

Developing our work together in a climate of change

A paper on inspection,
audit and regulation in
Wales prepared by

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Setting the scene

Wales has carved a pathway in public policy which is distinctive. The principles of citizen-centred services; equality and social justice; collaboration; and value for money underpin the policy agenda.

Inspection, audit and review bodies have responded proactively to provide policymakers and the citizens of Wales with clear information and judgements on the implementation and effectiveness of public service policies.

The past year has seen a change of Government at UK level and the rapid implementation of a programme for reducing public spending that is unprecedented. The effects of reduced public expenditure will have a major impact in Wales and require all public bodies to consider how they can most efficiently deliver the safe and effective services that Welsh citizens need.

In England there are radical changes planned with the emphasis towards more local, self regulation by public sector bodies with significantly less external scrutiny and accountability. The ideological context in England is one of a public sector based on competitive market principles where the market acts as the lever to drive up the efficiency and quality of public services.

The position in Wales is different. The Assembly Government has rejected the market approach and instead sees the drive to deliver more efficient and effective services coming through a combination of clear national strategic plans and better collaboration between public sector bodies.

The Welsh model of public service delivery requires a more significant role for IAR bodies in providing assurance about the efficiency, quality and safety of public services in the absence of competition, and contestability, and in the context of the limited and variable information on performance available to the public.

Within the current public expenditure climate the increased risk to public services makes our job even more important in both providing public assurance and making sure that standards do not suffer. The identification and spread of good and innovative practice becomes more important than ever as the public sector looks to do things differently.

The Assembly Government's Policy Statement on Inspection, Audit and Regulation in 2009 sets out guiding principles for inspection, audit and regulation in Wales. It recognises the vital role of live, on-site external review; the benefit of strong sectoral inspectorates with professional authority in their own fields; the need for effective partnership across organisational boundaries as key to success; and expects external review to play a full part in a programme of promoting high performance, continuous improvement and innovation and promoting value for money.

CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office agree with the values and principles set out in the Policy Statement. These reflect work already undertaken individually and collectively including:

- Developing in collaboration proportionate IAR plans and methods that provide the most information about the efficiency, quality, standards and outcomes of services they inspect in common through the best use of combined intelligence and limited resources.

- Working with public service providers to develop an approach where assessing and reporting on improvement is a shared responsibility between IAR bodies and public service providers. The focus on self-evaluation and assessment is a keystone in our methodologies.
- Working together to become more intelligent sharers, users and interpreters of relevant information.

This paper describes how CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office together are responding to the public policy agenda in Wales and the current climate of change. The remainder of the paper sets out:

- developments in collaborative working to date (Part 2 – making progress);
- further work planned or in hand (Part 3 – moving forward); and
- our plans to deliver (Part 4 – delivering improvements).

Making progress

Building on development to date

Joint and collaborative working between CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office has, in various forms, been ongoing for a number of years. The IAR bodies have always been alive to opportunities to work together where it is more efficient and effective to do so, such as on the Joint Reviews of Social Services that until 2009 were carried out by CSSIW and the Wales Audit Office, and on the jointly-badged 2009 report on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) which drew on contributions from all four IAR bodies. Collaborative working has been stimulated and facilitated by frameworks such as the Wales Programme for Improvement and by voluntary initiatives such as the Concordat for Health & Social Care in Wales. Most recently the new Local Government Measure and the introduction of revised Healthcare Standards have provided a further stimulus for the main IAR bodies to review their joint working practices and identify the areas where changes are needed.

A comprehensive approach

As well as entering into a high-level strategic agreement that sets out their commitment to collaboration and the principles underpinning joint working, CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office have invested in the appointment of joint project staff to support the development of joint working between the four organisations. They are also strengthening current information and data-sharing processes between themselves.

Citizen focus

All four organisations have a clear commitment to deliver their work in ways that have the citizen at the centre. These range from taking stakeholder views into consideration when planning IAR work, to building user views into fieldwork activity, and developing methodologies to make findings more accessible to the public. Key initiatives include:

- **challenging public sector bodies to engage with the public**, and plan and deliver services in a citizen focused way;
- **giving citizens the opportunity to shape our work** by responding to consultations;
- **targeting the ‘hard-to-reach’ citizens** rather than the usual audience of professionals; and
- extending the **involvement of practitioners and service users in inspection, audit and regulation processes.**

Promoting improvement

CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office work with their stakeholders individually and collectively to make sure that their work contributes to service improvement. There are some common features which all four bodies adopt to encourage positive change in public service delivery:

- **Clear presentation of findings;** such as the way the Wales Audit Office makes use of evaluative headings in its reports to help guide readers.
- **Ensuring recommendations are acted upon;** for example in the post inspection action plans Estyn asks of its providers.
- **Encouraging public sector bodies to take ownership of issues and challenges,** through self-assessment as used in CSSIW's and Estyn's methodologies for local government.
- **Providing expert opinion and challenge;** through own staff or through the use of objective peer reviewers such as that by HIW.
- **Promoting shared learning and spread of good practice;** such as the Wales Audit Office *Good Practice Exchange* work or the series of events held by Estyn to share good practice in the education and training sectors.
- **Reporting without fear or favour, not avoiding difficult messages, and acting decisively as appropriate;** for example in the Wales Audit Office corporate governance reviews of Anglesey and Denbighshire Councils; or where CSSIW, Estyn or HIW place providers in categories for improvement or special measures.

- **Ensuring lessons are learnt where IAR work has highlighted challenges and service failures**, such as HIW's work on homicide reviews.
- **Providing clear feedback, and developing an ongoing and challenging relationship with providers.**
For example, in health bodies, the role of the HIW relationship manager helps share judgements and support improvement. Similarly in local government, the role of link inspectors in CSSIW and Estyn is to monitor performance throughout the year.

Informing policy

CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office each provide authoritative and independent advice to inform the development of policy. Despite commonality in the way we inform the citizen about the results of our work, the four main IAR bodies each has a different organisational status and relationship with the Assembly Government. The IAR bodies inspect a minority of sectors in common and many other sectors independently. Their respective positions and the fact that they inspect many different sectors determine, to some extent, the methods and processes by which the work of each organisation informs policymakers.

However despite these differences, CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office are able to work together to impact on policy in key areas, particularly where the delivery of public services crosses sectoral and policy boundaries, as in recent reviews of CAMHS and Youth Offending Services (YOSs).

Proportionality

The recent strategic agreement highlights that the principle of proportionality is common to CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office. There are, for example, joint working frameworks in place to guide our local government work, and enable us to be proportionate in our response across organisational boundaries.

Coordination

CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office have made significant progress in coordinating their work in relation to local government. We are now formalising those processes and governance arrangements. An Annual Schedule of Joint Work and the development of Governance Arrangements for Joint Work will enable early and proactive planning between the IAR bodies.

The new Local Government Measure has resulted in strengthened arrangements for co-ordinating working between IAR bodies in local government. The co-ordination role given to the Auditor General under the measure has been a stimulus for mapping business cycles and identifying key points in the calendar year when IAR bodies need to get together to share information and review prospective work programmes. Colleagues from the Wales Audit Office, Estyn, and CSSIW came together in June 2010 for the first of a series of biannual meetings to discuss how to better coordinate work in local government.

Similar arrangements exist in health. Members of the Wales Audit Office and HIW senior management teams meet regularly to share information and review the contents of emerging work programmes. These interactions have helped the two bodies deliver co-ordinated and collaborative programmes of work. In addition, the HIW facilitates regular 'summit' meetings bringing together a range of inspection and regulatory bodies to share their findings on individual health organisations.

We have also established a National Reviews Working Group which aims to be proactive at a strategic level to better coordinate and plan how we work together effectively in planning and carrying out national reviews where they have a common or shared focus.

Moving forward

Ensuring our work remains fit for purpose

CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office are proactive in improving structures, methodologies, business processes and ways of working to ensure that they remain fit for purpose within an environment where IAR bodies, as with all public services, are having to make significant cost savings. Underpinning these internal changes is a recognition that there is a need to continue to develop and strengthen joint working.

Engaging more effectively with citizens

The effectiveness of IAR activities can be enhanced through better harnessing of the intelligence and experiences citizens have as direct users of public services. Whilst CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office currently make use of a number of mechanisms to capture the experience of service users, there is scope to be more innovative in our approach to collating such information as well as being more systematic in this aspect of our work.

We also want to do more to ensure that we continue to develop the way we present our findings so that they are accessible, understandable and useful to citizens through developing new ways of reporting and making better use of online and other media platforms to promote awareness of our work and its findings.

Better use of information to target our work

We plan to build on the principle of proportionality and make sure we target our resources efficiently and effectively; using information intelligently to help target work on the areas of greatest need. As individual organisations, CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office are each committed to improving the efficiency of their approaches as service providers become more competent and confident at self-evaluation.

Ensuring timely and agile responses

We need to ensure that our outputs are timely enough to inform and affect change. Where appropriate, CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office will create both the capacity and capability to respond quickly to investigate and report on issues where there appear to be serious concerns or failings in services that they inspect jointly. The aim is to ensure that risks and poor prospects for improvement are identified in sufficient time to help prevent failure before it occurs.

Further developing our approaches and methods

CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office are responsive to the changes and pressures facing providers of public services in their search for new and more cost-effective means of delivery. We will continue to enhance our methods and approaches to help provide the insight, diagnosis and assurance that is needed, including developing an approach to benchmarking which assists comparison and analysis within and across sectors, and with bodies outside Wales, where it is meaningful to do so.

Working together more effectively

CSSIW, Estyn, HIW and the Wales Audit Office will continue to develop joint planning and programming to maximise the benefits of collaboration and avoid duplication in relation to the services that we inspect jointly. We will embed the necessary governance frameworks, agreements and protocols to support effective joint working. We will also share information and intelligence to enhance the work we do together and collectively, enabling us to act on concerns jointly where appropriate and influence improvement on key issues of concern for the public of Wales.

Delivering improvements

Enabling change

In the next year we will be working jointly to deliver further changes and improvements in the ways we work together. Building on the firm foundations set out in the previous section, we have agreed a number of key objectives that will frame our approach to joint and collaborative working for the next year. These are set out below.

Key Objective 1

Our joint and collaborative working is guided by a common vision and purpose, and supported where necessary by strategic agreements and operational protocols.

- We will formalise and strengthen our governance arrangements for working together.

Key Objective 2

Our respective planning and programming activities will be co-ordinated such that they result in proportionate programmes of work which avoid duplication and ensure that key risks and concerns are being examined.

- We will share and act on concerning information so that we will be able to focus more effectively on what matters most to people.

Key Objective 3

We will develop the approaches to information and knowledge sharing between our respective organisations to guide our programmes of work and to help ensure that intelligence is actively and promptly shared.

- We will develop a programme of shared learning, peer review and benchmarking both within Wales and with IAR bodies elsewhere to ensure that we remain able to provide the high level of professional judgment and assurance.

Key Objective 4

We will identify opportunities to bring together the knowledge and intelligence we collectively hold on public services, and report this in ways which support service improvement and inform policy making and national scrutiny, as well as provide public accountability.

- We will further develop our existing collaborative working to ensure that we have arrangements and methodologies in place whereby we can collectively respond rapidly and effectively to new challenges and issues which may arise at any time.

Key Objective 5

We will continuously monitor the progress we are making with joint and collaborative working and report this openly and transparently to key stakeholders.

- We will launch a joint website that will act as a single initial point of contact to inform the public of our work and findings. We will do more work on developing a common approach to engaging and gathering the views of citizens, learners, patients and services about their experiences of using those public services we jointly inspect.

