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## Press release

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### Scope for more patients to be treated in day surgery

There is still scope to increase the amount of day surgery undertaken in the NHS in Scotland, according to a report by the Auditor General. The report found that, overall, Scotland currently has lower day surgery rates than England.

Day surgery is preferable to inpatient care for many conditions, and can help free up hospital beds for patients with more complex needs. It can also be more cost effective than inpatient treatment.

National targets have been set for increasing the numbers of patients treated by day surgery. The number of day surgery patients is continuing to rise, but the rate of increase has slowed considerably.

“Some trusts may have reached their optimum level of day surgery, but others could do more to develop day surgery as an alternative to inpatient care,” said Deputy Auditor General Caroline Gardner.

The report notes that if all trusts reached the targets, the number of day case procedures would increase by a further 10% - an extra 5,700 cases a year. This would be better for patients, and free up beds that would be available to treat more people.

In 2002/03, across Scotland as a whole, only seven of the 19 procedures looked at by Audit Scotland reached the target levels. There is considerable variation among trusts, and this cannot be explained solely by location or differences in patient circumstances.

“We’d like to see NHS boards monitoring the levels of day surgery and taking action where day case rates are low. Patients should be get the right treatment for their needs, whether that be inpatient, day case or outpatient care.” said Ms Gardner.

Audit Scotland looked at a range of 19 procedures, which are suitable for day surgery treatment and for which targets have been set. These include the removal of breast lumps, cataract extraction, varicose vein treatments and the correction of a squint.

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#### Notes to editors

1. The Auditor General is responsible for securing the audit of the Scottish Executive 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 Executive or the Scottish Parliament.

2. 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 Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland.