

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 September 2012

Report of the Director of Health and Housing

Part 1- Public

Delegated

1 CHILDREN'S OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSESSMENTS

Summary

The report reviews the history of waiting times for Children's Occupational Therapy assessments and compares the waiting times for assessments with other West Kent local authorities. The report makes recommendations on how the recent improvement in waiting times for a Children's OT assessment can be maintained.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 A scoping report was presented to this Board on 6 March 2012 outlining key issues for a review of Children's Occupational Therapy (OT) assessments undertaken by Kent County Council.

1.1.2 The key issues for the review were:

- to consider the history of the waiting times for Children's OT assessment since May 2009; and
- to compare the waiting times for Children's OT assessments in Tonbridge & Malling with other West Kent local authorities; and
- to assess the prospect of recent service improvements being sustainable into the foreseeable future; and
- to agree a way forward with Kent County Council (KCC) in terms of assessment targets and levels of resources to meet the targets.

1.2 Waiting times for Children's OT assessment since May 2009

1.2.1 In May 2009 concerns were expressed by Members in the meeting of the Strategic Housing Advisory Board about the waiting times being experienced by children for an OT assessment. This had followed concerns raised at an Advisory Group Meeting of the Home Improvement Agency. The Director of Health and Housing was asked to write to the Managing Director of Children, Families and

Education at KCC to request confirmation of the position, as at that date, of the waiting list for children's OT assessments.

- 1.2.2 A meeting was held with Liz Totman, Head of Specialist Children's Services at KCC, on 2 October 2009. At this meeting it was confirmed that 27 children in Tonbridge & Malling were waiting for an OT assessment: five had been waiting since 2007; nine since 2008 and 13 children were referred in 2009. Clearly the waiting list is a moving entity as new referrals come onto the list and children are removed once they have been assessed and allocated to an OT.
- 1.2.3 As at end of December 2009, there were 23 children on the OT assessment waiting list with the oldest referral dating back to October 2007. At the end of March 2010, there were 25 children on the waiting list still with the oldest referral still dating back to October 2007.
- 1.2.4 Liz Totman gave a presentation to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board on 19 July 2010 where she indicated there were 30 children awaiting an OT assessment: five of these waiting since 2007; eight since 2008; 10 since 2009 and seven referrals received in 2010. At this stage she indicated that all cases would have an 'initial' assessment in order to determine if issues could be resolved immediately e.g. equipment provision, re-housing report. The Council supported this approach as it would determine the likely number of cases coming forward for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and hopefully prevent families from waiting on the list only to be told their property could not be adapted. Concerns were raised that cases would still not be allocated to an OT and therefore may still 'sit' on the waiting list for some time. It was the aim of KCC to undertake 'initial' assessments on all new cases to enable the waiting list to be managed more effectively and to reduce the waiting time to three months.
- 1.2.5 As at October 2010 there were 15 children awaiting a full OT assessment, however all had received an 'initial' assessment. It was felt some progress had been made however the oldest case remained a referral in October 2007. I am advised that the OT Service prioritise the cases hence some referrals after 2007 may have been allocated before the oldest case as they were assessed as a higher priority.
- 1.2.6 In December 2010 we were advised that a locum OT had been employed by KCC to help clear the waiting list in Tonbridge & Malling BC area; however that person then withdrew their intention to accept the post. A locum OT was appointed in February 2011 and as at May 2011 there were 13 cases on the waiting list. The oldest of these referrals was now March 2010. At this stage the Council's Grants Officers were in regular touch with the locum OT, feasibility visits for DFGs were taking place and it was clear significant progress was being made.
- 1.2.7 As at September 2011 there were seven cases awaiting an OT assessment and the oldest case dated back to March 2011. The number of cases being referred to

the Council for DFGs had increased considerably and the arrangements with the locum OT were working well.

- 1.2.8 As at April 2012 there was one child awaiting an OT assessment and that was a referral from October 2011. As at July 2012 there were three children awaiting an OT assessment and the oldest referral dated back to October 2011. As at August 2012 there were two children awaiting an OT assessment and the oldest referral dated back to February 2012.
- 1.2.9 Clearly KCC responded to the concerns raised within Tonbridge & Malling B.C. and once the locum OT was in post from February 2011 significant improvements to the waiting list have been achieved. We are aware that at the end of June 2012 the contract with the locum OT that had been in place covering Tonbridge & Malling B.C. was terminated. There is now one full time OT and a part time OT in place covering Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells area with a full time OT assistant post to be filled.
- 1.2.10 Our key partner in delivering DFGs across our Borough, Russet Homes have commented that they are extremely encouraged to see the impact made on reducing OT assessment waiting times. They themselves strengthened their team with the appointment of a temporary surveyor post in order to help deliver quicker schemes for both children and adults who required major adaptations.

1.3 Comparison of waiting times for children's OT assessment across West Kent

- 1.3.1 The table below details the waiting times and length of wait for children's OT assessments across West Kent as at April 2012:

Local Authority	Total number of children waiting for assessment	Date of oldest referral
Dartford BC	17	October 2010
Gravesham BC	6	January 2011
Maidstone BC	15	July 2010
Sevenoaks DC	7	November 2010
Tonbridge & Malling BC	1	October 2011
Tunbridge Wells BC	0	n/a

1.3.2 The table below details the waiting times and length of wait for children's OT assessments across West Kent as at July 2012:

Local Authority	Total number of children waiting for assessment	Date of oldest referral
Dartford BC	8	September 2011
Gravesham BC	9	October 2011
Maidstone BC	11	May 2011
Sevenoaks DC	2	September 2011
Tonbridge & Malling BC	3	October 2011
Tunbridge Wells BC	3	March 2012

1.3.3 It is clear from the above table in 1.3.1 that in April 2012 there were notably less children waiting for an OT assessment in Tonbridge & Malling BC compared to the rest of West Kent apart from Tunbridge Wells BC. In addition the waiting times were significantly reduced for children in our borough, some 17 months less than in Maidstone.

1.3.4 It is apparent the additional resources KCC had put into the Tonbridge & Malling area had the desired affect and brought the waiting list and times down to a much more acceptable level.

1.3.5 Members will note from the above table in 1.3.2 that in July 2012 a much more acceptable level of numbers waiting and waiting times was being achieved across West Kent.

1.4 Ongoing Service Improvement

1.4.1 An Officer from KCC will be attending the Committee and will update Members.

1.5 Assessment targets & Levels of Resources

1.5.1 An Officer from KCC will be attending the Committee and will update Members.

1.6 Legal Implications

1.6.1 None

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.7.1 None

1.8 Risk Assessment

- 1.8.1 When a property does not meet a child's needs there is a risk that an accident/injury could occur e.g. parent injures back carrying child upstairs as child unable to walk. It is therefore important that any identified needs are met as quickly as possible.

1.9 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.9.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report.

1.10 Recommendations

- 1.10.1 That the significant progress made by Kent County Council in reducing the waiting list and times for children's Occupational Therapy assessments **BE NOTED**;
- 1.10.2 That the close working relationship between Kent County Council, Russet Homes and this Council in progressing children's adaptation schemes **BE RECOGNISED**; **and**
- 1.10.3 The need to maintain monitoring of service performance through regular reports to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board **BE AGREED**.

Background papers:

contact: Linda Hibbs

Nil

John Batty

Director of Health and Housing

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	The decision makes a positive contribution to the welfare of young people.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?	n/a	

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.