



Notes to editors

Press release: NHS spending on agency staff has “increased markedly” in recent years

- This report sets out key facts about the use of agency staff by NHS bodies in Wales – including expenditure; analyses by health bodies of underlying reasons; national initiatives to control this type of spending; and the challenges that lie ahead.
- The NHS in Wales employs almost 80,00 full-time equivalent staff (excluding GP’s and those employed directly by GP Practices) and spent £3.62 billion on pay in 2017-18.
- But NHS Wales also needs additional staff to supplement the full-time workforce – when key posts are vacant; staff are on sick leave, holiday or absent for some other reason; or when demand for services increases, for example through winter pressures. These posts can be filled by paid overtime; internal staff banks; private sector agencies or people who enter into a direct contract with health bodies on an ad hoc basis.
- Staff supplied by agencies tend to be the most expensive source of temporary staff. NHS bodies in Wales collectively spent over £160 million on agency staff in 2016-17, more than four times the equivalent figure for 2012-13. There have also been large increases in agency spend in other UK countries.
- The Auditor General is the independent statutory external auditor of the devolved Welsh public sector. He is responsible for the annual audit of the majority of the public money spent in Wales, including the £15 billion of funds that are voted on annually by the National Assembly. Elements of this funding are passed by the Welsh Government to the NHS in Wales (over £7 billion) and to local government (over £4 billion).
- The audit independence of the Auditor General is of paramount importance. He is appointed by the Queen, and his audit work is not subject to direction or control by the National Assembly or government.
- The Wales Audit Office (WAO) is a corporate body consisting of a nine member statutory Board which employs staff and provides other resources to the Auditor General, who is also the Board’s Chief Executive and Accounting Officer. The Board monitors and advises the Auditor General, regarding the exercise of his functions.