

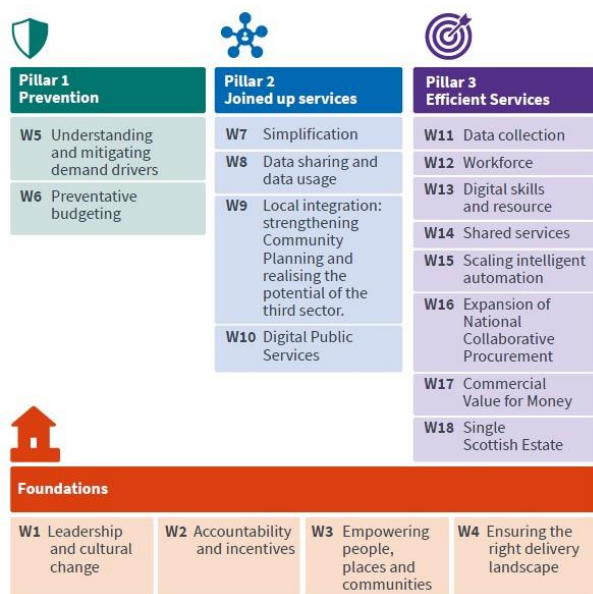
# Scotgov Public Sector Reform Strategy

## Introduction

The Scottish Government have published a **Reform Strategy for Scottish Public Services**. The document is clear about the Government's wish to reduce the size of the public sector workforce and outsource more services to the Third Sector. Short term targets include savings of £200m a year for the next five years. These savings will be delivered through a variety of mechanisms with a strong emphasis in developing shared services and digitising services.

## Context

The *Reform Strategy* is one of a series of linked plans published by the Scottish Government in recent months; the others being the *Medium Term Financial Strategy* and the *Fiscal Sustainability Delivery Plan*. Whilst the emphasis in the Reform Strategy is on delivering improvements, there can be no doubt that a perceived gap between expected government income and planned government expenditure is a major driving force behind the programme.



## KEY POINTS:

- The Scottish Government have set a target to reduce the workforce in public services.
- The aim is to improve services while reducing costs.
- They wish to increase the amount of services delivered by the third rather than public sector.
- The strategy relies on a large increase on automation.

## Reform Strategy overview

There are a variety of preambles about the necessity of shifting spending towards being preventative and bodies working beyond silos (none of these observations are new). The declared aim of the strategy is to improve public services by making them more joined up, efficient and fiscally sustainable. To do this the the Scottish Government have carried out “a structured Root Cause Analysis to identify barriers, and what must change, to achieve the necessary pace and scale of reform.” Based on this analysis the Scottish Government have identified four “foundations” and three “pillars” on which to base their plans. These will be carried out across eighteen workstreams which include; “Scaling intelligent automation”, “Ensuring the right delivery landscape” and “Workforce”.

## Workforce

The purpose of the workforce stream is to “take steps to reprofile our public sector workforce” – no one should be under any illusions here. “Reprofile” means reduce. The Reform strategy in effect sees two types of workers; frontline staff and the rest. Those not deemed frontline aren’t, in this view essential enablers, but rather a drain on resources. The Fiscal Sustainability Plan mentions a target of a 0.5% reduction every year for the next five years. For those deemed frontline there is to be consultation and partnership over service redesign

### “Realising the potential of the third sector”

One of the key themes of the strategy is to boost the role of the third sector at the expense of public bodies delivering services directly. The third sector is to be enabled and supported, skills in the sector are to be ‘recognised and built on’ as a “key delivery partner” and given greater involvement in designing services. The intended consequence will be greater outsourcing and contracting of services

### “Ensuring the Right Delivery Landscape”

It is stated at the outset that one aim of the strategy is the integration of services and approaches. This “may mean structural change – reducing the number of public bodies - but only to deliver better outcomes: structural change itself is not the goal.” It is said though that the Scottish Government will merge or change the number of public bodies if they think it will increase efficiency, remove duplication and improve service delivery. Councils are to be further disempowered with a strengthening of the community asset transfer process, and more greater decision making capacity given to Regional Economic Partnerships.

### “Scaling intelligent automation”

Much hope in the Strategy is placed on using automation to reduce staff numbers and deliver other savings. The Scottish Government Intelligent Automation Centre of Excellence will be used to expand automation a shared service through a scalable hub-and-spoke model across core government areas and key public bodies. A national collaborative procurement framework is to be developed to give the Scottish public and third sector, easier access to automation expertise and reusable solutions.

## Shared Services

Shared services “thinking and propositions” are to be developed across a range of services. The aim being to offer solutions public bodies can “take value” from. The aim being that economies of scale will save money. Initial steps will be rolling out of HR, finance and purchasing systems currently in use in the Scottish Government

## Commercial Value for Money

Up to £300 million is to be saved over over a two-year period by working with the public sector to increase usage of existing national collaborative agreements while identifying new areas for this approach. There will also be an empowerment of grant funders to increase competitive tension in grant spend ensuring grants go to those organisations who demonstrate they can use it to maximise impact on service level improvements. A “Single Scottish Estate” approach will reduce the number of premises, this will “give the public access to more services in one place and reduce administrative costs.”

## Tensions and concerns

There are contradictions within the strategy. Local staff and leaders are to be empowered, yet most of the mechanisms for reform rely on centralisation; whether of premises, use of clusters, national systems and decisions, a shift from public to third sector or automation (Automation outsources decisions and design of services to whoever designed the software). Whilst some of the aims of the strategy may be laudable beneath the reams of management speak there is much to be concerned about.

## Additional reading

- [Scottish Government Public Sector Reform Strategy](#)
- [Scotgov Reform Strategy press release](#)
- [Scotgov Medium Term Financial Strategy](#)
- [Scotgov Fiscal Sustainability Delivery Plan](#)



## Contact UNISON's Bargaining & Campaigns team:

Stephen Low  
[s.low2@unison.co.uk](mailto:s.low2@unison.co.uk)

Susan Galloway  
[s.galloway@unison.co.uk](mailto:s.galloway@unison.co.uk)

Nicola Morris  
[N.Morris@unison.co.uk](mailto:N.Morris@unison.co.uk)

0141 342 2811  
0800 0 857 857