

ADAPTING FOR CHANGE

THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE ADAPTATIONS WORKING GROUP

1. The Scottish Government is grateful to the Adaptations Working Group for its reports, *Adapting for Change*¹ and *Planning Ahead: Living at Home*.² We thank the Group's Chair and members for their considerable commitment and also appreciate the contribution of all those who responded to the Group's consultation or provided feedback through attendance at consultation events.
2. Housing adaptations make a vital contribution to supporting older people and disabled people to live safely, comfortably and independently at home. In doing so, they are a key preventative measure, helping to reduce the number of emergency hospital admissions through falls and other accidents. The Scottish Government established the Adaptations Working Group, with a remit to explore ways to achieve the best possible outcomes for older people and disabled people from investment in housing adaptations, in recognition of both their current and future importance. While there is much good practice in delivery of adaptations, there are also some significant systemic barriers to achieving their full potential.

Proposals/Recommendations

3. The Group's recommendations from its two reports can be split into three key areas:
 - Streamlining measures within the current delivery systems;
 - Fundamental change to current delivery systems; and
 - Measures enabling people to plan ahead and pro-actively adapt their homes.

Streamlining measures

4. We were pleased to note the wide range of ways identified by the Group in which better outcomes could be achieved within the current organisational arrangements. We were also pleased to see that many of the measures are already in place in different local areas. However, we would like to see them being used more universally. To this end, we will work with local authorities, housing associations and other organisations to highlight and promote greater implementation.

More fundamental change

5. We agree with the Group that, while the streamlining measures offer scope for achieving more effective delivery of adaptations within the current systems, they will not resolve some of the most critical problems. Crucially, they do not tackle the key issue of inequalities caused by differences in housing tenure. We also

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/access/ROOPH/ADWG/finalreport>

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note that a clear majority of respondents to the Group's consultation supported more fundamental change.

6. We are pleased that the Group's recommended approach includes the development of a strategy for delivery based on tenure neutrality and takes account of key developments and policy directions relating to personalisation, self-directed support, outcomes-focused approaches and prevention. We will work to take the Group's recommendations forward and are now in the early stages of project planning.
7. In taking the recommendations forward, we will work with those who deliver and use services and have particular expertise and experience, including local authorities, housing associations, service users and others. We are encouraged and grateful to have already received offers of help and support from a number of organisations. An important part of delivering the Group's vision for housing adaptations will be the testing of aspects of the recommended approach to delivery. We are keen to hear from anyone who would be interested in working with us on this.
8. In the meantime, we have increased the adaptations budget for housing associations to £10 million in 2013-14, in recognition of the value of adaptations in helping older people and disabled people to live independently.

Planning ahead

9. The ability to adapt a home at an early stage before a crisis is reached can help to realise the full preventative benefits of housing adaptations. The Working Group has helpfully set out the issues with the current financial options available to people who wish to pro-actively adapt their homes, focusing particularly on equity release. We have taken on board the Group's conclusion that for equity to play a role in enabling to plan ahead, the public sector needs to lead the way.
10. We are working to develop a pilot for an equity loan scheme, which would help home owners who wish to proactively adapt their homes and have substantial equity, but insufficient cash resources. The aim is to develop a package, including both the adaptation and finance, that provides value for money via a trusted route and is attractive to those who would benefit from it.

Conclusion

11. The Scottish Government is extremely grateful to the Adaptations Working Group for its reports and recommendations. We look forward to continuing co-operation with local authorities, housing associations, service users and others in the housing sector and beyond to take the recommendations forward.

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