

# Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol

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Lleoliad:  
Ystafell Bwyllgora 2 – y Senedd

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Dyddiad:  
Dydd Iau, 21 Mawrth 2013

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Amser:  
09:15

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Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales



I gael rhagor o wybodaeth, cysylltwch â:

**Polisi: Marc Wyn Jones**  
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## Agenda

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Cyfarfod preifat cyn y prif gyfarfod – 09.15 – 09.30

### 1. Cyflwyniad, ymddiheuriadau a dirprwyon (09.30)

### 2. Ymchwiliad i addasiadau yn y cartref – Sesiwn dystiolaeth 11 (09.30 – 10.40) (Tudalennau 1 – 16)

Awdurdodau Lleol

CELG(4)-10-13 – Papur 1(Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Conwy)

CELG(4)-10-13 – Papur 2 (Cyngor Sir Penfro)

CELG(4)-10-13 – Papur 3 (Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd Port Talbot)

CELG(4)-10-13 – Papur 4 (Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Torfaen)

- Ivor Jones, Rheolwr gwelliannau tai – Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Conwy
- Jim Stobbart, Rheolwr gwasanaeth cwsmeriaid (tai'r sector preifat) – Cyngor Sir Penfro
- Steve Kidwell, Prif swyddog adnewyddu tai, opsiynau tai a chymorth gofal cymunedol – Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd Port Talbot
- Gill Pratlett, Cyd-bennaeth y Gwasanaeth integreiddio a gwelliannau (gwasanaethau oedolion) – Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Torfaen

### **3. Ymchwiliad i addasiadau yn y cartref – Sesiwn dystiolaeth 12 (10.40 – 11.40)** (Tudalennau 17 – 22)

Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru – Panel technegol tai  
CELG(4)–10–13 – Papur 5

- Naomi Alleyne, Cyfarwyddwr Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru
- Sue Finch, Swyddog Polisi Tai, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru
- Kenyon Williams, Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili

### **4. Ymchwiliad i addasiadau yn y cartref – Sesiwn dystiolaeth 13 (11.40 – 12.25)** (Tudalennau 23 – 27)

CELG(4)–10–13 – Papur 6  
Shelter Cymru

- Jennie Bibbings, Rheolwr Polisi

### **5. Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i benderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o'r cyfarfod ar gyfer y canlynol: (12.25)**

Eitem 6

### **6. Blaenraglen Waith y Pwyllgor (12.25 – 12.30)** (Tudalennau 28 – 30)

CELG(4)–10–13 – Preifat papur 7

Papur 1

## Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol

### Ymchwiliad i Addasiadau yn y Cartref

Ymateb gan : Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol Conwy

- 1) **Pam bod yr amser a dreulir yn dosbarthu cymhorthion ac addasiadau a ariennir gan Grantiau Cyfleusterau i'r Anabl yn amrywio'n sylweddol ledled Cymru;**
  - 1.1 Mae'n deg dweud bod y term Cyfleusterau i'r Anabl (DFG) yn cael ei gamddeall gan lawer. Caiff ei gymryd i olygu pob math o addasiadau - nid dim ond y rhai a ddiffinnir yn y Ddeddf Grantiau Tai, Adeiladu ac Adfywio 1996. Yng Nghonwy rydym yn gwahaniaethu rhwng Grantiau Cyfleusterau i'r Anabl (DFG) gorfodol (deddfwriaethol) a Chymorth Cyfleusterau i'r Anabl dewisol - a ddiffinnir yn ein Polisiâu Adnewyddu Tai cyhoeddedig. Mae yna hefyd fân addasiadau sy'n cael eu prosesu gan y Gwasanaeth Therapi Galwedigaethol neu gan yr Adran Gofal a Thrwsio lleol. Caiff cymhorthion bellach eu hadnabod fel Technoleg Gynorthwyol oherwydd natur newidiol y cymorth electronig yn ogystal â chorfforol sydd ar gael.
  - 1.2 Mae'r diffiniad o'r Dangosydd Perfformiad (DP) ar gyfer Grantiau Cyfleusterau i'r Anabl gorfodol (PSR / 002) yn amwys:

'Dylai nifer y diwrnodau calendr a gymerwyd i roi'r Grant Cyfleusterau i'r Anabl gael ei gyfrif o ddyddiad cyswllt cyntaf y cleient gyda'r awdurdod lleol, sy'n ymwneud yn benodol ag addasiad, y cynigir y Grant Cyfleusterau i'r Anabl iddynt wedi hynny, at y 'dyddiad ardystiedig'. Fel arall, yn achos cleient presennol, y man cychwyn ddylai fod y dyddiad y codir yr angen am addasiad, naill ai gan y cleient neu'r Awdurdod, ac wedyn y cynigir Grant Cyfleusterau i'r Anabl.'

Gall Awdurdodau ddewis p'un ai i fesur o'r cyswllt cyntaf a gofnodwyd neu (fel arall) y dyddiad y caiff yr angen am addasiad ei godi gyntaf. Bydd hyn yn arwain at amrywiadau o fewn amserlenni yn dibynnu ar y dewis a wneir gan awdurdodau.
  - 1.3 Awgrymwyd (os na weithredwyd) dylid rhag-boblogi'r enwadur ar gyfer y DP uchod â data o'r flwyddyn yn diweddu 31 Mawrth 2012, a ddarparwyd yn flaenorol gan awdurdodau lleol. Dylid sylwi nad yw'r ddau ffigur (yr enwadur a'r ffigur a nodwyd) yr un fath – gan fod nifer o achosion yn pontio blynyddoedd ariannol (ar gyfer y DP). Gallai hyn arwain at hyd yn oed mwy o gamddealltwriaeth oni bai bod y diffiniad o'r DP yn cael ei newid.

- 1.4 Mae Conwy bob amser wedi rhoi blaenoriaeth i ariannu addasiadau (gan gynnwys Grantiau Cyfleusterau i'r Anabl) dros welliannau tai eraill er y deallir nad yw awdurdodau eraill wedi gwneud hyn. Fodd bynnag, mae'r holl gynlluniau a ariennir â chyfalaf wedi dod o dan bwysau yn ystod y blynyddoedd diwethaf.
- 1.5 Ein profiad ni yw bod dibynnu ar asiantau allanol i ddatblygu ceisiadau ar ran ymgeiswyr yn llawn anawsterau - yn bennaf oherwydd y ffaith eu bod yn tueddu i fod â blaenoriaethau sy'n cystadlu. Mae amserlenni wedi gwella ers i'r Cyngor ddefnyddio ein hasiantaeth (hyd braich) fewnol i gynorthwyo â darparu Grantiau Cyfleusterau i'r Anabl.
- 1.6 Mae'n amlwg y bydd lefel y gyllideb sydd ar gael yn cael effaith ar amserlenni ac efallai lle nad yw'r gyllideb yn ddigonol i gwrdd â'r galw, bydd Awdurdodau Lleol yn dal yn ôl ar geisiadau na ellir eu hariannu tu allan i'r broses ar hyn o bryd. Gallai hyn fod drwy sefydlu rhestr o atgyfeiriadau sy'n aros i gael eu symud ymlaen pan fydd arian ar gael. Gallai rhestrau gael eu blaenoriaethu yn ôl difrifoldeb yr angen.
- 1.7 Yng Nghonwy, gwnaethpwyd ymdrechion i ostwng cost yr holl addasiadau fel cydnabyddiaeth o'r pwysau cynyddol ar gyllidebau. Mae hyn wedi arwain at sefyllfa lle rydym yn prosesu'r un nifer o achosion am gost sylweddol is. Fodd bynnag, gall nifer fach o addasiadau costus (fel arfer estyniadau) gael effaith sylweddol ar amserlenni ac argaeledd cyllideb.

**2) A wnaed cynnydd digonol wrth weithredu argymhellion adroddiad y Pwyllgor Cyfle Cyfartal yn 2009 ar addasiadau yn y cartref**

- 2.1 Er nad oes gennym wybodaeth uniongyrchol am gynnydd Llywodraeth Cymru o ran gweithredu'r argymhellion yng Nghonwy, rydym wedi gwneud y gwelliannau canlynol:
- 2.2 Gwnaethpwyd cymhorthion ac addasiadau yn flaenoriaeth gorfforaethol
- 2.3 Pan ddaethpwyd â'r gwasanaeth addasiadau mawr yn fewnol, cynhaliwyd adolygiad o'r holl brosesau a strwythurwyd y timau i ddarparu gwasanaeth effeithlon.
- 2.4 Parhawyd i weithio'n agos gyda Therapyddion Galwedigaethol (OT), gan gynnwys cynnal ymweliad ar y cyd gyda'r OT a'r Syrfêwr Technegol ar ddechrau'r broses. Gwnaethpwyd arbedion drwy wneud y gwaith a drefnwyd yn iawn y tro cyntaf. Mae hyn yn ganlyniad i'r gwell cyfathrebu rhwng yr ymgeisydd, OT, y gwasanaeth Adnewyddu Tai a'r contractwr.
- 2.5 Defnyddio rhestr gymeradwy o gontractwyr - gan gynnwys rhestr waith wedi'i phrisio ymlaen llaw ac amserlenni tynn ar gyfer darparu.

- 2.6 Gweithio gydag eraill i adolygu a chyflwyno arfer da; Mae staff Adnewyddu Conwy yn hwyluso gweithio trawsawdurdod yng Ngogledd Cymru. Mae Therapyddion Galwedigaethol hefyd yn cymryd rhan mewn rhwydweithiau lleol a chenedlaethol.
- 2.7 Swyddog penodedig yn ymweld i gynorthwyo a chefnogi ymgeiswyr i lenwi ffurflenni cais ac ati, yn eu helpu drwy'r broses profion modd ac i weithredu fel pwynt cyswllt ar gyfer eu hymholiadau. Yn flaenorol, ymddengys bod diffyg perchenogaeth ar achosion ac roedd cleientiaid yn cael eu trosglwyddo o un swyddog i'r llall. Caiff gwybodaeth berthnasol ei gasglu'n uniongyrchol erbyn hyn - gan arwain at amserlenni llai.
- 2.8 Gwneir adolygiadau cynnydd rheolaidd rhwng y gwasanaeth Therapi Galwedigaethol a'r gwasanaeth Adnewyddu er mwyn sicrhau bod achosion yn symud ymlaen.
- 2.9 Roedd gwella mynediad i wybodaeth am addasiadau ar gyfer ein cleientiaid yn un o'n blaenoriaethau allweddol. Cyhoeddwyd taflenni amrywiol a safonau gwasanaeth mewn Plain English (a'u cyfieithu i'r Gymraeg) a'u dosbarthu hefyd o amgylch ysbytai, clinigau a meddygfeydd. Caiff y prif wasanaeth addasu gyhoeddusrwydd mewn sioeau ffyrdd amrywiol ac ymweliadau rheolaidd ag ysbytai lleol. Caiff hyn ei gefnogi gan Strategaeth Tai Pobl Hŷn Conwy a fabwysiadwyd yn ddiweddar, fel un o'r pedwar amcan strategol, i sicrhau bod gan Bobl Hŷn yng Nghonwy fynediad i wasanaethau sy'n darparu technoleg gynorthwyol ac addasiadau, gan eu galluogi i fyw'n annibynnol.
- 2.10 Mae Tîm Derbyn Therapi Galwedigaethol wedi cael ei sefydlu gyda'r nod o fynd i'r afael a lleihau'r rhestr aros ar gyfer asesiadau syml, ac yn ei dro'n cael effaith ar y rhestr aros gyffredinol a'r amser a dreulir yn aros am asesiadau.
- 2.11. Mae tri cymhorthydd Therapi Galwedigaethol (OTA) yn cynnal yr asesiadau y cyfeirir atynt yn 2.10 a chânt eu goruchwylio gan Uwch Ymarferydd OT. Mae'r amser ymyrraeth uchafswm wedi'i gyfyngu i 3 mis, ac erbyn hynny mae'r anghenion uniongyrchol wedi cael sylw. Os oes angen, neu os nad oes ateb i'r broblem, dim ond wedyn mae'r cleientiaid hyn yn cael eu cyfeirio at y tîm ardal ar gyfer atebion tymor hirach. Mae'r dystiolaeth yn awgrymu mai dim ond canran fach sy'n mynd ymlaen i'r hailddyrrannu, felly'r effaith gynyddol yw bod y rheiny sydd wedi'i nodi o'r cychwyn fel bod ag anghenion sylweddol yn mynd yn syth i'r timau ardal ac nid oes rhaid iddynt aros gyn hired am asesiad gan nad yw'r rhestr aros yn llawn o faterion atgyfeirio llai cymhleth.
- 2.12 Cyflwynwyd OTA penodedig ar gyfer addasiadau llai cymhleth fel dilyniant o gyflwyno'r Tîm Derbyn fel menter bellach i gyflymu'r broses addasiadau ar gyfer achosion llai cymhleth. Gan mwyaf, roedd yr addasiadau a nodwyd gan y Tîm Derbyn yn rhai tynnu bath/ gosod

cawod neu atebion mynediad syml. Yn hytrach na throsglwyddo i'r prif dîm ardal dyrannwyd OTA gyda phrofiad sylweddol i gyflymu'r rheiny trwy'r broses addasiadau. Mae hyn wedi gwella amserlenni'n sylweddol ar gyfer y mathau hynny o addasiadau.

- 2.13 Mae holiadur atborth cwsmer manwl iawn wedi cael ei gyflwyno sydd wedi arwain at atborth cwsmer da iawn (mwy na 90% o ymatebion cadarnhaol). Caiff cyfraddau boddhad eu dadansoddi gan y rheolwyr, gan Therapyddion Galwedigaethol a chontractwyr, fel y gellir nodi unrhyw batrymau. Yna caiff unrhyw faterion/ pryderon eu trin yn briodol er mwyn parhau i wella'r ddarpariaeth o wasanaeth ar gyfer ein cleientiaid.

3) **Pa effaith y mae gostyniad mewn adnoddau ar gyfer tai yn debygol o'i chael ar ddarparu addasiadau yn y cartref;**

- 3.1 Caiff addasiadau mawr (gan gynnwys DFGs) eu hariannu drwy'r Gronfa Gyfalaf Gyffredinol. Yng Nghonwy, mae'r gwasanaeth Adnewyddu Tai yn gwneud ceisiadau am ddyraniad ar sail flynyddol fel sy'n ofynnol gan y broses cynllunio busnes. Profodd y dyraniad yn 2011/12 i fod yn annigonol a bu'n rhaid cael trosglwyddiadau o ddyraniadau sector tai preifat eraill trwy'r broses wleidyddol. Mae'r gyllideb sydd ar gael wedi gostwng yn sylweddol o uchafbwynt o £2 filiwn (dyraniad blynyddol hyd at 2008/9), gyda dim ond £1 miliwn yn cael ei ddyrannu o 20011/12. Wrth gwrdd â'r her, mae costau cyfartalog gwaith wedi cael eu lleihau - yn rhannol oherwydd ailgylchu lifftiau grisiau, teclynnau codi ac ati, ac edrych ar gynhyrchion/deunyddiau amgen yn hytrach na rhai brand costus (ond sy'n bodloni'r un fanyleb ee CE/ nod barcud). Yn rhannol, mae hyn yn adlewyrchu newidiadau mewn galw a'r datrysiadau a nodwyd, ond mae hefyd yn adlewyrchu gwaith sylweddol i leihau'r gost drwy fanyleb dynnach a chaffael effeithiol.

- 3.2 Trwy ddarparu addasiadau mawr ar yr amser priodol, gellir cadw pobl yn eu tai eu hunain, nid yn unig yn lleihau costau gofal preswyl ond o bosibl yn darparu manteision emosiynol a chymunedol sylweddol i ddefnyddwyr gwasanaeth. Serch hynny, gallai effaith gwasanaeth amserol fynd tu hwnt i ohirio mynediad i ofal preswyl, er enghraifft, i liniaru costau yn y gwasanaeth gofal cartref neu ryddhau cleientiaid presennol o ofal preswyl. Mae tystiolaeth yn dangos bod sgil effaith ariannol peidio darparu gwasanaeth mewn amserau arweiniol rhesymol yn ymestyn tu hwnt i'r costau uniongyrchol i'r gwasanaeth addasiadau.

- 3.3 Mae angen cydnabod y berthynas rhwng y galw a lefel yr adnoddau ariannol sydd ar gael fel blaenoriaeth allweddol.

4) **A yw Llywodraeth Cymru yn monitro'n effeithiol y modd y mae gwasanaethau addasu yn cael eu darparu: a Beth mwy sydd angen ei wneud i wella gwasanaethau addasu yn y cartref yng Nghymru**

- 4.1 Nid ydym mewn sefyllfa i roi sylwadau ar drefniadau monitro ar wahân i'r mater a drafodwyd ym mharagraff 1.3.
- 4.2 Mynediad teg a chyson i DFG, Grantiau Addasiadau Ffisegol (PAG) neu ffynonellau eraill o gyllid (megis taliadau uniongyrchol gan sefydliadau trosglwyddo stoc) yn hanfodol. Nid yw cleientiaid yn ymddangos i fod yn derbyn cymorth yr un mor hawdd neu gyflym ag addasiadau ar gyfer eu hanableddau. Pan fo oedi yn digwydd o ran diwallu angen, gall hyn effeithio ar iechyd defnyddwyr gwasanaeth a chost y cymorth sydd ei angen yn nes ymlaen. Mae Therapyddion Galwedigaethol yn datgan bod yna anghydraddoldebau o ran cyflymder cyflwyno addasiadau, yn enwedig rhwng DFG a cheisiadau PAG. Efallai bydd Llywodraeth Cymru yn dymuno ystyried ariannu ceisiadau tenantiaid RSL trwy ddyfarnu DFG fel rhan o broses ddeiliadaeth ddall.
- 4.3 Gall gwahanol lwybrau ariannu arwain at drefniadau anghyson, sy'n annheg i denantiaid Landlordiaid Cymdeithasol Cofrestredig (RSL). Gall dyblygu a gorgyffwrdd rhwng gwasanaethau Landlordiaid Cymdeithasol Cofrestredig ac Awdurdodau Lleol fod yn ddrislyd a rhoi gwerth gwael am arian.
- 4.4 Mae Gwasanaeth Adnewyddu Tai Conwy yn gwneud gwaith dylunio ar gyfer Landlordiaid Cymdeithasol Cofrestredig lleol (yn dilyn trosglwyddo stoc) ac mae hyn wedi bod o fudd i ddarparu gwasanaeth a gwella amserlenni ac mae wedi arwain at gysondeb o ran safonau ar draws deiliadaethau. Mae gweithio'n agos gyda phartneriaid RSL wedi arwain at addasiadau gwell ac amserol ar gyfer tenantiaid yr effeithir arnynt.
- 4.5 Fel rhan o'n Strategaeth Tai Pobl Hŷn, sydd newydd ei mabwysiadu, rydym wedi datblygu is-grŵp i gymryd y cynllun gweithredu 'Technoleg Gynorthwyol ac Addasiadau' yn ei flaen. Bydd y grŵp hwn yn cynnwys cynrychiolwyr o'r holl Landlordiaid Cymdeithasol Cofrestredig lleol sy'n cynnig addasiadau a bydd yn darparu llwyfan i ni well cydlynu'r ffordd yr ydym yn defnyddio a monitro gwasanaethau addasu yn well. Er bod DFG hefyd ar gyfer pobl heb fod dros 55 oed, mae'r gwaith sy'n cael ei wneud i weithredu'r strategaeth hon yn rhoi cyfle gwerthfawr i wella ein gwasanaethau ymhellach ar draws y bwrdd, drwy gael y bobl fwyaf priodol i gyfarfod, i drafod y camau canlynol:
1. Sicrhau bod pobl hŷn yn gwybod gyda phwy i gysylltu os oes ganddynt broblem ac angen asesiad ar gyfer technoleg gynorthwyol neu addasiad
  2. Hyrwyddo datblygiad Teleofal ymhlith staff fel y gallant drosglwyddo'r wybodaeth i gleientiaid
  3. Archwilio dulliau ariannu posibl ar gyfer gwasanaeth tasgmon a garddio

4. Helpu pobl hŷn i ryddhau cartrefi sydd wedi dod yn anymarferol iddynt fyw ynddynt drwy ddarparu cefnogaeth ac arweiniad
5. Datblygu cofrestr Cyfateb Eiddo Addasedig sy'n rhychwantu ar draws yr holl Landlordiaid Cymdeithasol Cofrestredig, gan gyfateb tenantiaid i eiddo a addaswyd yn briodol
6. Datblygu rhaglen hyfforddiant o amgylch Urddas a Pharch ar gyfer pobl sy'n mynd i gartrefi tenantiaid i osod technoleg gynorthwyol neu addasiadau

Fel rhan o gam gweithredu 6, hoffem hefyd ddatblygu holiadur atborth cwsmeriaid traws-ddeiliadaeth, cyffredinol, fel y gallwn ddechrau safoni'r ffordd yr ydym yn cynnig y gwasanaethau hyn.



## Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

### Inquiry into Home Adaptations

Response from : Pembrokeshire County Council

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your Inquiry Into Home Adaptations – please accept my apologies for the delay in responding – the response was sent on 1<sup>st</sup> February, however due to technical problems was not delivered.

The comments below are sent on behalf of Pembrokeshire County Council Disabled Adaptations Working Group which works to improve the process and quality of delivering adaptations across the county.

**• *Why there are still significant variations in the time it takes to deliver aids and adaptations funded by Disabled Facilities Grants across Wales;***

We would challenge whether this statement could be made in absolute terms. For a number of years it would appear there has been a lack of consistency in the way local authorities have interpreted the definition of the performance indicator and therefore the results that have been reported; it is therefore not possible to say in absolute terms if there significant variations between local authorities. Another difficulty in recording the time taken is with complex cases where the client is already a customer of a service, such as Community Care, long before the need for an adaptation becomes apparent.

In Pembrokeshire we have experienced delays in the past in different parts of the process that effect the delivery time, the most significant example being those elements of the process are reliant on customers being pro-active. Another example is where as part of the assessment process additional medical information is requested from health services and there are delays on obtaining this information to complete the assessment.

In Pembrokeshire we have made significant improvements over the last few years in the time taken to deliver aids and adaptations in the county. We set up an inter departmental group – the Disabled Adaptations Working Group – which has focussed on improving the policies and processes which has led to the improvements delivered.

**• *Whether sufficient progress has been made on implementing recommendations from the Equality of Opportunity Committee's 2009 report on home adaptations;***

It is noted that many of the recommendations identified work the Welsh Government should undertake. Given the continuing concerns that service delivery should improve still further, whilst there have been improvements in some areas there is still improvement work to be done.

- ***What impact reduced resources for housing are likely to have on the provision of home adaptations;***

Pembrokeshire recognises the statutory basis for the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants and continues to make resources available to meet that statutory need across all tenures, however with reducing resources, meeting this statutory requirement will potentially require a realignment of resources away from non-statutory functions.

Pembrokeshire revised its Private Sector Housing Policy in 2011 to introduce a policy which provides for a maximum amount of £25,000 for a DFG (with an option to increase to £36,000 at the relevant Director's discretion in exceptional circumstances. We also introduced means testing on smaller adaptations. This policy is current being reviewed to determine its effectiveness.

In the social sector, as the level of funding for new social housing reduces at the same time as there are increasing demands on social housing to meet unmet need, this increases pressure for more adaptations. There are fewer new houses available which have been designed to "Homes for Life" standards which then impact upon the need to undertake sometimes complex adaptations in existing properties. This can be ameliorated to a certain extent through the better management of stock by social landlords and as Council we are undertaking much work to improve this.

If adaptations are not considered to be reasonable and practical, rehousing is required but this may result in a considerable wait for alternative suitable accommodation in suitable areas – a particular issue for rural counties. Families could be forced to move away from family or other support networks to gain suitable housing.

- ***Is the Welsh Government effectively monitoring the provision of adaptation services***

See above comment about the variations in delivery of adaptations. In addition the focus has for many years been on the speed of delivery of the adaptations rather than the outcomes for the customer. This qualitative monitoring is not as simple, however should be undertaken to provide a balance. Sometimes, a customer focussed approach may increase the time taken to deliver an adaptation; an example of this is where adaptations are delayed at the request of the customer due to ill health. In Pembrokeshire we undertake a broad customer satisfaction survey and find that the majority of customers are very satisfied with the service as a whole, although it is acknowledged that the main concern is one of time taken.

- ***What more needs to be done to improve home adaptation services in Wales.***

A number of issues can be addressed when looking at improving service delivery:

- Improved joint working between departments and other organisations

- Having an OT post sitting directly within the team delivering the adaptations service
- Reduce complexities of different streams of funding
- Look at the apparent inequity between DFG's and PAG's and direct works for LA tenants – e.g. no upper limit for PAG, service charges added to rent in some cases etc.
- The application is a lengthy, fairly intrusive process and can result in customers either not applying or abandoning applications – does the legislation need to be reviewed to reduce complexity?
- Providing support for customers during the process.
- Undertake a whole systems review of the delivery of the adaptations service in each Authority to reduce inefficiencies and focus on the customer experience.

Should you have any query, please do not hesitate to contact Andrew Davies Wrigley, Jim Stobbart or me.

Lyn Hambidge  
Head of Housing  
Pembrokeshire County Council

## Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

### Inquiry into Home Adaptations

Response from : Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

This note is provided in response to the open letter by the chair, Communities, Equality & Local Government Committee Letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> November 2012, seeking views on an inquiry they are to undertake into home adaptations. The responses related directly to each of the 5 points identified as “terms of reference” for the inquiry.

#### **Point 1**

- 1.1 ***“Why there are still significant variations in the time it takes to deliver aids and adaptations funded by Disabled Facilities Grants across Wales;”***
- 1.2 The 2009 Equality of Opportunities Committee report, which considered the same question, broadly describes a position which has not changed today. The report states *“Systems and arrangements for the delivery and performance management of services vary across housing tenures as well as across Wales. Adaptations, for example, can be delivered through a variety of mechanisms including Disabled Facilities Grants, Rapid Response Adaptations Programmes, Physical Adaptation Grants, Home Improvement Grants and Relocation Grants”* The 2009 report also recognised that *“Despite the review in 2005, the picture does not appear to have significantly improved. Many of the issues that emerged during that review - for example long delays, inconsistency across local authority areas and housing tenures, poor access to information and poor performance management - have arisen again during the course of this inquiry.”*
- 1.3 The DFG process continues to be delivered in fundamentally different ways by each local Authority driven by different demographics, different geographical conditions, different financial pressures, different historical processes for delivery of adaptations, different local relationships e.g. with Care and Repair and different functioning directorates.

#### **Point 2**

- 2.1 ***“Whether sufficient progress has been made on implementing recommendations from the Equality of Opportunity Committee’s 2009 report on home adaptations<sup>1</sup>;”***
- 2.2 The 2009 report made 15 recommendations none of which address the fundamental differences in delivery pressures or processes described above. Most critically it could not address a fundamental problem i.e. that DFGs is one of many priority functions which compete for access to limited, unhypothecated capital funding.
- 2.3 A clear example of the difficulties that exists in changing all-Wales thinking and establishing a collective approach to DFGs is illustrated in the context of the Neath Port Talbot Systems Thinking review of DFGs carried out in 2009/10. In 2009 NPTCBC chose to apply a different approach using Systems Thinking methodology to review all of its services. DFGs were at the forefront of this new approach. The 2009/10 systems thinking review of DFGs produced significant outcomes in terms of a single customer focussed method of approach which dramatically changed the Council DFG system and has

delivered many customer focussed improvements. Understanding that this would take some time to see success, the Council chose to entirely redesign and restructure its Housing Renewal Service and its funding priorities. It recognised that the greatest level of housing grant demand was for DFGs. Consequently 98% of all general funding for housing renewal funding is now focused on delivering DFGs. The review was widely recognised and publicised by UK public service organisations as a good practise model. Most Authorities in Wales and many in England gained experience of the new system, examined its evidence and positively saw its benefits. Information has been shared across Wales. In 2009 the process and outcomes were presented to the WLGA and Equality of Opportunity Committee. In 2010 Welsh Audit Office commissioned and published a report on systems thinking approaches which positively recommended the NPTCBC approach to DFG delivery. In 2011 a change management book was published which recommended the DFG systems review carried out by the Council as the way forward for DFGs.

- 2.4 Whilst NPTCBC are continuing to see the new system delivering continuous improvements and while the council have been party to many organisational raids on this subject, there still does not seem to have been any significant move by other authorities to use the learning within their own DFG processes.

### **Point 3**

#### ***3.1 "What impact reduced resources for housing are likely to have on the provision of home adaptations"***

- 3.2 National strategies for care are now driven by the need to maximise the number of older people living independently for longer in their own homes. Reducing resources for housing is a failure to recognise that success in this area is depended on home design and condition being suitable. The alternative is unsuitable and inappropriate accommodation leading to early admittance to residential/nursing care and increased high cost formal care packages.
- 3.3 This will lead to longer DFG waiting times, negating the positive impact of adaptations provided in a timely manner. As a consequence higher costs will be incurred by other agencies, Social Services, the Health Service, GP Practices etc. where this failure demand will present itself.
- 3.4 The focus will be budget driven, not driven by providing the "right help". The impact of a reduced budget will drive the wrong behaviour, and will result in a waste of resources where the "right help is not delivered first time".

### **Point 4**

#### ***4.1 "Is the Welsh Government effectively monitoring the provision of adaptation services."***

- 4.2 No. There are a number of factors that make the process ineffective:
- i) The data collection is not indicative of local authority demand Eg KPI (point 4) only provides the total number of DFG's delivered in that financial year and does not identify the number of grants being processed over that period and held

unprocessed on waiting lists, which does reflect demand. This reflects money spent which will be a simple measure of the constraint due to budget setting rather than demand for the service.

- ii) As indicated above the data collected is not recorded consistently. The Welsh Government needs to be clear on what they wish the measure to indicate and what does it tell the deliverers.
- iii) Whilst 'end to end time' if it is split into its constituent parts is a good measure, consideration should be made to include the number of times the 'right help' was provided as this is crucial to the success of the DFG. Evidence of repeated interventions or additional care support needed after a DFG is not collected.
- iv) By replacing a KPI target with data measures of "What Matters" from the customer's viewpoint, measures of the systems should be undertaken to enable the use of objective criteria for distinguishing background variation from events of significance, based on statistical techniques. (i.e. Control charts help you 'see' when the system varies away from the normal process). By collecting data from a process, variations that may affect the quality of the end product or service can be detected and corrected, thus reducing waste as well as the likelihood that problems will be passed on to a client. Control charts have an emphasis on early detection and prevention. In addition to reducing waste, this can lead to a reduction in the end to end time required.
- v) The definition in the primary DFG indicator needs clarification, particularly with the wide and varied delivery methods of the Local Authorities in Wales. This is impacting on how each Local Authority provides different schemes which may fall within or out of the indicator.

## **Point 5**

### **5.1 "What more needs to be done to improve the Home Adaptation Service in Wales."**

5.2 The Welsh Government should develop a single framework for delivery of DFGs based on what matters to the customer. Identify the purpose of a DFG from the customer perspective and delivering only the "value steps" necessary to achieve its "purpose", which will minimise cost and reduce delivery time. It will also have the benefit of removal of all those steps that do not add "value" to the customer or have them undertaken away from the front line where they do not impact the customer. Understanding these processes will require authorities to apply different thought processes similar to the 'systems thinking' approach used by this Authority.

5.3 If we can ensure that all providers are working to, and using the same methods in achieving the "purpose" and use measures to see improvement, or not, then these measures can be used to improve the service and be communicated in a way to ensure this.

5.4 The systems approach encourages a culture of continuous improvement. Operating Principles such as listed below are simple, consistent and can be clearly evidenced:

- Place experts to the front
- Get it right first time
- Only deliver value steps (Purpose)
- Have a system with no hand off's

- Minimise Waste & Preventable Demand, only do the work that adds value to the process in customer terms, and do not build waste back into the system.
- Achieve the customers nominal value, the customer sets the nominal value
- 'Pull' an expert when required
- Continuously measure and improve the process
- Base decisions on Data
- Define who is the customer
- Purpose is defined as what matters to the customers
- System must deliver the purpose
- Check and act upon the system
- Those working in the system should design the system
- Decisions must be based on data and evidence
- Managers facilitate process of change and redesign to meet purpose
- Managers should create a supportive environment to encourage individual decision making to deliver the purpose
- System should provide help to the customer going through the process
- IT Should support the whole system end to end
- Use measures to tell us how we are achieving the purpose

## Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

### Inquiry into Home Adaptations

#### Response from : Torfaen County Borough Council

#### 1. Why there are still significant variations in the time it takes to deliver aids and adaptations funded by Disabled Facilities Grants across Wales?

There are a range of reasons why there are variations in the time it takes to deliver aids and adaptations funded by DFGs. An important issue is that when DFG services are being compared we are not always comparing like for like, this covers a range of issues including:

**Different Services** - Different authorities take different approaches to how DFG aids and adaptations are delivered, for example in Torfaen there is a full home improvement agency, a service not provided by all local authorities which might improve quality of outcomes for service users but not necessarily speed up the time taken to administer the grant. This could impact on the length of time it takes to deliver aids and adaptations funded by DFGs as different approaches may have factors which increase the length of time required, but equally they may have factors which improve the service and outcomes for service users.

**Occupational Therapists** - Similar to the provision of different services different authorities have different staffing levels which can impact on the length of time taken to deliver aids and adaptations. In particular the level of OT support can have a significant impact, in some areas there is dedicated OT support for housing adaptations, but not in others waiting lists for assessments that need a qualified OT can be problematic and can hold up the delivery of aids and adaptations. In some areas there may also be different expectations on OTA's in the assessment of someone's needs and their home and again this has the potential to both speed up or delay services depending on the stance taken.

**Performance Indicators** - There are currently only two performance indicators being used to measure DFGs (PSR/002 and PSR/006), these PI's focus on average number of calendar days to deliver services. It may be that these indicators need to be examined to ensure that all local authorities are measuring the same thing, i.e. date of first contact with the local authority through to completion of the work, as there is the potential for different interpretations of what is to be measured. For example, what is counted as the date of first contact and with whom? If different authorities are recording the existing PI's differently then this will provide an inaccurate picture of service delivery times and could lead to significant variations being evidenced. These PI's could be tightened up and it may be worth noting that, as they are, they do not cover any aspect of quality or outcomes for those receiving the service.

**Geographical Differences** - Within Torfaen there is a legacy of poor housing stock, this has the potential to impact on the time it takes to deliver adaptations as it may be that as a result more complex adaptations are required – long delays relating to a few complex applications have the potential to distort the average waiting time for all adaptations. We are also currently experiencing delays due to things like Welsh Water and Planning Control agencies, where for instance following a change in legislation an increasing number of applications have to be made for adaptations situated near to Welsh Water sewers. This is leading to delays as additional consent is required before any of the adaptation work can be undertaken,

#### 2. Has sufficient progress been made on implementing recommendations from the Equality of Opportunity Committee's 2009 report on home adaptations?



Looking at the recommendations made in the 2009 report it is unclear whether any of the recommendations made have had a significant impact on DFGs. The recommendations are focussed on the role of the Welsh Government, if progress has been made on implementing them, then at this stage it has not been communicated widely. Some of the recommendations have been taken forward on a local / regional level, e.g. monitoring performance and sharing good practice, but it is hard to say where this has been taken forward on a national level. It may be worth reviewing progress as there are a number of recommendations which have the potential to help local authorities in the delivery of DFG aids and adaptations and would help to support a more consistent and efficient approach across Wales.

### **3. The impact that reduced resources for housing are likely to have on the provision of home adaptations?**

In order to support the inquiry it may be worth defining what is meant by reduced resources. Potentially the impact of reduced resources will include:

- Housing waiting lists are already extremely high and with the welfare benefit reforms coming in they are only going to get much bigger.
- Our allocation of social housing grant is diminishing significantly so without this funding we are not able to build as many new homes to meet the housing need, this will result in a reduction in adapted housing being included on schemes due to their high costs. There is a significant lack of adapted properties within the social stock in Torfaen this will ultimately place a greater burden on social care budgets.
- Lack of knowledge within the social sector housing of what adaptations have been carried out is a significant issue, if there were adequate resources across housing and the RSL's a full mapping process could be undertaken and potentially more people could be matched with an appropriate adapted home. There are a number of people living in adapted properties which may not necessarily meet their disability.

### **4. Is the Welsh Government effectively monitoring the provision of adaptation services?**

As mentioned in the responses above there are some questions regarding how well the existing DFG performance indicators support the monitoring of the provision of adaptation services. It is also unclear what impact previous reviews have actually had on the provision of services, even though a number of recommendations have been made and it has been acknowledged that there is a need to drive forward improvements. There is a feeling that the provision of minor adaptations is scrutinised in more detail than major adaptations and this may be something that warrants further investigation.

### **5. What more needs to be done to improve home adaptation services in Wales?**

There are a few elements to home adaptation services that could be improved, including:

- A need to cut down on bureaucracy. DFGs are very process driven and could be more outcomes driven, this could include a review of the legislation in respect of means testing.
- There is a need for the better sharing of information, good practice and guidance. As noted above different authorities approach home adaptation services differently, employing different levels of staff and different methodologies. It would be helpful to have the Welsh Government lead an evaluation of existing services, looking at the different approaches taken, roles and responsibilities of staff, etc. to identify and share good practice and help support the move to a more consistent approach to home adaptation services across Wales.
- Improved education – for example the need to ensure that any new builds are being built in order to reduce the number of adaptations required in the future, that they allow

for wheelchair access, universal design principles and key safety and enablement features ie appropriate heights for plugs, adjustable non portable equipment etc.

Paper 5

## **Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee**

### **Inquiry into Home Adaptations**

Response from : WLGA

#### **Introduction**

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales. The three national park authorities and three fire and rescue authorities are associate members. It seeks to provide representation for local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies the key priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh Local Government and the communities they serve.

2. The need for appropriately adapted homes is increasing steadily as people live longer and the number of children and young people surviving longer with disabilities rises. Forecasts suggest that in the next forty years the number of people aged 65 or over will increase by 50%. This will clearly have significant implications for housing, health and social care services including home adaptations

3. Home adaptations play a vital part in enabling vulnerable people to remain living independently in the community. There is considerable evidence that adaptations significantly improve the quality of life of people with disabilities and reduce the need for more costly services such as residential care, nursing homes and hospitals. The WLGA therefore welcomes the inquiry and the focus on improving adaptation services in Wales. We hope that the committee will take the opportunity to look beyond Disabled facilities Grants (DFG's) which fund a relatively small number of large scale adaptations, and consider the wide range of mechanisms for providing home adaptations and assistance.

4. The current pattern of home adaptation services is complex and therefore putting in place a coherent, efficient, equitable and effective provision across Wales is considerable. Navigating the range of provision also inevitably presents a real challenge for people who need adapted housing.

5. Home adaptations are currently funded through a range of grants which differ depending on tenure and the scale of work. Provision includes disabled facilities grants (DFG), physical adaptation grants (PAG), minor adaptations grants, independent living grants (ILG) and the rapid response adaptation programme (RRAP) as well as schemes which match need to appropriately adapted homes. This complexity of provision and eligibility criteria has inevitably also led to inequitable access to services.

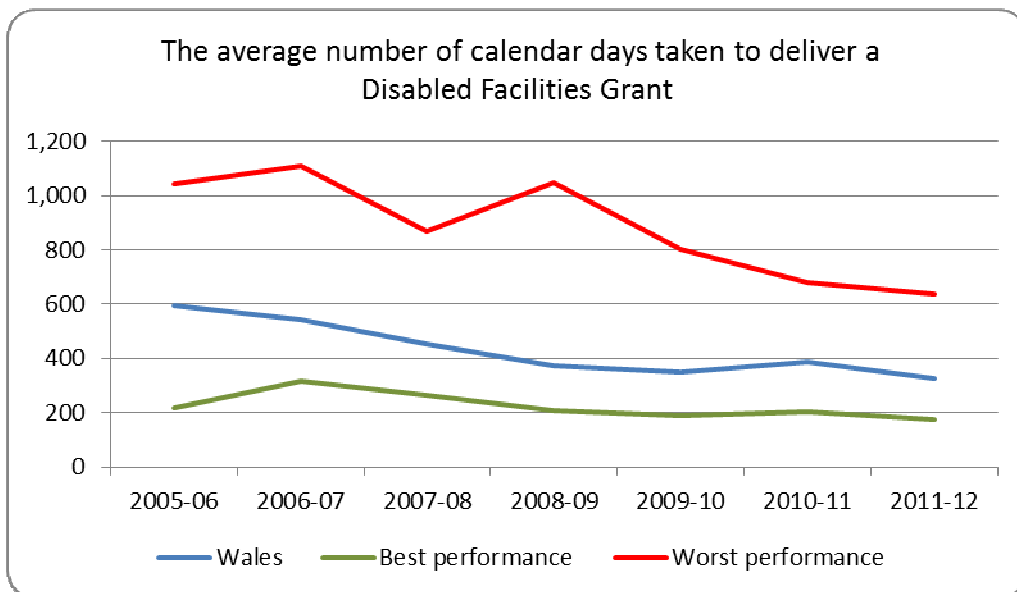
6. The effectiveness of home adaptation services has been the focus of a number of reports as well as a committee inquiry over the past 8 years. The focus of attention has

been on the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) which are just one form of assistance and which provide a relatively small number of large scale adaptations. In 2010/11 a total of 4743 home adaptations were carried out using statutory DFG's. In contrast there has been little consideration of the full range of grants and assistance which provide adapted homes for many more people. A comprehensive review of the whole range of provision would provide a fuller understanding of the degree to which services are addressing needs effectively.

6. Unfortunately the variety of funding mechanisms for adaptations has resulted in some inequities, particularly in relation to tenure. In 2010/11 owner occupiers and private tenants in Wales, who make up 82% of households had access to just over £35m for Disabled Facilities Grants through Local Authorities. However housing association tenants who make up 10% of households also had access to £8.5m of funding for large scale adaptations via the Welsh Government Physical Adaptation grant (PAGs) scheme. This contrasts Local Authorities and Stock transfer associations who are expected to fund adaptations. It is increasingly the case that stock transfer housing associations not meeting their tenant's need for large scale adaptations and consequently tenants are applying to their Local Authority for DFG funding.

**Why are there still significant variations in the time it takes to deliver aids and adaptations funded by DFG's across Wales.**

7. The delivery time for a DFG has been a National strategic Indicator since 2009/10 and an indicator within the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) for much longer. The performance data shows a steady improvement in the delivery time for DFGs with the average time being reduced from 545 days in 2005/06 to 326 days in 2011/12, an improvement of 40% over 6 years. Consistency in performance across Authorities has also significantly improved as is demonstrated in the graph below included in the Local Government Data Unit Performance Bulletin 2011-12.



8. The data demonstrates the positive direction of travel however there is recognition that Authorities are interpreting some aspects of the PI definition differently, in particular the definition of "the first recorded contact with the Authority, relating specifically to an adaptation". This makes it difficult to fully understand the level of inconsistency across Authorities.

9. Some degree of inconsistency in services across Wales is inevitable given the differences in demography, geography, labour markets, organisational structures, policies, processes and financial pressures. Authorities are also working with a number of partners such as RSL's, Care and Repair agencies, Local Health Boards which each have varying policies and practices.

10. Local Authorities understand the importance of maximising consistency and continue to work together on a regional and national level to improve services and increase consistency. The Gwent Authorities for example meet on a regular basis to improve services and their work has evidenced considerable consistency in the policies and delivery of adaptation services.

### **Progress on implementing recommendations from the Equal Opportunity Committee Report on home adaptations 2009**

11. Local Authorities are continuing to improve adaptations services in response to a number of factors including the increased demand for grants, the pressure on resources as well as the implementation of the 2009 Committee report recommendations. Examples of the improvements Authorities are making include:

- lean systems reviews leading to a significant reduction in processing times, an increase in the number of grants completed and reduction in costs (see case study Appendix 1)
- Improving access to grants through better information and promotional materials, one stop shops and a single point of access for disabled people
- Increasing the use of 'trusted assessors' in the place of an OT's where this meets the guidelines
- Closer working between OT's and housing staff including employing an occupational therapist (OT) to focus on DFG's and joint protocols with OT's in social care
- Joint visits between OT's and grant officers to identify the most appropriate solution at the start of the process
- in house improvement agencies to streamline the process including use of a schedule of rates, contractor frameworks and contractor lists
- Regional procurement of contractors and equipment eg stair lifts, grab rails, showers etc to bring down costs
- Home visits to assist with the application including the means test and contractor selection
- Adapted housing registers to ensure the most effective allocation of social housing
- Better use of the 'reasonable and practicable test' when deciding on of the most effective and efficient solution

- re location grants to help someone move to an adapted or more appropriate accommodation as an alternative to grant work
- fast track procedures and prioritising applications according to need
- Close relationships with Care and Repair including co location
- self assessment for some minor adaptations
- Grants for landlords who agree to bring an empty properties back into use as an adapted property
- Increased use of IT systems for example electronic referral system and document management systems.
- designating individual planning and building control officers to speed up the processing of large scale DFG's
- a corporate adaptations panel to bring together key professionals to review working arrangements, services and budgets
- embedding a register of accessible homes within the common housing register for social landlords
- recycling equipment eg stair lifts
- replacing expensive warranty schemes for equipment (eg stair lifts) with a local Authority sinking fund.
- increasing the cost ceiling for Minor Adaptation grant to increase the number of small scale adaptations that can be carried out more speedily
- regional benchmarking, sharing good practice and improvement action plans.

12. The WLGA in conjunction with the Housing Technical Panel (the Local Government officer network) continues to use every opportunity to share learning and support effective practice. This has included the publication of best practice advice by the Local Authority housing adaptations benchmarking club, officer learning events and discussions at the WLGA Cabinet Members Housing Network

### **What impact will reduced resources for housing have on the provision of home adaptations**

13. The number of frail and very frail people in Wales is increasing steadily and the need for services is also therefore increasing. This presents a real challenge for Local Government particularly at a time when budgets are being squeezed and service pressures are increasing. Partner organisations including health Boards and the third sector are also facing similar budgetary pressures.

14. These pressures are increasing the challenge of meeting the rising need for adaptations, particularly large scale DFG's. Authorities are increasingly focusing on how to make best use of resources and therefore it is very important that the means test for DFG's is retained to ensure that assistance is focused on low income older people who are unable to fund the work themselves. It is also important that eligibility for the range of adaptation grants is coherent and does not allow DFG applicants who have failed the means test to access assistance via alternative funding streams.

15. There is extensive evidence that housing adaptations reduces pressures on primary health care services and the demand for nursing care and hospital admissions. There is

therefore a very strong argument for health budgets to assist with the cost of adaptations in order to reduce the demand for high cost health services.

### **Is the Welsh Government effectively monitoring the provision of adaptation services?**

16. National performance data currently focuses on the time taken to deliver a DFG's and therefore provides a partial understanding of the extent to which people are being assisted to live independently at home through home adaptations. The focus on process also provides limited understanding of outcomes. The WLGA would not wish to see an increase in the burden of performance data collection, but we would welcome a more holistic picture of services which focuses on outcomes. We hope this inquiry will help to generate a broader understanding of the range of adaptation services delivered by Local Authorities and their partners and the variety of mechanisms that can be used to provide adaptations to enable people to live independently at home

### **What needs to be done to improve the home adaptation services in Wales**

17. The current pattern of services for home adaptations is complex and in some respects inequitable. The inequity needs to be addressed, particularly in relation to tenure. We suggest that all social landlords should be expected to fund adaptations of their properties as part of their responsibilities as landlords and there should be equality of access to any additional Welsh Government funding, irrespective of tenure.

18. There has been some discussion about removing the means test in order to speed up the DFG process. We are concerned that this would result in the scarce resources being diverted to assist those who are able to fund their large scale adaptations and reduce assistance available for people on lower incomes. As an alternative there may be an opportunity to simplify the means test in order to reduce delays

19. The need for adaptations is rising steadily and this trend will continue as people live longer and increasing numbers of children survive significant disabilities. Authorities and other providers will need to continue to find ways in which needs can be met more efficiently. This will be achieved partly by streamlining processes but also by looking at using existing resources as efficiently as possible including making the best use of adapted properties and recycling equipment, helping people to move to more appropriate accommodation and considering recyclable loans as well as grants.

20. It is clear that expenditure on adapting properties and enabling people to live independently at home for longer saves Local Authority expenditure on residential care. Adaptations also deliver significant savings for Health Boards by reducing the need for hospitalisation and nursing care and assisting with hospital discharge. Home adaptations are an important preventative measure and serious consideration should be given to targeting some health funding on adaptations on a spend to save basis.

#### Appendix 1

The Lean Enterprise Research Centre undertook a lean review of DFG processes for Neath Port Talbot in 2010(1) which achieved the following improvements:

- 24% increase in the number of grants completed compared with the previous financial year
- 45% reduction in time between the applicants first contact and completion of the work
- 54% reduction in construction time
- 22% reduction in costs
- Steps in process reduced from 291 to 34

(1) Zokaei K et al (2010) Lean Systems Thinking in the Public Sector in Wales  
Lean Enterprise Research Centre



# Shelter Cymru

Paper 6

## **Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee**

### **Inquiry into Home Adaptations**

Response from : Shelter Cymru

## **1. About us**

**1.1** Shelter Cymru is Wales's people and homes charity. We believe that a decent, secure home is a fundamental right and essential to the health and well-being of people and communities.

**1.2** We provide independent, specialist advice, advocacy and legal representation for anyone with housing problems. Last year, our advisers assisted nearly 17,000 people from all over Wales, helping to prevent homelessness in 90 per cent of the cases where it was threatened. Over the same period, there were more than 80,000 unique visitors to the Advice Online section of our website.

**1.3** Through our campaigning, research and policy work we aim to improve housing law and services, while our education service helps to prevent homelessness through working directly with young people and providing detailed teaching and learning resources.

## **2. Introduction**

**2.1** We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. Forty per cent of our clients have a disability and we regularly assist people in applying for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), getting adaptations made to their home and dealing with subsequent issues that may arise. We are concerned about the impact of current waiting times on our clients' physical and mental wellbeing as well as the increased costs that long waiting times bring to health and social care services and a host of other public services.

**2.2** This paper summarises our main positions and supplements our oral evidence to the Committee.

## **3. Disabled Facilities Grants waiting times**

**3.1** We share the Committee's concern over the continuing lack of consistency in DFG delivery times, as well as the continuing failure to deliver DFGs during statutory time limits. It is a disheartening realisation for applicants who learn that local authorities may breach maximum waiting times that are set in statute without apparently incurring any penalty.

**3.2** What we have learned from our casework is that long waiting times often put people off making an application altogether. This is not because people can't be bothered but rather because their present living situation is simply not tenable for that length of time.

**3.3** Lengthy waiting times create hidden populations who may desperately need adaptations for quality of life but who are forced to make do by relying on family and friends and enduring considerable day-to-day hardship. Public services may be unaware of the extent of this phenomenon even though in monetary terms it eventually leads to earlier onset of health problems, earlier admissions to hospital and residential care, and increased cost to the public purse.

#### **Case study 1**

Julie\* from south Wales uses crutches and on bad days uses a wheelchair. She was allocated an adapted house from her council which has ramp access to the front door. However the house was accessible only when she used crutches due to a plastic lip on the front door.

Her condition worsened and she found she was relying on her wheelchair more often, which meant that she could not get into and out of her house without assistance. She is now no longer able to live there and is having to stay with her sister in her non-adapted property.

The local authority has advised her to give up her tenancy so she can apply for a DFG for her sister's house. However, Julie is reluctant to do this due to her lack of security of tenure at her sister's. The only solution for her is to present as homeless, although as there is no suitable temporary accommodation available it is likely that she will have to stay in a hotel.

\* Name changed to protect anonymity

**3.4** We know that good practice in administering DFGs has existed in Wales. However such good practice is rarely transmitted to other authorities and even within authorities that do make progress, the gains are often temporary and limited.

**3.5** In 2008/09 the DFG team in Neath Port Talbot undertook a systems thinking review that was widely cited in the Welsh public sector as an example of good practice, having identified that it would be possible to reduce average waiting times from 675 days to 64 days<sup>1</sup>. The review discovered that the existing DFG application process comprised 291 separate steps and had a drop-out rate of 33 per cent. Following system redesign the number of steps was reduced to 34 and the drop-out rate fell to nil. The review also promised that adaptations would be delivered more cheaply since they met applicants' needs more closely.

**3.6** It is disappointing to note that despite having gone through this root-and-branch reform process DFGs in Neath Port Talbot remain among the slowest to deliver in the whole of Wales. While there have been some improvements in performance in the last two years, waiting times are still unacceptably long.

**3.7** This raises questions about the ability of local authority departments to implement fundamentally different practices while workloads are high. However, in our view it is only right and fair that DFG application numbers should remain high, since they are an important element of preventative spending that saves costs for the NHS and other services while contributing substantially to people's quality of life. Higher numbers of applications are more likely to reflect

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<sup>1</sup> Zokaei, K., Elias, S., O'Donovan, B., Samuel, D., Evans, B. and Goodfellow, J. (January 2010) Lean and Systems Thinking in the Public Sector in Wales: Report for the Wales Audit Office. Lean Enterprise Research Centre

actual levels of need. Unless local authorities can come to terms with the reality of high demand, and allocate staff resource accordingly, we may never see widespread compliance with the statutory maximum waiting time.

## 4. The impact of reduced resources for housing

**4.1** The UK Government's programme of spending cuts will impact disproportionately on disabled people, who will bear 29 per cent of all cuts. Disabled people will lose an average of £4,410 per person, compared with an average of £467 for all citizens.<sup>2</sup>

**4.2** The imminent introduction of the Bedroom Tax will affect 46 per cent of households in the social rented sector in Wales. It is estimated by the DWP that two-thirds of affected households will include at least one person with a disability<sup>3</sup>.

**4.3** In Wales, 57 per cent of disabled people in the social rented sector need adaptations to their home<sup>4</sup>. Discretionary Housing Payments are inadequate in size and scope to effectively assist these households on anything other than a temporary basis. The Bedroom Tax will create a wave of housing need where the lack of alternative accommodation will be severely exacerbated for disabled tenants by the limited availability of adapted housing and lengthy waiting periods for adaptations.

**4.4** We expect the Bedroom Tax, together with other aspects of welfare reform, to create higher levels of indebtedness and homelessness among disabled people; increased expenditure on adaptations in temporary accommodation and longer accommodation periods; higher demand for smaller properties in the social sector; and higher demand in the private rented sector (PRS).

**4.5** Clearly it is more cost-effective to utilise existing adapted housing where possible, and we welcome the Welsh Government's White Paper commitment to ensure that every part of Wales is covered by an accessible housing register (AHR) for social housing. We believe the Government should make implementation of this promise a priority. We also believe the Government should act to improve accessibility within the PRS.

**4.6** In the last decade the proportion of housing in the PRS has doubled across Wales while home ownership has declined and access to social housing has remained relatively steady as a proportion of housing overall<sup>5</sup>. For increasing numbers of people the PRS is the only available tenure and yet for disabled people with specific access requirements it can be impossible to find a suitable property or a landlord willing to have adaptations made. Despite this, the impacts of the lack of affordable housing coupled with welfare reform mean that the PRS is likely to be the only option for increasing numbers of disabled people.

**4.7** Disabled tenants living in the PRS are less likely to have their adaptations needs met: in 2008, only 39 per cent of households including a disabled person requiring adaptations in the PRS had the adaptations they needed, compared with 48 per cent in social housing and 59 per cent of owner occupier households<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Duffy, D. (2013) A Fair Society? How the cuts target disabled people. Centre for Welfare Reform

<sup>3</sup> <http://1voice.org.uk/lords-fear-bedroom-tax-will-hurt-disabled-tenants/>

<sup>4</sup> Living in Wales 2008

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government Dwelling Stock Estimates 2010/11

<sup>6</sup> Living in Wales 2008

**4.8** Our casework includes frequent examples of disabled private tenants experiencing problems finding an adapted property or getting adaptations carried out. There is a serious lack of adapted properties in the PRS and there is no AHR for this tenure, making it very difficult for would-be tenants to find housing that is already suitably adapted.

**4.9** Some of our clients in the PRS have requested that their landlord consent to having adaptations carried out, only for the landlord to issue possession proceedings in response. Even when landlords are willing to consent they may change their mind at any point, evict the tenant and rip out any works already carried out.

### **Case study 2**

John\* from north Wales was granted £35,000 by his local authority for adaptations to his privately rented home. Just before the work was about to commence he received a letter from his landlord's mortgage lender advising of court action for possession.

The work was put on hold while legal proceedings took place. The landlord resolved the possession action and John's tenancy remained in place. However, the lender then wrote again to the landlord stating that he is in breach of his tenancy terms as his mortgage is not buy-to-let.

While the landlord has insisted to John that there is no further threat to his security of tenure, the local authority has stopped the work going ahead as they will be unable to grant a further DFG at a new property if the landlord's lender pursues possession.

John is searching for somewhere else to live but has so far been unable to find an adapted property or one where the landlord is prepared to have adaptations made.

\* Name changed to protect anonymity

**4.10** Local authorities are often reluctant to invest significant resources in getting adaptations done in the PRS. Figures for 2010/11 show that fewer than 5 per cent of completed DFGs in Wales were for PRS properties. Local authority performance was patchy: while some authorities granted up to 20 per cent of their DFGs to people living in the PRS, there were eight authorities where no grants were made for PRS properties at all. It is highly unlikely that these eight authority areas – which collectively account for 30 per cent of Wales' population – have no disabled residents in the PRS in need of adaptations. A more likely reason is that these authorities are unwilling to invest in a sector characterised by such lack of security.

**4.11** The economic climate is driving more and more households into the PRS. The implications of this shift for disabled people need to be fully considered by the Welsh Government. In particular, the current tenure reform initiative is well placed to create additional security for disabled people. The promise to ensure every Welsh local authority has an AHR in place could be expanded to include the PRS, with the proposed register of private landlords being an ideal vehicle for this. Local authorities should work with private landlords to raise awareness of disability and adapted properties.

**4.12** With 22.7 per cent of the Welsh population reporting a long term health problem or disability<sup>7</sup> it is important that the housing market reflects the needs of all. It is more cost-effective to create

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<sup>7</sup> Census 2011

accessible housing at design stage and we believe the Welsh Government should work with building contractors to ensure that new builds take account of accessibility requirements for disabled people.

## 5. What we believe needs to be done

- We need a stronger focus on service improvement in DFG administration. We suggest that this could be achieved in a number of ways: firstly, by ensuring that all local authorities commit to adopting proven best practice; secondly, by encouraging stronger dialogue between local authority DFG departments and service users to build accountability; and thirdly, by reviewing DFG administration across Wales to ascertain whether regional or national administration would be more efficient.
- There is much that could be done to assist disabled people requiring adaptations in the private rented sector. Partners including local authorities, local landlord fora, disability rights groups and the Welsh Government could work together to promote the interests of disabled private tenants, raising awareness among landlords of the benefits of developing positive relationships with disabled tenants. An accessible housing register for the private rented sector is vital, and we suggest this could be developed as part of the Welsh Government's proposed register of private landlords.
- At the same time, disabled people in the private rented sector need greater rights to enable them to access DFGs and get adaptations carried out without fear of eviction. We believe this issue needs to be addressed in the Renting Homes Bill.
- The accessibility of new builds could be improved through joint working between the Welsh Government, construction industry and disability rights groups.

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February 2013

# Eitem 6

Mae cyfyngiadau ar y ddogfen hon