



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Safeguarding and Protecting Children in NHS Wales**

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BY **Mark Drakeford Minister for Health and Social Services**

I would like to update Members on Safeguarding and Protecting Children in NHS Wales.

Ensuring our children are safe and protected from harm is a high priority for the Welsh Government. As such, I wish to ensure that Safeguarding and Protecting Children in NHS Wales remains visibly high on all our agendas and that it continues to play a vital role alongside other key agencies in ensuring children in Wales are safeguarded and protected. I am pleased that progress has been made. Inevitably though there is more to do. This is my annual statement to the National Assembly on Safeguarding and Protecting Children in NHS Wales.

On 30 September a campaign to raise public awareness about the dangers of head injury from shaking babies was launched with a conference held by the Safeguarding Children Service, Public Health Wales, in conjunction with Children in Wales. The event was chaired by my Chief Nursing Officer, Professor Jean White, with the strong and essential objective of properly educating parents of the dangers of shaking babies with a view to reducing the number of infants killed or seriously harmed in this way.

The Welsh Government has revised the programme level agreement with the Safeguarding Children Service, Public Health Wales, which sets out our clear expectations for the delivery of this essential service. The Safeguarding Children Service provides independent safeguarding advice and overarching support for child safeguarding activity in NHS Wales, as well as clinical leadership through the NHS Safeguarding Children Network. This network is now well embedded and has a programme of work designed to continue to drive good practice that includes sharing best practice and learning as well as developing all Wales policies and protocols.

A new quality outcomes framework has been implemented across NHS Wales. This is being used by Local Health Boards and NHS Trusts to self assess how well they are contributing to the delivery of good outcomes for children and young people. Annual findings will assist in establishing standards and in setting tangible objectives that will steer improvement on an all-Wales basis.

An expert working group on safeguarding training for NHS Wales has recommended an agreed set of standards and uniformity for delivery across NHS staff, primary care practitioners and for contractor services, volunteers and the third sector. The intercollegiate document published by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health on behalf of contributing organisations has been adopted for implementation across Wales. This definitive reference point will ensure clarity for all sectors and increase the portability of the training for staff/contractors/volunteers moving around Wales and the UK. Evidence of such training is to be documented on the Electronic Staff Record and will assist in compliance reporting to the Local Health Board and identifying when training updates are required. The onus has been on NHS organisations to demonstrate they are meeting the requirements and address any deficits. Health Board and Trust Chief Executives must ensure that relevant reports and updates on safeguarding training are included as a standard part of the annual report.

Clarification has also been provided to the NHS on the need for repeat Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checks for staff involved in the care of children. Health Boards and Trusts must comply with the requirements of Welsh Government guidance. They must ensure that where it is a mandatory requirement, an employee should have a DBS check on employment, and checks should be made routinely and at repeated intervals of no more than 3 years (throughout the period of employment). Health Boards and Trusts have also been made aware that with the introduction of the DBS in December 2012 there is a new definition of 'regulated activity' in relation to children. Health Boards and Trusts must ensure that their checking procedures are compliant with legislation and that checks are only made where it is legal to do so.

New Child Practice Reviews came into effect on 1 January in Wales, replacing the Serious Case Reviews. I know that colleagues in the NHS were pivotal to the development of these arrangements. This new, innovative framework moves away from the 'blame culture' previously associated with child protection cases and should improve the process of learning and review for all professionals involved in child protection work. This new framework will also build on, and improve, the quality and sustainability of the children's safeguarding arrangements we have in place today.

Research into use of the Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI) framework to develop Information Sharing Protocols, including in a safeguarding context, has now been published. We will be taking the views of safeguarding leads from health and social services on the findings and any actions that may be needed. The latter will then be published.

During the past year a consolidated programme of work has been put in place through legislation and guidance to further strengthen multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Wales. The Deputy Minister for Social Services, Gwenda Thomas AM, introduced the Social Service and Well-being (Wales) Bill into the National Assembly in January. The Bill will help create a solid foundation for fundamental change and will strengthen safeguarding and protection arrangements.

These new arrangements will ensure that local agencies are supported by more robust leadership and a stronger, more effective framework for multi-agency co-operation. The Bill includes provision to establish a new National Independent Safeguarding Board which will help drive up standards, and improve consistency and will also be responsible for advising Ministers on the adequacy and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

The Welsh Government has always recognised that multi-agency co-operation is critical to effective safeguarding – safeguarding is everyone’s business. The evidence we have demonstrates that Local Safeguarding Children Boards are not working in the way we had hoped, and are unable to demonstrate how they are effectively safeguarding children. We need to address this and to ensure that a better framework for action exists which ensures improvement and consistency in the work of Boards. The Deputy Minister has always been clear that the way to achieve this is through reducing the number of Boards to ensure consistency, improvement and sustainability. I know that a number of areas in Wales have already moved to a more collaborative footprint, well in advance of the legislation coming into place.

The Deputy Minister has recently established the Safeguarding Advisory Panel – chaired by Phil Hodgson – to work with key stakeholders to build the detailed arrangements to ensure the effective implementation of the Bill provisions. It is absolutely critical that the NHS Wales ensures that it is at the heart of this vital work.

The Deputy Minister has made a written statement on the progress in developing safeguarding and protection arrangements for implementation through the Bill. The Bill seeks to break down artificial barriers based on age, and introduces the broader concept of a people model. In a safeguarding context, this will be most obvious to see with the establishment, subject to scrutiny and the approval by the National Assembly of a National Independent Safeguarding Board, covering both adults and children. I support this approach and intend to adopt a similar one in my Ministerial statements which, in future, will address the safeguarding responsibilities of the NHS of not only children, but also adults who are considered to be at risk.