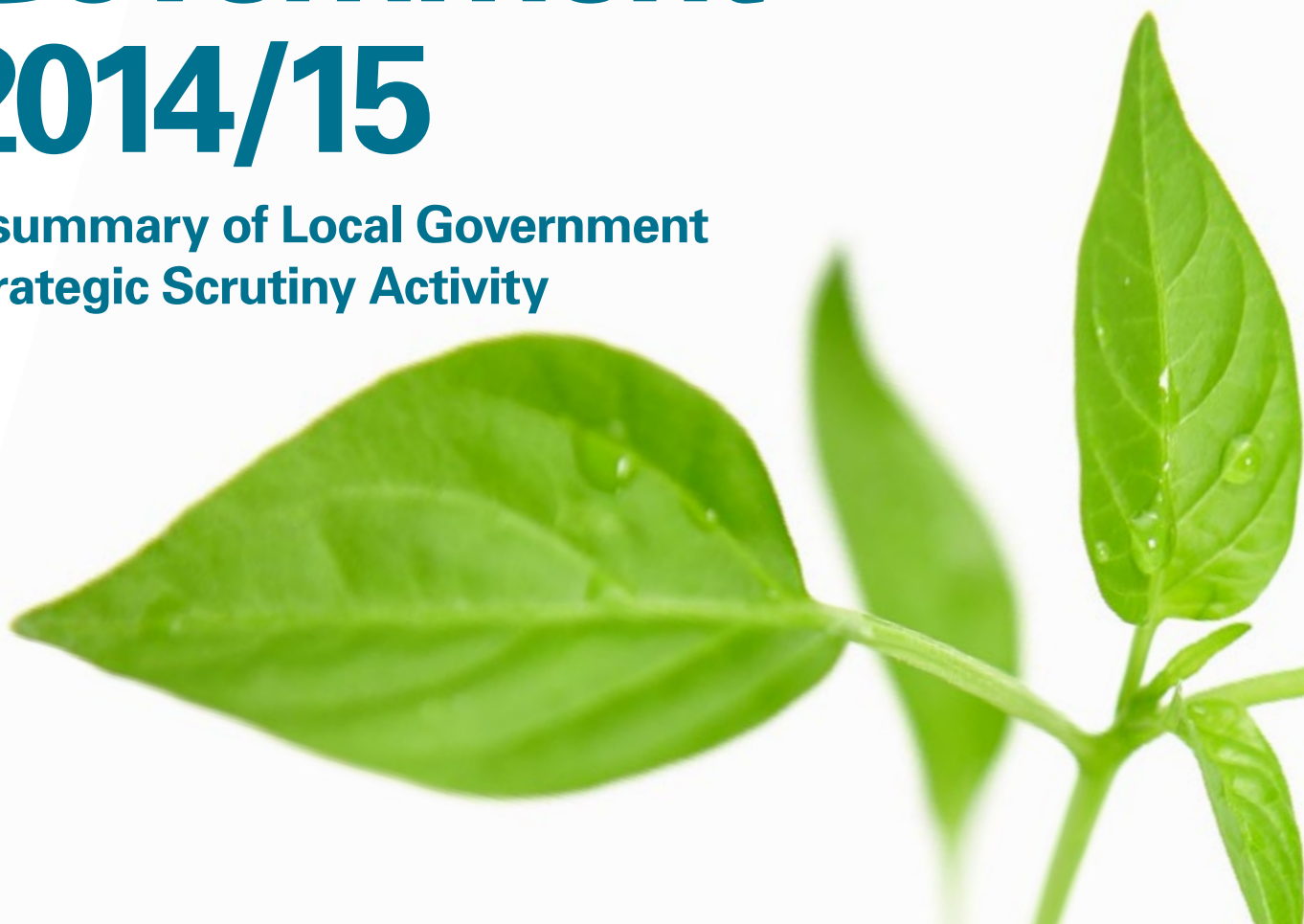


National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government 2014/15

A summary of Local Government
Strategic Scrutiny Activity



Prepared by the Local Government Scrutiny Coordination Strategic Group

June 2014



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Background

1. The National Scrutiny Plan for local government has been jointly prepared by members of the Local Government Scrutiny Coordination Strategic Group. This group includes the main scrutiny bodies for local government - the Accounts Commission, Audit Scotland, Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland, Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate, and the Scottish Housing Regulator. Details of each body can be found in [Appendix 1](#). In this report, they are collectively referred to as scrutiny bodies.
2. Since 2008, scrutiny bodies have worked together to identify and agree the key scrutiny risks in each of Scotland's 32 councils and to develop a plan of scrutiny activity to respond to those specific risks. This approach, called Shared Risk Assessment (SRA), is designed to ensure proportionate and risk-based scrutiny in line with the recommendations of the Crerar report¹.
3. All 32 council areas have a Local Area Networks (LAN), consisting of representatives of all the main scrutiny bodies for local government. The purpose of the LAN is to share intelligence and agree scrutiny risks for each council. Annually, each LAN prepares an Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) containing a scrutiny plan setting out the planned scrutiny activity over a rolling three-year period. These individual plans are aggregated each year to form the National Scrutiny Plan.
4. The National Scrutiny Plan for local government is one of the key outputs from the SRA work. The plan for 2014/15 is the fifth such plan and summarises the strategic scrutiny work from April 2014 to March 2015 as described in each of the 32 councils' individual scrutiny plans.

¹ The Crerar Review. The report of the independent review of regulation, audit, inspection and complaints handling of public services in Scotland. September 2007.

Part 1: Context

Public service reform

5. The 2014/15 National Scrutiny Plan has been developed in the context of a significantly changed scrutiny landscape and the Scottish Governments public service reform agenda, with its focus on:
 - **Place** – integrated local services driven by better partnership working.
 - **People** – workforce development and effective leadership.
 - **Prevention** – shifting resources to preventative activity.
 - **Performance** – greater transparency and improving performance.
6. Given the significance of the public service reform agenda on local government, this year's SRA has considered each council's current position in relation to:
 - community planning and new Single Outcome Agreements
 - police and fire oversight arrangements (following the introduction of new national police and fire services)
 - health and social care integration
 - welfare reform.
7. This has allowed each local area network to consider how councils are responding to the opportunities and challenges that the reform agenda presents.

Review of shared risk assessment

8. In 2013, the Local Government Scrutiny Coordination Strategic Group commissioned a review of the SRA process. The review was undertaken by a working group, consisting of representatives from the main scrutiny bodies for local government. The purpose of the review was to take stock of the operation of the SRA after four cycles of the process and consider how the process might be refined and improved based on the experience of four years of running the SRA process.
9. Based on the findings of the review, this year's SRA process placed more emphasis on:
 - engagement between LANs and councils so that each risk assessment and assurance and improvement plan properly reflected the specific circumstances of each local authority
 - identifying the current position of councils in implementing the Scottish Government's reform agenda
 - scrutiny risk in relation to councils' improvement and transformation agendas.

10. The Local Government Scrutiny Coordination Strategic Group has committed to undertake further development work on the SRA process during 2014/15. This will include consideration of the merits of a move towards a partnership and place-based SRA process.

National scrutiny activity

11. There is national scrutiny activity planned across councils over the next three years. Where activity has been identified for 2014/15, it is included in the National Scrutiny Plan.
 - Following pilot work in 2013, the Care Inspectorate is leading a new programme of joint inspections of children's services and inspections of adult care and health services. The selection of local authority areas for inspection is based on intelligence and risk and takes account of the SRA process.
 - Education Scotland will be reviewing the quality of Careers Information Advice and Guidance services delivered by Skills Development Scotland across all council areas between 2014/15 and 2016/17. It will also be working in partnership with councils to carry out self-evaluation of education psychology services during 2014/15 and 2015/16. In addition, Education Scotland will continue to engage with councils for the purpose of validated self-evaluation (VSE).
 - HMICS will be inspecting local policing across Scotland, covering all local divisions over the next three years. This will examine, amongst other things, local scrutiny and engagement between Police Scotland and councils.
 - The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) will carry out thematic inquiries between 2014/15 and 2015/16.
 - Audit Scotland will carry out a programme of performance audits during the period of this plan that will involve work with councils. The [performance audit programme for 2014/15](#) is available to view online. It will also continue to carry out a programme of housing benefit risk assessments across councils.

Part 2: National scrutiny plan 2014/15

12. The [National Scrutiny Plan \(PDF\)](#), summarising planned scrutiny activity in councils from April 2014 to March 2015, can be found on the Audit Scotland website.
13. The plan includes all strategic scrutiny activity of which we are currently aware. It also includes assisted self-evaluation work requested by councils that is designed to support improvement and build self evaluation capacity. The focus is on planned scrutiny activity that assesses whole services or corporate functions. Therefore, the plan does not include scrutiny activity carried out at service unit or institution level, such as inspections of individual schools or care homes. It also does not include the annual financial audit.
14. In developing this plan we have engaged with COSLA and SOLACE. We acknowledge the input we have had from them and from councils in taking forward this scrutiny improvement work.

Appendix 1

The Local Government Scrutiny Coordination Strategic Group members

Accounts Commission	The Accounts Commission is a non-departmental public body (NDPB). The Accounts Commission is the public's independent watchdog for local government in Scotland. Its role is to examine how Scotland's 32 councils manage their finances, help these bodies manage their resources efficiently and effectively, promote Best Value and publish information every year about how they perform.
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland is a statutory body providing services to the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland (AGS). Working together, the Accounts Commission, the AGS and Audit Scotland ensure that public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.
Care Inspectorate	The Care Inspectorate is a non-departmental public body (NDPB). The Care Inspectorate's purpose is to provide assurance and protection for people who use care, social work and children's services.
Education Scotland	Education Scotland is an executive agency. It is the Scottish Government's national development and improvement agency for education. It is charged with providing support and challenge to the education system, from early years to adult learning, in line with the government's policy objectives.
Healthcare Improvement Scotland	Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) is a health body. The function of HIS is to improve the quality of the care and experience of every person in Scotland every time they access healthcare by supporting healthcare providers.
Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate	The Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland exists to provide independent, risk based and proportionate professional inspection of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. Its purpose is to give assurance to the Scottish public and Scottish Ministers that the Service is working in an efficient and effective way, and to promote improvement in the Service. Through this, the Inspectorate provides external quality assurance to the Service, and provides support to the Service in delivering its functions.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS) is charged with promoting efficiency and effectiveness in respect of the standards of the police service in Scotland.
Scottish Housing Regulator	The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is a non-ministerial department. The statutory objective of the SHR is to safeguard and promote the interests of people who are or may become homeless, tenants of social landlords, or recipients of housing services provided by social landlords.

Appendix 2

Glossary

Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP)	Document which captures agreed areas of risk and good practice, and the resulting scrutiny response for each council. It is the primary planning document for scrutiny bodies.
Local Area Network (LAN)	There is a LAN for each council, comprising representatives of all the scrutiny bodies who engage with the council. LAN members ensure that information and intelligence held by each scrutiny body is shared.
LAN lead	LAN representative facilitating LAN discussions and responsible for engagement with the council and producing the AIP.
National Scrutiny Plan (NSP)	The aggregation of the individual council's scrutiny plans into a national plan detailing all the scrutiny work planned across Scottish councils.
Shared Risk Assessment (SRA)	A joint approach using key information about local government to plan scrutiny activity that is proportionate and based on risk.
Supported self-evaluation (SSE)	Assistance provided by the Care Inspectorate to councils on request, to help them develop their own methods and quality of self scrutiny.
Validated self-evaluation (VSE)	Assistance provided by Education Scotland to councils on request, to help them develop their own methods and quality of self scrutiny.

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A summary of Local Government Strategic Scrutiny Activity

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