

## Audit Commission National Reports

Every year the Audit Commission publishes a wide range of national reports to address important issues within the local government, housing, fire, community safety and health sectors.

Although these reports sometimes focus on specific sectors, often the learning is just as applicable to other environments. Our work is aimed at helping local public bodies look after public money, achieve more with less and improve places and people's lives

Our research identifies practice that works, highlights emerging findings and examines national trends to help drive improvement in local practice and influence national policy. Our findings are widely communicated by publishing national reports, holding national and regional events and developing improvement tools for use by local public bodies and Audit Commission staff. This note provides an overview of the Audit Commissions work over the past year and also highlights some of the reports coming soon.

We hope you will find this a useful quick guide to some of the Audit Commission's most recent studies. Other reports such as corporate documents or annual scores and analysis reports are available on the Audit Commission website [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)

All our national studies and tools are available on the Audit Commission website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk) or can be ordered by calling 0800 50 20 30.

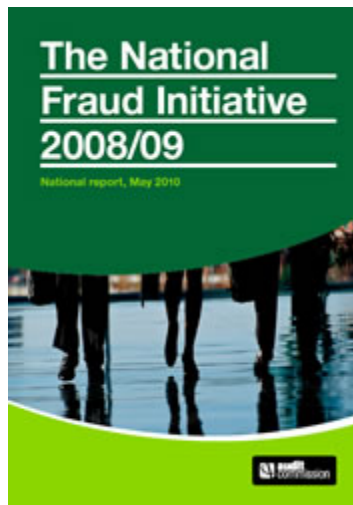
### **Against the odds - Re-engaging young people in education, employment or training** 7 July 2010



Since 1990, a yearly government survey has indicated that between 9 and 10 per cent of 16 to 18 year olds is without a wage, schooling or training. Our new study looks at the financial, personal and social cost of teenagers who are so-called NEET - not in education, employment or training. The study has found that the problem may be worse than the annual 'snapshot' survey shows, but that a new approach can make scarce resources work harder for those at greatest risk.

### **National Fraud Initiative report 2008/09**

May 2010



This report sets out the successes of NFI in helping protect 'UK PLC' from fraud and wrongful payments, explains what more could be done by government and participants and details how NFI will develop to meet new fraud challenges.

### **Surviving the crunch - Local finances in the recession and beyond**

23 March 2010



The third in a series about the credit crunch. Councils have been cushioned to date because the government stuck to its three-year funding settlement. They have lost development related income, and capital receipts are down. Councils must think bigger and act quicker to reduce costs, or future funding cuts will cause more damage to services and jobs than is necessary. Maps show certain areas and women are especially sensitive to local public service job cuts.

**By mutual agreement - Severance payments to council chief executives**  
16 March 2010



Top pay in the public sector has become a matter of concern for both the government and the public. This report examines one aspect of pay for council chief executives, severance payments following the early termination of contracts. Data is provided on the number, scale and causes of payments. A series of recommendations focused on improving the transparency around severance payments is provided.

**Healthy Balance- A review of public health performance and spending.**  
11 March 2010



This briefing estimates that £21 billion of NHS funds has been allocated in 2009/10 on the basis of health inequalities and there have been improvements. However, this publication highlights some of the variation in success among different localities, particularly for teenage pregnancies. Despite the sums of money allocated, it is not always clear how much has been spent on improving health inequalities and what the impact has been.

### **The truth is out there - Transparency in an information age**

5 March 2010



This is the second publication in the 'Truth Series', which are publications aimed at prompting a debate on issues at the heart of the information agenda. This paper focuses on transparency and citizen use of information, it:

- shares learning and innovative practice from Britain and other parts of the world;
- highlights the challenges and risks of making data and information more widely accessible; and suggests some ways to mitigate those risks in the years ahead.

## **Under pressure - Tackling the financial challenge for councils of an ageing population**

18 February 2010



Councils face the challenge of an ageing population as public spending reduces. This report says most councils do not know enough about the costs of their ageing population. They may also miss the savings that could flow from preventive services and better work with other organisations.

## **Giving children a healthy start - A review of health improvements in children from birth to five years**

3 February 2010



The study examines local service planning and delivery, discusses the impact of government funding on health outcomes, how effectively local bodies manage their financial resources, and the extent to which they are providing good value for money. A child health indicator tool consisting of 20 health indicators and a financial modelling tool for the under-fives are available to enable local bodies to identify how they are performing against these indicators and will identify areas for improvement and allocate resources

efficiently. A short video is available on our website showing how some areas are engaging with their local population for the benefit of the under-fives.

## More for less- Are Productivity and Efficiency improving in the NHS? 12 November 2009



Productivity has joined quality to form the twin foundations on which the NHS will face and weather forthcoming pressures on public spending. For providers, doing more for less, or even for the same, will mean reducing unit costs. This analytical publication examines how NHS money has been spent, whether primary care trusts have been successful in keeping more patients out of hospital, and whether hospitals have become more efficient.

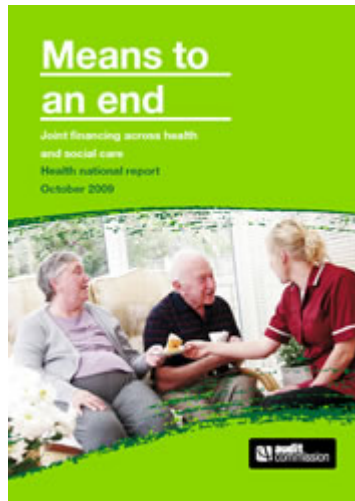
## Nothing but the truth? - A discussion paper 5 November 2009



This is the first of a series of reports aimed at prompting a debate with stakeholders on issues at the heart of the information agenda. This discussion paper focuses the need to improve the reliability of facts and figures used by those who make decisions on our behalf. The paper aims to begin a conversation with stakeholders about what needs to be done to improve data quality in local services, and what the options are to enhance effectiveness.

## **Means to an end - Joint financing across health and social care**

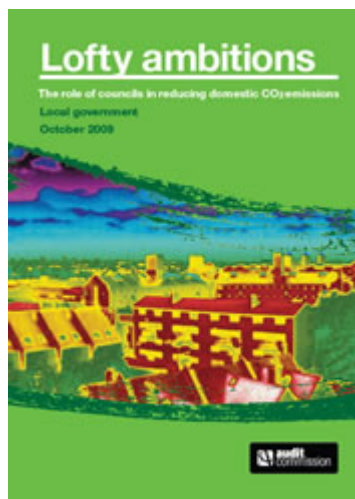
29 October 2009



This report reviews the joint financing and integrated care arrangements between NHS bodies and councils with adult social care responsibilities. It builds on our previous publication, Clarifying joint financing arrangements, that explained the practical implications and legislative framework for joint financing.

## **Lofty ambitions - The role of councils in reducing domestic CO2 emissions**

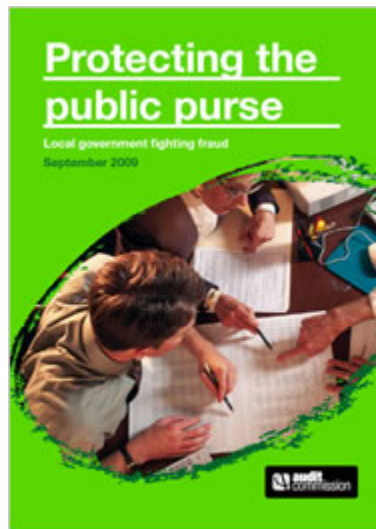
21 October 2009



Councils have many opportunities to act and to exercise community leadership to achieve reductions in domestic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This report examines and reports on the progress made by councils to cut these emissions in their areas. It gives practical examples to show councils how they can tackle emissions, and at the same time help to reduce fuel poverty. The report also considers how councils can achieve improvements in value for money from their actions to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>.

## **Protecting the public purse - Local government fighting fraud**

15 September 2009



The report provides an overview of the threats of fraud facing councils. It calls on them to urgently reassess their counter fraud plans and to ensure that staff understand, and have faith in, whistle-blowing arrangements.

## **When it comes to the crunch - How councils are responding to the recession**

12 August 2009





This report is the second in a series of Audit Commission reports looking at how local authorities are responding to the 2008/09 recession. It examines the types of challenges faced by councils in the recession and the steps they have taken in response. It also explores the nature of the national response to the recession and its fit with local actions.

### **Is there something I should know? - Making the most of your information to improve services**

30 July 2009



This report looks at how councils use information to make decisions. It encourages chief executives, senior officers and lead members to be more demanding about the information they seek and use when making decisions. The report also suggests ways to improve in both these areas. The report is supported by a toolkit that includes a self assessment, checklists, decision making guides and resourcing tools.

### **Room for improvement - A review of strategic asset management in local government**

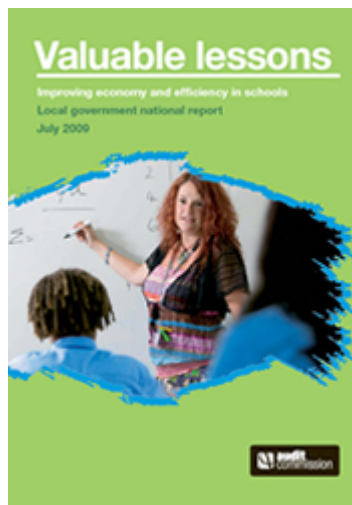
17 June 2009



This report sets out how councils can manage their land and property assets worth £250 billion more strategically to obtain maximum benefit for residents and taxpayers. It shows how the best councils have combined savings from the estate with improved services. It is accompanied by six detailed case studies, a briefing for elected members, and a value for money benchmarking tool that allows councils to compare their capital spending with their statistical neighbours.

## **Valuable lessons - Improving economy and efficiency in schools**

30 June 2009



This report examines economy and efficiency in schools, considering what actions they and other stakeholders can take to prioritise and improve value for money. Separate briefing reports were also published for councils, governing bodies, head teachers and other school staff with financial responsibilities. The Audit Commission also updated its Managing School Resources online tool for schools in light of the Valuable Lessons report.

## **Taking it on trust - A review of how boards of NHS trusts and foundation trusts get their assurance**

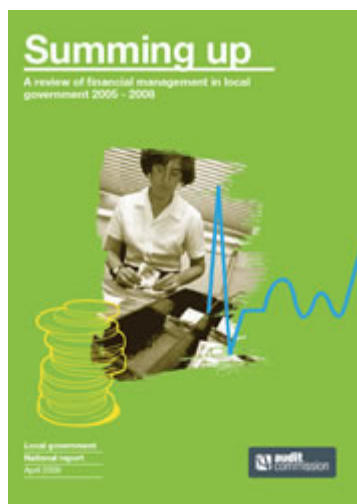
29 April 2009



This report examines how the boards of NHS trusts and foundation trusts in England assure themselves that internal controls are in place and operating effectively, whether processes are in place to guard against risks and if they are rigorously applied. A separate briefing, *Figures you can trust*, is also available which looks in further detail at how boards assure themselves about the quality of their data.

## **Summing up - A review of financial management in local government 2005-2008**

23 April 2009



*Summing Up* provides an overview of councils' progress in developing their financial management arrangements between 2005 and 2008, and discusses the importance of sound financial management in helping to meet the challenges facing local government in the short to medium term.

## **Working better together - Managing local strategic partnerships**

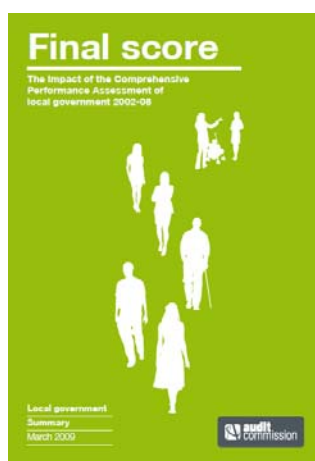
21 April 2009



This report reviews arrangements for performance, resource management, and governance in LSPs. It encourages LSPs to take a whole systems approach to performance improvement and helps them use the multi-level governance model. The report is supported by in-depth case studies of good practice LSPs, a delivery chain tool, and papers to improve governance, performance and scrutiny. Launched with the report is an on-line improvement tool for LSPs.

## **Final score - The impact of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of local government 2002-08**

5 March 2009



This report looks back over seven years of local government assessment and inspection and considers the extent to which CPA helped councils improve their governance, finances and services for local people. It goes on to

describe the transition from CPA to the new Comprehensive Area Assessment.

## **Risk and return - English local authorities and the Icelandic banks** 26 March 2009



The collapse of the Icelandic banks in October 2008 highlighted the large sums of public money on deposit with financial institutions outside as well as inside the UK. This report examines English local authorities' deposits in the Icelandic banks and their UK subsidiaries.

## **Tired of hanging around - Using sport and leisure activities to prevent anti-social behaviour by young people** 28 January 2009



Sport and leisure activities have an important role in preventing anti-social behaviour in young people. *Tired of hanging around* aims to help councils and their partners to get the best outcomes from these activities. The report assesses the impact and efficiency of current funding arrangements; and includes the perspective of young people on what they want and what they value from projects. A short video is available on our website to complement the report.

## Joint reports

### Tenant Involvement: Assessing landlords' progress

25 March 2010



This discussion paper is the result of the first joint research project between the Audit Commission and the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). The project set out to assess the progress of social landlords in involving their tenants and to highlight the similarities and differences in approaches across the sector.

This paper provides a snapshot of progress on tenant involvement and identifies the key challenges for social landlords in engaging with their tenants under co-regulation. It is intended to stimulate discussion in the sector and to provide information and good practice examples for policy makers, landlords and tenants.

### Reports coming soon:

#### **Financial implications of personalised social care budgets**

We are looking at the costs and benefits of giving individuals control of social care budgets; what would it mean for accountability and councillors?

#### **Strategic financial management**

This looks at the role of finance directors, audit committees, cabinets and backbench councillors in spending and accounting for public money. This study builds on our previous report: [World Class Financial Management](#).

#### **Policing: More for less**

In collaboration with HM Inspectors of Constabulary, this looks at police numbers, crime and community support officers as financial pressure grows.