

News release

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Community planning yet to plug the gap between expectations and delivery

Progress on community planning has not yet achieved the major change needed to fulfil its potential to reduce inequalities and put communities at the heart of delivering public services.

Community planning involves councils and other public bodies working with communities, businesses and voluntary groups to plan and deliver services that improve the lives of local people. Established in 2003, the process is led by 32 Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs), covering each council area.

In its third update on community planning for the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission, Audit Scotland states that local and national progress has been made since its last report in 2014.

It recognises that CPPs have improved leadership and scrutiny, and the way they use data to set clearer priorities. However, more effort is needed to shift resources on a larger scale towards long-term goals and to involve communities fully in making decisions that affect their lives, so CPPs can improve outcomes and address inequalities, particularly in more disadvantaged areas.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out new statutory duties for CPPs, and reforms such as health and social care integration aim to promote prevention and outcomes. But stronger national leadership and support from the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) is needed for community planning to meet its full potential.

The Scottish Government is improving its understanding of individual CPPs, but should be clear on what role it expects CPPs and partners to play in reforming public services.

The report also states that some short-term performance targets make it difficult to advance reform and shift the focus of public bodies to long-term outcomes for services and the people who use them.

Caroline Gardner, Auditor General for Scotland, said: "Community planning continues to be given a pivotal role in transforming public services in Scotland. The progress we've seen from individual CPPs shows there is enthusiasm for pushing forward with this ambitious reform.

"But without a stronger focus on prevention, long-term outcomes, and how partnerships perform, it's difficult to see how community planning can make the impact that's needed. If community planning is to thrive, the views and experiences of local people must be at the heart of measuring delivery of public services."

Douglas Sinclair, chair of the Accounts Commission, added: "This report makes clear that a gap still exists between national expectations of CPPs, and how partnerships plan and deliver services.

"Bridging that gap requires firm leadership from the Scottish Government, COSLA, and CPPs, strengthened by empowered communities and a commitment from all partners to share and deliver resources towards joint priorities."

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Notes to editors

1. The various public bodies involved in community planning employ a collective workforce of 380,200 staff and are responsible for budgets totalling £25.5billion. A further breakdown is available in our Key Facts exhibit.
2. The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 provides the statutory basis for community planning. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 introduced more statutory duties for community planning.
3. This is the third overview report published by Audit Scotland on community planning. In March 2013, we published [Improving community planning in Scotland](#), and provided an update on progress in November 2014 with [Community planning: turning ambition into action](#).
4. This report provides an update on progress, and is in two parts:
 - Part one examines the policy context for community planning and developments since November 2014.
 - Part two assesses the progress that has been made nationally and locally against the recommendations in our previous report.
5. A summary of progress against the recommendations in our 2014 report is provided in Appendix 1. These have been classified into red (no progress made to date), amber (some progress) and green (recommendation fully implemented). We have repeated some of our previous recommendations in this report where progress has not been made and the recommendations remain relevant.
6. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk
 - The Auditor General appoints auditors to Scotland's central government and NHS bodies; examines how public bodies spend public money; helps them to manage their finances to the highest standards; and checks whether they achieve value for money. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliament
 - The Accounts Commission is the public spending watchdog for local government. It holds councils and various joint boards and committees in Scotland to account and help them improve. It operates impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government, and meets and reports in public
 - 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 Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland.