Scottish Government

Management Report 2017/18





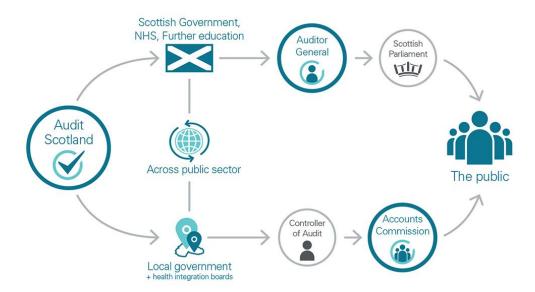
Prepared for Scottish Government

June 2018

Who we are

The Auditor General, the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland work together to deliver public audit in Scotland:

- The Auditor General is an independent crown appointment, made on the recommendation of the Scottish Parliament, to audit the Scottish Government, NHS and other bodies and report to Parliament on their financial health and performance.
- The Accounts Commission is an independent public body appointed by Scottish ministers to hold local government to account. The Controller of Audit is an independent post established by statute, with powers to report directly to the Commission on the audit of local government.
- Audit Scotland is governed by a board, consisting of the Auditor General, the chair of the Accounts Commission, a non-executive board chair, and two non-executive members appointed by the Scottish Commission for Public Audit, a commission of the Scottish Parliament.



About us

Our vision is to be a world–class audit organisation that improves the use of public money.

Through our work for the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission, we provide independent assurance to the people of Scotland that public money is spent properly and provides value. We aim to achieve this by:

- carrying out relevant and timely audits of the way the public sector manages and spends money
- · reporting our findings and conclusions in public
- identifying risks, making clear and relevant recommendations.

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Audit findings

Introduction

- **1.** Auditors in the public sector give an independent opinion on the financial statements and other specified information accompanying the statements. We also review and report on arrangements within the audited body to manage its performance, regularity and use of resources.
- 2. To support our work on the financial statements, we test key controls within key financial systems to see if we can place reliance on the systems and processes used to produce data for the financial statements. This report contains a summary of the key issues identified during the interim audit work carried out at the Scottish Government.
- **3.** Given the size and nature of the Scottish Government's operations, a number of large and relatively complex systems such as Payroll are used. It is therefore important that adequate controls are in place to ensure the accurate processing of information.
- **4.** The Scottish Government provides services such as Payroll, HR and the Scottish Executive Accounting System (SEAS) to approximately 45 public bodies including agencies such as Transport Scotland and other bodies such as the Care Inspectorate. Our testing is used to provide assurance to the auditors of these public bodies. They will consider the results in planning and performing their local audit work.
- **5.** The main focus of our work was to test the key controls within the Scottish Government's main financial systems. We also report on our findings from the testing of expenditure and journals across the nine Scottish Government portfolios. Our expenditure testing helps to provide us with assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement¹ and we will use the results of this testing to finalise our approach for the 2017/18 financial statements audit.
- **6.** The report also details the results our follow-up work carried out in two areas identified in our 2016/17 annual audit report:
 - Progress in recovery of overpayments to project sponsors of approximately £16 million which was identified as part of the Scottish Government's closure work on the European Structural Funds 2007-13 programmes.
 - A review of the Scottish Government's participation in the latest National Fraud Initiative which is a counter-fraud exercise coordinated by Audit Scotland that uses computerised techniques to identify potential fraud or error.
- **7.** The contents of this report have been discussed with the Scottish Government to confirm factual accuracy. The co-operation and assistance we received during the course of our audit is gratefully acknowledged.

¹ Materiality defines the maximum error that we are prepared to accept and still conclude that our audit objective has been achieved. The assessment of what is material is a matter of professional judgement. It involves considering both the amount and nature of the misstatement.

Summary conclusion

- 8. Our overall conclusion is that, other than payroll, the Scottish Government's main systems of internal control (SEAS (General ledger), Payables, Receivables and Banking) operate effectively. This enables us to take planned assurance for these systems for our audit of the 2017/18 financial statements and to provide assurance to auditors of public bodies that use the same systems. Taking planned assurance from our work on internal controls means that we can reduce the amount of substantive testing we would need to do to confirm that transactions and balances in the financial statements represent a true and fair view of the underlying activity. In the case of payroll, we will increase our testing to obtain the assurance we need.
- 9. Our controls testing identified a number of cases where controls did not operate as expected and these are summarised in Exhibit 1. This includes several findings which are the same as those identified in previous years' audits and management action to resolve them remains outstanding. It is important that the issues identified are addressed within the agreed timescales to ensure that the integrity of the systems is maintained and that risks are minimised. There is also the potential for risks to increase the longer management action remains outstanding.
- **10.** Issues identified from our expenditure testing and follow-up work are also detailed in Exhibit 1. Where weaknesses have been identified we will carry out additional work in response to these findings and this is also detailed in the exhibit.

Testing of key controls









Bank reconciliations

Payroll controls

IT access

Budgets

- 11. Our responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice require us to assess the system of internal control put in place by management. We seek to gain assurance that the audited body:
 - has systems of recording and processing transactions which provide a sound basis for the preparation of the financial statements
 - · has systems of internal control which provide an adequate means of preventing and detecting error, fraud or corruption
 - complies with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations.
- 12. Our 2017/18 testing covered key controls in a number of areas including bank reconciliations, payroll validation and exception reporting, authorisation of journals, change of supplier bank details and IT access controls. Additionally, our testing covered budget monitoring and control, and feeder system reconciliations.
- **13.** Where we identified that a key control did not operate as we expected, we considered other mitigating controls and the effectiveness of these controls to deliver the control objective we expected. If the key control or mitigating control is not operating adequately, we have included it in our key findings in Exhibit 1.
- 14. In accordance with ISA 330: The Auditor's Response to Assessed Risks, our audit judgements are based on current year testing of controls and where appropriate prior year results. Our risk based audit approach allows us to take a three-year cyclical approach to controls testing. This approach enables us to place

reliance on previous years' audit work where we have confirmed that controls remain unchanged and no significant weaknesses have been identified.

Testing of expenditure

- **15.** We tested a sample of expenditure items across all nine Scottish Government ministerial portfolios. We focused on core portfolio expenditure given that grant-in-aid funding to public bodies is audited by their local auditors. A sample of high-value transactions were tested covering the first nine months of the financial year. Further testing will be completed before the start of the financial statements audit to ensure coverage of the full financial year.
- **16.** We identified one issue from our expenditure testing and this is detailed in Exhibit 1.

Testing of journals

17. We selected a sample of journal entries relating to the period April 2017 to December 2017 based on a number of potential risk factors, for example journals created on a weekend or bank holiday (it would be expected that most journals would normally be created during the working week). We found that all the journals tested were appropriate and valid. We will test a further sample of journal entries as part of our final accounts testing.

European Structural Funds

- **18.** The Scottish Government's closure work on the European Structural Funds 2007-13 programmes identified that they had overpaid project sponsors approximately £16 million as a result of audit findings and therefore this could not be claimed from the European Commission as eligible expenditure. As at 31 March 2017, the Scottish Government had identified this debt but had not decided whether it should be recovered. If they did not pursue it, there was a risk that the European Commission would take a view that this funding is out-with their approved state aid schemes and that they would apply state aid penalties which could be an additional cost to the Scottish Government.
- **19.** Out of 215 project sponsors, a group of 71 project sponsors were identified as being overpaid and invoices were subsequently raised by the Scottish Government and issued to project sponsors. Of these 71 sponsors, 17 sponsors formally disputed the invoice amounts. The Scottish Government formed panels to hear the project sponsors' evidence regarding the disputed amounts. The Scottish Government informed us that the panels upheld project sponsor appeals in six cases, with a further three being partitially upheld, and overall the potential recoveries were approximately £14 million of which £4.9 million was taken forward through the dispute process.
- **20.** Our testing examined a sample of reports from panel meetings, considered the perceived breaches, reviewed the judgements made and the resultant reports. Our testing concluded that for the sample of reports we reviewed, the panels' decisions were methodical, impartial and fair. We will review the accounting treatment in relation to the overpayments as part of our financial statements audit.

National Fraud Initiative

- **21.** The Scottish Government participates in the biennial NFI exercise through uploads of payroll and accounts payable data. The data submitted by the Scottish Government covers all of those bodies which use its payroll and accounts payable shared services in addition to its own operations.
- **22.** We completed a NFI auditor questionnaire which all auditors of bodies who participate in NFI are asked to complete. This includes reviewing the progress of the Scottish Government in investigating data matches, results of investigations and reporting of results internally and externally. It was expected that match investigation should have largely been completed by 30 September 2017.

23. Overall, we found that the Scottish Government's engagement in most areas was good. However, there was no follow-up of matches relating to procurement. We also made recommendations in relation to the reporting of progress and results of the NFI exercise. Further details of our findings are included in Exhibit 1.

Risks identified

24. Any weaknesses identified represent those that have come to our attention during the course of normal audit work and therefore are not necessarily all the weaknesses that may exist. It is the responsibility of management to decide on the extent of the internal control system appropriate to the Scottish Government.

Exhibit 1

Key findings and action plan 2017/18

Audit findings

Current year

1. Expenditure testing

Our expenditure testing found three instances where the grant did not follow the process as set out in the terms and conditions of the grant letter. The total value of the grants where issues were identified was £2.1 million. These covered:

- Grant conditions not satisfied before payment in Health and Sport:
- Grant payment made without Statement of Compliance as specified in grant letter in Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform; and
- An extension to a deadline given for a grant in Communities, Social Security and Equalities, which was not agreed in writing as required by the terms of the grant letter.

The grant letter is a key control to ensure propriety of expenditure. It is important that conditions set out in the grant letters are followed to ensure that money is spent in line with Scottish Government objectives.

Grants guidance is clear on the principles and process to be followed. The three findings were local issues of a procedural nature, which did not result in any inappropriate payment of funding; steps have been taken in each case to prevent recurrence.

For information - the Governance team are working with Third Sector Unit to boost awareness and understanding of the materials and guidance already available to grant makers by initiating a grant makers network, which met for the first meeting time on 12th of June.

Further testing of expenditure charged during January to March 2018 to ensure we have tested the full year.

Bank reconciliations

We audited a sample of bank reconciliations for two bank accounts. We identified that the bank reconciliations for the period April 2017 to September 2017 were not completed until November 2017. We

Accepted. Cover for bank reconciliations will be reviewed and extended.

Head of Treasury and Banking

Further testing of bank reconciliations as part of our year end work.

Issue identified **Additional audit** Management response procedures planned Responsible officer and target date noted that reconciliations after September 2017 had been completed October 2018 timeously. Bank reconciliations provide the necessary control to uncover irregularities and help to identify potential fraud. If reconciliations are not completed timeously the risk of fraud or error not being detected is increased. The Scottish Government should ensure that monthly bank reconciliations are completed and reviewed for the full financial year. 3. Authorised signatory not The bank has now confirmed No additional audit removed that the member of staff has procedures are required. been removed as signatory from The Scottish Government provides its bank accounts of both the banks with details of officers who have Scottish Government and other the authority to open accounts. This list customers of the Scottish should be updated when officers leave Government banking the department. We identified one framework. signatory relating to one bank account who has moved departments but had not been removed from the authorised Head of Treasury & Banking signatory list. We were advised that officers have made numerous attempts Complete to remove the signatory but the bank has not actioned the request. There is a risk that unauthorised transactions are processed if the authorised signatory list is not up to date. We would recommend further attempts are made to update the signatory list. **European Structural Funds** Continue to undertake Further testing of ESF (ESF) reconciliation reconciliations on a monthly reconciliations, including basis. whether they have been From sample testing of the ESF reviewed, as part of our year reconciliations we identified that there end work. was a lack of an independent review of Head of European Structural completed reconciliations for the period Funds State Aid Division from April 2017 to November 2017. In addition, reconciliations were not completed monthly for the period April Already implemented 2017 to October 2017. Failure to complete and review reconciliations regularly weakens this control. We noted that reconciliations were carried out on a monthly basis from November 2017, and review of reconciliations was implemented from December 2017. These weaknesses were identified in-year and addressed.

There is a risk of errors not being detected timeously. Furthermore, a

Management response Responsible officer and target date

Additional audit procedures planned

lack of review means discrepancies could potentially be undetected.

5. Payroll exception reporting

Variance reports are run monthly by the payroll team with the expectation that all variances should be investigated by Senior Pay Administrators. For the variance reports of September 2017 and January 2018 that we audited, not all variances had been investigated. Completed variance reports were subsequently provided. There is a lack of audit trail to confirm that all variances are investigated and resolved before the payroll is run.

The central variance report should be updated by all Senior Pay Administrators and reviewed by the Pay Admin Managers prior to the payroll being run. The review should be evidenced.

We are reviewing how team leaders access the variance report to allow multiple updating of the report. A review of the Variance Report has commenced and we are

The new report will be shared with internal audit for comment.

building a replacement report.

working with our Support

Contractor on scoping and

Head of HR Service Centre Review date - September 2018 We will increase our substantive testing of payroll transactions as part of our year end work.

6. Payroll retrospective payments

In our leavers sample of 30 we identified an employee who was not retrospectively paid for the annual salary increase which took effect from 1 August 2017.

Similarly, one case from our change of grade sample highlighted an employee who was not paid a lump sum payment due to an annual pay and band increment which was effective from August (but retrospectively applied in Novembers pay).

There is a risk that retrospective payments to employees are not correctly applied to all employees and that there is no control in place which prevents/detects this.

A report will be provided by Corporate Analytical Systems Team (CAST) to ensure all backdated pay award payments are captured and processed including lump sum promotion payments.

Head of HR Service Centre Review date - September 2018 We will quantify the potential monetary error and assess against our performance materiality.

We will also review and consider this report confirming all backdated pay award payments have been captured and processed.

Prior year follow up

7. Supplier vetting

For procurements under £50,000 there are no formal supplier checks in place. For example, confirmation that the supplier is valid, that the financial position of the supplier is adequate and that there are no regulatory or ethical issues. This means that a bogus, financially weak or disreputable supplier could be used by the Scottish Government.

SG have taken a risk based approach in considering supplier expenditures of less that £50k. This balances the risk of operational delivery exposure where payments are made in arrears, with the resourcing required to complete full analysis of accounts. Consideration will be given to steps to further reduce potential fraud risks.

Further testing of payables and expenditure as part of our year end work.

Management response Responsible officer and target date

Additional audit procedures planned

One mitigating control is that suppliers are paid in arrears.

The Scottish Government planned to roll out a new supplier vetting scheme between August 2016 and April 2017 but found that there were not enough Designated Purchasing Officers across Directorates to deliver the new scheme.

The Scottish Government still plans for procurements under £50,000 and above £5,000 to have a contract in place to strengthen controls.

In the meantime, there is a moderate risk that a financially weak, fraudulent or disreputable supplier is being used by the Scottish Government which may lead to disruption of service provision.

The Scottish Government should ensure that controls are strengthened for procurements below £50,000 in 2018/19.

Purchase to Pay Manager November 2018

8. Access to Payroll system

We have reported on controls over access to the payroll system since our 2014/15 report. e-HR is an integrated system that administers multiple HR functions including payroll. As such, adequate arrangements for segregation of duties are essential. Mitigating controls include Team Leader checks over starters, leavers and amendments to payroll. As with 2016/17, the results of our 2017/18 testing identified issues in each of these areas (see payroll amendment checks below).

There remains a risk that changes to payroll are not subject to independent verification, resulting in the potential for payroll error or fraud. The Scottish Government should ensure mitigating controls for the segregation of duties are operating effectively.

The mitigating controls are part of a process of continuous improvement. The results of the audit have been included in this process and will be considered along with workflow mapping and allocations to ensure that the segregation of duties are operating effectively. The mitigation controls are part of a process of continuous improvement and with the introduction of a client group split rather than an A-Z split across all payrolls provides a segregation of duties by client.

Head of HR Service Centre Review date - October 2018 Further testing of mitigating controls (team leader checks) will be carried out as part of our year end work.

9. Payroll amendment checks

We identified in 2015/16 and 2016/17 that 100 per cent Team Leader checks were not completed for all starters and leavers. These checks involve Payroll Team Leaders checking changes to Payroll data have been processed correctly and mitigate the risk of input

We are creating Quality
Assurance reports, logs and
processes to assist with data
checking and identify skills
gaps. We are also
communicating with CAST,
iTECS and our Support
Contractor to identify facilities

We will increase our testing of payroll amendments as part of our year end work considering this finding.

Review date - October 2018 &

March 2019

Management response Responsible officer and target date

Additional audit procedures planned

10. Payroll signed contracts

We identified in our 2016/17 audit that there was no signed contract held by payroll for five members of staff. Our 2017/18 testing of 30 starters, identified six cases where no signed contract was held by Payroll. In 2016/17 HRSS advised that contracts have been revised, with signed acceptance being included at the offer of appointment stage. Revised arrangements were due to be trialled in March 2017, meaning new entrants could not proceed without signed acceptance. This year's findings would indicate this has not been fully implemented.

There is a risk that a lack of signed contracts could result in disagreements over terms and conditions of employment. The Scottish Government should ensure signed contracts for all staff are held by Payroll.

We will meet with Resourcing colleagues and review the process to ensure all areas are aware of the potential consequences when the signed contract has not been received and the importance of attaching the documentation to DOC. The pay teams scan all documents as quickly as resourcing and workflow allows. All documentation has now been uploaded. All paperwork within the HR Service Centre is retained securely until it is scanned. This mitigates any risk that confidential documents are misplaced.

Head of HR Service Centre Review date - October 2018 & March 2019 We will increase our testing of starters, as part of our year end work, considering this finding.

We will confirm that all documentation has now been uploaded to the system.

11. Payroll supporting documentation

We identified in our 2016/17 audit that there were delays in uploading supporting documentation onto the system. Our 2017/18 testing of starters, leavers and payroll changes identified a total of 20 cases (from a combined total sample of 90) where supporting documentation had not been uploaded onto the system at the time of testing. Of the 20 cases, 17 had been outstanding for more than one month.

There is a risk that changes are made to the payroll system which are unsupported, increasing the risk of fraud or error. The Scottish Government should ensure appropriate supporting documentation is retained on the payroll system.

The Pay Admin team will scan all documents as quickly as resourcing and workflow allows. All subsequent paper work has been uploaded.

Team Leaders will regularly check there is no back dated scanning.

Head of HR Service Centre Review date - October 2018 & March 2019 Further testing of supporting documentation will be carried out as part of our year end work.

We will confirm that all documentation has been uploaded to the system.

12. SEAS and EASEbuy access controls

In our 2016/17 interim report we identified three instances where access to SEAS was granted without full compliance with the SEAS Access Policy. In 2017/18 we noted the following issues:

SEAS access controls:

Access was granted to two users without the appropriate level of training being carried out by a temporary member of staff who now left the Scottish Government. System Administration is now carried

We will test a sample of journal entries at the year end to ensure they have been accounted for correctly.

We will confirm that all documentation has been uploaded to the system.

Management response Responsible officer and target date

Additional audit procedures planned

- We identified two instances where users were granted access to SEAS prior to the appropriate level of training being carried out.
- No confirmation of Care Inspectorate employees training is obtained before user access is granted. Training is completed offsite and not in Scottish Government buildings.
- Access to EASEbuy should be authorised by an officer of B3 grade or above. We identified two instances where the authorising officer was below this grade (one B1 and one A3).
- We could not identify a completed access authorisation for three of our sample of 21 EASEbuy users. These users were all from bodies outside the core Scottish Government Directorates.

Lack of sufficient training and authorisation of users increases the risk of fraud or error occurring. The **Scottish Government should ensure** that all users complete appropriate training and authorisation prior to access being granted in line with its policy.

out by staff who are aware of system access policy.

The SEAS user forms for Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service and the Care Inspectorate have been amended to include a disclaimer confirming that all users have completed the relevant training before submitting a request for specific SEAS responsibilities. The proposed change is currently with Internal Audit for consideration and will be implemented after this.

SEAS Application Security Administrator

June 2018

EASEbuy controls:

EASEbuy desk instructions for setting up Scottish Government (SG) users have been updated so that every user form authorisation is checked against the SG staff directory prior to processing as of the 1 June 2018.

The EASEbuy team will work with all partners, i.e. those organisations that are not SG staff to agree a centralised B3 equivalent contact to authorise all user forms prior to submitting the requests to the EASEbuy team - completion date 31 July 2018

A new PECOS user form was created for Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) to go live from the 1 June 2018 to have a centralised B3 equivalent to submit all user forms - completion 1 June 2018.

The training provision for all future EASEbuy and PECOS training will be through eLearning from July 2018 onwards. Face to face training will be removed once the eLearning materials are all fit for purpose. eLearning materials will be created and maintained by a combination of the Finance Training Team and Scottish

Issue identified **Additional audit** Management response procedures planned Responsible officer and target date Government Purchase to Pay Governance team once a Purchasing System Manager is recruited by late August 2018. Purchase to Pay Manager September 2018 We will follow up as part of 13. NFI procurement matches The data matches in this new batch of NFI data involve our year end work. In our 2016/17 Annual Audit Report we personal data and, in particular, reported that no progress had been data not held by Procurement made on investigating the procurement colleagues. Given the matches (a total of 42 recommended significance of GDPR in the matches). As at April 2018, there was handling of sensitive personal still no investigation into any of the data, SG will review processes procurement matches. There was a for taking action on intelligence lack of clarity over who was provided by NFI. A process will responsible for the procurement be developed to sensitively and reports. appropriately handle this With no investigation of information and take procurement matches, and a lack of appropriate action. clear oversight over who is responsible for investigations of different categories of matches, Deputy Director, Financial there is a risk that potential fraud is Management and Head of undetected. This exposes the Procurement Development and Scottish Government to both Construction Review Division financial and reputational risk. (liasing with colleagues across the SG as necessary). Review underway. 14. NFI internal reporting There is routine reporting to We will consider as part of SGAAC on fraud: in the Annual our review of the Governance Although the Scottish Government Statement disclosures. Fraud Report and in the Assurance and Audit Committee Finance papers, and this does (SGAAC) receives information on NFI include more detailed reporting by way of escalation and from our on the NFI in the relevant Annual Audit Report, there is no years. We will shortly be routine reporting throughout the year. preparing the next Annual Fraud Report and will consider the The Scottish Government should level of detail provided on the consider routinely reporting on NFI to SGAAC. This would help NFI activity. emphasise the importance of the Scottish Government's fraud prevention activities and the Senior Policy Officer, Fraud

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supporting it.

Scottish Government's role in

By Sept 2018

Scottish Government

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