

## **Protecting vulnerable people**

Councils can help to protect some of their most vulnerable residents through effective licensing regimes, including children at risk of sexual exploitation. Sadly, both licensed premises and licensed vehicles have been used as opportunities to sexually exploit children, as recent high profile cases have underlined.

We know that many victims of exploitation are too traumatised for investigations to proceed to court, meaning that issues do not always show up through disclosures. This makes additional intelligence from all other sources critical to licensing deliberations. A detailed exploration of tackling child sexual exploitation (CSE) is outside the remit of this guide, but all councillors and officers, across all services, should familiarise themselves with the LGA's guides on CSE, which can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/CSEguide>. It is important to recognise that this is a subject that needs to be sensitively handled to avoid drivers feeling that they are being treated as potential criminals. However, the sensitivity around the subject must not mean that the issue is not discussed or that training is not provided.

Your local safeguarding boards also have an important role to play in licensing and you should ensure that safeguarding boards understand the role that licensing can play in their discussions. Your licensing officers should also be fully engaged with relevant safeguarding discussions.

This is particularly important in two-tier areas, with licensing located in the districts and child protection in the county council. A number of serious case reviews have highlighted a failure of communication between the two-tiers of local government as a contributing factor to child exploitation going undetected.

If allegations of CSE or other serious offences are made, then your council should have in place procedures to allow a rapid response from the council. In the most serious cases, it will not be appropriate to wait until a licensing committee or sub-committee can be held.

### **Safeguarding training: Scarborough Borough Council**

Working together, Scarborough Borough Council and North Yorkshire Police identified that working with taxi drivers was key to safeguarding practices linked to the local night-time economy (NTE), particularly in helping to prevent sexual exploitation, and in accessing the information and intelligence drivers held which they'd been reluctant to share with agencies.

An opportunity to capture those individuals arose when Scarborough Borough Council's Taxi Licensing Policy was renewed, introducing **mandatory safeguarding training for taxi drivers wishing to obtain or retain their licences**.

This comprises a two-hour tailored session, written and delivered by Sandra Rees, the Council's Community Safety and Safeguarding Manager and Sgt Rachel Wood,

both of whom have operational experience in the NTE. It was essential, for the package to have maximum impact, that it had to be delivered by people who were not only passionate about safeguarding, but also had credible operational experience working in the NTE. The training covers safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, making referrals, signposting to relevant agencies, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation and 'hate and mate' crime. Taxi and PHV Licensing – Councillors' Handbook (England and Wales) **27**

As well as delivering this training to drivers, it gave an opportunity to establish closer working relationships with drivers going forward. Local taxi officers are now allocated a named PCSO to visit them on a weekly basis to share information and concerns. In addition to this, having listened to drivers' concerns, stickers with 'zero tolerance on abuse to drivers' were printed and distributed to all taxis, and information cards with relevant agency numbers were produced and given to all taxi companies for distribution by their drivers. With perseverance and careful delivery, the outcomes have been very positive; forging closer relationships with drivers and impacting on their decisions to report concerns. For instance, it has led to a greater number of reports to police regarding drugs information.