

Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee

HWLG(3)09-08 (p1): 23 April 2008

Proposed Committee Inquiry into Assembly Government's Consultation Paper "Proposals to Change the Structure of the NHS in Wales"

Draft Terms of Reference and Proposed Witnesses

Purpose

1. The Committee agreed at its meeting on 9 April to conduct a short scrutiny Inquiry into the proposals set out in the Assembly Government's consultation paper "Proposals to Change the Structure of the NHS in Wales". This paper proposes terms of reference for the Inquiry, possible witnesses, suggested outcomes and timescale.

Background

2. The Government published its consultation paper on 2 April. The main proposals on which the Assembly Government is consulting are:

i. Abolishing the Internal Market in Wales, by providing funding from the Welsh Ministers or a National Health Service Board for Wales (the National Board) directly to NHS Trusts and Local Health Boards (LHBs).
ii. Three options for establishing a National Board, to oversee the NHS in Wales and be responsible for agreeing and funding the work which NHS Trusts and LHBs are to carry out. These are:

1. A Special Health Authority
2. A Civil Service Board
3. An Advisory Board supporting an Assembly Government Chief Executive.

iii. Cutting the number of LHBs from 22 to 8.
iv. Transferring the management and provision of Community Services from NHS Trusts to Local Health Boards.
v. The constitution and membership of the new Local Health Boards in Wales.
vi. The constitution and membership of NHS Trusts in Wales.
vii A possible revised model for providing shared services, such as procurement, certain legal services and estates advice across Wales.

3. The Assembly Government has asked for responses to the consultation paper by 25 June 2008. There is as yet no indication of a timescale for final decisions and implementation of any changes.

Structure, Timing and Witnesses

4. Given the need to prioritise other aspects of the Committee's work (for example, the Inquiry on Presumed Consent), the consultation status of the proposals and because there are likely to be further opportunities if needed to scrutinise any final proposals in greater depth, Members are invited to agree that this Inquiry should be limited in both its scope and duration. The overall aim would be to gain a better understanding of the proposals, clarify any major issues and make initial recommendations to the Assembly Government on the broad thrust of the proposals, rather than attempt to reach definitive judgements.

5. Members will wish to consider, whether the Minister for Health and Social Services should be invited to give evidence to the Committee as part of the Inquiry. Members had the opportunity to question the Minister about the proposals when she attended the Committee's meeting on 16 April for a general scrutiny session and may consider this sufficient. Instead, Members may find it helpful to invite the Chief Executive of the NHS, Mrs Ann Lloyd, to attend to provide technical and specialist evidence on the proposals on behalf of the Assembly Government.

6. For these reasons, Members are invited to agree:

that oral witnesses should be limited to representatives of the main NHS institutions likely to be directly affected by the proposed changes (i.e. the Assembly Government, NHS Trusts, LHBs and Community Health Councils);

that there should not be any general call for written evidence on this occasion (any written submissions received could be considered by the Committee) although those giving oral evidence will be asked to provide a written Memorandum beforehand;

that the Committee should aim to report to the Assembly no later than mid May so that the report can be taken into account by Assembly Ministers in considering responses to the consultation and to allow a debate on the report to be held in Plenary before the summer recess.

Terms of Reference and Suggested Outcomes

7. Given the above, the Members are invited to consider the following Terms of reference for the Inquiry:

"To examine the Assembly Government's consultation proposals for changes to the structure of the NHS in Wales in order to:

Gain a clearer understanding of the proposals and the process for considering and implementing them;

Identify and highlight any particularly significant issues;

If appropriate, make recommendations to the Assembly on the various alternatives proposed."

8. The main outcome of the Inquiry will be a report to the Assembly to help inform public debate and Assembly consideration of the Government's proposals.

Action for Committee

9. The Committee is invited to note the contents of this paper and approve:

the proposals for the conduct of the Inquiry set out in paragraph 6;

the draft terms of reference and suggested outcomes set out in paragraphs 7 and 8.

10. As outlined in paragraph 5, the Committee is also invited to consider whether the Minister for Health and Social Services or the Chief Executive of the NHS should be invited to attend to give evidence on behalf of the Assembly Government.

Steve George

Clerk to the Committee

April 2008