

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

“EVERY ADULT MATTERS” – IMPROVING THE PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE PEOPLE

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 Adults with disabilities or infirmity are vulnerable to physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse from other people.
- 1.2 Abuse of adults has a far lower public profile than child abuse but “every adult matters” is just as important as “every child matters”.
- 1.3 Members and staff of the council have a duty as “corporate carers” towards vulnerable people they support. This duty is equal to their ‘corporate parent’ role towards children in the council’s care.
- 1.4 Recent experience and research has highlighted areas where councils can improve the protection of vulnerable adults. This paper sets out proposals for North Lincolnshire to adopt in order to ensure that vulnerable adults are safeguarded to as high a level as possible.
- 1.5 To seek Cabinet agreement to the proposals outlined.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Abuse of vulnerable adults whether physical, sexual, emotional or financial is a reality in North Lincolnshire and across the country. In the year 2007/08, 133 reports of adult abuse were investigated in North Lincolnshire. However, it is widely held that the reported incidents are a considerable under-representation of actual abuse. Adult abuse has a far lower profile in the public eye and media than child abuse, which means there is a lower awareness of its possibility among the public.
- 2.2 The government and the regulatory body, the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI), have recognised this issue and have placed a far greater emphasis on councils’ duties to safeguard vulnerable people. CSCI published a national study into the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements recently which summarised 23 inspections of councils (does not include North Lincolnshire). They concluded that many councils must do more to ensure adult protection. The government also launched a nationwide consultation on its present policy and is expected to tighten, most possibly by legislation, inter-

agency working and increase the powers of councils and police to intervene directly in serious cases. North Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board conducted a local consultation and submitted it to the government body.

- 2.3 The council has a duty and lead responsibility to protect adults who are vulnerable due to disability or infirmity. The council fulfils this duty in a number of ways and two years ago it established a North Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) to ensure a co-ordinated approach across all relevant agencies.
- 2.4 The SAB consists of senior representatives from the police, NHS, voluntary sector, care providers and others. The council's Director of Adult Social Services chairs it. The board publishes an annual report and is subject to oversight by the council's Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.5 The work of the SAB has highlighted good progress on safeguarding and a number of areas for development that will keep North Lincolnshire in the vanguard. They are summarised in the next section.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Option 1

- 3.1 While recognising that adults are safeguarded in North Lincolnshire there are some aspects that need developing and the following proposals are recommended:
 - 3.1.1 The council commits itself to zero tolerance of adult abuse on a par with its stance on child abuse.
 - 3.1.2 Elected members adopt a duty of "corporate carers" for vulnerable people who are supported by the council. This is similar to "corporate parent" responsibilities towards looked after children and should be led by a designated member champion.
 - 3.1.3 Awareness is raised and embedded of the possibility of adult abuse and what to do when it is suspected:
 - within council services through officer champions in each service area;
 - outside council services in relevant partner organisations;
 - with the public through publicity and awareness-raising campaigns.
 - 3.1.4 A safeguarding strategy for North Lincolnshire is agreed and published by the SAB.

Option 2

3.2 The alternative option is not to pursue these developments.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

Option 1

4.1 Agreement to the proposed developments will improve the way vulnerable adults are protected from abuse.

Option 2

4.2 If the proposals were not accepted then vulnerable adults would be left at greater risk of abuse.

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

5.1 Financial implications

There are no financial implications to this paper. It is also noted that partner agencies make cash and in-kind contributions to enable the SAB to carry out its duties.

5.2 Staffing implications

There are implications of extending staff's awareness of the possibilities of adult abuse and what to do if they suspect it.

5.3 Property implications - None

5.4 IT implications - None

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

6.1 Statutory implications

The council fulfils its statutory duties by leading and co-ordinating adult protection policy, procedures and practice through the Safeguarding Adults Board.

6.2 Environmental implications - None

6.3 Diversity implications

Safeguarding practice and procedure recognise that diverse and minority groups can be at risk of abuse and constantly strives to include their needs and views.

A Diversity Impact Assessment has been completed.

6.4 Section 17 – Crime and Disorder implications

Improvements to safeguarding of vulnerable adults will help detect and stop crimes.

6.5 Risk and other implications - None

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

7.1 The SAB recently carried out a borough-wide consultation with relevant and associated agencies and groups. Its results were reported to the Adult Services Cabinet Member on 4 March and submitted to government office as North Lincolnshire's response to national consultation on adult safeguarding.

7.2 In summary it showed consensus across local organisations and recommended that lead responsibility is best placed and should remain with the council. It also supported the view that adult safeguarding should be seen as equally important to child safeguarding and be backed by legislation.

7.3 Trades unions have been consulted about these proposal and are supportive of them.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That Cabinet agree to the proposals listed under section 3.1 of this paper.

8.2 That all Elected Members adopt a duty of "corporate carers" and Cabinet nominates an Elected Member to be the safeguarding champion for the council.

8.3 That service directors appoint a safeguarding adults champion in each service area.

SERVICE DIRECTOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

1. "Establishing a Safeguarding Adults Board in North Lincolnshire" NLC Cabinet Paper 15/03/2007

2. "Safeguarding Adults – A Study of the Effectiveness of Arrangements to Safeguard Adults from Abuse" CSCI November 2008
3. "Safeguarding Adults – A Consultation on the Review of the 'No Secrets' Guidance" DoH 2008
4. "No Secrets' Review Consultation" – NLC Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services paper 04/03/09