

In-house Occupational Therapy Service

Proposal

- To appoint an in-house Occupational Therapist to undertake assessments for our Council tenants.

To have in place arrangements for specialist support from an independent OT service to provide supervision and on-going professional development.

Scope

- To visit residents in their homes and carry out a needs assessment including longer term options – exploring alternatives to adaptations
- To assess and specify adaptations required
- To make best use of existing adapted property – matching people to adapted properties
- To free up existing adapted properties where the adaptations are no longer required.
- Providing expertise for new developments

Introduction

When people make contact about an adaptation they are generally doing it when the situation has reached crisis point and all too often the reaction of this situation is to seek immediate solutions rather than looking at the person and the longer term solutions. When faced with a solution to their problem people are reluctant to consider other options such as moving to more suitable alternative accommodation.

. Under the current service, the Council relies on the Occupational Therapy (OT) Service through the NHS to carry out assessments. Referrals are often at the point of crisis for the tenant which can then be followed by a wait of 18 weeks for an assessment to be carried out. At crisis point this is a significant time to wait but is outside of the control of the Council.

By employing an internal Occupational Therapist the time tenants have to wait for an assessment will be significantly reduced, as well as ensuring that the Council is making best use of its stock.

Critical to the service is ensuring that it complies with the Equalities Act 2011.

The In-House OT Service

Adapting a resident's home may not be the best solution and moving to more suitable accommodation may be more appropriate in the immediate and longer term.

Often people are reluctant to move however facilitating a move may be better in the long term and save money on adaptations which would incur further expenditure to remove. In addition the adaptation may assist the resident but not provide the best outcome.

To ensure that the Councils' tenants achieve the best outcome, their situation will be holistically assessed to consider their housing needs, medical needs in the short and long term, their support networks and the availability of alternative solutions. The

assessment will include engagement with other agencies and support networks including the family, if appropriate.

Best practice does indicate that people are less likely to consider moving if their needs can be met by not moving. Sometimes this is possible but often it is a partial fix offering no long term solution.

To encourage people to consider moving the in-house OT will assess housing needs initially. The service will offer full support to move to suitable alternative accommodation or at least best fit if no existing property exists that is specifically adapted. One to one support is critical to the success of helping often older people to move from larger family sized accommodation they have lived in for many years.

In employing a medical professional it is recognised that they will need additional support that the Council does not supply in-house. In order to ensure adequate supervision and regular updates with current practice as well as keeping up to date with Cambridgeshire Community Services OT practices, it is proposed that the Council contracts with an independent Occupational Therapist to provide support to the in-house OT. Cambridge City Council contract their services for similar work although they do not employ their own OT.

Existing stock

It is vital that existing stock that is becoming vacant is identified as being suitable for disabled people with a list of adaptations.

Often the adaptations are removed without considering looking for residents who could make best use of the adaptations in the property. The OT will monitor all forthcoming vacancies to best match people to property.

Direct lets will be considered for residents who will transfer to suitable accommodation within Council stock. Arrangements with other housing providers in the district will also be sought.

New Developments

The OT service will provide advice on the type of disabled accommodation that residents need and want and where. The location is very important as all too often a suitable property comes vacant away from existing support networks.

The OT will be able to work with developers and the new residents to ensure that the specification meets their needs as well as allowing as much choice as possible in finishings.

Carrying out an Assessment

Should the resident not wish to move or not be able to move for medical and social reasons, the OT will undertake an assessment on the existing property.

All assessments will be carried out with full consultation with health and social care agencies involved with the resident. If there is no one involved referrals will be made to engage for medical and support needs with the resident's agreement.

Sign posting to support agencies will form an integral part of the assessment. For example the resident may not be claiming all the benefits they are entitled to or could benefit from a Lifeline + assessment.

All assessments must be carried out with due regards to the requirements of HHSRS assessments. Any category 1 failings must be addressed.

Where the property cannot physically be adapted to the resident's requirements, for example the tenant may need a level access shower but the bathroom is upstairs and the stairway cannot accommodate a stair lift, this information will need to be communicated to the resident.

Assessments for Home-link

Applicants for housing who advise of a medical situation or a disability which is aggravated by their housing conditions require to be assessed. The OT will form a part of their assessment to provide a local on the ground perspective. This will provide consistency but also enable the OT to advise of the housing needs of disabled people and feed into the strategic development of adapted accommodation in the district.

Funding the Service

The service can assist to reduce adaptations by moving people to accommodation better suited to their needs or that which is already adapted. Therefore the cost of assisting people to move could be significantly less than installing expensive adaptations and the subsequent removal and making good.

The service can also provide a service that ensures a holistic approach so that tenants do not need to move so often, therefore void costs are reduced.

Small adaptations are fitted without an assessment however they could well act as alarms for the need for an early needs assessment which could result in the need for minor adaptations being avoided.

Without an assessment even minor adaptations could be mistakenly put in the wrong place placing the resident at higher risk of injury through falls for example. This could place the Council at risk of being sued.

Options to sell the service to other providers will also be sought

Added Value

The employment of an OT will place the needs of disabled people at the centre of the service.

The service will have the potential to be pro-active to reach residents before crisis point and help to take a strategic view on future requirements

The service whilst offering much more than an OT service will ensure that residents do not wait up to 18 weeks for an assessment