

AGENDA ITEM NO.

TO: COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 4th MARCH, 2003

SUBJECT: AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS - PROGRESS REPORT

FROM: HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF ITEM

1.1 To update the Community Scrutiny Committee on the current position with Aids and Adaptations.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 On 17th September, 2001 Executive approved the funding for a jointly funded Occupational Therapist (OT) to be based within Housing.

2.2 Historically Warwick District Council has been able to meet the demand for aids and adaptations by adjusting its budgets accordingly. Members have supported the above approach to ensure its tenants' homes are adapted to create a safe environment to aid day to day activities.

In the past five years the budget has been amended as follows:

Year	Original Budget £	Amended Budget £	No. of Referrals	No. of Fast Track Requests*
1999/2000	125,000	114,820	64	0
2000/2001	215,000	153,572	64	92
2001/2002	375,000	395,773	51	215
2002/2003	360,000		87	146

*Fast track system introduced September 2000

2.2.1 In the past twelve months we have worked closely with Warwickshire County Council's Social Services Department to address the increasing delays with Occupational Therapy Assessments.

2.2.2 In September 2002, Warwick District Council, together with Warwickshire County Council, recruited a jointly funded Occupational Therapist. The OT, Lesley Rowbotham, is based within the Housing Business Unit for the majority of the week, having to spend some time at the County Council updating records.

At the time Lesley was recruited, our tenants were waiting up to twelve months for the OT assessment with the exception of emergency requests, for example to enable discharge from hospital. The current waiting time is approximately 4 months.

2.2.3 The County Council continue to have responsibility for assessments as prescribed in the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. Therefore, requests for assessments must continue to be registered with Social Services.

2.2.4 In September 2000, we introduced a fast track system specifically for handrails and banisters. This approach enabled tenants to request rails without requiring an OT assessment. The scheme has proved to be extremely successful and has been extended to include lever taps and half steps.

2.3 **Position to Date**

2.3.1 All cases awaiting assessment when the jointly funded OT was appointed in September have been completed.

2.3.2 From the time referrals are received within the Housing Business Unit to the time the work is completed is on average 12 weeks, this is reduced to 6 weeks for fast track requests.

A short delay has been experienced in the above timescales when the bulk of waiting list assessments were completed. This is due to the fact that we have one dedicated Building Surveyor within Property Services who assesses feasibility for each referral together with providing costings. A further delay may be caused with the contractor again, due to them having dedicated workmen for our adaptations.

2.4 **Demographic Trends**

2.4.1 Whilst Social Services have experienced problems with their own recruitment of an OT, which has contributed to the delays in assessment, you will note from 1.1 that the demand has not reduced. If you add those currently on the waiting list to the number of referrals received this year, the demand has substantially increased.

The Audit Commission has estimated that there are between 640,000 and 750,000 wheelchair users in the UK of whom many are existing or potential tenants of Local Authorities.

This reflects the aging population. The latest census statistics show there are more pensioners than there are people under 16 years.

There are 8.5 million disabled people in Britain, 6 million in England of whom 4 million have mobility difficulties. 65% of disabled people are over 65 years of age.

The 2002 Tenant Satisfaction Survey involved 651 tenants who are considered to be representatives of the tenants within the district. Of those tenants:-

- 36% of households included one person aged 60 years or over
- 16% of households included two people aged 60 years or over
- 0.3% of households included three people aged 60 years or over.

In 2001/2002 referrals were received for the following adaptations:

Type	2002/2003
Level access showers	72
Over bath showers	9
Ramps	15
Rails/lever taps	147
Other	32
	Total Number: 275

2.4.2 Customer Satisfaction

Since June 2002 a Satisfaction Survey has been sent to all tenants where adaptations have been completed. % of tenants rated the overall service as good or very good. Appendix 'A' shows a full breakdown of the survey.

2.5 Current Challenges

2.5.1 Due to the increasing demand, the position of the budget is as follows:-

Original budget	£360,000
Current expenditure	£284,399
Plus commitments	£122,515
Expected expenditure to 31.03.02	£450,000
	Shortfall £90,000

2.5.2 Relocating Stair-lifts

Curved stair-lifts are unique to a property and, in the event the stair-lift is no longer required, usually after the death of the tenant, we are unable to relocate the stair-lift. On average a curved stair-lift costs £2,500.

Straight stair-lifts are easier to relocate, however, the cost including the renewal of the warranty exceeds the original cost.

We are potentially in a situation where it is cheaper to dispose of, sometimes, a stair-lift less than 12 months old, than to relocate it.

2.5.3 Adapted Properties

The majority of referrals are for level access showers, on average the cost is £2,500. 20% of the requests are for people who reside in general needs accommodation, particularly houses.

Whilst we have a policy not to insist people move to a more suitable property, problems occur when a family is offered a property that does not have a bath.

There have been few instances of a suitable applicant being available when an adapted property is ready for allocation. This has impacted on the desirability of the property, as a rule we do not remove adaptations with the exception of stair-lifts.

2.5.4 Maintenance Costs

With the increasing number of adaptations comes the cost of maintenance which impacts on the revenue budget.

Stair-lifts and hoists are serviced on an annual basis.

2.6 Options for the Future

2.6.1 Capital Programmes

There is concern that the OTs over specify on referrals. Whilst they are required to look at the long term needs of the client, there is concern more level access showers are requested when an over-bath shower would meet current needs.

If, as a matter of routine, over-bath showers were installed during bathroom refurbishments, it may reduce the more costly referrals. Members may decide to take this approach initially for sheltered schemes and elderly designated properties. The approximate costs for over-bath showers and all associated tiling and rails, etc. are as follows:-

- Thermostatically controlled showers £450.00
- Standard over-bath shower £180.00

If, at a later date, a level access shower was required, the over-bath shower would remain.

Discussions are already ongoing with Social Services to address the issue of over specification.

In addition to the above, during kitchen and bathroom refurbishments, the tenants should be given the option of replacing taps with lever taps. Lever taps could be fitted as standard at sheltered schemes and elderly designated properties. This approach is simple, low cost, but very effective.

2.6.2 Stock Management

It has always been our policy not to insist people move to 'more appropriate' accommodation, although this does impact on the budget and desirability of general needs accommodation after adaptation.

On 16th July, 2002 Members agreed to introduce assistance with removal expenses and connection/disconnection of cookers and washing machines. Since it was introduced we have had no suitable cases where the tenants were willing to move.

It may be necessary to review this approach if we wish to meet the increasing demand.

2.6.3 Multi-Agency Working

Historically we have worked with local RSLs to meet the needs of applicants and tenants with disabilities. The jointly funded OT is trying to improve the multi-agency approach by setting up a panel who will jointly assess individuals' needs.

Through the existing group we could explore the possibility of holding a joint store, particularly of stair-lifts which could be re-used rather than disposed of, as mentioned earlier.

2.6.4 Aids and Adaptations Budget

With the demographic trend showing an increasing ageing population, we can only assume the demand for aids and adaptations will follow the trend.

As a result of this, Members may need to debate the need to increase the budget to meet the growing need. This has to be considered within the context of the HRA Business Plan. There are a range of competing priorities within the Business Plan, particularly with regard to the Council's commitment to meeting the decent homes standard.

It is estimated that £500,000 is required to meet the anticipated demand for 2003/2004.

3. **POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK**

- 3.1 The demand for aids and adaptations has been met from existing capital resources.

4. **OUTCOME REQUIRED**

- 4.1 Members are asked to note the report and comment on the option for the future 2.6.

Amanda Harper
Tenancy Services Manager

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Community Scrutiny Committee

Areas in District Affected: All

Executive Portfolio Area and Holder: Councillor Alan Boad - Housing Services.

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AH/JB
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