PURPOSE

1. To advise of the recent publication of an Accounts Commission audit, prepared by Audit Scotland, on Social Work in Scotland.

BACKGROUND

2. The Social Work in Scotland report was published on 22 September 2016 and is available on the members' information portal.

3. The Accounts Commission is the public spending watchdog for local government. The Commission hold councils in Scotland to account and help them improve. They operate impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government, and meet and report in public. They expect councils to achieve the highest standards of governance and financial stewardship, and value for money in how they use their resources and provide their services.

4. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. Audit Scotland helps the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission check that organisations spending public money use it properly, efficiently and effectively.

5. Social work provides a wide range of services. These aim to improve the quality of people’s lives and help them to live more independently. In 2014/15, councils’ net spending on social work services was £3.1 billion. Services for older people made up around 44 per cent of this spending, and services for children and families around 28 per cent. A range of other services make up the remainder.

6. Just over 200,000 people work in social work and social care, around one in 13 people in employment in Scotland. In addition, there are 759,000 unpaid carers aged 16 and over in Scotland, 17 per cent of the adult population, and 29,000 young carers under 16. Carers UK estimated the value of unpaid care in Scotland to be £10.8 billion, more than three times current social work net spending.

7. Social Work Services provide and fund essential support to some of the most vulnerable people in society. They supported and protected over 300,000 people in 2014/15, around 70 per cent of whom were aged 65 and over.

8. Social work services are facing significant challenges. These include financial pressures caused by a real-terms reduction in overall council spending, demographic changes, and the cost of implementing new legislation and
policies. The Accounts Commission has estimated that these changes require social work spending to increase by between £510 and £667 million by 2020 (16–21 per cent increase), if councils and IJBs continue to provide services in the same way. The report indicates that additional funding provided to IJBs via the NHS may partially relieve the financial pressures.

AUDIT OVERVIEW

9. The overall aim of the Accounts Commission audit was to examine how effectively councils are planning to address the financial and demographic pressures facing social work. The objectives were to assess:

- the scale of the financial and demand pressures facing social work;
- the strategies councils are adopting to meet these challenges;
- the effectiveness of governance arrangements, including how elected members lead and oversee social work services;
- the impact of financial and demand pressures on people who use services and on carers, and how councils involve them in planning how services are provided.

10. Social work comprises a wide range of services, and the Accounts Commission have not covered all of them in this report. They also did not examine health and social care integration arrangements, which will be the subject of separate audit work, but they did consider their impact on councils' financial, operational and governance arrangements. The methodology included:

- fieldwork interviews with elected members, senior managers and social workers in six council areas, Midlothian, East Renfrewshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Glasgow City, Perth and Kinross and West Lothian;
- desk research, including analysing both the impact of legislation and policy, and financial and demographic data;
- meetings and focus groups with stakeholders, including:
  (i) 33 focus groups and 12 interviews with service users and carers (165 participants)
  (ii) 4 focus groups with service providers (over 40 participants)
  (iii) attending the Coalition of Carers in Scotland AGM.

11. The audit also took into account the findings of previous audits including:

- Commissioning social care (March 2012)
- Reshaping care for older people (February 2014)
- Self-directed support (June 2014)
- Health and social care integration (December 2015)
- Changing models of health and social care (March 2016)

12. In addition, further audit work is planned on health and social care integration and self-directed support.
13. The *Social Work in Scotland* audit summarises that current approaches to delivering social work services will not be sustainable in the long term. There are risks that reducing costs further could affect the quality of services.

**KEY MESSAGES**

14. They key messages from the Audit are:

- Social work services are facing significant challenges (financial; demographic; new legislative and policy requirements);
- Current approaches to delivering social work services will not be sustainable in the long term;
- Community capacity requires to be built to better support vulnerable people to live independently in their own homes and communities;
- The integration of health and social care has made governance arrangements more complex;
- Elected members require to assure themselves that service quality is maintained and that risks are managed effectively;
- The role of the Chief Social Work Officer has become more complex and challenging, and council's require to ensure that Chief Social Work Officers have the status and capacity to enable them to fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively.

**AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS**

15. The key recommendations relate to:

- Social work strategy and planning;
- Governance and scrutiny arrangements;
- Workforce;
- Service efficiency and effectiveness.

16. The report recommends that councils and Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) need to work with the Scottish Government, which sets the overall strategy for social work across Scotland, to make fundamental decisions about how they provide services in the future. They need to work more closely with service providers, people who use social work services and carers to commission services in a way that makes best use of the resources and expertise available locally. They also need to build communities’ capacity to better support vulnerable local people to live independently in their own homes and communities.

17. Although councils want to deliver more preventative services, there has been a limited shift to prevention, different models of care or better tapping into the support available from the wider community. There has been little in the way of fundamental change in the way councils deliver services. Many councils have taken an opportunistic or piecemeal approach to change, often to meet financial challenges or as the result of initiative funding by the Scottish Government.

18. Councils and IJBs need to instigate a frank and wide-ranging debate with their communities about the long-term future for social work and social care in their area to meet statutory responsibilities, given the funding available and the future challenges. Elected members need to engage with communities in a wider dialogue about council priorities. At a higher level, there is a key role for
the Scottish Government as they set policy and councils need to work with the Scottish Government, COSLA, the Scottish Local Government Partnership, Social Work Scotland and other stakeholders to review how to provide social work services for the future and future funding arrangements.

19. Currently, opportunities for people who use social work services and carers to be involved in planning services are limited. The audit suggests there is scope for councils and IJBs to do more to work with them to design, commission, deliver and evaluate services to achieve better outcomes. It is acknowledged that service providers also have an important role to play in contributing to commissioning and councils need to do more to work with them to design services based around user needs.

20. The audit highlights that councils and their community planning partners need to do more to promote and empower communities. This includes working with them to design, commission, deliver and evaluate services to achieve better outcomes, and to build capacity to allow communities to do more to support themselves.

21. It is further recommended that councils work with the Scottish Government, their representative organisation (COSLA or the Scottish Local Government Partnership (SLGP)), Social Work Scotland and other stakeholders to review how to provide social work services for the future and future funding arrangements. It is also recommended that long-term strategies are developed for the services funded by social work, informed by detailed analysis of demographic change and the contribution preventative approaches can make to reduce demand for services. This should include the development of long-term financial and workforce plans.

22. The audit also suggests that councils look to consider examples of innovative practice from across Scotland and beyond – working with the NHS and Scottish Government to review how to better synchronise partners’ budget-setting arrangements to support these strategies.

23. The audit outlines that councils and IJBs should ensure that the governance and scrutiny of social work services are appropriate and comprehensive across the whole of social work services, and review these arrangements regularly as partnerships develop and services change. It is further recommended that accountability be improved by having processes in place to measure the outcomes of services and monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of services, allow elected members to assure themselves that the quality of social work services is being maintained and that councils are managing risks effectively, measure people’s satisfaction with services and reporting findings to elected members and the IJB.

24. The audit continues that councils should demonstrate clear access for, and reporting to, the council by the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO), in line with guidance, ensuring the CSWO has sufficient time and authority to enable them to fulfil the role effectively and provide an annual summary of the performance of the social work service, highlighting achievements and weaker areas of service delivery, setting out the council’s response and plans to improve weaker areas and that these are actively scrutinised by elected members.
25. Councils should work with their representative organisation (COSLA or the SLGP), the Scottish Government and private and third sector employers to put in place a coordinated approach to resolve workforce issues in social care as part of their contract monitoring arrangements, ensuring that providers who use zero hours contracts allow staff to accept or turn down work without being penalised.

26. The audit concludes by recommending that councils and IJBs should, when planning an initiative, include evaluation criteria and extend or halt initiatives depending on the success of new approaches in improving outcomes and value for money. As part of this approach, councils should benchmark their services against those provided by other councils and providers within the UK and overseas to encourage innovation and improve services. They should also work with COSLA to review the eligibility framework to ensure that it is still fit for purpose in the light of recent policy and legislative changes.

POLICY AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

27. The findings and recommendations have been considered by the Social Work / Social Care Governance Forum, which was established to ensure that there is professional oversight of professional social work practice and related matters. A self assessment is being undertaken to highlight the strengths, opportunities, risks and actions required in response to this report.

HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

28. The capacity of the social services workforce and the Chief Social Work Officer are identified areas of concern within the audit and this will require to be considered as part of our self-assessment.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

29. Recommendations from this audit will further influence our approach to achieving necessary savings and prioritising areas for improvement.

COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

30. It is proposed that the Audit’s findings and recommendations are shared with community planning partners via existing partnership arrangements. They will assist to develop shared understanding and responses to the challenges outlined.

RISK IMPLICATIONS

31. The capacity of the social services workforce and the Chief Social Work Officer are identified areas of concern. This is accompanied by the challenge of necessary savings in coming years, with the requirement to continue to support a growing ageing population while investing in preventative approaches.

32. In June 2016, the Chief Social Work Officer identified areas of risk in her report to Council as a consequence of the complexity associated with the integration of health and social care. Consequently, steps have been taken to strengthen governance arrangements relating to social work services and the role of the
Chief Social Work Officer. These arrangements are set out in the East Ayrshire Social Work and Social Care Governance Framework.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

33. Tackling inequality is core to social work values and approaches, and the key findings in this report will further influence how services can be delivered to address inequalities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

34. Governance and Scrutiny Committee members are requested to:

   i) note the findings and recommendations of the Audit;
   ii) note that a self-assessment is being undertaken which will report back to Governance and Scrutiny Committee in due course; and
   iii) note that the Audit will also be presented to the Integration Joint Board.

Susan Taylor
Head of Children’s Health, Care and Justice Services / Chief Social Work Officer
2 November 2016

Report prepared by Hilary Scott, Planning & Performance Officer, East Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership

BACKGROUND PAPERS

3. Detailed Audit Methodology
4. Governance Arrangements for Councils and IJBs
5. Self Assessment checklist for Council members