

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING
HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY**

**ADVISORY GROUP MEETING
19 August 2009 at 10.00 am**

Present:	Names: Chris Thomas Pension & Disabilities Service Cllr D Cure Councillor Cllr J Atkinson Councillor Cllr J Balcombe Councillor Linda Hibbs Housing Services Manager David Eaton Project Manager in touch Lesley Wheal Caseworker in touch Helen Ryan Administrator in touch Mr Jillians Client HIA	To Action
Apologies:	Names: Nicola Tallon Kent Association for the Blind Viv Fuller CROP Alison Batchelor Volunteer Bureau Cllr M Worrall Councillor Cllr J Anderson Councillor Aric Goss Surveyor in touch	
Previous Minutes:	Chris Thomas called the meeting to begin and asked us to introduce ourselves to the group.	
3) Matters Arising:	<p>3.1 Cllr Cure asked if we could get someone from the OT,s Child & Family Education Department to come and speak to the group regarding children's grants.</p> <p>3.2 Linda Hibbs said that a meeting has been set up for October, between John Batty and Roslin Turner from the child directorate to discuss the delays with children's grants. This will then be discussed at the SHAB meeting. Cllr Cure said that he knows that at present there are 23 young children on the waiting list and this is a concern. He feels that the government needs to give the local authorities more funds to deal with the increase in cases. Local Authorities cannot keep taking monies from one year's budget to cover another.</p>	

	<p>3.3 Linda Hibbs explained that there is no service level agreement with the OT's and David Eaton said that there is a "Combined Approach" in place. Chris Thomas felt it was important to have a service level agreement in place with the OT's and us. Cllr Cure asked for a breakdown in figures for child cases currently outstanding so that we can see where the problems are occurring. David Eaton said that it will need to be mapped from the point of referral from the OT to when the works are completed. Linda Hibbs and Lesley Wheal said that the date of referral is now on the OT's referral letter so that would be made easier. David Eaton said that these cases are very complex and can take time. Cllr Cure said that it would be good to map these cases to see where the problems are. Chris Thomas said that it would be beneficial to see the DFG's across all 4 area's to see how the timescales vary. David Eaton said that would be possible and Cllr Cure said this would be very helpful to look at.</p> <p>3.4 Mr Jillians was concerned about not having transport to get to these meetings and was not sure if it was difficult for Lesley Wheal to pick him up. Lesley Wheal said that it was very important to have him in the group and explained it was no problem.</p> <p>3.5 Under Agency Round-up it was asked if Robin Cahill had been contacted regarding Community Care Grants. Chris Thomas said that it is important that all information is passed on and Annette Hughes needs to be contacted regarding this. Cllr Cure said that it had been sent to Alison Batchelor and she will pass it on.</p> <p>3.6 Chris Thomas asked if there had been any progress on the Gardening Services under the Handyperson Service. David Eaton explained that no equipment had been sourced and he was waiting to finalise the arrangements for this service. Cllr Cure said that Age Concern do have a gardening service priced at £12 per hour.</p>	<p>DE</p> <p>RC</p> <p>DC/AB</p> <p>DE</p>
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	<p>3.7 Chris Thomas asked if all the charges are the same for in touch HIA services across the 4 borough councils. David Eaton explained that the contracts with the borough councils were negotiated separately and have evolved over time, it is hoped that now the agency has been combined when the time for renegotiations arises they will be discussed alongside other contract arrangements.</p> <p>3.8 Chris Thomas said that the Agency now needs a single set of accounts in order that it can be compared across the area's. David Eaton explained that by 2011 the councils will look to review all the contracts and also look at the structure and costs. He explained that it will take time to sort out a singular structure and he is constantly aware of the pressures of keeping the costs down and whilst enhancing service provision. Cllr Cure said that any new contract with the Mid & West Kent HIA will be vast and will have to go out under the European tender procedure.</p>	
<p>4) Project Managers Report</p>	<p>4.1 David Eaton presented his Project Managers Report. With regard to Human Resources, Bernard Barratt the Surveyor for Tunbridge Wells has now left the agency and David was pleased to say that Robert Bushell has now joined us. He comes from a similar work background and has picked up straight away on cases in Tunbridge Wells. Sharon Carrick the Caseworker from Sevenoaks has also now left the agency and her position is being advertised. Lesley Wheal has now gone back to her roots of Caseworker for Tonbridge & Malling and is no longer a Senior with line managing duties.</p> <p>4.2 David Eaton explained that a re-structure of the agency staff was in progress. At present the structure is very flat and he line manages most of the staff. Under the new structure there will be a management team with Seniors in each department. Staff are being encouraged to apply for the new positions available and any vacancies left after this process will be advertised. This will result in 22 staff rather than the 18 at present. David Eaton felt that the whole service would be enhanced especially the Handyperson Service where it will have an administrator specifically for that service, an Ancillary Services Team Leader and a Senior Handyperson. It was thought that this would provide a much better, more consistent service. Cllr Cure thought that this would be a real benefit to the service. David Eaton said that there would also be a new Caseworker recruited for the Ancillary Services who would be involved in visiting clients and completing support plans, then referring them onto all the appropriate support services including handyperson services, core caseworkers, Occupational Therapy and other social groups.</p>	

4.3 Linda Hibbs asked if the staff are involved in line managing staff with for example the senior surveyor is there to be any back up cover. David Eaton explained that he did not think there was a need for this. Cllr Cure asked how many vacancies there would be and David Eaton said that many of the roles would be filled internally but any posts left to fill, like caseworkers or administrators would be advertised.

4.4 David Eaton then went on to explain the Management accounts. There is currently a deficit of £12,500 but that is 50% lower than last year so it has been significantly reduced. Chris Thomas felt that this small deficit was manageable. With regard to the performance information

4.5 Cllr Cure was concerned at the 96 weeks timescale for the completion of a case. Lesley Wheal explained that this was a child case and therefore very complex with lots of people involved. Chris Thomas felt that a more detailed breakdown of these timescales was needed as one case can bring the whole average speed of service down. David Eaton agreed to look at these reports in order to give this information.

4.6 David Eaton said that the Handyperson service was on target to meet its 100 jobs per year and felt that the target was perhaps too low. He predicted that the service could go on to do as many as 400 to 450 jobs in this current year. Chris Thomas asked that when there are new leaflets available that they are passed out amongst the group members in order that the services can be promoted to their clients.

4.7 Cllr Cure asked Linda Hibbs if as a borough we are happy with the service from in touch. Linda Hibbs said that the service is certainly improving since going across to in touch and it was good to see that the backlog of cases is being dealt with. David Eaton was glad to note that the borough is happy with the service provided and said that it would improve further over the next few months.

4.8 David Eaton explained about the new services within the Homesafe Handyperson service. With the funding from Supporting people in touch were now able to provide new free products to clients, including carbon monoxide detectors, letter box cages, smoke detectors and electric blankets.

4.9 Chris Thomas asked if the electrical installations in properties that we visited were checked as many elderly clients in old properties have unsafe wiring. David Eaton said that when the Handyperson or caseworkers visit they do have a look at wiring and then look into any help if it is required.

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	<p>4.10 David Eaton said that he is thinking about the introduction of an MOT for your house where for a small annual fee would be payable and clients would receive an annual check up with free gutter clearance. This idea is being tested with service users presently</p> <p>4.11 Cllr Balcombe felt that this type of service from trusted people would be welcomed. He had experienced problems with tradesmen and his mother-in-law involving a big company, British Gas, trying to say that she needed a new boiler until he got involved then they managed to get parts for the old one. Chris Thomas said that trading standards needed to get involved to warn elderly people of these problems.</p> <p>4.12 David Eaton then explained that the Quality Mark for the Tonbridge and Malling agency needed renewing but there had been many changes in the format of this. It was first thought that this would go ahead in November but now there was a charge of £1500.00 for this service and David Eaton felt that it would be better to do the agency as a whole and renew all the Quality Marks at once later than previously planned. It was not sure who requested the Quality Mark and Linda Hibbs said that she would look into it and report back to David Eaton.</p>	LH
<p>5) New Advisory Group Structure</p>	<p>5.1 Cllr Cure said that on this he was totally opposed to a Chairman who is in a cabinet position. It needs to be an independent chairman for the new group. Cllr Balcombe and Cllr Atkinson agreed. David Eaton said that we need to discuss what the new structure for the group will be. Cllr Cure said that we need to agree how many members are needed to represent each authority. We also need to encourage voluntary group members to come, they have an important role in the group. David Eaton explained that the Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells group agreed with the idea of just 1 group meeting but that it was important to maintain links with the local authority funding partners, voluntary groups and clients. It was thought that perhaps one meeting could be held annually as a forum which would work as an information sharing day to involve the voluntary services and clients.</p> <p>5.2 Chris Thomas said that it was important that an independent meeting was held to deal with certain issues and these cannot be discussed within a large meeting. Quite often although a large information day would get good attendance it does not necessarily get decisions made. It was felt that a big forum is not always the best place to make decisions and discuss issues on the service.</p>	

	<p>5.3 David Eaton said that the consultation for this new format would run until the end of December so once it had been discussed at each advisory group then he would collate the findings and provide an outline plan for the new structure. Cllr Cure did say that an information day once a year to showcase the service would be excellent to let people know about the HIA Service.</p> <p>5.4 Cllr Cure said that perhaps 3 representatives from each authority and then a representative from the voluntary organisations, KAB, British Legion & Volunteer Bureau.</p> <p>5.5 Chris Thomas felt that maybe 3 from each authority was too many as this would be 12 members already so perhaps just 2 from each local authority would be enough. David Eaton said that the key message is to keep communications open with all the members.</p> <p>5.6 Chris Thomas said that there was a lot to discuss on this and that David Eaton should report back to the group once he has spoken to all the advisory groups. Chris Thomas also agreed that the chairman needs to be independent in order to get agreements and decisions at these meetings. Cllr Cure said that a paper needs to be prepared to decide who needs to attend and then need to have an agreement with those members to attend the meeting.</p>	DE
<p>6) Technical Report</p>	<p>6.1 Lesley then gave a brief outline of the technical report. Lesley explained that the 96 weeks timescale on one particular case was caused by waiting 18 weeks for the landlord's approval and not having a surveyor for 6 months. When these factors are taken out it does bring down the figures to a more reasonable timescale. Another two cases took 68 and 70 weeks and this was because the drawings service was outsourced whilst the service was without a surveyor. Chris Thomas said that these issues had now been addressed and it was expected that this timescale will improve. David Eaton explained that the approval to start dates had now improved and over the next quarter we will get a better idea of the service we are providing.</p>	
<p>7) Agency Round-up</p>	<p>7.1 Unfortunately other agencies were not in attendance to give information on current changes in their services.</p>	

<p>8) Any Other Business</p>	<p>8.1 Chris Thomas explained that the referrals from the caseworkers for the Pension and Disability Service can be unclear and he felt that the caseworkers would perhaps benefit from some training. He would be happy to send someone from the Pension & Disability Service to train the 6 caseworkers. David Eaton said that he would consider this and report back to Chris Thomas.</p> <p>8.2 Cllr Cure said that the Tonbridge Volunteer Bureau is now at the Tonbridge Gateway every Friday and is now also moving into Snodland every other Wednesday.</p> <p>8.3 After a meeting with Cllr Cure on Wednesday 2 September to agree a list of prospective members for the new advisory group format, it has been attached for all members information and will be taken to the Maidstone Advisory Group for their discussion. David Eaton will then report back to all the groups before finalising the details.</p>	
<p>9) Date of next Meeting</p>	<p>9.1 The date for the next meeting will agreed at a later date.</p>	

Outline of Members for New Advisory Group to Cover Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells

Chairman – to be elected from Voluntary Bodies

Representatives from each local borough

Elected Members – 2 from each Borough 8

Officers - 1 from each Borough (suggest they are non voting) 4

County wide Organisations

Supporting People – West Kent 1

Kent County Council 1

Occupational Therapy 1

West Kent Community Health (PCT) 1

Voluntary Bodies

British Legion 1

Hi Kent (organisation for Deaf) 1

Kent Association for the Blind 1

CROP 1

Citizens Advice Bureau 1

Carers First 1

Age Concern/Help the Aged 1

Safa Force Help 1

Pension & Disabilities Service 1

Service Users

Client – 1 from each Borough 4

In touch

HIA Services Manager, Senior Surveyor or Caseworker &
Administrator. 3

Total 32