



Memorandum by the Auditor General for Wales

Final Programme of Value for Money Examinations for 2004-2005

Submitted to the Audit Committee of the National Assembly for Wales

February 2004

Final Programme of Value for Money Examinations for 2004-05

1. At its meeting on 23 October 2003, the Audit Committee approved my estimate for the financial year 2004-05 and considered my proposed forward value for money programme for 2004-05 and beyond (AC(2)-04-03 paper 2). I have considered the Committee's views, and I am now in a position to inform the Committee of my final decisions.
2. The subjects that I have decided to include in my final programme of value for money examinations for 2004-05 are as follows:
 - (i) ambulatory care and day surgery (to be undertaken in collaboration with the Audit Commission in Wales);
 - (ii) NHS clinical waste;
 - (iii) Tir Gofal (Countryside Council for Wales);
 - (iv) managing staff sickness absence in further education;
 - (v) managing the performance of trunk road agents;
 - (vi) Arts Council—follow up;
 - (vii) Middleton: The National Botanic Garden;
 - (viii) Merlin: the Assembly's new IT and business improvement programme; and
 - (ix) sickness absence management in the Assembly.
3. While considering my draft programme for 2004-05 and future years, the Committee requested that I give consideration to an examination of the use of NHS resources for private work. I currently have underway a study of waiting times in the NHS, which includes some analysis of the use of NHS hospital facilities for private patients with respect to its effect on waiting times. The results of this work are due to be published later in 2004. I therefore intend to examine this particular issue that the Committee has raised with me as part of this broader examination of NHS waiting times. If, however, it appears that further

analysis is merited following the NHS waiting times report, I will provide a follow-up report or memorandum.

4. Members may be interested to note that I intend my examination of ambulatory care and day surgery to be undertaken by the National Audit Office Wales in collaboration with the Audit Commission in Wales. The subject matter of this study lends itself well to a joint approach as it brings details of local practice together into a national picture. Joint working in this way will be a valuable learning experience for both the National Audit Office Wales and the Audit Commission in Wales, and should provide an early and practical start to the development of the working practices of the new Wales Audit Office.
5. The Committee will no doubt appreciate that this programme is not immutable. The overall service that I provide to the Committee benefits from being flexible and responsive to changing circumstances, often, of course, at the suggestion of members of the Committee. I shall keep the Committee informed of any changes to my programme should they arise.

John Bourn

Auditor General for Wales

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