

Notes of meeting of Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Working Group

Held on Wednesday 2nd April 2008 at Municipal Buildings

Present: Cllr Shaun Osborne (Chair), Cllr Ellen Cargill, Cllr Linda Redhead, Cllr Peter Murray, Howard Cockcroft, Julie Hunt, Peter Barron, Dwayne Johnson.

Apologies: Cllr Kath Loftus, Cllr Pamela Wallace, Cllr Trevor Higginson, Emma Mookerji.

- 1) The prime focus of the meeting was to consider the current situation in Halton and how Halton responds to any reported incidents in respect of vulnerable adults. Figures indicate that the number of referrals of alleged abuse was on a rising trend, and was higher than any other North-West Local Authority. The working group wished to understand why this was the case, and satisfy itself that the systems in place were appropriate and robust.
- 2) "No Secrets" provided the national guidance. The interpretation of definitions in respect of data collection were, however, different across the country. There is no standard system to record complaints, although one is promised for 2009. Halton has a 'low threshold' in its interpretation, and records categories that others don't (e.g. mis-medication; referrals from care homes, which is the highest category). Numbers also include referrals that, when investigated, show there is no case to answer.
- 3) Halton has had an active policy of encouraging referrals. Rises in reports correlate to active publicity campaigns. A well-developed training programme for partners also encourages greater number of reports. An external review of the service in Halton by the University of Liverpool had been very positive, particularly praising quick response times and good training.
- 4) The referral route was outlined from initial report to Halton Direct Link to allocation to appropriate team. This all happened on the day of referral. The multi-agency discussion was also highlighted, illustrating how the Council was working with its partners.
- 5) Rises in reporting was across all categories (Agencies, Care Homes, Home, Family, etc). Reports from Care Homes was the largest single category, followed by relatives. Contract specifications with care homes include care standards, and the requirement for staff to have Enhanced CRB checks.
- 6) The role of the Police was discussed. It was noted that there were very few prosecutions (7 in 2006/07), particularly in the area of financial abuse, where thresholds had been set. The Group agreed that they would like more information on the role and approach of the Police and the protocol in place. They asked that the next meeting should focus on this.
- 7) Other areas for consideration for future meetings would be budgets, staffing structures, and Member representation on the Safeguarding Board. Copies of 'No Secrets', Local guidance, annual report and referral pathways could be circulated to Members.