

Mr Darren Millar AM
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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MANAGEMENT OF DIRECT PAYMENTS BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

In December 2015, I wrote to you confirming that I would carry out a desk-top review on how councils are currently managing Direct Payments for adults. This was in response to a letter regarding Direct Payments at Swansea City Council which you passed to me for consideration. The attached annex provides my findings.

My overall conclusion is that the take up of Direct Payments is low and local authority policies, administration and management arrangements are not always supporting vulnerable people to live independently. I reached this conclusion because:

- the number of individuals receiving Direct Payments and the amount spent is small compared to England;
- local authorities policies, practices and promotional activity are not supporting vulnerable people to apply for and use Direct Payments; and
- over half the local authorities in Wales do not have sufficient Direct Payment management arrangements to assure themselves and the public that value for money is consistently being delivered.

The attached annex provides a fuller briefing on my findings. Whilst my work has shown that the use of Direct Payments is growing, the rate of improvement remains low and progress has been slow. The standards of service vary widely and current practices are not consistent enough or of sufficient quality to support vulnerable people to live independently. It is questionable whether these services provide value for money.

I have also made a series of recommendations for Welsh Government and local authorities which, in the first instance, I would suggest the Committee consider. The Committee may wish to reflect whether it takes evidence from Welsh Government and local authorities to assure itself that Direct Payments are being managed effectively and vulnerable people are receiving the necessary help and assistance to live independently.

The Committee may also wish to consider what further action it might take in dialogue with the Health and Social Care Committee given the role of that Committee in overseeing the development of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. For this reason I have copied this letter to the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee and would welcome their view on the findings of my review and how the recommendations I have made can best be taken forward and addressed.



HUW VAUGHAN THOMAS
AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES

Enclosure: *Briefing Paper on the Provision of Direct Payments for Adults by Welsh local authorities*

cc *Mr David Rees AM, Chair, Health and Social Care Committee*