

Report to: **Scrutiny Committee for Adult Social Care**

Date: **26 March 2009**

By: **Chairman of the Tabletop Review Board**

Title of report: **Tabletop Scrutiny Review of Community Equipment**

Purpose of report: **To present an update on the work of the scrutiny review of Community Equipment**

RECOMMENDATION – that the Committee note the report.

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

2. Background Information

2.1 Community equipment comprises of items such as walking aids, bathing equipment and grab rails. Following a needs assessment by Adult Social Care or health practitioners, clients can be provided with this equipment to help support them to remain in their own home and to live more independent lives.

2.2 At present the ASC department and the East Sussex Primary Care Trusts jointly commission a contract with the Nottingham Rehabilitation Service (NRS) to provide community equipment to residents in East Sussex.

2.3 A Review Board was formed in June 2008, comprising of Councillor Sylvia Tidy, Chairman, Janet Colvert, Chair of the Core Group, Local Involvement Network (LINK), Councillor Barry Taylor and Councillor Olive Woodall. The Review Board has met on two occasions with Imran Yunus, Strategic Commissioning Officer in ASC, to discuss the provision of community equipment in the future.

3. Community equipment provision in the future

3.1 The demand for community equipment in England is predicted to grow over the next few years due to several demographic factors:

- the increase in the number of older people;
- the predicted increase in the number of people living with a long term condition; and
- the increase in the number of children/young adults with a physical/learning disabilities.

3.2 In 2006 the Government launched a national scheme: the Transforming Community Equipment and Wheelchair Services (TCES) programme (although the wheelchair element of the service has since be dropped). There are two components to the scheme:

Retail outlets – these will be used to provide simple aids to daily living (e.g. grab rails, toilet seats, walking frames, eating utensils). Clients will continue to receive a needs assessment for equipment, but instead of being provided directly with the equipment they will receive a prescription, which they can redeem at a retail outlet. The prescription will provide a basic style of equipment free, although the client will have the option to 'top-up' the prescription to enable them to buy a different model/style of equipment if they wish. The equipment will then become the property of the user.

Loan equipment home delivery service – this will provide larger items of equipment (eg bath shower chair, bath lift, hoists, ramps), which often needs to be specially designed or fitted to meet a client's needs. The prescription service may not be practical for providing this equipment and it will often

need to be provided to the user through a home delivery service. The equipment will be loaned to the user for as long as required and a maintenance contract will be put in place to ensure that the equipment continues to remain in working order.

Benefits of a new system

3.3 The current system for supplying community equipment is based on clinical need and does not take into account client choice. One of the aims of TCES is to overcome this and allow people to have a choice over the style and model of equipment they want. This lack of choice has also been a contributory factor in poor product innovation for community equipment and it is hoped that by developing this new model this will help stimulate the product market.

Future provision in East Sussex

3.4 The NRS contract had been due to expire in September 2009 and at that point East Sussex County Council was keen to move to the new TCES programme. However, as the development of a retail model is still in the early stages, the department has decided to continue using NRS for a maximum of two years to allow more time for a robust model to be developed. An extended contract has now been signed with NRS, which includes some additional requirements to improve service delivery; such as the implementation of an electronic catalogue system, improved management information and a process for ongoing catalogue updates to ensure new equipment is made available. Changes are also being made to the way the department manages the contract to ensure that these areas are achieved in a timely manner and that the department realise the benefits during the period of extension.

3.5 As a step towards developing the retail model a Sensory Equipment Pilot Project is currently being developed and this will be operational by the autumn. The pilot aims to establish the procedures and processes needed to develop a small-scale retail model and then use the knowledge gained during this process to extend the service to other client groups and types of equipment.

4. Findings and recommendations of the board

4.1 The Review Board is supportive of the TCES system and the development of the Sensory Equipment Pilot Project as a means of trialing a retail model in East Sussex. However, it raised two main concerns, which it asks the department to consider when developing the system:

- How vulnerable people or those with a mobility issue, who may have difficulty accessing a retail outlet or managing the new process, are supported to access community equipment; and
- How access to a retail outlet for those people living in a rural area without transport is managed.

4.2 The Review Board will meet again in Autumn 2009 to consider the development of the Sensory Equipment Pilot Project.

Councillor Sylvia Tidy
Chairman of the Tabletop Review Board

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Local Members: All

Background documents: None