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## Press release

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# SPSA has improved some police support services but ICT remains a challenge

The Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA) has made improvements to services like criminal justice, training and forensics since its creation in 2007 but is currently unable to meet all the information communication technology (ICT) needs of its customers.

An Audit Scotland report published today, *The Scottish Police Services Authority*, examines the organisation's establishment, its achievements so far and the main challenges that lie ahead. SPSA is a national organisation which provides support services to Scotland's eight police forces and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS).

Since it was set up, SPSA has improved criminal justice, training and forensics services; including delivering new training courses at the Scottish Police College and reducing the time taken to analyse forensic samples. It has made this progress despite, in the early days, having little information to help it plan service delivery, having limited support from its stakeholders and experiencing a number of senior staff changes.

Supporting and developing ICT systems has been challenging. SPSA is not yet able to meet all its customers' needs. ICT transferred to SPSA in 2008, a year later than other services. This means the organisation has had less time to make changes, while demand for ICT support from police forces has increased. For example, SPSA now maintains around 2,700 more printers, scanners and monitors for the police than it did in 2008. A number of important ICT projects, both at the national level and for individual forces, need SPSA's input but it has had problems prioritising between these. The Scottish Government recently published a review of police ICT completed by consultants which makes a number of recommendations on how SPSA and police forces can improve ICT provision.

Auditor General for Scotland, Robert Black, said: "SPSA had a difficult beginning and lessons can be learned from this experience when developing shared services in the future. SPSA has made improvements in some areas but it faces significant challenges if it is to deliver high quality services with less money. It needs to act quickly to address these challenges."

In line with its targets, SPSA has delivered £5.3 million in savings over the past three years. SPSA and its customers have the potential to deliver more savings by working in partnership. The report recommends that the Scottish Government reviews how it measures efficiencies to encourage bodies to work together better.

Mr Black continued: "SPSA has the potential to deliver savings for police forces and criminal justice bodies but it cannot do this alone. All of these bodies need to work together with the Scottish Government to achieve this."

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### Notes to editors

1. The SPSA was set up in 2007 to provide support services to Scotland's eight police forces and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. The SPSA is a non-departmental public body with a budget of £105million for 2010/11.
2. Its main objective is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of some of the services which support Scottish policing, namely; forensic services; criminal justice services; ICT services; and training, learning and other development for new recruits, police officers and staff at the Scottish Police College.
3. Some of the services now provided by SPSA, such as the Scottish Police College, were already centralised, stand-alone services before SPSA's creation. SPSA now provides formal governance for

these services. Other services, like forensics and ICT support, were previously managed by each of the eight police forces

4. Prior to the creation of SPSA in 2007, baseline information on the quality of the services SPSA now provides was incomplete. After it was set up, SPSA put processes in place to collect this information and our assessment of the quality of the services SPSA delivers is based on both that information and interviews with SPSA customers.
5. The SPSA is given ring-fenced funding for the maintenance of the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency (SCDEA). The SCDEA is a separate entity and has operational autonomy.
6. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 can be found on Audit Scotland's website [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk)
7. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Auditor General for Scotland. The Auditor General is responsible for securing the audit of the Scottish Government and most other public bodies in Scotland, except local authorities. He investigates whether spending bodies achieve the best possible value for money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliament.