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Audit Committee

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**JEREMY COLMAN, AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES / ARCHWILYDD CYFFREDINOL CYMRU**

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**Date** 14<sup>th</sup> September 2007  
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*Dem Chari*

### **AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT ON MAKING BETTER USE OF NHS DAY SURGERY IN WALES**

The Clerk's letter of 9 July 2007 requested my advice on the Welsh Assembly Government's response to the recommendations made by the Audit Committee in its report *Making Better Use of NHS Day Surgery in Wales*.

The Assembly Government's response is positive and accepts in full all six of the Committee's recommendations. In implementing recommendation 1, the Assembly Government is undertaking important work to ensure data standards are met, to assess the feasibility of measuring 23:59 activity accurately, and to improve comparability of day case rates with other UK countries.

The Assembly Government's response to recommendations 2, 4 and 6 provides assurance that it is committed to encouraging NHS trusts to increase their rates of day surgery, through the work of the Delivery and Support Unit, the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare and Regional Commissioning Units, and by setting NHS trusts increasingly stringent targets for day case rates, cancelled operations and theatre utilisation rates. It is also encouraging that work is ongoing to develop benchmarking information to support trusts in making better use of day surgery.

The response to recommendation 4 describes actions to improve day surgery rates through more effective commissioning. In particular the response highlights the development of the Regional Commissioning Units and a review looking at the process of transferring funding between commissioners and providers. The work of the tariff workstream will develop tariffs for elective procedures which may be used if the Assembly Government decides to follow the same path as other countries.

The job planning system for consultants, referred to in recommendation 3, has been running for some time. The Assembly Government and trusts are two years into a five year project to develop Consultant Outcome Indicators to better inform job planning and a more focused discussion of outcomes. The Committee may wish to note that the National Audit Office highlighted the benefits of the job planning and appraisal process in Wales in its recent report, *Pay Modernisation: A New Contract for NHS Consultants in England*. It cited as a best practice example the development of outcome measures (Consultant Outcome Indicators) in Wales to link pay and performance.<sup>1</sup> The Wales Audit Office will monitor progress in developing Consultant Outcome Indicators and assess their contribution to the delivery of improved day surgery rates.

In its response to the Committee's fifth recommendation, the Assembly Government commits itself to strengthening guidance on the information provided to patients considering day surgery by the end of 2007.

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<sup>1</sup> National Audit Office, *Pay Modernisation: A New Contract for NHS Consultants in England*, report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC335, Session 2006/07, page 15

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The Wales Audit Office will continue to monitor the progress made by the NHS in Wales in making better use of day surgery and implementing the Committee's recommendations. I will draw to the Committee's attention any areas where I consider that further action is merited.

*Yours sincerely,*



**JEREMY COLMAN**  
**AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES**