



WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

# **Inquiry into the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust**

Conducted by Jeremy Colman, Auditor  
General for Wales

## **Statement of Inquiry Procedures**

**4 August 2006**

**[www.wao.gov.uk](http://www.wao.gov.uk)**

## **Terms of reference**

- 1.** On 11 July 2006, the National Assembly for Wales voted to invite Jeremy Colman, Auditor General for Wales, to lead an inquiry into the ambulance services in Wales.
- 2.** The Assembly proposed that a timely, independent inquiry be undertaken and for a report on that inquiry to be made public. The terms of reference recommended that the Inquiry should:
  - a** look at the effectiveness of performance standards, staffing issues, financial and resource pressures, together with any other related matters considered relevant; and
  - b** consider the implications for the future and make recommendations accordingly.
- 3.** The inquiry is not a formal public inquiry under the Inquiries Act or similar legislation but will be carried out using the Auditor General's existing powers under the Government of Wales Act 1998 and the Public Audit Wales Act 2004. These give the Auditor General access to the staff and records of the Trust and other relevant public bodies and enable him to lay a report before the Assembly.

## **Inquiry team**

- 4.** The Inquiry will be supported by a team of financial and performance experts from the Wales Audit Office and closely integrated with the special assurance review of the trust announced by Healthcare Inspectorate Wales in May.
- 5.** Mr Colman has appointed Gill Lewis as Engagement Partner for this Inquiry. Mrs Lewis has considerable experience of audit within the public sector. Rob Powell is the project manager, with a core team comprising Lucy Evans, Jackie Joyce, Martin Gibson and administrative support from Helen Thom. Other members of Wales Audit Office staff will contribute to the work of the Inquiry as directed by Mr Colman.
- 6.** In accordance with his usual practice, Mr Colman has invited a number of experts in the field of ambulance services to sit on an advisory expert panel. This small group has no executive powers over the Inquiry but will provide specific advice to Mr Colman at key stages of the Inquiry.

## **Finding out more and contacting the inquiry**

- 7.** The correspondence address for the Inquiry is:  
FREEPOST RRBH-GZXC-XGHC  
Wales Audit Office  
2-4 Park Grove  
Cardiff  
CF10 3PA  
029 2026 0260, [info@wao.gov.uk](mailto:info@wao.gov.uk)
- 8.** We have also set up a page on the Wales Audit Office website dedicated to the Ambulance Inquiry. The web address is [www.wao.gov.uk](http://www.wao.gov.uk). The web page will include a web-based form through which individuals can submit written evidence to the Inquiry.

## **The questions the inquiry will address**

- 9.** The Inquiry will address a very forward looking question, Should Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust do what it is planning to do? Within this framework, the Inquiry will consider:
  - a** whether the Trust has a clear understanding of its current position, in terms of its current performance and the enablers of good performance;
  - b** whether the Trust has a sound plan to improve the situation; and
  - c** whether there are any risks to the successful implementation of the plan.
- 10.** In taking evidence, the Inquiry team will focus on these three questions, as well as ideas about how the Trust might deliver improvements for the future provision of ambulance services in Wales.

## Public hearings

11. The Inquiry team will operate largely in accordance with standard Wales Audit Office performance audit practices. However, because of the public nature of his assignment, we will also run six public hearings at which any member of the public can give oral evidence about ambulance services in Wales. The hearings will take place at the following venues and times:

Venue	Time	Date
Brangwyn Hall, Swansea	17:30 – 21:00	Thursday 10 August
Newport Centre, Newport	14:00 – 18:00	Friday 11 August
Pavillion Conference Centre, Llandrindod Wells	17:00 – 21:00	Monday 14 August
Halliwell centre, Trinity College, Carmarthen	13:00 – 17:00	Monday 21 August
Bangor University, Bangor	13:30 – 17:00	Thursday 17 August
Marriott Hotel, Cardiff	17:00 – 21:00	Tuesday 22 August
North East Wales Institute of Higher Education, Wrexham	16:30 – 20:30	Tuesday 5 September
Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Aberystwyth	16:30 – 20:30	Thursday 7 September

12. The hearings will serve two primary objectives:
- a to inform and consult the public about our approach to the Inquiry; and
  - b to provide an opportunity for the public to present evidence to Mr Colman in a public forum.
13. The hearings have the following broad agenda:
- a an introductory presentation by the Inquiry team about the questions the Inquiry will address and the methodology to be followed; this will include the opportunity for those attending the hearings to ask questions about the Inquiry; and
  - b an opportunity for those attending the hearings to speak publicly about their experiences of, and views about, ambulance services in Wales, focusing on the key questions outlined in paragraph 9 above.
14. The hearings will be conducted in English and Welsh. If anyone requires a language other than English or Welsh, the Wales Audit Office will endeavour to meet their language of preference if notified in advance.
15. The proceedings of the six hearings will be transcribed, translated and placed on the ambulance inquiry website.

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16. Members of the public can also provide written evidence via the Freepost address or website form outlined in paragraphs 7 and 8 above. Wales Audit Office staff will also be happy to arrange separate meetings with any member of the public who wishes to discuss their views on the ambulance service.

## Our methodology

17. In addition to the six public hearings, the Inquiry will follow standard Wales Audit Office methodologies. We will use a range of techniques to answer the questions set out in Appendix A.
18. Our methodology will be sufficiently flexible to adapt to the evidence and information we identify during fieldwork. However, our broad methodology will include:
  - a a detailed analysis of the Trust's financial position and performance; this will include a benchmarking exercise to compare the Trust with other relevant organisations;
  - b an examination and analysis of key documents;
  - c a thematic examination of written submissions and oral evidence provided to the Inquiry team;
  - d interviews and focus groups with Trust employees throughout Wales; and
  - e interviews with key stakeholders, such as staff groups, Assembly Government officials, Health Commission Wales and Community Health Council officers.

## Timescale

19. The Auditor General is firmly of the view that the Inquiry should be expedited at a brisk pace to enable the Trust to progress its service development as quickly as possible. The Auditor General aims to publish a report in the Autumn, although this may be a prelude to further work to promote improvement within the Trust.

## Dealing with potential criticisms of individuals

20. Although the Inquiry aims to produce a report that will promote improvement and assist the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust to make positive steps forward, it is possible that the final report will include adverse or critical statements about individuals involved with the Trust. We will inform by letter any individual in respect of whom an adverse or critical statement is made, and provide a fair opportunity for them to make whatever comment or representation they wish about the statement. However, the ultimate decision about the content of the report remains the Auditor General's.

## Appendix A – questions the Inquiry will address

### Main study question

Should the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust do what it is planning to do?

Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Level 4 questions
<b>1</b> Does the Trust have a sound understanding of its current situation and the factors that will influence it in the future?	<b>i</b> Does the Trust deliver satisfactory results?	<b>a</b> Are operational results satisfactory?
		<b>b</b> Are clinical results satisfactory?
		<b>c</b> Are financial results satisfactory?
		<b>d</b> Are support service results satisfactory?
	<b>ii</b> Have the enablers of good performance been in place?	<b>e</b> Has there been effective leadership for the Trust?
		<b>f</b> Has the Trust had sound arrangements to develop strategy?
		<b>g</b> Have the human resources been available and utilised effectively to support improvement?
		<b>h</b> Are there sound operational processes to support the delivery of Trust services?
		<b>i</b> Does the Trust have sufficient capacity?
<b>2</b> Does the Trust have a sound plan to improve the situation?	<b>iii</b> Does the plan reflect good planning practice?	<b>j</b> Has the plan been developed through a sound process?
		<b>k</b> Is the plan itself robust?
		<b>l</b> Has the plan been appropriately communicated?
		<b>m</b> Is there a sound framework to realise the benefits of the plan?

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Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Level 4 questions
	<b>iv</b> Does the plan reflect specific issues pertinent to the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust?	
<b>3</b> Is there any risks to the sound implementation of the plan?	<b>v</b> Is there a risk that there will be insufficient leadership to bring about service and cultural change?	<b>n</b> Within the Trust?
		<b>o</b> Outside the Trust?
	<b>vi</b> Is there a risk that the Trust might fail to respond to changes in the external environment?	<b>p</b> Is there a risk of failing to build the partnerships that can deliver improvement and service development?
		<b>q</b> Is there adequate environmental scanning?
		<b>r</b> Is there sufficient engagement with policy changes?
		<b>s</b> Is there recognition of the importance of organisational development in implementing the plan?
	<b>vii</b> Are there human resource risks around implementing the plan?	<b>t</b> Is corporate performance management sufficiently robust to support delivery of the plan?
		<b>u</b> Are there recruitment and retention risks?
		<b>v</b> Are there staff management and development risks?
		<b>w</b> Are there staff engagement risks?
		<b>x</b> Are there risks associated with the effective management of Agenda for Change?
		<b>y</b> Are there risks associated with relationships with the Trade Unions?
		<b>z</b> Is there a strategic approach to changing the culture of the organisation?
<b>aa</b> Are there any HR issues arising from integration with NHS Direct?		

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Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Level 4 questions
	<b>viii</b> Are there process risks that might compromise delivery of the plan?	<b>bb</b> Is there a risk that basic response time performance may compromise the Trust's ability to modernise?
		<b>cc</b> Are there risks around improving basic operational processes?
		<b>dd</b> Are pilots evaluated robustly and rapidly to disseminate good practice?
	<b>ix</b> Are there risks that capacity will compromise delivery of the plan?	<b>ee</b> Could immediate financial pressures crowd out service development/ investment?
		<b>ff</b> Are there risks associated with securing capital?
		<b>gg</b> Are there risks associated with the Trust's infrastructure?
		<b>hh</b> Could structural issues affect the Trust's ability to implement its plan?
		<b>ii</b> Could capacity shortfalls compromise delivery?