Appendix 1

Best Value Service Review – Promotion of Independence

Young Disabled Adults

Baseline – CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

A.   Current Provision/situation and Issues:

1.   Key is to enable young disabled people to appreciate that prevention is crucial in the feeling safe factor, rather than retrospective action. Need to start from a reality base which accepts their fears, anxieties and vulnerabilities and how this dramatically affects their quality of life. Current policy/procedures tends to be reactive rather than preventative.

2.   Difficult to identify specific resources, which focus on prevention, other than modest elements/interventions within the department and in pockets across the voluntary sector. Need to devise strategies and create resources, which build in safeguards for greater personal safety and less 'risk'. Need a more holistic approach to what is both understood and what resources are provided in terms of 'safe environment'.

3.   Needs more focussed research into what experiences of both service users (as victims) and of agencies/groups connecting with these young people (e.g. Phil Arnold/YOT, Drug & Alcohol Action Team/DAAT, Rob Lancaster/Education Service including Sencos/Ed Psych Support Service and also needs exclusion date.

4.   Seems to be a ad hoc, reactive approach generally to issue of personal safety with only sketchy examples of holistic approach to this major issue for this highly vulnerable and potentially exploited group.

5.   Clearly we have along way to go before young disabled people will really trust the very services that are there to 'protect' them, preserve their dignity and Human Rights and ensure reasonable quality of life.

B.   Known Problems Nationally:

   ❖ Lack of clear definitions and understanding of what safe environment embraces and its significance to YDA's
   ❖ Lack of clear 'joined up' policies or guidance, which would promote a more holistic understanding and development of good practice.
   ❖ Lack of recognition that these YDA do understands how safety issues affect them and are capable of expressing them if they are given the encouragement, opportunity and appropriate platforms to do so.
   ❖ To few examples/models of excellence in this whole area.
   ❖ Failure to recognise that feeling safe – in all its forms, lays at the very heart of the PI agenda and unless greater recognition is given to this we potentially

unduly the integrity both of the principles, and indeed what well intentioned but limited good practice is around.

❖ At strategic and field level service providers must respond positively to these concerns and put in place consistent integrated services, which reflect the need for joint up approach with clear monitoring and review processes.

❖ Service providers at all levels need to be seen as safe, reliable and competent to 'protect' young disabled adults.

❖ Crucial to develop 'safe services' for the least powerful, least valued, abused/misused group who are seen as relatively powerless to initiate action to improve issues of safety as it affects their quality of life.

C.   <u>**Known Problems locally in Nottinghamshire:**</u>

Thus far we have taken 'soundings' from a number of organisations involved with providing advice, care or support to young disabled adults, and some direct feedback from young adults themselves. The issue of safe environment and related personal safety is increasingly recognised as an issue that has had little real prominence or attention in any consistent or coherent way – despite some pockets of initiative.

In order to understand the dimensions of the issue and its impact on this group we have 'clustered' these initial responses which enables us to understand what is clearly a very fragmented understanding and approach to the whole issue of safe environment.

(a)   Personal safety, per see, in their homes and in community. Many simply do not feel 'safe' and their real felt world is one of fear and mistrust.

(b)   Criminal Justice issues – and fear of engaging with the system.

(c)   Self harm

(d)   Reporting/recording of 'unsafe' situations, patterns

(e)   Drug/Alcohol concerns

(f)   Community access issues ('where can I find real mates, enjoy myself and be safe /accepted')

(g)   Developing personal strategies which develop confidence, courage, empowerment and self-esteem – particularly where previous bad experiences. Advocacy/rights.

(h)   Abuse and neglect disclosure and occurring at any and all levels both within the family and in the outside world.

(i)   Communication/lack of confidence prevents sharing/ disclosure of fears threats or accessing opportunities to minimise risks and feel safe.

(j)   Lack of safe supportive healthy and secure environment, including community and social networks, and transport. H & S issues within the home/own accommodation.

(k)   Issues of relational intimacy/sexual health/consent /sexuality

(l)   Lack of circle of 'support/friends/peers' to chill with and threats from peer group pressure.

(m)   Embracing 'Citizenship' and its responsibilities in an unequal and unjust environment where they are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and being taken for a 'ride'.

D.   <u>**Summary and solutions/options:**</u>

(i)   What is clear that the issue of 'feeling safe' for this user group goes across all areas of social care practice and yet has gained little recognition or understanding particularly in terms of prevention and pro-active interventions.

(ii)   It therefore has major potential impact for care standards setting right across the social care spectrum. Our QA mechanisms fail to appreciate the 'feeling safe' context either for this group or a service provision, as we tend to want to drawer out the 'positive aspects/feel good factors', rather than negative as indicators both of good practice and quality of service provision.

(iii)   When young disabled adult's right across the spectrum are victims of crime or exploitation or abuse in all its forms – including bullying, they are rarely taken seriously and neither are the offences themselves. Perpetrators behave with impunity and in large measure are protected by the very institutions, which should be protecting the vulnerable, often helpless, victims.

(iv)   We need to more clearly understand the wider implications of this issue and its full impact on YDA's through undertake further research and finding explicit examples where a holistic understanding and approach is both recognised and developing.

(v)   Central to any progress on this issue is the need to provide a versatile range of accommodation seen as relevant useable and 'safe' in all aspects, of which there appears to be a real shortage. A more integrated accommodation strategy which recognises the need for voluntary and statutory sector housing providers to work closely together in sharing resources, skills and experiences which activate develop good practice in promoting safe environments, would be a significant step forward.

(vi)   A positive step forward would be to examine currently training/experience of 'community support workers' across the board and establish coordinated training initiatives, which broaden their existing knowledge skills and experience to embrace the vital importance of integrating personal safety into their core activities/support roles with young disabled people. It is essential that these young people are encouraged to 'stand tall', and develop the confidence and skills and support systems that will give them every opportunity to overcome/ manage their fears.

(vii)   clear information packs and which are integral to social/life skills training and which set out key information and easy access/reference points for personal safety and safe environment are essential. Obviously the

format and content of such packs will need to be consistent with the needs of differing groups of users

(viii) without doubt there is real potential in the development of a Mentoring/Buddy/Enablers initiative which will also incorporate issues of personal safety and such mentors could become key contact points when individuals are feeling at risk whatever the nature and circumstances of the perceived or actual risk.

What now? Over the coming weeks we intend to:

❑ Undertake more specific research into this issue to ascertain more clearly whether there are actually establish good practice models – although thus far we have been unable to identify any specific initiatives, which incorporate issues of personal safety/safe environment into core service delivery.

❑ Collate specific data in terms of incidents, and personal 'stories', which will give additional insight into both the extent and need for the development of effective strategies, which are relevant, realistic and create real personal safety and confidence.

❑ We recognise the need over the coming weeks to further consult with a number of key partners whose contribution to successfully developing strategies at a local level will be essential. Additionally we anticipate that there may well be examples of experience of safe environment initiatives at regional and national level, which should be explored.

❑ We see considerable merit in discussing this issue with representatives from both the statutory and social housing sector both to raise the profile of this issue and explore options for developing a coordinated approach to policies, and practice which embrace personal safety and safe environment in more tangible and relevant ways.

❑ We anticipate that the outcomes of the Supporting People Review will themselves underline personal safety concerns already being raised in respect of both disabled young people together with the anticipated lack of housing/support activities which reflect and deal with the safe environment needs of these young people.

Comm(S)(SG:[PIYDAIR-AP1]