

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

Date: **11 November 2010**

By: **Chairman of the Review Board**

Title of report: **Final report of the Integrated Community Equipment Service Review Board**

Purpose of report: **To inform the committee of the outcomes from the work of the Review Board**

RECOMMENDATION: The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the report and request that a further report be brought to the Committee in March 2011 to update members on the progress towards developing a new model for the Integrated Community Equipment Service

1. Background

1. At the June 2008 meeting of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee members decided to carry out a short review of the Integrated Community Equipment Service. Initially the aim of the review had been to examine the options available for the future provision of the service, in preparation for when the current contract ended in September 2009.

2. However, following a decision by the Adult Social Care (ASC) department to extend the current contract for a further two years (until September 2011), the Review Board decided to amend its remit and monitor how the department was moving forward with developing a new model of the Integrated Community Equipment Service for the future.

3. To achieve this, the Review Board considered:

- The current provision of community equipment
- The key drivers for developing a new model of provision
- How the ASC department was developing a new model of provision in East Sussex

4. The Review Board consisted of Councillor Sylvia Tidy (chairman), Councillor Barry Taylor and Janet Colvert (Local Involvement Network (LINK) representative). The Board met on five occasions and took evidence from a range of witnesses:

- Susan Fisher, Branch Manager, Anchor Staying Put Wealden & Lewes
- Duncan Gillett, Clearwell Mobility
- John Leonard, Director, East Sussex Hearing Resource Centre
- Sally Reed, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Physical Disability & Sensory Impairment), East Sussex County Council
- Imran Yunus, Strategic Commissioning Manager, East Sussex County Council

5. Attached is a report by the Review Board outlining its findings and recommendations.

Councillor Sylvia Tidy
Chairman of the Community Equipment Review Board

Contact officer: Gillian Mauger, Scrutiny Lead Officer (01273 481796)

Local Members: All

Background Documents: None

Tabletop Scrutiny Review of the Integrated Community Equipment Service

Community Equipment

1. Community equipment enables people who require assistance to perform essential activities of daily living to maintain their health and to live as full a life as possible.
2. The term community equipment covers two types of equipment:
 - Simple aids for daily living - these include walking aids, bathing equipment (such as bath boards and rails), raised toilet seats and grab rails.
 - Complex aids for daily living – these include specialist beds, hoists and bath lifts, which often need to be specially designed or fitted to meet a client's needs.
3. Following a needs assessment by Adult Social Care or a health practitioner, clients can be provided with this equipment as part of their care package to help support them to remain in their own home.

Community equipment provision in East Sussex in 2009/10

Simple aids	Complex aids
24,208	10,796

4. East Sussex County Council and the East Sussex Primary Care Trusts have a pooled budget in place to provide community equipment for both health and social care needs. Together they jointly commission a contract with the Nottingham Rehabilitation Supplies (NRS) to provide community equipment to residents in East Sussex. The cost of the contract for 2009/10 was £3.5 million (the 2010/11 contract is still being negotiated).
5. The NRS contract provides both simple and complex aids to service users across East Sussex through a van delivery service. The service is also responsible for maintaining complex aids whilst in a service user's home and for collecting and recycling both simple and complex aids once the equipment is no longer required.

Key drivers for developing a new model of provision

6. There are two key drivers for transforming the existing community equipment service:

Anticipated growth in future demand - Demand for community equipment will continue to increase in the future due to a rise in the numbers of older people, people with a long term condition and children/young adults coming through from Children's Services with complex needs. This increased demand will put unsustainable pressure on the community equipment budget and the ASC department needs to consider other more cost effective ways of providing the service in the future.

The Putting People First (PPF) agenda - The PPF agenda focuses on the personalisation of services and enables clients to have a greater choice around the type of support they receive. The current integrated community equipment service is based purely on clinical need and does not take into account client choice.

Transforming Community Equipment and Wheelchair Services (TCES)

7. In 2006 the Government launched a national scheme: the Transforming Community Equipment and Wheelchair Services (although the wheelchair element of the service has since been dropped). Whilst it is not compulsory for local authorities to sign up to this national scheme there is an expectation that this type of scheme is given due consideration when a local authority is making changes to the way in which it provides community equipment.

8. The two components of the scheme are:

Retail outlets – these would provide simple aids for daily living (as outlined at paragraph 2). Clients would continue to receive a needs assessment for equipment, but instead of being provided with the equipment they would receive a time limited prescription to redeem at a retail outlet. The prescription would provide a basic style of equipment free, although the client would have the option to 'top-up' the prescription to enable them to buy a different model/style of equipment if they wished. The equipment would then become the property of the user.

Loan equipment home delivery service – this would provide the complex aids for daily living (as outlined at paragraph 2). The equipment would be loaned to the user for as long as required and a maintenance contract would be put in place to ensure that the equipment remained in working order.

Developing a new model of provision in East Sussex

Considering a retail model

9. The ASC department has had lengthy discussions with local retailers and the local pharmaceutical committee over how a retail model could be developed in East Sussex. Whilst there was interest from some retailers in developing such a model the ASC department had concerns about the buying power of local retailers and the local pharmacists, as well as issues around lack of storage capacity and availability of vehicles for deliveries. Initial trials through the Independent Living Service (see paragraph 17 for more information) revealed low levels of interest from people in visiting retail stores to collect equipment (preferring to use web based companies), raising concerns about the viability of developing this type of model for accessing equipment. It was therefore decided that going down the route of the full retail model was too risky and could potentially end up being an expensive option in the long run.

Future development work

10. The ASC department is currently looking at different ways in which to provide the community equipment service in the future and this work is ongoing. One area it is considering is buying equipment through a consortium with other local authorities in the South East, which will offer increased buying power and enable the local authorities to purchase equipment cost effectively. Given the current economic climate, and the expectation that this area of need will increase in the future, the cost factor plays a key part in the decision for how to develop the service in the future.

11. Other ideas being considered include shifting the emphasis for arranging when the equipment is delivered to the service user (the aim being to reduce failed deliveries, something that has been an issue with the current contract) and, where possible, the responsibility for fitting simple aids (such as raised toilet seats) to lie with the service user.

12. A contractor would still be required to deliver some of the equipment and, where necessary, provide a maintenance service for complex pieces of equipment. It is hoped that East Sussex based companies would be interested in tendering for this type of contract.

13. Over the past year ASC has undertaken two small pilots with local organisations to ascertain whether unique areas of community equipment work could be carried out in a different way:

Sensory Equipment Pilot Project

14. Sensory equipment is a specialised area of community equipment meeting a particular need for a small group of service users. A pilot, set up in December 2009, contracted the East Sussex Hearing Resource Centre (ESHRC) to provide and install sensory equipment across a small geographic area based around Eastbourne. The aim of the pilot is to see whether a more personalised service could be offered to this particular group of service users which better meets their needs and is more cost effective for the department.

15. Following an assessment by Adult Social Care the service user is provided with a prescription which they can redeem with the ESHRC. This allows service users to have a choice around the model of equipment they may wish to have, topping up the cost of it where necessary. In the first six months of the pilot a total of 106 prescriptions were issued and the running costs of the service during that time were £13,500.

16. Initial feedback from the pilot has shown that service users have appreciated a more personalised service provided by staff who understand their particular needs (staff and volunteers at ESHRC have hearing impairments themselves and can therefore easily identify with the needs of the service users). The ASC department is now considering expanding this service county wide.

Independent Living Service

17. The Independent Living Service is a countywide service which began in October 2009 and is provided by Anchor Staying Put. The service addresses one of the aims of the Putting People First agenda of providing information and advice to the general public, whether or not they are eligible for an Adult Social Care service. The service provides advice and guidance on purchasing community equipment for those people with low or moderate needs and who would therefore not qualify for equipment through the Community Equipment Service. Currently three retailers are accredited to the service and these are recommended to those people wishing to purchase equipment (although these are only based in urban areas such as Seaford and Polegate).

18. In the first nine months of the service over 1,300 people were provided with advice and information on community equipment. Initial feedback on the service has been positive with people appreciating the level of advice they have received to solve simple daily living tasks. However, most people have opted to purchase equipment via web based companies, especially those living in rural areas, and the expected increase in sales via the retail outlets has not materialised.

Conclusions

19. The Review Board recognises that with increased demands for equipment, in a time of reducing budgets, it is paramount that the ASC department develops a community equipment service which is as cost effective as possible. It therefore supports the direction of travel being taken by the department to buy community equipment through a county council consortium. However, with the contract with Nottingham Rehabilitation Supplies due to end in September 2011, the Review Board is concerned that the department has a great deal of work to do to develop the proposed model in such a short timescale. The Review Board would therefore wish the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee to see the specification for the new community equipment service as soon as it has been developed so that it can reassure itself that every element has been thoroughly thought through and costed out.

20. The Review Board also has some concerns about the changes being proposed to the delivery and fitting of community equipment in the future. It recognises that the current system of using vehicles to deliver small simple aids, such as cushions or bath mats, is not cost effective and these items can be easily sent through the post in the future. It also supports the change to service users arranging the deliver of equipment at a time to best suit them (to reduce the number of failed deliveries). However, it has concerns that for some vulnerable service users having to arrange the delivery and then fit simple pieces of equipment themselves could be difficult and this may mean that they choose not to use the equipment.¹

21. The Review Board therefore wants the department to address the following issues as they develop the new community equipment service:

- A process to be developed to identify, and provide support to, those vulnerable service users who need help to fit simple aids (such as raised toilet seats); and
- Safeguards to be put in place to ensure that where service users have agreed to arrange for the delivery and fitting of simple aids a check is carried out by officers to ensure that the equipment has been delivered and correctly fitted.

22. The Review Board considered the Sensory Equipment Pilot to be an excellent model of how a voluntary sector organisation can provide a service that not only meets the needs of local people but also provides added value for both service users and the department. The Review Board is therefore supportive of this service being expanded across East Sussex.

¹ The Review Board had previously raised concerns about a suggestion that where possible service users would also be asked to install grab rails. It has since received assurances from the department that the installation of all grab rails will now be carried out under the minor adaptations service.

23. The Review Board also supports the role of the Independent Living Service to provide information and advice to those people not eligible for ASC services. This ensures that people are accessing the right type of equipment to support their needs and meets the aims of the preventative agenda by ensuring support is provided early, which may delay future demand for more costly services. However, the Review Board was concerned that they had seen little publicity about this new service and felt that the service might not be reaching those members of the public that would benefit from it. It therefore recommended that ASC look at increasing publicity across East Sussex (perhaps through the Your County magazine and Action in Rural Sussex website/publications).