

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO HOLDER DELEGATED DECISION

by

COUNTY COUNCILLOR MYFANWY ALEXANDER

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE, WELSH LANGUAGE
HOUSING AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

March 7th, 2022

REPORT AUTHOR: Professional Lead - Housing

SUBJECT: Independent Living (Adaptations) Policy

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council provides an aids and adaptations service for tenants of Council-owned homes. The service is designed to adapt the homes of people with disabilities to help them retain as much independence as possible while living in their home, avoid if possible unwanted moves to a different home, and reduce demand for additional support services. The policy and procedure for this service is provided by the 'Council Housing Adaptations Policy', attached to this report as Appendix A, which has been in place since May 2017.
- 1.2 This report requests approval of a new 'Independent Living (Adaptations) Policy', attached to this report as Appendix B, to replace the 'Council Housing Adaptations Policy'. The 'new approach is designed to place an increased emphasis on considering the determination and delivery of adaptations in a more holistic way.

2. Background

- 2.1 The current 'Council Housing Adaptations Policy' was designed to formalise good practice and ensure consistency across Powys.
- 2.2 Since this policy was introduced in May 2017, the adaptations service has benefitted from improving consistency and a joined-up approach between the various officers and agencies delivering this important area of work. A close working partnership developed with Care & Repair¹ has facilitated a high-quality service for people needing minor adaptations to their home, regardless of tenure, with average delivery times for tenants of the Council of 35 days. Larger adaptations are also

¹ 'Care and Repair' is a charitable organisation, which delivers housing related services to help people enjoy their homes and remain living as independently as possible. It is a subsidiary of Barcud Housing Association.

efficiently delivered by the wider housing service, with an average delivery timescale of 135 days.

- 2.3 A review of the policy by Housing Services was undertaken to make sure that the Council's approach was continuing to provide an effective and efficient service that would help people be better able to enjoy their home. The consultation enabled tenant representatives, groups working in the field of disability, housing staff, Social Services Occupational Therapists and County Councillors to provide comments and share their experiences of services.
- 2.4 Appendix C to this report provides a full report on the outcome of the consultation. The consultation findings were used to build on the foundation of the current policy to develop the 'Independent Living (Adaptations) Policy'. This is designed to further improve the aids and adaptations service to the Council's tenants by:
- Putting more emphasis on an adaptation being one of a range of options to meet the need of tenants and their household.
 - Accommodating 'Homes in Powys', introduced in 2018, which includes enhanced matching of accessible homes with households who need easier access.
 - Encouraging discussions with tenants on how their current and foreseeable needs for an adapted and accessible home can be best met.
 - Including the terminology and financial thresholds from Welsh Government ENABLE² guidance, including for example speeding up the delivery of small adaptations (up to £1,000) by reducing the needs for a detailed needs assessment.
 - Integrating housing management considerations into the decision-making process for medium and large-scale adaptations, to avoid costly adaptations where a better solution would offer alternative more suitable accommodation.
 - Reflecting the delivery timescales suggested by Welsh Government for medium and large adaptations.

3. Advice

- 3.1 The Council has a duty to provide an aids and adaptations service for its tenants, which is why it has in place a 'Council Housing Adaptations Policy' and is proposing to provide a better service through the 'Independent Living (Adaptations) Policy'.
- 3.2 Option One: Do nothing
- 3.2.1 The current policy, introduced in 2017, no longer reflects current service demands and delivery methods, including those being introduced as part of the 'Moving on Up' Housing Services redesign. Leaving the

² ENABLE is the Welsh Government funding programme that supports a wide range of adaptations to help people to live as independently as practicable in their home.

current policy unchanged means that it will be increasingly out of step with practice. This increases the risk of confusion and challenge between and from tenants, residents and officers, both within and outside the Council.

3.3 Option Two: Adopt the 'Independent Living (Adaptations) Policy'

3.3.1 Adoption will provide clarity to tenants, residents and officers, both within and outside the Council, about the outcomes driving the policy, making delivery smoother and quicker regarding the adaptation process. Adoption will bring the policy in step with Welsh Government guidance and Council practice.

3.4 Providing a holistic approach to the delivery of aids and adaptations to help tenants of the Council be better able to enjoy their homes, make a major contribution to Vision 2025, with particular regard to Equality Objective Three which: "will improve the availability of accessible homes, adaptable homes and lifetime homes, that provide suitable and sustainable accommodation for future generations".

4. **Resource Implications**

4.1 Aids and adaptations to homes owned by the Council are funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Provision has been made in the Thirty Year HRA Business Plan 2022-2023 to cover the cost of providing the service set out in the 'Independent Living (Adaptations) Policy'.

4.2 Training would need to be carried out for officers using the policy to make them aware of the changes, but this would be done internally with no extra cost to the service.

4.3 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes sections 4.1 and 4.2 above and can support the recommendation on that basis.

5. **Legal Implications**

5.1 Under of the Equality Act 2010, the Council must make sure that there is an aids and adaptations service available for its tenants. The Principal Housing Solicitor states: "Consultation has been carried out on the changes to the Policy and the implementation of the Independent Living (Adaptations) Policy would allow residents in Powys to stay in their homes longer and the Council would be providing a better service to their tenants and the general public".

5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report".

5 **Data Protection**

6.1 No changes to the processing of personal data arise from this report. Joint Data Control Agreement and Data Protection Impact Assessment are already in place.

7. Comment from Local Member(s)

7.1 This is a county wide matter and so applies to all local members.

8. Integrated Impact Assessment

8.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed, a copy of which is attached to this report as Appendix D.

9 Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that:

9.1.1 The 'Independent Living (Adaptations) Policy' is approved and brought into effect on April 1st, 2022.

Contact Officer:	Dafydd Evans (Service manager – Housing Resources)
Tel:	01597 827464
Email:	Dafydd.evans@powys.gov.uk
Head of Service:	Nina Davies (Head of Housing and Community Development)
Corporate Director:	Nigel Brinn (Economy and Environment)