

Adult Safeguarding Peer Challenge

1. In early February Stockton Council received a 'Regional Peer Challenge' delivered by a team of professionals from other local authorities and partner agencies from different parts of England to assess local performance in relation to safeguarding of vulnerable adults. The Challenge followed the 'critical friend' paradigm and included study of background documents, completion of a self-assessment, and interviews, meetings and focus groups.
2. One of the sessions consisted of an hour with Cllr. Steve Nelson and Mike Batty from Stockton Council, Les Jones from Cleveland Fire Brigade, Jeff Evans from DTV Probation Trust and Paul Noddings from Tristar Homes, who were interviewed by Cllr. Alan Kerr, the Deputy Leader of South Tyneside Council, and DC Maria Gray from the Metropolitan Police.
3. Included in the 'Partnerships' section of the feedback was a 'strength' in relation to "Safer Stockton Partnership – 3 year planning schedule, 6 priorities, ASB, DV etc" and an 'Area for Consideration' – "Safer Stockton Partnership could consider 'vulnerable people' as a priority".
4. It is possible that the Review team did not fully understand the community-driven approach to prioritisation followed by our Partnership, as only a very brief discussion of a few minutes took place on this issue.
5. The recommendation also invites further discussion around the meaning of the term 'vulnerable people' in this context. For example, it is arguable that everybody who becomes a victim of crime and/or ASB is therefore a vulnerable person, but there are clearly variations of degree: a young child who experiences domestic violence would be regarded by most people as more vulnerable than an adult taking part in 'consensual' violence in a public place after a night of drinking, although increasingly the term 'vulnerable' is being extended to cover those who have rendered themselves vulnerable by excessive intake of alcohol (whether or not they are regarded as being clinically dependent on alcohol). The longer phrase 'people whose circumstances make them vulnerable' is sometimes used.
6. The most constructive way forward on this issue may be to make some general reference to prioritising the most vulnerable victims in the introductory text to the Community Safety Plan 2014-2017, and noting that vulnerability will be addressed as most appropriate under each of the six priorities, e.g.
 - (a) Reduce ASB – by continuing to use the vulnerability assessment tool to score all complaints of ASB
 - (b) Reduce violent crime and robbery – by searching for any patterns of repeat victimisation.
 - (c) Reduce drug related offending – by continuing an approach based on a mixture of education, treatment and enforcement, with an emphasis on treatment for people with an addiction to drugs but willing to engage with treatment, and an emphasis on enforcement for those who will not engage and those involved in supply.

- (d) Reduce criminal damage – by searching for any patterns of repeat victimisation or use of criminal damage as an instrument of deliberate harassment/victimisation.
- (e) Reduce alcohol related crime and ASB – by continuing an approach based on a mixture of education, treatment and enforcement
- (f) Reduce domestic abuse – by continuing an approach based on a mixture of prevention, support for victims and a range of enforcement and ‘treatment’ options for perpetrators.