

Options for the future of HEART

This section presents the work of Foundations the national body for Home Improvement Agencies, on delivery model options regarding the future delivery of the HEART service, and some of the ‘for’ and ‘against’ arguments for each:

1. Retain ‘as is’ – HEART host remains the same

This option would see the service and governance arrangements remain as they currently are. With a shared service improvement plan and support for the Board to agree a shared vision for the service as well as the ICT and reporting improvements this option could deliver the outcomes that partners wish for.

However if the service remains ‘as is’ without any form of structured service improvement plan and support for the Board then it is unlikely that the service will deliver the service improvements required and there is a significant possibility that the HEART partnership will not be able to continue in its current form.

If the service is to remain as is then it is strongly recommended that the actions listed within this report are taken forward as a priority to enable the service to be clearly defined and deliver for all partners.

2. Develop a segregated Partnership Model within HEART

This model would see WCC staff remain within the HEART service but their primary focus would be to deliver the requirements of the County Council under its Care Act obligations.

This model is unlikely to be effective and would potentially lead to a significant reduction in the delivery of DFG services across the County as staff who currently provide significant support to the delivery of that service are transferred to a different focus.

Whilst this model could be made to work it would require significant resource to develop a successful operating model and would require all partners to agree to the change. At the current time it is not anticipated that this model would provide an effective delivery model for the HEART service.

3. Move HEART service to a new Host authority

To transfer the HEART service ‘as is’ to a new Host authority without implementing the strategic and operational recommendations as outlined in this report is unlikely to achieve any significant service improvement or achieve the outcomes required by all partners. There is a

high risk that the transfer of host authority would become the primary focus of the partnership at the expense of the service improvements required.

None of the District/Borough partners stated a desire to host the service and the County stated that whilst they may have the capacity as the larger authority to host the service they did not feel that they were the correct host given that the DFG is a housing function, and this and other housing measures form the majority of the 'in reality' delivery outcomes for HEART clients.

Therefore, at the current time the proposal to simply transfer HEART to a new Host would appear to offer limited, if any, benefits.

4. Demobilise HEART

The final option available to partners is to demobilise the HEART Partnership. This option may be one that is considered if agreement cannot be reached regarding what the purpose of HEART is and how the service can fulfil the requirements of all partners.

To demobilise a service such as HEART is not a quick process and has significant implications at both a political, strategic, and operational level. The principle of the model that HEART operates - co-location, single service pathway, shared policy and 'one-stop shop' - is considered by Foundations as the model of Best Practice and the integration of housing and social care services to provide a seamless service is one which many Home Improvement Agency and DFG support services across the country aspire to.

If partners decide that the difficulties faced are too significant to be overcome in the time available then any service demobilisation should be accompanied by a comprehensive mobilisation plan for a new service model.

From an initial desktop analysis there would appear to be two alternative models of provision for Housing Support Services across the County, to create two separate HIA type services across the North and South of the County or for each authority to develop and deliver its own 'in house' service.

[Create 2 separate services – North and South](#)

This would see the HEART service split into two distinct services which could be developed along a similar model to HEART but on a smaller scale. Discussion would need to take place with the County regarding whether or not they would wish to second their staff into this type of service or whether they would return their staff back to a single centralised service.

Appendix 3 – Options Appraisal Future Delivery Model of HEART Service

Each authority creates its own individual service

This would require each authority to establish its own in-house HIA service and is likely to be significantly more expensive than being part of a wider service. Secondment of county-staff to individual authorities is not guaranteed, although this model has been adopted elsewhere in the Country. In Norfolk there are Independent Housing Assessment Teams located within each local authority's DFG delivery team, where Occupational Therapists are seconded into each individual authority, which has had mixed levels of success.