



RESPONSE TO ADAPTATIONS WORKING GROUP

CONSULTATION ON OPTIONS FOR CHANGE IN THE DELIVERY OF HOUSING ADAPTATIONS

Questionnaire

Respondent information form

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The name and address of your organisation will be made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government website). Are you content for your response to be made available? (Yes/no)

Yes

Are you content for the Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise? (Yes/no)

Yes

Question 1

Do you agree that there are issues with the current arrangements for housing adaptations, which need to be addressed?

- **If so, has the Adaptations Working Group identified the main issues?**
- **Which issues are most important to address?**

ALACHO agrees there are issues with the current arrangements for housing adaptations which needs to be addressed.

Although some councils have suggested the current problems may be over emphasised in the consultation, the consensus seems to be that there are issues which need to be resolved, including

- How best to deal with (and resource) ever increasing demand
- How to remove inequity in the current system, both between tenures and between different local authorities' schemes of assistance, which risks giving rise to postcode lottery in waiting times for, and even availability of, aids and adaptations
- Removing the complexity of application and installation for customers

ALACHO is content that the consultation adequately identifies the main issues requiring resolution, and where appropriate we have identified our main concerns in this response.

Question 2

Are there parts of the current arrangements that you think work well and should not be changed?

Several councils have referred to the continued productive role of Care and Repair schemes in facilitating aids and adaptations (A&As) as something which should be maintained and even enhanced. Effective joint working between housing services and OT services has also been mentioned as a key element in any effective approach to the provision of A&As (especially when the latter is embedded within housing services departments). Some councils also mention the value of self-referral schemes for minor adaptations and suggest extending and enhancing such schemes across all tenures.

Question 3

Which of these minor (streamlining) changes do you think would improve the current arrangements for delivery of adaptations? Why?

- **Do you think these changes would be sufficient to address the issues?**

Most councils would agree that **all** of the proposed streamlining changes have the

potential to improve current delivery arrangements, with the uniform availability of good quality, comprehensive (i.e. covering all stages of the process) advice and information for everyone being the first priority.

The proposed changes, whilst desirable will of course only prove effective if backed by sufficient resources (no doubt a recurring theme in council responses)

Question 4

Which of the three approaches to organisational responsibility (through local housing authority, Health and Social Care Partnerships or the individual) do you believe would provide the most effective basis for the delivery of housing adaptations and the greatest benefits to people who need adaptations? Why?

Most councils would accept the legitimacy of the three options suggested, albeit contending that they are not mutually exclusive and that components of all three should be enshrined in the favoured option (namely the strategic housing focus and “trusted adviser” nature of councils, the expertise of occupational therapists in health and social care, and the undoubted requirement to put individuals at the heart of the process). Perhaps unsurprisingly, councils are likely to favour a process which puts local authorities at the heart of the new system, seeing themselves as best placed to deliver the strategic and operational skills essential for effective co-ordination and implementation of a user friendly service. As agents of local democracy, councils are also likely to feel that they will in any event acquire ultimate accountability for service delivery, especially in the eyes of service users i.e. individuals will naturally look to councils and elected members for advice and assistance with aids and adaptations, particularly when problems arise.

Question 5

Are there issues or risks with any of the three approaches to organisational delivery that are not covered above?

Many councils would perceive risks if the process of A&A provision and funding were be wholly controlled and managed by health and social care. For example, that funding for aids and adaptations could become “lost” in health and social care budgets, perhaps being superseded by other priorities and subsequently diminished, or if a strategic focus on housing aids and adaptations were to be lost.

Not the least risk is that councils’ ability to strategically plan and implement programmes of aids and adaptations to their own stock might be significantly reduced. A different set of risks are perceived were individuals to become responsible for their own aids and adaptations, namely that many people lack the experience confidence or expertise to engage in the process and would look to councils for assistance in any event. As noted above, that is not to say that individual views and preferences should not be at the heart of whatever option is chosen to consolidate service delivery in future.

Question 6

In the context of personalisation, what are the most important things to put in place to ensure that people who need adaptations and their carers are at the centre of the process and have choices?

Impartial and informed support for applicants and carers from a trusted source, backed by robust up to date advice and information, will be essential prerequisites of any new system. However this will be of only limited value if sufficient resources are not available to meet assessed need, notwithstanding the need for a financial contribution from those able to pay all or some of the adaptation costs.

Question 7

Which of the three approaches to funding (through local housing authority, Health and Social Care Partnerships or the individual) do you believe would provide the most effective basis for the delivery of housing adaptations and the greatest benefits to people who need adaptations? Why?

For similar reasons advanced in response to questions 4 & 5 above, ALACHO believes that funding through local housing authorities offers the most effective basis for the delivery of housing aids and adaptations. However this should be allied to a collaborative approach with health and social care, one based firmly on the principles of personalisation correctly identified as vital in the consultation, and characterised by delivery against a set of agreed delivery outcomes.

Question 8

Are there issues or risks with any of the three approaches to funding that are not covered above?

The obvious risk is that for economic or other reasons, resources will be insufficient to meet demand. This risk applies not only to the availability of grants for those unable to afford the costs of essential aids and adaptations, but also in relation to availability of funding for those required to pay all or some of the cost. As noted above some housing professionals perceive a risk that, if consolidated through health and social care, resources for housing A&As for older people might be sacrificed to other health related priorities if pressure arose in those areas.

Question 9

Do you think we currently have the fairest arrangements for people, who have personal resources, including both income and equity in their current home, to contribute to the cost of their own adaptations?

- **If you would like to see changes, what would these be?**

Many councils believe that a review of the current arrangements for financing aids and adaptations would not only be welcome, but may be overdue. Some households find difficulty meeting their share of cost where required to do so, whereas others could pay more, or indeed all, of the cost without incurring financial hardship. It seems likely that in a climate of economic decline an increased proportion of A&A costs will need to be met by those individuals with some ability to pay, either directly through their own resources, or by means of the equity in their homes.

Question 10

Do you have any comments on any other issues related to the future delivery of housing adaptations, which aren't covered above? If yes, please provide details.

ALACHO believes that the consultation on the future organisation and organisation of housing adaptations for older people is both timely and helpful. The provision of housing aids and adaptations will assume ever increasing importance as our population ages, and the benefits of preventative expenditure become increasingly evident. We note that the consultation is not intended to cover the details of how any alternative arrangements for delivering A&As might be implemented. Needless to say, we would be happy to engage in further discussion on the key elements of a preferred system, together with the potential benefits of implementing the possible streamlining changes outlined in the consultation and how this might best be achieved.