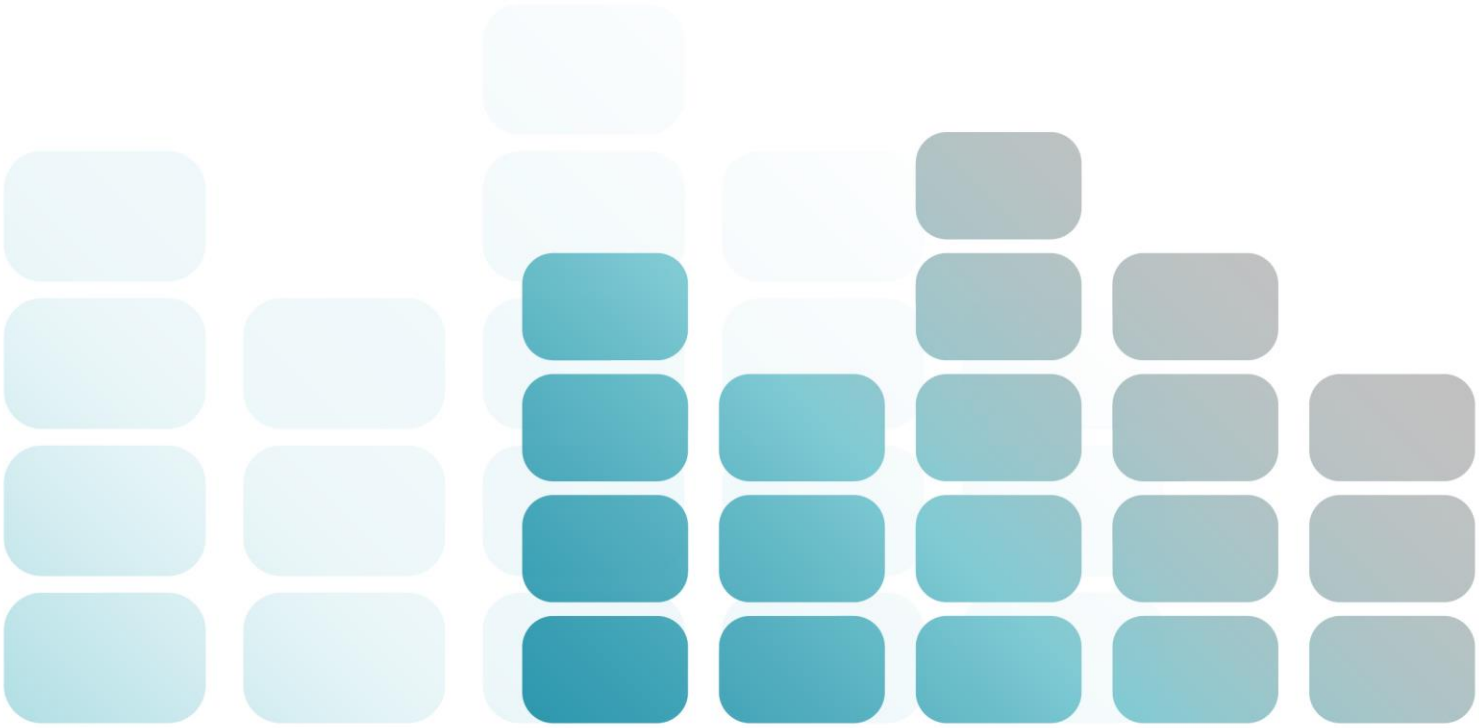
NHS Lothian

Annual Audit Plan 2024/25



AUDIT SCOTLAND

Prepared for NHS Lothian
February 2025

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Introduction

Purpose of the Annual Audit Plan

1. The purpose of this Annual Audit Plan is to provide an overview of the planned scope and timing of the 2024/25 audit of NHS Lothian's annual report and accounts. It outlines the audit work planned to meet the audit requirements set out in auditing standards and the Code of Audit Practice, including supplementary guidance.

Appointed auditor and independence

2. Pauline Gillen, of Audit Scotland, has been appointed by the Auditor General for Scotland as the external auditor of NHS Lothian for the period from 2024/25 until 2026/27. The 2024/25 financial year is therefore the first of the three-year audit appointment.

3. Pauline Gillen and the audit team are independent of NHS Lothian in accordance with relevant ethical requirements, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard. This standard imposes stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors. Audit Scotland has robust arrangements in place to ensure compliance with ethical standards. The arrangements are overseen by the Executive Director of Innovation and Quality, who serves as Audit Scotland's Ethics Partner.

4. The Ethical Standard requires auditors to communicate any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the audit team. There are no such relationships pertaining to the audit of NHS Lothian to communicate.

Audit scope and responsibilities

Scope of the audit

5. The audit is performed in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, including supplementary guidance, International Standards on Auditing (UK), and relevant legislation. These set out the requirements for the scope of the audit which includes:

- An audit of the financial statements and an opinion on whether they give a true and fair view and are free from material misstatement, including the regularity of income and expenditure.
- An opinion on statutory other information published with the financial statements in the annual report and accounts, the Performance Report, and the Governance Statement, and an opinion on the audited part of the Remuneration and Staff Report.
- Conclusions on the NHS Lothian's arrangements in relation to the wider scope areas: Financial Management, Financial Sustainability, Vision, Leadership, and Governance, and Use of Resources to Improve Outcomes.
- Reporting on the NHS Lothian's arrangements for securing Best Value.
- Provision of an Annual Audit Report setting out significant matters identified from the audit of the annual report and accounts and the wider scope areas specified in the Code of Audit Practice.

Responsibilities

6. The Code of Audit Practice sets out the respective responsibilities of NHS Lothian and the auditor. A summary of the key responsibilities is outlined below.

Auditor's responsibilities

7. The responsibilities of auditors in the public sector are established in the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. These include providing an independent opinion on the financial statements and other information reported within the annual report and accounts, and concluding on NHS Lothian's arrangements in place for the wider scope areas.

NHS Lothian's responsibilities

8. NHS Lothian has primary responsibility for ensuring proper financial stewardship of public funds, compliance with relevant legislation and establishing effective arrangements for governance, propriety and regularity that enables it to successfully deliver its objectives. The features of proper financial stewardship include:

- Establishing arrangements to ensure the proper conduct of its affairs.
- Preparation of an annual report and accounts, comprising financial statements and other information that gives a true and fair view.
- Establishing arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud, error and irregularities, and bribery and corruption.
- Implementing arrangements to ensure its financial position is soundly based.
- Making arrangements to secure Best Value.
- Establishing an internal audit function.

Audit of the annual report and accounts

Introduction

9. The audit of the annual report and accounts is driven by materiality and the risks of material misstatement in the financial statements, with greater attention being given to the significant risks of material misstatement. This chapter outlines materiality, the significant risks of material misstatement that have been identified, and the impact these have on the planned audit procedures.

Materiality

10. The concept of materiality is applied by auditors in planning and performing an audit, and in evaluating the effect of any uncorrected misstatements on the financial statements or other information reported in the annual report and accounts.

11. Broadly, the concept of materiality is to determine whether matters identified during the audit could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions of users of the financial statements. Auditors set a monetary threshold when determining materiality, although some issues may be considered material by their nature. Therefore, materiality is ultimately a matter of the auditor's professional judgement.

12. The materiality levels determined for the audit of NHS Lothian and its group are outlined in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1
2024/25 Materiality levels for NHS Lothian and its group

Materiality	NHS Lothian and its Group
Materiality – based on an assessment of the needs of users of the financial statements and the nature of NHS Lothian's operations, the benchmark used to determine materiality is gross expenditure (net of contributions to integrated joint boards). This is based on the audited 2023/24 financial statements. Materiality has been set at 1.6% of the benchmark.	£45.0 million

Materiality	NHS Lothian and its Group
Performance materiality – this acts as a trigger point. If the aggregate of misstatements identified during the audit exceeds performance materiality, this could indicate that further audit procedures are required. Using professional judgement, performance materiality has been set at 75% of planning materiality.	£33.0 million
Reporting threshold – all misstatements greater than the reporting threshold will be reported.	£500,000

Source: Audit Scotland

Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements

13. The risk assessment process draws on the audit team's cumulative knowledge of NHS Lothian, including the nature of its operations and its significant transaction streams, the system of internal control, governance arrangements and processes, and developments that could impact on its financial reporting.

14. Based on the risk assessment process, significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements have been identified and these are summarised in Exhibit 2, page 8. These are the risks which have the greatest impact on the planned audit approach, and the planned audit procedures in response to the risks are outlined in Exhibit 2.

15. Risk assessment process is an iterative and dynamic process. The assessment of risks set out in this Annual Audit Plan and Exhibit 2 may change as more information and evidence is obtained over the course of the audit. Where such changes occur, these will be reported to NHS Lothian and those charged with governance, where relevant.

Exhibit 2
Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements

Risk of material misstatement	Planned audit response
1. Fraud caused by management override of controls Management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of management's ability to override controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.	The audit team will: • Evaluate the design and implementation of controls over journal entry processing. • Make inquiries of individuals involved in the financial reporting process about inappropriate or unusual activity relating to the processing of journal entries. • Test journals entries, focusing on those that are assessed as higher risk, such as those affecting revenue and expenditure recognition around the year-end. • Evaluate significant transactions outside the normal course of business. • Assess changes to the methods and underlying assumptions used to prepare accounting estimates and assess these for evidence of management bias.
2. Valuation of property, plant and equipment NHS Lothian held £1,160.3 million of property, plant, and equipment (PPE) at 31 March 2024, of which £1,014.1 million was land and building assets. NHS Lothian is required to value land and building assets at existing use value where an active market exists for these assets. Where there is no active market, these assets are valued on a depreciated cost replacement (DRC) basis. As a result, there is a significant degree of subjectivity in these valuations which are based on specialist assumptions, and changes in the assumptions can result in material changes to valuations.	The audit team will: • Evaluate the design and implementation of controls over the valuation process. • Review the information provided to the valuer and assess this for completeness and accuracy. • Evaluate the competence, capabilities, and objectivity of the valuer. • Obtain an understanding of management's involvement in the valuation process to assess if appropriate oversight has occurred. • Review the appropriateness of the key data and assumptions used in the 2024/25 valuation process, and challenge these where required. • Review management's assessment that the value in the balance sheet of assets not subject to a valuation process in 2024/25 is not materially different to current value at the year-end, and challenge this where required.

Risk of material misstatement	Planned audit response
3. Accounting for changes in service concession arrangements NHS Lothian operates a number of properties through private finance initiative (PFI) or public private partnerships (PPP) contracts. These are accounted for as service concession arrangements under IFRS 16 with liabilities disclosed in the statement of financial position at 31 March 2024 of £450.5 million. One such contract relates to the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (RIE) which at 31 March 2024 had an associated liability of £195.4 million. During 2024/25, NHS Lothian proposed against entering into the secondary contract for RIE which is due to commence in 2027. As the model supporting the liability had assumed that the secondary contract would proceed, this will require to be revisited in 2024/25. Given the value of the liability at March 2024, this will result in a material adjustment.	The audit team will: • Review working papers to ensure that the adjustment correctly reflects the decision taken by the Board and is in line with IFRS 16. • Ensure that the adjustment has been appropriately disclosed in the annual report and accounts.

Source: Audit Scotland

Key audit matters

16. The Code of Audit Practice requires public sector auditors to communicate key audit matters. Key audit matters are those matters, that in the auditor's professional judgement, are of most significance to the audit of the financial statements and require most attention when performing the audit.

17. In determining key audit matters, auditors consider:

- Areas of higher or significant risk of material misstatement.
- Areas where significant judgement is required, including accounting estimates that are subject to a high degree of estimation uncertainty.
- Significant events or transactions that occurred during the year.

18. The matters determined to be key audit matters will be communicated in the Annual Audit Report. Exhibit 2 outlines the significant risks of

material misstatement to the financial statements that have been identified, including those that have greatest impact on the planned audit procedures and require most attention when performing the audit.

Group audit

19. NHS Lothian is part of a group and prepares group financial statements. The group is made up of six components, including NHS Lothian which is the parent of the group. Risk assessment procedures have been performed on the group audit to identify if there are any risks of material misstatement to the group financial statements, or any components where audit procedures are required for the purposes of the group audit. The outcome of the risk assessment procedures on the group audit are outlined in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3
Outcome of risk assessment procedures on the group audit

Group component	Accounting treatment	Risk of material misstatement	Audit procedures required	Auditor
NHS Lothian	Consolidated on a line-by-line basis	Yes – Exhibit 2	Yes – full scope audit	Audit Scotland
NHS Lothian Charity	Merger accounting – Intra-group transactions removed	No, but is material to group financial statements	Yes – procedures due on the investment fund balance	Chiene & Tait
Edinburgh IJB	Accounted for on equity basis	No, not material to group financial statements	Yes – analytical procedures at group level	Audit Scotland
West Lothian IJB	Accounted for on equity basis	No, not material to group financial statements	Yes – analytical procedures at group level	Audit Scotland
East Lothian IJB	Accounted for on equity basis	No, not material to group financial statements	Yes – analytical procedures at group level	Audit Scotland
Midlothian IJB	Accounted for on equity basis	No, not material to group financial statements	Yes – analytical procedures at group level	Audit Scotland

Source: Audit Scotland

20. Where audit procedures are required on a component's financial statements, and the component auditor is different to NHS Lothian's appointed auditor, group audit instructions will be issued to the component auditor outlining expectations and requirements in performing these audit procedures.

Wider scope and Best Value

Introduction

21. Reflecting the fact that public money is involved, the Code of Audit Practice requires that public audit is planned and undertaken from a wider perspective than in the private sector. The wider scope audit set out by the Code of Audit Practice broadens the audit of the annual report and accounts to include consideration of additional aspects or risks in four wider scope areas, which are summarised below:

- **Financial Management** – this means having sound budgetary processes. Factors that can impact on NHS Lothian being able to secure sound financial management include the strength of the financial management culture, accountability, and arrangements to prevent and detect fraud, error and other irregularities, bribery and corruption.

- **Financial Sustainability** – this means looking forward over the medium and longer term in planning the services to be delivered and how they will be delivered effectively. This is assessed by considering NHS Lothian's medium- to longer-term planning for service delivery. As we reported in 2023/24, NHS Lothian has forecast a funding gap of £193 million by 2028/29.

- **Vision, Leadership and Governance** – this means having a clear vision and strategy, with set priorities within the vision and strategy. This is assessed by considering the clarity of plans in place to deliver the vision and strategy and the effectiveness of the governance arrangements to support delivery.

- **Use of Resources to Improve Outcomes** – this means using resources to meet stated outcomes and improvement objectives through effective planning and working with partners and communities. This is assessed by considering NHS Lothian's arrangements for ensuing resources are deployed to improve strategic outcomes, meet the needs of service users, and deliver continuous improvement. We will also monitor and report on any updates from the Scottish Hospital Inquiry.

22. A conclusion on the effectiveness and appropriateness of arrangements NHS Lothian has in place for each of the wider scope areas will be reported in the Annual Audit Report.

Duty of Best Value

23. The Scottish Public Finance Manual (SPFM) explains that Accountable Officers have a specific responsibility to ensure that arrangements have been made to secure Best Value. Best Value in public services: guidance for Accountable Officers is issued by Scottish Ministers and sets out their duty to ensure that arrangements are in place to secure Best Value in public services.

24. Consideration of the arrangements NHS Lothian has in place to secure Best Value will be carried out alongside the wider scope audit. A conclusion on the arrangements NHS Lothian has in place will be reported in the Annual Audit Report.

25. Auditors may also carry out specific audit work covering the seven Best Value characteristics set out in the SPFM. The risk assessment process did not identify a need to carry out specific audit work on any of the characteristics. However, auditors are required to carry out a review of the 'fairness and equality' characteristic at least once during the audit appointment, and this will be carried out during the 2024/25 audit.

Reporting arrangements, timetable and audit fee

Audit outputs

26. The outputs from the 2024/25 audit include:

- This Annual Audit Plan.
- An Independent Auditor's Report to NHS Lothian, the Auditor General for Scotland, and the Scottish Parliament setting out opinions on the annual report and accounts.
- An Annual Audit Report to NHS Lothian and the Auditor General for Scotland setting out significant matters identified from the audit of the annual report and accounts, conclusions from the wider scope and Best Value audit, and recommendations, where required.

27. The matters to be reported in the outputs will be discussed with NHS Lothian for factual accuracy before they are issued. All outputs from the audit will be published on Audit Scotland's website, apart from the Independent Auditor's Report, which is included in the audited annual report and accounts.

28. Target dates for the audit outputs are set by the Auditor General for Scotland. In setting the target dates for the audit outputs, consideration is given to the target date for approving the annual report and accounts, which is 30 June 2025 for NHS bodies.

29. The Independent Auditor's Report and Annual Audit Report are planned to be issued by the target date of 30 June 2025.

Audit timetable

30. Achieving the timetable for production of the annual report and accounts, supported by complete and accurate working papers, is critical to delivery of the audit to agreed target dates. Exhibit 4 includes a timetable for the audit, which has been agreed with management. Agreed target dates will be kept under review as the audit progresses, and any changes required, and their potential impact, will be discussed with NHS Lothian and reported to those charged with governance, where required.

Exhibit 4
2024/25 audit timetable

Audit activity	Agreed target date	Relevant Board/ committee date
Issue of Annual Audit Plan	7 February 2025	17 February 2025
Annual report and accounts:		
• Submission of the Annual Accounts draft template and relevant supporting papers	6 May 2025	
• Consideration of unaudited annual report and accounts by those charged with governance	12 May 2025	
• Submission of unaudited annual report and accounts and all working papers to audit team	12 May 2025	
• Latest date for audit clearance meeting	6 June 2025	
• Issue of draft Letter of Representation, proposed Independent Auditor's Report, and proposed Annual Audit Report	9 June 2025	16 June 2025
• Agreement of audited and unsigned annual report and accounts	9 June 2025	16 June 2025
• Approval by Board		25 June 2025
• Signing of Independent Auditor's Report and issue of Annual Audit Report	26 June 2025	

Source: Audit Scotland

Audit fee

31. NHS Lothian's audit fee is determined in line with Audit Scotland's fee setting arrangements. The proposed audit fee for the 2024/25 audit is £366,580.

32. In setting the audit fee, it is assumed that NHS Lothian has effective governance arrangements in place and the complete annual report and accounts will be provided for audit in line with the agreed timetable. The audit fee assumes there will be no significant changes to the planned scope of the audit. Where the audit cannot proceed as planned, for

example, due to incomplete or inadequate working papers, the audit fee may need to be increased.

Other matters

Internal audit

33. NHS Lothian is responsible for establishing an internal audit function as part of an effective system of internal control. As part of the audit, the audit team will obtain an understanding of internal audit, including its nature, responsibilities, and activities.

34. While internal audit and external audit have differing roles and responsibilities, external auditors may seek to rely on the work of internal audit where it is considered appropriate. A review of internal audit's 2024/25 audit plan was carried out to identify if there were any areas where the audit team could rely on its work. The audit team will consider relying on internal audit's work on financial controls regarding expenditure.

Audit quality

35. Audit Scotland is committed to the consistent delivery of high-quality audit. Audit quality requires ongoing attention and improvement to keep pace with external and internal changes. Details of the arrangements in place for the delivery of high-quality audits is available from the Audit Scotland website.

36. The International Standards on Quality Management (ISQM) applicable to Audit Scotland for 2024/25 audits are:

- ISQM (UK) 1, which deals with an audit organisation's responsibilities to design, implement, and operate a system of quality management (SoQM) for audits. Audit Scotland's SoQM consists of a variety of components, such as: governance arrangements and culture to support audit quality, compliance with ethical requirements, ensuring Audit Scotland is dedicated to high-quality audit through engagement performance and resourcing arrangements, and ensuring there are robust quality monitoring arrangements in place. Audit Scotland carries out an annual evaluation of its SoQM and has concluded it complies with this standard.

- ISQM (UK) 2, which sets out arrangements for conducting engagement quality reviews, which are performed by senior management not involved in an audit, to review significant judgements and conclusions reached by the audit team, and the appropriateness of proposed audit opinions on high-risk audits.

37. To monitor quality at an individual audit level, Audit Scotland carries out internal quality reviews on a sample of audits. Additionally, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales (ICAEW) carries out independent quality reviews on a sample of audits.

38. Actions to address deficiencies identified by internal and external quality reviews are included in a rolling Quality Improvement Action Plan, which is used to support continuous improvement. Progress with implementing planned actions is monitored on a regular basis by Audit Scotland's Quality and Ethics Committee.

39. Audit Scotland may periodically seek the views of NHS Lothian on the quality of audit services provided. The audit team would also welcome feedback at any time.

NHS Lothian

Annual Audit Plan 2024/25

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