

CABINET

22 NOVEMBER 2011

Title: A Strategy for Disabled Adaptations	
REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT SERVICES	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: Yes
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Accountable Divisional Director: Bruce Morris, Divisional Director, Adult Social Care	
Accountable Director: Anne Bristow, Corporate Director, Adult & Community Services	
Summary: <p>Adapting properties for disabled and older people contributes greatly to helping them remain independent in their own homes. This is central to the Adult Social Care vision "Helping You Live the Life You Want".</p> <p>There is also a considerable evidence base for the cost effectiveness of major adaptations. Relatively inexpensive one-off spend on alterations to homes can prevent hospitalisation due to falls and postpone the need for residential care.</p> <p>Demand for adaptations to Council properties currently outstrips available budget and, as a consequence, it is necessary to apply strict criteria. By utilising the new Housing Revenue Account (HRA) self financing scheme and managing the delivery of private sector adaptations more efficiently the Council could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make basic adaptations available to larger numbers of older and disabled people• Offer preventative direct payment grants towards the cost for a limited range of adaptations for people in all housing tenures• Deliver modest savings through efficiencies <p>Adaptations to privately owned homes are funded by Disabled Facilities Grants utilising the annual grant from the Government.</p> <p>The new "Direct Grant" scheme would provide more flexibility in how residents adapt homes to meet their needs.</p>	

Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet is recommended to agree:

- i. To fully fund all adaptations to Council properties from the HRA, utilising the HRA self financing scheme;
- ii. That all housing associations and private landlords be asked to fund adaptations for their tenants;
- iii. To develop a preventative direct payment grant scheme for people who are not eligible for help via other schemes, to enable them to arrange basic adaptations for themselves; and
- iv. To note the decision to delay re-tendering the administration of Disabled Facilities Grants, in order to ensure that ongoing arrangements fit with other schemes

Reason(s)

This proposal will assist in meeting several of the objectives set out in the Council's Policy House including:

- Providing high quality social care services for those that need them
- Enabling people with care needs to live the life they want, with real choices about their lives and care
- Improving homes that people choose to live in, whether owned by the Council, other social landlords, privately rented or owned

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Major Adaptations are structural changes or built in equipment that enable older and disabled people to access essential facilities within their homes. Examples of major adaptations include stair lifts, level access showers, ramps and extensions.
- 1.2 The Council currently has two separate schemes for providing one-off funding for older and disabled people to adapt their homes depending on whether they live in privately owned accommodation or are Council tenants.
- 1.3 Adaptations for people living in privately owned and rented properties are funded via Disabled Facilities Grants. Until recently this scheme was administered by the external provider Hanover. Prior to the end of the contract on 1 September 2011 Hanover made it clear that they did not wish to retender for a new contract. Furthermore market testing indicated a lack of alternative providers with the necessary expertise. As bringing the service back in house would yield immediate savings to the Council, a decision was made to postpone retendering the contract pending decisions about other aspects of major adaptation delivery. Interim arrangements have been made to manage this work in house.
- 1.4 Council housing adaptations are funded and administered by Adult and Community Services. The process for both tenures is broadly similar in that Occupational Therapists make recommendations about adaptations that would meet assessed needs. Once authorised the works are undertaken.

- 1.5 The Council also provides equipment for disabled and older people above a £50 cost threshold. Simple items of equipment are provided through “prescriptions” redeemed through a range of accredited suppliers, generally chemists and specialist shops. More complex items of equipment, electrical hoists etc., are provided via a shared contract, the “London Consortium” with the specialist provider Medequip.

Effectiveness of Adaptations

- 1.6 There is a considerable evidence base for the cost effectiveness of major adaptations.¹ Relatively inexpensive one-off spend on major adaptations can prevent hospitalisation due to falls and postpone the need for residential care. For children, appropriate accommodation can reduce family stress and diminish the likelihood of high-cost residential services.

Need and Demand

General Issues

- 1.7 The need for adaptations is determined both by the number of older and disabled people in the local population and the nature of the housing stock in the borough in terms of age, suitability for disabled people, and “adaptability”. Older traditional terraced houses, in Dagenham in particular, are difficult to adapt; having small living and bathroom areas and narrow doorways and stairs.
- 1.8 Demand has also been driven through changes in public expectations and the variable quality of housing stock. In addition it has been influenced by additional budget allocation in previous years, to clear waiting lists and to improve performance ratings, which has raised residents’ expectations.
- 1.9 To enable the Council to keep within available budgets tight eligibility criteria are applied to all referrals. Major adaptations such as showers and downstairs toilets for example, are only approved where there is a clear medical or hygiene need.

Referrals for assessment	1364
Recommendations for major adaptations	333
Approved	203
Lower level needs that could have benefited from an adaptation	130+

¹ Postponing entry into residential care by just one year through adapting someone’s home can save £28,080 per person. ‘Annual Cost of Care Home Report’, *Laing and Buisson* (2008).

The average cost of an adaptation is £6396 but, with an average life of at least five years they are good value for money. ‘Adapting for a Lifetime’ *The Foundations* (2010).

A fall at home that leads to a hip fracture costs the state £28,665 on average (£726 million a year) This is 4.5 times the average cost of a major housing adaptation and over 100 times the cost of fitting hand and grab rails to prevent falls ‘Better Outcomes, Lower Costs’, *Heywood and Turner* (2007).

Housing adaptations reduce the need for daily visits from paid carers and reduce or remove costs of home care (savings range from £1,200 to £29,000 a year) ‘Better Outcomes, Lower Costs’, *Heywood and Turner* (2007).

² Record of assessments and adaptations held Adult Social Care on the AIS and Oracle databases

- 1.10 The Council receives more complaints and members enquiries about major adaptations than it does about any other aspect of Adult Social Care, with over 25% being directly or indirectly related to decisions about non-provision of major adaptations.

Population trends

Age	Year					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
65-69	5,741	6,234	6,550	6,791	6,937	6,995
70-74	4,659	4,619	4,701	4,740	4,875	5,166
75-79	4,070	4,065	4,804	4,130	4,108	4,009
80-84	3,503	3,449	3,391	3,323	3,259	3,257
85+	3,880	3,987	4,075	4,175	4,313	4,492

- 1.11 As shown in the table above, the numbers of older people in the age range 65-85 are projected to remain stable over the next 5 years, with an increase of 16% (over 600 people) in the number of people over 85.

Disabled Children

	2001	2011	Increase
Number of children aged under 20		53,000	
Number of children aged under 5 in Barking and Dagenham	12,000	18,000	50%

- 1.12 30% of people in the Borough are below the age of 20 and the number under the age of 5 increased by 50% between 2001 and 2011.

Number of disabled children in the UK	777,000 (5% of children)
Estimated number of disabled children aged under 20 in Barking and Dagenham	2,650 ⁶
Estimated number of disabled children aged under 5 in Barking and Dagenham	900 ⁷

³ GLA (Greater London Authority) SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) Projections 2010 Round

⁴ 'Barking and Dagenham's Children and Young People's Plan, 2011-2016, A Call for Change, a Plan for Action', *London Borough of Barking and Dagenham*.

⁵ 'Living in Britain, Results from the 2002 General Household Survey', *Office for National Statistics* (2004)

⁶ This figure is an estimate based on 5% of children in the Borough, using figures presented in Table 3

⁷ Ibid

- 1.13 There are approximately 777,000 disabled children in the UK, (5% of all children). Applying this 5% proportion to the figures presented in Table 3, it is estimated that there are about 2,650 people below the age of 20 in the borough, with some level of disability, and about 900 who are below the age of 5. As the population of children below the age of 5 has increased by 50% in the last 10 years, we could also expect a similar increase in disabled children within this age group.

Table 5. Number of children in the 2011 School Year who have a Statement of Special Educational Need and “profound and multiple learning or physical disability”⁸	
Year (age)	Number in current year
Year 1 (5)	9
Year 2 (6)	10
Year 3 (7)	11
Year 4 (8)	6
Year 5 (9)	5
Year 6 (10)	13
Year 7 (11)	5
Year 8 (12)	5
Year 9 (13)	11
Year 10 (14)	11
Year 11 (15)	9
Year 12 (16)	7
Year 13 (17)	2

- 1.14 Given the expectation of a rapid overall increase in the child population in Barking & Dagenham it is possible that the growth in numbers of disabled children is better shown in the Early Years pre-school population. The Portage and Early Support Service is jointly funded by the local authority and Primary Care Trust and works with children with significant developmental delay aged under-3 and their families. The numbers of children with “profound and multiple learning or a physical disability” worked with by the team was 13 for the period October 2008-March 2009, 9 for October 2009-March 2010 but 22 for October 2010-March 2011. This supposition is also supported by the number of referrals to the local NHS Child Development Clinic, which for the past 2 years has been consistently over-target.
- 1.15 Other groups of families may be affected by their child’s disability leading to a request for a disabled adaptation. Some children with autistic spectrum disorders can pose highly challenging behaviour towards adults and siblings, as well as be a potential safety hazard to themselves. The condition is associated with a lack of awareness of danger and a need for vigilance on the part of the parents, which may

⁸ Records held by Barking and Dagenham Children Services

be alleviated through equipment or home adaptations to enhance safety. A sole bedroom for an autistic child rather than a shared one can create a space which provides structure and reduces arousal, so reducing stress and minimising the impact of their condition on the household.

- 1.16 Children’s Services spends significantly on very high-cost services for disabled children including residential homes and schools. The reasons for this are often through safeguarding concerns or need for specialist education, but for some children severe family stress is a strong contributory factor. Appropriate housing is a potential factor in managing children with complex needs through local services, thereby lowering expenditure on high-cost services.

Year	Number of major adaptations	Total Cost
2007/8	15	£90,938.00
2008/9	26	£70,751.00
2009/10	24	£173,740.00
2010/11	22	£96,593.00

- 1.17 The number of adaptations for disabled children is relatively small as a proportion of overall adaptations. However sometimes these can be complex and involve significant alteration work and the cost from year to year is difficult to predict.

1.18 Growth in Housing numbers

The Draft Borough Investment Plan anticipates growth in Housing numbers in the borough over the next 5 years.

Year	Additional new Homes
2011/12	516
2012/13	875
2013/14	1,379
2014/15	1,123

- 1.19 The “London Plan” requires that all homes meet the Lifetime Homes Standard and that 10% of schemes of 10 dwellings or more meet the wheelchair housing design standard unless the site is deemed inappropriate. This could produce an additional 389 wheelchair accessible dwellings, however these are projections are at significant risk in the current economic climate.

2. Proposal and Issues

The proposals set out below are designed to continue to meet assessed individual need, whilst delivering an innovative direct grants programme for preventative adaptations.

⁹ Record of assessments and adaptations held Adult Social Care on the AIS and Oracle databases

2.1 Assume all landlords including the Council will install their own adaptations.

It is reasonable to expect landlords should arrange adaptations for their own tenants. For the Council's own stock this will be funded through the new HRA self financing scheme.

2.2 Smaller private landlords may not have the resources to undertake adaptations and the Council will need to ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged by tenure. The numbers of applications from tenants of privately rented property are currently around 6 per annum.

2.3 Develop a Direct Payment Grant Scheme available to people living in all housing tenures

"Direct payment" type grants towards the cost of adaptations would be made available to enable older and disabled people to make their own arrangements for installing their own adaptations. This would include people with lower level needs who do not currently meet our eligibility criteria. The resident would then be responsible for installing the adaptation either themselves or using a Council accredited installer. The scheme would operate in a similar way to Direct Payments for personal care and be offered to people who were eligible for services as part of an assessment, as well as being a standalone targeted prevention scheme.

2.4 This would build on the targeted prevention that the council already provides in the form of a reablement service and advice and information services for people with lower level needs and self funders.

2.5 It would offer more flexibility than the current arrangements where the type of adaptation to meet an assessed need is generally specified. For example a cheaper shower unit could be installed rather than the more expensive level access shower which requires more building work.

2.6 The scheme would have the advantage of meeting some of the lower level needs that we are currently unable to meet through the application of restrictive eligibility criteria.

2.7 Solely rely on the Disabled Facilities Grant to fund home owner adaptations

All applications for Disabled Facilities Grants would be funded from the grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government (currently £570K per year), without any top up from the Council. Administration will continue to be provided in-house and the scheme administered in line with statutory guidance.

2.8 For the past 2 years the budget for Disabled Facilities Grants has not been under pressure with under committed grant being rolled over into the following financial year. This has partly been due to the fact that Hanover who previously administered the scheme had not completed all committed works within the financial year. A budget reduction of 40% is likely to lead to some pressure but this can be contained.

3. Options Appraisal

3.1 Implement no changes

If no changes are made the potential benefits of the proposals will not be realised. At present the degree of choice and control that older and disabled people have over the adaptations that they need is limited and this situation would continue. Due to budget pressures the tight eligibility criteria will continue with no alternative offer when an adaptation is refused.

3.2 Implementing the Proposals

There is advantage in all adaptations to Council properties being managed by the Housing Department, utilising the self financing scheme.

3.3 The proposed direct payment grant scheme can be implemented without additional resource by utilising funding currently used to top up the Disabled Facilities Grant budget. The proposal will increase choice and control and is a cost effective innovation that will enable a greater number of people to benefit from basic, accessible facilities.

3.4 Administering Disabled Facilities Grant work in-house has released the current 12.5% commission costs yielding revenue saving to the Council of £71,250.

4. Consultation

4.1 This paper has been presented to Adult and Community Services DMT, CMT and Strategic Housing Board. In-depth discussions have also been conducted with Children Services and Finance Departments. The idea of a preventative scheme was mooted at a member briefing on 20 July 2011 and was positively received.

4.2 If agreed, the preventative scheme will be developed in consultation with groups who would be most likely to benefit in the future. This will include older and disabled people, and groups and organisations that represent their interests.

5. Financial Implications

Implications completed by Jo Moore and Ruth Hodson, Finance Group Managers

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13¹¹
	£	£	£
Privately owned properties			
Disabled Facilities Grant from government	570,000	570,000	570,000
Disabled Facilities Grant Council top-up	380,000	380,000	380,000
Council Housing adaptations	500,000	500,000	500,000

¹⁰ Local Authority Disabled Facilities Grant allocations for 2010/11, 2011/12, Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

¹¹ Disabled Facilities Grant funding from the DCLG for next year (2012-2013 financial year) will not be confirmed until March 2012. We, however, expect grant allocation to be the same as the previous years as no reduction in funding has been announced.

- 5.1 The table above shows the budget allocation for adaptations to Council and privately owned properties for 2010-2013 covered by the Disabled Facilities Grant.

Disabled Facilities Grants

- 5.2 Local authorities are required to offer Disabled Facilities Grants under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. If certain conditions are met (including a means test) a grant must be awarded to the applicant. The grant funded adaptation becomes the property of the applicant.
- 5.3 Up until 2010 local authority budgets for Disabled Facilities Grant were funded by a 60% contribution from the Department of Communities and Local Government, topped up by a compulsory contribution of 40% from the Council, however the compulsory top-up rules have now been relaxed. Statutory guidance about eligibility and contractual arrangements for the work remain restrictive.
- 5.4 Disabled Facilities Grants were previously administered via a contract with Hanover at an overall cost of c.£200,000 per year. This was made up of direct funding from the Council of £80,000 plus a 12.5% commission on all of the works undertaken. Bringing the service in-house has resulted in an immediate saving of £80,000. In addition, further efficiencies can be made by utilising existing in-house staff capacity and capitalising these staffing costs to the budget the Council receives from the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Council Funded Adaptations

- 5.5 Adaptations to the Council housing stock are administered by Adult and Community Services but are to be funded by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). From 1 April 2012 the current subsidy system for housing finance will be replaced by a self financing scheme. An HRA business model is currently being drafted which includes provision for capital works. Included within these works will be an annual allocation for disabled adaptations and it is anticipated that an amount at least equal to the 2011/12 budget of £500k will be accommodated for disabled adaptations.

6. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Shahnaz Patel, Senior Lawyer

- 6.1 Under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, it is a mandatory requirement for all Local Authorities to pay Disabled Facilities Grants to applicants who meet the criteria. The Council is not allowed to decline a grant to an eligible applicant on the basis of there being insufficient budget and, if demand outstripped resources, would have to maintain a waiting list.
- 6.2 The Housing authority is responsible for the administration of the disabled facilities grant, through all stages from initial enquiry to post completion approval. They can consult social services over whether to approve the funding for the necessary works, nevertheless it is for the Housing authority to decide.
- 6.3 Furthermore, waiting times are restricted in that Housing authorities must approve or refuse a grant application as soon as reasonably practicable and, in any event,

must be paid within 12 months of the completed application. The Local Government Ombudsman has held that any delay from referral to execution of works will be considered as unjustified and constitute maladministration.

- 6.4 Private landlords and Registered Social Landlords are not legally obliged to provide adaptations to their tenants and can refuse to do so, on the grounds that they do not have sufficient resources. All residents in whatever tenure have a statutory right to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant.

7. Other Implications

7.1 Risk Management

There is some risk associated with the proposal that the Council redirecting the funding previously used for the 40% top up towards the preventative scheme. However the new scheme will mitigate the impact of any longer waits for eligible applicants. The new scheme would need to be carefully specified and managed to ensure it was administered fairly.

7.2 Contractual Issues

As the contract with Hanover for the administration of Disabled Facilities Grants has now ended there are no contractual issues.

7.3 Staffing Issues

Implementation of these proposals has no direct impact on Council employees.

7.4 Customer Impact

Older and disabled people will have increased access to adaptations that will enable them to continue to live independently within their own homes. It will also help to prevent hospitalisation due to falls and postpone the need for costly residential care.

The impact of the proposals will be neutral for other groups with protected characteristics.

7.5 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Inadequate housing is an established environmental factor that can adversely affect parents' ability to cope. Whilst it does not directly lead to neglect or abuse, it can be a significant contributory factor to the stress on a parent of supporting a child with disabilities and contribute to a safeguarding risk. Any proposal that would increase the number of families of disabled children accessing adaptations would have a positive impact on family wellbeing.

Major adaptations can significantly reduce stress on carers of vulnerable people, and improve the quality of relationships. They can significantly impact on the contributing factors which can lead to potentially abusive situations.

7.6 Health Issues

The proposals described in this paper could have a positive impact on the health of the population. More people should have access to the resources needed to make necessary adaptations to their homes under these proposals. This reduces the risk of disabled people having accidents at home, and supports them to live independently for longer. The proposed changes also recognise the need for support by people who are owner-occupiers, as disabled people living in this borough in their own homes in need of home adaptations, may well be asset rich but cash poor.

Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

None

List of appendices:

None