

## Better protection for vulnerable adults

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The most vulnerable people in society will be better protected by local agencies such as councils, the police and the NHS, Care Services Minister Phil Hope announced today.

In response to the Government's consultation on strengthening protection for vulnerable adults, new legislation will be introduced to enshrine in law the need for every local area to have in place a Safeguarding Adults Board – a body made up of the local social services authority, the police, the NHS and working with all other groups involved in protecting vulnerable adults. The board will ensure that vulnerable adults who suffer abuse will have quick and easy access to the people who can help them best.

The Government, working with stakeholders, will now set in train a programme of work to lead and support all agencies involved in safeguarding adults. It will ensure that everyone involved in the care of vulnerable adults has the skills to protect them.

There will also be a new cross Government Ministerial group which will oversee the safeguarding of vulnerable adults, set priorities, work up new policy and provide national leadership.

### **Care Services Minister Phil Hope, said:**

'Vulnerable adults deserve the best protection we can give them - that often means many local agencies being involved in their care.

'We are going to make it law that every local area must have a Safeguarding Adults Board to look after the most vulnerable people. Some areas already do this and they do it well but I want it to be mandatory and effective for everyone.

'A new Ministerial group will oversee the safeguarding of vulnerable adults. Along with Ministerial colleagues across Government, I will set priorities, new policy and provide a strategic co-ordination role. Our first goal will be to push through legislation on Safeguarding Adults Boards and to issue new and improved guidance.

'I would like to thank all those who contributed to this work.'

**Mind's Chief Executive Paul Farmer said:**

'People with mental health problems can often face isolation and can be dependent upon care and support that is provided by strangers. We have seen that when agencies work together with people with mental health problems they can prevent abuse from occurring and can ensure that justice is done. By giving priority to this issue the Government is helping to reduce the risk of abuse. Mind has heard many examples where people have been exploited by those tasked with supporting them, such as the woman whose neighbour did her weekly grocery shop but also helped herself to £14,000 of her money and yet her care workers did not notice. We look forward to working with the Government to produce new guidance that will better safeguard the rights of people in vulnerable circumstances.'

**Chief Constable Richard Crompton, the Association of Chief Police Officers' lead on vulnerable adults said:**

'On behalf of the Police Service, ACPO made a major contribution to the 'No Secret' consultation. We are pleased to see that many of the points we made are reflected in the Government announcement and look forward to continued work with Government and partners to improve safeguarding adults from abuse.'

**Kathryn Stone, Chief Executive of Voice UK said:**

'Voice UK welcomes the announcement that safeguarding boards are to be made statutory. This is a clear signal from government that adults at risk will be prioritised and protected.'

Today's announcement builds on previous measures which include making every independent care home subject to the Human Rights Act and giving the Care Quality Commission tough powers to penalise or close down care providers who offer substandard care.

The Government is also working with the General Social Care Council on a system of registration for home care workers. This will strengthen protection of vulnerable people, raise the quality of care provided and help prevent abuse.

Legislation that can, and is, being used to safeguard adults includes the Criminal Justice Act 1988, the Mental Capacity Act, 2005, the Fraud Act, the Mental Health Act 1983, the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, as well as health and safety at work legislation.

By enabling adult services to work more effectively together, the Government is tightening the net so that more offenders are caught and punished within existing law. This approach takes into account the views of many older people and many people with disabilities who say they do not want social workers, police or any other professionals making decisions about their lives.