

2 December 2002

Aids and Adaptations

Report of Head of Overview and Scrutiny

Purpose of the Report

1. To give an update about the Aids and Adaptations Services which have been reviewed by a Scrutiny Group and to note improvement in this important service.

Background

2. Under the Council's experimental Constitution, a major Scrutiny project was undertaken in conjunction with all District Councils, the Health Authority and users and carers to examine services to residents who required aids and adaptations in their homes.
3. The recommendations of the Scrutiny Group which were approved by Durham County Council's Cabinet are set out in the attached Appendix.
4. One of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Group was to review progress to assess what improvements have been made in practice. An action plan was prepared by the Social Services Department in line with the recommendations of the Scrutiny Group. A review meeting was convened in October 2001 involving users of the service. The evidence from the user group was not as positive as had been hoped and, as a result of this meeting, a report was presented to Cabinet on the 4th December 2001 asking the Executive to expedite the required improvements in this important service.
5. Cabinet supported the view of the Scrutiny Group and agreed that the performance in relation to Aids and Adaptations should be closely monitored.
6. A meeting of the Working Group which looked at the Aids and Adaptations Services met on the 5 September 2002. Representatives from the District Council and the Health Authority were present but more importantly a number of users and carers attended the meeting to give their views about improvements in the service.

7. The Director of Social Services staff gave a presentation about the progress which had been made to address the issues raised by the Scrutiny Working Group. In particular, it was noted that
 - the County Durham and Darlington Community Equipment Partnership Board has now been established. Its role is to achieve service improvements in conjunction with users of the service and all interested parties.
 - a number of Task Groups have been established to ensure that the necessary improvements are introduced on a timely basis.
 - a single contact to access services was being developed.
 - joint procedural guidance for Health and Social Services staff was being developed.
8. A representative from the District Councils gave a presentation to the meeting. This demonstrated the partnership approach which had now been fully introduced. It was pointed out that in terms of performance indicators this service was no longer considered in need of urgent consideration and was steadily improving. It was explained that there were 90,000 clients in the County who required service and that over 40,000 pieces of equipment were involved.
9. Representatives from the users and carers were given full opportunity to make comment about their perception of the current service. The general view was a positive one. Whilst there were individual examples of some difficulties, there was the universal acknowledgement that the service was very responsive to the views of users and carers and that the improvement in the service was being introduced on a collaborative and partnership basis which appeared to be ensuring that the continuous improvement required was consistently being pursued by all parties.
10. A number of particular examples of improvements which could be introduced in the service were raised at the meeting and Social Services staff agreed to look into these issues. For example it was agreed that consideration would be given to equipment being loaned on a trial basis.

Summary

11. The Scrutiny Working Group originally looked at this service in 2000. It was pleasing to note that the recommendations from the Scrutiny Group have been taken very seriously and the view from users has changed significantly since the Scrutiny Group first entered into a dialogue on this issue. Whilst at the start of the process the preponderance of representations were negative in relation to this service, now it was clear that far more positive comments were being received than negative.

12. Bearing in mind the importance of this service, it was agreed that the Scrutiny Group would reconvene for one further meeting in approximately 6 months time together with the users and carers to confirm that the progress which has been demonstrated is consolidated and further developed.

Recommendation

13. You are recommended to note the information in this Report.

Background Papers

Reports to the Working Group

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ATTENDANCE LIST

5th September 2002

Councillor Nicholls in the Chair

Durham County Council

Councillors Armstrong, Blenkinsopp, Carroll, Fenwick, Mrs. Fergus, Mrs. Howarth, Mrs. Hunter, Langham and Lightley.

(Other Members – Dormer, Douthwaite, Firby, Forster, Morgan, Priestley and Thompson)

Officers

Mr. A. Inglis, Sedgefield Borough Council Officer:

Mrs. M. Oliver, Chester-le-Street District Council

P. Allison (Health Authority)

Mrs. J. Hartley

Mr. E. Short

Mr. J. Thornberry

Mr. I. Mackenzie

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY ISSUES

The services provided to assist people to remain in or return to their homes can make a significant difference to the quality of life of many County Durham residents. The review of current services identified a number of areas for improvement. The timely opportunity provided by the NHS Plan to seek closer working relationships between the partners providing these services assisted the Group in proposing the following recommendations which are set out in context at Section 13 of this report.

3.1 OVERALL CO-ORDINATION

- ❖ A one stop shop or single contact point for users should be explored as a priority.

3.2 EQUIPMENT SERVICES

- ❖ The arrangements for joint equipment stores should be kept under review.
- ❖ Joint purchasing arrangements should be further explored.
- ❖ Improved tracking of equipment should be introduced.
- ❖ Regular review of waiting times for the provision of equipment should be introduced.
- ❖ Eligibility criteria should be clarified and reviewed on a countywide basis wherever possible.
- ❖ Clear standards should be established.

3.3 OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICES

- ❖ Pooled budgets, secondments, team working or lead commissioning should be explored depending upon local circumstances.
- ❖ Integration to deliver one-stop packages of care should be explored.

3.4 PROPERTY AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS

- ❖ Minimum standards should be established on a county wide basis under an agreed strategy.
- ❖ Regular reviews of waiting times should be introduced.
- ❖ Arrangements should be made to disseminate good practice as part of continuous improvement.

3.5 USERS

- ❖ Effective networks amongst users should feed in to the providers of the service to disseminate good practice and enable continuous improvement.

3.6 REVIEW PERIOD

- ❖ The Scrutiny Group should revisit this topic six months after the report about this topic to the County Council's Executive Committee to review and monitor progress.