



Paper 3

Communities, Equality and Local  
Government Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
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18<sup>th</sup> 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

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Rowley".

**Older People's Commissioner for Wales**



Older People's Commissioner for Wales  
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

## 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

