

**Report of the Chief Constable to the Chair and Members
of the Operational Policing Panel
22nd January 2010**

**Executive & Presenting Officer: Mr David Pickard, Assistant Chief
Constable (Crime Operations)**

Status: For information

Vulnerable Adults Unit

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To update Members on the current work across the Force to tackle abuse caused to and committed by Vulnerable Adults (VA).

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the content of the report.

3 Reasons

3.1 Procedure/Structure

The investigation of abuse against vulnerable adults has been included in the remit of the Vulnerability Units (VU), established on 13th July 2009. Staffing levels with respect to this specialist area remained unchanged during the move to the VU. Two Detective Constables deal with investigations in this area, one based in the North VU and one in the South VU, supported by a specified supervisor within the unit. Additional assistance is provided by other staff within the unit at the discretion of the Detective Inspector in charge of the unit.

- 3.2 These staff deal with a variety of offences committed against VA where the offender has custody care or control over the VA. Custody or care includes carers within care homes or those providing domiciliary care within individuals

homes. Control includes individuals who have control over finances for family members or who have Power of Attorney. The VAU also investigates offences against a VA where the perpetrator is a VA.

- 3.3 The team deal with a range of offences from common assault through to those where homicide is suspected, however when larger enquiries commence other specialist teams become involved in the investigation such as the Murder Investigation Team (MIT).
- 3.4 The Chief Constable is a signatory to the No Secrets document that commits Cleveland Police to working closely with partner agencies; these include Social Services, Primary Care Trusts, the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI), the CPS, and the Department for Works and Pensions. The VA staff also work with individual care home providers.
- 3.6 Referrals of alleged abuse are reported from other agencies as well as the police to the VA Co-ordinator within each of the local authorities. Each Social Services Department within the four unitary authorities has an appointed VA Co-ordinator. The Co-ordinators within each of the unitary authorities receive an annual funding contribution from Cleveland Police.
- 3.7 When a VA referral is made to the VA Co-ordinator a strategy meeting is held within 24 hours. This meeting is chaired by the VA Co-ordinator. Any agency which holds information about the VA is invited to attend the meeting where information is shared and a strategy is formulated to determine how the case will proceed. To date this year the average number of referrals is 55 per month. This has increased from 40 per month in the previous reporting period and 31 per month the year before.
- 3.9 The Detective Chief Inspector (Public Protection) is a member of the Tees wide Adult Safeguarding Board. The Detective Inspectors in the VU's are the Police representative on each of the Local Authority Protection Committees and the nominated VA Detective Sergeant's in the VU's are members of the working groups that stem from these committees. The Teeswide Adult Safeguarding Board is newly formed following discussion between partners about the need for a co-ordinated strategic approach.
- 3.10 There are a number of pressures in the field of adult protection which are expected to increase referrals. This includes a rise in the population of persons 'in care' and a corresponding growth in the delivery of care services commissioned by local authorities. There is also an increasing focus nationally with regard to adult protection issues. In the past year, the Department of Health has consulted widely on changes to the 'No Secrets' document. Included in the consultation are proposals to place Adult Safeguarding Boards on a statutory footing and to introduce new offences and police powers in relation to VA.

3.11 Levels of Vulnerable Adults Abuse

Levels of reporting of alleged abuse are increasing as demonstrated in the table below. This demonstrates that there is confidence in the procedures and that they are widely used by all agencies. Not all referrals result in an investigation by the police, some require an initial investigation to establish if a crime has been committed, if it is not the case then police involvement ceases.

Year	Reported Incidents	Recorded Crimes
2005	332	46
2006	433	26
2007	425	35
2008	485	17
2009*	604	42

**Year to date figure (Jan-Nov)*

3.12 The nature of the offences being investigated is varied, in the last two months investigations have commenced into offences including:

- 3 cases of rape including a multiple rape involving 4 suspects;
- Assaults by care home workers including one on a lady who had days left to live;
- Cases of financial abuse ranging from smaller amounts to organised fraud involving tens of thousands of pounds.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

Cleveland Police currently contribute 10% of the financial commitment to partnership arrangements for Safeguarding Adults in each of the unitary authorities. This funding is used to provide an adult protection co-ordinator, administrative support, training costs and administrative costs in each local authority. This currently amounts to a total commitment of around £30k per annum (10% contribution). Other contributors to partnership funding include the relevant PCT (40%) and the relevant local authority (50%).

4.2 Diversity and Equal Opportunities

Clearly this is an area where diversity and equality are critical as vulnerable adults are susceptible to abuse and discrimination. The partnership services and specialist police resource provided in relation to the protection of vulnerable adults reflect this. All partners are committed to tackling this type of abuse and ensuring quality of life for all vulnerable adults.

4.3 Human Rights Act

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising from this report.

4.4 Sustainability

The Vulnerability Units have been formed in order to provide greater resilience across the three vulnerability areas (Vulnerable Adult abuse, child abuse and domestic abuse). However, the growth in VA referrals, coupled with the growth in Child abuse referrals over the past year is stretching the capacity of the units.

4.5 Risk

This is an area of potential risk to the Force. If procedures are not followed and a serious adverse incident results then the Force would be exposed to partnership scrutiny through the Serious Case Review process. This may subsequently lead to media scrutiny.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The Force is committed to safeguarding vulnerable adults and striving to improve the investigating of such offences. This is evidenced by the Chief Constable's ongoing support as a signatory to the 'No Secrets' guidance.

5.2 The introduction of the Vulnerability Units has changed the structure of the Force response to VA referrals and VA investigations. The success of the Vulnerability Units will be reviewed early in 2010.

Sean Price
Chief Constable