

ELDERLY PERSON INITIATIVE – HANDY PERSON SCHEME

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines a new partnership scheme to undertake small repairs and improvements to help prevent falls amongst older residents.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The provision of services which help support older people to live independently is stressed in guidance as an objective for all agencies – housing, health and social services.
- 2.2 Obtaining accessible, low cost, reliable services for carrying out adaptations and improvements is often a problem for older people. The Council, Essex Social Services, Springboard Housing Association and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions already fund a Home Improvement Agency service, but this deals primarily with assistance to applicants who are applying for housing grants. Even the smallest type of grant – Home Repair Assistance – tends to be for several hundred pounds worth of work. Grant Funding require completion of forms, estimates, approval, grant claim etc.
- 2.3 In response to Government initiatives and funding, Essex Social Services, the Health Authorities and Voluntary Sector have produced a Prevention Grant Strategy, the objective of which is to “prevent or delay the need for more costly intensive services, and adopting an approach that will slow down or delay loss of independence and improve quality of life.”
- 2.4 The Prevention Grant Strategy includes a number of initiatives targeted at the needs of older people, people with disabilities, mental health or substance abuse problems or learning disabilities.
- 2.5 The importance of housing within community care is recognised in the strategy, which includes continued matched funding for Home Improvement Agencies. It also provides for the establishment of ‘handy person schemes’ that will provide grab rails, stair rails, undertake the repair of steps and carry out other similar small jobs for older people to help reduce the risk of them falling.
- 2.6 Discussions have taken place between officers from the Council, Social Services, Rochford Primary Care Group and Springboard Housing Association about the possible establishment of such a scheme within the district.

3. SCHEME DETAILS

- 3.1 The scheme will be aimed at reducing the number of admissions to hospital amongst older people as a result of a fall.
- 3.2 As well at those residents who become known to the Home Improvement Agency through their contacts, referrals of older residents are likely to be made by GPs, voluntary and statutory agencies.
- 3.3 It is proposed that a home safety audit will be carried out by the 'handy person' covering items such as:
- height and safety of letter boxes
 - need for grab rails at front and rear entrances and in bathrooms
 - floor safety
 - condition of steps and stairs
 - loose or trailing wires
 - adequacy of lighting etc.
- 3.4 To make the scheme available to all those in need, no charge will be made for labour, but donations will be requested for the cost of materials. In circumstances where the resident is unable to make a donation, this will not prohibit access to the scheme.
- 3.5 Performance measures will be set and users will be surveyed for their views of the service.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 The Springboard Housing Improvement Agency is applying for matched funding from Essex Social Services Prevention Grant, Rochford Primary Care Group and the Council. Application is also being made to Springboard Housing Association's Charitable Trust and voluntary bodies. If the funding applications are successful, the project could start by October.
- 4.2 On the basis of discussions so far, it is proposed that the project be started on a part-time basis for 18 hours per week.

The total cost to the end of the financial year will be £8000 to be financed equally by Rochford Primary Care Group, ECC Social Services, Springboard and the Council, i.e. £2000 each. The cost and contributions will be double this for a full year.

- 4.3 This year's contribution can be met from the funding for private sector renewal, as this is clearly a complementary activity.

5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Some of the work undertaken will also assist to reduce the risk of crime e.g. external lighting.

6 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That the Council supports the establishment of a handy person scheme as outlined in the report.
- (2) That a figure of £4000 be included in the draft estimates for 2001/2002. (HHHCC)(HFS)

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Background Papers:

Proposal for handyman scheme, Springboard Housing Association letter – 7th June, 2000.

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