

Argyll & Bute Council – 2002/03

Performance Audit Report Management of Community Equipment and Adaptations

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1. Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 We conduct our audit in accordance with Audit Scotland's Code of Practice. The Code makes clear that it is the responsibility of management to ensure that internal control systems are appropriate.
- 1.2 As part of our 2002/2003 performance audit activity we have undertaken a review of the management of community equipment and adaptation services within the Housing and Social Work Departments of Argyll & Bute Council.
- 1.3 This report summarises the findings from our audit work and, where appropriate, makes recommendations to strengthen existing controls or otherwise address any identified weaknesses. It also identifies specific areas of good practice in relation to community equipment and adaptations services and, more specifically, joint working in this area. It should be noted that the weaknesses recorded are only those which came to our attention during the course of our audit work and are not necessarily, therefore, all of the weaknesses that may exist.
- 1.4 The review of the management of community equipment and adaptations was developed by Audit Scotland centrally and undertaken in local authority social work and housing departments and acute and primary care NHS trusts across Scotland. It does not include services provided by housing associations and registered social landlords.

Summary of main findings

- 1.5 **Social Work and Community Equipment and Minor Adaptations.** There are a number of specific detailed findings and recommendations contained within the report. The main issues can be summarised as:
- ◆ a number of improvements are required to the Council's information systems which record and report on expenditure, activity and performance;
 - ◆ a written strategy should be developed to provide a plan and timetable for developing the Joint Future agenda;
 - ◆ written standards, policies and procedures could be improved;
 - ◆ from a client perspective, information on assessments could be shared; and
 - ◆ public performance reporting of the equipment and adaptations service should be developed.
- 1.6 Our review also identified areas where the Council's approach may be considered as relatively good practice. These include:
- ◆ due to the large geographical area covered by Argyll & Bute Council, a dedicated team dealing with equipment and adaptations does not exist and is not considered

practical. However, the geographical distribution has led to the creation of integrated outreach teams with the NHS Occupational Therapy Service for the provision of the service on the islands in the Council's area. In addition there is an integrated outreach team based on the mainland based at one location. This team also provides a rapid response service;

- ◆ Argyll & Bute Council is one of only three authorities that provides a partly integrated occupational therapy service. The integrated service team is based at one location and has an operational manager and aligned budget. The operational manager of the integrated service is currently liaising with the NHS to develop a pooled budget;
- ◆ Argyll & Bute has one partnership arrangement comprising the Local Health Care Co-operative (LHCC), the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the Council's Housing Department. A Service Manager from the Social Work Department has recently been seconded to the Strategy Group to take forward the Joint Future agenda. His remit includes developing joint resourcing;
- ◆ one store operates as a joint store in Argyll & Bute. Based in the Oban General Hospital, it was opened in March 2002;
- ◆ within the Authority, protocols for the joint working between health and community occupational therapists are in place;
- ◆ in common with 84% of authorities, Argyll & Bute Council identified that it published information about equipment and adaptation services;
- ◆ a priorities assessment guide for occupational therapists is included in the Council's "Criteria and Practice Guide for the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations and Other Services". There are three classes of priority. Priority 1 is given immediate attention whilst priority 2 is assessed as soon as possible and priority 3 is given to non-critical cases. The prioritisation system is used to deal with both referrals and for managing provision;
- ◆ Argyll & Bute Council scored highly in its process for recording the client's journey;
- ◆ there are set target times for dealing with emergency referrals; and
- ◆ a customer satisfaction survey has been conducted and analysed, within the Community Equipment Service.

1.7 **Housing and Adaptations.** The issues identified within the Adaptations Service are similar, in many respects to those encountered within the Community Equipment Service. The main issues can be summarised as:

- ◆ a number of improvements are required to the Council's information systems which record and report on expenditure, activity and performance;
- ◆ budgeting processes should be reviewed and the level of unmet demand established;
- ◆ a more formal partnership should be formed with the Council's Social Work Department; and

- ◆ client surveys and public performance reporting of the equipment and adaptations service should be developed.
- 1.8 During this review we identified that the Housing Department has a number of areas of relatively good practice. These include:
- ◆ the staff turnover, staff vacancy and sickness absence rates are relatively low within the Service;
 - ◆ Argyll & Bute Council has agreed eligibility criteria for adaptations between the Social Work and Housing Departments; and
 - ◆ information on the adaptation service is available in leaflet form, within the Authority.
- 1.9 Although this report includes a number of specific recommendations to strengthen internal controls, it is the responsibility of management to decide the extent of the internal control system appropriate to the Authority. We would stress, however, that an effective internal control system is an essential part of the efficient management of any organisation.
- 1.10 The factual content of the report has been agreed in discussion with appropriate officers from the Authority.
- 1.11 The Action Plan which sets out the agreed action to be taken in response to the audit recommendations should be read in conjunction with the relevant references from the main report.
- 1.12 The co-operation and assistance afforded to audit staff during the course of the audit are gratefully acknowledged.

2. Action Plan

No.	Recommendation	Responsible Officer	Action	Date	Update at 31 October 2003
1	A system should be introduced to separately record the Authority's expenditure, referrals and assessments on equipment and on adaptations.	Shirley McHugh	Liase with IT section to enable Care first system to record information required.	August 2004	Ongoing
2	A review of activity recording should be undertaken to ensure consistency and accuracy	Shirley McHugh	Liase with IT section to enable Care first system to record information required.	August 2004	Ongoing
3	Consideration should be given to recording the referrals received and assessments made for housing association and RSL tenants by adding these categories to the "contact by" section of the information system.	Shirley McHugh	Liase with IT section to enable Care first system to record information required.	August 2004	Ongoing
4	The information system should be revised to record assessments completed, individual pieces of equipment issued, individual adaptations installed and completions.	Shirley McHugh	Liase with IT section to enable Care first system to record information required.	August 2004	Ongoing
5	Changes to the information system should be implemented to enable completions to be analysed by client group.	Shirley McHugh	Liase with IT section to enable Care first system to record information required.	August 2004	Ongoing
6	The Council should consider the effect of demographic and other environmental changes in planning for the future needs of the service.	Planning Officer Community Care	Explore the effects of these changes and plan for future service needs.	Date to be agreed by planning department.	Post is currently vacant.

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No.	Recommendation	Responsible Officer	Action	Date	Update at 31 October 2003
7	The Strategy Group should prepare a written plan and timetable for developing the Joint Future agenda, including the development of joint resourcing and giving consideration to the future development of information systems.	Jim Robb	Plan and timetable to be written and developed by Strategy Group.	To be decided by Strategy Group.	Ongoing
8	The Council should identify standards for storing, transporting and cleaning equipment and periodically audit the arrangements to ensure compliance.	Shirley McHugh	Develop relevant standards in consultation with Quality Assurance Unit.	August 2004	Ongoing
9	Argyll & Bute Council should develop, with the local health service, a Joint Statement of Intent on training and a joint development and training plan.	Jim Robb Shirley McHugh	Liase with Training Departments in Social Work and Health to develop plan and training.	January 2004	Ongoing
10	Written assessments and details of a point of contact should be provided to the client.	Shirley McHugh	Single Shared Assessment will provide written plan. Contact details to be provided by staff.	January 2004.	Ongoing
11	The Council should review their delivery and installation processes.	Shirley McHugh	Care and Repair already delivering/installing/collecting majority of equipment. Review this service.	January 2004	Ongoing

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No.	Recommendation	Responsible Officer	Action	Date	Update at 31 October 2003
12	The Council should introduce systems to monitor equipment and adaptation waiting lists and waiting times.	Shirley McHugh	Liase with IT section to enable Care first system to record information required to enable monitoring within joint equipment services.	August 2004	Ongoing
13	Written procedures should be developed for dealing with Medical Devices Alerts and the recall of equipment.	Shirley McHugh	Procedures to be developed in consultation with staff.	January 2004	Ongoing
14	Consideration should be given to establishing and reporting information on the level of recycling of equipment.	Shirley McHugh	Explore ways of recording level of recycling of equipment.	August 2004	Ongoing
15	A service, maintenance and repair policy should be developed within the local service.	Shirley McHugh	Develop policies for maintenance, service and repair of equipment.	August 2004	Ongoing
16	Instructions should be provided to staff (and training) to ensure compliance generally with Health & Safety regulations and with Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations.	Council Health and Safety Manager, Moving and Handling Trainer, Shirley McHugh.	Relevant training as required. (Care and Repair carrying out many lifting tasks now.)	August 2004	Ongoing
17	Performance information should be made publicly available within the Council's framework for PPRg.	Planning Officer for Community Care	Information made available.	Date to be agreed by planning department.	Post is currently vacant.
18	Budget and expenditure information on major adaptations should be collected and reported within the Council.	Head of Planning & Performance	Information made available	July 2004	Ongoing

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No.	Recommendation	Responsible Officer	Action	Date	Update at 31 October 2003
19	Council budgeting processes should be reviewed for major and minor adaptations and the level of unmet need determined and reported.	Head of Planning & Performance and Head of Community Support	Set up system	December 2003	Complete, Ongoing
20	Systems for collecting and reporting activity data should be reviewed to ensure that the data is reliable and can be analysed into major and minor items, the source of referral and client group.	Head of Planning & Performance	Review & modify existing system	December 2003	Ongoing
21	The Housing Department should consider formalising its Joint Working approach with the Social Work Department on adaptation work.	Head of Planning & Performance and Head of Community Support	Formal approach to joint working will be implemented	December 2003	Ongoing
22	Consideration should be given to establishing and reporting information on the level of recycling of adaptations	Head of Planning & Performance	Refine and update existing system	December 2003	Ongoing
23	A review should be undertaken to establish whether a pickup service for adaptations exists and if not, whether its introduction would contribute to recycling rates.	Head of Planning & Performance and Head of Community Support	Discussions with Occupational Therapist service to agree a system (see also no.22)	December 2003	Ongoing
24	A client survey should be undertaken periodically with users of adaptations. The results of the adaptation section of the occupational therapy service survey conducted by Social Work should be made known to the Housing Maintenance Manager.	Shirley McHugh	Results of survey passed to Housing Maintenance Manager.	August 2003.	Complete

