



Draft letter for the Deputy Minister to send to Lynne Neagle AM

At the Plenary debate on 15 January on the Care and Social Services Inspectorate in Wales Annual Report 2006-07, I gave a commitment that everyone who raised a specific issue would get a detailed answer.

During the debate you referred to the Beeches Nursing Home in Blaenavon, which was deregistered and closed in 2006, and to the closure of Holly House in Caerphilly. You asked what changes have been forthcoming since that time.

As a direct outcome of these events the Welsh Assembly Government has been working closely with other agencies and organisations to develop guidance for local authorities and health services, setting out in detail how concerns about standards of care or poor performance at registered care home settings should be dealt with. This development work, which was flagged up in the CSSIW Annual report, is well advanced and draft guidelines should be going out for consultation later this month. These guidelines will include procedures for dealing with concerns at registered homes, with the management of contracts, with issues around home closures and relocation of residents, and other related matters. I shall ensure that you receive copy of the consultation document when it issues.

I have been advised that in anticipation of this guidance, the South East Region of CSSIW has been working informally and successfully with local partner agencies to monitor and seek improvement where matters of concern have been identified.

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 report. In the light of this and other research, the Assembly Government has established an Adult Protection Project Group 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 propose to make a fuller announcement about this Project Board in the near future.

Other measures include:

- the programme on Dignity and Respect in Care which I launched on 1 October last year
- the implementation of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups legislation which will extend the requirement for CRB checks to a larger number of the workforce who work or have regular contact with vulnerable adults.
- The coming into force of the Mental Capacity Act, which includes a new offence of ill-treating or wilfully neglecting a person who lacks capacity to make their own decisions.
- new powers to CSSIW to reinforce the providers responsibility for the quality of their service, new powers to support CSSIW proportionate and service user focussed approach to regulation and to compliance. Powers to give CSSIW strengthened enforcement powers are before Parliament.
- a review of the Regulations and National Minimum Standards for care homes, which we announced on 15 January. This will give us an opportunity to consider whether further changes in the regulatory framework are required to address abuse and the causes of abuse
- the introduction of local authority performance indicators on adult protection which enable comparison of performance across Wales.
- a recently completed consultation on extending our "In Safe Hands" guidance to improve safeguards against the financial abuse of vulnerable adults receiving care services in their own homes. We shall continue to keep this guidance under review to ensure that it remains focused and appropriate.
- the appointment of the Commissioner for Older People in Wales. While it will be for the Commissioner to decide her own priorities the issue of elder abuse will inevitably be high on the agenda, and the Commissioner will be able to investigate how local authorities are implementing the adult protection arrangements.
- In the field of regulation and inspection, we have created a new CSSIW inspectorate that is able to look at the quality of the totality of social care from commissioning, to contracting, through to individual planning, services provision and leadership and management – the "Circle of Care". The new inspectorate, with its 360 degree focus on services providers and service commissioners, is able to join up the work of regulators of individual care facilities with the annual

performance evaluation of local authorities, and thematic reviews of services generally. This will include developing a thematic review of adult protection arrangements in 2008/09.