

North East Derbyshire District Council

Cabinet

9 March 2016

Update on Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children

Report No LR/06/15-16/PH of Councillor L Robinson, Portfolio Holder with Responsibility for Community Safety and Health

This report is public

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 Policies for both Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults are in place and currently fit for purpose. Updates are due later this year following the introduction of the Care Act.
- 1.2 Safeguarding Link Officers have been identified as the contact point for any referrals through to Derbyshire County Council or the police. These are:-
 - Paul Hackett – Corporate Safeguarding Lead Officer
 - Carl Griffiths – Lead Safeguarding Link Officer
 - Rachael Pope – Customer Services Operational Manager
 - Lee Hicken – Joint Assistant Director , Leisure
 - Janice Bartrop/Tania Morrell - Human Resources Advisor
 - Dawn Clarke – Joint Assistant Director, Finance and Revenues and Benefits
 - Heather Summers - Head of Neighbourhood Services, Rykneld Homes
- 1.3 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. The group involves officers from Bolsover District Council, North East Derbyshire District Council and Rykneld Homes.
- 1.4 Activities to raise awareness of policies over the last 18 months have included:
 - New staff briefing cards detailing signs of abuse, how to refer and contact details for all Safeguarding Link Officers are currently being distributed and

include aspects of mental health following the Scrutiny review of Mental Health in 2015.

- Regular bulletins on NEDi
- Dedicated Safeguarding page on NEDi
- 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).
- A Programme of safeguarding training for Officers commenced in 2015. Members were also invited to attend a safeguarding awareness briefing on 9 November 2015. Between the beginning of January 2015 and the end of January 2016 a total of 180 North East employees and 19 North East Derbyshire Members have attended safeguarding awareness sessions.
- Scrutiny Review on Sexual Exploitation commenced 25 September 2015.

Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Process (VARM)

- 1.5 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 issues 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 cases at risk of homicide).
- 1.6 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.
- 1.7 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:

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
- 1.8 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.

Safeguarding and VARM Referrals

Child Protection

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- 1.9 There have been 6 child protection referrals between the period November 2014 and November 2015 plus 1 anonymous contact via the website asking for advice on reporting suspected abuse but no details given.

1.10 The following factors were recorded:

- 3 were allegations of neglect and young children being left alone in the house;
- 1 was an allegation of grooming;
- 1 physical abuse witnessed in the form of a child being hit;
- 1 allegation of sexual abuse.

1.11 Referrals came via a cross section of departments including Revenues and Benefits, Leisure Centre, Environmental Health and the Contact Centre.

Rykneld Homes

1.12 There have been 5 child protection referrals during the period November 2014 – November 2015.

1.13 The following factors were recorded:

- Parental Neglect – 3
- Domestic Abuse – 1
- Substance Misuse by parents - 1

Adult Safeguarding

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1.14 There have been 7 cases of adult Safeguarding between the period November 2014 to November 2015

The following factors were recorded:

- 1 threats of suicide to an Officer within Revenues and Benefits;
- 1 gentleman with learning disabilities with suspected abuse/hate crime from neighbours;
- 1 Learning disabilities, robbed and attacked by neighbours;
- 4 elderly, mentally and physically vulnerable, including financial abuse

Rykneld Homes

1.15 There have been 15 adult safeguarding referrals for the period November 2014 to November 2015.

The following factors were recorded:

- General Welfare - 1
- Mental Health - 6
- Mental/Physical Health - 2
- Physical abuse - 1
- Domestic abuse - 2
- Substance misuse - 2
- Financial abuse - 1

Domestic Abuse

- 1.16 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).
- 1.17 The council and Rykneld Homes monitor incidents or suspected incidents of domestic abuse:

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- 1.18 During the period October 2014 – October 2015 the Council’s Housing Options Team dealt with 62 cases where domestic abuse was a factor. The team continues 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

- 1.19 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

- 1.20 Council Officers from the Housing Options Team and Environmental Health Services have and are currently involved in 5 VARM meetings with Environmental Health staff chairing 2 of those meetings. **Appendix 1** provides an overview of the types of cases Environmental Health are involved in and **Appendix 2** provides photographs of some of the properties affected.

Factors include

- 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 and high costs due to need to clear properties.
- Hazardous conditions but non engaging with services. Issues of lack of nourishment and sanitation. Vulnerability due to old age, learning disabilities and mental health are factors also in these cases.

Rykneld Homes

- 1.21 Rykneld Homes have been involved in 3 VARMS during the period November 2014 to November 2015.

These include

- Mental Health and Anti Social Behaviour – 2 including one case where there was a high risk of fire due to dangerous smoking
- Hoarding – 1 case

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 VARM process and the Council's involvement and contribution in preventing serious harm and risk of death to vulnerable 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.
- 5.1.3 A number of VARM cases have resulted in the need for financial resources to help clear properties where hoarding is a factor. Officers seek to identify and apply for funding from external agencies. The Council successfully applied on behalf of Derbyshire Housing Officers for funding for assistance with VARM cases. There is currently a pot of £10,000 across Derbyshire to help facilitate the VARM process.

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. Councils should ensure that their functions and services are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The Council along with Bolsover District Council and Rykneild Homes undertake a review of activities against the Section 11 criteria through the use of an audit tool.

5.3 Human Resources Implications

- A total of 180 employees have attended safeguarding awareness training between the beginning of January 2015 and end of January 2016, with two further sessions due to be held in February 2016. This training has been delivered by Safeguarding Children Training and Consultancy Ltd.
- 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.

6 Recommendation

- 6.1 That Cabinet note the work carried out by Officers to safeguard vulnerable adults and children and where appropriate to ensure that the police or Derbyshire County Council's Adult Social Care and Children and Younger Adults (CAYA) are made aware of the incidence as part of their safeguarding duties.

7 Decision Information

Is the decision a Key Decision? (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
District Wards Affected	N/A
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people

8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1 Appendix 2	Overview of VARM cases involving NEDDC staff Photographs of properties involved in VARM cases
Background Papers (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
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Joint Environmental Health Service

North East Derbyshire District Councils

Housing & Pollution Service - VARM Cases

VARM CASE	REASON	STAGES UNDERTAKEN
<p>Coal Aston</p> <p>EH Lead/Chair</p> <p>(August 2014 –Nov 2015)</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"> • 1st VARM meeting taken place with a list of actions (EH chair); P attended • Fire service installed extensive smoke detectors • Insurers providing alternative living accommodation, storage facility, contractors to start work, social worker to provide support throughout process and afterwards – all on track • Social worker support in place • EH to provide support & resource during removal of items to storage • Hoarded items in storage • Property cleansed ready for insurance structural work • P went assisted into rented accommodation
<p>Clay Cross</p> <p>(May 2014 to 30 June 2015)</p> <p>EH Lead/Chair</p>	<p>Vulnerable individual living in own home with 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"> • 1st VARM meeting taken place with a list of actions (EH Chair) • Temporary repair to roof, door locks replaced & dummy CCTV cameras fitted by NED Handyvan Service • Oil filled radiator supplied by NED Handyvan Service, eligible for energy efficiency support for combi boiler/free upgrade • PCSOs observing • MAT Health meeting to be undertaken • Working with Action Housing for referral and floating support for vulnerable adult

VARM CASE	REASON	STAGES UNDERTAKEN
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with individual to consider moving into sheltered accommodation and bathe at residential home • After many months, individual unwilling to move or sell property and no money for repairs; increasing engagement issues • Only EH option available – served Housing Act Hazard awareness notice on property for electrics, flat roof renewal, repair toilet, boiler & heating
<p>Ashover</p> <p>(June 2014 onwards, still ongoing)</p> <p>EH Lead/Chair</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"> • Smoke detectors installed in property by NED Handyvan Service • 3 oil filled radiators supplied by NED Handyvan Service • Attempted VARM (EH Chair) – had to be cancelled due to lack of engagement by vulnerable adults & agencies unable to gain access • Fire service installed smoke detectors to adjoining property for additional protection • EH-filthy & verminous notice served to clear property in stages over a number of months • Working with charitable organisations to find funding to cover the cost of clearing • Benefits and income streams being assessed
<p>Calow</p> <p>(May 2015 to Jan 2015)</p>	<p>Vulnerable adult in property; extreme hoarding & filthy house;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st VARM meeting taken place with a list of actions (Rykneld chair); H attended • 2nd VARM • Encouraged to remove items for space • EH support for clearance

VARM CASE	REASON	STAGES UNDERTAKEN
Rykneld Lead/chair		and expertise in hoarding, filthy & verminous situation
<p>Eckington</p> <p>(May 2015, still ongoing)</p> <p>DCC Adult Care Lead</p> <p>Officers: EH on the panel</p>	<p>Vulnerable female (50) hoarded own property; moved into mothers (80) property and hoarded her property so that she has had to move out and move in with another daughter, sleeping on a sofa. Mother's tenancy is under threat due to the amount of hoarding in property.</p> <p>Concerns for conditions in property, large cracks in walls, structural survey needed; no water electricity or gas; property not habitable due to hoarding and lack of facilities; E not lived at property for 9 years; mortgage being paid on Property and E holds down a responsible job; medical issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st VARM meeting taken place with a list of actions (Adult Care Chair); • Objective to clear enough space in E's property to allow to move back by Christmas and ensure conditions are safe with necessary facilities and utilities operational • Leonard Cheshire working with E • Exploring other charitable funding for help with storage
<p>Morton</p> <p>(March 2015, still ongoing)</p> <p>Adult Care Lead</p> <p>Officers: EH on panel</p>	<p>Vulnerable male (79) living in rented farmhouse;</p> <p>March 2015 - original complaint of rats inside property; filthy & Verminous property – dog & human excrement throughout property. Using diesel to light fire & chimney fire sustained – fire service called out;</p> <p>Social worker involved & property cleansed.</p> <p>Sept 2015 – property back to filthy and verminous – social worker involvement, property cleaned and paid for by</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Multi disciplinary team meeting taken place with list of actions • Fire service –installed misting system • EH housing inspection & Prohibition Notice under Housing Act • Social worker support • Care package at home

VARM CASE	REASON	STAGES UNDERTAKEN
	<p>George.</p> <p>Nov 2015 – property back to poor conditions. George in hospital for 4 weeks, ready for discharge but unable to be released due to poor housing conditions.</p> <p>EH inspection – Structurally ok, to prohibit use of upper floors and room where chimney fire under Housing Act; Outside toilet – commodes inside and care package in place for hospital discharge; Some funds available to carry on with care package.</p>	

**North East Derbyshire & Bolsover District Councils - Joint Environmental Health Service
Housing & Pollution Service - VARM Cases - photographs**

Ashover VARM Case: Owner occupied property - Mother (80) & son (50):

- Kitchen before and after



- Living Room before and after



- Bathroom before and after



South Normanton VARM Case: Owner occupied property - Mother (79) & son (47)

- Living room and bedroom



- Kitchen before and after



South Normanton Case: Private rented property - Male wheelchair user (65) & wife

- Kitchen



Calow Case: Rykneld property - female tenant (65)

- Kitchen

