Integrated Disability & Equipment Resource Centre:

Draft Service Model and Business Plan

1. Introduction

Effective equipment services are crucial to the concept of independent living for people of all ages with a disability as reflected by various performance indicators and targets for some time. Integrated Community Equipment Services (ICES) are seen by the Government as fundamental to effective delivery. More recently however thinking has expanded to include the need for all services to refocus resources upon the health and well-being agenda especially in relation to older people and those with chronic disease or long term conditions. This includes the need to develop services that are designed around the needs of the user rather than being resource led.

In the central Lancashire area of Preston, Chorley and South Ribble the “joint” equipment service is in need of total re-provision as the current store is unfit for purpose. Whilst this demands significant financial outlay it also provides a rare opportunity to develop an integrated service that can both modernise the equipment service, improve economies of scale and develop a model of service that maximises the potential to promote independence & well-being for those with a disability.

This paper sets out the business plan to expand the basic ICES model by expanding around it a one-stop disability service.

2. Outline Plan

The plan developed from local working groups is to provide a purpose built facility at Centurion Park, Leyland to offer a full assessment, ICES and support centre to those with a disability.

Centurion Park offers an rare opportunity in as much as the developer is prepared to reconfigure a basic warehouse storage space of 12,000 sq ft into a unit that includes a store age area and a split-level office area creating an effective useable floor space of 14,250 sq ft. The costs for this are spread between the capital set-up costs (large scale structural redesign) and a rental figure that includes other minor works to produce an equipment store facility.

3. Details

“Centurion Park,” has the capacity to provide the following:

1. storage are of approximately 7,625 Sq. Ft.,
2. independent living demonstration area 2,125 Sq. Ft.,
3. open plan office area of 4,500 Sq. Ft.

The open plan nature of the design maximises present and future flexibility. The centres location facilitates ready access for service users in keeping with current thinking related to accessibility and is well placed for the delivery across the area.
4. Advantages of the Integrated Disability and Equipment Resource Centre Model

The basic advantages are:

- Improved User Experience
- Improved Professional Development and Integration
- Improved Economies of Scale

5. Improved User Experience

It is well known that service users prefer to access services at one single point of delivery rather than being required to trawl around several agencies or locations.

Accessibility to a range of services on one site will save service users time, reduce frustration and make understanding services more straightforward.

A one-stop service within a purpose built facility offers obvious practical advantages to those with a disability. The nature of the building offers a radical new approach to improving user access for example ample parking (part covered), easy movement around the facility and tailor made onsite services.

A clear aim of the service is to improve the service user experience and provide a centre for service users to feel valued and involved in the services we provide. The “pooled” nature of professional and voluntary sector collaboration will have a vital role to play in achieving this ambition. It is anticipated that there will be a Management Committee for the building that fully involves service users. Service user access to the facility is a fundamental aspect of this enhanced model.

6. Improved Professional Development and Integration

A major aspect of the development of the Integrated Resource Centre model is the plan to improve the way services are provided and developed. This expands the Government requirements to provide an ICES service and adds a range of related services. As a result the Resource Centre model will derive clear local advantages as a result of enhanced co-working and greater integration. Specific developments in service are planned in the following areas:

**Information**

Authorities have a duty to provide information about their services. The one-stop nature of the resource centre will make it easier to provide this assistance as it allows ready signposting to anyone needing to know of services for those with a disability. It is anticipated that this will be manifest in the creation of an advisor or information officer post ideally provided in conjunction with the voluntary sector.
**SAP Compliance**

Whilst SAP is not required by all service user groups it is anticipated that consistency of documentation will be a standard for the service to achieve. This will prepare the service well for further integration and again ease the process from the service user’s perspective.

**Improved Screening**

Currently there is severe pressure upon the Occupational Therapy Service. A recent pilot project in Preston however has demonstrated the value of a screening service for OT referrals achieving a reduction in the numbers of referrals to the OT services of 25-30% over a period of 3 months. The Integrated Resource Centre model provides an ideal base to take forward the development of such a service given it can act as the initial point of referral for all OT services.

**Improved Professional Working**

The co-location of workers together help to ensure good practice is shared and interagency support is maximised. Currently there is considerable variation in terms of waiting times for an OT referral. It is anticipated that bringing services together more will help to remove such variation and improve overall delivery.

**Efficiency**

The availability of a range of professionals within one setting, with a proper signposting role, will help to ensure service users are provided with the services or advice they require speedily and reduce the number of inappropriate referrals thereby preserving professional time. It is anticipated the Resource Centre model will, through its ability to demonstrate equipment, will improve the effective allocation of resources.

**Integration**

The model offers the potential to unite fragmented services into a more logical and accessible form of provision. At this stage the model seeks to “pool” related services across a range of responsibilities in order to benefit from the natural advantages this offers without the bureaucratic complications related to formally reconstituting organisational structures.

**Seamless Service**

Accessibility of a range of services on one site will help to create the reality of a seamless service. Pooling services supports exchange of information and improved understanding amongst professionals. The Resource Centre model will provide the base for a seamless service and for other joint initiatives to thrive.
7. Improved Economies of Scale

The developments outlined above will lead to improved economies of scale in the following areas:

- Pooling of staff
- Release of office capacity elsewhere
- Shared development costs of new services
- Improved efficiencies within equipment service
- Improved recycling
- Improved maintenance/longevity of equipment
- Improved potential to promote preventative approaches
- Improved allocation of resources

8. The Business Case

The proposed plan expands the ICES model to create a new type of service as set out above, development the department is committed to which will provide the opportunity for savings through rationalising roles, simplifying systems and promotion of the prevention and enabling agenda.

It needs to be recognised however that the present service has been under resourced for some time and current funding does not reflect what it would cost to provide a good enough facility at the existing fairly dilapidated site to create a basic Integrated Community Equipment Store.

9. Expanding the Model

The new Resource Centre model therefore reflects an effective expansion of “storage capacity” of 2,125 sq ft over that required for a basic ICES. This extra space is required to allow for an additional service commonly available in many areas i.e. an Independent Living Centre. The model may not achieve all that a dedicated ILC may offer? It will however provide a cost effective alternative by combining the availability of professional advice from a range of professionals and availability of equipment for demonstration and consideration including future developments in services.

10. Proposed New Site: Centurion Park

10a. Staffing

It is a clear aim of this model that the majority of staffing costs will be cost neutral with benefits expected from the shared nature of the resource. The current store has a basic compliment of staff whose capacity to manage a larger store is increased through improved facilities. Professionals on site especially OT’s and Technical Instructors will support the demonstration area. At this stage the only increase in staffing anticipated is 1.5 WTE receptionists funded across all parties. Management will be provided by the Chorley & South Ribble PCT from within current expenditure.
It is estimated this space will accommodate at least 40 members of staff and as such this reflects excellent value for money in pure accommodation terms alone. Given it is the additional office space, to accommodate a full range of professional services within an ICES that makes this model unique, the case for moderate additional funding appears to be attractive.

11. The New Model

Should agreement be given to fund the new model it will produce a one-stop service by combining the Integrated Community Equipment Store, Independent Living Space and ready access to a range of professionals.

The professionals who would work within the new service model would include:

- Reception Staff
- Store Management and Store Staff
- Community Occupational Therapy Staff
- Social Services Staff
- Customer Care
- Screening Officers
- Visual Impairment Officers
- Continence Professionals
- Specialist Nursing
- Clerical Staff
- Major Improvement and Disabled Facilities Grant Advisor/Administrators
- Carers Support Service
- Direct Payment Organisers
- Voluntary Sector Workers including Information Officers
- Housing Officers
- Benefits Advisers
- Man With a Van Service
- Home Improvement Agencies
- N.B. Should the model be fully funded there is the potential to consider of presence of some or all of the localities PDSI assessment and care management service at Centurion Park?

12. Potential Future Development

An area to allow for the demonstration of equipment is something that is felt to be essential both to the service user and the service. It is believed that demonstration and testing of appliances and aids including bath/shower aids will improve the way equipment is issued and used. The nature of the building as such allows for flexible use e.g. the construction of consulting rooms for private discussion and fitting. The plans do not include the full mock-up of a two storey dwelling to demonstrate stair lifts. The layout of the building however allows this to be considered should additional funding be obtained at a later date.
13. Future-proofing

A very important aspect of this development is the way the structure of the building will be strengthened to allow for the open-plan aspect to include office space. This will help to ensure that once occupied the building can be readily adapted to provide a range of future configurations should this be required.

The building has been designed with the disabled person in mind. It includes for example the provision of a lift to offices to the mezzanine level. This will make the building not only fully accessible to service users but will comply with the Disability Discrimination Act for employees. Should a project on this scale be agreed it lends itself well to future development such as the demonstration of Electronic Assistive Technology and potentially both tele-care and tele-health systems as they develop?

14. Localisation

Recent work within the Lancashire Local South Ribble Pilot has resulted in an agreed Pilot to address delays and shortfalls in the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants. A key part of this plan and a recommendation agreed by elected members is the development of a new model of a system of provision of information, assessment, equipment and adaptations that support people in their own homes.

The provision of a DFG facility would be the cornerstone of this model. It would promote a quality of service for assessment, equipment and facilities for all services that came together to enable the model. The development should not be seen as the final perfect model but one that has the potential and flexibility to enable that to be achieved.

Work is also underway in Chorley & South Ribble for re-tendering of the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) provider contract. It is envisaged, should the Resource Centre model be agreed, that the new HIA will have a direct presence in the centre.

15. Management

It is proposed that the day to day management of the Resource Centre will be provided by Chorley and South Ribble PCT who currently provide the existing equipment store service. A Community Equipment Services Integrated Management Board model has been developed locally and it is proposed that this management board will have overall management responsibility for the Resource Centre with representatives from all the funding agencies, those organisations who have a presence in the centre and service users.

16. Rental Period

The original rental cost of the Centurion Park model was dependent upon a 15yr lease period, in part, to help recoup some of the development costs of the building specific to the equipment store. The developer has confirmed that a 10 yr lease period can be obtained at a revised cost: i.e. a 15 year lease, with a 10 yr break clause, inclusive of the additional office space at £93,000. The Primary Care Trust will lease the building.
17. Funding for the New Service

Lancashire County Council already funds a proportion of cost for the running of the Loan Store at Sharoe Green Hospital, funding for community Occupational Therapists and aids and adaptations. There would be a transfer of these costs into the new service model. The additional expenditure required to support this development is currently subject to discussion with the two Primary Care Trusts and progress regarding the Integrated Disability Equipment & Resource Centre is dependent on the outcome of these negotiations and the identification of long term funding.

18. Conclusion

The proposal to replace the old Sharoe Green Equipment Store with a fully Integrated Resource Centre model designed to produce a one-stop service for those with a disability is an exciting and ground-breaking opportunity.

It offers a profound improvement in provision that can serve as a base for further service development and integration. The centre will reflect a true multidisciplinary approach involving Lancashire County Council and our colleagues in Health and beyond. The pace of this development is now extremely fast given the pressures to develop a replacement for Sharoe Green. We can report however that discussion related to the Resource Centre model have been well received by other agencies including City and Borough elected members and officers. Should the outline plan receive the support of the County this will create a very positive platform for integrated working today of direct benefit to the people we serve and a clear example of effective corporate working for the future.