

Date: Wednesday 29 May 2002

Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Supplement to paper HSS-12-02(p.4)
**Statement from Jane Hutt AM, Minister For Health And Social Services:
Welsh Assembly Government Position on the Creation of the Health Protection
Agency**

The Committee has been kept up to date with developments, including our arrangements for informal consultation and the outcome, around the creation of the Health Protection Agency. This followed the Department of Health's announcement in January of the CMO for England's infectious disease strategy "Getting Ahead of the Curve" and their proposals for this new Agency to be formed from three existing statutory bodies.

I support the aim of strengthening specialist support for health protection by bringing together in the Health Protection Agency the functions of the key organisations concerned with health protection. Current and future potential threats to public health require us to put in place the most robust arrangements available for responding.

The UK Government has announced its wish to establish the Agency by means of a Regulatory Reform Order and is expected to publish shortly a consultation paper on its proposals for the Order. Subject to the outcome of consultation, proposals for an Order could be placed before Parliament for first stage scrutiny in the autumn. Before the Order can be made, consent will need to be obtained from the National Assembly for Wales. We expect this to be sought after Parliament's first stage scrutiny.

For consultation to be effective and to take account of the needs of Wales, it is essential that the position of the Welsh Assembly Government should be reflected in the UK Government's document. In the light of responses to our preliminary consultations and discussions with other Health Departments, I have decided to ask the UK Government to include in the consultation document the proposal that the Health Protection Agency should have a role in Wales and a statutory relationship with the National Assembly.

However, in order to continue to develop arrangements matched to the distinctive needs of Wales, I propose that there should be separate arrangements for field services in Wales. In line with my previous

statements, Consultants in Communicable Disease Control will become part of the National Public Health Service – Wales rather than joining the new Agency (as is proposed in England).

I have decided also to propose that the Public Health Laboratory Service (Wales), which currently is part of the England and Wales body, should become part of the National Public Health Service - Wales. This will maximise the opportunity for drawing together the specialist and field services essential to the surveillance and control of communicable diseases in Wales.