

Item 5

REPORT TO CABINET

31 Jan 2008

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

Housing Portfolio

DISABLED PERSONS ADAPTATIONS POLICY

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Housing Services Department with input from Social Care and Health have reviewed the current Disabled Person's Adaptation Policy, which was written and adopted in 1997. The review team have developed the existing policy to ensure it is comprehensive and clearly states the Council's criteria for determining the priority and type of adaptations it will carry out as a landlord based on Government guidance and good practice. In particular the review has taken account of Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People (June 2006, Communities and Local Government).
- 1.2 Following a review of the Disabled Adaptations Service which was completed in January 2006 a Service Improvement Plan was developed for the service and a key action within the plan is to review the Disabled Adaptations Policy.
- 1.3 The Housing Service Department is committed to providing a high quality adaptations service to its tenants to enable them to continue to live in their properties. During the last three financial years the Housing Services Department has carried out adaptations to 1,607 Council Properties at a cost of £1,887,000. In the current financial year the Department has allocated a budget of £760,000 and to-date adaptations have been carried out to 560 properties.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Disabled Person's Adaptations Policy is approved and implemented.

3 CONTEXT

- 3.1 Sedgefield Borough Council currently owns some 8,590 properties managed across 5 Geographic Area Housing Teams. Research through the Housing Needs Studies carried out by the Council has identified there are currently 31% of households within the Borough, containing somebody with a disability or long-term illness. Age profiling current Council tenancies has identified that more than 65% of tenants are over the age of 50, and some 34% over the age of 70. These facts mean the Housing Service faces continuing demand for adaptations that will outstrip available resources. The effective management of how we provide disabled persons adaptations is key to meeting tenant's needs in a balanced and fair manner.

The Disabled Persons Adaptation budget is currently set aside from the annual Housing Revenue Account budget, and is approximately £450,000 per annum. The policy has been developed to help us balance the demand against our budget, by ensuring that:

- Requests are prioritised against clear criteria
- Tenants long term needs for adaptations are assessed by evaluating the future prognosis of the applicant including the option to support rehousing through the use of exceptional letting status where this represents the most effective solution.
- Requests for adaptations are assessed using the same criteria as those applying for Disabled Facility Grant.

The policy therefore has to balance the level of demand for adaptations against the available budget whilst ensuring it is:

- Equitable
- None discriminatory
- Delivers value for money
- Ensures the effective use of the Housing Stock

The legal context for carrying out adaptations is set out in Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 which places a duty on the Social Services Authority to:

- Arrange practical assistance in the home, and any works of adaptation or the provision of additional facilities designed to secure greater safety, comfort or convenience.

Despite further legislation being introduced this duty still remains, and as the Act requires Social Services authorities to arrange assistance, the Council does recognise it has a key role in supporting Social Services in delivering its responsibility.

4 THE REVIEW PROCESS

4.1 Disabled Persons Adaptations (DPA's) are a key priority for the Housing Service and contribute to the sustainability of tenancies, to promoting independent living and tackling health inequalities across the Borough.

4.2 The review considered how the Council meets its obligations in terms of ensuring that DPA's are carried out to properties in a timely, cost effective and appropriate manner.

4.3 Specifically the review covered:

- a) The current DPA Policy and management of the DPA Process
- b) Legislative requirements in respect of DPA
- c) Budget requirements and demand for the DPA service
- d) Works carried out within existing policy and the proposal for updating this agreed list
- e) Timescales throughout the DPA process
- f) Partnership working with Occupational Therapists, Social Care and Health

and other key partners.

g) Performance management

h) Identifying and recording data where adaptations have been carried out.

- 4.4 A self assessment of the current arrangements was carried out using the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE's). The self assessment process identified a number of areas for improvement which have been addressed in the Policy (attached as Appendix 1). There are however some areas that require further consideration and have been set out in a Service Improvement Plan (attached as Appendix 2).

5 KEY POINTS OF THE POLICY

- 5.1 Following completion of the DPA review in December 2005, it was agreed that there was a need to establish a communications protocol, which would deal with the strategic and operational issues affecting the DPA service. The review team recommended a structure for these groups which have now been established and consist of:

- **A Strategic Group**, which is responsible for reviewing policy, procedures, and monitoring performance.
- **An Operational Group**, whose key role is to deal with the daily operational tasks, discuss targets, deal with complaints, and discuss workload and priorities.
- **Case Conferences**, which are held between the Occupational Therapists, Property Services and Housing Management when cases are complex. If it is not reasonable or practicable to adapt a property or there is a substantial cost to providing an adaptation (i.e. extension to property) then a case conference will be arranged. The request for a case conference can be made from any of these services. Case conferences aim to ensure the best outcome for the tenant within the constraints of the policy, procedure and/or budgets.

- 5.2 All adaptations, once assessed will be placed on a waiting list in dataal order. The only exceptions to this criteria are those adaptations, which have been deemed to be **urgent** by the Occupational Therapist/Sensory Impairment Officer and these will be moved to the top of the list.

- 5.3 In order for us to ensure the service we provide is equitable we will apply the same criteria as adopted for Disabled Grant Facilities set out in 'The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant'. The list below includes examples of works which we will carry out and is not exhaustive.

- ***Facilitating Access and Provision***

These include works to remove or help overcome any obstacles, which prevent the disabled person from moving freely into and around the dwelling and enjoying the use of the dwelling and the facilities or amenities within it.

- ***Making a dwelling or building safe***

This is to make a dwelling or building safe for the disabled person and other persons residing in the property.

- **Room usable for sleeping**

Facilitating access to a room used or suitable for sleeping for a disabled person.

- **Bathroom**

Providing a disabled person with access to a wash hand basin, a WC and a shower or bath

- **Facilitating preparation and cooking of food**

This covers a wide range of works to enable a disabled person to cater independently.

- **Heating, lighting and power**

To enable a disabled person to have full use of heating, lighting and power controls in the dwelling.

- 5.4 There has been a marked increase in the number of requests being made for adaptations in bungalows, general needs and supported housing schemes to accommodate the use of motorised scooters. Clear procedures have been developed to deal with requests from tenants for adaptations in line with Social Care and Health policy. Occupational Therapists would not normally recommend that a disabled person buy a motorised scooter, without a referral to the wheelchair service for assessment. Therefore we will not provide ramps or storage facilities for motorised scooters provided by the tenant themselves. However we will normally grant permission for tenants to carry out alterations to Council Houses and bungalows to store their scooters, subject to the normal safeguards for such alterations.
- 5.5 A Health and Safety risk assessment of Supported Housing Schemes identified a number of risks associated with the storage and circulation of motorised scooters in communal areas, therefore the Council should not allow the storage of scooters within its Supported Housing Schemes.
- 5.6 Transitional arrangements will be put in place for existing tenants of Supported Housing Schemes who have already purchased mobility scooters for the duration of the tenancy or life span of the scooter. A register will be maintained and reviewed at each health and safety audit.
- 5.7 Housing application information will raise potential tenants awareness of the mobility scooter policy to make them aware and to be prepared to make alternative arrangements for any existing mobility scooters. The Local Estate Officer must find out at sign up whether a future resident has mobility scooter. If the resident does, then they should make them aware of the policy and procedure.
- 5.8 An information pack for customer's is currently being developed based on Housing Improvement Agency good practice and will be issued to all applicants on receipt of a referral.
- 5.9 A key element of review is ensuring that the service has a comprehensive set of Service Standards, and the review team will develop these in consultation with Customers as part of the Service Improvement Plan

6 IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

To ensure that the Disabled Person's Adaptation Policy is effective in improving customer focus and performance in any organisation, it must be embedded in the culture of the organisation. It is proposed that the Policy will be promoted to all customers through publicity material on the website, area Housing Offices and other media. All staff will receive a copy and a link will be made through team meetings, to ensure the policy is fully understood.

To ensure the effectiveness of the Policy, there will be a need to monitor their implementation through the development of new customer satisfaction surveys.

The Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The cost of developing, printing and publishing the Disabled Adaptations Policy and Tenants Information Pack. The estimated cost of printing can be met from existing budgets

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Tenants will be invited to Focus Group Sessions in order to establish Service Standards and carry out an Impact Needs Assessment of the Policy.

9 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 Links to Corporate Objectives/Values

The Community Strategy Outcomes include a Borough with Strong Communities where residents can access a good choice of high quality housing. The Council's ambitions, which are linked, to the Community Strategy outcomes and are articulated through the Corporate Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan. Our ambitions include delivering a Borough with Strong Communities with good quality affordable housing in safe neighbourhoods. The preferred option would ensure the Council's housing stock could continue to support these objectives into the future.

- 9.2 Risk Management

The adoption of an effective Disabled Persons Adaptations Policy is a key element in developing a high scoring housing service. Failure to develop and implement the policy could result in a poor inspection result and prevent the delivery of a high quality service.

- 9.3 Health & Safety

No additional issues have been identified.

9.4 Equality & Diversity

The development of this policy has been informed by the initial findings of the Impact Needs Requirements Assessment currently being undertaken for the adaptations service. This will ensure the service provided to tenants requiring adaptations to their home is equitable and transparent.

9.5 Legal & Constitutional

No additional issues have been identified.

9.6 Sustainability

No additional issues have been identified.

9.7 Information Technology

No additional issues have been identified.

9.8 Crime and Disorder

No additional issues have been identified.

89.9 Human Rights

No additional issues have been identified.

9.10 Social Inclusion

No additional issues have been identified.

9.11 Procurement

No additional issues have been identified.

10 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None

11 LIST OF APPENDICES

1 Disabled Persons Adaptations Policy

2 Service Improvement Plan

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Wards: None

Key Decision Validation: Not a key decision

Background Papers:

Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People (June 2006, Communities and Local Government)

Disability Discrimination Act (1995)

Disabled Person Adaptations review (2006)

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (1970)

Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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