

To: SOCIAL WORK (OPERATIONS AND SERVICES) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: BRAIN INJURY NEEDS IDENTIFICATION WORK BY DARE : FINAL REPORT
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 5 OCTOBER 2004	Ref: SKMCD/EMCS	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

To advise Committee of the final report by the Disability and Rehabilitation Education (DARE) Foundation on the review of acquired brain injury services undertaken as part of the Best Value Review of Independent Living Services.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Damage to the brain can occur through a variety of different injuries such as a blow to the head, lack of blood to the brain or through infection. As a result the difficulties people experience following an acquired brain injury are often wide ranging and complex, including:

- physical disability e.g. difficulty co-ordinating movement
- cognitive impairment e.g. difficulty with concentration and memory
- psycho-social problems e.g. mental health problems and problems with social interactions

2.2. Consequently, people are often unable to return to their lifestyle prior to their brain injury without a significant period of rehabilitation.

2.3. Services for people with acquired brain injury are currently delivered either via reception services, other area team staff or referred to the Brain Injury Project which currently offers a specialist rehabilitation input.

2.4. Approval was granted at Social Work (Operations and Services) Sub Committee on 25 April 2002 for the DARE Foundation, an independent organisation, to conduct a review of brain injury services. Funding of £36,510 was approved for this purpose.

2.5. A series of workshops was held over a 6-month period attended by 60 people with a 50:50 mix of service user/carers and service providers. There were a total of 4 project groups which focussed on different aspects of service provision.

3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Findings of the review

3.1.1. The Report highlighted a number of recurrent and significant issues:

- Lack of awareness, understanding and training in the specific needs of people with acquired brain injury (ABI).
- Lack of information about ABI at every stage of the person's journey post injury.
- An apparent failure or lack of communication and joint working between Health and Social Work Services in relation to continuing and appropriate service provision.
- Inefficient multiple assessments from a range of providers, which often failed to materialise in the required support.
- A concentration of services in one area of the authority, creating associated travel and access difficulties for many.
- Lack of resources in terms of staffing, leading to poor continuity of service provision.
- Lack of information, assistance and support with training, education and employment opportunities for people with ABI.
- Lack of appropriate advocacy services.
- Lack of respite facilities.
- Lack of choice and availability in terms of self-help and support groups.

3.1.2. Many of these issues highlight the particular difficulties facing people with acquired brain injury and their families. People can enter services via a multitude of different routes and the brain injury is either not necessarily identified as significant at the point of entry to these services, or may not be identified at all until some months later when the person is no longer in contact with services.

3.2 Recommendations of the review

3.2.1 The action-learning aspect of the workshop programme proved to be an effective way to work with people with ABI and considerable progress was made. However, it should be noted that at times the work presented challenges in working together on shared goals and the vision for how future support should be offered to people with ABI and their families.

3.2.2 There needs to be a greater collaboration between service providers and people with ABI and carers to improve awareness, expectations and equality of opportunity. There is also an urgent need for greater collaboration between Health and Social Work Services to ensure seamless transitions from hospital to community.

3.2.3 The findings of the review propose the following recommendations: -

- Mandatory Disability Equality training and ABI awareness for all providers across the authority.
- A cultural change across the authority needs to be embraced fostering positive attitudinal change. This should utilise the skills and strengths of existing staff who have a commitment to improving brain injury services.
- The creation of a Health/Social Work joint funded Brain Injury Co-ordinator post, supported by a designated team.
- The production and distribution of the "Lets work together" newsletter (one of the outcomes from the project working groups) and committed financial support for a quarterly update.

- The establishment of dedicated neurological services across the authority, directed by staff specialising in brain injury.
- Greater strategic collaboration between Health, Social Work, Housing, the voluntary sector, carers and service users to develop meaningful and sustainable strategies for inclusion and equality and to effect more person centred services.
- Establishment of clear partnership pathways and a multi-agency framework with responsibility for the transition of young people with ABI through school and into adulthood and adult services.
- A seamless process of access to information, available in different formats.
- A comprehensive directory of all services available across the authority.
- Development and implementation of an inter-agency database.
- Redevelopment of North Lanarkshire Councils website to make it more user friendly and accurate.
- Provision of expert support enabling access to a wider range of leisure and social activities within the community.
- Development of independent advocacy services.
- Establishment of a programme enabling people with ABI to retrain and find meaningful, sustainable and appropriate employment.
- Application of greater person centred planning approaches for people with ABI.
- Greater support to encourage the establishment of a range of self-support groups.

3.3. Outcomes

3.3.1. Since the report was produced a number of areas have been progressed:

- A Job Coach post has been approved to work with people with ABI based within the Departments' Supported Employment section.
- Work has taken place to improve access to the North Lanarkshire Council Website following a meeting with representatives from the DARE workshops..
- Early discussions have begun with Lanarkshire NHS around the options for working more closely in supporting people with ABI and their families.

4. FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The findings and priorities outlined in this report are consistent with the broader findings contained within the Best Value Review of Independent Living Services, which was the subject of a separate report to Committee (11th March 2004). They are also consistent with the direction of national and local policy in respect of community care services.

4.2 The findings and priorities require to be incorporated into the Best Value Implementation Plan for Independent Living Services. This will require further work in considering which proposals can be addressed via service improvements on a no cost basis, and which will require additional investment. These resource implications will be reported to Committee at a future date, in the context of progress in implementing the Best Value Review.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Committee is asked to :

- (i) note the contents of this report
- (ii) request the Director of Social Work to :
 - provide additional information to Committee about resource implications


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Director of Social Work
7 September 2004

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