

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	Subject: Procedures for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults
FROM: Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 6 June 2000	
REPORT AUTHOR: K Somers	

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To draw the attention of the Committee to concerns about arrangements for the protection of vulnerable adults, to advise of work done to develop model inter agency procedures, and to propose a process for the implementation of revised procedures in North Lanarkshire.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In December 1998, the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland published the Report of an Inquiry into the Care and Treatment of an individual known as Ms P. Ms P was a vulnerable woman with a learning disability who was deemed to be at risk due to her association with people who abused and exploited her.
- 2.2 Ms P was an adult woman resident in Glasgow. She lived with her parents until her mother's death 20 years before the occurrence of the incidents under investigation.
- 2.3 Over a period of approximately 4 years, Ms P received services from the health service, the Social Work Department and the City Housing in Glasgow. During this period Ms P was accommodated in homeless accommodation and remained an open case in the Social Work Department.
- 2.4 Over this time, Ms P was the victim of a large number of assaults, some of them very serious.
- 2.5 After almost three years, the Social Work Department applied for Guardianship of Ms P. This prompted an investigation by the Mental Welfare Commission into the circumstances of the case.
- 2.6 One of the main concerns identified by the Mental Welfare Commission Inquiry was the failure of the statutory agencies, the Police and the General Practitioner to communicate effectively or to act in a coordinated way to ensure that the vulnerable person was protected.

- 2.7 The main conclusions of the Mental Welfare Commission were that:
- ◆ Ms P did not receive adequate supervision and protection during the period under review;
 - ◆ Glasgow City Housing were to be commended for their efforts in trying to secure appropriate care and protection;
 - ◆ Several agencies did not respond adequately or timeously to the majority of assaults against Ms P;
 - ◆ Poor communication within and between agencies resulted in an inadequate assessment of Ms P's mental disorder and level of vulnerability and contributed to unnecessary delays in the decision to use the powers of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act to protect Ms P;
 - ◆ Ms P experienced deficiency in care throughout the period under review.
- 2.8 The Commission made 12 recommendations to address the deficiencies identified. These were addressed to Glasgow City Social Work and Housing Departments, the Police, the Health Board and NHS Trusts, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and the Scottish Office.

3 ACTION REQUIRED

- 3.1 In February 2000, the Chief Social Work Inspector and the Chief Executive of the NHS in Scotland wrote jointly to Health Boards, NHS Trusts and Directors of Social Work.
- 3.2 The joint letter drew attention to the findings of the Inquiry and indicated that the Minister for Health and Community Care expected action from all agencies to be taken to ensure that the failures which contributed to the poor standards of care experienced by Ms P were not repeated.
- 3.3 In particular, the relevant agencies were asked to satisfy themselves that care and protection procedures were in place which were informed by the findings and conclusions as set out by the Commission.
- 3.4 Primary Care NHS Trusts have also been asked to ensure that the relevant findings are brought to the attention of all General Practitioners.

4 MODEL PROCEDURES

- 4.1 During 1999, the Head of Social Work Services of North Lanarkshire chaired an inter authority group involving Strathclyde Police. This group produced draft model procedures for the protection of vulnerable adults, to guide the development of procedures at local level. The draft procedures have the support of Strathclyde Police.
- 4.2 The model procedures have been the subject of further work by the agencies active in Glasgow City, to whom the Mental Welfare Commission's recommendations were addressed. Joint procedures have recently been finalised in Glasgow.

- 4.3 Further guidance on the matter has recently been published in England, in a Department of Health guidance paper "No Secrets", which covers developing and implementing multi agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse. This defines an adult who is vulnerable as 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"

- 4.4 Initial discussions involving housing and social work have taken place in North Lanarkshire. Officers have concluded that the model procedures could be developed and implemented in North Lanarkshire. Contact with a senior local officer from Strathclyde Police indicates that this would be an acceptable way forward.
- 4.5 Discussion with Lanarkshire Primary Care Trust and South Lanarkshire Council Departments will be required in due course with a view to establishing a consistent set of procedures in Lanarkshire.
- 4.6 It is proposed that this work should be accorded priority given the request of the Minister that all authorities should examine their procedures and ensure that agencies are working effectively together to ensure the care and protection of vulnerable individuals.
- 4.7 The introduction of revised procedures will require to be supported by interagency training. This will be given further consideration in due course.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to:
- [a] note that all authorities have been asked to review interagency procedures for the protection of vulnerable adults and ensure their effective implementation;
 - [b] approve the proposal that the Directors of Social Work and Housing, in consultation with other relevant agencies, propose to give priority to reviewing local procedures to ensure their effectiveness in protecting vulnerable adults.
 - [c] remit the report to Housing Committee for its consideration.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
31 May 2000

For further information on this report please contact J Nisbet, Principal Officer (TEL: 01698 332010)