

Summary of responses to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak from scrutiny bodies in Scotland

Scrutiny body	Date	Response -
Audit Scotland / Accounts Commission	5/5/20	<p>COVID-19 – What it means for public audit in Scotland, May 2020</p> <p>Financial audit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reflect the pressure on public bodies, the deadline for auditing health and central government accounts have been extended by three months to 30 September 2020. Local authorities will have until 30 November to have their accounts audited. This will impact on timings for audit work and reporting. Standard-setters are allowing bodies to streamline the information they provide in performance and accountability reports, but financial statements remain unchanged. There is considerable uncertainty and volatility in individual bodies' capacity for reporting and engaging with audit. Governance will be a key focus, including the new arrangements put in place by public bodies in response to COVID-19. We will work with colleagues, including contracted audit firms, to promote consistency of judgement on complex issues. We will maintain audit quality while being flexible about timelines. <p>Performance audit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of performance audit work has been paused as we review our work programme and our capacity. Those audits that were either completed or very close to completion are being published. Others are being reviewed on a case-by-case basis. We are reviewing our forward work programme to reflect the new risks and challenges public bodies face. <p>Future COVID-19 audit work</p> <p>Phase 1 (short term)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing the Scottish Parliament on emerging audit risks linked to the public sector response to COVID-19. Considering what this means for our future work programme and the work of the Parliament's Public Audit and Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee (PAPLS). <p>Phase 2 (medium term)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing the work programme to consider the impact of COVID-19 on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> specific sectors (eg, NHS, further and higher education, justice, local government) policy commitments (eg, early learning and childcare expansion, addressing child poverty) thematic issues raised by COVID-19 (eg, the impact on Scotland's public finances, fraud risk management, inequalities). <p>Phase 3 (longer term)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying lessons that can be learnt from the public sector's response. Assessing the outcomes achieved from key Scottish Government spending and programmes related to COVID-19. Aligning our work programme with the Scottish Government's work to rebuild Scotland's economy, remove inequality and advance wellbeing.

Care Inspectorate

4/5/20

The Care Inspectorate has not inspected services in the normal way since around mid-March 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the significant risk of our staff transmitting and spreading the virus to multiple sites. This decision is consistent with public health advice that we follow routinely in any outbreak of infection in services and agreed with Scottish Government. It is also a position that has been adopted by care regulators throughout the United Kingdom.

Our focus has been one of gathering and sharing intelligence and providing advice, guidance and support to services directly or galvanising support for services from others. This involves:

- Inspectors regularly contacting all care homes and care at home services on their caseload usually at least weekly, often more frequently and sometimes daily for a period.
- Regular contact and liaison with Health & Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs), local authorities, public health teams, providers, and provider groups such as Scottish Care and CCPS
- Dealing with complaints about care services, registrations and variations.
- Monitoring and responding to notifications made to them by services, including notification of deaths of service users and COVID-19 outbreaks (confirmed or suspected) on a daily basis.

On Friday 3 April 2020, we introduced an additional notification incorporating a Red, Amber, Green assessment to enable care services to very simply inform them of their assessment of their staffing levels, particularly when this was reaching crisis point. Care Inspectorate staff monitor and respond to these, including over the weekends to ensure that services get the support they need from HSCPs, Public Health Teams or others as appropriate. We have gathered a significant amount of intelligence and are sharing this on a regular basis with a range of bodies, including Scottish Government, HSCPs, Public Health Teams, the NES/SSSC recruitment hub and the National Contingency Planning Group to name but a few.

More recently we have been working with Directors of Public Health in each of the 14 Health Board areas in Scotland. Health Boards and Directors of Public Health have been asked to take the lead on an enhanced system of assurance around staffing and wellbeing of care home residents. Directors of Public Health were recognised as being uniquely well placed to lead, plan, initiate and coordinate this work locally. Those Directors have been asked to work with local Infection Prevention and Control Teams, HSCPs, the Care Inspectorate, primary care teams and others.

We have provided intelligence to each of the 14 Health Board areas and allocated a specific member of staff to each area to take this work forward. After taking advice from experts in infection prevention and control the work will include, specific interventions to services, by the staff with relevant clinical expertise. The Care Inspectorate will only be making visits to care services when considered essential, and with the agreement of the relevant Director of Public Health. Given the demands on local authorities and other strategic partnerships in responding to the outbreak, and the need to maintain social distancing and other precautionary measures, we do not anticipate resuming joint inspection

		<p>activity at strategic level for some time. However, we remain available to, and ready to provide advice and support to strategic partnerships including child and adult protection committees as required.</p>
<p>Education Scotland</p>	<p>9/5/20</p>	<p>Education Scotland update regarding COVID 19</p> <p>At Education Scotland we appreciate the pressures and uncertainty currently facing education establishments due to the changing situation with COVID-19. We also appreciate that education establishments may experience a reduction in staffing numbers during this time with the need to protect staffing levels.</p> <p>During this period, we believe it is vitally important that staff working in education can focus entirely on their establishment, on supporting their colleagues, pupils and local community, and provide support where needed. We are stopping professional learning activities and events, conferences and training as well as all ELC and school inspections, QUIPE visits to independent schools and college Progress Visits from Monday 16th March.</p> <p>During our scrutiny visits, our HM Inspectors work closely with pupils, staff, parents and communities for a sustained period of time and we believe our decision to pause this activity for this period will allow schools and education establishments to focus on their local business continuity plans and to support their staff, young people and communities.</p>
<p>Healthcare Improvement Scotland</p>	<p>7/5/20</p>	<p>Healthcare Improvement Scotland response to COVID-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of our COVID-19 response, we have refocused our own activities in order to provide support to the health and care system where it is needed most e.g. working to help GP practices deliver virtual consultations, creating an online database of examples of compassionate care, aiding systems for volunteering and providing rapid reviews of evidence. • We have released both clinical and non-clinical staff to deployment across the health and care system to support patient care, including registered clinical professionals currently on secondment with us to allow them to return to their substantive boards and integration authorities. • We have continued to meet our statutory obligations in terms of assuring the quality of healthcare services, whilst pausing routine inspections and reviews – this has included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ continuing to respond to concerns raised by NHS employees; and facilitating the sharing of intelligence about the quality of care across partner organisations in Scotland ○ regulation of independent healthcare services (i.e. independent hospitals, hospices and clinics) and making sure that ionising radiation is used safely to protect patients from the risk of harm. • After a period of suspension, we are now resuming our process for reviewing a sample of death certificates to ensure accuracy, although on a reduced basis.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having paused a range of activities across our work programme, we are now assessing how and when we can 'reactivate' different programmes of work, while continuing to take account of evolving circumstances.
Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate	6/5/20	<p>Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland has suspended routine inspection fieldwork activity, however, work will continue to conclude inspections where the fieldwork has already been completed, such as the local area inspection of the City of Edinburgh, due for publication in June and the Thematic Inspection of Command and Control in July/August. The most recent Thematic Inspection on the Training of Retained Duty System Personnel was laid in Parliament on 31 March 2020.</p> <p>In order to minimise the impact of our inspection role we have implemented the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently all 'face to face' contact within our inspection regime and our observations within Board Meetings etc. has been suspended, with scrutiny is being undertaken through observation of Meeting minutes and documents. The full 2020/21 programme of Thematic Reviews and Local Area Inspections is being revised, so that work can currently be undertaken on all of the three Thematic Reviews through a desktop study of data and documents, which will enable us to be prepared and 'starburst' our fieldwork when conditions become more relaxed. <p>HMFSI are working closely with the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service to give independent assurance on the suitability and effectiveness of their Emergency Plans and Policies during this challenging time.</p> <p>The Inspectorate is keeping in close contact with the SFRS to offer its assistance in any form that they might require, to ensure that they can fulfil their roles and responsibilities for the safety of their communities.</p> <p>Although HM Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland has a statutory duty to provide independent assurance to the Scottish public and Scottish Ministers, on the efficient and effectiveness of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, it is mindful that currently these are unusual times. We are therefore undertaking a sympathetic view for the immediate future and are keeping the line of scrutiny within our inspection regime flexible.</p>
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland	7/5/20	<p><u>HMICS continues to monitor Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority</u></p> <p>Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland suspended routine inspection activity mid-March 2020. Joint inspection work, which we carry out with the Care Inspectorate and others, is also on hold.</p> <p>We will continue to fulfil our statutory duties but do so in a way that minimises the impact on police resources when they are carrying out crucial work during this challenging time.</p> <p>An independent review of use of police powers, with a focus on compliance with human rights principles and the impact on different groups of society, was</p>

		<p>announced in April. HMICS is a member of the Independent Advisory Group, which will be reporting to the Scottish Police Authority.</p> <p>We continue to liaise with Police Scotland, the Scottish Police Authority, and the Scottish Government about the ways in which HMICS can add value through independent scrutiny and advice.</p>
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland	28/4/20	<p>We have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postponed our full inspections schedule and commenced from the 27th April 2020, a reduced Liaison Visits Framework series of abbreviated inspections where prisons or Court Custody Units are visited for one day to confirm the treatment and conditions for prisoners. We will only consider conducting a longer Liaison Visit when we believe the urgency to visit outweighs our precautions related to the coronavirus. A copy of our Framework will be on our website. • From 24th March we suspended visits to establishments by IPM volunteers and commenced from the 27th April 2020, a Remote Monitoring Framework, which includes a series of calls to establishments by our volunteer IPMs and the Regional Monitoring Coordinators, dip sampling of records, analysis of data, and triangulation of evidence with user voice surveys. • We continue twice-weekly video calls between the HQ team; and continue to publish weekly updates to our IPM volunteers reiterating these messages. A copy of our Framework will be on our website. • We will continue to report on our findings from the two frameworks on our website. • Thematic reviews have been of necessity delayed but will continue with literature and document reviews. • The Chief Inspector and her team are in regular contact with all key stakeholders.
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland	4/5/20	<p>While HM Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland has paused face-to-face inspection fieldwork, we continue to work remotely on assessing the implementation by COPFS of the recommendations made in our 2017 inspection of the investigation and prosecution of sexual crime. We are assessing the evidence gathered to date and considering whether it may be possible to draft a report on this basis, as it seems unlikely we will be able to complete our fieldwork as planned. We are also scoping and planning future inspections, and monitoring legislative, policy and practice developments in response to the pandemic.</p>
Scottish Housing Regulator	6/5/20	<p>We recognise the unprecedented circumstances that social landlords are facing as a consequence of the pandemic and that they will be working very hard to manage and mitigate the impact on their operations and to safeguard their tenants, people who are homeless and other service users. We appreciate that this means that landlords will be prioritising that work over other more routine activity. We have aligned our regulatory approach to these new circumstances.</p> <p>Reporting the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19)</p>

We have moved our focus to monitor the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on social landlords. We have initiated a monthly return from all social landlords to provide us with key information on the impact of the pandemic on social landlords, tenants, people who are homeless and others who use the services of social landlords. We will use the information from the monthly returns to identify emerging issues and serious risks to tenants, people who are homeless and other service users, and we are providing the Scottish Government and the newly formed Social Housing Resilience Group with appropriate updates to help in their coordination of the national response to the pandemic.

Changes to our regulatory approach

We postponed the publication of updated Engagement Plans planned for 31 March 2020 for all landlords other than for the most critical cases, and we have postponed all but the most critical regulatory engagements to allow landlords and us to focus on the most serious existing risks or those that emerge from the current pandemic.

We have extended the timescales for all landlords to submit the Annual Return on the Charter and for RSLs to submit the Five Year Financial Projections and the Loan Portfolio Return to the end of July. We will keep this date under review as the current situation develops. We will continue to work closely with the Scottish Government and landlord representative bodies to coordinate our response to the current situation.