

## NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

## REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	Subject: <b>Equipment and Adaptations</b>
FROM: Director of Social Work/ Director of Housing and Property Services	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 5 October 1999	
REPORT AUTHOR: Bobby Miller	
REF: JD/RM/JN	

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to advise Committee on the position in relation to assessment and provision of equipment for disabled people living in the community, and adaptations to their homes, between 01/04/99 and 30/06/99. It also reports on further work undertaken by the working party of Housing and Social Work staff who have been developing practice and policy and reviewing the Joint Adaptation Policy approved by Committee in May 1997 and implemented in November 1997.

- 1.2 This report has been prepared jointly with the Director of Housing and will be considered by the next Housing Committee.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 Demand continues to grow for the provision of equipment and adaptations to support people with physical disabilities in their own homes. Early hospital discharges, a growing elderly population and changing legal requirements regarding how Social Work and Health employees require to deal with moving and handling of service users, have all added to the considerable numbers who refer themselves or are referred by others, for assistance.

In addition North Lanarkshire has some of the highest levels of physical disability in the country.

- 2.2 Joint Housing and Social Work Policies and Procedures were developed to establish consistency across North Lanarkshire and deal with issues of prioritisation of help to those who most need it, in the context of limited resources and growing demand.
- 2.3 In relation to adaptations the Council's responsibilities are as follows:

## \* Housing

- Provision of adaptations in council houses.
- Operation of the scheme for Home Improvement Grants for adaptations carried out in the private sector.

## \* Social Work

- Assessment of disabled peoples needs.
- The provision of equipment for people living in public and private sector housing.
- The provision of minor adaptations in the public sector and some permanent adaptations in the private sector.
- Financial contributions to "top up" Home Improvement Grants for work to be done in disabled peoples homes.

## 3. Staffing

In common with the experience of most local authorities, recruitment and retention of qualified Occupational Therapy staff to work in North Lanarkshire is highly competitive amongst Local Authorities and between local authorities and the Health Service which offers better terms and conditions of employment.

The staffing establishment is:-

Head O.T.s	2
O.T.s (qualified)	16.5
O.T.s (unqualified)	16.5

In the first 3 months of the year there were on average 4 O.T. (qualified) vacancies across the Authority, and 1 Head O.T. post was vacant.

One of the reasons cited by O.T.s leaving the Authority for their move is that the range of work is too narrow and offers little scope for the deployment of their rehabilitation skills. Health settings offer better conditions of employment and greater job range and satisfaction. Recent changes in advertising arrangements have led to a good response and 3 of the qualified vacancies have now been filled.

## 4. Budget 1999/2000 and Expenditure during the period 01/04/99-30/06/99

Budget	Total 1999/2000 £	Committed £ (quarter to 30/6/99)	Balance at 30/06/99 £
Social Work	495,610	166,205	329,405
Housing	1,738,800	887,758	851,042
Housing Non HRA	162,000	50,800	111,200
Total	2,396,410	1,104,763	1,291,647

## 5. Performance

### 5.1 Referrals - 01/04/99-30/06/99

New referrals to the Social Work Department requiring assessment: 1,441

### 5.2 Work Completed - 01/04/99-30/06/99

Cases where equipment was provided by Social Work	1,810
Cases where adaptations were provided or topped up by Social Work	304
People assisted by Housing	429
People assisted by Housing (non HRA) (Home Improvement Grants)	70

**Total number of people assisted** **2,613**

### 5.3 Outstanding Work at 30/06/99

Demand continues to increase at around 15% per annum.

#### Demand for Service (Social Work)

Cases awaiting assessment	1,613
Assessed but awaiting funding	773
Cost of carrying out this work	£400,863

This cost is in excess of the balance of budget available to the Social Work to the Social Work Department and the situation will be further exacerbated when the needs of the 1,613 people awaiting assessment are costed.

#### Demand for Service (Housing)

Cases awaiting funding	210
Cost of carrying out this work	£425,826
Remaining balance for 99/00	£425,216

Clearly there are considerable problems regarding the waiting list for assessment by Occupational Therapy staff and from the figures noted above serious budgetary problems for carrying out work which has been assessed as required.

With regard to the assessment position, proposals are being considered to extend the numbers of staff available to undertake simple assessments for equipment, to include social workers and assistants during the course of a general Community Care Assessment, rather than having to wait for an Occupational Therapist or an Occupational Therapy Assistant to carry out a separate assessment. The implication for other aspects of work currently carried out by field social work staff within the

Department will require full consideration. Proposals will require to be discussed and agreed with the Trade Unions prior to implementation.

The employment of additional Occupational Therapists would improve waiting times for assessment. While a greater throughput of assessment could be achieved either by changing the role of existing staff or enhancing O.T. resources there is still a major budget problem in relation to the provision of equipment and adaptations since reductions in the number of people awaiting assessment would be matched by a corresponding increase in the number of people awaiting the provision of equipment.

Some pieces of equipment are relatively straightforward and can be provided at relatively low cost (eg. a raised toilet seat, "grab rails" in a bathroom etc). Provision of such items can make a difference to the quality of people's lives. There is however a large range of expensive options which frequently are the solution to people's difficulties. For example the installation of a stairlift in a house which requires a curved lift to be provided costs in excess of £5000 for installation; and maintenance costs then require to be met from recurring revenue budgets. The number of cases where people are helped covers a wide range of options from the fairly inexpensive to others which have major budgetary implications eg. a stairlift, an extension to a house, major internal alterations to a property.

Increase in O.T. numbers will not in itself resolve these complex problems. Neither Housing nor Social Work separately or jointly can meet all of the demand within existing resources.

## **6. Joint Housing/Social Work Developments**

Staff from the Housing and Social Work Department have continued to meet on a regular basis to review practice, procedural and training issues and work in this area will continue in line with previous proposals to upgrade and update the joint procedures as necessary, to ensure best practice and maximum value for money from the existing budgets.

### **6.1 Training**

Joint training has taken place involving operational staff from Area Housing and Social Work Offices participating in reviewing case practice and case studies in joint exercise. Training on the joint procedures has been extended to operational staff from the Housing Associations which operate in the North Lanarkshire Area and these associations have now to a major extent, adopted the procedures used between the Social Work and Housing Departments.

### **6.2 COSLA Joint Practice Guidance**

The development group monitors the operation of the Council's Policies and Procedures against the COSLA Good Practice Guide and to ensure compliance in North Lanarkshire. The Council's joint procedures for Housing and Social Work continue to be featured in the Community Care Good Practice Database.

### 6.3 Modular Extensions

The Council's commitment to use modular extensions as a preferred option to building extensions to Local Authority houses has led to six modular extensions being provided to Council tenants in North Lanarkshire and these have proved successful in best value terms.

### 6.4 Care and Repair Scheme

The pilot project funded jointly by the Council, the Health Board and Scottish Homes and run by the Clyde Valley Housing Association which began in the Motherwell area, has now been extended to serve the whole of North Lanarkshire Council area.

## 7. **Conclusion**

The issues highlighted in this report confirm the pattern of problems which has been identified in a number of previous reports. Moreover, it confirms the sense which members have of significant levels of frustration arising from unmet demand.

The increasing numbers of frail older people living in unsuitable accommodation and rising expectations in relation to independent living on the part of people with disabilities pose major challenges to the Local Authority.

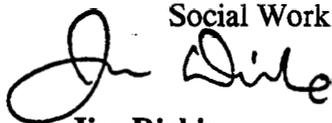
Resources in this sector within Social Work have remained virtually unchanged in the last 3 years, while demand has increased by 15% per annum. It is inevitable therefore that there have been increasing waiting lists for assessment and provision of equipment and adaptations. Housing have made available substantial additional resources to address budget shortfalls within their area of responsibility.

A full scale review of the Council's responsibilities and services across both Housing and Social Work is required in order to ensure best value and to secure a realistic level of support through provision of equipment and adaptations.

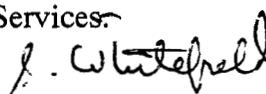
## 8. **Recommendation**

8.1 Committee is asked to note the terms of the report;

8.2 Directors of Social Work and Housing and Property Services to bring forward proposals for terms of reference and conduct of a joint review of equipment and adaptations for disabled people, for consideration and approval by the Conveners of Social Work and Housing and Property Services:



**Jim Dickie**  
**Director of Social Work**  
**16 September 1999**



**Gavin Whitefield**  
**Director of Housing and Property Services**  
**16 September 1999**