



Sunderland Care & Support Community Equipment Services Report

June 2018



Distribution List:

Sunderland Care & Support:

Phillip Foster, Managing Director, Sunderland Care & Support
David Dalkin, Operations Manager, Sunderland Care & Support

Healthwatch England - Katie Johnson, Development Officer

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Shaleen Mercer, Community Nurse for Physical Health in Learning Disability Team
Lisa Plant, Community Nurse for Physical Health in Learning Disability Team

Voluntary & Community Sector:

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Hannah Parrington, Peer Support Coordinator, Stroke Association
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Rabia Tilt, Dementia Support Worker, Alzheimer's Society

Joy Yates, Editorial Director, Sunderland Echo
Judith Ralston, Practice Manager, South Hylton Surgery
Jane Forster, Practice Manager, Kepier Medical Practice
Paul Cutler, Matron, Community Health Services Sunderland, South Tyneside Foundation Trust



Disclaimer

This report is not representative of all service user views; it only represents the views of those who were able to contribute within the time available.

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Acknowledgements

The Healthwatch team would like to acknowledge the support of the service users who spoke to our Engagement team and completed our survey. We would also like to thank those staff members who took time out of their day to either speak to us in person or complete our survey questions and give their feedback.



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1. Introduction

1.1 What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch England is the national consumer champion in health and social care. It was set up by the government to ensure that people's views around health and social care services are listened to and fed back to service providers and commissioners with a view to improving services.

There is a local Healthwatch for every Local Authority area in England.

Healthwatch Sunderland aims to be a strong local consumer champion working with our partners to support people to:

- Shape health and social care delivery
- Influence the services they receive personally
- Hold services to account

We achieve this by:

- Listening to people, especially the most vulnerable, to understand their experiences and what matters most to them.
- Influencing those who have the power to change services so that they better meet people's needs now and into the future.
- Empowering and informing people to get the most from their health and social care services and encouraging other organisations to do the same.



1.2 Background and rationale

Initial conversations with some service users of Sunderland Care and Support, Community Equipment Services (CES) gave us some negative feedback and highlighted some issues they had experienced. This feedback was gathered over the first few months of 2017 and involved engagement work with the following organisations:

- Sunderland Carers Groups - Washington, Southwick, Pallion
- Stroke Association groups
- Alzheimer's Society groups
- GP Practices (Patient Participation Groups) - Houghton Kepier, South Hylton

Some of the main themes that came from this feedback included;

- Long waiting times to receive equipment
- Long waiting times to return equipment
- Uncertainty on how to return equipment
- A long trial and error process to receive a suitable bespoke pieces of equipment

After consideration of this feedback, Healthwatch Sunderland's Board decided the Engagement Team would conduct more in-depth research. This would enable us to determine if the negative views given by these service users and staff members were generally reflective of the service.



1.3 What is Community Equipment Services?

CES is part of Sunderland Care and Support and funded by a partnership of Sunderland City Council and Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group. The service provides a range of standard and non-standard equipment to people with an identified assessed need following a prescription from an authorised prescriber. The service also maintains and repairs equipment they have supplied. When it is no longer needed, equipment is collected and refurbished, so that it can be re-issued when appropriate.

Professionals who request equipment for clients are known as prescribers. Prescribers range from Occupational Therapists, Community Nurses, Physiotherapists and various other trusted assessors. Prescribers work for various organisations including; City Hospitals Sunderland Foundation Trust, Sunderland City Council, South Tyneside Foundation Trust, Gentoo, Age UK and the Fire Service and other various regional hospitals, where Sunderland residents may be receiving treatment.

Members of the public mainly access the service through a requisition from a professional, although there are a small number of items for which people can self-assess. The self-assessment process is carried out by the Sunderland City Council's Customer Service Network on behalf of the Occupational Therapy Service.

How does CES work?

Prescribers complete assessments and identify the need for the provision of equipment. They log on to the electronic system where they can identify the customer (if they are known to the service or create new record) and then identify the piece(s) of equipment in the catalogue.



For standard equipment the prescriber would then place the order, selecting an appropriate delivery speed. The prescriber can then inform the customer of the delivery date.

The order is then electronically entered into a postcode route for delivery on the selected day. The day prior to delivery, the route is allocated to a Prevention and Equipment Officer for delivery. The equipment is then delivered and if requested, demonstrated to the customer and the equipment barcode scanned to allocate the piece of equipment to the customer.

For non-standard equipment the prescriber wouldn't be able to order via the electronic system, but instead would need to request 2 quotes from companies who manufacture/supply the relevant piece of equipment. Once the 2 quotes have been obtained they are submitted to the 'Special Orders Panel'. The Special Orders Panel consists of representatives from: Social Services, District Nursing, Recovery at Home and The Hospital Discharge Team. The panel meets once a week, on a Tuesday afternoon, to discuss orders for equipment which are bespoke or non-standard (equipment which is made or adapted to fit an individual, or not available as a standard catalogue item). As long as there are two members of the group present at the meeting, it goes ahead as planned to prevent delays.

The panel makes their decision based on the clinical reasoning, correct use of criteria and ensuring both value for money and that procurement rules are being followed.

On occasion panel members may request further information or clarification from prescribers of the clinical reasoning for the need of equipment, seeks further information or suggests alternative provision to meet the customer need.

Once there is an agreement that an item is needed, an order is placed by the Special Orders Panel to the manufacturer.

Assessments for wheelchairs are carried out by the Wheelchair Assessment Team.



CES provide stock standard wheelchairs. Powered and bespoke wheelchairs are provided through a Regional Framework and the maintenance of all wheelchairs is through a regional contract provided by Ross Care.

The process for adaptations to individual's homes is different and not part of the CES process, these are carried out by the Home Improvement Agency, possibly through the Handyman contract with Sunderland Community Furniture Service.

Why was the new system introduced?

CES recognised that their computer system was old and was becoming unreliable and the software supplier had notified CES that they would no longer support the application. To help with this it was decided to introduce a new system. The new system was introduced summer 2017 and has allowed them to make efficiencies as prescribers now place their own orders and an items barcode number is scanned rather than recorded manually. This results in a saving in administration time and more efficient planning of delivery routes.



2. Methodology

Between July 2017 and August 2017 the Healthwatch team began by having conversations with some key staff members, from those organisations who worked in partnership with CES. This work helped the Healthwatch team to gain some background information on CES. This included the services available to the public and how prescribers were involved in the process of accessing equipment for their service users etc.

To aid this, meetings were held with the Senior Operations Manager of CES, staff from the Community Rehab Team, Recovery at Home Team and Physical Disabilities in Learning Disabilities Team and the Lead Occupational Therapist within the Sunderland Royal Hospital Discharge Team.

Using this insight and knowledge two surveys were designed. One aimed at service users (see appendix 1) and one aimed at prescribers of equipment (see appendix 2).

Both surveys sought to obtain both qualitative (comments on the service) and quantitative (numerical) data. For ease of access two versions of each survey were created, one of which was paper based and the other was uploaded to www.surveymonkey.com, which is an online survey creation service.

The service user survey was circulated by the Healthwatch Sunderland Engagement Team in the following ways:

- CES were provided with surveys and accompanying information to disseminate to their service users by their community delivery drivers when delivering equipment.
- An article in the Healthwatch Sunderland monthly e-newsletter (January, February, March 2018).
- A one off e-news article on MailChimp (online email system) was disseminated.
- Regular social media updates on Facebook and Twitter.



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- Front-page feature on the Healthwatch Sunderland website including supporting updates on the News and Surveys page.
 - Face to face engagement with various Voluntary and Community Sector groups.
 - Information stands in various community venues including Sunderland Care and Support's own coffee morning.

HWS monthly newsletters has a reach of over 900 local people who have registered with Healthwatch Sunderland. CES delivery team were also issued with 150 surveys to distribute to their customers. In addition approximately 50 surveys were handed out across our various community engagement activities.

The questions within the survey aimed to explore the following themes;

- Overall experience of using CES
- Assessment process
- Access to the service
- The home visit
- Waiting times for equipment
- The repair, installation or replacement process
- The return process of equipment
- Improvements to the service

The survey aimed at prescribers was distributed by the Healthwatch Engagement Team to professionals across the city via several key staff members working across the health and social care sector.

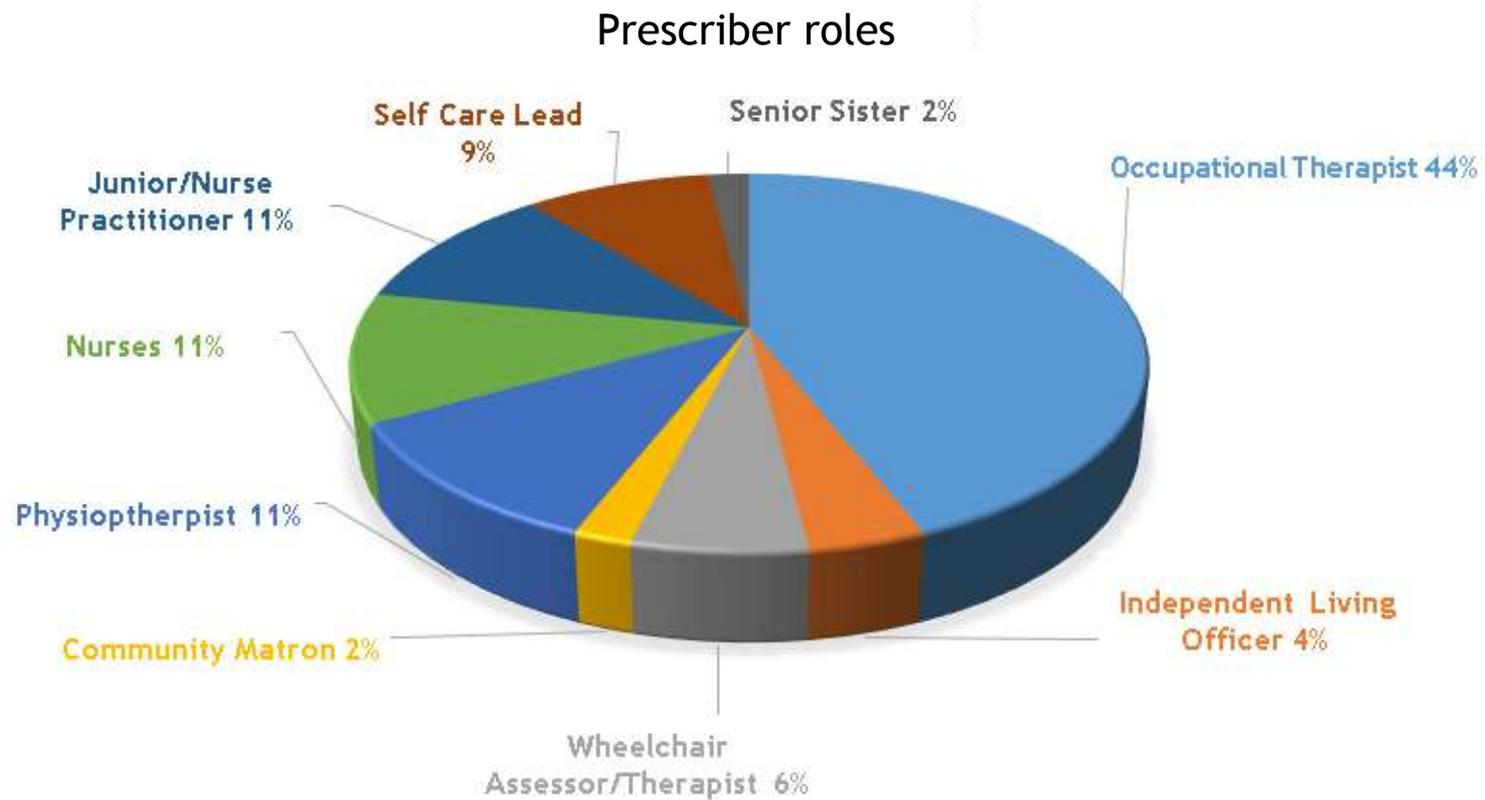
The questions in this survey aimed to explore the following themes:

- Use of the new ordering system
- Waiting times for equipment
- Overall satisfaction of using the CES
- Service user experience.



2.1 Prescribers responses

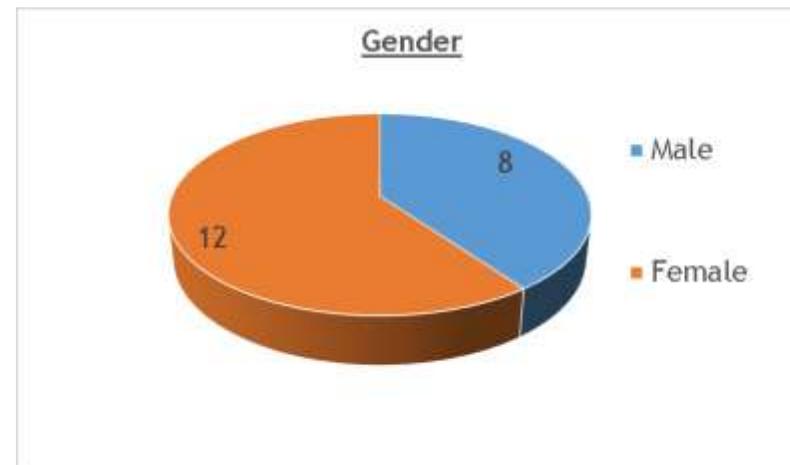
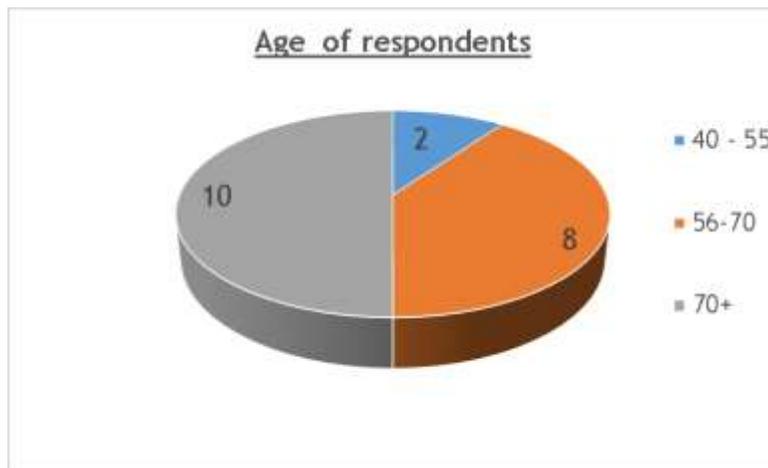
The Healthwatch team received 47 surveys from prescribers during the consultation period. Their roles are given below:





2.2 Service Users responses

The Healthwatch team received 20 surveys during the consultation period, from those who had used CES since the summer of 2017. Their demographics are given below:





3. Findings

3.1 Prescribers

We asked prescribers a range of questions about the ordering of equipment and minor adaptations for their customers, the feedback highlighted what is working well and what may need improving:

What works well

- 98% of respondents found it fairly easy, OK or very easy to order equipment using the new IT system.
- 87% of respondents said standard equipment usually arrives within 7 days.
- 81% of respondents felt the new IT system had improved the ordering of equipment.
- 83% of respondents were able to order the non-special order equipment needed within a day of identifying it.
- 87% of respondents found ordering specialised equipment either OK or fairly easy.
- 73% of respondents found the new IT system either easy or very easy to navigate.
- 74% of respondents stated they receive a decision from the Specials Order Panel within 1 week.
- 62% of respondents stated that the wait for equipment in the main, doesn't delay patients discharge from hospital.

What needs improving

- 48% of respondents said they have encountered problems when using the new IT system (see page overleaf).
- 71% of respondents reported that the wait for bespoke equipment/minor adaptations causes service users problems.
- 65% of respondents identified that the delay in service users accessing equipment, is as a result of waiting for a supplier/manufacture representative appointment.
- 53% of respondents stated that their service users share their frustrations with prescribers, around the waiting times to receive equipment.



3.2 Prescriber's overall comments for improvement

Prescribers were also given the option to answer open ended questions which asked if they could identify any areas of the process of accessing equipment which requires further improvement. Their comments are grouped into the following main themes:

Communication

- Communication between CES to prescribers, service users and their carers could be improved when there are changes to planned delivery dates of equipment.
- The availability of appropriate telephone numbers to enable prescribers to contact CES for urgent same day equipment and to confirm items are being delivered.

Ordering system

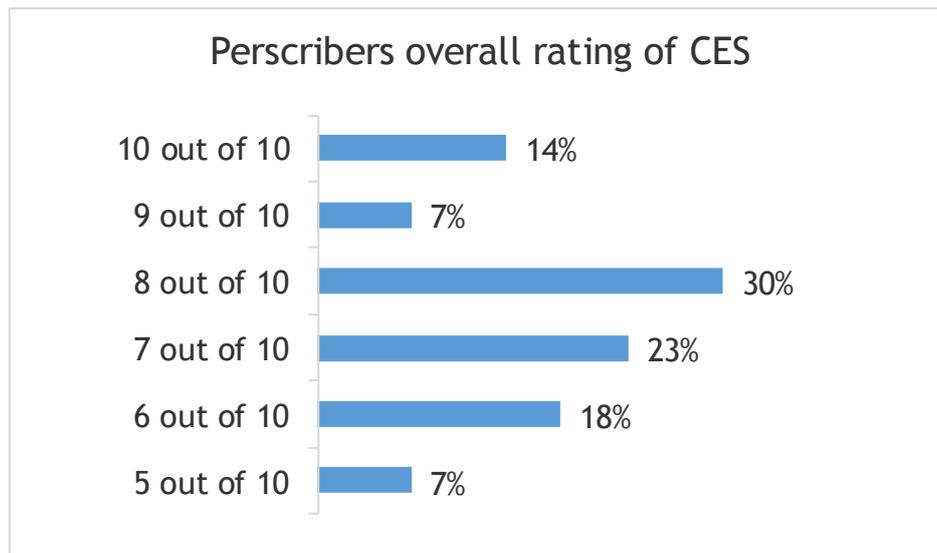
- Stock levels could be updated more regularly to assist with time wasted ordering stock which is no longer available.
- Descriptions in the catalogue could include more detail about the equipment, to help with the ordering process.
- Photographs could be displayed for all items to enable easier identification.
- A more frequent review of stock items was identified as a way to help with having access to newer and better equipment coming onto the market.
- Better information regarding the repairs of equipment.
- A way of differentiation between regular and special order equipment could be highlighted in catalogue.
- Authority allowing prescribers to order equipment needs evaluating as it isn't always configured i.e. some prescribers find they haven't been given access to ordering certain items on the site despite being informed they can.
- Earlier collection of equipment that is no longer required.



Special equipment ordering:

- More straight forward ordering system for specialist equipment.
- The order time between Special Orders Panel decisions and ordering can be too long.
- The waiting time is too long for a supplier/manufacturer representative appointment due to lack of these appointments.

Prescribers gave their overall rating or the service:



(None of the respondents scored the service less than 5 out of 10).

“If equipment is not available have had instances where customers have not been informed of problem but neither has OT and this needs addressing”

“Generally I feel that the service works well, there can be delays which are frustrating. The time between panel approval and ordering is sometimes too long”

“The system is easy to use but needs keeping up to date to be fit for purpose”



3.3 Service Users

We asked service users a range of questions about their access to and experience of using equipment services. The results of these are shown below:

What works well

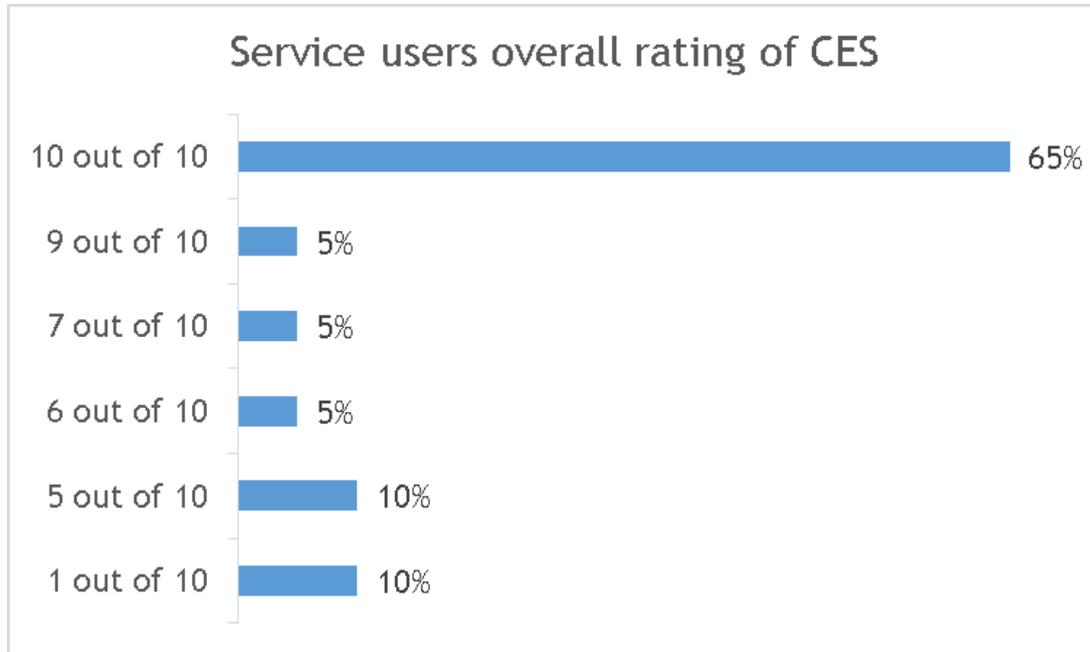
- 94% of respondents said they were very satisfied or quite satisfied with their access to CES.
- 100% of respondents were informed that there may be a wait for equipment/minor adaptation when relevant.
- 100% of respondents were shown how to use the new piece of equipment/minor adaptation and informed who to contact if there are any issues.

What needs improving

- The wait for equipment to be collected when it is no longer required is taking too long.
- The majority of respondents waiting for specialised equipment felt it took too long from their assessment to receiving it.



Service users gave their overall rating of the service:



“I had a very quick response and staff have been very helpful”

“I was very disappointed in the length of time it took to get the wheelchair”

“Everyone has been very helpful and compassionate”



3.4 Outcomes of the work so far

As stated in the background and rationale of the report, in the lead up to this piece of work, the Healthwatch Engagement Team were hearing at the various subject specific support groups we visited, that individuals had specific issues with their orders for equipment/minor adaptations for either themselves or someone they care for.

When the Engagement Team highlighted some of these issues to the Manager of CES she agreed that a representative from the organisation could visit community groups to hear first-hand how the service is working for its users. Several groups accepted the offer and arrangements were made for a visit from a CES representative at the following groups:

- Washington Carers Group - Tuesday 6th February 2018
- Washington Stroke Association Group - Friday 9th February 2018
- Southwick Stroke Association Group - Wednesday 7th March 2018
- Mackem Stroke Association Group - Thursday 26th April 2018

At the meetings the CES representative firstly explained who CES are and what services they offer. They then went on to listen to personal stories from individuals in the groups and hear some of the difficulties which they have encountered to access the service, waiting times, receiving multiple inappropriate items and also the collection of equipment which is no longer needed.

At each of the meetings there was at least one person who had identified that they needed a piece of equipment which would help them to be more independent. Either the Engagement Team or the CES representative provided them with the Sunderland City Council's Contact Centre telephone number to enable them to make a self-referral into the service. During a follow-up visit to one of the groups, one lady had called the Contact Centre and had since received a walking aid with a tray attached. This enabled her to transfer her meals, drinks and other items from one room to another - she was delighted with the item and the service she had



received. The CES representatives also took away, individual queries to address and feedback the outcomes to their customers.



Washington Carers Group

During discussions at one of the latter groups the CES representative informed the group that CES have plans to develop a catalogue of items which they will sell to further enhance an individual's independence e.g. specialised cutlery. He stated that items will be available at lower costs than those currently in shops and on-line. The group were keen for the representative to return once the catalogue is available.



4. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

To help improve some of the issues identified around communication with service users CES could;

- Regularly update the information available on the service on their own website and other relevant websites.
- Display promotional posters/leaflets in key public places such as GP practices, Health Centres etc. Information in this literature could provide information on how people can access the service and return unwanted equipment.
- Continue to attend and interact with service user specific groups in the community.
- Inform those who have orders placed for equipment when there is a change in the delivery date/time.

Recommendation 2

To help improve some the issues identified around communication with prescribers CES could;

- Provide regular updates on planned improvements to the service and its associated systems.
- Inform those prescribers who have placed an order on behalf of a service user of any changes in delivery date/time.

Recommendation 3

To help improve some of the issues prescribers identified with the IT system CES could:

- Provide more information on the system including, photos of all equipment available and more detailed descriptions.
- Provide better and more up to date information on the repairs of equipment.
- Update stock levels on a more frequent basis.



The three recommendations detailed above will be discussed between our Chair, Alan Patchett and Philip Foster to agree an action plan based on the recommendations.

The Healthwatch Sunderland team will review progress of the implementation of the recommendations in September 2018 to ensure the relevant issues have been addressed.



5. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire for service users

A few minutes of your time can help improve services in Sunderland

Healthwatch Sunderland is a consumer champion in health and social care. It was set up by the government to ensure that people's views around health and social care services are listened to and fed back to service providers and commissioners with a view to improving services.

We are currently conducting a survey in response to some feedback we have collected in the local community. People have told us their views and experiences of accessing and receiving community equipment and minor adaptations to their homes.

Through this feedback we have identified some key priorities that people wish us to pay attention to and therefore we need to hear from other service users.

We would really appreciate if you could spare a few minutes to complete the attached survey, telling us about the service you have recently received and returning it in the FREEPOST envelope by March 31st 2018. **We are looking for feedback from users of the service from summer 2017 to the current date.**

The results of this survey will be used to develop and improve services in the future.

This survey is your opportunity to tell us your experiences! **If you wish to complete a survey on line please visit our website (address above) or if you require some support completing the form, please give us a call on**

(0191) 514 7145.

Thank you





Accessing equipment / minor adaptations

- When was it identified that you needed a piece of equipment or minor adaptation? (N.B. We are looking for those who have used the service from Summer 2017 to date)

Approximate date: _____

- Who identified that you needed a piece of equipment or minor adaptation?

- How long did you wait for your initial assessment appointment?

- Who completed your initial assessment? (e.g. Community Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Hospital Discharge Team)

Overall how satisfied are you with the access of your equipment/minor adaptation?

Very Satisfied	Quite Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor dissatisfied	Quite Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Receiving your new piece of equipment/minor adaptations

- How long did it take from your assessment to receiving your equipment/minor adaptation?

- Were the expected waiting times explained to you at your assessment?





- What piece of equipment/minor adaptation did you receive?

- Were you shown how to use your new piece of equipment/minor adaptation?

- Were you told who to contact if there are any issues with your equipment/minor adaptation?

Overall how satisfied were you with the receipt of equipment/minor adaptations

Very Satisfied	Quite Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor dissatisfied	Quite Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Returning your equipment / minor adaptation



- Have you been informed how to return your equipment/minor adaptation?

- If your equipment was collected, how was your experience?

Good, the process was easy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not good, I waited a long time for the equipment to be picked up	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good, the equipment was picked up quickly	<input type="checkbox"/>	The equipment has not yet been collected	<input type="checkbox"/>

- If you returned the equipment yourself, where did you return it to?



- On a scale of 1 - 10 (1 being poor 10 being excellent) please rate your experience.



Please explain the reasons for your score

- Would you like to tell us anything else about your experience overall?

About you

Who are you completing this form for?

Myself

Someone I am a carer for

A relative or friend

How old are you?	Gender	Postcode?
What is your ethnicity?	Do you have a disability?	

Thank you for your feedback

The results from the survey will help to improve Sunderland residents access to equipment and minor adaptations. The report will be published in our monthly e-bulletin. To receive your copy leave your email address below:



Or keep an eye on our website: www.healthwatchesunderland.com



Appendix 2- Questionnaire for prescribers



Sunderland Equipment Services
Prescriber Survey 2018

.....
Name of employer and department:
.....

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

The following questions relate to the equipment that comes from Sunderland Care and Support Equipment Leechmere Distribution Centre and is scheduled to be with customers within 7 working days.

1. How easy do you find it to order standard equipment from Sunderland Care and Support since the new system has been in place from summer 2017?

Very Easy Fairly easy OK Difficult Very difficult

2. Have you encountered any problems with the new system that has been put in place?

Yes No I haven't used it yet

If you have answered yes, please explain

3. Has the new system improved equipment ordering?

Yes No

Please explain your response



4. How long does it normally take you from identifying the equipment need to placing the order?

5. If there are delays in ordering the equipment could you explain what causes this?

6. How do you find the navigation of the new system? E.g. easy to navigate.

7. Did you receive training to operate the system?

Yes

No

If yes do you feel the training was adequate?

8. Does the equipment you order normally arrive within the scheduled 7 working days?

Yes

No

BESPOKE EQUIPMENT

The next set of questions relate to bespoke equipment which is available to order that requires you to gain at least 2 price quotes for.

1. On average how often do you place orders for specialised equipment/minor adaptation? (Weekly, monthly etc)



2. How easy is it currently to order specialised equipment?

Very Easy Fairly easy Ok Difficult Very difficult

3. On average how long does it take from identifying which equipment/ minor adaptation is needed to getting the 2 required quotes? (i.e. the same day, a few weeks etc).

4. If this process takes longer than a week can you explain why?

5. Once these quotes are submitted to Sunderland Care and Support how long is the average wait for a decision?

6. Once you have been given a decision, on average how long is it before the order is placed?

7. Do you explain approximate waiting times to your clients?

Always Sometimes Never

If you don't always explain the waiting times, can you tell us why?

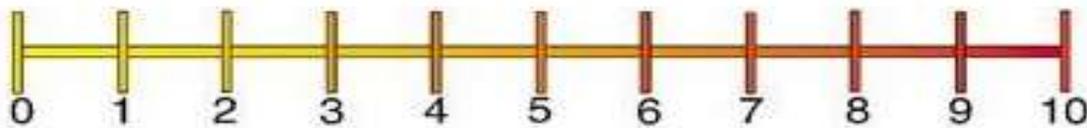


8. Does the wait for bespoke equipment/ minor adaptation cause your clients problems?

No Yes, serious problems Yes, but minor problems

9. If you support a patient prior to their discharge from hospital, in your experience has the waiting time or appropriate equipment /minor adaptation delayed their discharge?

10. On a scale of 1 - 10 (1 being poor 10 being excellent) please rate your experience of ordering a receiving equipment / minor adaptations for your clients.



11. Can you identify any areas of the process which require further improvement?

12. Do your clients ever share any frustrations with you around waiting times?

Any additional comments about your role in accessing and ordering community equipment and minor adaptations for service users.

Thank you for your feedback which will help to develop the final report about Community Equipment Services in Sunderland 2017/2018. The report will be published in our monthly e-bulletin.

To receive your copy leave your email address: _____

Or keep an eye on our website: www.healthwatchesunderland.com

Healthwatch Sunderland
Room 608
Hope Street Xchange
1-3 Hind Street
Sunderland
SR1 3DQ

