



# Scottish Ambulance Service

## External Audit Annual Plan 2022/23

April 2023



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# Introduction

Azets have been appointed by Audit Scotland as the external auditor to the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) for the period 2022/23 to 2026/27.

This document summarises the work plan for our 2022/23 external audit. The core elements of our work include:

- an audit of the 2022/23 annual report and accounts
- consideration of the wider scope areas of public audit work
- any other work requested by Audit Scotland.

We expect that our audit will have a similar underlying approach to that of your previous external auditor, Grant Thornton, although there are some changes to the Code of Audit Practice and auditing standards that come into effect for the first time in 2022/23, which are reflected in this document.

## Adding value

All of our clients quite rightly demand of us a positive contribution to meeting their ever-changing business needs. We will add value by being constructive and forward looking, by identifying areas of improvement and by recommending and encouraging good practice. In this way we aim to promote improved standards of governance, better management and decision making and more effective use of public money.

Any comments you may have on the service we provide would be greatly appreciated. Comments can be reported directly to any member of your audit team.

## Openness and transparency

This report will be published on Audit Scotland's website [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk).

# Audit scope and general approach

## Responsibilities of the auditor and SAS

The [Code of Audit Practice](#) outlines the responsibilities of external auditors appointed by the Auditor General for Scotland and it is a condition of our appointment that we follow it.

Auditor responsibilities are derived from statute, International Standards on Auditing (UK) and the Ethical Standard for auditors, other professional requirements and best practice, the Code of Audit Practice and guidance from Audit Scotland.

SAS has primary responsibility for ensuring the proper financial stewardship of public funds. This includes preparing a set of annual report and accounts that are in accordance with proper accounting practices. SAS is also responsible for complying with legislation and putting arrangements in place for governance and propriety that enable it to successfully deliver its objectives.

[Appendix 1](#) provides further details of both our responsibilities and those of SAS.

## Risk-based audit approach

We follow a risk-based approach to the audit that reflects our overall assessment of the relevant risks that apply to SAS. This ensures that our audit focuses on the areas of highest risk. Our audit planning is based on:



Planning is a continuous process and our audit plans are updated during the course of our audit to take account of developments as they arise.

### Communication with those charged with governance

Auditing standards require us to make certain communications throughout the audit to those charged with governance. These communications will be through the Audit Committee.

### Professional standards and guidance

We perform our audit of the financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing UK (ISAs (UK)), Ethical Standards, and applicable Practice Notes and other guidance issued by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC).

### Partnership working

We coordinate our work with Audit Scotland, internal audit, other external auditors and relevant scrutiny bodies, recognising the increasing integration of service delivery and partnership working within the public sector.

### Audit Scotland

Although we are independent of Audit Scotland and are responsible for forming our own views and opinions, we do work closely with Audit Scotland throughout the audit. This helps identify common priorities and risks, treat issues consistently across the sector, and improve audit quality and efficiency. We share information about identified risks, good practices and barriers to improvement so that lessons to be learnt and knowledge of what works can be disseminated to all relevant bodies.

Audit Scotland undertakes national performance audits on issues affecting the public sector. We may review SAS's arrangements for taking action on any issues reported in the national performance reports which have a local impact. We also consider the extent to which SAS uses the national performance reports as a means to help improve performance at the local level.

During the year we may also be required to provide information to Audit Scotland to support the national performance audits.

### Sharing intelligence for health and social care

The Sharing Intelligence for Health and Social Care Group enables seven national agencies<sup>1</sup> to share and consider intelligence about the quality of health and social care systems across Scotland. The aim of the group is to support improvement in the quality of health and social care. When any of the agencies has a potentially serious concern about a health and social care system, the group ensures this is shared and acted upon appropriately.

We are required to complete an intelligence return and attend the group meeting when SAS is being considered. Attendance at the meeting also provides us with the opportunity to hear intelligence from other agencies.

### Internal Audit

As part of our audit, we consider the scope and nature of internal audit work and look to minimise duplication of effort, to ensure the total audit resource to SAS is used as efficiently and effectively as possible.

### Shared systems and functions

Audit Scotland encourages auditors to seek efficiencies and avoid duplication of effort by liaising closely with other external auditors, agreeing an appropriate division of work and sharing audit findings. Assurance reports are prepared by service auditors in the health sector covering the national systems / arrangements. We consider the audit assurance reports when evaluating SAS's systems.

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<sup>1</sup> The seven national agencies referred to are: Healthcare Improvement Scotland, NHS Education for Scotland, the Care Inspectorate, Audit Scotland, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland and Public Health Scotland.

## Delivering the audit – post pandemic

### Hybrid audit approach

We intend to adopt a hybrid approach to our audit which combines on-site visits with remote working; learning from the better practices developed during the pandemic.

All of our people have the equipment, technology and systems to allow them to work remotely or on-site, including secure access to all necessary data and information.

All of our staff are fully contactable by email, phone call and video-conferencing.

Meetings can be held over Skype, Microsoft Teams or by telephone.

We employ greater use of technology to examine evidence, but only where we have assessed both the sufficiency and appropriateness of the audit evidence produced.

### Secure sharing of information

We use a cloud-based file sharing service that enables users to easily and securely exchange documents and provides a single repository for audit evidence.

### Regular contact

During the ‘fieldwork’ phases of our audit, we will arrange regular catch-ups with key personnel to discuss the progress of the audit. The frequency of these meetings will be discussed and agreed with management.

### Signing annual accounts

Audit Scotland recommends the electronic signing of annual accounts and uses a system called DocuSign.

Electronic signatures simplify the process of signing the accounts and are acceptable for laying in Parliament. Accounts can be signed using any device from any location. There is no longer a need for duplicate copies to be signed, thus reducing the risk of missing a signature and all signatories have immediate access to a high-quality PDF version of the accounts.

## Approach to audit of the annual accounts

Our objective when performing an audit of the annual accounts is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement and to issue an auditor’s report that includes our auditor’s opinion.

As part of our general approach, we will:

- perform risk assessment procedures including updating our understanding of the entity and its environment, the financial reporting framework and system of internal control;
- review the design and implementation of key internal controls;

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, at the financial statement level and the assertion level for classes of transaction, account balances or disclosures;
- design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, to obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion; and
- exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit recognising that circumstances may exist that cause the financial statements to be materially misstated.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. We include an explanation in the auditor's report of the extent to which the audit was capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, and respective responsibilities for prevention and detection of fraud.

## Key audit developments in 2022/23

Revised auditing standards<sup>2</sup>, which come into effect from the current year, will have a significant impact on the way we perform our audit, particularly how we assess the risk of material misstatement, our approach to the audit of fraud, and the ways we ensure our audits are performed in line with regulatory requirements and to a high standard. The in-depth nature of these additional procedures, as well as updated tools and techniques that may come into scope, will also offer additional opportunity to provide insights and constructive feedback on the way SAS manages risks. [Appendix 2](#) provides further details on the implications of these new requirements.

## Materiality

We apply the concept of materiality both in planning and performing the audit, and in evaluating the effect of identified misstatements on the audit and of uncorrected misstatements. In general, misstatements, including omissions, are considered to be material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to

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<sup>2</sup> Revisions to ISA (UK) 315 on auditors' responsibility to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement in the financial statements and ISA (UK) 240 on material misstatements caused by fraud came into effect for audits of financial statements with periods commencing on or after 15 December 2021.



influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

Judgments about materiality are made in the light of surrounding circumstances and are affected by our perception of the financial information needs of users of the financial statements, and by the size or nature of a misstatement, or a combination of both.

The basis for our assessment of materiality is set out in [Appendix 3](#).

## Accounting systems and internal controls

The purpose of an audit is to express an opinion on the financial statements. As part of our work, we consider certain internal controls relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such that we are able to design appropriate audit procedures. However, this work is not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the controls.

We will report to SAS, significant deficiencies in internal controls that we identify during the audit. The scope of our work is not designed to be an extensive review of all internal controls.

## Specialised skill or knowledge required to complete the audit procedures

Our intended audit approach is to consult internally with our Technology Risk team for them to support the audit team in assessing the information technology general controls (ITGC).

## Going concern

In most public sector entities, the financial reporting framework envisages that the going concern basis for accounting will apply where the entity's services will continue to be delivered by the public sector. In such cases, a material uncertainty related to going concern is unlikely to exist.

For many public sector entities, the financial sustainability of the entity is more likely to be of significant public interest than the application of the going concern basis. Our wider scope audit work considers the financial sustainability of SAS.

## Group audit scope and risk assessment

As Group auditor, we are required to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the components and the consolidation process to express our opinions on the group financial statements.

The Group consists of the following entities:

| Component                                 | Significant | Level of response required |
|---|-------------|----------------------------|
| Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS)          | Yes         | Comprehensive              |
| Scottish Ambulance Service Endowment Fund | No          | Analytical                 |

**Comprehensive** – the component is of such significance to the group as a whole that an audit of the components financial statements is required for group reporting purposes.

**Analytical** - the component is not significant to the Group and audit risks can be addressed sufficiently by applying analytical procedures at the Group level.

### Risks at the component-level

At this stage of our audit cycle we have not identified any risks at the component level which could lead to a material misstatement in the group financial statements.

### Prevention and detection of fraud or error

In order to discharge our responsibilities regarding fraud and irregularity we require any fraud or irregularity issues to be reported to us as they arise. In particular we require to be notified of all frauds which:

- Involve the misappropriation of theft of assets or cash which are facilitated by weaknesses in internal control; and
- Are over £5,000.

We also require a historic record of instances of fraud or irregularity to be maintained and a summary to be made available to us after each year end.

### National Fraud Initiative

The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) in Scotland is a biennial counter fraud exercise led by Audit Scotland working together with a range of Scottish public bodies, external auditors and overseen by the Cabinet Office for the UK as a whole. The most recent NFI exercise commenced in 2022, with matches received for investigation from January 2023. As part of our 2022/23 audit, we will monitor SAS’s participation and progress in the NFI.

### Anti-money laundering

We require SAS to notify us on a timely basis of any suspected instances of money laundering so that we can inform Audit Scotland who will determine the necessary course of action.

## Wider audit scope work

The special accountabilities that attach to the conduct of public business, and the use of public money, mean that public sector audits must be planned and undertaken from a wider perspective than in the private sector. This means providing assurance, not only on the financial statements, but providing audit judgements and conclusions on the appropriateness, effectiveness and impact of corporate governance and performance management arrangements and financial sustainability. [Appendix 1](#) provides detail of the wider scope areas of public sector audit work. Our initial risk assessment and scope of work planned for 2022/23 is outlined in the '[Wider Scope](#)' section of this plan.

## National risk assessment

Where particular areas of national or sectoral risk have been identified by the Auditor General, they will request auditors to consider and report on those risks as they apply at a local level. For 2022/23 the following areas have been identified:

- Climate Change
- Cyber Security

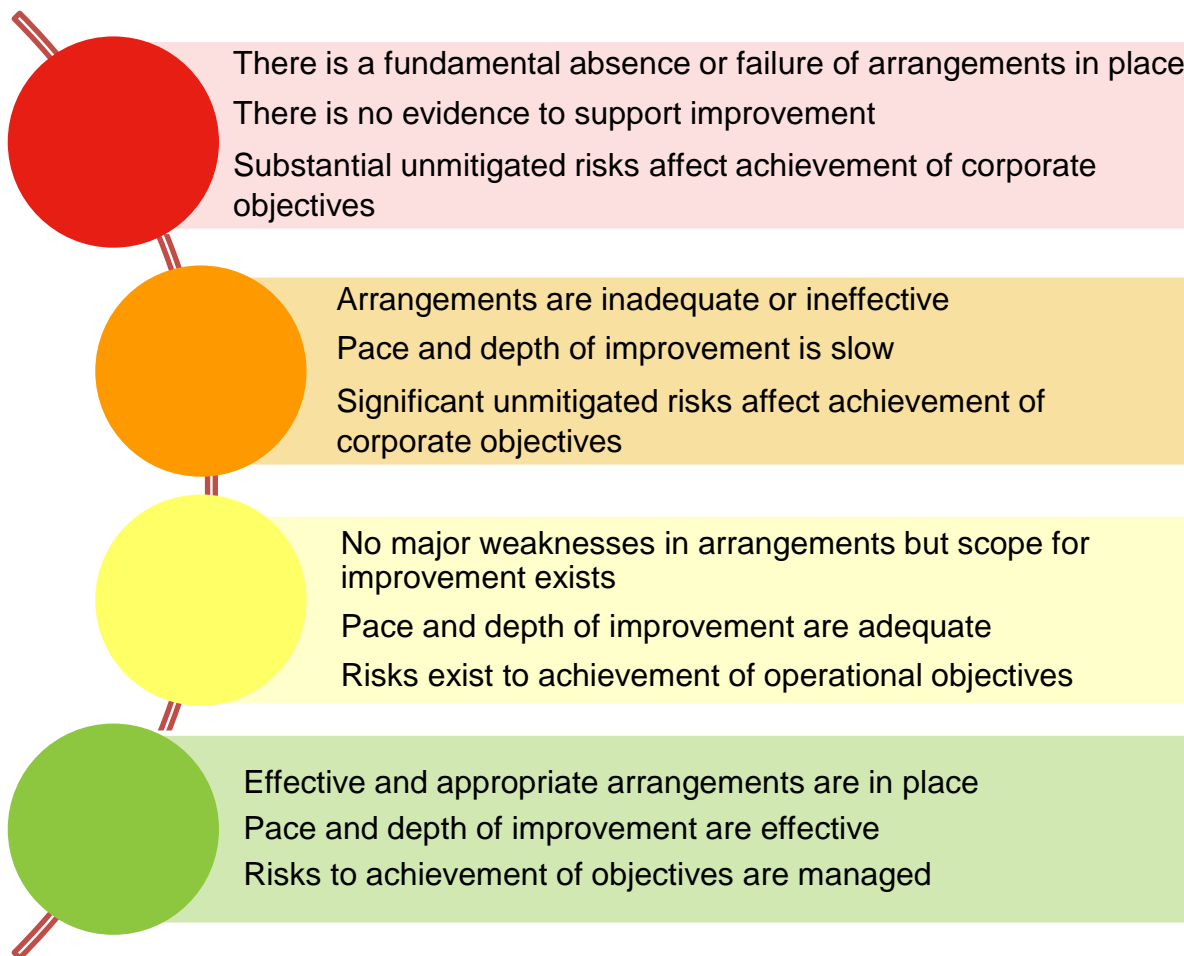
[Appendix 4](#) provides further detail as to the scope of this work.

## Best Value

[Ministerial guidance to Accountable Officers](#) for public bodies sets out their duty to ensure that arrangements are in place to secure Best Value in public services. Through our wider scope audit work, we will consider the arrangements put in place by the Accountable Officer to meet these Best Value obligations.

## Reporting our findings

We will provide judgements on the pace and depth of improvement in reporting our findings on the wider scope areas. We will use the following gradings to provide an overall assessment of the arrangements in place.



# Significant and other risks of material misstatement

Significant risks are risks that require special audit consideration and include identified risks of material misstatement that:

- our risk assessment procedures have identified as being close to the upper range of the spectrum of inherent risk due to their nature and a combination of the likelihood and potential magnitude of misstatement; or
- are required to be treated as significant risks by auditing standards, for example in relation to management override of internal controls.

## Significant risks at the financial statement level

The table below summarises the significant risks of material misstatement identified at the financial statement level. These risks are considered to have a pervasive impact on the financial statements as a whole and potentially affect many assertions for classes of transaction, account balances and disclosures.

| Identified risk of material misstatement  | Audit approach  |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Management override of controls</b></p> <p>Management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.</p> <p>Although the level of risk will vary from entity to entity, this risk is nevertheless present in all entities. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur, it is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud and thus a significant risk.</p> <p><b>Risk of material misstatement: Very High</b></p> | <p>Procedures performed to mitigate risks of material misstatement in this area will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documenting our understanding of the journals posting process and evaluating the design effectiveness of management controls over journals.</li> <li>• Analysing the journals listing and determining criteria for selecting high risk and / or unusual journals.</li> <li>• Testing high risk and / or unusual journals posted during the year and after the unaudited annual accounts stage back to supporting documentation for appropriateness, corroboration and to ensure</li> </ul> |

| Identified risk of material misstatement | Audit approach  |
|--|---|
|  | <p>approval has been undertaken in line with SAS’s journals policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaining an understanding of the accounting estimates and critical judgements made by management. We will challenge assumptions and consider the reasonableness and indicators of bias which could result in material misstatement due to fraud.</li> <li>• Evaluating the rationale for any changes in accounting policies estimates or significant unusual transactions.</li> </ul> |

## Significant risks at the assertion level for classes of transaction, account balances and disclosures

| Identified risk of material misstatement  | Audit approach   |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Fraud in revenue recognition</b></p> <p>Material misstatement due to fraudulent financial reporting relating to revenue recognition is a presumed risk in ISA 240 (The Auditor's Responsibilities Relating to Fraud in an Audit of Financial Statements).</p> <p>The presumption is that SAS could adopt accounting policies or recognise income in such a way as to lead to a material misstatement in the reported financial position.</p> <p>Given the financial pressures facing the public sector as a whole, there is an inherent fraud risk associated with the recording of income around the year end.</p> <p>In respect of Scottish Government funding, however, we do not consider the revenue recognition risk to be significant due to a lack of incentive and opportunity to manipulate revenue of this nature. The risk of fraud in relation to revenue recognition is however present in all other income streams.</p> <p><b>Inherent risk of material misstatement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Revenue (occurrence / completeness): High</b></li> </ul> | <p>Procedures performed to mitigate risks of material misstatement in this area will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluating the significant income streams and reviewing the controls in place over accounting for revenue.</li> <li>• Considering SAS's key areas of income and obtaining evidence that income is recorded in line with appropriate accounting policies and the policies have been applied consistently across the year.</li> </ul> |

| Identified risk of material misstatement  | Audit approach   |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Fraud in non-pay expenditure</b></p> <p>As most public sector bodies are net expenditure bodies, the risk of fraud is more likely to occur in expenditure. There is a risk that expenditure may be misstated resulting in a material misstatement in the financial statements.</p> <p>Given the financial pressures facing the public sector as a whole, there is an inherent fraud risk associated with the recording of expenditure around the year end.</p> <p><b>Inherent risk of material misstatement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Non-pay expenditure (occurrence / completeness): High</b></li> <li>• <b>Accruals (existence / completeness): High</b></li> </ul> | <p>Procedures performed to mitigate risks of material misstatement in this area will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluating the significant non-pay expenditure streams and reviewing the controls in place over accounting for expenditure.</li> <li>• Considering SAS's key areas of expenditure and obtaining evidence that expenditure is recorded in line with appropriate accounting policies and the policies have been applied consistently across the year.</li> <li>• Reviewing accruals around the year end to consider if there is any indication of understatement of balances held through consideration of accounting estimates.</li> </ul> |



| Identified risk of material misstatement   | Audit approach   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Valuation of land and buildings (key accounting estimate)</b></p> <p>SAS held land and buildings with a net book value of £24.785million at 31 March 2022, with valuations of all land and building assets reassessed by valuers under a 5-year programme of professional valuations and adjusted in intervening years to take account of movements in prices since the latest valuation.</p> <p>There is a significant degree of subjectivity in the measurement and valuation of land and buildings. This subjectivity and the material nature of SAS’s asset base represents an increased risk of misstatement in the financial statements.</p> <p><b>Inherent risk of material misstatement:</b></p> <p><b>Land &amp; Buildings (valuation): Very High</b></p> | <p>Procedures performed to mitigate risks of material misstatement in this area will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluating management processes and assumptions for the calculation of the estimates, the instructions issued to the valuation experts and the scope of their work.</li> <li>• Evaluating the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the valuation expert.</li> <li>• Considering the basis on which the valuation is carried out and challenging the key assumptions applied.</li> <li>• Testing the information used by the valuer to ensure it is complete and consistent with our understanding. If there have been any specific changes to the assets in the year, we will ensure these have been communicated to the valuer.</li> <li>• Ensuring revaluations made during the year have been input correctly to the fixed asset register and the accounting treatment within the financial statements is correct.</li> <li>• Evaluating the assumptions made by management for any assets not revalued during the year and how management are satisfied that these are not materially different to the current value.</li> </ul> |

| Identified risk of material misstatement  | Audit approach  |
|---|---|
| <p><b>IFRS 16 Implementation (key accounting estimate)</b></p> <p>The adoption of IFRS 16 on leases was delayed for NHS organisations and was implemented from 1 April 2022 therefore impacting on the 2022/23 financial statements for the first time.</p> <p>There is a risk that lease terms, lease payments and the discount rate used to measure lease liabilities are inappropriately determined, therefore creating a risk that the financial statements are materially misstated. There is also a potential risk that lease liabilities are not completely recorded.</p> <p><b>Inherent risk of material misstatement:</b></p> <p><b>Right of Use Asset (valuation): High</b></p> <p><b>Right of Use Asset (completeness): High</b></p> <p><b>Lease liabilities (valuation): High</b></p> | <p>Procedures performed to mitigate risks of material misstatement in this area will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluating management processes for reviewing lease arrangements and contracts to determine leases falling within the remit of IFRS 16.</li> <li>• Testing the completeness and accuracy of the data collected by management and used as part of the implementation of IFRS 16.</li> <li>• Assessing the key judgements and decisions made about material contracts such as property leases or where lease terms are not prescriptive.</li> <li>• Reviewing the appropriateness of the discount rate used in the calculation of the lease liability.</li> <li>• Reperforming the calculation of the lease liability and right of use asset for a sample of leases.</li> <li>• Reviewing the accounting policy and related disclosures for IFRS 16 in line with the requirements of the Financial Reporting Manual (FReM), NHS Manual for Accounts and Scottish Government guidance.</li> </ul> |

| Identified risk of material misstatement   | Audit approach  |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Provisions (key accounting estimate)</b></p> <p>The financial statements include provision for legal obligations in respect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clinical and medical obligations;</b></li> <li>• <b>Participation in CNORIS (Clinical Negligence and Other Risks Indemnity Scheme); and</b></li> <li>• <b>Pensions and similar obligations.</b></li> </ul> <p>There is a significant degree of subjectivity in the measurement and valuation of these provisions. This subjectivity represents an increased risk of misstatement in the financial statements.</p> <p><b>Inherent risk of material misstatement:</b></p> <p><b>Provisions (valuation): High</b></p> | <p>Procedures performed to mitigate risks of material misstatement in this area will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing management’s estimation for the provision and related disclosures.</li> <li>• Considering compliance with the requirements of the FReM and NHS Manual for Accounts.</li> <li>• Considering the competence, capability and objectiveness of the management expert.</li> </ul> |

## Other identified risks

Other identified risks are those which, although not considered to be significant, will require specific consideration during the audit.

### Upgrade to eFinancials

The eFinancial system was upgraded at the start of 2023. There has been significant disruption to some elements of the system since this update. Three issues were identified to have significantly impacted on the provision of services within the health finance teams:

1. Performance of the system leading to delayed posting of very large month end journals and for some transactions these requiring to be broken down
2. Instability of DbCapture resulting in some Boards reverting to paying invoices manually
3. Difficulties in running reports resulting in a delay to reporting month 10 position.

While we understand these issues have now been resolved we will consider these in the context of our audit to determine whether any have led to a misstatement in the

2022/23 financial statements. We will consider the service auditor report and findings and engage our IT specialists to support our work in this area.

### **Provision of payroll services**

SAS's payroll services are transferring to NSS, as part of a South East payroll service including SAS, NHS Fife, NHS Forth Valley and NHS Lothian. Staff transferred into NSS in February 2023. There will be a six month stabilisation period. NSS are due to provide assurances that, for the period to 31 March 2023, the controls have not changed from those operated by SAS's in-house team. We will consider these arrangements as part of our review of SAS's IT controls and will engage our IT specialists to support our work in this area.

# Wider scope

## Introduction

The Code of Audit Practice frames a significant part of our wider scope responsibilities in terms of audit areas:

- Financial sustainability
- Financial management
- Vision, leadership and governance
- Use of resources to improve outcomes.

Our planned audit work against these four areas is risk based and proportionate. Our initial assessment builds upon our understanding of SAS's key priorities and risks along with discussions with management and review of board and committee minutes and key strategy documents.

We have identified two significant risks in relation to financial sustainability and financial management as set out in the table below. At this stage, we have not identified any significant risks in relation to the other wider scope areas.

Audit planning is a continuous process and we will report all identified significant risks, as they relate to the four wider scope areas, in our annual audit report. This section summarises our audit work in respect of each wider scope area.

## Wider scope significant risks

### Financial sustainability

SAS submitted its draft medium term financial plan to the Scottish Government, in line with set deadlines, in March 2023. The final version of the plan was considered by the Board in March 2023. SAS has committed to align its medium term financial plan to its annual delivery plan, workforce plan and 2030 strategy.

The financial plan shows a cumulative financial gap of £27.75million over the period 2023/24 to 2024/25 with a breakeven position forecast for 2025/26. This position reflects the continued impact of COVID-19 and operational pressures on the service and is subject to the delivery of efficiency savings plans (cumulative target of £36million over the period 2023/24 to 2025/26). Whilst efficiency savings plans have been met in recent years, a high proportion of savings achieved have been non-recurring. The medium-term financial plan includes the assumption that 70% of efficiency savings will be recurring. SAS has recognised achievement of this target will be challenging due to the forecast split of efficiency savings in 2022/23 being closer to 40% recurring.

The Scottish Government has indicated its intention to produce a whole-NHS Scotland plan with population-based priorities. SAS will develop an operational plan in June 2023 setting out what it will deliver between July 2023 and June 2024. Future funding allocations will be based upon the new integrated plan and SAS has committed to review its medium-term financial plan in June 2023 to reflect its operating plan and NHS Scotland policy priorities over the short, medium and long term as issued in the Scottish Government's planning guidance.

SAS continues to face challenges in achieving financial balance in amongst the unprecedented challenges of recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The emerging and uncertain impact on SAS's finances and ability to deliver services in a sustainable manner remains a significant challenge and risk.

### Our audit response:

During our audit we will review whether SAS has appropriate arrangements in place to manage its future financial position. Our work will include an assessment of progress made in developing financially sustainable plans which reflect the medium and longer term impact of cost pressures and that continue to support the delivery of SAS's statutory functions and strategic objectives.

## Financial management

In March 2022, the Board approved its 2022/23 financial plan which showed a balanced outturn position. However, by June 2022, SAS forecast projected overspends.

The latest forecast (February 2023) projects a deficit of £1.5million, resulting from a shortfall in COVID-19 funding and increasing fuel cost pressures. The 2022/23 financial plan assumed funding from the Scottish Government to cover COVID-19 expenditure in full, however, in June 2022 it was confirmed that only £8.6million of funding would be received to cover expected costs of £15million. The increase in COVID-19 costs is primarily due to the necessity for the service to continue with increased staffing within the Ambulance Control Centres to meet the increased demand in emergency calls, the impact on increased overtime as a result of shift overruns from turnaround times and staff absence and the need for the timed admissions development. SAS has forecast that similar levels of COVID-19 costs are expected to recur in 2023/24. An additional COVID-19 allocation of £4million was received in January 2023 which reduced the forecast shortfall on COVID-19 funding to £1.5million. A further allocation was received in March 2023 for the shortfall of £1.5million with the COVID costs now fully funded by Scottish Government in 2022/23.

As a result of the additional funding received SAS are projecting a break-even position for 2022/23. The year-end financial position is highly reliant on the delivery of a savings target of £17.35million.

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### Our audit response:

During our audit we will consider SAS's approach to identifying and responding to financial challenges that have occurred during the year.

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## Our audit approach to the wider scope audit areas



### Financial sustainability

Financial sustainability looks forward to the medium and longer term to consider whether the body is planning effectively to continue to deliver its services or the way in which they should be delivered.

#### Consideration

The health sector continues to face unprecedented challenges to the sustainability of the system which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Within its medium term financial plan, SAS has identified the following areas of the current economic environment as having the most significant risk on achievement of a medium term sustainable position:

- The highest level of inflation in the last 40 years.
- The financial challenges as a consequence of increased energy and fuel costs.
- The post pandemic impact on health and social care.
- The reduction in COVID-19 funding, while still coping with extreme system pressures.

SAS's focus for savings proposals has been on developing efficiency plans for 2023/24. As at month 11, SAS had identified efficiency plans of £8million of the £12million target for 2023/24, outlined within the financial plan. The financial plan identifies efficiency savings through best value programme delivery, devolved efficiency targets, grip and control measures and continued collaborative working with partners. SAS has committed to identify and quantify the

#### Our audit approach

We will review and conclude on:

- The ongoing development of financial planning and modelling to identify and address risks to financial sustainability.
- The appropriateness and effectiveness of arrangements in place to address any identified funding gaps.



**Consideration**

**Our audit approach**

unidentified savings as a priority in the first quarter of 2023/24.

Following the publication of the Outcome of the Targeted Review of the Capital Spending Review, the Scottish Government is currently engaging with all Boards to discuss the availability of capital funding in the medium to long term. The current planning assumption is that the total capital funding available for NHS Scotland will reduce over the next 5 years and a whole systems approach to capital planning will be implemented to inform future infrastructure investment decisions. SAS has acknowledged that the Fleet Replacement Programme is continuing to deliver significant benefits to the service and discussions are ongoing with the Scottish Government to understand the impact that the whole system approach to capital planning will have on this significant area of capital spend.



### Financial management

Financial management is concerned with financial capacity, sound budgetary processes and whether the control environment and internal controls are operating effectively.

#### Consideration

SAS met all its key financial targets in 2021/22, delivering an underspend against its Revenue Resource Limit and a breakeven position against its Capital Resource Limit. This was achieved, despite the impact of COVID-19 (£16.2million of additional costs), through additional funding received from Scottish Government.

As at month 11, February 2023, SAS reported an overspend of £1.9million against a trajectory assumed revenue deficit of £0.5million. SAS has achieved £15.1million of efficiency savings against the full year target of £17.35million, where reliance continues to be placed on savings which are non-recurring in nature.

SAS has financial commitments of £47.7million in 2022/23 for which an allocation of £45million has been received. This funding gap has been reduced to £2million through a reduction in anticipated actual costs for on-call elimination. SAS is expecting this gap to be managed through an approved capital to revenue transfer.

A breakeven position is forecast against SAS's Capital Resource Limit. The most significant capital project continues to be the Fleet Replacement Programme where a £22.98million earmarked funding allocation has been received from Scottish Government to cover capital expenditure in 2022/23.

#### Our audit approach

We will review, conclude and report on the following:

- The achievement of financial targets.
- Whether SAS can demonstrate the effectiveness of its budgetary control system in communicating accurate and timely performance.
- Whether SAS has arrangements in place to ensure systems of internal control are operating effectively.
- Whether SAS has established appropriate and effective arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption.



### Vision, Leadership and Governance

Vision, Leadership and Governance is concerned with the effectiveness of scrutiny and governance arrangements, leadership and decision making, and transparent reporting of financial and performance information.

#### Consideration

The previous auditor concluded that SAS has well established governance arrangements with the Board being supported by the Audit, Staff Governance, Clinical Governance and Remuneration Committees. The Board demonstrate a focus on self-assessment and continuous improvement through mechanisms including Board and Committee self-assessments of effectiveness.

Board and Committee meetings continue to be held remotely through virtual means. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, SAS has been able to maintain all aspects of board governance, including its regular schedule of Board and Committee meetings, to allow for effective scrutiny, challenge and informed decision making.

The Chief Executive is due to retire in June 2023. A successful recruitment process has concluded and the new Chief Executive is due to join SAS in July 2023.

SAS launched its 2030 Strategy in September 2022. The development of the strategy reflects changes to the environment in which SAS operates, including the impact which COVID-19 has had on service delivery. Portfolio Boards have been established and from November 2022 progress in achieving strategy delivery plans have been presented to each Board meeting.

#### Our audit approach

We will review, conclude and report on the following:

- The clarity of plans to deliver its 2030 Strategy.
- Whether SAS can demonstrate that the governance arrangements in place are appropriate and operating effectively.
- The transparency of decision-making, financial reporting and performance data.
- Reasonableness and consistency of the governance statement in relation to other information gathered during our audit.



### Use of resources to improve outcomes

Audited bodies need to make best use of their resources to meet stated outcomes and improvement objectives, through effective planning and working with strategic partners and communities. This includes demonstrating economy, efficiency, and effectiveness through the use of financial and other resources and reporting performance against outcomes.

#### Consideration

SAS continues to experience significant service pressures, exacerbated by the ongoing presence of COVID-19, with increased unscheduled care demand, higher patient acuity, workforce absences and challenges in handing over patients timeously at Emergency Departments because of wider health and care system pressures. The March 2023 Board Quality Indicators Performance Report highlighted further increases in response times due to significant system pressures affecting ambulance availability.

In order to address the increased demand on the service, SAS continues to invest in its Demand and Capacity programme through additional Scottish Government funding. The aim of the programme is to deliver the best possible care for patients and protect staff welfare through recruitment of additional resources and redesigning of staff rosters.

The programme is governed by the Demand and Capacity Programme Board which meets monthly and is chaired by the Chief Executive. In 2021/22, through the Demand and Capacity Programme, SAS accelerated the recruitment of an additional 549 staff and 21 new A&E vehicles across the country, along with a number of other support and response vehicles.

SAS has committed to develop the content and format of performance reporting in 2022/23. The

#### Our audit approach

We will review, conclude and report on the following:

- Whether performance reporting in 2022/23 is timely, reliable, balanced, transparent and appropriate to user needs.
- How SAS demonstrates a focus on continuous improvement in the context of continuing and significant financial and operational challenge.
- The implementation and delivery of the Demand and Capacity programme.
- Ongoing monitoring of the air ambulance re-procurement exercise.

**Consideration**

**Our audit approach**

addition of five revised KPIs were approved at a Board development session in August 2022. Work is ongoing to further develop the suite of KPIs with the aim to enhance the detail of measures for each group of patients and to measure SAS’s contribution to wider population health and care assurance. The revised measures are planned to be included in performance reports from March 2023.

During 2022/23 until August 2023, SAS will be undertaking its air ambulance re-procurement project. Work is ongoing to conduct a consultation and engagement exercise to gather input from staff, stakeholders, the public and partner organisations. The consultation exercise is currently in Phase 3 and SAS is expecting to have issued the Invitation to Tender Document by the middle of May and have selected a contractor for the project by the end of June 2023.

# Your Azets audit management team

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## Gary Devlin: Engagement Lead

[gary.devlin@azets.co.uk](mailto:gary.devlin@azets.co.uk)

Gary is the partner in charge of our audit of the Scottish Ambulance Service. Gary has over 25 years' experience in public sector auditing and leads a range of our external audit appointments in the health and local government sectors. Gary is a recognised specialist in public sector governance and risk management and will be responsible for all aspects of audit delivery. Gary will be available to provide accounting and other advice to the Board.



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## Karen Jones: Engagement Manager

[karen.jones@azets.co.uk](mailto:karen.jones@azets.co.uk)

Karen is one of the directors responsible for our Audit Scotland appointments. She has considerable experience in planning and delivering public sector audits, producing management reports and liaising with senior management and audit committees.

Karen will work alongside Gary to deliver the external audit to SAS.



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## Amy Hughes: Audit Senior

amy.hughes@azets.co.uk

Amy is an ICAS qualified audit senior on our public sector team and has worked across a range of public sector organisations. Amy takes a specific interest in the audit of Best Value and has undertaken a number of wider scope audit reviews. Amy will lead the day-to-day audit delivery of the Scottish Ambulance Service working alongside Karen and Gary.



# Audit timetable

The submission deadline for the annual accounts is normally set to be consistent with the administrative deadline set by the Scottish Government. It was moved to 30 September for 2019/20 and 2020/21, and 31 August for 2021/22, but is returning to the pre-pandemic 30 June from 2022/23.

The Auditor General is required to send the audited annual accounts to the Scottish Ministers who are then required to lay the accounts in the Scottish Parliament by 31 December.

We have set out below target months which align to SAS’s schedule of Audit Committee and Board meetings. We will aim to meet these scheduled meetings however this will be monitored during the audit process and may require to be revised to reflect emerging issues.

| Audit work/output | Description   | Target month/s  | Audit Committee            | Deadline      |
|-------------------|---|-----------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| Audit strategy    | Onboarding and initial engagement, introductory meetings and presentation of audit strategy.  | January         | 13 January 2023            | N/A           |
| Audit plan        | <p>Planning meetings, understanding the entity, risk assessment.</p> <p>Audit plan setting out the scope of our audit, including key audit risks, presented to the Audit Committee.</p> | January – March | 20 April 2023 <sup>3</sup> | 31 March 2023 |

<sup>3</sup> Due to the timetable of Audit Committee meetings; the External Audit Plan will be submitted to Audit Scotland after 31 March 2023 deadline.



| Audit work/output   | Description   | Target month/s  | Audit Committee | Deadline     |
|---|---|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Interim audit   | Interim audit including review of accounting systems.   | January - March | N/A             | N/A          |
| Final audit   | Accounts presented for audit and final audit visit begins.  | May             | N/A             | N/A          |
| Independent Auditor's Report                              | This report will contain our opinions on the financial statements, the audited part of the remuneration and staff report, annual governance statement and performance report.   | June            | 15 June 2023    | 30 June 2023 |
| Annual Report to SAS and the Auditor General for Scotland | At the conclusion of each year's audit we issue an annual report summarising out work and all opinions, conclusions, significant issues and recommendations. This report pulls together all of our work under the Code of Audit Practice. | June            | 15 June 2023    | 30 June 2023 |

Prior to submitting our outputs, we will discuss all issues with management to confirm factual accuracy and agree a draft action plan where appropriate.

The action plans within the reports will include prioritised recommendations, responsible officers and implementation dates. We will review progress against the action plans on a regular basis.

# Audit fee

For 2022/23, the new auditor appointment process provided Audit Scotland with a fair representation of the current audit market and highlighted the increasing requirements, expectations and scrutiny of the audit profession.

High quality audit work is essential to successfully deliver a fully ISA and Code of Audit Practice-compliant audit. These factors have led to above inflation increases in the cost of audit. Whilst these increases are significant, they are consistent with evidence obtained from the profession and other UK audit agencies. On setting fees, Audit Scotland has ensured that efficiencies have been fully utilised to mitigate the impact.

In the health sector, the average fee increase is 21.8%, where the average fee was previously £134,673 and has risen to £163,984.

Audit Scotland sets an “expected” audit fee that assumes the body has sound governance arrangements in place, has been operating effectively throughout the year, prepares comprehensive and accurate draft accounts and meets the agreed timetable for audit. The expected fee is reviewed by Audit Scotland each year and adjusted if necessary based on auditors’ experience, new requirements, or significant changes to the audited body.

The expected fee level notified to SAS for 2022/23 is £97,750, which is £15,470 higher than the fee agreed in the previous year and reflects the sectoral increase of 21.8%.

As auditors, we negotiate a fee with SAS that reflects our assessment of the work required to address the risks identified during the planning process. The fee may be varied above the expected fee level to reflect the circumstances and local risks within the body.

For 2022/23, we propose setting the audit fee above the expected fee level to reflect the following areas of work:

| Area   | Fee    |
|--|--------|
| Additional costs associated with the first year of our audit appointment, increased focus on IT general controls, high levels of significant audit risks within the NHS and the wider scope risks identified in this plan. | £2,000 |
| Dealing with accounting queries which arise during the financial year; including implementation of IFRS 16.  | £1,500 |
| Ongoing monitoring of the air ambulance re-procurement exercise <sup>4</sup> .   | £1,500 |

Our audit fee for the current year (with prior year comparatives) is as follows:

|                         | 2022/23         | 2021/22        |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Auditor remuneration    | £102,990        | £71,120        |
| Pooled costs            | £8,870          | £7,750         |
| Audit support costs     | £3,830          | £3,410         |
| Sectoral cap adjustment | (£12,940)       | -              |
| <b>Total fee</b>        | <b>£102,750</b> | <b>£82,280</b> |

We assume receipt of the draft working papers at the outset of our on-site final audit visit. If the draft accounts and papers are late, or agreed management assurances are unavailable, we reserve the right to charge a fee for additional audit work. An additional fee will also be required in relation to any other significant exercises not within our planned audit activity.

<sup>4</sup> In 2023/24, SAS will be undertaking its air ambulance re-procurement project which involves developing a tender specification brief and selection of a contractor for the project.

# Auditor independence and objectivity

We are required to communicate on a timely basis all facts and matters that may have a bearing on our independence.

In particular, FRC's Ethical Standard stipulates that where an auditor undertakes non audit work, appropriate safeguards must be applied to reduce or eliminate any threats to independence.

Azets has not been appointed to provide any non-audit services during the year. We confirm that we comply with FRC's Ethical Standard. In our professional judgement, the audit process is independent and our objectivity has not been compromised in any way. In particular there are and have been no relationships between Azets and SAS, its Board members and senior management that may reasonably be thought to bear on our objectivity and independence.

# Appendix 1: Responsibilities of the Auditor and SAS

## The Auditor General and Audit Scotland

The Auditor General for Scotland is a Crown appointment and independent of the Scottish Government and Parliament. The Auditor General is responsible for appointing independent auditors to audit the accounts of the Scottish Government and most Scottish public bodies, including NHS bodies, and reporting on their financial health and performance.

Audit Scotland is an independent statutory body that co-ordinates and supports the delivery of high-quality public sector audit in Scotland. Audit Scotland oversees the appointment and performance of auditors, provides technical support, delivers performance audit and Best Value work programmes and undertakes financial audits of public bodies.

## Auditor responsibilities

### Code of Audit Practice

The Code of Audit Practice (the Code) describes the high-level, principles-based purpose and scope of public audit in Scotland. The [2021 Code](#) came into effect from 2022/23.

The Code of Audit Practice outlines the responsibilities of external auditors appointed by the Auditor General and it is a condition of our appointment that we follow it.

### Our responsibilities

Auditor responsibilities are derived from the Code, statute, International Standards on Auditing (UK) and the Ethical Standard for auditors, other professional requirements and best practice, and guidance from Audit Scotland.

We are responsible for the audit of the accounts and the wider-scope responsibilities explained below. We act independently in carrying out our role and in exercising professional judgement. We report to SAS and others, including Audit Scotland, on the results of our audit work.

Weaknesses or risks, including fraud and other irregularities, identified by auditors, are only those which come to our attention during our normal audit work in accordance with the Code and may not be all that exist.

## Wider scope audit work

Reflecting the fact that public money is involved, public audit is planned and undertaken from a wider perspective than in the private sector.

The wider scope audit specified by the Code broadens the audit of the accounts to include additional aspects or risks in areas of financial management; financial sustainability; vision, leadership and governance; and use of resources to improve outcomes.

## Financial management



Financial management means having sound budgetary processes. Audited bodies require to understand the financial environment and whether their internal controls are operating effectively.

### Auditor considerations

Auditors consider whether the body has effective arrangements to secure sound financial management. This includes the strength of the financial management culture, accountability, and arrangements to prevent and detect fraud, error and other irregularities.

## Financial sustainability



Financial sustainability means being able to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

### Auditor considerations

Auditors consider the extent to which audited bodies show regard to financial sustainability. They look ahead to the medium term (two to five years) and longer term (over five years) to consider whether the body is planning effectively so it can continue to deliver services.

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## Vision, leadership and governance

Audited bodies must have a clear vision and strategy, and set priorities for improvement within this vision and strategy. They work together with partners and communities to improve outcomes and foster a culture of innovation.



### Auditor considerations

Auditors consider the clarity of plans to implement the vision, strategy and priorities adopted by the leaders of the audited body. Auditors also consider the effectiveness of governance arrangements for delivery, including openness and transparency of decision-making; robustness of scrutiny and shared working arrangements; and reporting of decisions and outcomes, and financial and performance information.

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## Use of resources to improve outcomes

Audited bodies need to make best use of their resources to meet stated outcomes and improvement objectives, through effective planning and working with strategic partners and communities. This includes demonstrating economy, efficiency and effectiveness through the use of financial and other resources, and reporting performance against outcomes.



### Auditor considerations

Auditors consider the clarity of arrangements in place to ensure that resources are deployed to improve strategic outcomes, meet the needs of service users taking account of inequalities, and deliver continuous improvement in priority services.

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## Audit quality

The Auditor General and the Accounts Commission require assurance on the quality of public audit in Scotland through comprehensive audit quality arrangements that apply to all audit work and providers. These arrangements recognise the importance of audit quality to the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission and provide regular reporting on audit quality and performance.

Audit Scotland maintains and delivers an [Audit Quality Framework](#).

The most recent audit quality report can be found at <https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/quality-of-public-audit-in-scotland-annual-report-202122>

## SAS responsibilities

SAS has primary responsibility for ensuring the proper financial stewardship of public funds, compliance with relevant legislation and establishing effective arrangements for governance, propriety and regularity that enables it to successfully deliver its objectives. The features of proper financial stewardship include the following:

| Area   | SAS responsibilities  |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Corporate governance</b></p>                     | <p>SAS is responsible for establishing arrangements to ensure the proper conduct of its affairs including the legality of activities and transactions, and for monitoring the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements. Those charged with governance should be involved in monitoring these arrangements.</p>  |
| <p><b>Financial statements and related reports</b></p> | <p>SAS has responsibility for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of its financial position and its expenditure and income, in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and relevant legislation;</li> <li>• maintaining accounting records and working papers that have been prepared to an acceptable professional standard and that support its financial statements and related reports disclosures;</li> <li>• ensuring the regularity of transactions, by putting in place systems of internal control to ensure that they are in accordance with the appropriate authority; and</li> <li>• preparing and publishing, along with the financial statements, an annual governance statement, management commentary (or equivalent) and a remuneration report in accordance with prescribed requirements. Management commentaries should be fair, balanced and understandable.</li> </ul> <p>Management is responsible, with the oversight of those charged with governance, for communicating relevant information to users about the entity and its financial performance, including providing adequate disclosures in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework. The relevant information should be communicated clearly and concisely.</p> <p>SAS is responsible for developing and implementing effective systems of internal control as well as financial, operational and compliance controls. These systems should support the</p> |



| Area   | SAS responsibilities   |
|--|--|
|  | <p>achievement of its objectives and safeguard and secure value for money from the public funds at its disposal. SAS is also responsible for establishing effective and appropriate internal audit and risk-management functions.</p>  |
| <p><b>Standards of conduct for prevention and detection of fraud and error</b></p> | <p>SAS is responsible for establishing arrangements to prevent and detect fraud, error and irregularities, bribery and corruption and also to ensure that its affairs are managed in accordance with proper standards of conduct by putting proper arrangements in place.</p>  |
| <p><b>Financial position</b></p>   | <p>SAS is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to ensure the financial position is soundly based having regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Such financial monitoring and reporting arrangements as may be specified;</li> <li>• Compliance with statutory financial requirements and achievement of financial targets;</li> <li>• Balances and reserves, including strategies about levels and their future use;</li> <li>• Plans to deal with uncertainty in the medium and long term; and</li> <li>• The impact of planned future policies and foreseeable developments on the financial position.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Best Value</b></p>   | <p>The Scottish Public Finance Manual sets out that accountable officers appointed by the Principal Accountable Officer for the Scottish Administration have a specific responsibility to ensure that arrangements have been made to secure Best Value. Accountable Officers are required to ensure accountability and transparency through effective performance reporting for both internal and external stakeholders.</p>   |

# Appendix 2: Impact of revised auditing standards

Revised auditing standards which come into effect from the current year, will have a significant impact on the way we perform our audit, particularly how we assess the risk of material misstatement, our approach to the audit of fraud, and the ways we ensure our audits are performed in line with regulatory requirements and to a high standard. The table below provides further detail on the implications of these new requirements.

| Key change  | Potential impact on SAS & our approach  |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Enhanced risk identification and assessment, promoting more focused auditor responses to identified risks</b></p> | <p>Management and those charged with governance may receive more up-front questions as we plan the audit and identify and assess risks of material misstatement.</p> <p>We may conduct planning and risk assessment procedures at a different time to ensure that our understanding is comprehensive, and that information is leveraged effectively and efficiently.</p> <p>To facilitate a more robust risk-assessment, we may request additional information to enhance our understanding of systems, processes and controls. For example, we may request:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a better understanding of SAS’s structure and operations and how it integrates information technology (IT)</li> <li>• more information about SAS’s processes for assessing risk and monitoring its system of internal control</li> <li>• more detailed narratives about how transactions are initiated, recorded, processed and reported</li> <li>• policies and procedure manuals, flowcharts and other supporting documentation to validate our understanding of the information systems relevant to the preparation of the financial statements</li> <li>• more information to support our inherent risk assessment.</li> </ul> <p>This information not only informs our risk assessment but also assists us in determining an appropriate response to risks</p> |

| Key change   | Potential impact on SAS & our approach   |
|--|--|
|  | <p>identified, including any new significant risks which require a different response.</p>   |
| <p><b>Understanding and acting on risks associated with IT</b></p> | <p>We will be asking tailored questions and making information requests to understand the IT environment, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT applications</li> <li>• supporting IT infrastructure</li> <li>• IT processes</li> <li>• personnel involved in the IT processes.</li> </ul> <p>Combined with the controls that may be needed to address the identified and assessed risks of material misstatement, this understanding may also identify existing and new risks arising from the use of IT. Therefore, we will be asking more focused questions and requesting additional information to understand the general IT controls that address such risks. For example, we may have questions in relation to general IT controls over journal entries (e.g., segregation of duties related to preparing and posting entries) to address risks arising from the use of IT.</p> <p>Depending on our assessment of the complexity of systems and associated risks, we may also involve additional team members, such as IT specialists.</p> |
| <p><b>Enhanced procedures in connection with fraud</b></p>         | <p>We will be asking targeted questions as part of an enhanced approach to fraud, including discussing with SAS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• any allegations of fraud raised by employees or related parties</li> <li>• the risks of material fraud, including those specific to the health sector.</li> </ul> <p>Combined with other information, and any inconsistencies in responses from those charged with governance and management, we determine implications for further audit procedures. Work in connection with fraud may also now include the use of audit data analytics, or the inclusion of specialists in our engagement team to ensure we obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to conclude whether the</p>   |

| Key change   | Potential impact on SAS & our approach   |
|--|--|
|  | <p>financial statements are materially misstated as a result of fraud.</p> <p>In addition to existing communication and reporting requirements relating to irregularities and fraud, there may be further matters we report in connection with management’s process for identifying and responding to the risks of fraud in the entity and our assessment of the risks of material misstatement due to fraud.</p> <p>These enhanced requirements may assist in the prevention and detection of material fraud, though do not provide absolute assurance that all fraud is detected or alter the fact that the primary responsibility for preventing and detecting fraud rests with the Board and management.</p> |
| <p><b>Enhanced requirements for exercising professional scepticism</b></p>   | <p>Challenge, scepticism and the application of appropriate professional judgement are key components of our audit approach. You may receive additional inquiries if information is found that contradicts what our team has already learned in the audit or in instances where records or documents seen in the course of the audit appear to have been tampered with, or to not be authentic.</p>  |
| <p><b>Using the right resources, in the right way, at the right time</b></p> | <p>One of our new strategic quality objectives sets out that we will strive to use the right resource, in the right way, at the right time. This may mean increasing the use of specialists (for example in relation to general IT controls) or changing the shape of the audit engagement team to ensure that we are able to provide appropriate challenge and feedback in specialist areas.</p> <p>This will include appropriate use of technology, including data analytics.</p>  |

# Appendix 3: Materiality

Materiality is an expression of the relative significance of a matter in the context of the financial statements as a whole. A matter is material if its omission or misstatement would reasonably influence the decisions of an addressee of the auditor’s report. The assessment of what is material is a matter of professional judgement and is affected by our assessment of the risk profile of the organisation and the needs of users. We review our assessment of materiality throughout the audit.

Whilst our audit procedures are designed to identify misstatements which are material to our audit opinion, we also report to the Board and management any uncorrected misstatements of lower value errors to the extent that our audit identifies these.

|   | <b>Group</b>    | <b>Board</b>    |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
|   | <b>£million</b> | <b>£million</b> |
| <b>Overall materiality for the financial statements</b> | 4.20            | 4.20            |
| <b>Performance materiality</b>                          | 3.15            | 3.15            |
| <b>Trivial threshold</b>                                | 0.21            | 0.21            |

## Materiality

Our assessment is made with reference to SAS’s gross expenditure. We consider this to be the principal consideration for the users of the annual accounts when assessing financial performance.

Our assessment of materiality equates to approximately 1% of SAS’s gross expenditure as disclosed in the 2021/22 audited annual report and accounts.

We set materiality for both the Group and SAS at the same level given our assessment and approach to the group audit. We have concluded, at the planning stages of our audit, that the Scottish Ambulance Service Endowment Fund is not a significant component to the overall group.

In performing our audit, we apply a lower level of materiality to the audit of the Remuneration and Staff Report. Our materiality is set at £5,000.

**Performance materiality**

Performance materiality is the working level of materiality used throughout the audit. We use performance materiality to determine the nature, timing and extent of audit procedures carried out. We perform audit procedures on all transactions, or groups of transactions, and balances that exceed our performance materiality. This means that we perform a greater level of testing on the areas deemed to be at significant risk of material misstatement.

Performance materiality is set at a value less than overall materiality for the financial statements as a whole to reduce to an appropriately low level the probability that the aggregate of the uncorrected and undetected misstatements exceed overall materiality.

**Trivial misstatements**

Trivial misstatements are matters that are clearly inconsequential, whether taken individually or in aggregate and whether judged by any quantitative or qualitative criteria.

# Appendix 4: National risk areas under scope of audit in 2022/23

## Climate change

Tackling climate change is one of the greatest global challenges. The Scottish Parliament has set a legally binding target of becoming net zero by 2045, and has interim targets including a 75% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The public sector in Scotland has a key role to play in ensuring these targets are met and in adapting to the impacts of climate change.

There are specific legal responsibilities placed on public bodies to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, to adapt to climate change, to act sustainably and to report on progress. A number of public bodies have declared a climate emergency and set their own net zero targets, some of which are earlier than Scotland's national targets. All public bodies will need to reduce their direct and indirect emissions, and should have plans to do so. Many bodies will also have a role in reducing emissions in wider society, and in supporting activity to adapt to the current and potential future impact of climate change. For example, working with the private sector and communities to help drive forward the required changes in almost all aspects of public and private life, from transport and housing to business support.

Public audit has an important and clear role to play in:

- helping drive change and improvement in this uncertain and evolving area of work
- supporting public accountability and scrutinising performance
- helping identify and share good practice.

The Auditor General and Accounts Commission are developing a programme of work on climate change. This involves a blend of climate change-specific outputs that focus on key issues and challenges as well as moving towards integrating climate change considerations into all aspects of audit work.

For 2022/23 audits, auditors are required to provide answers to the questions set out in the following table which are intended to gather basic information on the arrangements for responding to climate change in each body:

### Key questions

What targets has the body set for reducing emissions in its own organisation or in its local area?

Does the body have a climate change strategy or action plan which sets out how the body intends to achieve its targets?

How does the body monitor and report progress towards meeting its emission targets internally and publicly?

Has the body considered the impact of climate change on its financial statements?

What are the areas of the financial statements where climate change has, or is expected to have, a material impact?

Does the body include climate change in its narrative reporting which accompanies the financial statements and is it consistent with those financial statements?

### Cyber security

There continues to be a significant risk of cyber-attacks to public bodies, and it is important that they have appropriate cyber security arrangements in place.

A number of recent incidents have demonstrated the significant impact that a cyber-attack can have on both the finances and operation of an organisation.

For 2022/23 audits, auditors are advised to consider risks related to cyber security at audited bodies. However, the revised ISA (UK) 315 includes enhanced requirements for auditors to understand a body's use of IT in its business, the related risks and the system of internal control addressing such risks. The Auditor General and Accounts Commission consider that meeting these additional requirements is likely to be sufficient consideration of cyber security in 2022/23.





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