

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 18 December 2008
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Health & Community
SUBJECT: Independent Living Services
WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform the Executive Board about a range of issues surrounding the Independent Living Services.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

That the Executive Board:

- i) Approve the contingency plans outlined in the report;**
- ii) Approve the planned carry forward into the 2009/10 budget as described in 3.8.1 within the report.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Halton has high levels of disability and a population profile that is ageing relatively more than the UK as a whole. One of the key areas of work that is essential to support people remain living either in their own homes or a more suitable house, is the ability to make improvements or adaptations to their properties and this report describes the improvement in the amount of work being delivered by the Halton Home Improvement and Independent Living Service and the current expenditure.

3.2 The tenure of people also affects the sorts of service they can access. Registered Social Landlords have a considerable waiting list for adaptation work and the type of tenure should not determine whether people get the adaptations they need. The Council has provided additional funding to improve this. There are many factors that indicate the level and type of work required. Some of the changes we have made in the service over the last year as well as economic factors mean we need to respond differently. Some of these factors and solutions are explored below.

3.3 The Disabled Facilities Grants is a mandatory grant for adaptations to the homes of disabled people. For a number of reasons, which are discussed later in the report, it appears that demand for major adaptations in the private housing sector may be levelling out at the present time. However,

it is likely that this will create sufficient demand to fully spend the Disabled Facilities Grants allocation funded by the government together with some Council match funding. It is unlikely, however, that all of the growth funding provided this year will be used for Disabled Facilities Grants but some contingencies linked to the major adaptations process are identified in this report. This fact was reported to the Executive Board on 10 April 2008 and it was acknowledged that this funding would probably need to be phased over a two year period.

- 3.4 Investment in the provision of adaptations enables people to continue to live at home, reduces the level of personal care support required and avoids admission to residential care. In Halton there has been a significant reduction in admissions to residential care and an increase in the numbers of older people helped to live at home from 82 per thousand population in 2002/03 to 125 per thousand in 2006/07. National research has also demonstrated the value of the provision of adaptations in reducing risk of falls and consequent hospital admissions and in supporting prompt hospital discharge. Indeed Halton remains one of only two Council's in England not to have reported any delayed discharges since the guidelines were introduced.

3.5 **SERVICE TRANSFORMATION**

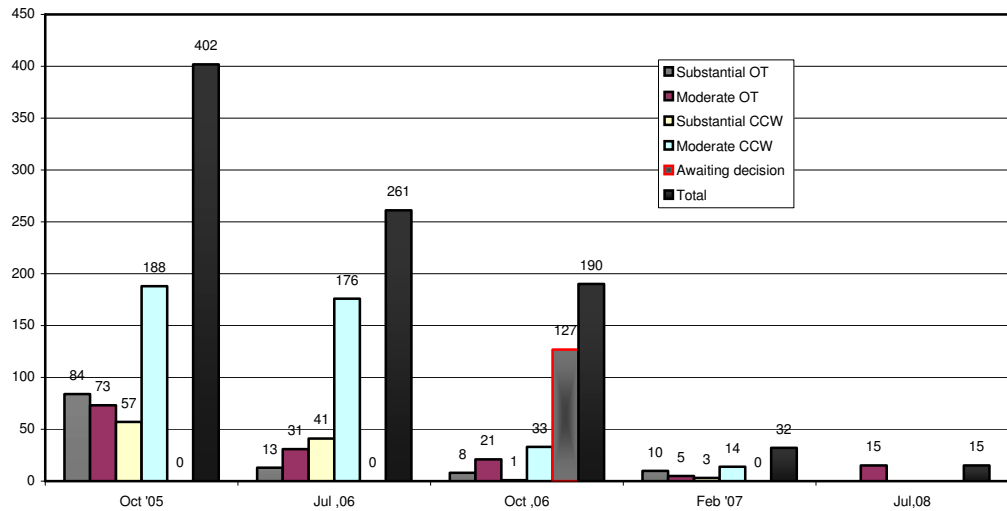
- 3.5.1 During 2007/08 extensive work was undertaken to transform the adaptations service from a complex service, characterised by delays and high levels of service user dissatisfaction, provided by staff in three parts of the Directorate to one integrated, efficient service, with single line management and based in one office. The Halton Home Improvement and Independent Living Service (HHILS) was therefore established in April 2008.

3.5.2 **Assessment Waiting Times**

The waiting list for assessments by Occupational Therapists (OT) and Community Care Workers (CCW) has been significantly reduced from 402 in 2005 to 15 in July 2008 as in Graph 1.

3.5.3 **Graph 1: Waiting list for occupational therapist and CCW assessment:**

OT & CCW Assessments



3.5.4 Design waiting times

In the last couple of years the Council's Home Improvement Agency (HIA) and Grants Team have managed the impact of the reduction in the OT and CCW assessment waiting times. This resulted in an increase in requests for Disabled Facilities Grants, including an increase in requests for smaller adaptations. The service had a six to eight month waiting list for design work in July 2007. The use of consultancy design workers funded by means of fee charges from the Council DFG allocation has now reduced the backlog of adaptation work and the Agency are currently able to respond to referrals without delay.

3.5.5 So far this year 15 service users have withdrawn their applications for Disabled Facilities Grants. Table 3 shows the reasons for withdrawal, most of which cannot be predicted and can result in a considerable reduction in expenditure against the Disabled Facilities Grants budget. The estimated cost of these withdrawn cases is £167,000.

Table 3: Adaptation applications withdrawn 2008/09

| No of service users | Reason for withdrawal of application |
|---------------------|--|
| 3 | Admitted to residential care |
| 3 | Do not want the adaptation that has been recommended |
| 4 | Moving to alternative accommodation |
| 4 | Deceased |
| 5 | Do not want to proceed with adaptations |

3.5.6 Accessible Homes Register

A register, to match people requiring an adapted property with vacant adapted properties, has been in operation since September 2007. So far six matches have been made estimated at £110k in new adaptation work, this has, therefore, avoided the requirement to be processed through our adaptations service. This process reduces the disruption to the disabled person, enabling them to move into an adapted property with minimal delay. Using the register does, however, reduce requests for Disabled Facilities Grants.

3.5.7 Partnership agreement with Registered Social Landlords

The partnership agreement with the Registered Social Landlords allocated £467k to them to completed housing adaptations on a 50:50 funding basis. This was agreed in June 2008. Unfortunately, some of the Registered Social Landlords were slow to sign up to the agreement. This has led to delay for some of the Registered Social Landlords in beginning to carry out work under the agreement, while others are well underway with this. Some of this funding will need to be vired into the 2009/10 budget.

3.6 CONTINGENCY PLANS

3.6.1 Major and minor work assistance

It is recommended that an additional £70,000 be transferred from the adaptations budget to continue to meet the demand for major and minor works assistance. The work undertaken using this assistance includes repair of badly leaking roofs and replacement of unsafe electrical installations and these are targeted at vulnerable people on low incomes. However the extent of the work likely to come in is difficult to predict as for example one case completed this year was for work in excess of £40,000 whilst others may be for as little as £1,000.

3.6.2 Semi-permanent ramps

Currently semi permanent ramps are provided as a short-term measure to facilitate hospital discharge. These are then eventually replaced with a concrete ramp if there is a long-term need for this type of provision. The appearance of the semi-permanent ramps is preferable to concrete ramps and some users have been unhappy when plans have been made to replace the semi-permanent ramps provided to meet urgent need. Components of these ramps can be recycled when no longer required, increasing efficiency savings and making properties more attractive to non-disabled people. It is recommended that the sum of £137,000 be allocated to fund semi-permanent ramps already provided through the community equipment service.

3.6.3 Stair Lifts

To speed up provision of stair lifts, meeting the need of some people and

enabling others to access the bedroom and bathroom while awaiting major adaptations, these lifts are now provided under a contract by Lifiable and have been removed from the Disabled Facilities Grants process. So far £72,000 has been spent out of a budget of £94,000 and 29 lifts provided. It is anticipated that assessed need will exceed the available budget. To continue to provide stair lifts in this way it is recommended that £50,000 is transferred to this budget.

3.6.4 Modular Buildings

Plans to install modular buildings in previous years have not been achieved due to difficulties convincing some Registered Social Landlords of the viability of these structures and the need to identify suitable service users and properties for the use of such solutions. There are currently two cases under consideration where the use of a modular building would be appropriate. In one case the adaptation is a bathroom and the other a bedroom. One of the modular buildings is for a Registered Social Landlord tenant and in that case plans are being drawn up and it is anticipated the building will be complete within the financial year. It is currently estimated that to complete these two projects will cost in the region of £80-85k. The budget for modular buildings was reduced to £40k this year. It is recommended that an additional £45,000 be secured for this purpose.

3.6.5 Design work

Currently additional design work for the Home Improvement Agency is funded through fees using a proportion of the adaptation budget. It is recommended that this arrangement continues at a cost of £10,000 for the remainder of 2008/09 until there is more clarity about the level of adaptation work required. This would enable us to purchase additional services, without the commitment to fund permanent staff.

3.6.6 Top ups

Currently if service users are eligible for DFG but are assessed as having a contribution to make, or where work is in excess of grant maximum DFG and they are unable to meet their contribution, an application is made to HHILS and the contribution may be met from the Minor Adaptations budget. Last year this was overspent by £167,000. Currently £23,000 has been spent on top ups and work is being processed where the estimated required top ups would amount to a further £32,000. Of course new applications could still be received within the financial year. It is recommended that £60,000 is transferred to meet this expenditure.

3.7 SUMMARY OF ALL CONTINGENCY PLANS

Table 4 summarises recommended possible contingencies to ensure the Disabled Facilities Grants budget and additional funding allocated by the Council is fully spent in 2008/09.

3.7.1 **Table 4: Summary of recommended contingencies**

| Type of work completed | Current Budget In £'000 | Recommended Additional funding from DFG /Adaptation Budget In £'000 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Major & Minor Work Assistance | 200 | 70 |
| Semi-permanent ramps | 0 | 137 |
| Stair lifts | 92 | 50 |
| Modular buildings | 40 | 45 |
| Additional Design Work | 0 | 10 |
| Tops Ups | 0 | 60 |
| Total Additions | | 372 |

3.8 **ANTICIPATED TOTAL EXPENDITURE 2008/09**

Table 5 shows anticipated expenditure from the adaptations budget based on the current work being processed by the service, the RSL partnership funding committed and the implementation of all of the contingency plans.

3.8.1 **Table 5: Anticipated Total Expenditure 2008/09**

(Figures are in £'000)

| Type of expenditure | Total anticipated expenditure |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Anticipated spend on DFGs | 650 |
| Partnership funding already allocated | 100 |
| Recommended contingencies | 372 |
| Total expenditure | 1.122 |
| Combined grants budget 2008/09 | 1.573 |
| Planned carry forward for 2009/10 Budget | 451 |

3.9 **FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN SERVICES**

3.9.1 **“Adapting for Independence” Conference**

This conference was held in Widnes, on 16 October 2008 and provided an opportunity to learn more about the modernised adaptation service, to hear about the legal aspects of provision of equipment and adaptations and the benefits to service users and professionals of these services. The conference was extremely well attended with representatives from all over the North West and feedback was very positive.

3.9.2 **Members seminar**

This seminar was held on 13 November 2008. It updated members on developments within the service and provided an opportunity to meet with officers, discuss particular case scenarios and obtain a clearer

understanding for members and officers of the complexities and constraints of the work of the service. It also provided an opportunity to consider the future aspirations of members for the service. This seminar will be repeated on 19 February 2009.

3.9.3 Therapy Review

A review of therapy services is currently being undertaken in partnership with Halton and St Helens PCT and it is anticipated that this will provide further opportunities for service improvement, for example, in relation to hospital discharge pathways.

3.9.4 Modernisation of Registered Social Landlord properties

In partnership with the RSLs a process has been developed to ensure service users awaiting assessment for adaptations are prioritised so that their needs are met appropriately when for example, bathrooms are refurbished as part of the RSLs ongoing modernisation programme.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Policies and procedures for the provision of adaptations are currently being updated and reviewed in response to the service changes introduced. Policies for the provision of semi permanent ramps and modular buildings will need to be incorporated in to these documents.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The recommendations in this report are part of comprehensive plans to modernise the adaptation service. They represent innovative and efficient ways of using resources and will ultimately improve provision for service users in Halton. Failure to implement at least some of these contingencies could result in budget under spend and lead to delays in service provision.

5.2 The recommendations in this report have been discussed with Finance who have raised no objections to the proposals.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Major and minor works assistance and energy efficiency grants are available to householders and children living in these properties would benefit from these services. DFGs are provided for disabled children. All of the contingency plans discussed in this report will be available to and have the potential to benefit disabled children, improving their independence at home.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

None identified.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Through improvements to independence and the standard of housing all of the services discussed in this report have the potential to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Halton.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Through provision of equipment and adaptations and improvements to home standards these services have the potential to improve safety and reduce the risk of falls and injury to carers.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

Through grants and loans these services provide the opportunity for home renovations, improving the quality of life for individuals and the standard of housing stock within Halton.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The major risk is the inability to fully spend the grant budgets, particularly the Disabled Facilities Grants budget. Some of the contingencies, for example, the Partnership Agreement with the Registered Social Landlords depend on match funding and the joint safer handling post depends on the commitment of the PCT.

7.2 Monthly meetings monitor expenditure against budget and the contingencies will be regularly discussed and reviewed.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The measures outlined in this report will improve the adaptation service available to all service user groups and across all tenures.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

| Document | Place of Inspection | Contact Officer |
|--|-------------------------------|--|
| Housing Capital Programme Executive Board Report 10/04/08 | Municipal Building, Widnes | Dwayne Johnson Strategic Director Health & Community |