

## Welsh for Adults programme

9 April 2014

Thank you for your letter to the Auditor General for Wales of 28 March 2014, which we received on 3 April 2014, in which you request:

*the criteria that, if met, would initiate a “value for money” enquiry into whether Government funding of the Welsh for Adults programme could be more effectively utilized*

I am responding on behalf of the Auditor General. We do not hold recorded information that directly meets the description of your request because the Auditor General does not operate on the basis that if certain criteria are met, then he will necessarily initiate a value for money study. The Auditor General has discretion in the exercise of his functions, and while he takes various factors into account in deciding how to exercise his functions, he does not fetter his discretion by adhering to a fixed set of criteria to trigger examinations. I can, however, say that factors that the Auditor General will consider in deciding whether to undertake a value for money study, include the levels of public interest and concern, the scale of the issues and the circumstances and risks involved, whether the work would be timely, whether the lessons learned are likely to be transferable and the potential value of the work in terms of monetary savings, improved services and improved management or governance. In addition, the Auditor General aims to maintain balanced coverage across a range of policy portfolios and considers how potential studies might support the delivery of specific strategic themes in his work.

You may be interested in the document I have enclosed with this letter, which is a recently published briefing paper for the National Assembly’s Public Accounts Committee regarding the Auditor General’s programme of value for money studies. Page 15 sets out that the Welsh for Adults programme is one of the topics the Auditor General has been considering as a potential future value for money study, and the Auditor General sets out that he will be “keeping a watching brief over the Welsh Government’s response to the recent review to inform my prioritisation of work to start in 2015-16”.

As you are aware, a report arising from a Welsh Government commissioned review of the Welsh for Adults programme was published in 2013, and that report makes recommendations that are relevant to the question of value for money. Therefore, the Auditor General considers that any possible value for money study would be more effective if it takes into account developments and actions arising from the Welsh Government’s response to that review. The Welsh Government’s statement in response to that review can be found here:

<http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2013/welshforadultsreview/?lang=en>

(I have enclosed a paper copy of the statement for ease of reference)

I should explain that the Auditor General does not have the power to question the merits of the policy objectives of the Welsh Ministers; that is explicitly prohibited in statute. Such scrutiny is a matter for the National Assembly for Wales. As such, any value for money study that the Auditor General might carry out into the Welsh for Adults programme would examine the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the Welsh Government has used its resources, but it would not question the merits of policy objectives.

We have been conscious that your letter to the Auditor General of 6 January 2014 was due a response, but decided that we could provide you with a more substantive response once the enclosed briefing paper was finalised.

I hope you find my response helpful, however if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Ian Phillips