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## News release

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# Scope for significant improvements and savings in transport for health and social care

Greater coordination of transport for health and social care, which affects many people across Scotland, could lead to significant improvements and financial savings.

An Audit Scotland report published today, *Transport for health and social care*, looks at transport arranged by the ambulance service, NHS boards and councils to take people to and from health and social care appointments.

The report says that poor information about transport services and uncoordinated transport arrangements mean there is a risk people are not getting to the services they need. Badly planned transport results in unnecessary journeys, missed or late appointments, people staying in hospital longer than they need to and reliance on unplanned options such as taxis.

The report found information on costs, quality and people's needs is inadequate. Audit Scotland found that at least £93 million is spent annually on transport for health and social care, but this is likely to be a significant underestimate because it is difficult to identify what is spent in this area.

The report recommends coordinating local services, making better use of joint scheduling, sharing more resources between partners, and providing better information to the public.

Auditor General for Scotland Robert Black said:

'Well organised transport can make a positive difference to people needing help with getting to and from hospital appointments and services like day centres. Delays and confusion about arrangements can cause distress and anxiety and lead to people not getting the most out of the care services that are being provided.'

'All partners involved in transport for health and social care need to work together to improve the way these services operate. This is an area where there is scope to make significant improvements and save money without affecting quality.'

Accounts Commission for Scotland chair John Baillie said:

'Joint working across the public sector and with voluntary and private sector providers is crucial for the successful and sustainable development of transport for health and social care. Councils and Regional Transport Partnerships are key partners in planning and delivering these services.'

'There needs to be clear leadership and joint working to ensure transport is well-planned, coordinated and cost-effective. When improving and developing transport services, all partners need to consider the individual needs of service users and the impact of transport provision on their care.'

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### Notes to Editors:

1. For the purposes of this audit, Audit Scotland's definition of transport for health and social care was transport arranged by the ambulance service, NHS boards and councils to take people to and from health appointments and social care services such as day centres. It excluded public transport, regular school buses and general community transport to support independent living, such as taking people shopping. The audit did not cover emergency healthcare transport.
2. Transport for health and social care generally covers three main groups of people: people with a medical need who are eligible to access the Patient Transport Service (PTS) provided by the Scottish Ambulance Service;

people not eligible for PTS but need help with transport, including those on low incomes, those who live in rural and remote areas, and those who have ongoing health and social care needs; and people who have their own means of transport, such as their own or family vehicle or easy access to public transport.

3. In 2009/10, there were 4.6 million hospital outpatient attendances and 1.6 million people discharged from hospital, and 23,000 people attending day centres in Scotland.
4. A supplementary report about the views of voluntary sector providers can be found on Audit Scotland's website [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk)
5. 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)
6. 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 Government and most other public bodies in Scotland, except local authorities. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Executive or the Scottish Parliament.
  - The Accounts Commission looks at whether local authorities, fire and police boards spend public money properly and effectively. It is independent of both central and local government. Commission members are appointed by Scottish Ministers.