

Yr Is-adran Polisi
Housing Policy



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Mr Huw Vaughan Thomas
Auditor General for Wales
Wales Audit Office

14 March 2018

Dear Huw

WALES AUDIT OFFICE REPORT: HOUSING ADAPTATIONS

Following my earlier letter to Nick Selway regarding the Housing Adaptations draft audit report, I am pleased to enclose our response to the recommendations which relate to the Welsh Government. It formally confirms our acceptance of the recommendations; provides an anticipated completion date for them; and reports on the progress made to date. This information is contained within Annex A attached to this letter.

We believe the report is a timely and useful source of evidence driving change within an essential aspect of our wider commitment towards integrating housing interventions as closely as possible with the NHS and social care. The Welsh Government recognises the essential role which aids and adaptations play in allowing elderly and disabled people to live independently. The delivery of these essential services involves a wide range of agencies right across Wales. Recent years have seen a number of changes to the funding and organisation of these services. In light of the very clear recommendations emerging from the Parliamentary Review of the NHS Ministers have however indicated they would like to see further changes and the report's recommendations highlight some of the key issues any service improvement will need to take into account.

We believe our long standing commitment to preventative investment in this area is very much in line with the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. In line with the approach set out in Prosperity for All we also see the changes we are contemplating as cross-government in nature. The review which culminated in the ENABLE proposals was very much along these lines involving health and social care colleagues as well as

Cymru
Cathays Park • Parc Cathays
Cardiff • Caerdydd
CF10 3NQ

Ffôn • Tel 0300 025 5445
John.howells@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.

representatives of social landlords and care and repair. We would expect to engage a similarly wide range of partner organisations in the work we are now beginning to pull together

We would be very pleased to deal with any queries you may have arising from our detailed response

Yours ever



John Howells
Director of Housing and Regeneration

cc Cabinet and Plenary Mailbox
The PAC Chair
WG CGU Mailbox
Nick Selwyn

Annex A

Recommendation One

There are many sources of funding and policies for adaptations, which results in disabled and older people receiving very different standards of service (paragraphs 1.5 to 1.9). To address these discrepancies **we recommend that the Welsh Government set 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.**

Response: Accept

Completion Date: December 2019

As part of the ENABLE programme of work, Welsh Government has begun collecting and aggregating data to help understand how adaptations are currently delivered. Using this data we will work with delivery organisations to improve the service the aids and adaptations programme provides to citizens. During the next twelve months we will work with our partners across a range of tenures to identify those aspects of this work which could benefit most from agreed service standards as well as agreeing what those standards might be.

Recommendation Five

Delivery of adaptations can be delayed by a variety of factors (paragraphs 2.20 to 2.33). To improve timeliness in delivery **we recommend that:**

- **the Welsh Government reviews whether local authorities should continue to use the means test for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs);**
- **local authorities provide or use home improvement agency services to support disabled and older people to progress their DFG applications efficiently;**
- **delivery organisations work with planning authorities to fast track and streamline adaptations that require approvals;**
- **delivery organisations use Trusted Assessors to undertake less complex adaptation assessments; and**
- **the Welsh Government streamlines its approval processes for Physical Adaptation Grants (PAGs).**

Response: Accept

Completion Date: April 2019

We will review whether the means testing requirements for Disabled Facilities Grants should continue. It is perhaps worth noting in this respect that this matter was considered by

Ministers as part of the implementation of the ENABLE programme. However in light of the growing emphasis on joined up working in this area we see merit in considering this question again. We will also work with the sector to identify practical changes which would enable us to streamline the approval process for Physical Adaptation Grants.

Recommendation Nine

Having the right performance indicators and regularly reporting performance against these are important for public bodies to manage operational performance, identify areas of improvement and evaluating the positive impact of services. We found that the current range of performance indicator data is extremely limited and not sufficient to enable a full evaluation of performance (paragraphs 4.5 to 4.20). **To effectively manage performance and be able to judge the impact of adaptations, we recommend that the Welsh Government and delivery organisations:**

- **set appropriate measures to judge both the effectiveness and efficiency of the different systems for delivering adaptations and the impact on wellbeing and independence of those who receive adaptations;**
- **ensure delivery organisations report against their responsibilities in respect of the Equalities Act 2010;**
- **ensure performance information captures the work of all delivery organisations local authorities, housing associations and Care and Repair agencies; and**
- **annually publish performance for all delivery organisations to enable a whole systems view of delivery and impact to support improvement to be taken.**

Response: Accept

Completion Date: December 2019

Data collected under ENABLE over recent months has begun to provide us with a more comprehensive picture of the scale and nature of the investment being made in adaptations and how this varies from one area to the next. We are hoping to make early progress towards being able to collate the data now available including the publication of an annual snapshot of performance.

We recognise this recommendation sets out a rather more stringent challenge surrounding the need to develop a greater understanding of the impact achieved by these interventions. Delivery of this more far-reaching recommendation is likely to take place over a longer timescale. But our aim will be to say something about the success or otherwise of our 2018-19 investment by the end of 2019. We will also ensure our improvement work includes measures designed to remind organisations of their responsibilities in respect of the Equalities Act 2010