



**Report of the Chief Constable to the Chair and Members
of the Operational Policing Panel
9th February 2012**

**Executive & Presenting Officer: Mr Sean White, 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 is carried out by staff within the two Vulnerability Units (VU). Staffing levels with respect to this specialist area had remained unchanged during the move to the VU. Two Detective Constables dealt 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 was provided by other staff within the unit at the discretion of the Detective Inspector in charge of the unit. The capacity of the staff to properly carry out their role was being impaired due to the volume of work and it was agreed in October 2011 that there would be growth in the Unit with the creation of two additional Detective Constable posts to deal with Vulnerable Adult abuse.

- 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 Care Quality Commission (CQC), the CPS, and the Department for Works and Pensions. The VA staff also work with individual care home providers.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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 59 per month. This has increased from 58 per month in the previous reporting period and 50 per month the year before.
- 3.7 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 co-ordinates a strategic approach to tackling and raising the profile of Vulnerable Adult abuse.
- 3.8 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, particularly as a result of the Panorama programme which focussed on the Winterbourne Care Home in Bristol.
- 3.9 A Vulnerable Adults policy has now been developed, all staff across the organisation have been briefed by members of the Vulnerability Unit and Public Protection is now a feature of every morning management meeting at each district. These changes have resulted in a raised awareness of Vulnerable Adult abuse across the organisation.

3.10 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
2010	700	24
2011	712	84

3.11 The nature of the offences being investigated is varied, investigations have commenced into offences including:

- Indecent assault;
- Assaults by care home workers;
- 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 Health agency (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 were formed 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, the increase in establishment for Vulnerable Adult detectives should off-set the work-load and provide greater resilience.

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 resulted in a more co-ordinated approach to tackling the issues around Vulnerable Adult abuse, the Public Protection Gold Group chaired by ACC White meets quarterly to consider any strategic issues and the Chief Inspector in charge of Public Protection manages the units on a day to day basis.

Jacqui Cheer
Temporary Chief Constable