

Best Value FAQs

What is Best Value?

Audit Scotland describes Best Value as “*ensuring that there is good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public.*”

The duty of Best Value applies to all public bodies in Scotland. It is a statutory duty for local authorities, such as councils.

For Aberdeenshire Council it is about how we ensure that decisions taken are in the best interests of the communities we serve, how well we spend public money, are we identifying and making improvements where needed and, most importantly, how do all these processes inspire our communities to trust us with the delivery of local services.

While this is a corporate audit, the success is based on what we do as individuals and teams to deliver the best possible services for our residents. It is what we do, all day, every day.

When does the audit take place?

The focus fieldwork will take place during February and March, we are still waiting on exact dates. The auditors are likely to use evidence and documentation, they may also attend meetings or arrange to interview groups of staff, councillors and partners, as part of this activity.

Where can we view more information on Best Value?

We have created a website that covers all information, this can be viewed at <https://ourstory.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/>

Are there resources available to share with our teams/colleagues?

Yes, a presentation is available and can be found on the website under ‘Resources & FAQs’.

What does the Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) cover?

Each council’s BVAR incorporates an analysis of the Best Value characteristics aligned to the themes of:

- Vision and strategic direction
- Performance
- Use of resources
- Partnership working
- Improvement and transformation

We need to detail how we set ourselves apart from other councils in Scotland. It is known as ‘Our Story’ and supported by an evidence bank.

When was our last audit?

We received a ‘light touch’ audit in 2013, however our last major audit was in 2008. The findings of both these audits are included in Our Story and can be reviewed on the website.

Are staff able to see the submitted report?

Yes, this can be viewed on the website under ‘Our Story’

What is Our Story?

It sets out how we're doing as an organisation. It gives us the chance to show Audit Scotland our 11 priorities, our council plan, the data we collect regarding customer feedback and how we're using this information to support change and improvement across our services. It allows us to know where we have come from and where we are going.

Who will be interviewed by Audit Scotland? Is it likely to be team members or managers?

They may want to speak to groups of staff, managers, Heads of Service, councillors or some of our partner agencies.

It is unlikely that there will be many 1-1 meetings due to time limitations. We will ensure individuals who are identified for interviews are briefed on what they may be asked and are comfortable to do so. As yet we haven't received a list of who Audit Scotland want to speak to, but we will speak to managers and ask them who they suggest may be able to assist.

What can you discuss with Audit Scotland?

Speak to them about how you deliver Best Value in your team, how you deliver improvements and how it reflects our customer needs and the requirements of our communities. In addition, you can talk about any achievements or where you think we are doing well.

We will provide any support that you may need if you are asked to speak to Audit Scotland.

When do we expect to receive feedback from Audit Scotland?

We hope to receive the final report in October, it is a long process. They do their initial work in February/March and after a few months we will receive a draft copy. We can challenge any points we disagree with and share evidence to prove otherwise. It will then go to the Accounts Commission for formal sign off. The report is a public document which will be available for anyone to review.

Do all councils get audited?

Every Scottish council now goes through a Best Value audit every five years. All reports are available to view on Audit Scotland's [website](#).

How do we receive the results? Do we get a grading or feedback with strong/weak areas etc?

The report will help us recognise our areas of strength and areas that we need to improve. It will show us where we need to go in the future. We do not receive a rating. In future audits they will review the past report and ensure requested changes were made.

Will it have an impact on the council?

A good Audit Scotland report gives us pride, validation that we are heading in the right direction and doing our job well. We want to receive an external endorsement that we are doing things right. It can also help with recruitment and retention.

What role do members play?

We have been working closely with members to ensure they know their role in Best Value. Are they making decisions that officers can then deliver on? Are they able to make difficult

decisions? Their role focuses on strategic leadership. Locality is important, what do communities want? We need to ensure needs of local communities are met.

More information

If you require more information please contact your manager or your service representatives.

- Infrastructure Services - [Belinda Miller](#)
- Education & Childrens' Services - [Craig Clement](#)
- Health & Social Care - [Mike Ogg](#)
- Business Services - [Kate Bond](#)
- Area Managers - [Amanda Roe](#)

For any other questions or feedback please contact:

- [Kate Bond](#), Head of Customer Communication and Improvement and lead officer for Best Value
- [Jade Fitzpatrick](#), Policy Officer
- [Louise Calder](#), Marketing and Communications Officer