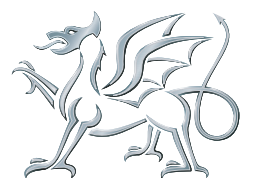




Making the Connections: Delivering Better Services for Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government
vision for public services

October 2004



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Why our approach is right for Wales

Spending on our public services in Wales has grown rapidly since devolution, and will continue to expand over the coming years, although at a more moderate rate.

A key challenge for the second Assembly term is to ensure that this extra investment makes the maximum possible difference – both improving the quality and extending the quantity of services for people in Wales.

There are two basic models which both aim to extract extra value from spending on public services. The first is based on breaking up large-scale organisations into smaller bodies with delegated budgets and a greater degree of freedom as providers. Enhanced efficiency and responsiveness levels emerge through the more competitive and entrepreneurial environment for management.

Whereas competitive models appear at first sight to offer the public service user more choice, in practice it is the management team who are empowered by it. They either prosper or wither, according to how much custom their business unit generates. Such models exclude the empowerment of the public service user in the design of the delivery system. There is a perfectly respectable case to be argued for this model, but not for Wales.

The second model, which we have opted for, seeks to maximise efficiency gains through the scale economies of more effective co-operation and co-ordination between agencies across the whole of the public sector, not excluding the independent, voluntary and private sectors. By deploying new ICT applications, for example, we can deliver shared corporate services, e-procurement and e-government at lower costs, thereby releasing resources to front-line services. By using co-ordination rather than competition, users and producers of public services are enabled to be on the same side. As a consequence, the best outcomes are obtained when those who use and those who provide services work together in collaboration.

Our approach is based firmly on the second model. We are clear that this path will produce better results, and not only in terms of efficiency gains. This also releases the enterprise and flair of all the management and staff to improve performance, but in a different way. More significantly still, a collaborative model fits better with Wales' size as a small country of three million people, our geographical pattern with an absence of large metropolitan areas and Welsh values and attitudes and sense of ownership in our public services.

Our preference for collaboration and co-operation provides the fundamental underpinning of all that follows in this document.

Rhodri Morgan AM



Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM
First Minister for Wales

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1. Introduction

1. The first four years of the Assembly were about establishing a new form of democratic government in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government's priority for the second term is our vision for public services and the way they are designed and delivered in and for Wales.
2. We care deeply in Wales about our public services. We see them as belonging to our community, not just as providers to customers: people will speak of 'our school' and 'our health centre'.
3. Some public services are not locally based. The nature and range of services also reflects shared interests, from culture and language to business, that may be much wider than local community.
4. The way in which services are provided can never be static. Services are having to reach out more, and become more flexible and more responsive to new circumstances.
5. This is having an increasing impact on everyone involved in delivering services. Our local authorities, the NHS, educational institutions and national agencies are finding new ways of responding to the challenge. The voluntary sector is also playing an increasing role, particularly in delivering new services and reaching out into communities. The private sector too supplies a wide range of services and know-how to and on behalf of government where it is best placed to contribute.
6. The Assembly Government is part way through an unparalleled period of sustained investment in our public services, with total funding almost doubling from just over £7 billion to nearly £14 billion per year between 1999-2000 and 2007-08.

7. As a result, our young people are attaining better results at school, our colleges and universities are educating more students, there are far more jobs, and better quality jobs, available in our economy, our infant mortality rates have improved and our NHS is employing record numbers of doctors, nurses and other paramedical staff to improve our health.

8. What is needed now is to improve the way services are delivered. We need to bring the users of services into the process of devising those services, alongside the provider and the professional. People and businesses can get or feel lost in the system or fall outside it altogether. They can face frustration because different providers do not co-ordinate their work sufficiently, or because the pathway through the available possibilities and options is unclear.

9. The Assembly inherited a large but fragmented array of public services, which did not necessarily reflect the needs of Wales. Now that devolved government does enable us to do exactly that, we have set out our broad objectives in *Wales: A Better Country* and other policy documents. This paper is about *how*: our vision for how we will deliver, with our partners, public services which reflect the distinctive nature, needs and values of Wales.

2. From Vision to Action

Our vision

Excellent public services are essential to a prosperous, sustainable, bilingual, healthier and better-educated Wales.

Joint working is vital to deliver public services of top quality: they must be responsive to the needs of individuals and communities, delivered efficiently and driven by a commitment to equality and social justice.

Our four principles for better services

Citizens at the centre

1. Our vision brings citizens and communities into the centre of the way public services are designed and delivered. Services should be more responsive to the needs of users, and should be easy to access for people in Wales of all generations and circumstances.
2. In developing our health and wellbeing, in learning throughout our lives, in enhancing the quality of our communities, we all make our own contribution. Effective services will be designed and delivered with the active participation of citizens, communities and businesses.

Equality and social justice

3. Every citizen must have the opportunity to contribute to the social and economic life of Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all, whatever their race, language, religion, disability, age, gender and sexual orientation.
4. Social justice means that we have to reach out to those who are hardest to reach and target resources where the need is greatest. Our public services must have the flexibility to respond to the most excluded and vulnerable.

Working together as the Welsh Public Service

5 Our experience shows that improving service delivery will be achieved by more co-ordination between providers to deliver sustainable, top quality, responsive services, rather than by increased competition between providers.

6. Services should be delivered by whichever organisations are best placed to secure the outcome we need. In many cases, this will involve partnership with the voluntary and private sectors. Some services are best delivered by regional or national centres of expertise, but they will still be accessible to all, albeit sometimes at a distance from the user's home.

Value for money

7. We are determined that people in Wales should get the greatest possible value from the investment in public services. We need to maximise the resources going to front-line service delivery. Support services will increasingly be shared between organisations to achieve efficiencies through the application of the most up-to-date processes and technologies.

The way ahead

8. To deliver the vision, the Assembly Government will lead and co-ordinate a five-year programme of action to 2010.

Putting the citizen centre-stage

9. The Assembly Government will lead, with its partners, the development of services which are more citizen-centred, building on innovative experience in Wales and elsewhere. This means:

- Users and producers working together to design, develop and deliver services, working across organisational boundaries;
- Better front-line access and support for people using the services; and
- Greater participation by citizens, communities and businesses in the way that services are designed and delivered.

10. Services focusing on citizens' needs are not universally available in Wales, although many good examples can be found. It does mean significant changes in the way that services are designed, planned and delivered. Actions include:

- Setting out the entitlements and responsibilities of citizens and communities as users of services;
- Promoting radical approaches to the way in which services to particular groups (e.g. Welsh speakers, disabled people or start-up businesses) are designed, delivered and evaluated by working across organisational boundaries;
- Promoting best practice in customer service, emphasising the need for service providers to reach out actively to the most excluded;
- Exploring new ways to support vulnerable people in their relationships with public services;
- Delivering the next phase of e-government to improve access to services and simplifying the routes for people to make contact with the delivery end;
- Commissioning much better information and evidence on how citizens and communities view services, how needs are changing and how services are performing and, especially, underperforming; and
- Greater opportunity for individuals to be involved in decisions affecting them and for front-line staff to respond to their needs.

The Welsh Public Service ideal

The Welsh Public Service

The Government has a radical vision of a Welsh public service, sharing common goals and working across functional and organisational boundaries. We will use the opportunity conferred by devolution to bring together the different elements of the public service in a more integrated way – to create greater dynamism, with more efficient and effective service delivery.

The merger of a number of ASPBs into the Welsh Assembly Government is a significant step towards the achievement of a Welsh public service.

The Welsh public service covers local government, the NHS, national bodies sponsored by the Government, national parks, universities, colleges, schools and others. These organisations with different purposes, constitutions and accountabilities, and involving business and voluntary sectors in delivery, can be brought together by the shared values of social justice, equality, sustainability and a sense of community.

11. The Government will give new meaning and purpose to the organisation of the Welsh public service. Actions include:

- Providing the incentives, the support and the regulation regime to promote collaboration;
- Improving the ICT infrastructure to enable bodies to work together;
- Further reform of the quango state to strengthen democratic accountability and improve services;
- Simpler relationships between the Assembly Government and its partners, with fewer bureaucratic burdens and more emphasis on accountability and outcomes; and
- Developing a new approach to regulation and inspection, which is more linked to our agenda for improving services, better co-ordinated and more citizen-centred.

Making the most of our resources

12. Citizen-centred services delivered by a more integrated Welsh public service will mean better value for money. To achieve the greatest benefit for the public from its increasing investment in public services, the Assembly Government will work with partners to transfer efficiency gains to the front-line.

13. Actions include:

- A target figure of £600 million improved value for money across the major public bodies by 2010 through more efficient ways of working, achieving cost reductions or service improvements;
- Ensuring that each public organisation adopts a value for money target;
- Helping the public service to secure better value for money from procurement, support services and management of projects through Value Wales, a Welsh procurement and support services office;
- Taking the opportunity of the ASPB merger programme to eliminate duplication in corporate support functions;
- Streamlining corporate support functions more generally across the public service;
- Consultation with partners and audit bodies on the arrangements for defining, securing, monitoring and validating the value for money gains; and
- Making the best use of staff across the public service by reducing paperwork for front-line staff and increasing the time available for actual service delivery.

Engaging the workforce

14. The role of those working in the public service in delivering the vision will be crucial. We will work closely with Trades Unions and employers to support staff in meeting the challenge. Actions include:

- Developing the capacity of public service managers through Public Services Management Wales (PSMW), and co-ordinating the development of a human resources strategic approach for the public service;
- Encouraging the interchange of staff across the public service, and with the private and voluntary sectors, to deepen the expertise in designing and delivering policy; and
- Seeking collaborative solutions to common issues such as workforce planning, recruitment, raising skill levels and career development for tomorrow's managers.

Delivering the action plan

15. Over the next six months, the Assembly Government will be working with partners on the essential building blocks and consulting more widely on the big issues considered in this paper, before launching its action plan in spring 2005.

3. Putting the citizen centre-stage

1. In this chapter, we set out what citizen-centred services means and our plans for putting it into practice¹. Our approach has four strands: **democratic accountability, better front-line access and support, greater responsiveness** and **stronger participation**. These need to be applied consistently across the public service.

2. Our approach covers direct services that deliver to individuals and groups, such as school children, patients, minority ethnic groups, businesses and voluntary groups, and structural services that benefit the community as a whole, such as transport, waste management or planning.

3. The people of Wales are much more than customers of public services; they may be taxpayers, voters, owners of businesses and members of local communities too – with a right and an opportunity to hold public services to account. Public service organisations must therefore respond to people with all these roles in mind, striking a balance between fulfilling individual citizens' needs, including the right to redress, and meeting shared community needs.

4. To deliver citizen-centred services, we need to embed across the public service the systems and practices that will make the voice of the citizen count. Our approach represents a clear strategic direction and a practical means for delivering more responsive services in Wales. Many organisations are already putting it into practice. In the following sections, we set out our approach in more detail and highlight the actions we will take.

¹ We will be publishing separately a working paper that provides a more detailed description of our model.

Box 3.1: Citizen-centred services in Wales

For citizens as individual users, the improvement of public services must be based on:

- Awareness of the services available to them;
- The principle of equality, between the Welsh and English languages, and meeting all other equality duties;
- Improvement in service design to achieve a greater alignment with their needs and the needs of their community, including:
 - Help if they need it, when they need it, in accessing and receiving the right services for their need;
 - The opportunity to be involved in decisions about the right services to meet their needs; and
 - Services to be available at the appropriate community level;
- Fairness, dignity and respect in their contact with public services;
- Information about progress;
- Ease of access to fair and open redress; and
- Feedback that is demonstrably taken into account.

Citizens as community members, tax-payers and voters can expect:

- Services that are open to everyone who needs them, including reaching out to the vulnerable and excluded;
- Services that encourage and enable them to participate in the design and planning of local services, and that inform them about standards, performance and challenges;
- Opportunities to feed back views and concerns to the Assembly Government and to other public service providers; and
- Elected government to ensure that these principles are met.

In return, everyone has a shared responsibility to work together towards better outcomes – for themselves and for their communities.

Democratic accountability: government taking the lead

5. Elected leaders at the national and local level are accountable to citizens for ensuring that they have the range and quality of services they need. This includes defining the outcomes to be delivered, setting and monitoring standards, drawing on the findings of auditors and inspectors, using powers of intervention if necessary and making the often difficult decisions about resources. We will take responsibility for driving forward the citizen-centred approach in partnership with local government.

Box 3.2: Designing services around people's needs: patient care in Gwynedd

Providing rehabilitation and intermediate care services are important in making sure that people get the right care, in the right place and at the right time. These services help prevent unnecessary admissions or readmissions to hospital or long term care.

Gwynedd local authority is using an Assembly Government grant to work in partnership with North West Wales NHS Trust to provide the Tuag Adref community rehabilitation service. The aim is to promote faster recovery from illness and maximise independent living by providing intensive rehabilitation and support to patients in their own homes, for a period of up to six weeks.

Between 1 April 2003 and 31 March 2004, 192 patients benefited from the service, and 84% achieved all of their rehabilitation goals at discharge.

6. We will:

- Evaluate, through reviews from the user's perspective, the full range of services for particular groups to see how they might be improved. Where necessary, we will rethink the design and delivery of the services with users and providers;
- Encourage the further development of joint reviews by the inspectorates and regulators with a strong focus on the experience of citizens; and

- Develop measures of citizen satisfaction with public services in Wales, so that performance can be gauged more accurately and service design improved. Much can also be learned from other countries, and we will seek to identify and apply these lessons in Wales.

Front-line access and support to ensure equality and social justice

7. In *Wales: A Better Country* we set out how we are targeting resources to promote equality and social justice. It is also crucial to ensure that public services are truly accessible to everyone, particularly those who are hardest to reach.
8. People should be helped through the system to access the services they need. This may involve something as simple as a customer service unit, through to more intensive support systems such as personal advisers.

Box 3.3: Front-line access and support: contact management at Cardiff Council

Cardiff Council supports three roaming customer advisors, who meet customers in more convenient and less daunting locations, such as supermarkets. In an effort to improve the environment in one area, advisors went from door to door offering the removal of articles dumped on people's property. The advisors can also offer further Council services should a need be identified.

9. All public bodies in Wales should adopt and spread best practice principles of customer service. Each body should develop the capability to:
 - Publicise how to access its services, and demonstrate that it has provided the means of accessing the services preferred by users;
 - Provide helpful advice to new users on the services to which they are entitled and how they should apply for them;
 - Communicate effectively in English, Welsh and other languages of the communities they serve;

- Track how users are being served to ensure the quality of service; and
- Report on their success in delivering promised standards.

Box 3.4: Front-line access and support: the Better Advice, Better Health initiative in Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government, in partnership with Citizens Advice Cymru, is providing health-related benefits advice to patients in GPs' surgeries and community hospitals.

The programme is reaching many sectors of the population that do not usually seek advice from Citizens Advice Cymru. Patients agree that the programme provides a high level of service, with many preferring to receive advice in their doctor's surgery than in any other context. Participating GPs feel that it has enabled more people to access health care and reduced health inequalities. Over a 12-month period, counsellors saw some 6,500 clients and dealt with over 10,000 new enquiries, providing £3.4m in new benefits for eligible citizens across Wales.

Box 3.5: Front-line access and support: Careers Wales Online

Careers Wales was established in April 2001 as the first all-age careers information, advice and guidance service in the United Kingdom. Its services are available to everyone in Wales through a network of high street careers shops, outreach work in the community, by phone and through its presence in schools and further education colleges.

From November 2004, every resident in Wales will be able to set up their own account on the bilingual Careers Wales Online website (CW Online). Users will be able to interrogate a database of learning opportunities across Wales and access comprehensive information about available jobs.

CW Online will also be a valuable resource for schools and colleges to prepare students for the world of work. In addition, it will provide a gateway to assistance from careers guidance experts.

10. We will support the improvement of front-line access and support by:
- Publishing best practice guidance on customer service;
 - Further promoting e-government in Wales, including the use of the Internet, customer management systems and applications such as tele-medicine, as a means of delivering services and communicating with service users;
 - Taking the lead in enabling public service bodies to work together more effectively in providing services and information to citizens through:
 - Better information sharing between public bodies;
 - Stronger ICT networking across the public services (including the Broadband Wales Strategy, to be launched shortly); and
 - Exploring innovative approaches to enable people to access services, such as first-stop gateways for the public for all services in a locality, or advisers who support vulnerable people in their relationships with public services.

Box 3.6: Front-line access and support: contact centres and Internet access to council services in Newport & Wrexham

Both Newport and Wrexham Councils have developed new approaches to making council services accessible to the people they serve.

In Newport, the Council has developed a Contact Centre that aims to handle up to 80% of citizen enquiries at the point of contact, while Wrexham has established a fully transactional website, which is among the most advanced in the UK. This enables citizens to make payments, request services, report problems such as abandoned vehicles or graffiti and complete application forms on-line.

In order to share their expertise to mutual benefit, the two councils have entered into a partnership agreement. Newport council is assisting Wrexham with the establishment of a customer contact centre, and in return Wrexham is supplying Newport with help and advice on website development.

Making services responsive to people's needs

- 11.** Service providers should ensure that, wherever possible, they have designed service options around the preferences of communities and their members, and shaped what is offered to the needs of individuals. Services have to be more flexible, designed using detailed information about people's needs and preferences. Front-line professionals need to have scope to shape service packages in response to people's specific circumstances.
- 12.** Everyone is a partner in achieving better outcomes: as a patient, student or user of any other service, we should all be actively involved in shaping services to best meet our needs.
- 13.** There must be much stronger collaborative arrangements to respond where a service provider experiences a break in service availability. Users should receive a clear explanation of the position and be offered the service from a neighbouring provider wherever possible.

Box 3.7: Responsive services: 14-19 Learning Pathways

14-19 Learning Pathways is a radical plan to place young people in Wales at the centre of learning and to give them more say in what should be provided.

With the support of a learning coach, all young people will be able to choose Learning Pathways that best suit them – mixing and matching vocational, academic and occupational qualifications and experience. Young people will also be represented on 14-19 Networks, established locally to achieve the transition from today's model of provision to the flexible and responsive approach for the future.

Box 3.8: Responsive services: the second offer scheme in NHS Wales

The second offer scheme is an example of how Welsh public services are responding to patients' needs. If a patient's local hospital fails to deliver treatment within the Assembly Government's maximum waiting times for treatment in NHS Wales, a second offer will be made of immediate treatment elsewhere. The scheme does not rely on the patient's capacity to use the system; instead, a central service team contacts them if the waiting time target is not going to be met.

Co-operation between Trusts ensures that the patient receives a joined-up service and that, as the first port of call, spare capacity within NHS Wales is used.

- 14.** We will support the development of more responsive services by:
- Encouraging the design of services which are more flexible, drawing on user reviews and other evidence;
 - Encouraging a more active approach to researching the needs of users; and
 - Promoting good practice on public information about service options and on the involvement of users, where relevant, in the decisions about the service they are receiving.

Embedding community participation

15. Understanding community priorities and building participation into the management of services is just as important as being responsive to individuals' needs. Whether they are serving local communities or serving communities of interest, service providers need to involve those communities in setting service priorities, shaping improvements to services and considering how services should be delivered.

16. The new Community Strategies, co-ordinated by local authorities, provide a means for involving local communities in agreeing local priorities and influencing local services. Communities First is bringing this approach to our most deprived communities. Local partnerships, comprising local people and businesses, statutory bodies and voluntary and community organisations, decide what action is needed to change their communities and take responsibility for its implementation.

Box 3.9: Embedding participation: community safety

An example that illustrates the breadth of possible community involvement - from partnership with government, to joint voluntary action, to individual behaviour - is community safety. Citizens can help to improve the safety of their local areas in a variety of ways, such as:

- Contributing to a consultation exercise on community priorities;
- Sitting as a local stakeholder on a Community Safety Partnership board;
- Participating in specific initiatives such as victim support, or simply helping to reduce the risk of burglaries in a neighbourhood by agreeing to the construction of strong gates and fences adjoining their property;
- Launching or participating in neighbourhood watch; and
- Being vigilant and reporting crime.

17. To consolidate community participation, we will:

- Seek improvements in the way that local service performance is reported to the public, so that citizens and communities can be well-informed. But this will not lead to 'league tables': they do not support service improvement because they can make the turnaround of under-performers harder to achieve;
- Update guidance on community participation;
- Make further improvements to national consultation by:
 - Establishing improved co-ordination across all formal consultations to avoid overloading local people and organisations ;

- Building on recent innovations in consultation, such as e-consultation through Cymru Ar-lein and Funky Dragon, while emphasising greater inclusiveness; and
- Encourage service delivery bodies, as a matter of best practice, to ensure that the user voice is heard at the highest decision-making levels.

Box 3.10: Embedding participation: children and young people

Children and young people are important members of communities, and it is essential that they are afforded maximum opportunities to contribute effectively, and to have their voices heard on decisions that affect their lives. In every area of Wales, Young People's Partnerships, Children's Partnerships and Framework Planning Partnerships can assist service planners and providers to work with children and young people in developing responsive and effective services to meet local need.

4. Working together as the Welsh public service

1. Services which are centred on the needs of citizens require those delivering services to work together as never before. In this chapter, we set out our approach to achieve this through stronger collaborative working, further reform of the quango state, simpler relationships with partners and effective regulation and inspection.

Stronger collaboration

2. Through collaboration, organisations can make best use of specialised resources, overcome problems arising from limited capacity and provide an integrated service that is focused on the citizen. Collaboration needs to take place at the appropriate level and in the appropriate form. Some services need a national approach (e.g. bus passes), some a regional approach (e.g. transport planning), some a local approach (e.g. Communities First).

Box 4.1: Working together: free bus travel for the elderly and disabled

A partnership of the Assembly Government, local authorities and bus operators has delivered free bus passes for the elderly and disabled in Wales. We make regulations and pay for the initiative, while local authorities manage the scheme. All-Wales co-operation means that bus operators accept the passes anywhere in Wales: for instance, a resident of Newport can use the pass to travel from Anglesey to Flintshire using local bus networks.

Box 4.2: Working together: area-based regeneration strategies

Following major clothing industry job losses in south Ceredigion and north Pembrokeshire, the Welsh Assembly Government led the establishment of a dynamic partnership between all the key players in Team Wales. The partnership included local government, the voluntary and private sectors, and developed ambitious action plans involving a total public and private sector investment of around £60 million to help transform the area.

The approach has been widely applauded as effective and a model for working on a collaborative basis.

3. The Wales Spatial Plan will provide a framework to help the planning and co-ordination of services regionally and nationally. Community Strategies will complement the Spatial Plan by feeding in local priorities as well as taking account of factors that go beyond the local authority boundary. The integration of ASPBs into the Assembly Government and our proposals to establish regional offices will provide opportunities for ensuring that Government services are closer to the people, more joined up and more responsive to regional variations in need.
4. The Assembly Government will be expecting all public bodies to review the possible benefits of collaboration wherever it could improve public services and subject to value for money and the need for clear lines of accountability.

Box 4.3: Working together: free swimming for children and young people

A partnership between the Assembly Government, the Welsh Local Government Association, local authorities across Wales, the Sports Council for Wales, the Welsh Amateur Swimming Association and other partners has successfully delivered free swimming in Wales for children and young people aged 16 and under during school holidays.

In its first year, the pilot scheme massively increased the numbers and frequency of young people swimming, with concomitant benefits to child health expected.

Box 4.4: Working together: special educational needs

Specialist services are often best delivered by local councils working in partnership. For example, the majority of special educational needs services in Gwynedd and Ynys Môn are provided through a Joint Committee comprising elected members from each authority. They oversee the work of a unit which includes educational psychologists, specialist teachers and administrative staff. The unit has a service level agreement with each of the two councils. The provider unit works in close partnership with Cynnal, the school improvement service for Ynys Môn and Gwynedd.

In south east Wales, Caerphilly leads a joint service for Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Newport and Monmouth as well as itself.

5. We already have many good examples of close partnership and collaboration in Wales. We propose to encourage greater collaboration through:
- Joint working on procurement and support services (see chapter 5);
 - Developing practical guidelines on partnership working and highlighting examples of successful collaborations;
 - Working with partners to pilot innovative delivery models for joint working, from which learning can be shared on a wider basis;
 - Improving the ICT infrastructure; and
 - Using opportunities in future primary legislation to acquire further powers to promote collaboration at the local and regional level.

Box 4.5: Working together: collaborating to provide consumer advice

Consumer Direct is a pan-Wales collaboration between all twenty two local authorities. Delivered through Cardiff Council, it provides an innovative telephone and on-line consumer advice service which offers clear, practical and impartial advice to Welsh consumers. The Wales pilot is financed by the Department of Trade and Industry and supported by the Assembly Government.

6. The drive for more collaboration between agencies in delivering public services needs to be accompanied by joining up the complaints processes. As and when Parliamentary time allows, we will establish a unified Ombudsman's service for Wales, allowing citizens to make complaints about maladministration to a single point. The Ombudsman's reports will also provide opportunities for public service providers to learn from the experiences of other services.
7. We encourage both the voluntary and private sectors to develop their role in a joined up Welsh public service, helping to deliver high quality services.

Box 4.6: Working together: collaboration on waste recycling in Powys and Ceredigion

Through the 'exemplar scheme', the Assembly Government is supporting collaboration between local authorities and the voluntary and private sectors to increase waste recycling rates.

In Powys, local voluntary groups 'adopt a site' where citizens can deposit items for recycling. The local organisations receive some funding, in return for looking after the site, keeping the area clean and tidy and reporting on spillages or overflows.

In Ceredigion, a materials collection system has been developed which has the potential to increase recycling in small, remote communities. The intention is that the operators of small collection vehicles strike up a rapport with the local community that helps to encourage participation in the scheme and so increases recycling. This initiative also has private sector involvement, which provides logistical support, collection facilities and local markets for materials.

Reform of the quango state

8. Reforming the quango state is an essential part of making the Welsh public service fit for purpose. Our aim is both simple and compelling: to strengthen democratic accountability. In the First Minister's words, "It is this Assembly, with the authority of its democratic mandate, which must assume responsibility and accountability for public policy in Wales. It is for Ministers to determine policy, and for this Assembly to hold us to account."²

9. Our policy is that, subject to the Assembly's powers, where executive Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs) undertake functions that are essentially governmental in character, in that they set or lead on an aspect of public policy or policy delivery, they should be integrated with the Assembly Government. We have already announced that, by April 2006, the Welsh Development Agency, the Wales Tourist Board and Education and Learning Wales – National Council will be brought under the direct control of the Assembly. We are reviewing the remaining ASPBs and an announcement on further reform will be made later this autumn.

Simpler relationships with partners and delivery organisations

10. We want simpler outcome-focused relationships between the Assembly Government and its partners and delivery organisations, so that more resources can be directed to improving front-line services. Less may not mean more, but it should certainly mean better in this set of relationships.

11. We are already simplifying the frameworks for working with our partners and delivery agents. We are putting in place new systems to monitor performance and drive service improvements that reflect the values and scale of Wales, including the performance measurement framework for local

² *National Assembly for Wales Record of Proceedings*, 14 July 2004.

government and the balanced scorecard for the NHS. We are also drawing up simpler service level agreements with the umbrella voluntary sector organisations to set out how we will support work that provides the underpinning infrastructure for voluntary sector activity in Wales.

12. In the longer term, the Government will work to align the performance frameworks of the different sectors more closely. The establishment of the Wales Audit Office from April 2005 will also enhance the accountability of public services.

13. Wherever possible, we want to reduce administrative burdens so that effort can be concentrated on improving front-line public services. We will:

- Reduce the number of plans required from local government;
- Rationalise and simplify grant schemes, whether for public bodies or businesses, to eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and strengthen their support for Assembly Government priorities;
- Simplify and standardise our procedures and processes through the Assembly Government's own business improvement project;
- Encourage organisations within sectors to use common performance measures, which will help them to compare progress with others and identify how they could improve their own services; and
- Work with the inspectorates and partners to reduce the burden of regulation and inspection.

14. We will place even greater emphasis on scrutinising the regulatory impact of all proposed new Assembly-sponsored legislation and policy, in order to minimise the burden placed on business.

15. The new arrangements will place more emphasis on accountability and outcomes, and less on volumes of paperwork and ticks in boxes. They aim to strike the right balance between freedoms to take decisions and innovate, controls to ensure that results are delivered and organisations are accountable for their actions, and incentives for continuous improvement.

16. Where necessary, we will take early action to tackle poor performance, acting as a catalyst for change to put things back on track. Early intervention is the most effective way of turning performance around, and we will work to develop a culture in which help is willingly sought and provided.

Regulation and inspection

17. The fundamental purpose of both regulation and inspection³ (R&I) is to provide professionally independent assurance that public services meet relevant standards, deliver their intended outcomes and represent good value for money.

18. Regulation and inspection therefore play a vital part in ensuring that public services are accountable, effective and efficient. But they also have a cost: the Assembly spends over £40 million each year to fund the work of bodies undertaking audit, regulation and inspection. Inspecting every service area with the same intensity may mean spending expensive R&I resources on looking at services that are generally safe and effective. The organisation providing the service is the one that is accountable for the quality and safety of that service. External inspection should complement and strengthen, not replace, the responsibility that service providers have for evaluating their own performance and for driving up standards from within.

19. In addition, the perceptions and experiences of those who use services need to be recognised in our approach to regulation and inspection.

20. We are therefore going to simplify the layers of regulation and inspection of public services in Wales, making for clearer and more effective reporting structures in which providers of services will be freed up to concentrate more on delivery and users more plainly informed about outcomes. Bodies that are succeeding should be subject to less external scrutiny than those that are doing less well.

³ Broadly speaking, regulation focuses on how far services meet agreed minimum standards in individual settings, such as schools or care homes. Inspection looks at overall service quality and effectiveness, and usually identifies areas for improvement.

Box 4.7: Regulation and inspection: developing a concordat between bodies inspecting, regulating and auditing health and social care in Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government is leading on the process of developing a concordat between bodies inspecting, regulating and auditing health and social care in Wales. This is designed to support the improvement of services for the public and to reduce unnecessary burdens on front-line staff. The intention of the concordat is to gain agreement to a set of principles which support improvement in health and social care services while minimising disruption and duplication, ensuring that information is shared appropriately and encouraging joint inspections.

21. To maximise the contribution of regulation and inspection to the Assembly Government's agenda for the Welsh public service, we will:

- Strengthen the focus on service user, citizen and community interests in planning, undertaking and reporting on regulation and inspection work;
- Enhance the role of R&I in stimulating performance improvement and promoting the spread of good practice;
- Improve the effectiveness of the contribution that R&I's evidence and professional expertise makes to policy development; and
- Promote greater collaboration between the R&I bodies on planning their reviews, collecting data and sharing knowledge and expertise, which will improve effectiveness while reducing the burdens on inspected bodies.

5. Making the most of our resources

1. Our overall spending on public services will continue to grow, but we have to make the most of our resources. We are committed to maximising value for money in order to deliver better quality services. This chapter sets out our targets for the next five years, and outlines how they will be achieved.

Our value for money targets

2. As part of our five-year programme of change, we will achieve £600 million of value for money improvements across the entire public service. This is equivalent to around 5% of our current total investment in public services. In broad terms, it means public organisations becoming around 1% more efficient year-on-year for the next five years.

3. We shall expect organisations to be delivering at least half the value for money improvements by 2008. We will incorporate efficiency-related incentives in future funding arrangements to encourage and reward engagement.

Delivering the targets

4. This is a big challenge, but success will produce substantial additional resources for the front line. Individual organisations have to decide their own efficiency measures and many of the best ideas will come from staff on the ground.

5. Organisations should benefit from the value for money gains they make. Equally, the public needs to know that the gains are being achieved. Over the next six months, we will work with partners in local government, the NHS, ASPBs, further education and higher education to produce a programme of actions for each sector. To support the programmes, we will expect all public bodies to have value for money targets within their individual business plans that are consistent with our targets. We will work with the different

sectors and audit bodies on the arrangements for defining, securing, monitoring and validating the gains.

6. The keys to achieving our targets are:

- Smarter procurement;
- Streamlining support functions;
- Shaping our services more effectively to meet public need; and
- Making better use of the time, skills and expertise of staff.

We will also actively pursue value for money opportunities that may arise via public-private partnerships.

Smarter procurement

7. The public service in Wales spends about £4 billion a year on procuring goods and services. We can get better value for money from this expenditure. This does not always mean accepting the lowest price: we shall look for added value in relation to sustainable development and seek to secure the widest possible benefit for Wales.

8. There have been a number of successful initiatives in Wales so far. The Welsh Procurement Initiative, its sister local government unit and work in the NHS and further & higher education are all showing the way. But there is more that can be done.

9. The public service should be able to achieve up to £120 million of value for money improvements through better procurement by 2008, with the possibility of more by 2010. To help achieve this target, we will build on the success of the Welsh Procurement Initiative, giving it a wider and more strategic role as Value Wales, a Welsh procurement and support services office. The additional resource will:

- Improve the information base;
- Support collaborative procurement;
- Broker shared service solutions;

- Provide expertise in the complex areas of ICT and construction;
- Promote stronger project management;
- Develop the use of e-procurement;
- Strengthen links with UK procurement agencies;
- Raise procurement skills in public bodies; and
- Advance the sustainable development agenda.

10. We will involve partners in shaping Value Wales to ensure it provides support to their value for money programmes and collaborates effectively with the other successful procurement initiatives that are already in place across the public service.

Box 5.1: Smarter procurement: the Welsh Procurement Initiative

The Welsh Procurement Initiative Team was established in 2002 and is the first specialist public sector body in Europe that exists to address the procurement activity of a country. In its first two years of operation, the Initiative identified over £12 million of savings. It has championed cross-sector collaboration, delivered 650 training places to 80% of Welsh public sector organisations and piloted the use of social clauses in procurement.

In 2003, the Welsh Procurement Initiative Team's success was recognised by winning the prestigious Chartered Institute for Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) public sector award. In 2004 its innovative procurement website has been shortlisted for the CIPS best project award.

Streamlining support functions

11. Functions such as finance, revenue collection, payroll, human resources and estates are essential to the proper management of our services, but we have to find ways of delivering them more efficiently. Much can be achieved by making the most of ICT to simplify and standardise business processes. However, the greatest gains are likely to come from organisations introducing shared support functions.

12. We are not alone in pursuing these opportunities: governments in many countries are developing innovative approaches to reducing back office costs by encouraging public organisations to share support functions. We have already introduced the concept of shared support services for our new Local Health Boards and want to take things further.

13. It should be possible to deliver up to £120 million of value for money gains by improving and sharing support functions across the whole public service by 2010 through:

- Implementing an innovative business change programme within the Welsh Assembly Government;
- Taking the opportunity to eliminate duplication in corporate support functions as ASPBs are merged with their opposite number department within the Assembly Government;
- Requiring ASPBs to explore the scope for collaborations on support services;
- Developing shared support services across the NHS in Wales; and
- Working with partners in local government, higher education and further education to develop and implement opportunities for sharing support functions.

Over time, this is likely to mean fewer posts in support functions, releasing resources for the front line.

Reshaping services

14. Patterns of demand change over time. We have to ensure that our services are designed to meet the needs of today, in order to make sure that they deliver value for money. For example, reducing the costs of maintaining surplus places in some of our schools and making the best use of the public estate are, and will continue to be, a pressure on local authorities and others. In the NHS, the Wanless programme will reshape the NHS and make it more sustainable. More generally, reshaping services can also involve public service providers working across boundaries and entering into joint arrangements when commissioning and delivering services.

Better use of the time, skills and expertise of staff

15. We have to make sure we are using our workforce efficiently. Much has already been achieved: for instance, we are implementing a series of new contracts for people working in the NHS and in other sectors, which will bring employment terms up to date and enable staff to be more productive.

Box 5.2: Better use of staff time: reducing burdens on the front line through tackling workload issues in schools

In September 2004, the Assembly Government set up a School Workload Advisory Panel to offer advice on reducing the bureaucratic burdens on schools in Wales and to report annually on the Assembly Government's progress in doing so.

The six-strong Panel consists of practising head teachers, classroom teachers and a school secretary, all with first-hand experience of the bureaucratic demands made upon schools. Their aim is to work with schools and others to eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and to ensure that workload implications have been properly taken into account in both new and existing policies and initiatives.

16. Other challenges for the public service include reducing sickness absence and workplace stress. The potential benefits are substantial: a reduction of 1 day a year sickness absence per member of staff could be worth around £25 million to the whole public service.

Box 5.3: Better use of staff time: tackling sickness absence in the Welsh Assembly Government

As part of developing its internal human resources (HR) strategy, the Welsh Assembly Government is addressing the need for action to tackle sickness absence and long-hours working. It is benchmarking itself against best practice in the public and private sectors. Line managers are supported by qualified HR advisers and in-house occupational health and welfare services, so that issues are dealt with in a fair, consistent and non-discriminatory way.

6. Engaging the workforce

"Staff are the most important asset in delivering public services irrespective of their status as public servants. Their skills and abilities will be even more important in the future."

First Minister, 14th July 2004

1. The co-operation and support of staff will be critical to delivering our vision. Changes in the way public services are organised and managed will be required, often continuing a journey already begun. Staff need to feel part of these changes. This chapter is about how the Assembly Government will engage with the workforce to meet the challenge.
2. For many staff, our proposals will generate new ways of working and more satisfying jobs. The shape of the workforce will change, however, as more resources are shifted to the front line. The Government will be working closely with organisations, managers and Trades Unions to accomplish the transition as sensitively as possible.
3. It also means more staff having working relationships not only with their employer, but also with partnership structures. This in turn will fundamentally shift the nature of public service management.

A distinctive Welsh approach

4. We have public services that are better resourced and staffed than five years ago. We do not, however, currently make the most effective use of that resource.
5. A large proportion of staff is employed under conditions of service of which the core is negotiated at the England & Wales or UK level. Some have significant Welsh dimensions. To enable more movement of staff between our public bodies, we will be looking at how to overcome the barriers arising from current arrangements, including conditions of service. We are also moving

some of the services directly provided by Assembly Government departments closer to communities, thereby providing good career opportunities for the workforce in their local areas and better reflecting the diversity of the citizens of Wales.

6. Staff are also users of public services. Many will be active in the voluntary sector, with whom public services will increasingly need to co-operate. We will need to find ways of using their experience as users and as citizens as well as deliverers of services. Similarly, public sector bodies will need to consider how they can discharge their duties as employers in ways that meet the wider objectives in this paper, for example by promoting equality and social justice.

7. There has been relatively limited thinking about the Welsh public service workforce as a whole. Individual organisations have human resource (HR) policies and there are plans for the development of particular sections of the workforce, often focused on individual professions. Yet there are many common issues, for example:

- Because the public service workforce is older than the workforce as a whole, there will be a retirement bulge in the next few years and we need to ensure that knowledge and expertise are not lost;
- Health & safety continues to be a significant concern across the public sector, including workplace stress and associated absence;
- The demand for services, and therefore skills and expertise will continue to change as society changes, most noticeably as the population ages;
- There is further to go to improve diversity and equality in public bodies; and
- There are skill shortages and core skills which will need to be strengthened to meet our agenda for public services.

8. We have to do more to ensure that we are encouraging talented people from all backgrounds to enter the public service in Wales. We need better processes for identifying this talent including under-represented groups, and creating the conditions in which it can thrive.

Public Service Management Wales

9. We need a structure to facilitate the delivery of collaborative, commonly agreed solutions. A year ago, the Assembly Government launched its Public Service Management Initiative to address management across the public service. The early days have demonstrated the need and enthusiasm for such an approach, and it has now outgrown its status as an initiative.

10. We are now putting it on a longer-term basis as Public Service Management Wales (PSMW). Over 70 organisations are members. We are creating a distinctively Welsh approach to developing Welsh public servants. The aim is to develop the capacity of public sector managers and bring more coherence and co-ordination to staff management, deployment and development.

11. A strategy for PSMW is being published alongside this paper, setting out its vision and explaining plans for realising it.

A strategic approach to human resources

12. We will develop, with our partners, an overarching strategic approach to HR to provide the support for the improvements described in this paper. PSMW will co-ordinate its development, with a route map in early 2005.

13. This strategic approach will address:

- The way to embed the principles and proposals in this paper into service design and delivery;
- Better leadership and management, including developing future leaders able and committed to realising the vision for public services;
- More effective and co-ordinated staff planning and development for a more integrated Welsh public service;
- More integrated career structures, including flexibility and mobility within and between sectors; and
- Issues of common concern.

These issues will need to be underpinned by:

- Robust information about the public sector workforce;
- Identification and filling of skills gaps; and
- Capacity building, including professional development.

There is also potential for making better use of the HR capacity within the public service and we shall be exploring the scope for innovative approaches.

14. PSMW will bring senior executives, HR directors, improvement agents and management development professionals together and the strategic approach will be developed with them and their organisations. We will also engage staff and Trades Unions, involving them at all stages from the initial thinking to implementation. This will provide the context for organisations to develop their own strategies, including scope for partnership and joint working, and will also inform PSMW programmes.

Box 6.1: Engaging the workforce: an example of joint HR planning

The Workforce Improvement Framework for Social Care Task and Finish Group has identified key issues that are broadly applicable to all:

- The social care sector in Wales is one sector with one workforce;
- We can only achieve quality services through collaboration not competition;
- The workforce must become an integral part of everyone's core business; and
- Recruitment and retention difficulties can only be resolved via a combination of long-term strategic action and individual initiatives.

Box 6.2: Engaging the workforce: emerging themes

An Audit Commission in Wales study of local authorities has identified the following themes:

- A number of authorities are introducing comprehensive training and development programmes for managers. These authorities have tended not to work with other authorities in developing the programmes and they are using a range of different suppliers. PSMW may be able to build on the outcomes of this and share training with those authorities which have not yet developed their own programmes;
- Some authorities have undertaken work to address managerial capacity issues, including innovative approaches to recruitment, retention initiatives and salary reviews. These could be shared to improve practice more widely;
- Few authorities have yet developed a coherent approach to workforce planning;
- Developing a workforce plan or strategy would enable authorities to ensure that they have the right capacity in the right areas to achieve the authority's vision, aims and objectives. It would also help authorities focus on approaches to succession planning; and
- Developing a workforce strategy or plan would also need to be underpinned by a robust human resources strategy which would provide support for the workforce plan through recruitment and retention, training and development, sickness absence management and other mechanisms.

7. Making it happen

1. Putting our proposals into action will demand sustained commitment across the public service. We will work with our partners over the next few months to develop a five-year action plan for publication in spring 2005, and we welcome comments on our proposals.
2. We will provide the structures, resources and incentives to see that the goals set out in this document are achieved. In return, we will ask our partners in the public service to engage actively in delivering the changes that are necessary to deliver the high-quality, citizen-centred services that Wales needs.
3. Over the next six months, we will:
 - Establish a Public Services Improvement Board, chaired by the First Minister, with a membership to be confirmed following discussion with partners, to oversee the action plan and report yearly on progress;
 - Complete an initial assessment of where action needs to be targeted to support the citizen-centred approach;
 - Pursue our quango reforms further;
 - Include a £32 million provision in our budget to underpin the action plan over the next three years on an invest-to-save basis. This is in addition to improvements being funded through our main programmes;
 - Take forward Value Wales, a Welsh procurement and support services office;
 - Consult with audit bodies and partners on the detail of how value for money targets will be established, monitored and validated;
 - Take forward Public Service Management Wales, on the basis of joint ownership with partners;

- Support the development of the new National Leadership and Innovations Agency for Healthcare, the Improvement and Development Arm of the Welsh Local Government Association (Syniad) and Excellence Wales, the new Welsh Local Government Association scheme to celebrate high performance and innovation and encourage learning between authorities; and
 - Test the action plan against our commitments to sustainable development, equality and a bilingual Wales.
4. In return, we shall be asking all the public bodies we fund to:
- Contribute to the development of our five-year action plan;
 - Start addressing what they need to do to deliver the vision set out in this paper;
 - Contribute to the development of the value for money programme of actions for their sector;
 - Ensure that, within their existing business planning arrangements, they:
 - Have clear plans for improving efficiency;
 - Adopt targets for improving value for money that are compatible with the national targets;
 - Put arrangements in place for reporting progress; and
 - Work with us to ensure early action on individual joint working initiatives.

8. How to respond to our proposals

1. You are invited to send your comments on the proposals in this paper by 31st January 2005.
2. Cymru Ar-lein is the Welsh Assembly Government's ICT strategy and electronic consultation tool. Comments can be made:
 - Via the interactive electronic fora at: www.cymruarlein.wales.gov.uk
 - By email to info.age@wales.gsi.gov.uk; or
 - In writing to us at: Making the Connections, Welsh Assembly Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ
3. Remember that you can ring LearnDirect on 0800 200 900 to find out how and where you can contact us electronically, or you can visit your local library to get support in accessing the consultation papers and the Cymru Ar-lein interactive discussion fora.
4. In accordance with its policies on openness, the Welsh Assembly Government intends to publish the responses to this consultation. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of its author are published along with the response, as this gives credibility to the consultation exercise. If you do not wish to be identified as the author of your response, please state this expressly in your response.

Further copies

Further copies of this paper can be obtained from

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It is also published on the National Assembly's website at:

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubconsultation/index.htm>

This document is available in other formats and languages upon request.