

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
HEALTH & WELLBEING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
24TH OCTOBER 2011
BRIEFING NOTE FROM HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
DISABLED ADAPTATIONS

1. Purpose of Briefing Note

- 1.1 To advise the Policy Development Committee of the current position with regard to disabled adaptations. Members asked for further information at the last meeting of this Policy Development Committee.

2. Background

- 2.1 The provision of disabled adaptations in both private and council owned homes is a valuable service that:

- Allows people to continue living independently;
- Saves rehousing and care costs;
- Provides a safer home environment thereby reducing the risk of injury through slips and falls and consequent hospital admission.

- 2.2 Anyone within the District who requests assistance with a disability by the provision of adaptations is initially dealt with by Social Care & Health at Staffordshire County Council. The applicants' needs are assessed by an Occupational Therapist (OT), and if adaptations are required they are provided in one of three ways:

a) **Minor Works** - Where the necessary adaptations can be provided for less than £4,000 these are provided by Social Care & Health from their minor works budget.

b) **Council Owned Housing** – The necessary adaptations specified by the OT are provided and paid for from a specific budget within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme.

c) **Privately Owned Housing** - The necessary adaptations specified by the OT are provided by way of a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), subject to the applicant satisfying a financial means test. If the applicant meets the qualifying criteria then the DFG is mandatory and the Council is obliged to pay it. Where the adaptations are for the benefit of a child there is automatic eligibility and no financial means test is required.

- 2.2 For some time there have been good working relationships between the respective Officers involved in the provision of disabled adaptations. A working group was set up in September 2008 and is made up of officers from Social Care & Health, Cannock Chase Council, and South Staffordshire PCT.

- 2.3 The group has met regularly and has made significant progress. There is now a clear understanding of respective roles and responsibilities. Staffordshire County Council committed additional funding to their minor works budget thereby allowing more applicants to be dealt with in this way. In 2008/9 additional one-off funding was obtained from Staffs County Council (£75,000), and South Staffs PCT has made several one-off cash payments from end of year balances.
- 2.4 Notwithstanding the progress made, there are some significant issues that remain to be addressed.
- 2.5 Firstly, there is the issue of the backlog of applicants awaiting the provision of disabled adaptations. There are applicants awaiting an initial assessment of their needs by an OT from Social Care & Health. There is also a backlog of Council tenants waiting for adaptations to their homes. Depending on the priority rating of their case some tenants may wait several years. For adaptations to privately owned property there is presently little or no backlog with the Council, the backlog being held by Social Care and Health.
- 2.6 Secondly, there is an issue with funding for disabled adaptations. There are particular problems with each of the three routes by which adaptations are provided:

Minor Works – Pressure on County Council budgets are likely to preclude additional funding into this budget.

Council Housing – The Councils agreed 2011/12 Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme includes a budget of £608,000 to provide disabled adaptations to council dwellings. Financial provision has also been made within the initial HRA Business Plan (as agreed by Cabinet on 21st July 2011 for consultation) to provide for the future estimated need for disabled facilities works in council dwellings. The provision includes resources to remove the current waiting list during years 1 to 3.

Privately Owned Housing - Funding is provided by way of a central government grant with this grant then being added to by the Council. Up until 2008/9 there was a requirement for all local authorities to support the money provided by central government on a 60:40 basis - 60% from central government and 40% local authority. In 2008/9 this changed to allow local authorities to support the disabled facility grant scheme by whatever percentage of extra money they see fit, however the government do expect to see local authorities maintaining at least a 40% support of the government grant. Up to and including the current financial year the Council has maintained the 40% support.

A decision on the 40% funding of DFGs for 2012/13 onwards will need to be made as part of the forthcoming budget setting process.

- 2.7 The above issues are compounded by the year on year increase in demand for disabled adaptations. This is a result of an ageing population and an increasing expectation of continuing to live independently. Indeed independent living appears to be a cornerstone of recent and emerging Health and Social Care policy.
- 2.8 The table below details numbers of adaptations and annual budgets.

Table of Demand for Disabled Facilities Assistance

	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
	(Actual)	(Actual)	(Actual)	(Actual)	(Projected)
<u>PUBLIC SECTOR:</u>					
Work Completed	59	70	81	53	115
Referrals with Contractor @ 31 March	30	30	19	29	30
Backlog @ 31 st March	118	114	135	124	85
Total	207	214	235	206	230
Referrals Received from SC&H	75	126	98	83	80
<u>PRIVATE SECTOR:</u>					
Work Completed	66	84	85	73	76
Referrals with Contractor @ 31 March	24	18	n/a	12	19
Backlog @ 31 st March	29	31	n/a	32	31
Total	119	133	n/a	117	126
Referrals Received from SC&H	53	52	n/a	76	80
Budget:					
Public Sector	£353,665	£400,270	£569,860	£550,000	£608,000
Private Sector	£334,790	£480,140	£507,100	£604,830	£661,580