

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

COLLABORATION BETWEEN CSSIW, ESTYN, HIW AND THE WALES AUDIT OFFICE

I am writing to let you know about developments in relation to collaboration between the four main inspection, audit and regulation bodies in Wales – the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), Estyn, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and the Wales Audit Office (WAO).

Collectively the four organisations are responsible for the external review of most public services in Wales. Over the years the external review bodies have collaborated in a variety of ways in areas of shared or overlapping interest, where it has been more efficient and effective to collaborate rather than to operate independently of each other. However, over the past year or so we have recognised and responded to an increased need to collaborate and coordinate the activities of the four organisations in a more structured and transparent way.

In September 2009 the Assembly Government published its policy statement on Inspection, Audit and Regulation in Wales. Whilst acknowledging the varying degrees of independence of the four external review bodies, the policy statement included proposals for both the Assembly Government and the external review bodies to take forward. The Assembly Government is publishing tomorrow (18 March) a progress report on the actions it has taken in response the policy statement.

Although it is the Assembly Government's policy statement, the four external review bodies agreed to the principles set out in the statement. These included the need to develop a more robust framework for collaboration in areas of common interest, to help ensure that best use is made of the limited resources available for external review, and to demonstrate more clearly that the four organisations collectively are discharging their statutory responsibilities in a coordinated way.

A Heads of Inspectorates' Group, supported by a dedicated secretariat, has been established to take forward the collaboration agenda, including actions in relation to the Assembly Government's policy statement. The Group meets frequently and, on Monday, 21 March, we are publishing a strategic agreement between the four external review bodies, *Working collaboratively to support improvement*, alongside a paper, *Developing our work together in a climate of change*, which describes how CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the WAO

together are responding to the public policy agenda in Wales and the current climate of change.

The relevant documents are attached. I hope you find them useful.

Yours sincerely

HUW VAUGHAN THOMAS

Auditor General for Wales

To copy to: Imelda Richardson

Ann Keane

Peter Higson

Betsan O'Connor

To attach: Assembly Government policy statement

Assembly Government progress report

Strategic agreement, *Working collaboratively to support improvement*

Heads commentary paper, *Developing our work together in a climate of change*