

Report to: **Scrutiny Committee for Social Services and Health**

Date: **17 March 2005**

By: **Acting Director of Adult Social Services**

Title of report: **Disability Services: Improvements to the processing and monitoring of home adaptations**

Purpose of report: **To inform the Scrutiny Committee of proposals to introduce Adaptations Progress Chaser Occupational Therapy Assistants, a new database and monitoring system to (i) Improve information on the progress of individual major adaptations for service users and partner agencies; (ii) Monitor and speed up the progress of adaptations; and (iii) Provide information needed to complete the Commission of Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI) 6 monthly report**

---

**RECOMMENDATION - to note the developments set out in the report.**

---

**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 There are no additional cost implications associated with this report as all the improvements can be made within existing resources.

**2. Background**

2.1 Disabled people who adapt their homes with the assistance of statutory authorities find the experience very lengthy and difficult. This report outlines how the Social Services Department is working with its partner agencies to monitor and improve the process. The report outlines the development of a new monitoring database and the establishment of Adaptation Progress Chaser posts. It also sets out the quality assurance systems that will back up the whole system.

2.2 The Social Services Department has a duty to arrange practical assistance in the home, including help with arranging home adaptations, pursuant to the Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970. This report refers to assisting disabled people with major adaptations costing over £1000.

2.3 Making changes to a disabled person's home environment can have a profound effect on their ability to live a full and independent life. Carrying out works to a house, taking into account the disabled person's needs, other family members, builders, planning requirements and building regulations, is often a complex and frustrating task.

2.4 If the disabled person needs assistance from statutory authorities or other agencies to manage and fund the adaptation work, the process becomes even more complex. The Social Services Department can assist with design recommendations and, in exceptional cases, provide funding; District Councils may provide funding through Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs); Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) may provide building design, technical support and contract management; and if the disabled person is a tenant, then the landlord (who may or may not be a Registered Social Landlord) would also be involved.

2.5 In November 2004, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) published "Delivering Adaptations for Disabled People: A Good Practice Guide". As East Sussex County Council has a good record of working together with District Councils and HIAs, as well as keeping up to date with good practice guidance on adaptations, many of the recommendations contained in the latest ODPM booklet are already in place or are currently being developed. The ODPM is currently reviewing DFGs and legislative changes may take place in the future.

2.6 The ODPM guidance recommends close joint working between the relevant agencies and East Sussex already has two multi-agency working groups. The Accessible Housing Group reports directly to the Strategic Forum Commissioning Body for Supporting People. The group covers all tenures and aims to improve the adaptation process for users and is developing strategies on alternatives to adaptations. The Joint Approach to Adaptations Group's objective is to improve the processing of adaptations through DFGs. Appendix 1 provides a chart of how these groups fit into the wider joint planning structure.

2.7 The ODPM guidance recommends jointly agreed protocols between the partner agencies. East Sussex has a long standing jointly developed and agreed protocol on the provision of adaptations through DFGs which is published in a booklet and is provided to all disabled people if they intend to fund an adaptation through this method. The booklet, *A Joint Approach to Adaptations*, is available on the Social Services website or can be obtained via the Social Services Helpline 0845 6010664.

### **3. New Developments**

3.1 The ODPM guidance further recommends that agencies develop information systems and the use of progress chasers to track adaptations in progress. The database and the progress chaser posts have now been developed and will be in place across the county by 31 March 2005.

3.2 All service users, whether in privately owned or rented property, who have requested a major adaptation through Social Services will be logged on a newly developed database. The database will track adaptations - beginning with the service users' initial contact with Social Services, through assessment and building works starting, to completion of the adaptation. The purposes of this database will include (i) enabling the service user and partner agencies to check the progress of a specific adaptation; (ii) enabling the Social Services Department to measure the speed of the service and will inform the CSCI six monthly return; (iii) enabling the planning groups to measure their success at improving the overall service; and (iv) assisting with future service planning, including measuring equity across all tenures. The information fields on the database are set out in Appendix 2. Normal data protection procedures will be in place to ensure the security of the information.

3.3 Linked with the database, Physical Disability Teams will have an Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) identified to take on the role of an Adaptations Progress Chaser OTA. This will be achieved by improved staff processes and will not involve additional funding. The Progress Chaser will be responsible for maintaining the database and will be the named contact person within the Social Services Department for service users and partner agencies to contact about the progress of a specific adaptation.

3.4 These two new developments will be key to improving the services to service users and ensure effective monitoring by agencies of timescales regarding referrals, assessments and adaptations.

3.5 In addition to the above, further systems are in place that will ensure that progress is taking place on individual adaptations. All service users receiving ongoing support from an Occupational Therapist in a Physical Disability Team for an adaptation have a service review every six months. These reviews are logged on Carefirst. As an additional quality assurance measure, random sample case monitoring is undertaken by the Physical Disability Teams on a regular basis, to ensure that all relevant reviews (and other essential tasks) have taken place.

### **4. Conclusion and reason for recommendation**

4.1 The combination of the new database, the Progress Chaser OTA posts and the tightening up of the reviewing system will improve the provision of adaptations for service users. The database will provide information required by CSCI, as well as informing the joint working groups on their progress in speeding up the process and monitoring for equality across tenures. Therefore, the Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the developments set out above.

KEITH HINKLEY

Acting Director of Adult Social Services

Contact Officer: Julian Fowler, Head of Occupational Therapy Services (01273 481356)

Local Members: All

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

*Delivering Adaptations for Disabled People: A Good Practice Guide*: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (November 2004).

*A Joint Approach to Adaptations*: jointly developed by East Sussex Social Services, the District Councils and Home Improvement Agencies: available on the Social Services website or from the Social Services Helpline 0845 6010664.