

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into Home Adaptations

Response from : Wales Heads of Environmental Health

Subject: Inquiry into home adaptations

Has your Authority made any changes in response to the recommendations of the Equality of Opportunity Committee report 2009?

No

If Yes: Please outline the changes

We believe that in the current circumstances our system is effective as it can be. We did implement changes following the 2005 review and these have proved effective in reducing delivery time for DFGs. Our DFG delivery time continues to fall because of improved performance management within the system and taking the opportunity to streamline our internal processes wherever the opportunity arises.

Has your Authority made any other improvements in your DFG services since 2009?

Yes. We have introduced a Disabled Persons Relocation Grant. Where it is not possible or cost effective to adapt a property the Council will assist in the costs of moving to and adapting a new property.

Has your Authority made any changes to make more effective use of funding since 2009?

No

If yes: please outline

Are applications for DFG's increasing?

No. We are seeing a year on year decrease in applications which we are at present unable to explain.

If yes please provide numbers of applications for 09/10 10/11 11/12.

What needs to be done to further improve the home adaptation services in Wales?

The 5 Gwent Authorities have carried out some significant work in relation to DFGs. We have looked at how we all deliver the service and how much we invest. From our findings it is clear that there is generally a high level of consistency across Gwent in terms of delivery. There are differences in average costs of grant but we understand these and are looking to improve on this by working more smartly with our suppliers. The significant difference is in the amount of capital made available by the Councils to fund DFGs. Those LAs with the longer waiting times are those where the available capital does not meet the level of need.

There needs to be an understanding of where the delays occur in the DFG system. It is clear that the “blame” for delays is being directed at local authorities. Whilst in some cases this may be the case (lack of capital funding, lack of investment in OT services) it is not always the case. Significant delays can occur that are outside the control of Councils – mortgage companies, landlords and applicants themselves. A clearer understanding of a breakdown of the PI would allow more focus to be placed on the areas where the real delays occur rather than blaming the system.

I believe that the power to improve the system already exists. We do not need more good practice guides. A better understating of where delays occur is the first point. A thorough examination of the PI data is required as I don’t believe this is being reported consistently across Wales - when the PI is broken down into more stages e.g. Social Services assessment phase, pre-application checks, means test and work delivery time.

RRAP must be continued to be hailed as a success. We do not have actual figures to hand but delivery time can be a few days. We also deliver other minor works very quickly. Perhaps there should also be focus on the positives as we believe that the adaptations provision in local authorities is a success story.