

Children's Hearings Scotland

Annual Audit Plan 2025/26



Prepared for Children's Hearings Scotland
February 2026

Contents

Introduction	3
Audit scope and responsibilities	4
Audit of the annual report and accounts	6
Wider scope and Best Value	10
Reporting arrangements, timetable and audit fee	11
Other matters	13

Accessibility

You can find out more and read this report using assistive technology on our website www.audit.scot/accessibility.

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 2025/26 audit of the Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) 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. Lisa Duthie, of Audit Scotland, has been appointed by the Auditor General for Scotland as external auditor of CHS for the period from 2024/25 until 2026/27. The 2025/26 financial year is therefore the second of the three-year audit appointment.

3. Lisa Duthie and the audit team are independent of CHS 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 CHS 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
- an opinion on the regularity of income and expenditure
- an opinion on statutory other information published with the financial statements in the annual report and accounts, namely the Performance Report and the Governance Statement
- an opinion on the audited part of the Remuneration and Staff Report
- concluding on the financial sustainability of CHS and a review of the Governance Statement
- reporting on CHS'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 CHS 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 CHS's arrangements in place for the wider scope areas.

Children's Hearings Scotland's responsibilities

8. CHS 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 that give a true and fair view and other information
- 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.

Communication of fraud or suspected fraud

9. In line with auditing standards, in presenting this plan to the Audit and Risk Committee, we seek confirmation from those charged with governance of any instances of actual, suspected, or alleged fraud that should be brought to our attention. Should members of the committee have any such knowledge or concerns relating to the risk of fraud within CHS, we invite them to communicate this to the appointed auditor for consideration.

Audit of the annual report and accounts

Introduction

10. 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

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. The materiality levels determined for the audit of CHS are outlined in [Exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1

2025/26 Materiality levels

Materiality	Amount
Materiality – based on an assessment of the needs of users of the financial statements and the nature of CHS's operations, the benchmark used to determine materiality is gross expenditure based on the audited 2024/25 financial statements. Materiality has been set at 2% of the benchmark.	£182,000
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.	£127,000

Materiality	Amount
Using professional judgement, performance materiality has been set at 70% of planning materiality.	
Reporting threshold – all misstatements greater than the reporting threshold will be reported.	£9,000

Source: Audit Scotland

Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements

14. The risk assessment process draws on the audit team's cumulative knowledge of CHS, 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.

15. 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](#). 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.

16. The risk assessment process is an iterative and dynamic process. The assessment of risks may change as more information and evidence is obtained over the course of the audit. If such changes occur, these will be reported to CHS 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
<p>Fraud caused by management override of controls</p> <p>Management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of management's ability to override controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.</p> <p>This is a presumed risk on all audits.</p>	<p>The audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Risk of material misstatement	Planned audit response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate significant transactions outside the normal course of business. • Assess the adequacy of controls in place for identifying and disclosing related party relationships and transactions in the financial statements. • Assess changes to the methods and underlying assumptions used to prepare accounting estimates and assess these for evidence of management bias.
<p>Implementation of a new general ledger system</p> <p>A new general ledger will be implemented during the year, and the annual accounts will be prepared using this system. This represents a significant risk of material misstatement due to changes in the financial reporting environment. The key areas of risk include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new general ledger may not operate as intended leading to incomplete or inaccurate financial reporting. • The data transferred from the existing ledger to the new system may be incomplete, inaccurate, or incorrectly mapped. • Key finance staff may not be sufficiently familiar with the new system increasing the likelihood of errors. 	<p>The audit team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the arrangements put in place for implementation of the new general ledger. • Obtain an understanding of the new general ledger, including how it operates, controls in place that are relevant to financial reporting, and if there were any issues with its implementation or subsequent to implementation. • Evaluate the design and implementation of controls within the new general ledger that are relevant to financial reporting. • Test the conversion and transfer of data from the old general ledger to the new general ledger to identify if data is accurate and complete. • Review of the chart of accounts and mapping of account codes to the financial statements from the new general ledger to identify if this is appropriate and in line with expectation.

Source: Audit Scotland

Key audit matters

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. 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.

Wider scope and Best Value

Introduction

20. 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.

21. Due to the nature and size of CHS and its limited financial activity, it is considered a less complex body for the wider scope audit. Therefore, the wider scope audit does not consider all four wider scope areas and is instead limited to concluding on the financial sustainability of CHS.

22. Financial sustainability 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 CHS's medium to longer term planning for service delivery. A conclusion on the financial sustainability of CHS 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. We will consider the arrangements CHS has in place to demonstrate Best Value and report our conclusion in the Annual Audit Report.

Significant wider scope and Best Value risks

24. No significant risks in the wider scope areas or Best Value were identified from the risk assessment process.

Reporting arrangements, timetable and audit fee

Audit outputs

25. The outputs from the 2025/26 audit include:

- this Annual Audit Plan
- an Independent Auditor's Report to CHS, the Auditor General for Scotland, and the Scottish Parliament setting out opinions on the annual report and accounts
- an Annual Audit Report to CHS 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, recommendations, where required, and any good practice identified.

26. The matters to be reported in the outputs will be discussed with CHS 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.

27. 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 31 October 2026 for central government non-departmental public bodies, and other similar bodies.

28. The Independent Auditor's Report and Annual Audit Report are planned to be issued by the target date of 31 October 2026.

Audit timetable

29. 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 3](#) 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 CHS and reported to those charged with governance, where required.

Exhibit 3

2025/26 audit timetable

Audit activity	Target date	Audit and Risk Committee date
Issue of Annual Audit Plan	31 March 2026	24 February 2026
Annual report and accounts:		
• Submission of unaudited annual report and accounts and all working papers to audit team	15 June 2026	
• Latest date for audit clearance meeting	31 July 2026	
• Issue of draft Letter of Representation, proposed Independent Auditor's Report, and proposed Annual Audit Report	18 August 2026	25 August 2026
• Agreement of audited and unsigned annual report and accounts	18 August 2026	
• Approval by those charged with governance and signing of audited annual report and accounts	23 September 2026	
• Signing of Independent Auditor's Report and issue of Annual Audit Report	23 September 2026	

Source: Audit Scotland

Audit fee

30. CHS's audit fee is determined in line with Audit Scotland's fee setting arrangements. The audit fee for the 2025/26 audit is £17,821 (2024/25: £16,150). This includes an additional fee to cover audit procedures that will provide assurance over the implementation of the new general ledger system, and assumes the transition is successful.

31. In setting the audit fee, it is assumed that CHS 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

32. CHS 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.

33. 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 2025/26 audit plan was carried out to identify if there were any areas where the audit team could rely on its work. The audit team concluded it will not rely on internal audit's work. However, the audit team will review internal audit's reports and assess if there is any impact on the audit.

Audit quality

34. 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](#).

35. The International Standards on Quality Management (ISQM) applicable to Audit Scotland for 2025/26 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.

36. 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.

37. 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.

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

Children's Hearings Scotland

Annual Audit Plan 2025/26



Audit Scotland, 4th Floor, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN

Phone: 0131 625 1500

www.audit.scot