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Ann Jones AM
Chair of the Equality of Opportunity Committee
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Bae Caerdydd
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**REL: Committee Inquiry into Discrimination against People Living with HIV by
Healthcare Professionals and Providers**

Dear Ms Jones

The Royal College of Nursing in Wales welcomes the Inquiry of the Committee into
Discrimination against People Living with HIV by Healthcare Professionals and Providers.

In 2001 A Terrance Higgins Trust Report stated:

“Stigmatisation of people with HIV in healthcare settings was a well-established, if disturbing
phenomenon in the earlier years of the epidemic in the UK, and in the late 1980s and early
1990s many studies identified substantial, widespread and persistent hostile or discriminatory
attitudes among various categories of health and social care professionals.

In recent years evidence suggested that for most people with HIV, their experience, in terms of
their HIV related treatment at least, is generally good.¹⁶ Research amongst gay men showed
93% being satisfied with the service provided. However, gay men tend to use a small number
of HIV clinics where they know that they are unlikely to encounter prejudice. With both the
spread of HIV amongst other population groups and the increasing “mainstreaming” of HIV
services, however, many people with HIV fear that they may encounter substantial
discrimination again in the future from non-specialist healthcare workers.”¹

Continued

¹ Prejudice, Discrimination and HIV Terrance Higgins Trust 2001

The Royal College of Nursing strongly believes that whether the stigma and discrimination that is felt is real or perceived to be real makes no difference. Either way, the profession of nursing working in collaboration with other disciplines must do more to make the services they provide more sensitive to these patients' needs.

As an organisation that promotes excellence in care, the Royal College of Nursing is committed to changing attitudes and ending the stigma that surrounds this disease to ensure all our members, regardless of where they work, are equipped with the knowledge, skills and understanding to communicate and practice sensitively.

In 2007, the RCN ran an educational campaign raising awareness of this important issue amongst our members who work outside of HIV and sexual health settings. An example of the promotional material distributed is enclosed with this letter.

We believe the following actions should be undertaken by the Welsh Assembly Government to improve healthcare services for those with HIV:

- Ensure consistency of access to HIV care across Wales.
- Ensure LHBs effectively assess, monitor and forecast the needs of people with HIV living in their communities and with that information ensure sufficient funding and resources are allocated to services in their area.
- Increase the number of nurse specialists working in HIV care to manage the increase in patients and provide the high-quality care and expert support that people with this disease need.
- Education and training for nurses working in primary care so they can offer HIV testing to their local communities.
- Educational materials for healthcare professionals who work outside of HIV and sexual health settings to reinforce key messages (such as the need for universally applied precautions when there is a risk of contact with blood and the importance of robustly tackling stigma and promoting values such as dignity and respect).

I trust you find this information helpful.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely



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