

## Improving the Disability Equipment and Mobility Service

*'You have restored my faith in the Social Care System – great service, thank you'-  
Teignbridge service user quote.*

### Background

Equipment and Adaptations services have traditionally been delivered to older and disabled people and their Carers as an integral part of our care management service. A wide range of products are available through the Community Equipment Service (CES) but these products are only available to those people who are eligible under Fair Access to Care services (FACS).

Increasingly older and disabled people wish to have more control over the services they need and more choice in the solutions available to them. They are more likely to access independent sources of support but value objective advice to assist their decision making.

In 2007 an Equipment & Minor Adaptations Options Appraisal exercise was undertaken for Adult & Community Services looking at the different options to speed up the provision of equipment and to reduce lengthy Occupational Therapy (OT) waiting lists.

This recommended the pilot implementation of the Trusted Assessor (TA) model. This was intended to meet people's needs for mobility aids and equipment more quickly and more appropriately. It would also free up OTs to focus their skills and expertise to support people with complex needs to help them maintain their independence and dignity.

This change of emphasis has the support of the OT's Professional Body – The College of Occupational Therapists, who have endorsed and promoted the use of non-OT staff to assess for and provide Minor Equipment & Adaptations.

### The Pilots

Pilot schemes took place to test out three differing models during a three month period from December last year.

- North Devon (Bideford and Torrington) – Devon Care and Repair
- Exeter and East Devon – Living Options
- Teignbridge – Pluss

A project steering group led by Jan Ingram (Assistant Director Health and Social Care) and with membership drawn from across the Directorate and with Trade Union participation, oversaw the work.

The detailed evaluation report available was submitted to the Adult & Community Services Strategic Management Group on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Based on the success of the pilots SMG confirmed the adoption of the model and agreed to its implementation across the County. Further learning has been being gathered during March and April which will also help to inform the contracts to be drawn up and put out to tender later this year.

The Trusted Assessor service focuses on 'simple' activities of daily living, at a high level these functions are:

- Bathing
- Cooking
- Toileting
- Simple transfers to include bed, chair and toilets
- Simple mobility problems
- Access including steps, stairs and thresholds

It will also be responsible for the review of clients who have received equipment, including the recycling of equipment where appropriate.

**The aims are:**

- To simplify and speed up the way equipment and adaptations services can be accessed throughout Devon and to promote greater consumer choice, protection and awareness.
- Eradicate waiting lists for ACS assessment and provision related to needs for equipment and minor adaptations.
- Increase uptake of Direct Payments for equipment and minor adaptations
- Increase the choices available to people at all points in the supply chain.
- Increase the body of people within statutory, voluntary and other organisations who can act as “Trusted Assessors”.
- Implement where possible in the timescales of the project recommendations within “Minor Adaptations without Delay”.
- Deliver efficiency gains through the increased use of “assess and fit” services.
- Promote self awareness activities which help people take greater responsibility for preventative measures which will increase their health, well being and independence.

At present within ACS people requesting Equipment and Minor Adaptations (E&MA) can be on waiting lists for an assessment by an Occupational Therapist or where utilised a Community Care Worker for up to 16 weeks, making the diverse models across the county in some places frustrating service users.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> August 2007 a snap shot of the ACS waiting lists of all localities on Care First 6 was undertaken, North Devon waiting lists were not available for interrogation. Once collated it showed that there were 444 people on the waiting list of which 84% were relating to equipment, adaptations, moving and handling and bathing:

Clients on waiting list		
	Number	% OT related tasks
Exeter	166	86%
Exmouth	46	93%
Honiton	36	89%
Teignbridge	101	88%
South Hams	94	68%
West Devon	1	100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>84%</b>

The following chart shows the percentage of Assessments undertaken where the initial assessment visit was completed within 5 days from being received by the Trusted Assessor Organisation

	Number	% of total
Completed in 5 days	355	87%
Completed in 10 days	390	95%
Completed in 15 days	403	98%
Completed in 20 days	410	100%

DCC has a statutory obligation to start to assess clients within 2 working days of a referral. The assessment must be completed within 28 days of the start of the assessment and services must be provided in accordance with the care plan within a further 28 days, **an end to end target of 8 weeks and 2 days.**

TAs completed 100% of all Assessments and provided equipment in accordance with the care plan **within 20 days, 4 weeks.**

The pilots are now in a position to start taking Bathing Disabled Facilities Grant assessments and an assumption by the project team is that this will equate to approximately 29 additional assessments a month across the 3 pilot sites.

## The Evaluation

The pilot evaluation was completed by the project team and steering group consisting of Operational staff and managers, project staff and with TU representation

They looked at the benefits to end users and to the department and concluded that the pilot demonstrates a clear improvement in service delivery:

- **A more responsive and flexible service for clients**
- **A fast service has major preventative value**
- **Efficiency savings**

The evaluation included:

- Training
- Systems and Processes
- Interface with ACS teams
- Logistics
- What has gone well
- What has not gone not so well
- What should be done differently

## The findings

1. **Speeds the process at all points of the supply chain and provides ease of access to equipment services for all eligible service users** - Overall 86% of services completed within 5 days
2. **Delivers the statutory responsibilities of ACS.** - The Trusted Assessor service was delivered to those who are within the Critical and Substantial FACS bands.
3. **Promotes well being and independent living.** - The service was provided during a face to face home visit and universally welcomed by service users, refer to individual pilot feedback.
4. **Delivers a consistent outcome across service users/carers** - Although each pilot has been configured slightly differently, the outcome for the speedier supply of equipment services has been clearly demonstrated. However where Minor Adaptations have been commissioned separately from the Trusted Assessor service itself there is an inevitable time lag.
5. **Ensures maximum choice at all points of the \*supply chain.** – Care Direct Plus carried out the initial screening and FACS eligibility to determine the preferred route for the customer. Service users were subsequently offered Direct Payments by the Trusted Assessor if this was their preference.

6. **Has a clear evidence base** - Pilot establishment was based on a number of research sources. These were identified at the options appraisal stage and are referred to in more detail in other project documentation.

7. **Provides consumer advice, self determination and protection.**

The following management information evidences the improvements delivered by each pilot.

	North Devon	Exeter and East Devon	Teignbridge
Number of Assessments	92	179	139
% Completed within 5 days	66%	97%	88%
Returns before Assessment	12%	7%	6%
Returns post-Assessment for further work	23%	20%	26%
Revisits	13%	15%	0%

**KEY:**

Number of Assessments	Total number of Assessments.
% Completed within 5 days	Of Assessments undertaken the percentage where the initial assessment visit was completed within 5 days.
Returns before Assessment	Number of referrals returned to ART/Helpdesk by the TA Organisation before an assessment was carried out.
Returns post assessment for further work	Number of referrals returned by the TA Organisation after they carried out an assessment, where further work was identified for another other team.
Revisits	Number of times that a re-visit was required when the equipment (and/or minor adaptation*) identified as required in the assessment could not be provided or work completed within one visit.

**Benefits**

The major benefits of the pilots have been:

**Speed and timeliness**

- Trusted Assessor has increased the speed of supply at the assessment and provision stages

**Better client experience**

- Reduction in number of visits required for a simple service

**Efficiency savings**

- Cheaper than the existing model
- Payment by results has focussed provider attention on meeting ACS response times

**Reduced bureaucracy**

- Improvement to processes and systems
- Simplified case recording with development of a non-FACE Prescription Form
- Introduced a mechanism for Clients to self check and self review their own equipment and minor adaptation needs after the initial supply.

**Reduce Devon's carbon footprint**

- Reduced the number of separate visits required to the client to deliver simple services within one or two visits. This will have a major impact on travel costs in a county where a large number of service users live rurally.

### **Prevention of falls and accidents**

- Cost benefits will accrue to ACS and Devon PCT where speedier supply will have reduced the likelihood of a fall or other deterioration in health.

### **Aligns to the strategic direction of the Directorate**

- Adopting the Trusted Assessor model would support the Directorate strategic decision to become a commissioning organisation.

### **Customer feedback**

Increasingly, older and disabled people wish to have more control over the services they need and more choice in the solutions available to them. They are more likely to access independent sources of support but value objective advice to assist their decision making.

Comments from service users include:

#### **About the speed of Supply**

*'Just to let you know what great service we have received from Bideford Care & Repair... telephone call from Social Services on the 11th March wanting more info. Aids arrived and fitted 13th March.... Long may it continue.'*

*'I am impressed with the quick service you provide'*

*'It's a pleasure not to have to wait for the equipment to be delivered at a later date after the visit. I can use it straight away, thank you'*

#### **About the Trusted Assessor Staff**

*'...the gentleman that visited was the perfect man for the job.'*

*'...he did a great job in the house and they cannot stop praising him. They hoped that all our staff were are nice and good at their jobs...'*

*'We thought the Trusted Assessor we a very helpful lady'*

*'She was very helpful and I felt at ease'*

*'The lady was came around to do my assessment was excellent. She talked to me as a human being....'*

*'He is a credit to your organisation'*

#### **About the Outcome**

*'When I advised her that I would leave the perching stool for her, she was very surprised but also very pleased. She thought we would have to order the stool, and was glad to know she could start using it straight away.'*

*'Our Handyperson then completed the paperwork I had started on my visit. The client was so pleased with the service I had provided, and the difference the rails made to her, that she rang up our Office to thank us personally.'*

*'I am now confident in the bath with a bath seat and (my) bedrail helps me to stand properly and I can turn in bed.'*

*'I really feel more positive that I can stay in my own home'*

*'I'm really pleased with what you've provided for me, it's a lot more than just some equipment, you've given me some quality of life back.'*