

**TO THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE
SAFEGUARDING ADULTS PERSONAL ASSETS TEAM – RESPONSIVE REVIEW**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Safeguarding Adults Personal Assets Team (SAPAT) is a relatively small service within the Directorate of Adults, Health and Wellbeing that aims to look after the financial, property and personal affairs of vulnerable adults in the community and in residential care who lack the capacity or family support to look after their own financial arrangements. The Team currently looks after 510 clients with 331 Appointeeship Cases and 147 Deputyship cases with 32 other cases such as power of attorney cases or those at application or relinquishment stages. In addition to these, there are 23 deceased individuals' estates that are being actively worked on. Total monies held by SAPAT on behalf of these clients has reduced to £6.8m as at 10th October, 2017 (down significantly from the £9.6m originally reported when this work began and the £7.2m reported in at the last update report).
2. This report summarises the issues uncovered and progress made to date to resolve these issues after a review of the SAPAT. This report is a final update report on the progress of this substantial project and follows the original report made to the August 2016 Audit Committee and the update report given to Audit Committee in April 2017. As such, it gives a brief overview of the original reported issues and a detailed progress statement on each item.
3. Overall SAPAT is in a substantially better position to that previously reported and a significant amount of work has gone into improving systems, processes and training to enable SAPAT to fulfil the team's aims and objectives. Testing that is currently ongoing by Internal Audit Services, shows a significantly improved service. Whilst there are still some risks remaining and there is ongoing work for the team, it is felt that sufficient improvement has been made to remove this area from the "critical list".
4. The current audit (already underway) will create a formal action plan for continued development within SAPAT. Progress against these actions will be monitored under the normal audit actions monitoring process.
5. Further work is still required in some areas. These include:
 - Continuing the reduction in the number of clients managed by SAPAT and re-balancing workloads to reduce the number of clients managed by each

caseworker to ensure sufficient time is available to deal with each client on a needs basis.

- There is a need to work closely with social workers as much of the development will require social workers to complete assessments. A role has been created within SAPAT to take this forward and provide training to social workers so that the SAPAT role is more easily understood and inappropriate referrals to the team avoided.
- Temporary social workers, in the process of being recruited to SAPAT, need to be utilised to complete the various transport reviews that need to be undertaken and cannot be accommodated in normal social work arrangements.
- Problems with the care provider in providing accurate and timely bills for clients' lease vehicles need to be resolved. Legal advice needs to be sought if this situation continues. (It should be noted that whilst this has an effect on SAPAT, it is in no way caused by them. This is purely a supplier issue).
- CASPAR (the SAPAT system) upgrades need to be rolled out and appropriate usage procedures documented. This will include the revised deputyship charging module to automate deputyship charges.
- Document storage has been transferred to the Council's EDM (Electronic Document Management system), removing much of the documentation that was previously stored on network drives. Documents and letters sent out by the team however, are (based on the current audit testing that is underway), not always being recorded properly within EDM and this needs to be addressed going forwards.
- Pre-paid credit card alternatives need to be investigated and, if necessary, procured to replace the outgoing pre-paid card contract which ends in August 2018. (The current supplier APS is pulling out of the pre-paid card market).

EXEMPT REPORT

6. This is not an exempt report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. The Audit Committee is asked to note the progress of the audit review, summary issues within SAPAT and the progress made.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

8. Adult safeguarding is a fundamental part of the Council's remit. Whilst the Council does not need to provide a personal financial and personal affairs management service for vulnerable clients, it has chosen to do so to support its role in adult safeguarding.. Ensuring that the service is fit for purpose and operating effectively is critical to supporting adult safeguarding and ensuring that in providing this

service, the Council complies with the Care Act and safeguards its most vulnerable citizens.

BACKGROUND

9. This report provides the Audit Committee with information on the outcomes from and progress of the joint Internal Audit and Adults work in SAPAT and allows the Committee to discharge its responsibility for monitoring the Council's exposure to risks.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASON FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

10. Not applicable

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>All people in Doncaster benefit from a thriving and resilient economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> 	None
	<p>People live safe, healthy, active and independent lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> 	<p>SAPAT is part of the Adults, Health and Wellbeing Directorate who lead on Adult Safeguarding. The purpose of the SAPAT service is to contribute to financially safeguarding vulnerable individuals.</p> <p>Ensuring that the service is fit for purpose and operating effectively is key to ensuring that the Council complies with the Care Act and safeguards its most vulnerable citizens.</p>
	<p>People in Doncaster benefit from a high quality built and natural environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> 	None
	All families thrive.	None

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> 	
	Council services are modern and value for money.	Initial analysis of the SAPAT service is that it is neither modern nor value for money. Work is underway to ensure the service is modern and fit for purpose.
	Working with our partners we will provide strong leadership and governance.	None

RISKS & ASSUMPTIONS

11. Failure to address governance and operational weaknesses within the SAPAT service exposes the Council to the following risks:-

- Potential reputational damage to the Council as a result of a failure to properly manage the affairs of vulnerable adult clients,
- Potential legal litigation as a result of any failure to properly manage the affairs of vulnerable clients,
- Potential financial loss as a result of the write off or non-collection of charges such as care fees (or other fees) and
- Potential financial loss as a result of reimbursing clients who suffer a financial detriment as a result of a failure to properly manage their finances.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12. Failure to implement a re-engineered process within SAPAT potentially causes a detrimental impact upon the reputation and business affairs of the Council and could possible result in litigation should any vulnerable client be financially disadvantaged by any failure to properly carry out Appointeeship or Deputyship duties.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

13. Failure to implement a re-engineered process within the SAPAT service potentially causes a detrimental impact upon the reputation and business affairs of the Council and could result in a loss of income from clients or a cost to the Council to correct any detrimental financial impact caused as a result of failings in the SAPAT process.

HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

14. None

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

15. A root cause analysis of the issues within SAPAT identified that a failure to properly implement a technological solution and a heavy reliance on alternative and manual

systems to store data have been a significant contributor to the problems of the team.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

16. The SAPAT service serves vulnerable adults with primarily protected characteristics, specifically older people, people with physical and mental health issues and those with learning disabilities. Due to the nature of the clients that the SAPAT service supports, these groups are likely to be disproportionately affected by the issues identified in this report.

CONSULTATION

17. There has been consultation with managers at the outset, throughout and at the conclusion of this review in order to ensure that the work undertaken and findings are relevant to the risks identified and are accurate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

18. Safeguarding Adults Personal Asset Team – Full Report
19. Safeguarding Adults Personal Asset Team – Update Report (April 2017)
20. Care Act 2014
21. Office of the Public Guardian / Deputyship Guidance

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – SAPAT (Safeguarding Adults Personal Asset Team) Full Report

**Steve Mawson
Chief Financial Officer &
Assistant Director of Finance**

Internal Audit – Progress Report (Report 3)

**SAFEGUARDING ADULTS
PERSONAL ASSETS TEAM
(SAPAT)**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Safeguarding Adults Personal Asset Team (SAPAT) is a relatively small team in Adults Health and Wellbeing that handles a variety of things on behalf of vulnerable adults (clients). These services include:
- The management of client monies and benefits, usually as a Deputy¹ or as an Appointee².
 - Distribution of cash to clients for personal allowances
 - Payment of bills and care fees on behalf of clients
 - The arrangement of client funerals (where no next of kin is available or the next of kin declines to arrange the funeral)
 - Management of properties (land and buildings) belonging to clients and securing their properties and pets
 - Management / safeguarding of personal valuable possessions
- 1.2. SAPAT currently comprises 16 full time staff (an increase on the previous update where there were 10.5 staff (FTEs)) and has an overall gross budget of £402k. The increases in staff numbers are due to 2 temporary funded additional posts and 2 Apprentices. A further 2 social work posts within the team are currently being recruited to.
- 1.3. SAPAT manages the finances of 510 vulnerable clients (as at the date of this report) with 23 deceased client cases also still in progress. This compares to 543 clients and 40 deceased client cases as at the end of March 2017. Monies administered by the team on behalf of clients now totals £6.8m.(reduced from £7.2m as at March 2017).

2. Background

- 2.1. A full review of SAPAT and all its functions was launched in 2015/16 by the directorate with support from Internal Audit Services with a full case review of all managed cases to ensure that the correct benefits and care charges were in place. This work continued into 2016/17 with extensive support from project managers and Internal Audit to address issues raised as part of the original review.
- 2.2. This report is the second update report to be presented to Audit Committee and builds on the previous report from August, 2016 and the update given in April 2017. A re-review audit is currently underway and is performing testing on the system and re-reviewing a sample of clients. Whilst this work is ongoing at the date of this report, sufficient work has

¹ Deputyships are orders granted by the Court of Protection that allow individuals, or in this case the Council, to administer the financial affairs, benefits, wellbeing decisions and property of vulnerable adults with no or little capacity to undertake this role themselves. When acting as a Deputy, the Council must act in the best interests of the individual and must make an annual report to the Office of the Public Guardian about the administration of the client affairs. The Council is entitled to, and does, charge for these services and fees are set by the Court on application.

² Appointeeships are granted by the Department for Work and Pensions. The Council applies, on behalf of a vulnerable adult in receipt of benefits that lacks sufficient capacity to administer their own benefits, to the DWP to apply for, administer and receive benefits on behalf of the vulnerable client in order to pay for the care fees. There are no current charges for this service to clients although such a proposal is in progress.

been completed to be able to give an accurate progress report on these issues.

3. Original Issues and Current Assessments

The purpose of this report is to give an update on progress to date and highlight any further work and issues and the plans for addressing these. For ease, issues have been brought forward from the original report and an up to date assessment of progress and current risks has been given. Items in *italics* are a direct lift from the previous update report. Where new issues have been uncovered as part of the work undertaken, these have also been listed.

3.1. Inaccurate claims for benefits on behalf of vulnerable clients

The Originally Reported Issue

732 cases were reviewed, after removing funeral only cases, approximately 600 client financial reviews were required. In total, errors were found on 127 cases (21% of the cases managed). For all of the cases, the root cause was identified as a failure on the SAPAT services part to notify Housing Benefits and Financial Assessments of changes in income and savings levels and a poor understanding by SAPAT of benefit entitlements. This was further hampered by an inappropriately configured system with a lack of designed exception reporting.

Current Position (March, 2017)

All housing benefit related and care fee errors have now been corrected and whilst there remain some overpayments that are still under recovery, agreements are in place to deal with all identified errors.

SAPAT are regularly working with the Financial Assessments team on the recovery of outstanding care debt (both historic and as a result of the errors above). This also assists in the sharing of benefit related knowledge and skills.

Exception reporting arrangements have been designed and are in place. Exception reports are now generated monthly and are worked through by case workers. This identifies:

- Benefit clashes (2 benefits in claim that cannot be claimed together);
- Benefits in claim over maximum and under minimum benefits thresholds in order to identify changes in eligibility;
- Benefits that need suspending (due to hospital stays); and (amongst others)
- Clients who have not had a full benefits review in the last 6 months.

Benefit training has been delivered to the team and further refresher training is scheduled. Benefit guidebooks are also distributed to all staff to help ensure that they are fully aware of all benefits and relevant entitlement levels.

The CASPAR system is being (will have been by the date of the Audit Committee) upgraded to bring in new functionality that will assist in the management of benefits. New

reports are available in the new system to identify users who's capital and savings levels move under defined capital stages in order to identify changes in benefit eligibility and benefit tariff levels.

Case file auditing is being introduced and an associated procedure drafted. These are in the early stages but will review data quality, benefit claims etc and will feed into staff training and development through an appropriate feedback loop.

Early testing on this area shows a significant improvement in the management of benefits in claim although a larger sample is currently being worked through.

Additional work is being undertaken to ensure that all of the work and checks undertaken are properly recorded as there are still some issues with regards to keeping copies of documents (specifically around changes in income and savings / capital levels) that are sent to the DWP.

Lack of training for SAPAT Staff

The Originally Reported Issue

Training for SAPAT staff has been sporadic with no clear focus on the managing client financial affairs. No training had ever been given on benefits claims or the benefits available. The Team had essentially been focussing on processing payments and personal allowances on behalf of client to the dereliction of other duties such as reviewing benefit entitlements or forward financial planning for the clients. It is clear from the review that caseloads managed by individuals were excessive and unmanageable and there has been a clear lack of management action to ensure caseloads and procedures were managed properly and at a safe level for the staff and clients involved.

Current Position

Training is fully in place and refresher training is now arranged on an ongoing continual development basis. Case file auditing is being introduced and an associated procedure drafted. These are in the early stages but will review data quality; benefit claims etc and will feed into staff training and development through an appropriate feedback loop.

Testing on a small number of benefit claims so far has shown that the situation has greatly improved.

3.2. Lack of a suitable system to manage case work

The Originally Reported Issue

In April 2015, a new system CASPAR was installed and brought on line to replace a series of spreadsheets maintained for each client being managed. The system was purchased following a procurement exercise.

The system CASPAR was installed by ICT, however, the configuration of the system was left to the SAPAT service. Training provided by the software house was poor and it is clear from our examination of the system and its setup that it was improperly configured with insufficient consideration given to most elements of the team's role (beyond basic transaction processing on behalf of the vulnerable clients).

Current Position

The previous update reported that CASPAR had been completely overhauled and these changes have been largely successful with some minor teething issues.

Spreadsheet usage has significantly reduced with many of these spreadsheets now being archived into the Council's document management system for future reference if ever needed. Some spreadsheets remain in use, primarily with regards to the charging of deputyship fees (as the module is not yet implanted within CASPAR). An additional spreadsheet for cash handing is also still in use (Cash payments are fully recorded in the CASPAR cash module, however, as staff from the One Stop Shop are involved in the process and do not have access to the system a spreadsheet remains in use to record what cash envelopes have (and have not) been collected. This minimises this risk significantly.

CASPAR upgrades bring with it additional functionality and bug fixes that will benefit the team and a period of 2-3 months will be required to make the necessary changes to the data and working practices to make full use of these. A demo day was held with TROJAN (the CASPAR software house) to demo the new functionality on the 9th of October, 2017. This opportunity was also used to identify further developments / issue resolutions that would be useful for SAPAT.

3.3. Data quality issues

The Originally Reported Issue

In addition to the above configuration problems, data quality problems also hamper the performance of the CASPAR system and the SAPAT service. Data was migrated from spreadsheets to the CASPAR system manually with some additional information being transferred into the system by data upload from CAREFIRST. Data within the system is incomplete and in some instances out of date.

Current Position

Data quality work is largely complete now with exception reports identifying missing or damaged data.

Case file auditing is being introduced and will identify data quality issues on a rolling basis with training then arranged or procedures amended as a result.

Changes to the CASPAR system as a result of the upgrade have identified some other data quality issues that now need to be addressed in order to use the amended charging module. (This module currently exists but was not yet implemented due to some bugs within it. This has now been fixed. This module allows for the automatic calculation and charging of deputyship fees which are currently calculated by hand). The new module requires the date of the deputyship court order to match the category start date (i.e the date that the Council became the deputy for the client). These do not match in most cases and will need to be corrected before the module can be implemented.

3.4. Failure to follow the Financial Procedure Rules / inappropriate charging mechanisms

The Originally Reported Issue

There were no procedures held by the team for their different functions. The only procedures available to follow were the CASPAR user manual (which details how to use

CASPAR only). This, coupled with the poor set up of the CASPAR system had led to a situation where charges payable by clients were billed using manually typed invoices that could not be traced or reconciled to actual payments received due to the fact that record keeping within the team on this issue was poor. It is not clear whether all debts were billed or whether all debts billed were actually received / collected. This process was in use for both funeral bill payments and for charges for deputyship management fees.

The CASPAR system is capable of automatically generating and billing charges to clients, however, this part of the system was never configured.

Current Position

Charges for funerals are now handled by Bereavement Services and no manual bills are now in use.

As at the time of the last update, it was hopeful that the CASPAR charging module would have been implemented by the time of this report. However, issues were identified with the module (several bugs) and various changes in team management occurred that meant that the implementation of this element was put on hold. Charges have continued but remain manually calculated and billed. These are billed manually through CASAPR and an associated bank transfer initiated through the CCM (Lloyds banking software). No manual invoices are now in use.

3.5. Poor reporting and performance management

The Originally Reported Issue

Whilst the CASPAR system has a report generator, capable of writing custom reports using a report writer, no reports had been set up with which to monitor or control operations. No exception reports were considered or set up within the system and inbuilt reports such as the OPG Report (designed to send to the OPG annually to record spending made on behalf of Deputyship cases) were ineffective due to poorly configured expense reporting options.

There was no single management view of the number of cases being managed or the case loads of individual case workers. Case workers were holding up to 80 complex cases each (those with simple cases their caseload exceeded 150 cases per case worker). This was due primarily to a failure on management's part to control in the influx of cases to manage. Whilst case numbers are reducing, the SAPAT service caseload remains exceptionally high.

Current Position

Performance management within the team is achieved with the use of performance dashboards with information taken directly from the back of the CASPAR database. Case file management (which is in its infancy) now adds a qualitative dimension to performance management that should (with regular training) ensure performance is driven throughout the team.

Attempts have been made to re-balance the workload of all individuals. Whilst the team still bears more case work than other similar authorities, the risk in this area has been greatly reduced. Caseloads however are still in excess of 40 cases per FTE (some are still managing caseloads of up to 60 cases) and work needs to continue to relinquish cases and reduce this overall number. Temporary additional resources have been put into the team to relieve some of the pressure. Details on client numbers are given in section 3.6

below. Whilst there is still some way to go to reach the suggested manageable target, this represents a significant improvement from the original position.

New cases are still coming through to the team but numbers are again greatly reduced after controls were added to the pathway for accepting new clients. (see the next section for further information).

3.6. Inappropriate referral mechanisms and a lack of a joined up approach with social workers (case load management)

The Originally Reported Issue

Referral systems to refer vulnerable adults in need of support to the SAPAT service represented an “open door” with little recorded challenge to the appropriateness of the referrals being made. This has meant that most referrals made were taken on without question and has resulted in an unmanageable case load for the SAPAT service that is significantly higher than any other local authority in the area. This has meant that most clients are simply “transactionally” managed (paying bills and receiving income) rather than being financially managed in terms of financial planning and benefit assessments and has manifested in a failure in some cases to manage the clients affairs in the clients best interests.

Arrangements within the team to record the progress of any referrals were poor and this has resulted in complaints being received from the public and solicitors acting on their behalf. .

Current Position

The criteria for accepting new cases has now been in place for approximately 1 year and is reducing the rate at which new cases for the team are accepted.

Work with social work teams continues. Guidance documents have been created and are being disseminated to try to increase social worker awareness of the role of SAPAT and in their roles in determining family and other available options for managing client finances before referring any cases to SAPAT. This is a slow process.

A new manager (on a secondment basis) has been recruited to SAPAT and will handle the overall management of the team and caseload. The existing supervisors post is being re-aligned to take on team development and to develop further the relationship with social worker teams (including the delivery of training to social workers in this respect). Whilst this is a relatively new development, this should significantly help with future referrals.

Current caseloads have reduced and are stabilising at around 510 current cases. Current case breakdowns are as follows:

Current cases (10th October, 2017)

<u>Live Cases</u>	<u>510</u>	
Appointee cases		331
Appointee (in the process of applying)		8
Appointee (converting to deputyship)		2
Appointee (in the process of relinquishing)		2
Deputyship		147
Deputy (in the process of relinquishing)		3
Deputy (moving to solicitors)		3
Deputyship (in the process of applying for)		2
Power of attorney		4
Protection of property		8
<u>Assistance only cases</u>	<u>19</u>	
<u>Deceased cases</u>	<u>23</u>	

3.7. Poor personal and valuable asset storage

The Originally Reported Issue

Personal and valuable items are sometimes collected from properties when a vulnerable adult is admitted to care. These are currently stored at Copley House. All items are stored in sealed and numbered bags and these bags are cross referenced against a client record in CASPAR. However, only the bag number is recorded on CASPAR and not the contents. When bags are opened for any purpose, they are sealed inside a new bag and the bag number updated on CASPAR. As CASPAR has no record of the contents of the bag, it is therefore, unclear whether any items are missing or lost after the bag swap.

Current Position

Revised procedures are now in operation within SAPAT to ensure that only valuable items are collected and stored. Storage of personal assets is at an all-time low with just 2 storage cupboards in use (compared to the entire room that was previously filled at Copley House). SAPAT have maintained this low level of personal assets for over 6 months and all property items are registered now on the CASPAR system.

Processes are in place to discharge / distribute personal items in the event of death and associated paperwork now ensures that all personal possessions are passed on to the next of kin with any remaining cash. Indemnity forms are in use to record these transactions.

Audit testing as part of the ongoing audit review, is scheduled as a final check on personal property.

3.8. Complications caused by the banking transfer.

The Originally Reported Issue

In February, 2016 the Council changed banking provider from the Co-Op to Lloyds. The transfer had consequences for the SAPAT service. Whilst these could not be avoided, these have had an impact on the speed of progress for this project.

The transfer moved SAPAT clients from a “hard” account (an bank account with normal bank statements), to a “virtual” account (where all monies held by the Council on behalf of SAPAT clients are held in a single hard account with a virtual sub accounts and virtual electronic bank statements). It has now come to light that the extracts agreed by the bank and the CASPAR software house Trojan, are flawed in that transactions received (for example) in April but not identified and allocated to the correct client until June, are backdated on the banking extract and therefore show in CASPAR as an April transaction. However, they actually appear on the June client bank statement. This is resulting in difficulties in reconciling the CASPAR system to the bank statements for each client. Both the bank and Trojan are aware of these issues and discussions are underway to implement a workable solution.

Current Position

The remaining banking issues have now been resolved and the processes for reviewing and reconciling monthly bank statements now runs smoothly with reconciliations being undertaken on all accounts monthly. Initiating bank transactions continues to be a large proportion of the SAPAT working week, however, this is necessary and cannot be avoided.

Testing results on bank account management and bank account monitoring show that transactions are being recorded properly and that reconciliations are being regularly cleared. The total amount of cash currently being administered by the team has fallen to £6.8m as at October 2017.

SAPAT are now however, experiencing issues with their pre-paid credit cards. The current provider, APS, is withdrawing from the market with effect from August 2018. The cards are used by the team as a cash equivalent mechanism (these cards are also used within the Direct Payments system). Cards are currently issued to care workers and the clients individually so as to clearly identify who initiated a specific transaction. Further pre-paid cards are also in use for group home household accounts. (These are cards onto which multiple clients pay a contribution to shopping and other household bills. These cards are used by care workers at the group homes to purchase shopping / food on behalf of the home’s residents. This avoids the time consuming splitting of invoices / receipts and reduces the amount of cash needing to be held in advance by the homes).

The Council has recently completed a procurement exercise and has identified a new provider for the Direct Payments cards but the cards are not suitable for use within SAPAT as the cards are charged on a variety of different transaction types (including fees for loading the cards with money). Use of these cards would be too costly a system to implement within SAPAT (the Office of the Public Guardian query all card charges and fees and these must be proved to be in the best interests of the client before these will be accepted).

A visit to another local authority using these cards shows that multiple cards per client are also in use (one for the client to use to access personal monies/ cash and the other as the main account card, thereby incurring double charges). The cards at this other authority are used INSTEAD of a bank account with all direct debits, standing orders etc being charged

against the client's main "card". This other council is in effect holding ALL client monies against the pre-paid accounts main header or parent account and not in a bank account. This negates the "loading" charges for them and cash is simply moved within the system from one "wallet" to another.

If this kind of system were to be implemented in Doncaster, it would require the removal of the bank account system CCM and the transfer of £6.8m onto a prepaid credit card account. It would mean that all bank account (in this case card account) reconciliations would revert to fully manual reconciliations which would in turn place too much pressure on the systems / staff within SAPAT. Chargeable development work would then be required by both Trojan and the card issuers to develop a new way of automating the data import and reconciliations. In addition, charges for the cards would be higher than the current bank account charges with Lloyds. Alternatives are now being considered and will be implemented in due course. Internal Audit Services remain involved in this element of the process to ensure that the new solutions are workable and are financially robust.

3.9. Transport Payments

The Originally Reported Issue

In addition to the above issues, problems have surfaced regarding personal transport payments for approximately 90 vulnerable clients. These issues however are NOT caused by the SAPAT service. These are the result of poor management of the clients lease contracts by a third party provider (Care UK through their Living Ambitions arm). A historic problem relating to the billing of clients for transport charges by Living Ambitions resulted in the accumulation of transport debt for 90 clients. The team has worked with Living Ambitions to resolve these issues and bill individual clients for their own transport. This has caused delays in dealing with client financial reviews that are not the fault of the SAPAT service. Whilst the billing issues are now solved however, it has been identified that there are some clients that can no longer afford to lease a vehicle for their own use. The team is working with social work colleagues to commence reviews of the needs of any service user so affected to ensure that the arrangements put in place meet the needs of the client and are within the client's financial means going forward.

Current Position

Billing issues from the care provider continue to be an ongoing problem with billing delays continuing into the 2017/18 financial year. No bills have been received from the provider for transport since April 2017, this is despite assistance on the calculation of the bills from the Council for more than 1 year. Monies based on estimated costs (from our own calculations) have been moved from all of the affected client's accounts into a central holding pot. This has been done to ensure that when the bills do arrive, the effects on the clients' financial affairs are minimal. Leaving these monies within the clients' accounts shows a capital / savings level which is artificial and this in turn can affect client benefit entitlements, care fee levels and annual deputyship fees.

Complaints in this respect are now being escalated with the care provider.

The transport needs of some of the service users continue to be an issue with almost all lease vehicles in place now out of their lease agreements. Some clients have been moved to Motability vehicles and underused vehicles have been re-located to ease the current pressures but individual social worker based reviews of the transport needs of the clients

involved have still not taken place. 2 social worker roles are being recruited to (these are temporary and are within SAPAT) that will assist in clearing these reviews.

4. Other Issues Arising (Items previously completed have been removed from this section)

4.1. Staffing Issues

Issue recorded as at the date of the last update report

Senior Management has attempted to permanently recruit to the SAPAT Manager post. This unfortunately was unsuccessful. Project management support continues till at least June 2017 but the team requires a manager to take forward the embedding of new arrangements and ensure that going forward, SAPAT meets its aims and objectives. Options are being considered to fill the post moving forwards. The full team structure will then be reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Current Position

The Team Manager post has now been filled on a secondment basis. The duties of this post and the original supervisor post are being worked out and new job descriptions agreed going forwards to ensure that there is clarity of responsibility between the 2 roles. The full team restructure cannot be progressed until these roles have been considered and assessed.

Temporary resources have been brought into the team in terms of 2 additional temporarily funded posts, 2 social workers (currently in the process of recruitment) and 2 apprentices to assist the team.

4.2. Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) Clients

Issue recorded as at the date of the last update report

In the past, several clients have, whilst they have capacity, opted using a Lasting Power of Attorney to nominate the Council to look after their finances after they lose capacity. There are currently 6 such clients with the Council. However, the "power" rests with the persons nominated on the LPA forms. In all cases, these are former employees of the Council, some having left several years ago. Work was required to locate all of these former employees and get them to relinquish their roles and powers so that the individuals could be transferred to appointeeships or deputyships. Legally, the power to deal with the finances of these clients, rested with the individual attorneys and not the Council. No further clients of this category will now be accepted to avoid any such issues in future.

Current Position

All LPA clients have now relinquished their roles and arrangements are being made to re-assess the individuals and move these clients to a more appropriate arrangement. 4 such clients remain in this category.

4.3. Cash Handling

Cash handling in terms of the weekly amounts of cash paid to clients remains high

(approximately £15-18k per week). Alternative solutions are being sought but are being held up by a lack of available social worker hours to review the needs of the clients, and the withdrawal of the current pre-paid cards provider (APS) from the market.

Temporary social work resources being recruited directly to the team should enable some of these reviews to be undertaken but alternatives to the pre-paid cards on offer need to be considered before this level of cash can be reduced.

Cash handling by the team is now minimal with the majority of the work (and therefore the risk) being transferred to the security firm delivering the cash. Cash requested is delivered in individual marked envelopes for each client and each payout day (this is because some clients collect cash on a daily basis as this was their determined need at their last review). Cash is stored in the safe and is paid out by staff in the One Stop Shop with a log of collections kept. Uncollected cash is reviewed weekly to ensure that excess cash does not build up. Until the reviews have been completed and alternative pre-paid card solutions are in place, it is likely that cash will remain around the £15k per week level. Ultimately however, this needs to reduce although this is a more long term goal for the team.

5. Future Audits

- 5.1. Audit assistance within SAPAT is now coming to an end (except on the pre-paid credit cards issue which remains a significant risk for the service). The audit (ongoing at the time of this report) is in the early stages and is concentrating on testing and financial checking on the clients managed by SAPAT. Whilst testing is incomplete, early indications show that SAPAT handling of client affairs is substantially improved. Work continues within the team to embed new practices and further develop their processes but sufficient progress has been made to reduce this from the critical watch list.
- 5.2. A formal action plan will be developed at the end of the current audit and progress will be monitored against this by Internal Audit as part of their normal audit action monitoring.