

National scrutiny plan 2018/19

A summary of local government
strategic scrutiny activity



Prepared on behalf of the Strategic Scrutiny Group
April 2018

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

 AUDIT SCOTLAND

 improving policing
across Scotland

 Healthcare
Improvement
Scotland

 Scottish Housing
Regulator

 Education
Scotland
Foghlam Alba

 HMIPS
HM INSPECTORATE OF
PRISONS FOR SCOTLAND

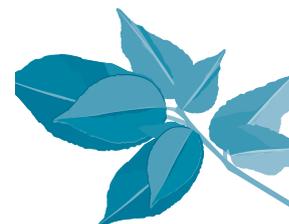
Inspectorate of
Prosecution in
Scotland

 HMFSI

 care
inspectorate

Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. We help the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission check that organisations spending public money use it properly, efficiently and effectively.

Contents



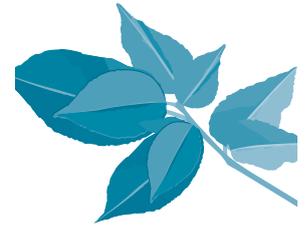
Background	4
Part 1. Direct scrutiny activity	5
Part 2. Additional scrutiny of interest	9
Endnotes	10
Appendix. The Local Government Scrutiny Strategic Group members	11

Links

 PDF download

 Web link

Background



1. The National Scrutiny Plan for local government has been jointly prepared by members of the Strategic Scrutiny Group (SSG). This group comprises Scotland's main public sector scrutiny bodies - the Accounts Commission for Scotland, Audit Scotland, Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, the Scottish Housing Regulator, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland, Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prosecution. The SSG is convened and chaired by the Accounts Commission. Details of each organisation can be found in the [Appendix](#). In this report, they are collectively referred to as scrutiny bodies.

2. The SSG supports the delivery of better coordinated, more proportionate and risk-based local government scrutiny. Those scrutiny bodies directly relating to local government services - Audit Scotland (on behalf of the Accounts Commission), the Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland, the Scottish Housing Regulator and council external auditors appointed by the Accounts Commission (including private sector Audit Firms), work together through Local Area Networks (LANs) to share intelligence and agree the key scrutiny risks in each of Scotland's 32 councils.

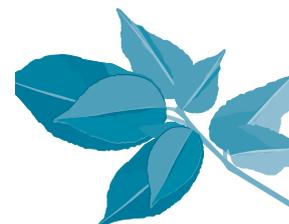
3. Annually, each LAN prepares a Local Scrutiny Plan (LSP) setting out the planned scrutiny activity for the council concerned. LSPs also include nationally programmed scrutiny, such as the Care Inspectorate's joint inspections of services for children, young people and families and joint inspections of adult health and social care services. This approach, called Shared Risk Assessment (SRA), is designed to ensure well coordinated proportionate and risk-based scrutiny.

4. This 2018/19 National Scrutiny Plan (NSP) for local government is one of the key outputs from the SRA process. It is the ninth such plan and summarises all planned strategic scrutiny activity.¹ From April 2018 to March 2019 in each of Scotland's 32 councils. This strategic scrutiny activity can of course change during the year, particularly in response to any significant risks or events that may require immediate investigation.

5. A separate table showing planned scrutiny activity is available on the [Audit Scotland website](#) .

Part 1

Direct scrutiny activity



National scrutiny programmes

6. There is a range of national scrutiny activity planned across councils over the next year and beyond. Where activity has been identified for 2018/19 that impacts on individual councils it is included in the National Scrutiny Plan. Significant pieces of national scrutiny activity, as well as developments in scrutiny approaches, are outlined below.

The Accounts Commission/Audit Scotland

Best Value

7. The Accounts Commission began to roll out its revised approach to Best Value auditing from October 2016. This includes an assessment each year of aspects of Best Value as part of an integrated annual audit. In addition, a public Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) for each council will be published at least once in a five year period that will bring together an overall picture of the council drawn from a range of audit activity and the work of other scrutiny bodies.

8. The five year rolling programme of Best Value Assurance Reports is reviewed and refreshed annually by the Accounts Commission. The results of the SRA process will make a significant contribution to the audit intelligence that informs decisions about the programme, both in terms of the sequencing and timing of audits and the focus of audit work at individual councils.

9. Audit Scotland is currently carrying out work to produce a BVAR in Fife, Glasgow, East Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire, Dumfries and Galloway and East Lothian councils. The current BVAR programme includes publication of a report in 2019 for North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, Highland, Scottish Borders, Perth & Kinross and Midlothian councils. The scope and timing of the work to be carried out, as part of the 2018/19 audit, will be discussed with each council.

National performance audits

10. Audit Scotland has several performance audits covering local government planned during 2018/19. These are part of a programme agreed by the Accounts Commission and Auditor General for Scotland (AGS) which is informed by the Accounts Commission's strategic audit priorities, public sector audit risks and policy developments, as well a wide range of policy monitoring and external engagement.

11. The programme includes audits covering children and young people's mental health, health and social care integration, city deals and the value for money of non-profit distributing (NPD) projects. Any engagement with individual councils is still to be determined. Further details on each of the audits in the performance audit programme for 2018/19 and beyond are available [here](#) .

Housing benefit risk assessments

12. Audit Scotland will also continue to carry out a national programme of housing benefit risk assessments across councils during 2018/19. The Accounts Commission will continue to review its future approach to the scrutiny of benefits in light of the changing powers around social security in Scotland.

Care Inspectorate

Health and social care integration authorities

13. Since April 2017, the Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) have a joint duty under the Public Bodies (Joint Working)(Scotland) Act 2014 to assess and report on the effectiveness of integration authorities' strategic plans. In these early stages of the integration of health and social care, the Care Inspectorate and HIS will report on the progress that integration authorities are making towards a more collaborative culture and integrated approaches to planning and delivering services, both of which should deliver improved outcomes for people in communities.

14. During 2018/19 the Care Inspectorate and HIS intend to visit three integration authorities to report on their progress. A key area of focus will be the measures they are taking to ensure they fully understand the current needs, and anticipate the future needs, of their communities and how they are jointly planning, commissioning and delivering services to meet these needs. The Care Inspectorate and HIS will be particularly looking to identify examples of good practice in engaging with communities to assess and plan to meet needs.

15. Audit Scotland's [Self-directed support: 2017 progress report](#)  noted that authorities' commissioning plans do not yet clearly set out how they will make decisions about changing services and re-allocating budgets in response to people's choices. In response, all joint inspections of strategic planning will examine how commissioning decisions are being influenced by self-directed support legislation.

16. Inspection activity to date has reinforced the critical importance of strong and effective care at home services to meet the aspiration of maintaining people in their own homes and communities for as long as possible and in line with their wishes. There are many services and supports that contribute to achieving this, including community health services, with directly provided and commissioned care at home services playing a very significant role. Over the next year, therefore, planning and commissioning of sufficient, stable and quality care at home provision will be a focus of joint inspections.

Thematic review of self-directed support

17. The Care Inspectorate will carry out a thematic review of self-directed support during 2018/19. Its aim is to build on the key findings of [Self-directed support: 2017 progress report](#) , exploring the ability and confidence of front line staff to implement self-direction support legislation by offering choice and control and making decisions with people about their support. Throughout the year, it will conduct an inspection in up to six areas across Scotland with the aim of identifying factors which support effective implementation of the legislation and barriers which require to be overcome. The Care Inspectorate will provide feedback on each area and publish an overview report, with the expectation that all areas will then use these findings to evaluate their own practice and make improvements where necessary.

Joint inspections of services for children and young people

18. From April 2018, Scottish ministers have asked the Care Inspectorate to lead another programme of joint inspections of services for children and young people, in conjunction with Education Scotland, HIS and HMICS. Ministers have asked the Care Inspectorate to provide assurance about how community planning partners are protecting and meet the needs of children and young people who have experienced, or are at risk of, abuse and neglect, and how they are working together to improve outcomes for children and young people who are subject to corporate parenting requirements. The intention is to carry out five joint inspections in 2018/19. The Care Inspectorate has agreed with ministers that, for the duration of this programme of inspections, it will incorporate an area of specific enquiry each year, with the aim of identifying key lessons and best practice which all partnerships could use to support their own continuous improvement. It will publish an overview report at the end of each year.

Community justice

19. The Care Inspectorate will work with Community Justice Scotland and other partners to support improvement in the implementation of the community justice strategy, to identify any particular risks and to carry out targeted scrutiny where this is required.

Adult support and protection

20. The Care Inspectorate will report in May on a thematic review of Adult Support and Protection, carried out across six partnership areas in collaboration with colleagues from HIS and HMICS. During 2018/19, it will work with Scottish Government and colleagues to encourage partnerships to use this learning to review their own practice and to take any action necessary to strengthen their response to concerns.

Education Scotland

21. Education Scotland, working in partnership with Audit Scotland, will carry out a programme of inspections to evaluate the progress made by local authorities in improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty related attainment gap. These inspections are initially focused on the nine local authorities who are designated as challenge authorities within the Scottish Attainment Challenge.² All nine challenge authorities will be inspected by the end of 2018, with Education Scotland providing four weeks' notice prior to carrying out individual inspections (and as a result these are not shown on the associated activity map). Other authorities may be included in due course; particularly those authorities currently subject to enhanced monitoring as a result of shared risk assessment.

22. Following publication of [Education Governance: Next Steps](#)  in June 2017, six Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) were established. Each RIC will formulate its own regional improvement plan and each plan will be agreed with the Chief Inspector of Education. Support and challenge from within the collaborative teams and from Education Scotland Regional Advisers will ensure that each of the regional improvement plans takes account of all available evidence on performance and that the selection of educational strategies and interventions is appropriate to the particular regional context.

23. Over the coming year Education Scotland will continue to inspect community learning and development (CLD) services and the quality of careers information and guidance services delivered by Skills Development Scotland across council areas. It also plans to carry out a validated self-evaluation of educational

psychology services in one local authority area towards the end of 2018. Education Scotland will also work with stakeholders and other public bodies to create new approaches to scrutiny that take account of education reform, provide assurance and support system-led improvement.

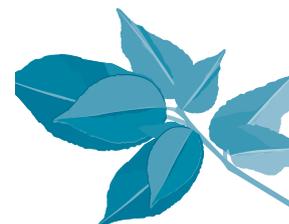
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

24. The SHR may carry out thematic inquiries during 2018/19 or it may carry out survey or on-site work to follow up on published thematic reports. The SHR will also review the Scottish Social Housing Charter data submitted by landlords and may carry out data accuracy visits during the second half of 2018/19.

Where councils are to be involved in a thematic inquiry, any follow-up work to a published thematic inquiry, or a data accuracy visit, the SHR will confirm this directly with the council and the LAN lead.

Part 2

Additional scrutiny of interest



25. In addition to the direct scrutiny planned for local government, there is a range of other scrutiny activity that touches on local government, as outlined below.

Her Majesty's Fire Services Inspectorate (HMFSI)

26. HMFSI will continue to inspect Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) local service delivery across Scotland. These inspections will examine, among other things, local scrutiny and engagement between the SFRS and councils. As part of its programme, HMFSI intends to inspect service delivery in Edinburgh, Dumfries and Galloway and North Lanarkshire during 2018/19. HMFSI also has a programme of thematic inspection planned, but this work is unlikely to result in contact with local authorities. However, HMFSI may also carry out ad hoc inspections in response to specific events, which could involve contact with local authorities.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS)

27. HMICS remains committed to assessing the quality of local policing as experienced by communities across Scotland, with an emphasis on the impact of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. During 2018/19, it will inspect G Division, which covers East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire and Glasgow. Divisional inspections will cover partnership working and in particular, local scrutiny and engagement between Police Scotland and councils and the local Community Planning Partnership and Community Safety Partnership. Local police inspections also include a 'plus' element, which aims to investigate national issues through a local lens. These elements are subject to separate reports published on its website www.hmics.org.uk .

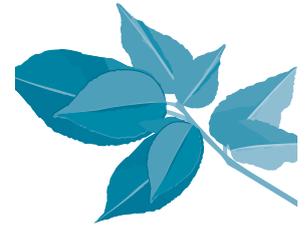
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS)

28. HMIPS will inspect prisons in Scotland, jointly with Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Human Rights Commission. Each prison will be monitored on a weekly basis by volunteer Independent Prison Monitors who are allocated to each prison. Reports of findings from both inspection and monitoring are published regularly throughout the year.

Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland (IPS)

29. In the Scottish Year of Young People, the IPS will conduct a thematic review of the prosecution of young people in the Sheriff Court. The review will assess the availability and use of diversion schemes provided by local authorities. It will also seek to identify areas of good practice, which may be of benefit to those involved in implementing the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 both at local and strategic levels. As part of its programme, IPS will continue to inspect service delivery by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service at both a national and local level.

Endnotes



-
- ◀ 1 Strategic scrutiny work does not include scrutiny activity carried out at service unit or institution level, such as inspections of individual schools or care homes, or the annual financial audit of public bodies.
 - ◀ 2 The nine challenge authorities are: Clackmannanshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire councils.

Appendix

The Local Government Scrutiny Strategic Group members



Accounts Commission	The Accounts Commission is a non-departmental public body (NDPB). The Accounts Commission is the public's independent watchdog for local government in Scotland. Its role is to examine how Scotland's 32 councils manage their finances, help these bodies manage their resources efficiently and effectively, promote Best Value and publish information every year about how they perform.
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland is a statutory body providing services to the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland (AGS). Working together, the Accounts Commission, the AGS and Audit Scotland ensure that public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.
Care Inspectorate	The Care Inspectorate is a non-departmental public body (NDPB). The Care Inspectorate's purpose is to provide assurance and protection for people who use care, social work and children's services.
Education Scotland	Education Scotland is an executive agency. It is the Scottish Government's national development and improvement agency for education. It is charged with providing support and challenge to the education system, from early years to adult learning, in line with the government's policy objectives.
Healthcare Improvement Scotland	Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) is a health body. The function of HIS is to improve the quality of the care and experience of every person in Scotland every time they access healthcare by supporting healthcare providers.
Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate	The Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland exists to provide independent, risk based and proportionate professional inspection of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. Its purpose is to give assurance to the Scottish public and Scottish ministers that the service is working in an efficient and effective way, and to promote improvement in the service. Through this, the Inspectorate provides external quality assurance to the service, and provides support to the service in delivering its functions.
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) provides independent scrutiny of both Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority. Its approach is to support Police Scotland and the Authority to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local needs. It can inspect other UK police services that operate in Scotland and are members of the National Preventive Mechanism, inspecting police custody centres to monitor the treatment and conditions for detainees.
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland provides oversight and scrutiny of the 15 prisons in Scotland, by way of inspection and monitoring, in order to report on the conditions in prison and the treatment of prisoners. Monitoring is conducted by volunteer Independent Prison Monitors, who are required to visit every prison every week, to respond to prisoners' requests and to monitor conditions. HMIPS also has responsibility for inspecting court custody cells and the conditions in which prisoners are transported.

Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland	The Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland is headed by HM Chief Inspector who reports directly to the Lord Advocate. The aim of the inspectorate is to enhance the quality of service and public confidence in the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service through independent inspection and evaluation.
Scottish Housing Regulator	The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is a non-ministerial department. The statutory objective of the SHR is to safeguard and promote the interests of people who are or may become homeless, tenants of social landlords, or recipients of housing services provided by social landlords.

National scrutiny plan 2018/19

A summary of local government strategic scrutiny activity

This report is available in PDF and RTF formats,
along with a podcast summary at:

www.audit-scotland.gov.uk 

If you require this publication in an alternative
format and/or language, please contact us to
discuss your needs: 0131 625 1500

or info@audit-scotland.gov.uk 

For the latest news, reports
and updates, follow us on:



Audit Scotland, 4th Floor, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN

T: 0131 625 1500 E: info@audit-scotland.gov.uk 

www.audit-scotland.gov.uk 