

COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT/INDEPENDENT LIVING

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: SOCIAL CARE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING

CABINET

17TH FEBRUARY, 2005

Wards Affected

County wide

Purpose

To receive a report on developments in the Community Equipment Service and to consider the future direction of the Service.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision

Recommendation

- THAT (a) the report be noted; and**
- (b) future development of the Service be supported as follows:**
- **Further integration work with the Strategic Housing Service**
 - **Investigation of the option of alternative providers for Community Equipment Services**

Reasons

At the Budget Panel meeting in November 2004, an undertaking was given to report back to Cabinet on the developments in the integrated Community Equipment service and associated services to facilitate Independent Living.

Considerations

1. Community Equipment ranges from simple care equipment, such as commodes, chair raisers and bath seats, to more sophisticated equipment such as computerised sensory equipment, automatic fall detectors and remote sensor devices. Community equipment and assistive technology can keep people out of residential care, prevent accidents such as falls, reduce hospital admissions and give a more effective and safer discharge from hospital.
2. In March 2000, the Audit Commission's published "Fully Equipped", a report on the provision of some forms of equipment to older or disabled people by the NHS or social services in England and Wales. It concluded that the organisation of equipment services was a recipe for confusion, inequality and inefficiency. The report found that service users did not always receive equipment of reasonable quality and that many services were fragmented.

3. The Commission called for action to improve standards, provide a fairer service and make equipment services an important component of strategies designed to promote independence. The Department of Health also established a national implementation team with responsibility for helping NHS trusts and social services to deliver a single integrated community equipment service by April 2004.
4. The single integrated Community Equipment Service is defined as one meeting the following criteria:
 - Pooled Health and Social Care budget contributions
 - A Single Operational Manager for the Service and a Single point of contact for services.
 - A Board to advise the manager, whose members include representatives of Local authorities and NHS organisations and professionals who assess equipment needs.
 - Unified Stock
5. The action plan to achieve integration was approved by Herefordshire's Health and Care Partnership in October 2002. At the time it was acknowledged that outsourcing the Community Equipment Service might be an option for consideration in the future, but that the immediate aim of securing a single integrated service by April 2004 should be the priority. The Section 31 partnership arrangement under the Health Act Flexibilities was formally signed on 31st March, 2004.
6. Government targets have been set for the service as follows:
 - To increase by 50% the number of people in receipt of equipment.
 - To increase the percentage of items of equipment and adaptations delivered within 7 days.
7. Cabinet will be aware that meeting these targets has been challenging. The Commission for Social Care Inspection Performance Review Report was presented to Cabinet on 23rd September, 2004, where the commentary on Adult Services included concerns on equipment services. The initial assessment of the percentage of items of equipment delivered within 7 days was 38%, but following a review of activity and data the indicator performance was validated at 63%. An action plan to further improve this indicator is being implemented. The 2004/05 target of 68% is likely to be exceeded.
8. In February 2005, the Community Equipment Service will be subject to a further Audit Commission audit carried out on behalf of the Health Care Commission.
9. Further challenges have been the securing of finance for future development. Investment from the Primary Care Trust (PCT) includes the employment of Occupational Therapists and District Nurses, who assess the need for equipment. The Council's contribution to the pooled budget has been for the operational running of the Community Equipment Store.
10. A New Manager has been in post since July 2004. Since that time the following developments have taken place:
 - Partnership Board established

- Advisory Board, with service user representation, established
 - Enhanced transport arrangements which was a barrier to delivering equipment quickly
 - Eligibility Criteria has been reviewed
 - Access to Direct Payments for service users is being explored
 - Servicing and repair arrangements reviewed
 - Improved delivery presentation and information for users
 - Incorporation of specialist seating in schools
 - Inclusion of further services is being explored
11. Although progress has been made, further development is required. The Best Value Review of Physical Disabilities which reported to Strategic Monitoring Committee in January 2005, included a number of recommendations, making the links between independent living and appropriate housing. Further integration with the work currently coordinated by the Strategic Housing division is needed.
12. The Private Sector Housing section provides the link to a number of services to encourage independent living:
- **Disabled Facilities Grants**
These are available towards the cost of providing adaptations and facilities to enable a disabled person to continue living at home. There is a financial limit on the value of grants that can be made under this scheme, the need for additional finance falls on the directorate budget.
 - **You @ Home Repairs on Prescription**
The scheme assists with carrying out essential or urgent works that have been identified and referred by Health or other key workers. This includes minor adaptations (i.e. costing less than £1000) funded by the Community Equipment Service's pooled budget.
 - **Energy Efficiency Scheme**
Assistance is aimed at elderly owner occupiers and private tenants and households on very low incomes towards certain repairs and energy efficiency measures in the home.
 - **Handyperson Scheme**
The Anchor " Staying Put" Agency operates a small scale repairs service which assists older or disabled people with maintenance and repair works.
13. The link between all areas of Independent Living has been highlighted in the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit Policy document "Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People," published on 19th January, 2005. The report recommends that a new way of supporting disabled people is needed, focussed on the goal of independent living. There should be a move towards individual budgets for disabled people, drawing together the services to which they are entitled and giving them greater choice over the mix of support they receive in the form of cash and/or direct provision of services.

This policy needs to be taken into account in any future developments.

Consultees

Social care users, carers, stakeholders and partners.

Background Papers

None identified.