

Yr Adran Iechyd, Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a Phlant
Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol • Prif Weithredwr, GIG Cymru

Department for Health, Social Services and Children
Director General • Chief Executive, NHS Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Darren Millar AM
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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Our Ref:DS/DH/DCL

18 April 2013

Dear Chair

Public Accounts Committee: 19 March 2013

Following my recent appearance at the Public Accounts Committee on 19th March I am writing to respond to the actions points that arose.

1. Wales Audit Office Report – Consultant Contract

Each of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) report recommendations have been analysed by Welsh Government officials. A detailed responsive plan is being developed which will specify the actions to be taken forward by Welsh Government and Health Boards. Clearly there will be a requirement for significant collaborative working.

In addition to this, Welsh Government officials have instructed the NHS Wales Employers Unit to establish a task and finish group to take forward some of the specific recommendations highlighted in the WAO report. Draft terms of reference have been prepared with a clear immediate focus on the implementation and monitoring of effective consultant job planning. These are attached.

I will be requesting an initial review of the actions taken by all parties in September 2013. I will then require a more detailed response from each Health Board in respect of the WAO recommendations at the end of this financial year. This will provide sufficient time for the necessary improvements to annual job planning processes to be completed. I will be happy to share my findings with the Public Accounts Committee.



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2. Projects Commissioned - CHKS

Each Health Board in Wales has a contract with CHKS. These contracts are concerned with the delivery of high quality clinical benchmarking information. CHKS compares coded information about diagnosis, deaths, and co-morbidities with other NHS organisations across the UK with which it holds similar contracts. The recently published risk adjusted mortality data are an example of the product of this arrangement with CHKS.

The Health Board contracts with CHKS were due to cease on 1st April 2013 but have been extended for a 6 month period. This is to enable an appropriate All Wales procurement process which will provide a single replacement contract. The work is being led by the NHS Wales Information Service, with a project board chaired by Dr Graham Shortland, Medical Director of Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. The value for money of the CHKS contracts will be reviewed as a part of this process.

3. Office of National Statistics Data

There have been no formal discussions between Welsh Government and the Office for National Statistics on consultant productivity, to my knowledge. Consultant productivity and outcomes will however be an area for the Task and Finish Group to consider.

4. Impact of Consultants' Private Practice on the NHS

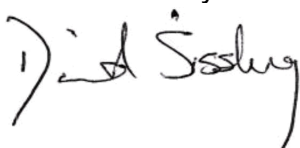
The Welsh Amended Consultant Contract makes it very clear that private practice must never impact on NHS care. Each consultant has a NHS job plan that they must deliver. Health Boards have clinical governance mechanisms in place to ensure high quality care is delivered by Consultants.

I can confirm that each NHS organisation has a policy to recoup relevant monies from Consultants for their use of NHS facilities for private patient care. Work is ongoing by Welsh Government officials to review the policy relating to this issue and specifically to ensure a consistent approach across Wales. I am not aware of any instance in which an NHS organization has purchased private care directly from its own Consultants.

5. Amended Consultant Contract – Impact on Flexible working/Female Consultants

Whilst there has been an increase in the number of female Consultants over recent years and in part-time working patterns for both genders, there is no qualitative data held to suggest that this increase can be directly attributed to the amended Consultant Contract.

Yours sincerely



David Sissling

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