

Report to: **Adult Social Care and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **6 September 2012**

By: **Director of Adult Social Care**

Title of report:: **Disabled Facilities Grant and Adaptations Support**

Purpose of report: **To provide an update on the work undertaken jointly with the District and Borough Councils to develop an adaptation support service and support clients to identify alternative housing options**

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider and comment on the contents of this report

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The County Council has a statutory duty under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 to provide assistance with adaptations where an individual's needs have been determined as eligible under the Fair Access to Care guidance (FACs). In the first instance the County Council will endeavour to meet its duty through a referral to the relevant District or Borough Housing Department for the provision of a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

1.2 Funding from ASC Capital Budget will therefore need only be considered if the housing authority is unable to fully discharge the duty by the provision of a DFG.

2. Background and Supporting Information

2.1 In 2010/11 the County Council in partnership with the District and Borough Councils reviewed the pathway for housing adaptations within East Sussex.

2.2 Following a review of existing services it was agreed that the pathway needed to address the following key principals:

- Consistency across the County
- Clarity of commissioned activity
- Agreed priorities with District and Boroughs
- A flexible approach to carrying levels of need
- A system for monitoring time frames for adaptations

3. Housing Solution Service

3.1 The Housing Solution Worker (HSW) is a shared service between ASC and the District and Boroughs that aims to explore and provide alternatives to adaptations. The purpose of the service is to ensure that individuals receive appropriate and timely support, which enables individuals to make informed choices about their housing needs, and relevant solutions exploring possible alternatives to major adaptations funded through Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG).

3.2 This service is jointly funded and is available in Eastbourne, Hastings and Wealden. Both Lewes and Rother were unable to contribute the 50% funding required to fund the post holders, so the service and the approach are not available in these localities.

3.3 The three post-holders have been in post since March 2012 and are fully operational. There is a service-wide approach across the three localities allowing for a sharing of cases and resources and is being successfully co-ordinated and led by Hastings Borough Council's Housing Renewal Manager.

3.4 Number of Cases

Borough	Number of Live Cases	Number of Closed cases
Eastbourne	31	17
Hastings	21	13
Wealden	10	5

3.5 Arising from the closed cases a total cost of £134K has been saved against the DFG budget as a result of alternative solutions being found to adapting clients' property.

3.6 With regard to the live cases it is estimated that a total cost of approximately £292K will be saved against the DFG budget, should alternatives to adaptations be realised.

4. Adaptation Support Service

4.1 The local authorities of Wealden, Rother, Eastbourne, Hastings and Lewes in partnership with East Sussex County Council looked to jointly commission an Adaptations Support Service in April 2012 to provide technical support in respect of adaptations.

4.2 The aim of the service is to ensure that people have all the necessary information about whether or not their property is adaptable, or if alternative housing options need to be considered. The service can also, if appropriate, assist them in applying to the respective local authority for a DFG and support them whilst their home is being adapted.

4.3 It was the intention to award two contracts, one covering Hastings and Rother and one covering the West of the County (Eastbourne, Lewes and Wealden). Whilst the process was successful in the East a contract was not awarded in the West.

4.4 A review of the new service in the East has shown significant improvement in the timescales for adaptations, overall communication and the quality of the work being undertaken. The contract is delivering and meeting the Key Performance Indicators and is valued by the Occupational Therapist and District and Boroughs.

4.5 There is ongoing discussion around utilizing the contract extension and the current service provider has confirmed that they could not agree to this, given the current fee % (10%). There are more grants being awarded in Hastings and Rother than anticipated as costs have been reduced with better value for money being achieved. The service provider has had to employ additional staff to be able to deliver the timescales required and to manage the increase in volume. Rother District Council is overseeing the service on behalf of Hastings and Rother and a meeting is planned shortly to review the position.

4.6 In the West, Lewes, Wealden, Eastbourne and ASC work in partnership to source alternative ways to support individuals to access the technical support required. Operationally this is not causing any significant problems for the Occupational Therapy Service; however the process does appear to be taking longer with therapists having to do a bit more work than previously. Further work is required to fully review this approach and to agree a way forward.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 The above activity did create an opportunity for the Occupational Therapy Service and the District and Borough Councils to jointly review operational processes and systems for delivering major adaptation. This has now been completed and it can be reported that there is greater consistency across the County supported by updated County Council operational instructions.

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Local Member: ALL Background Documents: NONE