

**REPORT TO:** Health Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 11 January 2011

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Adults & Community

**SUBJECT:** Electrically Powered Scooters and Wheelchairs

**WARD(S):** Borough-wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 Halton residents are increasingly purchasing their own electrically operated scooters or being supplied with electrically powered wheelchairs via Halton Wheelchair Service. Once they have this equipment, a request is made to their Registered Social Landlord (RSL) or Halton Borough Council (HBC), or both, to supply a permanent ramp to their property, and at times, adequate storage facilities.
- 1.2 This report states the position of Halton Borough Council, towards the provision of permanent ramps and storage facilities for these items.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- i) Members of the Board note the contents of the report.

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The use of electrically powered scooters and wheelchairs has been increasing in popularity in recent years. When therapists at Halton Wheelchair Service prescribe an electrically powered indoor or outdoor wheelchair, they will request an assessment by the Occupational Therapists (OT) employed by HBC to arrange the provision of ramped access.



Electrically powered wheelchairs

- 3.2 The OT will carry out an initial assessment to determine if ramped access is 'necessary and appropriate' and ask for a technical feasibility study by technical staff to ensure that the recommendation is 'reasonable and practicable'.
- 3.3 Funding available for adaptations to a persons home is derived from the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. This enables local authorities to provide financial assistance (in the form of Disabled Facilities Grants or through Halton's 50/50 partnership arrangements) to people with permanent and substantial disabilities to modify their homes, when this is considered 'necessary and appropriate' by the local authority OT, and 'reasonable and practicable' by technical staff.
- 3.4 Considerable investment has been given over the past two years to improve the timescales for completing adaptations that provide access to essential facilities for example toilets, bathrooms and bedroom. Improved access in the form of ramps or step lifts has been provided for permanent wheelchair users when necessary.
- 3.5 New design and access standards require level thresholds in all new homes to allow unimpeded access for all disabled people and their mobility equipment. However Halton has a high level of older properties with stepped access and there is a tendency to remove permanent ramps constructed to different properties when the disabled tenant no longer lives there.
- 3.6 Electrically powered indoor wheelchairs (EPIC) are only supplied to people who:
  - Are unable to walk or are unable to self propel a wheelchair, or it would be detrimental to their medical condition for them to do so,
  - Would gain a measure of independence form the provision of such a chair
  - Is mentally and physically capable of safely operating the powered chair
- 3.7 Electrically powered indoor outdoor wheelchairs (EPIOC) are only supplied to people who:
  - Meet the criteria for electrically powered indoor wheelchairs and
  - Have no difficulties with visual, cognitive, visuospatial or other higher cortical functions or medical conditions which would make them a danger to themselves, pedestrians or other road users while suing the wheelchair
  - Comply with the DLVC requirements for motor vehicle drivers in connection with an epileptic condition or other causes of loss of consciousness
  - Can demonstrate that the use EPIOC will significantly improve their quality of life / independence to a greater level than that supplied by the EPIC

- 3.8 The assessment for the provision of EPICs and EPIOCs is rigorous and takes into account the person's medical condition, their need for mobility equipment and their ability to use the equipment safely. The sale of electrically powered scooters does not take any of this into account, only the person's ability to pay for the equipment.
- 3.9 The Department of Transport has outlined its growing concern about safety due to the unregulated use of electrically powered scooters and has recently held consultations on the proposed changes to the laws governing them. The responses have been analysed and passed to Ministers to await their decision.



Electrically powered scooters

- 3.10 One suggestion in the consultation document included taking forward some of the recommendations contained in the DfTs 2005 review. For example:
- Improve advice to potential users when purchasing a vehicle and provide training on its use,
  - Require users to have third party insurance,
  - Devise a fitness to drive assessment
  - That an appropriate body e.g. British Healthcare Trades Association should assist buyers in researching the best value for money

#### **4.0 POLICY AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 HBC is committed to promoting independence and choice for disabled people. When mobility equipment is provided, following an assessment by therapists, as an essential part of a disabled person's day to day life and allows them access in their home and to the wider community, HBC and RSLs will assist the disabled person to modify their home if this is considered 'necessary and appropriate' and 'reasonable and practicable'.
- 4.2 To widen the scope of any adaptation policy to provide ramped access to properties of people who have privately purchased electrically powered scooters we would need to consider:

- **Funding Arrangements** - Do they meet the requirements for financial assistance under the legislation referred to in point 3.3 above?
- Is additional funding available to meet an increase in adaptations?
- **Fitness to drive test** - Are they mentally and physically capable of using the scooter?
- Do they present a danger to themselves and other pedestrians and road users?
- Who would carry out the fitness to drive assessment?
- **Training** - Who could provide training in the use of the mobility scooter and what steps can be taken to regulate this?
- **Assessment of Home environment** - Will the storage of the scooter present a danger to themselves and other tenants, particularly in sheltered schemes? Who will carry out this assessment and for ramped access?

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **5.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

This report would be equally relevant to disabled children and young people in Halton.

### **5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

None identified.

### **5.3 A Healthy Halton**

This report supports disabled people to access and use mobility scooters to enable them to remain independent and safe. It also supports the efficient use of resources to provide disabled people with a range of home adaptations.

### **5.4 A Safer Halton**

This report supports the safe use of mobility scooters by disabled people and raises issues in relation to the safety of pedestrians, road users and other people in Halton.

### **5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

## **6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

### **6.1** This report clarifies the criteria for the provision of home adaptations for users of mobility scooters taking into account resource and safety implications.

- 6.2 The report acknowledges the Department of Transport's growing concern about safety due to the unregulated use of electrically powered scooters and recommends Halton Borough Council review this policy and strategy when the Government respond to the recent Department of Transport consultation on proposed changes to the law governing powered mobility scooters and wheelchairs.

## **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

This report encourages and supports the safe use and storage of mobility scooters by disabled people further improving independence.

## **8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996	HHIILS	Mr P Brown 01928 704463
Cheshire and Merseyside Wheelchair services – criteria for supply of equipment	Halton Wheelchair Service	Mrs S Lightfoot 01928
Consultation on proposed changes to the laws governing powered mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs (DfT-2010-10)	DfT website	Mr Terry Deere 020 7944 2046
College of Occupational Therapist response to DfT consultation 2010-10	HHIILS	Mrs J Wood 01928 704462