



Annual Awards 2011 Entry Form

Name of organisation Sandwell MBC

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Please tick the relevant box below to indicate which category you wish to enter

Risk Manager of the Year	<input type="checkbox"/>	People Risk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Community Risk	<input type="checkbox"/>
Operational Risk	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strategic Risk	<input type="checkbox"/>	Risk Management Young Achiever of the Year*	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Applicants for Risk Management Young Achiever of the Year should indicate their date of birth here:

N.B. If you wish to enter more than one category, a separate entry form is required for each category.

Please type your executive summary here. The summary should be no more than 500 words. Please use Arial font, size 11, at 1.5 line spacing. Use additional spacing between paragraphs.

This paper highlights the work of Sandwell MBC's Appointeeship Unit, in the management of a significant risk facing vulnerable members of the Sandwell community. It is not a new initiative or programme; however service improvements in recent years have highlighted how the ongoing provision of excellence has changed the lives of individuals living within the community and improved the risk of these individuals being exploited for financial gain.

The National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 significantly expanded the role and responsibility of Local Authorities in the management and delivery of Community Care Services. As a direct result of this act, Sandwell MBC set up a small unit to formally deal with the finances of those service users mentally incapable of doing so for themselves. The unit operated as part of the Council's finance function and was never perceived as a 'social service'. It was not until more recently that the Council accepted that more could be done and, following the appointment of a new manager, the Appointeeship Unit was transferred to the Authority's social care function, to manage this very serious community risk.

The risk is certainly one which impacts on those people who, for mental capacity reasons find themselves unable to cope with managing their finances and could be the target of financial abuse from family members, carers, unscrupulous landlords and legal services providers.

The unit works in partnership with a large number of individuals, groups and organisations across the whole range of public services. In addition, family members, concerned members of the public, carers, banks and building societies, utility companies, social landlords and other local authorities countrywide are engaged with.

A fundamental aspect of the unit's work and the underpinning force for its success is the provision of advice and guidance / training to partnership agencies and individuals to explain their work, how it impacts on the clients they represent and how the partners can support the processes for overall improvement.

Training in awareness and good practice also spread the news on the activities of the unit, the standards to which they work and the laws protecting vulnerable people.

The unit members work tirelessly to improve the lives of their clients, through financial forensic investigation, physical searches of properties occupied by clients and through ongoing management of client's finances and personal arrangements. This work can often be frustrating but ultimately very rewarding as the immediate benefits of unit intervention are identified.

To highlight the human interest factor and how the work of the unit plucks at people's heart strings, a presentation by the unit manager on the unit's activities received a standing ovation from senior Council officers at a recent Sandwell Manager's Forum. This was previously unheard of!

Please write your main submission here. The submission should be no more than 1500 words. Please use Arial font, size 11, at 1.5 line spacing. Use additional spacing between paragraphs.

The risk / issue and clear need for the initiative

All too often local authorities are presented with potential service users who are mentally incapable of managing their finances and are vulnerable and at risk of abuse. Sandwell MBC set up a small unit to formally deal with the finances of those service users mentally incapable of doing so for themselves. The unit previously operated as part of the Council's finance function; however was never perceived as a 'social service'. Following the appointment of a new manager, the Authority's Appointeeship Unit became embedded within the Authority's social care function.

The risk is certainly one which impacts on those people who, for mental capacity reasons find themselves unable to cope with managing their finances and could be the target of financial abuse either from family members, carers, unscrupulous landlords and legal services providers. If the unit did not exist the impact on the Council and public in general is huge.

Because of the work of the unit:

- Accommodation, care services, council tax and other fees and the resultant drain on the public purse are reduced.
- A sense of order and control is placed on an area of risk which could cause general chaos.
- A vulnerable part of the community is looked after, which might otherwise be homeless due to debt problems.

The approach and partnership working arrangements

The unit works in partnership with, and receives referrals from Care Managers. These include other social care agencies and providers, the police, DWP, Health Service, the local Authority Adults Safeguarding Board, the Court of Protection, family members, concerned members of the public, carers, banks and building societies, care providers, council employees, utility companies, social landlords and other local authorities countrywide.

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The unit's initial activity focuses on the assessment of individuals in order to meet their service access criteria:-

- whether the individual is in receipt of a service from Sandwell Adult Services,
- has a mental incapacity as defined by the Mental Capacity Act and / or Mental Health Act,
- has no family or friends who can appropriately act on their behalf or a Court appointed Deputy currently acting on their behalf, or is experiencing financial abuse by their current representative.

The most important aim of the department is to ensure clients' assets and finances are used in their best interests.

Work concentrates on individual case management, involving assessment of the clients needs against available financial resources (involving a large degree of financial forensic activity). Management of their assets is undertaken to ensure they are no longer exposed to the risks which originally brought that service user to the attention of the unit. The unit's main objective is to ensure that money, physical assets, investments or policies are managed on behalf of the client, ensure safeguarding and maximising the life experience of the client, utilising their funds to enable them to realise their aspirations.

Some cases are extremely complex and involve fingertip searches of a client's home; often climbing over bags of rubbish looking for important documents and valuables, with staff dressed in protective all-in-one suits, finding all manner of decay, not for the faint hearted!

Safeguarding activity spans across those with limited resources, to those who have considerable assets at risk. A person's personal details, life history and asset details have to be ascertained. Dormant accounts of varying sizes and treasured memories are all retained for future use at their new home.

Senior Officers dealing with complex new cases write to all UK bank and building societies, life insurance companies and investment agents to establish if the client is known to them so that the unit can be sure there are no unknown assets or forgotten accounts.

Examples of the current work of the unit follows:-

- The team stopped a house sale with less than 18 hours left before contract signature, because a family member was taking advantage and trying to deprive the client of half the value of his house.
- A very independent 94 year old elderly lady fell in the street and broke her hip. She suffered from dementia. The unit discovered she had two houses locally, both in extremely poor repair, to the extent that the Council's Empty Properties Team was working towards enforcement action. Unit members searched one of the squalid properties and removed 500 bin bags of rubbish in their quest to identify the client's history and assets. Investment certificates, photographs, certificates, personal letters, memories, jewellery and cash were also found which enabled the unit to fully take over the finances and safeguard her assets. An application was made to the Court of Protection to request the appointment of a corporate Deputy to legally manage the large asset risk. The client was then supported by the unit in her move into a residential home with all her financial needs and bills paid for from her funds.
- Following concerns by neighbours, police broke into a flat and found a confused lady with her husband, who had passed away 10 days earlier. Due to agoraphobia and personality disorder the lady had not stepped outside the flat for over 7 years. She

was taken to a place of safety. Large sums of money had been found and removed by the police. The woman had multiple personality disorder and her current identity could not be proven. A great deal of investigative work had to be undertaken to ascertain her real name. A selection of names and life histories had been used over her lifetime and her true identity was discovered, even though it was not her current chosen name. The Court of Protection issued orders in her true name and 8 aliases, to safeguard her assets throughout her life. Family members were also identified and involved in the search. The unit continues to manage her financial affairs on her behalf.

Innovation

Even though most local authorities offer this non-statutory service many aspire to the working model set up in Sandwell, with its income led staffing and its success in good practice.

Other local authorities look to the unit for advice and guidance. The fact that the unit goes out of its way to maximise the impact it has on the lives of its service users is evidence enough that the work it is undertaking is innovative and unique. The nature of the financial forensic activity undertaken to ascertain the financial resources of the service user is also unique and is not replicated elsewhere to the extent detailed in this report. This regularly involves approaching the homes of the clients to undertake a fingertip search for documents and money, always with an open mind, a deep breath.....and often a can of air freshener!

Evidence of Impact

It is difficult to quantify the impact of the work of the unit although it is easy to say that without the unit's intervention over 600 members of the community would be severely disadvantaged and could potentially be homeless. With the Unit's intervention those people's lives are enriched, rebuilt and improved.

In terms of quality, anecdotal evidence determines that clients enjoy meeting up at the Unit,

where over 130 come to collect their weekly money or to visit and gain companionship. The unit makes the most of holidays and high days to celebrate with clients, e.g. Christmas, Easter and other celebrations.

Decorations, photographic opportunity and laughter all follow along with an ongoing active engagement between client and worker, building relationships and trust so that clients can share their experiences, their worries and their joy with the team.

The unit encourages service users to enjoy their money in life experiences, aspirations, trips, holidays and to improve comfort in their homes.

Fun, laughter and a willingness to listen helps the unit to earn trust and enables them to offer support and encouragement

Whilst the unit currently caters for over 600 service users, the most telling factor of the unit's success is that referrals are increasing year on year. Cases are becoming more complex and financial abuse is rife.

Staff members often attend the funerals of clients at the end of their lives so pay their respects and say goodbye to those who have touched their hearts over many years.

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Main Submission



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