

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Meeting Venue:
Committee Room 3 – Senedd

Meeting date:
7 March 2013

Meeting time:
09:15

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



For further information please contact:

Policy: Marc Wyn Jones
Committee Clerk
029 2089 8505 / 029 2089 8600
CELG.committee@wales.gov.uk

Agenda

Private pre -meeting – 09.15 – 09.30

1. Introductions, apologies and substitutions (09.30)

2. Inquiry into Home Adaptations – Evidence session 5 (09.30 – 10.15) (Pages 1 – 5)

Disability Wales

CELG(4)-08-13 – Paper 1

- Rhyan Berrigan, Policy Officer
- Miranda French, Policy and Public Affairs Manager

3. Inquiry into Home Adaptations – Evidence session 6 (10.15 – 11.00) (Pages 6 – 9)

Age Cymru

CELG(4)-08-13 – Paper 2

- Martyn Jones, Equalities Policy Advisor
- Wyn Jones, Information and Advice Manager

4. Inquiry into Home Adaptations – Evidence session 7 (11.00 – 11.45) (Pages 10 – 15)

Care and Repair

CELG(4)-08-13 - Paper 3

- Chris Jones, Chief Executive

5. Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the following business: (11.45)

Item 6

6. Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Bill: Consideration of the Stage 1 Draft 1 Report (11.45- 12.15)

Paper 1

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into Home Adaptations

Response from : Disability Wales



Purpose – to provide evidence for the National Assembly for Wales Communities, Equality and Local Government Inquiry into Home Adaptations.

1. Disability Wales is the national association of disabled people's organisations in Wales. Disability Wales strives to achieve rights, equality and independence for all disabled people, regardless of physical, sensory or neurological impairment, learning difficulty or mental health condition. We recognise that many disabled people have different identities and can face multiple discrimination.
2. **Why there are still significant variations in the time it takes to deliver aids and adaptations funded by Disabled Facilities Grants across Wales;**
3. There is no uniform guidance to the administration process and differing funding priorities could be the reason for timescale variation across Wales. Each Local Authority has its own funding priorities and there isn't joined up networking across Local Authorities. A joined up approach would prove very beneficial to Authorities and disabled people as information and guidance would be standardised throughout Wales. Also the coordination of Occupational Therapists to carry out the initial assessment of need along with Social Services often varies according to the Local Health Board / Authority they are attached to. Again each Health Board allocates their funds according to their own priorities; there is no standard across Wales. Therefore; neither assessments nor the application process for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are a smooth process.

4. **Whether sufficient progress has been made on implementing recommendations from the Equality of Opportunity Committee's 2009 report on home adaptations¹;**
5. Disability Wales cannot comment on all the recommendations however we will be able to comment on two. Although throughout the 15 recommendations focus is very much on older people, the benefits of adaptable housing for disabled people are not mentioned at all.
6. **Recommendation 8** – The feasibility of having one single, publically available housing register across all tenures. In relation to Accessible Housing Registers (AHRs) this is yet to materialise, in fact Shelter Cymru's Accessible Housing Registers research found that some Local Authority staff were adversely opposed to advertising their AHRs more widely due to the fear of being swamped by disabled people applying for accessible housing.
7. There is also no standard AHR, Local Authorities could be divided as to whether to integrate AHRs into the conventional choice base system (already in place) or have a separate standalone AHR. It is possible to have both in existence across different Local Authority areas but at the same time employ a joined up approach. The preferred Housing Register choice of each Local Authority and their flexibility of approach will determine the feasibility of a national AHR for the whole of Wales. At the moment, Welsh Government are at the research stage, it is hoped that once the research findings have been digested, a future course of action can then be identified to further strengthen the developments of AHRs across Wales.
8. **Recommendation 9** – although this applied to older people only, disabled people too require information about home maintenance and adapted services available. Information must be provided in accessible formats, in the most accessible way e.g. large print, Easy read, Braille, British Sign Language. Disabled people may need one to one support / advocacy while submitting DFGs also.
9. The dissemination of information is also important to consider, not all disabled people use the Internet therefore placing flyers in places where

¹<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-third-assembly/bus-guide-docs-pub/bus-business-documents/bus-business-documents-doc-laid.htm?act=dis&id=137714&ds=7/2009>

disabled people frequent would be a good starting point. Information in alternative formats still has to be requested by disabled individuals / groups; it would be better if information could be provided in accessible format without having to request it. There is more to accessible formats than large print versions of documents. If you provide information in electronic format you must be aware of access requirements; PDF documents are not always screen reader compatible for example. Will information be provided through active engagement, involving local disabled groups by way of workshops / steering groups' participation or similar? Active engagement is positive as it would enable disabled people to share their knowledge and experience and also to enable disabled groups to assist other disabled people in their local community with housing related issues.

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

11. Reduced resources could have a detrimental effect of home adaptations. There is already a considerable variation of grant administration waiting times across Local Authorities in Wales. The waiting times could increase due to fewer staff being able to carry out the eligibility assessments. The amount of Grants available (i.e. the funding pot) could diminish which could inevitably lead to increasing competition for limited resources available to disabled and older people in need of adaptation grants.
12. Long term funding of the DFG scheme could be put in jeopardy if priorities and practicalities of delivering a reduced grant / budget are not adequately thought through. It is likely in the worst case scenario that it could come down to Older people vs. Disabled people for the DFG funds? Eligibility criteria could become more stringent as a result of the reduction of resources and assessments more complicated due to increased competition for the reduced funds as mentioned in the previous paragraph.
13. Who should monitor the quality of home adaptations? Reduced funds could mean the adaptations are carried out by the builder who provided the cheapest tender and not necessarily the best quality tender for example. Quality assurance of work carried out should be monitored and current high standards maintained regardless of reduced resources.

Disabled people could receive poor quality adaptations which could lead to costly repairs and upkeep, thus increasing disabled peoples stress levels and the extra work required could add to the cost hence diminishing the budget further.

- 14. Is the Welsh Government effectively monitoring the provision of adaptation services;**
15. We are aware that the Welsh Government worked with Shelter to report on the prevalence and benefits of AHRs which we welcome as AHRs are something Disability Wales researched in 2009. For information about Disability Wales 2009 research see:
<http://www.disabilitywales.org/accessible-housing>.
16. Adapted and Accessible Housing forms an integral part of the Framework for Action on Independent Living (which underwent a draft consultation stage before Christmas. See:
(<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/equality/frameworkforactionconsultation/?lang=en>) (Responses are being analysed currently). Accessible housing is one of the priority areas and of paramount importance when disabled people want to live inclusively in the community. Availability of accessible homes gives disabled people a housing choice, the location of accessible housing such as near public transport links and local amenities should also be a factor to consider in keeping with an overall holistic approach to independent living. See also Disability Wales' Independent Living Campaign and Manifesto (forerunner of the Framework for Action on Independent Living <http://www.disabilitywales.org/independent-living>) which again highlighted the significance of accessible housing in relation to successful Independent Living.
- 17. What more needs to be done to improve home adaptation services in Wales.**
18. Increased provision of funds and support for the roll out of AHRs across Wales or a choice based joint approach between all Local Authorities and Housing providers. This is needed in order to ensure disabled people have accessible housing that meets the ever increasing demand.
19. Housing Adaptation services could become increasingly vital as other forms of disabled peoples' welfare benefits and social service provisions

are reduced. The lack of other means of funding could lead to an increase in DFG applications as an increasing numbers of disabled people try to avoid becoming prisoners in their own home. This would result in an increased workload for Housing Adaptation Teams.

20. Ensure the administration of DFGs are standardised across Wales; perhaps Welsh Government could set a maximum waiting time for the Grants to be processed through; a 'Good Practice' Guide for Local Authorities to follow when decision making to ensure consistent decisions are made.
21. More could be done to promote the adaptation service as a viable alternative to residential care or the alternative to moving to a different home if the current house does not meet the occupants' accessibility requirements. Of course with any promotion drive it must be ensured that the target groups identified can have easy access to the information (accessible formats etc).
22. To illustrate the issues facing disabled people a Disability Wales member commented:
23. *"More than a year ago I had my application turned down by my county council for a full DFG on the grounds that I had had a DFG 22 years ago. It was concerned with adaptations to my bathroom which has become unusable because the shower base put in at the time has cracked and water is seeping into the floorboards. I have been told that a shower base like the one I have should never have been installed. Although it is wheelchair accessible it is a type of plastic which has deteriorated over time. This was paid for through a DFG 22 years ago and the LA says they will not provide a grant for works previously carried out."*
24. To conclude: Provision of home adaptations can make a really positive difference to disabled peoples lives and promotes disabled peoples' right to independent living. Applying for DFGs, for example, could be a smoother process. Consistency across all Local Authorities on issues such as eligibility, assessment and waiting list times etc would go a long way to simplify the grant application process. It is hoped that homogeny of the Housing Adaptation service across Wales could lead to a fairer, more transparent and better quality service with more accountability.

Agenda Item 3



Paper 2

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into Home Adaptations

Response from : Age Cymru

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Age Cymru is the leading charity working to improve the lives of all older people in Wales. We believe older people should be able to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, have adequate income, access to high quality services and the opportunity to shape their own future. We seek to provide a strong voice for all older people in Wales and to raise awareness of the issues of importance to them.
- 1.2 We welcome the opportunity to submit a written response to the Inquiry and are very grateful for the invitation to offer oral evidence on the 7th March. Our response has been informed by data from Age Cymru Advice our Older Minority Ethnic Network (OMEN) and the work of our local partners. In this written submission we have sought, wherever possible, to avoid duplication or repetition of information offered to the previous Inquiry and to provide quantitative and qualitative evidence gathered to date that we will expand upon in the oral evidence session.

2. General comments

- 2.1 The impact of people living longer on the availability of homes and the management of improvements and services presents key policy challenges. However, when placed against the backdrop of a testing economic climate these issues force difficult decisions about how to prioritise need and it is important that older people are supported to continue to live independently and in safety.
- 2.2 Housing is inextricably linked to poverty and inequality and is not just about building new homes but about improving existing homes and enabling people to live independently for as long as possible, reducing demand on the NHS and social care services. These are key issues for older people and this work must be aligned to the Framework for Action on Independent Living. The connections between housing and the Welsh Government's commitment to older people's wellbeing and independence, as set out in the Strategy for Older People in Wales, are clear.
- 2.3 Poor housing has a considerable impact on the health, social and psychological wellbeing of older people. One of the main focuses of the Welsh Government's agenda in relation to both housing and social care is that people should be supported to stay in their homes for as long as possible. However, currently people are required to wait long periods to receive adaptations that will make their homes safe and support them to remain independent. Delays persist despite the increased investment that has been

1

Y grym newydd sy'n cyfuno
The new force combining

AGE Cymru
Concern

HELPTHEAGED WE WILL
Help the Aged yng Nghymru
Help the Aged in Wales

made in this area, for example, through the Strategy for Older People in Wales. Leadership from the Welsh Government, with clear performance targets for reasonable adaptations, could ensure that regional variations and unacceptable delays are minimised.

- 2.4 Suitable housing is a fundamental pillar of a successful community. Older people must be able to live safe, independent and active lives in the setting most appropriate to them. In Wales, 73 per cent of all households with someone aged over 60 are home owners and 16 per cent live in local authority or housing association owned properties. Around 11 per cent of all older households are in the private rented sector.¹

Terms of Reference

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

- 3.1 Our local partners work across local authority areas and tell us that there is little consistency in terms of the timescales for delivering aids and adaptations funded by Disabled Facilities Grants. Much of their Information and Advice work relates to benefits including the provision of assistance with the completion of Disability Living Grants. However, there is huge variance in the time it takes to progress these processes, which they find frustrating as this is a matter over which they have no control.
- 3.2 Whilst most of the calls our local partners receive relate to initiating an application for stair-lifts and bathroom adaptations, they also field a significant number of calls from those that have applied for an adaptation and have been waiting for twelve months or more for work to commence. Local Age Cymru organisations will contact the local authority on the individual's behalf in these circumstances to obtain an estimation of the likely timescales but are rarely given accurate figures. Local authorities often cite the lack of occupational therapist as part of the problem with delays but the most common explanation is lack of finances.
- 3.3 Uncertainty in terms of timescales and failing to keep people informed was the biggest issue our local partners identified in relation to DFG's. Indeed, they highlighted this has led to people considering purchasing or hiring the necessary items when this may not be an affordable option for them.

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

- 4.1 Failure in local government to provide a holistic service, including the provision of adequate information and advice has led to a lack of clarity about what is available to individuals. This seems to indicate that there has been little progress on the implementation of Recommendations 9 and 10. Our partners have advised that local authorities do little more than send out a form in some areas and whilst local Age Cymru organisations make regular referrals to colleagues in Care and Repair they are unsure how often referrals are made by social services.

¹ A Statistical Focus on Older People in Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, 2008.

4.2 Whether or not local authorities provide advice on all the available options is also an issue. Our partners report that people are often surprised to discover that rental can be a much quicker way of obtaining items such as a stair lift, which can be supplied and fitted in a week or less through this method. There would seem to be a lack of unawareness that adaptations can be made without a grant and the associated bureaucracy.

4.3 The issue of poor information is perhaps emphasised by data from Age Cymru Advice. Between April and December 2012 we issued 1,082 copies of our Information Guide 'Adapting your home' and 4393 copies of our factsheet 'Funding repairs, improvements and adaptations'. These figures represent 6.65% of our total level 1 enquiries and 2.62% of our level 2. We also issued 1,592 copies of our factsheet 'Disability equipment and how to get it'.

5. What impact reduced resources for housing are likely to have on the provision of home adaptations

5.1 As mentioned earlier, local authorities often suggest that the lack of occupational therapist contributes to the problem of delays but the most common explanation for delays is lack of funding. Although now well rehearsed, the Care and Repair analogy of every £1 spent on Rapid Response Adaptations saving £7.50 in health and social care carries no less impact. The impact of preventative measures such as this not only represent potential saving is public spending but offer significant benefits in terms of the health and wellbeing of older people.

5.2 In light of the current economic climate and the welfare reforms, that will include alterations to housing benefit, we feel that any reduction in the overall housing revenue grant will have an adverse effect on the provision of home adaptations. We accept that cost efficiencies can and must be achieved through more efficient allocation of existing budgets but reductions in the overall housing budget in Wales must be set against a backdrop of an ageing population living in what is acknowledge to be amongst some of the poorest quality social housing stock in Europe. Cuts here will have a disproportionately adverse impact on older people.

6. Is the Welsh Government effectively monitoring the provision of adaptation services

6.1 The concerns regarding the limited scope of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were raised during the last review and we feel these are still relevant. The performance indicator for Disabled Facility Grants currently relates to waiting times only and this narrowly focussed measurement fails to acknowledge the complexities of adaptations.

6.2 There is also no facility for cross referencing the waiting times for other grant aided adaptations. In relation to the first Inquiry question on variations in adaptation delivery times, failure to develop a suitably robust and meaningful suite of focused performance indicators has been a contributory factor in the inconsistency of adaptation services.

6.3 We feel that equality impact assessments (EIA) should be utilised to ensure the needs of individuals with relevant protected characteristics, as detailed in the Equality Act 2010, are accommodated in future assessment processes. Age is a protected characteristic

and we feel that older people will receive better adaptation services through effective implementation of both the General and Specific Duties under the Act. Age Cymru's older person specific EIA process 'Age Proofing' would prove a useful tool in developing future PI's for adaptations.

7.0 What more needs to be done to improve home improvement services in Wales

7.1 Age Cymru believes that an integrated approach to both the design and delivery of improvement services will deliver the positive changes needed for older people. As detailed in the previous Inquiry, more effective multi agency partnership working and information sharing will be central planks in the delivery of more efficient and effective services to older people. Such changes will facilitate more effective use of accessible housing and adapted property registers.

7.2 Closer working between health, social care and the third sector will have a beneficial impact on service delivery to older people but this must be complemented by policy integration at a strategic level. To achieve the transformation necessary there will need to be cognisance between relevant strategic and legislative drivers and in this context perhaps the most crucial connections necessary will be between the following:

- The Strategy for Older People (Phase 3)
- The Framework for Action on Independent Living
- The Housing Bill
- The Social Services Bill
- The Welsh Governments Strategic Equality Objectives

The single recurring theme across all these policy drivers is the need for information and advice and this would seem particularly pertinent in the case of housing adaptations.

Agenda Item 4



Paper 3

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into Home Adaptations

Response from : Care & Repair Cymru

1. About Us

Care & Repair Cymru (C&RC) are the “Older People’s Housing Champion”. We are a national charitable body and actively work to ensure that all older people have homes that are safe, secure and appropriate to their needs. Care & Repair Cymru is committed to improving the health & wellbeing of older people in Wales by providing advice and assistance with home improvements, adaptations and general repairs. C&RC are part of a group structure with Community Housing Cymru and the Centre for Regeneration Excellence Wales and jointly champion not-for-profit housing, care and regeneration.

C&RC work in partnership with a number of organisations including the Welsh Government, Local Government Housing and Social Care Teams, NHS, Occupational Therapists, third sector organisations such as Age Alliance Wales, the Older Peoples Commissioner, and Housing Associations to ensure that older people have access to a range of housing and social solutions that enable them to live in housing that meets their individual needs.

There are 22 Care & Repair Agencies covering the whole of Wales. Each agency provides a wide range of services and support for older and vulnerable people, helping them to remain living independently in their own homes and communities. Every year, we provide services to some 30,000 older people, many of whom receive help with housing adaptations.

2. General comments

Care & Repair Cymru welcomes this opportunity to provide written evidence to the Inquiry into Home Adaptations.

It is well documented and recognised that we are living in an ageing society. In his publication ‘*Adding Life to Years*’, John Osmond (Institute of Welsh Affairs) says that in the next 10 years, the number of people aged over 65 in Wales will increase by about 5%, an increase of 130,000, and the number aged over 85 will increase by 30,000. In the next 60 years, the number of people in the UK aged over 65 will more than triple from 4.6 million to 15.4 million, and in that same timescale, according to the UK Government’s actuary department, the number of



Care & Repair Cymru

people aged 100 will increase from 10,000 to 1 million. Meanwhile, half the babies born in the UK today will reach the age of 100 according to the medical journal The Lancet. Care & Repair Cymru believes that ageing is one of the most important public policy issues facing the Welsh Government and it is important that good policy, practice and targeting of resources occurs to cope with the huge scale of increased need for services by older people, including from the NHS, Social Services and Housing.

The role of housing and in particular housing adaptations is important. Services such as those delivered by Care & Repair, and housing adaptations generally prevent the need for more expensive NHS and residential care services. On Health costs, the Independent reported that falls amongst older people cost the NHS in the UK £4.6 million a day or £1.7 billion a year. Hip replacement surgery costs about £25,000-£30,000 per case. Delayed Discharge of Care in Wales has been estimated to cost the NHS in Wales £30 million per year. The recent BRE report for Shelter Cymru estimated that poor, inappropriate housing costs the NHS £56 million per year, with the majority of costs due to falls amongst older people.

In relation to residential care costs, a recent study in a Welsh LA concluded that providing timely housing adaptations reduces the need for daily care visits; can reduce or remove costs of home care packages; and delays entry into residential care by an average of 4 years. The cost of residential care per case per year was estimated as £19,760. With the average cost of a DFG being around £7000, this equated to a cost saving of £72,000 per case for a timely adaptation. Put another way, each year delay in providing a DFG costs £18,000 to Social Care.

In Wales, we have a Rapid Response Adaptation Programme (RRAP), delivered by Care & Repair and funded by the Welsh Government. RRAP works by getting health or social services professionals to refer clients for relatively inexpensive work that either gets them out of hospital and back home, or prevents them being admitted in the first place. The average cost per job is just £135. We have estimated conservatively from information gathered over the last 10 years that each pound spent on Rapid Response Adaptations saves Health/Social Services around £7.50. The programme is acknowledged by all partners to be efficient and effective, yet demand exceeds funding and the programme has to be rationed.

In summary, timely adaptations contribute significantly to many of the Welsh Government's strategic objectives in relation to older people, re-ablement services, prevention, early intervention and helping keep older people living independently at home for as long as possible. Keeping older people living independently at home and in their communities is where they tell us they prefer



Care & Repair Cymru

to be. In both social and financial terms, it is a better and a far more cost effective solution.

Therefore, further scrutiny of the adaptations system is welcomed, given the unacceptable delays still encountered by our clients. The focus on DFG however is too narrow. This is just one of many funding routes and mechanisms available to provide housing adaptations, albeit DFGs fund a significant and important chunk of adaptation work. We also believe that the Committee's Inquiry needs to cross reference to the forthcoming review of housing adaptations which was a commitment of the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage within the recent Housing White Paper (and has already commenced). That said, our specific comments to the questions asked by the Committee are as follows:

3. Why are there still significant variations in the time it takes to deliver aids and adaptations funded by disabled facilities grants across Wales?

Significant variations exist because of the different ways that different LAs in Wales deliver their DFG and adaptation services. Those who have embraced best practice outlined in the Jones Review for WG (published in 2005), the follow up Review of the Equality of Opportunity Committee report in 2009 and best practice with regard to partnership working invariably deliver quicker, more cost effective adaptation services. In summary, this best practice is:

- Working closely with Care & Repair in delivering smaller adaptations through the innovative Rapid Response Adaptations and/or Independent Living Grants.
- Delivering minor / smaller adaptations through less bureaucratic processes (e.g local authorities using flexibilities under the 2002 Regulatory Reform Power to Provide Assistance to undertake smaller, repetitive adaptations more quickly, often without resort to a means test or OT assessment)
- Operating accessible housing registers (in partnership with local Housing Associations) whereby adapted housing is matched and allocated to those who need it rather than taking out adaptations and letting as general needs housing.
- Ensuring that alternative funding is used for Social Housing tenants ie MRA for Council Tenants and PAG for Housing Association tenants, thereby ensuring that DFG funding goes further for homeowners.
- Where the social housing landlord function has been transferred through stock transfer, stock transfer organisations building the cost of future adaptations to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard into their Business Plans
- The need for Local Authorities to give sufficient priority, and thus funding, to DFG programmes from their unhypothecated general capital settlements from



Care & Repair Cymru

WG. Essentially, once authorities have streamlined their systems, and implemented best practice, there is still a need to adequately fund DFGs to meet the needs of demand led, mandatory DFGs. It is often reported that DFGs are delayed towards the end of a financial year as “the money has run out”. This clearly will increase DFG delays and waiting times.

4. Whether sufficient progress has been made on implementing recommendations from the Equality of Opportunity Committee’s report on home adaptations.

Following the Committee’s 2009 review, Care & Repair Cymru led the development of better information on DFGs and housing adaptations generally (both hard copy and web based), and produced this publicity information in partnership with the College of Occupational Therapists, Age Cymru and the Older People’s Commissioner. However, there are some parts of the 2009 Review which we feel may have not been sufficiently progressed. This includes:

- more formal review of Local Authorities progress in implementing the 2005 Jones Review
- providing assistance where poor practice is detected, and developing an on-going mechanism for sharing good practice
- the Welsh Government to determine local authority areas where partnership working could be improved and investigate the potential for Local Service Boards to drive improved partnership working
- The need for widespread good practice on adapted housing registers and allocation systems

Also it is unclear whether the recommended investigation by WG into LA numbers of Occupational Therapists (to meet demand in an ageing society) has been undertaken, and given this, whether LAs have sufficiently planned future workforce needs for OTs.

5. What impact reduced resources for housing are likely to have on the provision of home adaptations

Funding is an extremely important element of DFG performance. The Committee will be aware that there is no ring-fenced provision of funding for LAs for DFGs, and each LA determines the amount of funding it wishes to allocate for DFGs from its general capital allocation. In this respect, LAs determine whether they will reduce funding for DFGs and makes these decisions in light of other priorities and pressures.

While it is clearly important to work in partnership with third sector organisations such as Care & Repair, to develop and implement good policy and practice for



Care & Repair Cymru

providing DFGs and housing adaptations, and streamlining systems to make them more efficient, more client focused and less bureaucratic, if there is no funding at the end of this, DFG waiting times will inevitably increase. The effect of this will be magnified as demand for DFGs and adaptations increases- in other words the double whammy of increased demand coupled with decreased funding will lead to much longer waiting times.

6. Is the Welsh Government effectively monitoring the provision of adaptation services

Committee will be aware that there is a statutory performance indicator for DFG that measures the time taken from a client first contacting the LA about a DFG to completion. In 2011, waiting times across Wales varied from 180 days (quickest) to 638 days (longest), with a Wales average of 326 days. It is fair to point out that this is an improvement from 2004 (when the average time across Wales was 595 days), and 2005 (when the Jones Review for WG was published and 3 authorities had an average waiting time in excess of 1000 days).

It could be concluded that the statutory PI and other recommendations introduced following the Jones Review has driven this improvement. However, it is also right to say that the current average time of 326 days is still far too long, and more improvement is necessary, particularly those LAs taking the longest.

As stated above, while the PI information is available and monitored, Care & Repair Cymru feel that more could be done to monitor LAs progress in implementing best practice from previous reviews, providing assistance where poor practice is detected, developing an on-going mechanism for sharing good practice and determining in which areas partnership working could be improved.

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

- A major challenge is improve services around consistency, best practice, and partnership working, as identified in 3) above. Care & Repair Cymru believes that full implementation of previous reviews, along with specific following points will significantly improve adaptation services across Wales.
- The Rapid Response Adaptations Programme, as recognised good practice in delivering small adaptations should be expanded (with increased funding, ideally from central WG Health funding to compliment the current Housing funding and also be made available to Social Housing tenants, as recognition of the direct benefits to Health in terms of prevention and Delayed Transfer of Care (DToC).
- The Independent Living Grant programme brings flexibility for works costing between £1000 and £10,000 and independent evaluation concluded that it



Care & Repair Cymru

worked in terms of enabling innovation and shorter waiting times. This programme should be funded annually. This would ensure that recognised benefits are able to be consistently delivered.

- Continuing to nationally highlight the cost benefits to statutory services of delivering quick housing adaptations to ensure local political and officer priority and adequate funding to deal with demand