

Dumfries and Galloway Council

Local Scrutiny Plan

2015/16



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Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in Dumfries and Galloway Council during 2015/16. The plan is based on a shared risk assessment undertaken by a local area network (LAN), comprising representatives of all the scrutiny bodies who engage with the council. The shared risk assessment process draws on a range of evidence with the aim of determining any scrutiny activity required and focusing this in the most proportionate way.
2. This plan does not identify or address all risks in the council. It covers only those risk areas that the LAN has identified as requiring scrutiny, or where scrutiny is planned as part of a national programme. Planned scrutiny activity across all councils in Scotland informs the National Scrutiny Plan for 2015/16, which is available on the Audit Scotland website.

Scrutiny risks

3. Last year's Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP), covering the period 2014-17, highlighted the wide range of senior management vacancies that the council had carried during 2013, alongside the temporary management arrangements that existed within the council's community and customer services department at that time.
4. The AIP noted that the council was in the process of implementing a range of organisational changes to create a structure with sufficient capacity and resilience to allow the council to improve services and delivering better outcomes for local people at a time of significantly reducing resources. An important aspect of that improvement agenda was responding to the very critical joint inspection of services for children, young people and families that took place across the Dumfries and Galloway Community Planning Partnership (CPP) in January and February 2014. Aspects of the organisational changes were also intended to help the council address the areas for improvement identified by the Scottish Housing Regulator as part of its 2013 national thematic inspection into housing options and the prevention of homelessness.
5. In December 2014 the council approved a further major restructure that will reduce the number of directorates from six to four (Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning; Economy, Environment and Infrastructure; Communities; and Corporate Services), with the Chief Officer for Health and Social Care Integration (HSCI) in Dumfries and Galloway reporting directly to the council's Chief Executive and being accountable to

the new Health and Social Care Joint Board. It is anticipated that the appointment of the four new Directors will be concluded by 1 April 2015 and the broader process of the redesign of service management within the four directorates will follow once those appointments have been made. That redesign work will be co-ordinated from a central project management office and be overseen by a Transformation Board and Steering Group. Over the next 3 years the council plans to undertake a series of service reviews to drive efficiency and improve outcomes across the organisation. It is anticipated that the overall programme of change will deliver annual management savings of £2m by the end of 2017/18, with further savings and efficiencies arising from the service review programme. The council will receive regular reports (at least six-monthly) from the chief executive on progress against the programme of change. The LAN will be monitoring implementation of this change programme throughout the year given its significance and potential impact on service management and leadership, performance, and outcomes for local people.

6. In its joint inspection of services for children, young people and families the Care Inspectorate found that child protection performance had declined since 2010 and the effectiveness of responding to ensure children's safety and wellbeing was inconsistent. The inspection report, which was published in April 2014, made recommendations for urgent action to improve the arrangements to protect children and young people. Given the significance of the Care Inspectorate's inspection findings a follow-up visit took place in late 2014 to assess progress in relation to the areas for improvement set out in the report.
7. The inspection team noted the seriousness with which the partnership had responded to the findings of the first inspection and the resources they had deployed to review processes and improve practice, giving appropriate priority to strengthening responses to concerns about children's safety. The progress report, when published, is likely to provide positive assurance about the direction and pace of travel towards improvement while recognising the size and scale of the areas still to be addressed and the challenges of achieving this within a relatively lean management structure. The Care Inspectorate will continue to monitor the partnership's progress against the original inspection report's recommendations and to support improvement and capacity building.
8. Dumfries and Galloway Council has a significant number of residential child care services located in its area. Many of these services provide out-of-borough placements for other local authorities from across the United Kingdom. Whilst the overall responsibility for the support and welfare of the children in these placements rest with the placing authority these services create significant demands on local police and health services.

9. The 2014-17 AIP included a commitment by the council's appointed auditors (PWC) to undertake some targeted audit work on the effectiveness of the council's governance and scrutiny arrangements in holding officers to account and driving performance management and improvement. Observations from last year's annual audit work are that the current arrangements provide a good degree of scrutiny and challenge of performance by elected members.
10. The joint inspection of services for children, young people and families identified significant weaknesses in the effectiveness of joint self evaluation work by partners which had failed to identify significant weaknesses in joint planning and professional practice, and had not been used effectively to secure improvements. This reflected broader weaknesses in the quality assurance arrangements for services for children and young people.
11. Last year's AIP included the proposal that targeted Best Value audit work would take place during 2015 to assess the impact of the council's restructuring and redesign of services in delivering efficiencies and improving outcomes. It was intended that this work would also provide independent assurance to the Accounts Commission on progress that is being made in managing performance and delivering continuous improvement by the council since its last Best Value follow-up audit in 2009.
12. Given the major restructuring approved by the council in December 2014 the LAN feels that Best Value audit work would no longer be appropriate during 2015. Best Value audit work is still planned, but, its timing will take account of the progress made by the council in implementing its ongoing restructure and service review programme. It is unlikely to take place until 2016 at the earliest. As well as assessing the impact of the council's restructuring and redesign of services the Best Value audit work will also review the effectiveness of the council's self assessment and performance management arrangements in driving improvement.
13. The 2014-17 AIP reported positively on the performance of the council's education service in relation to national measures and proposed no specific education scrutiny activity within the council at that time. The current scrutiny risk assessment for education is that there continues to be no additional risk-based scrutiny required. The council has invited Education Scotland to work with its education service on a process of Validated and Assisted Self Evaluation (VSE) to strengthen further its capacity for improvement and inform its next education services planning cycle. The outcome of the VSE will be published in due course.
14. The council's homelessness service has recently been moved from within the social work department to the council's strategic housing function. LAN has identified a range of scrutiny risks in relation to homelessness (high levels of households placed in temporary accommodation; relatively low levels of lets made to homeless people by two major registered social landlords (RSLs) in the area; and rising case durations). These

mean that follow-up scrutiny of the council's housing options and homelessness service by the Scottish Housing Regulator is planned towards the end of 2015/16.

15. There continues to be significant local interest in the circumstances surrounding the move into administration of R&D Construction Ltd, a significant local supplier to Dumfries and Galloway Housing Partnership (DGHP). Whilst this is predominantly a matter for DGHP the council has an interest in this matter given its role as a funder of DGHP and as a local housing authority. Dumfries Trades Union Council (DTUC) has recently petitioned the Scottish Parliament to request a full investigation into the "associated allegations of cover-ups in relation to the [R&D] contract". The LAN will monitor this issue in light of the council's interest as the local housing authority.
16. The council's 2014/15 budget of £350m includes key assumptions regarding: pay inflation and pay awards; pension contribution rates; the Scottish local government living wage; new areas of responsibility such as the Children and Young People Bill; and known budget pressures such as its Waste PFI contract with Shanks. However, in order to achieve its balanced budget savings of £7.5m will be required from across the council. The council has a good track record of delivering its savings plans and achieving a balanced budget facilitated by a process of ongoing scrutiny through the year of the delivery of savings plans. PWC will continue to monitor developments in this area through the 2015/16 annual audit process.

Planned scrutiny activity

17. As shown in Appendix 1, the council will be subject to a range of risk-based and nationally driven scrutiny activity during 2015/16. For some of their scrutiny activity in 2015/16, scrutiny bodies are still to determine their work programmes which specific council areas they will cover. Where a council is to be involved, the relevant scrutiny body will confirm this with the council and the appropriate LAN lead.
18. In addition to specific work shown in Appendix 1, routine, scheduled audit and inspection work will take place through the annual audit process and the ongoing inspection of school and care establishments by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate respectively. Audit Scotland will carry out a programme of [performance audits](#) during 2015/16 and individual audit and inspection agencies will continue to monitor developments in key areas of council activity and will provide support and challenge as appropriate. This will help to inform future assessment of scrutiny risk.

March 2015

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
LAN	The LAN will be monitoring implementation of the council's major restructure and the related process of the redesign of service management within the four new directorates. It will also monitor progress with the 3-year service review programme, given its significance and potential impact on service management and leadership, performance, and outcomes for local people.	Throughout 2015/16
Audit Scotland	Best Value audit work to assess the impact of the council's restructuring and provide independent assurance to the Accounts Commission on progress that is being made in delivering continuous improvement since the council's last Best Value follow-up audit in 2009.	Summer-Autumn 2016
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	The Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland will carry out a joint inspection of services for adults during 2015/16. The inspection will initially focus on services for older people then, at the latter part of the year, these will encompass other adults' services, firstly learning disability services then alcohol and drug services. This is part of a wider national planned programme of scrutiny work being undertaken by the Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland.	January/February 2016
Care Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)	The Care Inspectorate and HMICS will be undertaking a joint thematic review of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) in Scotland during 2015. The purpose of the review will be to assess the status, efficiency and effectiveness of the MAPPA process in Scotland, in terms of keeping people safe and reducing the potential risk of serious harm by registered sex offenders in our communities. It will cover all 32 local authorities and involve local authorities, Police Scotland, NHS Boards and the Scottish Prison Service. The joint review will cover the Dumfries and Galloway Council area during April 2015	April 2015
Education Scotland	Education Scotland will work in partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Council for the purposes of Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE). The scheduling of the VSE has been arranged by negotiation between Education Scotland and the council.	January-June 2015
	Education Scotland will be working in partnership with councils to carry out a validated self-evaluation (VSE) of educational psychology services across all councils over a two-year period beginning in 2015/16. Education Scotland will notify councils of its VSE plans each academic term.	Date over the next two years to be determined

Her Majesty's Fire Services Inspectorate (HMFSI)	HMFSI will be inspecting local fire and rescue services across Scotland over the next five years. These inspections will examine, amongst other things, local scrutiny and engagement between the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and councils. As part of its programme, HMFSI will inspect four local fire and rescue services during 2015/16. Dumfries and Galloway is not included in the programme this year.	Date over the next five years to be determined
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS)	HMICS will be inspecting local policing across Scotland over the next three years. These inspections will examine, amongst other things, local scrutiny and engagement between Police Scotland and councils. Two local Policing Divisions are programmed to be inspected in addition to Edinburgh Division in 2015/16. The Divisions will be identified approximately three months prior to inspection, the first being no earlier than October.	Date over the next three years to be determined
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	Follow-up scrutiny of the council's housing options and homelessness service.	End of 2015/16
	<p>The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has a planned programme of thematic inquiries into housing services which will be carried out largely in the first quarter of 2015-16, with publication of inquiry reports in the first and second quarters of the year. The thematic inquiries will cover a range of housing services including: Gypsy/Travellers; factoring services; gas safety; complaints handling; customer service standards; repairs; rent consultation; equalities; and openness and accessibility. Some of the thematic inquiries will not involve any on-site work at all and no local authority will be selected for on-site work in more than one thematic. The SHR will contact individual landlords with details about their potential inclusion.</p> <p>During the first and second quarters of the year, the SHR will review the Charter data submitted by social landlords in May 2015 and identify topics for a further programme of thematic inquiries to be taken forward in the second and third quarters of the year.</p>	To be confirmed