



Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

12 November 2014

Report Title The Licensing Authority and Safeguarding Children

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Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Panel is recommended to:-

- (i) Note the regular engagement that has taken place between officers from Licensing Services and Safeguarding.
- (ii) Endorse the proposals that this work is formalised and expanded to include other regulatory functions through the establishment of the Regulatory Services and Safeguarding Forum.
- (iii) Receive a further report in 12 months regarding the outcomes of the group.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To note the regular engagement that has taken place between officers from Licensing Services and Safeguarding.
- 1.2 To endorse the proposals that this work is formalised and expanded to include other regulatory functions through the establishment of the Regulatory Services and Safeguarding Forum.
- 1.3 Receive a further update report in 12 months detailing the work of the group.

2.0 Background and Context

- 2.1 Licensing Services issue a range of licences, consents and permissions to people and businesses covering a host of regulated activities. There are in excess of forty different licensing regimes delivered by the service.
- 2.2 These licensing functions cover a broad spectrum of activities and across the city individuals and businesses that are licensed will frequently come into contact with children.
- 2.2 Discussions with colleagues in Children's Safeguarding have identified the following areas of licensing that have the greatest potential for issues to arise relating to safeguarding children:
 - Licensing Act 2003 (alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment licensing)
 - Taxis
 - Gambling Act 2005
 - Sex Establishment Licensing
 - Street Trading
- 2.3 Regular dialogue has taken place between colleagues in Licensing Services and Safeguarding for several years. Historically this has been on a case by case basis, however these meeting have increased in frequency over the last 12 months and it is now considered necessary to continue this work in a more formal context.
- 2.4 One factor that has highlighted the need to continue this on-going dialogue in a more formal context is the recent publication of the Jay Report regarding child sexual exploitation in Rotherham. The report detailed that taxi drivers played a 'prominent role' in the abuse of over 1,400 children.

3.0 Work to Date

- 3.1 As detailed above there has been a series of regular meetings between Licensing Services and Children's Safeguarding over the last 12 months.
- 3.2 These meetings have considered a number of issues relating to children's safeguarding and licensed businesses and persons. This has included the development of information

sharing protocols, guidance for businesses, a safeguarding input to specific cases and the integration of safeguarding issues into selection and recruitment for employees that will deal with licensed businesses.

- 3.3 This regular dialogue has allowed safeguarding to provide additional professional input to investigations regarding licensed persons and businesses where safeguarding concerns have been raised.
- 3.4 This input has supported the investigations into and subsequent revocation of two private hire drivers licences.

4.0 Development of the Regulatory Services and Safeguarding Forum

- 4.1 It is proposed to formalise the work detailed above through the establishment of the Regulatory Services and Safeguarding Forum.
- 4.2 The forum will expand the scope of the work that has taken place to date to include any potential child or adult safeguarding issues from across all areas of Regulatory Services, not just those associated with the Licensing Authority.
- 4.3 The membership of the forum will be as follows:
- Chair: currently the Licensing Manager, however this will be delegated to one of the Regulatory Service's Service Leads
 - The Local Authority Designated Officer for Children's Safeguarding
 - Section Leader, Licensing Services
 - Regulatory Services (Commercial) representative
 - Regulatory Services (Residential) representative
 - Child Employment Officer

Other employees/agencies will be invited to the group as appropriate such as those involved in Home to School contracts and the Police.

- 4.4 The forum will develop terms of reference, but the primary ambitions of the group will be as follows:
- To continuously develop and improve local protocols that enable the swift exchange of information regarding regulated persons and businesses where there are safeguarding concerns between Regulatory Services, Safeguarding and other enforcement agencies.
 - To develop protocols with neighbouring authorities to allow the exchange of information regarding regulated persons or businesses where there are safeguarding concerns.
 - To further integrate safeguarding awareness across the Regulatory Services staff group.

- To educate and inform regulated businesses and persons of safeguarding awareness and establish channels for concerns to be raised.
- To jointly lobby national Government on issues of concern.

4.5 The final point is currently pertinent as the Government's Deregulation Bill is progressing through the House of Lords at present. The Bill contains several clauses regarding taxi licensing. Recently the Government dropped one of these proposals but further clauses which, if approved, remain in the Bill. These clauses will reduce the frequency of checks on drivers and allow vehicles from other areas to pick up fares booked through Wolverhampton licensed operators. If introduced, these changes will significantly erode local control over the taxi trade. There has been no formal consultation directly with licensing authorities regarding these proposals and they are of great concern. It is proposed that the forum will draft a letter to be sent jointly from the relevant portfolio holders to the Government to express these concerns.

4.6 An update report will be presented to this Panel in 12 months detailing the work of the forum.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report for the Council.
[MF/30102014/I].

6.0 Legal implications

6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
[RB/03112014/U]

7.0 Equalities Implications

7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act places a responsibility on the Council to pay due regards to any policies, procedures and decisions it makes. This has been considered and there are no equality concerns arising from this report.