

## Home Support Service Review

### Report by Eibhlin McHugh, Acting Director, Communities and Wellbeing

#### 1 Purpose of Report

This report provides an update on the Home Support Service, the service having been the subject of a previous report to Cabinet in December 2010. The report provides an update on measures taken to improve the efficiency of the service and recommends plans for the cessation of the service by autumn 2013. Additionally, the report seeks approval for reinvesting a proportion of the resultant savings into Midlothian Council Complex Care Service to increase its efficiency and effectiveness.

#### 2 Background

2.1 The Home Support Service is one of three services provided directly by Midlothian Council within the field of home care. The *Reablement Service* provides a service intended to enable people to regain their skills and independence as far as possible. *The Complex Care Service* provides ongoing personal care to people with enduring complex needs. *The Home Support Service* provides practical support such as shopping and housework.

2.2 An eligibility criteria framework for social work services was introduced in 2006. This meant that unless users' needs were assessed as 'critical' or 'substantial' services would not be provided or funded directly by the Council, unless it was as part of an overall package of care aimed at addressing such a level of need. However, it was also agreed not to remove services from existing users, assessed and provided with services under the previous policy.

2.3 As a result the client base of the Home Support Service has diminished, currently standing at 82, as a consequence of service users either moving into residential or nursing care or dying. The staffing establishment of the Service has also diminished through natural turnover. However, the rate at which the staffing establishment has diminished has failed to match the rate at which service users have left the service. This has created over-capacity and therefore the service is increasingly inefficient.

2.4 The proposal is to gradually reduce staffing levels from the Home Support Service by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013 in accordance with the Council's

Policy for Organisational Restructure. Additionally, it is proposed to reinvest a proportion of the resulting savings within the Complex Care Service to provide the necessary staff cover in the evenings through the creation of 2 FTE posts.

- 2.5** Disestablishing the Home Support Service would result in a reduction in service for some individuals. Some individuals who currently receive the service free of charge through the Council financial assessment process would be required to pay for the service in future if it was purchased from an external provider. This would involve signposting service users to alternative providers for them to make their own arrangements and pay the full cost of the service.

### **3 Report Implications**

#### **3.1 Resource**

The Home Support Service has a budgeted establishment of 10.78 FTE home support workers with an annual cost of £201,000. There are currently 10.33 FTE staff in post made up of 19 individuals.

These staff deliver 138 hours of service per week to 82 service users. This level of service requires a maximum of 5 FTE staff. Reducing the establishment within the Home Support Service by 5.78 FTE would generate an annual saving of £108,000. This annual saving would increase to £201,000 in autumn 2013 when the service ceases.

The Home Support service generates income from service users. The annual income attributable to Home Support is around £48,000. This will diminish over time as the volume of service delivered reduces and will cease when the service stops in autumn 2013.

If the service was purchased externally the annual income would be retained but there would be an annual cost to the Council of around £93,000 based on the current 138 hours per week provided. Consideration must also be given to potential costs as a result of reduction in staffing levels in accordance with the Council's Policy for Organisational Restructure which could amount to up to £115,000.

It is proposed that 2 FTE care support worker posts are created within the Complex Care Service at an initial annual cost of £46,520 rising to £51,000 at the top of the pay scale. This additional cost would be funded by the savings within the Home Support Service.

The net savings of £31k in 2012-13 rising to £86k in 2013-14 and £103k in 2014-15 from the increased efficiency and future cessation of the service will contribute to the Older People's Service Review savings target of £200,000.

#### **3.2 Risk**

Failure to fully address the over-capacity of the Home Support Service would lead to progressively-worsening inefficiency at a time when services are under increasing scrutiny with regard to value.

Disestablishing the Home Support Service would lead to a loss of income from service users.

Reduction or disestablishment of the Home Support Service will require redeployment to be sought for affected staff in accordance with the Council's Policy for Organisational Restructure. Where redeployment involves a move to a suitable vacant post in Complex Care or Reablement, the essential qualification criteria for these posts is an SVQ (Scottish Vocational Qualification) Level 2 in Care. For staff who do not currently possess this qualification, it is anticipated it would take approximately two years to complete this course. Staff would have to be willing to undertake the SVQ course to be eligible for these vacancies.

### **3.3 Policy**

#### **Strategy**

This report links to Communities and Wellbeing Service Priority S01 - *...Respond to growing service demands by enhancing community partnerships that promote health and well-being and by transforming the way we provide and procure effective and affordable services for adults.*

#### **Consultation**

Staff were written to and advised of the reduction and eventual disestablishment of the service 18 months ago.

Following a decision made regarding this report, further consultation with affected employees and Trade Unions would be required in accordance with the Council's Policy for Organisational Restructure and Midlothian Council's Recognition and Procedural Agreement.

#### **Equalities**

This report proposes a significant change to an existing service for 82 - service users. As such, an equalities impact assessment is being undertaken.

#### **Sustainability**

The recommendations support the sustainability of key Council services by removing inefficiency in a service area that is not considered a priority. There is the potential for the cessation of service to create demand that is now being met by local enterprise, offering far greater flexibility and a broader range of provision (e.g. the Home Support Service only offers provision Monday to Friday, in the morning). The current maximum charge applicable for the service (£8.50 per hour) is of a level that offers the possibility of full-cost recovery for non-profit making providers.

#### **4 IT Issues**

There are no IT issues arising from this report.

#### **5 Summary**

The Home Support Service currently operates at around 37% capacity. This inefficiency has arisen since December 2010 when the service was last down-sized to match workload and is projected to grow further because reduction in staffing has not matched the rate at which service users have left the service. As a consequence of it being a 'diminishing' service, comprising of unqualified staff working under Local Government conditions of service, it is unlikely that outsourcing the service would prove attractive to the external sector as TUPE would almost certainly apply. Staff working in this service had been offered the opportunity to undertake SVQ Level 2 in Care but have previously chosen not to do this. There will be limited opportunities for alternative employment within the care sector for disestablished staff as qualifications are required and the staff group have previously opted not to undertake this.

In the event that the Council decides to cease the provision of the Home Support Service, it is understood that a private sector provider would expand further into the market as they are already providing this service in Midlothian to other clients. A non-profit making provider has also established itself and provides a service across Midlothian. There is also the potential for a voluntary sector provider or 'social enterprise' to offer a broader and more flexible range of low-level services that are preventative in nature and support older people to stay at home safely and securely (e.g. a handyman service to complement existing 'care and repair'-type services). This area of need was identified through previous public consultation and was subsequently incorporated into the Joint Midlothian Older People's strategy 2011 – 2015.

#### **6 Recommendations**

Consideration be given to the following recommendations:

- i) The Home Support Service should continue to scale-down to a position of full capacity, with a more proactive programme to reduce the current establishment of 19 staff in line with decreasing demand for the service.
- ii) Investment of £46,520 released as a result of the reduction of staff from the Home Support Service to create a further 2 FTE posts within the Complex Care Service.
- iii) The Home Support Service is disestablished entirely by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013. Any remaining service users would then be signposted to alternative services.

**2<sup>nd</sup> August 2012**

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