TASKFORCE TO TACKLE VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION AGAINST NHS STAFF

A special taskforce is being set up to consider new measures to reduce violence and aggression against NHS staff, Health Minister Edwina Hart announced today [Wednesday, 3 October].

The group will address three main issues:

- **Incident reporting** – The NHS must ensure that incidents are reported for all types of violence and aggression. It will develop common incident reporting to provide accurate information.

- **Taking action against the perpetrators of violence** – The taskforce will ensure that there are mechanisms in place to take action against anyone who is willfully violent towards staff or fellow patients. Guidance will be developed to ensure the NHS has in place robust systems for working with the police and Crown Prosecution Service to ensure that offenders are prosecuted appropriately. It will also look at ways in which information on offenders can be shared across the NHS in Wales.

- **Support for staff after an incident** – Further guidance will be issued on the measures the NHS must take to support staff following a violent attack. This could range from the physical, emotional or even legal support to ensure that staff feel valued.

A member of the Royal College of Nursing Wales will be seconded to the Assembly Government to take forward this work.

Mrs Hart: “Violence against, or abuse of, NHS staff is completely unacceptable.”
“The threat of violence not only carries obvious injury and distress to staff and lead to increased sickness absence and poor morale, but it also stops patients getting the vital treatment they need.

“This was one of the main issues raised with me during my recent meetings with healthcare unions and visits to hospitals across Wales.

“The Taskforce, which will include a range of health professional and trade union representatives, will report its initial findings within three months so that we can put these issues into practice in the NHS in Wales with immediate effect.

“The secondee will help to inform our policy development to improve the working condition of staff in Wales which will ultimately improve patient care.”

Tina Donnelly, Director of the Royal College of Nursing Wales, said: “We welcome this Taskforce which is being set up to ensure the reduction of violence and aggression against NHS staff. RCN Wales supports the Health Minister in seeking to address what has become a total unacceptable environment for nurses to work. We have been extremely vocal during the last two years in seeking to ensure a safe working place and more recently current research carried out by the RCN has shown that eight of 10 nurses have been victims of violence and aggression in Wales and these statistics are totally unacceptable. We look forward to working with the Welsh Assembly Government on the vitally important agenda.”

Head of Health at Unison, Dave Galligan, added: “We welcome this work to deal with the very real problem of health staff being victims of violence! At last we can see it being taken seriously, there can be no more ignoring the 7000+ incidents every year.”

Lorna Tinsley, National Officer, Royal College of Midwives, said: “The RCM welcomes this initiative, midwives working in both the community and hospital are suffering abuse which is rarely reported. Improvement in the aftercare and support of individuals is essential.”