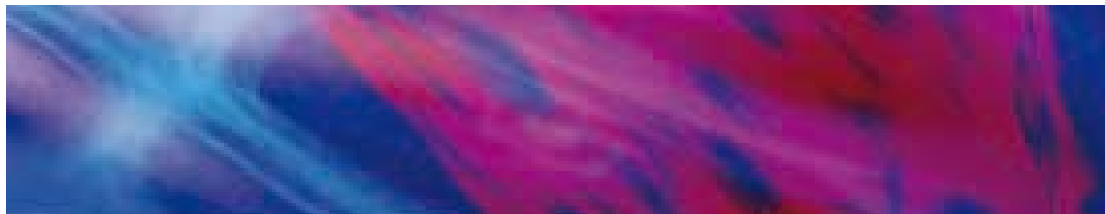
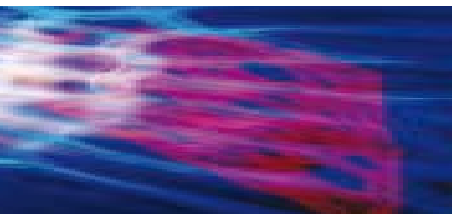


The Improvement Service

Annual Report

2007/2008





## CONTENTS

About the Improvement Service	3
Foreword from the Chair of the Board and Chief Executive	4
The Changing Face of Local Government	5
Developing Capacity	6
Supporting Best Value and Improvement	7
Shared Services	8
Customer First	9
Knowledge Management	10
Improvement Funds	11
Looking Ahead	12
Board of Directors	13
Directors Report and Financial Statements	14
Contact Us	36

# ABOUT THE IMPROVEMENT SERVICE

The Improvement Service was established in 2005 as a partnership between the then Scottish Executive, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) to meet a need for advice, consultancy and programme support to assist in the delivery of the improvement agenda for local government in Scotland.

Our aim is to support councils and their partners to improve the health, quality of life and opportunities of all people in Scotland through community leadership, strong local governance and the delivery of high quality, efficient local services. We work with councils and their partners to ensure that the governance, organisational and partnership capacity of local government is capable of delivering these results.

We do this by encouraging councils and their partners to work together and supporting them in this to achieve collaborative gain; by identifying best practice from the public, private and voluntary sectors in the UK and internationally; by providing learning and development opportunities for elected members, senior management and practitioners; and by promoting the use of knowledge management within local authorities to support knowledge sharing, learning and business re-design.

# FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

2007-2008 was a period of considerable change for both local government and the Improvement Service. Much work has been done this year on positioning ourselves to support councils in delivering the Scottish Government's National Outcomes for Scotland and local outcomes for communities and areas. This has included rationalising and integrating three previously self-standing programmes on Governance and Performance Management, Best Value and Improvement, and Partnership and Joint Venture into one - Improving Performance and Outcomes. We have also worked to ensure that our other programmes support this emphasis on improving outcomes.

Our highlights include:

- Supporting the development of Single Outcome Agreements by developing joint guidance and a recording framework, a self-assessment toolkit, critical friend review process, community of practice, data profiles and a menu of local outcome indicators;
- Developing a portfolio of materials to support elected members in their governance role including induction packs and training materials;
- Investing in and increasing the use of communities of practice across Scottish local government to encourage knowledge sharing and collaboration;
- Securing financial support and leading development support on several Shared Services projects including the national diagnostic, national recruitment portal, public notices portal and Customer First;
- Providing partnership and financial support for the Public Service Improvement Framework to encourage and enable robust self-assessment;
- Investing a further £750,000 in training and development for planning staff and elected members through the Planning Development Programme;
- As part of the Customer First project, delivering the 'first cut' of national gazetteer for Scotland, and driving developments to deploy a national infrastructure to support a single point of access to public services in Scotland.

The following pages outline further progress against 2007-08's core programmes of Developing Capacity, Best Value and Improvement, Shared Services, Customer First and Knowledge Management. We are pleased to report that we have achieved all the objectives set out in our business plan for the year. However, we know there is always room for improvement. We need to be more realistic in reconciling our ambition and capacity by focusing on our overall purpose; to fully engage stakeholders, not merely consult them; to get better at exploiting the full potential of partnerships in resourcing developments and innovations; and to be clearer about defining and focusing our activities on the strategic outcomes of our work.

On behalf of the Board, we welcome feedback on our work and on our annual report, and look forward to further supporting the improvement of Scottish local government in the coming year.



Patrick Watters, CBE,  
Chair,  
Board of the Improvement  
Service



Colin Mair,  
Chief Executive  
The Improvement Service

# THE CHANGING FACE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government is undergoing considerable change. There is ongoing debate about its role and functions, the way it engages with the communities it serves and its relationship with central government. The Concordat between central and local government, developments stemming from the Crerar report into scrutiny, and the continued drive for efficient government present councils and their partners with both opportunities and challenges over the next few years.

The Concordat and the outcomes of the Crerar review provide local government with a real opportunity to take greater control over its own development by demonstrating leadership and ambition, being open to challenge, innovation and scrutiny and by committing to learning and sharing good practice.

However, councils will be required to demonstrate a much stronger focus on outcomes in their governance, planning, performance management and resourcing processes, and increased rigour and clarity in self-assessment.

At the same time, limited real growth in the resources available, demographic change and expectations for rapid, personalised service will put increasing pressure on councils. The expectation of continued efficiency improvements will therefore be considerable and the now-established emphasis on collaboration, partnership and shared services will continue.

Finally, there will be continued challenges from expectations that truly leading practice will be quickly identified and adopted whilst ensuring that a simple “one size fits all” approach does not apply across the very different local contexts in Scotland.

As part of the supporting framework for improvement and efficiency in local government, the IS is focusing efforts on helping councils rise to the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities.

Our Developing Capacity programme aimed to improve organisational development and leadership from the top down by creating or brokering cost-effective development opportunities for elected members, management and staff.

## DEVELOPING CAPACITY

### Leadership and Management Development

Following a successful pilot in 2006-07, a second cohort of senior executives completed the Top Executive Development Programme, aimed at enhancing the leadership skills of chief executives, directors and heads of service. The programme uses a mix of group workshops and individual assessment and coaching to improve the participants' leadership and management skills.

As part of the management development programme for operational managers, a series of 'Train the Facilitator' sessions took place in June 2007 to support the provision of 'delivery end' leadership training within local authorities. Feedback was extremely positive and the participants are now offering the programme material within their own authorities.

By end of 2007-08 the Top Executive Development Programme and the Operational Management Programme had been used by half the councils in Scotland.

### Political Leadership Programme

In early 2007 we developed and piloted the Political Leadership Programme, a leadership development programme for

senior elected members across all councils and political parties. The programme addresses issues such as the current political context; leading change and innovation; adding public value; and managing interaction and communication. The Programme was officially launched in October 2007 and four cohorts were run over the course of the year with 35 senior leaders taking part.

### Continuous Professional Development for Elected Members

In response to significant turnover of elected members in May 2007 and evidence of widespread variation in the approach and capacity of councils to provide support and development to elected members, the Improvement Service commissioned the Institute of Governance and Public Management at Warwick Business School to develop a draft Continuous Professional Development Framework for elected members. This was issued to all councils in February 2008 for consultation on the content and format. Following consultation, seven councils have agreed to pilot the framework. This pilot began in April 2008 and will conclude in autumn 2009.

We also delivered induction packs to all first-time elected members after the May 2007 elections, with electronic copies made available to all other councillors, and developed

online induction training materials for use by councils.

### Planning Development Programme

The Planning Development Programme provides a range of in-house and open training events and grant support to Scotland's 34 planning authorities to help tackle identified training and development needs for staff and elected members. Through the Programme, the Improvement Service is also working with authorities to improve the management of training and development and on a variety of projects linked to skills and knowledge development.

In 2007-08, this included providing 15 planning authorities with training in planning-related subjects. We published a guide to managing staff training and development to provide practical advice and information on good management practice in staff development; produced induction training materials and workshops for elected members with planning responsibilities; funded research into the current approach to graduate employment and training; and established a work shadowing scheme in partnership with Homes for Scotland to encourage greater understanding between planning authorities and the development industry.

*"A very valuable resource which should be continued and expanded upon particularly as it helps with improving the profile as planning profession worthy of pursuing."*

*Participant in the Planning Development Programme, taken from 'Evaluation of the Planning Development Programme'*

*"This programme was invaluable in giving me the opportunity to discuss with other senior councillors outwith my council, issues critical to local government"*

*A Council Leader and participant in the Political Leadership Programme*

**B**est Value describes a range of activities and culture designed to drive continuous improvement in public services through rigorous reviews, consultation, targets and reporting. Our Best Value and Improvement programme helped councils through direct support, developing governance and performance management capacity, and improving the performance of partnerships and joint ventures.

## SUPPORTING BEST VALUE AND IMPROVEMENT

### Single Outcome Agreements

We have supported the development of Single Outcome Agreements by all Scottish local authorities which support the National Outcomes set by the Scottish Government. This support included developing, in conjunction with the Scottish Government, joint guidance; a self-assessment toolkit; critical friend supports to councils; a Community of Practice for SOA lead officers; and a menu of local outcome indicators.

### Performance Management

Our Performance Management programme promotes rigorous self-assessment and performance improvements by councils. We completed delivery of the first phase of the Public Service Improvement Framework, a robust self-assessment tool, to six public sector organisations in January 2008. Phase two was launched in March 2008, involving a further 12 public bodies. We have developed and piloted a peer review model to share good practice and learning between councils.

We also commissioned a review of UK and international public sector performance frameworks and approaches which identifies the most innovative and comprehensive performance frameworks from which local government can learn.

### Efficient Government Monitoring

We provided direct support to councils using the efficiency measures developed last year to produce their first Annual Efficiency Statements. Following the publication of the first set of efficiency statements, we commissioned a project to review council's approach to efficient government monitoring and analyse how far they had progressed in addressing the expectations of the Efficient Government agenda. In March 2008, we held a workshop to discuss the findings which was attended by 29 councils.

### Best Value Audits

We have developed a range of support for councils around Best Value including 'critical friend' reviews, good practice-sharing, and direct support to those councils requesting it on improvement planning and development following the publication of their Best Value audits.

### Sustainable Development

We are supporting councils and their partners in promoting sustainable methods of delivering public services and in reducing their carbon footprints. We continued to support

councils in delivering on the Climate Change Declaration ahead of making their first annual statement on progress in March 2008. We also provided financial support for the Sustainable Scotland Network Conference, 'Climate Change and Local Government,' in November 2007.

### Collaborative Gain

Collaborative Gain is about ensuring that any partnership activities bring about added value benefits, which would not have been possible by individual organisations operating on their own. We undertook action research with three councils and their partners to identify collaborative gain within partnerships and joint ventures.

We participated in the review of health improvement performance management project with Health Scotland and Communities Scotland and offered support to four community planning partnerships in taking forward the development of outcome-focused programmes for health improvement.

We are a member of the steering group for a national project on the role of community planning in supporting health and well-being.

*"The City of Edinburgh Council's Services for Communities department are implementing the PSIF across all 21 service areas and have seen some real benefits. The process has been a great opportunity to bring staff together to identify areas for improvement and to really develop services. The framework is now attracting interest from other departments and will be implemented in some of these areas in 2009."*

**Sarah MacKenzie, Performance and Quality Manager, City of Edinburgh Council**

*"The involvement of the Improvement Service proved to be invaluable in terms of producing the Inverclyde Single Outcome Agreement. They provided the necessary support over an intensive two-day programme which proved to be a challenge and experience for all those involved. The learning points were well captured and not forgotten and were reflected in the finalised outcome agreement."*

**Andrew Spowart, Head of Performance Management and Procurement, Inverclyde Council**

Developing ways for councils and their partners to share services will play a major role in reducing the cost and improving the quality of public services. With support from the National Shared Services Board, the Improvement Service helped to co-ordinate, support and evaluate several projects in this area.

## SHARED SERVICES

### Diagnostic Pathway

The Edinburgh and Glasgow Pathfinder projects which took place in 2006-07 led to the development of a generic model which enables councils to identify opportunities to simplify and standardise processes and share services across the organisation. In October 2007, we secured funding from the Scottish Government to roll out the programme to all Scottish local authorities and led development support for the National Diagnostic programme. We developed an online toolkit to support councils in their programme and actively worked with councils to share best practice.

### National Recruitment Portal

We secured funding for and led the development of a shared online recruitment portal, myjobscotland.com, allowing all Scottish local authorities to recruit from a wider pool of employees, support more effective recruitment practices and reduce the amount spent on advertising. The recruitment process and system has now been agreed by all councils, the portal has been built and is expected to soft-launch in June 2008 with the full launch to take place in autumn 2008.

### Public Notices Portal

We secured funding for and led development of a national online portal to allow councils to provide local information regarding services such as road works and property developments. The portal will allow councils to improve the provision of public notice information and to reduce spending on advertising while meeting statutory requirements. A stakeholder group involving seven councils has been established, the portal design has been agreed and a prototype developed.

*“The recruitment portal is an excellent example of collaboration to deliver efficiencies and free up resources for front line services. Myjobscotland will open up a single point of access to a great variety of jobs, for the moment in local government but potentially over time across the public sector.”*

**Stewart Stevenson MSP, Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change**

**C**ustomer First is a Scottish Government-funded programme which aims to deliver public services at first point of contact and allow citizens to transact with the council in whichever way they choose, by telephone, face-to-face or online. It has been developed in partnership with councils and is managed, with the support of COSLA and SOLACE, by the Improvement Service.

## CUSTOMER FIRST

### National Infrastructure

The national infrastructure allows data sharing across Scotland's public bodies and supports a citizen account, a national authentication service and citizen entitlement status, linked to an address gazetteer.

In partnership with all 32 Scottish councils, we have: developed a Citizen's Portal to provide a single point for notifying change of name/address and sharing bereavement information across the public sector; begun work to deploy the national infrastructure to underpin a new online portal which will provide access to all Scottish public services (the OneScotland portal); and started to integrate the Citizen's Portal into OneScotland.

We began discussions with the NHS in Scotland to use the citizen's account authentication service for pilot projects that could allow patients secure access to online services.

### Definitive National Addressing

The 'first cut' of a national gazetteer was completed, delivering a complete, consistent and accurate address system for Scotland. Projects to exploit the gazetteer for other purposes are now underway. These include web service access to the gazetteer for e-planning and the development of a national personal licensing register and a national personal licenses register and database.

### Local Citizen Account/Customer Relationship Management

We initiated a project to underpin the CRM programme with a national framework and national contract, and put in place management arrangements to co-ordinate the roll out of the contract with a number of lead councils. At the end of 2007-08, five councils had signed license agreements to adopt the system provided under the national contract.

To support staff within councils who are working to improve service delivery, we worked with councils to develop a toolkit which provides a route map together with tools and techniques for delivering Continuous Improvement projects.

We also worked with councils to complete a standardised A to Z of council services and knowledge base of 1700 FAQs and 400 sample forms. We are now working to integrate this with the national infrastructure.

### National Entitlement Card Scheme

We undertook a national entitlement card rebranding exercise to replace the Scottish Executive logo with the new OneScotland brand. We continued to promote uptake of the entitlement card: 25% of Scottish citizens now have an entitlement card. We also rolled out more than 3,000 smartcard readers to councils to support the national entitlement card scheme and to include amended interfaces to support the card for additional services such as libraries, leisure and cashless catering.

*"The National Customer Relationship Management Programme has provided a particularly effective role in supporting councils execute their customer access strategies. The Programme - based around collaboration - has provided demonstrable impact by leveraging the creative capacity of councils, by maximising the value of and benefits from collaboration and by developing common solutions to meet common requirements once, not 32 times".*

**Alex Linkston, Chief Executive, West Lothian Council and Chair, National Customer Relationship Management Programme**

Sharing innovative ideas, experiences and leading practice is key to improving the quality and efficiency of local public services. We updated our knowledge management strategy and our knowledge management programme provided support, guidance, tools and a technology platform to underpin knowledge capture and sharing across local government in Scotland.

## KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

### Knowledge Sharing

We have worked with councils and existing networks to capture and share knowledge across local government, and to improve access to knowledge resources. We continued to develop our website as a core communication tool for the IS and as a tool for disseminating case studies, ideas and innovation taking place in local government. Usage of the website increased over the year.

We were involved in initiating a knowledge management network to support knowledge management 'champions' within councils and other parts of the Scottish public sector. We were a partner in a working group to establish a Scottish social work knowledge portal. We have provided online management and leadership development toolkits and piloted improvement bulletins to test the appetite and audience for such a service.

We managed the development of the Diagnostic Pathway Toolkit - established to enable councils undertaking Diagnostic Projects to learn from and build on the knowledge and experience of the pathfinder councils (Edinburgh and Glasgow).

### Communities of Practice

Communities of practice which enable collaboration, knowledge capture and sharing are a significant part of our knowledge management strategy and we have increased investment and support for them.

We entered into an agreement with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to offer its technology platform to Scottish local government and are promoting the resource to groups in Scotland.

To support the effective working of communities, we held three development events for people who facilitate networks and produced written guidance, which is available on the IS website. We also worked with existing communities, for example the PSIF Implementation Group, Scottish Members Services Development Network and the Analysis, Intelligence and Research Community, to revamp and re-launch their communities building on what they had learned from the initial phase of working in this way.

### Research

The IS completed a number of research projects throughout the year. This included research into the experiences and attitudes of elected members who stood down in May 2007 in order to provide learning to new councillors.

We published a survey of councillors elected in May 2007 which provides

a comprehensive demographic picture of elected members and explores issues such as why they stood for election and training and development experiences.

We began research to examine the appetite for a standard set of customer satisfaction measures for use across the whole of local government and explore what these measures might include. We also collected and published a list of research activities being undertaken in Scottish councils to support sharing and collaboration around research activity. We worked with partners such as the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council to support activities focussed on improving knowledge exchange between councils and academia and encouraging use of research in councils.

### The IS as a Knowledge-based Organisation

We worked to ensure that the Improvement Service practiced effective knowledge management through providing and promoting access to key sources of evidence and information; encouraging appropriate use of shared document stores; introducing Sharepoint to provide a pilot intranet for the organisation; encouraging and supporting active participation in communities of practice and enabling regular team and topic-focussed events and workshops.

*"...the biggest surprise was that so many people are involved as facilitators and it is so widespread. Before yesterday I had not given much thought to this beyond the immediate challenges of my own community. It is good to know that there are other people out there with similar challenges."*

**Delegate at the Community of Practice Facilitators Event**

To encourage innovation and sharing of ideas, the IS set up two Improvement Funds to support special projects that it was believed could have a wide impact on services. Although the funds are now closed for applications, work on the successful projects continued throughout 2007-08.

## IMPROVEMENT FUNDS

### Delivering results

We awarded funding of £150,000 to support innovation and development by and for councils via our two improvement funds - the Smart Ideas Fund and the Innovation Exchange. This takes the total awarded via these two funds to £450,000.

In 2007-08 the funded projects began to demonstrate results and were asked to share their experiences in carrying out the projects. A series of progress reports, case studies and any direct outputs from the projects are available on the IS website. A final report which summarises the outcomes of all projects is also available.

### Knowledge Sharing Event

In April 2008, a showcase event was held where nine projects which received funding shared their learning, outputs and experiences with colleagues across Scottish local government. A number of these projects also provided further information and demonstrations at exhibition stands. All the presentations made at the event have been made available on the IS website.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next few years will be a period of even greater opportunity and challenge for councils and we are exploring ways to ensure that the Improvement Service is useful to councils and that our work has an impact.

We must help to ensure that the governance, organisational and partnership capacity of local government is capable of delivering improved health, well-being and opportunities for individuals and communities. As such, our statement of purpose for 2008-2011 is “To support councils and their partners to improve the health, quality of life and opportunities of all people in Scotland through community leadership, strong local governance and the delivery of high quality, efficient local services.”

This will include supporting councils in embedding a focus on final outcomes in their decision-making and performance management, ensuring that self-assessment is robust, developing further opportunities for, and improving collaboration, and ensuring that local government has the capacity to deliver on its commitments.

Since its establishment, the Improvement Service has been funded directly by the Scottish Government. As part of the 2008-09 to 2010-11 Local Government Budget settlement it was agreed that this should change. From 2008-09, funding for the Improvement Service will be transferred to local government and is included within the total Local Government settlement. We have secured £1.7 million per year over the next three years.

Changes in our governance arrangements to take account of this are currently being implemented. The role of Scottish Ministers as a partner in the partnership agreement, a member of the company and Director of the Company ended on 1 April 2008. As we move into our next three-year phase, we will appoint new Directors, to a maximum of 12, which will include four representatives from COSLA and four from SOLACE. We are also seeking to further embed the sense of “ownership” of the Improvement Service across all councils and are committed to offering all councils member status in the company with the ability to vote for Directors, shape the business plan and hold the Board to account at the company AGM.

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Improvement Service Board represents our founding partners and provides the leadership, strategic direction and accountability for the outcomes agreed with our sponsors and stakeholders. The Board Directors are:



Patrick Watters, CBE,  
Chair,  
Board of the Improvement  
Service



Roderick Mair,  
Chief Executive,  
COSLA



Colin Mair,  
Chief Executive,  
Improvement Service



Keith Yates,  
Chief Executive,  
Stirling Council  
(resigned 16 November 2007)



Gavin Whitefield,  
Chief Executive,  
North Lanarkshire Council



Ruth Parsons,  
Director of Public Service  
Reform Directorate,  
Scottish Government  
(resigned 17 March 2008)

# Directors' Report and Financial Statements

IMPROVEMENT SERVICE COMPANY  
Registered number: SC287978  
For the year ended 31 March 2008

## Contents

Company Information	19
Directors' Report	20
Independent Auditors' Report	24
Income and Expenditure Account	25
Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses	26
Balance Sheet	27
Notes to the Financial Statements	28

# Company Information

## Directors

Patrick Watters  
Roderick Mair  
Colin Mair  
Gavin Whitefield

## Secretary

Mitre Secretaries Limited

## Registered office

101 George Street  
Edinburgh  
Midlothian  
EH2 3ES

## Registered number

SC287978

## Auditors

Scott-Moncrieff  
Chartered Accountants  
Registered Auditor  
17 Melville Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7PH

## Solicitor

CMS Cameron McKenna LLP  
101 George Street  
Edinburgh  
Midlothian  
EH2 3ES

## Principal bankers

Bank of Scotland  
Almondvale Centre  
Livingston  
West Lothian

# Report of the Directors

The directors present their report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2008. The company was incorporated on 27 July 2005.

## Principal activity

The principal activity and core business of the company was to support, promote and assist in the delivery of excellent public services through learning, sharing and delivering improvement solutions.

## Review of business

The net surplus after providing for taxation amounted to £47,464 (2007: £6,000).

As well as delivering on all the key commitments outlined in our 2007/08 Business Plan, this year has been a period of development for the company; our focus has been on ensuring we are positioned to support councils to deliver on the Scottish Government's national outcomes for Scotland and on outcomes for local areas and communities.

We have progressively rationalised and focused our programme structures to better fit the changing context that councils face. In the last year, we have integrated three previously self standing programmes on 'Governance and Performance Management', 'Best Value and Improvement' and 'Partnership and Joint Ventures' into a single programme focused on 'Improving Performance and Outcomes'. We have also worked to ensure that our 'Knowledge Management', and our 'Organisational Development and Capacity Building' programmes support the key emphasis on improving outcomes whilst our Shared Services programme (including Customer First) has developed to support the more efficient resourcing and delivery of outcomes.

At the same time we strengthened our team by increasing our core staffing capacity in order to retain expert knowledge and skills and deliver more effectively our longer term plans as well as developing and embedding effective internal systems and processes.

## Business streams and investment

Our Financial Statements clearly set out both our funding sources and spending for the year. We carried forward a balance of £326,866 from 2006/07, approved by Scottish Government to deliver on various projects in 2007/08. In addition, we received £1.717m core grant funding and spent 99.99% of our total budget in-year.

As well as our core grant funding we received specific grants to deliver on the Shared Services, Customer First (programme office) and Planning Development programmes, as follows:

<b>Shared Services</b>	<b>£</b>
Shared Services Programme	198,886
Recruitment Portal & Public Information Portal	1,888,470
Workforce Planning	200,000
National Diagnostic	300,000
	<hr/>
	<b>2,587,356</b>
Customer First	500,248
Planning Development	751,266
	<hr/>
	<b>3,838,870</b>

We were given Scottish Government approval to carry forward a total balance of £869,135, almost all of which will be utilised to deliver our Shared Services programme in 2008/09.

## Business streams and investment (cont.)

### *Achievements*

We are pleased to report that we have achieved all the objectives as set out in our business plan for 2007-08.

Our highlights include:

- Development in conjunction with the Scottish Government joint guidance and a recording framework for the implementation of Single Outcome Agreements. In addition we developed for local government a SOA self assessment toolkit, critical friend review process, community of practice for SOA lead officers within councils, data profiles to help councils evidence their priorities and a menu of local outcome measures;
- Development of a portfolio of materials to support elected members in their critical governance role - this has included induction packs for every elected member and induction training materials for councils. We have also developed, piloted and delivered a political leadership programme to 70 council leaders, opposition leaders and senior elected members in the last year;
- Implementing a top executive development programme and an operational management programme which is now used by half the councils in Scotland. We have sponsored and supported training partnerships to use these materials and provided 'training the trainers' support to councils;
- Development of a strategy and approach which recognises knowledge management as a key enabler for improvement. A key element of this approach was our investment and support for 'communities of practice'. Knowledge and learning made available through the IS website has progressively developed and usage of the site has increased significantly this year;
- Development of frameworks, toolkits and research to enhance the achievement of collaborative gain through partnership working. Some of this work evolved into the Shared Services programme which we designed and managed on behalf of the National Shared Services Board. We have successfully secured financial support, and led development support for the national diagnostic project, the national recruitment portal, the public notices portal and 'Customer First'. We have directly designed and led proposals that brought over £12 million into the council sector;
- Development of a portfolio of approaches to support councils around Best Value, improvement and efficiency including direct support, tools and frameworks. Specifically we have given partnership and financial support for the development of the 'Public Service Improvement Framework' to support robust self assessment by councils and their partnerships. In the latter part of the year we have developed the framework and format for SOAs, and led the development of the 'menu' of local outcome indicators;
- Investment of a further £750,000 in training and development opportunities for planning staff and elected members through the Planning Development Programme;
- Delivery of over £150,000 through our 'Improvement' funds to support innovation and development in councils;

Ongoing management of the Customer First programme, key deliverables include:

- the 'first cut' of a national gazetteer, i.e. complete, consistent and accurate addresses for Scotland;
- agent portal / citizen portal testing work with nine councils - to provide citizen account / authentication / basket of services model;
- underpinning the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) programme within a national framework - including a national contract - and putting in place management arrangements to co-ordinate the roll out of the contract with a number of lead councils;
- two new projects - web service access to the gazetteer for e-planning and the new National Personal Licensing System and National Personal Licenses Register and Database (NPLD);
- work to deploy the national infrastructure to underpin a new Scottish public services portal (the OneScotland portal) and start to integrate the citizens' portal into 'OneScotland';
- the roll out of more than 3,000 smartcard readers across councils to support the national entitlement card scheme and to include amended interfaces (e.g. for library, leisure, cashless catering) to support the card.

## Looking forward

Since its establishment, the Improvement Service has been funded directly by the Scottish Government. As part of the 2008/09 to 2010/11 Local Government Budget settlement it was agreed that position should change. From 2008-09, funding for the Improvement Service will be transferred to local government and is included within the total Local Government funding package. We have secured £1.7million per year over the next three years.

Changes in our Governance arrangements to reflect the new status of the company are also being implemented. Scottish Ministers' involvement as a partner in the partnership agreement, a member of the company and as Directors of the company ended on 1st April 2008. As we move into our next three year phase we will appoint new directors to a maximum of twelve which will include four representatives from COSLA and four representatives from SOLACE. We are also seeking to further embed the sense of "ownership" of the Improvement Service across all councils, with the Board of Director's committed to offering all councils member status in the company with the ability to vote for Directors, help shape the Business Plan, and to hold the Board to account at the company AGM.

As well as our local government funding, to date we have specific grant agreements in place to progress the Shared Services, Customer First and Planning Development Programmes as follows.

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Programme	£	£	£
Shared Services	869,135	-	-
Customer First (programme office)	675,000	675,000	-
Planning Development	650,000	450,000	300,000

Note that the Shared Services funding in 2008-09 represents the balance carried forward from 2007-08.

### *2008 - 2011 Business Planning Strategy*

The next few years will be a period of even greater opportunity and challenge for councils. Our three year Business Planning strategy sets out how we will work, in collaboration with others, to help councils meet the challenges and seize the opportunities. The plan sets out our role as part of the supporting framework for Scottish councils; the outcomes for councils which we will be seeking to achieve; and how we will work to support councils to set, monitor and deliver improved outcomes.

## Directors

The directors during the year were:

Tom McCabe MSP (resigned 17 May 2007)

Patrick Watters

Roderick Mair

Colin Mair

Keith Yates (resigned 16 November 2007)

Gavin Whitefield

Ruth Parsons (resigned 17 March 2008)

## Statement of Directors' responsibilities

Company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the surplus or deficit of the company for that period. In preparing those financial statements the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The directors are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 1985. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

## Disclosure of information to auditors

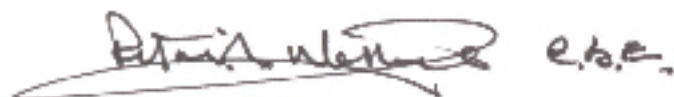
As far as each of the directors at the time the report is approved are aware:

- there is no relevant information of which the company's auditors are unaware; and
- the directors have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of the information.

## Auditors

A resolution to re-appoint Scott-Moncrieff, Chartered Accountants as auditors will be put to members at the annual general meeting.

By order of the board



Cllr Patrick Watters

Chairman  
Improvement Service Company  
28th August 2008

# Independent Auditors' Report to the Company Members

We have audited the financial statements of Improvement Service Company for the year ended 31 March 2008 set out on pages 21 to 35 which have been prepared under the historical cost convention and the accounting policies set out on page 24.

This report is made solely to the company's members as a body, in accordance with Section 235 of the Companies Act 1985. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

## Respective responsibilities of directors and auditors

As described in the Statement of Directors' Responsibilities the company's directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards.

Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

We report to you our opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view and are properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985. We also report to you if, in our opinion, the company has not kept proper accounting records, if we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit, or if information specified by law regarding directors' remuneration and transactions with the company is not disclosed.

We report to you whether in our opinion the information given in the Directors' report is consistent with the financial statements.

## Basis of opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the directors in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the company's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

We have undertaken the audit in accordance with the requirements of APB Ethical Standards including the APB Ethical Standard - Provisions Available for Small Entities, in the circumstances set out in note 15 to the financial statements.

## Opinion

In our opinion:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; of the state of the company's affairs as at 31 March 2008 and of its surplus for the year then ended;
- and the financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985;
- and the information given in the Directors Report is consistent with the financial statements.

*Scott-Moncrieff*  
Scott-Moncrieff  
Chartered Accountants  
Registered Auditor  
17 Melville Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7PH

*28 August 2008*

# Income and Expenditure Account

For the year ended 31 March 2008

	Note	2008 £	2007 £
<b>Turnover</b>		5,102,437	3,795,471
Administrative expenses		(5,080,805)	(3,803,456)
<b>Operating profit/(loss)</b>	2	21,632	(7,985)
Investment income	5	38,540	23,772
Interest payable and similar charges	6	(5,000)	(9,787)
<b>Surplus on ordinary activities before taxation</b>		55,172	6,000
Taxation	7	(7,708)	-
<b>Surplus on ordinary activities after taxation</b>		47,464	6,000

None of the company's activities were acquired or discontinued during the above two years.

The notes on pages 24 to 35 form part of these financial statements.

# Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses

For the year ended 31 March 2008

	Note	2008 £	2007 £
<b>Retained surplus for the year</b>		47,464	6,000
Actuarial gain/(loss) recognised in the retirement benefit scheme		162,000	76,000
<b>Total recognised gains and losses relating to the year</b>		<b>209,464</b>	<b>82,000</b>

The notes on pages 24 to 35 form part of these financial statements.

# Balance Sheet

At 31 March 2008

	Note	2008 £	£	£	2007 £
<b>Fixed Assets</b>					
Tangible Assets	9		67,148		70,740
<b>Current Assets</b>					
Debtors	10	308,805		513,647	
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>1,684,883</u>		<u>1,655,805</u>	
		1,993,688		2,169,452	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	(2,030,372)		(2,240,192)	
<b>Net current liabilities</b>			<b>(36,684)</b>		<b>(70,740)</b>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities excluding retirement benefit scheme deficit</b>					
			<u>30,464</u>		<u>-</u>
Retirement benefit scheme deficit	8		<u>(88,000)</u>		<u>(267,000)</u>
<b>Net liabilities including retirement benefit scheme deficit</b>			<b><u>(57,536)</u></b>		<b><u>(267,000)</u></b>
<b>Capital and reserves - equity</b>					
Income and expenditure account including retirement benefit scheme deficit	12		<u>(57,536)</u>		<u>(267,000)</u>
<b>Company members' funds</b>			<b><u>(57,536)</u></b>		<b><u>(267,000)</u></b>

The financial statements were authorised for issue by the Board of Directors on 28 August 2008

Colin Mair  
Director

The notes on pages 24 to 35 form part of these financial statements.

# Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 March 2008

## 1 Accounting policies

### *Basis of accounting*

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable accounting standards.

### *Going concern*

The directors consider that the company continues to be viable as there is an agreement in place with the Scottish Executive to provide funding for the activities of the company until March 2011.

### *Cash flow statement*

The company qualifies as small within the definitions of the Companies Act and as such is exempt from preparing a cash flow statement.

### *Turnover*

Turnover represents amounts earned during the year, net of Value Added Tax.

### *Tangible fixed assets*

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation. Depreciation is provided to write off the cost of tangible fixed assets as follows:

Fixtures and fittings: 3 - 10 years straight line

### *Operating leases*

Lease payments under operating leases, where substantially all the risks and benefits remain with the lessor, are charged as expenses in the periods in which they are incurred.

### *Deferred taxation*

Deferred taxation is provided in respect of the tax effect of all timing differences in accordance with FRS 19.

### *Foreign currencies*

Transactions denominated in foreign currencies are translated at the exchange rate at the date of the transaction.

Foreign currency assets and liabilities held at the balance sheet date are retranslated at the exchange rates ruling at that date. Any resulting exchange profit or loss is dealt with in the profit and loss account.

### *Pension costs*

The company operates a defined benefit scheme in respect of its employees. The assets of the scheme are held in external funds managed by professional investment managers.

In accordance with 'FRS 17 - Retirement Benefits', the operating and financing costs of pension and post retirement schemes (determined by a qualified actuary) are recognised separately in the Income and Expenditure Account. Service costs are systematically spread over the service lives of the employees and financing costs are recognised in the period in which they arise.

The difference between the actual and expected returns on assets during the year, including changes in the actuarial assumptions and also recognised in the Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses.

### *Grants*

Grants of a revenue nature are credited to the income and expenditure account in the period in which they accrue.

## 2 Operating surplus

	2008	2007
	£	£
Operating surplus is stated after charging:		
Depreciation of tangible assets	19,909	9,640
Release of deferred Government grants	(20,129)	-
Operating lease charges	39,162	37,709
Auditors' remuneration - audit	6,500	6,000
Auditors' remuneration - other	7,428	13,837
Loss on disposal of tangible fixed assets	(182)	-
	<u>109,947</u>	<u>105,650</u>

## 3 Directors' remuneration

	2008	2007
	£	£
Directors' emoluments	92,483	88,713
Pension costs	17,464	16,937
	<u>109,947</u>	<u>105,650</u>

Only one director, Colin Mair, is a member of the defined benefit pension scheme.

## 4 Staff costs and numbers

Staff costs were as follows:

	2008	2007
	£	£
Wages and salaries	930,089	672,887
Social security costs	63,838	61,553
Pension costs	93,269	96,002
	<u>1,087,196</u>	<u>830,442</u>

The average monthly number of employees was 24 (2007: 20).

The staff of the company worked in the following activities:

Core Management	13	12
Customer First	6	6
Shared Services	3	1
Planning Development	1	1
Equalities	1	-
	<u>24</u>	<u>20</u>

**5 Investment income**

	2008	2007
	£	£
Bank interest	38,540	23,772

**6 Interest payable and similar charges**

	2008	2007
	£	£
Pension scheme interest	5,000	9,000
Lease finance charges	-	787
Bank interest	5,000	9,787

**7 Taxation**

	2008	2007
	£	£
UK corporation tax - current year	7,708	-

The tax assessed for the year differs from the standard rate of tax as follows.

	2008	2007
	£	£
Profit on ordinary activities before tax	55,172	6,000
Profit on ordinary activities at standard rate of tax 20% ( 2007: 19%)	3,408	1,140
Expenses not deductible for tax purposes	4,300	(1,140)
	7,708	-

## 8 Pension costs

The pension cost charge for the year amounted to £93,269 (2007: £96,002).

The company is an admitted body of the Lothian Pension Fund. The fund is a defined benefit scheme into which employees' and employer's contributions, and interest and dividends from investments are paid and from which pensions, lump sums and superannuation benefits are paid out. Employees' contributions are fixed by statute at 6% and employer's basic contributions are assessed every three years by an actuary and are fixed to ensure the fund remains solvent and in a position to meet its future liabilities. The actuarial method used is known as the projected unit method. The last actuarial valuation was 31 March 2005 and following this valuation employer's contributions were 315% of employees' contributions for the year to 31 March 2008. Employer's contributions for the year ended 31 March 2008 amounted to £93,269. The contributions of the company were 18.4% (2007: 18.4%) for the year to 31 March 2008.

In accordance with FRS 17 - Retirement Benefits - a valuation of the fund was done at 31 March 2008, by Hymans Robertson, independent actuaries. Hymans Robertson have calculated the pension assets and liabilities as at 31 March 2008 by rolling forward the employer's share of the assets from 31 March 2007 to 31 March 2008 allowing for investment returns (estimated where necessary), the effect of contributions and transfers paid into, and estimated benefits paid from, the fund by the employer and its employees.

The main assumptions used in the calculations are:

	31 March 2008 % per	31 March 2007 % per	31 March 2006 % per	27 July 2005 % per
Price increases	3.6	3.2	3.1	2.8
Salary increases	5.1	4.7	4.6	4.3
Pension increases	3.6	3.2	3.1	2.8
Discount rate	6.9	5.4	4.9	5.0

The expected return on assets is based on the long-term future expected investment for each asset class as at 31 March 2008.

The fair value and expected return on assets is as follows:

	Long term return 2008 %	Long term return 2007 %	Long term return 2006 %	Long term return 2005 %
Equities	7.7	7.8	7.4	7.3
Bonds	5.7	4.9	4.6	4.7
Property	5.7	5.8	5.5	5.4
Cash	4.8	4.9	4.6	4.5

	Fund value 31 March 2008 £'000	Fund value 31 March 2007 £'000	Fund value 31 March 2006 £'000	Fund value 27 July 2005 £'000
Equities	392	292	264	25
Bonds	46	21	19	2
Property	61	47	34	3
Cash	17	21	5	1
	516	381	322	31

Net pension liability as at:

	31 March 2008 £'000	31 March 2007 £'000	31 March 2006 £'000	27 July 2005 £'000
Estimated employer assets	516	381	322	31
Present value of scheme liabilities	(604)	(648)	(671)	(37)
Net pension liability	<u>(88)</u>	<u>(267)</u>	<u>(349)</u>	<u>(6)</u>

Analysis of the amount charged to net incoming resources

	31 March 2008 £'000	31 March 2007 £'000
Current service cost of the defined benefit scheme	(90)	(21)
Past service cost	-	11
Total operating charge	<u>(90)</u>	<u>(10)</u>

Analysis of amount credited to other finance income

	31 March 2008 £'000	31 March 2007 £'000
Expected return on employer assets	33	24
Interest on pension scheme liabilities	(38)	(33)
Net return	<u>(5)</u>	<u>(9)</u>

## Analysis of amounts included in other recognised gains and losses

	31 March 2008 £'000	31 March 2007 £'000
Actual return less expected return on pension scheme assets	(45)	3
Experience gains and losses arising on the scheme liabilities	(1)	(1)
Changes in financial assumptions underlying the present value of the scheme liabilities	208	74
Actuarial gain recognised in net movement of funds	<u>162</u>	<u>76</u>

## Movement in deficit during the period

	31 March 2008 £'000	31 March 2007 £'000
Deficit at the beginning of the period	(267)	(349)
Current service cost	(90)	(21)
Past service cost	-	11
Employer contributions	112	25
Net return on assets	(5)	(9)
Actuarial gains	162	76
Deficit at end of period	<u>(88)</u>	<u>(267)</u>

## Analysis of amounts included in other recognised gains and losses

	31 March 2007 £'000	31 March 2006 £'000
Actual return less expected return on pension scheme assets	3	13
Experience gains and losses arising on the scheme liabilities	(1)	(301)
Changes in financial assumptions underlying the present value of the scheme liabilities	74	(70)
Actuarial gain/(loss) recognised in net movement of funds	<u>76</u>	<u>(358)</u>

## Movement in deficit during the period

	31 March 2007 £'000	31 March 2006 £'000
Deficit at the beginning of the period	(349)	(6)
Current service cost	(21)	(29)
Past service cost	11	-
Employer contributions	25	43
Net return on assets	(9)	1
Actuarial gains/(losses)	76	(358)
Deficit at end of period	<u>(267)</u>	<u>(349)</u>

**9 Tangible fixed assets**

	Fixtures and fittings £
<b>Cost</b>	
At 1 April 2007	81,729
Additions	16,499
Disposals	(219)
At 31 March 2008	<u>98,009</u>
<b>Depreciation</b>	
At 1 April 2007	10,951
Charge for the year	19,910
At 31 March 2008	<u>30,861</u>
<b>Net book value</b>	
At 31 March 2008	<u>67,148</u>
At 1 April 2007	<u>70,778</u>

**10 Debtors**

	2008 £	2007 £
Grants receivable	302,073	507,360
Other debtors	6,732	4,661
Prepayments and accrued income	-	1,626
	<u>308,805</u>	<u>513,647</u>

**11 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year**

	2008 £	2007 £
Trade creditors	313,696	349,019
Corporation tax	7,708	-
Other taxation and social security	13,990	23,519
Amounts owed to West Lothian Council	673,716	1,440,463
Accruals and deferred income	1,021,262	427,191
	<u>2,030,372</u>	<u>2,240,192</u>

**12 Reserves**

	Income and expenditure account £
At 1 April 2007	(267,000)
Statement of total recognised gains and losses	209,464
At 31 March 2008	<u>(57,536)</u>

**13 Reconciliation of movements in company members' funds**

	2008 £	2007 £
Surplus for the financial year	47,464	6,000
Actuarial gain/(loss) recognised in the retirement benefit scheme	162,000	76,000
Net increase/(reduction) in company members' funds	<u>209,464</u>	<u>82,000</u>
Opening company members' funds	<u>(267,000)</u>	<u>(349,000)</u>
Closing company members' funds	<u><u>(57,536)</u></u>	<u><u>(267,000)</u></u>

**14 Operating lease commitments**

The company's commitments under operating leases for the next year are for leases expiring:

	Land and buildings £
Within one year	<u>16,329</u>

**15 Non-audit services**

In common with many other companies of our size we use our auditors to prepare and submit returns to the tax authorities and assist with the preparation of the financial statements.

## 16 Related parties

Due to the nature of the company's operations and the composition of its board of directors, being from public sector organisations, it is inevitable that transactions will take place with companies and organisations in which a director of the Improvement Service Company has an interest. The company works with many public funded bodies with whom transactions have been undertaken during the year.

The following directors held official positions in these organisations:

Director	Public Body	Position held
Tom McCabe MSP	-	Politician
Patrick Watters	-	Councillor
Ruth Parsons	Scottish Executive	Director of Public Service Reform
Roderick Mair	Local Government	Chief Executive
Keith Yates	Stirling Council	Chief Executive
Gavin Whitefield	North Lanarkshire Council	Chief Executive

None of the directors have significant control over the company or the related organisations. On this basis the details and amounts of the transactions have not been disclosed.

The appointment for each director was made by the following nominating bodies:

Director	Nominating body
Tom McCabe MSP (resigned 17 May 2007)	Scottish Executive
Ruth Parsons (resigned 17 March 2008)	Scottish Executive
Patrick Watters	The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Roderick Mair	The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Keith Yates (resigned 16 November 2007)	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers
Gavin Whitefield	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers

The following directors also hold directorships with related organisations:

Director	Other directorships held
Patrick Watters	Scottish Leadership Foundation East Kilbride Crime Prevention Trust
Colin Mair	Scottish Association for Mental Health (resigned 22 May 2007)

Funding is received from the Scottish Executive. In the year total funding receivable was £4,971,503 (2007: £3,741,094) and at 31 March 2008 £302,073 (2007: £507,360) was included within debtors.

Transaction processing is provided by West Lothian Council. During the year £5,088,981 (2007: £1,997,593) was paid to West Lothian Council for transactions and £687,706 (2007: £1,463,982) was due to them at 31 March 2008 - this is included within creditors.



	2008 £	2007 £
Administrative expenses		
Wages and salaries	1,087,196	830,442
Other staff costs	45,133	37,025
Commissions	461,484	-
Rent	39,162	26,980
Rates	22,490	16,564
Insurance	4,710	3,746
Light and heat	3,728	6,020
Cleaning	5,202	4,694
Repairs and maintenance	1,250	3,847
Service charges	22,000	11,007
Printing, postage and stationery	71,198	58,495
Recruitment costs	17,509	41,521
Private contractors	876,807	-
Telephone	17,102	17,124
Computer running costs	117,780	58,709
Motor and travel	56,357	39,617
Legal and professional	10,334	12,123
Consultancy fees	913,510	1,510,949
Audit fees	6,500	6,000
Non audit fees	7,428	13,837
Bank and credit card charges	194	29
Sponsorship	15,653	10,100
Irrecoverable VAT	311,831	291,576
Programme events	93,485	130,738
Payments to other local authorities	315,825	367,102
Secondees	428,750	217,563
Corporate events	30,789	16,327
External room hire	31,578	18,130
Publications	30,076	33,186
Business development	26,196	2,504
Sundry expenses	8,157	5,996
Donations and subscriptions	1,429	1,865
Release of deferred government grant	(20,129)	-
Depreciation	19,909	9,640
Loss on disposal of fixed assets	182	-
	5,080,805	3,803,456
	5,080,805	3,803,456

## CONTACT US

We are part of the supporting framework for Scottish councils and work with them to set, monitor and deliver improved outcomes for communities in Scotland. We work directly with individual councils to conduct Critical Friend Reviews, Peer Reviews and Senior Management Reviews, all underpinned by the principles of Best Value. We also facilitate in a wide range of local and national programmes and projects to meet political, social and economic agendas, host events, give conference presentations and attend workshops.

Please get in touch if you are keen to be involved in any of the projects or if you have ideas for new areas of work.

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## Key contacts in 2007-08

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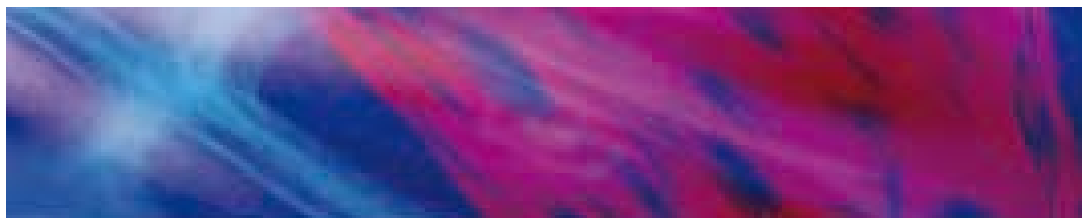
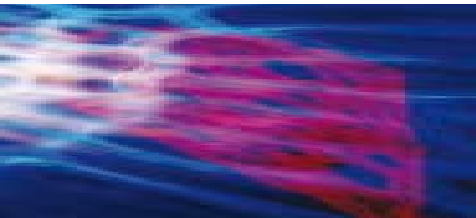
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The Improvement Service is devoted to improving the efficiency, quality and accountability of public services in Scotland through learning and sharing information and experiences.