

Public Audit and Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee

National Fraud Initiative

Submission from COSLA

As the representative voice of local government in Scotland, COSLA is pleased to provide brief comment on the work local authorities have carried out to strengthen their contribution to the National Fraud Initiative to minimise fraud and error across the public sector.

Local Authorities take seriously their duty to protect the public purse from all forms of misuse, this is highlighted by the vast number of Councils who were deemed as having managed their role in the NFI 2014/15 exercise satisfactorily. That said the 2016 report did highlight five Councils who had scope for improvement across two areas, late submission of data sets and limited investigation work being carried out. It is worth highlighting that four of these five authorities, had by February 2016, subsequently been found to have demonstrated actions resulting in final auditor assessments of adequate or satisfactory. The fifth Council named in the report whilst not achieving an adequate/satisfactory final assessment did demonstrate limited progress in the areas highlighted.

The progress made by those Councils to strengthen their contribution to NFI was achieved during a period of instability for Councils around fraud/error prevention and detection. As the Committee is aware the resources previously linked to fraud prevention and investigation work were transferring to central government to form the Single Fraud Investigation Service. Local authorities across Scotland, were very much still finding their way around how they should proceed, mindful of the overarching duty to protect public funds against a backdrop of reductions in funding, both generally, and associated with fraud and error.

In closing local government has played an active part in the National Fraud Initiative work, both before and after, the initiative was placed on a statutory footing. The results contained within the 2016 report demonstrate the continued benefits across the public sector of this initiative. Local Government remains committed to being involved with NFI moving forward and individual Councils recognise the importance of fulfilling the role expected of them appropriately.

COSLA
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