

Tracey Burke

Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol / Director General

Y Grŵp Addysg a Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus
Education and Public Services Group



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Nick Ramsay AM
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

5 July 2019

Dear Mr Ramsay,

**THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE – HOUSING ADAPTATIONS
UPDATE JULY 2019**

I am pleased to provide an update on the implementation of the recommendations in the Public Accounts Committee's Housing Adaptations report July 2018.

For ease of reference, the Committee made six recommendations. Recommendation 1 was for completion by December 2018 and I wrote to you on 1st March 2019 explaining that implementation of this recommendation had been completed.

Three recommendations (2, 3 & 4) were for completion by July 2019 and I am writing to you today to provide an update on those recommendations. As you will see in the attached update table, Recommendations 2 and 4 are already complete. For Recommendation 3, good progress is being made, but due to its complexity and sensitivity and the imperative to work collaboratively and with proper consultation, we feel a revised deadline of February 2020 is needed to ensure that this recommendation is fully met.

The remaining two recommendation (5 & 6) were given completion dates of December 2019. I am pleased to report that Recommendation 6 has already been completed. Good progress is being made on Recommendation 5, working collaboratively with members of the Housing Adaptations Steering Group. As part of work progressing Recommendation 5 consideration has been given to potential improvements to the approval process of Physical Adaptation Grants.



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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.

To summarise, four of the six recommendations are now completed and good progress is being made on the two outstanding. I will provide the Committee with an update on these at the appropriate times.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tracey Burke." The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial 'T'.

Tracey Burke

Title of report	Housing Adaptations – Report of the PAC
Update	July 2019

No.	Recommendation	Status	Target date
1	We recommend that the Welsh Government publishes the performance data it has collated under the ENABLE review by November 2018. In publishing this information the Welsh Government should clearly set out any deficiencies in the first round of performance information it collected – for example, organisations not providing returns – and how it intends to address these gaps.	Completed November 2018 Response provided in my letter of 1 st March 2019	Complete
2	We recommend that the Welsh Government prioritise the establishment of national minimum standards for all adaptations to ensure disabled and older people receive the same standard of service irrespective of where they live, who their landlord is and whether they own their own home. In particular, they should ensure that the data underpinning this exercise is robust and comprehensive. In their response to the Auditor General’s Report, Welsh Government stated a completion date of December 2019. Given slow progress in the past, the Committee believes this needs greater urgency from Welsh Government and should be completed by July 2019. The Committee will monitor delivery to ensure the minimum standards have been established and disseminated by July 2019.	Completed April 19 The Welsh Government published new standards of service for housing adaptations ¹ in April 2019. These Service Standards set out the level of service expected for the delivery and installation of a housing adaptation that service users, regardless of their geographic location and tenure, can expect. They will help to ensure service providers deliver housing adaptations in a more consistent manner and inform service users on the level of service to expect when they seek support for a housing adaptation. Accordingly, we consider this recommendation and the associated recommendation from the Wales Audit Office’s report have been addressed.	Complete

¹ <https://gov.wales/housing-adaptations-standards-service>

No.	Recommendation	Status	Target date
		<p>Data collected by the Welsh Government as part of its regular grant monitoring arrangements will be used as evidence on the delivery of service standards. The first data review², outlined in recommendation 1, was published in November 2018, with the next update anticipated to be published in November 2019 and will allow for evaluation to be made of the impact of service standards, albeit changes in outcomes may take time to emerge.</p>	
3	<p>We recommend that the Welsh Government sets clear standards for means testing DFGs. Welsh Government accepted that it is possible to undertake small and medium scale adaptations without creating complex and overly bureaucratic approval processes, but the variation in local authority approaches had resulted in a post-code lottery for applicants. We therefore recommend that Welsh Government reviews current approaches and produces guidance that clearly set out the minimum value and type of adaptations works where the means test should be applied and minimum approval standards required. The Committee will monitor progress that this work has been done, no later than July 2019.</p>	<p>The action in response to the recommendation is also relevant to recommendation 5 in the Wales Audit Office's Report, which was originally scheduled for completion by April 2019. Progress is being made through a dedicated Task and Finish Group to develop options on guidance that can be followed by a local housing authority when applying means tests for DFG housing adaptations, which is relevant to this recommendation and that made in the Wales Audit Office's report into housing adaptations.</p> <p>The group has drafted a proposal which does not favour the option of removing means testing entirely, on the basis there may be inequitable outcomes to applicants of the grant. They have proposed that means testing should not be applied to less complex (small and medium) adaptations or individuals receiving palliative/end of life care.</p> <p>If the Housing Adaptations Steering Group and the</p>	<p>Revised target date Feb 2020</p> <p>Early work highlighted the complexity of this task. On reflection therefore, to ensure a good outcome is delivered more time is needed to complete this task.</p>

² <https://gov.wales/enable-programme-analysis>

No.	Recommendation	Status	Target date
		<p>Welsh Ministers accept the recommendation the Welsh Government would wish to test policy options fully, through wider consultation before making a formal recommendation on a minimum size and type of adaptation work where a means-test is applied.</p> <p>Some initial work has been undertaken to explore how local authorities had developed changes of practice through the use of powers available to them under the Regulatory Reform Order 2002. However, that document is currently high-level in nature and does not have sufficient detail to merit publication. The policy preference that this initial work is used alongside allocation analysis research (referred to in recommendation 4).</p> <p>Leadership is provided by the Welsh Government through the Housing Adaptations Steering Group and associated Task and Finish Groups will continue to support the progression of this recommendation.</p>	
4	<p>We recommend that the Welsh Government provide support and guidance for delivery organisations to improve integration of services, for example through integrated delivery teams. We note that there appears to be a strong relationship between the presence of integrated delivery teams, and good practice in delivering adaptations. We therefore recommend that, as part of its ENABLE work, the Welsh Government identifies the nature of this relationship and how this has supported better outcomes. We will require the Welsh Government to demonstrate</p>	<p>Evidence provided to the Welsh Government Housing Adaptations Task and Finish Group has reaffirmed the value of co-location of services and the creation of single points of access for housing adaptations.</p> <p>Practical steps to improve the level of integration have been made through the publication and promotion of the Welsh Government's standards of service for housing adaptations. The document targeted at local authorities and their partners, emphasises the importance of integrated working</p>	Complete

No.	Recommendation	Status	Target date
	<p>to the Committee that this work has been done, no later than July 2019.</p>	<p>across services.</p> <p>Terms and conditions of the ENABLE grant to local authorities require recipients to seek to achieve integration of services across local authorities, social landlords and health agencies at a local and regional level.</p> <p>Grant terms and conditions for Care and Repair Agencies require that they promote integrated delivery across local authorities, social landlords and health agencies at a local and regional level. Officials continue to work with delivery agencies and local authorities to deliver a single point of entry in the provision of housing adaptations.</p> <p>The Welsh Government initially intended to address the recommendation in part by commissioning research so that a systems review was undertaken into housing adaptations in Wales. It was not possible to progress that procurement exercise due to a lack of bidders. In light of direction given by the Housing Adaptations Steering Group, a more concentrated research exercise, focused on funding allocation analysis will be carried out (with a due date for completion in December 2019, which will be in line with the previously stated deadline date for the systems review research). The evidence base provided by the research will evidence the extent to what further action is required to address gaps in services caused by poor integration.</p>	

No.	Recommendation	Status	Target date
		Completed	
5	<p>We recommend that the Welsh Government, through the new “Enhanced Adaptations Development Group” seeks assurance that delivery organisations are taking the necessary steps to discharge the Auditor General’s recommendations. Given witnesses, including Welsh Government, accepted the findings of the Auditor General and the need for change, the Committee believe it is appropriate for the Welsh Government to take a lead in ensuring these long-standing weakness are addressed. We will require the Welsh Government to demonstrate to the Committee that this work is progressing, no later than December 2019.</p>	<p>The Welsh Government has taken a lead on addressing long term weaknesses identified by the Wales Audit Office. The work of the Enhanced Adaptations Steering Group has been reviewed. The Group has been renamed the Housing Adaptations Steering Group. The Terms of Reference state explicitly that the group is focussed on delivery of the Wales Audit Office recommendations and it has a work plan that addresses each of the recommendations. Membership of the group has been revised to align its work with this delivery objective.</p> <p>Members of the Group, include representatives from Care and Repair Cymru, Community Housing Cymru, the WLGA, local authorities as well as Disability Wales and the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales.</p> <p>Task and finish groups have been formed to focus on particular clusters of the recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office.</p> <p>Meetings of both groups have taken place during the last reporting period draft papers outlining policy approaches to the recommendations have been prepared and will be presented to the Steering Board on 20 July.</p> <p>The policy proposals, if endorsed, will be presented to stakeholders.</p>	<p>Dec 2019</p> <p>Work ongoing</p>

No.	Recommendation	Status	Target date
6	<p>We recommend that the Welsh Government revises its national performance indicators for data collection in 2019-20. The indicators should be designed to allow delivery organisations to evaluate their performance, inform their strategy and improve service delivery. The Welsh Government should ensure the revised measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect the minimum standards developed for adaptations to allow an evaluation of the impact, wellbeing, and wider benefits of investment in adaptations; • Address the deficiencies identified in the Auditor General’s report (paragraph 4.13); and • Address any gaps identified from the first year monitoring and evaluation of ENABLE. <p>The Committee will monitor progress that this recommendation has been completed, no later than December 2019.</p>	<p>Completed April 19</p> <p>A new electronic template and guidance was published on the Welsh Government’s website, which also reflect the new service standards published in April 2019. Data collection covers all funding streams including those targeted at Registers Social Landlords and local authorities as identified by the Wales Audit Office’s report into housing adaptations. The template and guidance build on experience in collecting data and now includes a more detailed customer satisfaction section that is anticipated to add to our understanding of the impact of housing adaptations on the recipient of the work. Work is continuing to collect and bring together data on the performance of delivery organisations during the 2018-19 period. This will be published as soon as that exercise is completed and relates to Recommendation 9 of the Wales Audit Office’s report.</p>	Complete