

Post-legislative scrutiny of the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013: Call for views

Audit Scotland, Accounts Commission, Auditor General response

Background

1. Audit Scotland, the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland welcome the opportunity to respond to this call for views.

- The Auditor General for Scotland (AGS) is an independent crown appointment, made on the recommendation of the Scottish Parliament, to audit the Scottish Government, NHS and other bodies and report to Parliament on their financial health and performance.
- The Accounts Commission is an independent public body appointed by Scottish ministers to hold local government to account. The Controller of Audit is an independent post established by statute, with powers to report directly to the Commission on the audit of local government.
- Audit Scotland is a statutory body established under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It is Scotland's national public sector audit agency which provides the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission with the services they need to carry out their duties.

2. Public audit provides independent assurance that public money is spent properly and is providing value for money. Social care, and its importance to health and wellbeing, has been an important issue for the Accounts Commission and the AGS for many years. We have published several reports and outputs in this area, including a Social Care briefing (2022), Integration Joint Boards: Financial analysis (2022 and 2023), Health and Social Care integration (2015 and 2018), Self-directed support (2014 and 2017) and Social work in Scotland (2016) – all our reports in this area since 2015 can be found [here](#).

Implementation of self-directed support

3. In August 2017, we published a joint [report](#) which considered whether there was sufficient progress in implementing self-directed support (SDS) to achieve the aims of the ten year SDS strategy. Specifically looking at:

- Progress councils and integration authorities had made in implementing SDS
- The impact SDS was having on people with support needs, carers, families and communities
- Factors that were supporting or impeding effective implementation of SDS
- How effectively the Scottish Government was supporting implementation of SDS and evaluating its impact

4. The report found that while there were many examples of positive progress in implementing SDS, authorities are yet to make the transformation required to fully implement the SDS strategy. The report also found that while there were many examples of people being supported in new and effective ways through SDS, not everyone was getting the choice and control envisaged in the SDS strategy.

5. As part of this work we gathered information from supported people and carers. We found not everyone with support needs is getting the choice and control set out in the SDS strategy. This includes people with mental health problems, who often need more flexible support. There can be good reasons for lack of choice, including protection from harm or limited options in rural or remote locations, but some people feel they have been denied the opportunity to access more effective ways to improve their quality of life. The results of this work are set out in [Supplement 2 – Audit methodology and survey results](#)

6. The report set out a series of recommendations for the Scottish Government, COSLA, integrated joint authorities and partners to make improvements including in relation to:

- authorities working in partnership with service users, carers and providers to increase flexibility and choice, and make processes simpler and more transparent;
- providing staff with further training on identifying and planning for outcomes, and supporting them to apply professional judgement
- the Scottish Government, COSLA and partners working together to agree on the allocation of future financial support and seek solutions to address recruitment and retention problems.

7. In December 2019, we followed up with an impact [report](#) which found that while authorities were yet to make the full transformation required to fully implement the SDS strategy, some steps were being taken to address our recommendations including:

- the refinement and development of accurate data and methodologies to understand the impact of SDS on people who need support although this was still ongoing
- a review of independent information, advice and advocacy people need for SDS had been carried out to inform funding for the next three years
- the Scottish Government is publicly reporting on its plans, strategies and outcomes achieved through public funding
- a new SDS implementation plan had been produced for 2019-2021 as part of a wider programme of activity to support local reform of adult social care. This was done in partnership with key stakeholders including service users and carers.

8. We have not done any direct work around the implementation of self-directed support since our impact report. However, through our ongoing engagement with the social care sector we understand that an implementation gap remains. There remains wide variability in how the SDS policy is implemented across Scotland with a mixed experience for people in having full choice and control of their support.