

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – REVIEW OF HOUSING OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST POST**

**Summary of Purpose and Recommendations:**

This report reviews the success of the two-year pilot Housing Occupational Therapist Post (due to expire on 31 March 2005), and recommends making the initiative permanent. The post is currently funded jointly by Social Services and New Forest District Council (on a 50/50 basis), and is an example of the advantages of close partnership working to improve service provision to the disabled residents of the New Forest.

**Cost to Council:** £20,000

**Within existing budget?** Yes

**Contribution to Corporate Plan (Minor/Moderate/Major/Neutral):**

	+		-		+		-
	Minor			<b>Priorities</b>			
	Major			Clean Streets & Public Places		Neutral	
		Neutral		Crime & Disorder		Neutral	
	Major			Housing	Minor		
		Neutral		Managing our Finances		Neutral	

**Comments on Impacts on Corporate Objectives and Priorities:**

1. Fostering of partnership working to improve service provision
2. Promoting independence for disabled and older persons by assisting them to remain independent within their own homes



**REVIEW OF HOUSING OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY POST**

**1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to review the success of this two-year pilot scheme, and consider making the arrangement permanent. The post is currently funded jointly by New Forest District Council and Social Services (on a 50/50 basis), and the agreement expires on 31 March 2005.

**2.0 Background Information**

- 2.1 It has long been recognised that housing plays a vital role in community care, and this pilot is an example of the development of a closer link between the different agencies working to improve service provision to the disabled residents of the New Forest.
- 2.2 Occupational Therapists (OTs) working in the field of disabled adaptations in housing are normally employed by Hampshire County Council and based in Social Services offices. This pilot scheme was set up as part of a drive to improve multi disciplinary working and provide an integrated service regardless of tenure.
- 2.3 The key roles of this specialist post are threefold:
- 2.3.1 To offer advice and support for the more complex/difficult housing adaptations (in both the public and private sectors) funded by a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG),
- 2.3.2 To assist in the allocation of council properties to disabled applicants (matching needs to availability, and also advising on the suitability of void properties for adaptation), and
- 2.3.3 To assess necessary adaptation works which can be undertaken as part of the Refurbishment Programme for Council stock.

**3.0 Achievements**

- 3.1 Grant Aided Housing Adaptations
- 3.1.1 This specialist post concentrates on the more complex cases, large-scale adaptations or urgent referrals (e.g. where a swift response is needed to discharge a patient from hospital). As the post is based at Appletree Court, this allows closer liaison with both the Housing Improvements and Maintenance sections, and has resulted in a speedier more efficient service. Currently 32 clients are being assisted in this manner.
- 3.2 Allocation of Council Properties
- 3.2.1 The Housing OT attends the twice-monthly meetings of the Housing Medical and Social Panel to offer advice and information relating to an applicant's medical

situation and how this can affect their housing needs. This may involve a home visit to determine the urgency of a request or to assess the suitability of their existing/proposed accommodation, or discussion with a GP to clarify medical details. Forty-six clients have been assisted in this manner in the last 18 months together with a large number of assessments of void properties.

3.2.2 This process leads to more appropriate use of our housing stock by allocating adapted properties to people who have an identified need (and avoids the need to remove an adaptation and install standard facilities before re-letting). It also speeds up void times, reduces refurbishment costs, and negates the need for many future grant aided adaptations.

3.2.3 To further improve the service a feasibility study examining the benefits of operating a separate disability housing register is being considered.

### 3.3 Planned Maintenance Adaptations

3.3.1 As part of all refurbishment programmes for our stock, we are now able to offer upgrades specific to a disabled tenant's needs as part of the process (e.g. the provision of a walk in shower instead of a bath). Prior to the commencement, a tenant can request an assessment by the Housing OT, and where appropriate their recommendations can then be included by the contractor when submitting his estimate. This process reduces the costs in adapting properties for our disabled tenants and meets their needs in maintaining independence within the community. Seventy-three disabled tenants have been assisted in this manner.

## 4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are obvious benefits to all involved in continuing and developing this service on a permanent basis. The total estimated cost for operating the service for the coming financial year is £40,000. Social Services have confirmed that they have funding (£20,000) in place to support the post on a permanent basis, and funding (£20,000) is available in the Housing Revenue Account for 2005/2006 to supplement this.

## 5.0 Environmental Implications

5.1 Assisting disabled people remain independent in their own home reducing the need for community care or hospital support.

## 6.0 Crime and Disorder Implications

6.1 There are no direct implications.

## 7. Portfolio Holder Comments

7.1 The Portfolio Holder for housing has been consulted and says:

The Audit Commission Report 'Home Alone' highlights the importance of the role of housing in community care, and this is further re-inforced in the Government

Good Practice Guide of 2004 entitled 'Delivering Housing Adaptations For Disabled People'. This pilot post has greatly improved the service we are able to offer to our disabled residents in adapting their homes and helping them to remain independent within the community, and in doing so achieves many of our corporate objectives.'

## **8.0 Recommendations**

- 8.1 It is recommended that Cabinet agree to the provision of Housing Revenue Account funding of £20,000 for the establishment of a post of Housing Occupational Therapist.

## **Background Papers**

Audit Commission Report 'Home Alone'  
Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People – A Good Practice Guide

## **For further information**

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