



Project part financed
by the European Union

C.A.W.T. Protection of Vulnerable Adults Project

Evaluation

June 2008



turning complex problems into simple solutions

1 Protection of Vulnerable Adults Project – Summary Document

1.1 Background

1.1.1 In recent years the Protection of Vulnerable Adults has become a very topical issue and one which is becomingly increasingly prioritised within Health Services in both N.I. and R.o.I. Policies and procedures around the Protection of Vulnerable Adults exist at Regional, H.S.S.B. and Trust level in N.I. and at local H.S.E. or county level in R.o.I. However, there were concerns that there may be a lack of consistency within the C.A.W.T. area as a whole and that this would have implications for people with a learning disability.

1.1.2 These concerns led to the development of the Protection of Vulnerable Adults Project which aimed to improve the health and social well-being of people with a learning disability by auditing guidelines for their protection, and which aimed to equip staff working with people with learning disabilities with the skills required to deal with the protection of vulnerable adults and investigations of abuse. The project fitted within the C.A.W.T. Learning Disability Sub Group. The project obtained funding from the European Union INTERREG IIIA programme (via C.A.W.T.) which was matched funded by the D.H.S.S.P.S. and D.o.H.C. In total to project cost £240,000 The Project was overseen by a Project Board. A Project Manager and part time Administrative Assistant were employed to deliver the project objectives. A voluntary Quality Assurance Team were established to monitor project quality. The Project ran from February 2006 to June 2008.

1.1.3 During the project's lifetime a range of activities were undertaken. These are detailed in the Appendices.

1.1.4 The original aims of the project were to examine the health status and support for carers, and, to develop common guidelines and training to equip staff in the C.A.W.T. area with the skills to deal with protection issues. The evaluation sought

to establish the extent to which the project achieved these aims, and to consider the effectiveness of delivery. The evaluation involved consultation with the Project Board and staff, consultation with key stakeholders involved in the protection of vulnerable adults, and consideration of all project documentation.

1.2 Key Findings

1.2.1 Overall, the project has increased awareness and understanding of the issue of protection of vulnerable adults and of the guidelines and policies relating to the protection of vulnerable adults.

- ◆ The investigative work highlighted a range of issues around:
 - staff concerns about their role with regard to abuse, protection and investigation and about the role of management in implementing/delivering on any policies and procedures
 - the need for policies to focus on being proactive, to be easily understood, to involve all key stakeholders, to have clear roles/responsibilities and protocols,
 - the factors that can lead to poor practice and how these should be addressed to avoid abuse
 - the need to ensure appropriate staff training and updating
 - the need for improved communication and networking across jurisdictions and agencies and how collaboration between agencies/jurisdictions is possible, despite differing legislation, policies, procedures, practice
 - the need to address gaps in provision/policy development in some areas, particularly relating to regional policies, registration, and interagency working
 - the need for a consistent approach to training, support, communication local fora/Adult Protection Co-ordinators and clear roles and responsibilities - at local level
 - the need for multi-agency co-operation and clarification of roles/responsibilities, communication points, joint protocols

- the importance of stakeholders getting the opportunity to network and learn from each other, particularly in relation to highlighting best practice and looking at things from a different perspective
- ◆ The Frameworks and Tool kits were considered to be useful tools for staff to use, long after the project's life span. These, along with the associated training, and training on investigation procedures, staff roles, and service management helped improved understanding and awareness of the issues relating to abuse and protection. The issues highlighted through the investigative work had been incorporated into the tools and training and therefore were designed to address concerns and issues highlighted above. The training and tools were complementary to existing policies, procedures and training (and the work on existing policies helped ensure that this was the case). Those consulted indicated that the tools and training provided them with:
 - a better understanding of legislation, policies, investigative procedures and their role within this
 - a better understanding of the issue of abuse and where and how it can happen
 - a clearer view of the roles and responsibilities of key staff and agencies
 - a much better understanding of processes and procedures in other jurisdictions
 - an opportunity to learn from other areas
 - less fear and anxiety about the issue
 - a simpler view of what is a complex issue
- ◆ The Carers Research has provided an evidence base on the needs of carers and existing services and support.
- ◆ The Poster Campaign and Safer Lives and Personal Safety Events have raised awareness among service users
- ◆ The theatre work has raised awareness of the issues and provides a strong message from service users

1.2.2 The extent to which the project has or will impact on policy and practice is only likely to be fully realised over time. To date, those involved have indicated that their participation has led to some changes in attitude and practice within the work place. The learning has also been transferred to others through discussion of the events/training at team meetings. The tool kits will be used by many, long after the project ends. Most

would be keen to use the information bank and view it as a useful resource. Most have taken some additional learning from events attended, etc.

- 1.2.3** In terms of wider impacts in relation to policy, it was felt that the project came at a good time given the increasing priority on the protection issue, and moves within each jurisdiction to address it. In R.o.I., consideration is now being given to developing a regional policy on adult protection and it is viewed that the information and learning from this project will be very useful in assisting this to happen. It will be important to ensure that the learning from this project is publicised and directed to key policy makers. The learning will also be useful in the review of day services in R.o.I. Within N.I. it is also felt that the project will continue to influence policies, procedures and practice. It has already influenced work being undertaken by the Regional Adult Protection Forum and the Western Adult Protection Forum and will be used as a resource in future work. It has also been used in other H.S.S.B. areas in N.I. and by other professionals involved in the field of protection. By undertaking the work on a cross border basis, the project will help ensure as much consistency as possible between the jurisdictions in any future policy development. The project has helped push the issue of adult protection higher up the agenda.
- 1.2.4** The carers research has just been completed and it is therefore too early to comment on its impacts, however, feedback indicated that it will be useful in terms of helping commissioners identify gaps in services and support and therefore aid future planning.
- 1.2.5** The project has also resulted in networking and communication within each jurisdictions, between the two jurisdictions, and between key agencies involved in the field of protection. It has provided an opportunity for each to learn about the other, to view things from a different perspective, and to understanding each other's roles/responsibilities, guidelines, constraints, etc. Key contacts have been made and it is hoped that these will be maintained.
- 1.2.6** The project was considered to have been managed and delivered very effectively. Those consulted related this largely

to the drive, commitment, knowledge, skills, and experiences of the Project Manager. The project reached a wide audience strategically because of the involvement in other strategic fora, conferences, etc. However, whilst the project has considered a wide range of issues, there was a view that, if it had not been for the changes within the health services in both jurisdictions, the impacts could have been greater. These changes resulted in many staff changes and much uncertainty within each area and within the Project Board. In addition, there were changes in CAWT structures and resultant changes in staffing.

1.2.7 The project ended in June 2008 and the Project Co-ordinator left the post just before that. However, it is important that the information and learning gathered through this project keeps a high profile and is used to influence policy makers and providers in future. The Project Manager's role was instrumental in this regard during the project and consideration needs to be given to how the information is publicised and promoted in future. This should be the role of all managers and policy makers in the CAWT area. Consideration also needs to be given as to how and where the project information is stored and managed for easy access by all key stakeholders.

1.2.8 The Project Manager laid out a series of recommendations in the End of Service Report. To build on the work of the project to date, these need to be followed through.

1.3 Recommendations

1.3.1 In light of the key evaluation findings the following recommendations have been made:

- ◆ **End Report Recommendations.** The recommendations outlined in the end of service report should be followed
- ◆ **Influencing Policy.** The products of the project and key findings should be brought to the attention of policy makers and providers and should be kept at a high profile, particularly as the emphasis is increasingly on addressing the issue of abuse and ensuring that there are key strategic and overarching policies relating to protection

- ◆ **Vulnerable Adults Protection Forum.** A Forum of some kind needs to be maintained to ensure that the lessons learned from this project are used within future policy and practice development. This should involve key professionals in each H.S.E. and H.S.S.B. area and should relate directly to the Chief Executives of each H.S.E./H.S.S.B. area and/or any key strategic fora in each jurisdiction. If H.S.E. and H.S.S.B. personnel are involved in such a fora, their commitment should be recognised within their own organisations and appropriate support and resources made available to them to allow for their involvement in a project of this kind. Without such recognition, projects like this are dependent on the goodwill of a small number of key staff. This Forum should also have a remit for ensuring that key professionals still have an opportunity to learn from one another.
- ◆ **Information Bank.** The information developed by the project and kept within the information bank should be publicised and made accessible to all staff. Consideration needs to be given as to how this is managed.
- ◆ **Key point of contact.** There should be a key point of contact in relation to the issue of abuse and protection for those operating within the C.A.W.T. areas (e.g. an Adult Protection Co-ordinator)
- ◆ **Networking and Communication.** Networking and communication between the jurisdictions should be maintained, e.g. annual events looking at best practice, etc. Networking and communication should involve staff from each jurisdiction and from key agencies concerned with caring for adults with a learning disability and those concerned with investigating abuse. This may be widened to include other vulnerable groups.
- ◆ **Use of Toolkits.** There should be a mechanism in place to ensure that organisations working with vulnerable adults are using the toolkits and/or ensuring their staff and managers are training in the issues of abuse and on key policies relating to abuse
- ◆ **Involvement of carers and people with disabilities.** Carers and people with learning disabilities need to be included in the development of policies and procedures as a matter of course
- ◆ **Use of Carer Research.** The Carer research should be used to plan any services and support for carers and people with learning disabilities.

1.4 Appendices

1.4.1 Project Activities

- ◆ Investigative Work
 - Discussion Fora and Questionnaires to staff and managers working with adults with a learning disability to establish concerns/knowledge around the issue of protection
 - Review of existing polices and completion of a report outlining key findings
 - Review of investigations undertaken elsewhere to identify key lessons learned with a view of identifying how best to avoid abuse
 - A conference on barriers to effective cross border working and report on this issue (34 key representatives attended the conference)
 - A Summer School offering opportunities for staff working with vulnerable adults to learn from one another. This was attended by 110.
- ◆ The development of a Framework and Tool kit around the issue of abuse, for staff to use as a guideline for work. The findings from the investigative work above contributed to these. These were distributed to key stakeholders across the C.A.W.T. region. (100 copies for each region)
- ◆ The development and delivery of training on the Framework and Tool kits, on Investigating Practice, on Staff Practice and on Service Management. 24 courses were delivered throughout the region and were attended by 400 people. (There may be an element of double counting).
- ◆ A range of other activities including:
 - Involvement in key events such as the Western Vulnerable Adults Forum, JICSMAIL Adult Protection Group
 - Delivery of workshops in seminars and conferences - National Disability Authority and National Protection Conference
 - Contribution to NIO Policy consultation on sex crimes
 - Contributions to Western Adult Protection training
 - Development of Posters on Personal Safety - in conjunction with service users - which were widely distributed across the region

- Instigating and being involved in Personal Safety Event for users (attended by 30 people) and Safer Lives event for users (attended by 150 people).
 - Dissemination of 5 newsletters highlighting the issue and the project
 - Work with 2 drama groups (involving service users) to develop a play on the issue of protection (based on real events). This was showcased at the Summer School mentioned above and has also been showcased for nursing and social work schools
 - Provision of support and advice and training to at least 7 organisations (statutory and non statutory) within the CAWT region
 - Contributed to a module on safety and protection for ARC
 - Making Home Office Guidelines on safety and protection N.I. specific (and offering same service for R.o.I.)
 - Supporting Social Work students with dissertations on protection
 - Linking with other professionals and researchers in areas outside of C.A.W.T. on issues around protection.
- ◆ Additional projects. At the end of the project, there was a slight budget surplus (due to an under spend on staffing) and this was used to support 3 projects which operated throughout the C.A.W.T. region from February - June 2008. These included:
- Extending the Safer Lives event to other areas
 - A Sexuality Project in response to needs identified in H.S.E. West
 - A Service Governance Framework in the Western Trust area in N.I.
- All three were supported on the premise that they could be easily transferable throughout the C.A.W.T. region.
- ◆ The project also commissioned research into the needs of carers and a mapping of the provision of support and services for carers. This was undertaken by The Praxis Group (successful tenderer) and involved contact with 121 carers and 74 health professionals operating within a 10 mile radius either side of the border.



Williamson Consulting, 244 Kingsway, Dunmurry, Belfast, BT17 9AE
Tel: (028) 9062 5511 Fax: (028) 9062 3635
E mail: info@williamsonconsulting.co.uk