Summary

1 The Service is increasingly interacting with more children and young people through the various initiatives it delivers. It also aims to enter 60,000 homes across Cheshire, Warrington & Halton this year and again next year to conduct Home Safety Assessments (HSA). During the course of these visits the service has identified a number of issues which have had potential child protection implications.

2 It is essential that the Service policy provides a rigorous framework in order to protect the authority, its staff and volunteers and to safeguard the children and young people the service comes into contact with. Therefore, the Service’s existing safeguarding policy has been reviewed and amended to reflect the wider range of Service engagement with children and young people and will now also encompass Young People & Vulnerable Adults in addition to Children within its remit.

3 External expert advice and the services legal advisors have been consulted in the review of this policy to reflect the specialist nature of "Safeguarding" which is relatively new to the Fire and Rescue Service as a result of its increased emphasis on community engagement. The revised policy builds on measures that are already in place, and provides guidance on how staff should deal with sometimes difficult and challenging situations in relation to Safeguarding Children, Young People & Vulnerable Young Adults.

4 The full policy statement and details of its key information is at Annex I to this decision paper. Copies of the full policy and procedures will be available at Policy Committee, or on request.

Recommended: That

5 [1] The report be received;
[2] The revised policy and associated procedures be adopted; and

[3] Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Young Adults be included in the 09/10 Member training programme.

**Background:**

6 The Service aims to work with all young people in the communities it serves to:

- Assist in making them aware of the dangers of fire, arson and road traffic collisions: Inform them of the risks to themselves, the community and service personnel through false and malicious calls:

- Inform them of the risks to themselves, the community and Service personnel through

- Offer them opportunities to work with the Service and develop themselves in different areas in order to become more able, safer and responsible future citizens.

7 The Service is delivering an increasing number of programmes that engage with children and young people. In addition the service target of 60,000 HSA means that service personnel and volunteers are interacting with much larger numbers of children, young people and vulnerable adults. This potentially increases the risk to staff that work and interact with these groups. The revised policy provides a framework of guidance and control measures to protect staff and to safeguard those children and young people the organisation comes into contact with.

8 The main revisions to the document are:

- Name change to incorporate Vulnerable Young Adults and extension of the entire policy to include young people and vulnerable young adults.
- Detailed management responsibilities and accountabilities
- Criminal Record Bureau Check (CRB) procedure
- Levels of Safeguarding training for Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service staff
- Staffing ratios on initiatives Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service deliver
- The removal of any reference to report to control, in readiness for Regional Control Centre (RCC)
- Revised procedural flowcharts to ensure there is a full understanding of the reporting procedure and will assist staff in the decision making process.
- Incorporation of quality and audit procedures to reduce the risk to the Authority and the community of non-compliance with the policy.
IRMP6 (currently in draft and the subject of an extensive programme of consultation), includes a proposal to CRB check all front line staff. This proposal is a key part of the implementation of this safeguarding policy.

The policy requires all Service staff and volunteers to be trained in the context (and where appropriate the application of the policy). This requirement extends to Members of the Authority. As such, this policy will be included in the Member training programme for 09/10.

Equality Impact Assessment

An initial Equality Impact Assessment on the policy has been undertaken and it is recommended that a full equality impact assessment is undertaken in 12 months after implementation.

Financial Implications

It is anticipated that there will be additional financial costs associated with the implementation of the new policy with regard to training staff. These costs are estimated at £17,000, and will be met from existing budgets.

Legal Implications

This policy has a wide range of legal implications and has been developed in consultation with the Service solicitors.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS : NONE