
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	April 2021
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Service Area	Adult Social Care
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To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Community Occupational Therapy Service 2020-21 - Disabled Facility Grants

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report covers the performance of the Community Occupational Therapy Service for the year 2020-2021.
- 1.2 The report incorporates the information in respect of the delivery of Disabled Facility Grants within Merthyr Tydfil.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The scrutiny committee discusses and comments on the issues set out in the report.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The role of the Community Occupational Therapy Service (COTS) is to work with people to assess their ability to undertake their activities of daily living and where appropriate provide equipment or adaptations so that individuals can be as independent as possible.
- 3.2 These assessments are undertaken in people's homes so that the environment in which they live is taken into account as part of the assessment.
- 3.3 The Community Occupational Therapy Service consistently receives on average 35-40 referrals per month. These range from requests for assessment for handrails to requests for the provision of complex adaptations to the person's home.

- 3.4 All referrals are triaged on receipt and are categorised as critical, substantial, moderate or low. An example of a critical referral that would require an immediate response would be where a person requires an immediate assessment for moving and handling equipment as they have deteriorated rapidly and now require equipment such as a hoist to enable care staff to assist them with personal care. An example of a referral that would be considered low would be a request for bathing aids if there is no medical reason to support the referral.
- 3.5 Where the assessment has identified the need for adaptations to the property the next stage would be dependent on the level of work required and tenancy arrangements. Small adaptations such as handrails are referred to Care & Repair whilst larger adaptations (Disabled Facility Grants) such as the provision of wet rooms are referred to the grants department for properties that are owner occupied, privately rented or owned by Merthyr Valleys Homes. Where the property is managed by one of the other registered landlords then these are undertaken under the Physical Adaptation Grants via Welsh Government.
- 3.6 In terms of the Disabled Facility Grants the majority of these relate to the provision of adaptations to bathrooms and wet rooms.

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

- 4.1 The Community Occupational Therapy Service has seen a considerable turn over in staff in recent years and recruitment to vacant posts has been problematic. In addition to this there have been other longer term staff absences which has reduced the capacity within the team. This resulted in an increase in the waiting list for assessment with the team focussing on the critical and substantial cases.
- 4.2 Eventually staff were recruited and for a period of time there was a full staffing compliment within the team and collectively they had made significant progress in reducing the waiting list.
- 4.3 As the majority of assessments that require a Disabled Facility Grant are those that require adaptation of bathrooms, these were often categorised initially as low priority for assessment. This saw a marked decrease in the number of DFGs that were undertaken.
- 4.4 Previously the management of the physical adaptations were undertaken by an internal grant team that oversaw the works through the feasibility and planning stage, to the commissioning of builders to completion and quality review of the work. In the later part of the financial year 2019-2020 there were also periods where there were significant absences within the grants team and new requests for DFGs were not progressed from June 2019 and in January 2020 the grants element of the DFG was commissioned from RCT.
- 4.5 At the time of transfer to RCT, 54 cases that were with the Grants department were transferred waiting commencement of the DFG work.
- 4.6 The period of the report request has coincided with the period of the pandemic which has had a considerable impact on the work of the team.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 5.1 The pandemic has impacted on the ability of the team to undertake assessments due to the restrictions regarding social distancing. In March 2020, the decision was made to restrict visits to people's homes to critical situations only. In July 2020, as the position improved slightly, home visits were re-commenced ensuring that staff wore appropriate PPE.
- 5.2 Additionally members of the public have been too anxious to let staff in to their properties and this has also impacted works being carried out for DFG's. Equipment is delivered via the Joint Community Equipment Store which has also been affected by staff absences during this period and equipment deliveries were delayed due to staffing levels at stores etc working during the height of the pandemic, however it is now improved.
- 5.3 In order to manage the caseloads more effectively, the team developed a stricter/clearer referral criteria and worked with the duty team to produce more specific guidance and questions to ensure when referrals are coming through, they are screened with consistency which has allowed us to manage and prioritise referrals faster and more effectively to maintain the number of people on the waiting list to under 90. The team has also implemented a paperless referral system and are driven now solely by WCCIS for COT related referrals which again has streamlined the process in the COT team.
- 5.4 Whilst we had recruited to all posts, we have recently had 1 qualified OT and 1 COT technician leave the Authority for alternative employment. We took this opportunity to review the staff structure and will be replacing the qualified OT with a senior OT post that will provide professional supervision to the team and this post is currently being recruited.
- 5.5 The current staffing establishment within the team is as follows:

Post	Number	Vacancies
Senior Community Occupational Therapist	1 FTE	1 FTE
Community Occupational Therapist	2FTE	0
Community Occupational Therapist technician	3FTE	0.5 FTE

- 5.6 The current waiting list for assessments is 94. The waiting list for assessment in the different categories are as follows:

Number	Category
Critical	0
Substantial	56 – 60.1%
Moderate	34 - 36.5%
Low	3 – 3.2%

These numbers fluctuate weekly as new referrals are made to the service.

5.7 Welsh Government funds lower level works via the Enable Grant and these works are directly managed and delivered via Care and Repair.

5.8 At the height of the pandemic in April 2020 no urgent assessments were suspended and were re-commenced in June 2020 therefore there were no assessments that would have led to requests for adaptations during this period. The table below sets out the assessments that led to referrals to the grants department in RCT:

	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
	2	3	5	5	5	3	5	9	1

6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

6.1 We want to reduce the waiting list for assessments through recruitment to all posts.

6.2 We want to implement the draft quality assurance process for the service including citizen feedback.

6.3 We want to strengthen the professional supervision arrangements through the recruitment of a Senior Community Occupational Therapist.

7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

7.1 We need to recruit into the vacant posts so that the team can operate at capacity and reduce the waiting list.

7.2 We need to continue to monitor and revise working arrangements in line with the social distancing guidance.

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

8.1 The work we are undertaking around carers links with the Living Well wellbeing objective.

LISA CURTIS JONES
CHIEF OFFICER (SOCIAL SERVICES)

COUNCILLOR CHRIS DAVIES
CABINET MEMBER FOR
SOCIAL SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No