



WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

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Jeremy Colman

Proposals for all-Wales studies across  
health and social care



**Consultation**

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The Auditor General for Wales and his staff together comprise the Wales Audit Office, whose mission statement is 'to promote improvement so that the people of Wales benefit from accountable, well-managed public services that offer the best possible value for money'.

## I am seeking views to help shape my forward programme of studies in health and social care

1. The purpose of this document is to obtain views from external stakeholders on the topics I am considering as future all-Wales studies across health and social care over the next two to three years. A number of wider thematic areas are also identified that allow me to examine service delivery across a number of different public-sector bodies.
2. It should be noted that alongside the work being consulted upon in the document, I will maintain a programme of local risk-based audit at individual NHS bodies and local authorities.
3. I have selected study topics that I believe to be relevant following an analysis of risks and priorities facing health and social-care services in Wales, and would welcome responses to the following questions:
  - **Which proposals would you support, and why?**
  - **Are there any proposals that you do not support, and why?**
  - **Should I prioritise certain topics, and, if so, in what order and why?**
  - **Are there other topics which I should consider, and why?**
4. Your responses to the above questions should be forwarded to:  
**info@wao.gov.uk by 14 September 2007.**
5. I would welcome your views in whatever format you find easiest, although it would be helpful if you could record your views on the pro forma supplied with this document.
6. Please note that I will use separate mechanisms to consult on work which is specifically focused on local and central government.

## How I plan to work in partnership with other external review bodies

7. I have a key strategic commitment to work in partnership with other external review bodies and, in particular, to give effect to the objectives and actions set out as part of the *Wales Programme for Improvement*, and in the *Concordat between Bodies Inspecting, Regulating and Auditing Health and Social Care in Wales*. I will therefore aim to ensure my audit and inspection work is appropriately co-ordinated with that of other external review bodies.
8. Before finalising my programme of studies, I propose to have full and detailed discussions with other external review bodies, to explore where opportunities exist to co-ordinate our respective work and to undertake examinations jointly or collaboratively.

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## Work I am already committed to

9. In addition to the work being consulted on in this document, there is a substantial programme of work already underway, or about to start, within the Wales Audit Office. **Appendix 1** of this document contains details of this work.

## My proposals for all-Wales studies across health and social care

10. The topics I am considering undertaking as all Wales studies over the next two to three years, and on which I seek your comments, are set out below.

### Planning and delivering integrated services

No.	Proposed topic
1	<p><b>Continuing care</b></p> <p>The Grogan case has thrown a fresh focus on the challenges of correctly assessing individuals' continuing-care needs and funding their provision. A review of how NHS bodies and local authorities are working together to manage continuing care is therefore timely.</p> <p>Potential areas of focus would be needs assessment, agreeing eligibility criteria, arrangements for assessment and review, delivery of joint care packages, and the overall financial impact of care packages. Scoping of any work on continuing care would involve close liaison with the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to identify opportunities for joint or collaborative working.</p>
2	<p><b>Implementation of the new commissioning arrangements</b></p> <p>The Welsh Assembly Government (the Assembly Government) has recognised that commissioning arrangements for health and social-care services need to be strengthened in order to deliver the objectives set out in <i>Designed for Life and Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities</i>. Guidance has been issued which clarifies responsibilities for commissioning and introduces the concept of Regional Commissioning Units as a mechanism for making the best use of existing capacity and skills within the current service configuration.</p> <p>The proposed review would examine whether Local Health Boards (LHBs) and trusts, in partnership with local authorities, have succeeded in putting firm foundations in place to strengthen health and social-care commissioning arrangements. Progress in developing the needs assessment information base to support commissioning activities will also be reviewed.</p>

## Developing and supporting the workforce

No.	Proposed topic
3	<p><b>Securing benefits from pay modernisation in the NHS</b></p> <p>Significant amounts of time and money have been invested in designing and implementing the new consultants' contract and Agenda for Change. The scale and complexity of this pay modernisation programme mean that there is a risk that the expected benefits realisation occurs more slowly than envisaged, or not at all.</p> <p>The review would therefore assess progress that has been made with implementation of the pay modernisation programme and look for evidence that the intended benefits are being, or are likely to be realised.</p>
4	<p><b>Violence against NHS staff (follow-up)</b></p> <p>In 2005, I published a report which raised concerns about the impact of violence and aggression against NHS staff. The report highlighted the need to tackle high-risk areas and to strengthen arrangements for recording and reporting incidents.</p> <p>The Assembly Government has taken steps to address the problem, however, there are still concerns about a growing trend of violence against NHS staff and calls for more comprehensive training for staff to help them handle violent patients.</p> <p>The review would assess progress in implementing my previous recommendations and assess whether scope still exists to do more to protect and equip NHS staff.</p>

## Ensuring efficient use of resources

No.	Proposed topic
5	<p><b>Procurement (NHS supplies)</b></p> <p>Implementation of better procurement practices offers scope to make significant savings which can be reinvested into service development and delivery. Work undertaken through the Acute Hospital Portfolio in 2002 found wide variation between Welsh trusts in the cost of procuring supplies and equipment, even after factoring for Trust size. Since then the All Wales NHS Procurement Board has developed a strategy to support better and more collaborative procurement across NHS trusts.</p> <p>This review would revisit the procurement of supplies and benchmark performance across trusts using agreed indicators. It could also assess the extent to which trusts are implementing the All Wales Procurement Strategy and whether this has led to improved procurement practices.</p>
6	<p><b>Clinical negligence (follow-up)</b></p> <p>In 2005/2006, just over £20 million was paid out in compensation for victims of clinical negligence. The figure for 2006/2007 is predicted to increase significantly, with £40 million being set aside by the Assembly Government. The Welsh Risk Pool's annual report highlights that, year on year, the same factors contribute to clinical errors, suggesting that lessons are not being learnt.</p> <p>This examination would follow up recommendations made by my predecessor in 2001 and would assess whether appropriate systems are in place to minimise the risks of clinical error. The follow-up review would include an assessment of the likely impact of the new NHS Redress Measure. The opportunities to deliver this work collaboratively with HIW and the Welsh Risk Pool would be fully explored.</p>

## Strengthening performance management and information

No.	Proposed topic
7	<p><b>Performance Management arrangements in health and social care</b></p> <p><i>Designed for Life</i> identifies performance management as a key driver for change and the achievement of challenging milestones for the modernisation of health and social-care services. However, performance management in the NHS in Wales is still developing from a historically low base. Similarly, local authorities are still struggling to use performance management information effectively to address poor performance and drive service improvement in social-care services.</p> <p>This examination would review the performance management arrangements across health and social care services, assessing how effective they are as drivers of change and improvement. It would also look at performance management arrangements at the interface between health and social care.</p>
8	<p><b>NHS information and data quality</b></p> <p>Within the NHS, accurate information is needed to support the management, planning, commissioning and monitoring of healthcare services. In recent years, however, numerous reports have cited problems with the availability of reliable information as an impediment to service design and development.</p> <p>The Wales Audit Office is considering undertaking a rolling programme of data-quality audits, which would reconcile data held on national databases such as Patient Episode Database Wales (PEDW) with that contained in local IT systems and associated clinical case notes. The work would be scoped and developed in liaison with the Assembly Government's Corporate Health Information Programme. The results would help identify where attention needs to be focused to improve the quality of data which is collected and reported within the NHS in Wales.</p>
9	<p><b>Accuracy of waiting-list information (follow-up)</b></p> <p>New waiting-list targets stipulate that by the end of December 2009, the maximum wait between patient referral and treatment should not exceed 26 weeks. While good progress has been made in reducing waiting times, the 2009 target is challenging, and robust monitoring arrangements will be needed to review compliance. These monitoring arrangements will need to be underpinned by accurate waiting lists.</p> <p>The Wales Audit Office undertook a spot-check review of the accuracy of waiting list information in March 2007. This revealed both good practice and some concerns, particularly in relation to how patients are suspended from waiting lists. A follow-up series of spot-check reviews is proposed to provide assurance that trusts have addressed the problems identified, and that robust arrangements are in place to support performance monitoring against waiting-list targets.</p>

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## Ensuring better access to services

No.	Proposed topic
10	<p><b>Unscheduled care</b></p> <p>Many services are involved in the delivery of urgent and emergency care. A&amp;E departments, NHS Direct, out-of-hours GP services, and ambulance services provide interventions which range from life-saving treatment to advice and reassurance. Despite service developments, concerns remain about the responsiveness of urgent and emergency services, the extent to which they are integrated, and increasing pressures on A&amp;E departments.</p> <p>This review would encompass a collective examination of unscheduled care services in Wales, and could include a review of progress against recommendations made in my report on the Welsh Ambulance Services Trust. By assessing the cost effectiveness and effectiveness of services, and the extent to which they are co-ordinated, the review would provide a baseline from which progress with the 'Delivering Emergency Care Services' initiative can be measured. The opportunity to deliver work jointly or collaboratively with HIW would be fully explored.</p>
11	<p><b>Dental services</b></p> <p>The new Dental Contract which came into force from April 2006 aims to facilitate the provision of high-quality, flexible services tailored to patients' needs, with a greater focus on preventative treatment. The contract was introduced in Wales against a backdrop of inequalities in access to NHS dentistry, and previous initiatives to build up community dental services through salaried NHS dentists.</p> <p>This review would examine whether there has been sound implementation of the new Dental Contract and whether the intended benefits are starting to be realised. It could also assess whether the Assembly Government's Community Dental Initiative has helped to strengthen local dental-service provision in the areas of greatest need.</p>

## Thematic examinations across the public sector

No.	Proposed topic
12	<p><b>Making the Connections (asset management)</b></p> <p>Phase one of this work comprised a baseline assessment of progress in implementing the <i>Making the Connections</i> agenda across the public sector. These findings will be made available in autumn 2007.</p> <p>I propose to build on this by undertaking a study into the use of assets across the Welsh public service. The potential efficiency gains from reviewing the configuration and use of assets are significant and the potential gains from joint working in this area are also significant. There is a unique opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promote better use of assets at the institutional and broader community level; and</li> <li>• identify and share good practice.</li> </ul> <p>The proposal is that we examine asset management across the Welsh public services over a three-year period.</p> <p>Initially, we will examine if the Welsh public services are collectively ensuring that their approach to fleet and vehicle asset management makes best use of resources to support improvements in service delivery.</p> <p>Subsequently, I will examine buildings management, management of plant, equipment and machinery, and management of IT assets across Welsh public services.</p>
13	<p><b>Good Practice Exchange</b></p> <p>I remain committed to the principle of using good practice to support improvement across the Welsh public service and plan to continue to identify, evaluate and facilitate its transfer both within and between sectors as part of mainstream work.</p> <p>Following on from the successful launch of the Good Practice Exchange in May 2007, I plan to enhance the Exchange and, initially, specifically intend to develop the sickness absence management materials to focus on the wider area of attendance management. This continues to be a priority area for the Welsh public service, is a logical extension of the topic and will continue to build upon the relationships I have developed with the Human Resources community. In addition, I plan to develop further content for the Good Practice Exchange, which supports the Making the Connections work I am planning to carry out on asset management.</p> <p>To support the exchange of knowledge and information, I will also continue to develop the Shared Learning Forum. This will provide a means of Public service bodies sharing information across organisational and sector boundaries.</p>
14	<p><b>Tackling obesity</b></p> <p>There are well-publicised concerns about the rising incidence of obesity. Alarming, the latest Welsh Health Survey showed that over 50 per cent of adults are either overweight or obese. Health professionals have described obesity as a health 'time bomb' and it is seen as a growing challenge for Government. Obesity can lead to increased incidences of a number of serious chronic diseases which are life limiting. Moreover, it can present a significant economic burden through its impact on health and social-care services and as a cause of sickness absence.</p> <p>The examination would follow on from my recent review of the uptake of physical activity by assessing the impact of obesity on the NHS and its partners, and by reviewing how the Assembly Government and public-sector bodies are working together to tackle the problem.</p>

No.	Proposed topic
15	<p><b>Older people's services</b></p> <p>The proportion of older people in the Welsh population has been steadily rising over the past 25 years and is predicted to rise further. Older people are major users of health and social services, but demand for these services can be off set by having a greater focus on the promotion of health, wellbeing and independence of older people.</p> <p>A National Service Framework (NSF) for older people was launched in March 2006, as a key mechanism to improve services and ensure that older people receive prompt, seamless and high-quality support when needed.</p> <p>The NSF's implementation plan identifies the importance of a comprehensive, independent review of older people's services. This examination would give effect to that through a joint review with HIW and CSSIW. The results would be used to assess how well health and social-care services are working together to deliver the standards of care set out in the NSF.</p>
16	<p><b>Working with the voluntary sector</b></p> <p>There are as many as 30,000 voluntary-sector organisations operating in Wales, undertaking important work in support of public-sector delivery across a range of settings. The Assembly Government's Voluntary Sector Scheme, which sets out how it consults, works and funds the voluntary sector, was the subject of an independent review in 2003. The review made a number of recommendations for the continued success of the Scheme.</p> <p>The proposed examination would assess progress with implementation of the independent review's recommendations. More generally, it could examine whether the engagement with the voluntary sector follows recognised best practice, and what arrangements the public sector has in place for monitoring the value for money of services delivered by the voluntary sector.</p>
17	<p><b>Adult mental-health services (follow-up)</b></p> <p>In October 2005, my report on adult mental-health services in Wales highlighted the need for significant and sustained action to improve services for people with mental-health problems. The Assembly Government responded to this, and other reports, by making additional funding available and publishing a national action plan for adult mental-health services.</p> <p>This examination would assess progress with implementation of the previous report's recommendations and review how well NHS trusts, LHBs and local authorities are working together to design, commission and deliver modernised mental-health services in line with the national action plan. Scope for delivering the work jointly with HIW and CSSIW will be reviewed.</p>

## How I will use your consultation comments

11. Whilst I believe all the topics identified are important and relevant areas to examine, current commitments and capacity limitations mean that I will not be able to examine them all over the next two to years. I therefore propose to use the consultation comments to help me prioritise which topics should be built into my immediate plans.
12. I will also maintain a longer list of potential review topics which will be routinely revisited as part of the internal planning and programme management processes within the Wales Audit Office.
13. I will publish a summary of the responses to this consultation on the Wales Audit Office's website, [www.wao.gov.uk](http://www.wao.gov.uk).

## Appendix 1


## Current and planned work

### Health and social care

Topic	Agreed and underway	Agreed but yet to commence
GMS Contract	✓	
Healthcare Acquired Infections (work co-ordinated with HIW)	✓	
Home Oxygen Contract	✓	
Review of accuracy of waiting list information in NHS trusts	✓	
Chronic Disease Management	✓	
Delayed Transfers of Care	✓	
Implementation of the CHD NSF (jointly delivered with HIW)	✓	
Maternity Services (delivered in collaboration with HIW)	✓	
Review of financial management arrangements in the NHS	✓	
NHS Sickness Absence (follow-up)	✓	
European Working Time Directive		✓
Informing Healthcare		✓
Management of NHS Capital Investment Programmes		✓

### Thematic examinations across the public sector

Topic	Agreed and underway	Agreed but yet to commence
Making the Connections: baseline assessment	✓	
Audit of efficiency gains	✓	
Child and adolescent mental health services (jointly delivered with HIW)	✓	
Good Practice Exchange: management of sickness absence	✓	
Emergency Planning – Civil Contingencies Act		✓



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Wales Audit Office  
2-4 Park Grove  
Cardiff CF10 3PA  
Tel: 029 2026 0260  
Fax: 029 2026 0026  
Textphone: 029 2026 2646  
E-mail: [info@wao.gov.uk](mailto:info@wao.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.wao.gov.uk](http://www.wao.gov.uk)