



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Wales Audit Office / Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru

Date: 6th October 2009
Our ref: JC/0929/fgb
Your ref:
Pages: 1 of 2

24 Cathedral Road / Heol y Gadeirlan
Cardiff / Caerdydd
CF11 9LJ
Tel / Ffôn: 029 20 320510
Fax / Ffacs: 029 20 320555
www.wao.gov.uk

Email / Epost: jeremy.colman@wao.gov.uk
PA / CP Fiona Bashford, fiona.bashford@wao.gov.uk

Mr Jonathan Morgan AM
Chair of the Audit Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

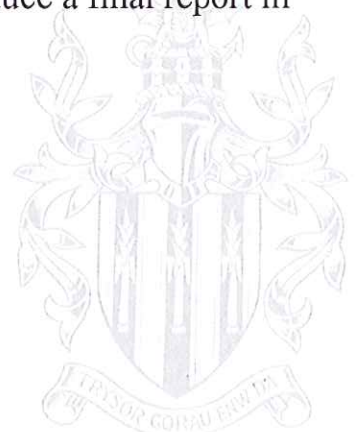
Dear Chair

AGW REPORT: *MATERNITY SERVICES*

The Clerk's letter of 10 September requested my advice on the response from the Minister for Health and Social Services in respect of my report on maternity services.

The Committee may recall that, following a briefing from my staff on this report, members were concerned about a number of issues arising from the audit, particularly around the lack of a coherent strategic vision; the unacceptable variation in performance; and the poor information available on the cost and quality of maternity services. However, before deciding on what further action the Committee might take in considering my report, it agreed to first seek further information on how the NHS is responding to my recommendations.

In her letter to the Committee, the Minister sets out that she has asked officials to establish a working group to consider my report and recommend improvements to maternity services in Wales. She expects the group to produce a final report in December 2009.



Whilst the proposed establishment of this working group brings a welcome focus on maternity services, it is not yet apparent how the NHS in Wales intends to improve the maternity services that it provides. Given the low strategic priority that has to date been given to such services in Wales, the Committee might wish to take evidence early in the New Year from the Accounting Officer, to seek direct assurance that the Committee's concerns are being addressed. Given the variation in performance across maternity providers, the Committee might also find it helpful to take evidence from one or two of the new Health Boards on how they are responding locally to my audit findings and recommendations.

Yours sincerely



MC **JEREMY COLMAN**
AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES