

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 14 FEBRUARY 2005
REPORT ON: BEST VALUE REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICE
REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
REPORT NO: 12-2005

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval for a Best Value Review of the Occupational Therapy Service.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- i) a member/officer review of the Council's Occupational Therapy Service be added to the list of best value reviews previously approved by the Policy and Resources Committee
- ii) an overview group be chaired by the Chief Executive; that member representation on the overview group consist of three members from the Administration, two from the SNP Group and one from the Conservative Group; and that representatives from the trade unions, NHS and the voluntary sector are also invited to take part in the group
- iii) a working group of lead officers and representatives, chaired by a Corporate Officer, be established to undertake detailed work on behalf of the overview group and, in particular, to visit other local authorities to establish best practice for joined-up working and delivery of occupational therapy services
- iv) the scope, objectives, membership and consultation processes of the review be as detailed in Section 6 and Appendices 1 and 2 of this report, and the review be scheduled for completion by December 2005

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, funding of the service will be one of the key issues for the review group to consider.

4 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Through consultation with stakeholders during the review process, this report will have an impact on the theme that all sections of the community are empowered to participate in decision-making.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

The review will focus particularly on the needs of people with disabilities.

6 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 The Occupational Therapy Service assists people in continuing to live in their homes by looking at how they manage tasks and what can be done to adapt their environment to assist with this. The service deals with over 4,000 referrals each year and is provided by a team of a manager, 8 OTs, 5 OT assistants, a storeman, a driver/handyman and clerical support. The service has links with other services in Social Work, Housing, Building Control, Architectural Services and Planning and Transportation, and with a range of Health Service contacts including hospital OTs and the District Nursing service. It is mainly District Nurses who operate the community equipment loan service although other health professionals are involved. This complements the service provided by the Council's Occupational Therapy Service.

6.2 Elected members can be involved in referring constituents, enquiring about progress and querying decisions. While the vast majority of users express satisfaction with the service, the issues which most give rise to queries from members include parking, provision of showers and ramping/storage for wheelchair users. It is recommended that the best way to address these and other issues affecting the service would be through a Member/Officer Best Value Review, tasked to consider any changes required to the service.

6.3 The service has already been the subject of a number of reviews:

- in 1998, an Action Plan was agreed following an internal review
- in 1999, the service was involved in the Housing Department's Best Value Review of Housing and Related Services for People with Physical Disabilities. Action to address discrepancies in policy and priorities between the Housing and Social Work Departments was subsequently agreed by both Committees in 2001 (Report No 210-2001)
- in 2002, a Best Value Review of the Occupational Therapy Service was approved, including proposals for reduction in waiting times, establishment of an occupational therapy forum, improvement in public information, greater working with Health and other Community Care services and more robust stock control (Report No 172-2002)
- in January 2005, Social Work Committee approved a report detailing a business case for the establishment of a Joint Equipment Service with NHS Tayside (Report No 53-2005)

These reviews have all led to improvements in the operation of the service. However, some key issues remain to be addressed and it is suggested that these be the focus of the proposed member/officer review.

6.4 In particular, it is suggested that the review should consider:

- a) The structure of the service, including the implications of greater joint working and joint resourcing with the NHS, with the aim of creating a more integrated service. It should be recognised, however, that this is a complex area. There is no single management structure for OTs within the health service, and the Council's occupational therapists also link with a range of other departments and organisations.
- b) Reviewing the agreed criteria for assistance which forms the basis of professional guidance to staff, including policies on provision of showers to replace baths, provision of disabled parking signs and boxes and provision of wheelchair ramps, all taking account of the resource implications for the Council and other housing providers. The criteria for provision of equipment and adaptations were last considered by Committee as a whole in 1997 and the range of current policies are set out in Report No 893-1997, subject to the detailed recommendations agreed in Report No 210-2001 as mentioned above.
- c) Whether some of the lower level assessments or administrative work currently done by occupational therapists could be done by other departments, freeing up time for work requiring qualified staff. This might include, for example, Housing staff assessing requests for raised sockets, lever taps and grab rails, and Planning and Transportation staff dealing with requests for disabled parking signs and boxes. The review could also explore whether the assessment for wheelchair ramps could be transferred to the NHS wheelchair service, although this would require greater budgetary provision to be made.
- d) Addressing issues of recruitment and retention of qualified occupational therapists, including the issue of grades relative to NHS staff and the career structure within the service. Conditions of service and career pathways are considered more attractive in the health service, with higher salaries for equivalent responsibility and experience. This makes it difficult for the Council to recruit and retain staff, and this disparity is likely to widen as a result of the NHS 'Agenda for Change'.

- e) Any scope to increase the budget for equipment, which would allow a wider range of equipment to be provided to increase clients' choice and satisfaction. National reports have suggested that the service as a whole is under-funded, and the best value review referred to above showed that Dundee City Council's expenditure was toward the lower end of the range of spending by local authorities.
- 6.5 It is recommended that the Chief Executive should chair an overview group and that member involvement in this group should be on the basis of the previously agreed formula for best value reviews ie three members from the Administration Group, two from the SNP Group and one from the Conservative Group. Officers taking part would include the Chief Executive and Directors of Housing and Social Work and it is also proposed to invite representatives from voluntary groups, trade unions and the NHS. The proposed remit and membership of the group is set out in Appendix 1.
- 6.6 It is also recommended that a working group of lead officers, along with NHS, trade union and voluntary sector representatives, be established to undertake detailed work on behalf of the review group and, in particular, to visit other local authorities to establish best practice for joined-up working and delivery of occupational therapy services. The proposed remit and membership of the group is set out in Appendix 2.
- 6.7 As with all best value reviews, consultation with stakeholders will be a key part of the review process. It is proposed that the working group be remitted to consider a programme of surveys/meetings with service users, and discussions with representative bodies such as the Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations and relevant voluntary organisations.
- 6.8 This is an appropriate time to review the Occupational Therapy service. In response to the report 'Equipped for Inclusion' which was produced by the Strategy Forum on Equipment and Adaptations and supported by the Audit Scotland report 'Adapting to the Future', the Scottish Executive has recently announced its intention to establish an Implementation Strategy Group to take forward the recommendations in the report. The Executive has also encouraged providers to improve the delivery of equipment and adaptation services to ensure that peoples' needs are met both efficiently and effectively. This review provides an opportunity to consider in a local context the need for an integrated, co-ordinated and consultative approach being recommended at a national level to address the shortcomings in existing arrangements.

7 CONSULTATIONS

The Depute Chief Executives, Assistant Chief Executives and the Directors of Social Work, Housing and Planning and Transportation have been consulted on this report.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report No 893-1997 - Occupational Therapy Service - Criteria for Provision Equipment/Adaptations in the Homes of People with Disabilities

Report No 210-2001 - Best Value Review of Housing and Related Services for People with Physical Disabilities - Continuous Improvement Proposals

Report No 172 -2002 - Best Value Review of the Social Work Department Occupational Therapy Service

Report No 53-2005 - Dundee Joint Equipment Service

Alex Stephen
Chief Executive

8 February, 2005

REVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

OVERVIEW GROUP

Remit

- To identify key issues for exploration by the working group
- To receive reports and monitor progress
- To recommend any proposals which emerge from the review to the Best Value Review Sub-Committee and other Committees as appropriate

Membership

Chief Executive (Chair)
Councillors (6)
Director of Social Work
Director of Housing
Director of Planning and Transportation
Senior Health Officer
Chair of Working Group
Trade Unions (2)
Voluntary Sector - Celebrate Age Network and McKinnon Centre Disability Issues Group

Frequency of Meetings

3-4 meetings at key stages during the review, between March and December 2005

REVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

WORKING GROUP

Remit

- To investigate in detail the issues set out in para 6.2 of this report, in particular:
 - ways of creating a more integrated, customer-focused service
 - criteria and policies on provision of the service
 - scope for some assessment work to be done by staff other than qualified occupational therapists
 - recruitment and retention of staff
 - budgets for equipment
- To research best practice, including visits to other authorities
- To report and make recommendations to the overview group

Membership

Neighbourhood Services Co-ordinator (Chair)
Project Manager
Social Work Lead Officer
Housing Lead Officer
Planning and Transportation Lead Officer
Health Lead Officer
Personnel Officer
Trade Unions (2)
Voluntary Sector – Celebrate Age Network and McKinnon Centre Disability Issues Group

Frequency of Meetings

Fortnightly/Monthly