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Date: 24 February 2010  
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Jonathan Morgan AM  
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
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Dear Chair

## ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT UPDATE ON PROTECTING NHS STAFF FROM VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

The Clerk's letter of 3 February 2010 requested advice on the update provided by the Minister for Health and Social Services in respect of progress made since the Committee's report in July 2009 on *Protecting NHS staff from violence and aggression*.

The Minister's update covers all of the main issues raised in the Committee's report, namely: reporting of violence and aggression; action to prevent and control violent incidents; and supporting staff in relation to violent incidents. And it is clear that good progress has been made in many of the areas of concern for the Committee. In particular:

- all NHS bodies have in place an Executive Director Lead (a champion) as well as a Non-Executive Lead for protecting staff against violence and aggression;
- all NHS bodies have updated Employer Action Plans for tackling violence and aggression, with these plans being monitored by the All Wales Violence and Aggression Steering Group;
- further action has been taken to encourage staff to report incidents, such as including information on health bodies' web pages and staff newsletters, piloting a simplified incident reporting form, and giving prominence to the issue in staff training courses and in management appraisals;
- since 1 October 2009, all NHS bodies have been reporting incidents of violence and aggression using a common set of incident reporting codes, which should make it easier to analyse trends across the NHS in Wales;
- the Assembly Government has been actively monitoring and analysing reported incidents of violence and aggression, as well as the percentage of staff who have received training in the three core modules of the All Wales Violence and Aggression Training Passport;

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- a new standardised training module on Restrictive Physical Interventions has also been developed and is due to be ready for implementation from the end of this month;
- four hospital sites and five Cardiff-based ambulances have had new high quality CCTV cameras installed as part of a pilot scheme launched in December 2009; and
- the Minister signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Police in September 2009, which is expected to help increase the number of incidents of violence and aggression that result in a prosecution.

However, a number of other key actions, while in train, are yet to be fully implemented. For instance:

- the Assembly Government plans to develop and implement an all-Wales communications strategy to support a sustained and high-profile awareness raising campaign;
- it is likely to be June 2010 before all NHS bodies are using the latest version of the Datix system so that staff can report incidents of violence and aggression on-line;
- a comprehensive review of the Training Passport (modules A, B and C) was due to start in January 2010;
- most NHS bodies still have a lot of work to do to ensure that all relevant staff are trained in the three core modules of the Training Passport, with the Minister's update reporting a worryingly low level of compliance at several NHS bodies;
- work on a business case for an automated alert system to protect lone workers was due to be completed in January 2010, with the implementation of this system to take place thereafter;
- the recruitment of caseworkers to manage serious cases of violence and aggression is ongoing, with these staff expected to be in place by the end of Spring 2010; and
- the collection of data on prosecutions following incidents on NHS sites will be possible once the new case workers are in place.

That the number of reported cases of violence and aggression increased by some 25 per cent between 2007-08 and 2008-09 is also of concern. Around two thirds of the 9,172 incidents reported in 2008-09 were aimed directly at staff. The Minister has explained that this overall increase may be due, in part, to improved reporting. And the recent action taken to encourage staff to report incidents may yet mean that even more incidents are reported in future, regardless of the underlying trend. However, the 2008-09 figures also pre-date many of the other initiatives that the Minister has described and which, in time, will hopefully help to reduce the number of incidents of violence and aggression and/or their severity.

Given the number of actions still to be completed, the Committee might wish to seek a further update report from the Accounting Officer of the NHS, towards the end of 2010. I would, of

course, be pleased to provide the Committee with further advice on that update as to whether the progress made over recent months has been sustained, and whether any further action by the Committee is merited.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gillian Body', written in a cursive style.

**GILLIAN BODY**  
**Auditor General for Wales**