

Dynamic work programme – Update

March 2022

AUDITOR GENERAL 

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

- We are delivering a comprehensive and ambitious programme with major products due between March and the summer parliamentary recess.
- We continue to see the impact of delays to financial audit and wider availability of data to support our work, which is having a knock on impact on scheduling and resourcing work into 2022/23.
- The local government election moratorium is putting pressure on the publications schedule in May and June. We have had to make difficult decisions about the timing of publications based on ensuring timely reporting and balancing AGS and Commission priorities.
- We are aiming to ensure PABV colleagues are not all fully allocated to audit product delivery from April 2022 onwards so we can focus on research and development to inform the future work programme, as well as ensure contingency to be able to respond to urgent requests for new audit products. R&D and contingency are two separate and equally important aspects of planning and resourcing our work in an agile and responsive way.

What guides our planning and delivery...

Providing assurance and driving improvement

We will use our unique local and national perspective to provide assurance about how Scotland's public services are responding to Covid-19. We will aim to provide insight and learning, and drive improvement, innovation and transformational change as Scotland moves towards recovery and renewal.

Taking a person- centred approach

Where possible and appropriate, we will capture the needs and concerns of the people who use public services through our audit work.

Integrating cross cutting issues

We will integrate thinking on issues that cut across policy areas and have an impact on citizens and service users throughout our audit work. For example: prevention, digital, inequality and human rights, climate change, community engagement

Taking a risk-based and proportionate approach

We recognise the potential impact of audit work on people working in public services who are still responding to Covid-19. We will ensure our audit response is proportionate and risk-based, and that audited bodies have clear advance notice of any planned work.

Being flexible and agile

We will adapt our work programme as new issues emerge or risks change. We will use a range of approaches to report our audit work.

Interconnected themes



ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND GROWTH

How public money is being used to support economic recovery and the renewal of public services

- Public finances
- Supporting jobs, business and enterprise
- Skills and training
- Infrastructure investment and low carbon economy
- Impact of EU withdrawal

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY



How public bodies are ensuring proper and effective use of public money across the public sector and within individual bodies

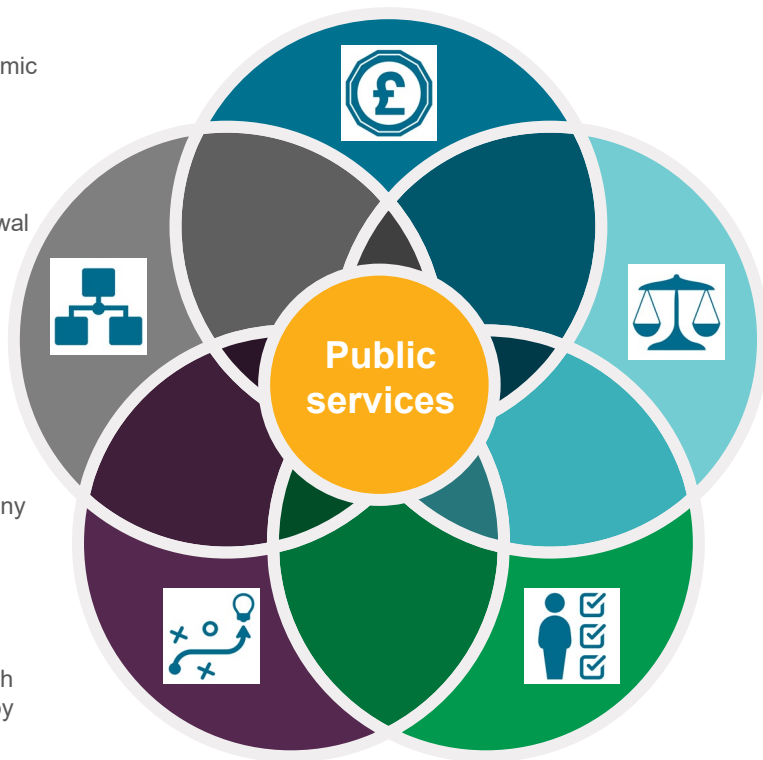
- Following the pandemic pound
- Collaborative leadership
- Annual audits
- Fraud risks
- Effective scrutiny



INNOVATION AND TRANSFORMATION

How public bodies are learning through continuous improvement, innovation and by transforming public services

- Local government
- NHS
- Best Value
- Service redesign
- Digital transformation
- Workforce planning



INEQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS



How Covid-19 is impacting on different groups in society, focusing on the risk of deepening existing inequalities. Helping ensure public bodies address inequalities and protect human rights, recognising the multiple ways people experience disadvantage and poorer outcomes.

- Child poverty
- Children and young people with additional support needs
- Care experienced children and young people
- Mental health
- Housing benefit
- Digital exclusion
- Social security



POLICY PRIORITIES AND COMMITMENTS

Progress on key policy commitments. Public services' ability to deliver on long-term strategic priorities and outcomes

- Health and social care integration
- Early learning and childcare
- School education
- Community empowerment
- Community justice
- Courts backlogs
- Climate change

What we've delivered: December to February

Best Value Assurance Reports

Falkirk Council

Performance audits

Planning for skills

Overview reports

NHS in Scotland 2021

Briefings

Social care

Key:

Auditor General for Scotland

Accounts Commission

Joint – Auditor General and Accounts Commission

Audit Scotland

Statutory reports

National Records of Scotland

Bòrd na Gàidhlig

NHS Highland

Scottish Government consolidated accounts

Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life

Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Scottish Canals

Other audit products

Statutory Performance Information Direction 2021 and supporting blog: Public performance reporting - why it matters

Administration of Scottish Income Tax 2020/21

Climate change AAR pilot: Transport Scotland 2020/21

AGS budget briefing (internal)

Local government budget briefing and Covid-19 update (internal)

What's coming up: March to September* (Auditor General)

AUDITOR GENERAL 

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

Performance audits

New ferries for the Clyde and Hebrides (March)

Social security:
Implementation of devolved powers (May)

Statutory reports

Colleges TBC (April)

Other audit products

Digital connectivity: R100 update (March)

Scotland's colleges 2022 (July)

*Months in brackets in tables are proposed publication months

What's coming up: March to September* (Accounts Commission)

AUDITOR GENERAL 

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

Overview reports

Local government finances 2021 (March)

Challenges and performance LGO 2022 (May)

Financial analysis of IJBs 2020/21 (June)

Best Value Assurance Reports

Moray Council follow up (March)

Angus Council (July)

Shetland Council (August)

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (September)

Briefings

Climate Change: Local government targets and plans (August)

Other audit products

Annual Assurance and Risk Report (Internal) (March)

Services for children with additional support needs (May)

Improvement Service blog (May)

Statutory reports

Section 102: Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board

*Months in brackets in tables are proposed publication months

What's coming up: March to September*

(Auditor General and Accounts Commission)

AUDITOR GENERAL 

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

Performance audits

Reviewing Scotland's financial response to the Covid-19 pandemic (June)

Briefings

Scotland's economy: Supporting businesses through the Covid-19 pandemic (March)

Other audit products

Drugs and alcohol (March)

Child poverty (June)

*Months in brackets in tables are proposed publication months

- Audit Scotland will deliver the following to complement the joint work programme:
 - Climate Change: Baseline review (Mar 22)
 - E-hub: Lifelong learning (Apr 22)
 - National Fraud Initiative in Scotland (Jul 22)
 - Data governance/ethics roundtable (Q2 2022-23)
- Audit Scotland is also maintaining a national database of UK and Scottish Covid-19 funding announcements to inform all Following the Pandemic Pound products across the joint work programme

Sector	Number of opinions required	Deadline	Accounts certified (as at 21/02/22)	Percentage complete (as at 21/02/22)	Percentage on time
Health	23	30/09/21	23	100%	100%
Central government – Agencies, NMDs and Scottish Water	23	30/09/21	23	100%	52% (12/23)
Central government – NDPBs and similar	55	31/10/21	55	100%	69% (38/55)
Local government	104	30/11/21	102	98%	82% (85/104)
Further education	21	31/12/21	14	67%	57% (12/21)
Total	226				

- Progress with 2020/21 annual audits for Scottish public bodies:
 - All health and central government audits now complete.
 - In local government, two small joint committees audited by ASG are awaiting committee dates to enable sign off.
 - Seven further education colleges audited by firms still to be completed.
- The European agricultural accounts (EAFA) were signed by the C&AG of the NAO on 14 February. ASG audits the Scottish component. This is the normal, pre-Covid timetable for EAFA work.
- Work is still ongoing on the audit of 2020/21 housing benefit subsidy claims. The DWP has extended the deadline to end February. In some cases, small errors detected are resulting in the need for increased sample sizes and increased audit work. We are starting discussions with the DWP and NAO about the level of audit work required in future as expenditure declines with the transition to universal credit
- No instructions have been received from HM Treasury and NAO on the 2020/21 Whole of Government Accounts process. The audit deadline for components will now be 31 July at the earliest.
- Audit planning for 2021/22 is now under way. Target completion dates outlined in planning guidance are generally one month earlier than 2021. This will be challenging to achieve in every case.

Summary of proposed changes to programme

Change	Detail
Delaying	Drug and alcohol services (Joint): We agreed with AGS and sponsors to delay this publication from February to early March due to availability of dates in the publications schedule after the February Commission meeting as well as AGS and sponsor diary availability for media.
	Scotland's economy: Supporting businesses through the Covid-19 pandemic (Joint): We agreed with AGS and sponsors to delay this briefing from February to March due to data access and quality issues, and to ensure time for better alignment with local audit work and statutory reporting. Originally this briefing was also intended to include elements of wider economic planning. The scope was ultimately altered due to the Scottish Government announcing (and then subsequently delaying) the publication of the new 10-year National Strategy for Economic Transformation.
	Reviewing Scotland's financial response to the Covid-19 pandemic (Joint): We agreed with AGS and sponsors to delay this audit from May to June to ensure it could incorporate findings from other audit work that has been delayed. This also allowed time for further evidence to be collected from Scottish Government.
	Financial analysis of IJBs 2020/21 (Commission): The financial local government overview publication date shifting from January to March has had a knock-on impact on resource availability to start work on the IJB financial analysis. We are proposing the IJB financial analysis moves from May to June to give the team more time to finish the report and take pressure off the publication schedule in May.
	Child poverty (Joint): We propose delaying this briefing from May to June to ensure adequate time for the governance steps required after the draft briefing goes to the Commission meeting on 12 May 2022.

Summary of proposed changes to programme

Change	Detail
Delaying	Angus Council BVAR (Commission): We propose delaying publication of this report from late June to early July due to pressure on the publications schedule in June. It will still go to the June Accounts Commission meeting.
	Scotland's Colleges 2022 (AGS): We propose delaying this report from May to July because the Scottish Funding Council has delayed publishing some of the data we require.
	Climate Change: Local government targets and plans (Commission): The Commission's Performance Audit Committee has agreed to delay this product from June to August. As the Commission meeting in January was cancelled we delayed seeking approval of the scope for this product until the Performance Audit Committee in February. The knock on impact is a delay in publication, which also eases pressure on the busy June publications schedule.
	Sustainable alternatives to custody (Joint): We propose delaying this performance audit until 2023 so we can re-direct resources to initial scoping work on courts backlogs. The revised timing will enhance the potential relevance, impact and added value of the community justice work as it can follow planned joint inspection work on community justice services by other scrutiny bodies, which should report in the second half of 2022.

Summary of proposed changes to programme

Change	Detail
Removing	Infrastructure Investment Plan and strategic capital investment (AGS): In December we proposed delaying this briefing. We are now proposing we remove it from the programme. The Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) was published over 12 months ago, followed by updates on major capital projects and project and programme pipelines in September 2021. We feel it is now too late to publish commentary on these and resources would be better focused on scoping audit work on strategic capital investment. This will build on the January 2020 audit on privately financed infrastructure investment as well as look at the Scottish Government's Medium Term Financial Strategy and updated Climate Change Plan.

Change	Detail	Proposed timing
Adding	Court backlogs (AGS): We propose adding a product to the programme to look at court backlogs. These have worsened during the pandemic and there are implications for other parts of the justice system. The Criminal Justice Committee has noted its interest in this area and we are not aware of any other scrutiny or public reporting plans. Given the level of public funding, the acute nature of the issue, the impact on the wider justice system and increasing public interest, there is scope for our work to add significant value at this time.	TBC once further scoping undertaken

In the pipeline from October 2022 to March 2024

Economic recovery and growth

Area of focus	Latest plans
ScotRail franchise (AGS)	We will undertake audit work looking at the establishment of the new operating arrangements as ScotRail services move into Scottish Government ownership. We initially plan to report on this through the Transport Scotland annual audit report in early Q4 2022/23.
Economic development (Joint)	<p>During 2022 we will undertake research and development to scope audit work in this area. We will bring back proposals for products that cover the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Scottish Government's new 10-year strategy for economic transformation• Strategic capital investment, reviewing progress against the recommendations in our January 2020 audit on privately financed infrastructure investment and looking at the Scottish Government's Medium Term Financial Strategy and updated Climate Change Plan.• The implementation of schemes designed to replace the EU Structural, Social and Agricultural Funds• Developments affecting City Region and Growth Deals and progress against the recommendations in our 2020 report. We will consider how further reporting could add value.
Public finances	We will continue to keep the overall position of devolved public finances under review, including the operation of the fiscal framework and any significant risks to financial sustainability. During 2022/23 we will deliver our usual annual commitments including the internal budget briefings for the AGS and Commission, as well as the Administration of Scottish Income Tax 2021/22 report on behalf of the AGS. We will also consider the scope for audit work looking at providing assurance on UK-led spending in Scotland around shared prosperity and levelling up.

In the pipeline from October 2022 to March 2024

Area of focus	Latest plans
Climate change (AGS / AC / AS)	Building on the baseline review due in March we are planning an AGS briefing focussing on Scottish Government arrangements for delivering its climate change plan for Q3 2022/23. The scope has still to be agreed but is likely to consider governance arrangements, leadership and progress to date. We are also planning to develop a front-facing accessible data tool (AS) to improve transparency and scrutiny of progress on climate change. It will provide information and data on a range of climate change issues such as progress against emission targets, progress on key policies and milestones and information on adaptations. Alongside these products we are developing our longer-term approach and priorities for auditing climate change and will discuss this with the AGS, the Accounts Commission and our Commission sponsors later in the year.
Social care (Joint)	Following publication of the social care briefing in January 2022, we will continue engagement with Scottish Government and monitoring developments with social care reform. Once we have a clearer idea of plans for the National Care Service we will prepare proposals for a performance audit for discussion with the AGS and Commission. We will need to be flexible on the timing for the audit and it is unlikely to start until Q1 or Q2 of 2022/23.
Early learning and childcare (Joint)	The next audit in this series will look at whether the expansion in funded early learning and childcare was delivered as planned and how much it cost. We plan to report in Q4 2022/23.

In the pipeline from October 2022 to March 2024

Area of focus	Latest plans
Drug and alcohol services (Joint)	Given the Auditor General and Accounts Commission's ongoing interest in how drug and alcohol services are being delivered and the impact this has on people and their families needing support, we plan to carry out more detailed work in this area in the next 12-18 months.
Community justice: Sustainable alternatives to custody (Joint)	The AGS briefing paper on this topic from July 2021 highlighted that the Scottish Government had not achieved its aim to shift the balance of sentencing from prison to the community. We have proposed delaying this joint performance audit in this area to early 2023. This audit will still consider the roles and work of other key stakeholders, including local government and the third sector. The revised timing will also allow our audit work to follow planned joint inspection work on community justice services by other scrutiny bodies.

In the pipeline from October 2022 to March 2024

Area of focus	Latest plans
Mental health (Joint)	We are currently scoping a performance audit on adult mental health services and plan to bring this to the AGS and Commission for discussion before summer 2022, and report during Q4 2022/23.
Digital exclusion and connectivity (Joint)	We are planning to publish a performance audit in 2023/24 on how the public sector is addressing digital exclusion and connectivity. We will also continue to look at digital exclusion through other audit work, such as overviews and our community empowerment work.
Child poverty (Joint)	In 2023/24 we plan to look at the progress made in achieving interim targets within the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. This will include looking at any additional plans and actions the Scottish Government is putting in place with local government and their partners to mitigate the new risks in this area created by Covid-19.

In the pipeline from October 2022 to March 2024

Area of focus	Latest plans
Local government overview reporting (AC)	We will monitor the impact of the 2020/21 local government overview reports due to publish in March and May 2022 as well as the financial analysis of IJBs due in June 2022. We will support the Accounts Commission to consider the focus and format of local government overview reporting in 2023 and beyond to maximise reach and impact.
NHS reporting (AGS)	<p>We are developing proposals for a future programme of health and care audits, recognising the ongoing policy focus on health and care, with significant reforms on the horizon and the dominance of spending in this area. This will impact on our reporting on the NHS as we are considering the future format and frequency of the NHS in Scotland report to allow for a shift of some resources to other more focussed and thematic health and care audit work.</p> <p>We recognise the whole systems approach required for public health due to the broader factors affecting health and wellbeing, such as housing, income and the education and justice system, and the impact of the broader economy and inequalities. As such we will consult on our proposals in due course with the AGS and, where necessary and relevant, with the Accounts Commission.</p>

In the pipeline from October 2022 to March 2024

Area of focus	Latest plans
Best Value assurance reporting (AC)	<p>From 2022/23 BV work in councils will be fully integrated with the annual audit and reported in Annual Audit Reports (AARs), including risk-based, follow up and thematic BV work. AARs for each council will be reviewed by the Commission at least once over the five-year audit appointment to provide the Commission with assurance on BV in each individual council.</p> <p>The Commission will use the Annual Assurance and Risks Report (AARR) to identify thematic work for coverage by all auditors in the following year's audit. The next AARR will draw on the 2021/22 AARs and is due in March 2023. The first AAR under the new audit appointments and BV approach will be available in Q3 2023/24.</p> <p>In Q2 of 2023/24 we plan to deliver a legacy thematic summary of BV best practice examples covering the last six years of BV reporting.</p>

In the pipeline from October 2022 to March 2024

Governance and accountability

Area of focus	Latest plans
Reviewing Scotland's financial response to the Covid-19 pandemic (Joint)	In 2022/23 we will move into the recovery phase of our approach to following the pandemic pound, which will assess the wider impact on public finances of recovery from a pandemic. We will review the impact of our performance audit on reviewing Scotland's financial response to the Covid-19 pandemic and propose how best to follow up, looking at changing budget headings and spending considerations as well as financial management and sustainability.