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News release

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Progress made on self-directed support but patchy across councils

New legislation means councils will have to transform the way they deliver social care, offering people choice and control over the support they need. A report published today makes recommendations to help councils fully implement the policy.

Every year Scotland's councils spend £2.8 billion on social care services. They now (as of April 2014) have a legal duty to offer a wider range of options to help meet people's individual needs. This duty is part of the national Self-directed Support (SDS) strategy to transform social care over a period of ten years.

The report says councils have started to make changes to social care. Progress has been mixed among councils and slower in some areas which have underestimated the scale of the cultural and practical changes.

SDS means that people assessed as needing social care have the right to choose and tailor the support they receive. Councils need to work with the private and voluntary sectors to develop new services to support people and improve their quality of life. These changes will affect how councils manage their social care budgets.

The report identifies three approaches used by councils to determine how much they spend on each person's support. Each carries different benefits and risks which need to be managed carefully.

Many user and staff groups have welcomed the changes brought by SDS but these will also have significant training and support implications for the social care workforce.

Accounts Commission chair Douglas Sinclair said: "This is a huge and complex change for councils. The new act gives individuals significant new rights to choose what services best suits their needs.

"Some councils need to up their game and deliver SDS successfully on the ground, as the public will rightly expect no less. Our report aims to help them through that process."

Auditor General Caroline Gardner said: "Self-directed support has the potential to transform the daily lives of thousands of people. The Scottish Government has provided £42 million to help councils and other organisations prepare for self-directed support. It needs to have a strategy to measure and report on what this spending has achieved and the impact of self-directed support in the years ahead."

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Notes to editors

1. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland. It examined councils' progress in implementing the Self-directed Support strategy and their readiness for the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013. It focuses on councils because they have the lead role, working in partnership with users, carers, third and private sector providers, NHS boards and other organisations. The audit work was carried out between December 2013 and February 2014.
2. The report reviewed progress at this relatively early stage because self-directed support has significant implications for the future provision of social care. It also highlights issues for councils and NHS boards to consider as they establish new partnership arrangements for health and social care.
3. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk
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 - The Auditor General appoints auditors to Scotland's central government and NHS bodies; examines how public bodies spend public money; helps them to manage their finances to the highest standards; and checks whether they achieve value for money. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliament.
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