

**North East Derbyshire District Council**

**Special Cabinet**

**2 February 2015**

**Update on Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children**

**Report No: LR/02/15/RS of Councillor L Robinson, Portfolio Holder with  
Responsibility for Community Safety and Health**

**Purpose of the Report**

- This report provides Cabinet with an update of activity around safeguarding for both vulnerable adults and children for North East Derbyshire District Council
- The report also provides an overview of the county wide Vulnerable Adults Risk Management panels (VARM) and the council's involvement in the process.

**1 Report Details**

- 1.1 In November 2012 Cabinet approved a revised Child Protection Policy.
- 1.2 In August 2013 Cabinet approved the Council's first Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse Policy.
- 1.3 Safeguarding Link Officers have been identified as the contact point for any referrals through to Derbyshire County Council or the police. These are
  - Rebecca Slack – Lead Safeguarding Link Officer
  - Allison Westray – Chapman – Joint Assistant Director Economic Growth
  - Lee Hicken – Joint Assistant Director , Leisure
  - Janice Bartrop/Tania Morrell - Human Resources Advisor
  - Heather Summers - Head of Neighbourhood Services, Rykneld Homes
- 1.4 A joint Corporate Safeguarding Group meets on a bi monthly basis to ensure that activity around safeguarding is coordinated and that all staff and members are aware of the process.
- 1.5 Activities to raise awareness of policies have included:
  - Staff briefing cards detailing signs of abuse, how to refer and contact details for all Safeguarding Link Officers were distributed via pay slips in Spring 2014.
  - Regular bulletins on NEDi
  - Dedicated Safeguarding page on NEDi
  - Safeguarding workshop for members held in September 2013

- Additional training for NEDDC Officers has been delivered by DCC and the Fire and Rescue Service on the newly developed Vulnerable Adults Risk Management process (VARM).

## **1.6 Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Process**

The Derbyshire Safeguarding Adults Board has developed the VARM Policy to provide professionals with a framework to facilitate effective multi agency working with vulnerable adults who are deemed to have mental capacity and who are at risk of serious harm. These are vulnerable adults who do not meet DCC's Safeguarding Adults process but who do need to be considered and risk assessed via another process. It doesn't replace other existing processes such as the Mental Health Act or MARAC ( Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committee for domestic abuse case at risk of homicide).

The VARM process is a multi agency approach designed to discuss, identify and document high risk cases, and formulate an action plan identifying appropriate agency responsibility for actions. The VARM panel is chaired and coordinated by an initiating Officer.

Key agencies involved include Adult Safeguarding, Derbyshire Fire and Rescue. Derbyshire Constabulary, Environmental Health Officers, Housing, Probation, Alcohol and Drug Services. Each agency is required to nominate VARM champions. NEDDC has nominated the following:

Rebecca Slack - Housing Strategy & Enabling Manager  
 Carl Griffiths – Private Rented Sector and Housing Options Manager  
 Gill Halliwell – Senior Environmental Health Officer  
 Jayne Hooton – Senior Environmental Health Officer  
 Rykneld Homes have an additional 2 Officers

Both the Council and Rykneld Homes have been increasingly involved in recent VARM cases since January 2014 and have often acted as the lead agency.

## **1.7 Safeguarding and VARM Referrals**

### **Child Protection**

#### **North East Derbyshire District Council**

There have been 3 child protection referrals since June 2013:

1 case where child protection issues identified during a visit and 2 suspected incidents at Leisure Centres.

#### **Rykneld Homes**

There have been 5 child protection referrals during the period January to November 2014. The following factors were recorded:

General Welfare – 1  
 Domestic Abuse – 2  
 Property Condition – 1  
 Substance Misuse by parents – 1

## **Adult Safeguarding**

### North East Derbyshire District Council

There have been 4 cases of adult Safeguarding in the last 12 months

3 threats of suicide directly (note 1 is now a VARM case)

1 gentleman with learning disabilities with suspected abuse/hate crime from neighbours

### Rykneld Homes

There have been 7 adult safeguarding referrals for the period January – November 2014.

The following factors were recorded:

General Welfare – 1

Mental Health – 2

Mental/Physical Health – 4

## **Domestic Abuse**

Derbyshire County Council do not include domestic abuse under their Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy. Alternative mechanisms are in place to respond to domestic abuse including direct referrals to Derbyshire Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Services (DDVSAS – formerly North Derbyshire Women's Aid), the police or MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committee).

Rykneld Homes are currently developing a Domestic Abuse Policy and procedures.

The council and Rykneld Homes monitor incidents or suspected incidents of domestic abuse:

### North East Derbyshire District Council

During the period April 2012 to April 2013 The Housing Options Team dealt with **71** cases where domestic abuse was a factor. In the period April 2014 – October 2014 they have seen **38** cases where domestic abuse was a factor. We continue to liaise closely with DDVSAS and refer to their services which include advice sessions, refuge accommodation, Men's Refuge, outreach services and services for children.

### Rykneld Homes

Rykneld Homes referred **3** cases of domestic abuse directly through to Derbyshire County Council or DDVSAS.

## **Vulnerable Adult Risk Management Meetings (VARMS)**

### North East Derbyshire District Council

Council Officers from the Housing Options Team and Environmental Health Services have and are currently involved in 9 VARM meetings with Environmental Health staff chairing 3 of those meetings.

## Factors include

- 4 alcohol related with risk of fire
- 1 alcohol related but with 7 category 1 hazards and evidence of misuse of the property by a group of local residents for drinking and alcohol use. The Council is currently chairing this VARM and an outcome will be reached on the 28<sup>th</sup> November. Proposals include closing the property using a Premises Closure Order (Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014) and seeking rehabilitation for the client and or alternative supported accommodation.
- 3 cases of hoarding – this is a growing issue. Rykneld Homes have recently developed its own Hoarding Policy in response to the issue and the Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service are actively working to promote the development of a Derbyshire wide Hoarding Policy and Procedures. Hoarding will usually result in a high risk of fire.
- 1 person living in hazardous conditions but not engaging with services. The person has no cooking or washing facilities and the property is also at risk of fire.

## Rykneld Homes

Rykneld Homes have been involved in 4 VARM cases since January 2014 when the process was first launched.

These include

Mental Health and Anti Social Behaviour – 1

Hoarding – 1

Domestic abuse – 2 (note other factors will have been involved to enable the VARM process to continue)

## **2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation**

- 2.1 To provide an overview and update on incidence and activity around the Council's Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Child Protection Policies.
- 2.2 To highlight the introduction of the Derbyshire wide VARM process and the Council's involvement and contribution in preventing serious harm to individuals and their neighbours.

## **3 Consultation and Equality Impact**

- 3.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on both the Council's Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and Child Protection Policies.
- 3.2 A VARM panel is a multi agency group to ensure that the right agencies are engaged in preventing serious harm to vulnerable adults in the district.

## **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 Not applicable

## **5 Implications**

### **5.1 Finance and Risk Implications**

- 5.1.1 The risks of not having adequate safeguarding processes in place are to the safety of vulnerable adults and children and in some cases prevention of death occurring.
- 5.1.2 The VARM process has proved effective in preventing fire to a property and neighbouring properties.

### **5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection**

- 5.2.1 Section 11 of The Children's Act 2004 states that district and borough councils have a "duty to co-operate" and a "duty to safeguard and promote well being" for children. Council's should ensure that their functions and services are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

### **5.3 Human Resources Implications**

- Eight Safeguarding Children training events have been procured to provide in house training for 200 Officers across North East Derbyshire District Council and Bolsover District Council during January to March 2015.
- In May 2014 Derbyshire Fire and Rescue and DCC's Adult Safeguarding provided a dedicated training session on the VARM process for NEDDC, Bolsover District Council and Rykneld Homes staff. The Housing Strategy Manager has requested a further session as key staff in Environmental Health Services and front line housing staff at Rykneld Homes still require training.
- It should be noted that the VARM process can involve an intensive period of Officer time, and on occasion a number of council Officers will be involved in panels at the same time. For example one recent case included Officers from Environmental Health Services, Housing Options Team, Community Safety and the Legal team. This is demonstrated in **Appendix 1**.

## **6 Recommendations**

That Cabinet:-

- (1) Notes the work carried out by officers to safeguard vulnerable adults and children and that where appropriate arrangements have been made to ensure that the Police or Derbyshire County Council, Adult Social Care and Children and Young Adults section are made aware of incidents as part of their safeguarding duties.
- (2) Agrees that key members of staff at the District Council undertake further training on the Vulnerable Adults Risk Management (VARM) process.
- (3) Agrees to consider further reports at future meetings on an annual basis on the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children.

## 7 Decision Information

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b><br>(A Key Decision is one which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards) | No |
| <b>District Wards Affected</b>   |    |
| <b>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</b>  |    |

## 8 Document Information

| Appendix No  | Title   |
|--|---|
| Appendix 1   | Over view of VARM cases involving NEDDC staff |
| <b>Background Papers</b> (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers) |   |
|  |   |
| Report Author  | Contact Number                                |
| Rebecca Slack  | 01246 217289                                  |

| VARM CASE   | REASON   | STAGES UNDERTAKEN  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Case 1</p> <p>Officers:</p> <p>Environmental Health Services</p> | <p>Vulnerable individual living in own home with major life threatening health &amp; care issues and extensive drug &amp; alcohol misuse; serious disrepair to property (7 Cat 1 hazards) and misuse of property by others e.g. dumping on property, drug &amp; alcohol taking by others in property; target of hate crime; significant fire issues as open fire used for heating and cooking purposes</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi agency meeting (EH Chair)</li> <li>• Scoping meeting (EH Chair)</li> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> VARM meeting taken place with a list of actions (EH Chair);</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> VARM meeting taken place with update on actions to date &amp; additional actions (EH Chair);</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> VARM due 27/11/14 (EH Chair)</li> <li>• HOT also in attendance for possible homeless prevention</li> <li>• Legal involved to advise on repossession of property and possible closure of premises due to ASB and risk to community.</li> </ul> <p>Emerging actions: smoke detection fitted by fire service, property repossession, alternative supported accommodation via Action Housing , residential de-tox rehabilitation, social worker support, fire service concerns</p> |
| <p>Case 2</p> <p>Officers:</p> <p>Environmental Health officers</p> | <p>Vulnerable individual living in own home with extensive hoarding problems; fire safety issues, extensive disrepair to gable end of property due to subsidence which will be repaired by insurance company; contractors for insurance company unable to undertake work due to extensive hoarding activity.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> VARM meeting taken place with a list of actions (EH chair);</li> <li>• Fire service installed extensive smoke detectors</li> <li>• Insurers providing alternative living accommodation, storage facility, contractors to start work, social worker to provide support throughout process and afterwards – all on track</li> <li>• Social worker support in place</li> <li>• EH to provide support &amp; resource during removal of items to storage</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Case 3</p>   | <p>Vulnerable individual living in own home with</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> VARM meeting taken place with a list of actions (EH Chair)</li> </ul>  |

## Appendix 1 – Environmental Health Services VARM cases

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>(May 2014 onwards)</p> <p>Officers:<br/>Environmental Health</p> | <p>extensive structural, heating, hot water and sanitary disrepair and significant health problems; poor nourishment concerns as no means of cooking; not bathing or washing, sleeping downstairs on sofa, individual believes subject to break-ins</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temporary repair to roof, door locks replaced &amp; dummy CCTV cameras fitted by NED Handyvan Service</li> <li>• Oil filled radiator supplied by NED Handyvan Service, eligible for energy efficiency support for combi boiler/free upgrade</li> <li>• PCSOs observing</li> <li>• Multi Agency Team Health meeting to be undertaken</li> <li>• Working with Action Housing for referral and floating support for vulnerable adult</li> </ul> |
| <p>Case 4<br/>(June onwards 2014)</p>                               | <p>2 vulnerable adults living in own home; Extreme Hoarding and filthy house; serious fire safety concerns arising from cooking in basement of property and open fire heating; significant lack of engagement problems;</p>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smoke detectors installed in property by NED Handyvan Service</li> <li>• 3 oil filled radiators supplied by NED Handyvan Service</li> <li>• Attempted VARM (EH Chair) – had to be cancelled due to lack of engagement by vulnerable adults &amp; agencies unable to gain access</li> <li>• Fire service installed smoke detectors to adjoining property for additional protection</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Case 5<br/>(Rykneld property)</p>                                | <p>Vulnerable adult in Rykneld property; extreme hoarding &amp; filthy house;</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> VARM meeting taken place with a list of actions (Rykneld chair);</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> VARM</li> <li>• Encourage to remove items for space</li> <li>• EH support for clearance and expertise in hoarding, filthy &amp; verminous situation</li> </ul>   |