

News release

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Councils must continue to change to address gap between demand and resources

Scotland's councils are managing to improve and maintain most services. But Scottish Government funding to councils is likely to reduce in future; this, combined with increased demand and less flexibility over spending decisions, means councils need to think differently about how they deliver services to the public.

The *Local Government Overview 2019* report by the Accounts Commission, the local authority watchdog, says some services are beginning to show signs of pressure and change is needed to tackle a growing gap between demand and resources.

Nearly 70 per cent of councils' spending is on social care and education, and more money is being committed to Scottish Government priorities. This leaves councils less flexibility in where to spend and where to save.

At the same time councils are facing increased demand. All councils will see a continued rise in the number of people aged 65 and over, and ten councils an increase in the number of children under 15.

Graham Sharp, chair of the Accounts Commission said: "It's important to recognise that councils are working hard to maintain and, in some cases, improve services. Now fundamental change is needed to ensure services meet the shifting demands of local communities, with councils working and collaborating with communities to deliver the change needed. Councils must now focus on changing how front-line services are designed and delivered."

For further information contact Joanna Mansell: 0131 625 1652 jmansell@audit-scotland.gov.uk

Notes to editors

1. The performance of councils was measured using evidence from 16 national performance indicators. See Exhibit 6 in the report.
2. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Accounts Commission for Scotland. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk
3. The Accounts Commission is the public spending watchdog for local government. It holds councils and various joint boards and committees in Scotland to account and help them improve. It operates impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government, and meets and reports in public
4. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland.