has over 6 years of public sector audit experience and has considerable experience in planning and delivering audits. Marie will manage the team and work alongside the Senior Audit Manager to deliver the audit.

47. The local audit team is supported by a specialist technical accounting team, all of whom have significant experience of public bodies and work with accounting regulatory bodies.

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Audit Scotland's published material is available for download on the website in a number of formats. For information on our accessibility principles, please visit:

www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accessibility

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