

**ALL WALES AUDIT COMMITTEE CHAIRS (AWACC) MEETING  
HIGHLIGHT REPORT**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>8 May 2024</b>
<b>Chair Name</b> <i>Chair Organisation</i>	Nuria Zolle Independent Member, Chair Swansea Bay University Health Board
<b>Secretariat</b> <i>Secretariat Organisation</i>	

<b>In Attendance:</b>	
Rhian Thomas	Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
Karen Bulmer	BCUHB – Independent Member
Matthew Evans	Swansea Bay University Health Board
Anthony Veale	Audit Wales
Hazel Lloyd	Swansea Bay University Health Board
Simon Cookson	Audit Wales
Anne Beegan	Audit Wales
Gareth Jones	Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
Rhobert Lewis	PTHB – Independent Member
Dave Thomas	Audit Wales

<b>Apologies:</b>	

**The following is a summary of the main issues discussed at the meeting**

- 1. Welcome and apologies**
- 2. Minutes from the 20/11/2023**
  - Members were asked to consider the minutes of the previous meeting. There were no pending actions other than the work plan priorities.
- 3. Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda**
  - There were no matters arising.
- 4. National Perspective Scoping 24/25 Work Plan**

Audit Wales, Counter Fraud, Internal Audit and the Board Secretaries highlighted the following areas:

  - Hazel Lloyd highlighted: partnership working (the operational arrangements of the new Joint Commissioning Committee), hosting arrangements, general services, and how assurance is provided to boards.
  - Anne Beegan highlighted: scrutiny of management responses, what good looks like in terms of service provision and commissioning, risk management frameworks.
  - Anthony Veale highlighted the need for chairs to adequately equip themselves to raise key questions in relation to the audited accounts at the draft stage and final stage before board sign off.
  - Matthew Evans highlighted: There is a lot that can be done nationally, with shared service colleagues. The need to work with internal audit colleagues to pick up the fraud risk elements. On a national basis, the team feel they are lacking an overall

umbrella input which indicates whether there is a strategic risk for NHS Wales. There is an opportunity for AWACC to help share national findings.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- Gareth Jones asked whether the feedback in relation to management responses is coming back in good time for the reports to then be received by the relevant audit committees in good time. Simon Cookson responded by saying it feels engagement is tougher now, and that's in part a reflection on the pressure the whole system is under. This does have a knock-on impact in getting reports to audit committee, so that there is a smooth flow of work. Simon Cookson said there is a new set of internal audit standards coming in that the team must operate to. This may highlight some opportunities to improve efficiency and make the process smoother. Dave Thomas said what they try to do in Audit Wales within their report templates, is to embed a management response annex to them.
- Rhian Thomas would welcome any guidance for committees at Cardiff and Vale as they have new Independent Members in their organisation. A discussion took place which highlighted the need to update the audit committee manual. Hazel Lloyd agreed to bring back a response from the board secretaries' group.
- Rhobert Lewis said they have seen an increase in the number of internal audits which means an increase in cost. Therefore, going forwards an assessment on value will need to be made. Gareth Thomas valued the third level assurance the audits gave Rhobert Lewis agreed the question he was posing was which internal audits are thought to be necessary to give that assurance. Karen Balmer highlighted the important role of ensuring value for money. She was mindful of the value it provides in terms of assurances in relation to both improvement and effectiveness of services. Simon Cookson stated that internal audit is delivered through shared services and plans are designed to provide value but also ensure that an opinion can be given at the end of the year. Dave Thomas and Anthony Veale highlighted the role independent assurance plays and the letter received by all audit committee chairs highlighting audit fees.
- Gareth Jones asked if the Fraud Prevention E-Learning module was mandatory in the NHS. Matthew Evans replied it is not mandatory, different approaches are taken to ensure that staff are well trained. Matthew Evans stated that those members of staff that are more at risk of exposure to fraud receive more bespoke or higher level of training.
- Matthew Evans is seeking help in various aspects, including sharing learning and practices, managing risks, conducting comparative work and enhancing efforts against counterfeit arrangements and operational procedures. The chair suggested this could become a regular item for the committee.
- The chair summarised the following action points: Members would like to understand what induction is provided to audit committee chairs. They also wish the following items to be placed in this year's work plan: management responses and trackers, board assurance, scrutiny of accounts, risk management commissioning arrangements, counter fraud.

## 5. Operating Arrangements

The chair highlighted she had reviewed the operational structures of various groups across Wales and developed a similar framework. She sought members views.

- Gareth Jones said he believes for the committee to become effective the meetings need to be more regular and suggested quarterly.
- Rhodri Evans asked for clarity of who are members of this group. Dave Thomas said Audit Committee chairs are members of the group. Members concurred. Dave Thomas said from experience it is good to ensure 75% of the chairs attend the meetings as this will benefit shared learning.
- The chair sought support in terms of setting up the agenda and work programme. She highlighted a planning pre meet with Audit Wales, Counter fraud and Internal Audit had been beneficial and asked whether other members would be willing to support the group. Rhodri Evans agreed he would support the group.
- The chair sought members view in relation to inviting a Welsh Government Representative. Members agreed that a Welsh Government representative attend meetings on an invite basis depending on the agenda.
- Matthew Evans said the Counter Fraud Authority are contracted by Welsh Government to provide certain services to the NHS Wales. Matthew Evans suggested that an update maybe beneficial to the committee.
- The chair summarised the following actions: the operating arrangements will be distributed for comments, meeting frequency will be included in the operating arrangements, Rhodri Evans will join the steering group, a counter fraud representative will be invited to attend the meetings.

## 6. Sharing practice

The chair highlighted the purpose of this session was to informally discuss what is working well and not so well and areas where chairs would welcome further support.

- Opening the discussion, the chair highlighted Swansea Bay's work on developing a board assurance framework. She highlighted how the board is on a journey. She also highlighted how management responses is an area the committee in Swansea Bay is looking at, particularly how these need to be realistic but also specifically address the recommendation. Rhodri Evans agreed management responses need to be tight. He highlighted significant repetition across different sub committees where there are the same papers in every committee. Rhodri Evans said to address this the process should be more streamlined and go back to quality assurance with any issues that are raised the team are aware and acting on them with a plan in place to make sure progress is happening. The chair highlighted how in Swansea Bay they refer internal audit reports to the committee that holds the specific risk. For example, those that relate to patient safety are considered by the Quality and Safety committee.
- Karen Balmer highlighted that it is not just about whether the recommendations have been implemented it's the impact those recommendations have and how effective

- they are. Rhian Thomas shared how Cardiff and Vale they are trying to align the board assurance framework with their new corporate strategy. She highlighted they allocate several Board Assurance framework items to each committee to scrutinise on a quarterly basis which is working well.

#### **7. Meeting Effectiveness**

Members enjoyed the session. They particularly valued the opportunity to share lessons learned and ways of working.

#### **8. Next meeting:**

The date for the next meeting is 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024.