



**Report of : Director Environment & Neighbourhoods**

**Meeting: Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board**

**Date of meeting: 17<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

**SUBJECT: Information on Adaptations in Leeds.**

**Electoral Wards Affected:**

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

## **Executive Summary**

Scrutiny Board (Social Care) made a number of recommendations following an inquiry into adaptations in 2003. The recommendations were implemented, yet the picture of delivering adaptations has changed again in Leeds in order to improve service delivery and maximise efficient budget management even further. Since 2006, the Adaptations Agency has provided a full adaptations service in the private sector via Disabled facilities Grants and the ALMOs & BITMO have undertaken adaptations directly, using their appointed contractors.

The demand for adaptations has grown considerably in the city over recent years and as a consequence, the pace of delivery and expenditure has also increased in that time. Improvements have been secured in the time taken to deliver adaptations and comparisons are provided with other Local Authorities for adaptations provided through DFGs. Value for money aspects remain a key focus both now and into the future.

Through the Adaptations Operations Group, the statutory providers of adaptations in Leeds consider best practice, performance comparisons and opportunities to share learning for the benefit of all agencies and, ultimately, service users.

## **1.0 Purpose Of This Report**

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the current delivery of adaptations in public & private sector housing, the service improvements achieved in recent years, VFM considerations and opportunities for future development.
- 1.2 Scrutiny Board (Social Care) undertook an inquiry into adaptations in 2003. The recommendations following this inquiry were implemented and the progress and impact reported to Scrutiny for a number of years thereafter. The context of the provision of adaptations in the city has, however, moved on apace since that time and a number of changes have since been made in the agencies delivering adaptations and the operational methods of delivery. As a result of the changes made, there has been a reduction in the time taken to deliver schemes into homes, which was the prime focus of the Scrutiny Inquiry conducted in 2003.
- 1.3 This report provides the current performance in this key respect, alongside customer satisfaction, the trends in demand and delivery of adaptations and comparisons with other Local Authorities on private sector work. Whilst having recently secured significant additional capital investment for adaptations in the private sector, the need to manage the increasing demand against resources available has been a critical component of adaptations work in recent times.

## **2.0 Background Information**

### Overview of the Delivery of Adaptations in the Public & Private Sector.

- 2.1 Leeds City Council has a long history of maintaining a substantial annual programme to install adaptations into residents' homes to promote independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for people who are disabled, together with their families.
- 2.2 There have been changes in the service areas delivering the various stages of adaptations over the years. The Adaptations Agency was established in 2003 with the intention of pulling together all cross tenure adaptations work into one team. From July 2006, the ALMOs took on the work to directly deliver adaptations using contractors, leaving the Adaptations Agency to deliver schemes in the private sector from that point on.
- 2.3 The current social care and housing legislation and guidance provide the framework for Local Authorities to deliver an adaptations service to residents. At Leeds City Council, great strides have been made in recent years to improve the service provision in line with the Government's Guidance and within the spirit of Best Value and Modernising Government and towards meeting the expectations of self directed support.
- 2.4 The first point of access for clients is often through the call centre before transfer to Occupational Therapy staff within Adult Social Care or Children's Services. Social Care services have developed an effective screening process at the initial point of contact to ensure that the various applications for adaptations and equipment can be dealt with quickly and effectively. Many minor adaptations, for example hand rails, are requested and ordered directly over the phone by the client, without any assessment being undertaken.

- 2.5 Assessments of need for major adaptations such as wet floor showers can also be carried out by telephone interview, when, for example, responding to service users known to Social Care where a full needs assessment has previously taken place. If an assessment is appropriate, Occupational Therapy staff visit applicant's homes to conduct a full assessment of needs of the disabled user and their carers, ensuring that the works are "necessary and appropriate". The current housing legislation (Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996) identifies the mandatory categories for eligibility for Disabled Facilities Grants and the OT referrals outline the necessary works under these criteria. This is applied across all tenures. Social Care also take account of other legislation relating to the provision of adaptations (e.g. Chronically Sick and Disabled Person's Act 1970), as well as other statutory community care responsibilities.
- 2.6 For owner occupiers or people living in the private rented sector, the OT assessments are forwarded to the Adaptations Agency, to be processed as a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The Adaptations Agency offers a full agency service which includes carrying out the mandatory Government means test, designing the adaptations scheme (ensuring works are reasonable and practicable) and organising one of the Agency's framework contractors to carry out the work. The whole process is supervised and led by officers from the Agency on the client's behalf.
- 2.7 For applications received from Council tenants, the OT assessments are forwarded directly to the relevant ALMO (or BITMO) for action. In Leeds, adaptations in public housing are funded by the ALMOs and no statutory means test or maximum grant limit applies, unlike private sector clients. The ALMO's operate with their own contractors and monitor works through to satisfactory completion. The ALMOs also employ OTs who may assess tenants needs when there are no other community care issues and support the delivery of complex schemes.

### **3.0 Main Issues**

#### **3.1 The Scale of provision in Leeds.**

- 3.1.1 Approximately 70% of adaptations delivered to Leeds residents are minor adaptations, ie those costing under £1,000 such as hand rails. These are delivered quickly via contractors working for Social Care services and the ALMOs.
- 3.1.2 For larger adaptations such as wet floor showers and stair lifts, the number is smaller, but still significant. In 2007/08, 1,901 homes received a major adaptation (704 private sector; 1,107 public sector) and the total expenditure on major adaptations across the city in 07/08 was £13.7m (£5.25m private sector; £8.55m public sector). There has been an upward trend in expenditure and delivery on adaptations to private and public sector homes over recent years. Appendix 1 shows the expenditure and number of schemes completed annually from 2003/04.

#### **3.2 Current Performance.**

- 3.2.1 A feature of the delivery of Adaptations in Leeds is the number of services involved in delivering schemes to residents of all tenures. The various delivery processes can never be the same, for example means testing is a feature of a DFG, but is not required in the public sector. In spite of these differences, officers review the operational aspects of service delivery to ensure consistent assessments and

outcomes for clients. The provision of adaptations is monitored by a cross tenure Adaptations Operations Group that has representatives from all statutory agencies that deliver adaptations across Leeds. The group has a specific interest in maintaining quality and consistency in service outcomes while researching further improvements in delivery service.

3.2.3 A key performance indicator which has held Members' attention over time has been the time taken to complete adaptations. The current performance on this (July 08) is provided at Appendix 2a. Also provided here is the annual performance on delivery times in the private sector from 2003/04 (Appendix 2b) and a comparison of the average days taken to complete schemes across Local Authorities in the Leeds benchmarking group ( Appendix 2c).

3.2.4 Appendix 3 provides details on customer satisfaction with adaptations, although the methodology to collect this information is not completely consistent across all agencies.

### 3.3 Improving Service Delivery in Recent Years.

3.3.1 The delivery of adaptations in Leeds has changed significantly since the previous Scrutiny Inquiry in 2003. Underpinning all of these changes has been the intention to achieve an improved service for disabled residents and their families, balanced with an efficient use of resources to meet need. The latter is dealt with more in section 3.4. In relation to operational improvements made in recent years, the following are worthy of note:

3.3.2 A total overhaul of the DFG delivery process. This has included stripping out unnecessary stages in the process and the introduction of clear delivery targets for each stage, which are monitored on a weekly basis by managers in the Adaptations Agency. This has resulted in a clear picture of delivery across all schemes and the ability to manage completion times more closely and according to budget provision. Schemes that were previously moving through very slowly have been identified and fast tracked or closed down as required.

3.3.3 Standardised specifications and costings have been introduced into the DFG process. This has had a dramatic effect on reducing the time taken to deliver schemes.

3.3.4 The information available to clients has been significantly improved. The imminent publication of an overview of services and facilities is intended to be useful for people with absolutely no knowledge of what is available and no idea of whom to contact for help. Already in place is much more information on obtaining an adaptation, our service standards, who does what and other practical advice to help people through to completion of their schemes.

3.3.5 A panel process has been established to review cases that have become stuck, due to either the delivery agencies and/or the client being unable to agree on how to proceed with an adaptation. At the time of writing, the panel has yet to be tested but presently, three cases have requested to proceed to a panel hearing. Whilst uncharted territory as yet, the very offer of a panel hearing has proved the key to move on a number of applications which had previously stalled.

3.3.6 The Adaptations Operations Group now meets monthly, and is chaired by a Chief Officer, taking a lead in ensuring the delivery of the service is driven equitably across all tenures in Leeds and that all agencies are fully engaged. In addition to resolving known areas of concern (for example collection and reporting performance data), the group is used as an opportunity to share good practice and identify service improvements that can be adopted across all agencies.

3.3.7 It has been recognised that improvements were needed in how the Council managed situations where a family have complex needs which could potentially be met by a number of housing solutions. A case management approach to these situations has now been agreed with the involvement of Council services, the NHS and with representation from a service user and advocate.

#### 3.4 Value For Money in the Delivery of Adaptations.

3.4.1 The demand for adaptations is growing. The Government has widened the eligibility for DFGs in recent times and the type of schemes delivered has increased in complexity. All of these factors create pressures on the budget delivering adaptations. The Authority has secured enhanced financial support from Government for 08/09 and has made additional investment through the capital programme to meet demand in the private sector. This has led to an unprecedented intended spend of £6m in this sector alone in 08/09. In this context, officers are acutely aware of the need to deliver value for money and work has been ongoing over a number of years to improve our position. The graph at Appendix 4 compares the unit cost of delivering adaptations in the private sector, as reported by eleven Local Authorities in 2006/07.

3.4.2 Recent initiatives contributing to VFM aspects of adaptations in Leeds include:

- Adaptations being delivered through a framework of contractors in both the public & private sectors. The procurement of this work involved both quality and cost assessments at competitive tendering stage. Most of the current contracts operate open book accounting and as such enable both parties to jointly identify efficiencies and areas of waste reduction.
- In the public sector, previously-used equipment is cleaned, serviced and recycled where possible, or stored where there is not an immediate use available. However, there are limitations to this for adaptations such as stair lifts which are made to order. In the private sector, the equipment essentially belongs to the home owner as a result of the DFG and is not therefore readily available for reuse elsewhere.
- The ALMOs re-housing officers ensure that adapted housing stock is utilised effectively. This can mean tenants being re-housed into homes that already have adaptations rather than adapting their existing home, thus ensuring needs are met at least cost. Assistance is provided to help customers move in such cases.
- Fixed price 'work packages' have been introduced for 90% of the Adaptations Agency's work, also in one of the ALMOs. This has introduced savings in the time spent on procurement, leading to reductions in average costs.

- A review of and changes in the materials used in adaptations schemes have resulted in savings (e.g. use of larger tiles in wet floor showers have saved on labour and materials). This has also increased customer satisfaction with the work undertaken.
- Adaptations needs are identified as part of capital programme works (kitchen and bathroom renewals). This leads to efficiencies from proactive identification during the refurbishment works.

#### **4. Opportunities for the future.**

4.1 The Adaptations Operations Group continues to meet and identify best practice for all tenures, sharing ideas for innovations and seeking opportunities for future improvements. The following are a number of examples of such opportunities that are under consideration in Leeds.

4.2 The Assistive Technology Hub.

There are many different types of services and products that can be used alongside personal support if needed, to enable disabled people to achieve their desired lifestyle. An opportunity exists for Leeds to consider how these services can be linked together to deliver the best possible outcomes for disabled people. Some of these services, eg; Care ring and Telecare, are provided by the Council, some, such as wheelchairs, by the NHS, and some jointly, for example community equipment. The 'not for profit' sector provide services including William Merritt Disabled Living and Mobility Centre, and the private sector contributes through local & national retailers. It is acknowledged that it is difficult for both disabled people and professionals supporting them, to navigate all these services and to make decisions about the best combination of products for an individual.

Adult Social Care is to fund a piece of work using the Social Care Reform Grant to investigate the potential to develop an 'Assistive Technology Hub' which would link all the relevant services in the city. Different services and agencies might link to the hub in different ways, but the key features would be:

- The Hub would provide a single point of contact/information /advice for disabled people and professionals
- The Hub would respond to people who are able to receive statutory financial support and to self funders
- The Hub would seek to include all service providers in Leeds with an interest in delivering assistive technology

The Hub would not only be able to advise people about the different types and funding for adaptations, but also all the other associated services that they might not have considered.

This approach would provide an opportunity for adaptations services to be promoted to disabled people and to a wide range of health and social care workers and to ensure that adaptations are provided when they are the best solution available for an individual family.

4.3 Joint Funded Post to Co-ordinate Case Management of Complex Adaptations and Appeals.  
Having agreed the processes (now to be tested) on both appeals and on case managing complex adaptations / rehousing schemes, an opportunity exists for the Council's services involved in delivery of these services to jointly fund a post which would co-ordinate and track progress on appeals and case management to ensure both an equity of approach and robust performance management. The provision of a jointly funded post assists in overcoming any gaps or barriers between services involved in the delivery of adaptations, but is as yet still subject to agreement by all parties. A business case for the post will be considered by the Adaptations Operations Group in September 08.

4.4 Leeds Adaptations Partnership  
With the Adaptations Operations Group now established and working well, there is an opportunity to take these operational arrangements a step further to establish a Leeds Adaptation partnership. This would involve members of the Adaptations Operations Group formally committing to a city-wide approach to the delivery of adaptations services to work on behalf of the partnership in addition to representing their individual agency and to combine resources when that would be an effective way to make service improvements.

## **5 Conclusions**

5.1 The provision of adaptations in Leeds has changed significantly in recent years. A wide and changing range of agencies deliver the service including the call centre and OTs, to the eventual delivery agents of the Adaptations Agency or the ALMO and contractors. It is by no means a simple process, however it is one which the client must be able to access simply, understand readily and navigate without difficulty in order to have their housing needs met. Whilst internal systems and processes are complex, there is an overriding intention to provide a customer-led service which minimises any inherent deficiencies caused by a number of delivery agencies being in place. Service improvements have been achieved since the previous Scrutiny inquiry, however challenges continue, not least in managing spend for maximum benefit of the entire client base, both current and future.

## **6. Recommendations**

Scrutiny Board is asked to consider the content of this report to assist in the determination of Terms of Reference for a future inquiry into adaptations in Leeds.

## **7. Background documents**

Adaptations: Final Report of Scrutiny Board Social Care – October 2002

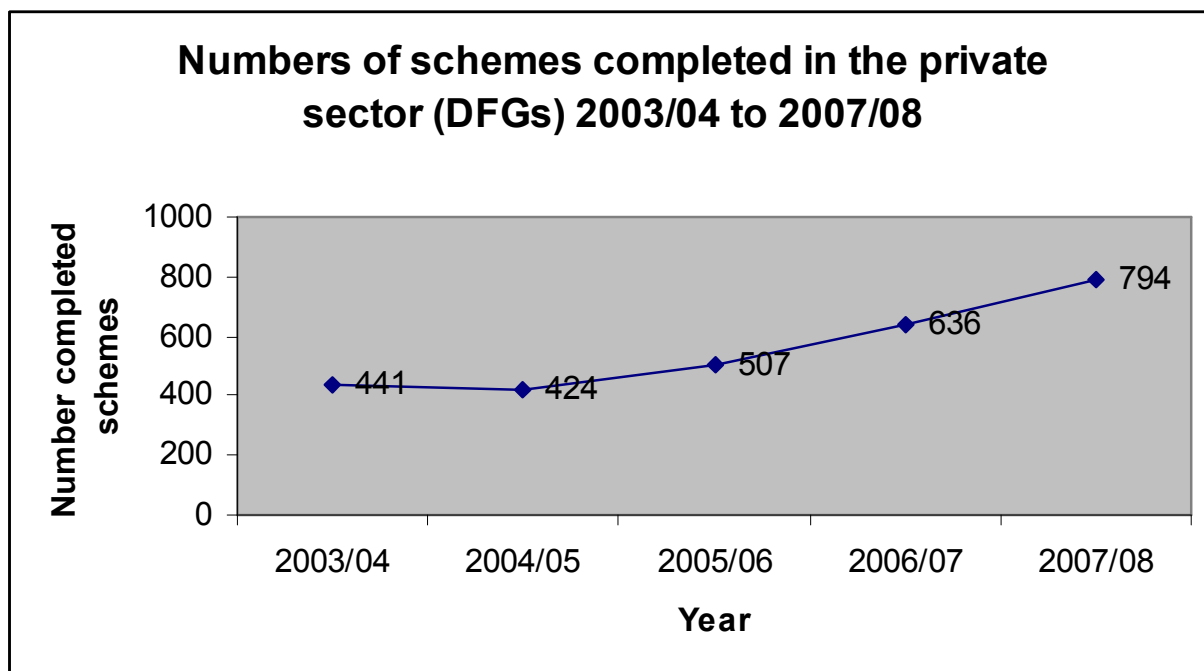
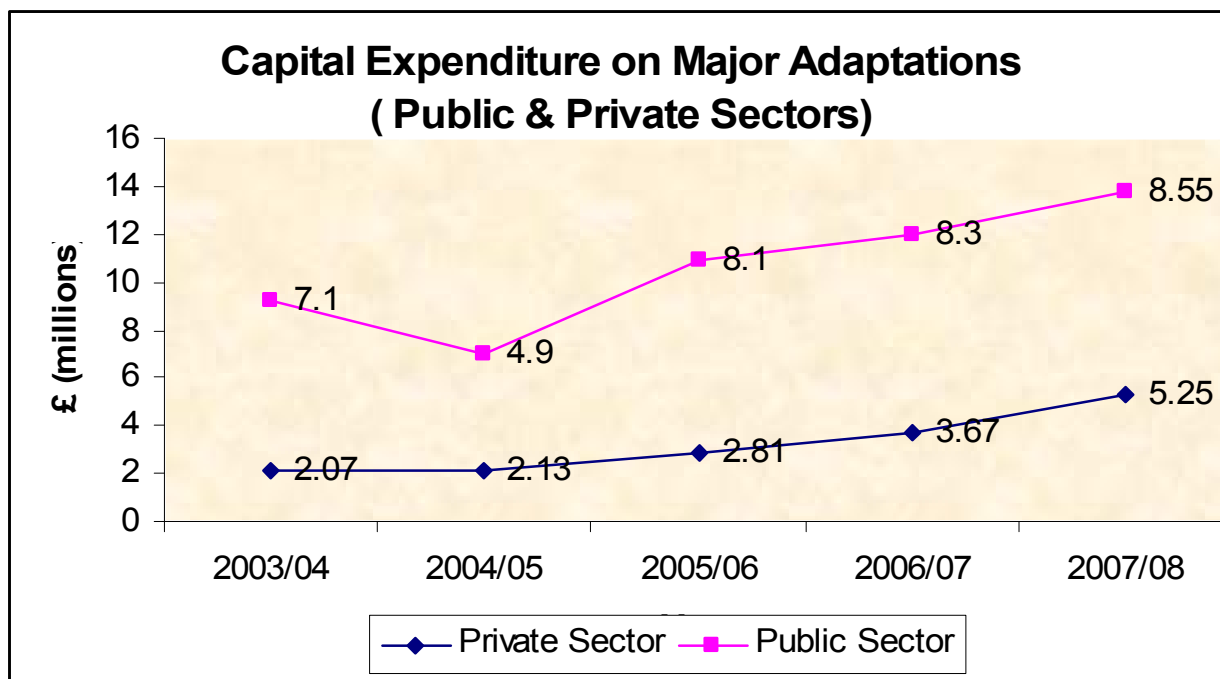




Table 1. All Agency performance – Ave. Time Taken from First Contact to Completion of Adaptations (July 2008)

Cross Tenure Performance	High Risk Cases			Medium Risk Cases			Low Risk Cases		
	No	Days	Ave	No	Days	Ave	No	Days	Ave
Belle Isle TMO:	1	21	21.0	0	0	-	5	15	3.0
Aire Valley Homes:	9	1243	138.1	19	1604	84.4	150	22210	148.1
East North East Homes:	4	1616	404.0	2	214	107.0	21	4925	234.5
West North West Homes:	0	0	-	3	436	145.3	30	3821	127.4
Adaptations Agency:	4	1141	285.3	4	1936	484.0	32	8126	253.9
LCC Performance	18	4021	223.4	28	4190	149.6	238	39097	164.3
	CLG Target Days:		83	CLG Target Days:		151	CLG Target Days:		259

Table 2. Adaptations Agency Performance – Ave. Time Taken from receipt in Agency to completion.

Cross Tenure Performance	High Risk cases			Med risk Cases			Low risk Cases		
	No	Days	Ave	No	Days	Ave	No	Days	Ave
Belle Isle TMO:	1	57	57.0	0	0	0.0	5	644	128.8
Aire Valley Homes:	9	721	80.1	19	1236	65.1	150	18750	125.0
East North East Homes:	4	113	28.3	2	182	91.0	21	3733	177.8
West North West Homes:	0	0	0.0	3	280	93.3	30	2190	73.0
Adaptations Agency:	4	472	118.0	4	356	89.0	32	5781	180.7
LCC Performance	18	1363	75.7	28	2054	73.4	238	31098	130.7
	CLG Target Days:		76	CLG Target Days:		129	CLG Target Days:		212

**Table 3. Social Care Performance\* – Ave. Time Taken from first Contact to request for Adaptation.**

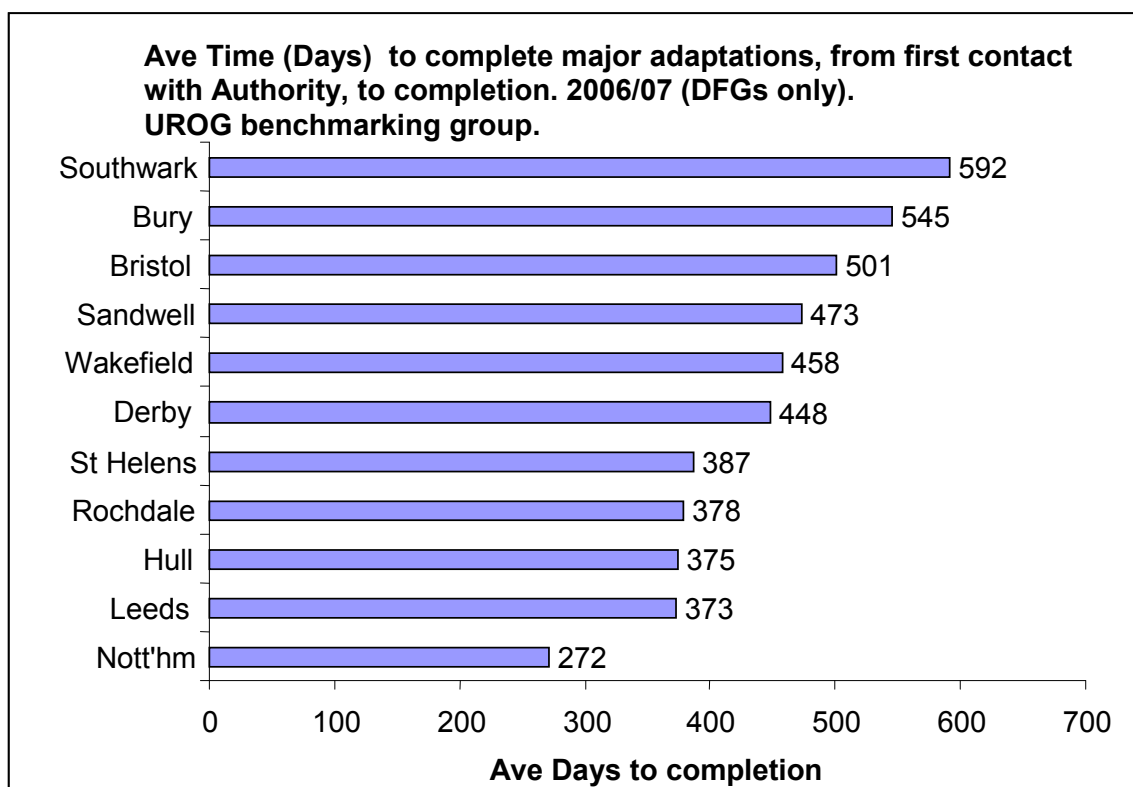
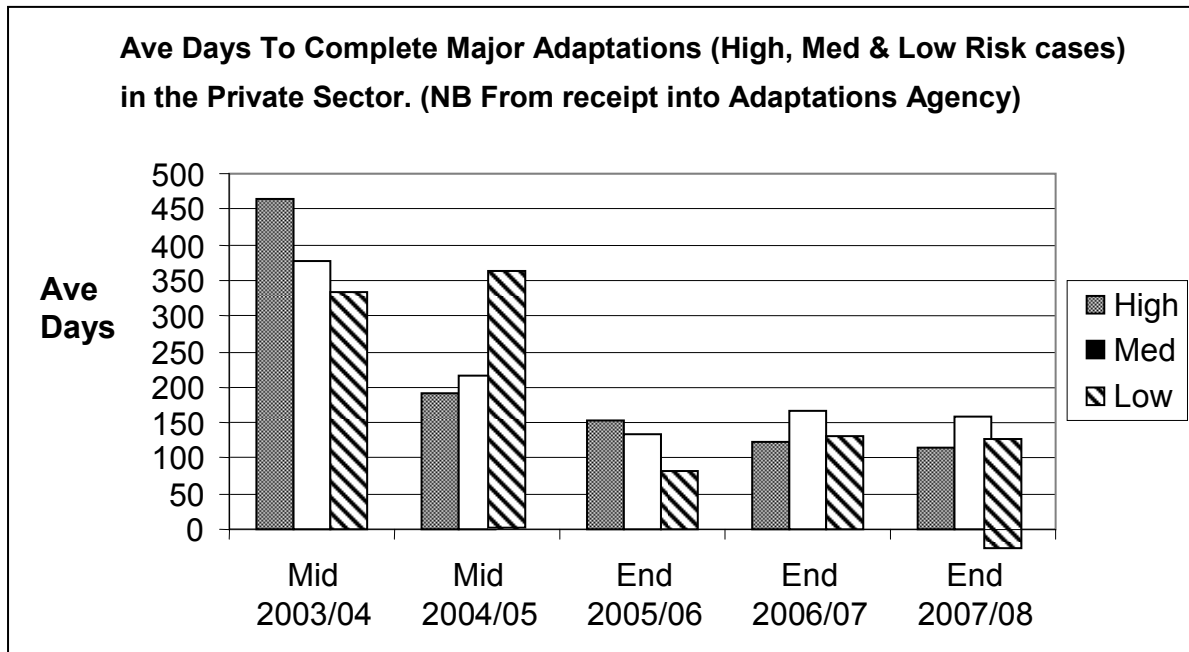
Cross Tenure Performance	High Risk cases			Medium Risk Cases			Low Risk Cases		
	No	Days	Adapt 1	No	Days	Adapt 1	No	Days	Adapt 1
<b>Belle Isle TMO:</b>	1	12	12.0	0	0	0	5	228	46
<b>Aire Valley Homes:</b>	9	531	59.0	19	414	21.8	150	3611	24
<b>East North East Homes:</b>	4	1507	376.8	2	34	17.0	21	1212	58
<b>West North West Homes:</b>	0	0	0	3	168	56.0	30	1177	39
<b>Adaptations Agency:</b>	4	671	167.8	4	1489	372.3	32	506	16

<b>LCC Performance</b>	18	2721	<b>151.2</b>	28	2105	<b>75.2</b>	238	6734	<b>28</b>
	<b>CLG Target Days:</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>CLG Target Days:</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>CLG Target Days:</b>		<b>47</b>

\*Note: The performance framework is based on guidance from CLG and does not account for the performance requirements set for social care regarding the timescales for assessment and providing services (which includes making recommendations for adaptations).

The AOG is developing a framework which takes account of this and then on collecting and reporting on the performance accurately.



Customer satisfaction levels 07/08**DFG clients.**

The following information was obtained from clients whose work was completed & checked in Q4 of 2007/08. A 45% return rate was achieved, representing the views of 56 households.

The following results were obtained:

- 100% were satisfied with the friendliness/politeness, knowledge and helpfulness of the Adaptations Agency Customer Support Officers and Surveyors.
- 100% were satisfied with the surveyor's explanation of the grant procedure.
- 100% considered the contractors to be "polite and considerate" and took good care whilst working within their homes.
- 98% were satisfied with the standard of work on their homes.

**Aire Valley Homes Tenants Satisfaction with Adaptations**

The overall satisfaction for Jan - March 08 was 98%.

**WNW Teanants satisfaction with Adaptations.**

Overall Satisfaction for Q4, 2007/08 was 100%

**ENE Tenants Satisfaction with Adaptations**Overall Satisfaction level for Q4, 2007/08:

Baldwins	95%	
C& L Plumbing	100%	
Gary Jones		No returns
Hugh Steeper Ltd	100%	
Leeds Building Services	96%	
Martin Carthy	55%	
Passmores		96%
Excel		92%
Stannah	99%	
Wessex	100%	

