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## Press release

Strictly embargoed until 00:01, Thursday 23 November 2006

# Further improvements needed in the management of information and IT in the NHS in Scotland

**The Scottish Executive must continue to improve the way it manages information technology to support care in the NHS in Scotland.**

An Audit Scotland report published today says doing this involves a major cultural shift for the NHS in Scotland and will take time. In the past there has been a range of locally-developed IT systems across Scotland. To get the most out of its investment, the NHS needs a clear national strategy.

Audit Scotland's report, *Informed to care: Managing IT to deliver information to the NHS in Scotland*, says the Scottish Executive Health Department (SEHD) is working towards this. It is setting up new structures to oversee and manage IT and is putting in place processes to ensure national and local efforts support each other.

The department needs to ensure its IT investment is clearly linked to the service's information needs, and improve its involvement of professionals, health service workers and users in designing and implementing systems. It also needs to improve its funding arrangements for setting clear budgets, identifying expected benefits and monitoring information management and technology (IM&T) projects.

There is a significant amount of money spent on IM&T in the NHS in Scotland; at least £100 million was budgeted for 2006/07. This is an important area of investment to improve technical support for the health service. Critically, this includes developing an electronic patient record, and linking finance, human resources and purchasing systems.

Audit Scotland's report contains good practice standards to help the health service further improve.

**Caroline Gardner, the Deputy Auditor General for Scotland, said:** "Information technology is not an end in itself, but a vital tool to support the health service in providing good quality care. Good and timely information supports better care for patients.

"The NHS in Scotland has started work to improve the planning and management of information systems. We hope this report helps the service to achieve its ambitious plans for the future."

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### Notes to editors

1. 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)
2. 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 jointly for the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland:
  - 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.