

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 20
SEPTEMBER 2016

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT INDEPENDENT LIVING ARISING
FROM THE PROPOSED HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report:

- This report provides an update on the ongoing project to develop a Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency, HIA, to help elderly and vulnerable persons to remain living independently at home, sets out the changes to government funding for Disabled Facilities Grants, and explores opportunities for innovative services in the light of the HIA proposal and funding changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY:

That

(A)	The proposal that East Herts Council becomes a partner in the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency be supported;
(B)	Members consider opportunities to enhance service provision by virtue of the HIA proposal and funding changes; and
(C)	Members suggest innovative ideas for consideration by the HIA steering group.

1.0 Background

1.1 At the request of this Committee, it considered an update on the Disabled Facilities Grant programme at its meeting on 16th February 2016. That report set out the legislative and funding frameworks for mandatory and discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), and referred to the ongoing county wide review of adaptation services.

1.2 The review led to a proposal to develop a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) delivery model in Hertfordshire. This committee in

February supported this approach in principle, and a future report was included in the committee's work programme.

- 1.3 Officers continue to participate in the project steering group for the Hertfordshire HIA, and this council's Chief Executive is the project sponsor. A business case and proposed model have been developed. Both were reported to this council's Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee on 30 August 2016, and Executive on 6 September 2016. The Executive has confirmed East Herts Council's commitment to participate in a shared service. This then enables detailed implementation plans to be devised with partners with a view to the service 'going live' in 2017/18.

2.0 Exploring potential developments to assistance policy and independent living services.

- 2.1 There has been a recent increase in government funding for DFGs. For East Herts, in 2016/17 the Better Care Fund allocation for DFGs is £530,136, an uplift of £237,009 between 2015/16 and 2016/17. This now exceeds anticipated expenditure under the current referral rates, which fall below the previous trend.
- 2.2 The increase in funding together with the proposed new way of working provides opportunities for enhancing current service provision. This committee is therefore invited to contribute to the thinking underway on service development by suggesting ideas for innovation for the project team to consider.
- 2.3 To assist this process, Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Members have received a link to a new integration briefing document published by Care and Repair England, titled 'Innovation in home adaptations – a fresh chance'. The link is provided in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** to this report. It considers how the substantial increase in funding for home adaptations offers opportunities to improve integration and meet new performance targets, including reducing delayed transfers of care. The briefing, supported by Public Health England, explains the connections between Disabled Facilities Grant finance and this year's new Better Care Fund Policy Framework.
- 2.4 A link to a more detailed report by Foundations entitled 'The Disabled Facilities Grant – before and after the introduction of the Better Care Fund' published in June 2016 is also provided as an essential reference paper. This would seem to support the proposed direction of travel, and considers new service models and flexible use of the DFG.

- 2.5 For example, members may wish to draw on their local knowledge to suggest gaps in existing service, and to consider in what circumstances fast-tracked, non-means-tested adaptations might be appropriate, subject to amending local housing assistance policies.
- 2.6 One example of this could be to evaluate a pilot for a new rapid non-means-tested adaptations service for safety or access works such as stairlifts and ramps costing less than £5,000 to assist hospital discharge or for those at risk of admission to hospital or care.
- 2.7 Officers will take any ideas raised by the Committee to the HIA project's service delivery subgroup for further consideration.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Human Resources

- 3.2 There are staffing implications which are being considered as part of the project and through the Corporate Business Scrutiny and Executive reports.

Finance

- 3.3 The Council's Finance team has worked closely with colleagues in the other participating districts and the County Council to pull together and scrutinise the financial case for the shared HIA. The financial implications of the proposed HIA model are considered in the business case, provided as **Essential Reference Paper 'C'** to the above reports.
- 3.4 The financial implications of any fast tracking or non-means-tested assistance would need to be evaluated. Greater local flexibility in use of DFG funding would require changes to the council's published housing assistance policy and agreement with agency partners, but could ensure local allocation of DFG funding through the Better Care Fund is retained.

Background Papers

None.

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