

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CABINET MEMBER**

HOME SAFETY EQUIPMENT HELP FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

1.1.1 To advise the Cabinet Member of new funding being provided by the Department of Children, Schools and Families for home safety equipment for families on low incomes and to determine how this will be administered.

1.2 The key points in this report are as follows: -

- From April 2008, Local Authorities will each receive an allocation for three years to provide home safety equipment to local families. This funding is being provided through local Children's Services.
- This report recommends that the funding be transferred to Neighbourhood and Environmental Services to be managed by their existing Home Safety Team.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In December 2007, The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures was published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. One of its proposals is to fund a new home safety equipment scheme to prevent accidents to young children in the home. Every year in the UK almost 4,000 people die in accidents in the home and 2.7 million turn up at accident and emergency departments seeking treatment.
- 2.2 Children of parents of lower income backgrounds are at higher risk of accidental injury and children under the age of five are particularly vulnerable to everyday accidents at home.
- 2.3 The Government is providing a total of £18 million over three years to Local Authorities to provide Home safety equipment (stairgates, fireguards, smoke alarms, socket covers) to help the most vulnerable families keep their children safe from accidental injuries at home.
- 2.4 The funding will be distributed to local Children's Services authorities. There are no details available at the present time on the formula for allocating the resources but these are expected imminently. If the funding is allocated on a population size basis, North Lincolnshire

Council could expect to receive in the region of £45,000 over three years.

- 2.5 The council already employs a Home Safety Officer within the Health Improvement team who has operated a successful subsidised home safety equipment for sale scheme for many years. Parents of young children are referred to the scheme by Health Visitors, Children's Centres and Social Services Departments based on their financial need.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 There are two options for consideration which are: -

- Option 1 - to manage the new fund through Children's Services
- Option 2 – to transfer the funding to the Home Safety section of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services who would administer the scheme.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 would result in duplication in that two similar Home Safety equipment schemes would be operating simultaneously which would cause confusion to local residents. Additionally, as there are currently no staff in Children's Services to administer such a scheme, a proportion of the funding may be required to fund this which would reduce considerably the amount of funding available for safety equipment.
- 4.2 Option 2 would avoid duplication and would enable the funding to be allocated by Home Safety staff already in post using existing referral mechanisms.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 The cost of providing Home Safety equipment would be fully funded by the grant from the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

- 6.1 Low income families often do not purchase essential equipment such as fireguards and safety gates to protect their children from serious injury. This targeted funding can help significantly to reduce accidents in the home

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The multi agency Local Safeguarding Children's Board have a 'Turning the Curve' (Home Safety) sub group which has been consulted on the

funding and support its management through the council's Home Safety section.

- 7.2 The members of the Yorkshire and Humber Region Home Safety Council are looking to manage their respective funding through their Home Safety/ Environmental Health sections rather than through Children's Services.
- 7.3 The report has been submitted to the Neighbourhood, Environmental and Communities Cabinet Member who has given his approval for the proposal in Option 2 of the report.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Children's Services Cabinet Member approves the administration of the funding from the Department of Children, Schools and Families for home safety equipment as per Option 2 above.

SERVICE DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ENVIRONMENT
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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures – Dept for Children, Schools and Families
December 2007
Press release from Dfes dated 4th December 2007
Email from Child Safety Unit of DCSF dated 7th April 2008