



Knowsley Independent Living Centre

Good practice themes

- 1. Co-located comprehensive service for older and disabled people**
- 2. Service user involvement**

Context

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (population c148,600) in Merseyside. It is one of six local authorities in the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority created in 2014 which has responsibilities for a range of strategic functions including some elements of housing.

Much of the Knowsley Borough's housing stock dates from the 1950s and 1960s. The local private sector house condition survey undertaken in 2015 indicated that 11% of homes failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard due to the presence of at least one category 1 hazard and 11% of households were in fuel poverty.

The proportion of households indicating that they felt their day to day activities were limited by a long term health problem or disability was higher than the average for the North West region. The local Better Care Fund DFG allocation in 2018/19 is £2.243 million.

1. The Knowsley Centre for Independent Living - A co-located comprehensive service for older and disabled people

The pioneering **Knowsley Centre for Independent Living** was established by the local authority in 2011 as a result of older and disabled people being actively engaged in service planning.

There was a strong preference expressed by older and disabled people for a one stop shop rather than the fragmented services which were available at that time. In response to this clearly expressed view a partnership was set up between the Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, NHS, Knowsley Housing Trust (the Care and Repair service provider) and the wider voluntary sector.

The result was the setting up of a Centre for Independent Living which houses a wide range of services and facilities in two adjoining buildings which are part of the NHS estate. One operates as an equipment store with a repair/recycling facility and the other is a fully inclusive Independent Living Centre located over two floors and containing a showroom, assessment facilities, meeting rooms, offices and access to an on line shop (Vivark Care shop) for purchase of mobility aids and equipment.

Services based within the centre include:

- Disabled Facilities Grant team
- Care and Repair / handy person service
- Independent living and design team
- Aids and Adaptations Occupational Therapy team
- Sensory service
- Falls and Postural Stability Services
- Extra Care, Sheltered and Community Groups Support Services
- Assistive technology
- Blue badge assessments
- Wheelchair assessment and repair
- Equipment recycling centre

Full details of services and other activities can be found via www.knowsleyCIL.org/

The operation of the Centre allows for pooling of budgets and enables development of innovative and more rapid ways of working. Even though there are several line management arrangements in place co-location has encouraged closer alignment of strategic priorities and improved provision for older and disabled people.

All services linked to housing led interventions are managed by one service manager in the Adult Social Care Department. A common outlook on service design and inter-relationships is helped by there being only one Clinical Commissioning Group for the council area.

The significant increase in Better Care Fund allocations for Disabled Facilities Grant in recent years has enabled the manager to develop a number of improvements for service users.

Stay Put Major Adaptations

Co-location has been a strong factor in achieving a major reduction in waiting time for assessments for/ installation of adaptations, alongside signposting people to other services in the Centre.

Recent performance standards have resulted in virtually eliminating waiting lists for major adaptations in the owner occupied and housing association sectors and so the in-house adaptations service has, following TUPE, assumed responsibility from April 2018 for clearing

the backlog of home adaptation waiting lists affecting Knowsley Housing Trust (the LSVT) tenants.

This will help in the medium term to work towards greater consistency of approach and improved service user experience and outcomes across all housing tenures.

To further support this ambition and to stretch the effectiveness of the DFG budget the local approach is to work flexibly with social landlords and wherever possible secure a shared approach in provision of adaptations. There is a 50:50 funding agreement with Knowsley Housing Trust who are the largest social landlord. In other social housing stock the in-house agency arrange adaptations also on an agreed 50:50 funding agreement but one local landlord prefers to use their own in-house team which is acceptable as long as costs are in line with Knowsley's own tendered rates.

The Aids and Adaptations Occupational Therapy team based at the Centre is managed by North West Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. This has helped communication with the broader NHS sector.

To ensure a degree of independence in the quality control arrangements for major adaptations an officer within the Care and Repair service (who has not had any involvement with the DFG process) now assesses all completed cases to ensure that contractors are meeting the required standards. This helps to confer reassurance to the service user and secure value for money for the service.

Housing options information, advice and help to move

This is currently provided as part of the overall Centre for Independent Living service with the Care & Repair service, occupational therapists and the in-house grants team linking in with sheltered housing and extra care schemes as appropriate. There is an ambition to expand this service in 2018-19 with a dedicated half post within the establishment connecting with the property "pool" and the housing allocation system to assist vulnerable older residents to be matched to adapted properties and to link in with new housing developments to ensure bungalows are included when feasible.

Vivark Care & Repair service

This Care & Repair service, funded jointly by the local authority and Knowsley Housing Trust, offers a range of housing related services to enable older and disabled people to live independently at home. These include:

- **Fast track minor aids and adaptations**
- **General handyperson service**
- **Falls prevention** (home checks and installation)
- **Home from Hospital support*** – hospital staff who check patients' homes prior to discharge make referrals if urgent repairs/ adaptations are needed
- **Crisis intervention** – A designated Care and Repair officer is responsible for a crisis service which helps in cases of hoarding, organising deep cleaning, provision of beds and white goods

All Care & Repair technicians have received DLF Level 3 Trusted Assessor training.

The Care & Repair handyman service undertakes a wide range of small repairs, maintenance, home security, gardening, painting and decorating jobs, most on a low cost basis.

Care and Repair currently receives 5,000–6,000 requests for assistance per year.

Assistive Technology (AT)

The Occupational Therapy service is combined with the authority's technical therapy practitioners who take the lead role on advising and guiding all health and adult social care staff on the use and availability of assistive technology solutions. This includes mainstream AT lifelines and associated environmental and lifestyle sensors such as falls detectors, GPS trackers, epilepsy sensors for example along with the use of mainstream technologies such as the Alexa type devices and voice controlled lighting, tv and other environmental controls.

To encourage the take up of the low cost service residents have the experience of a free initial 12 week provision and then can opt out if they wish. This was introduced to determine if the historic reluctance to pay for call centre monitoring charges was because they had no direct experience of its benefits of assisting with their independence and accident prevention. It is anticipated that the increase in the AT provision combined with other prevention initiatives will reduce the need for expensive alternative packages of care. Since the free trial there has been a steady increase every month in the overall number of residents being supported via the use of AT and there has been a couple of case studies demonstrating that it's use combined with other prevention measures has negated and / or reduced formal packages of care.

Equipment

The available space and expertise within the Centre has facilitated an effective recycling arrangement for a range of equipment, including stair lifts provided through grant assistance and Knowsley Housing Trust's capital programme, thereby reducing waste to a minimum.

2. User led provision

The Centre for Independent Living was developed with the Knowsley User Led Organisation (KULO) who help to make sure local people influence and have a say on what and how services are provided in Knowsley. The involvement of service users has continued well beyond the initial establishment of the Centre for Independent Living in 2011. The Knowsley User Led Organisation (KULO) is an active and inclusive community group of disabled people and carers who live in Knowsley.

One of their stated aims is 'to improve and integrate existing services as well as shape and influence new local services'. They meet regularly at the Centre where they provide community led sessions and programmes of activity include cookery, monthly information sessions and 'Really Useful Wednesdays' which are a series of resident led workshops/ community sessions which share and showcase their skills with the wider community. Information on their services can be viewed via [Knowsley User Led Organisation](#) (KULO)

In respect of the governance of the Centre KULO continues to see monitoring and performance data from the statutory services based at the Centre and can influence service proposals.

The CIL steering group is made up of residents from across the borough who in turn represent other user group bodies and the statutory services report into the CIL steering group. KOPV along with KULO, the physical partnership board and carers groups are the main represented groups at the CIL steering group, the chair of the steering group is also the KOPV chair person. Any community representative can bring issues from other community groups to be addressed by the steering group and relevant statutory provider representatives are invited to the meeting to work on joint solutions to resolve issues arising, these are then in turn communicated back to the community to ensure the solutions are working.

KULO's presence and involvement at the CIL brings the centre alive with activities and opportunities for all residents to engage with the centre and it adds real value to the statutory services offer ensuring they are joined up, accessible, and communicated across the borough to all.

A resident may have come to the centre just for a blue badge assessment but when KULO are around they will leave with a whole lot more information about other services that can support them and with opportunities that they can engage in.

Since the partnership agreement we have developed weekly resident led workshops enabling local people with disabilities as well as carers to come together learn, share and showcase their creative expertise.

This series of practical and creative activities called Really Useful Wednesdays has become very popular and also serves as a neutral platform for local people of all ages to meet peers, make social connections as well as signpost attendees to services and wider community/ social activities at Knowsley's Centre for Independent Living.

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