

NEWS RELEASE FROM THE REGISTERED NURSING HOME ASSOCIATION

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RNHA WELCOMES GOVERNMENT PLAN FOR INDEPENDENT BOARD TO DECIDE WHO SHOULD NOT WORK WITH VULNERABLE PEOPLE

The Registered Nursing Home Association (RNHA), which represents over 1,200 nursing homes across the UK, has welcomed the government's latest proposals for an Independent Barring Board to make decisions on who should be excluded from jobs that would bring them into contact with vulnerable adults.

In its formal response to consultation on the scheme by the Department of Health, the Home Office and the Department for Education and Skills, the RNHA says it fully supports action to safeguard the welfare of vulnerable adults, including older people receiving health and social care.

In particular, the association welcomes the fact that the members of the Barring Board will be independent and that all or most of them are expected to work in a full-time role.

Commented RNHA chief executive officer Frank Ursell: "The new Barring Board must maintain its independence at all times, given that it will be dealing with such critical issues as the health and welfare of vulnerable people on the one hand and the livelihoods of care staff on the other. This requires balanced, careful deliberations based on expert assessment of the facts."

He added: "The sensitivity and importance of these responsibilities means that the Board must maintain the confidence of patients, the public and the care professions. We believe that by adopting a transparent approach to the discharge of its onerous responsibilities, and by closely involving all the key stakeholders, the Board should be able to establish itself as a credible organisation."

The RNHA has warned against the Barring Board becoming obsessed by too many politically imposed performance targets.

Said Mr Ursell: "Of course it is desirable for the Board to investigate individual cases quickly. But this should not be at the expense of accuracy and making the right decisions based on the best possible evidence."

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Notes to editors:

1. In March 2006 the government published its Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill, which includes provisions to establish an Independent Barring Board for maintaining lists of people who will be prevented from working with children and vulnerable adults, including older people.
2. Consultation is currently taking place on specific proposals relating to the membership and operation of the Independent Barring Board.

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