Report to:	**Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee**
Date:	**15 March 2007**
By:	**Director of Adult Social Care**
Title of report:	**Audit of Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Service (Adult Protection)**
Purpose of report:	**To propose an audit of the service and make recommendations in relation to the future development of the service in the light of increased referrals.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:

1. Note the appointment of a Project Manager with administrative support to undertake a review of the present position in safeguarding services.

2. Receive a further report in November 2007 detailing future recommendations to enable Adult Social Care to respond appropriately to the increase in demand for investigation where a vulnerable adult is alleged as having been abused.

1.   Financial Appraisal

1.1   Salary for Project Manager at LMG1 £23k including on costs and half post administrative support at APT 3, £10k, both for six months.

1.2   Access to a computer and office accommodation at £5,000 and travel costs for the Project Manager of £500 will also be required.

2.   Background and Supporting Information

2.1   The sharp increase in the reporting of adult protection concerns for vulnerable adults has resulted in the dramatic growth of Safeguarding Adults investigations, meetings, assessments and reviews over the past four years. This is likely to rise to over 1000 referrals this year and in considering sample data from 2006/7:

- •   48% of allegations are found to be substantiated
- •   20% to be inconclusive due to lack of evidence
- •   21% to be unsubstantiated
- •   11% were not categorised

More than 500 vulnerable residents of East Sussex have been found to be the subject of abuse, mostly from formal carers or from their friends or family. Adult Social Care is charged by "No Secrets" 2000 as the lead agency for the co-ordination of Safeguarding Adults investigations in order to prevent, investigate and take action where a vulnerable adult is alleged as being abused.

2.2   The CSCI inspection of older people's services in 2006 identified a lack of consistency in the response to these allegations both across the county and between client groups. This has been borne out of an increase in complaints relating to the Safeguarding Adults service.

2.3   The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 which originated from Recommendation 19 of the Bichard Enquiry which flagged up the need for safeguarding arrangements relating to staff and address weaknesses in the current system (CRB/POVA List) will be implemented later this year.

2.4   The Mental Capacity Act 2005 brings into existence a new offence of "ill-treatment or wilful neglect" of a person who lacks capacity as well as providing for independent advocacy services for people without capacity who are being abused. This service comes into effect in April 2007 although other provisions of the Act will be brought in later in the year. The Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy Service has been commissioned in East Sussex.

2.5   The Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004 introduces the new offence of "causing or allowing the death of a vulnerable adult".

2.6   Assessment and Care Management teams for older people, those suffering mental ill health and for those with a learning disability undertake an increasing number of investigations each year. In order to provide a proportional response a four level system of intervention has been adopted:

- Level 1 allegations are investigated by the provider following determination by ASC;
- Level 2 involves an assessment or review of the service user and/or alleged perpetrator if they are also a service user due to previous incidents or concerns raised;
- Level 3 is where a serious allegation/incident has occurred which may be a crime; and
- Level 4 is where a number of people may have experienced abuse in a single setting or from a worker in their own homes.

The number of Level 4 investigations has been found to be far higher than managers had anticipated at 20%. Level 3 and 4 together amount to 45% of the work. Charts detailing the adult protection activity are available in **Appendix 2** and **Appendix 3**.

In 2006 in relation to referrals which are a crime 56 Achieving Best Evidence joint interviews with Sussex Police took place to assist vulnerable witnesses to gain access to justice. At more than one interview each week this is also far higher than anticipated. East Sussex has 24 specialist staff trained to undertake these interviews.

2.7   The work is underpinned by a series of discussions and multi-agency strategy meetings chaired by Adult Social Care managers. Some cases are complex and involve Trading Standards, legal advisors, finance officer support (where financial abuse is alleged) as well as investigation staff and independent provider service managers. We need to explore ways of ensuring that quality and consistency are applied across the service areas in East Sussex.

2.8   The Department of Health has commissioned a data gathering study in order to ascertain what reliable data can be collected to inform us of the level of abuse nationally.

3.   Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendation

3.1   Decision making on the level of investigation to be adopted needs to be consistent across the localities and across client groups in order for the best use of resources to be achieved. Efficiency can be optimised when the level of investigation can be consistently applied. Practice needs to be monitored as a matter of course to ensure that protective policies and procedures are followed, outcomes for service users collated and the service continuously improved in the light of experience.

3.2   A six month audit of the Safeguarding Adults service needs to be undertaken in order to establish what is being done well and what could be done more efficiently. The Project Initiation Document is attached (**Appendix 1**).

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Local Member(s)*: All*
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: