

**Select Committee on Environment – 24 June 2008**

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

**Equipment and Adaptations in Private and Public Housing in the Borough**

**Purpose of Report**

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

**Background**

2. At the last meeting of this Select Committee when considering its work plan for 08/09, Members requested a report on Equipment and Adaptations in homes across the public and private sectors.
3. The stock position in the borough at 1 April 2007 is:

<b><u>Stock owner</u></b>	<b><u>No.</u></b>	<b><u>% of total stock</u></b>
Local authority owned stock	23620	18.0
Registered social landlord	3594	2.7
Other public sector	142	0.1
Private sector	104110	79.2
Total stock	131466	100

4. **Occupational Therapy (OT) Teams**

All requests for equipment, assistive technology or adaptations irrespective of whether clients live in private or public sector homes are directed initially through the OT teams

5. The teams assess clients who have a permanent and substantial disability or chronic illness that is affecting their ability to undertake daily tasks. Their aim is to work with the client to determine what outcome they wish to achieve and facilitate this by teaching a different way of undertaking the task, providing equipment and / or recommending

minor/major adaptations. Ultimately they are promoting independence and enabling people to remain in their own homes if they wish to do so.

6. Clients are screened at this stage and do not reach assessment for a number of reasons:
  - they are not eligible for the service i.e. don't have permanent and substantial disability
  - they require only advice and information provided
  - they are referred to more appropriate agency i.e. PCT for rehabilitation/Falls team
  - they need simple equipment provided e.g. urine bottles, equipment repairs etc.
7. The full process from enquiry to a referral being made for major adaptations is attached at Appendix 1.
8. In 2006/07, 7363 enquiries were received of which 33% (2371) did not progress to full assessment for the reasons outlined above. The remaining 67% (4992) of enquiries were assessed for specialist equipment and minor and major adaptations. Only 6% of all enquiries are referred to public sector for major adaptations with 5 % being referred to private sector.

<b><u>OT referrals</u></b>	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
				at 31 May
<b><u>Public sector</u></b>				
Minor works	1344	1481	1576	270
Adaptations - building jobs	351	501	487	48
<b><u>Private sector</u></b>				
Adaptations > £500	283	360	312	32
Minor works < £500 (OT)	n/a	1782	1749	n/a

9. **Referrals to Private and Public Sector Housing teams**

All referrals for minor and major adaptation works in Council homes irrespective of cost are funded directly from the Housing Revenue account. In 2006/07, 1481 referrals were received for minor works and 471 for larger scale adaptations. Minor works are low cost and are completed within 1 - 4 weeks of receipt of referral. Works include the provision of grab rails, stair rails and handrails and the number of requests for this type of work increased by 6% in 07/08.

10. Referrals for larger scale adaptation works in the public sector include all works other than minor works outlined above. Building jobs are identified from the referrals received i.e. lifts are ordered separately from other building works e.g. level access showers, ramps etc which

are usually contracted out together on the same works order. Therefore one OT referral with lift access included will result in at least two building jobs being created.

11. Adaptation works in the private sector are dealt with differently. Minor works i.e. grab rails, stair rails, intercoms, half steps etc. where the cost of the works is less than £500 are organised and funded directly by the OT teams. 1782 minor works were carried out in 06/07 and the number of requests for this type of work decreased by 2% in 07/08. In addition to this the OT teams also purchase stair lifts for private sector clients where the need is urgent. The client is required to agree to the removal of the lift when it is no longer required so that it can be stored and reused again in appropriate circumstances.
12. In addition to this 389 referrals were received for adaptation works exceeding an estimated value of £500. These referrals include the provision of ramps, level access showers, ground floor WCs, lifts and ground floor bedroom and bathroom accommodation.
13. All adaptations in the private sector greater than £500 are funded from an annual ring fenced sum received directly from Communities and Local Government (CLG) which is based upon our annual Housing Investment Programme bid and additional funding provided by the General rate fund.
14. **Adaptation Process in Private and Public Sector Housing teams**  
  
Currently all cases referred by OTs are dealt with in date order unless there is an overriding priority medical reason for that case to be fast tracked.
15. In the public sector a Specialist Housing OT works closely with Council tenants and the Housing Minor Works teams to identify adaptations or alternative re-housing solutions. This includes making the best use of existing stock that has already been adapted. Additionally proactive work is also carried out on the housing waiting list by identifying clients that have adaptation needs that can be met by adapting void stock to a suitable standard. The client is then re-housed into the adapted property and this assists in reducing waiting list numbers and void turn round times.
16. Clients living in Council homes do not have to contribute towards the costs of adaptation works that are organised by the Council on their behalf. Following on from referral and assessment by the Housing OT, the building works are identified by the Minor Works team and an order is placed for the works to be carried out. Works on site are supervised by this team up to and including completion.
17. However clients living in the private sector have to apply for a disabled facilities grant if the estimated cost of the adaptation works is greater

than £500. The grant is subject to statutory eligibility criteria and a financial means test that is based upon the clients earned and unearned income and their personal circumstances. Dependent upon the outcome of this test some clients may have to pay a contribution towards the cost of the adaptation works.

18. Private sector clients have the choice of arranging the works themselves or using the Councils In house Agency Service to assist. However in all cases an initial judgement will be made by the visiting Private Sector Housing Officer as to whether or not the referral for adaptations at the property is reasonable and practicable. The internal design, size and location of the property will be taken into consideration when determining if a grant is appropriate in the circumstances. Cost effective alternative schemes or other housing solutions for the client are also explored. However many properties within the borough are difficult and expensive to adapt due to design and access problems.
19. Where properties are not suitable for adaptation then advice and assistance is provided to find an alternative solution for the client. Flexibility in this sector is more limited than the public sector as the majority of clients own their own homes. Alternative solutions can often be lengthy and expensive for the client and is subject to housing market influences.
20. A schedule of work in eligible cases is prepared by the Private Sector Housing team. The schedule will detail the work that has to be carried out and this will be given to clients who choose to arrange the works themselves. Three quotes are required together with planning and building regulation approval (if required) and a full and valid application. When this is received the application can then be approved. The client has 12 months in which to complete the works following approval.
21. In cases where the client requests the In House Agency to assist, works are procured on their behalf using builders from a select list of pre approved builders. The grant application is processed in the same way but the agency manages the scheme for the client through to completion.
22. **Current Position**

A joint collaborative working term contract has been agreed for all domestic lifts across both the public and private sectors. This includes the provision of stair lifts, step lifts and vertical lifts in domestic properties. 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,
23. Lifts that are no longer required by the client will be removed and stored by the contractor and reused in appropriate circumstances.

24. These initiatives will provide efficiency savings across both sectors in terms of unit cost and speed of installation and repair.
25. In the private sector where lifts form a part of major adaptation scheme clients will be fast tracked where possible. The lift element of the referral will be installed whilst the client waits for the other adaptation works to be carried out. This will make a contribution to improving the quality of life for the client in the interim.
26. In May 2008 the Government introduced new legislation increasing the scope of works eligible for assistance i.e. safe access to gardens and increased the maximum grant allowance to £30,000. This is likely to increase demand for assistance where previously clients have been refused assistance. Also previously where clients in the private sector have funded the costs of works in excess of £25,000 this will no longer be the case. This will bring further pressures on the budget and will impact on the average unit costs in both sectors.

### **Finance**

27. The following table shows the budget profiles for 2005 – 2009.

Budget	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000 est.
<b><u>Public sector</u></b>				
Minor works	127	91	93	100
Adaptations (occupied)	1133	1629	1887	1240
Adaptations (voids)	n/a	95	143	76
Total spend (public)	1260	1815	2123	1416
<b><u>Private sector</u></b>				
All adaptations > £500	2847	2492	2800	3392
Adaptations < £500 (OT)	130	130	130	130
Stair lifts only (OT)	100	100	100	100
Total spend (private)	3077	2722	3030	3622

## Law

28. 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.
29. 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.
30. 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.

## Recommendation

31. It is recommended that:-
  - The contents of the report are noted



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**Linda Sanders**  
**Director of Adult Community and Housing Services**

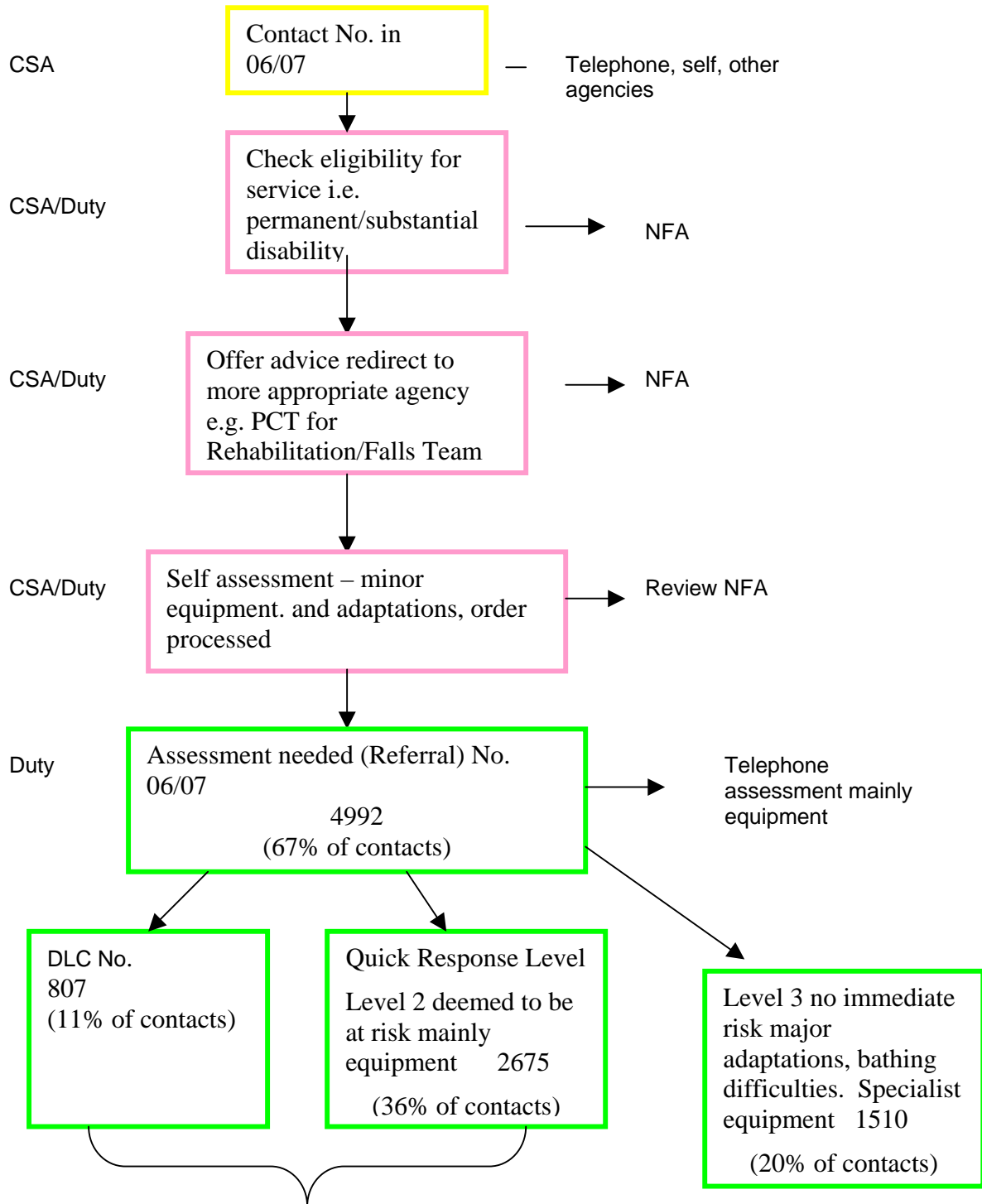
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## **List of Background Papers**

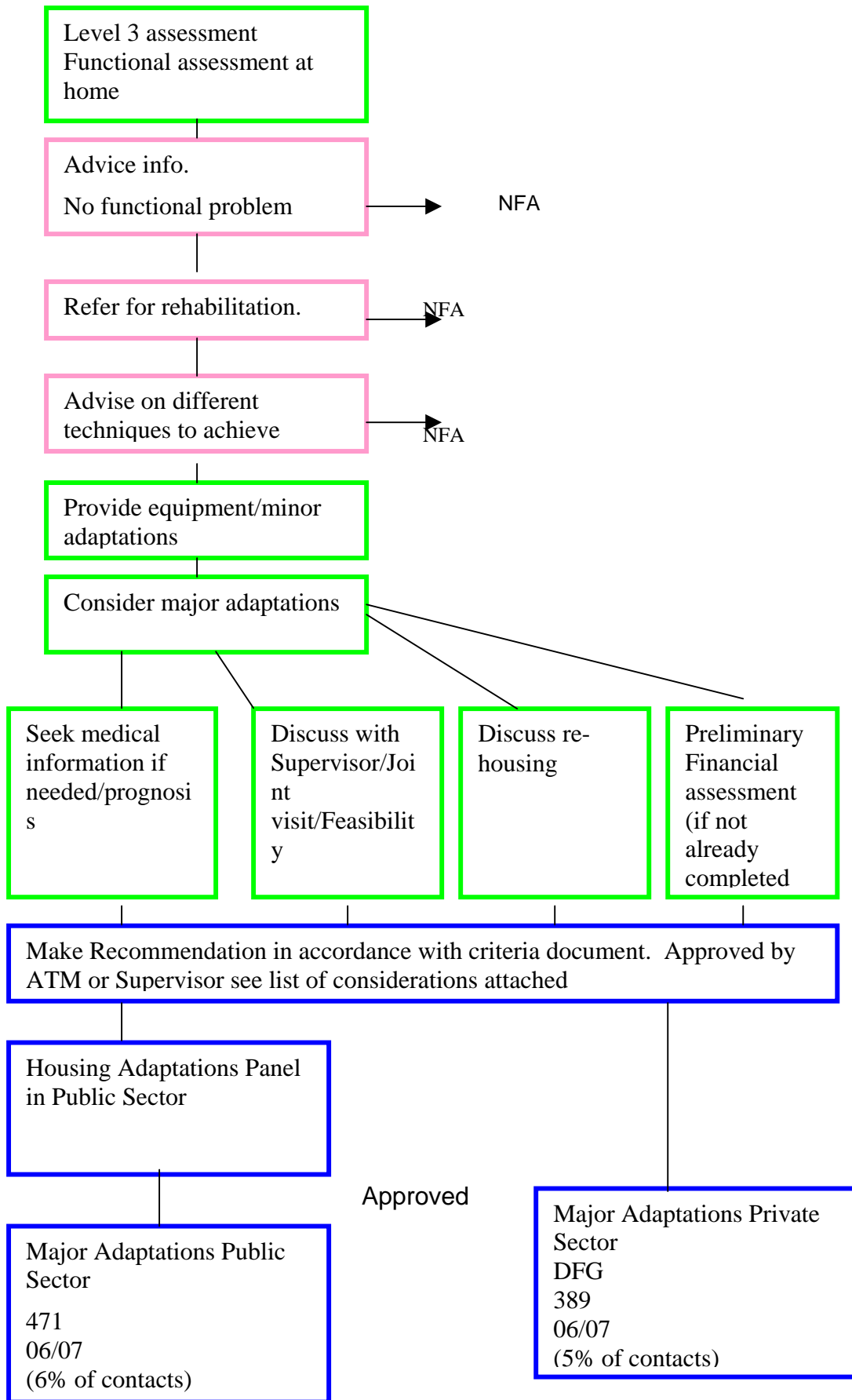
None

## Process from Initial enquiry to recommendation

(For equipment or adaptations)



Equipment issued, referred to Level 3  
List where major adapts identified





## Key to Process Map



Contacts



Assessments and Assessment process



Screened out



Adaptations

## Glossary

ATM	Assistant Team Manager
CSA	Customer Services Assistant
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
DLC	Disability Living Centre
NFA	No further action
PCT	Primary Care Trust