

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Meeting Venue:
Committee Room 2 – Senedd

Meeting date:
17 April 2013

Meeting time:
09:15

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



For further information please contact:

Policy: Marc Wyn Jones
Committee Clerk
029 2089 8505 / 029 2089 8600
CELG.committee@wales.gov.uk

Agenda

Private Pre-meeting – 09.15 – 09.30

1. Introductions, apologies and substitutions (09.30)

2. Inquiry into Home Adaptations – Evidence session 14 (09.30 – 10.15) (Pages 1 – 6)
CELG(4)-11-13 – Paper 1
Welsh Government

Carl Sargeant, Minister for Housing and Regeneration
Alyn Williams, Head of Private Sector Housing Team
Huw McLean, Private Sector Housing Team

Break – 10.15 – 10.25

3. Ministerial Scrutiny Session – Minister for Housing and Regeneration (10.25 – 11.30) (Pages 7 – 13)

CELG(4)-11-13 – Paper 2

Carl Sargeant, Minister for Housing and Regeneration
John Howells, Director of Housing and Regeneration

4. Papers to note (11.30 – 11.35)

Inquiry into Home Adaptations – Additional information from the Older People's Commissioner for Wales (Pages 14 – 19)
CELG(4)-11-13 – Paper 3

Correspondence following Committee meeting on 21 March (Pages 20 – 21)
CELG(4)-11-13 – Paper 4 – Private correspondence

Paper 1

Minister for Housing and Regeneration

Written Evidence to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee's Inquiry into Home Adaptations

1. I welcome the opportunity to submit evidence to the Committee's Inquiry and will address its terms of reference in the order that they are stated in the Chair's letter of 11th December 2012.
 - *Why there are still significant variations in the time it takes to deliver aids and adaptations funded by Disabled Facilities Grants across Wales;*
2. The independent report published by CEL Transform in October 2010, which was commissioned in response to the Equality of Opportunity Committee's 2009 Report, presented a positive picture overall and concluded that there had been a **"sustained and significant improvement in the average time taken to process Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) across Wales"**. The report also referred to an increased emphasis on the quality of service provided with more attention being given to a **"balance between speed, customer participation/control and the quality of the outcome"**.
3. Whilst I recognise that there are variations across Wales, overall, delivery times for DFGs have improved in general and are still getting better. The general trend across Wales is for faster delivery. The time taken to deliver DFGs as measured by the established Performance Indicator (i.e. number of days taken to complete a DFG) shows a 45% improvement since 2006. The average time has reduced from 593 days down to 325 days. This means that the average time to complete a DFG is well within the statutory timescale set out in the DFG legislation (the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996).
4. The Performance indicator itself was:
 - developed in conjunction with local authority practitioners;
 - measures the process from end to end, which reflects the experience of the client; and
 - encourages local authorities to take corporate responsibility for the delivery of DFGs rather than at an individual departmental level.
5. It also needs to be made clear that delays are not always caused by local authorities either in terms of assessing a person's needs or in processing grant applications. There are cases where delays have been caused by the grant recipients themselves because they have taken additional time to decide to have the works done because of the disruption involved. Other delays arise when a person decides not to choose to use an approved builder suggested by the local authority and takes time to find their own contractor to carry out the necessary works. As the timeline starts when

the initial enquiry is made, these delays are reflected in the overall time it takes to complete the works. We need to take a balanced view on this issue and recognise the hard work that local authorities and the Welsh Local Government Association have done to bring the waiting times for DFGs down.

6. The Welsh Government also introduced a one-off initiative in 2011-12 in the form of the *Independent Living Grant*. £1.5 million was secured to fund adaptations for people who were either on a waiting list for a DFG or needed works done to return home from hospital. The grant was delivered through Care & Repair working in partnership with local authorities, was not means tested and was available up to maximum of £10,000. Because the grant was so successful a further £1 million was secured to fund it at the end of 2012-13. The success of the grant and its take-up has led us to consider how it could be funded in the future. This is something I will be looking at in the context of the review of adaptations services that was announced in the Housing White Paper last year.
 - *Whether sufficient progress has been made on implementing recommendations from the Equality of Opportunity Committee's report on home adaptations;*

Minor Adaptations

7. Progress has been good over a range of areas including the delivery of DFGs which is alluded to above. Significant progress has also been made in terms of the delivery of minor adaptations. Many more straightforward items are now being provided outside of the more complicated statutory DFG system and this is common practice amongst the majority of local authorities. The 2005 independent report on the delivery of adaptations and DFGs recommended this course of action.

Good Practice

8. It is quite readily apparent that there is an abundance of good practice information available to local authorities, and the independent report published by CEL Transform in October 2010 confirmed that this is the case. In addition to the Welsh Government revised guidance (new Annex D to National Assembly for Wales Circular 20/02) we have the Benchmarking Reports, which were revised by the WLGA in 2009. Local authorities also exchange information informally and through more formal means such as the all-Wales Heads of Environmental Health Technical Panel. The Welsh Government will continue to work with local authorities and other representative bodies to ensure that examples of good practice are circulated widely and signposted effectively.

Publicity

9. Satisfaction levels amongst DFG recipients appears to be generally high but the Welsh Government needs to ensure that assistance reaches all

those who could benefit from it and this is part of the reason why we provide core funding for Care & Repair services across Wales. The quality of information provided by local authorities as the main delivery agents is vital. It is encouraging to see the examples of good work such as road shows and publicity events such as Care & Repair week, the latest of which occurred quite recently. It is crucial that this access to information is maintained especially in the current financial climate that we find ourselves in. Awareness of the available service has also been enhanced by the joint leaflet that was produced by Age Cymru, Care & Repair Cymru and the College of Occupational Therapists specifically for Wales. This built upon the information that was published by Age UK at a wider level.

Adapted Housing Registers

10. The Welsh Government is still of the opinion that a single National housing register would not be beneficial. There is already a growing move towards common housing registers within each local authority for access to social housing. The Welsh Government encourages local authorities and housing associations to set up Accessible Housing Registers, which include both people and property databases. Their primary objective is to assist the matching of available property with the needs of people with disabilities seeking housing. In addition, they have the potential to enable the authority to make best use of existing resources (i.e. the adapted property), avoid unnecessary spending on adaptations and assist planning of future housing. The Welsh Government's revised guidance on housing allocations recommends that this is the case as it has greater potential to increase communication and access to adapted housing within the immediate community.

Occupational Therapist Services

11. It is encouraging to note that the number of occupational therapists (OT) has risen in Wales since the Committee published its report in 2009. Information on the Stats-Wales website shows the whole time equivalent of OTs has risen from 216 in 2009-10 to 242 in 2011-12. Some local authorities also have specific housing OTs and this has enabled them to speed up assessment and DFG application processes.

Home Maintenance Services

12. Local authorities have the powers to provide assistance for home maintenance under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. The Order requires each local authority to publish a housing renewal policy which sets out what forms of assistance are available to homeowners in its area. The policies are available for the public to scrutinise and are also available in summary form upon request. Most of the current published policies cover the issue of home maintenance.

Funding

13. Funding for DFGs has remained relatively static. In 2011-12 it was £34.9 million across Wales and represented almost two-thirds of all the money spent on private sector renewal during 2011-12. Any proposals to improve adaptations services have to be seen within the context of the current financial climate. Funding for DFGs is not ring-fenced and comes out of unhypothecated local authority General Capital Funding (GCF).
- *What impact reduced resources for housing are likely to have on the provision of home adaptations;*
14. It is important to point out that the Welsh Government does not set budgets for DFGs across Wales. It is for individual local authorities to determine how much to allocate for adaptations purposes. DFGs remain a mandatory entitlement but with increasing pressures on budgets, spending on adaptations will have to compete even more with other local authority priorities. As a mandatory entitlement, expenditure on DFGs will be protected to some degree but other activities may be affected such as grants for home improvement and other forms of assistance for homeowners. There could be an impact on waiting lists because of the squeeze on resources and these will have to be carefully managed. Under the present economic circumstances local authorities will inevitably concentrate on their statutory duties and this will include the provision of DFGs.
15. This is part of the reason why additional funding for the Independent Living Grant has been provided as outlined above. The grant was introduced on a one-off basis but we have been able to provide £2.5 million over the last two financial years to help mitigate against the effects of the cuts in funding. The budget for the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme (RRAP) has also been protected in order to maintain the impact of this important service. In addition, the Welsh Government has managed to minimise the impact of budget cuts on Care & Repair and has protected agency front-line services from the effect of the cuts that had to be made.
- *Is the Welsh Government effectively monitoring the provision of adaptation services; and*
16. The Statutory Performance Indicator mentioned above provides information on delivery of DFGs. We also receive detailed information on spend on DFGs through statistical bulletins that are prepared by the Welsh Government's Knowledge and Advisory Service. Adaptations are a regular feature of discussions with the Welsh Local Government Association and the all-Wales Heads of Environmental Health Technical Panel.

17. My officials also receive regular updates and reports on the delivery of RRAP and numbers of people helped by Care & Repair services across Wales. Indeed, the latter information forms part of our Programme for Government tracking indicators. Overall, we gather a large amount of information which informs policy on adaptations and helps us to ensure that services are provided effectively.
- *What more needs to be to improve home adaptation services in Wales.*
18. Whilst I recognise that services vary across Wales, improvements have been made to service delivery and I think that this fact needs to be highlighted. We are in a much better position than we were in 2006, for example, and there are some very positive stories to tell. However, I recognise that we need to consider service delivery and adaptations generally and this is why the Welsh Government announced, in the housing White Paper, that there would be a review of the range of aids and adaptations programmes to see whether there is scope to make further improvements.
19. Although a seminar has taken place where local authority housing and social services departments, Care & Repair, Occupational Therapists and other interested parties discussed the current provision arrangements, the review has been put on hold until the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee publishes its findings as a result of this inquiry. It seemed prudent and sensible to do this.
20. One of the most important things that can be done in terms of improving the existing service is to re-emphasise the importance of corporate working on the part of local authorities where adaptations are concerned. We need to highlight the fact that this is a key issue and there may be a role for the Welsh Local Government Association to work with us to get this message across more strongly. There are of course areas where the requisite corporate approach works well and it may be just a question of sharing good practice at a number of levels.
21. There are positive stories to tell and it is far too easy to dwell on some negative aspects of the services that are currently provided. Hopefully we can make further improvements to the current system so that services are improved for the Citizens of Wales.

Carl Sargeant
Minister for Housing and Regeneration
Welsh Government

Agenda Item 3

Paper 2

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Wednesday 17 April 2013

Housing & Regeneration

Portfolio

1. Within my portfolio, I have responsibility for matters concerning housing, regeneration and planning, including building regulations.
2. In these difficult times for the economy and public spending, along with my Ministerial colleagues, I intend to take action to deliver the things that make a difference to the people we serve, their families and our communities - now and in the future.
3. The home is at the heart of our policies and programmes and I am committed to tackling poverty and reducing inequalities, providing attractive places for people to live and work.
4. The Programme for Government (PfG) identifies many of the specific actions I am taking. It also sets out milestones and indicators to assess progress in tackling the long-term challenges facing Wales.
5. As you know, I have particular accountability for ensuring delivery is on track in a number of areas within the programme – most notably in the chapters covering Growth and Sustainable Jobs (1), Welsh Homes (6), Tackling Poverty (9), Rural Communities (10) and Environment and Sustainability (11).

Priorities & Progress

6. Whilst it is not possible to address my entire portfolio in this paper, I have outlined below further details on some of my priorities, giving consideration to specific areas this and other Committees have identified as of particular interest to it.

Housing Bill

7. This autumn will see the Introduction of Welsh Government's first Housing Bill which was announced in the First Minister's Legislative Statement to the National Assembly in July 2011.
8. There has been considerable stakeholder engagement across the sector before and after the publication of the Housing White Paper (Homes for Wales) last May (2012).

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/housingcommunity/housewhitepaper/?lang=en>

9. The White Paper listed a range of legislative and non legislative changes aimed at achieving a whole system approach – more homes, better homes and better services.
10. It is intended that the Bill will cover areas such as: improvement to homelessness law; the introduction of a compulsory licensing scheme for all private rented sector landlords and letting agents; the introduction of a power to enable local authorities to charge up to double the rate of Council Tax on long term empty properties; and a duty on local authorities to provide official Gypsy and Traveller sites where a need has been identified.
11. The Bill will also include: reforms to the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy system; introducing standards for local authorities on rents, service charges and quality of accommodation; and enabling more use of Community Land Trusts and Co-operative Housing.

Renting Homes Bill

12. This Bill contributes to Programme for Government commitment to make it easier for people to move between renting, full and shared ownership.
13. It responds to long-standing calls for reform, the Bill will create a fairer, simpler and more efficient legal basis for renting a home.
14. The proposals are modelled closely on recommendations produced by the Law Commission in 2006 and we have been working closely with the Commission to review and update them as necessary.
15. There will be two statutory model contracts setting out in plain language the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords: a secure contract modelled on the local authority secure tenancy and a standard contract similar to the current assured shorthold tenancy.
16. The Renting Homes White Paper will be published later in the spring, followed by the standard 12 week consultation. The Bill is due for introduction into the Assembly in early 2015.

Regulated Mobile Homes (Wales) Bill

17. The Committee will be aware that this is an Assembly Member Bill, introduced by Peter Black AM. Mobile homes are used as permanent homes by an estimated 5,000 residents in Wales, (3,500 homes across 92 sites).
18. The Bill aims to renew current law relating to mobile homes that is perceived to be ineffective and outdated, with malpractice from site owners relatively commonplace.

19. The Bill is currently at Stage 2 of scrutiny in the Senedd with the General Principles and the Financial Resolution being agreed on the 13th March. There was widespread support for the Bill, with no objections to its principles.
20. Stage 2 scrutiny of the Bill by the Communities, Equalities and Local Government committee will take place on the 13 June.

Delivering more homes

21. Our target is 7,500 additional affordable homes by 2016 and, as noted later in this paper, bringing 5000 empty properties back into use. We delivered nearly 2,500 additional affordable homes in 2011/12 and over 1,000 empty homes were brought back into use in that same year.
22. The investment in the Social Housing Grant Programme, encouraging the release of more public land for affordable housing and supporting Houses into Homes, our Empty Property Initiative.
23. Moreover, we are providing £6 million in 2012/13 and for the following two years to the Welsh Housing Partnership which will provide over 800 properties for intermediate rent.
24. On top of this, we have allocated £4million revenue funding each year for the next 30 years which will enable over **£140** million to be borrowed by housing associations which will support the development of more than **1,100** new affordable homes.
25. This innovation reflects the determination of the Welsh Government to find ways of sustaining investment in housing and is a clear example of close working between local government, housing associations and the Welsh Government. It will mean good quality, affordable homes for many families and individuals across Wales.
26. We are leading the way in the effective use of land and there is a dedicated team to actively release Welsh Government land for housing. Local authorities have resources at their disposal in the land they own and some are actively looking to innovate in housing delivery by using this land for a range of housing outcomes.
27. A total of 426 affordable housing units were delivered on land made available by the public sector during 2011-12, around two thirds of which was on land made available by local authorities.
28. We are also developing co-operative housing in Wales and have set an ambitious target of 500 new co-operative homes to be delivered during this administration. An emerging model of affordable co-operative

ownership is particularly interesting as is the approach to development on a garden village basis with community and co-operation at its heart.

Houses into Homes

29. As noted earlier, our “Houses into Homes” scheme is an innovative £10m scheme aimed at owners of residential properties empty for six months or longer. It is contributing towards the target of bringing 5,000 empty properties back into use during this Welsh Government term of office. It is linked to the Programme for Government commitment on empty homes.
30. The scheme is delivered by local authorities working on a regional basis and is a model of collaboration. Just last month (March), the final amounts were drawn down from the Welsh Government. The scheme is expected to bring back into use at least 436 properties in the first wave of loans. This delivers a large contribution towards the Government’s commitment to bring 5,000 empty residential properties back into use during this Assembly term.
31. We are also working on a registration and licensing scheme for all landlords and letting and management agents in the private rented sector.

Rent Policy

32. In addition, we have developed a new policy for social housing rents that will apply consistently to local authority and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) - and reflect the size, type, location and quality of landlords’ housing stock.
33. Implementation of the new rent policy for RSLs will be in 2014/15 and is subject to exit from the HRAS for local authorities.

Welsh Housing Quality Standard

34. The quality of existing homes, particularly for those who are poor or vulnerable, is equally as crucial. This investment in people's homes is also an investment in local jobs, skills and communities at a time when tackling poverty and creating jobs is top of the Welsh Government’s agenda. For these reasons it is essential to keep pressure on all social landlords to meet and maintain the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2020.

Welfare Reform

35. Despite the actions we are taking, it is important that local authorities assess the impacts that the reforms will have on their local communities to inform the nature and scale of action they need to take.

36. Over the last financial year and this financial year, we have provided £1.5 million to support local authorities to take action to help people to cope with the changes. I am currently considering the programme of support for local authorities for the next financial year.
37. We have also contributed £120,000 to a national research programme with DWP to consider the social and demographic impacts of the changes so that we can better understand the impacts and be able to tailor support to help people.
38. Local authorities need to consider the multiplier effects of the impacts. Evidence suggests that each £1 of income lost by local people will be associated with a total loss of income to local economies of between £1.00 and £1.50.
39. Furthermore, figures provided by local authorities and social landlords suggests that the impact of the bedroom tax is likely to be greater in rural rather than urban areas, with a greater proportion of tenants affected.
40. This fact means that local authorities and social landlords in rural areas will need to work harder to mitigate the impact of the bedroom tax, as there are fewer appropriate housing options available to affected tenants in rural areas.

Vibrant and Viable Places

41. The new regeneration framework, 'Vibrant and Viable Places', was launched on 11 March and is the culmination of 18 months of research, engagement and consultation within the regeneration field within Wales and wider afield.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/businessandconomy/regeneration/vvpframework/?lang=en>

42. The framework sets out a vision that everybody in Wales should live in well-connected vibrant, viable and sustainable communities with a strong local economy and good quality of life.
43. We have set out new national outcomes for regeneration, aligned to those for Communities First: prosperous communities, learning communities and healthier communities. The framework places a strong emphasis on the importance of partnership, strategy and sustainable development.
44. It has the backing of the whole Cabinet. It promotes a well-evidenced approach combining support for people and places, and encourages partnership working by the public, private and third sectors.
45. We want to get the best out of every pound spent by the Welsh Government in terms of mainstream funding such as health and education. In addition, intensive targeted regeneration investment in a small number of key places will be used to support local growth in town centres, coastal communities and Communities First clusters.
46. We are now working on the detailed guidance for local partnerships to bid for targeted investment.

Planning

47. Significant work is underway to reform the planning system. Since devolution, up to date national planning policies have been put in place. These policies are appropriate to the needs of Wales, reflecting our commitment to deliver sustainable development, economic renewal and affordable homes. To assist delivery at the local level a new local development plan system has been introduced. Work is also underway to improve the planning application process.
48. The Planning Reform Bill will provide an opportunity to introduce primary legislation which takes forward the reform agenda. In the past we have had to rely on UK Bills, secondary legislation and policy and guidance as our main levers. Being able to create our own primary legislation provides a new opportunity that should be embraced.
49. Planning legislation and policy must be based on evidence. A comprehensive evidence base has been assembled to inform the Planning White Paper and underpin the Planning Reform Bill. The White Paper and draft Bill will be published before the end of 2013.
50. Separately, I was pleased that officials from my Knowledge and Analytical Services and Planning Divisions were able to provide oral and written evidence to the Environment & Sustainability Committee recently, regarding Population and Household Projections for local authorities in Wales – where the level and scale of housing development in a Local Development Plan is a matter for the Local Planning Authority.

Construction

51. Elsewhere, the Programme for Government includes a commitment to strengthen building regulations to improve energy efficiency by 55% above 2006 building standards, equivalent to 40% above 2010 standards. The Welsh Governments energy targets for buildings are linked to European legislative requirements which are compulsory for all European states from 2021.
52. Our recent consultation proposals for changes to the Building Regulations considered two options in relation to reducing carbon emissions in new homes, either a reduction of 40% relative to the 2010 Part L standards from January 2015 or a 25% reduction from 2014. There were also proposals for a 20%, 10% or 11% improvement on Part L 2010 for new non domestic buildings
53. We received 91 responses to the consultation. These have been analysed and were presented to the Building Regulations Advisory Committee for Wales on the 24 January 2013. A number of recommendations and actions resulted from this meeting and officials will work to develop further Part L proposals based on the outcomes of the consultation.
54. The consultation also included viability modelling in relation to the impact on housing development for the options of a 25%, 40% and the inclusion of sprinklers within new homes. The Domestic Fire Safety (Wales) Measure was introduced in April 2011. The current timetable for the

introduction of fire suppression systems (sprinklers) is September 2013 and we will be going out to public consultation on the details of implementation ahead of this.

Carl Sargeant AM
Minister for Housing & Regeneration
April 2013



Paper 3

Communities, Equality and Local
Government Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Cambrian Buildings
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff CF10 5FL

Adeiladau Cambrian
Sgwar Mount Stuart
Caerdydd CF10 5FL

18th March 2013

Re: Inquiry into Home Adaptations

Dear Committee Members

Thank you for the recent opportunity to provide oral evidence to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee's Inquiry into Home Adaptations. During the session I promised to provide further written information on two specific areas; namely the current discrepancies in access to adaptations between different tenures and also the good practice that local authorities shared with me in recent written correspondence.

In relation to the current discrepancies across tenures, I expressed my concerns in my earlier written evidence about the complexity of the current system within which aids and adaptations services are funded and delivered. Adaptation services have developed from a range of different pieces of legislation, supplementary orders and guidance and new policies which have been introduced to improve parts of the system over time. The inconsistencies and inequalities in the current arrangements have created a disjointed and complex system where access to resources is dictated by housing tenure.

Differences in the way that various funding streams are administered and implemented, depending on local policies and decisions, create a serious risk that people with complex needs will fall through one of these funding



gaps. For the older person trying to access the help they need, navigating this complex web of eligibility criteria can act as a significant barrier.

I am concerned that current arrangements are not conducive to developing a common sense solution to the needs of an individual but instead are directed by the access to a particular funding route. I would therefore strongly welcome any move towards a simplified, tenure blind approach to adaptations that is more focussed on meeting the needs of the individual. This need not necessarily equate to the introduction of one single system or delivery mechanism, but should ensure that eligibility for, and access to, adaptations is based on need, rather than housing tenure. This approach would mirror other support services, including the recent changes to the Supporting People Programme, which reflect more needs based approach in relation to eligibility.

In relation to the good practice, I have attached for your information a list of initiatives that local authorities shared with me during recent correspondence on DFG delivery times. I have classified this into a number of common themes including joint working, use of resources, the customer experience, process issues and alternatives to DFG provision. I would take the opportunity to reinforce the point I made at the oral evidence session; that much of this should, in fact be regarded as standard practice if we are to move to a position where if an older person needs aids and adaptations in their home to help them stay safe and independent, they will be assured that they will get the help they need on a timely basis in a way that suits the life that they lead and the things that they want to do.

I hope you find this supplementary information useful. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance. I look forward to hearing the outcomes of the Committee's inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Older People's Commissioner for Wales



Aids and Adaptations

List of good practice provided by Welsh local authorities – December 2012

Joint Working

- Co-location of OTs with grant officers has reduced waiting list from two years in 2010 to two months
- Council has employed on a trial basis an adaptations coordinator to bridge OT and adaptations teams.
- Invested in additional OT support to speed up the assessment process
- Managed by an integrated disabled person's service including surveyors, OTs.
- Close links with RSLs who delivery PAGs
- Workshop bringing together officers from social services and housing
- Monthly meetings between Housing and OT
- Joint working between housing and OTs (colocation)
- Reorganisation of OT into a single service team
- Officer seconded to Housing Renewal Team
- Good joint working with OTs
- Close partnership with C&R (co-located with the council).

Use of resources

- Acknowledged timescales need to be reduced and have invested officer time and financial resources. This has reduced delivery time from 809 to 399 over three years.
- Cabinet considering proposals for additional resources

- Funding to Care and Repair
- Provision of sufficient capital to adaptations even in financially challenging times – no applicant has to wait for grant assistance as a result of lack of funds
- Recycling of equipment
- Living Independently Home Repair Grant tackles other works of repair e.g. roofs or electrics at same time as DFG.
- Strong financial support, consistent capital allocation

Customer experience

- Recently started monitoring feedback from clients, for example 82% of people who received a DFG felt it helped them stay independent.
- Telephone based enquiry service and home visit options for applicants
- In house agency service to hand hold applicants through the process.
- Early draft means test to give potential applicants a very early indication of any financial contribution
- Root and Branch review in 2007 to identify process efficiencies, streamline customer journey. Reduced from 500+ days to 175 days
- Customer satisfaction levels high (95%)
- Home visits

'Process' issues

- Changes to Housing Renewal Policy specifically aimed at reducing delivery times over the next 12 months.
- Partnership with LSVT with a panel to consider applications for adaptations, including moving to a new property.
- Tighten up on targets for each step of DFG process
- Joint pre-referral visit by housing surveyor and OT to ensure any recommendations are reasonable and practical
- Fast track procedure for urgent cases
- Prioritisation system to deal with most urgent cases first
- Using surveyors as assessors to reduce OT waiting times

- More accurate recording
- Fast track stair like service for palliative care
- Refining application process
- E-referral process from OT to grants team
- Dedicated team with specialist OTs
- Fast track for priority cases

Alternatives to DFG

- Minor works commissioned separately
- Prioritising hospital discharge for minor adaptations
- Partnership with Care and Repair to deliver minor adaptations and the RRAP programme (average time 4 days)
- Safety at Home Scheme: partnership between OT and C&R (delivered 454 minor adaptations last year, average time 6 days)
- Discretionary relocation grant via Pathways to Adapted Housing Register
- Minor adaptations Grant for less than £2k (average 59 days)
- Financial incentive to move
- 11 days to deliver minor adaptations
- Loans and grants for other repairs and improvements

Contractors / building work

- Recently re-tendered for building contractors
- Framework contract with local contractors – with agreed timescales and schedule of rates
- Approved contractor agreements.
- One experienced local architect
- Joint feasibility visits OT and grants
- Expert local contractors
- Schedule of rates (removed tendering)
- In house grant agency
- Registered Builders Scheme – advice on sourcing a builder

Document is Restricted