

Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales

Consultation document on our proposed equality objectives 2018-2022



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU



Consultation Document: Draft equality objectives for the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office 2018-2022

Overview

This consultation invites views and comments on draft equality objectives for the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office for the period 2018-2022. Once finalised, the objectives will be incorporated into a Joint Strategic Equality Plan which will be published in April 2018.

If you require this publication in an alternative format and/or language, or have any questions about its content, please contact us using the details below.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English and we will respond in the language you have used. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay.

How to respond

Please respond using the response form www.snapsurveys.com by 9 February 2018.

You can complete the form in either Welsh or English.

Alternatively, please send us your response in writing by post or email using the details below.

Planning and Reporting Team
Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF11 9LJ

Email info@audit.wales

Telephone 02920 320 500

Confidentiality and data protection

Information provided in response to this consultation may be published or disclosed in accordance with access to information legislation (chiefly the Freedom of Information Act 2000, but also the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want any information you provide to be treated as confidential, you should tell us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give any assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Auditor General or Wales Audit Office.

Personal data will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Where such data falls within the scope of a request for information from another person, the provisions of the 1998 and 2000 Acts will need to be considered in the particular circumstances. While no situation can be prejudged, this is likely to mean that information concerning senior officials and public figures is likely to be disclosed while the names and addresses of ordinary members of the public are likely to be withheld.

Foreword

We published our first [Joint Strategic Equality Plan](#) in May 2014, replacing the [Auditor General's Strategic Equality Plan](#) of April 2012 and setting out the key things that the Auditor General and the Wales Audit Office intended to do over the period 2014 to 2018 in order to help eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Since then, we have made good progress in developing a programme of work to help ensure that the necessary arrangements are in place for us to fully meet our equality duties and deliver against the ten equality objectives that we had set ourselves. Progress made on delivering our Plan has been reported each year in our annual Equality Reports; our [Equality Report for 2016-17](#) was published in September 2017.

After reviewing and taking account of the progress we have made over the last four years, we have now developed a revised suite of equality objectives which we believe should underpin our work for the period 2018 to 2022.

Before finalising our new objectives and publishing them in our Strategic Equality Plan for 2018-2022, we want to seek the views of our various stakeholders on our proposed objectives and the potential steps we could take in order to fulfil them.

If you have any comments or suggestions on these objectives, please respond either using the response form www.snapsurveys.com, or by email to info@audit.wales by 9 February 2018. We are particularly keen to hear from people representing the interests of protected groups.

We hope that you will be able to take the time to read this short consultation document and look forward to hearing your views.



Huw Vaughan Thomas
Auditor General for
Wales



Lindsay Foyster
Equality Champion and
Non-Executive Board
Member, on behalf of the
Wales Audit Office

Introduction

The Auditor General for Wales is the statutory external auditor of most of the Welsh public sector.

The Auditor General is responsible for the audit of the majority of public money spent in Wales, including the funds that are voted annually by the National Assembly. Significant elements of this funding are passed by the Welsh Government to the NHS and local government in Wales.

Public sector audit involves providing an opinion on the accounts and also covers issues such as:

- **regularity (whether public money is being used for approved purposes);**
- **propriety (how public business is being conducted); and**
- **value for money.**

The Wales Audit Office employs professionally qualified staff and utilises other resources, including additional expertise from private sector accountancy firms, to enable the Auditor General to carry out his functions. The Wales Audit Office currently employs around 270 staff.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is often known as the General Equality Duty. Under this Duty, like other public authorities, we must, in exercising our functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act;
- b advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

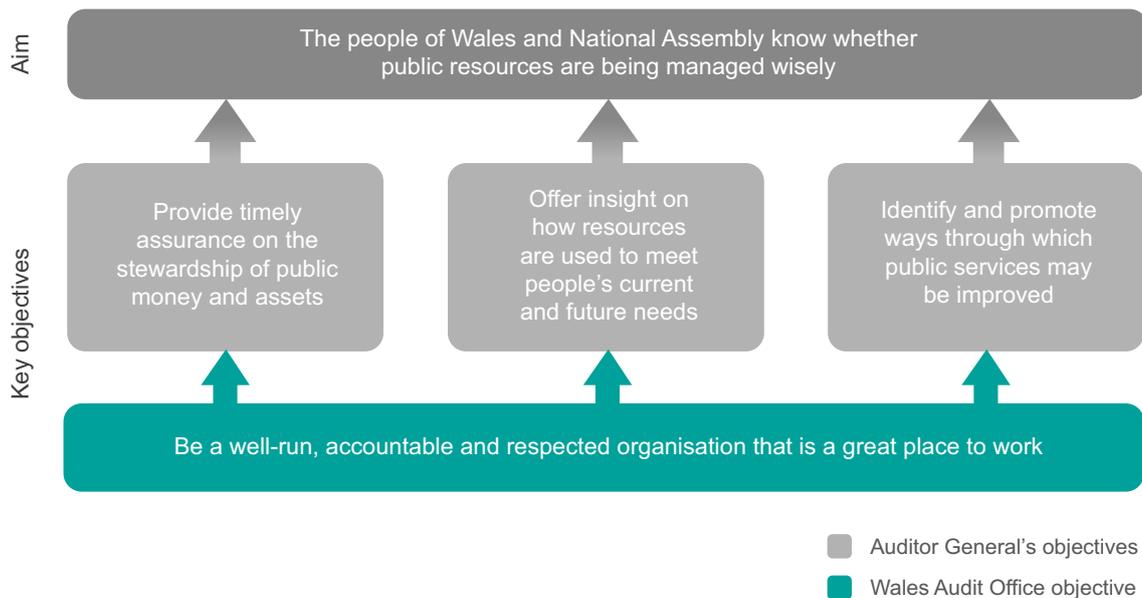
Welsh Ministers have also set Specific Public Sector Equality Duties.

These include:

- a developing specific equality objectives (including through considering objectives to address causes of pay differences relating to protected characteristics) to help meet the General Equality Duty, and setting out the steps that we intend to take to meet those objectives;
- b involving persons representing individuals with protected characteristics in the setting of equality objectives and more widely in the duties;
- c making arrangements for collecting information about compliance with the General Equality Duty and taking account of such relevant information in the setting of equality objectives;
- d monitoring progress in fulfilling our equality objectives;
- e making arrangements for promoting knowledge and understanding of the General Equality duty and the regulations among Wales Audit Office employees;
- f publishing assessment reports setting out, where significant, the likely impact of new policies and practices;
- g publishing an action plan setting out any policy to address gender pay differences;
- h publishing a Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) setting out, among other things, our equality objectives, steps to meet the objectives and expected time to achieve them and arrangements for meeting certain other duties (d, e, f and g above);
- i publishing each year relevant employment information – e.g. recruitment and training statistics by the protected characteristics;
- j publishing each year, progress reports covering among other things, progress towards meeting our specific equality objectives;
- k having regard to the General Duty in procurement processes.

Our aim and strategic objectives

Our aim is that the people of Wales and National Assembly know whether public resources are being managed wisely.



Our first three objectives focus on what we consider to be the threefold purpose of audit – providing assurance, offering insight and promoting improvement.

Our fourth objective underpins the first three; in order for the Auditor General to deliver a high-quality audit service, the Wales Audit Office must be a well-run, accountable and respected organisation that delivers value for money and provides a stimulating and rewarding environment in which to work.

Our proposed equality objectives for 2018-2022

In order to establish a revised suite of equality objectives, our Equality Steering Group and Equality Interest Group¹ have recently undertaken a detailed review of the effectiveness of the steps taken and progress made towards meeting the objectives set out in our current [Joint Strategic Equality Plan](#). A summary of the effectiveness of steps taken and progress made was published in our [Equality Report for 2016-17](#). When developing our revised objectives, particular consideration was also given to upcoming changes in our operating environment, as described at a high level in our [Annual Plan for 2017-18](#).

Our proposed equality objectives for the period 2018 to 2022 are:

Auditor General objectives

1. We will engage with people that represent the interests of protected groups when considering:
 - a what programmes of value for money examinations and studies we will undertake; and
 - b the methods to be employed in value for money examinations and studies that are relevant to the General Equality Duty.
2. We will undertake at least one value for money examination or study that has a primary focus relevant to the General Equality Duty during the four-year period covered by the Plan.
3. We will revise the Auditor General's Code of Audit Practice to ensure the prescription in the Code enables us to better perform the General Equality Duty when undertaking our audit work.

¹ The respective roles of the Steering and Interest Groups are described in our [Equality Report 2016-17](#)

Wales Audit Office objectives

4. We will implement a People Strategy that, among other things, seeks to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations, drawing on our workforce information in respect of the protected characteristics.
5. We will make significant progress towards addressing our structural gender pay differences, alongside unwarranted pay differences in relation to other protected and related characteristics.
6. When procuring externally sourced services, we will:
 - a Include requirements relevant to performance of the General Equality Duty in our tender award criteria; and
 - b comply with the General Equality Duty when stipulating the performance standards to be included in the contract agreement.
7. We will foster good relations between Wales Audit Office staff sharing relevant protected characteristics and those that do not by providing senior and other staff equality 'champions' and supporting relevant staff networks.

Joint objectives

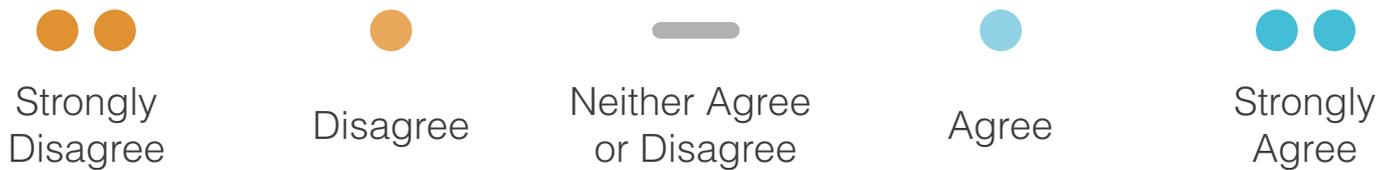
8. We will provide information about our work, including via our website, in a way that is accessible and avoids putting people who have impairments at a substantial disadvantage.
9. We will improve the extent and quality of information such as external feedback that we gather regarding how our work contributes or could contribute to performing the General Equality Duty.

Consultation questions

Consultation question 1

To what extent do you agree with our proposed equality objectives for the four-year period 2018 to 2022?

It would be helpful if you could provide supporting comments.



Consultation question 2

Do you think we should include any additional equality objectives for that period?

It would be helpful if you could provide supporting comments.

Consultation question 3

Do you have any views on the steps we should take in order to fulfil each of our proposed equality objectives?

Your Details

Name and job title (where applicable):

Name of your organisation (where applicable);

Contact details:

Thank you for taking the time to respond; your views will be taken into consideration in the drafting of our next Strategic Equality Plan which will be published by 1 April 2018.

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