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**Scrutiny Committee for Health and Adult Social Care – 27 March 2013**

**Report of the Director of Adult Community and Housing Services**

**Housing adaptations**

**1.0 Purpose of Report**

To advise the Scrutiny Committee on the current position relating to the provision of adaptations to private and public sector housing in the borough.

**2.0 Background**

2.1 The last report for members on this subject was presented to the Scrutiny Committee for Health and Adult Social Care on 26 January 2012.

**2.2. Access and Assessment**

In October 2010 in order to improve the waiting time for assessments, the Occupational Therapy teams reorganised into 2 teams – Quick Response (Duty OT Team and Assisted Living Centre (ALC)) and the Long Term Occupational Therapy Team.

2.2.1 Since September 2011, all contacts to Social Care have been processed through the Access Team based at Brierley Hill Health and Social Care Centre and therefore include statistics across the whole of Adult Social Care. The contacts relate to the number of enquiries received prior to screening taking place and not all require further assessment.

Between April – December 2012 the Access Team dealt with 13,566 enquiries, of which:

- 1064 had equipment provided at the point of contact (7.8%)
- 739 were closed requiring no further action (5.4%)
- 1720 were signposted or provided with information (12.7%)
- 2925 required assessment through either the Quick Response or Long Term OT Teams
- 7118 were referred on for other services blue badge, safeguarding, social worker assessments etc.

**2.4 Minor Adaptations**

Minor adaptations are those works that have a notional estimated value of less than £500 and are considered to be simple and non time consuming building works mainly comprising external handrails, grabrails, steps, small areas of slabbing and door entry systems.

**Private Sector**

Works are organised through a contract with a local building company and are funded directly by Disability Services. The contract is monitored by Private Sector Housing. 1723 referrals were made in 11/12 (1662 were completed in 10/11) and 1724 in 12/13 to date

## **Public Sector**

Works are notified to the Repairs Management Centre and are dealt with as part of the reactive maintenance service carried out by a dedicated adaptations team within Building Services Construction (BSC). In 11/12 1272 referrals were received (1446 in 10/11) and it is projected that 1260 referrals will be received by the end of the current financial year.

### **2.5 Major adaptations**

Major adaptations are works that are estimated to cost in excess of £500 and will include more complex building works. They normally include ramps, wheelchair access, level access showers, ground floor WC's, lifts, extensions to provide additional bedroom / bathroom.

Currently all cases referred by Disability Services are dealt with in date order. Where medical evidence is obtained that supports the case that the client is at significant risk without the adaptation then these cases are given priority. However where short term arrangements can be made although often not ideal requests for prioritising are refused.

#### **2.5.1 Private Sector**

In the private sector major works are funded through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) financed in part by an annual allocation from Communities and Local Government, Capitalised Housing Receipts and General Rate Fund. 286 referrals received in 11/12 and 301 received to date this year (463 in 10/11).

#### **2.5.2 Public Sector**

The Housing OT team complete assessments for clients requesting re-housing due to medical or disability needs. Following assessment those who need an adapted property are able to bid through Choice Based Lettings independently on line, or with assistance of case managers, on suitable adapted properties of their choice. Clients who are unable to access essential facilities and require adaptations to meet their needs receive maximum priority (Band 1) for suitable accommodation. In the event of their having less preference on the waiting list, for example due to equity or rent arrears, advice is provided regarding alternative housing options and where the options are limited, consideration is given to whether there are grounds for an exception to the lettings policy, to remove less preference, or allow an offer to be made prior to the sale of an owner occupied property. In 2011/12, nine exceptions were made for people with disabilities, of which five were for additional preference, two were owner occupiers, and two were to offer a different property type. The corresponding figures for 2012/13 to date have been eight in total, of which two were for additional preference, three were owner occupiers, two were for a different property type, and one was to move with rent arrears.

Adapted properties are classified as such when they including one or more of the following adaptations: level access shower, stairlift, vertical lift, adapted kitchen for wheelchair use. There are currently 185 clients who have a recognised need to move to an adapted property (bands 1-4), 41 clients with a need to move but with less preference (Band 5), and 74 with no need to move, but who if they do move, would need adapted accommodation (band 6 -7). Overall, 61% of clients needing adapted accommodation (bands 1-4) are couples or singles, whilst 39% are families with children or adult relatives in the household needing 2 or more bedrooms.

Households needing adaptations are generally not restricted to adapted properties only, but are able to bid on properties which are advertised as ramp adaptable, which if they are successful for, are then assessed by Housing OT, in conjunction with minor works where required, to determine if they are further adaptable for their needs. Where the void period allows, adaptations needed but not currently in place are completed prior to a move.

Where a saving has been made, by moving a household into a property with adaptations, as opposed to adapting their current property, support is available through Housing OT to assist with the move including, for example, help with removals or provision of a skip if this is required. In the 6 month period July 2012- Dec 2012 £115,000 worth of efficiency savings were gained through assisting clients to move into adapted properties as opposed to having their current properties adapted.

When a property is due to become empty and there are adaptations in place, the Housing OT service are advised and where the property is suitable for re-use for others with adaptation need, the property is advertised with preference to households with an adaptation need. The Housing OT team advise in relation to the details required in the advert to highlight the property to suitable clients. When the advertising cycle is complete, the Housing OT team recommend which household is best matched and in highest need for the adaptations available in the property, or if there are no suitable clients at that time a further advert may be required.

There are occasions when properties with adaptations are not suitable for re-use for other clients with adaptation needs. This is most commonly because the access to the property is not suitable for someone with mobility problems, having multiple steps. Other reasons may be that the adaptations are old and no longer serviceable, most commonly lifts, or that the void works to the property are such that the lift cannot be left in situ, without damage being caused through the void works, removal and re-site being more appropriate. Decisions to remove lifts are made primarily by Housing Occupational Therapy in conjunction with Operations Officers and/or Minor Works where required.

On occasion there are properties with adaptations which are low demand from applicants who need to move to adapted properties, these are most commonly houses with either a stairlift and/or level access shower, which only allow for mobility access (ie not suitable for someone who uses a wheelchair indoors), or high rise flats. Where properties with lifts fail to attract suitable applicants the lifts are removed and re-sited or re-used for parts in line with the lift service contract. Where there is a level access shower to the property, and there is no demand from applicants in need, the shower will still remain, unless it is deemed unsuitable for re-use for repair reasons.

In the quarter ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012, 43 adapted properties were advertised through Choice Based Lettings, of which 22 have since been offered and let to clients needing adaptations and 2 are still in progress. The other 19 have ultimately been let to households who had no known need for adaptations. Of these, 2 were bungalows let to older people, 3 were high rise flats, 5 were ground floor low rise flats (including 1 duplex), and 9 were family houses. From the houses, 2 vertical lifts were removed, both in the Coseley area, where we were unable to attract suitable clients, and 3 stair lifts were removed (1 Coseley, 1 Halesowen, 1 Wrens Nest).

The Housing OT team has also been extensively involved in the development and letting of different housing options for people with disabilities, including the Council's own new build developments, remodelling of existing council stock, and housing association provision including Extra Care and Friar's Gate.

In 11/12 just over 400 referrals were issued by Disability Services and the Housing OT. Historical records indicate that since April 2005 an average of 36 referrals per month have been received from Disability Services. In addition to this 15 referrals will have been received from Housing OT in 12/13.

### 2.5.3 **Lift Contract**

Since June 2008, the Minor Works team within Housing Services have administered a joint collaborative working term contract with Stannah Lift Services (SLS) for Public and Private Sector Housing and Disability Services. This contract includes the provision of stair lifts, curved track lifts, external step lifts and vertical through floor lifts. The repair and maintenance of all new and existing lift equipment installed for clients through the referrals process is also included in the contractual arrangements. Lifts that are no longer required by the client are removed and recycled where possible. Old lifts are broken down and parts reused where possible. This contract provides efficiency savings in terms of new installations, recycling and maintenance. SLS have performed very well on this contract and in May 2011 their contract was extended for a further two years to 31st May 2013. It is likely that this contract will be extended further until September 2013 to enable the full and proper OJEU compliant tendering process to take place.

In the Private Sector, Disability Services finance all maintenance and recycling costs and with Private Sector Housing financing all new installations. In the Public Sector the provision of new and recycled installations together with the maintenance and repair of all lifts is financed from the public sector adaptations budget.

The average waiting time for installation of lifts from date of order is :

- straight stairlift - 4/5 weeks
- curved stairlift - 6 weeks
- vertical lift - 8/10 weeks

### 2.6 **OT referral for adaptations**

Following on from referral all properties across both sectors are surveyed and a decision is reached about whether the proposed adaptation is reasonable and practicable.

### 2.7 **Customer Satisfaction**

The last joint service customer satisfaction survey was carried out in 2010. The figures below relate to responses received for surveys carried out in both the Public and Private sectors but the surveys were designed for each area to meet service specific needs.

	Private		Public	
	11/12	12/13	11/12	12/13
Builder rated as good or excellent by client	80%	93%		

Works rated as good or excellent by client	84%	93%	The responses vary between contracts - minimum score 99% satisfaction
Adaptations improved quality of clients life	77%	90%	
No difficulty in understanding the whole process and how long each stage would take (new question)	-	95%	
Client satisfied with experience	80%	96%	

## 2.8 **Waiting Times**

The current wait for assessment by the Long Term Team in Disability Services is 5 months and equates to 177 people as at 11 March 2013. The service is currently recruiting to two vacant Senior Occupational Therapist (OT) posts.

Additional funding was received from DCLG and Adult Social Care in the fourth quarter of 12/13 to meet the demand for adaptations in the private sector, to reduce hospital admissions and to facilitate early discharge from hospital. This has necessitated OTs working closely with Private Sector Housing to concentrate on cases that have already been assessed but have been waiting for funding to become available. This coupled with the current vacancies has slowed down the number of referrals being made into Private Sector Housing

### 2.8.1 **Private Sector**

There are currently 164 cases on the waiting list (estimated value £1.64m) awaiting caseworker visits and plans / schedules to be prepared for proposed adaptations. In addition to this 223 grants have currently been approved in 12/13 and a further 136 applications (value £1.36m) are currently being processed and are to be approved after the capital programme has been set for 13/14. Therefore currently there is a potential demand for adaptations estimated at £3m and this excludes any new referrals received after 1 April 2013. On average 28 referrals are received from OTs per month and the average grant approval is estimated at £10k.

The ongoing waiting list for adaptations will be dependent upon the level of budget set for 2013/14 by DCLG and the number of priority cases received annually. This budget will be supplemented by additional funding of £350k from Adult Social Care and £263k from DCLG received late in 2012/13 which will help reduce the waiting list .

A full Caseworker Needs Assessment visit is carried out for all clients. Clients are offered a range of funding options which include grants, loans, self and charitable funding. The Dudley Home Improvement Service will offer to project manage the preferred option/scheme regardless of the clients chosen funding source.

### 2.8.2 **Public Sector**

Excluding jobs that have been programmed as part of the current 2012/13 work programmes, it is forecast that there will be 200 jobs on the waiting list (estimated value of £1.2m) at March 2013. In addition there will be a commitment to finance the minor adaptations work programme and the maintenance programme for the stair lift contract together with an allowance for maintaining the hoist stock within the borough and making allowance for smaller one – off orders e.g. hoists and clos-o-mats that may arise. The projected carry forward in terms of commitment will be £1.45m.

It is expected that around 400 referrals will be issued by OTs over the next 12 months which, together with the commitment to finance the additional works outlined above will cost around £2.5m

## 2.9 Performance

The length of waiting lists for clients needing adaptations in both sectors are dependent upon the level of budgets set annually and the number of referrals received from the OTs. In the Private Sector approximately 28 referrals are received per month and based on the average DFG approved (£10k) creates an ongoing annual demand of £3.36m. In the Public Sector with an average of 33 referrals per month this equates to an annual estimated budget of £2.5m.

Many of the clients currently waiting for adaptations have already been waiting for over 12 months. It is proposed that they will have those works carried out during 2013/14 providing the annual budget meets the total estimated costs.

	2010/11		2011/12		2012/13	
	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public
Budget	£2.8m	£2.4m	£3.18m	£2.5m	£3.18m	£2.5m
No. of minor adaptations	1662	1446	1723	1272	1724	1272
No. of OT referrals for major adaptations	463	201	286	379	301	379
No. of referrals on waiting list	n/a	n/a	n/a	250	164	250
Estimated costs of adaptation works / waiting list	n/a	n/a	£3.0m	£1.75m	£3.0m	£1.75m

## 3.0 Finance

3.1 The following tables show budget and housing profiles.

Budget	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Private sector</b>					
Major adaptations	2,853	3,709	2,732	2,679	3,180
Minor adaptations	185	167	122	141	143
Total spend (private)	3,038	3,876	2,854	2,820	3,323
<b>Public sector (HRA fund)</b>					
Minor adaptations	110	106	95	95	85
Major adaptations	2,015	2,467	2,260	2,185	2,251
Adaptations (voids)	76	98	113	81	99
Total spend (public)	2,291	2,671	2,468	2,361	2,435

#### **4.0 Law**

- 4.1 The Chronically Sick and Disabled Person's Act 1970 imposes a duty on the Council to make arrangements for the provision of home adaptations and/ or additional facilities for the greater safety and/ or convenience for adults and children.
- 4.2 NHS and Community Care Act 1990 which consolidates government policy on community care also places a duty to assess clients in certain circumstances for services under the above act.
- 4.3 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 places a duty upon the Council to provide grants to enable adaptations to be carried out to facilitate a wide range of basic activities specified with in the Act (as amended) namely, safe access into and around the property including the garden and suitable washing, bathing, cooking and sleeping facilities. This can include Council tenants although currently tenants in the borough are not expected to go through this process. Additionally the Act also requires the Council to approve grants within six months of receiving a valid application.

#### **5.0 Recommendation**

It is recommended that:-

- The contents of the report are noted
- That further reports be brought back to the committee to discuss elements of the service in greater details if required



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#### **List of Background Papers**

Report to Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee 26 January 2012