

News release

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Lessons need to be learned from troubled ICT project

A major ICT project at Disclosure Scotland, which provides criminal history checks for employers, was delivered 18 months late and at more than twice the original budget.

A report from the Auditor General for Scotland says there were significant failings in control and oversight for the new PASS system, which aims to improve processing of disclosure checks. In 2015 the Scottish Government approved a budget of £34 million. The project cost has now risen to an estimated £78 million.

The system only just met a deadline for roll-out in September this year. It has yet to deliver full transformation and still requires manual work by temporary staff.

The Auditor General said over-optimistic assumptions were compounded by lack of financial reporting and governance of the project.

Caroline Gardner, Auditor General for Scotland, said:

"I have reported on the failures of many ICT projects in recent years and set out clear principles public bodies should follow. There are lessons to be learned from Disclosure Scotland's experience with the PASS system. While the rollout in September was a significant milestone, there have been real weaknesses in control and oversight of the project.

"The system was delivered late, over budget, and with less functionality than had been originally intended. There remains more work to be done before its full ambition, and wider transformation, is realised."

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Notes to editors

1. This is a section 22 report which allows the Auditor General to bring attention to Parliament and the public matters of wider interest arising from the annual audits of public bodies.
 2. Key principles for public sector bodies planning ICT projects are set out in an Audit Scotland briefing paper [Principles for a Digital Future](#).
 3. [Disclosure Scotland](#) carries out more than 300,000 disclosure checks a year and a further 280,000 checks to protect vulnerable groups. The PASS project replaced a previous system originally set up with BT in 2002.
3. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Auditor General for Scotland. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk
- 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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