

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## CABINET

15 December 2010

### Joint Report of the Director of Health and Housing and Cabinet Member for Housing

#### Part 1- Public

#### Matters for Information

#### 1 UPDATE ON CHILDREN'S OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSESSMENTS

##### Summary

**This report updates Members following the report to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board on 8 November 2010 on the number of children awaiting Occupational Therapy assessments in Tonbridge & Malling and what action is being taken to improve the situation.**

#### 1.1 Background

1.1.1 At the Strategic Housing Advisory Board meeting on 08 November 2010 Members expressed concern at the continuing delays by children in receiving an Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment. Members were updated in respect of fifteen cases:

- Two priority A\* cases which had been allocated
- Five priority A cases which would be allocated by December 2010
- Eight priority B cases which would be allocated by April 2011.
- It was confirmed that priority A\* cases are those that are already a priority A but where the situation is becoming critical, child and carers at risk of family breakdown (safeguarding issues) – these cases were to be agreed by area OT/OT assistant in discussion with Principal OT for the area. Priority A cases include where children are terminally ill, where it is a hospital discharge, where there is a high serious risk of injury to carer or child through manual handling, where it is an urgent respite/foster placement, a request for a property viewing, an urgent equipment review if equipment has broken down or child at risk due to outgrowing equipment or pre-hospital admission advice for parents and other hospital professionals. Priority B cases are all other referrals.

- 1.1.2 Whilst this did represent some progress in moving outstanding cases forward, there was an ongoing concern about the time taken to actually allocate cases to OTs to progress. We had been informed that the oldest priority A case was a referral made in July 2009 (15 months) and the oldest priority B case was a referral made in October 2007 (three years). We were also disappointed that no disabled facilities grant spend would be incurred in this financial year from these cases.
- 1.1.3 It was proposed that in order to monitor the ongoing allocation and initial assessment of children's OT cases:
- 1) officers would continue their ongoing contact with the Principal OT and area OTs in particular focussing on updates on allocations and initial assessments at the regular case meetings that are held;
  - 2) a further meeting with Liz Totman, KCC Councillor Leyland Ridings, Members and officers from Tonbridge and Malling is scheduled for 30 November 2010 where a progress update will be sought; and
  - 3) the Director of Health and Housing would report back into the February 2011 meeting of the Board where, dependent on progress made, Members may decide to request Liz Totman attends a further Board meeting as offered by her when she attended in July 2010.

## **1.2 Current position and action being taken**

- 1.2.1 Unfortunately, the meeting that was due to take place between both Officers and Members of this Council and Kent County Council (KCC) on 30 November 2010 was cancelled due to adverse weather conditions.
- 1.2.2 However we did receive a written update from KCC. Liz Totman, Head of Corporate Parenting, at KCC has stated that the case dating back to 2007 has been allocated to an OT and that it will not require a DFG. We understand that KCC are committed to employing a locum OT for 6 months to work only in the Tonbridge & Malling area to clear the remaining backlog. Unfortunately they state there are no suitable locum OTs available at the moment however they will continue to search in earnest.
- 1.2.3 As of 30 November 2010 we are informed that there are ten children's cases awaiting an OT assessment in Tonbridge and Malling. There are no A\* cases (highest priority), four A cases and six B cases.
- 1.2.4 The longest waiting case dates back to February 2009 which is a priority B case. The oldest priority A case dates back to July 2009. There are a further three priority B cases dating back to 2009 with the remaining cases all referrals received in 2010.

1.2.5 It is anticipated that all ten cases awaiting assessment will require a disabled facilities grant, seven of which are owner occupiers or private tenants. The remaining three cases requiring adaptations are housing association tenants.

1.2.6 KCC now have a system in place to ensure that all new referrals will have an initial assessment within 28 days.

### **1.3 Conclusions**

1.3.1 It is encouraging to note that the oldest case has been allocated for action. This means that there are no outstanding cases beyond 2009. This is a significant improvement on the position we have faced over the last eighteen months. We are confident that KCC will make every effort to recruit the promised locum in order to further reduce the waiting list in our area. A further update will be provided to Members at the next Strategic Housing Advisory Board meeting on 21 February 2011.

### **1.4 Legal Implications**

1.4.1 None arising from this report.

### **1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.5.1 The ten cases identified as requiring adaptations will be referred through as Disabled Facilities Grant enquiries. As these cases tend to be larger adaptations this could place a further strain on the already stretched DFG budget.

### **1.6 Risk Assessment**

1.6.1 The ongoing delays in OT assessments for children in Tonbridge and Malling may put at risk those families in need of works to adapt their home.

Background papers: None

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Nil

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