

Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 07

Subject: Housing Adaptations Update
Date of Meeting: 18 June 2009
Report of: The Director of Adult Social Care & Housing
Contact Officer: Name: Martin Reid Tel: 29-3321
E-mail: Martin.Reid@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1. This paper is presented to update the committee on work being undertaken following Chairman's Tenant Focus Group on Adaptations and review of private sector Housing Renewal Assistance Policy to improve value for money and use of resources in housing adaptations for disabled people in both Council and private sector housing.
- 1.2 This report sets out current practice and performance with regard to the council's duty to provide minor and major adaptations.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment and feed into the strategy.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Timely and appropriate adaptations are an essential part of enabling disabled and older people to live within their communities. They are a key part of the personalisation of Adult Social Care enabling people to have increased choice and control. Work is underway to improve the process and enable more people to have timely access to adapted properties through the various work streams of the modernisation programme.

The NHS and Community Care Act (1990) and the Children's Act (1989) place a duty on local authorities to provide assessment and assistance to vulnerable adults and children. This includes aids and adaptations to enable disabled people to remain in the community.

The assistance available covers private sector housing, owner/occupied and the council's own housing stock. With regard to the latter the funding for this is contained within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Private sector assistance covers assessment and advice as well as financial provision through means tested Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) and Disabled Facilities Assistance (DFA's). The Council's mainstream capital contribution to funding disabled facilities, in particular DFA funding, is provided as part of the Council's significant private sector renewal funding programme which includes grants to enable households in the private sector to remain in their homes or find suitable alternatives.

In Brighton and Hove minor adaptations are those costing under £1000 whilst major adaptations are those over £1000.

Lifetime homes, the government's strategy for housing in an ageing society sets out a commitment to increase levels of DFG funding and the capacity of the Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs).

3.1 Value for money - use of resources in housing adaptations.

The Council has sought to make best use of new and existing social and private sector housing adaptations resources through:

- i. Promoting early discussion of both social and private sector housing options to encourage consideration of a move to more appropriate housing as an alternative to disruption and cost of major adaptations.
- ii. Making the case for proactively funding adaptations to existing homes through use of mainstream Council procurement programmes and additional / alternative private sector renewal capital in addition to existing funding routes.
- iii. On-going development of our accessible housing register, continuing to fund an Accessible Housing Officer to identify and make best use of existing adapted and accessible Council and Housing Association housing stock in the City targeted at those who need it.
- iv. Best use of new build adapted housing opportunities through proactive involvement in development and implementation of the

City Council's Planning Advice Note – Lifetime Homes & Accessible Housing (PAN 03).

- v. Entering into new build nominations agreements with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to allow for early letting and finalisation of adapted homes to meet individual client needs.
- vi. Revising the Private Sector Renewal Strategy to allow for renewal assistance to private landlords who procure, adapt and lease properties to the Council to help meet the need for adapted homes.
- vii. Exploring options for private owners to be offered loans to assist moves to more suitable accommodation as an alternative to grant aiding adaptations to unsuitable properties.
- viii. Seeking to maximise funding available for adaptations. In particular increased capital funding through the BEST private sector renewal programme that has allowed the Council to double Disabled Facilities Assistance threshold from £25,000 to £50,000 for eligible households.

3.2 Demand projections in Brighton & Hove

Brighton and Hove is recognised for having higher levels of physical disability in its general population than the national average. Housing problems are compounded by much of the City being hilly preventing full wheelchair access. Many homes were built in the 19th Century and subsequently converted into flats, often with small rooms and narrow stairways making accessibility and adaptation difficult.

Projections show a rising demand for housing adaptations in the City. Key areas include:

- General growth in the number of households in the City.
- An ageing population, in particular, a projected growth of more vulnerable older households in the City.
- Applicants with disabilities, in particular children, are living longer and displaying more complex needs.
- More people requiring adaptations remaining at home rather than in residential care settings.

The 2005 Housing Needs Survey found that 19.8% of households in the City contain somebody with a long term illness or disability (around 22,362 households) of which 14% had two members affected. Over half of all household members were over 60 and 25.9% under 45.

The largest group affected by a named support need were those with a walking difficulty but who did not use a wheelchair, representing 52.3% of those with a support need. 8.1% of all households reported that they contained a member who was a wheelchair user, suggesting 1,765 households in the City as a whole.

There is a projected 15% increase in the retired population and 60% in the over 80 year old population up to 2026. Over a quarter of all people with a disability are over 75 and over half have a walking difficulty with likely requirements for adaptations.

11.7% of all dwellings in the City have been adapted to meet the needs of a disabled person. In terms of the nature of adaptations 46.9% of these have handrails / grab rails, 36.2% have bathroom adaptations and 41.8% have had adaptations to enable access to their property.

The Council rented sector has over double the average of households and people with a disability when compared with other main tenures in the City.

3.3 **Housing Adaptations Process**

Minor Adaptations

Minor adaptations are important in enabling people to live safely and independently at home. Making this support available will often postpone a person needing more intensive care at home or admission to a care home.

Assessments for minor adaptations are made by:

- Health Occupational Therapists in hospital or intermediate care settings.
- Occupational Therapists / Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTAs) within the Adult Social Care Access point, the Initial Response Service (IRS) and the Occupational Therapy Assessment Team (OTAT).
- For children, access to minor adaptations is through the Children's Disability Team (CDT); this report does not consider children's services.
- People may also access adaptations through referral from a private Occupational Therapist.

For owner/occupiers and private rented properties the process is that the prescription is faxed to the Integrated Community Equipment Store (ICES) who then place the order with their contractor.

For Council owned properties a prescription is submitted to the Home Improvement Officer (HIO) following assessment. This HIO then places

an order with the contractor using the schedule of rates. The works are then checked and signed off by the HIO.

Major adaptations.

Adaptations to Council homes and major adaptations to private and housing association homes are assessed and delivered via the integrated Housing Adaptations Team based within the Housing Strategy Division at Hove Town Hall.

This integrated service assists elderly, vulnerable and disabled people in acquiring and maintaining an independent, safe, and secure living environment. The team works with residents and their carers in finding the best housing solutions to meet their needs. This may be through identifying more suitable housing, adapting their home environment, or by finding other technological, housing solutions or therapeutic intervention.

The team consists of Occupational Therapists who confirm the need and recommend adaptation where appropriate and the adaptations technical team who oversee the delivery of any adaptation work required.

Properties requiring major adaptation fall into 2 main categories; those that are relatively simple such as stair lifts and level access showers and those that are complex. Within the council's own stock simple major adaptations follow the same process as minor adaptations. Where they are complex the Home Improvement Officer (HIO) works with the Housing Adaptations Occupational therapist (HAOT) to produce plans and costing. If considered feasible, the plans are then agreed with the client. If the costings are under £10k the HIO places the order as above; if over this ceiling the case is considered by the Adaptations Panel which meets bimonthly.

For Housing Association (HA) properties, if simple, the prescription is forwarded directly to the HA with a request to fund; if agreed the HA will organise the works and the prescriber will merely undertake a check visit on completion. Should the HA wish, they can submit a landlord's DFG application setting out the technical detail and if funding is approved they will organise the delivery of the works. Alternatively should the HA refuse to submit the landlord's application the tenant would have to be financially assessed in their own right and the HIO would then complete the specification and either they or the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) assist the tenant in ordering works. If the works are complex the process is the same but there would be the additional involvement of the HAOT. The financial issues remain the same as council-owned stock, with works over £10k being considered by the Adaptations Panel to ensure equitable use of resources.

In the private rented or owner-occupied sector, simple major adaptations are assessed and the prescriber passes to the HIO or HIA

for financial assessment and DFG application and works are ordered. For complex adaptations the process is as for Housing Associations.

Approximately 30% of all referrals require the involvement of the HAOT team due to their complexity.

3.4 **Housing Adaptations Investment**

Council Housing

The budget for Council Housing adaptation is £750K per year; this covers some minor and all major adaptations. This enables the Council to assist with around 400 adaptations a year.

Private Sector (non - Council)

The funding for all major adaptations apart from those within council-owned stock is made up of Disabled Facilities Grant and Private Sector Housing Renewal Assistance.

Brighton and Hove is a high performing Council in terms of bringing in investment for private sector housing. The Brighton and Hove and East Sussex Together (BEST) partnership we have forged with other district councils in East Sussex is in receipt of the highest private sector renewal grant in the South East for 2009/10 at just over £8m.

In 2009/10 of over £4.4m has been allocated to private sector renewal in the City, including adaptations. In addition to providing the Council capital contribution toward Disabled Facilities Grant, private sector renewal funding also supports Disabled Facilities Assistance (DFA's) of up to £50K per application and Minor Adaptations Grant (MAG) of up to £5k per application.

Disabled Facilities Grant

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a mandatory entitlement administered by local housing authorities to help fund the provision of adaptations to enable disabled people to live as comfortably and independently as possible in their homes.

Eligible work is wide-ranging, providing for access to the home and basic facilities within it, for example: providing ramps, door widening, stair lifts and level access showers. The grant, up to a maximum of £30k is subject to an assessment of need and a financial means test. Over the last 3 years the Housing Adaptations Team has doubled Disabled Facilities Grant expenditure on private sector housing adaptations, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Disabled Facilities Grants Awarded 2005-8

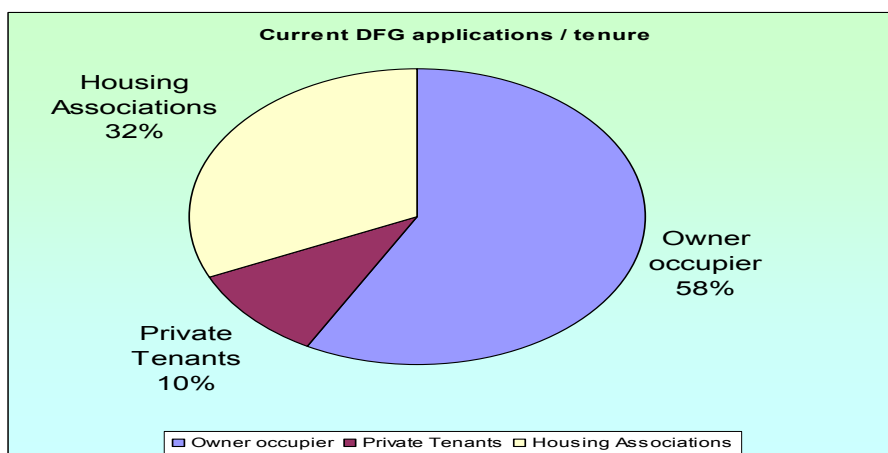
Year	Number of Disabled Facilities Grants awarded	Disabled Facilities Grant Expenditure
2005/6	48	£559K
2006/7	123	£989K
2007/8	124	£930K

The Council makes a 40% contribution to match fund the government's 60% contribution toward Disabled Facilities Grants. This 40% match funding and considerable additional funding by way of additional Disabled Facilities Assistance is provided by the Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Grant allocation via the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy. As outlined above, this increased investment has been achieved through the Council securing higher private sector renewal grant settlements as a result of successful bids for regional funding.

Current situation relating to DFG's

Of current cases going through the DFG process, the following graph shows the percentages of these cases broken down as:

- Owner occupiers
- Private tenants
- Housing Associations



Adaptations Waiting Times

In the November 2008 ASC&H Overview & Scrutiny report on adaptations the Committee were advised that there were 385 people waiting assessment by the Adult Social Care Occupational Therapy Assessment Team (OTAT) and that there were 137 cases awaiting completion of plans or schedule of works with the Home Improvement Agency (HIA). There are currently 100 cases with the Home Improvement Agency.

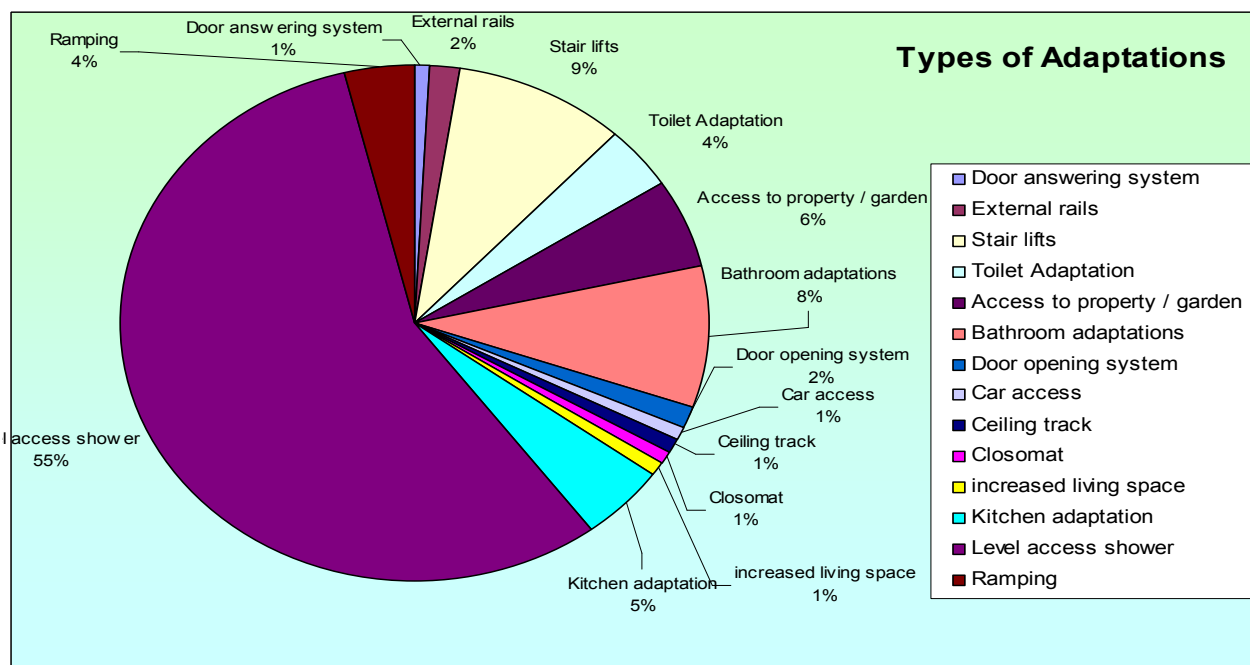
The Committee were advised that there were 120 cases awaiting allocation with the Housing Adaptations OT Team. There are currently 88 cases awaiting allocation with the HAOT team. Approximately 30 cases per month are added to the waiting list. The team is currently working toward clearing the waiting list.

National Performance Indicators

National performance indicators are collected by the Care Quality Commission (formerly Commission for Social Care Inspectorate). Performance figures for 08/09 against targets are outlined below.

National Performance indicators Figures used for Care Quality Commission (Formerly Commission for Social care Inspectorate)	2008-09 Outturn	2008-09 Target
Average length of time waiting for minor adaptations from assessment to work beginning.	2.8 weeks	4 weeks
Average length of time waiting for major adaptations from assessment to work beginning.	26.9 weeks	27 weeks
Number of those waiting for minor adaptations	3434	N/A
Definition: Councils are asked to report the total numbers of people in 2008-09 who waited for any period in the year for work on a major or minor adaptation to start.		
Number of those waiting for major adaptations	238	N/A
Definition: Councils are asked to report the total numbers of people in 2008-09 who waited for any period in the year for work on a major or minor adaptation to start.		

Types of Adaptations



Widening the Scope of the Housing Renewal Policy

We have recently amended our Private Sector Housing Renewal Assistance Policy to deliver more disabled assistance and to support adaptation of private housing stock to meet our need for adapted homes.

We have introduced a new temporary accommodation adaptations grant, created to provide assistance towards the cost of including wheelchair accessibility and / or other appropriate adaptations to private sector properties leased to the council for the accommodation of homeless households.

We have amended the disabled facilities assistance scheme to widen the scope of the assistance provided. The maximum limit on disabled facilities assistance has been increased from £25,000 to £50,000 (or 50% of the equity, whichever is the lesser). We have also amended the occupiers' minor adaptations grant to enable certain types of straightforward adaptations to be carried out under this scheme.

We also aim to explore options for private owners to be offered loans to assist moves to more suitable accommodation as an alternative to grant aiding adaptations to unsuitable properties.

Newly Built Homes

Brighton and Hove City Council and our partners were forerunners in adopting policies and working practices that support the needs of people who have a physical disability and their carers. In 2001 the City Council adopted the Lifetime Homes Standard to ensure that all new housing built is accessible and adaptable to changing housing needs. We are also ensuring that at least 10% of all new affordable homes are built to wheelchair standard.

During 2008-09 Registered Social Landlords working in partnership with the Council delivered 232 new affordable homes of which 31 (16%) were delivered to a fully wheelchair accessible standard as set out in the Planning Advice Note on Accessible & Lifetime Homes adopted January 2008 which sets standards higher than national requirements.

The Housing Adaptations and Housing Development teams were actively involved in the development and implementation of Planning Advice Note and the implementation of a new build nominations agreements with the partner RSLs to allow for 'off plan' allocation and finalisation of adapted homes to meet the individual's needs.

Council Homes

As outlined above the annual budget for investment in adaptations to Council homes is £750,000. In addition to this budget, the Council has worked closely with tenants and other stakeholders on best use of resources and housing options to meet adaptations need. This work was led by Chairman's Tenant Focus Group on adaptations. Details of this work and implementation of proposals are outlined below.

3.5 Housing Options for those Requiring Adaptations

Making best use of existing social housing, new build housing association homes, and the private sector are means by which we can maximise the benefit of limited adaptations resources available.

Improving access to social housing

Where it is not 'reasonable and practical' to adapt an applicants home it is often better to explore other housing options as an alternative to undertaking expensive and very disruptive major adaptations. The council has an Under Occupation Officer, who, as part of his role works with households requiring complex and expensive adaptations to

explore other options for moving, particularly into social housing in the City.

Matching Adapted Properties to those who need them

The Councils' Allocations Policy sets out the criteria under which all lettings to permanent council housing and nominations to housing association housing are made.

Applicants are given priority if they need to move for a medical reason that makes their current home unsuitable or does not provide adequate facilities. Priority may also be given where an applicant is releasing an adapted property or to make best use of adapted stock at the Council's discretion, where the tenant does not require adaptations or where the existing property cannot be adapted to meet the applicant's needs.

Properties are advertised openly in the Homemove Magazine, and on the website, www.homemove.org.uk. All homes adapted for use by disabled people are clearly labelled with a mobility classification and ring-fenced for those with a matching need to ensure that these properties are let to those who need them.

Details of mobility classification are outlined below.

Mobility Group 1 – Typically suitable for a person who uses a wheelchair full time i.e. indoors and outdoors. The property will provide full wheelchair access throughout.

Mobility Group 2 – Typically suitable for a person with restricted walking ability and for those that may need to use a wheelchair some of the time. The property will have internal and external level or ramped access, but some parts of the property may not be fully wheelchair accessible.

Mobility Group 3 – Typically suitable for a person able to manage two or three steps but unable to manage steep gradients. The property may have adaptations to assist people with limited mobility.

The figures below identify how many adapted homes became available for letting in 2008/09. The majority of wheelchair adapted homes were new build homes owned by housing association partners; very few council owned homes are suitably adapted for wheelchair users.

Table 2: General Needs Lettings to Property Adapted for those with mobility difficulties 2008/9 (Source : Locata)

	Mobility 1 (Fully wheelchair Adapted)	Mobility 2 (partially wheelchair adapted)	Mobility 3 (adapted for those with limited mobility)	TOTALS
One bedroom	11	8	87	106
Two bedrooms	6	3	41	50
Three bedrooms	0	3	10	13
Four bedrooms	2	0	3	5
TOTALS	19	14	141	174

Table 3: Applicants on the housing register waiting for adapted properties at 21 May 2009 (Source Locata)

	Applicants requiring Mobility 1 Properties	Applicants requiring Mobility 2 Properties	Applicants requiring Mobility 2 Properties	TOTALS
One bedroom	34	75	381	490
Two bedrooms	38	23	93	154
Three bedrooms	10	13	48	71
Four bedrooms	4	3	7	14
TOTALS	86	114	529	729

The highest need is for one bedroom properties (this includes those waiting for Adapted Sheltered Properties). As can be seen from the two tables, demand for adapted property far exceeds supply.

Newly Built Properties

These properties are also advertised through Homemove, Housing Associations must advertise these at least six months before they are completed, allowing applicants to have bespoke adaptations completed in partnership with their Occupational Therapist while the property is being built.

3.6 **Chairman's Tenant Focus Group on Adaptations**

This group was set up to work in consultation with tenant representatives and other stakeholders on the development of policy for those living in or seeking social housing to ensure that we are funding adaptations that make best use of available budget resources, social housing stock (both Council and RSL) and other options.

A. Key Themes from the Focus Group

A number of key themes emerged from the meetings which tenant representatives wished to see addressed. These are detailed below.

Use of resources

In addition to the existing budget the Group felt that pro-active investment in adaptations/accessible homes should be considered as part of the mainstream procurement process.

Allocations

Themes included the need for a detailed and up to date register of adapted and adaptable homes and more support with matching people with needs to suitable properties. In addition, more should be done to encourage agreement to moves where tenants live in adapted homes they don't need or require adaptations where homes aren't easily adaptable.

Assistance with moving

There was a strong feeling that more practical assistance be offered / provided with moving in order to assist people to find new property that meets their needs or can be quickly and easily adapted.

Other Themes

The Group felt more minor adaptations should be fitted as standard, for example lever taps and this should also be considered for some major adaptations such as level access showers. More planning ahead to anticipate demand was also seen as very important.

B. Focus group outcomes

As a direct result of consultation with the Chairman's Focus Group, an Accessible Housing Officer (AHO) was recruited in January of last year. Her remit is to improve the way in which Accessible and Adapted properties are advertised and let in the city. This is being achieved in three ways:

- improving our understanding of the access needs of everybody on the Joint Housing Register.
- undertaking an audit of all Council-owned housing stock in terms of their accessibility and feasibility for adaptation.
- providing a more equal service for disabled applicants within Homemove through more informative advertising and prioritised allocation for mobility properties.

Assessment

Since the recruitment of an Accessible Housing Officer all new applicants as well as existing applicants in Priority Bands A and B have been assessed for their mobility level and given one of four categories relating to their access requirements. These can be used to guide and advise disabled applicants as to which properties may be suitable for their needs, as indicated by corresponding mobility categories on the adverts. In total 2800 applicants have been individually reviewed for their needs. As a result, we have identified, in band A alone, 90 households that require wheelchair accessible housing and 69 households that require a property with easy access, to meet a mobility 3 standard. In addition, the Accessibility section of the Joint Housing Register application form has been re-written to encourage the provision of more relevant information for the Homemove officers to be able to assess how someone's disability is affecting their current housing.

Advertising and Allocation

The Accessible Housing Officer has spent a great deal of time working with Housing and Lettings Officers within the Council and the partner Housing Associations to ensure that relevant information and appropriate mobility categories are identified in the advert.

The AHO has attended meetings, accompanied on home visits and assisted in training sessions to ensure that information about steps, lifts, current adaptations, geography and the location of shops is now provided for all properties, wherever possible.

As a result, there has been a marked increase in the number of properties identified in the Homemove magazine as mobility homes, with full access details in the text of the advert and properties advertised as Mobility 1, 2 and 3 are now ring-fenced for those families that match the requirement for an adapted or accessible home.

Training

Accessible housing training was undertaken for representatives of our Homemove partners and the feedback was excellent. We

have now rolled out this training to all Housing Management staff within the Council and our partner RSLs. This training promotes a better understanding of the way in which housing impacts on the independence of disabled people. It will also assist the officers in carrying out an accurate audit of all properties to ascertain what level of access it can provide to the next tenant, thereby reducing empty property turnarounds and creating longer more secure tenancies in the long run.

Adaptations

With the success of the work that we're doing in the identification and allocation of properties that are either pre-adapted or would lend themselves to further adaptation, BHCC can look to utilising this knowledge to make better use of its limited adaptations budget. If adaptations are either not feasible, or not considered to be 'reasonable and practicable' then a dedicated officer from either Housing Options or the Under-Occupation Officer can work with the family to see what alternatives may be available to them, and makes the links with the supply of new affordable homes delivered in the city all built to Lifetime Homes, at least 10% fully wheelchair accessible from the start. If an adapted property was unable to be re-let to a disabled applicant due to external steps or other inaccessible feature, the AHO is working closely with the Adaptations team to ensure that the adaptations can then be recycled. We will endeavour to identify a person with a matching need and re-site the equipment.

Procurement

In addition to existing procurement of adaptations the Council's new framework contracts for long term procurement of works to Council homes will include capacity for provision of additional adaptations.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Council's Housing Renewal Assistance Policy was established following a comprehensive consultation exercise conducted both within the Council and with external stakeholders.
- 4.2 The Chairman's Tenant Focus Group on adaptations consisted of nominees from tenant representative bodies and has reported its findings to Housing Management Sub-Committee.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Adaptations is funding through the Disabled Facilities Grant and the Best Capital Allocation (£660k and ££440k respectively). There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations made in this report'
[Neil Smith, Accountant, 4 March 2009]

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Since the introduction of The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 local authorities have had a statutory duty to provide grant aid to disabled people to adapt their homes in order to meet their needs. There are further relevant provisions in the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 , and the Housing Act 2004 which govern assessing the conditions of dwellings. The strategy outlined in this report assists the Council to ensure those provisions are met fairly and reasonably.
[Elizabeth Culbert, Solicitor, 4 March 2009]

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 As a result of the work outlined above we have sought to raise awareness and address the needs and issues faced by disabled applicants for housing and adaptations assistance from the Council. We have sought to improve understanding of the way in which housing impacts on the independence of disabled people in the City and improve use of resources to better meet the needs of people who use a wheelchair or have restricted mobility.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Housing is one of the key objectives in the Council's sustainability strategy which aims 'to ensure that everyone has access to decent affordable housing that meets their needs'.

- 5.5 The developments outlined in this report seek to make the best use of existing housing and budget resources and promote lifetime homes. Further sustainability implications will be kept under review.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.6 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.7 Policy development in this area is undertaken with due regard to appropriate risk assessment requirements.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The aims of the Focus Group and the improvements outlined in this report support the priorities and aims of the 2020 Community Strategy and Council strategic goals of improving housing in the City and ensuring that residents have a health living environment.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

Documents in Members' Rooms:

None

Background Documents:

1. None

