

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 16 th April 2019
Report Subject	Specialist Housing
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Interim Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing & Assets)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report sets out the current work being undertaken in Flintshire to provide homes for people with specialist housing needs, identifying the scale of demand and the approach by partners to develop a holistic and equitable process.

Specialist housing, also called accessible housing, meets the needs of a specific group of people including:

- People with disabilities, primarily physical disabilities; and
- Older people who become less mobile.

The aim of providing accessible homes through adaptations, enables people to live independently and where possible to remain in their own home. It is fundamental to the Equalities Act 2010 and the goals of the Well-being for Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 by contributing to a more equal Wales and healthier Wales.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	To note and support the work of the specialist Housing Group in reducing the number of people on the specialist housing register.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND
1.01	<p>Specialist housing, also called accessible housing, meets the needs of a specific group of people including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• People with disabilities, primarily physical disabilities; and• Older people who become less mobile. <p>There are a range of attributes which are required to make a property accessible, the scale and scope of the adaptations are assessed independently on a case by case basis by an Occupational Therapist. The points below set out the range of potential adaptations which could be utilised in a person's home:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Widened doorways (800mm clear width opening or larger)• Ramped access to either front or back access• Wet area shower• Adapted kitchen• Specialist rise and fall bath• Wash dry toilet• Wall to floor rails to access the property• Door intercom / electronic door opening facility• Ceiling track hoists <p>The aim of providing accessible homes through adaptations, enables people to live independently and where possible to remain in their own home for a long as is possible. It is fundamental to the Equalities Act 2010 and the goals of the Well-being for Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 by providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A more equal Wales through enabling people to fulfil their potential no matter their background or circumstances; and• A healthier Wales by providing a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood. <p>Furthermore, by investing in and adapting people's homes we are providing the individual with increased independence and dignity, in addition the investment can provide efficiencies by not paying for other temporary accommodation that can prove to be significantly costly to the Council.</p>
1.02	<p>In 2017 Flintshire County Council developed a Specialist Housing Register which identifies all the households where there is a physically disabled resident requiring accessible housing. The make-up of the households are varied and include young and older people. More recently households that require larger properties (i.e.5 bedrooms or more) have also been included as we also deem this as specialist housing due to the fact that we have relatively few properties that can meet this particular need.</p>

The households on the Specialist Housing Register are also on the wider Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) register and have been banded according to priority.

As at January 2019 there are 51 households on the Specialist Housing register broken down as follows:

Priority	Adaptations	Larger property	Both	Total
Band 1	20	1	1	22
Band 2	18	9	-	27
Band 4	2	-	-	2
Total	40	10	1	51

The need for accessible properties is significant, we have recently identified that there are 539 households included on the SARTH register who require low level adaptations such as ramps, grab rails and wet rooms, to enable them to remain in their own home. **This equates to a third of all of the households on the housing register.** Due to the low level of need, these households are not on our Specialist Housing Register, however, we know anecdotally that their wait to be housed in suitable accommodation is significantly longer than the average waiting time. On average the households that were let non-adapted properties in quarter four of 2017/18 had been waiting on average between twelve to eighteen months. Therefore, we will be monitoring the households who require adaptations over the next 6 – 12 months to establish where there are barriers to meeting their needs through the Social Housing stock.

1.03

At the same time as establishing the register, a Specialist Housing Group has been set up consisting of representatives from our partner Housing Associations (Clwyd Alyn, First Choice, Grwp Cynefin and Wales and West) as well as the Council's Housing Solutions, Housing Management and Strategy Teams, Social Services and Occupational Health. The group is chaired by the Housing Register Manager and supported by the Housing Occupational Therapist and meets on a monthly basis to go through the register and identify possible options to find alternative, suitable accommodation for each case.

Since 2017 we have rehoused a total of 47 households into more suitable accommodation and provisionally allocated a further 6, which is a real success story for partnership working.

Many of the 47 households were either allocated properties through:

- a wider new build scheme where we request a specific new build property designed for the specific household needs (26%);
- through the acquisition of an existing property on the open market which is then adapted to meet the needs of the tenant (9%); and
- existing adapted social housing properties (65%).

The numbers of households that require low level adaptations in their own properties so they can remain independently in their homes has not been captured by the group. However, the Specialist Housing Group is about to

	<p>undergo a review to identify a more effective and equitable way of addressing the demand for accessible homes.</p>
1.04	<p>Currently who delivers the adaptations and how it is funded is dependent on the tenure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private sector – Disabled Facilities Grant managed through the Council or ENABLE for low level adaptations • Housing Associations – Physical Adaptations Grant accessed on a case by case basis funded direct from Welsh Government • Council property – funded through the Housing Revenue Account on a case by case basis. <p>Each of the above funding sources vary in criteria and timescales, and does not provide an equality of provision to all residents regardless of their background or circumstances. Welsh Government are currently considering the option of universal standards across all tenures which will help to address this situation.</p>
1.05	<p>The most important element of being able to provide accessible homes is the difference it can make to people’s lives. The following case studies demonstrate where collectively we have made a difference.</p> <p>Case study 1</p> <p>Mr X was a 60 year old gentleman who applied for re-housing following a leg amputation. Prior to his leg amputation Mr X lived in a 2 bedroom ground floor flat owned by Flintshire County Council, he became a permanent wheelchair user following his leg amputation and was unable to return home from hospital because his flat could not be adapted to accommodate a bariatric size wheelchair. Mr X was unable to be discharged from hospital until suitable accommodation was found, whilst medically fit for discharge he remained in hospital.</p> <p>The Housing OT became aware of a void property which could be adapted to meet the needs of Mr X and accommodate his large wheelchair. Permission was obtained and the property was significantly adapted; internal doors were widened, the bathroom was extended into the Carers bedroom to provide sufficient showering and toileting space, a wash dry toilet was installed and a ramp was constructed. With the help of the Accommodation Support Officer, whom obtained a grant for flooring and removal costs, Mr X was able to leave hospital as soon as the property was ready. Mr X reported to enjoy living in the adapted property but un-expectantly and sadly passed away a short time after.</p> <p>Following the death of Mr X the adapted property became void again. A suitable applicant from the Specialist Housing Register was immediately identified (Mrs Y), again the applicant was a bariatric wheelchair user. Mrs Y had been residing in a residential care home for a number of months awaiting suitable re-housing. The cost of the residential placement was approx. £800 per week and was being funded by Flintshire County Council. Mrs Y was allocated the adapted property and was able to return to live independently in the community.</p>

	<p>Case study 2</p> <p>A physically disabled person on the Specialist Housing Register who had been living in 1 room of their property as they were unable to get around in their wheelchair, was rehoused in a 2 bedroomed bungalow in the same area, which First Choice Housing Association acquired and fully adapted for their needs including a walk in shower and rise and fall kitchen units. The tenant is now able to live independently, with dignity and is really happy with their new home.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None as a direct result of this report.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Specialist Housing Group.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The lack of suitable adapted properties and the potential implications for ongoing costs in particular housing people in temporary accommodation such as residential homes where the cost to the Council can be significant.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Contact Officer: Lesley Bassett Job Title: Housing Strategy Manager Telephone: 01352 701433 E-mail: Lesley.bassett@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Specialist Housing – is housing which is made accessible to meet an individual’s needs, specifically if there are disabilities. For example widening of doors; ramps and grab rails; installation of wet room or hoisting equipment. Each case is individually assessed and funding is applied for on a case by case basis.</p>

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFGs) – is a funding stream managed through the Council for private house owners to receive grant support to adapt their properties to enable them to stay in their own home.

ENABLE – is a Welsh Government funded programme delivered through Care and Repair to fund low level adaptations for private house owners.

Physical Adaptations Grant (PAGs) – is grant funding for Housing Associations to access directly from Welsh Government on a case by case basis to make adaptations to their stock.

Council funded adaptations – the Council uses funding from the Housing Revenue Account to fund adaptation.

Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) Policy – the regional common policy for all major social landlords allocating social housing properties across Conwy, Denbighshire and Wrexham.