

NHS in Scotland 2016



AUDITOR GENERAL 

Prepared by Audit Scotland
June 2016

1. The NHS in Scotland provides a range of vital services across the country to thousands of people every day, often in partnership with other bodies. Increasing costs and a growing demand for services, combined with continuing pressures on public finances, means the NHS continues to face significant challenges in delivering its services. Alongside these pressures, NHS boards and councils are integrating health and social care services which is a major area of public sector reform.

2. We will assess the financial performance of the NHS based on information from the annual accounts and audit reports of NHS boards in 2015/16. We will also comment on the broader performance of the NHS drawing on other sources of information, including our national performance audit reports published throughout the year. We will look ahead to examine how the NHS in Scotland is equipped to deal with future challenges.

Audit Scotland's report on the NHS

3. Audit Scotland prepares an annual overview on the NHS in Scotland on behalf of the Auditor General for Scotland. We will comment on areas including:

- the financial performance of the NHS in 2015/16
- governance and financial management
- how well the NHS is managing changes to its workforce and estate
- key pressure areas within the NHS
- performance against national targets
- the financial outlook for the NHS in 2016/17 and beyond, and how well the NHS is equipped to face the financial challenges
- progress towards implementing NHS reform, including integration of health and social care services and transformational change.

Why is this audit important?

4. The NHS is one of Scotland's largest employers and spends around a third of the Scottish budget (around £12.3 billion in 2015/16). At December 2015, it employed over 161,000 staff, which is equivalent to over 138,000 full time staff.¹ Every year around 16.3 million people have an appointment with a GP, 4.46 million people have a hospital outpatient appointment, 1.57 million have a hospital stay and 102.3 million prescriptions are dispensed.² The scale and range of the services provided and the current financial pressures facing the Scottish public sector mean it is important to report publicly on how the NHS in Scotland is performing.

How will we carry out this audit?

5. Our report will draw on the audited annual accounts of NHS boards, annual audit reports, Audit Scotland's national performance audit reports, and information from other sources including ISD Scotland. We will supplement this through interviews with senior officials in the Scottish Government and a sample of NHS boards.


What impact will the audit have?

6. Our audit will provide an independent assessment of the performance of the NHS in Scotland. It aims to give assurance to the Scottish Parliament, the public and other stakeholders about the performance of the NHS during 2015/16. The audit may also highlight good practice and make recommendations, where relevant, to help improve financial and performance management. The information in our report will allow bodies to compare themselves against each other and Scotland overall.

Audit timetable

7. We will carry out the audit between June and September 2016. We aim to publish a report and a self-assessment checklist for non-executive board members in October 2016. Following publication, the Auditor General will brief the Scottish Parliament's Public Audit Committee on our findings.

Contact

If you have any questions or would like more information about this audit please contact Jillian Matthew, Audit Manager, on 0131 625 1844 or by email at jmatthew@auditscotland.gov.uk .

Notes:

- 1 NHS workforce data tables, ISD Scotland, December 2015.
- 2 Practice Team Information, October 2013; Annual Acute Hospital Activity and NHS Beds Information in Scotland, December 2015 (revised May 2016); Prescribing Summary Statistics, May 2016, ISD Scotland.



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