



Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care)

Date: 7th January 2009

Subject: Scrutiny Inquiry: Adaptations – Update Report

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting in September 2008, the Board agreed to undertake an inquiry to examine the delivery of adaptations to the homes of disabled people and their families. The Board also established a working group to undertake aspects of the inquiry. The first meeting of the working group took place on 6 October 2008, at which draft terms of reference were presented for discussion.
- 1.2 The draft terms of reference are attached at Appendix 1.

2.0 Scope of the Inquiry

The purpose of the inquiry is to make an assessment of the overall adaptations process to both public and private sector dwellings (cross-tenure) and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:

- The overall time to complete the adaptations process from the initial point of contact with the Council to practical completion of the adaptation, with particular reference to high risk cases and families with complex needs.
- Specific and identifiable stages within the overall adaptations process.
- The determination of risk within the adaptations process and how low level needs are addressed.
- Delivery of consistently high levels of customer service throughout the process, including the availability of customer advice/ guidance and the collection/ use of customer feedback.
- Current safeguards in place to ensure the Council receives 'value for money' in the delivery of adaptations, including the re-use of aids and equipment.

3.0) Progress to date

3.1.1 Session one – 6 October 2008

During the first session of the inquiry the working group examined:

- The progress / service developments arising from the action plan in response to an ombudsman investigation and report relating to an adaptation to a Council house. It was outlined that the current arrangements had only recently been introduced and a period of time was needed in order to assess its effectiveness. A review of the current proposals would be undertaken at a more appropriate time to ensure they were fit for purpose. It was agreed that further information of the 'case management approach' be presented to a future meeting of the working group.
- How the level of risk is determined within the adaptations process. The group were advised that the 'Low, Medium and High' categories referred to are in line with guidance provided by Communities and Local Government. Up-front discussions with individuals regarding the level of need/ risk, took place at an early stage in the assessment process.
- How low level needs are addressed in the short, medium and longer-term. Criteria information was presented to the group which was noted. It was agreed that this would be considered in preparation of the inquiry report.
- The background and development of the Adaptations Framework was presented to the group. The report contained examples of specific procedures and processes developed by each of the individual ALMO's. It was agreed that the matter be discussed in more detail at a future working group meeting and that an update report reflecting comments from each ALMO would be submitted to the group.

3.1.2 Session two – 4 November 2008

During the second session of the inquiry the working group examined:

- Meeting the needs of families with complex needs and the merits of a case management approach. The Council had been less successful dealing with disabled people with complex needs. In cases where disabled people needed to consider re-housing as an option to help meet their needs, performance targets should be considered as a secondary issue, as this is a significant life event for most individuals. The group considered a number of instances where the case management approach might be appropriate and recommended that a 'co-ordinator' role may be required, acting on behalf of all council services to ensure every complex case is tracked and performance managed to a successful conclusion. It was stressed by the working group that all agencies involved in the adaptations process needed to sign-up to such a co-ordinated approach – which may include establishing this jointly funded post.
- The long-term vision of an Assistive Technology Hub that will help disabled people and their families access the range of assistive technology (AT) services available across the City. The working group concluded that the development as presented should be recognised as an ambitious customer service improvement with great potential and the success of such a development is likely to be greatly enhanced by the early involvement of service users and potential the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB)

- Means Testing for the Disabled Facilities Grant. The group was presented with a report detailing the correct procedures for local authorities to follow when carrying out a test of resources. The group was also provided with statistical information which summarised the different types of grant applications and of those the number of applications where a contribution towards the adaptation was required.

3.1.3 Session three – 16 December 2008

During the third session of the inquiry the working group examined:

- The Performance Level report which highlighted the time taken to complete cross-tenure adaptations. The group was advised of inaccuracies in some elements of data therefore an accurate report will be brought to the next meeting. Focusing on high risk cases, the group considered the statutory DCLG target to be lengthy and unacceptable and asked officers to investigate how operations could be speeded up. It was explained to the group that processes could be speeded up however there is insufficient resources to fund this.
- Current practice in terms of re-using surplus aids and equipment cross-tenure. An adaptation is the property of the user and therefore can be transferred between properties should the user wish to do so. There are circumstances where it is less cost effective to transfer the adaptation than provide a new one, the example given was the re-use of chair lifts. Should a service user move the Council could be requested to fund the adaptation again.
- The Adaptations Framework update. With regard to the suggested post for a Complex Case Coordinator, the group were advised that the ALMO Chief Executives were concerned that this would not present good value for money. Further clarity on this matter will be requested from the ALMO Chief Executives to ensure that the authority is meeting the needs of families with complex needs. A complex case report will now be brought to the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board every three months.

4.0) Areas within scope scheduled for investigation

4.1.1 12 January 2009

- Opportunities to improve the current safeguards in place to ensure the Council receives 'value for money' in the delivery of adaptations.

4.1.2 12 February 2009

- The levels of customer service throughout the adaptations process, including the:
 - Availability of customer advice and guidance; and,
 - Collection and use of customer feedback.

5.0) Matters for Further Consideration

5.1.1 12 January 2009

- A complete and accurate performance report will be brought before the working group for further consideration and discussion.
- A review of the means testing process for the Disabled Facilities Grant. With a view to potential streamlining of the process.
- Planning for the future. Addressing acute and chronic need.

6.0) Recommendations

6.1 The Scrutiny Board is requested to :

- 6.1.1 Consider the contents of this report, draft terms of reference and draft minutes of the adaptations working group.
- 6.1.2 Comment on any specific aspects of the examinations undertaken by the Adaptations Working Group and on the progress to date.
- 6.1.3 Determine if there are any specific / further areas that require additional scrutiny, including the nature and frequency of any future reports

7.0) Background Papers

- 7.1 Draft terms of reference - Appendix 1.
- 7.2 Draft Minutes of the Adaptations Working Group – Appendix 2
 - 6th October 2008
 - 4th November 2008
 - 15th December 2008