

# Greater ambition on service redesign needed to respond to challenges ahead

Embargoed until 00:01 hours, 21 May 2026

## Scotland's councils need greater ambition to redesign services, with financial pressures growing and demand continuing to rise.

Councils have been changing how they work and deliver services for years, making significant savings. Now the scale and pace of change must shift to match the challenges ahead, helping secure financial sustainability and meet increasing demand.

As councils redesign services, they must learn from and work with each other, building on the many initiatives already in place. There remains, however, significant gaps in how councils are planning for the changes ahead.

Councils need to set out clearly the benefits to communities of service redesign and show they have understood the impact on vulnerable groups.

### Jennifer Henderson, member of the Accounts Commission said:

'Whilst councils have been changing how they operate and deliver services for many years, a shift in pace, scale and ambition is needed. Plans to redesign services must be sufficiently ambitious to meet the scale of current and future challenges. Delays could risk greater costs, tougher decisions and increased challenges in future years.'

'Local and national collaboration is vital. Councils must learn from each other, and be clear with communities why change is needed, the benefits and impacts. This is vital given changes to services can significantly affect people's lives. Failing to fully engage with communities risks councils having to withdraw plans, facing legal challenge and having to find savings elsewhere.'

For further information contact Joanna Mansell Tel: 07970331858  
[jmansell@audit.scot](mailto:jmansell@audit.scot) or [media@audit.scot](mailto:media@audit.scot)

### Notes to Editor:

**1.** Persistent barriers to change stem from challenges in: developing a workforce with the necessary skills and capacity; strengthening governance; improving IT systems and improving collaboration and data sharing.

2. [A supplement to the report](#) brings together examples of approaches to transformation councils from across Scotland.

3. The Accounts Commission published a report on [transformation in councils - Sector-led change and collaboration to achieve financial sustainability](#) in 2024. The Accounts Commission has also published two thematic reports since 2022 - [why leadership matters](#) and [responding to workforce challenges](#).

4. All reports by the Accounts Commission and Auditor General published since 2000 are available at [www.audit.scot](http://www.audit.scot)

- 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 help 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.

**ENDS**