



Report of the Director of Adult Social Services and Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods

Executive Board

Date: 26th August 2009

Subject: Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care) Inquiry on Major Adaptations for Disabled Adults

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

Executive Summary

The Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care) published the results of their inquiry into Major Adaptations for Disabled Adults on 17 June 2009.

In accordance with the requirements of the Constitution, the response to the Scrutiny Board's report has to be agreed with the Executive Board. Attached to this report is the statement of the Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care).

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 To provide the Executive Board with the joint response of the Directors of Environment and Neighbourhoods and Adults Social Services to the recommendations resulting from the Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care) inquiry into Major Adaptations for Disabled Adults.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 On 17th June 2009, the report resulting from the Inquiry into Major Adaptations for Disabled Adults was published. The Scrutiny inquiry included investigations within Leeds City Council, The Housing Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOS) and the Adaptations Agency.

- 2.2 Representatives of service users, tenants, residents and carers gave the Scrutiny Board their experiences of requesting and receiving adaptations.
- 2.3 This report details the findings from this inquiry and lists separate recommendations on how the service could be improved. Officers have studied and discussed the report and their response for each recommendation is listed below.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Recommendation 1

Before 31st March 2010 the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods re-evaluates the current adaptation procurement practices in place and explores potential partnership arrangements which will increase buying power and expand the possibilities for price negotiation in future financial years.

This recommendation is agreed

The Directors of Environment and Neighbourhoods and Adult Social Services note that a Value for Money Working Group has been set up involving the ALMOs and the Adaptations Agency as a sub group of the Adaptations Operational Group. This group is looking at procurement arrangements and will continue to meet regularly.

3.2 Recommendation 2

The Directors of all adaptations providers establish a consistent standard for all non complex adaptations regardless of tenure before 1st April 2010.

This recommendation is partly agreed:

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and Adult Social Services would accept there needs to be a consistent and minimum standard for all adaptations, however, this should not prevent organisations, if they so wish, to meet and exceed the minimum specified standard.

Whilst it is fully agreed there needs to be a consistent minimum standard for all non complex adaptations, it is equally important that organisations and providers should be able to go beyond the minimum standards to enable greatest benefit where this can be provided.

The Directors of Environment and Neighbourhoods and Adult Social Services would advise that there are inconsistencies in mainly the cosmetic elements of the adaptation schemes between ALMOs and between public and private sector providers which largely relate to the quality of finishing's rather than a different specification. If a standard finish were to be introduced, this would reduce both customer satisfaction and choice.

3.3 Recommendation 3

- a) *Local more rigorous and challenging cross tenure targets should be implemented with effect from 21st April 2010*
- b) *Before that date the Directors of all adaptation providers and the Director of Adult Social Services should investigate how assessment, referral and delivery can be*

speeded up to reduce cost in terms of public finance and to the health of the individual. Such targets should aim to achieve an equitable status in terms of waiting times for both public and private owner /occupiers

This recommendation is partly agreed:

The Directors of Environment and Neighbourhoods and Adult Social Services accept there needs to be a close correlation between the service standards provided to public & private sector tenants and owner occupiers.

However, the differences in response timescales can be attributable to legislation setting out different processes according to the tenure of the property. Where an adaptation is proposed for an owner occupier, it is a requirement of the process for delivery to include a means tested assessment. Such a means tested assessment is not needed for social housing tenants.

This key difference means it is not realistic for the Local Authority to implement the same performance targets for delivery cross tenure.

It is, however, fully accepted that all services should clearly set out, publish and publicise response timescales widely.

3.4 Recommendation 4

That the Directors of all adaptation providers make the necessary arrangements to consistently advise customers of the approximate adaptation delivery time, once their needs have been assessed.

This recommendation is agreed:

All Directors agree with this recommendation and would advise that the Adaptations Customer Relations group, a sub group of the Adaptations Operations Group, will ensure implementation.

3.5 Recommendation 5

a) That the Director of Neighbourhoods and Environment, ALMO directors and the Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement) make necessary provision for the display and replenishment of published adaptations information in all Council buildings accessible to the public for general or housing enquires

This recommendation is agreed:

The Adaptations Operation Group will be responsible for ensuring the delivery of this recommendation. This will include provision, distribution and updating of leaflets which will contain detailed information about the process of applying for an adaptation and the timescales for each element of the application process.

b) Customer Service Staff should be adequately skilled to signpost those seeking assistance to the appropriate officer/information or provide the necessary adaptations advice

This recommendation is agreed:

Occupational Therapists have been involved in the training of Westgate customer service staff. Advice to customers will be further improved by giving appropriate information so that customers can make an informed choice at an earlier stage about the means test, thus enabling them to decide to proceed if they are an owner-occupier.

3.6 Recommendation 6

Within the next 6 months the Directors with responsibility for the delivery of adaptation and the Director of Adult Social Services work in partnership to evaluate the provision of a cross tenure complex case coordinator (s) with the necessary specialist support skills to meet objectives set out in this report, with a view to securing this function within the next 12 months.

This recommendation is partially Agreed:

An Adaptation Operations Group oversees the general processes and procedures for delivering adaptations. It is proposed that this group continues to review the Housing Options process which was established to ensure complex cases are managed well across agencies.

The Adaptations Operation Group will review the need or otherwise to appoint a complex case coordinator. It is presently the view of ALMOs that to appoint such a person would duplicate existing provision. However, in view of current concerns about delays in provision of adaptations, an opportunity to further appraise this recommendation including development of a possible business case for any potential post, is a task that will be overseen by the Adaptations Operations Group.

3.7 Recommendation 7

Within the next 12 months the Directors of all adaptation providers and the Director of Adult Social Services produce a specific city wide Adaptation Strategy and Delivery Plan spanning a number of years, for both the public and private sector. The strategy should take into consideration that demographically the population is ageing and the other recommendations contained in this report.

This recommendation is agreed:

Directors agree that a specific city-wide strategy, with a strategy action plan, would enable the City Council and partners to structure and coordinate a unified approach to the provision of adaptations. It is recognised that a strategy for the provision of adaptations is an integral part of many different business plans, strategies and action plans. A cross-cutting strategy could bring all elements of this work together and if tasked to do so, the Adaptations Operations Group could provide a vehicle for the strategy to be delivered.

3.8 Recommendation 8

That the Directors of all adaptation providers ensure

a) that the full budget provision is proposed each year in the annual budget to meet all anticipated in year demand thus removing the financial barrier currently hindering the timely delivery of some adaptations

b) that where it becomes apparent that actual adaptations demand will exceed anticipated need further financial provision requested each year from 2010/11

onward to ensure the perpetual delivery backlog at the conclusion of each financial year is brought to an end.

This recommendation is partly agreed:

Directors are aware that budget provision each year is set according to the needs and priorities of each service. The Council's financial contribution to DFGs has increased by over 200% in the five years to present, with a 09/10 allocation of £4.43m, alongside the Government Grant of £2.57m. This reflects a significantly increased level of delivery on adaptations which rose from 441 schemes (03/04) to 784 schemes (08/09) in the private sector. However, the initial forecast for demand at the start of the year is still frequently exceeded during the year, leading to budget / service pressures. Officers believe that when budgets are set, Members could expect to be given a forecast of the anticipated demand and the cost of meeting that demand. It has been suggested that an annual report, based on the adaptations provision in the previous year, may assist in setting out the proposed demand / spending on adaptations.

Members will be aware, however that patterns of demand for adaptations continue to be varied, leading to a particular difficulty in anticipating demand of specific units and therefore a specific amount for future budget allocations.

3.9 Recommendation 9

The Director of City Development investigates and reports on the viability of adopting a model which reflects the spirit of the London Supplementary Planning Guidance for mandatory development to Lifetime Homes Standards, but suits the diversity and specific requirements of the City of Leeds, reporting findings to the Executive Board 31 December 2009.

This recommendation is not agreed:

The Council is already taking steps to address this through the formal planning process.

3.10 Recommendation 10

- a) The Directors of all adaptations providers and the Director of Adult Social Services conduct a full review, within the next 6 months, of how performance information is collected, collated and reported
- b) The provision of quarterly cross tenure adaptation assessment and delivery performance reports to the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board (or its Successor) including a summary of any known Leeds cases which the Local Authority Ombudsman have decided to investigate or have reported on. The first performance report for 2008/09 quarter 4 will be scheduled early in the Scrutiny work programme 2009/10

This recommendation is agreed:

The Adaptations Operations Group will develop a common data set ensuring that cross tenure adaptation and assessment and delivery performance reports can be received and managed by this group, in particular the performance on completion times.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

There are no immediate implications for Council Policy and Governance.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

The recommendations will have to be resourced from within existing Council and ALMO staffing and budgets and the scale of the tasks involved should not be underestimated. In respect of the appointment of a complex case coordinator, there may be future resource implications.

6.0 Conclusions

The Inquiry by the Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care) into Major Adaptations for Disabled Adults indicates the complexity of this area of work. An ability to work in effective partnership is key to the full implementation of the above recommendations which, when implemented, will bring significant potential benefits. It is however, highlighted that these will need close monitoring and management in order to be successful.

7.0 Recommendation

That Executive Board approves the proposed responses as outlined in this report

Background papers

None