

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE	Subject: PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT & ADAPTATIONS : PROGRESS REPORT
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK	
Date: 15 JANUARY 2004	Ref: SKMCD/ST

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

1.1. To advise Committee of progress in implementing the Joint Equipment Service and to provide an up date of information relating to the provision of equipment and adaptations.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. A report to the Social Work and Housing Committees in October 1999 identified a number of issues relating to the assessment and provision of community equipment and adaptations. Committee approved a recommendation to establish a joint Member/Officer working group. The decisions of the group were agreed by Committee in November 2000 and have been the subject of regular progress reports to Committee since that time.

2.2. As reported by the Joint Future Group, the Scottish Executive requires agencies to jointly resource and manage equipment and adaptation services.

2.3. Audit Scotland has undertaken a baseline review of community equipment and adaptation services across Scotland which will examine how joint working is progressing at the local level, and how well such services are being managed. The draft report and action plan for North Lanarkshire was received in July 2003 and a response has been sent. This will be the subject of a separate and future Committee Report.

3. PROPOSALS/CONSIDERATIONS

3.1. Service Developments

3.1.1 The Joint Equipment Service (JES) has been operational since May 2002. The Joint Partnership Board meets every six weeks to monitor performance in relation to budgets and service provision, which is provided by the Joint Equipment Stores' stock control system (MESALS 2000). An updated version of the system is currently being installed

3.1.2 The measured term contract for major items of equipment has been in place since August 2002, and includes some equipment funded via Health. Meetings are held approximately every six weeks with the contractor to monitor contract performance. The evaluation at the end of the first year of the three year contract identified some delays in meeting timescales for repairs. The problem has since been resolved and the repairs service improved.

- 3.1.3 The S.A.I.L (Support and Advice for Independent Living) Service, which officially opened in March 2003, is now successfully established, and is consolidating the service that it provides.

3.2. Assessment

- 3.2.1 Further training on single shared assessment for older people is underway. This allows health colleagues to access equipment for non complex need. In this way delays and duplication of effort are avoided. In 2004, single shared assessment will be extended to other care groups to include adults with a learning disability, mental health difficulties and /or a physical disability.
- 3.2.2 Work is ongoing on the development of a self-assessment format to access simple equipment. This fits well with the recommendations of the recently published Scottish Executive strategy document, Equipped for Inclusion - Report of the Strategy Forum : Equipment and Adaptations. The strategy sets out a clear strategic direction for the development of Equipment and Adaptations Services in the future and was the subject of a separate report to Committee on 30 October 2003.

3.3. Equipment and Minor Adaptation Provision

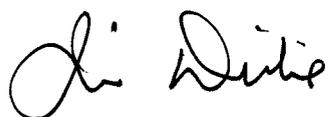
- 3.3.1 Performance information from the JES Stock System continues to indicate an increasing level of activity in relation to the provision of equipment:
- a) an average 2000 referrals per month since opening in May 2002.
 - b) approximately 2500 items of equipment are delivered per month.
- 3.3.2 The recycling of equipment continues to be addressed by the Joint Board for the Joint Equipment Store. An exercise in benchmarking the recycling activities of other local authorities was undertaken but no conclusive data could be gathered.
- 3.3.3 The current budget for Equipment and Minor Adaptations is just over £1.7 M (this includes £200,000 for Service and Maintenance via the Minivator Contract and £22,300 for Hearing Impairment Equipment.) As previously advised this budget is not sufficient to meet the level of assessed need. In recognition of this, on 28th August 2003 Committee agreed £700,000 to be vired from development budgets. In addition, £1 million has been made available to Social Work from the General Services Fund on a non-recurring basis. Of this, £600K will be available for equipment, and £400K will be made available to Housing to cover the costs of top up payments to Home Improvement Grants.
- 3.3.4 The current spend on equipment and minor adaptations to date is £2,064,761. Social Work area teams have recently been allocated shadow budgets to manage spend on specialised community equipment and minor adaptations. This will ensure that expenditure at a local level is closely monitored against the budget available. Spend on standard items of stock, which is often bulk purchased will be managed by the Joint Equipment Service. However based on the level of anticipated assessed need as well as the increased demand for services (approximately 15-20% per annum) the current budget including virement already agreed will require further investment.

3.4 Major Adaptations

- 3.4.1 The Best Value Review of Independent Living Services is due to report and a number of recommendations will be made in relation to major adaptations. This is the subject of a separate report to Committee.
- 3.4.2 The Home Improvement Grant scheme, which operates for people living in the private sector, is managed by the Grants Section in Housing and Property Services. Grant applicants can apply for additional funding for work which is not covered by the amount made available via the grant. These are commonly referred to as Top Up amounts. In June 2001, responsibility for the management of the Top Up budget transferred from Social Work to Housing and Property Services together with £50,000.
- 3.4.3 A revised policy of top up arrangements for private sector major adaptations was agreed by the Housing and Technical Services Committee on 4th September 2003. This is consequential upon a new grant scheme for all local authorities which came into force on 1st October 2003.
- 3.4.4 There are 210 applications for a home improvement grant currently being processed, and a further 100 applications waiting to be processed. The Grants Section have indicated that they will be able to meet the costs of all adaptations planned to take place during this financial year (both in terms of grant and top-up elements). This is due to the additional one off monies which have been made available via both Housing and Social Work budgets, previously reported to Committee. However, the applications which yet require to be processed will impact on the next financial year, and this will have significant implications for the 2004/05 budget.
- 3.4.5 Figures provided by Housing staff for the end of October 2003 indicate that the waiting list for adaptations in local authority housing is 708, with an estimated value of work of £1,999,063. Their budget this financial year is £1,895,000 (including £200,000 transferred from Social Work Department) of which £1,305,777 has been spent with £589,223 remaining. They are currently working to adaptations down to 20 points out of 35.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Committee is asked to note:
- (i) the contents of this report



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
20 November 2003

For further information on this report please contact Susan Taylor, Manager, Community Care (Adult Services) (TEL: 01698 332177).