

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Director of the Community Health and Care Partnership

Community Health and Care Partnership Committee: November 2012

Subject: Stairlift Provision for Residents in Private Sector Housing

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To seek authority to revise the method of funding stairlifts for disabled people living in private sector housing.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** Members are asked (1) to approve the proposal to cease funding stairlifts through private sector grants to owners and commence funding stairlifts through the EquipU contract; and (2) agree that its operation be reviewed in 12 months time.

3. Background

- 3.1** The provision of adaptations to assist people with disabilities to remain in their own homes is a priority for West Dunbartonshire Council.
- 3.2** Although most types of 'adaptations' are made by building contractors, where a stairlift has been assessed by an Occupational Therapist as an essential adaptation, the service has been provided in differing ways, depending on whether the person is an owner or a tenant of the Council or a Housing Association.
- 3.3** When the Council's tenants (and other Housing Association tenants) are assessed as requiring a stairlift this is provided through our contract with EquipU, the Joint Equipment Store. Significant savings have been made through this route by bulk purchasing and the recycling of the equipment. While in use the equipment is regularly maintained to ensure that it remains in good condition, as a result of which all, or part, of the equipment is suitable for reuse when the original user no longer requires it. All stairlifts in the social rented sector are funded from the Social Work budget.
- 3.4** Owners and private tenants in West Dunbartonshire have historically been awarded home improvement grants to assist them to purchase and install a stairlift. As a result the stairlift becomes the service user's property and as such they are responsible for all maintenance requirements.
- 3.5** In recent years the cost of maintenance has increased substantially with some contractors charging as much as £800 per annum. This is a financial burden which many owners simply cannot afford and the resulting lack of regular maintenance leads to a deterioration in the condition of the equipment. In turn

this can lead to further applications for grant as the stairlift becomes uneconomical to repair or is beyond repair.

3.6 When the service user no longer requires the stairlift it is usual for the original provider to collect it with no refund or benefit to either the service user or the Council. Due to the age and medical profile of many service users it is not unusual for stairlifts to be removed within a relatively short time after installation.

3.7 With an ageing population and the increased emphasis on assisting people to remain independent in their own home, the demand for stairlifts is likely to increase in the coming years while budgets decrease. The level of grant awarded to applicants varies from 50% of the approved cost to 100% if the applicant is in receipt of certain benefits. Approximately one third of all applicants receive 100% whilst only 15% receive a 50% grant.

4. Main Issues

4.1 In order to establish whether similar savings could be made in the private sector a random selection of quotes provided by grant applicants were set against the price of supply and installation with Equipu's contracted rates through their recently tendered contract.

4.2 The table below indicates the savings that could be made

Table 1	Original £	Equipu £	Savings £
Client 1	915	1,070	-155
Client 2	1,625	1,220	405
Client 3	1,685	1,650	35
Client 4	1,389	1,650	-261
Client 5	1,674	1,220	454
Client 6	5,050	3,562	1,488
Client 7	4,875	3,562	1,313
Client 8	3,995	3,562	433
Client 9	4,088	3,562	526
Client 10	4,085	3,070	1015
TOTALS	29,381	24,128	5,253

4.3 The Guidance on the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 Act makes it clear that the duty is on the Council to meet the needs of a disabled person after an assessment, and as long as that need is met there is no requirement for grant. This position has been clarified with the Scottish Government.

4.4 Removing the funding of stairlifts from the grants system would allow the Council to fully fund the provision of stairlifts via the Equipu contract using monies transferred from the Grants Section to the Equipu budget. In this way ownership of the equipment would be retained by Equipu, allowing it to be recycled. While owners would not always be given a new stairlift they would

be assured of a properly serviced stairlift, free of charge and fully maintained for as long as it is required. It is hoped that as the stock of equipment increases the cost of provision can be driven down even further.

4.5 Projected Saving on Current Costs:

Current grant spend on stairlifts	£78,000
Estimated total cost of stairlift (grant & client contribution)	£90,000
Estimated cost of supplying stairlifts via Equipu	£61,800
Maintenance in first year 30 X £33	£990

4.6 Estimated saving in first year (£78,000 less £62,790) £15,210.

Service Improvements

4.7 In addition to the cost saving, staff time will be freed up as service users will no longer have to make formal applications for grants. The assessment by the OT (as happens already in the case of grant applications) is all that will be required; once the need has been assessed the order will be placed with EquipU who will proceed to arrange the provision of the required stairlift. This dispenses with the need for scrutiny of the grant application and the receipt of benefits information. This should be a much simpler process for the client as well.

4.8 We would seek to implement this new approach with immediate effect.

4.9 It is not proposed to apply this approach retrospectively to any previous stairlift installations.

5. **People Implications**

5.1 The new arrangements should result in a small saving of staff time, in both the CHCP and HEED.

6. **Financial Implications**

6.1 There are no financial implications as the new process should result in a reduction in costs.

7. **Risk Analysis**

7.1 The pilot period will provide adequate data to ensure that the proposal is financially viable and represents value for money.

This will also ensure that all publicly funded stairlift provision is made on the basis of safely meeting the assessed needs of the user.

8. **Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

8.1 Initial screening has not identified any negative impacts of this policy change.

9. Consultation

9.1 The Executive Director of HEEDS and Head of Finance have been consulted in preparing this report.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 The proposal meets three of the five main priorities for the Council:

- Improve care for and promote independence with older people.
- Improve local housing and environmentally sustainable infrastructure.
- Improve the wellbeing of communities and protect the welfare of vulnerable people.

R Keith Redpath
Director

Person to Contact: Christine McNeill
Head of Community Health & Care Services
chris.mcneill@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

Appendices: None

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All