

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. SAPAT currently comprises 11.5 staff (FTEs) and has an overall gross budget of £356k. The service is currently projected to be around £60k overspent during the current financial year. It manages the finances of 584 vulnerable clients (as at the date of this report) and deals with approximately 60 public health funerals each year. Of the 11.5 staff, 8.5 are dedicated case workers managing client finances, 2 deal with funerals and the protection of property elements of these cases with 1 team leader. 3 of the FTE's are currently temporary and have been introduced to try and deal with the issues that the team faces.
2. This report summarises the issues uncovered and progress made to resolve these issues after a review of the SAPAT (Safeguarding Adults Personal Assets Team) part of the Adults Health and Wellbeing Directorate. The review was undertaken after concerns were raised by senior managers about the level of funds held by the SAPAT service on behalf of vulnerable clients and about the level of any housing benefits and financial support (for their care) that some clients were receiving which seemed at odds with the values held in their bank accounts. Adults Health and Wellbeing had however, already started to look at arrangements in the service due to the level of cash still held and distributed by the team.
3. A full review was undertaken of the team and its operations. The resulting findings are detailed in Appendix 1 to this report. The review identified serious failings by SAPAT which meant that in some cases there was insufficient attention paid to the amount of monies accumulated in people's accounts leading to incorrect financial assessments and incorrect payments of relevant benefits. The review identified that the failings were caused by a variety of issues including:
 - A clear lack of management direction from those managing SAPAT.
 - A caseload for Doncaster that was disproportionately higher than other councils in the local area and caseloads for individual SAPAT staff that were well beyond safe management limits.
 - An "open door" policy that accepted almost all referrals to SAPAT from social workers without robust challenge as to why the Council needed to be involved in the management of the client's finances.
 - Poor set up and configuration of the case management system on which client cases are reviewed and managed (CASPAR).
 - Poor understanding of the benefit rules and entitlement conditions for common benefit types.

- A lack of reporting, exception reporting and performance information.
 - Lack of a consistent process between case workers and a lack of documented procedures.
 - Poor recording systems, missing information and poor data quality.
 - A reliance on keeping data stored outside of corporate systems and on the S:Drive and
 - Complications from the switching of the Council's bank accounts from the Co-Op Bank to Lloyds.
4. It is stressed that once issues came to the attention of senior managers remedial actions were taken immediately and are ongoing at the time of this report.

EXEMPT REPORT

5. **Appendix 1 to this report is not for publication because it contains exempt information under paragraph 3 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. **The Audit Committee is asked to note the progress of the audit review, the issues within SAPAT and the progress made to ensure that the team and its associated processes and procedures are fit for purpose going forward.**

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

7. 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

8. This report provides the Audit Committee with information on the outcomes from and progress off 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

9. 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
	<p>All families thrive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> 	None
	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>Council services are modern and value for money.</p>	<p>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.</p>
	<p>Working with our partners we will provide strong leadership and governance.</p>	None

RISKS & ASSUMPTIONS

10. 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

11. 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

12. 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

13. None

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

14. 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

15. 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

16. 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

17. Safeguarding Adults Personal Asset Team – Full Report
18. Care Act 2014

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – SAPAT (Safeguarding Adults Personal Asset Team) Full Report (Exempt Information under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended).

Simon Wiles
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