

Tracey Burke

Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol / Director General

Y Grŵp Addysg a Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus
Education and Public Services Group

Nick Ramsay MS

Chair

Public Accounts Committee

Senedd Cymru

Cardiff Bay

CF99 1NA



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

10 March 2021

Dear Mr Ramsay,

Update on Housing Adaptations

Further to *Housing Adaptations: Report of the Public Accounts Committee* in July 2019, I wrote to you on 28 May 2020 and subsequently on 22 October with an update on developments. I am writing now with further information on the outstanding recommendations.

First, in relation to **Recommendation 3** - the Minister for Housing and Local Government issued a Written Statement on 10 March in relation to small and medium sized adaptations. From April it will be simpler for disabled people to get help with small and medium sized adaptations to their homes as we are taking measures to remove the means test from small and medium Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG).

If the requirement to conduct a means test is removed, research by the Wales Centre for Public Policy calculates the cost to local government in Wales would be an additional £238,000, whilst each local authority would save £6,000-£10,000 in annual administration costs. This research was published on the WCPP website on 10 March.

Local authorities are under statutory duties to provide DFGs to eligible disabled people and this will not change. However, they can use powers under the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 to make grants without applying a means test. The Minister is increasing the Enable grant to local authorities from April 2021 by £400,000, to £4.4 million. This additional grant can be used to meet the capital pressures and address any potential bottlenecks as a result of increased demand. We are confident that working together with local authorities we can continue to improve access to adaptations for those who need them, as well as reduce waiting times.

In relation to the small number of large adaptations carried out each year, I'd like to highlight the amended guidance for the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) capital programme for 2021/22 which issued in January. Large adaptations are usually only required in complex cases, such as families with disabled children, adults with life-limiting diseases and serious accidents. Resolving the financial issues can be very

time consuming, leading to significant and unnecessary continuing distress. Under the amended ICF guidance, Regional Partnership Boards are now able to use their discretion to meet the additional costs of adaptations which cost more than £36,000. We will monitor how much use is made of this flexibility over the coming year.

Second, in relation to **Recommendation 5** - regarding integrated regional working and a single point of access to adaptations services. A final draft of the strategic framework for regional Housing Adaptations Planning Groups is to be discussed at the Housing Adaptations Steering Group on 11 March. The Group will be asked to approve the framework, following which we will consult with stakeholders. The strategic framework will issue during the summer for phased implementation, with full operation from April 2022.

The membership of the Planning Groups will include Local Authorities, Registered Social Landlords, Care and Repair agencies, the Local Health Board (including Primary Care and Occupational Therapist services), relevant Third Sector bodies and service user representation. The purpose of the Groups will be to:

- establish a more methodical and integrated approach to delivering adaptations;
- identify shared strategic priorities;
- establish a simple and clear pathway for all service users to access any aid or adaption they require, regardless of who is providing it; and
- establish a broader understanding of the population need and demand for adaptations.

There will be a direct relationship with Regional Partnership Boards. The terms and conditions of Welsh Government adaptations grants will require that providers operate through the regional Housing Adaptations Planning Groups.

I hope you find this information helpful and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for your interest in housing adaptations and your recommendations for change. It has brought renewed focus to our policy thinking in this area.

Of course, I would be happy to provide any further information or clarification as required.

Yours sincerely



Tracey Burke



Parc Cathays • Cathays Park
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Ffôn • Tel 0300 0258047
tracey.burke@gov.wales
Gwefan • website:
www.wales.gov.uk

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.