

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS SERVICE

NOTES OF MEETING HELD WITH SERVICE USERS AND CARERS ON 7 APRIL 2004

PRESENT

Councillor E. Hunter (in the Chair).

Councillors Armstrong, Barker, Carroll, Cordon, Ebbatson, Dormer, Douthwaite, Hunter, Marshall, Quigley
G. Gibson, S. Stevens

P. Morphett, M. White, J. Brown, M. Dalton, S. French, K. McMillian, M. Edwards, K. Ibbotson, N. Town, G. Jones.

Officers: J. Hartley (Pioneering Care Partnership), B. Gow (Durham City Council), J. Thornberry, P. Allison, P. Emberson C. Tarling, I. Mackenzie (Durham County Council

1. Councillor Hunter welcomed everyone to the meeting. A particular welcome was given to the representatives of the service users and carers. Councillor Hunter explained that their views on the aids and adaptations service were the key to improving services for people in the County. Jane Hartley from the Pioneering Care Partnership was thanked for the opportunity to have this meeting at their new centre.
2. John Thornberry gave some background information about the development of the aids and adaptations service. He indicated that great strides had been made in improving this service since the Scrutiny Group first looked at this issue in 2000. At that time the performance indicators showed that significant improvement was required. Over this time, the service had moved from "red" which required urgent attention to "green" which was a good service.
3. John explained the importance of supporting the independence of people within the County. This was part of the overall strategy to reconfigure residential accommodation and provide more assistance for people in their own homes.
4. Paul Allison and Phil Emberson from the Social Care and Health Service explained some of the developments in this service. An integrated community equipment service with a pooled budget from the Health Service and the County Council had been introduced. This was in line with the original recommendations of the Scrutiny Group to introduce a "one-stop-shop" to make contact with the service more effective for members of the public.
5. Additional Occupational Therapists were being appointed and this would assist with addressing the pressures on the service. The new

Performance Indicator had removed the original requirement for delivery of equipment costing less than £1,000 within 21 days of need being assessed. The target now was to deliver all equipment within 7 days.

6. Jane Hartley and Christine Tarling explained the development of the Home Independence Service. A great deal of work had been put in hand and it was hoped that the new service would be fully introduced in July this year. The structure across the County was explained which involved five locality home independent shops, two specialist centres and two sensory impairment resource centres.
7. The service had been shortlisted for a national award which demonstrated how far progress had been made. Views of service users and carers were an integral part of the development of the service.

DISCUSSION

8. Linda Curtis from the Society for the Blind and Partially Sighted had tendered her apologies but wishes to raise the issue of the recent change in eligibility criteria which had resulted in many of the members of this society not receiving services. They used to receive services free in the past and now many were not willing to pay for services and were doing without. This issue was echoed by Pauline Morphett who also expressed concern about financial support for the Society.
9. In the discussion, the following main issues arose:
 - i. Publicity for the new service would be launched shortly.
 - ii. The general view from service users and carers was that the service had improved considerably although it was important not to be complacent about this.
 - iii. Further consideration was required in relation to stairlifts which were no longer needed, particularly those in private dwellings.
 - iv. There is still a need to introduce choice for service users rather than a single recommendation.
 - v. People who cannot travel to the new home independent shops need to be considered.

SUMMARY

9. The meeting had been very helpful to focus attention on progress made since this scrutiny project had been first considered. The general consensus was that we have now reached the stage where, rather than a routine meeting with service users and carers, a regular report to the Communities Sub-Committee would be an appropriate monitoring system. If concern was expressed a further meeting with service users and carers could be organised.