

## **Inquiry into the work of Healthcare Inspectorate Wales**

### Key conclusion and recommendation

The Health and Social Care Committee's inquiry into the work of Healthcare Inspectorate Wales was undertaken during autumn term 2013. The Committee reported its findings in March 2014. This sheet outlines the Committee's key conclusion and recommendation, and lists the main issues identified by the Committee during its inquiry. A copy of the full report can be accessed on the Committee's [website](#).

#### **Conclusion**

The Committee decided to undertake a review of the work of Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) to satisfy itself that the health services inspection regime in Wales is fit for purpose. The Committee did not receive the reassurances it wanted to hear about the role of HIW in ensuring that healthcare providers are examined properly, meet basic standards, and face sufficient intervention when basic standards are not met.

Furthermore, the Committee did not receive reassurances that the purpose and role of HIW has been defined sufficiently to provide a clear, robust and understood inspection and regulatory regime. It is our view that this lack of clarity has undermined HIW's ability to establish itself as an authoritative regulator. A clearer purpose would help to strengthen how HIW delivers its responsibilities and to set out what it intends to achieve through its regulatory and inspection activity.

The Committee believes that providing clarity about the statutory landscape, which currently appears cluttered and opaque, would help set a clearer direction and improve the accountability of the regulator. It is the Committee's view that reforming the statutory foundation of HIW would help to ensure a more effective regulator of healthcare. We also believe that this could help address our concerns about HIW's ability to demonstrate its independence from Government in a way other inspectorates, such as Estyn, are able to do.

The Committee is aware that the Programme for Government contains a commitment to 'review the framework for the external scrutiny of public services and the work of auditors, inspectors and regulators'. The Welsh Government has confirmed that this review will cover the work of HIW. However, the Committee believes that the current system is not providing the necessary reassurances that HIW can fully undertake its role and that a detailed, thorough review of the purpose and function of HIW should be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

It is important to emphasise that at no point during our inquiry did we identify serious issues relating to quality and safety of services. It is equally important to emphasise, however, that we did not feel entirely reassured that, should such issues arise in the Welsh NHS, they would be detected in a timely or systematic way if we were to rely upon HIW alone.



## Recommendation

**The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should undertake a fundamental review of HIW to reform, develop and improve its regulatory and inspection functions. Consideration of the need to reform HIW's statutory foundation should form part of this review, as should the key issues raised in this report. The review should be undertaken as a matter of urgency and should result in a clear outline of HIW's objectives and core purpose.**

## Issues

Listed below are the key issues identified by the Committee during its inquiry. The Committee believes that these issues should be considered as part of the fundamental review of HIW that it has recommended.

**1 – Delivery of the core purpose of HIW:** The Committee believes that HIW should publish a programme outlining its regulatory and inspection activity, including making public the detail of how often it intends to inspect the different healthcare providers and its capacity to fulfil its obligations. HIW should be clear about the inspection regime the public expects and consider how it will provide public assurance that services are safe and of high quality.

**2 – Better use of information:** It is the Committee's view that:

- HIW should significantly improve the way it accesses and handles intelligence and information, ensuring it has access to timely information from all the relevant bodies.
- HIW should make clear the range of data it uses to try to spot patterns which identify or predict poor quality care for patients, making transparent the processes in place to identify and respond swiftly to incidences of serious concern or systemic failures.
- CHCs should be more proactive in sharing their information with HIW so that they fulfil the fundamental role they have to play in supporting the inspection regime. This will improve joint working, ensure that inspections are better co-ordinated, and enable HIW to focus activity on the areas where the risks are highest.

**3 – Providing information to the public:** The Committee's view is that HIW needs a renewed sense of purpose, understanding that it exists to ensure that providers meet basic standards and to intervene when they do not. Inspection reports take too long to be published and are not effectively communicated to the general public. HIW needs to give assurances to patients and the public that it has a coherent plan to make sure healthcare providers are appropriately examined and held to account. To achieve this HIW needs to:

- publish its inspection reports in a timely fashion;
- increase and improve the accessibility of information it makes available to the public, making clear how it intends to follow up on its recommendations and the action it will take if progress is not made; and
- transform its website into a user-friendly, transparent and comprehensive information portal which reflects the reports it has produced and the work it has undertaken.



**4 – Building a high performing organisation:** In 2011, HIW undertook a review of the services provided by its external reviewers. HIW should publish the findings of this review to provide assurances that the organisation is striking the right balance between use of external reviewers and clinical inspectors. HIW should make public its approach to the appointment and use of external reviewers and identify clearly its future needs.

**5 – Retaining validation:** Although the Committee supports HIW's decision to move away from a heavily validation-based system of assessment, we nevertheless believe that there must not be an over-reliance on self-assessment – an appropriate level of validation must remain. HIW needs to clarify what external validation will be done to provide assurance that a self-assessment undertaken by a healthcare organisation is sufficiently robust, and to enable health bodies to benchmark their performance and effectiveness.

**6 – Integrated health and social care:** We believe that the review we have recommended the Welsh Government should undertake of HIW's regulatory and inspection functions should explicitly consider its role in relation to new models of healthcare. Specific consideration should be given to how HIW's work, in the context of new models of integrated care, sits alongside that of other regulatory and inspection bodies and what its role should be in relation to primary care.

**The Health and Social Care Committee will return to this topic during this Assembly, to ensure that the recommendation made and issues raised in the report are addressed in a timely and robust manner. .**

