

News release on behalf of the Accounts Commission

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Integration Joint Boards face significant workforce pressures and financial challenges

Scotland's Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) face considerable financial challenges and immense pressures on their workforce. IJBs have reached the point where significant transformation will be needed to ensure the long-term capacity, financial sustainability and quality of services individuals receive.

IJBs plan and commission many community-based health and care services. Demand for these services is increasing, in part due to demographic change and support for people with increasingly complex care needs. The number of care hours for those aged over 65 reached nearly 25 million in 2021/22. The proportion of care services reporting vacancies increased by 11 per cent to 47 per cent, with a 30 per cent turnover of staff each year.

Most IJBs underspent on providing services in 2021/22. This was largely because of difficulties in recruiting staff, which led to unplanned vacancies, and pandemic-related reductions in service provision. The reductions in service provision were likely to have contributed to an increase in unmet health and social care needs.

In 2021/22 IJBs returned significant surpluses, with reserves doubling to over £1.3 billion. This was mainly due to additional funding received late in the year for specific policy commitments, including Covid-19. The Scottish Government are currently exploring options to recover around two-thirds of the unspent Covid-19 money held in reserves.

Across Scotland, IJBs have a combined projected funding gap of £124 million for 2022/23. To be financially sustainable in the longer-term, IJBs must reduce their reliance on reserves. All IJBs must put in place detailed plans that clearly show how they will achieve the needed ongoing savings on a recurring basis and support urgently needed service transformation.

William Moyes, Chair of the Accounts Commission said:

“Change is needed now - it cannot wait for a National Care Service. Action is needed to tackle funding pressures, which are under increasing stress from rising demand and cost pressures. The workforce challenges are considerable, with mounting unmet need.

“We need to see services focus on prevention, with appropriate funding in place to transform the way services are delivered and to improve lives.”

For further information contact Joanna Mansell Tel: 07970331858
jmansell@audit-scotland.gov.uk or media@audit-scotland.gov.uk

Notes to Editor:

1. The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 set out a framework for integrating adult health and social care services. The Act created new partnerships, known as Integration Authorities (IAs), with statutory responsibilities to coordinate local health and social care services.

2. IJBs provide a wide range of services. Each IJB differs in terms of the services they are responsible for and local needs and pressures. The Act sets out the services that are required to be delegated to the IJB as a minimum, with the largest areas including the governance, planning and resourcing of the following:

- Adult and older people social work
- General practitioner services
- Services for adults with physical disabilities
- Mental Health services
- Drug and alcohol services
- Allied health professional services
- Pharmaceutical services

3. Together with the Auditor General for Scotland, the Accounts Commission has produced a series of reports focused on [health and social care integration](#).

4. All reports by the Accounts Commission and Auditor General published since 2000 are available on the Audit Scotland website

- 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 helps them improve. It operates impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government, and meets and reports in public.
- 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.