

Dynamic work programme – Update

March 2023

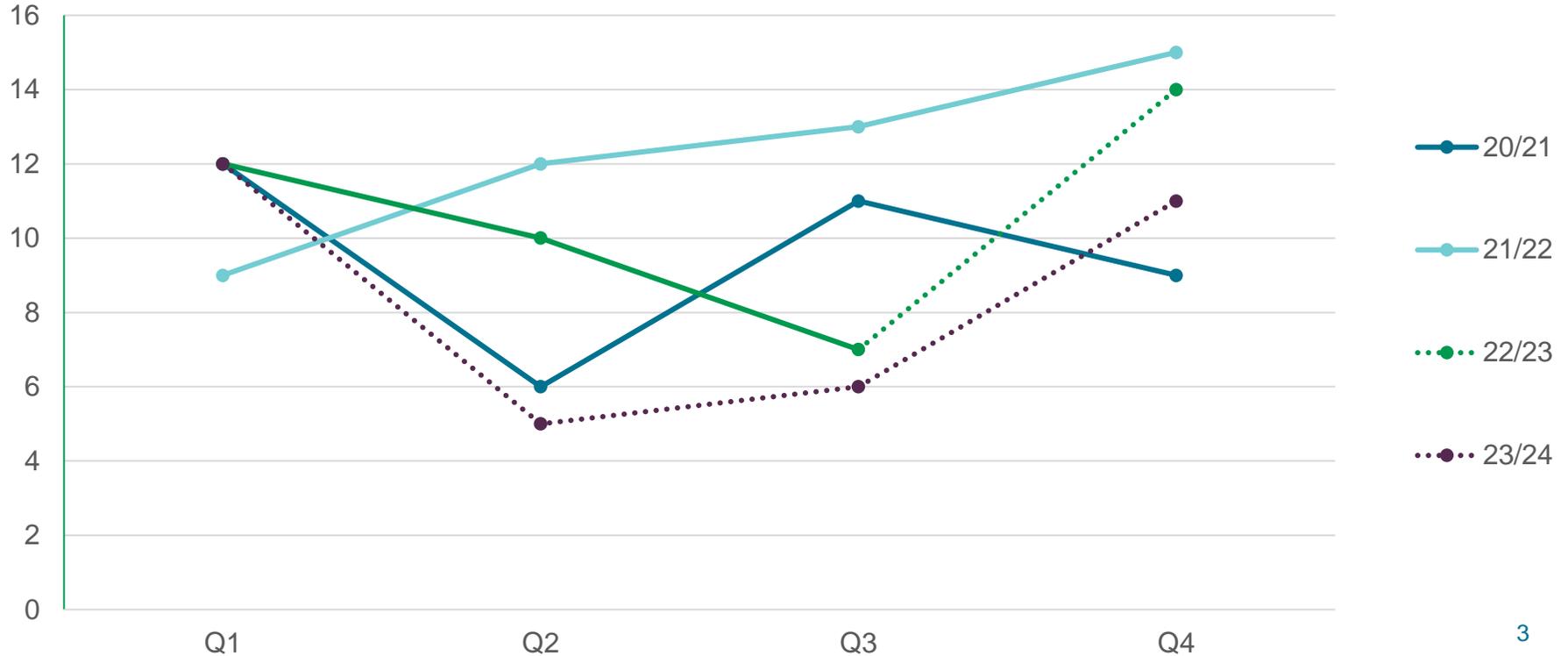
AUDITOR GENERAL 

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

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- We delivered 11 audit products between December and February and there are a further 21 products planned between March and August.
 - In this work programme update we have not proposed any new products. This is because we are still developing further proposals for new audit products in 2023/24 and 2024/25, including assessing affordability of the overall product mix for 2023/24. We are working closely with the new Controller of Audit on how best to bring together a strategic overview of the Commission's work programme, developing stronger links between the audit products, and the Commission's assessment of audit risks and its strategic priorities. We aim to come back to the Commission's strategy seminar in May with more developed proposals for 2023/24 and 2024/25.
 - In the meantime, slides 10-20 outline how we are continuing to develop the longer-term work programme proposals across the portfolios. It would be helpful to hear feedback from the Commission on its priorities for the audit work in the pipeline.

Audit products per quarter since April 2020

Audit products per quarter since April 2020



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 recovering from Covid-19. We aim to provide insight and learning, and drive improvement, innovation and transformational change as Scotland moves towards 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 consideration of issues that cut across policy areas and have an impact on citizens and service users throughout our audit work and public reporting. We will prioritise developing our audit approach on the following issues: climate change, digital transformation, inequality and human rights, community empowerment.

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.



ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND GROWTH

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

- Public finances
- Supporting economic development and growth
- Skills and training
- Infrastructure and investment

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY



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

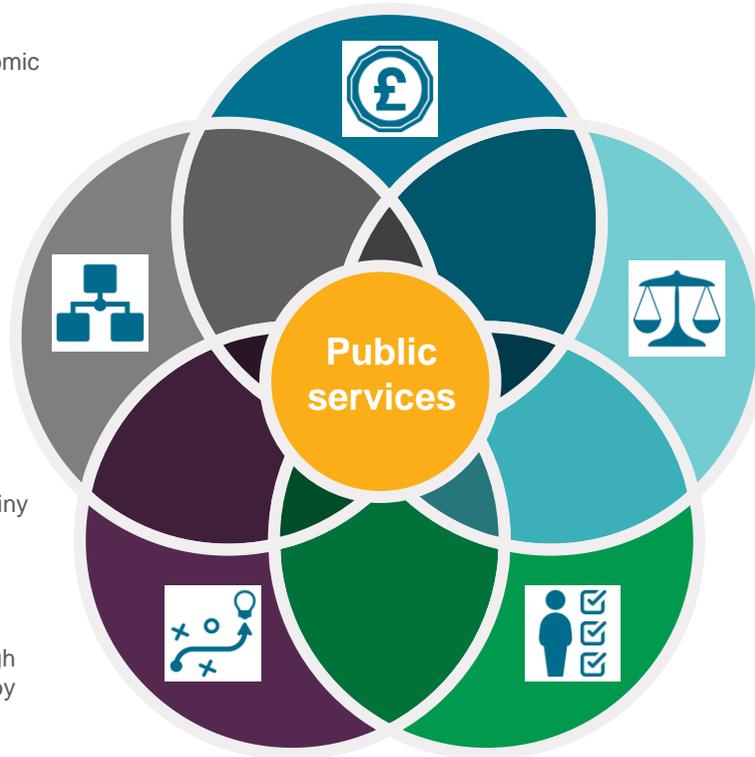
- Collaborative leadership
- Annual audits
- Fraud risks
- Effective scrutiny



INNOVATION AND TRANSFORMATION

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

- Local government
- NHS
- Policing
- 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
- Gender pay gap reporting



POLICY PRIORITIES AND COMMITMENTS

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

- Climate change
- Early learning and childcare
- Court backlogs
- Health and social care integration
- Social care
- National Care Service
- Drug and alcohol services
- Community justice
- Community empowerment
- School education
- Housing and homelessness

What we've delivered: December to February

Briefings

Local government in Scotland:
Financial bulletin 2021/22

Overview reports

NHS in Scotland 2022: Scottish
Government's NHS Recovery Plan

Statutory reports

Scottish Government consolidated
accounts

Crofting Commission

Commissioner for Ethical Standards
in Public Life

Other audit products

Auditing climate change: Our strategy

Administration of Scottish Income Tax
2021/22

Public sector gender pay gap reporting

Local government budget briefing (Internal)

Resourcing the benefit service: A thematic
study and supporting blog: Assurance and
scrutiny - reporting on the vital role of
Scotland's housing benefit services

Key:

Auditor General for Scotland

Accounts Commission

Joint – Auditor General and Accounts
Commission

Audit Scotland

Joint – Accounts Commission and
Audit Scotland

What's coming up: March to August*

Overview reports	Performance audits	Other audit products
Local government in Scotland overview 2023 (May)	Climate change: Scottish Government delivery arrangements (April)	Annual Assurance and Risks Report (Internal) (March)
	Criminal court backlogs (May)	Covid-19 finances follow-up (Web product) (March)
Statutory reports	Early learning and childcare (follow up) (June)	Covid-19 finances follow-up (Blog) (March)
Ferguson Marine Port Glasgow (March)		Education outcomes report (Impact blog) (March)
Scottish Canals (March)	Briefings	Homelessness (Blog) (April)
South Lanarkshire College (April)	Integration Joint Boards: Financial analysis 2021/22 (April)	Social care work programme (Blog) (April)
Glasgow City Council (TBC)		LGO Symposium (Event) (June)
		City Region and Growth Deals (Impact briefing) (June)
		Four nations climate change (June)
		Annual Fraud and Irregularity Report (July)
		Legacy summary of BV best practice (August)

Key:

Auditor General for Scotland
Accounts Commission

Joint – AGS and Commission
Audit Scotland

*Months in brackets in tables are indicative publication months

Audit work in the pipeline – September 2023 to March 2025

In the pipeline:

September 2023 to March 2025

Economic recovery and growth

Area of focus	Latest plans
Infrastructure and investment	<p>We are likely to propose publishing a briefing in the autumn 2023 looking at the challenges facing the Scottish Government's capital programme. This will look at the budgetary and operational pressures facing the delivery of the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) and include what funding mechanisms the government intends to use to deliver its programme. It will provide an opportunity to review progress against the recommendations in our January 2020 audit on privately financed infrastructure investment, including the use of revenue financing schemes. We could also look at the Scottish Government's asset management strategies as part of this work with a view to potential future work on the public sector estate and reform.</p> <p>We are also working with the Transport Scotland audit team to establish areas for wider scope work during the new appointment round.</p> <p>Longer term we are likely to propose working with the climate change team in 2024/25 on a joint performance audit on sustainable transport, with the area of focus being on 20 minute neighbourhoods.</p>
Supporting economic development and growth	<p>We are likely to propose audit work focussed on early analysis of the Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation and lessons learned from our 2016 performance audit (Supporting Scotland's economic growth). We anticipate this work will publish during 2023/24.</p> <p>We are also considering a performance audit on the Scottish National Investment Bank in 2024/25, which would cover investment to date and an early assessment of what impact this has made, as well as how it is evaluating and monitoring the impact of its investments.</p>

In the pipeline: September 2023 to March 2025

Economic recovery and growth

Area of focus	Latest plans
Public finances	<p>The Resource Spending Review and Medium-Term Financial Strategy make clear the extent of the significant fiscal challenge ahead, and the Scottish Government's spending priorities. The challenges relate to both the devolved tax position and spending pressures arising from the expansion of devolved social security measures and existing financial sustainability pressures in areas such as health.</p> <p>During 2023/24 we will investigate the reform agenda, which is critical to the Scottish Government's medium to long term position. This will include tracking progress on reform, defining reform, and considering the implications for value for money, pace and scale. We will propose audit products on the sustainability of public finances, including consideration of pace of reform, public sector efficiency and financial management.</p>
Skills and training	<p>We continue to monitor the impact of our performance audit report on Planning for skills and await the findings and recommendations of the independent review of the skills delivery landscape, due in spring 2023. We will use this, and the Scottish Government's response to the review, to inform proposals for future audit work, which is likely to begin during 2024/25.</p>

In the pipeline: September 2023 to March 2025

Area of focus	Latest plans
Climate change	<p>We recognise the priority placed on climate change by the AGS and Accounts Commission. We are refining proposals for a programme of climate change audit work. Up to 2024/25 we have identified heat in buildings and sustainable transport as two priority areas for reaching Net Zero. Progress in adapting to the impacts of climate change and behaviour change are two other key themes.</p> <p>We are likely to propose briefings on heat in homes for the Accounts Commission and AGS in the second half of 2023 and a roundtable on adaptation in November 2023, which may be followed up with a series of blogs in March 2024. We will continue to refine our proposals based on AGS and Commission feedback. Longer term, we are likely to propose a (possibly joint) performance audit on sustainable transport in 2024/25, potentially focusing on 20 minute neighbourhoods. Behavioural change will be a key theme throughout all of this work. Looking further ahead, we have identified energy, transition to a green economy and procurement as key themes.</p>
Early learning and childcare	<p>The next joint performance audit in this series will look at the impact of the expansion. This is likely to focus on assessing whether the significant investment being made in expanding publicly funded ELC has delivered improved outcomes, is helping to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap and has made a difference in supporting parents and carers to work, train or study. This audit is likely to start in 2024/25.</p>

In the pipeline:

September 2023 to March 2025

Area of focus	Latest plans
Health and social care	<p>We are monitoring developments in the social care sector on the issues highlighted in the January 2022 joint briefing including workforce challenges, sector capacity and financial risks. Following feedback from the Commission at its December meeting we are planning to do a blog in early May, about the social care programme of work. We are also considering proposing a joint briefing later this year that considers the workforce issues in the social care sector, supported by blogs from the AGS and Commission. To maintain flexibility and responsiveness to the changing landscape and issues we will consider the priorities and focus for further work on social care on a rolling basis. We are also monitoring progress with the development of the National Care Service (NCS) Bill and the Scottish Government's planning and preparations for the new NCS. We are in the process of planning proposals for future work which will be able to deliver a flexible response to issues the AGS and Commission wish to comment on publicly.</p> <p>We are considering the interconnections and dependencies across sector-based reform in health and social care and local government, including the impact the development of the NCS has on the shape and size of local government, on NHS services, and on governance and funding arrangements. We plan to continue to produce an IJB financial bulletin report in spring each year and widen this to include performance from next year, giving the Commission a vehicle to make wider comment about current issues in social care. This work will continue to be supported by independent oversight and public reporting at both national and local level on the current performance of IJBs through ongoing annual audit work in IJBs and related audit reporting (local AARs and national AARR) until such time as a NCS becomes operational and IJBs become Care Boards.</p>

In the pipeline:

September 2023 to March 2025

Area of focus	Latest plans
Homelessness	We are likely to propose a report on homelessness during 2024, potentially examining the pathways through the system for homeless people and families. Our work on the picture of homelessness across Scotland would support priorities around inequalities, human rights, access and affordability. In taking a pathways approach, it would be firmly person-centred. Work being undertaken across the UK by the Centre for Homelessness Impact on the impact and cost of temporary accommodation for homeless families would complement our work by providing a wider narrative of one element of the cost of homelessness.
Drug and alcohol services	We plan to carry out a joint performance audit in this area during 2023/24. This will include detailed analysis of spending and will explore what is being delivered in local areas by Alcohol and Drug Partnerships and other partners such as integration authorities and community planning partnerships. We are also considering looking at links with criminal justice.
Community justice: Sustainable alternatives to custody	We continue to monitor this area and plan to deliver a joint performance audit in 2023/24. Our audit work will follow planned joint inspection work on community justice services by other scrutiny bodies as well as our work on court backlogs, which have implications for community justice services.
School education	We are continuing to monitor progress against the recommendations in the Improving outcomes for young people through school education report through ongoing cluster monitoring and stakeholder engagement. We anticipate carrying out further audit work, but not until 2024 at the earliest.

In the pipeline: September 2023 to March 2025

Area of focus	Latest plans
Digital exclusion	We have started scoping a joint performance audit on how the public sector is addressing digital exclusion with a view to publishing in March 2024. We will take a Human Rights based approach for this audit. This includes considering how we can engage with service users as part of this audit. We will also continue to look at digital exclusion through other audit work, such as overviews and social care.
Poverty	<p>We are developing options for a full performance audit on child poverty, which is likely to start in 2024/25, allowing us to include data on performance against the 2023/24 interim targets for reducing child poverty. Future audit work relating to services for children and young people will also consider links with child poverty.</p> <p>We will continue to monitor the transfer of social security powers to Scotland with a view to considering how this informs and impacts on other audit areas, such as child poverty and inequalities, and whether we should produce any further outputs in this area.</p>
Children and young people with additional support needs	We are considering options for a full performance audit looking at the learner journey from pre-school to post-school for children and young people who need additional support. This would allow us to look at transition points. We will engage with stakeholders around the potential for joint work and to ensure the timescales for any work are of most value.

In the pipeline: September 2023 to March 2025

Area of focus	Latest plans
Local government overview reporting and auditing local services	<p>The 2023 LGO will be the third and final Covid-themed overview. This will be a performance focused report, drawing out the ongoing impact of the pandemic, current financial, service delivery and workforce challenges, and the serious risks to financial and service sustainability these pose. This will include the impact on performance and service users.</p> <p>We are currently engaging with the new Controller of Audit and the Commission about the development of local government overview reporting from 2024. The aim is to ensure that the package of local government reporting (including the financial bulletin, AARR, BV thematic and BV CoA reports) provide sufficient coverage and depth, while supporting the Commission to comment on its areas of interest, including: performance, local services, sustainability, inequalities, sharing good practice and how local government engages with the third sector to deliver local services.</p>
National Health Service	<p>With the way health and care services are delivered expected to change, we will continue to adapt our approach to auditing the NHS. We plan to have more impact by carrying out detailed assessments on an annual basis of specific programmes of work. We will agree the priority theme for the NHS in Scotland 2023 report early in 2023.</p>

In the pipeline: September 2023 to March 2025

Area of focus	Latest plans
Best Value assurance reporting	Best Value work in councils is now fully integrated with the annual audit and will be reported in Annual Audit Reports, including risk-based, follow up and thematic BV work. The Accounts Commission will use the Annual Assurance and Risks Report to identify thematic work for coverage by all auditors in the following year's audit. The first AAR under the new audit appointments and BV approach will be available in Q3 2023/24.
Policing	The AGS is interested in Best Value work on policing during the next audit appointment round. We intend to allocate resources to research and development work on policing over summer 2023 to inform the potential scope and approach to this work.

In the pipeline: September 2023 to March 2025

Summary of agreed products

Product	Type	Author	Quarter
Climate change: Heat in homes	Briefing	AGS	Q2 23/24
Scottish Government's capital programme	Briefing	AGS	Q2 23/24
Adult mental health	Performance audit	Joint – AGS and Commission	Q2 23/24
BV Controller of Audit report: Year 1 x 3	BV CoA report	Accounts Commission	Q3 23/24
Local government financial bulletin 2022/23	Briefing	Accounts Commission	Q3 23/24
Climate change: Adaptation	Round table	Audit Scotland	Q3 23/24
Administration of Scottish Income Tax 2022/23	Report	AGS	Q4 23/24
BV Controller of Audit report: Year 1 x 2	BV CoA report	Accounts Commission	Q4 23/24
Sustainable alternatives to custody	Performance audit	Joint – AGS and Commission	Q4 23/24
Administration of Scottish Income Tax 2022/23	Annual report	AGS	Q4 23/24
AGS budget briefing	Internal report	AGS	Q4 23/24
Digital exclusion	Performance audit	Joint – AGS and Commission	Q4 23/24

In the pipeline: September 2023 to March 2025

Summary of agreed products

Product	Type	Author	Quarter
Local government budget briefing	Internal report	Accounts Commission	Q4 23/24
Climate change: Adaptation	Blogs x 2	AGS and Commission	Q4 23/24
NHS in Scotland 2023: Focus TBC	Overview	AGS	Q4 23/24
Annual Assurance and Risks Report	Internal report	Accounts Commission	Q4 23/24
Integration Joint Boards: Financial analysis 2022/23	Briefing	Accounts Commission	Q1 24/25
Local government in Scotland Overview 2024	Overview	Accounts Commission	Q1 24/25
BV Controller of Audit report: Year 1 x 2	BV CoA report	Accounts Commission	Q1 24/25
Drug and alcohol services	Performance audit	Joint – AGS and Commission	Q1 24/25
Annual thematic BV report	TBC	Accounts Commission	Q2 24/25
BV Controller of Audit report: Year 1 x 1	BV CoA report	Accounts Commission	Q2 24/25
Annual fraud and irregularity report 2022/2	Annual report	Audit Scotland	Q2 24/25
National Fraud Initiative in Scotland	Other	Audit Scotland	Q2 24/25