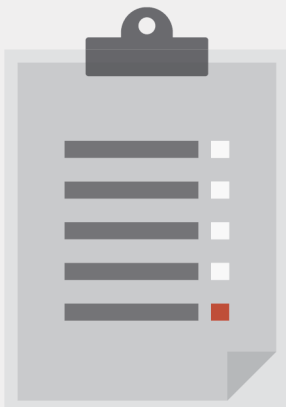


Consultation on our Proposed Equality Objectives for 2022-2026

February 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 2022-2026. Once finalised, the objectives will be incorporated into a joint Audit Wales Strategic Equality Plan which will be published in April 2022.

Audit Wales is the non-statutory collective name for the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office, which are separate legal entities with their own legal functions. Audit Wales is not a legal entity. Consequently, in this document, we make specific reference to the Auditor General or Wales Audit Office in sections where legal precision is needed.

How to respond

Please send us your response by 4 March 2022 by email or post using the details below.

We welcome responses in either Welsh or English.

Email info@audit.wales

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

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 provided above or by telephone on 029 2032 0500.

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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 data protection legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulation 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 data protection legislation. Where such data falls within the scope of a request for information from another person, the provisions of data protection legislation and the Freedom of Information Act 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.

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Foreword

We published our current [Strategic Equality Plan](#) in April 2018, setting out the key things that we intended to do over the period 2018 to 2022 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 nine equality objectives that we had set ourselves. Progress made on delivering that Plan has been reported each year in our annual equality reports. Our [Equality Report for 2019-20](#) was published in December 2020, and our Equality Report for 2020-21 will be published shortly.

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 2022 to 2026. Before finalising our new objectives and publishing them in a revised Strategic Equality Plan, we want to seek the views of our various stakeholders on our proposed objectives and the potential steps we could take to fulfil them.

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.



Adrian Crompton
Auditor General for Wales



Lindsay Foyster
Chair of the Wales Audit Office

Introduction

Who we are

- 1 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 most of the public money spent in Wales, including the funds that are voted annually by the Senedd. Significant elements of this funding are passed by the Welsh Government to the NHS and local government in Wales.
- 2 The Wales Audit Office has functions of providing resources, such as staff, for the exercise of the Auditor General's functions, and of monitoring and advising the Auditor General. The Wales Audit Office currently employs around 270 staff.

What we do



Assure

the people of Wales that public money is being managed well.



Explain

how public money is being used and how it meets people's needs.



Inspire

and empower the Welsh public sector to improve.

- 3 The Auditor General's functions include auditing accounts and undertaking local performance audit work at a broad range of public bodies, alongside conducting a programme of national value for money examinations and studies. These functions may be exercised in combination, if necessary, across different types of bodies, to examine public spending irrespective of who delivers the services.
- 4 Together, as Audit Wales, we audit around £21 billion of income and expenditure, which is over a quarter of Welsh GDP. Increasingly, we are considering the stewardship of human and natural resources alongside our consideration of financial resources and the way in which public bodies account for their use.
- 5 We identify good practice from across the full breadth of our audit work and disseminate this through a range of media, including blogs, podcasts and shared learning seminars and webinars.

Our ambitions



Fully exploit our unique perspective, expertise and depth of insight



Strengthen our position as an authoritative, trusted and independent voice



Increase our visibility, influence and relevance



Be a model organisation for the public sector in Wales and beyond

- 6 We have identified four broad ambitions which collectively describe the path we are taking towards reaching our full potential as a driver of change and improvement at the heart of public services and democratic accountability.
- 7 Each year we publish an [Annual Plan](#) that provides more information on:
 - a. how we follow the public pound in Wales;
 - b. our longer-term ambitions;
 - c. our operating environment;
 - d. our planned programmes of work and associated areas of focus for the next 12 months; and
 - e. how we measure and report on our performance.
- 8 Our planned programmes of work retain a degree of flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and priorities, and new issues of public or parliamentary concern.

Equality and Audit Wales

- 9 The Auditor General's main functions involve examining and reporting on the stewardship of public money by Welsh public bodies. When undertaking this work, we consider how well public bodies are run and the effectiveness of their services. The Auditor General is therefore in a strong position to identify opportunities for helping to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity in the delivery of public services. In reporting on public bodies, and in making recommendations, the Auditor General is able to encourage beneficial changes in terms of equality.
- 10 The Wales Audit Office is committed to providing a work environment that values the diversity of all people, both our own staff and those with whom we come into

contact during our work, and we fully support the rights of people to be treated with dignity and respect. As an employer of around 270 staff, the Wales Audit Office has a significant and direct impact on people in terms of equality. The Board fully recognises the duty to provide equal opportunity across the full range of employment factors, including: recruitment; training; promotion; ways of working; and terms and conditions, including pay.


- 11 Both the Auditor General and Wales Audit Office are required to follow the framework of protection against discrimination, harassment and victimisation brought in by the Equality Act 2010, including the General Duty (the Public Sector Equality Duty). We also have a responsibility to uphold the conventions set out in the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 12 The Welsh Ministers have set further specific statutory equality duties which apply to public authorities in Wales. These include:
 - a. developing specific equality objectives to help meet the General Duty;
 - b. setting out the steps that we intend to take to meet those objectives;
 - c. involving persons representing individuals with protected characteristics in the setting of equality objectives and more widely in the duties;
 - d. making arrangements for collecting information about compliance with the General Duty and taking account of such relevant information in the setting of equality objectives;
 - e. monitoring progress in fulfilling our equality objectives;
 - f. publishing a Strategic Equality Plan setting out, among other things, our equality objectives, the planned steps to meet the objectives and the expected timeframe to achieving them; and
 - g. publishing, each year, reports on progress towards meeting our equality objectives.
- 13 Since the Auditor General and the Wales Audit Office are separate legal entities with their own respective functions, each are required to develop their own equality objectives. However, as we work together in the same organisation, for coherence and economy we have agreed to bring our objectives together in a joint plan for Audit Wales.
- 14 While neither the Auditor General nor the Wales Audit Office are listed public bodies for the purposes of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, we nonetheless seek to embed the principle of sustainable development in the way we run our business, and to maximise our contribution to achieving the seven Welsh well-being goals, including that of a more equal Wales.


- 15 Similarly, while neither the Auditor General nor the Wales Audit Office are bound by the new Socio-economic Duty, we nonetheless seek to act in the spirit of the Duty. We are mindful of the need to reduce the inequalities of outcome that result from socio-economic disadvantage in our strategic decisions, both in relation to the way we run our business, and in the planning and delivery of our programme of audit work.


Our proposed equality objectives

- 16 Our current equality objectives are set out in the joint Strategic Equality Plan we published in 2018. Since publishing that Plan, we have undertaken and published annual reviews of the effectiveness of steps taken and progress made towards meeting the equality objectives, the most recent of which will shortly be published in our Equality Report for 2020-21.
- 17 To establish a revised suite of proposed equality objectives, our Executive Leadership Team considered the following:
 - a. whether existing objectives for which steps taken and progress made had been assessed as effective or highly effective should be removed from the list;
 - b. whether any objectives for which steps taken and progress made had been assessed as having limited effectiveness should be retained, and if so whether some rewording was required to ensure they remain fit for purpose; and
 - c. whether any new objectives should be added to the list to reflect our current circumstances, with particular reference to our employment information analysed by equality characteristics, our strategic and operational risk registers, the analysis of our operating environment as described in our Annual Plan for 2021-22, and the emerging areas of focus for our longer-term strategic plan for delivering our ambitions.
- 18 The initial outcome of those discussions, following further consideration by the Wales Audit Office Board and our staff Equality Interest Group (Pawb), is that we propose to replace our previous set of nine objectives with a new suite of four, as set out in the exhibit overleaf.

Exhibit 1: proposed new equality objectives

| Proposed objectives | Steps we intend to take to fulfil them | How we propose to monitor the progress made |
|---|--|---|
|  <p>1. Ensure relevant and timely coverage is given to equality, diversity and inclusion matters in our programme of audit work.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At regular intervals, engage with a range of people and organisations that represent the interests of protected groups, to seek their views on potential work for inclusion in our forward programme, and on the approaches to be adopted in relevant examinations and studies. • Enhance our research and development activity in areas including equality, diversity, and inclusion. • Strike the right balance in having a bank of pre-planned audit projects and sufficient flexibility to respond to emerging areas of interest, including in relation to equality, diversity, and inclusion. • Provide support and training for staff on how, when exercising the Auditor General's functions, auditors must also perform the General Equality Duty, as set out in the Auditor General's Code of Audit Practice and related guidance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek the views of representatives of protected groups on how individual pieces of work that have already been undertaken and that were relevant to the General Equality Duty have addressed the needs of protected groups. • Seek staff views on their confidence in performing the General Equality Duty when exercising the Auditor General's functions. |

| Proposed objectives | Steps we intend to take to fulfil them | How we propose to monitor the progress made |
|---|---|--|
|  <p>2. Better understand the diverse communication needs of our audiences and strengthen the accessibility of our outputs and messaging.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with a range of people and organisations that represent the interests of protected groups, to develop a better understanding of the communication needs of our audiences. • Taking account of that feedback, improve and enhance the readability and accessibility of our audit products and other publications to maximise their reach and impact. • Proactively identify opportunities to showcase our work to a wider range of audiences, and repurpose our outputs accordingly. • Equip our staff to better exploit opportunities to influence a wide range of audiences. • 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. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek the views of representatives of protected groups on the readability and accessibility of our audit products and other publications. • Collect annual statistics on the usage of accessibility software installed on our website. |

| Proposed objectives | Steps we intend to take to fulfil them | How we propose to monitor the progress made |
|---|---|--|
| <div data-bbox="189 568 330 703"></div> <p>3. Attract and retain talented people from all walks of life, and ensure our workforce is more representative of the diversity of our communities in Wales.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review our recruitment and assessment approaches and use of language in our job adverts, with a view to removing any potential barriers that relate to particular protected characteristics. • Train recruiting managers and others who are involved in the recruitment process to ensure that common standards and processes are being adhered to. • Develop our graduate and apprentice programme, utilising outreach work to ensure that we attract people of all ages, walks of life and communities. • Further develop networks and outreach activities to enhance our workforce diversity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect workforce information, as required by the Welsh equality regulations, and draw comparisons with appropriate benchmarking. • Monitor our pay gaps across a range of equality characteristics using a similar format to that required by the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017. • Monitor progress made on planned actions aimed at addressing our structural pay differences and increasing the diversity of our workforce. |

| Proposed objectives | Steps we intend to take to fulfil them | How we propose to monitor the progress made |
|--|---|---|
|  <p>4. Embed a culture of inclusion, trust, and self-reflection, where everyone feels valued and respected.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide senior and other staff equality 'champions' and support the work of Pawb and relevant staff networks. • Raise awareness among staff of the identity of those champions and their role in fostering good relations and embedding our desired behaviours, and in providing support and advice where staff express any concerns. • Work with the Chairs of our staff women's and LGBT networks to determine and provide appropriate levels of support. • Refresh and update our mandatory equality, diversity and inclusion training for all staff. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run a staff survey using the Civil Service People Survey core questionnaire, which includes questions in the thematic areas of inclusion and fair treatment, organisational culture, and discrimination, bullying and harassment. |

Consultation questions

Question 1

To what extent do you agree with our proposed equality objectives for the four-year period 2022 to 2026?

Choose an item from the drop-down menu below:

It would be helpful if you could provide supporting comments in the comments box below:

Question 2

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

Choose an item from the drop-down menu below:

It would be helpful if you could provide supporting comments in the comments box below:

Question 3

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

Choose an item from the drop-down menu below:

It would be helpful if you could provide supporting comments in the comments box below:

Question 4

Do you have any views on how we propose to monitor the progress made towards fulfilling each of our proposed equality objectives?

Choose an item from the drop-down menu below:

It would be helpful if you could provide supporting comments in the comments box below:

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 in Spring 2022.



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Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.