

DP 1068/07-11

Y Gwir Anrh/Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AC/AM
Prif Weinidog Cymru/First Minister for Wales

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Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
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On the 15 January during First Minister's Question's session you asked me what action the Welsh Assembly Government is taking to ensure the protection of vulnerable adults in Wales. You raised a further question concerning the figures in the Care and Social Services Inspectorate in Wales Annual Report 2006-07, that 61 per cent of adult protection investigations in care homes relate to homes with nursing care, whereas these homes represent only a quarter of the sector. You asked what the Welsh Assembly Government is planning to address this, together with service providers and commissions, and I undertook to write to you after seeking advice from the Chief Inspector.

In respect of older people in care homes, and the proportionately high number of adult protection investigations in homes with nursing care, we know from the annual Adult Protection monitoring reports that more concerns are expressed about older people generally than any other group, whether they live in the community or in care homes. Older people living in care homes with nursing are a particularly vulnerable group, likely to have multiple physical conditions and or mental infirmity. There is now a clearer view that examples of poor care are now regarded as Adult Protection matters. Referrals are made more readily so that investigations can take place, whereas previously these matters might not have been identified or only have been treated as complaints about the service.

Within this context I will be asking the Chief Nursing Officer to look at the contribution of nursing staff to the quality of this part of care home provision and consider whether any changes are needed to ensure that their role in ensuring high quality and safe care is secured

However there is no one answer to keeping vulnerable older people safe, and a whole systems approach has to be employed. The responsibility for leading on the adult protection rests with local authorities. They need to work with a number of bodies, including Community health services, GP's NHS Trusts, nurse registration and regulation bodies and with Local Health Boards as commissioners, the Care Council for Wales who all have safeguarding responsibilities. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) has a clear role to consider whether regulations have been breached and to act accordingly. CSSIW also has a clear role in advising on policy developments, using the evidence gathered in all its activities.

Within the broader context of protecting vulnerable adults, we have already taken or are working on a number of steps to ensure that our policies and other arrangements remain robust and are fit to meet demands of adult protection over the coming years.

While the abuse of vulnerable adults is sadly not a new phenomenon, there is a growing appreciation of the problem, due in part to better reporting, recording and monitoring arrangements, which is rightly leading to a more open debate about how this should be addressed. Again this is referred to in the CSSIW Annual Report. In the light of this and other research, the Assembly Government has established an Adult Protection Project Board to review the range of our vulnerable adults protection policies and other measures that we have introduced to ensure that they are appropriate and robust. I understand that the Deputy Minister for Social Services intends to make a fuller announcement about this Project Board in the near future.