

Annual Survey of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government

Annual Survey 2013-14



Contents

Introduction 3

Methodology 4

Key Highlights 5

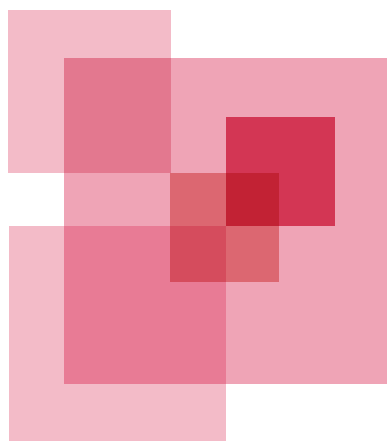
Resourcing 7

Impact and Influence 10

Political factors, nature of committees and their impact on effectiveness 14

Partnerships 19

CfPS and you: the services we provide to practitioners 22



Report author: Naomi Russell, Research Assistant

About the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS)

The Centre for Public Scrutiny is an independent charity, focused on ideas, thinking and the application and development of policy and practice for accountable public services. CfPS believes that accountability, transparency and involvement are strong principles that protect the public interest. We publish research and practical guides, provide training and leadership development, support on-line and off-line networks, and facilitate shared learning and innovation.

Introduction

CfPS has been carrying out surveys of overview and scrutiny in local government since 2004. The local government landscape has, in that time, changed dramatically. The abolition of the Audit Commission and the significant financial challenges for local authorities in recent years have arguably presented substantial opportunities for scrutiny to do work of genuine impact. However, these same challenges have also resulted in a shrinking resource base for scrutiny, which hinders its ability to make those impacts in the first place.

The results of this year's survey bear this tension out. Scrutiny continues to be effective even while its resource base diminishes. Those who are most optimistic about the future for scrutiny recognise the opportunities it presents to work across partnerships, with different organisations. But there are still risks, and causes for concern – particularly where the elimination of dedicated scrutiny officer support leads to a negative impact on scrutiny's effectiveness.

You said ... we did ...

Feedback on our work, and on how scrutiny is delivered within authorities, has helped us to improve our service in the past and will continue to do so in the future. There are several major changes that we have made to how we work, in direct response to feedback from our Annual Survey.

- In 2009 a number of respondents expressed a need for shorter, sharper and more timely research reports on issues of developing national practice. In response, we began producing our highly-rated series of Policy Briefings;
- In 2011, it was suggested that we should enhance the nature of support that we provide to authorities through regional networks. We made a “regional offer” to networks in England, which saw us delivering an enhanced package of training and development sessions in a number of areas. This support will be augmented in 2014, following feedback received in this year's survey;
- In 2013, a need was expressed for a series of short guides providing a fundamental introduction to the basics of overview and scrutiny in local government. Our series of 14 Practice Guides was published in June 2014.

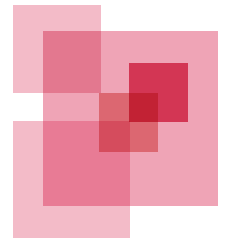
Methodology

As in the 2012/13 survey, respondents had the option to fill in the full survey or an abridged version. One full response was requested from each council, from the most senior officer with day-to-day responsibility for scrutiny. All other respondents were asked to complete the abridged version.

The final date for submissions to the survey was Monday 12th May 2014. As such the results reflect the political balance and control of authorities on that date.

Responses

- Responses were received from 273 people.
- 172 councils provided a full response to the survey.
- Of those 172 councils:
 - 83 were Conservative controlled
 - 50 were Labour controlled
 - 7 were Liberal Democrat controlled
 - 1 was Green controlled
 - 2 were controlled by an independent group
 - 15 were under no overall control and led by a coalition administration
 - 11 were under no overall control and led by a minority administration
- Of those 172 councils:
 - 19 were county councils
 - 78 were districts/boroughs in a two tier area
 - 20 were London boroughs
 - 14 were metropolitan boroughs
 - 30 were other unitary authorities in England
 - 11 were unitary authorities in Wales
- The most responses received (by region) were from the South East, with 57 out of 273 responses (20.9%).



Resourcing

- Dedicated support for scrutiny continues to fall. Of the 161 authorities answering the question, the average number of FTE officer posts for the municipal year 2013/14 was 1.75, compared to 2.04 the previous year. This is at its lowest level since 2004. The average number of FTE officers is expected to decrease to 1.63 per authority in 2014/15. Dedicated scrutiny budgets continue to decline – the average budget in 2013/14 was £4015.22, and the average budget for the year 2014/15 is £3,447.70. This is the lowest level since we started the survey. Readers should note that the reported figures for both of these factors for 2013/14 are different from the projected figures reported in last year's survey, both because of in-year changes and the fact that not all of the same authorities who responded last year also responded this year.
- 74% of respondents thought that lack of officer resource would be a barrier to the improvement of scrutiny in the future. Whilst financial resourcing remained a concern, it was highlighted by less than half this amount of councils (34%).
- Fewer scrutiny functions are now supported by a team of dedicated scrutiny officers, or even one such officer. Combined support provided through the council's democratic services or policy functions is increasingly common. 48% of authorities who responded reported having dedicated scrutiny officers, and this was expected to fall further next year to 45%, its lowest level since before 2006. This is dramatically different to last year's figures, where just 9.2% of councils responding reported having no dedicated scrutiny resource – although 22.3% did report having less than one FTE officer.

Impact and Influence

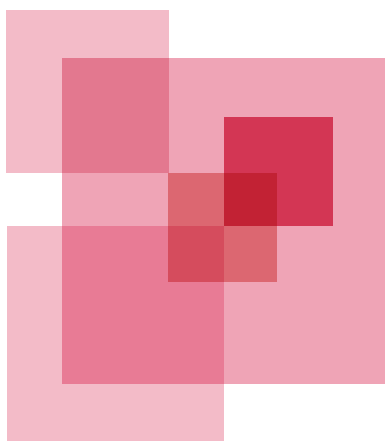
- 70.3% of councils reported having a formal system for monitoring recommendations; an improvement on last year's figure of less than 50%. It is too soon to know what the impact of these new systems has been.
- There is evidence that councils with monitoring systems have a more positive view of the impact scrutiny is having in their authority, and are more likely to view scrutiny as fulfilling its potential.
- Responses to the survey suggest that when an authority places little value on scrutiny, the effectiveness of the function is less than it would be otherwise. It appears that this is a mutually reinforcing vicious cycle.

Political factors and Committee Structure

- As in previous years, party control does not have an impact on the value respondents feel their authority places on scrutiny, nor does it have any impact on perceptions of how effective scrutiny is.
- There may be a case to suggest that the role of scrutiny is valued more in authorities where no single political party is in control.
- There is no evidence to suggest that a large committee size has a negative impact on how effective scrutiny is, although having fewer committees does have a positive impact.

Partnerships

- The previous two surveys suggested that scrutiny of partners and partnerships were considered by practitioners to be a prime opportunity for scrutiny. The trend continues this year.
- The majority (76.5%) of authorities responding to the question on joint work had engaged with at least one partner on joint scrutiny work and scrutiny of work undertaken by partners.
- Those who envisage a greater level of cross-partnership engagement in the future are more optimistic about the future of scrutiny.



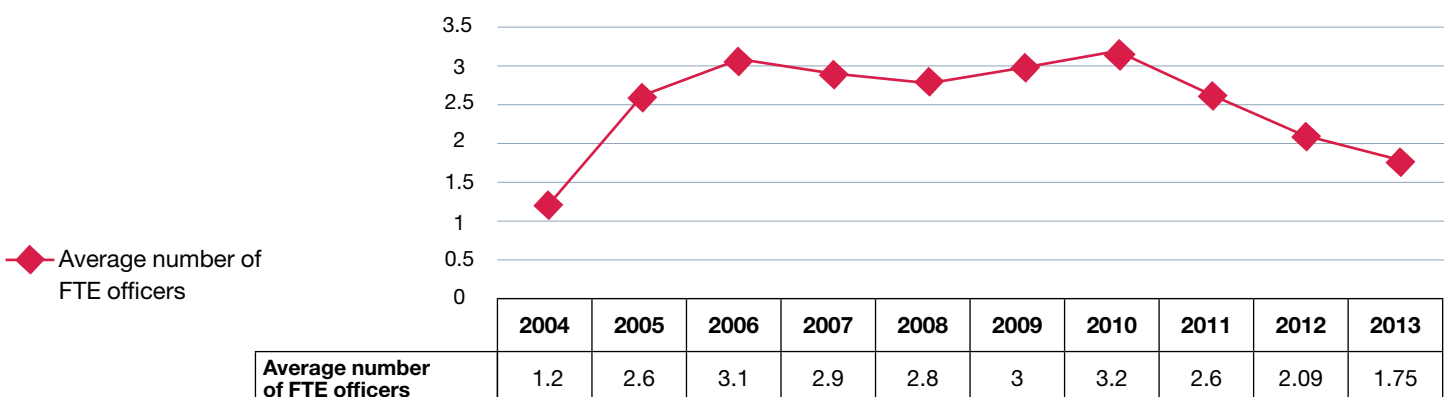
Resourcing

- Dedicated support for scrutiny continues to fall. Of the 161 authorities answering the question, the average number of FTE officer posts for the municipal year 2013/14 was 1.75, compared to 2.04 the previous year. This is at its lowest level since 2004. The average number of FTE officers is expected to decrease to 1.63 per authority in 2014/15. Dedicated scrutiny budgets continue to decline – the average budget in 2013/14 was £4015.22, and the average budget for the year 2014/15 is £3,447.70. This is the lowest level since we started the survey. Readers should note that the reported figures for both of these factors for 2013/14 are different from the projected figures reported in last year’s survey, both because of in-year changes and the fact that not all of the same authorities who responded last year also responded this year.
- 74% of respondents thought that lack of officer resource would be a barrier to the improvement of scrutiny in the future. Whilst financial resourcing remained a concern, it was highlighted by less than half this amount of councils (34%).
- Fewer scrutiny functions are now supported by a team of dedicated scrutiny officers, or even one such officer. Combined support provided through the council’s democratic services or policy functions is increasingly common. 48% of authorities who responded reported having dedicated scrutiny officers, and this was expected to fall further next year to 45%, its lowest level since before 2006. This is dramatically different to last year’s figures, where just 9.2% of councils responding reported having no dedicated scrutiny resource – although 22.3% did report having less than one FTE officer.

Some of the scrutiny posts listed by authorities were reported as being currently vacant, due to secondments and maternity leave. Concerns were expressed by officers in some authorities that surviving scrutiny posts might be vulnerable to deletion in restructurings in the near future. There was also reference to the possibility that whilst posts would still continue in 2014/15 they might be included in restructurings afterwards.

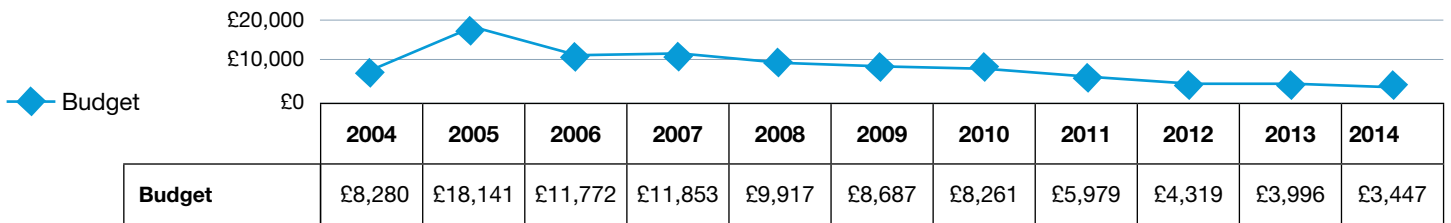
In the 161 authorities answering the question, the number of FTE officer posts was expected to drop by a national total of 16 in 2014/15- a reduction of 5.6 % of scrutiny roles which existed in 2013/14. A very small amount of councils (five) reported an increase in FTE officers for the year ahead. Four of these still reported that lack of officer resource would be a barrier to the improvement of scrutiny in the future. Amongst the 17 experiencing a reduction of officer resource the feeling that that lack of officer resource would be a barrier to the improvement of scrutiny in the future was universal.

Average number of FTE officers

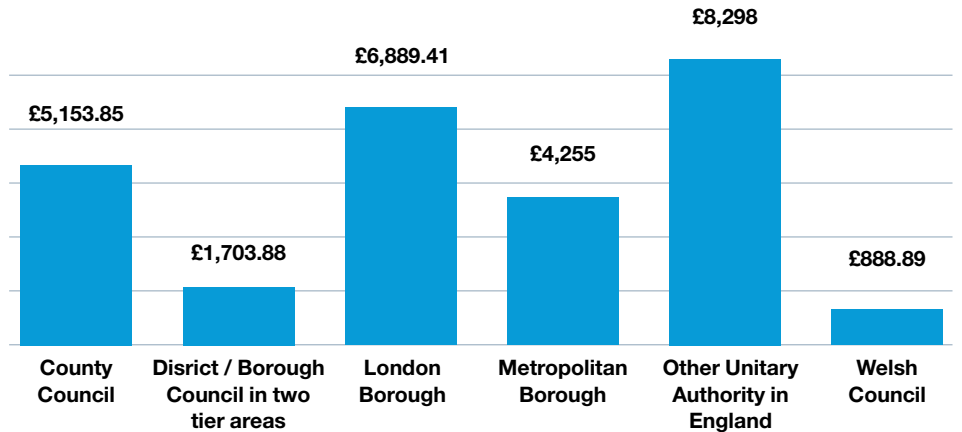


We asked authorities about the discretionary budget available for scrutiny. This is the budget – once staffing has been taken into account – available to the scrutiny function for its exclusive use. 45% of authorities responding reported having a discretionary scrutiny budget of £0. Those without a budget were no more concerned about the lack of dedicated financial resource preventing the future improvement of scrutiny than those who had one. Whilst we have no way of verifying a causal mechanism, it is interesting to note that the average budget for a Labour controlled council was £5675, for Conservative controlled councils it was £3060. Also, whilst figures remain too limited to offer statistical significance, there are interesting variations in average budgets depending on type of council (see bar chart).

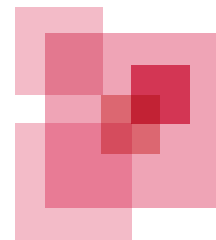
Discretionary Overview and Scrutiny Budget



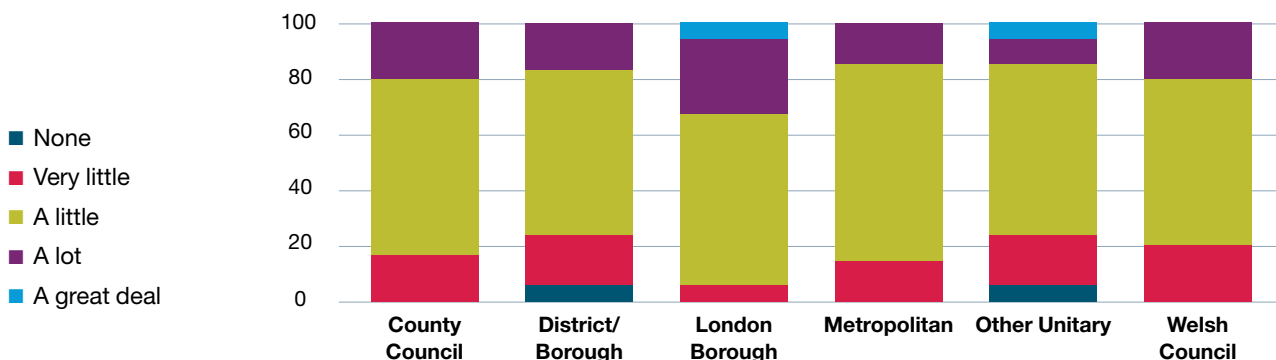
2012/13 average budget/type of authority



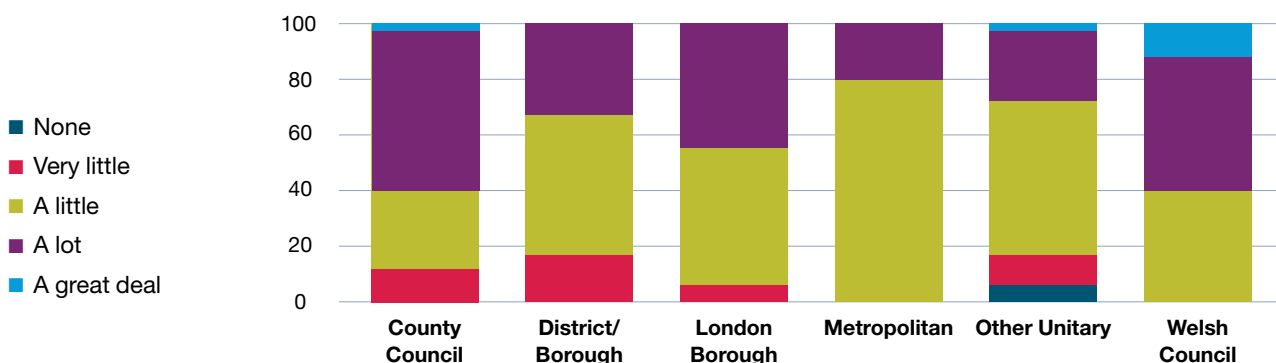
Despite having, on average, significantly less funding, there is no notable difference between the impact Welsh councils perceive scrutiny to have, when compared to different types of authority. Additionally, whilst the figures are fairly limited, they suggest Welsh authorities place more value on scrutiny than other types of authority. This is an encouraging finding given the significant support being provided by CfPS in partnership with the Welsh Government, and suggests that key messages from the Welsh Government about the importance of scrutiny are shared by Welsh local government.



Impact practitioners perceive scrutiny to be having in their authority by type of council



Value practitioners think their authority places on scrutiny by type of council



Use of the specialist model was most common in County Councils (64.5%), Welsh Authorities (91%) and 'other' Unitary Authorities (60%). London Borough Councils and other Metropolitan Borough Councils had around half of authorities using specialist models, and in District Councils Committee models are most common (48%). The specialist model is where councils have a dedicated scrutiny support team; the committee model is where scrutiny support is principally provided by democratic services officers; the integrated model is where scrutiny support comes mainly from policy officers in service or corporate policy departments.

Model of support for scrutiny



	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Integrated	19%	12%	8%	4%	10%	13.8%	14.8%	18.70%	18.70%
Specialist	47%	59%	47%	55%	55%	51.2%	53.4%	47.60%	45.18%
Committee	31%	28%	37%	33%	27%	22.0%	31.7%	33.70%	36.14%

Impact and Influence

- 70.3% of councils reported having a formal system for monitoring recommendations; an improvement on last year's figure of less than 50%. It is too soon to know what the impact of these new systems has been.
- There is evidence that councils with monitoring systems have a more positive view of the impact scrutiny is having in their authority, and are more likely to view scrutiny as fulfilling its potential.
- Responses to the survey suggest that when an authority places little value on scrutiny, the effectiveness of the function is less than it would be otherwise. It appears that this is a mutually reinforcing vicious cycle.

We use three measures to assess effectiveness.

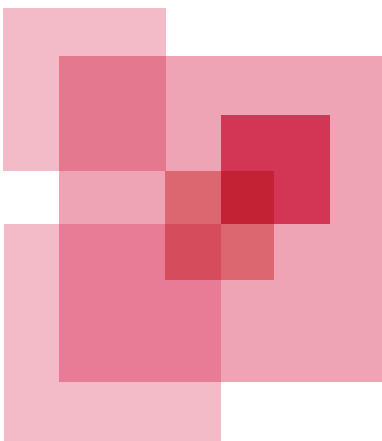
Each of these measures is given equal weight in our analysis.

- The number of scrutiny recommendations made by scrutiny that are subsequently accepted and implemented.
- Respondents' own perceptions of effectiveness. In previous years we asked 'How much difference do you think scrutiny makes to people's lives?' This year we adapted the questions to ask 'How much of a difference do you think scrutiny currently makes to the life of people living and working in your authority's area?' and added an additional question: 'How much potential do you think scrutiny has to make a difference to the life of people living and working in your authority's area?' This gives us scope to understand both perceptions of effectiveness and whether or not practitioners think this is the function's full potential.
- Respondents' perceptions of the value placed on scrutiny by the authority.

Tackling recommendations

116 of 165 (70.3%) councils responding to the question 'Are you able to track the implementation of scrutiny recommendations?' had a system to do this. 25 authorities who responded to both the 2012/13 and the 2013/14 survey had newly adopted such a system in the intervening year, so we can be confident that this is a real-world improvement rather than a symptom of selection bias. There is no observable improvement from last year in the way in which officers in these authorities perceive the impact of scrutiny or in the value that they believe their authority places on scrutiny. Whilst disappointing, we think this is likely to reflect the relative youth of new systems, and would hope to see improvements in future.

In previous surveys there had not been a correlation between the type of council and whether or not there was a recommendation monitoring system. This year the results were consistent for most models with around two-thirds having a system, although London Borough Councils were more likely than others (88.8%) to have one and Welsh councils less likely (45.5%).



Type of council	% Do Not Have System	% Have System
County Council	33.3	66.6
District Council	27.4	72.6
London Borough	11	88.8
Metropolitan Council	33.3	66.6
Other Unitary Council in England	33.3	66.6
Welsh Council	54.5	45.5

The impact of dedicated scrutiny support

Those without a system for monitoring recommendations had an average of 1.59 FTE officers. Those with had an average of 1.84. Whilst this difference is not large, it does imply that formal monitoring might be symptomatic of being better resourced. There was no observable relationship between discretionary budget and whether or not a council has such a system.

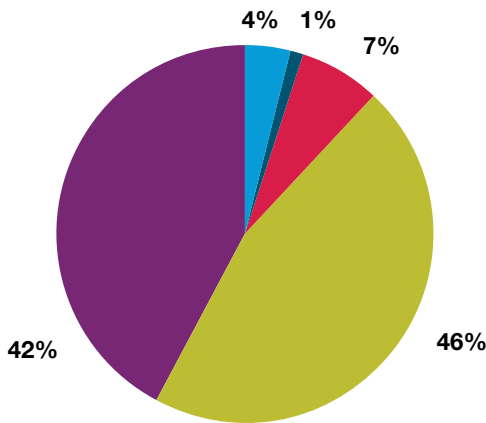
Type of Council	Specialist Model	Committee Model	Integrated Model
All Councils	45.7%	35.4%	18.9%
Councils With Monitoring System	77.3%	69%	54.8%
Councils Without Monitoring System	22.7%	31%	45.2%

Last year's survey was able to show that those with specialist models tend to monitor the acceptance and implementation of recommendations more than those that do not. This year the difference in likelihood of monitoring between specialist and committee models is less striking, potentially a reflection of an ongoing trend of authorities moving from specialist to committee models, but with staff maintaining monitoring systems which were used previously.

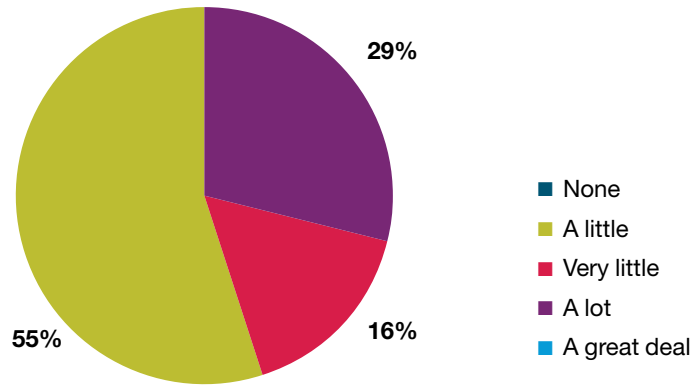
There was a correlation between having dedicated scrutiny officers and the number of recommendations which were accepted, although not those implemented, for the municipal year 2011/12. This trend is not present in this year's data. In councils with dedicated scrutiny support 92.3% of recommendations were accepted, closely resembling the 93.3% in councils without dedicated support. Councils with specialist support for scrutiny were less likely to see recommendations implemented, with 54.9% of accepted recommendations being implemented compared to 65.7% under other models.

However, practitioners in authorities with dedicated scrutiny support tend to see their authority as placing greater value on that function.

Perceptions of value authority places on scrutiny with dedicated scrutiny support



Perceptions of value authority places on scrutiny without dedicated scrutiny support



We asked respondents what they thought the current impact of scrutiny was on the lives of people living in their authority’s area, and what they thought its potential impact was. Of 160 respondents who provided answers to both of these questions, 65% thought that scrutiny was not fulfilling its potential. This included 74.5% of councils without a recommendation monitoring system and 61.9% of those that do, suggesting that such a system enhances either the functioning of scrutiny or the ability of practitioners to see its positive impact.

The 65% of practitioners who did not think that scrutiny was currently reaching its potential were no more concerned about a lack of financial or officer resource than those who thought that it was. They were, however, more likely to be in authorities where the impact from party politics was ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’ (36.9% as opposed to 23.2% in authorities who thought its potential was being fulfilled).

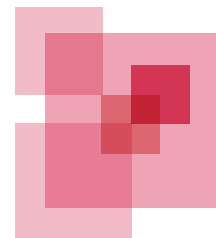
17.65% more councils with a recommendation monitoring system thought the impact of scrutiny in their authority was positive (a lot or a great deal) than those without such a system, compared to 18% last year.

Of the 30 authorities that had a positive view of the impact of scrutiny in their authority (measured as scrutiny being perceived as making ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’ of impact), 63.3% were authorities with dedicated scrutiny support, This is despite the fact that authorities with dedicated scrutiny support accounted for only 48% of the total number of authorities responding.

Recommendations being implemented

Where councils had a monitoring system, of recommendations made in 2013/14,

- 96% of recommendations had been accepted. This figure is very high. While it is not disproportionately higher than last year, it cannot on its own tell us an accurate story about scrutiny’s effectiveness. In particular, this measure does not address how challenging and realistic individual recommendations are. It does however suggest that recommendations, where made, are pitched in such a way that the executive, and others, are able to accept them.



- Of the 96%, 63% had been implemented and 37% were still in the process of implementation at the time of the survey.

The 2012/13 figures show that, in that year, 91.5% of recommendations were accepted and 63.5% implemented. Figures for previous years are not directly comparable as a different methodology was used. Related analysis can be found in the longitudinal analysis we carried out of CfPS Annual Surveys from 2003 to 2010, “Joining up the dots” (<http://www.cfps.org.uk/publications?item=7042&offset=50>).

The influence of authority attitudes

We split the data on practitioner attitudes about the impact of scrutiny in their area and their perceptions of the attitude of the authority into more positive (where they responded ‘a great deal’ or ‘a lot’) and less positive attitudes (where they responded ‘a little’, ‘very little’ or ‘none’). Just one authority responded that the impact of scrutiny was positive whilst the authority placed little value on it. The data implies there may be a mutually reinforcing relationship between value placed on scrutiny by an authority, and practitioners’ perceptions of the impact it has.

Impact they think scrutiny makes	Value authority places	
	A great deal or a lot	A little, very little or none
A great deal or a lot	25	1
A little, very little or none	36	95

Taken together, the data suggests that dedicated support for scrutiny continues to be important. Whilst this claim is not reflected in the percentage of recommendations accepted and implemented, it is evident that practitioners with dedicated scrutiny resources are more confident about the impact and value of their work. This gives us the confidence to say that a dedicated scrutiny resource does make the scrutiny function more effective.

Political factors, nature of committees and their impact on effectiveness

- As in previous years, party control does not have an impact on the value respondents feel their authority places on scrutiny, nor does it have any impact on perceptions of how effective scrutiny is.
- There may be a case to suggest that the role of scrutiny is valued more in authorities where no single political party is in control.
- There is no evidence to suggest that a large committee size has a negative impact on how effective scrutiny is, although having fewer committees does have a positive impact.

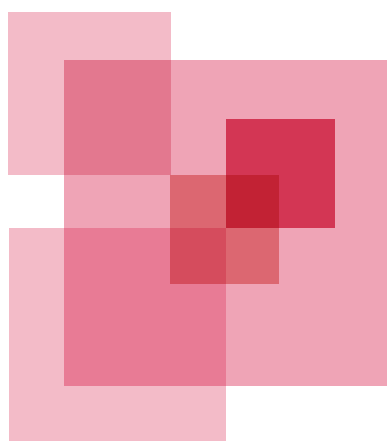
Previously surveys have considered the hypothesis that councils where no political party has overall control are more likely to have vigorous and effective scrutiny functions, and to place a higher value on it as a means to manage policy disagreements and contentious decisions. In previous years we have found little evidence to support this contention. This year, we do have some evidence for it. Those in authorities with no overall control thought the impact of scrutiny was greater than those in either Labour or Conservative controlled authorities (See pie charts). Whilst the relatively small number of responding authorities that have 'No Overall Control' means that it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions, the data does also suggest a pattern of a greater value being placed on scrutiny in such authorities. Fewer recommendations were accepted in authorities with no overall control - but more of those accepted were implemented.

This presents a challenge to those councils with majority control. Although the evidence is not overwhelming, it does imply that scrutiny in such councils will be more difficult, and could have less impact. It should however be said that this finding does not mean that scrutiny in authorities under no overall control is "better" or more effective than scrutiny in authorities with controlling party majorities.

	% of recommendations accepted	% of recommendations implemented
No Overall Control	85.5	79.9
Labour Controlled	92.6	61.7
Conservative Controlled	92.5	66.8

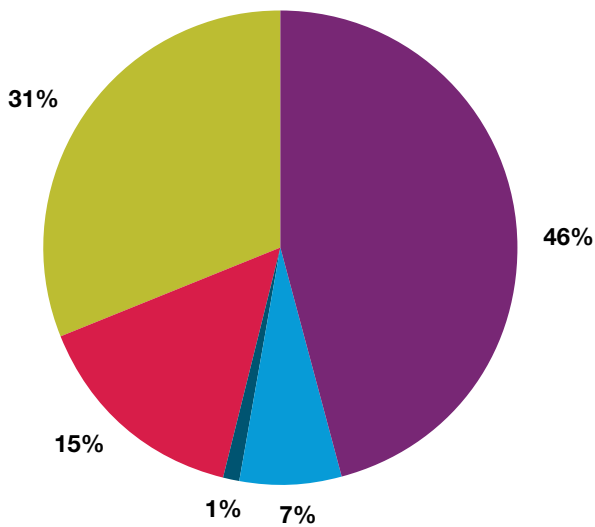
	% who think authority places 'None', 'Very little', or 'A little' value on scrutiny	% who think authority places 'A lot' or 'A great deal' of value on scrutiny
Conservative Controlled	64.5	35.5
Labour Controlled	63.3	36.7
No Overall Control	52	48

Last year Labour controlled authorities were more positive about the future of scrutiny. This year Conservative and Labour controlled authorities felt similarly about the future of scrutiny, whilst those authorities with no overall control were rather more positive.

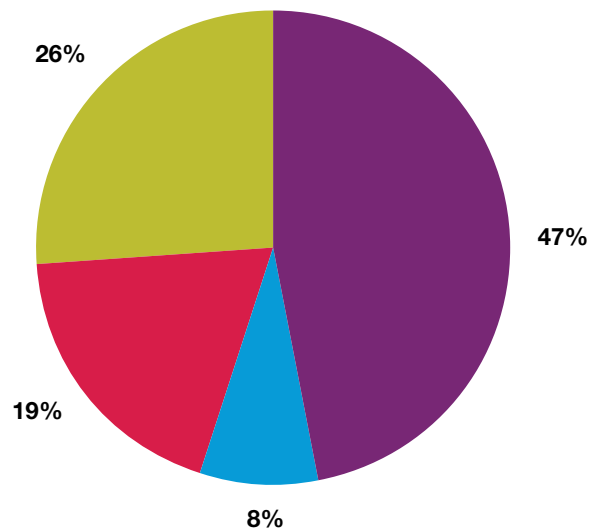


Interference from party politics continues to have a negative and statistically significant impact on perceptions of effectiveness. As was the case last year, there is no observable impact of the influence of party politics on the number of recommendations being accepted and implemented, but it does have a clear effect on our other two measures of effectiveness

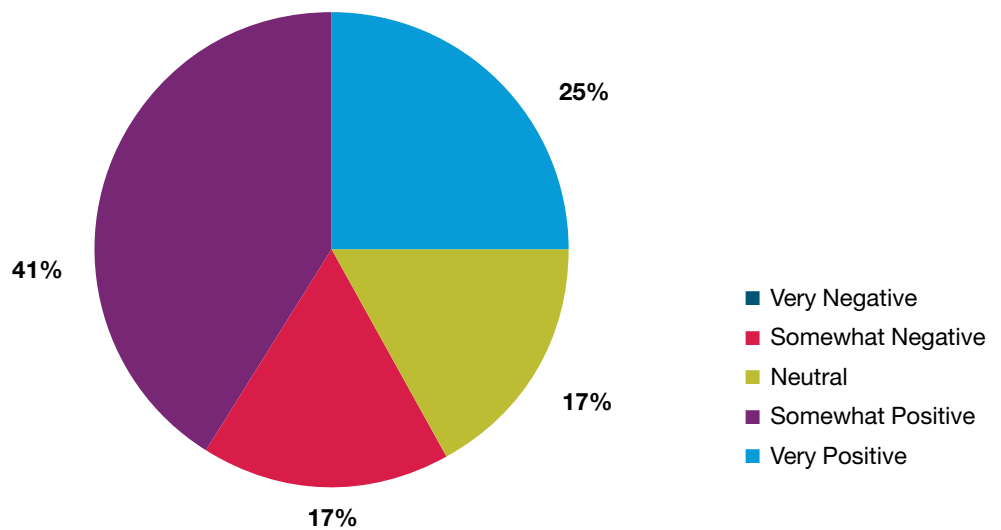
Conservative - Future of Scrutiny



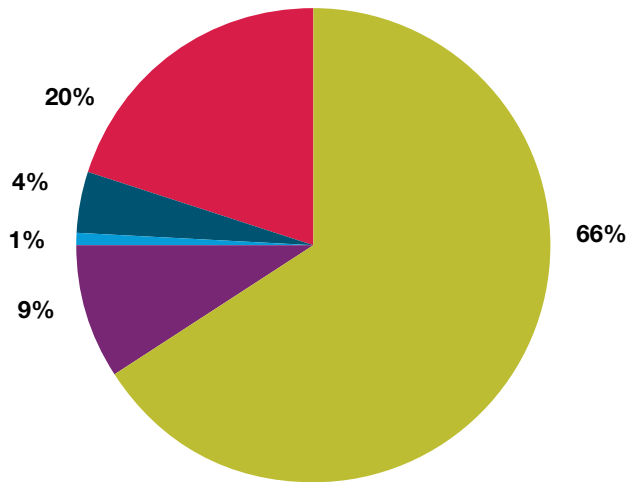
Labour - Future of Scrutiny



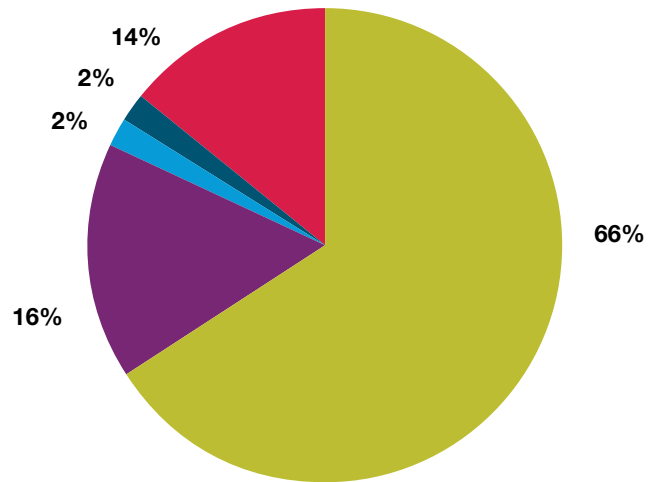
No Overall Control - Future of Scrutiny



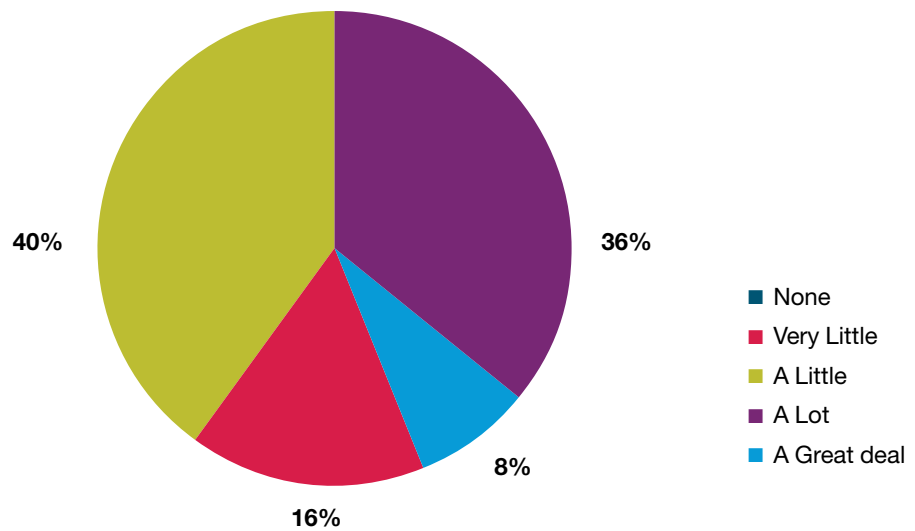
Conservative - Impact of Scrutiny



Labour - Impact of Scrutiny

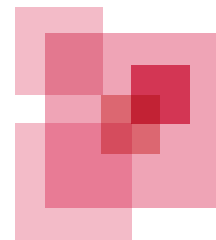


No Overall Control - Impact of Scrutiny



Chairing

This year's survey revealed that councils have many different systems for allocating chairs, with several reporting that their overview and scrutiny committees are chaired by the opposition even where all others are chaired by the majority party.



Of those responding to the question regarding how chairs are apportioned:

- 19.2% of 167 assign their chair and vice-chair positions politically proportionately
- 11.8% of councils with large majorities (9/76) assign their chair and vice-chair positions politically proportionately
- 43.8% of councils under no overall control (7/16) assign their chair and vice-chair positions politically proportionately
- 37.5% of councils with a small majority (6/16) assign their chair and vice-chair positions politically proportionately

This does not include councils who have described themselves as under minority administration, or where a single party holds all seats on the authority. Again, this year there is no evidence to demonstrate that, where chairs are assigned politically proportionately scrutiny is more effective under any measure (although it should be noted that, as we pointed out, councils under no overall control seem to report that more value is placed on scrutiny in their authorities, and those councils tend to be more likely to assign their chair and vice-chair positions politically proportionately). We remain of the view that, on balance, it is in the interests of good governance (as well as demonstrating the cross-party nature of scrutiny) to assign chair and vice-chair positions politically proportionately, unless there is a compelling reason not to.

Gender

According to the Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013 32.7% of councillors are female. The percentage of female scrutiny chairs and vice chairs continues to be broadly representative of this figure. In total 30.5% of scrutiny chairs are female and 34.7% of vice chairs.

Labour controlled authorities have, on average, more female chairs and vice chairs than Conservative authorities, with 36.7% of chairs being female as opposed to 29.8% in Conservative authorities and 38.5% of vice chairs as opposed to 33.1% in Conservative authorities.

Committee size and number of committees

The mean and mode committee size was 10-14 members. Previously surveys have considered the hypothesis that larger and more committees make scrutiny less effective. The findings of last year's survey suggested that average committee size makes no difference to effectiveness, and this year's findings broadly agree.

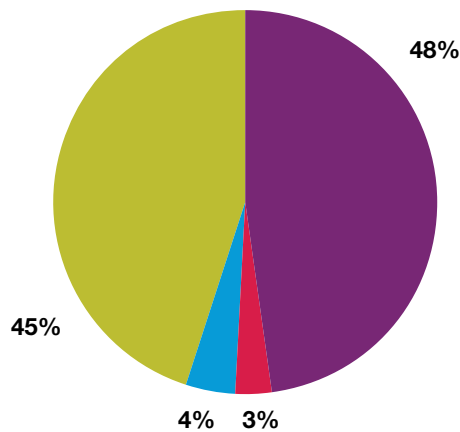
The data suggests that in authorities with large committees the authority places greater value on scrutiny. However, committee size does not have an impact on practitioners' perceptions of effectiveness and no significant correlation could be drawn between having a committee size above or below the average and the percentage of recommendations accepted and implemented in the municipal year 2012/13. Thus, the finding is inconclusive.

The observation that councils with larger committees tend to operate fewer committees continues this year, with just 10.2% of councils with three committees having an average committee size above 15. This figure sits at 30% for those with one committee and 50% for those with two, although the data is limited in this area so we should be cautious about this finding.

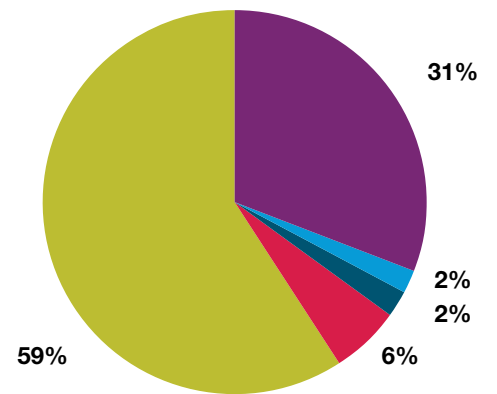
Type of Council	% of recommendations accepted	% of recommendations implemented
All Councils	96%	63%
Two committees or fewer	95.9%	72.3%
Three or more committees	89.1%	61.6%

Councils with fewer committees are more effective as gauged by the number of recommendations being accepted and implemented. As was the case last year, councils with larger than average committee sizes are disproportionately represented in the group of councils with systems for monitoring recommendations.

Value authority places - above average committee size

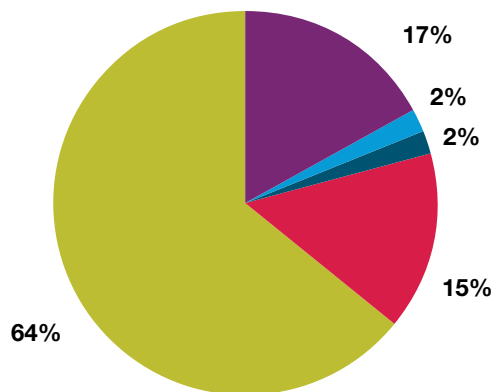


Value authority places - below average committee size

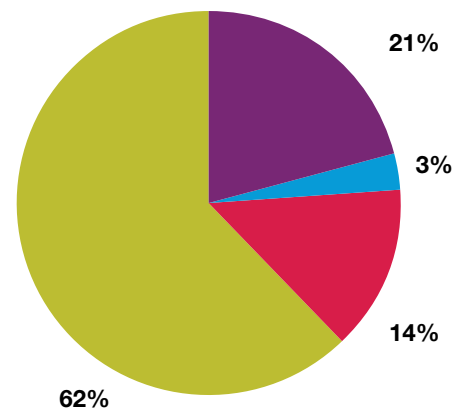


- None
- Very Little
- A Little
- A Lot
- A Great Deal

Perceptions of effectiveness with below average committee size



Perceptions of effectiveness with above average committee size

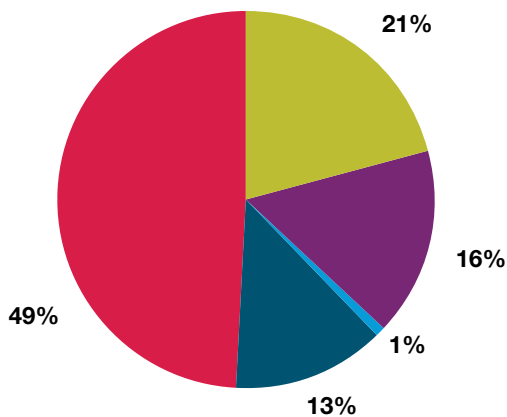


Partnerships

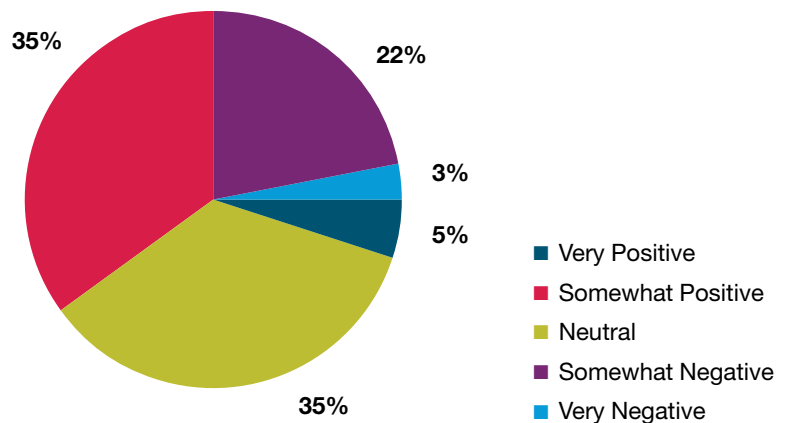
- The previous two surveys suggested that scrutiny of partners and partnerships were considered by practitioners to be a prime opportunity for scrutiny. The trend continues this year.
- The majority (76.5%) of authorities responding to the question on joint work had engaged with at least one partner on joint scrutiny work and scrutiny of work undertaken by partners.
- Those who envisage a greater level of cross- partnership engagement in the future are more optimistic about the future of scrutiny.

We compared the attitudes to the future of scrutiny of those who thought that the ‘establishment of a cross-partnership scrutiny function which works across organisational boundaries’ was likely or unlikely to be part of scrutiny’s future. This shows that the prospect of more cross-partnership scrutiny in the future is related to more positive attitudes about the future of scrutiny.

Attitudes to the future of scrutiny when practitioners think the establishment of cross-partnership scrutiny is likely

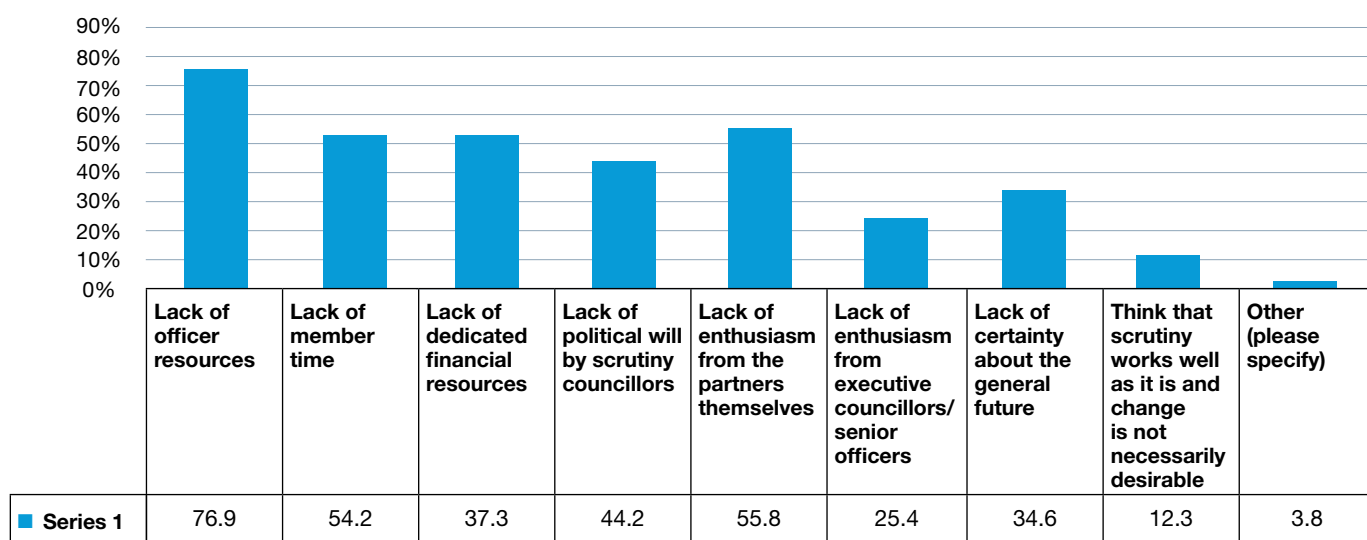


Attitudes to the future of scrutiny when practitioners think the establishment of cross-partnership scrutiny is unlikely

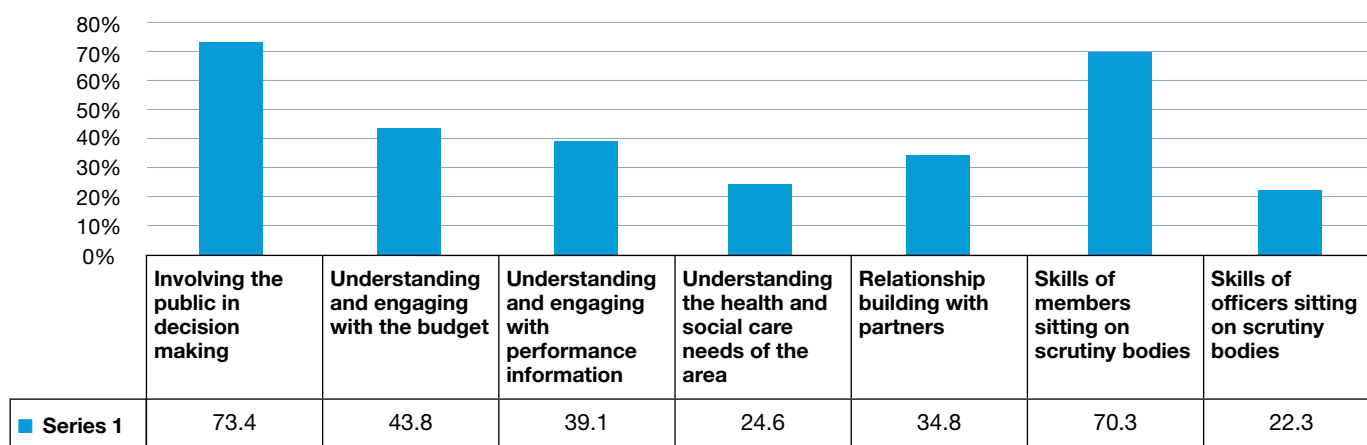


Only 25.4% of those responding to the question about barriers to the future improvement of scrutiny thought that a ‘lack of enthusiasm from partners themselves’ was a problem. All respondents were asked which areas they thought their authority needed to improve in. 34.8% identified ‘relationship building with partners’ as an area for improvement – meaning it is of significantly less concern than ‘involving the public in decision making’ (73.4%) and ‘skills of members sitting on scrutiny bodies’ (70.3%).

Barriers to the future improvement of scrutiny

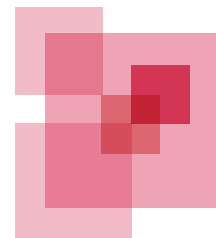


Ways practitioners perceive their authority needs to improve



Of 100 authorities who gave reasons for not having carried out joint work, and as was the case last year, the majority (54%) selected the failure to identify opportunities for joint work as the reason for this. A lack of resourcing also played a role. Only 2% stated a lack of interest from partners as a reason why joint work had not happened.

This suggests that practitioners are confident in the ability of their authorities to engage partners, and that partners welcome this.

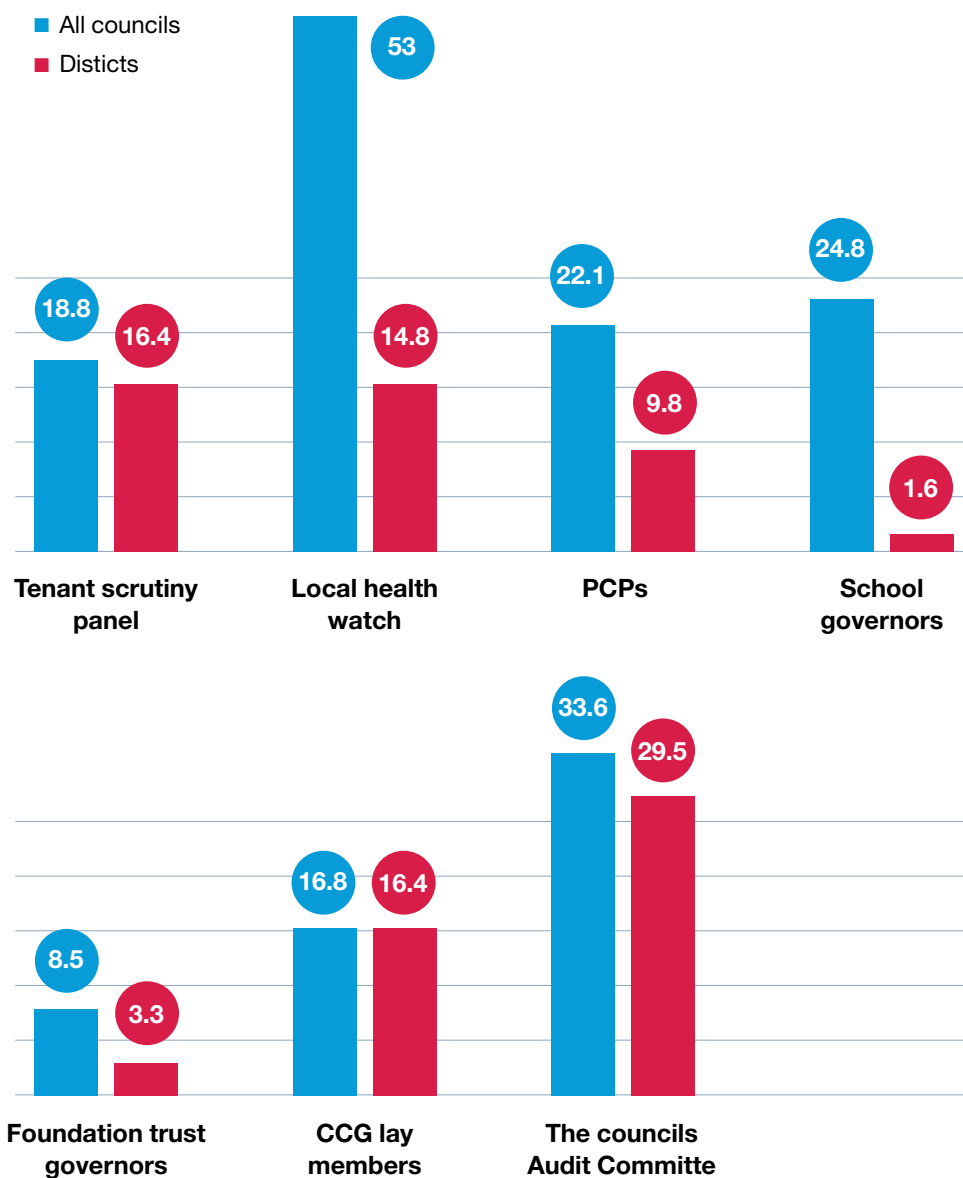


District Councils

Last year's survey aimed to build on anecdotal evidence that districts are finding partnership working, and the scrutiny of partnerships, particularly challenging. This year's survey results suggest that this is indeed with case as 94.3% of responding councils who had not engaged in any joint work were districts.

Where districts had reported a reason for a lack of joint work, they mainly referred to a lack of opportunities for joint work being identified, although districts were also disproportionately represented amongst those who claimed that they were held back by a lack of resource, and sometimes a lack of interest.

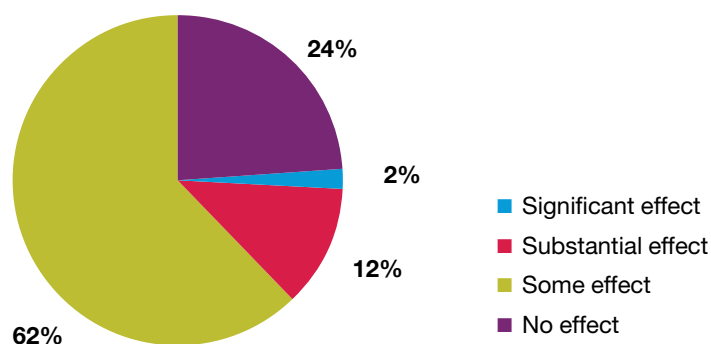
Engagement of all councils and district councils with scrutiny partners



CfPS and you: the services we provide to practitioners

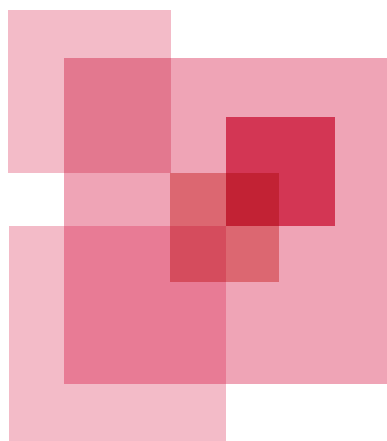
- As was the case last year, the majority of practitioners indicated that CfPS had 'some effect' on their work.

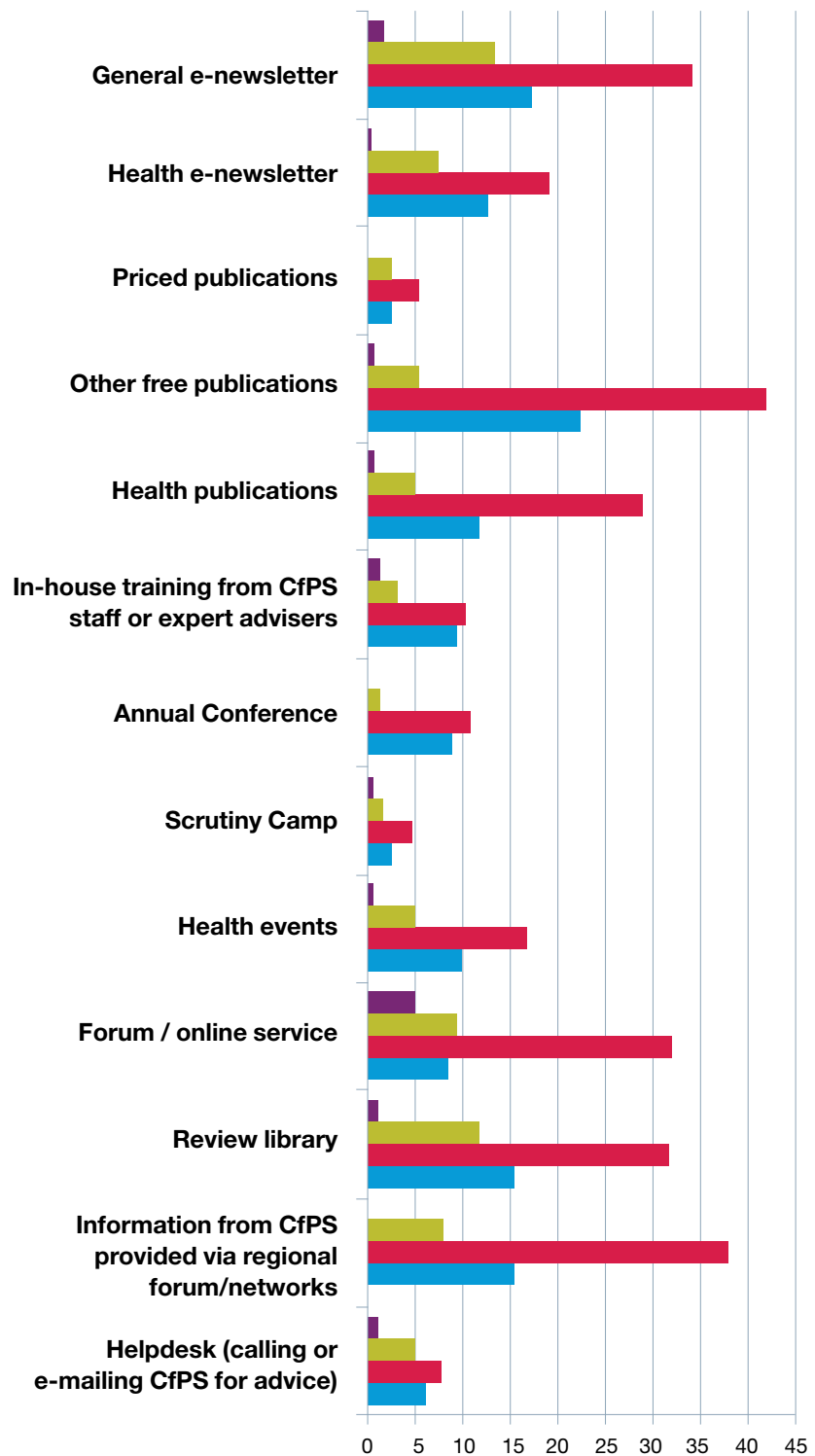
The effect on practitioners of CfPS work over the last year



This part of the survey gave all respondents the opportunity to comment on what they would like CfPS to do differently in order to better support practitioners. There were several themes coming out of these text responses:

- That CfPS continues to be a valued 'go to' source for scrutiny practitioners who are seeking support and new ideas for their scrutiny function.
- Those in Wales are pleased with the quality of support they are receiving from CfPS.
- That at times, a failure to use the resources provided by CfPS is not necessarily a reflection of their quality, but of a lack of awareness, budget or member interest.
- Scrutiny practitioners highly value the training services that CfPS provides, and would like to see an increased level of regional training being made available.





10.4% of those responding to any aspect of the question on services had not used any CfPS services at all. Policy Briefings continue to be the highest rated of all our publications, with 30% of respondents stating that they are 'very useful'.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny
Local Government House
Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

44 (0) 20 7187 7362

CiPS is a registered charity no 1136243

June 2014

 www.cfps.org.uk
 info@cfps.org.uk