

National scrutiny plan

A summary of local government strategic scrutiny activity



Prepared on behalf of the Strategic Scrutiny Group
September 2019

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

 AUDIT SCOTLAND

 improving policing
across Scotland
HMICS

 Healthcare
Improvement
Scotland

 Inspectorate of
Prosecution in
Scotland

 care
inspectorate

 Education
Scotland
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Regulator

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PRISONS FOR SCOTLAND

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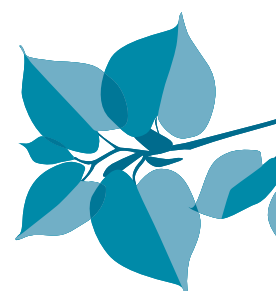
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Introduction



1. The National Scrutiny Plan (NSP) is issued on behalf of the Strategic Scrutiny Group for local government (SSG). The SSG comprises Scotland's main public sector scrutiny bodies – the Accounts Commission, Audit Scotland, Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, the Scottish Housing Regulator, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland, Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons and the Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland. The SSG supports the delivery of better coordinated, more proportionate and risk-based local government scrutiny. It is convened and chaired by the Accounts Commission. Details of each organisation can be found in the [Appendix \(page 22\)](#). This plan is prepared by the SSG's Operational Scrutiny Group, which is chaired by the Care Inspectorate. Other members are Audit Scotland (on behalf of the Accounts Commission), Education Scotland and the Scottish Housing Regulator. These scrutiny bodies work together through Local Area Networks (LANs) in each council area to share intelligence and relate this to their work.

What the plan covers

2. This NSP summarises all planned and announced strategic scrutiny activity from September 2019, in each of Scotland's 32 councils. In every local area there is also a baseline of scrutiny activity of services or institutions, such as inspections of schools or care homes or the annual financial audit of public bodies. In some cases where we note that no strategic scrutiny is planned for a council, this is often because they have already been subject to scrutiny activity.

3. This plan highlights the range and nature of scrutiny to be carried out during the year. For some programmes of work the plan does not set out each council where scrutiny will take place. This is because not all strategic scrutiny is announced on an annual basis. With an increasing focus on a risk-based and proportionate approach, scrutiny activity can also change during the year, particularly in response to any significant risks or events that require immediate investigation.

4. To ensure that this NSP is up to date and comprehensive, we will update it on a six-monthly basis in response to any significant changes in scrutiny activity. When the plan is updated we will inform LAN leads who will inform their councils.

Background

5. The SSG was established in February 2008, bringing together bodies scrutinising local authorities. Its work is underpinned by the obligations of the Public Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 and by the five principles of scrutiny:

- public focus
- independence
- proportionality
- transparency
- accountability.

6. The SSG established a shared risk assessment (SRA) process in 2008 as the vehicle for scrutiny bodies to share intelligence and agree scrutiny risks in each of Scotland's 32 councils. The process has been successful in providing a focus for scrutiny bodies to work closer together and for more coordinated engagement between councils and scrutiny bodies.

7. The way that scrutiny bodies plan their scrutiny programmes has changed significantly over the last few years. This is, in part, as a response to the increasingly complex landscape in which councils deliver their services, changes in the roles of scrutiny bodies over time, new audit and inspection methodologies and changing drivers for scrutiny.

8. Recognising these changes, we carried out a fundamental review of the SRA process during 2018. As part of the review we consulted with local authorities on how best we could take forward the SRA and scrutiny coordination. The feedback we received highlighted overwhelming support for scrutiny bodies continuing to discuss individual councils and their performance. However, it also raised areas for improvement, including:

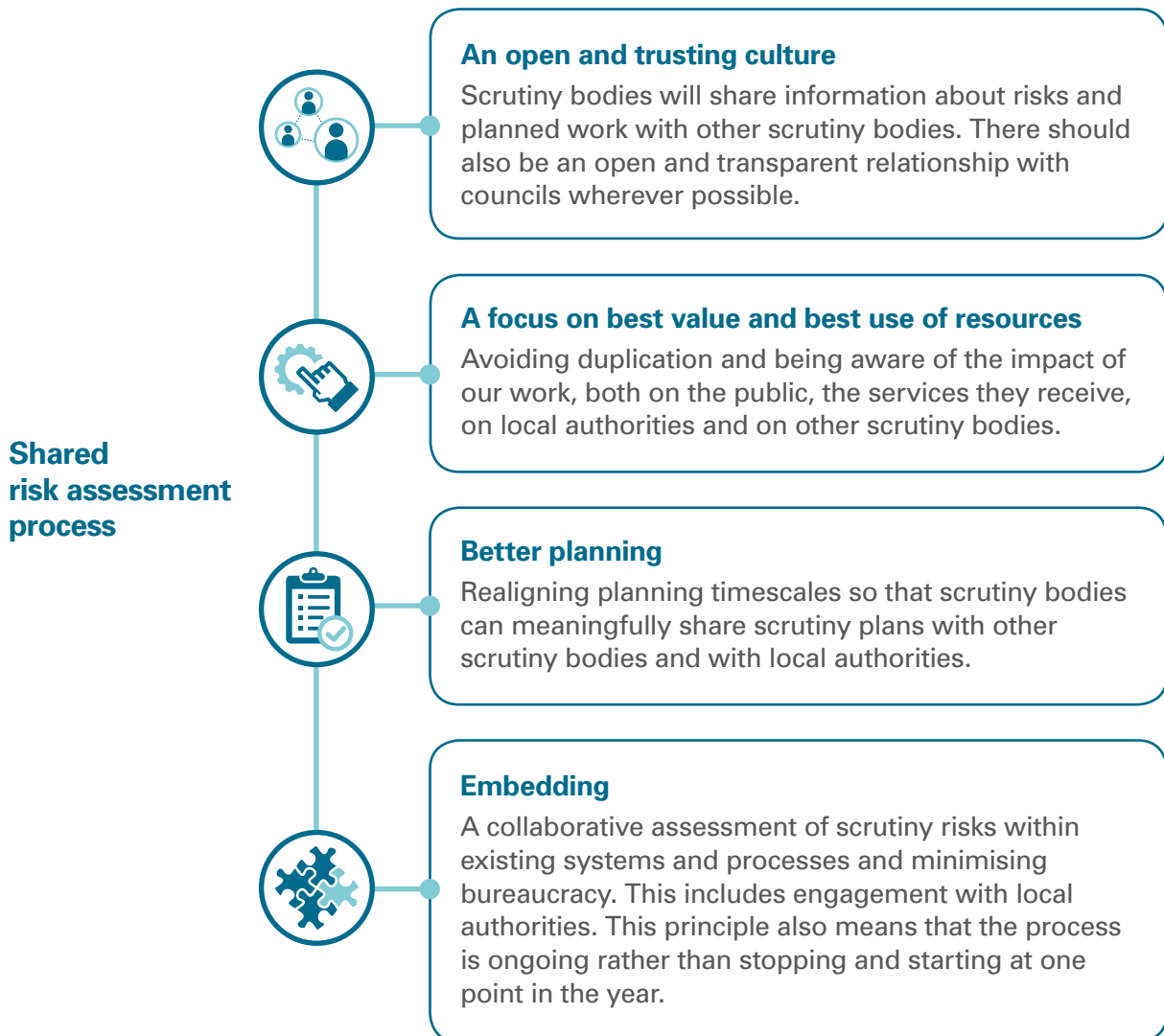
- a need for more regular discussion and sharing of local intelligence and mixed views on the value of local outputs from LANs
- improving scrutiny planning and coordination at a national level.

Revised SRA

9. We have introduced a revised approach to SRA, designed to ensure that it provides the greatest value for both scrutiny bodies and councils by:

- promoting the best possible shared understanding of scrutiny risks
- coordinating scrutiny activity most effectively
- maximising opportunities for scrutiny bodies to collaborate
- supporting better engagement between scrutiny bodies and councils.

10. The most significant changes in the SRA process are a greater focus on national planning and coordination of scrutiny programmes and better sharing of intelligence. Scrutiny bodies have agreed that the following principles underpin our revised approach to the SRA.



National scrutiny programme




Developing scrutiny programmes

11. Each scrutiny body involved in the SSG adopts a similar approach to developing their scrutiny programmes. Fundamentally this involves taking account of national priorities, risks, data and intelligence. However there are other factors which can have a significant impact on programmes of scrutiny activity. These include, unforeseen service failures, the impact of major reforms and legislation, such as EU withdrawal, or direct requests from ministers.


12. Collectively we continue to use the SRA process to inform the nature, ordering and scope of our scrutiny programmes. Through the SRA process we consider the relative strengths and areas for improvement of individual councils and their partnerships. In making our risk assessments we take into account how robustly self-evaluation is carried out and what the results of self-evaluation are telling us.

13. Our scrutiny programmes are also informed by both local and national responses to the common risks facing local government and its partnerships. These risks include:

- an increasingly challenging financial outlook caused by factors such as rising demand for services, demographic change, tight and uncertain budget settlements and commitments to national policy priorities
- the impact of the UK's departure from the EU
- the ability to ensure there are the skills and capacity required to manage and deliver services
- the ability to demonstrate the impact from public sector reform
- failure to capitalise on the opportunities that new technology offers to transform public services and improve outcomes for people.

14. In June 2019, the Scottish Government launched its [National Performance Framework](#)  (NPF), providing a focus for the delivery of public services. The risks set out above may impact on how local government and its partners contribute to the outcomes in the NPF. The NPF is something that will underpin our scrutiny activities.

Coordination and collaboration

15. Scrutiny bodies continue to follow the principles from the Crerar report, to better coordinate our work and look for opportunities for collaborative scrutiny. A wide range of our work is carried out collaboratively, for example joint inspections of services for children and adults and inspections of the Scottish Attainment Challenge authorities. The SSG is committed to this approach and plans to explore broader opportunities for scrutiny collaboration around important issues facing councils and the public, where all scrutiny bodies have an interest. For example, in 2019 the SSG published [*Principles for community empowerment*](#) , based on work with councils and other partners to understand this developing area and how they could incorporate it in scrutiny programmes.

16. The group plans further collaborative work where this can add most value. As with all partnership working, there are practical challenges in making collaborative scrutiny work successfully, but we see the potential for this to make a significant positive impact. As these opportunities evolve and develop we will update councils and their partnerships through LAN engagement and future revisions to this plan.


Scrutiny programme 2019/20

Council	Scrutiny activity	Scrutiny body/bodies	Fieldwork/engagement dates
Aberdeen City	Inspection of justice social work services	Care Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland	January to March 2020
	Career information, advice and guidance services	Education Scotland	September to December 2019
	Engagement on Gypsy Traveller minimum site standards	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Aberdeenshire	Best Value Assurance Report	Audit Scotland	February to April 2020 Report to Accounts Commission: October 2020
	Career information, advice and guidance services (follow-up)	Education Scotland	February 2020
	Engagement on: service quality; services for people who are homeless; Gypsy Traveller minimum site standards	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Angus	Engagement on services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Argyll and Bute	Best Value Assurance Report	Audit Scotland	Beginning October 2019 Report to Accounts Commission: April 2020
	Inspection of community learning and development services (further inspection)	Education Scotland	Before end of March 2020 (TBC)
	Engagement on services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Clackmannanshire	Engagement on services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Dumfries and Galloway	Inspection of justice social work services	Care Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland	October to December 2019
	Career information, advice and guidance services	Education Scotland	October 2019
	Engagement on: services for people who are homeless; Gypsy Traveller minimum site standards	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20

Cont.


Council	Scrutiny activity	Scrutiny body/bodies	Fieldwork/ engagement dates
	Local area inspection of fire services	HM Fire Services Inspectorate	July to September 2019
Dundee City	Best Value Assurance Report	Audit Scotland	February to April 2020 Report to Accounts Commission: September 2020
	Fieldwork for <i>Improving outcomes for young people through school education</i> 	Audit Scotland	September 2019
	Engagement on: services for people who are homeless; gas safety	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
East Ayrshire	No planned scrutiny		
East Dunbartonshire	Career information, advice and guidance services	Education Scotland	September to December 2019
	Engagement on services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
East Lothian	Supported and validated self-evaluation – community justice partnerships	Care Inspectorate	January to March 2020
	Engagement on: services for people who are homeless; Gypsy Traveller minimum site standards	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
East Renfrewshire	Engagement on services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Edinburgh	Best Value Assurance Report	Audit Scotland	February to April 2020 Report to Accounts Commission: August 2020
	Career information, advice and guidance services (follow-up)	Education Scotland	September 2019
	Engagement on services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
	Local area inspection of fire services	HM Fire Services Inspectorate	2019/20

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Council	Scrutiny activity	Scrutiny body/bodies	Fieldwork/ engagement dates
Eilean Siar	Career information, advice and guidance services	Education Scotland	September to December 2019
	Inspection of community learning and development services (further inspection)	Education Scotland	Before end of March 2020 (TBC)
	Engagement on services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Falkirk	Best Value Assurance Report	Audit Scotland	April to June 2020 Report to Accounts Commission: November 2020
	Career information, advice and guidance services	Education Scotland	September to December 2019
	Engagement on services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Fife	Fieldwork for Improving outcomes for young people through school education 	Audit Scotland	September 2019
	Engagement on services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Glasgow	Inspection of community learning and development services (further inspection)	Education Scotland	Before end of March 2020 (TBC)
	Engagement on services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Highland	Best Value Assurance Report	Audit Scotland	Fieldwork complete Report to Accounts Commission: November 2019
	Inspection of community learning and development services (further inspection)	Education Scotland	Before end of March 2020 (TBC)
	Engagement on: services for people who are homeless; Gypsy Traveller minimum site standards	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Inverclyde	Inspection of justice social work services	Care Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland	Fieldwork completing in September 2019
	Career information, advice and guidance services (follow-up)	Education Scotland	October 2019

Council	Scrutiny activity	Scrutiny body/bodies	Fieldwork/ engagement dates
	Engagement on: services for people who are homeless; planned stock transfer	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Midlothian	Joint inspection of services for children and young people in need of care and protection	Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland	January to March 2020
	Engagement on: service quality; services for people who are homeless; Gypsy Traveller minimum site standards	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Moray	Best Value Assurance Report	Audit Scotland	Beginning November 2019 Report to Accounts Commission: May 2020
	Inspection of community learning and development services (further inspection)	Education Scotland	Before end of March 2020 (TBC)
North Ayrshire	Best Value Assurance Report	Audit Scotland	January to April 2020 Report to Accounts Commission: June 2020
	Career information, advice and guidance services	Education Scotland	January to March 2020
	Engagement on services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
North Lanarkshire	Engagement on services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Orkney Islands	Joint inspection of services for children and young people in need of care and protection	Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland	Fieldwork completing in September 2019
	Engagement on service quality	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Perth & Kinross	No planned scrutiny		
Renfrewshire	Fieldwork for <i>Improving outcomes for young people through school education</i> 	Audit Scotland	September 2019

Cont.

Council	Scrutiny activity	Scrutiny body/bodies	Fieldwork/ engagement dates
Scottish Borders	Best Value Assurance Report	Audit Scotland	Fieldwork complete Report to Accounts Commission: October 2019
	Services for older people (progress review)	Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	October to December 2019
	Engagement on Gypsy Traveller minimum site standards	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
Shetland Islands	Fieldwork for <i>Improving outcomes for young people through school education</i> 	Audit Scotland	September 2019
	Supported and validated self-evaluation – community justice partnerships	Care Inspectorate	October to December 2019
	Engagement on: service quality; services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
South Ayrshire	No planned scrutiny		
South Lanarkshire	Joint inspection of services for children and young people in need of care and protection	Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland	October to December 2019
Stirling	Career information, advice and guidance services (follow-up)	Education Scotland	February 2020
	Engagement on: service quality; services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
West Dunbartonshire	Engagement on: services for people who are homeless; Gypsy Traveller minimum site standards	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20
West Lothian	Joint inspection of strategic planning	Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	January to March 2020
	Engagement on services for people who are homeless	Scottish Housing Regulator	2019/20

17. The following paragraphs include details about the purpose of each scrutiny programme in the table above, and the rationale for focusing on individual councils. It also includes details of other scrutiny activity affecting councils where fieldwork sites have not yet been identified.

The Accounts Commission/Audit Scotland

Best Value

18. Best Value is part of an integrated annual audit process. Each council will receive a public Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) at least once in a five-year period that presents an overall picture of the council, drawn from a range of audit activity and the work of other scrutiny bodies.

19. The Accounts Commission's current approach to Best Value auditing in councils began in October 2016. The five-year rolling programme of BVARs, which is reviewed and refreshed annually by the Accounts Commission, ensures a BVAR is published on every council by the end of 2021. The results of the SRA process make a significant contribution to the audit intelligence that informs decisions about the programme, both in terms of the sequencing and timing of audits and the focus of audit work at individual councils. BVARs bring together an overall picture of the council drawn from a range of audit activity and the work of other scrutiny bodies.

20. Audit Scotland will publish the following two reports to complete the Account's Commission's programme of seven BVARs in 2019: Scottish Borders Council (October 2019) and The Highland Council (November 2019). By the end of 2019, BVARs will have been reported covering 19 councils. Following consideration of ongoing intelligence from auditors, a further seven BVARs will be reported in 2020 during the fourth year of the programme. The councils included in the programme were chosen to reflect:


- a spread of councils (size and location)
- a spread of auditors to smooth the pressures on auditors
- current intelligence on risk profiles gathered from local auditors through annual audit planning and local area network discussions.










21. The scope and timing of the work to be carried out will be discussed with each council.

National performance audits

22. Audit Scotland is carrying out several performance audits covering local government in 2019/20. These are part of a programme agreed by the Accounts Commission and Auditor General for Scotland. The programme is informed by the Accounts Commission's strategic audit priorities, public sector audit risks and policy developments, as well a wide range of policy monitoring and external engagement.

23. The need for any engagement with individual councils will be determined during the scoping stage of each audit. Audit teams will discuss the reasons for selection and the type of work to be undertaken with relevant councils. Where

possible, we have included this information below. Further details on each of the audits in the performance audit programme for 2019/20 and beyond are available [here](#).  The 2019/20 programme includes audits covering:

- **[Affordable housing](#)** : This audit will report progress against the Scottish Government's affordable housing target to date, consider what impact it has had and identify opportunities for improvement in delivering affordable housing in the longer term. The audit report will be published in spring 2020. Detailed case studies in Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Edinburgh and South Lanarkshire councils will be carried out in 2019/20.
- **[Early learning and childcare follow up audit](#)** : Audit Scotland is carrying out the second in a series of three audits to understand and assess progress with the expansion to funded ELC. This audit is examining progress in planning for the expansion since our [previous report](#) . This includes progress in planning to ensure there is sufficient workforce, infrastructure and private and third sector provider capacity in place to deliver the expansion. We are also examining progress in planning for how the expansion will be evaluated. The audit report will be published in early 2020.
- **[Improving outcomes for young people through school education](#)** : This audit looks at school education to assess whether outcomes are improving for young people, whether the Scottish Government, councils and their partners collectively have a clear and coherent approach to improving these outcomes, how public money is being used for this and how effectively the Scottish Government, councils and their partners are evaluating performance and taking action to improve these outcomes for young people. Fieldwork for this audit will take place in Renfrewshire, Shetland, Dundee and Fife councils during August and September 2019.
- **[Revenue financing of assets](#)** : This audit will assess how the Scottish Government has managed this investment programme nationally. It is also looking at how the Scottish Government, the Scottish Futures Trust and Hub Companies have supported the public bodies delivering individual projects.
- **[Scotland's City Region and Growth Deals](#)** : Audit Scotland is carrying out the first of two performance audits looking at these Deals. This will focus on the rationale, development and management arrangements for the deals and identify early progress and risks and is due to publish in November 2019. A second audit will re-visit the Deals later to look at longer-term progress.
- **Supporting economic growth**: Building on the Auditor General's 2016 report on the [role of the enterprise agencies in supporting economic growth](#) , this audit will consider the issues and risks to other areas of the economic development landscape. This includes local economic development and regeneration activity in councils, and the role of the Business Gateway service.
- In 2019/20, impact reports on the 2017 [Equal pay in Scottish councils](#)  performance audit, and the [Self-directed support: 2017 progress report](#)  will be published.

Housing benefit risk assessments

24. The Accounts Commission has responsibility for the audit of housing benefit services in Scotland and Audit Scotland carries out a programme of performance audit work every year. The structural changes to the social security landscape, both at UK and Scottish level, are presenting significant implications for councils. In this context the Commission has decided to take a more strategic approach to the housing benefit performance audit from 2019/20. This changes the balance between reports on the risks at individual councils to more cross-cutting thematic reviews that look at risks across councils.

25. Audit Scotland continues to review the relative performance of all councils' housing benefit services throughout the year, and is taking a more risk-based and proportionate approach to changes in performance at an individual council. Audit Scotland will discuss council selection with councils' auditors prior to final decisions on reviews. The reviews planned for 2019/20 are:

- two thematic reviews: overpayments, resourcing models
- two reviews of individual councils: risk-based selection based on most current information.

Care Inspectorate

26. The Care Inspectorate's authority to inspect social services is laid out in Part 5 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010. It carries out inspections jointly with partners that include; Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. Joint inspections are carried out at the request of Scottish Ministers in accordance with an approved timetable.

27. There is an expectation that partnerships will have carried out some self-evaluation of their work, and each inspection will take account of the partnership's assessment of its own effectiveness. A self-evaluation framework based on the EFQM Excellence Model has been developed to support partnerships in assessing their own work. If approved by Scottish ministers, the new model for joint inspections of services for adults in an integrated context will make use of the self-assessment template issued to integration authorities by the Scottish Government.

28. The Care Inspectorate's proposed work programme for 2019/20 is outlined below. Its plan could be subject to change at any point to reflect changing circumstances and emerging risks.

Joint inspections of services for children and young people in need of care and protection

29. These inspections come from a recommendation from the child protection improvement programme. The Care Inspectorate leads these inspections and carries them out in partnership with Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland. Five joint inspection of services for children and young people in need of care and protection will be carried out in 2019/20 as part of a national scrutiny programme. The Community Planning Partnership areas selected are determined by the SRA process.

Joint inspections – strategic planning

30. Joint inspections of strategic planning are carried out under responsibilities in the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act. The Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland are jointly responsible for carrying out these inspections. They will also include input from Audit Scotland. Two joint inspections will be carried out in 2019/20 plus a progress review from joint inspection of services for older people. The health and social care partnerships selected are determined by a combination of intelligence from the SRA process and other intelligence held by the scrutiny partners. Inspections have been focused towards partnerships which have not been inspected previously under a joint inspection of services for older people.

31. The Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland are in discussion with the Scottish Government about jointly developing a new inspection methodology to provide assurance about whether integrated health and care is improving experiences and outcomes for individuals. This builds on the joint inspections of strategic planning. This new approach is being developed under direction of a Ministerial Strategic Steering Group in Integration to meet responsibilities under the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act. It is expected that pilot inspections will begin in 2020. Criteria for selecting health and social care partnerships to be inspected are still to be determined.

Inspections of justice social work services (with a focus on community payback)

32. These inspections are in response to a ministerial direction to provide assurance on the readiness of partners for PASS (Presumption Against Short Sentences) as part of the Scottish Government's community justice strategy. The Care Inspectorate will carry out inspections of justice social work services with input from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland. The annual programme will include three councils that are determined on the basis of national statistics and intelligence, including information from Community Justice Scotland.

Supported and validated self-evaluation – community justice partnerships

33. This work is in response to a ministerial direction to support the strategy for community justice. The Care Inspectorate will support and validate self-evaluation (VSE) in two council areas. Council areas will volunteer to be included in the programme and the Care Inspectorate will discuss its selection method with the justice high level advisory group.


Education Scotland

34. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education decides on the scale and priorities of Education Scotland's scrutiny programme in agreement with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. The annual programme of scrutiny activity is published in June each year and sets out intended activity across all education sectors.

35. HM Inspectors' of Education powers to inspect educational establishments and services are set out in the [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#) and its [Annual Programme of Scrutiny](#) is published on the Education Scotland website.

36. Between October 2017 and February 2019, HM Inspectors of Education evaluated the work of nine local authorities to improve learning, raise attainment and narrow the poverty-related attainment gap. The nine local authorities designated as challenge authorities within the Scottish attainment challenge are:

- Clackmannanshire Council
- Dundee City Council
- East Ayrshire Council
- Glasgow City Council
- Inverclyde Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- North Lanarkshire Council
- Renfrewshire Council
- West Dunbartonshire Council.

37. This programme was carried out under the terms of Section 9 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000. Reports on all nine authorities have now been published. A report summarising the findings from this programme ([*How well are the Scottish Attainment Challenge authorities improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?*](#))  was published in June 2019.

Joint inspections of services for children and young people in need of care and protection

38. HM Inspectors of Education will collaborate with other scrutiny partners on the programme of joint inspections of services for children and young people in need of care and protection led by the Care Inspectorate. These inspections focus on the difference community planning partners are making to:

- the lives of children and young people in need of care and protection
- the lives of children and young people for whom Community Planning Partnerships have corporate parenting responsibilities.

Career information, advice and guidance services

39. HM Inspectors of Education will evaluate and report on the quality of careers information advice and guidance services delivered by Skills Development Scotland across five council areas. These inspections will conclude the commitment to inspect the Careers Information Advice and Guidance services of all local authorities within a five year programme.

40. In addition, Education Scotland will carry out five follow-up visits of careers information advice and guidance services delivered by Skills Development Scotland. Where Education Scotland identifies that the quality of education is not good enough it undertake further inspection activity. The timescale for carrying out this activity is specified in the inspection report.

Community learning and development services

41. HM Inspectors of Education will carry out five further inspections of community learning and development services. Specific dates will be agreed with each local authority to take account of activity by other scrutiny bodies taking place within the local authority. Where Education Scotland identifies that the quality of education is not good enough it undertake further inspection activity. The timescale for carrying out this activity is specified in the inspection report.

National thematic inspections

42. Details of national thematic inspections will be announced in due course. Where these involve HM Inspectors' engagement with local authorities, we will take account of other existing commitments as outlined in the National Scrutiny Plan.

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

43. The SHR's objective is to safeguard and protect the interests of persons who are or who may become tenants of social landlords or recipients of services provided by social landlords (including people who are or who may become homeless and Gypsy Travellers). To deliver its objective, the SHR monitors, assesses and intervenes where appropriate, in relation to the performance of housing activities of council landlords.

44. Councils are required to comply with the Scottish Government's Social Housing Charter. The charter contains a total of 16 outcomes and standards that social landlords should aim to achieve (outcomes and standards in relation to homelessness duties apply to all councils and for Gypsy Travellers only to councils that manage sites for Gypsy Travellers). Each year councils complete an Annual Report on Charter (ARC) which sets out their progress against a set of charter indicators.

45. Each year the SHR carries out an annual risk assessment which monitors and assesses each local authority's performance of its housing activities. It uses information provided in the ARC as well as other information, such as that supplied by councils to the Scottish Government (for example, data on homelessness applications). This allows the SHR to determine any further engagement that it needs with councils for further assurance that they are complying with statutory and regulatory requirements and serving the interests of tenants and service users. This will be set out in published engagement plans for each council.

46. Engagement plans set out the reason for further engagement and the nature of that engagement. This can range from requiring further information, to regular monitoring of performance, or carrying out a detailed inquiry. The SHR may engage with a council about one, or more, of four broad areas:

- Service quality (for example gas safety)
- Services for people who are homeless
- Compliance with minimum site standards for Gypsy Travellers
- Other (for example gas safety).

New regulatory framework



47. The SHR's new framework came into force on 1 April 2019. It contains a requirement for each council to assure itself that it has complied with all regulatory requirements in relation to the performance of its housing activities and thereafter to provide a statement of assurance to the SHR. The statement must be submitted by 31 October each year and be approved by the relevant committee of the council prior to submission.

48. In 2019/20, the SHR will visit a small number of councils to review processes for gaining assurance of compliance with regulatory requirements. It will decide which councils to visit at the start of November 2019, with visits to be completed by February 2020.

Other scrutiny activity impacting on local government


49. Both Her Majesty's Fire Services Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland carry out local area-based inspection activity that involves contact with councils.

Her Majesty's Fire Services Inspectorate (HMFSI)

50. HMFSI undertakes a programme of inspections throughout the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) delivery areas, to examine local service delivery across Scotland. These inspections will examine, among other things, local scrutiny and engagement between the SFRS and councils. As part of its business plan programme for 2019/20, HMFSI intends to inspect service delivery in Dumfries and Galloway and City of Edinburgh. In addition, within its business plan, HMFSI has a programme of thematic review inspections planned, but this work is unlikely to result in contact with local authorities. However, HMFSI may also carry out ad hoc inspections in response to specific events, which could involve contact with local authorities. Further details are available on its [website](#)  and in its [Scrutiny Plan 2016–21](#) .

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS)

51. HMICS is committed to assessing the quality of policing service experienced by communities across the country and reporting publicly on how well Police Scotland is delivering against local priorities. It does this through its programme of Local Policing+ inspections. These local police inspections cover partnership working and, in particular, local scrutiny and engagement between Police Scotland and councils and the local Community Planning Partnership and Community Safety Partnership. They also include a 'plus' element, which aims to investigate national issues through a local lens.

52. In 2019/20, HMICS will not be carrying out an inspection into a specific local police division. Rather it will examine a number of significant policing issues and see how those issues are addressed in different parts of Scotland. Further details are available in its [Annual Scrutiny Plan 2019–20](#) .

Future work




53. In the main, scrutiny bodies publish details of the councils and partnerships that they will be auditing and inspecting on an annual basis. Predominantly this is because the programmes are responsive to emerging risks. In some cases, longer-term plans are also published, as outlined below.

Audit Scotland/Accounts Commission

54. The final year of the Account's Commission's five-year Best Value programme is 2021. The remaining six councils where BVARs will be published in 2021 are:

- Shetland Islands Council
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
- East Dunbartonshire Council
- South Ayrshire Council
- Angus Council
- Aberdeen City Council.

The Accounts Commission is considering the future approach to auditing Best Value in councils beyond 2021.

55. Audit Scotland's five-year rolling programme of national performance audits currently covers the period up to 2023/24. Further details on each of the audits in the performance audit programme are available [here](#) . Performance audit work that will begin to be carried out but reported in 2020/2021 includes:

- digital progress in local government
- supporting economic growth: the role of local authorities
- legacy of the 2014 Commonwealth Games
- outcomes for children with additional support needs
- social care sustainability
- waste management.

Care Inspectorate

Inspection of adult support and protection (ASP) arrangements

56. Inspection of adult support and protection (ASP) arrangements are carried out by direction of the Cabinet Secretary in response to findings of the ASP thematic review published in 2018. They are designed to raise the profile of adult support and protection commensurate with the priority given to child protection. The Care Inspectorate leads these inspections and carries them out in partnership with Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland.

57. The programme will include visits to all 26 local authority areas not inspected in the 2018 thematic review, over a two year period. The programme is expected to commence in autumn 2019, with the scheduling of council areas to be determined in conjunction with a programme reference group. The order in which these inspections will be carried out has not yet been agreed.

Inspection to provide assurance about whether integrated health and care is improving experiences and outcomes for individuals

58. The Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland are jointly developing a new inspection methodology to provide assurance about whether integrated health and care is improving experiences and outcomes for individuals. This will replace joint inspections of strategic planning. This new approach is being developed under direction of a Ministerial Steering Group on Integration to meet responsibilities under Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act. It is expected that pilot inspections will begin in 2020, with criteria for selecting council areas to be inspected still to be determined.

Education Scotland

59. Over the course of the year, HM Inspectors of Education will give due consideration to the outcomes of its inspections of schools, settings, and services which are the responsibility of the each local authority. It will respond to identified risk as appropriate. Where a scrutiny response is required, Education Scotland will take account of other scrutiny partners' existing commitments as outlined in the National Scrutiny Plan.

Scottish Housing Regulator

60. The SHR uses thematic work to look in depth at specific areas of local authorities' work. Thematic work also informs the SHR's advisory guidance and risk assessments and lets it share positive practice. From 2020/21 the SHR plans to develop a programme of thematic work with a clear focus on its priorities:

- homelessness
- affordable rents
- value for money
- tenant and resident safety.

Appendix

Strategic Scrutiny Group members



Operational group members shown in bold

Accounts Commission	The Accounts Commission is a non-departmental public body. 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. Working together, they 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. 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 is a health body. Its function 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	Her Majesty's 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 in Scotland	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland provides independent scrutiny of both Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority. Its approach is to support Police Scotland and the Authority to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local needs. It can inspect other UK police services that operate in Scotland and is a member of the National Preventive Mechanism, inspecting police custody centres to monitor the treatment and conditions for detainees.
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland provides oversight and scrutiny of the 15 prisons in Scotland, by way of inspection and monitoring, in order to report on the conditions in prison and the treatment of prisoners. Monitoring is conducted by volunteer independent prison monitors, who are required to visit every prison every week, to respond to prisoners' requests and to monitor conditions. It also has responsibility for inspecting court custody cells and the conditions in which prisoners are transported.
Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland	<p>The Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland is headed by HM Chief Inspector who reports directly to the Lord Advocate.</p> <p>The aim of the inspectorate is to enhance the quality of service and public confidence in the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service through independent inspection and evaluation.</p>
Scottish Housing Regulator	The Scottish Housing Regulator is a non-ministerial department. Its statutory objective 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.

National scrutiny plan

A summary of local government strategic scrutiny activity

This report is available in PDF and RTF formats, along with a podcast summary at:

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