

**Report to** Licensing committee  
23 March 2015  
**Report of** Head of local neighbourhood services  
**Subject** Safeguarding and licensing

**Item**  
**9**

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### **Purpose**

To seek approval of recommendations from Cabinet that will ensure that Licensing Committee are following best practice to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and ensure that safeguarding considerations are used to inform the decisions of the Licensing Authority

### **Recommendation**

To consider the recommendations of the all district councils task and finish group on safeguarding and licensing, as endorsed by cabinet.

### **Corporate and service priorities**

The report helps to meet the corporate priority A safe and clean city and the service plan priority to ensure the council carries out its duties to safeguard children and vulnerable adults

### **Financial implications**

The proposals contained within this report will be met from approved budgetary provision.

**Ward/s:** All wards

**Cabinet member:** Councillor Harris – Customer services

### **Contact officers**

Bob Cronk, Head of local neighbourhood services 01603 212373

Ian Streeter, Licensing Manager 01603 213232

### **Background documents**

None



## Report

1. The city council has always taken great effort to ensure that it fulfils its duties and responsibilities for vulnerable people.
2. In recent years, the external environment for safeguarding has seen considerable change. Recent high profile child protection cases, including those that relate to child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child abuse offences or allegations made against celebrities means the agenda is more visible in the public eye and has increased reporting of these issues.
3. One of the most concerning of child protection issues that is being responded to across the country are those that relate to child sexual exploitation where mostly vulnerable young girls and sometimes young boys, are groomed including on-line grooming.
4. Cases in Rotherham and Rochdale for example have attracted high levels of media coverage and provided a further challenge to local partnerships to understand the extent of local issues and how partners should respond.
5. Within the council the safer communities' co-ordinator has developed and implemented briefing sessions for council staff that relate to the level of contact that staff will or may have with children and young people at risk. These have also been offered to members.
6. The feedback from attendees has been very positive and has indicated how frequently council staff and members may come across children and young people at risk of grooming and sexual exploitation in for example, parks, play areas and licensed food establishments, which was what was found in other cities.
7. The Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board and Norfolk constabulary are leading on an awareness raising campaign in relation to CSE in 2015 and the council's safer communities co-ordinator is contributing to this work.
8. The issues in Rotherham and Rochdale have also highlighted the role that the council as licensing authority can play to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.
9. Members will know that, licensing arrangements were introduced as all activities that are licensable carry a level of risk of "harm" either of a personal, financial, environmental or amenity nature. The requirement for a licence enables a licensing authority to make a judgement so that the potential harm is eliminated, reduced or balanced against the benefits of society. The overriding philosophy underpinning licensing is that public safety must always outweigh the need for a person or organisation to work or trade.
10. In recent weeks all seven district councils have come together with Norfolk Constabulary and Norfolk County Council in a task and finish group to review how safeguarding considerations inform the decisions of each licensing authority.
11. The task and finish group have made a number of recommendations that will improve the information available for licensing decisions; provide an opportunity to increase the awareness in license holders of their role to safeguarding children as well as

vulnerable or potentially vulnerable adults and incorporate best practice into licensing policies as they are reviewed.

12. These recommendations are included at appendix 1.

13. Cabinet considered these proposals at the meeting of 11 March 2015 and requested that they are reported to licensing committee for implementation.

## **Appendix 1**

### **District Council's Safeguarding and licensing T&F group – recommendations**

#### **Information sharing – to improve inter-agency information sharing across Norfolk so that licensing teams have access to all the relevant information to ensure licensing decisions are safe**

1. Develop a Norfolk wide information sharing template and procedure hosted by Norfolk Constabulary to share:
  - decisions by each Licensing Authority when a premises, hackney carriage or private hire license is refused, suspended or revoked as a result of safeguarding issue
  - details of when Norfolk County Council remove a drivers badge for safeguarding reasons
  - share concerns raised about a license or county badge holder, or applicant (individual or premises) that may contribute to a wider pool of intelligence and concerns

This will contribute to resolving some of the information sharing issues in Norfolk relating to hackney carriage and private hire licences. However, there remains a risk with licensing decisions across the county boundary which requires a national change in the licensing framework. It is recommended that these concerns are raised with the Local Government Association and the Chair of the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) nationally.

2. Childrens services to invite licensing officers to LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) Meetings where this relates to licensable activities.

#### **Procedures and guidance – to ensure licensing procedures are robust capturing all relevant information from applicants and consultees**

3. Each licensing authority to review Hackney Carriage and private hire license application templates and ensure that all relevant information is requested. This may include:
  - Tests for applicants to complete
  - References
  - Previous licenses held and through which licensing authority

The decision to amend any templates to be taken by each authority

4. Develop a Norfolk wide awareness raising safeguarding leaflet for taxi licensees.
5. Develop a Norfolk wide awareness raising safeguarding leaflet for licensed premises and personal license holders

6. Develop an approach to increase the knowledge of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Taxi Drivers to widen their understanding and pilot in each district council area.
7. Develop an approach to increase the knowledge of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults for premises licence holders to widen their understanding and pilot in each district council area.
8. Request that safeguarding children and adults forms part of the Best Bar None scheme in Norwich. (The Best Bar None scheme is a national award scheme supported by the Home Office which aims to promote the responsible operation of alcohol licensed premises).

**It has been adopted by 100 towns and cities across the UK and is now being taken up internationally.**

**Best Bar None Norwich is the first in a series of BBN's that will cover Norfolk**

9. Agree a guidance note for the NSCB on how it should respond to licensing consultations relevant reviews and supports the work of the licensing authorities.
10. Request the LGA and independent Chair of the NSCB to ask the Government to amend the Licensing Act 2003 so that applications for personal license come under the framework for consultation with responsible authorities for comment on the suitability of the applicant.
11. Request the LGA and independent chair of the NSCB to ask Government to amend the (Licensing Act 2003) so that criminal background checks undertaken for personal license applications can be carried out by the Disclosure Barring Service at an enhanced level.

**Guidance – to improve guidance available to applicants, members and partners ensuring it is capturing best practice**

12. Incorporate safeguarding best practice and guidance into the revisions of licensing policies at the next policy review. This includes the Licensing Act, Gambling Act (which are both due for renewal in 2015), taxi policy and sexual entertainment venue policy (these are likely to be in future years).
13. Develop a briefing session for licensing teams and licensing related committee members to improve their understanding of safeguarding
14. Improve the understanding of the role and responsibilities of licensing authorities within the NSCB and Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB)