

**Reference:** IR863

**Date issued:** 15 March 2023

## Letter from AGW to NHS Wales Chief Executive re BCUHB Board Effectiveness

I am writing in response to your request for information dated 02 March 2023 in which you requested a copy of a letter sent in strict confidence from the Auditor General for Wales to the NHS Wales Director General with regards the recently published Public Interest Report on Board Effectiveness at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

Please see attached a copy of the letter requested.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Information Officer

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Dear Judith

## **Audit Wales Review of Board Effectiveness at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board**

I am attaching an embargoed copy of a report which sets out the findings from my urgent review of board effectiveness at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. It paints a very worrying picture of dysfunctionality in a number of working relationships at the most senior level of the Health Board. This dysfunctionality is fundamentally compromising the board's ability to work in a unified and cohesive manner to tackle the significant, and in many cases, long standing challenges the organisation faces.

The review has identified a number of immediate areas for action. However, the extent of the difficulties uncovered has led my review team to conclude that the board is unlikely to be able to tackle them without some form of external assistance or intervention. Such an intervention is needed as a matter of urgency to ensure that the board can properly discharge its functions. Underpinning this will be a need to address the divisions that are apparent with the Executive Team, and to move to a model of scrutiny and challenge by Independent Members which is appropriately robust without being hostile and adversarial.

The large number of whistleblowing disclosures that have been submitted by various parties within the Health Board and the content of those disclosures, were among the concerns that prompted my review of board effectiveness given the very destabilising effect they are having on the board. I am aware that the disclosures have been the subject of a rapid independent investigation which the Welsh Government has facilitated. Noting the sensitivities, complexities and specific choreography that is

needed in finalising this work, it is nonetheless important that these investigations are concluded as swiftly as possible together with any subsequent actions required to improve and stabilise leadership arrangements at the Health Board. Similarly, my report stresses the pressing need to resolve any issues arising from the ongoing investigations of the National Counter Fraud Service, the Ernst Young review and my audit of the 2021/22 accounts.

My team has kept in close contact with officials in your department throughout our review, in line with our current tripartite working arrangements. This has been very helpful in ensuring there is a mutual awareness of the different streams of review work underway in response to current significant concerns at the Health Board. I understand that the Minister will be making a written statement on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February which will address any changes to the Health Board's escalation status and further associated actions that are deemed appropriate in the circumstances. I plan to publish the attached report on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February. Given the nature and seriousness of the issues emerging from my work, I have decided to use my powers of reporting in the public interest to make the findings of my work available to a wider audience. As part of the publication process, the report will also be laid with the Senedd's Table Office.

I realise that the extent of the difficulties that Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board currently faces represent something of uncharted territory for the NHS in Wales, and I hope that my work has been helpful in providing some further insight into those problems and actions needed to resolve them. My team will, of course, continue to liaise closely with Welsh Government officials and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales to share intelligence from our work as part of the tripartite arrangements. We will also ensure you receive advance sight of the media statement which will be issued to accompany the report.

If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me directly or via Dave Thomas who has led the Audit Wales team undertaking the work.

Yours sincerely



**ADRIAN CROMPTON**  
**Auditor General for Wales**