



Haringey Council

Agenda item:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

On [Date]

Report Title: Vulnerable Adults – Feasibility Report on proposed Scrutiny Review

Forward Plan reference number (if applicable):

Report of: Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wards(s) affected: **All**

1. Purpose (That is, the decision required)

1.1 To consider the feasibility of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioning a scrutiny review on vulnerable adults.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commission a review on the terms outlined in this report when resources become available.

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3. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

3.1 Background papers relating to this report:

- No Secrets, Department of Health, 2000
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act, 2006
- Protection of Vulnerable Adults Scheme, Department of Health
- Vulnerable Adults Policy, Haringey Council, 2002
- Haringey's Safeguarding Adults: A National Framework of Standards for Good Practice and outcomes in adult protection work. Haringey Standards Audit, 2007
- Safeguarding Adults: A National Framework of Standards for good practice and outcomes in adult protection work, ADSS, 2005
- Police Act, 1997
- Annual Report to the Safeguarding Adults Board, April 2006 to March 2007, Adult, Culture and Community Services Directorate.
- Eligibility for London borough of Haringey Supporting People grant.

4. Background

4.1 In July 2007 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked for a one off feasibility report on the practicality of undertaking an in-depth review on the issues surrounding vulnerable adults.

4.2 The issues of vulnerability are very wide reaching, as can be seen from all of the definitions outlined below.

4.3 According to the Police Act, 1997, a vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years of age who is receiving one of the following services:

- Accommodation and nursing or personal care in a care home;
- Personal care or nursing or support to live independently in his own home;
- Any services provided by an independent hospital, independent, independent medical agency or National Health Service body;
- Social care services; or
- Any services provided in an establishment catering for a person with learning difficulties.

The person would have one of the following conditions:

- A learning disability;
- A physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs; or
- A reduction in physical or mental capacity.

With a disability of:

- A dependency upon others in the performance of, or a requirement for assistance in the performance of, basic physical function;
- Severe impairment in the ability to communicate with others; or
- Impairment in a person's ability to protect himself from assault, abuse or neglect.¹

4.4 'No Secrets' (guidance on developing structure and content of local inter-agency policies, procedures and joint protocols for when a vulnerable adult is believed to be suffering from abuse) issued by the Department of Health² uses a broader definition, stating that a vulnerable adult is a person "who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation". In this sense it is likely that everyone at some point in their life will be vulnerable or at risk of vulnerability. For example, when suffering from a major bereavement or someone at risk of losing their home.

4.5 This guidance also defines six types of abuse:

1. Physical – including inappropriate sanctions, hitting, slapping, restraint and the misuse of medication.

¹ The Police Act 1997 (Enhanced Criminal Record Certificates) (Protection of Vulnerable Adults) Regulations 2002, Office of Public Sector Information.

² No Secrets, Department of Health, 2000

2. Sexual – this includes any sexual acts to which the person could not consent to or was pressured into consenting to.
3. Psychological – including threats of harm, humiliation, blame, intimidation, isolation and withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
4. Financial or material – including fraud, theft, exploitation and the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
5. Neglect and acts of omission – including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate services and withholding the necessities of life e.g. medication, nutrition and heating.
6. Discriminatory – including racist, sexist, based on a person’s disability and other forms of harassment and slurs.

“Any or all of these types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance”³ No Secrets Guidance.

4.6 The No Secrets guidance was reviewed in 2004/2005 with the result being the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act, 2006. This places more emphasis on prevention rather than protection with protection being a last resort and insists that this must be on a multi-agency basis – voluntary, statutory and private agencies must all play a part. (Social Services, Police, Probation, Primary Care Trust, Acute Trusts, Community Mental Health Teams etc).

4.7 Haringey Supporting People criteria states that those who currently have or have previously been; homelessness or rough sleeping, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol problems, can be regarded as vulnerable. It also states that vulnerability can be defined as a combination of any two of the following:

- Low-level health needs
- Unemployment
- Homeless or inadequately housed
- English not a person’s first language
- Low income. ⁴

5. Haringey Context

5.1 Haringey, like other local authorities, is the lead agency responsible for the safeguarding of adults in the whole borough. This includes all residents in the Haringey regardless of whether or not they are in contact with Council services.

5.2 Haringey has a Safeguarding Adult’s board, which is a multi-agency body and exists to ensure that adult protection across the partnership is coordinated and working towards best practice. The board structure has recently been reformed in order to ensure that the appropriate members attend and that those members are in a position within their organisation to be able to action outcomes from the meetings and feed back to the group.

5.3 Haringey’s Adult Protection Policy is a joint policy and procedure, agreed on a multi-agency basis. This includes Haringey Council, metropolitan police, Haringey Teaching Primary Care Trust, Barnet, Enfield, Haringey Mental Health

³ No Secrets, Department of Health, 2000

⁴ Eligibility for London Borough of Haringey Supporting People Grant

Trust and providers of the statutory, private and voluntary sectors of health and social care.

5.3.1 The procedure covers the responsibilities of various tiers of officers, the processes which are followed when a person is suspected of being abused and also the involvement of various other agencies.

5.3.2 The Haringey Adult Protection Manager is in the process of revising its Safeguarding Adults Policy (previously the Adult Protection policy), this is currently in draft format and is due to be approved within the near future.

5.4 The Supporting People programme in Haringey is delivered on a Partnership basis with Haringey TPCT and the London Probation Service. This programme supports vulnerable people across the spectrum, including those who find themselves homeless, those with mental health problems, victims of domestic violence and people who misuse drugs and alcohol. The aim of the programme is to offer support to these vulnerable people, for example how to deal with financial arrears, finding employment training and helping people to find somewhere to live. This programme therefore not only offers support to people who are vulnerable but also prevents them from becoming in need of more specialised services at the acute end.

5.4.1 An important aspect of the programme is in enabling households to retain their independence, this can be ensured by people having access to good quality and stable housing.

5.5 The Association of Director's of Social Services (ADSS) have taken the "No Secrets" guidance along with best practice from various local authorities and come up with a national set of standards for good practice and outcomes for use as an audit tool and guide for those implementing adult protection work.

5.6 Haringey has recently completed an audit taking into account the above mentioned national standards in order to assess its own progress on the standards and to identify where effort should be concentrated. Progress is being made in a number of areas of the service; however there still remain areas which would benefit from further improvements.

5.6.1 This self assessment audit is currently being rolled out to partner agencies for example the North Middlesex Hospital.

6. Potential areas for an in-depth Scrutiny Review

6.1 Following consultation with the Adult, Culture and Community Services Directorate a number of possible areas for a Scrutiny review have been highlighted, particularly those raised in the above mentioned audit. These include partnership working, contract monitoring and the wider preventative agenda in relation to all areas of vulnerability.

6.2 Partnership working

6.2.1 Effective partnership working ensures that best practice and case information is shared across all related agencies and also ensures that vulnerable people receive the best possible services possible in a seamless manner to meet their needs.

6.2.2 One key area of partnership working is that of service delivery, including standards of service. There is an expectation that “each partner organisation has effective quality assurance and governance processes that are cross-referenced with ‘Safeguarding Adults’ issues⁵”.

6.2.3 Other key areas of partnership activity include ensuring that service providers are effectively assessed to ensure that they are fully capable of safeguarding service users.

6.3 Monitoring and quality checking

6.3.1 The annual report to the Safeguarding Adults Board for the financial year 06/07 also highlighted some areas for improvement which correlate with the audit undertaken. These included improvements in individual contracts and Service Level Agreements with providers commissioned and greater partnership working, in particular in information sharing and communication protocols across the partnership. This is an area which directly impacts the services that a person may receive, in that the contents of contracts should ensure that the person receives the best possible services from the provider concerned.

6.4 Preventative agenda

6.4.1 The current political agenda is widely focused on prevention and independence along with ensuring that the services that are provided are done so in the most cost effective manner possible. It is known that both prevention and resulting independence are more cost effective than having to provide services to those who have more acute needs.

6.4.2 Those who find themselves most in need of services, for example with mental health needs or those in need of housing, have on most occasions gone through a series of events in their lives which have led them to this situation. In many situations appropriate intervention may have prevented them from needing the more acute end of services.

6.4.3 A key issue in this area is that those on the lower end of the scale can very quickly find themselves at the higher end. For example, where someone loses their job, they may then become depressed which contribute difficulties in finding another one, they may then suffer from skill loss (e.g. self advocacy) and ultimately find themselves homeless.

6.5 Review aims and objectives

⁵ Safeguarding Adults: A National Framework of Standards for good practice and outcomes in adult protection work, ADSS, 2005

6.5.1 One in-depth review could focus on one or more of the following issues:

- How well are vulnerable people protected and supported and how is independence promoted?
- How are high standards of providers ensured by the partnership? For example, how robust is the partnership in monitoring and quality checking services which are commissioned?
- How well are services coordinated? For example are services seamless and are there any gaps or duplication of services?
- Recommendations for the improvement of support services and protection for vulnerable people.

6.5.2 A more detailed focus for the review would be developed in the scoping stage.

6.6 Methodology

6.6.1 The above mentioned service audit would be a useful tool to guide any review in this area as it has a clear breakdown of the standards which the council is seeking to meet in order to improve services.

6.6.2 Stakeholders would include:

- The Adult, Culture and Community Services Directorate (including Supporting People, Commissioning team and the Contacts team)
- Cabinet Member
- Corporate Voluntary Sector Team
- Services commissioned by the Council
- Haringey Teaching Primary Care Trust
- Mental Health Trust

6.6.3 Sources of evidence would include:

- Representatives of Service Users and their Carers
- Comparator authorities for best practice guidance.
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Department for Communities and Local Government

7. Scrutiny Process

7.1 More precise timescales for the review would be clarified during the scoping stage. However, it is anticipated that this review would be completed within the next municipal year. It is also anticipated that the review would consist of approximately six panel meetings to gather evidence and come up with recommendations.

7.2 Support for the Scrutiny Panel would be provided by an Officer of the Overview and Scrutiny with additional support provided by the Adult, Culture and Community Services Directorate and partners.

7.3 Recommendations would be implemented by the partnership, with implementation arrangements feeding back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8. Conclusions

8.1 Taking all of the above into account it is important to bear in mind that the area of vulnerability is very broad and it covers a very large number of client groups and people at some point in their lives. Therefore any review into vulnerable adults would have to stay focused on the area as defined in the terms of reference and scoping of the review.

8.2 There have also been a number of in-depth reviews relatively recently into more specific service areas, for example Learning Disabilities and Mental Health, and this could therefore be seen as an opportune time to look at the wider aspects of vulnerability in line with government agenda.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is therefore suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commission a review that focuses on how partners work together to support vulnerable people, including the commissioning of services and contract monitoring.