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Press release

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Scotland's day surgery rate continues to improve but better performance could free up more resources

Ten years after the first review of day surgery in Scotland, Audit Scotland has found that the rate of day surgery continues to rise but there remains wide variation in performance among health boards. Performing more operations as day cases, which involve no overnight stay in hospital, could potentially free up about £8 million a year.

An Audit Scotland report published today, *Day surgery in Scotland – reviewing progress*, says the health service is continuing to improve in this area and overall is meeting the national targets in more than half of the 19 more common day surgery procedures covered in its review. These procedures include circumcision, cataract removal and hernia repair.

The NHS in Scotland has made steady progress in carrying out more surgical procedures as day surgery since targets were first introduced in the 1990s. But more operations could still be carried out in this way, potentially freeing up about £8 million a year. Scotland continues to have lower rates of day surgery than England which indicates there is still opportunity to improve performance further.

Robert Black, the Auditor General for Scotland, said: 'It's long been recognised that day surgery benefits patients through promoting a speedy recovery and minimising the disruption that an overnight stay in hospital can have on people's lives. It also promotes a more efficient use of NHS resources by reducing waiting times and freeing up hospital beds.'

The report says there is considerable variation among NHS boards in the percentage of operations carried out as day surgery. This is not explained by differences in location or patients' circumstances. There is also wide variation within individual boards in their day surgery performance for different types of operations.

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Notes to editors

1. The Audit Scotland report looks at trends in performance since the first report on day surgery in the NHS in Scotland by the Accounts Commission in 1997. Earlier reports by the Accounts Commission and all Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 can be found on Audit Scotland's website www.audit-scotland.gov.uk
2. For 19 common surgical procedures, Audit Scotland looked at the percentage carried out as day surgery rather than inpatient surgery and compared this against national targets for each of these procedures. The targets were adopted by the then Scottish Office in 1998. The 19 procedures are listed in Appendix 1 of the report.
3. Day surgery incorporates both traditionally recognised day surgery and procedures undertaken in an outpatient setting. This is also known as same-day care. Over the past few years the number of surgical procedures carried out in an outpatient setting has increased.
4. If the NHS in Scotland met the Scottish Government's new national target of 75 per cent of operations carried out as same-day care then Audit Scotland estimates that about £8 million of resources could be freed up each year.
5. 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.
6. 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.