National Audit Office

The UK's independent public spending watchdog

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INQUIRY REGARDING UPDATES TO VALUE FOR MONEY HANDBOOK

Thank you for your email on 7 July 2025 asking about updates to the 'value for money handbook' that you hold a copy of. Your request has been handled under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), and we have checked our records and can confirm that we do hold information that relates to your request.

The value for money handbook that you emailed to us was prepared around twenty years ago for the use of value for money teams at the time. We no longer maintain guidance in this format, but we continue to do examinations of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, as set out under the National Audit Act 1983. The quality standards for our value for money work are set out in Transparency Report 2023-24 and Transparency Report 2024-25, as is our approach to continuous improvement and quality assurance for value for money audits.

You asked about shifts in regulatory focus, for example sustainability criteria and methodological advances. National Audit Office Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25 outlines our approach to sustainability reporting. This document also sets out our 2025-20 strategy, including our strategic ambitions and our priorities, encompassing both financial audit and value for money audit. You can find more detailed information on frameworks and methodologies on our website. For example, Insights - National Audit Office (NAO) includes good practice guides and frameworks produced by our expert hubs. You can find our value for money reports here Value for money Archives - National Audit Office (NAO) and each of these includes an appendix that describes the methodological approach for that audit.

I hope this information is helpful and you are happy with the way we have handled your request. Our policy is to respond to requests as helpfully and promptly as possible. If you are not happy with this response, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days by writing to the NAO FOI Team at FOI@nao.org.uk.
If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The primary way of escalating your concerns to the Information Commissioner is at: https://ico.org.uk/foicomplaints.

Yours sincerely

NAO FOI Team