



Assure, Explain, Inspire

Our strategy 2022-27

A time of challenge and opportunity

After a long period of austerity and the economic hit from the pandemic, the coming years will offer little respite for the already stretched public finances in Wales.

The pandemic has posed enormous challenges but demonstrated great strengths in our public services. The opportunity now is to build on the progress made in transforming the way services are provided to tackle the long-standing challenges that have pre-occupied the Welsh public sector for some time.

Despite these changing times, our purpose at Audit Wales remains constant – to assure people that public money is being managed well, to explain how that money is being spent and to inspire the Welsh public sector to improve.

That is why the timing and focus of this strategy are so important. Through its development we have challenged ourselves as an organisation, sought the scrutiny of others and gained a wealth of insight to help us identify a clear direction and focus for the next five years.

Many of the challenges we face in Wales today – in areas such as inequality, public health, and the climate emergency – are complex, interconnected and span the remits of a range of organisations. Our audit focus will evolve to reflect that complexity and how services are organising themselves to respond to the challenges we face.

We intend to place a greater emphasis on thematic reporting, comparisons across audited bodies and the identification and sharing of good practice. We will build greater flexibility into the design and delivery of our work programme to respond to emerging issues and invest in our research and development capacity and capability.

The single biggest area of our work supports the delivery of the Auditor General's annual opinions on financial statements. In the coming years we plan to develop a range of outputs that make greater use of this wealth of intelligence.

To achieve our vision, it is vital that our work is impactful and that our messages hit home. This relies heavily on the effective relationships we have with our audited bodies. We will seek to engage new audiences while creating more engaging, timely and topical audit products and sharper, bolder messaging.

Perhaps most importantly, we are committed to ensuring Audit Wales is a model organisation for the Welsh public sector, one that recognises and values our people within a culture that allows everyone to thrive. Our commitment to challenging inequality is embedded in our work and we will always challenge ourselves to do more. We are proud to be a bilingual organisation and continue to embrace the Welsh language in our activities.

The sustainable development principle and the 'five ways of working' set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act are key to our work. We will also grasp the opportunity to be a digitally mature, data driven organisation, while proactively managing the risks of cyber security.

Like all public sector organisations, we face financial challenges and will take a strategic approach to align our medium-term financial position, our service provision and the shape of our workforce.

The pandemic has posed personal and professional challenges for us all. We are indebted to all Audit Wales staff and thank them for their professionalism, hard work and commitment to public service through these challenging times.



Adrian Crompton

Auditor General for
Wales

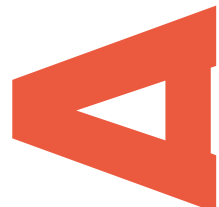


Lindsay Foyster

Chair,
Wales Audit Office

Our purpose and vision

Our purpose is at the heart of everything we do in Audit Wales. However, we recognise that the way in which we deliver this will evolve to reflect the significant challenges facing public services.



ASSURE
EXPLAIN
INSPIRE

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

Strategic, dynamic, high quality audit programme

Targeted and impactful approach to communications and influencing

Culture and operating model that allows us to thrive now and in the future

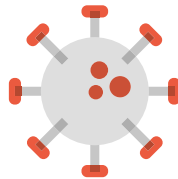
◀ Emerging trends

Our work programme will be shaped by three trends identified in our Picture of Public Services analysis:



A changing world

- Climate change: achieving a fair and just transition
- Equalities: responding to demands for a fairer and more equal society
- Constitution: managing the opportunities and risks of new relationships within the UK



The ongoing pandemic

- Direct costs of response
- Economic hit knocks-on to public finances
- Legacy costs of long-term impacts



Transforming service delivery

- Systems and culture to support new approaches to service delivery
- Purposeful collaboration
- Long-term planning and prevention
- Harnessing technology where appropriate
- Using data to learn across the whole system

This analysis will be refreshed continually to ensure they remain relevant.

◀ A Wales perspective

Our strategy does not sit in isolation from the wider Welsh public sector landscape.

We will apply the lens of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to all our thinking and decision making.

Our ambitions for Audit Wales to become a modern, forward focused model organisation for Wales will ensure that our strategic drivers around future workplaces, our digital vision, workforce and financial plans and net-zero ambitions are interconnected – creating a strategic eco-system that creates synergies and value across the organisation and the wider public sector.



How we got here

The development of this strategy has been informed by the Wales Audit Office board, executive leadership team and staff. We have engaged with key stakeholders to test and refine our thinking.

Our assessment of progress against our four ambitions has identified areas of strength and those we want to improve.

Fully exploit our unique perspective, expertise and depth of insight

Where we are

- We have integrated teamwork and outputs.
- We have specialist teams and expertise.
- We are evolving our use of technology.
- We share knowledge.
- We have a depth of knowledge and insight.

Where we want to be

- We have integrated cross-organisational and sectoral teams, supported by better resource management.
- We have staff working across a range of projects and activities.
- Using technology to enable seamless sharing of knowledge and past work.
- Working in the open with greater transparency and visibility of our work.

Strengthen our position as an authoritative, trusted and independent voice

Where we are

- We produce high-quality, evidence-based reports.
- When our work hits the target, it is well referenced by our stakeholders.
- Build on our pace of publishing to deliver work on 'the right issues at the right time'.
- Stakeholders attribute value to national and local work but some differentiate between the two.
- Our accounts work is trusted and delivered on time, and we are seen as experts in the field.

Where we want to be

- We are at the forefront of thinking and are a trusted commentator of choice.
- We can identify and draw on a wide sphere of expert knowledge and innovative practice.
- We have bold, clear messages and do not shy away from delivering tough messages.
- We horizon scan and proactively pick up emerging topics where we can engage using existing reports or work in progress.

Increase our visibility, influence and relevance

Where we are

- Our engagement with target audiences is good and we deliver what they need.
- We seek feedback on our performance with stakeholders.
- We share deep insights with stakeholders.

Where we want to be

- We share our insight and knowledge at external events.
- We horizon scan for key events/emerging issues.
- We increase our media presence.
- We create different outputs to meet the needs of different audiences.

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

Where we are

- We have strong processes that ensure good governance, risk management and control of resources.
- Our senior leaders take time to consider complex decisions.
- We have evolving performance management arrangements.
- We are removing legacy cultural and structural barriers.
- We promote equalities.

Where we want to be

- Building our reputation as a forward focused and innovative modern organisation.
- Embedding the sustainable development principle into how we do business.
- Deploying resources to maximise economy, efficiency and effectiveness, informed by thorough and robust data and management information.
- Our managers are drivers of change, providing strong and united leadership across the organisation.
- We are forward-looking, developing skills and capabilities to meet business need.

◀ One Audit Wales

Our reputation and impact depend upon the quality of work we deliver and everyone in Audit Wales has a part to play. Central to the success of this strategy is a relentless focus on ensuring the quality of our audit work and effectiveness of our internal operation in the following ways:

- We have the right people, doing the right things with the right skills.
- We invest in technology and skills.
- Our staff are clear about our direction of travel and their role in achieving our ambitions.
- Our leaders create the conditions for people to thrive and engage.
- Our people have the best possible development and ways of working to deliver high quality audit work and grow in their roles.
- Employee interactions maximise individual and team performance.
- We respond to feedback and have a culture of continuous improvement.
- Our change activities are anchored in improving quality and impact.



◀ What our stakeholders told us

What we said about our strategy

Strategic, dynamic and high-quality audit programme

- This will require us to set out our programme in a different way, emphasising it is more flexible than in the past.
- Form dynamic development groups drawn from those with experience and knowledge.
- A visible programme of work seems to be a 'should have' rather than a 'nice to have'.

Targeted and impactful approach to communications and influencing

- Aiming to ignite light bulbs and empower audited bodies to think and draw up solutions as we go is key to impact.
- We need to consider the differing audiences and ensure that communication matches their needs.
- Invest in finding out who our audiences are, and what they want to hear from us.

Culture and operating model that allows us to thrive both now and, in the future

- Make timelines visible. Show where challenges happen and make pace a priority.
- Effective feedback can only strengthen our leadership capabilities.

“ It is so important to follow where the money has gone and what difference it has made ”

What our external stakeholders said

- I like the thematic approach – focusing on the right topics delivering outcomes for citizens.
- It is so important to follow where the money has gone and what difference it has made.
- Look at how organisations work with people to prevent complex issues.
- Focus on good practice from outside of Wales. It is time to be radical.
- Work across sectoral silos, reflect the impact of collaboration and partnership working.
- If things go wrong, we need to know.
- Maximise the insights from the accounts programme.
- Create opportunities for greater collaboration.

◀ Our focus for the next five years – themes and outcomes

We have identified three areas of focus where we will prioritise action to achieve our ambitions, alongside the delivery of our core statutory responsibilities.

- Strategic, dynamic and high-quality audit programme.
- Targeted and impactful approach to communications and influencing.
- Culture and operating model that enables us to thrive both now and in the future.



Strategic, dynamic and high-quality audit programme



We will....

Strike the right balance in having a bank of pre-planned audit projects and sufficient flexibility to respond to emerging areas of interest.	Establish research capability and capacity and use it to shape our audit programme.	Take a more holistic approach to audit delivery, that draws on expertise and knowledge from across the organisation.
Establish a rigorous and transparent process for managing our local and national audit programmes.	Make more use of relevant previous work when responding to emerging areas of interest.	Drive continuous improvement in the quality of our work through the application of all relevant international auditing standards.

Our measures of success

- Statutory deadlines: proportion of audit products delivered by the required statutory deadline.
- On time: proportion of other key audit products delivered in accordance with the planned timetable for ensuring timely and impactful reporting.
- Quality: proportion of reviewed audits that are delivered in accordance with Financial Reporting Council (FRC) quality standards.
- Credibility: proportion of stakeholders that consider us to be an independent and authoritative communicator on the governance and stewardship of public money and assets.
- Providing insight: proportion of stakeholders who said that through our work, they gained useful insight that they would not have acquired otherwise.
- Driving improvement: proportion of stakeholders who believe our work has led to improvements in the provision of public services.
- Savings identified: value of potential savings, income, productivity gains and other financial benefits identified through our work.

Targeted and impactful approach to communications and influencing



We will....

Adopt a campaign-style approach to external communication, built in from the start of projects.	Sharpen our messaging and presentation and strengthen our digital presence.	Proactively identify opportunities to showcase our work and repurpose our outputs accordingly.
Equip staff to better exploit opportunities to influence a wide range of audiences.	Take a more prominent role in shaping the future of public audit.	

Our measures of success

- Proportion of stakeholders who rate our good practice events useful or very useful.
- Number of visits to our website where at least one action is performed, eg download a report, click on a video.
- Number of social media engagements, ie interactions with our posts such as a like, a comment, or retweet/share.
- Number of instances where we present audit learning to key policy working groups or at relevant externally hosted events.

Culture and operating model that allows us to thrive both now and, in the future



We will....

Embed a culture where everyone feels they have a voice and are valued, and where successes are widely celebrated.	Increase opportunities for collaboration, innovation and the sharing of ideas.	Ensure our ways of working lead to quick and effective decision making that is open and transparent.
Develop our workforce for the future through agile performance and talent management arrangements.	Strengthen leadership capabilities across the organisation.	Work in a smart and sustainable way where we maximise the potential of our people and physical assets.

Our measures of success

- Positive staff engagement and employee experience scores in our People Survey.
- Reduced sickness absence.
- Level of variance from our estimate.
- Value of cost savings and efficiencies.
- Reduced CO₂ emissions.
- Trainees achieving first-time passes in their professional exams.



Audit Wales

24 Cathedral Road

Cardiff, CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone: 029 2032 0660

We welcome telephone calls in
Welsh and English.

E-mail: info@audit.wales

Website: www.audit.wales