

Glasgow City Council Internal Audit Section

Committee Summary

Social Work Services – CareFirst System

1 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the agreed Internal Audit plan, we have carried out a review of the CareFirst case management system (CareFirst System).
- 1.2 The CareFirst system consists of a suite of modules covering both adult and children's social work services. It is used by Social Work Services to record care arrangements, referrals, related events, and supporting information relating to Social Work Service users. This information assists decisions made by social work staff as well as payment processing.
 - Software licensing arrangements
 - Procedures and staff training
 - Back up processes
 - User access and permissions management
 - Software updates and security patching
 - Data inputs and outputs to/from the application
 - Audit trail management
 - Ongoing support arrangements
 - Business continuity planning
- 1.3 CareFirst is developed by OLM Systems, however OLM have shifted focus to the newer Eclipse system as a replacement for CareFirst. As a result, no further enhancements are planned to be developed for CareFirst and customers have been advised to plan a transition to a new system. An extension of support for the CareFirst system has been agreed and the tendering process for a new system is underway. There are currently almost 4000 users of the system.
- 1.4 The scope of the audit was to ensure there are sufficient and appropriate controls in place covering the management of the CareFirst system. The scope of the audit included a review of the key controls in the following areas:

2 Audit Opinion

- 2.1 Based on the audit work carried out a reasonable level of assurance can be placed upon the control environment. The audit has identified some scope for improvement in the existing arrangements and four recommendations which management should address.

3 Main Findings

- 3.1 We are pleased to report that the key controls are in place and are generally operating effectively. The CareFirst system is on the most recent version available and allows for an unlimited number of users on the system ensuring that there are sufficient licences for users.
- 3.2 Both users and administrators are adequately supported through training, system manuals, and procedures provided on the Council's intranet. We found that there are an appropriate number of administrators in place for adding, removing, or amending user accounts and permissions. System access is restricted through user permission groups and a user access form is completed and approved by a manager for all new users. Removal of access is undertaken as part of the leavers process and user access reviews are undertaken biannually to ensure that user permissions remain appropriate. Through sample testing, we confirmed that these processes were being undertaken as expected.
- 3.3 Daily incremental and full weekly back ups are managed by CGI. Confirmation is given to Digital Services when back ups have been successfully completed. Back up data is also tested regularly to ensure that it has been backed up accurately and in full.
- 3.4 An agreement has been completed between the Council and OLM to continue to provide technical support, including security patches until 2029.
- 3.5 Data is shared from the CareFirst system to various external organisations such as the NHS and arrangements are in place to ensure that this data is shared appropriately.
- 3.6 However, our audit testing found that there are some areas of non-compliance. We determined that the password arrangements for accessing the CareFirst system could be further strengthened.
- 3.7 Despite suitable audit trails being available, we found that the arrangements for monitoring account usage could be further enhanced.
- 3.8 Management advised that business continuity arrangements for potential CareFirst system outages are incorporated within individual service area Business Continuity Plans (BCPs).

However, a review of three service area BCPs identified that these do not specify the operational processes to be followed in the event of a CareFirst system outage.

- 3.9 While there is a Records Retention and Disposal Schedule in place which governs the data retention for the CareFirst system, it was found that the CareFirst system does not automatically remove the inputted data which is no longer required to be stored on the system and manual deletion of records no longer required is not conducted.
- 3.10 An action plan is provided at section four outlining our observations, risks and recommendations. We have made four recommendations for improvement. The priority of each recommendation is:

- 3.11 The audit has been undertaken in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK public sector.
- 3.12 We would like to thank officers involved in this audit for their cooperation and assistance.
- 3.13 It is recommended that the Head of Audit and Inspection submits a further report to Committee on the implementation of the actions contained in the attached Action Plan.

Priority	Definition	Total
High	Key controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved. Urgent attention required.	0
Medium	Less critically important controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.	4
Low	Lower level controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.	0
Service Improvement	Opportunities for business improvement and/or efficiencies have been identified.	0

4 Action Plan

No.	Observation and Risk	Recommendation	Priority	Management Response
Key Control: Appropriate controls are in place to prevent unauthorised access to the CareFirst system.				
1	<p>While the Council Password Policy requires users to use strong passwords, we found that the password requirements for the CareFirst system could be further enhanced.</p> <p>There is an increased risk of inappropriate system access occurring if strong passwords are not used.</p>	Management should assess the feasibility of increasing the password requirement for the CareFirst system in line with the Council's Password Policy. Subsequently, management should ensure that the replacement software for CareFirst has the capability of strong password requirements.	Medium	<p>Response: Accepted</p> <p>A request has been made to CGI to determine the feasibility of amending the password complexity.</p> <p>Officer Responsible for Implementation:</p> <p>Business Development manager</p> <p>Timescales for Implementation:</p> <p>31 August 2026</p>

No.	Observation and Risk	Recommendation	Priority	Management Response
Key Control: Appropriate audit trails are maintained and reviewed.				
2	<p>Audit trails are available within the system however improvements could be made to the usage of these. It is noted that the CareFirst system does contain high-risk information such as financial outputs and information relating to service user care.</p> <p>There an increase risk that unauthorised actions remain unnoticed by management.</p>	<p>Management should consider introducing enhanced usage of audit trails.</p>	Medium	<p>Response: Accepted</p> <p>We are currently producing an options paper for Senior Management on the feasibility for Monitoring.</p> <p>Officer Responsible for Implementation:</p> <p>Business Development Manager</p> <p>Timescales for Implementation:</p> <p>31 August 2026</p>

No.	Observation and Risk	Recommendation	Priority	Management Response
Key Control: Adequate business continuity arrangements are in place.				
3	<p>Management advised that business continuity arrangements for CareFirst system outages are incorporated within individual service area BCPs and physical forms are available for officers should the system not be available. However, a review of three service area BCPs identified that these do not specify the operational processes to be followed in the event of a CareFirst system outage.</p> <p>The lack of documented business continuity arrangements increases the risk that appropriate processes are not followed in the event of a CareFirst service disruption.</p>	<p>Management should ensure that all service areas which have identified CareFirst as a key system review and update their BCPs to clearly define the processes to be followed in the event of a CareFirst outage. These should be communicated to all relevant staff and regularly tested.</p>	Medium	<p>Response: Accepted</p> <p>Officer Responsible for Implementation:</p> <p>Business Development Manager (Governance, Resilience & Strategic Planning)</p> <p>Timescales for Implementation:</p> <p>31 December 2026</p>

No.	Observation and Risk	Recommendation	Priority	Management Response
Key Control: Appropriate arrangements are in place for the disposal of sensitive data.				
4	<p>While a Records Retention and Disposal Schedule is in place at the Council which applies to the information contained within the CareFirst system. It was found that there is no automated or manual process in place to dispose of records held in the system that is no longer required as per retention periods.</p> <p>It was acknowledged during our audit that due to ongoing Scottish Child Abuse Inquiries, many areas within Social Work have suspended the retention and disposal rules. However, this does not apply to all data held on CareFirst. We were advised that automation of data disposal is a noted requirement of the new system and that the data held within the CareFirst system will be reviewed as part of the data migration.</p> <p>The lack of compliance with the Records Retention and Disposal Schedule increases the risk that sensitive information is held by the Council for an inappropriate amount of time.</p>	<p>While awaiting the implementation of the new case management system, management should assess the inherent risk of non-compliance with the Records Retention and Disposal Schedule and consider reflecting within the social care risk register to ensure any identified risk is managed in accordance with the risk management framework.</p>	Medium	<p>Response: Accepted</p> <p>Officer Responsible for Implementation:</p> <p>Head of Business Development</p> <p>Timescales for Implementation:</p> <p>30 September 2026</p>