



REVIEW OF THE HANDY PERSON'S SCHEME

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Handy Person's Scheme helps older people to retain their independence by carrying out minor household repairs and other small jobs which they are unable to do safely themselves. The scheme had initially been set up as pilot project using Supporting People money to carry out 400 jobs per year. However due to its resounding success it was expanded to carry out 1200 jobs per year.
- 1.2 In July 2008 the Adult Services and Health Commission learned that the performance of the Scheme during 2007 had been off target with completion of 900 jobs against a target of 1200. The Commission therefore decided to select this as its second major topic for review in its 2008/09 work programme.
- 1.3 Written and oral evidence was presented to the Commission by the Council's Housing Renewal Manager, Operations Manager at Spirita, Handy Person's Van Operative and three service users at a meeting held in public on 24 February 2009. The Commission was informed that the main reason for the scheme to be below target was due to lack of awareness amongst potential recipients of the availability. As a consequence insufficient numbers of people were applying for assistance from the scheme. This situation was not helped by the restriction on the eligibility criteria as the service is currently only available to people over 60 who are in receipt of means tested benefits and to adults with disabilities. However, the scheme has been promoted recently and as a result the monitoring figures for the first ten months showed the scheme to be on target for this year.
- 1.4 After checking for accuracy of the evidence with the witness, the final draft was approved by the Commission at their 16 March 2009 meeting and is attached in Appendix 2.
- 1.5 The Commission feels that this service fulfils an important local function and should continue to be supported. Evidence received by the Commission shows that there is capacity in the system to increase the total number of jobs carried out in a year. Members therefore recommended extending the service to all people over the age of 60 as it is considered that many elderly people can become vulnerable at some stage in their lives and could therefore benefit from this scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Commission made the following recommendations to improve the access to the service and achieve better value for money.
1. The Commission recommends that the criteria for accessing this service should be extended to include all residents over the age of 60 and not restricted only to those receiving benefits. The service should continue to be provided to adults with disabilities.
 2. Re-launch the scheme with the new eligibility criteria and promote the service across the city including in community centres and by giving presentations at all the Neighbourhood Forums
 3. Advise clients not to buy capital items in advance unless directed by the scheme administrator
 4. Each van should be stocked up with basic items required for daily activity to minimise time loss
- 2.2 The Council Cabinet is asked to consider and adopt the above recommendations of the Commission.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Members recognised that the need for a handy person's service exists for all older people over 60 regardless of whether or not they have the ability to pay. The Commission learnt that there is capacity in the service to carry out more jobs than the current contracted number. By extending the service to all people over 60 and not restricting it to those receiving benefits, it will increase access to a wider group and help towards meeting the target and lowering the unit cost of the service.
- 3.2 The Commission was informed that main reason for the service to miss its target of 1200 jobs was due to lack of awareness amongst potential service users about the availability of the service. Promoting the service across the city especially through Neighbourhood Forums and community centres should make more people aware and increase the accessibility of the service.
- 3.3 Clients do not pay for the handy van operatives' time and expenses but are required to meet the cost of any material used in the repair. Some clients purchase materials in advance of the visit and although these can potentially save the operative time, there have been occasions when wrong equipment has been purchased which can incur additional time and sometime costs to the client.
- 3.4 It was suggested that each van should keep a set of common items used for repairs and clients are charged if and when these are used. Adopting this method would help save time for the operatives and enable them to carry out more jobs.

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Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Report of the ASH Commission on the Review of Handy Person's Scheme

Appendix 1

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 None arising from this report.

Legal

- 2.1 The Council may have to amend its contract with Spirita in order to extend the service to all people over the age of 60.
- 2.2 The Constitution allows Overview and Scrutiny Commissions to conduct two reviews per year and submit reports to the Council Cabinet.

Personnel

- 3.1 None

Equalities Impact

- 4.1 Effective scrutiny benefits all Derby people.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 5.1 This report links with Council's priority for 2008-11 in helping us all to be healthy, active and independent.

Review of the Handy Person's Scheme Report

Introduction

1. The handy person's scheme provides assistance to older people by carrying out wide range of minor household repairs and other small jobs which would not be cost effective for a tradesperson. These jobs can typically take up to two hours to complete and could include minor works such as hanging curtains, fixing mirrors, clearing and repairing guttering, changing light bulbs etc. Clients are not charged for the handyperson's time but are expected to pay for the cost of any materials that may be required for the work.
2. This topic was first considered by the Commission as part of its annual work programme discussions in July 2008. On learning that the scheme was carrying out 900 jobs against an annual target of 1200, members resolved to select this as their second major topic for the year. In January 2009 the Commission considered its work programme again and agreed the following objectives for the review of the handy person's scheme:
 - To examine the reasons for the performance to be off target
 - To examine how the scheme is promoted amongst the
 - To examine the criteria for accessing the service and consider whether it is being targeted at those people who need it the most
 - To examine the scope to extend the scheme to other minor works such as minor adaptation programme
3. The Commission received written evidence from Spirita's Operations Manager and the Housing Renewal Manager of the Council. It also received oral evidence at a public meeting held at the Council House on 24 February 2009 from the following witnesses:
 - Housing Renewal Manager (officer responsible for managing the Handy Persons Contract and also Supporting People Programme)
 - Handy Person's Van Operative
 - Operations Manager – Care and Repair, Spirita
 - Three Service Users

Budget and eligibility criteria for accessing the service

4. The handy person's scheme was established as a pilot project with a single van operative run by Care and Repair Division of Spirita and contracted to carry out 400 jobs per year. The pilot scheme operated for about a year and was found to be so successful that two further handy van operatives were employed and the annual target increased to providing 1200 jobs. The funding for the scheme was increased to approximately £110,000 per year of which approximately 2/3 is provided by the Supporting People Programme and the remainder from the minor works budget of the Capital Programme.
5. The budget of the handy person's scheme is broken as follows:

3 Operatives	£ 60,032
Administration	£ 15,481

Office costs	£ 1,500
Training	£ 150
Marketing	£ 2,000
Mileage	£ 2,750
Materials	£ 4,200
PPE	£ 500
Insurance	£ 3,500
Van leasing	£ 9,895
Sub total	£100,008
15% overheads	£ 15,001
Total	£115,009

6. The above includes:
 - Free security equipment
 - 3 Vans which includes:
 - Signage
 - Fuel
 - Tools
 - Administration support which includes
 - Taking referrals
 - Inputting data
 - Producing reports and statistics
 - Management of Team
 - Corporate support for the team
7. The service is currently only available to people over 60 living in Derby who receive one of the benefits listed below.
 - Means Tested Benefits
 - Attendance Allowance
 - Disabled Living Allowance
 - Industrial Injuries Disablement
 - Incapacity benefit
8. The Commission was informed that tight eligibility criterion was set purposely when the scheme was first established in order to manage anticipated high demand in the service. However as the scheme has now been operating for a few years, it is time to review the eligibility criteria.

Types of jobs carried out under the scheme

9. The handy person's scheme carries out wide range of jobs and helps older and disabled people to retain their independence. Typical jobs include clearing guttering, of which more than 100 were received last year. This is recognised as important service and is considered to save the substantial money by spending to save. Unattended problems with guttering can lead to structural damage which would cost substantially more to repair later. Other types of jobs include grab rails, small plumbing jobs such as fixing leaks, building flat pack furniture, installing mirrors and odd light bulbs etc. Bigger mobility issues are referred to social services. No work is carried out that could put the client at risk.

Promotion of the scheme

10. The Commission was informed that the main reason for the scheme to miss its target of 1200 jobs in 2007 was due to lack of awareness. Many potential service users were unaware of the availability of the service and therefore were not applying for the service. In terms of how people find out about the service, the Commission was told that most referrals are received through neighbours, friends and relatives of the service users. A considerable amount of effort has been made by Spirita over the last 6 months to heighten the awareness of the service in the Derby City. This has included:
- Displaying posters in wards at the DRI
 - Promotion Flyers have circulated to all Senior Nurses, Discharge facilities & Therapy leads for the 2 hospitals
 - Scheme details circulated through Derby City Disability team
 - Discussed situation with Jack Straw, Derby City Strategic Development Officer – Prevention Corporate and Adult Services Department, who advised the Agency of people to be contacted regarding the service. Those contacted were:
 - Ben Haynes – Derby City PCT – Editor of Magazine
 - Ruth Holland - Derby Homes Communal Facilities Co-ordinator, who arranged to get the flyer up on the notice boards on all 26 of their sheltered housing common rooms
 - Phil Davies – Chief Executive Derby Home who distributed flyer to his team
 - Ray Gumbley - Age Concern Derby and Derbyshire
 - Lesley.Kopec – Derby City Council
 - Glenys Crooks – Derby Hospitals
 - Presentation made to the Lead Occupational Therapist Meeting at the DRI
 - Scheme promoted at the Derby City Arboretum Festival
 - Scheme promoted at the “First Contact” launch
 - Scheme promoted at the Derby City Liberation day
 - Talks given at all the “Live at Home” scheme throughout Derby City
 - Article placed in Derby Evening Telegraph
 - Limited Circulation of leaflets through doors in designated areas.
11. The Home Improvement Agency is working well with the First Contact Scheme in Derby and is beginning to receive referrals through this scheme.

Jobs carried out in year 2008/09 to date

12. The Commission was informed that as a result of recent promotion the latest monitoring report shows the scheme to be on track to achieve its target this year. In the first 10 months of this year it has carried out 966 jobs against a target of 1000. The figures however include approximately 150 referrals where visits were made by the operatives to the clients' home but work was not carried out due to variety of reasons such as health and safety or because the individual may have forgotten their booking. For recording purposes, even if the operatives make three trips, it is still considered as one referral.
13. The Commission was also informed that there is capacity in the service to carryout more jobs.

Response times for the scheme

14. The response time for completing jobs has varied within the year, depending on the amount of gutters that needed attending and the numbers of other jobs requiring two operatives. The guttering work has also been affected by the recent poor weather. The Commission was informed that many jobs are carried out within 3 days :

Longest response times to complete the job

1 st Quarter	4 days
2 nd Quarter	7 days
3 rd Quarter	11 days
4 th Quarter	5 days

Average for the year (so far) – 7 days

Benefits of contracting Spirita to carry out the jobs

15. The Commission was informed that Spirita provides good value for money and has a proven track record of helping the vulnerable people in the City. The organisation has existing core services which help to ensure the service is accessed by those who need it. The agency has a good working relationship with other organisations which helps the clients receive the best holistic service including:
- Fire & Rescue Service
 - Aged Concern
 - Help the Aged – especially through the First Contact Scheme
 - Welfare Benefits Agency
 - Royal British Legion (all the Agency's Project Workers are also RBL Case Workers)
 - Derby City Energy Efficiency Centre
16. It is also easier for the handy van operatives to make referral to the core service when the job is not appropriate for its service. Referrals are made to other organisation should the clients need it including:
- Welfare Benefits
 - Warm Front
 - First Contact
 - Social Services

Service users

17. The Commission received evidence from three service users who all said it was a fantastic service. Mrs Hill stated that she first contacted the service for help with clearing the guttering and subsequently for curtain rail and picture hanging. She stated that she was put in touch with this scheme by Warm Front. She was very pleased with the service she had received. An appointment was made with her and the operative rang her few minutes before arriving to carry out the work.
18. Mr and Mrs Smith also gave evidence to the Commission and stated that they first contacted handy person's scheme for assistance with their boiler. They have had other

works carried out since then such as repairs to leaking pipe which had not properly fixed by a plumber. They also said that van operatives are identified by their badges and from the City Council logo on the van which reassures them.

19. Requests for assistance are received from across the city and not from any one particular area. Service satisfaction has been very high amongst the services users with 98% happy to use the again.

Conclusion

20. Evidence received by the Commission confirms that the handy person's scheme provides valuable service to older people by carrying out small jobs that are too small for a tradesman. The scheme saves considerable amount of money, time and stress for users and helps them to retain independence. Jobs such as clearing guttering are also recognised to save the authority significant amounts money as leaving these unattended could lead to structural damage which would be more costly to fix later.
21. Delivering 1200 jobs at a cost of £111,000 per annum equates to approximately £91 per job. Taking this on face value this is not cheap. However the most of expenditure is incurred in employing the three van operatives and paying for associated costs which can't be avoided but importantly the service users are not charged for this. The scheme also provides an important social service for the elderly and vulnerable who could be at risk of being exploited if this service did not exist.

Recommendations

22. The Commission considered the evidence and makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

The Commission recommends that the criteria for accessing this service should be extended to include all residents over the age of 60 and not restricted only to those receiving benefits whilst continuing to provide services for adults with disabilities.

Reasons

Members recognised that the need for a handy person's service exists for all older people over 60 regardless of whether or not they have the ability to pay. The Commission learnt that there is capacity in the service to carry out more jobs than the current contracted number. By extending the service to all people over 60 and not restricting it to those receiving benefits, it will not only increase access to a wider group but also help towards meeting the target and lowering the unit cost of the service.

Recommendation 2

Re-launch the scheme with the new eligibility criteria and promote the service across the city including in community centres and by giving presentations at all the Neighbourhood Forums.

Reasons

The Commission was informed that main reason for the service to miss its target of carrying out 1200 jobs was due to lack of awareness amongst potential service users about the availability of the service. Promoting the service across the city especially through Neighbourhood Forums and community centres should make more people aware and increase the accessibility of the service.

Recommendation 3

Advise clients not to buy capital items in advance unless directed by the scheme administrator

Reasons

Clients do not pay for the handy van operatives' time and expenses but are required to meet the cost of any material used in the repair. Some clients are purchase materials in advance of the visit and although these can potentially save the operative time, there have been occasions when wrong equipment has been purchase which incur can incur time and sometime costs to the client.

Recommendation 4

Each van should be stacked up with basic items required for daily activity to minimise time loss

Reasons

It was suggested that each van should keep common items required for the repair and clients can be charged for the cost of these. Adopting this method would help the operatives to save time and carry out more jobs.

Appendix 3

DERBY CITY HANDY VAN SERVICE 2008 – 2009



STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

A questionnaire is left with all service users, following completion of works, together with a reply paid envelope for its return.

The following information is based on works completed
1 April 2008 – 18 February 2009.

Questionnaires issued	Responses received to date	% return
966	661	68.5%

Service standard is based on a points system

- 5 = excellent
- 4 = above average
- 3 = average
- 2 = acceptable but below average
- 1 = unacceptable

Measured against

Category	5	4	3	2	1
Appointments kept as arranged	95%	4%	0.3%	0.7%	
Courtesy	96%	3.5%	0.4%	0.1%	
Standard of work	93%	5.5%	1.5%		
Tidiness of site following works	94%	4.5%	1%	0.5%	-

98% of service users responding to the questionnaire confirmed that they would be happy to use the service again.

Report issued

20 February 2009