

News release on behalf of the Accounts Commission

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Funding to Integration Joint Boards increases, but significant risks and challenges ahead

Funding of Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) in 2020/21 increased by nearly 10 per cent in real terms, bringing total funding to £10.6 billion. This was mainly due to one-off Scottish Government funding to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19.

Reserves also tripled, reflecting unspent Covid-19 funding and the late allocation of specific funding for primary care, community, mental health and alcohol and drug support.

All Scotland's IJBs, however, face significant financial sustainability issues: uncertainty of future funding, rising demand and the potential impacts of a national care service. This means:

- across all 30 IJBs there remains a significant overall budget gap - this was £151 million in 2021/22, with some IJBs facing significant financial challenges
- making recurring savings and delivering services differently is essential to addressing future budget gaps
- 81 per cent of money held in reserves is ringfenced, creating a lack of flexibility in how IJBs can use this money
- Securing longer-term financial planning – only five IJBs have long-term financial plans

William Moyes, Chair, Accounts Commission said: "Scotland's 30 Integration Joint Boards face an increasingly uncertain future, with mounting financial and service pressures. All IJBs must put in place robust, detailed longer-term financial plans, helping design sustainable services.

"The pressures and demands on health and social care services are significant. The long-term, adverse impacts of Covid-19 on our health is as yet unknown, alongside pre-existing rising demand, serious recruitment challenges across the social care sector, continued inflation and uncertain longer-term funding for IJBs. This comes alongside plans to develop and implement a National Care Service, which has the potential to significantly change the way IJBs operate."

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Notes to Editor:

1. All reports by the Accounts Commission and Auditor General published since 2000 are available on the Audit Scotland website

- The Accounts Commission is the public spending watchdog for local government. It holds councils and various joint boards and committees in Scotland to account and help them improve. It operates impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government, and meets and reports in public.

- Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland.
2. The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 set out a framework for integrating adult health and social care services. The Act created new partnerships, known as Integration Authorities (IAs), with statutory responsibilities to coordinate local health and social care services.
 3. Together with the Auditor General for Scotland, the Accounts Commission have produced a series of reports focused on [health and social care integration](#).
 4. This is the first year the Accounts Commission has produced a standalone report focused on an analysis of the financial position and performance of Integration Joint Boards. In previous years this was included in the Accounts Commission's Local Government Financial Overview.