

EAST MIDLANDS HOUSING

DISABILITY SERVICE USER GROUP

WEDNESDAY 14TH JANUARY 2009

Present : Kathryn Webster
Marion Quinn
Viv Chamberlain
Nick Davis

Steve Bateman
Sharon Bateman
Graeme Stewardson
Jhon Bateman

ACTION

1. **Apologies**

Kathleen Wade
Sid Jeewa
Nicola Gough

Brian Cannon
Brian Fear

2. **Welcome and Introductions**

VC mentioned the need to raise the profile of the group. Information held on residents could be used to target.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Minutes of Meeting of 30th September 2008 agreed.

4. **Matters arising from previous Minutes**

5. KW advised amends to the Complaints Policy made and it is out at final consultation with staff at present.

It was also agreed that in future meetings need to be structured and concise and ensure sufficient time to deal with agenda items succinctly and properly.

5. **Nick Davis 2008 Update and 2009 Plans**

ND advised that in 2008 the following had happened :

It had been an interesting year. Obtained an extra £100k funding to clear backlogs and deal quickly with new cases. Spent a total of £360k but wasn't easy.

Had to bring in extra Occupational Therapy Support to achieve the spend. £140 per assessment this cost but did mean we were able to catch up.

£177K spent on 150+ completed cases

£130K on site/in progress (106 customers)

£121K at assessment stage (34 cases)

£428K total. This is over the £360K budget but will carry forward to 2009.

290 customers' very happy, but still 161 customers awaiting assessment as awareness has been raised about the scheme more have come forward.

Awareness raised through – targeted advertising, disability awareness is higher generally. Housing Officers are also advertising. Consequently more cases. VC stated there were more direct letters coming from OT's in local authorities. MQ suggested if there was more demand, awareness and an aging population isn't that a case for more funding.

2009 is about recognising adaptations as the norm. The AC were pleased we had an adaptations team so need to build on this. We need to work smarter this year i.e. look at material cost, schedule of rates for contractors. Going to try and design out the problems. VC emphasis will change. She is more involved with Dave Shaw who manages the capital spend and this is raising the profile and concentrating DDA issues at the major and capital repairs programme. We also want VC to have involvement at the new property development stage too.

We need to get more funding from local authorities (LAs) in particular. Needs to be a higher priority for 2009. Shared funding could lever in up to 50% more (£200k approx) this would allow us to meet higher demand.

We work with 35 LAs, 6 closely. Wrote to the others and one – Derby City wrote back and said they aren't able to work with us as we have a budget ourselves.

MQ advised that having had involvement on various committees with Derbyshire County Council she wasn't surprised, but that South Derbyshire District Council were totally different. SB asked if NWLDC were on board – VC stated they were.

VC also advised that because of the number of LA's involved, we need to get them to work the EMHA way otherwise we will have to cope with 35 different ways.

ND asked if the DSUG members would be willing to write/lobby? Members agreed they would be willing to sign a letter collectively. SB said the lobbying needs to remind the LA of their legal obligation. SB said that we need to list the advantages of working together with LA's.

VC

KW suggested prioritising and inviting LAs to meetings. Demonstrating that there is demand in the LA area would benefit residents and the LA may find it more difficult to say no. Also need to build greater links with community services disability groups and OT officers who would help apply pressure. The group were supportive of this.

ND suggested a postcode lottery existed in terms of funding. Group members experience confirmed this.

ND advised that VC has prepared a report to suggest better use of VC's time, bringing in an outside OT so she can concentrate on communication, funding, partnerships. The intention is that Viv will be more strategic but steering the assessments. Viv will still do assessments. Housing Director is on board with this but still to be approved.

The Association has also developed a positive ageing strategy that will steer some of the issues relating to disability that EMHA need s to deal with.

ACTION

Assistance technology is also being used in two schemes as a pilot project which will help identify how this can be used for independent living.

ND advised that reporting on targets and performances have been improved. 96.4% satisfaction at present, but target is 98% but moving in the right direction. VC to communicate target times for adapts completions in writing to residents – target is 7-10 working days.

VC

Also keeping better service records and details of equipment provision to ensure that servicing schedules are met. Will be finalising an equipment audit shortly so can plan for future equipment upgrades.

Individual budgets are being looked at and progress on these is ongoing.

MQ reported that she really requires a wall mounted phone. ND agreed to look at this.

ND

SB asked if contractors have a fixed budget for jobs? ND advised that budgets differ dependant on the precise nature of the job. SB feels some routine jobs are being passed to the Access Team unnecessarily. ND advised that the maintenance budget is to repair what is there already (replacing worn out parts) only enhancements, upgrades or adaptations go to the access team.

SharonB advised that staff have been told that if they feel they need Viv's input they should ask for it.

SharonB asked if EMHA could refuse permission for a Mutual Exchange on adapted properties. KW confirmed that a specific reason for refusal can be that the property is specifically adapted and the incoming tenants do not need the adaptation.

6. **Overview of Housing Management role and disability issues**

11.05 am Graeme Stewardson joined the meeting.

GS introduced himself – Head of Housing for EMHA. 64 staff in the Housing Management team including housing officers, site staff, and specialist staff. Work very closely with the Maintenance and Adaptations team. Particularly on relets. There are four area teams based in Sutton in Ashfield, Coalville, Northants, Leicester with 4 Area Housing Managers managing these. The AHMs are the ones with the local focus, contact points for LAs. In terms of adapted properties – GS teams take a lead on finding applicants for these. ND confirmed adopted voids are now on the housing IT systems and so this flags up quickly whether the property is adapted and so the housing teams can deal more responsively to allocate to applicants who need these adaptations. Time is still a key factor, but able to manage the process better.

MQ asked if this approach can be included in the LA lobbying letter too.

VC

ACTION

VC confirmed that she was being made aware of vacancies more often. ND advised it's a shame that the timescale is still an issue and ideally would be better if it could be waived. GS confirmed the clock starts ticking from when it becomes void, but can work on allocating the property once the termination notice comes in. Processes are improving though.

GS advised that other areas of work for the housing management team include: rent recovery, evictions, void (empty) property management, anti-social behaviour management, negotiation and mediation work is vital for ASB work and can take a long time. Sharon B asked if it was recognised that some people with disabilities are targets for ASB, a target for ridicule as they are intimidated by "able bodied" people acting anti-socially.

VC advised that some residents are declining adaptations as it draws attention to them and they are being verbally abused. Sharon B advised that in her experience terms used by some people are derogatory to disabled people and some use it intentionally.

Sharon B stated that in her experience natural reactions are better – acting "normally". ND advised that we work with contractors on diversity issues.

We need to have a think about how we can get better understanding and raise awareness of disability differences.

GS stated that if a member of the Housing Management team accidentally causes offence we need to know so people can learn from experiences. GS suggested the AHMs may attend DSUG periodically to observe. This was welcomed.

GS**7. DES Action Plan**

Disability Policy – good to be ratified.

KW

Living with a disability – Marion to pen something for the next EMHA News.

MQ

Newsletter – need to keep momentum. Even if only signposting to other services, or organisations. Could also do this from a carers view point. If DSUG members have ideas for future articles let KW know.

ALL

Next EMH News to feature article about DSUG and meeting dates for 2009 and outline agendas and request for details of help groups.

MQ / KW

DSUG leaflet to be developed at a future meeting.

ALL

Disability Groups leaflet specific to each area should also be developed. It was agreed that DSUG would begin to collate information that could be used in the leaflet.

ALL

Mobile inclusion loop at Jubilee House works intermittently – needs to be checked.

**Sharon
B**

Gardening scheme being revised /re thought.

ACTION

8. **Future of DSUG**

IDEAS

Gardening for disabled
DSUG awareness raising
DSUG publicity leaflet
DSUG supporting leaflet for Diversity training

Actions to follow up :

VC to do report on progress from first meeting action items to next meeting

VC

Service Promises – reprinting of leaflet where we are?

LB

Invite Chan to next DSUG meeting

KW

It was agreed that future meetings should focus on achieving actions so the morning part would be spent on discussion with the afternoons doing things, i.e. writing leaflets, newsletter articles etc.

9. **Dates of Next Meeting:**

It was suggested that the meeting invitation letter needs to make it clear that carers are welcome, even if the care receiver cannot make it.

All meetings 10.15 am start with a 3.30 pm finish planned.

18th March 2009

2nd June 2009

29th July 2009

30th September 2009

25th November 2009