YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park



Internal Audit Work Programme 2025/26

Veritau
Assurance for the public sector

Appendix 1

CONTENTS

3 Introduction

4 2025/26 internal audit work programme

5 Professional Standards

7 Appendix A: Quality Assurance and Development Activities

Introduction

1 This document sets out the planned 2025/26 programme of work for internal audit to be delivered for the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority ('the Authority').

2 It also sets out the outcomes of the Quality Assurance and Development Arrangements for 2024/25 and an updated Internal Audit Charter.

3 The work of internal audit for the Authority is governed by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the Global Internal Audit Standards (UK public sector)[1]. In accordance with those standards, the Head of Internal Audit is required to provide an annual internal audit opinion to the Authority based on an objective assessment of the framework of governance, risk management and control.

4 The internal audit plan of work has been prepared on the basis of a risk assessment and takes into account the changes in the risk profile for the Authority. This is intended to ensure audit resources are prioritised towards those systems or areas which are considered to be higher risk and/or which contribute the most to the achievement of the Authority's priorities and objectives.

5 The content of the programme of work has been subject to consultation with the Head of Finance, who has also consulted with other senior officers.

6 Responsibility for effective risk management, governance and internal control arrangements remains with the Authority. The Head of Internal Audit cannot be expected to prevent or detect all weaknesses or failures in internal control nor can audit work cover all areas of risk across the organisation.

7 The internal audit programme of work is submitted for formal approval by the Audit and Review Committee who are responsible for overseeing the work of internal audit and monitoring progress against the plan. Any changes to the work programme will be agreed with the Head of Finance and will be notified to the Committee. We will provide updates on the scope and findings of our work to the Audit and Review Committee throughout 2025/26.

[1]From 1 April 2025 the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards were replaced by the Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) and the Application Note: Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector. Together, these are referred to as the GIAS (UK public sector) and represent the new standards regime to be followed.

2025/26 internal audit work programme

8 The internal audit work programme includes audits of financial and operational systems and services. The plan also includes an allocation of time to support the delivery of the audit work plan.

9 The proposed internal audit work programme for 2025/26 comprises 26 days coverage. Further details are included in table 1 below.

Table 1: Proposed internal audit work programme for 2025/26.

Topic	Notes	Days
Administration of National Trails	A review of the Pennine National Trails Partnership, including governance arrangements and appropriate use of funding.	7
Creditors	A review of the system for ordering, approving and processing payments to creditors, and for amending supplier details.	5
IT Security	A review of IT security controls following the recent rollout of MS365 and SharePoint.	6
Transparency Code	A review of the Authority's arrangements for complying with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.	4
Client support, advice & liaison	▲ Audit planning and liaison ▲ Committee report preparation and attendance ▲ Follow up of previously agreed audit findings ▲ Preparing an updated Internal Audit Charter to reflect the requirements of the Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) (UK Public Sector) ▲ Other ad-hoc support and guidance (e.g. ensuring compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of Internal Audit in UK Local Government).	4
Total		26

Professional standards

10 In order to comply with professional standards, the Head of Internal Audit is required to develop and maintain ongoing quality assurance arrangements. The objective of these arrangements is to ensure that working practices continue to conform with the standards. A summary of quality assurance processes and any areas identified for development are reported to the committee each year as part of the annual report. The arrangements consist of various elements, including:

- maintenance of a detailed audit procedures manual and standard operating practices
- ongoing performance monitoring of internal audit activity
- regular customer feedback
- training plans and associated training and development activities
- periodic self-assessments of internal audit working practices (to evaluate conformance to the standards)

11 External assessments must be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team from outside the organisation. An external assessment of Veritau's internal audit working practices was undertaken between June and August 2023 by John Chesshire, an approved reviewer for the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors (the UK and Ireland's local chapter).

12 The assessment involved a full independent validation of Veritau's own self-assessment of conformance to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), as well as to the wider International Professional Practices Framework which governed the performance of internal auditing globally at the time the assessment was undertaken. The report concluded that Veritau's internal audit activity generally conforms to the PSIAS[2] and, overall, the findings were very positive.

13 The feedback included comments that the internal audit service was highly valued by its clients. Key stakeholders felt confident in the way Veritau had established effective working relations, both in our approach to planning and the way in which we engage flexibly with our clients throughout the internal audit process, at the strategic and operational levels.

14 From 1 April 2025, the PSIAS were replaced by what are known as the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector. These standards are made up of the Institute of Internal Auditors' Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) and the Application Note: Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector ('the Application Note'). The Application

[2] PSIAS guidance suggests a scale of three ratings, 'generally conforms, 'partially conforms' and 'does not conform'. 'Generally conforms' is the top rating.

Note interprets the GIAS, clarifying how they should be applied in UK public sector organisations.

15 In the UK, the body responsible for interpreting the GIAS and setting expectations for the performance of internal audit in the public sector is known as the Internal Audit Standards Advisory Board (IASAB). The IASAB is made up of six 'Relevant Internal Audit Standard Setters' (RIASS) representing central and local government, and the health sector. The RIASS for UK local government is the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). The IASAB developed the Application Note, releasing it in the early part of 2025.

16 The Global Internal Audit Standards (from which the Application Note provides its local government interpretations) were launched on 9 January 2024 and became effective on 9 January 2025. Veritau has used a GIAS conformance readiness tool provided by the IIA, alongside the specific public sector interpretations and requirements of the Application Note to prepare for the introduction of the new standards.

17 Our overall assessment is that Veritau conforms to the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector. However, we have identified a small number of actions to help strengthen our ability to demonstrate conformance. In addition, we have identified a further set of actions to ensure continuous improvement in service delivery.

18 Details of Veritau's ongoing quality assurance arrangements and the outcomes from our conformance assessment are set out in appendix A.

19 The Internal Audit Charter sets out how internal audit at the Authority will be provided in accordance with professional standards. The charter is reviewed periodically. Updates to the charter have been made to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector. The Authority already has a well-established internal audit service and so very few changes have been made to the charter. Those changes which have been made will have no impact on how the service is delivered. An updated charter is contained as a separate document.

Appendix A: Internal Audit Quality Assurance and Development Arrangements

1.0 Background

Ongoing quality assurance arrangements

Veritau maintains appropriate ongoing quality assurance arrangements designed to ensure that internal audit work is undertaken in accordance with relevant professional standards. From April 2025 those standards are the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector. Quality assurance arrangements include:

- the maintenance of a detailed audit procedures manual
- the requirement for all audit staff to conform to a Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct Policy
- the requirement for all audit staff to complete annual declarations of interest
- detailed job descriptions and competency profiles for each internal audit post
- regular operational 121 meetings for all auditors, to review progress with audit engagements, and formal 121s that include discussion of overall performance
- induction programmes, training plans and associated training activities
- attendance on relevant courses and access to e-learning material
- the maintenance of training records and training evaluation procedures
- membership of professional networks
- agreement of the objectives, scope and expected timescales for each audit engagement with the client before detailed work commences (audit specification)
- the results of all audit testing and other associated work documented in a structured format using our audit management system – K10 Vision
- file review by senior auditors and audit managers and sign-off at each stage of the audit process
- the ongoing investment in tools to support the effective performance of internal audit work (for example data interrogation software)
- post audit questionnaires (customer satisfaction surveys) issued following each audit engagement
- regular client liaison meetings to discuss progress, share information and evaluate performance.

On an ongoing basis, completed audit work is subject to internal peer review by a Quality Assurance group. The review process is designed to ensure audit work is completed consistently and to the required quality standards. The work of the Quality Assurance group is overseen by an Assistant Director. Any key learning points are shared with the relevant internal auditors and audit managers. The

Head of Internal Audit will also be informed of any general areas requiring improvement. Appropriate mitigating action will be taken where required (for example, increased supervision of individual internal auditors or further training).

Annual self-assessment

On an annual basis, the Head of Internal Audit will seek feedback from each client on the quality of the overall internal audit service. This includes surveys targeted at senior officers and chairs of audit committees. The Head of Internal Audit also undertakes an annual self-assessment against internal audit standards. A hybrid approach to self-assessment has been taken this year, as a result of the change in the internal audit standards regime from April 2025. Further information about this year's approach is set out below. As part of ongoing performance management arrangements, managers and auditors assess current skills and knowledge against the competency profiles for internal audit roles. Where necessary, further training or support will be provided to address any development needs.

The Head of Internal Audit and other members of the internal audit management team also participate in various professional networks and obtain information on operating arrangements and relevant best practice from other similar audit providers for comparison purposes.

The results of annual client surveys, self-assessment against the standards, professional networking, and ongoing quality assurance and performance management arrangements are used to identify any areas requiring further development or improvement. Actions required are reflected in Veritau business plans, the Veritau internal audit strategy, and individual personal development plans as appropriate. Any specific changes needed to address conformance with professional standards are reported to the Audit and Governance Committee as part of the annual report of the Head of Internal Audit. The report also summarises other development activity planned to enhance the delivery of the service. Information gathered for quality assurance and development purposes is also used to evaluate overall conformance with internal audit standards.

External assessment

At least once every five years, arrangements must be made to subject internal audit working practices to external assessment to ensure the continued application of professional standards. The assessment should be conducted by an independent and suitably qualified person or organisation and the results reported to the Head of Internal Audit. The outcome of the external assessment also forms part of the overall reporting process to each client. Any specific areas identified as requiring further development and/or improvement will be incorporated into current development plans.

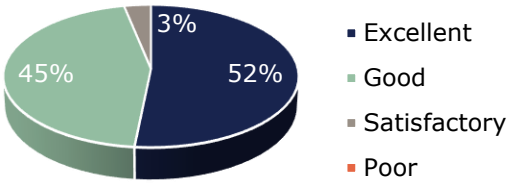
2.0 Customer satisfaction survey 2025

In March 2025 we asked clients for feedback on the overall quality of the internal audit service provided by Veritau during the preceding year. Where relevant, the

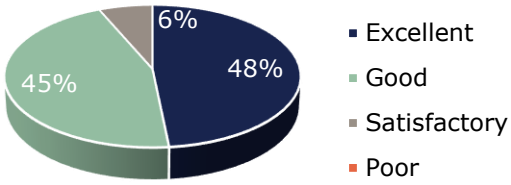
survey also asked questions about counter fraud and information governance services. A total of 188 surveys (2024 – 173) were issued to senior managers in client organisations. A total of 32 responses were received representing a response rate of 17% (2024 – 10%). Respondents were asked to rate the different elements of the audit process as either excellent, good, satisfactory or poor.

Respondents were also asked to provide an overall rating for the service. The results of the survey are set out in the charts below. These are presented as percentages, for consistency with previous years. However, it is recognised that the relatively low number of respondents means that the percentage for each category is sensitive to small changes in actual responses (1 respondent represents about 3%).

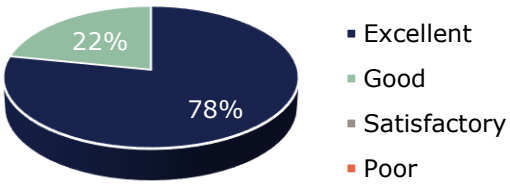
Quality of audit planning / coverage



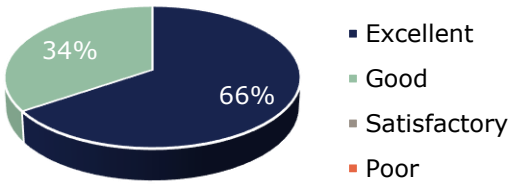
Provision of advice / guidance



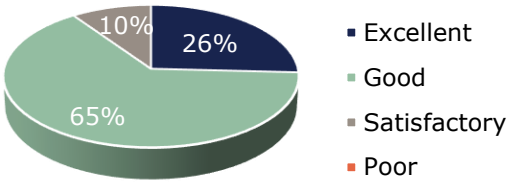
Staff conduct & professionalism



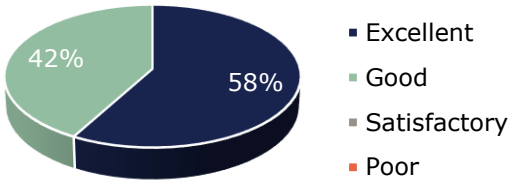
Ability to establish positive rapport



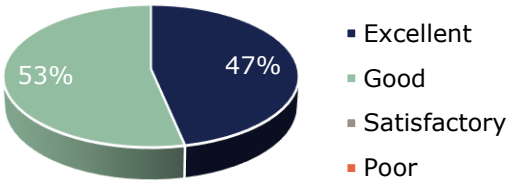
Knowledge of area being audited



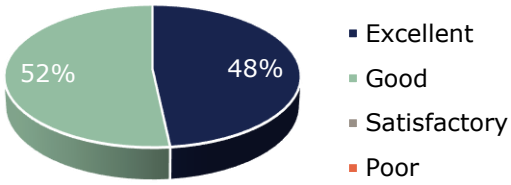
Minimising disruption for area being audited



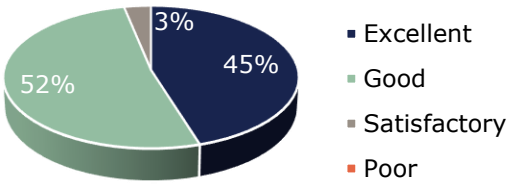
Communication of issues during audit



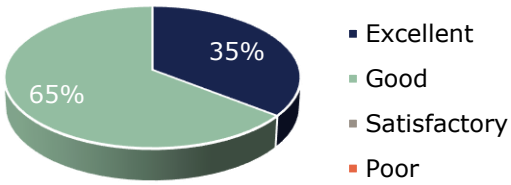
Quality of feedback at end of audit



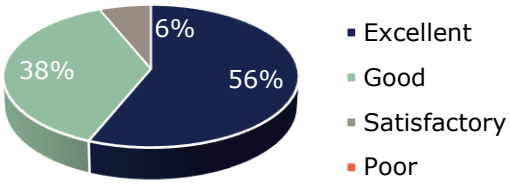
Accuracy / format / length / style of report



Relevance of audit opinions & conclusions



Overall rating for the Internal Audit service



The overall ratings in 2025 were:

	2025		2024	
Excellent	18	56%	7	44%
Good	12	38%	8	50%
Satisfactory	2	6%	1	6%
Poor	0	0%	0	0%

The feedback shows that the majority of respondents continue to value the service being delivered.

3.0 Self-assessment against audit standards 2025

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require internal auditors working in local government to take into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance. Up to 31 March 2025, the relevant standards were the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). CIPFA (who are responsible for setting internal audit standards for local government) have adopted new standards that apply from 1 April 2025. These are the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector – or GIAS (UK Public Sector)[3]. Internal auditors working in local government are expected to apply the new standards from April 2025.

In previous years Veritau has used a checklist published by CIPFA to assess conformance with the PSIAS. This is no longer appropriate following the change in standards. However, no equivalent checklist for assessment against the new standards has yet been published. For the self-assessment undertaken in April 2025, we have used documentation published by the Institute of Internal Auditors to prepare for the introduction of the new standards. This highlights areas of the GIAS that are changing and where updates to current arrangements may need to be made. We have also considered any changes required by the introduction of the new Application Note. We intend to undertake a further full assessment against the new standards later in 2025/26, once further guidance on assessing conformance is available.

[3] The GIAS (UK Public Sector) comprises the Institute of Internal Auditors' Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) and the Internal Audit Standards Advisory Board's Application Note: Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector (referred to as the Application Note). The Application Note interprets the GIAS for the UK public sector.

The self-assessment has identified two actions required to address areas of partial conformance with the standards. These are:

- To update current internal audit charters to address various requirements of the new standards. For example, the need to set out the internal audit mandate and to clarify the roles of senior managers and the audit committee in championing the role of internal audit.
- To introduce a new survey of chairs of audit committees (or equivalent) to address requirements for the committees to provide input on internal audit performance.

A new charter has been prepared and is included as part of the agenda for the current committee, for approval.

We received and reviewed the results from the survey of chairs of audit committees in late May 2025. A 50% response rate was achieved and Veritau received ratings of either excellent or good for all nine questions asked. Responses were particularly complimentary about Veritau's professionalism, timeliness of responses, the coverage of our work, and the relevance of our annual opinions. No specific development and improvement actions have been identified from the survey. However, we will continue to run it annually.

The self-assessment has highlighted a number of other actions that are not required to comply with the standards – but which will help to improve the service. These will be taken forward as part of our existing internal audit strategy. Further information on development activity is included below.

4.0 External Assessment

As noted above, the PSIAS required the Head of Internal Audit to arrange for an external assessment to be conducted at least once every five years to ensure the continued application of professional standards. This requirement continues under the GIAS (UK Public Sector). The assessment is intended to provide an independent and objective opinion on the quality of internal audit practices.

An external assessment of Veritau's internal audit working practices was undertaken in summer 2023, by John Chesshire, an approved reviewer for the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors. The report concluded that Veritau internal audit activity 'generally conforms' to the PSIAS[4] and, overall, the findings of the review were very positive. The feedback included comments that the internal audit service was highly valued by its member councils. Key stakeholders felt confident in the way Veritau had established effective working relations, both in our approach to planning, and the way we engage flexibly with our clients throughout the internal audit process, at both strategic and operational levels.

The outcomes from the external assessment were reported to this committee on 23 April 2024. The assessment was based on the PSIAS. Many of the

[4] PSIAS guidance suggests a scale of three ratings, 'generally conforms, 'partially conforms' and 'does not conform'. 'Generally conforms' is the top rating.

requirements under the new standards are the same or similar, and we can therefore continue to place reliance on the previous report. However, a further external assessment against the new standards will need to be carried out in the next three years.

5.0 Development plans

Overall, the internal audit services provided by Veritau continue to meet the requirements of professional standards. However, we recognise that the pace of change in local government and the wider public sector mean that there is a need to continually review and update aspects of our service to ensure it stays up to date and continues to deliver good value.

We first introduced an internal audit strategy in 2021. The strategy identified priorities for developing the service and actions to deliver continuous improvement. As a result of that we have changed many aspects of the service in the last four years. Key successes include:

- audit planning – we have become better at defining the areas we need to focus on (including client-specific risks and objectives) and we've introduced new arrangements for capturing and assessing information on our clients' operations
- work planning – introducing flexible arrangements that help us focus upcoming audits on areas that are most important and allow us to change course quickly when priorities change
- reporting – ensuring that key information is available to clients to understand audit priorities and outcomes
- implementation of a new audit management system (K10) – the new system uses the latest technology, offers improved functionality, and is supporting development activity across a range of areas.

We have also tried a few things which did not deliver the expected outcomes. However, we have used the experience gained to improve core audit activities and ways of working.

The latest strategy (2025 to 2027) was adopted in January 2025. It sets out areas we are prioritising for development over the next three years. These include the following:

- focussing on the development of high value assurance techniques and expertise. For example, the use of data analytics to provide increased understanding of clients' operations and the use of artificial intelligence tools to increase efficiency and insights. Developing our knowledge of opportunities and risks associated with AI will also help us to support client adoption of new technologies.
- further development of systems for planning, prioritising and reporting audit work to ensure work is targeted to the areas of highest importance for our clients, our internal processes are as efficient as they can be, and the clarity and usefulness of reports is maximised.

- use of the new K10 audit system to improve functionality for the delivery of audit work and the production of management information. We want to use the system to streamline follow up activity, and further develop internal management processes. This will help us to better understand and manage audit workflows, improve service delivery, and inform performance management arrangements.

To achieve these priorities, we have focused actions in the following key areas:

- embedding a strategic approach to work programme development and the use of the audit opinion framework
- redesigning and modernising our audit working practices (including assignment planning and reporting)
- further developing our use of data analytics
- developing our key performance indicators and the measures of added value

Quality assurance group

The internal audit quality assurance group has recently reported on their 2024/25 activities. They were aiming to assess how well core audit practices had been adopted and applied using the new K10 system by looking at a sample of completed audit files. They found that overall, core working practices had translated well to the new system. Strengths included the following:

- the completeness of files and file review processes – information expected to be on file was included and files had been signed off by relevant supervisors.
- good documentation of engagement with officers when planning individual audits and agreement of the scope and objectives of work.
- good use of new system functionality to record the systems audited and linked to this, the tests to be undertaken.
- assignment of the priorities to issues found and overall opinions were in line with expectations, and key findings were well documented.

A few areas requiring improvement were found. These included:

- the need to better document the analysis and conclusions reached during the planning stage of each audit, and discussions with clients at the end of each audit
- improvements needed to cross referencing documents within the system between related pieces of work – this may require a review of current system set up and training
- a need to better document conclusions directly within K10, to increase the efficiency of report generation from the system.

These issues have been flagged for further action through system development, whole team training and feedback to individual auditors where required.

Improvement actions identified during self-assessment

As noted above, we have identified a number of areas for improvement while undertaking the annual self-assessment. These do not represent non-conformance with standards but will help us to improve the service. Continuous improvement actions identified included the following:

- review existing auditor competency profiles to ensure adequate coverage of the auditor competencies identified in the GIAS
- strengthen the analysis of outcomes from routine training delivered, to ensure it met objectives and any further action or training required was identified
- undertake additional training for auditors on professional scepticism
- ensure routine training delivered clearly highlights links to the relevant professional standards being covered
- review coverage of value for money considerations in the audit manual, and ensure adequate coverage in routine training
- review the presentation of annual conclusions to assess whether different approaches could present clearer insights

These actions will be integrated into the internal audit strategy action plan.

6.0 Overall conformance with standards

Based on the overall outcomes from quality assurance and development planning arrangements, the Head of Internal Audit considers that the internal audit service conforms to Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector.