

Helping Older People Remain Independent in Their Own Homes

Executive Summary

***- developing timely access to adaptations and
housing related services -***

**Report Originator: Lynn Chapman
Service Improvements Manager, Kettering Borough Council & Kettering
Local Health Group (Heartlands Primary Care Trust)**

February 2005

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background

The provision of an adaptations service can be a crucial factor to changing the lives of those with disabilities. A modern adaptations service, however, acknowledges that whilst often key to transforming a disabling environment, adaptations alone do not ensure that people experience a good quality of life while living in their own homes. The service therefore, must be placed within and complement/add value to helping often vulnerable people to remain as independent as possible, for as long as possible within the environment of their choice.

The initial brief for this report emerged as a result of partner organisations and customer concerns regarding the lengthy process involved in accessing adaptations from the initial assessment, through grants procedures to the final installation. Whilst focused on identifying ways to improve systems and processes within the Borough of Kettering, the report findings and recommendations may be useful to other district/borough councils, the three Primary Care Trusts (PCT's) in Northamptonshire and other stakeholder organisations that operate at a local or countywide level. In addition, there has been much activity relating to improving access to community equipment and adaptations since this investigation began. The aim and objectives of the report therefore, reflect the advances that have already been made and those that are planned for the future.

1.2 Purpose of Report

The aim of this report is to make recommendations to enhance partnership working, systems and processes in order to ensure timely access to adaptations and related services that support independent living. The objectives therefore, are to:

- Draw together and summarise existing/new legislation and policy frameworks relating to adaptations services and the relevant national, sub-regional and local environmental/demographic influences (Section 3)
- Identify recent research recommendations relevant to adaptations and housing support services (Section 4)
- Undertake further investigations with key organisations to determine actions that have already been taken to address the recommendations of recent research, to identify any potential blockages to implementing those recommendations and to explore opportunities to enhance partnership working (Section 5)

- Investigate examples of good practice for housing related services and independent living to make recommendations for future service improvements and partnership working (Sections 5/6)

1.3 Environmental Influences and Local Issues

Sections 3,4 and 5 of the report present a range of environmental influences and resulting local issues that have been raised in recent years. For example:

- National Service Framework for Older People (setting standards in particular around assessments, community equipment, promoting independence by enhancing services, avoiding hospital admission and supporting early discharge and action to prevent falls); The Community Care Delayed Discharges Act 2003 that means local authorities and health service providers must find ways to effectively address hospital discharge to homes that are safe, secure and suitable for the individuals needs to minimise the chances of future admission
- Local Health Delivery Plan, 2003-2006, Northamptonshire Heartlands Primary Care Trust (PCT) that includes avoiding delayed discharges, enabling people to remain in their homes longer, provision of community equipment (aids and minor adaptations) within 7 working days, avoiding increases in waiting lists for equipment and reducing death rates from accidents
- Kettering Boroughs Local Strategic Partnership Community Plan targets that include improving the quality of life and access to housing and support services for older people, helping people to remain independent through reducing the risk of accidents, extending Care and Repair and Handy Persons services and supporting implementation of the NSF for Older People

The sections also identify that much work has already been undertaken, is on-going or planned with respect to improving access to community equipment and adaptations, in particular, from a health and social care perspective at national, sub-regional and local levels. This includes:

- On-going implementation of the Northamptonshire County Council Best Value Review of the Community Equipment and Adaptation Services
- Introduction of the Single Assessment Process (SAP) bringing together health and social services so older people have a single point of access to the care system
- Joint commissioning of Peter Fletcher Associates to produce a report entitled 'Northamptonshire Older People's Strategy, Linking Housing to Health, Social Care and Other Local Strategies' that resulted in a range of recommendations during 2004

- Introduction of a countywide pilot by Heartlands PCT to train professionals and support staff to assess for 'low level' equipment. The programme is currently being rolled out with a view to freeing up Community Occupational Therapists time to undertake more complex assessments and to speed up access to equipment generally
- Supporting People are in negotiations with district and borough councils and other stakeholders to create a north of the county Home Improvement Agency that will also undertake installation of minor adaptations. It is anticipated that the merger of existing services (Care and Repair, Handy Persons services) will produce equity of access and economies of scale. Additional funding through the Access and Capacity Grant is being used by Community Services (Northamptonshire County Council) to further develop the infrastructure and service provision
- Kettering Borough Council's 'Next Steps for Housing' programme includes a new Housing Needs Team that will work within any agreed proposals for a north of the county Home Improvement Agency Consortium

Whilst much work is already underway, further discussions with key agencies have highlighted work that needs to be considered in order to avoid any blockages at a locality level to achieving collective goals regarding adaptation and related independent living services. These views and an evaluation of what has yet to be moved forward from recent research recommendations are summarised in Section 6. The section also offers examples of good practice leading to recommendations for the future.

1.4 Issues, Opportunities and Recommendations

Section 6 summarises the key themes that have emerged through previous consultations and recent further discussions with stakeholder agencies. These are:

- Policies, Procedures and Processes
- Partnerships and Service Integration
- A Customer Focus to Continuous Improvement

Each theme is subsequently discussed with respect to recurring issues raised, current or planned activity to address those issues and any further recommendations for consideration. These are summarised overleaf and need to be collectively addressed in order to provide a customer focused approach to adaptations and housing related independent living services now and in the future.

Recommendations

It should be noted that the Service Improvement Manager jointly funded by Kettering Borough Council and Heartlands Primary Care Trust (Kettering Local Health Group)

will be responsible for supporting and monitoring progress of the recommendations once adopted. Whilst a proposed Implementation Plan can be found at Appendix 'E', external environmental factors may influence the timeframes shown. The Service Improvement Manager therefore, will need to negotiate with the relevant agencies and support the agreed implementation process. In addition, the post holder will gather evidence from the relevant agencies and customers to measure success against the anticipated outcomes shown in the tables that follow, which the recommendations aim to achieve.

Policies, Procedures and Processes

- a) Kettering Borough Council (Housing Services) to lead on the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to complete key tasks in order to support the streamlining of the assessment, approval and installation processes for Disability Facilities Grants (DFG's). This to include the production of good practice guidelines for processing DFG's/to track and feedback on customer progress through the system; determining local indicators through which performance in processing grants can be monitored; establishment of a protocol that enables the prioritisation of adaptations works and that rationalises between the potential health risks and realistic timeframes for completion depending on the extent of the work required; and revising/simplifying the current grant application forms for financial support for adaptations in order to make them more customer friendly. This work should be time-scaled to fit alongside the proposals to establish a North of the County Home Improvement Agency (HIA) by progressing some of the necessary procedures and processes within which the consortium will need to operate. It is anticipated that, (dependent on the management arrangements to be adopted) this should be operational by mid 2006
- b) Kettering Borough Council (Housing Services) to monitor the impact of measures to reduce waiting lists for assessments on the existing DFG allocation during 2005 in order to have evidence to make any representation for an increase in the Government allocation should this be deemed necessary
- c) During its 'Next Steps for Housing' programme, for Kettering Borough Council to revise the existing housing policy that will prevent council tenants from receiving equity of access to a speedier assessment process. The current policy requires an Occupational Therapist to undertake assessments regardless of the level of need and will prevent the effective roll-out of a programme to enable a wider range of staff to assess for low level equipment in order to free up Occupational Therapists time for more complex work
- d) Kettering Borough Council (Housing Services) to investigate the potential to agree with contractors timeframes for the receipt of quotations and outside timeframes for the completion of works, depending on the extent and complexity of the works required

Anticipated Outcomes

Recommendation a and b:

- Customers with a higher level of need will be prioritised for completion of works
- People will know where they are in the system and how their application is progressing
- The application process will be more accessible through reducing the complexity of forms
- Clarity and consistency of the process
- Ability to track and monitor where customers are in order to feedback to them when asked
- Measures to monitor, evaluate and hence improve on the service and to use such measures to justify the need for increased resources if necessary
- An opportunity through the Task and Finish Group to strengthen relations through collective decision making
- Achieve a better customer focus through sharing expertise and knowledge
- To have established streamlined processes to support the effective implementation of the HIA

Recommendation c:

- Equity of access to services regardless of tenure
- Speedier service for council tenants in line with other tenures
- Removal of potential blockage to the effective implementation of the Single Assessment Process with respect to low level assessments

Recommendation d:

- Removal of a potential blockage to the whole process of streamlining and speeding up access to adaptations

Partnerships and Service Integration

- e) The Services Improvement Manager to facilitate the establishment of a multi-agency project group (e.g. Housing, Police Crime Prevention, Fire Service, Health Visitor, District Nurse and Social Care and Health representatives) to develop an awareness raising and training programme for home visiting workers (statutory and voluntary sectors) to identify basic risks to health, safety and security in the home and to produce a guide to enable home visiting workers to know when and where to signpost to in order to address the identified risks. Following piloting, the project group will need to determine a roll-out programme open to the diverse range of organisations who undertake home visits (Handyperson schemes, Age Concern Home Visitors, Benefits Advice agencies, for example). These will be additional to those home visitors from the statutory agencies. This will support the requirements of the Community Care Discharges Act 2003 that places a duty on key agencies to ensure people are discharged from hospital to safe, secure and suitable home environments in order to minimise the chance of readmission. It will also reduce the potential need for several agencies to visit one individual by multi-skilling a range of home visitors and to enable better targeting where risks identified require specialist advice. The group should also seek approval from stakeholder organisations to contributing human resource time/financial contributions to the delivery of training through their

organisations, based on an agreed roll-out programme and for the production of the guidance

Anticipated Outcomes

Recommendation e:

- Identification of and addressing potential risks will prevent possible accidents/incidents that could result in hospital admission
- Reduce fear of crime through identification and completion of measures in the home
- Visitors regardless of the specific reason for the visit, will be better able to identify wider risks and hence reduce the need for several visits from several agencies
- One initial point of contact that leads to several risks being addressed
- Multi-skilling in basic risk factors should reduce the number of visits by each agency and will help to prevent a risk from becoming an accident/emergency and hence more resource intensive
- Better able to take a holistic approach to risk assessment and hence avoiding duplication
- Confidence to know what can be dealt with by the home visitor and at what point more specialist help should be sought, particularly in terms of health and well-being
- Ability to reach more people through multi-skilling
- Achieving added-value by sharing the delivery/costs of the partnership programme and guideline documents

A Customer Focus to Continuous Improvement

- f) During the 'Next Steps for Housing' programme, Kettering Borough Council to determine one point of contact for dealing with customers and keeping them informed of progress through the system. Customers report that whilst one point of access is helpful, the personal approach (such as a 'case worker') who can follow through the individuals particular and often diverse needs across a range of service and organisations would enable a 'one point of contact' rather than 'one point of access' approach. This role should link with the new post in Occupational Therapy Services that tracks individuals through the assessment process
- g) Consideration be given to the purchase of an additional licence within Housing Services (for use by the 'case worker' role above) to access the Councils recently acquired Oracle (Customer Relationship Model) ICT programme as a means to track and feedback to customers and/or their advocates as to where they are in the system and to monitor progress against target deadlines and indicators
- h) Kettering Borough Council and Heartlands PCT/Kettering Local Health Group to continue financial support to enable the sustainability of Care and Repair and Handypersons Services in the Borough during the process of establishing a North of the County HIA

- i) During the establishment of the North of the County HIA, the Service Improvement Manager to ensure that the longer-term funding of the Handypersons Scheme in Kettering is reviewed, taking into account the cessation of Lottery Funds in February 2007

- j) The Service Improvement Manager to negotiate with Age Concern, Northampton and County to determine the additional resources required in order to provide a service in line with the Blackpool falls prevention concept (see 5.9 of the main report). This enables the Handypersons service to fit smaller adaptations, such as grab rails (the service found that a high proportion of the Handypersons work helped to prevent falls by reducing risks in the home). For Heartlands PCT to consider prioritising the provision of training to Handyperson staff and volunteers by a qualified Occupational Therapist within the low level assessment training programme

- k) The Service Improvement Manager to liaise with the steering group (comprising of district/borough councils and Supporting People) working to establish the new HIA to seek support for the adoption of the performance indicators as recommended by Foundations to enable a comparison with national statistical information and quality of service provision

- l) The Service Improvement Manager to engage relevant stakeholders (such as those shown in Appendix 'D') to seek support to work towards the expansion of the HIA in line with the approach adopted by the Mid Devon Integrated Housing Scheme

Anticipated Outcomes

Recommendation h,i:

- Continuity of service during a period of change

Recommendations f,g,j,k:

- One point of access and one individual response for the whole process and for providing feedback on progress
- Expansion and focusing funded services to meet new performance targets intended to achieve a speedier service to customers
- Introduction of nationally monitored performance indicators for HIAs will enable a proactive approach to service delivery and improvement against best practice

Whilst Recommendation l will continue to achieve all the outcomes of the above recommendations, it will also enable:

- Fast tracking of hospital discharge patients to prevent bed blocking and unnecessary delays/long stays
- Better use and integration of services enabling economies of scale and a better quality of provision to the public
- Raised awareness of the type of assistance available that in turn could prevent crime, accidents in the home and assist people to remain in their own home
- Reduction in the need to contact several organisations before reaching the appropriate one to get the right information or service(s)
- Reduction in double handling of enquiries by providing a single point of contact

This executive summary offers an overview of the report. The following sections provide the detailed information that has led to the recommendations made.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2005/06 (DRAFT)

Appendix 'B'

RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY TASKS	MAY 05	JUNE 05	JULY 05	AUG 05	SEPT 05	OCT 05	NOV 05	DEC 05	JAN 06	FEB 06	MAR 06	NOTES
a) KBC to lead in the establishment of a task and finish group to: > Produce and adopt good practice guidelines for grant processing > Determine and adopt local performance indicators for processing grants > Develop and adopt a protocol to prioritise adaptations works > Produce revised application forms for DFG/other home improvement grants, consulted on and adopted												Timeframes include consultation period and procedures to gain adoption from within the relevant agencies. To run alongside process on developing North of County HIA
b) KBC to monitor the impact of measures taken to reduce OT assessment and waiting lists on the current DFG allocation												Measure impact over 6 months to make projection and bid for full year 06/07
c) KBC to revise it's existing housing policy to enable appropriately trained individuals to assess for low level equipment in line with the SAP process												The SAP process is underway therefore change to council policy can be immediate
d) KBC to investigate agreeing timeframes with contractors for receipt of quotations and for various works												Dependent on agreement with contractors

RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY TASKS	MAY 05	JUNE 05	JULY 05	AUG 05	SEPT 05	OCT 05	NOV 05	DEC 05	JAN 06	FEB 06	MAR 06	NOTES
<p>e) KLHG to facilitate the development of a multi-agency training programme and guidance booklet for home visitors to identify basic risks to health, safety and security within the home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop programme and pilot ➤ Produce guidance ➤ Gain multi-agency commitment to roll out programme and production of guidance ➤ Roll out programme 												Once programme is piloted and evaluated, evidence can be used to engage agencies further. Success of programme is dependent on multi-agency continued commitment
<p>f) KBC to determine one point of contact for customers and for keeping them informed of their progress through the home improvement process</p>												Will establish base line from outset from which monitoring of improvement can be made
<p>g) KBC to introduce a customer tracking service (CRM) for the home improvement process</p>												As above
<p>h) KBC and PCT/KLHG to maintain financial support to the existing Care & Repair and Handypersons Services during the process of establishing a North of the county HIA</p>												Enables continuity of service during period of change

RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY TASKS	MAY 05	JUNE 05	JULY 05	AUG 05	SEPT 05	OCT 05	NOV 05	DEC 05	JAN 06	FEB 06	MAR 06	NOTES
i) KBC/KLHG to ensure that the longer-term funding of the Handypersons scheme in Kettering is reviewed, taking into account the cessation of funds in Feb 2007 and HIA developments									▼			Negotiations to begin with partners in preparation for Feb 07 when funding ceases
j) PCT/KLHG to negotiate with Age Concern to determine the additional resources required in order to provide a service in line with the Blackpool falls prevention concept and for PCT to consider prioritising the provision of training to Handyperson staff and volunteers by a qualified OT within the low level assessment training programme												Negotiations will determine whether the initiative is viable prior to identifying how the service might be resourced
k) The new HIA to adopt and work within the performance indicators as recommended by Foundations												Dependent on when HIA is established and how the scheme will be managed
Facilitated by the Service Improvement Manager, to engage with all stakeholders to work towards the expansion of the HIA in line with the approach adopted by the Mid Devon Integrated Housing Scheme												Dependent on when HIA is established and how the scheme will be managed