WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE
WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

Title: Report of the Protection of Vulnerable Adults Project Board
Date: 18 February 2011
By: Gwenda Thomas, Deputy Minister for Social Services

Following my written statements in February 2008, July 2009 and 30 March 2010, I am very pleased to be able to inform you that I have now received the report of the Protection of Vulnerable Adults Project Board. This report outlines their advice and recommendations on adult protection arrangements in Wales and how these can be further strengthened to ensure that they continue to be appropriate and robust now and in the future. A copy of the report will be placed on the Welsh Assembly Government website.

It is a basic right that each of us should be free of exploitation, abuse and neglect. Since the publication of the ‘In Safe Hands’ Guidance document in 2000 we have seen a step change in the way in which safeguarding is delivered. There is now a coherent approach to adult protection that did not exist 10 years ago and a much deeper understanding of adult abuse. This work however must not stop there; we must continue develop our protection arrangements to ensure that they remain as strong as possible in order to eradicate abuse in Wales.

I would like to thank all the members of the Board for this report and for all of their hard work to date. Since its creation the Board has provided valuable advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on a range of Adult protection issues and I am very grateful to them for that.
The Board’s Report brings together the wide range of material that they have considered to date. Most notably it draws from a number of important reports in the field of adult protection, including: the review by the Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care (WIHSC), at the University of Glamorgan, of our main protection of vulnerable adult’s statutory guidance ‘In Safe Hands’, the Care and Social Service Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) report ‘National Inspection of Adult Protection: All Wales Overview’ and the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) report ‘Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults in Wales’, which reviewed the safeguarding and protection of vulnerable adults arrangements in place across the NHS in Wales. The Board also invited the views of stakeholders from across Wales on these reports, so that these could also become part of their deliberations.

The report makes two overarching recommendations, the first of which concerns the legislative foundation for adult protection arrangements in Wales. In considering this issue the Board have been limited in the extent to which they can describe the form that any potential new legislation should take. This is due to the need to await the findings of the Law Commission’s review of the law relating to the provision of adult social care in England and Wales, which includes the legislative framework for adult protection and the outcome of the referendum on the law making powers of the National Assembly for Wales. They have however, been able to clearly identify a range of key issues that will need to be considered in the development of any future legislation once the outcomes of both of the review and the referendum are known.

The second overarching recommendation calls for the “In Safe Hands” guidance to be replaced. This guidance, which embodies our fundamental approach to adult protection in Wales and was groundbreaking in its inception, has now been in place for 10 years. It is the case that much has changed over the past ten years and the board identify a range of areas in which the guidance can be improved to help strengthen adult protection arrangements in Wales.

The Board also call for strengthened national leadership and recommend that arrangements are put in place for a national Adult Protection Forum that would have a remit comparable to that of the Children’s Safeguard Forum. This echoes the views from stakeholders that there is a need for adult protection in Wales to benefit once again from an all Wales Advisory Group, a position also supported by Adult Protection Coordinators and regional Forum Chairs.

The Welsh Assembly Government continue to regard Adult Protection arrangements as a high priority and remain committed to ensuring that they remain effective in protecting vulnerable people from abuse.

I have considered the recommendations made by the Board and these have informed my thinking for improvement to the adult protection arrangements in the recently published Paper on the future of Social Services in Wales. The specific details of this will of course be a matter for the next Welsh Assembly Government to decide.