

## **CARE AND REPAIR FORUM: CONSULTATION ON A NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR CARE AND REPAIR**

The Care and Repair Forum is seeking views on the content of a National Policy Statement for Care and Repair in Scotland. In the first instance it would welcome views on the issues discussed in this paper and whether there are additional issues that should also be included. Taking account of the responses to this consultation, the Forum will prepare a Policy Statement which will be circulated in draft for further comments before it is finalised.

### **Introduction to Care and Repair Services**

Care & Repair services offer personal, financial and technical support to people facing the difficult task of repairing, improving or adapting a home which is no longer suitable to the person's needs.

The provision of advice and information is a central part of Care and Repair's role, as well as providing practical assistance with grant applications and co-ordinating repairs. Care & Repair is a home-based and personalised service, which puts the client in control of decisions.

Staff visit people at home and assist them through the entire process of deciding what work is to be done, arranging the finance and organising the building work.

Each case involves a different approach and often staff must cross disciplinary and departmental boundaries, working closely with health, housing and social work staff, to reach a solution for the client.

The building work is funded in a variety of ways, including local authority grants, benefits, equity release, home loans and charitable funds.

The current core target group for Care and Repair services is older owner occupiers aged 60 and over. However, some Care and Repair services extend this client group to include owners of any age group with physical or mental disabilities, or with special housing needs; private rented sector tenants (who are older/disabled); and crofting tenants (particularly in the Highlands and Islands).

Some local offices operate a waiting list and there may be variations in services offered and what qualifies for grant-aid in each local authority area. The range of services offered and the client group varies depending on their area of operation and the availability of funding. Sometimes it is simply as a result of historic decisions.

However, Care and Repair projects can be characterised by providing one or more of four core activities:

- Advice and information
- Help with major repairs, improvements and adaptations
- Small repairs services
- Handyman services

The 2006 Housing Act places a responsibility on local authorities to adopt a strategic approach to addressing the condition and quality of private sector housing. Every local authority will be required to produce a 'Scheme of Assistance'.

The scheme allows local authorities to provide assistance for house repairs, improvements, adaptations and construction, as well as the acquisition or sale of a house. Scottish Government Guidance on the implementation of the 2006 Act Repair suggests local authorities may wish to explore how Care and Repair services can contribute to their Scheme of Assistance.

Examples of how this could happen include rolling out Care and Repair projects to a greater range of owners (and potentially charging for some of these services), contracting Care and Repair projects to provide an adaptations services for disabled people, and ensuring that there is a handyman service available for all eligible clients.

## **Background to Consultation**

The Care and Repair Forum Board, as the national co-ordinating body for Care and Repair in Scotland, has decided that it wishes to prepare and issue a National Policy Statement for Care and Repair. This follows on from a recommendation of the Scottish Government Review of Care and Repair published in 2009.

The Board envisages that the National Policy Statement would set out the aims and objectives of Care and Repair and how the services it provides link to current developments in policy and society at large. It would explain how Care and Repair operates at local and national level and it would identify key areas where the Forum plans to take forward changes. The intention is that the Policy Statement would be high level and succinct. It would supersede the National Standards for Care and Repair published in 2004 and it would be distributed widely to those with an interest in the work of Care and Repair in Scotland.

## **Key Issues for the Consultation**

### **1. Care and Repair – Aims**

Care and Repair was initially established by Age Concern and Shelter in Scotland in the early 1980s to help elderly owners in sub-tolerable housing in Scotland improve their housing conditions. It recognised that many older owners lived in very poor conditions and needed help to access grants and arrange the necessary work. The primary aim was, at that time, to secure an improvement in housing conditions and help tackle sub-tolerable housing.

As the number of sub-tolerable houses has reduced, Care and Repair has diversified the services it provides and the focus of its work has increasingly shifted to helping customers to live independently in their own houses within the community.

- Is it now reasonable to describe the primary aim of Care and Repair now as helping its clients to live independently in the community?
- Should improving the housing conditions of customers still remain an aim in its own right so that Care and Repair services should be made available even when there is no threat or potential threat to independent living ?

### **2. Customers for Care and Repair**

To date, the core customer groups for Care and Repair have been elderly and disabled owner occupiers. The 2004 National Standards defines the core target group as “older owner occupiers aged 60 or over”. This report comments that some local projects extend provision to “owners of any age with physical or mental disabilities, or with special housing needs”. The twin approach is also recognised in recent publicity for Care and Repair which refers to “enabling older and disabled people to stay in their homes”.

There are a number of questions which arise from this:

- Given the need to define “older persons” is it right to focus attention on those aged over 60 or should it be reduced to facilitate preventative action to say 55 or 60 or increased to 65 or 70 to help prioritise services on those most in need?
- Should there be a national commitment to seek to provide services to disabled persons of any age and, if so, how should this group be defined?
- Should owner-occupiers continue to be the key customer group together with crofters in the relevant parts of Scotland or should services be extended to private or even public sector tenants? The obvious case against extending eligibility in this way is that it is the landlords who, for most repairs and improvements, have responsibility for work to be undertaken and, indeed, who would need to give their consent before Care and Repair could be involved.

### **3. Determining Priorities Based on Need**

Whatever decisions are made on the scope of the core customer groups, this is bound to include large number of households in Scotland who are potential customers and it seems inevitable that some further assessment of relative needs is, and will continue to be, required. There are a number of issues which arise from this:

- If the primary aim of Care and Repair is to enable customers to continue to live independently in their own homes, should any assessment of priorities at the local level be clearly tied into this aim? Does this imply that the determination of priorities should be more closely linked to community care assessments than may be the case at present?
- If the basis for deciding priorities is left implicit, particularly if the availability of services is not widely promoted, then there is a danger that services will be channelled to those households who request help (who may not be those most in need). Is there a case for each Care and Repair team to have an explicit set of criteria for deciding priorities?
- If each local team decides priorities locally, there is an obvious danger of a post code lottery. Is this a potential problem and, if so, should the Policy Statement give broad guidance on how priorities should be determined?
- If the Statement is to include broad guidance of this nature, what should this include? Possibilities include giving priority to the more frail elderly and those with more severe disabilities. There is also the question as to whether any account should be taken of the financial resources available to the household and the extent to which support is available from the wider family of the persons concerned, although both of these are likely to be difficult to assess in practice.

### **4. Core Services for Care and Repair**

Core Services were defined in the 2004 National Standards document to include advice and information, major repairs and adaptations, small repairs and what have been classified as “handyperson services” i.e. relatively straightforward maintenance tasks around the home.

- Does this list still remain appropriate or should other services be included?
- Specifically should “hospital discharge services” i.e. undertaking work in the house to facilitate hospital discharges and to help prevent the need for readmission, be added to the list? Would NHS and or/ Social Work be willing to provide financial support for these services?
- Should all local teams be encouraged to provide core services or should there be variations to avoid duplication where they are already available from other sources?
- Care and Repair has grown and developed through local innovation. Should there be clear recognition in the Policy Statement that local teams may wish to develop new services even though these would not be part of any national list of core services.

## **5. The Concept of a Minimum Level of Service for Care and Repair**

The consultancy study which underpinned the Scottish Government review floated the idea there should be a minimum level of service that all local Care and Repair teams should aim to provide. This could make it much easier to promote the Care and Repair “brand” amongst both the general public, and partners and stakeholders.

- Do you agree that there should be a minimum level of service?
- Should this level of service be determined by the outcome of the consultation on core customer groups and core services and, subsequently, kept under review?

## **6. Equality of Access to Care and Repair**

Care and Repair teams operate throughout Scotland with the exception of Midlothian (where the council is currently considering the need to initiate a service). However, some teams only operate on a limited basis within their local area.

Apart from geographical coverage, there is also the need to ensure equality of access and treatment of all relevant sections of the community. Because of the nature of the services it provides, Care and Repair seeks to reach out to the disabled and to many female householders. But there is a concern that, despite its commitment to equality, it may not be having sufficient impact on Scotland’s ethnic minorities.

- Would it be helpful or the National Policy Statement to contain a clear encouragement to local authorities in Scotland to ensure a comprehensive geographical coverage?
- Can the National Policy Statement help to encourage local teams to promote their services to ethnic minorities and, if so, how?

## **7. Governance Arrangements for Local Care and Repair Teams**

At the present time, there are a relatively small number of Care and Repair Teams which have their own independent structure, several have been established by local authorities as in-house units and the majority are run by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) as managing agents. The recent Scottish Government Review report recommended that:

“Where practicable, all Care and Repair projects should become self governing. They can do this either as stand alone organisations or as a part of a larger organisation such as a subsidiary of an RSL. This legal separation between project and managing agent should be accompanied by governance through a charitable board that is independent and which allows them to make their own decisions about their future.”

- Given this clear recommendation about the optimum governance arrangements, we would welcome the views of relevant stakeholders, in

particular, about the scope for giving a clear commitment to moving in this direction.

## **8. Finance and Fundraising**

Local authorities are now the major source of finance for Care and Repair teams following the SG's decision to merge the previous Private Sector Housing Grant, a ring fenced budget, into the general local government financial settlement. The Scottish Government review did, however, express the hope that local authorities might agree delivery outputs and outcomes with associated funding over a longer period of around 3 years to provide greater stability and continuity of funding.

In relation to fundraising, the SG Review concluded that Care and Repair services should become more self-sustaining by generating part of their income through providing chargeable services to non core clients. The scope for this depends on where the boundary is drawn between core and non core services and the demand for chargeable non core services at a price which would ensure that these services were generating sufficient income to cover their own costs and provide some additional resources for core services.

- Given the comments on multi-year funding agreements in the SG Review report, it would be helpful to have the views of COSLA and individual local authorities on the scope for this and the extent to which we could include a commitment to moving in this direction in the National Policy Statement.
- On fundraising, it would be helpful to have views on whether the Policy Statement should cover this topic and, if so, what it might say on the scope for fundraising and the actions that the Forum and Care and Repair teams might take to make progress without compromising core activities.

## **9. Care and Repair – Key Values and Ethos**

The 2004 National Standards and Guidance report sets out 3 key principles to express the ethos of Care and Repair. These were:

- a. Flexibility and choice – tailoring the services to the specific needs of each client
  - b. Privacy and trust – building trust by respecting the privacy of clients using Care and Repair services, ensuring that personal information is treated in confidence and treating clients with respect
  - c. Equality and diversity – ensuring that all individuals within the target group are aware of the services available and able to access them when required regardless of gender, sexuality, ethnicity disability and age
- Are these key values still applicable and, if so, should they form a part of the National Policy Statement?
  - Are there other key values that should also be mentioned, for example, the not for profit ethos of Care and Repair and the emphasis placed on encouraging customers to make their own decisions?

## **10. Care and Repair – The Context**

The Care and Repair Forum considers that the growth in the numbers of older persons in Scotland in recent decades and, in particular, older persons aged over 75, together with the growth in owner occupation have significantly increased the potential demand for care and repair services. The growth in the numbers of older persons is projected to increase further in the period up to 2020. Government policies also reinforce the potential importance of care and repair services with a strong and increasing emphasis on older persons living independently in their own homes where this remains feasible. On the housing policy side, the encouragement to owners to keep their homes in good repair and to implement energy efficiency measures is also relevant.

- Should the National Policy Statement provide a succinct summary of this demographic and policy context?
- Are there other important points that need to be mentioned?

## **11. Other Issues**

Are there other issues that should be included within the National Policy Statement?