



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Leisurewatch
Date:	7 th August, 2009
Reporting Officer:	Marie Therese McGivern Director
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Relevant Background Information

Belfast City Council Child Protection Policy and Procedures were adopted by Council on 3rd June 2002. A training programme was implemented to raise awareness and to inform Belfast City Council employees regarding the policy and issues relating to working with or contact with children and young people. The training is delivered by three Community Services Officers who are accredited child protection trainers.

The Derwent Initiative (TDI) is an independent UK charity which works to improve public protection by finding creative and practical multi-agency solutions to the problems of sexual offending. They offer research, consultancy, training and trademarked public protection schemes, including Leisurewatch. The Leisurewatch scheme involves training staff to raise awareness of adults who may potentially use public facilities such as leisure centres to gain access to children and young people. The training involves helping front line staff to identify, assess and manage sex offender risk. Additional training is provided for managers to co-ordinate and manage the risk.

A site audit is undertaken that examines physical, design and security issues and materials including signage is provided to confirm that the premise is a member of Leisurewatch.

The programme involves the establishment of an Official Protocol with the Police whereby concerns reported by staff will be acted upon. In Northern Ireland, the PSNI support the project financially and have an officer seconded to the project on a part-time basis.

The main difference between Leisurewatch and Child Protection is that the former is about perpetrator awareness. It trains staff to be aware of potential sex offenders who may come onto the premises to gain access to children. Concerns are fed to the police at an early stage and where an alleged incident may not have occurred. This may include a person hanging around a centre or park specifically at times when children are about. Child protection deals specifically where a child or young person has been potentially harmed.

Key Issues

Benefits of membership for Belfast City Council in belonging to Leisurewatch would include:

1. Additional on site and detailed training
2. Branding – centres displaying posters will potentially put off sex offenders use of the buildings.
3. Ongoing audit of facilities and advice regarding how to deter potential sex offenders
4. Mystery shopper – where visits would be made to assess if the facility was adopting appropriate procedures
5. Formal links with PSNI

Leisurewatch would not only be of benefit for leisure centres but could be adapted for all BCC premises where potential sex offenders could have access to children and young people.

Leisurewatch has approached Belfast City Council regarding potential membership. Several meetings have taken place between Leisurewatch and Belfast City Council's Designated Officer and the Key Worker for Leisure. These involved discussion of the implications and the links to the Council's Child Protection Policy and training programme. Concerns were raised that there could be potential confusion between the two policies, so it was agreed that the Belfast City Council Child protection trainers would be able to input into the training in order to address these concerns. The training would initially cost Belfast City Council a minimum of £20,000 to implement with additional monies per year to retain membership and provide additional training.

A paper has been prepared (Appendix 1) that outlines the options for Belfast City Council regarding potential membership of Leisurewatch.

It is felt that within Belfast City Council, sound policy and procedures exist supported by a comprehensive training programme provided by accredited child protection trainers, and that the current review of these could incorporate all aspects of best practice. On this premise, it is considered that option 2 be recommended, supported by further consultation with Corporate Human Resources, and Legal Services, both of whom endorse the recommendation.

It is considered that it is important that Belfast City Council comply with all aspects of best practice, and that the Leisurewatch brand would enhance this practice.

It should be noted that in order to be a member of the scheme, Belfast City Council would have to purchase the whole package.

Resource Implications

Financial

The training would initially cost Belfast City Council a minimum of £20,000 to implement with additional monies per year to retain membership, and provide additional training.

Human Resources

No implication on the current allocation

Asset and Other Implications

There is no impact on any physical BCC asset.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Note the contents of the report.b) Make a decision as to Belfast City Council becoming a member of Leisurewatch. |
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Key to Abbreviations

Appendices

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Proposal for Belfast City Council to join Leisurewatch |
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