



Date: 16 July 2012
Our ref: HVT/1683/fgb
Page: 1 of 2

24 Cathedral Road / Heol y Gadeirlan
Cardiff / Caerdydd
CF11 9LJ
Tel / Ffôn: 029 20 320502
Fax / Ffacs: 029 20 320600
Email / Epost: wales@wao.gov.uk
www.wao.gov.uk

Mr Darren Millar AM
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Dea Dan

CAESAREAN SECTION RATES – COMPARATIVE DATA FROM ACROSS THE UK

On 12 June 2012, I briefed the Committee on progress made by maternity services in Wales. Some members of the Committee were concerned about the high caesarean section rates across Wales, and queried how these rates compared to figures from elsewhere across the UK. I agreed to seek out further information on caesarean section rates across other regions and nations of the UK and to see if information for the year ending March 2012 could also be obtained.

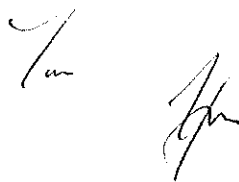
My staff have now made these enquiries, and have examined the information that is readily available. This analysis has revealed that there are gaps in the data and differences in the way that the information is collected and analysed across the UK countries. For these reasons I am not able to present a meaningful comparison of caesarean section rates across the UK to the Committee at present.

Caesarean section rates are not routinely published in Northern Ireland. The data can be made available and my staff have requested it, but it will take a number of weeks before it is ready. We have also established that the way in which caesarean section rates are calculated differs between the countries – in England and Wales caesarean section rates exclude births where the method of delivery is unknown, whilst in Scotland the figures are based upon all births. The extent to which these differences affect the overall percentages needs further analysis.

Date: 16 July 2012
Our ref: HVT/1683/fgb
Page: 2 of 2

I therefore propose to write again to the Committee in early September when I have received data from Northern Ireland. In the meantime my staff will do some further work to determine the extent to which the differences in the way in which data is collected and analysed affects the comparability of the figures across the UK. This will enable me to include appropriate health warnings on the data that I will be forwarding in September.

I hope that the Committee finds this update helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'HVT', is positioned to the left of a larger, more stylized handwritten signature in black ink.

HUW VAUGHAN THOMAS
AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES