

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 In 2000, the Welsh Assembly Government published a statutory guidance document, 'In Safe Hands', which said *'Authorities should draw up an annual report to their committees about their work in relation to Adult Protection. The National Assembly for Wales will expect to see this information being collected, collated and, most importantly, used in developing practice and services'*. This is the annual Protection of Vulnerable Adults report for the year April 2011 to March 2012.

2.0 Adult Safeguarding

- 2.1 Adult Safeguarding ensures that vulnerable adults are able to retain independence, well-being and choice, and that they can live their lives free from abuse or neglect.
- 2.2 In Flintshire, the Adult Safeguarding Manager is responsible for coordinating safeguarding work, including the Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA), social work for vulnerable adults, Mental Capacity Act issues and the implementation of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.
- 2.3 A page on the Council's Infonet site has been created, giving staff access to a wide range of resources and documents relating to the Protection of Vulnerable Adults, the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, and the Mental Capacity Act 2005. The Flintshire County Council website page on Safeguarding has also been updated.

3.0 Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA)

- 3.1 The Protection of Vulnerable Adults process, or POVA, is the national system in place to protect all vulnerable adult client groups from abuse and to support them to seek treatment and redress in the event that they have been abused. Social Services Departments take the lead role in coordinating the development of local policy guidance, but all agencies are to *'work cooperatively on the identification, investigation, treatment and prevention of abuse of vulnerable adults'* [In Safe Hands, 2000].
- 3.2 A vulnerable adult is defined in 'In Safe Hands' as a person over 18 years of age 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 serious exploitation'*.
- 3.3 Adult Social Services' Departments are responsible for chairing Adult Protection Strategy meetings and Case Conferences, a role taken on in Flintshire by Team Managers or the Adult Safeguarding Manager. Social Services for Adults also take responsibility under 'In Safe Hands' for coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the inter-agency Adult Protection process. This includes providing training for in-house and external staff in using the procedures, producing information leaflets and providing the Welsh Government with Adult Protection statistics.
- 3.4 Abuse is defined as a *'Violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons'*.

4.0 Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

- 4.1 The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) were introduced in April 2009. The Safeguards are part of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, and were introduced to provide legal protection for vulnerable people who are in care homes or in hospital and who lack the mental capacity to consent to be in the care setting. Any care home or hospital, treating or caring for a person in such a way that they believe they are depriving that person of their liberty, is now required to seek authority to do so.
- 4.2 Deprivations of Liberty are assessed by the relevant Supervisory Body, a role which Flintshire Social Services for Adults carries out for people who are in care homes and who are ordinarily resident in the county. Seven Best Interests Assessors have been appointed by the Department to carry out the assessments required by the Safeguards, a function which the Assessors carry out in addition to their other responsibilities as senior Social Workers in the Department.
- 4.3 Fifteen Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards assessments were dealt with by Social Services for Adults between April 2011 and March 2012, in care homes in Flintshire and in neighbouring Authorities. This was a decrease from 25 referrals the previous year. Eight requests came from care homes outside Flintshire, seven from homes within the county. Authorisations were issued in seven cases, with the other referrals being assessed as not meeting the threshold for authorisation.

5.0 Mental Capacity Act 2005

- 5.1 The Mental Capacity and Best Interests Procedure was launched in 2011 to give staff guidance and direction in the use of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. If a vulnerable adult lacks the mental capacity to make a decision, the Act expects that any decisions are made in the person's best interests, and that statutory agencies work with the individual and their family. The Procedure gives guidance on assessing a person's mental capacity to make a particular decision, and on ensuring that decisions are made in the best interests of the individual.
- 5.2 The Adult Safeguarding Manager supports the implementation of the Mental Capacity Act by offering advice to teams about specific cases and chairs formal multi-agency Best Interests meetings in the most complex cases.

6.0 National, Regional and Local Developments

- 6.1 The year has seen a number of significant developments which will raise the national profile of Adult Protection. Key amongst these are Welsh Government proposals for the future of Adult Safeguarding and the publication of new All-Wales Adult Protection Procedures.
- 6.2 Chapter 4 of the Social Services Bill Consultation Document set out the Welsh Government's proposals for the future of Safeguarding. These include:
- Establishing a national Independent Safeguarding Board for adults and children.
 - Setting up six regional Adult Protection Boards to run parallel to Children's Safeguarding Boards.

- Introducing a coherent legal framework for adult safeguarding, to ensure that agencies can be seen to respond to alleged abuse against adults in the same consistent, coordinated and robust way as they would against the alleged abuse of a child.
 - Introducing the term ‘adult at risk’ to replace ‘vulnerable adult’, which consultation groups have suggested is an unwelcome label.
 - Ensuring that all agencies encompassed in the legal framework will, upon being alerted to suspected abuse, be required to, or cause others to make enquiries and undertake appropriate action to protect an adult defined as being at risk. At the moment, only Social Services Departments have a statutory responsibility to adhere to adult safeguarding procedures.
- 6.3 It is anticipated that the broadening of definitions outlined within the Bill, together with an increasing public profile of adult safeguarding issues, will result in an increase in adult safeguarding referrals. Social Services Departments will continue with their responsibility of coordinating the adult safeguarding process.
- 6.4 In light of this background, a pressure bid was submitted and agreed by Council for an additional £45,000 for 2012 – 2013 with full year effect of £90,000 for future years.
- 6.5 The new Adult Safeguarding Unit will ensure the robust implementation and operation of adult safeguarding policies and procedures, including Mental Capacity Act issues, domestic violence forums and public protection matters.
- 6.6 Resources will consist of two Adult Safeguarding Managers, two administrators and social work support.
- 6.7 The role of the Flintshire Adult Protection Committee will be reviewed in the light of the changes proposed in the Social Services Bill.

7.0 Adult Protection Statistics 2011 – 2012

- 7.1 The year saw a total of 250 Adult Protection referrals received by Flintshire Social Services for Adults. Of these, 186 progressed to a full investigation and 64 referrals were screened and were dealt with by the relevant Team Manager. This figure compares with 212 cases reported in the year 2010 - 2011. It shows that the trend of annual increase in Adult Protection referrals is continuing, as can be seen in **Table 1**.

Year	Total Number of Referrals
2011 - 2012	250
2010 - 2011	212
2009 - 2010	190
2008 - 2009	128
2007 - 2008	141
2006 - 2007	103
2005 - 2006	76
2004 - 2005	40

Table 1: Annual rates of Adult Protection referrals in Flintshire

- 7.2 The graphs presented at **Appendix 2** give a breakdown of numbers, types of referrals and outcomes. The highest number of referrals (38) came from Social Services provider services, followed by independent providers (37). This shows the vital role that care staff in residential and domiciliary settings have in identifying and reporting suspected abuse.
- 7.3 As in previous years, women over 65 are by far most likely to be the alleged victim in Adult Protection referrals. In 2011 - 2012 there were 51 referrals made for women over 65. This population group also makes up the highest proportion of clients of Social Services for Adults. The victims are most likely to be living in their own homes in the community when the alleged abuse takes place, and the allegation is most likely to be one of physical abuse.
- 7.4 At the conclusion of each investigation a record is made of the outcome of the process. In 45 of the 186 cases which were investigated, no abuse was found at the end of the process, but in cases where there may have been abuse, One-hundred and seventeen investigations led to risks being reduced or removed. In eight cases, the alleged victim refused any safeguarding action and in the other 16 cases, outcomes included extra support for care providers and increased monitoring by a care manager.
- 7.5 **Table 2** shows the number of Adult Protection referrals received for the six counties across North Wales for the year 2011-2012. It can be seen that in Flintshire there was a lower than average rate of referral (the average figure across North Wales was 23 per 10,000 population).

County	Referrals received
Anglesey	154
Conwy	375
Denbighshire	244
Flintshire	250
Gwynedd	166
Wrexham	335

Table 2: Comparative Adult Protection referral rates across North Wales 2011 – 2012

8.0 Training

- 8.1 Between April 2011 and the end of March 2012, monthly training sessions were delivered by the Social Services for Adults Workforce Development Team to staff from within Flintshire County Council and also to the independent care provider sector. One-hundred and twenty-seven people attended Level 2 (Introductory) training and 58 people attended Level 3 (Advanced).
- 8.2 Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has continued to deliver a programme of in-house training to Health staff, and this can be linked to an increase in the number of referrals coming from Health Board colleagues.
- 8.3 Thirty-eight care home owners and senior members of care home staff attended awareness training in the use of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards in 2011 – 2012.

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 The year has seen the highest number of Adult Protection referrals since recording began in 2004.

- 9.2 A comprehensive training programme has been delivered by Social Services, and by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, and this increased awareness, along with a greater public profile for adult safeguarding, can be seen to have influenced the increase in referral rates.
- 9.4 The next twelve months will see significant change in the way adults at risk are safeguarded both nationally and within Flintshire. The Social Services Bill will affect the coordination of, and priority given to, adult safeguarding at a strategic level across the country. Within Flintshire the creation of a dedicated Adult Safeguarding Unit will enable Social Services for Adults to further develop and improve safeguarding for adults at risk.