

Report of: Environment and Housing

Report to: Housing Advisory Board

Date: 7th September 2015

Subject: Housing Adaptations

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

The process of undertaking housing adaptations aims to create an accessible living environment which helps disabled people to continue to live in their own homes or where appropriate we would help to facilitate a move to more suitable accommodation.

These new arrangements have been introduced to provide a consistent service for customers by adopting a bespoke service to an individual household that looks at offering a solution that is specific to their individual needs.

The report seeks to outline progress relating to the change, provide an overview of current performance trends and look at opportunities for service improvement.

Recommendations

Housing Advisory Board are asked to note the contents of this report.

1.0 **Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To give an overview of recent changes in the way this service is provided, look at the current performance and ways to provide further service integration and improve the customer experience.

2.0 **Background Information**

- 2.1 The legal framework relating to housing adaptations is set out in the 1996 Housing Construction Grants and Regeneration Act: Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).

A DFG covers the cost of major adaptations which costs more than £1k, to create an accessible living environment for disabled people. A DFG is approved if the Council assesses major adaptations are 'necessary and appropriate' meet a disabled person's accessibility need and that it is 'reasonable and practicable' to adapt a disabled person's home.

- 2.2 The legal framework relating to DFGs is tenure neutral. Nevertheless there are important distinctions between the adaptation of Council housing and that of other tenures.

The adaptation of Council housing is funded through the Housing Revenue Account with private sector (owner-occupied/ privately rented/ housing associations) adaptations being funded through government grant and supplemented by Council capital funding.

Agreements are in place with local housing associations to contribute to the cost of adapting housing association managed stock. The 2015/16 budget for council housing adaptations is £5.2m. A means-test (excluding adaptations for children) is applied to the DFG entitlement for home-owners/private tenants/housing association tenants; whilst there is no means-test applied to the adaptation of council housing.

- 2.3 The management of the housing adaptations service within the Council changed in June 2015. The 'necessary and appropriate' assessment continues to be carried out by an Occupational Therapist working in Adult Social Care, Children's Services or Housing Leeds. In order to improve the service and create a more consistent City wide service it was decided to move the service into Housing Leeds with the 'assessment' being done by the Health and Housing with the 'delivery' of work being undertaken by Property and Contracts.

- 2.4 The strategic thinking relating to housing adaptations is framed around the concept of a 'housing pathway' with a disabled person having the options of 'staying put' in their existing home through suitable adaptation or making a 'planned move' to alternative accessible housing. These options are, where appropriate, considered concurrently.

If a decision is made that it is not 'reasonable and practicable' to adapt a disabled person's current Council tenancy then a 'housing needs' assessment is carried out by the Health and Housing Service to determine priority for re-housing with an accompanying medical re-housing recommendation, which sets out the type of housing and adaptations that the person requires in order to be suitably re-housed.

The Health and Housing service works with disabled Council housing applicants to help them secure a suitable Council allocation, which will include assistance with bidding for available homes. These decisions are made in consultation with the local housing management service to ensure the best match between available stock and the individual needs of the applicants.

- 2.5 Property and Contracts has lead responsibility to determine how to deliver cross-tenure works based on the industry capacity. The capacity of the internal and external service provision is being considered in order to ensure the Council meets its internal targets relating to work completion times and quality, and the Council's intention to continue to support the work of local contractors.
- 2.6 Cross-tenure targets have been set to measure the time taken to complete major adaptations, which is from the date an application is received to the date work is completed. The measure includes three elements, the 'necessary and appropriate' assessment by an OT, the 'reasonable and practicable' assessment by a surveyor and the delivery of any work which including both the selection of a contractor and the works being undertaken.

The Council has recently adopted more demanding performance targets 56 days to complete the OT assessment and 70 days to complete the works on high priority cases.

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 Council Housing Suitability Assessments:

A target has been set to make a suitability of let decision within three working days of receiving the referral. Performance for June and July 2015 is as follows:

Area	Number of Assessments	Number completed within 3 working days
ENE	83	82
South	168	119
WNW	99	94

- 3.2 A key issue highlighted through the performance monitoring is the high number of assessments that result in a decision that the prospective let is not suitable for the applicant; which can slow down the lettings process. Operating a choice based lettings system means that there will be always be some disparity between the bidding choices made by applicants and the specific characteristics of a property. Medical re-housing recommendations are notional assessments, based upon the type of housing and adaptations a disabled person requires, while an OT will assess the specific characteristics of a property. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity to look at medical re-housing recommendations, and the assistance given to disabled applicants to bid for suitable properties which will improve current performance.
- 3.3 A key part of this work is the development of an Accessible Housing Register that will better match disabled housing applicants, based upon their medical re-housing recommendations, and the pool of adapted council housing with improved detail on the adaptations within the interior and curtilage of the property. This work involves reviewing all current medical re-housing recommendations and recording of adaptations. The Accessible Housing Register will better enable officers, to assist disabled people with making suitable bids and determining suitable direct let offers.
- 3.4 **Major Adaptations Spend:** the budget for council housing adaptation work in 2015/16 is £5.2m, which includes the delivery of specialist works such as stair lifts and through floor lifts as well as standard work such as ramps and adapted bathing facilities.
- 3.5 **Service Review:** In order to ensure that we meet the individual needs of individual households we are currently undertaking a review of our processes to ensure that it is responsive and flexible to deliver a

service that offers value for money, is consistent in approach and delivers against the assessed needs of individual family members.

- 3.6 A workshop has been arranged between all partners in order to assess our current process, reduce duplication and align our collective services into a single delivery model that will offer a consistent approach to service delivery.
- 3.7 There are a number of areas that will be considered further as part of the overall process and will include the following;
- Pooling of resources to deliver the OT activity.
 - Availability of resources to deliver works
 - Definition of an adapted property when allocating an empty property
 - Development of an accessible housing register
 - Link expenditure and demand to the future investment strategy
- 3.8 **Major Adaptations Performance:** 83% of major adaptations to council housing completed between April and July 2015 were delivered within the target timescale. Comparable performance for 2014/15 was 85%. It is important to stress that the performance targets are now significantly more demanding: 70 days rather than 114 days for high priority cases.
- 3.9 The targets are applied irrespective of the works required, and some complex cases have gone over target. There are some issues relating to the performance of contractors, especially sub-contractors, and this is being addressed.
- 3.10 There are some issues relating to securing access to a tenancy and/or the need for wider improvement work, this will be tackled through a partnership approach which puts the tenant at the center of the process

4.0 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 As part of the service review consultation will be undertaken with user groups, support groups and Members through the HAB.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 The delivery of adaptation services makes an important contribution to enabling disabled people to continue to live independently and promoting health and well-being.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The delivery of adaptation services makes an important contribution to promoting the health and wellbeing of disabled people.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The report sets out opportunities for generating efficiencies within existing budgets to delivery an adaptations service throughout the city. These opportunities could result in the costs associated with hospitalisation or care, are reduced or avoided.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 The Council delivers adaptation services in accordance with the legal framework set out in the 1996 Housing Construction Grants and Regeneration Act.

4.5.2 The report does not contain any exempt information.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 The report sets out opportunities for delivering better value for money in the assessment and delivery of adaptation services.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 The Council has re-organised its adaptation services around the two functions of assessment and delivery. The report sets out progress to date in respect of implementing this re-organisation and how further improvement opportunities can be achieved.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Housing Advisory Board are asked to note the contents of the report.